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NAME OF PERSON INTERVIEWED: GEORGE VISCAROLA
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INTERVIEW DATE: AUGUST 1, 1998
RUNNING TIME: 00:00
INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.
RECORDING ENGINEER:
INTERVIEW LOCATION: DENNIS, MASSACHUSETTS
ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: KIMBERLY MAIER
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: CHARLES MITCHELL, 4/2007

COUNTRY, YEAR: SPAIN, 1937
AGE: 14
PASSAGE ON SS DEGRASSE

PORT OF EMBARKATION: LE HAVRE
OLD COUNTRY RESIDENCE: MORTERA, SPAIN
UNITED STATES RESIDENCE (S): QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS; BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

ORAL HISTORIANS NOTE:

LEVINE: It's August 1st, 1998 and I'm here in, on Cape Cod, and I'm here with George Viscarola, who, and Mrs. Viscarola, Connie Viscarola – his wife is here with us – we're in Dennis, Massachusetts. And Mr. Viscarola came from Spain in 1937 at the age of 14. He is, at the time of the interview, 75 years old, and this is Janet Levine for the National Parks Service.

Okay. If we could start at the beginning and you could say your birthdate and where in Spain you were born.

VISCAROLA: Well, my birthday is March 3rd, 1923, and I was born in a little village by the name of Mortera, M-O-R-T-E-R-A, in the province of Santander, S-A-N-T-E...

C. VISCAROLA: Mm, mm. S-A-N-T-A...

VISCAROLA: S-A-N-T-A-N-D-E-R. Santander. And that's in the northern seacoast of Spain.

LEVINE: And did you stay in Mortera up until you left for the United States?

VISCAROLA: We did stay in Mortera until the age of 9-, age of 14, when we left as a consequence of the Spanish Civil War.

LEVINE: Okay. Let me get your father and mother's name.

VISCAROLA: My father's name was Jesus, J-E-S-U-S.

C. VISCAROLA: Jesús.

VISCAROLA: Jesús in Spanish. And my mother's name was Eleuteria, E-L-E-U-T-E-R-I-A. Eleuteria.

LEVINE: And how about her maiden name?

VISCAROLA: Maiden name, Campo. Eleuteria Campo.

LEVINE: C-O-M-P-O/

VISCAROLA: C-O-M-P-O.

C. VISCAROLA: No. C-A-M...

VISCAROLA: Campo, C-A-M-P-O.

LEVINE: Okay. Great. Now, did you have grandparents?

VISCAROLA: I had a, ah, yes, grandmother, on both sides and I never knew my grandparents, or my grandfathers, at all.

LEVINE: Did you spend time with either grandparent?

VISCAROLA: I spent most of my time with my mother's mother. In, in the ah, homestead where we all lived. The house was hers. My grandmother's house and it was a farming community. It was a very small village. The village was 14, 15 neighbors. Fifteen neighbors.

And it was very small, very congenial. Ahm, it was like I said, farming. And we dedicate our selves to dairy products and ah, and, harvesting. That was about it.

LEVINE: Now, the homestead. Who lived in the homestead?

VISCAROLA: In the homestead, as I remember, lived my grandfather, I mean, I'm sorry, grandmother. My uncle. My mother, and I.

LEVINE: You were an only child?

VISCAROLA: I was the only child until, up 'til the age of ah, when was it, Ephraim?

C. VISCAROLA: '31 he was born.

VISCAROLA: 1931. My brother was born in 1931.

C. VISCAROLA: Almost nine years.

VISCAROLA: Almost nine years after my...

LEVINE: So you were an only child for your first nine years.

VISCAROLA: For the first nine years I was the only child in the homestead.

LEVINE: What did that mean? Were you...?

VISCAROLA: Well it was very, very unusual in the sense, because you're part of a, of a farming community, or farming family, you have your chores, you go and do the work every day with your uncle and tend the animals, the cattle, mostly cattle in this time. And then you go out into the fields to ah, lend a hand whenever you can, you know, as soon as you can practically walk, you start contributing to the well being of the household, really. And ah, I remember going to school of course; school was the prime thing to do. And we had a very nice community school where a few of the neighboring village's children would come in to the central. And the school was segregated, you know. It was boys in one school and the girls went to another school.

LEVINE: Was it a religious school?

VISCAROLA: No. It was a community school, you know. But it was very interesting.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, ah, I guess the other children who were in the school were also helping out on the farm?

VISCAROLA: Oh, like everybody else. Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: And what kinds of things were being grown?

VISCAROLA: Oh, we had corn. And we had beans and beets and primarily, the big, big business was the ah, cattle. Milk. And the hay. The haying period, like now, for example. In July and August was the haying and that was the big bulk of the work.

LEVINE: Did you do haying?

VISCAROLA: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We did. Oh, yeah. And you know, I remember going out with rakes and ah, and picking up the hay and making the haystacks with my uncle and some of the laborers that he had hired to help, because there's only very few of us. But we had ah, twenty, around twenty head of cattle. It was a small farm. Wasn't... And everybody else's farms were small. But there were many. So ah, the milking, the sale of the milk was the major income for us, really. The other, the little vegetable gardens that we had, like beets and beans and potatoes, we just for the sustenance of the household.

LEVINE: I see. Now were you and your family and your community big potato eaters?

VISCAROLA: Ah, I wouldn't call it big potato eaters, but it was our main staple. I mean, potatoes and beans and then of course we had a hog or two that we slaughtered during the holidays, particularly Christmas time. And ah, we all shared, you know.

LEVINE: Tell about slaughtering a hog.

VISCAROLA: Well, I remember my uncle slaughtering the animal and hearing the poor animal screech until he was dead, you know. Which was a very primitive way of doing it.

LEVINE: How did they do it?

VISCAROLA: They slit the throat and then let him bleed to death. I mean it was a, how can I put it. Really. By today's standards it was criminal, but that was, it was an accepted way of doing it.

LEVINE: Did it take a long time?

VISCAROLA: It took, it would take a good ten minutes. Which is a long time. And ah, you know, I remember not wanting to be near it because it was disturbing. As little as I was at the time.

LEVINE: And then what happened, once the animal died?

VISCAROLA: Once the animal died it was a, you know, cut up and ah, everything was saved. The blood was used to make blood sausages and some of the ah, ah, the ah, better cuts of meat were ah, trimmed and put in this big salt bins that we had to preserve it for later use and some of it was given to neighbors or to family, and they would do the same thing. They would put it in this salt containers. Large bins of, how would I call them...

LEVINE: You mean like barrels?

VISCAROLA: No, they were most, oak chests. And they would have them layered there with a big, rough granulated salt and they would put the meat in there and, and use it later on.

LEVINE: How long could it be preserved that way?

VISCAROLA: It could be kept about six, eight months without too much difficulty. And then I remember my grandmother making the ah, blood sausages. You know, that ah, with the help of some of the neighbors. It was more of a sharing type of community than anything else. Because we all depended on each other for survival. And, and, and...

