**Elisa:** Good afternoon. This is Elisa Mattson for the National Park Service. Today is the 14th of September 1994 and I’m in the home of Arthur Tipples. I’m here with Mr. Arthur Tipples, his son Mr. Donald Tipples, his wife Mrs. Josephine Tipples and Peter Ham, who is doing the recording for us.

Mr. Tipples came from Wales in 1916, Mr. Tipples can you start by giving me your name and your date of birth?

**Arthur:** The name is Arthur E. Tipples and I was born in October 21st 1909.

**Elisa:** Can you tell me a little bit about the town that you came from? Maybe describe this that you have right here in front of you.

**Arthur:** I always remember going out with my grandfather who was a real friend of mine. We always went out for walks. In Wales there’s lots of beauty green and red [unclear 00:01:29] and hedgehogs and brooks and pretty white Welsh.

They had their own little pubs where we used to go for a walk with my grandfather and sometimes my grandmother. They’d stop at the club because we couldn’t as a kid get in. He always come out after with a big piece of cheese and crackers. We liked to walk.

We had a lot of different types of birds over there that we don’t have here. One [unclear 00:02:16] bird was the cuckoo. It actually used to say, “Cuckoo, cuckoo”. We had others in the snow time. In the winter we had robins would come but they were little smaller robins than what we have here; very pretty little birds and they were friendly. You usually find them coming on your window sill looking for food.

**Elisa:** Can you describe the scene when you’re walking? What did it look like? When you’re walking through Wales, what did the houses look like? You said it was very green.

**Arthur:** They were very old. The house I lived in was a row house. It had two sides, house this way and this way, but there were only about two blocks because at the end of this was a farm. The house I lived on was 26 Park Street and we had a regular house.

The walls were all put together. We had our own fireplace. My mother didn’t have a gas plate back in the back; what we call a cauldron where they used to have a big place for boiling water. The house was such that the front bedroom was always locked. That was for talks, for company.

**Donald:** The living room, not the bedroom, was locked.

**Arthur:** Something that we used to like to do because we had guests lights on it but at night it get pretty dim and one of the big things was sitting down watching the fireplace. We had a big fireplace.

We used to have two ovens on it where my mother used to cook on it. We had a backyard, which was two walls, and we had our own house like this and the house… we Welsh men we’re all interested in having some kind of a little garden.

**Elisa:** Do you remember the garden?

**Arthur:** Very simple garden, yes.

**Elisa:** What did you grow?

**Arthur:** Tomatoes, lettuce, and carrots.

**Elisa:** Who would mind the garden? Was that your father or your mother’s job?

**Arthur:** My father. It was nothing doing on a Sunday. Everything was closed down on Sundays in Wales as to go to church or a chapel. My father, all the males had Sunday. They’d [unclear 00:06:08] then spend a little bit with the garden. My grandfather had the best garden.

**Elisa:** Why was his the best?

**Arthur:** I guess he spent more time doing it.

**Elisa:** What was your mother’s first name?

**Arthur:** [unclear 00:06:32].

**Elisa:** And your father?

**Arthur:** John.

**Elisa:** Can you tell me what your mother looked like?

**Arthur:** I could tell you what she looks like; do you want to see it?

**Elisa:** Can you describe it for the tape? Can you tell me what she looked like?

**Arthur:** She was a very nice-looking, warm lady; a very shapely one, and a very good cook.

**Elisa:** What would she make?

**Arthur:** She could make anything.

**Elisa:** What was your favorite thing that she’d make?

**Arthur:** I wouldn’t know because when she married my father, she was a cook in a little club. We lived near the sea and all the ship captains used to come in there. There used to be a nice place. I remember seeing it. It had a lot of brass on the front. They had living rooms and they were fed there. It was like a hotel. My mother was a number one cook out there. She used to cook for them.

**Elisa:** She would make nice dinners? Do you remember what a dinner would be like in your house? What you’d have?

**Arthur:** Beef was important.

**Elisa:** Potatoes?

**Arthur:** Yes, potatoes. I guess they cooked almost anything.

**Donald:** They ate a lot of breads.

**Arthur:** What I used to like too was sausages.

**Elisa:** What can you tell me about what your father looked like?

**Arthur:** I lost my father when I was about five, when he went to war. He was like a lot of early guys. He worked for a gas company and he was quite busy going in and out. I don’t think that they had more other things to do than to worry about kids because I didn’t have too much with him. If it was there I have forgotten it. It was my grandfather who I lived with.

