



City of Alexandria  
Office of Historic Alexandria  
*Immigrant Alexandria, Past, Present, and Future*  
**Oral History Program**



Project Name: *Immigrant Alexandria: Past, Present and Future*

Title: *Interview with Maggie Holley*

Date of Interview: *April 21, 2015*

Location of Interview: *Maggie Holley's House, Alexandria, Virginia.*

Interviewer: *Holly Bowers*

Transcriber: *Holly Bowers*

Abstract: Maggie Holley has lived in Alexandria for more than twenty years. During the interview she discusses her childhood in Ireland, as well as leaving Ireland to volunteer in Guatemala and Honduras. She recalls moving to the United States and maintaining connections to Ireland, and talks about adopting her children from Guatemala and China.

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<b>INTRODUCTIONS 0:00</b>	
Holly Bowers	All right, this is Holly Bowers. It is Tuesday, April 21, 2015 and I am with Maggie Holley.
Maggie Holley	My name is Maggie Holley and today's date is the 21st of April 2015.
<b>CHILDHOOD IN IRELAND 0:20</b>	
HB	Excellent. And now, just to start off, can you tell me where you're from and describe it a little bit, please?
Maggie Holley	I am from Kilkenny, which is in the south-east of Ireland. And actually, I grew up in the country, about five miles from the city of Kilkenny. And the name of the area was Dunmore.
HB	Can you spell that for me, please?
Maggie Holley	D-U-N-M-O-R-E
HB	Excellent, thank you. You lived with your family?
Maggie Holley	I lived with my family, with my mother and father, and there were—I have eight siblings. There was nine of us. But my father died when I was thirteen, so for the rest of the time it was just my mom and then all the kids.
HB	Were you one of the older or the younger siblings?
Maggie Holley	I was the second oldest. I had one sister who's older, and then I was second.
HB	And what was your home life like?
Maggie Holley	Well, as I said, we lived out in the country. And my dad died when he—I was thirteen. But he, we lived on a very small farm and then my dad, to supplement, he worked on the railway as well. We went to the local school until—for primary education, and then we transferred into Kilkenny for our secondary education. But we grew all our own vegetables, grew all our own food and it was—we knew everybody in the neighborhood. It was very different than living, you know, living here, but it's very different than living in Ireland has changed a lot. It's more similar to here. But from when we were growing up, we didn't have a car, we didn't have a TV. Church was a big thing for us growing up, Irish Catholics, we went to Mass every Sunday.
HB	What was a service like?

Maggie Holley	Well, back then of course we didn't care much for it, but I mean it was—. [laughs] But when I look back on it, it's—Mass was completely in Latin, so it has changed, and the priest, everybody looked up to the priest, which was very, very different than now. And religion was—and then when I transferred into the secondary school, that was all run all by nuns and Christian brothers and priests ran all the education in Ireland when I was growing up.
HB	How big was your school system?
Maggie Holley	The primary school, the small, it was one of these two-roomed schoolhouses that you hear of. And we had one, we had two teachers, a master and then we had a woman [inaudible] from kindergarten, say, to about third, and then from third to sixth was a master, was a man. It was quite small, but I can't remember exactly how many. But I mean, you would know everybody. We knew everybody in the neighborhood.
HB	What would you do after school?
Maggie Holley	Well, we lived about a mile and a half from the school, so we had to walk. We walked to school and we walked home. And, thinking back, it took quite a while because there's a group of kids that would walk home together and we always took a long time to get home from school. But probably do our homework and then when we went home we'd have to help out. We would help out doing things. We had some pigs and chickens and, as I said, we grew all our own vegetables, so we would have to help and we would help. Now, my mom did all the cooking, but we would help cleaning up afterwards. And then we would do our homework, and then we would go to bed or listen to the radio, because I think I was probably about eighteen before we got a TV.
HB	Did you have any assigned chores or chores that you particularly didn't like?
Maggie Holley	I didn't mind working outside. I hated working inside. But we had to make our beds and then on Saturday we had to clean. [laughs] Every morning we would clean the windows. We had to clean all the windows in the house every Saturday morning. We had to—I still laugh—we had to polish—every Saturday evening we had to polish all our shoes. Everybody's shoes were lined up, and we had, the girls had to polish the boys' shoes back then. But that's the kind of—we had to do that. We—the biggest two that stick regularly were the cleaning of the windows and the polishing of the shoes that I