LEVINE: Tell about how the hog would be, what would be the next steps when it was Christmas time?

VISCAROLA: Well, Christmas time was very, I remember the harvesting of, for example, of the corn and having big stacks of corn pile up in, in the barn somewheres and then at Christmas time, they would come, some of the people would come with some of the help that would remain there during the harvest time, would help us husk the corn, you know, and then ah, separating the granules of corn from the ah, cores so we would save the corn and then take it later on. Take it in little sacks to the ah, mills to turn it into flour. So we had a couple of grist mills nearby that we would take it and...

LEVINE: Tell about that.

C: They would, they would grind the ah corn into corn meal and then we would bring it back home and we would use that say ah, either to make

corn bread or to ah, mix it with beets and ah, and ah, turnips and make a gruel like, to give to the animals when the animals were little babies. You wouldn't feed them just anything – you had to give them this particular mixture of food, which was a way of really getting them going into, you know. And of course we like to fatten the little animals into calves because we used to sell them and have an income out of that. But Christmas time was, again, was very ah, close knitted neighborhood where everybody, you went to somebody's home tonight and then tomorrow night you went to somebody else and somebody else would come over to your house. It was a continual exchange of ah, effort so to speak. And we used to have chestnuts and we put 'em, we had a big open fires, you know, that, that's how we cooked. We had an open hearth and we had the chestnuts there. We may have a pot of stew or something. And then my ah, my grandmother would make some ah, something that we called tostadas. A tostada is like French bread type of thing, you know, with egg.

LEVINE: A long...?

VISCAROLA: No, they were just regular slices of French bread that they dipped in egg batter and ah, they would fry it and then they would put honey on it and then let 'em set aside to cool off and oh, that was a big treat, you know? So we had the tostadas and, and, and then of course if the

occasion would ah, make it feasible, they would pass them around, you know, and they had the tostadas and the chestnuts, roasted chestnuts and ah, a few sausages, you know, blood sausages that we had cooked and a glass of wine or things like that. And as little as we were, children drank wine. Because that was the thing that we had.

LEVINE: Was it red or white?

VISCAROLA: Oh, yes. Red wine.

LEVINE: And it grew around there, the grapes?

VISCAROLA: No. We didn't have grapes but somebody else had 'em. So we will have, this was the exchange characteristic of the neighboring towns. Some had the grapes, some others had the honey, so you exchanged. It was sort of a, come to think of it, of a trading society.

LEVINE: Money wasn't the...

VISCAROLA: Money wasn't that important. It really wasn't. We didn't have it to begin with, because what little we had it would come from the sale of milk and the sale of the cattle. Or a calf. Whenever the occasion. And, and, and when the people do, did need money, that's what they

would do. They would sell a cow or a calf or two in order to get the income so they could afford whatever else they may need.

LEVINE: What was the most valuable thing, what were the most valuable things that people had?

VISCAROLA: Animals. Their animals. Their cows. They were it. Everything was done for them and around them. And because they were used as sustenance, really. It was a very simple, basic, and yet very nice, neat, comfortable life. As a matter of fact, sort of jumping ahead a little bit perhaps, ah, like I said, we lived in the household with my grandmother, my uncle, who was the key figure of running of the business, and my mother and I, and later on, my brother. But I remember my dad, leaving the area of the village, in the early twenties to come to the United States to make a living, because he didn't want to be a farmhand, you see. And once he was over here, he would go back. He got involved in the hotel/restaurant business and he was a chef, eventually. A cook and then a chef. And then he will go back ah, after making the tour of New England and working like now, in the summertime, he will work over here on the Cape Cod. He worked in Wayano a few times. The Wyano Club here in Cape Code.

LEVINE: Oh, that's a Cape Cod...

VISCAROLA: That's a Cape Cod resort now, it's still going. And he worked there quite a few times. He worked in Hampton Beach in New Hampshire. And then before leaving the ah, summer circuit, in the Cape, he will go to Florida to Daytona Beach for the winter. But prior to do that, he would take a break of four or five weeks and go to Spain for a few weeks and then go from Spain to Florida. And then in the early spring he will come up to New England again. But I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself.

LEVINE: No, but it's good to know. In other words when you were growing up, most of that time your father was away.

VISCAROLA: Yes.

LEVINE: Just coming back.

VISCAROLA: I barely knew my father when I came over here in 1937. If I had met my father on the street, I probably wouldn't have known him. Oh, I had pictures of him and all that, but you know what I'm saying. Oh, yeah. My father was completely out of my life.

LEVINE: Did he write letters to you and your mother and tell you things about the United States that you think you knew?

VISCAROLA: I'm sure he must have. But I don't remember it Janet. I don't remember. He must have, because he wrote often. Okay. And like I said, he will come by just about oh, every year, year and a half, you know. But I remember, what I was leading to, is I remember my father wanting to bring my mother into United States afterwards, and because we were so comfortable in our little community, my mother said, no! Why go to a strange land where I don't know the people, I don't know the language, I don't know anybody. Well, of course, bear in mind my father used to send over a few dollars, five dollars, ten dollars a month was a huge amount of money.

LEVINE: So you actually were pretty well off by the standards.

VISCAROLA: Oh, quite well off. Quite well off. My mother managed to have a ah, servant for her to take care of my, brother that came in 1931, later on. And ah, she man-, we managed. We lived well, by other standards. So much so that eventually, when my grandmother died, my father bought the house and ah, that was, that was a really uncommon thing to do. For him to, for anyone in the area to own their own home was very uncommon. Cause most of the houses were owned by, and the

land, by large, wealthy landlords. But we were exceptional. All our land was our own and the house was our own. So you can imagine, Janet, how different, if you can use that expression, we were.

LEVINE: Now, how about your uncle? What kind of a figure was he?

VISCAROLA: My uncle was my father for me.

LEVINE: Yeah. Tell about him. What was his name, first of all?

VISCAROLA: Ramon. Raymond. Ramon. R-A-M-O-N. Ramon. A nice guy. A nice guy. And ah, he stayed in the homestead until much, much later he married, then of course he went on his own. Obviously. But my, my uncle was my father to me.

LEVINE: What kind of a person was he? Can you remember any experiences with him as a boy growing up?

VISCAROLA: He was very firm and stern, like most people there. You have to remember there was a society that it was based on hard work. Really. And (stammers) to, say again that the farm survived because you work hard. And because your animals were kept healthy and in good shape. And everything evolved around that particular sphere. Really. And by

my, he was the head of the household. He managed all the business. He decided what was to be sold and what not to be sold, what was to be kept. How many ah, acres of land we were to, to cultivate for corn or hay or beets or beans or whatever. But he was the key figure. He was the one that run. And because he was the key figure, he was outdoors all the time. We only saw him when he came to, to supper.

LEVINE: And how did he treat you?