**Elisa:** What was his name? Do you remember your grandfather’s first name?

**Arthur:** Willis. He was a great old man.

**Elisa:** You spent a lot of time with your grandfather.

**Arthur:** Yes.

**Elisa:** How about your grandmother?

**Arthur:** She was the same. My great grandfather he liked me real well because I was always doing something that he liked me to do. I was free. I always as a kid would draw pictures. We used to take clay and make models for him. Every time I’d make something like that I’d get a big Welsh penny.

**Elisa:** You spoke a little bit about religion in Wales. You went to church every Sunday?

**Arthur:** Yes. In fact when I was back over there I went to the chapel and the pastor was there and I asked him, he had just finished his service that Sunday. Even the library where they make the baptism, that was still there in the same position, and I asked him about it. I said, “I was baptised in that church.” He said, “I don’t believe that.” But he went through the records, didn’t take him too long, he found it and the pen point in there was almost like it had just been put on there. It wasn’t dated away.

I got baptised when I was about turning five because my mother had been moving around quite a bit and we never got to settle down. Coming down the street called Houghton Road, that’s where the old church was. It wasn’t a good looking church as this but then it was enormous. Inside it was just similar church as a chapel as we call them.

My grandmother and mother decided it was time for me to be baptised so I just went in there and I remember getting baptised because I was about nearly five years old. That record is still there in that church in Barry Island.

**Elisa:** They kept the records that long.

**Arthur:** They were just ordinary helpers. We had a little trouble at first. I told him I was born in 1915, right?

**Elisa:** I have 1909.

**Donald:** That’s when he was born.

**Arthur:** Yes, but that is for my…

**Elisa:** When you were baptised?

**Arthur:** Yes. He missed it by one year when he looked at it but he found it. He was telling me from the archives there my grandmother’s name was in it, my mother’s in it, my name and all their names. Even the old church in the back of the church where we used to go for Sunday Schools, that was still in there.

**Elisa:** Do you remember Christmas when you were in Wales? Do you remember Christmas with your grandparents? Do you remember a holiday in your house when you were still in Wales?

**Arthur:** Christmas?

**Elisa:** Yes. What was it like? What did you do?

**Arthur:** It was always, particularly for kids, we all loved the waiting for Father Christmas. We used to get to bed early because we didn’t want him to see us. What we usually used to get was some toys, small toys, and we used to get nuts and oranges and apples that we didn’t get them too regular in those times; Christmas we did.

**Elisa:** Do you remember any friends that you had? Young children that you used to play with when you were in Wales?

**Arthur:** I had them but I don’t remember.

**Elisa:** Games that you would play as a child?

**Arthur:** I can remember that we lived so near from the house to the farm and we used to do a lot of playing of soldiers, we’d always put on military wear, we made a lot of things by digging in the sand. We used to like to go down to Barry Island where the sea was. We spent a lot of time down there swimming and playing on the sand.

**Elisa:** What can you tell me about this picture of you? This was when you were still in Wales?

**Arthur:** Yes.

**Elisa:** Why was that picture taken of you?

**Arthur:** That picture was taken when my dad went to war. When World War One broke out, he went right over there with them because all of his outfit belongs to what they call the Guards in America.

**Elisa:** Like the National Guard?

**Arthur:** Yes, but they had different name for it. He was sergeant. Everybody used to don patriotic there; every man so that his whole outfit went. They went over to France. This was made to me because I was his mascot for the company so this outfit was made out that way.

**Elisa:** Were you the oldest or the youngest? You had a brother?

**Arthur:** I was the smallest.

**Elisa:** You were the youngest and your brother was older.

**Arthur:** Yes. He was five years older than me. I had a young sister but she died in infantry. She was buried in Ebbw Vale.