	remember mostly about growing up.
HB	Did you get on well with your siblings?
Maggie Holley	Well, you know, we fought, but looking back we did. We did, and I mean, we were very close together, I think. Like, myself and my sister were eleven months together—eleven months apart. Typical with Catholic families. And then everybody, maybe the most was a year and a half to two. As I said, nine but we had one set of twins. But we were all pretty close. So we did. And I think about the summers especially—we didn't play anything organized. Now, when I got a little bit older, I played—when I went to high school—or secondary school as we call it—I played camogie, which is—I don't know if you know?
HB	I'm not familiar.
Maggie Holley	Yes, it's the Irish game is hurling. Men and boys play hurling—it's like with a wooden stick. But the girls' is called camogie.
HB	Can you spell that for me, please?
Maggie Holley	C-A-M-O-G-I-E. So I played that. But other than that we didn't, because we would, you'd just get out there and—because of my siblings were so close in age, we just played. We'd get out and play at hurling or camogie, that was the biggest two. We played that in the yard.
HB	What did that game involve?
Maggie Holley	Now, it's very similar to field hockey, but the sticks are a little bit wider—the bottom of the stick is wider. So it's something similar to that and goals are scored. They still play it—it's still very, very popular in Ireland.
HB	Would that have been played with the other neighborhood children as well?
Maggie Holley	Yes, some of the kids would come by and we would play that together. We'd play that in somebody's yard. But a lot of times we just went out, like in the summers when I was growing up, we would all just—everybody, all the kids would get together and we just would take off. And you would just go and wander the fields and come home—we wouldn't even come back for lunch. You wouldn't come back til dinner time. And that's all we did. There was a river close by, so everybody would go and swim in the river, and you'd be gone all day and then come back. So yes, it's very different. I did. And I think the town was five, six miles from where we lived but, as I said, we

	<p>didn't have a car. So there were buses that went in there. And I think occasionally, there was a movie theatre—cinema—and we might go to that, but not very often. We didn't. We would, as we got a little bit older then, all the kids in the neighborhood would get together and we would cycle. We'd go cycling for miles. And that's what we'd do on a Sunday, just cycle and then come back.</p>
HB	<p>Did that change, or did you get involved in different activities as you got older and went to secondary school?</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>Like I said, I would play camogie, and I was on the school camogie team and then we had another camogie team. So Sunday afternoon, yes, I would go and play camogie. That's what I did. But we didn't—I probably graduated high school when I was seventeen and a half. You know, we'd just start saying we'd get together in groups and just go off cycling. And nobody was boyfriend or girlfriend, you know, back then—that's a long time ago now. That's the type of thing we did. We didn't, you know. Like I said, I could probably count before I was eighteen the number of movies—we just didn't do it. And nobody did. We weren't the only – it wasn't just our family. Nobody in the neighborhood did it.</p> <p>But like I said, I go home quite—you know, my family is still in Ireland, so we go home like every other year, and that's completely changed. It's just very similar to being here now, even more, so I don't know if that's just, you know, maybe growing up in the country here was like that and now it's completely changed, too. Yes.</p>
HB	<p>I'm trying to think back to my own small-town childhood and what we did, and I remember endless summer days spent outside.</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>I know. Yes. And if somebody came by that was fine, but if they didn't, because we had such a large family, we just went and did it ourselves. So we never had, you know, like play dates or nothing like the kids nowadays. We never had anything like that. It was just—.</p>
HB	<p>Built in?</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>Oh, yes.</p>
<p><b>LEAVING KILKENNY TO BECOME A NURSE 09:52</b></p>	
HB	<p>At what point did you leave Dunmore and Kilkenny?</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>Well, I left Dunmore, Kilkenny—I went to, when I got out of school, I went to Dublin. I went and I worked, probably—we call it the Civil Service—for about a year and a half. Probably like a federal government type thing, for about a year and a half I worked there.</p>