VISCAROLA: Oh, he treated me very well. He treated me well. But you see, children, children in those days that there were a means of helping the household. And he would say to me, hey Gorgorio, or Gorgorio do that. And that was it. You didn't have that ah, tender, loving...

LEVINE: Encouraging...

VISCAROLA: Care. No. And you knew that you had to go to school. You went to school. You know, Monday through Thursday noontime. And Thursday afternoons were free. We didn't go to school Thursday afternoons. But we went to school Saturday morning.

LEVINE: Did you go Fridays?

VISCAROLA: Oh, yes. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, half a day Thursday and Friday. And half a day Saturday.

LEVINE: Now in school, did you learn anything relative to the kind of farm work you were doing?

VISCAROLA: Strangely enough, no. That came by osmosis. And we had, I remember, we had a wonderful, wonderful teacher. Emilio. E-M-I-L-I-O. Emilio. I remember him as if it was yesterday. He was very instrumental in my getting any knowledge about anything, really. But we were all in one classroom.

LEVINE: With all the grades.

VISCAROLA: With all the other grades. And ah, he was an exceptional teacher because he taught us everything from ah, the three basic R's. Writing, reading and arithmetic. And astronomy, geometry, geology. I used to be walking with him on the way home and he would be talking about the atmosphere, the air and the environment, and all those things. And really about the farm. Strangely enough.

LEVINE: And yet everyone else probably wasn't talking about those things.

VISCAROLA: Well, that's it. (excitedly) And you know, Janet. One strange thing about it. Because we were all in a collective environment, you learn by hearing the other grown-up children. You know, I remember trying to read the ah, the tables, you know, multiplication tables, for example. And meanwhile, I could hear the other children next to me reading some of the classics, like Don Quixote, for example. And that kind of got your interest going.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. Because you were all together.

VISCAROLA: Because you were all together. And although you may have had a lesson by the teacher to tell you, okay, Gorgorio, you're gonna copy this paragraph from this book, and you'd be writing. But meanwhile you're, you're attention wasn't in writing, you attention was in listening to somebody else doing some thing more important than you were.

LEVINE: Huh.

VISCAROLA: So you see.

LEVINE: So that, do you think that was an advantage then?

VISCAROLA: I thought it was a tremendous advantage of teaching. And then you know, I remember the teacher having one of the senior, if I could use that name, senior boys in the classroom, he says, would you mind taking three or four of the little fellows and taking them outside. And we used to go outside, he says, and teach them the ah, the multiplication of two, for example, table. Or the three table, the four table. And that boy would take us out and says, okay. And the spelling the same way. And ah, I remember, I remember the lessons were very important. The home lessons. You were assigned a home lesson and you had to do it. You had to do it. And then, if for example, if you were ah, told to do a division ah, exercise, then you had to go up in front of the class the following day and put it on the board. And do it on the board.

LEVINE: Did everyone do it?

VISCAROLA: Everyone had to do it. Everybody had to take turns at it.

LEVINE: But people didn't try not to do it?

VISCAROLA: Oh, no. You had to do it. If you didn't do it, then you had to, you had to take it home with you again until you learned that particular. And I remember geography for example. In Spain, coincidentally at that

time had forty-nine provinces, for example. And I remember, I said, okay, this month or this week or whatever; we're going to learn the geography of Spain's provinces. And ah, you had to learn them, and then you get up in front of the class with your back against the map and name each and every one of them and their capitals and then of course, consequently, their rivers and their main mountains and things of that nature. But you learned. And once you learn it, you, it stay with you. It was a nice way of doing it, I think.

LEVINE: Did you also have to learn poems and things?

VISCAROLA: Yes, we did.

LEVINE: And recite them?

VISCAROLA: And recite them.

LEVINE: Wow.

VISCAROLA: Oh, ya.

LEVINE: Now, can you remember any of those?

VISCAROLA: Oh, god. I don't, I don't remember. I remember studying the poem by the, The Bells of San Juan. Las Campanas de San Juan. And it was a very lovely poem. And I remember getting up in front of the class and reciting it. But everything was, really open. Ah, we had the little slate, little slate squares that we used to take home to do our problems and to do our handwriting. Handwriting was a very ah, difficult task, because they taught you the Palmer method. And you had to sit a particular way. You had to hold your pen a particular way and you had the little pens and the inkwells, okay. And you had to buy those. Those were your own. And ah, and you had to do the penmanship. Penmanship had to be so. And the teacher will walk around once in a while and he'll creep behind you and if you weren't holding your pen right, he'll smack you right on your hand with a ruler. You know, he'll hit you right with it. And ah, if you misbehave, for example, one of the ah, ah, disciplines that you had to learn is obedience. And if you misbehave, by some you know, did something wrong, we used to have slingshots, you know, boys carry the slingshots because we thought the slingshot was a nice thing for boys to do and go hunting birds and whatever. And if he caught you with a slingshot, you were in trouble. So he would take you in, in front of the class and ah, have you hold your hand with your fingers closed like that and hit the top of the fingers with a ruler.

LEVINE: Hm.

VISCAROLA: So discipline was ah, was cruel at times. It was cruel.

LEVINE: But everybody thought that the teacher should be doing that.

VISCAROLA: Oh, yes. That was an, an acceptable way of, you know, it was part of our well-being. Part of the society, I think. And ah, but we learned. And what little we learned, we learned well.

LEVINE: Who else were the leaders? Was the teacher considered a very important person?

VISCAROLA: Yes. Ya. In the, in that community you have to consider the political aspects of the society in many ways because the teacher was very, very important, key person. The ah, priest was a very significant person.

LEVINE: Was everyone Roman Catholic?

VISCAROLA: 99 ½ percent were Roman Catholic and I'll come to that later on, in a little while, except my mother. Okay? Except my mother. But the teacher, yes, to stay within that scope. The teacher was a very important person.

LEVINE: And the priest and who else?

VISCAROLA: The priest was a very important figure and a very dominating figure in the community.

LEVINE: In what way did the priest...?

VISCAROLA: In the fact that if you didn't go to church, you were a w-e-l-l, a persona non grata type of thing. You weren't looked upon very favorably. As in, how come you didn't go to church today? And some people went to church more than three or four times a week, you know. And ah, because, in some of the farm people contributed part of being, or belonging to the church was you had to bring to the church some of the products from your farm. Corn or a chicken or whatever, to the priest, you know. So the priest was a very, very important figure. It just happened that in our community, in our county where there were quite a few villages, we had some wealthy families. Which is possibly characteristic of a lot of communities anywhere. But we had some very, very wealthy families. And they were the ones that owned the land and the houses that most of the farmers used. And of course, they were in the church because they are the ones that really, really kept the church alive, obviously. But the priest was a very, domineering, I

would use the word domineering figure in the community. And ah, you were, you were an outcast if you didn't go to church, really.

LEVINE: Did you have a personal relationship with the priest? In other words is he somebody you ever spoke with?