**Elisa:** What’s the name of the town you came from?

**Arthur:** It was called Barry Island.

**Elisa:** Where you were born in Wales? What’s the name of that?

**Arthur:** I just know the town where it says Ebbw Vale.

**Elisa:** How do you spell it? [E-B-B-W-V-A-L-E]. When your family came to America, can you tell me about that? Why did you leave Wales?

**Arthur:** When we [unclear 00:18:26] to Wales?

**Elisa:** No, when you went to America, why did you leave Wales?

**Arthur:** We were in Barry dock. When we left there, took sail the ship.

**Elisa:** What was the name of your ship?

**Arthur:** St. Louis. We got out to one of the big sea ships. [unclear 00:19:14].

**Donald:** What are you trying to talk about?

**Arthur:** Where I sail from.

**Donald:** I thought you left from Barry dock?

**Arthur:** Yes but I had to take a train to get over to this.

**Elisa:** Liverpool?

**Arthur:** Liverpool, that’s where we sailed out. We left at about a high tide at almost midnight.

**Elisa:** So it was night time?

**Arthur:** Yes, dark. We got out, got across the shores coast of Ireland and the war was on then. We were on an American ship but we weren’t in America yet. My dad had already been killed from France.

**Elisa:** That’s why you went, right?

**Arthur:** That’s why my grandmother and grandparents from America wanted us to come; my brother, myself, my mother. I can say it was reluctantly that my mother went. She didn’t want to go because she always had a thought in mind that maybe my dad would find out, because he was called as ‘missing in action’. They never found him, never heard anything from him.

Anyway we got on the boat and we were out off of Ireland about 10 o’clock when we were stopped by German submarines. Everybody had to get out of the boat, get out of bed, get under those rubbers with things on them. My mother, brother and I we stood on the back on the deck and they lost us about four or five hours the ship didn’t leave.

They could see we had nothing anything going to them, given the many decent good stuff, ammunition, the ship was clean. They were going away from England so they said go. We sailed about seven years going into New York.

**Elisa:** Seven hours?

**Arthur:** No, we were gone about seven days on the ship. What I saw the sea line was that we were really immigrants. We were in third class. We were way down at the bottom.

**Elisa:** Remember what it looked like?

**Arthur:** We could get up on top but it wasn’t very pleasant.

**Elisa:** Do you remember where you slept on the boat?

**Arthur:** Yes. It wasn’t too bad. They had separate separations. The one we had had three bunks in it with their own door. We could wash our face in there but they were all together off the one deck. I remember we had to get out to go up deck to eat.

**Elisa:** What did you have to eat? Do you remember?

**Arthur:** Pretty good to eats I remember. We had potatoes, sausage and lot of things there but it wasn’t no fancy table like we have in a big liner. It was just a long, wooden table; several of them where we all sat together.

**Elisa:** Do you remember any of the other people on this ship?

**Arthur:** We had two friends on that. They left us in New York and I think they stayed in Lancaster.

**Elisa:** Were there mostly British or Welsh people on this boat or were there all people?

**Arthur:** There weren’t too many of them.

**Elisa:** Where were the people from? Do you remember?

**Arthur:** There were Italian, all mixtures. They were all pretty nice people. I don’t remember all the nationalities they were but they were…

**Elisa:** Speaking English?

**Arthur:** Yes, I guess there were a couple of English.

**Elisa:** What languages did they speak? Did they speak English or Italian? Do you remember hearing different languages being spoken?

**Arthur:** I don’t remember what nationalities they had. They kept it to them other than that I remember their nationalities were different. They were what we used to think of people that was dressed as… they were dressed different with their bag of shoes and shoals. The Welsh people we dressed up pretty good. We always dressed good.

**Elisa:** Do you remember what you wore when you were on the ship or what you brought with you?

**Arthur:** Yes. I brought a little jacket and a shirt. We always had short pants, long stockings, and boots; very simple make up.

**Elisa:** How much luggage did you take with you?

**Arthur:** My mother and my brother carried most of them. They had two or three. Most of it was sent out; shipped.

**Elisa:** Before you left?

**Arthur:** Yes.

**Elisa:** What were the seas like on the boat?

**Arthur:** It was rough as I think it was going over November. When I first left Liverpool, I was looking up in the boat. The ship looked like it was locked down to the ocean. When we got out to sea, the water was coming right over the ship. The winds were always one way or the other, depending, and that’s the only place we could go on if it was winds and the weather was rough this way then you stayed on that side; when it was that side we had to go that side.