	And then I decided to go into nursing. And actually what I did was I went to, it was difficult to get into nursing in Ireland back then because there was limited spots. So myself and my friend we went to England, to Sidcup in Kent, and I did my RN, my registered nurse there. And then I, a year or two afterwards I did my midwifery training. That probably brought me up to about twenty-four or twenty-five, maybe. And I'd worked a little bit here and there in London. I worked for a while—I worked for about six months in London.
HB	As a nurse?
Maggie Holley	As a nurse, yes.
HB	Were you at a particular hospital?
Maggie Holley	No, I worked actually in a private nursing home. I worked there, and after that I went to work in Colombia. I worked in Colombia for eighteen months. I did volunteer work. And then I went back home for about six months, and then I went to Honduras. I worked for Honduras with Save the Children. I worked there for two and a half years, and that's where I met my husband. And my husband is from Virginia—that's how I ended up here.
<b>VOLUNTEERING IN COLOMBIA 11:26</b>	
HB	What made you decide to go overseas like that?
Maggie Holley	You know, it was something I kind of —well, it wasn't. I won't say I always thought about it. But I met—when I was doing my midwifery I met this priest—he was a Catholic priest, and he was at the church that I used to go to. And he ran this organization called [inaudible] out of Liverpool in England, actually. And he would—he had some hospitals in Colombia, Peru, and Pakistan, and I guess they needed somebody in Colombia, and that's why I ended up going to Colombia.
HB	What was that experience like?
Maggie Holley	Oh, wonderful. That was the best—to date I have to say that Colombia was the best experience of my life. I absolutely loved Colombia—the country, the people, everything was just—I loved it.
HB	What made it such a great experience for you?
Maggie Holley	Well I think maybe because it was the first time I was ever really, really away from home. But the people were wonderful, the people I worked with were wonderful, I loved the country itself was just—we lived in a little— way out in the boonies. We lived way out. I guess the nearest town was probably four or five hours, and you had to cross

	<p>this huge river. And we lived close to the, about an hour walk and then you'd be right on the beach. But the people especially. I did, I just loved it. There was nothing I didn't like about it. And I travelled all over Colombia, too.</p>
HB	<p>Did anything surprise you in a culture shock way?</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>Well, it was—when I look back, of course it did. But, you know, I guess when you're young nothing really surprises you. But I think it was hard because we got sick quite a bit. We got dysentery, the usual, you know. I guess it was hard, coming from somebody who'd never, never seen it before, the poverty. You know, seeing how people lived—the poverty was dreadful. Really, really bad. People just living in little shacks and, you know, it's just like you see when you see these—they talk about the third world countries.</p>
HB	<p>What were some of your responsibilities there?</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>Well, when I was there, again, I worked as a midwife. But what we did, we had certain clinics—I think there was about three midwives when I was there and we had one doctor. We had a doctor and the three midwives. So the doctor kind of stayed at the hospital a lot because we would admit patients and then we had, like, an emergency where people would come, and then we had—a lot of women would come to deliver babies. And that's what we, we covered that. The midwives covered that a lot, but we also worked in the emergency room and we would go and work at the clinics, where we saw people for the clinics. So that's what we did mostly there.</p>
HB	<p>What part of the country were you living in?</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>In Colombia? I was living in, it's probably, I don't know if you know Colombia, but Cartagena? Cartagena's a big city, and it's about halfway—it's on the coast, and it's about halfway between Panama and Cartagena. But it was way out in the country, I mean way, way out. But it was beautiful.</p>
HB	<p>It sounds lovely.</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>Yes, I loved Colombia. It was really, it was a wonderful experience.</p>
<p><b>NURSING IN HONDURAS – SAVE THE CHILDREN 14:53</b></p>	
HB	<p>Is that what made you decide to go to Honduras at a later point?</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>Yes, it did. And then I went to Honduras. I was there for two and a half years in Honduras, and I worked with an organization. I worked with Save the Children. And that was, we didn't have a hospital. That</p>



	was more of a preventative program. We did a lot of vaccinations, we worked in the villages and helped bring water and helped them plant, and we also had clinics. But we would train the local nurses, so that was a little different. This was more—Honduras was more of a preventative type of program. But I was there for two and a half years.
HB	In the same spot, or did you move around?
Maggie Holley	No, we stayed in the same. I lived in the same spot. But again, we had a lot of clinics and we'd go up the hills and all over the place for the clinics.
HB	How many people were with your team with Save the Children?
Maggie Holley	Save the Children, there was again one, two, three. We had another three midwives and we had one doctor, and then there was a director, so that's five people.
HB	You said that's where you met your husband. What he doing? Was he also with Save the Children?
Maggie Holley	No, he was a Peace Corps. He was with Peace Corps, and they lived up there. We lived on the beach—we actually lived on the beach. The Caribbean was right here and we lived here. But he lived up there [gestures upwards], he lived up the beach. He's an engineer, and he was working for—as an engineer, or helping. And he would work in the villages too, and build things and that kind of thing.
HB	Do you remember meeting him for the first time?
Maggie Holley	You know, I do, and I think I met him on a beach. Because like I said, they just lived up the beach from us. It was himself and another, there was two volunteers that they had rented a house, and that's where I met him.
HB	How much time did you have together in Honduras?
Maggie Holley	Oh, a lot. We did, because they lived up the beach and we lived not too far and I mean, there was, again, in Honduras we didn't have anything, we did a lot. Now on the weekends we didn't work, either of us on the weekend. As a group—there was quite a few Peace Corps workers there—we would travel all over Honduras; we'd do that on the weekends. But during the week, that's—again, there was no TV, so you spent a lot of—we used to play a lot of card games and that kind of thing, because that's what you did because there wasn't much else to do.
HB	What was the—? Based on knowing that your husband came from