VISCAROLA: Oh, yeah. You spoke to him. As a matter of fact, my dad used to play handball with the priest in the Sunday afternoons after my dad had been an alter boy several times for a little period of time, as I understand. I don't remember that too well, but the priest was a, oh yeah, he intermingled with the people very nicely and he would come by, taking his daily walks and things like that, and talk to the people and say, hello Ramon, or hello, Gorgorio. Oh, yeah. But the thing is that ah, if, and when, you had given indications that ahm, that ah, you didn't got to church, you know, things didn't settle right. And as a matter of fact, imagine, my dad had been an alter boy and something really turned him against the church. Maybe because of the...

END TAPE ONE SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE ONE SIDE B

LEVINE: Now, we're on side B of tape one and I, just if you could backtrack a little, a tiny bit that we might have missed on the end of that side.

VISCAROLA: Something turned my father against the church. You know, whether it was because of the ah, overwhelming influence or whatever, that, he just turned against it. So much so that um, I remember an incidence when my brother was born in 1931, and the, you had to give the priest so much money to baptize an infant. It was a standard routine. My father refused. So my, my brother was almost, I don't know, a year, two years old and he hadn't been baptized. And it was a big thing about it. And my father simply because of, it was a thing (laughing) with him, it was a principle. He said, hey, if we are going to be Christians then you just baptize him. Money has nothing to do with it. You know?

LEVINE: Did that make a difference in how you were treated?

VISCAROLA: That was the beginning of a thing with my parents. My father first, and then my mother later on. And when things began to ah, to evolve and then we, things in Spain began to change quite a bit, ah, in 1931, I think, the King of Spain was ah, thrown out of the country and then things began to develop ah, politically. In 1930, latter part of 1931, I think it was, I may not be right on this, Spain had the first constitutional government in the country. Prior to that it had been a dictatorship and the kings, and what have you. But in 1931, King

Alfonso was thrown out of Spain and the political theater began to change quite a bit. And then of course, eventually, the Spanish Civil War.

LEVINE: Now how did the change of the king being thrown out and all that, how did it trickle down to your little village?

VISCAROLA: Well it, like any-, it didn't affect us too much, in the sense that we were quite autonomous in the sense of the word, you know? But then of course, you have some strings to the major, you know, that the civil characteristics of the taxes and your land and things like that begin to change. Ah, we didn't care too much who was in power, whether it was the king or the dictator or whatever. Because it didn't really affect you. But to some degree, yes. The price of milk for example, had to, but, was influenced as a consequence of the political upheaval. And of course that affects you eventually.

LEVINE: And how about, you mentioned like the teacher was a key figure and the priest was a key figure. Was there a political key figure?

VISCAROLA: No. No. Not until much, much, much later. That all changed again. We are jumping a great deal. But in 1936 when the Spanish Civil War really broke out as a consequence of unrest in the mining fields in

Asturias, which is a northwestern region of Spain. That's a huge mining area. And the poor miners had gone on strike and things to real bad ah, to a degree that ah, the government sent some ah, for some military troops that came in from Morocco, because you have to remember that Spain had a possession of northern Morocco at that time, and that was a Spanish possession where most of the military bases were centered. And I remember in 1936, early in 1936 there was a big strike in Asturias and they sent the Moor brigades and they slaughtered supposedly hundreds of miners. And that really set the pace for a lot of political upheaval. Then ah, Spanish Civil War got started. And that was very traumatic.

LEVINE: So the people in your town were sympathetic to the miners?

VISCAROLA: Like I said, ninety percent of the people being catholic, they were sympathetic with the monarchy, all right? The king. And of course, don't forget the king was mainly supported by the wealthy people. The wealthy people of, those wealthy people were wealthy primarily because going back into history, their predecessors had been named dukes or lords or princes because they had served the king and they had been granted these huge tracts of land. So one hand washed the other, you see. So that's where the big political... So going back to the people, the people went along with the tide. But ah, for the few

like my father, that ah, possibly because he had been in the United States and had known the other side of the coin so to speak, ah, he said, hey, look, we don't have to be that way. But um, ninety, yes, the people, when the Spanish Civil War broke out for example, as we know General Franco, who was pro-church, pro-Fascism, on the far right, and then you had the civil, the first constitutional government that Spain has had up to that time was the ah, so-called civil government of the country, that kind of took a very definite separation of ideals. The church and the state, you see. The church being controlled by the wealthy, being the dominant segment of society. Because if you didn't go to church, you were just looked upon as a very, very dubious character. They just didn't think that you were a good person. Quote, unquote. So then it began that ah, that the church was on one side, the government was on the other. And this led to a very, very traumatic civil war. Which lasted three years.

LEVINE: Could you recount how the build up toward the civil war was in your experience?

VISCAROLA: Oh, yes. There was a tremendous amount of unemployment. Like I said, let's go back to the miners in the province of Asturias. They wanted more money. And the government at that time said, no, you're not going to have it. So one thing led to another, says, well, what we

can't get by one way we're going get it by force. So that's when they sent the Moors to Asturias and they slaughtered the miners, you know, and that really got the whole country into a very bad state. Very bad taste for the whole country. And then, that really began to get people to think in terms of ah, hey! What's right and what's left? And what's right and what's wrong? Began to polarize the people essentially, is what did it. And ah, they said either you do as we tell you, or you're not going to do it. That kind of, the Spaniards are very individualistic person, per se.

LEVINE: Is that a characteristic?

VISCAROLA: That is very characteristic of the Spaniard. Very individualistic. And I don't know whether it's more so than anybody else. But at that time, yes. So the ah, the atrocities in Asturias were quite significant in the fact that that was the key that set the Spanish civil war in motion. That lasted three years.

LEVINE: Now, when did it start affecting your little community?

VISCAROLA: Almost immediately, because, you know, as small as the community as we were, we weren't totally isolated from the world. It was absolutely ridiculous. We depended on the communications and

transportation and the foods that we could grow on the farm, we had to... But then, the thing is that the whole country became polarized. The pros and those against. The pro-government, the pro-church. The church obviously, Spain being a very religious country and the church was very dominant. And because back from, you know, history, Spain has always been a very catholic country. But because they seem to be so over-powering, over-controlling, ah, you know, like I remember in my grandmother's house, if you didn't go to church, you weren't looked on as a very nice person because that was part of society. Ninety-nine and point nine percent of Spaniards were catholic. Still are, I'm sure. You know? But ah, in, in, in our society, my father I think was very instrumental in the fact that he didn't want to stay in the farm. From the very beginning, he took it upon himself to say, this is not the life for me. So he came into, into America, immigrated to America, and he would go back and forth, you know...

LEVINE: More than once a year?

VISCAROLA: Just about every once every year and a half, sometimes two years. Cause I remember my father coming home, after I was born obviously, and then coming to the house and I hardly knew him. Who's he?

LEVINE: What was he like on those visits that you recall?