**Elisa:** Did you get sea sick on the boat?

**Arthur:** My mother got awful sea sick, my brother got two sea sicks, I didn’t get a single.

**Elisa:** So it was fun? Do you remember it being exciting?

**Arthur:** Yes as a young kid because I remember one experience. We were going to go up for breakfast. We had a pretty good piece of steps up there. The ship went like this; I went down off the top, down into the deck and then all the way down to where all the shelves were.

**Donald:** You fell down the stairs and slipped down the hall?

**Arthur:** Yes. Into a pile of… what do you call them?

**Donald:** Shelves?

**Arthur:** No.

**Donald:** Slide preservers?

**Arthur:** Yes. They were all stacked up and I fell right into them. But I didn’t get hurt so I was alright.

**Elisa:** Did you meet kids on the boat that you played with?

**Arthur:** I remember that there was a couple of them but I don’t remember them by names.

**Elisa:** Did you meet the captain of the ship?

**Arthur:** No, not in that sail.

**Elisa:** How about when your boat docked in New York, do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

**Arthur:** That was something I do remember. We come in on a Sunday and I think my little article in there tells me that I remember exactly where the Statue of Liberty was.

**Elisa:** What did it look like? Do you remember what you thought when you saw it?

**Arthur:** It was like a cemetery, like a…

**Elisa:** Statue?

**Arthur:** First I didn’t know. Anyway I remembered it. Then I saw across the other side was Ellis Island.

**Elisa:** What did you think when you saw the outside of the building?

**Arthur:** It looks like I can visualize it now; this big tower is what I saw mostly.

**Elisa:** What did you think about it? Were you afraid of going there?

**Arthur:** I wasn’t afraid. The ship came in on a Sunday and docked and all the first and second classes were let to go.

**Elisa:** How long do you think you waited before they got off the boat? Were you on the boat a long time when it was docked?

**Arthur:** We went on a Sunday morning and we had to have another dinner there I remember.

**Elisa:** You were maybe on the ship a whole day?

**Arthur:** All Sunday.

**Elisa:** Did you see a doctor? Do you remember seeing a doctor on the boat?

**Arthur:** Not too many. They had them there if we needed them but we didn’t get to see the doctors until on a Monday when they took all of us to Ellis Island on a ferry. Then we were lined up and entered into this big door, I remember also that door. That door then you saw doctors. They were having some kind of a disease there with their eyes.

**Elisa:** I think that’s trachoma.

**Arthur:** They were going to take us back; if they had it, we were going to go back. We didn’t have that but it seemed like every often they would have these doctors checking you. I know my eyes were sore by the time I got through talking to them because of that. We had a woman doctor and she to put a lamp on my mother and said my mother had tuberculosis.

**Elisa:** How did she decide to check, she looked at her? Do you remember how she examined your mother? Or was she taken away into another room?

**Arthur:** First of all she stopped them then she separated her from me and my brother and took her into an infirmary. They held her in the infirmary until they had a specialist come out to check her.

**Elisa:** Where were you and your brother?

**Arthur:** We were in the big dormitory out there in the big old line ship. We was only there one night.

**Elisa:** You were detained there overnight there?

**Arthur:** That was one day, that night, all of next day until the doctor passed my mother as being okay. He says she wasn’t tubercular. She had been researched sea sick, she sure was. Time that ship left Liverpool back into its dock in New York she was sea sick. She couldn’t eat; all she could drink all the time was a cup of tea. We didn’t have that but she had some steward that would give them a few bags and get some tea for her. Anyway, we all got loose out of Ellis Island.

**Elisa:** Who came to get you at Ellis Island? Did somebody come to pick you up?

**Arthur:** We had a hell of a time; my mother, my brother and I we were just turned loose. We didn’t know where we were. Mother found herself a way around to the train station as we were supposed to embark to St. Paul where my grandmother was, and finally got into that one and got into Chicago and then we had another fight to find another train to St. Paul.