	Virginia and you'd come from Ireland, what was the mix of the group like? Were there people from all over?
Maggie Holley	Well, as I said, our group there, I was the only Irish person. The doctor and the other two midwives were from England. But the Peace Corps obviously were all American. So you would meet a lot of Peace Corps workers as we travelled through. Because when you're within the Peace Corps, you know, normally we would stay, you would stay with the Peace Corps workers as you went around the country. We went to, we used to go to Guatemala a lot. I didn't go with William, but myself and some of the other midwives that I worked with, we used to go to Guatemala quite a bit.
HB	What would you do in Guatemala?
Maggie Holley	Just travel around. I loved Guatemala. It's a beautiful. Actually, that's where my son, his birth parents are from. He's Guatemalan. But I loved Guatemala. It's a beautiful country, again, because there's more, there's a lot of [indigenous] Indian local people. They're very colorful in how they dress and the marketplaces. Yes. It was beautiful. I loved Guatemala.
HB	Did you ever consider going back there?
Maggie Holley	You know we talked about—myself and William, too—but then of course we said maybe we would go back when we retire, and then of course we adopted the kids and that's all gone now because they're—you know, we've got to put them through school and college.
<b>MOVING TO THE UNITED STATES AND ALEXANDRIA 18:47</b>	
HB	Did you and William become engaged while you were in Honduras?
Maggie Holley	No, we didn't. I went home for a little while and then I came over here, and that's when we got married then.
HB	Were you working in the States?
Maggie Holley	Yes. What I did, when I come over here I got a job as a nurse. I worked as a—my husband William is from Newport News in Virginia. It's close to Williamsburg [Virginia]. So he was—that's where I came to. Then, after about six months I got a job as an RN. I worked as a registered nurse in labor and delivery for about six years, and then we moved to Maryland, to southern Maryland. And I was there for a little while and I worked in labor and delivery and then I decided to go back—I wanted to practice as a midwife. So I had to go back to school. I went to the Frontier School of Midwifery, it's in Hyden, Kentucky. So I had to go there, and then I came back and I started working as a midwife. And I worked as a midwife at Prince

	<p>George’s—it’s a big old hospital in Cheverly, Maryland, here. And I worked full time until we adopted Mike. I can’t remember how many years, that’s probably about ten years. And then when I adopted Mike I stopped working for a couple of years, but then I went back part-time to the same place. But I’d only work the weekends; I worked every other weekend, that’s all I did. And I did that for about twelve years and I just stopped two years ago, I stopped work. It was too difficult because the kids are into too many activities, so I just stopped working.</p>
HB	<p>Do you remember your first impressions of Newport News?</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>That’s a good question, now. When I think about it, I remember that the first thing that impressed me mostly was, [laughs] believe it or not, were the supermarkets. They were so big. I mean, <i>so</i> big. And I think, too, that you had to rely on public [transportation]—that you needed a car. Because I’d never had a car, never needed a car because when I lived in Dublin I didn’t need one. When I lived in England there’s buses and undergrounds and everything and you didn’t need it. In Dublin everybody uses public transport, and the same in England. When I lived in London you just went and got on the Underground. And when I came to Newport News, you had to have a car. So the first thing I had to do was to learn how to drive, because I’d never learned how to drive, and buy a car. I found that very—yes.</p>
HB	<p>I can imagine.</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>But you know, I think because, like I said, because I had William and because I didn’t have to learn how to speak the language, and then once you got in working in a hospital you got to know a lot of people, it really wasn’t that difficult. It wasn’t, at all.</p>
HB	<p>That I guess exposes you to a great community.</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>Yes! I never had any problems. I can’t ever remember thinking, “Oh my, this is very different.” I don’t ever remember even thinking that.</p>
HB	<p>Was the education different when you went back to school in Kentucky?</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>Not really. I mean, because I had—when I came here I had to retake my RN Boards [licensure.] When I initially came here in 1980, before I could practice as a registered nurse I had to retake Boards. So I didn’t take any classes or anything, I just bought all these books and in about three or four months just read the books and I passed my RN boards. So no, I didn’t find it that difficult when I went back, and I didn’t find it that different. Maybe because of that, you know.</p>
HB	<p>Was that when you moved to Alexandria, or when you moved to the</p>