VISCAROLA: Well, he was so much so, I remember calling him Jesús. My mother, my father's name was Jesus, Jesús, and I would refer him to as Jesús. I didn't call him Dad or Pa or whatever, Jesús. Until he told me, you know, I'm your father. But um, going back to, to...

LEVINE: To the war and the build up of the Civil War and how it came to manifest itself in your little community.

VISCAROLA: Well that's the whole thing. Things got to a point that ah, people were sort of polarized. The church, that was overwhelmingly, extremely powerful – obviously – it's a Catholic country. And then the civil government that found that things were getting from bad to worse. They just couldn't control anything. And so, to us, thank god we had the farm. We had our crops and we lived pretty well and we had ah, we could slaughter an animal and feed ourselves pretty well. But there are some basics that you just can't do without. So eventually the war got to everybody. And ah, things got to a point that ah, it became extremely difficult. And then the outbreak of the Civil War in Spain was when Franco, who was a general serving in the army in northern Africa, he ah, made the ah, assault onto the government and started taking over. So this polarized the whole Spanish civilization, Spanish country. And it became a very, very vicious thing, because neighbors

that didn't like other neighbors, they used that as an excuse, you see. And if you went to church you were all right. If you didn't go to church you were one of the black... whatever, you know.

LEVINE: Did you actually see fighting?

VISCAROLA: No. We saw a great deal of military activity in our community because as I, our, because we, not being churchgoers, to a degree, because you see, my father hadn't been in the United States. When he was a young man he came to the United States, early in his life, you know. And he had seen what the other world was like. So he recognized the fact that that was not really the best way of, to live. So ah, when my father would come home and he would tell us all about it, he'd say, well, there's another world out there that is totally different. And it's not just going to church every other day or, or being what the priest tells you to do. There's something else here so to speak. So the people became polarized. So much so that within families they became polarized. And ah, my mother, being a very vocal person by nature, you know, she became very anti-church type of thing. And ah, things got bad. Cause ah, we were isolated in the Spanish peninsula. We were isolated up in the little pocket in the northern part, and we were cut off from the rest of the so-called Spanish civil government. So ah, things got real nasty. Real nasty. Neighbor against neighbor.

If I didn't like you for whatever reason you had done two, three, four years ago, this was my chance of getting even with you.

LEVINE: And what would you do?

VISCAROLA: Well, you know. What would you do? You would call up the authorities, the militia in those days, you know. When the Spanish Civil War broke out, all of a sudden everything became civil-, I mean militarized. And they would go say ah, you know, Miss So and So, she's a... I don't like what she's doing. You were taken and interrogated and questioned. This polarized the people against people quite often. I had nephews, cousins that ah, it took years afterwards that we didn't even talk to each other because of that. It became a very, extremely personal vendetta. Yeah! Oh, sure. If you had done something in the past that I didn't care what you had done, this was my time to get even.

LEVINE: Now did people try to get even with your mother and father since they were being anti-church?

VISCAROLA: Well, not as much as possibly because something that they had done, but primarily because my father, having been to America and having come back and forth several times, there was kind of a dislike about

oh, look at those. Not only they don't go to church, they have their own home. They own their own land. You know? They ah, sort of nose up in the air type of thing. So that kind of polarized us a little bit really. But things got really, really nasty because in the Civil War if you have any dislikes for anything or anybody this is the time that you get even. And the Spaniard is a very emotional individual. And that was the time to get even. And a lot of them did. (pauses, softly) A lot of them did.

VISCAROLA: So it kind of, it was very fortunate for us that my father was here when this conflict broke. So ah, things got worse and worse and ah, our household, our homestead was used as sort of a militia outpost, from where they really operated. And kept an eye on all the other farms and communities and all that. So because my father had been over here and ah, I think that had an influence into my mother, our household, that ah, there were other things in this world besides, you know, going to church every day, or every afternoon and all day Sunday. You know, so they looked upon us as sort of ah, you know, not a very likeable family.

LEVINE: I see. Now when you say the militia used your homestead as a base, were these people coming from outside of the community?

VISCAROLA: The neighboring towns and communities, they took it upon themselves to say, hey, you know, I'm going to join this group that's gonna keep an eye on everybody. There was no organized per-se, militia type of thing. Everybody acted as a very anarchistic type of a thing. Really.

LEVINE: Now were both sides at that point becoming militaristic?

VISCAROLA: Very polarized.

LEVINE: So there were going to be fighters on both sides.

VISCAROLA: Oh, yes indeed. Yes, indeed. I recall very, very early, in 1936 and at the beginning, oh my goodness, the ah, the ah militia men coming over and they stayed in our house and because they used our house we were sort of black sheep of the community because 99% of them were Catholics and they went to church and they did what the priest did. And this was the church versus the civil government, which was then, so this became a very distinctive polarization. Those pro-church goers, pro-government sympathizers. So my father having been over here, he was very liberal man. He knew what the other world was like. So um, ah, he didn't think that the church was the right, you know, it was too powerful, too instrumental, too domineering. If you didn't go to church you weren't the right person. You know, my father had seen

the light. So lo and behold, we were sort of the ah, black sheep of the neighborhood, you see.

LEVINE: Now how about you? How old were you?

VISCAROLA: I was fourteen at the time.

LEVINE: You were fourteen. Did you get drawn in, in any way?

VISCAROLA: No. We were just playing. But we did see a lot of ah, activity in the, the area, you know. The bombing of our city which was nearby. Santander, just about eleven miles away. A lot of military activity. And we could see the freight trains and the passenger trains carrying the ah, the militia to the fronts and things like that. So it became very, very... It became a very vicious war because war, from my point of thinking, war, when you're fighting another country, is totally different than having a civil war. A civil war, you don't even know who your enemy is. Ever.

LEVINE: Do you think having lived through that experience of a civil war, do you think that made a difference in how you think about things?

VISCAROLA: Perhaps. Perhaps.

LEVINE: How do you think it affected you?

VISCAROLA: I don't know. It's hard to say, it's hard to say. Cause I was a young fellow. You know, I was only fourteen at the time. But ah, I don't know whether it had an influence on me or not, really. But all I can say is a very vicious thing. Because you don't know, you don't know who your enemy is. You don't know who's coming to your house and what he's gonna do, if anything, really. And thank god that we had the farm and we had our own way of growing things so we could eat. You know, we can slaughter an animal and eat. But some of the other people had it very, very hard. Very difficult.

LEVINE: Now was it the Spanish Civil War that decided your mother that it was actually better to go to the United States?

VISCAROLA: Well, it got to be so, as we were saying, ah, if you didn't go to church, you were an enemy of society. I mean the church was very domineering in Spain, then, even now to some degrees. But more so in then. So, from early days, my mother refused to go to church. So she was an outcast. And she was a black sheep. So when this thing broke, and thank god we were in sort of the ah, government side against the Franco side, you know, Franco namely the church, ah, so

we were all right until things began to Franco's receiving assistance from Hitler and Mussolini and all the other countries and began to ah, overpower the government side. So it came time that my mother had to leave.