When we got to St. Paul, I remember we were getting out of money. All we had was a couple of sardine sandwiches and we got into St. Paul. My grandmother and grandfather were supposed to be there but they weren’t there, and it was getting cold. It wasn’t snowing yet but it was really cold in St. Paul. I was going to say we had our first Thanksgiving off the ship.

**Elisa:** Tell me about that.

**Arthur:** We had a duck I remember, a duck dinner. It was a pretty good dinner. I didn’t know what Thanksgiving was. We were at the sea at that time. Where was I?

**Elisa:** Back in Minnesota looking for your grandparents.

**Arthur:** They got lost and couldn’t find us and we couldn’t find them. My mother again was pretty good in the way she got herself around. She got herself a taxi and told the taxi that, “You take me to this house”, where my grandmother lives.

**Elisa:** Do you remember what the house looked like?

**Arthur:** Like any other. We finally got there and this cabbie said that’s got to be it. What it was was a shack. My grandfather was making it, winter was coming in and he was making a cottage. We had to just wave and he entered in. He had another room there. It wasn’t too big.

Anyway, he was gone and some people saw us floundering out after we left the taxi and I was beginning to feel cold because I had no big pants or socks. I sure had socks and high pants and it was cold. I said, “What’s different here? Why is this life so hard?” In Wales we didn’t have any frost ground like that, we hadn’t had the snow yet but it was frozen. This young lady called us over, of course they all knew one another there, and when we got in it was a warm place. My son and I said, “Look at that big Chinese lantern.” It was one of those big old-fashioned stoves. [unclear 00:36:59].

Then we got together with my grandfather and my grandmother, and two aunts there too; Violet and another one, then we had fun. The house was closed [unclear 00:37:25], had oil lamps and no water in it, no gas; cook everything by fire. We were comfortable but it wasn’t what my grandfather had. My grandfather he was a contractor and he built his homes. He had some good looking homes in Wales. When he come on over here he comes through to Canada. They both come in to Canada and down through Canada and got there, St. Paul.

**Elisa:** How long did you live in that house? Do you remember with your grandparents?

**Arthur:** Our first night there, sleeping in the morning, we had no snow when we went there. We got up in the morning the snow had almost covered the boat. My mother said, “This God-forsaken place I’m not going to stay here.” We did live there; my mother never did go back. I’ve made four trips back when I got older but my mother never did go. My brother went once.

**Elisa:** How long did you live in Minnesota?

**Arthur:** I was about 9 when I got there and 16 when I left there.

**Elisa:** Where did you go?

**Arthur:** I went to Chicago then I got educated.

**Elisa:** What can you tell me about going to school in America when you went to school?

**Arthur:** I enjoyed it. The teachers I thought were all very nice, not like it is today. We had to have a lot of respect for them. We didn’t dare think some of the things they pull off around here.

**Elisa:** What was your favorite subject?

**Arthur:** My biggest import was art. I was very good at art but I got fine with some of the other stuff but I wasn’t million-dollar excellent but I did get into high school for one trade.

**Elisa:** Once you were finished with high school what did you do? What was your occupation?

**Arthur:** They ruined my life practically again by going to Chicago. I had to go in there and I wouldn’t start school again.

**Elisa:** You didn’t want to move?

**Arthur:** Didn’t want to. But I was fortunate I did work with International Harvester Company as an office boy. I was about 16 and I spent with them for a couple of years and I happened to be… in those days the office boys did a lot to all the biggest people.

I happened to be in one division where all the top people were running the show. I had one guy like me and he said if I go back to school, I’ll see if I can get you signed into… it was a training but they set us up in a three-year program and we were studying towards being top foreman and so on. I got credited for it, got on that ship again; I got a credit and went through the whole three years. I and one other fellow was the only two that weren’t college people. The rest were all college people. We had eight of them and only two of us were not college.

Anyway, I made it and I got a good start. I was doing special welding. I think I left five months just working on welding people, doing stuff that I could make it change from old-fashioned way to welding. I almost worked any place I wanted. They thought I was good, that I’d made them a lot of money. I got into welding again. I was running out of work trying to make changes, and I became a foreman for a production department.