	States?
Maggie Holley	No, when I did my RN Boards that was when I initially, and then we moved to Alexandria because we lived in southern Maryland, and then what happened was, we lived in southern Maryland for about five years, and then we moved to Atlanta for a year, but it didn't work out. William was supposed to have, his job fell through. And I worked as a midwife there for about a year, and then after a while we just came back here because William got a job back here. So that's when we moved to Alexandria. And that was in, I think, [19]94. So we've been here since '94, this particular area.
HB	What were the easiest parts about settling in Alexandria, after all the other places that you'd lived?
Maggie Holley	I just, I love Alexandria. When we actually lived in southern Maryland, we would come up—because it's only about an hour—we would just drive up on a Sunday and just come to Alexandria because we always loved Alexandria. Just, we'd park and then you'd just go out for lunch and walk around. So, I loved Alexandria, I guess, from the get-go when we got here. It's so easy to get places, it was close to getting to work because I would just get onto 495[Interstate Highway] to 295 and get back to the hospital that way. Then you walk into Old Town. And of course it's changed a lot, because we've been here twenty years, over twenty years now, so it definitely has changed. That area down here? That wasn't there.
HB	By the [King Street] metro?
Maggie Holley	The other side of the metro. You know Carlyle, where all those big, big buildings and all those, that wasn't there. So it's changed a lot. Potomac Yard, all that's changed completely. So there's a lot more traffic on this road [Russell Road] since the PTO [Patent Trade Office] moved here. It's very different, and it's built up a lot. But I've always liked Alexandria. Again, it wasn't a big deal for me to settle here.
HB	Were there any challenges unique to Alexandria?
Maggie Holley	No. No, because when we moved here I had my job. No, as I said, I think because I speak the language and I started going to St. Mary's Church. No.
<b>CONNECTIONS TO IRISH CULTURE 25:23</b>	
HB	Have you found any sort of a community of other expats?
Maggie Holley	You know, I know, people always say, "Oh, it's just like the other

	<p>day, we just got some new neighbors.” And they used to go to St. Mary’s because my son, Mike, went to the St. Mary’s school all along from kindergarten through eighth grade. And I knew this boy Mike, he was a year ahead of Mike, but we just found out that his mother is from Dublin. You know, he just told me his mom is from Dublin. I didn’t even know. So, no I don’t. The only thing is there’s an Irish store in town, I go to that. But other than that I don’t. I haven’t, I haven’t. I have a very good friend, actually she lives in Newport News, but she’s from Scotland. And I’m sure there is. I mean, there’s an expat, you know, people get together, but I’ve never done that. No, I haven’t.</p>
<p>HB</p>	<p>Is there anything that you miss about home in Ireland?</p>
<p>Maggie Holley</p>	<p>Well, you know when I go home, every time I go home to Ireland, which is almost every other year, I mean, I love it. But I can’t ever see myself, you know—we, myself and William, we talked about maybe retiring and going home to Ireland, but now of course we won’t because of the two kids. But before we kind of thought maybe we would. But things are—even though there’s a lot of similarities between here and Ireland now, but it’s still everything is done, it’s a little, it’s slower. People don’t get as upset about things, and a little bit of a, “Oh, you can do it tomorrow” type of thing, which I probably would have trouble with that now. A friend of my sister, who, she lives in Toronto. Her friend went back to live in Ireland, and they just left about a year after they came back. They said she couldn’t—that type of thing, you know, like somebody’s supposed to come and do something and they’ll show up about a week later. She couldn’t do it. I mean, I love it when I go home, but it’s for—another thing, it’s quite expensive living in Ireland now. It’s kind of sad. The recession hit Ireland very badly and I can see that when I go home because a lot of factories and little stores that have been there always, they’re gone now, and there’s a lot of unemployment, and so. But I still love it, I do. But again, to live there, I don’t think I could do it now because I’ve been here too long.</p>
<p>HB</p>	<p>So you mentioned your sister’s in Toronto. Have your other siblings spread out around the world?</p>
<p>Maggie Holley</p>	<p>Oh, yes. My family are. My oldest sister, she married an English guy so she lives in England, and all her kids are. And then my sister Anne lives in Toronto, my sister Bea, well, it’s just that, then. Bea lives in Iceland, her husband is Icelandic. And I guess the rest live in Ireland.</p>
<p>HB</p>	<p>Are you all able to get together at any point?</p>