LEVINE: Was she, was there something specific that happened?

VISCAROLA: The fact that you were anti-religious. That was sufficient to name you ah, sort of a persona non grata. Okay.

LEVINE: I see. And was it difficult for her to get out?

VISCAROLA: Well, it was, it wasn't, yes and no. It wasn't the fact that we were completely isolated, surrounded from all sides. The only way for us to exit were through the seaport of Santander. Which was a major city nearby, you know. And evacuate to ah, by boat to France. Which was the nearest one. So when things got real, real bad, we evacuated to France and ah, my, thank god, my father was here. So we...

LEVINE: Had your father become a citizen?

VISCAROLA: Yes. Thank god for that. So my father, you know, in his back and forth, he saw the daylight very early in his life, my father. He says,

Spain is not for me. He says. And he wanted, he wanted to bring my mother as I understand it, to the States. My mother says, hey, what for? I got everything I wanted. He would send two, three dollars a month. We lived like kings over there by comparison to the other poor peasants, no? We had our own home. Our own land, which very, very few people -- I don't know of anybody that owned their own home and land. We were very, very few. Except the wealthy landlords that owned everything.

LEVINE: Well it must have been that your mother had a spunkier side to her. She took a stand apparently, against the church.

VISCAROLA: Well, yes. Yah. Thinking back. Yes. She did. But I think she was greatly influenced by my father. Really. My father having been to the States, he really saw what the other world was like.

LEVINE: Now had your mother and father's families been in that part of Spain before that? Their parents?

VISCAROLA: All in that community.

LEVINE: For generations.

VISCAROLA: Oh, yes. For as far back as I can remember. Just local people. Local farming people. Yeah. So um, when things got bad we ah, we had a very good friend of ours who was a mayor of a little village nearby and he came over one day, I remember, in a car. Very few people had cars, you know, but he was a mayor. He had a car. So he came over and says, you know, you people have to leave. What do you mean, leave? As I understand it. Well, he says, the ah, Franco's forces have taken the ah, Bilbao, you know, which was the largest, Bilbao and says they'll be here in short time. I mean, this was overnight decision. So my mother picked my mother and I and we went with the rest of the refugees and we went to Santander which was the seaport nearby. And there were three cargo ships there that had come in with coal, or, I think it was, I think it was coal, and we left.

LEVINE: In other words, he was telling you troops would be coming into your town and you would be killed.

VISCAROLA: Oh, yeah. And my mother was, because my mother became very outspoken during the Civil War. She was really very, very outspoken.

LEVINE: Did she speak publicly?

VISCAROLA: No. But she let it know that she would point the fingers and say you, you and you. And the militia would come over and take you and you and you. And god knows what happened to them. The Civil War, if there's anything that is really, really nasty about a civil war is that you use that as an excuse for your...

LEVINE: Vendettas.

VISCAROLA: Inner emotions.

LEVINE: Right.

VISCAROLA: And if you didn't like your neighbor for whatever, ah, your neighbor's cow kick a bucket of milk in the barn, that was a time to get even. I mean silly things, really. And um, we had to leave. My mother wouldn't have survived at all.

LEVINE: Now, did you leave with many other people?

VISCAROLA: We left with three other ships.

LEVINE: No. Leaving your little town, were there others leaving at the same time?

VISCAROLA: In our town, just my mother and my brother and I.

LEVINE: Oh, and how did you leave? Do you remember departing?

VISCAROLA: I remember taking the train to the seaport of Santander. Early in the morning and I remember getting aboard somewhere around noontime. I don't remember much after that. I know that we, we reached St. Nazaire, France, days later. I understand that the two other ships, or one other ship didn't make it. It was captured.

LEVINE: Wow. Now do you remember that being aboard the ship?

VISCAROLA: Oh, I remember being aboard the ship. Miserable. Oh, yeah!

LEVINE: I didn't have a name, the ship that you were on?

VISCAROLA: I'm sure it did have, but I don't recall it. I don't recall it.

LEVINE: What was so miserable about it?

VISCAROLA: Well, there were so many of us in there because all the refugees from the towns that had been evacuated were there and the ah, forces,

Franco's forces had taken over the ah, Basque area of northeastern Spain, close the French frontier. Those were to go first. And the thing that really, really help us evacuate, because they wouldn't only evacuate anybody, they would only evacuate the Basque people first. And our name is Basque.

LEVINE: Oh!

VISCAROLA: Viscarolasaga is the real name. All right? So lo and behold, that was our salvation. The name saved us, you know? So they said, all the people from the Vasque, I'm sorry, Basque countries, have priority in evacuating.

LEVINE: Now, who said that?

VISCAROLA: Well, the local authorities.

LEVINE: I see. Cause they were Basque.

VISCAROLA: So we were Basque. What else could be more logical? So because we, my mother had also some influence in the ah, people in the village, in the government...

END TAPE ONE, SIDE B

BEGIN TAPE TWO, SIDE A

LEVINE: Okay. Now this is tape two. And I'm speaking with George Viscarola, and we are talking about ah, being a refugee and leaving Spain during the Spanish Civil War.

VISCAROLA: That's correct. .

LEVINE: Good.

VISCAROLA: That's correct. So I remember leaving. There were three ships all told. You know. And all the refugees from the Basque regions, and because our name is Basque, we were obviously...

LEVINE: Chosen.

VISCAROLA: Chosen to leave. Otherwise we wouldn't have left. But I remember, I don't remember too much about the trip. I know it was very, very difficult. And I don't even know how long it took from Santander to ah, St. Nazaire, where the ship finally landed. It might have been two days, might have been three days, but I don't think it might have been

more than that. But there was almost three thousand of us on board. I mean, it was loaded. I mean, we had to leave.

LEVINE: So it was like steerage, going...

VISCAROLA: Oh, no question about it. Oh, ya. Really. And ah, you know, we, my mother, I remember she just picked up a couple of blankets and that's all we had to, to take with us. You know. Because things got very, very difficult. Very difficult.

LEVINE: Now, you were fourteen and your brother was about four?

VISCAROLA: No. My brother was nine years younger than I.

LEVINE: So he was five.

VISCAROLA: Five. Ya. Really. So we landed in St. Nazaire in France, and of course ah, through the process and as soon as my mother got into ah, into solid ground again she contacted my, my father. She had sent word by wireless just before departing the village that we were leaving with destination unknown. My father didn't know where we were, really. But when we got to France of course, she contacted my father through the local authorities. Then my father began the process of

getting to, papers and documents ready. And I remember, it was very difficult in France with so many people. So many Spanish refugees from all over, you know, really. It was very difficult. And they treat us very badly in France.

LEVINE: Really? In what ways?

VISCAROLA: Well, we were trash.

LEVINE: Ah. Mm, hm.

VISCAROLA: Left over spoils from the Spanish Civil War.