The war was coming on again, World War Two, and everything was negative and the whole system was changing. They were having lots of accidents. I was always interested in my own department of safety. The superintendent called me up one day and he said, “We have this job but many people all fighting for it”, but he said, “I’ve never had anybody who was given such a recommendation, and all the general foremen said you’re the man to be the safety director”.

We started about 16,000 people we went up to 18,000 people because we had a big factory. We had factories, we had our own steam shops, but they went into welds making all the tractors but mostly navy and marines. They assembled all the farming trucks. [unclear 00:46:05].

They were having bad safeties and I was fortunate enough in stopping them. I had a real good safety program. We really ironed it out. We had safety shoes, the girls had to wear uniforms. We went from three in-stations; we wound up at about 1,800 and we had them all in uniform. I had a real problem; I was set up by the top people in Chicago. They all told me that all the other big companies’ safety people had the same program as I headed on the different plants. They said, “We don’t believe it. I said, “Anytime you want to come here you just come. You don’t have to call me, just come.” They got in there and everybody had their safety goggles on and everything was done right and they said, “If I didn’t see it I wouldn’t believe it.”

**Elisa:** Can you tell me how you met your wife?

**Arthur:** Josephine was always a very beautiful woman. Her hobby was she liked to dance. In the good old dance big shows they had big bands. Her parents, her mother was very clean, very chinny, and very strict. She was also a very beautiful woman and still is. She fell down; I heard her get hurt and she had a fall down on a party. Her arm was bust with her face open, still all busted and swollen.

**Elisa:** But how did you meet your wife? Where?

**Arthur:** In a dance floor.

**Elisa:** You went to a dance and you met her at a dance?

**Arthur:** Yes. When I was a teenager and I guess my wife, that was all we did in those days; just dance in a big, fancy dancing hall, ballrooms. I could dance all the time. We didn’t have no TV; we had nothing other than dance itself. We used to dance a lot.

**Elisa:** Was this in Chicago that you met your wife?

**Arthur:** That was in Chicago.

**Elisa:** Where did you move from Chicago? How did you get to California?

**Arthur:** Not before I retired.

**Elisa:** So you retired to California?

**Arthur:** My son was a marine, his brother was a marine, they got in to California, they loved California and they wouldn’t come back to Chicago. So when I retired, that was the place for us because Donald had already given us some grandchildren already.

**Elisa:** How many children do you have?

**Arthur:** There’s Arthur, and Donald.

**Elisa:** How about grandchildren?

**Arthur:** Donald has three and my other son has three.

**Elisa:** You have six grandchildren.

**Arthur:** I’ve got great grandchildren now.

**Elisa:** Great grandchildren too?

**Arthur:** Yes, we’ve got three, haven’t we?

**Donald:** Yes.

**Arthur:** Three great grandchildren; two girls and one boy.

**Elisa:** If I asked you a question whether you are happy you came to this country, what would your answer be? Are you happy that you came to America? That your family decided to move here instead of staying in Wales?

**Arthur:** I’m so Welsh it squeezes. On my trips that I visited there with my cousins, if I had to do it over, had my right, I’d stay in Wales. America is not like America anymore; it’s rough, everything is rough. But I love Wales.

**Elisa:** When was the last time you went back to Wales?

**Arthur:** About three years ago?

**Donald:** Almost 10 years now.

**Arthur:** On my last trip? I’ve been back four times since I retired. I retired when I was 62. From then till now in between the four different times I was back. The funny part over there in Wales is the town Barry, where I lived, hasn’t changed one minute. They haven’t even put new buildings in there.

**Elisa:** Mr. Tipples, thank you very much for letting us come here and do this interview with you. It really told us a lot and your memory is incredible; what you can remember from being a small child.

**Arthur:** I could have told you a lot more if I wasn’t at this time sick.

**Elisa:** You certainly did a wonderful job and I want to thank you very much.

**Donald:** What was your favorite toy?

**Arthur:** English toy soldiers; I had them all the time.

**Elisa:** This is Elisa Mattson. I’m signing off with Mr. Arthur Tipples and his son, Donald Tipples, Peter Ham, and his wife Josephine on September 14th 1994 for the Ellis Island Row of History Project.