Maggie Holley	Oh yes, we do. Occasionally we try and have, about every four or five years we have a family reunion. We don't—sometimes we go to Ireland, sometimes we've gone to France, we've gone to Canada. So I'm hoping the next one will be in the United States. Maybe down somewhere like Miami. Oh, we do. But a lot of—you know, my—I guess most of my siblings have been here. They've come here to visit. But we still like to go home. I still love to go home. But now as the kids are getting—especially Mike, he doesn't want to go. Before, I would go and we'd spend five or six weeks. We'd spend the entire summer there. And now with Mike he's at the age fifteen, where he doesn't want to spend—. Now my little one, Kate, would love to. But Mike, it's not fair to expect him to spend six weeks, so we don't go as much.
HB	Fifteen is a tough age.
Maggie Holley	Oh yes, all he wants to do is be with his friends. He doesn't even want to know us! [laughs]
HB	Have you tried to familiarize them with Irish traditions or some of your home culture?
Maggie Holley	I'm trying to think. Obviously, I said, the biggest thing is the food. I still go to the Irish store and get my Irish food. And Giant here on Duke Street, they've started to carry a lot of Irish [and] English food.
HB	I've noticed that!
Maggie Holley	Yes. So I'll do that. I'm trying to think, is there anything other major? Not really. The biggest thing is the food type of thing. And of course we love to watch Irish movies and that kind of thing. Kate, again, my little one, she loves that kind of thing.
HB	Any favorites?
Maggie Holley	Favorite—?
HB	Films?
Maggie Holley	It's very funny you should talk about that because we just got the DVD that, there's a beautiful little movie that just came out. It's called <i>Under the Sea</i> . Or is it below? What's it called? Under the Sea. [leaves table to get DVD] It's called <i>Song of the Sea</i> . It's a new one, it's just came out. It was an Academy Award winner. It's beautiful. It's lovely. It's got a lot of, like, little Irish sayings and that kind of thing. And I love Irish music. But, as of like, traditions, not really. No, I think we just kind of —no, I won't say that. But we do like to watch

	the Irish movies and I personally love the English, or the Irish music. And frankly the food more than anything else. Like shepherd's pie, I cook a lot of that. I still do Irish food. And of course when we go home then we do all that kind of stuff.
HB	Will you, do you make shepherd's pie during the week, or for special occasions?
Maggie Holley	Probably more for special occasions. Now that I've said that, I do it in the winter. You know, it's good, it's kind of comfort food.
HB	Very much so.
Maggie Holley	And that's why I think, too, when I go to the Irish store with the kids, too, they like the Irish candy. And occasionally we go to Eamonn's, I don't know if you know Eamonn's is the fish and chips [restaurant.] They're not great. I mean, it's not as good as the fish and chips at home, but it's still nice to go. So we do that, and occasionally we go to O'Connell's, the one down there [gestures toward King Street]. Again, I'm not—that's okay. But, that kind of thing. And we used to go, too, when they had that other Irish [restaurant], we go to Murphy's occasionally. So we would do that.
<b>BECOMING A CITIZEN 32:06</b>	
HB	Great. So, having been here as long as you have, have you gone through the naturalization process?
Maggie Holley	Yes, I did. Probably I was here maybe ten, probably had my green card for about ten years before I did it. But yes, I did that. I guess here in Arlington [Virginia], I went to Arlington. So that's probably ten, that's probably about twenty years ago now because I've been here thirty years, close to thirty years.
HB	Were there any challenges that you faced coming to the United States before you married William?
Maggie Holley	No. What I did was I came, I went home for about six months after and worked in the local hospital after and then William, he stayed down in Newport News and got a job. And then I came back here and actually I was here probably about five years before we got married. But no, because what I did the hospital that I worked for, they got me a visa to work as a nurse. And then, we just got married and at that point then I got my green card, I guess, after, a short time after getting married I got my green card. And then about ten years after that I applied to be a citizen. So again, I think because, you know, married, William is American, we spoke English, it really was not a problem at