LEVINE: I see. Now did it take a while for your father to get the paperwork?

VISCAROLA: Well, I think it was July when we left, latter part of July, when we left Spain, and we departed Le Havre ah, Sept-, October 7, I think it was.

LEVINE: So three months in that.

VISCAROLA: So we spent quite a while in France and we were looked upon as, the refugees. You know, trash.

LEVINE: Were you living in an area?

VISCAROLA: We were, I remember living in certain stages, various, three or four different places in France. And I remember the last one we were at, it was a converted jail. An old jailhouse. There must have been at least a thousand people in there.

LEVINE: So in other words, the French had set up places.

VISCAROLA: For the refugees. Oh, yes. Oh, ya.

LEVINE: And you were contained.

VISCAROLA: We were contained within a particular group of refugees in different parts of France. But as soon as my mother got in contact with my dad, who, fortunately, was here, then things began to really evolve to the ah, point that um, we could get out of the concentration camp that, as we called them, and they were. Sort of. And then we ah, we went to Le Havre, in France, and we stayed with a family in Le Havre while the papers, documents and my father got things going. One thing that I, that was very, very, very instrumental on our quick process that, my brother was an American citizen. Because he was born while my

father had become an American citizen. Where I wasn't. You see. So here's a family that has an American born child...

LEVINE: And an American citizen for a father.

VISCAROLA: So we were expedited in the quickest possible way through the American consul and through the French authorities and all that. So we stayed with a couple of families in Le Havre for a while. My mother help in the, one had a restaurant and my mother helped a little bit in the restaurant while the documents and all the preparations got going.

LEVINE: Ah. Do you remember anything about those families and staying with them?

VISCAROLA: Vaguely. Ya. They were Spanish families. Lo and behold.

LEVINE: Spanish families that had a restaurant in France.

VISCAROLA: They had a restaurant so they were established their businesses or families in France. And they were very, very nice to us. Very nice. And ahm, they ah, they helped us an awful lot. They really do. I wish I could remember them now. But I just don't, you know.

LEVINE: How did you feel? Can you recall as a fourteen year old how you felt?

VISCAROLA: You know, you're very resilient when you're young. You know, so things, I'm sure thinking back on the hardships that my mother had to go through are unbearable. So what, so you have something to sit on and, and eat at the tables. So what else is new? You don't, you couldn't care less, really. I remember the bombings in the little city when we were in the village and all that, and the aircraft coming over and the militia coming by and people taken out and being executed and all those things, but (stammering) you become impervious to those things.

LEVINE: I mean, was that the first time you had been out of your little community?

VISCAROLA: Yeah.

LEVINE: So that must have been a shock all by itself.

VISCAROLA: Oh, quite an experience. And yet it might have been good because then you, you, you, you are not really ah, aware of anything else. You are in your little cocoon and you go in your own little way and, and,

and nothing else matters because you don't know anything else, really. We were farm people to begin with, and ah, something else didn't exist. That's it.

LEVINE: But you know, for the French to treat the refugees poorly – they were Basque and Basque people are part French isn't that true?

VISCAROLA: Yes. A small region of southern France, but just the same the French people, as far as I can remember, they were very cruel. Very cruel. Even to this day, I, I, don't, you know, and this is silly to say it. I don't have much sympathy for. But ah, they and some, some of them, some of them were very nice but by large, by far, we had gone through so much. It's easy to talk about it, it's another thing to experience it, and we had gone through an awful lot. So we were delighted to get on the DeGrasse, the ship.

LEVINE: In Le Havre.

VISCAROLA: And sail to good old USA.

LEVINE: So what was that like on the DeGrasse?

VISCAROLA: Tremendous. Life on DeGrasse was, you know, we were so saturated with what we had gone through, that ah, nothing mattered. We were going to America. Beautiful. It took us ten days to come over.

LEVINE: Do you remember, did anything happen aboard ship?

VISCAROLA: I can't remember a thing about it. I can't remember anything about that trip.

LEVINE: You just wanted to get here. And then what happened? Do you remember coming into the New York Harbor?

VISCAROLA: I remember coming into New York Harbor and I remember a doctor on board the ship trying... I had an infection in my forehead, for whatever reason. I don't know what it was. It was like a pimple. A large pimple. And the doctor on the ship didn't like it. He tried to scrape it, to clean it – all that. So when we landed in New York, the doctors the doctors looked at it, and apparently they, this guy has an infection of some sort. So...

LEVINE: And by the way, was it a refugee ship?

VISCAROLA: No. It was the ah, the DeGrasse. SS ship DeGrasse.

LEVINE: Oh, right. Of course. Now, were you in the steerage? Were you down in the bottom of the ship, or do you remember?

VISCAROLA: I know it was third class.

LEVINE: Third class.

VISCAROLA: I know it was third class.

LEVINE: So you would have gone to Ellis Island anyway, but this doctor thought that there was something...

VISCAROLA: But you see, it was very, very interesting because my brother was an American citizen. So he couldn't stay behind by himself, so he had to have his mother with him. So they were, they were lucky because they came in and they went through the proper proceeding, or procedures in New York, but meanwhile, my infection was questionable, you know? So I was detained in Ellis Island. I don't know how long.

LEVINE: I think you said...

VISCAROLA: Seven or eleven days or something.

LEVINE: Well, now, what do you remember about Ellis Island in the end?

VISCAROLA: Oh, it was a great place. I remember ah, going through the processing there. And then I remember ah, being in the Ellis Island and ah, ah, being served cold milk. Cold milk, you know, for the first time! Because in France, even in France they give you warm milk with the coffee or whatever. But cold milk and, and, and those things do you know, some kind of shredded stuff. Turned out to be corn flakes, you know. I had never had corn flakes. It was quite an experience. And then they had some people from Cuba that I could really relate to, communicate, language wise. Because the language became a barrier.

LEVINE: By any chance were some of the people you encountered there stow-aways from Cuba?

VISCAROLA: I don't recall.

LEVINE: Okay.

VISCAROLA: I don't recall.

LEVINE: Maybe they were just immigrating the same way you were.

VISCAROLA: I don't know the reason for them being there, you know. It never came about, no more than they ask me why are you here. I remember ah, being with them, going to the dining room with them and eating all the strange foods that I had never seen before, you know, corn flakes, for example (laughing), things like that. But it was a matter of the doctors determining what my infection was all about.

LEVINE: So in other words you were not put in a hospital on Ellis Island. You were with everyone else but they kept a watch on your, on your...

VISCAROLA: Yes. And I remember the nurses coming over every morning and cleaning it, you know, with alcohol and all that and tending it. And giving us a shower and a bath, you know, and I remember the nurse ah, the nurse says, now hear. You can use the rest of your body, wipe your, wash your private parts with this, you know. I remember that very distinctly.

LEVINE: Now, were you treated nicely?