	all. I mean, the only thing I hated about it were you had to go to Immigration and sit, you know, you sat there about four hours waiting to be called. But other than that I never ran into any trouble, they were very nice. I took the exam, you know, the oral exam. I think you take the written exam and then you have an oral. You just go and meet with somebody. I guess that was in Baltimore because we lived in Maryland at the time. And that was it.
HB	What sorts of questions were you asked?
Maggie Holley	For—?
HB	The oral exam.
Maggie Holley	For the exam, was it oral or written? It had to be written. I guess for the oral exam, more was—I'm trying to think. The one that you had to—no, that was written, the one that they ask you all about the history, where you had to learn all that. But I think for the oral exam you had to go and I guess they were more talking about— they needed to ask me any questions about, you know, where do you live, that type of thing, just to make sure you were here. And I think they interviewed William, too. And I know what they did, too, back then they, I think they came and they asked where we lived, asked the neighbors if indeed we were living as husband and wife type of thing. I think they did that. Either they sent a note because a couple of the neighbors told us that. But I think that was more—I think the actual oral, it was more of an interview and the written was the questions where you had to just learn the American history type of thing.
HB	What did you do to prepare for that part of it?
Maggie Holley	I just bought some books and just read the books, and that was all I needed to do. But, as I said, for me, I think, once you speak the language and I think once you're married to an American it makes it a lot easier, too, especially working your way through the system. Because he would come with me, and—yes.
<b>ADOPTING CHILDREN 35:24</b>	
HB	So you lived in Alexandria for a few years before you adopted Mike, correct?
Maggie Holley	Yes. We moved here in [19]94 and we adopted Mike in [19]99 – so five years.
HB	What was that process like?
Maggie Holley	For Mike? It wasn't typical in that we didn't set out to—normally



	<p>what you do when you're adopting, you go ahead and you do all the paperwork and the home visits. You know, the social work and all have to do first. But Mike was actually about twenty-four hours old before we knew anything about Mike, so we had to do it kind of in the reverse. And he was actually born in [Washington] D.C., so we had to live in D.C for six weeks til we got everything before we could bring him home. So, yes, we kind of did it a little different.</p>
HB	<p>What part of D.C. were you living in at that point?</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>We got an apartment in Dupont Circle. It was lovely. I loved it, it was really nice! I spent six weeks because William would be home here as he was working at the time and I just took the time off because I was working then, and we just lived in a little efficiency until we could bring him home, because of—.</p>
HB	<p>And then you mentioned earlier that that was very different from the process of adopting Kate.</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>Well, what we did with Kate, we went through the Barker Foundation, and they kind of do all the work for you. And then you just go. We went to China, and then there's like somebody there to help you facilitate in China, so it really—whereas for Mike we did a lot of the work ourselves.</p>
HB	<p>How long did you stay in China for?</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>We didn't stay that long. We only stayed one week, because Mike was only four, almost five, and he stayed with my husband's parents. So we didn't want to stay too long. And also, Kate was actually born in the city that the American consulate, it's called Guangzhou. For the most part, a lot of parents who adopt, if you go to the other part all over China, you have to go there and then you have to come feed back through Guangzhou because you have to get the visas and everything to the American consulate. But Kate was born there, so we just went to one. So we didn't, we didn't go, we didn't visit a lot of China just because we wanted to get in and out. And we did it in one week, which was very—.</p>
HB	<p>This is a side note, but do you know the spelling of Guangzhou offhand?</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>Oh no. I could look it up, but it's G—it's on the map. It's right in the south, just above Hong Kong. Guangzhou is here and then Hong Kong is here.</p>
HB	<p>And how old was she when you brought her home?</p>

Maggie Holley	We got Kate when she was two.
HB	Were there any adjustments for her?
Maggie Holley	Oh yes, of course. And there still are, which is quite understandable because she spent the first two years of her life in an orphanage. But she's amazing, Kate, she really is. She wasn't talking when she came home. She didn't talk for about six months, but now of course she doesn't stop. She's very—she's a feisty little thing. If you spent two years of your life in an orphanage—she's very feisty! It did take, like I said, but once she started talking she can take care of herself. I think when you, you know, you have to, I guess—that's a good thing if you can take care of yourself for the first two years of your life.
HB	Was there any particular reason that you and William decided to adopt from China?
Maggie Holley	Well, actually, what happened was Mike was about four, maybe three or four, and we decided that it might be good for him to have a sibling. And we went to a meeting, we went to the Barker Foundation out in Vienna [Virginia], and we thought about maybe getting, because they also worked with Guatemala. But they said to get a Guatemalan girl it would take a lot longer. And because of her age and everything, we didn't want to wait. And then they suggested China, and that's why we did China. We were very lucky, because we got Kate—we started the process in June, and the following year in June is when we got her, which was very, very quick. And now, we're very, very lucky because now it's taking three to four years to adopt from China. It's changed; it's slowed down <i>a lot</i> . Just shortly after we got Kate they changed a lot of policies. We were very lucky.
HB	Have you and William adopted any traditions from either China or Guatemala, or tried to make sure that Mike and Kate are still in touch with their home cultures?
Maggie Holley	Yes, we do. Of course, when Mike was younger we were very good about it. There was the Latin American, the LAPA [Latin American Parents Association], there's the Latin American groups that meet, we would go to that. And I was very good at taking him to all the Latin American festivals in D.C., but not as much now just because it's Mike's—Mike doesn't want to. Maybe he will again as he gets a little bit older, but at the moment he doesn't. With Kate again, we started, we were going to start very young with her for Chinese, and then somebody, because she was having trouble a little bit with the language they said wait, and then we have. And that's funny, because

	<p>only the other day she was talking about how she'd like to learn Chinese again, so we probably will. Now unfortunately, if you're going to the public school here, they teach Chinese at GW [George Washington Middle School]. And I know in a lot of the schools they do. But of course the Catholic schools, they just teach Spanish. So it's funny, we talked about it so we might consider it because in Northern Virginia there's quite a few places where you can learn Chinese, so we might do that. Kate's very—she talks a lot about China and she knows a lot about China and she's very interested about it. Mike's not quite as much, but I think that's an age thing. Kate will talk a lot, and we've taken her to some of the Chinese festivals and she loves Chinese food, so that's what we do with Kate.</p>
<p>HB</p>	<p>What other things are your children interested in?</p>
<p>Maggie Holley</p>	<p>Well, they're both doing sports. Mike is a soccer guy, and basketball. Kate's very much, too. She plays soccer, lacrosse, and basketball. I'd like to say they have other—like, we tried Kate with playing piano, she played flute, but she just did it because we wanted her to do it. And then we just stopped because she just wasn't interested. And Mike was never interested. So they're both more active than— they're both more sports than anything else, really. And of course Mike's very interested in his friends, and he's lucky in that a lot of his friends live in the neighborhood that he went to school with at Saint Mary's, and they went to BI [Bishop Ireton] at the same. So he's got some good friends for a long time. And Kate does, too, a little boy that goes to Saint Regis, we carpool with them; they just live around the corner. She's been friends with him for a long time. So that's really—I'd like to say that Mike's more interested in reading. But, you know, they read when they have to, for school and that type of thing, but definitely they're both more outdoorsy.</p>
<p><b>CONCLUDING THOUGHTS 43:11</b></p>	
<p>HB</p>	<p>And I guess to start to wrap up a bit, I know, it seems like especially Irish and British culture is much more accessible in the U.S. in the last couple years, with NBC [National Broadcasting Channel] picking up things like the Premier League [Men's Professional Football Soccer League from England] and Giant [Food Store retail chain].</p>
<p>Maggie Holley</p>	<p>Oh, yes.</p>
<p>HB</p>	<p>—having more food available. Is that something that you've enjoyed or that you've particularly noticed?</p>
<p>Maggie Holley</p>	<p>Well, I do. Mostly we do watch the soccer a lot, and Mike loves the</p>

	<p>British soccer. Of course he does. He watches it about every weekend, we're watching it. So that's, absolutely. And, I have to say, I myself will look at the British comedy, I love the British comedy shows. And that's more available too. You can just turn on the TV and get that, too. But definitely, too, like the Irish food, I do, I love it. I still do like that. And we'll go sometimes if they have something going on, the Irish music at Murphy's or that type of thing. So yes, it is more accessible, I agree.</p>
HB	<p>What—you mentioned that your siblings have all visited you here at one point or another. What have they thought of Alexandria?</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>Oh, they all love Alexandria. Just Alexandria because, I guess—what's not to like about Alexandria? We can walk; we don't even have to ride, we just walk into Old Town, the lovely restaurants, you sit by the water. And I think, probably maybe why I like it so much is too it does remind me of home. Because you know, where I grew up, Kilkenny, is—it looks—and that's what about the towns in Ireland and the towns in England, but in Ireland especially. They all—you walk along the street and the stores are here. And that's why I like Toronto. There's parts of Toronto like that, where you have your flower shop here and then you have this store here. It's not all like, like, when I think of Newport News where we originally was living, they didn't have anything like that. You know, it's all just malls and strip malls and that type of thing. But I mean, Williamsburg did, but I mean, definitely Alexandria—. I think that's why I'm—you know, places like Georgetown [District of Columbia], it's lovely, where you can just walk along the streets. So that part, I guess that reminds me of home a lot.</p>
HB	<p>I can see that.</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>Yes, it's very similar in that respect.</p>
HB	<p>Great. And Maggie, do you have anything else to add that we haven't touched on while we've been speaking so far? I know we've ranged pretty far and wide.</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>I know, yes. No, I did read, let me take a quick look [reaches for question sheet]. No, I think that's it. Don't you think we've covered, I mean, I think we've covered just about everything.</p>
HB	<p>I agree. Well, thank you.</p>
Maggie Holley	<p>Oh, you're very welcome. I hope that helps a little bit.</p>