VISCAROLA: Oh ya. We had all the food in the world that we wanted, whereas before we hadn't had what we really wanted, you know. And new foods too. You know, drinking cold milk? Whoever drank cold milk?

Come on! You don't drink cold milk. You go to the cow and pump it and you have a glass of milk, you know? And France the same way. They serve you warm milk. But I remember in Ellis Island the first time they serve me a glass of cold milk. I said, cold? It's cold! How can I drink cold milk, you know. Things like that.

LEVINE: So how did you spend your days? Do you remember what you did?

VISCAROLA: We had games and we had um, oh, what did they call... (thinking)

C. VISCAROLA: Gymp.

VISCAROLA: Gymp. Gymp is the word.

LEVINE: What is that?

VISCAROLA: Gymp is the making of belts and different things with ah, strands you know? And we had sessions and we had movies, you know, which we didn't under-, I didn't understand, you know. But ah, it was nice. I liked Ellis Island. I really did. And we had all the food in the world. I mean, the food was unreal! You know (laughs). Who had ever dreamed, dreamt that we could eat that well. Really!

LEVINE: Now were you by yourself?

VISCAROLA: I was all by myself on Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Where was your mother?

VISCAROLA: My mother and brother because my brother was a citizen, they couldn't detain him, so my father had friends in New York City and they stayed with friends in New York City.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. Now did they visit you at all?

VISCAROLA: Yes. Every day. Every day they would come over and spend the time with me. It was nice.

LEVINE: And how was the visit conducted? Where did you meet them?

VISCAROLA: Well, in Ellis Island, you must know better than I, they had the big central hall where they, all the families will come to visit or attend to their business of, of, of need, you know. And I remember spending time with my Mom and my father and my brother in that big, large hall in Ellis Island. But Ellis Island was very nice in many ways. They

had games and they had movies and they had music. And they had, it was nice. Time went very quickly. Very quickly.

LEVINE: Well, you really went from a concentration camp, as you called it, to Ellis Island.

VISCAROLA: Precisely. Precisely. Precisely. Exactly.

LEVINE: So it probably felt a lot better.

VISCAROLA: Oh, yeah. So then of course we came into my, I was released, thank god. And we came to Quincy and we lived in Quincy.

LEVINE: Just to back up a minute, when you were released, did the physician or the nurse, did they say anything about what...

VISCAROLA: I don't recall. I don't recall the proceedings that led to that particular event or what have you. I just don't remem-, I don't even know the day, you know for example, which I think should be very important. I don't recall it. I just don't.

LEVINE: So you and your, so your mother and brother came. Did they come and get you?

VISCAROLA: Yes. And my father.

LEVINE: Oh, and your father came down?

VISCAROLA: Oh, yeah. My father was all this time in New York waiting for me to be released. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. They stayed with friends in New York and ah, nice Spanish family. I don't know what happened since, but ah, they stayed with them, for whatever length of time. Might have been a week. Ten days. I don't know. And then I remember coming out of New York and I remember going through ah, this, I don't know what street it might have been. And I remember I had to look straight up to see the daylight. Because everything was so, was so big in New York, you know. And ah, it was very, very, very unique in every sense of the word. Because here you are in an entire different world. You don't understand a word that anybody's saying. But by the same token you're overwhelmed by the immense size of it all. It really... And then from there we came to Quincy.

LEVINE: How did you get to Quincy?

VISCAROLA: By, by bus. We came to Quincy. And we stayed in Quincy for about a year, year and a half and then we move into Boston. And life in the United States became a dream.

LEVINE: Well, now. Did you go to school in Quincy?

VISCAROLA: Yes. Yes. I went to grammar school and then little by little I began to get into the knowledge of the language and I remember going to class and of course barely understanding anything. It became rather difficult. But you know, you're very resilient at that age, so little by little you, you, you keep on going. You learn a word here and a word there, and ah, lo and behold, here we are.

LEVINE: Mm, hm. Now was your father working as a cook or a chef at this point?

VISCAROLA: Yes. My father was a chef in the hotel business and he worked in Boston. So that's one of the reasons why we moved from Quincy to Boston, because he worked at the Braemore Hotel in Boston, at that time. And for him to commute back and forth every day became kind of difficult. So ah, eventually, 1938 I think it was, a year, year and a half later, we move into Boston.

LEVINE: And how did your other like being in the United States?

VISCAROLA: Well, I never heard her complaining. Because she lived very well in Spain. I mean, she, she, we, we owned, she owned her own home which was very unusual in the old country for anybody to own, thank god to my Dad. He came early to United States and he would send a few dollars over there. Where a couple dollars over there was like two hundred anyplace else. So we own our own land and our own home over there, so she was well-to-do, quote/unquote, in Spain. When she came over here, well, I'm sure she must have had her lonely times. But she never let us know about it. Ah, the language, of course must have been a very difficult thing for her. But she was very resilient too. She became, she had Spanish friends in Quincy.

LEVINE: Oh, she did.

VISCAROLA: And ah, well, we met a lot of, one of the reasons that we went to Quincy from New York, because Quincy had a lot of Spanish people that work in the granite quarries and stonecutters. Okay? So she had met a few Spanish families in Quincy. Italians, you know. Italians, Spanish, you know the language is very similar. My father ah, spoke the language pretty well. So ah, she, she really, made inroads in that respect. So, and then she had friends. She made good friends in

Quincy, Spanish people in Quincy. So little by little, we all got along pretty well. I think it was more difficult to come to Boston near my father, his work. But even then we met some Spanish families and then you become, you begin to blend in, into the American society, so it's sort of a procedure, procedure that you really go through. So it became good old USA.

LEVINE: Mm. So then you continued. Did you continue in school in Boston?

VISCAROLA: Yes. I did continue. I went to school in Quincy and then when we came to Boston I went to school. Then I went to, ah, because my language was very limited, I attended sort of a, what they call it, an immigration school in Boston where they had immigrants, you know, it specialized for children that didn't have complete ah, ah, control of...

LEVINE: Mastery of the language.

VISCAROLA: Mastery of the language, thank you. So I remember going there for oh, maybe a year or two and then ah...

LEVINE: Were you in a specific grade, or was that school more of a...?

VISCAROLA: Just a complete mass of immigrants attending classes and then I would take special classes with different teachers that use, like night school. In those days night school was a big thing. And a lot of immigrants when to night school prep-, primarily because of that. So I remember going to night school and then of course, little by little I began to get myself into the so-called American society. Then I...

LEVINE: Do you remember where that school was? The school for the immigrants?

VISCAROLA: Oh, sure. They're called Immigration School, right next to the Metropolitan Theater in Boston.

LEVINE: Oh! Where's the Metropolitan Theater?

VISCAROLA: It's in Boylston Street in Boston.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh, huh.

VISCAROLA: I remember very well.

LEVINE: And was that a big help to you?

VISCAROLA: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. It was a big help you know. Being with the teachers that specialized in ah, teaching immigrants from all over the world, you know? I met a lot of, a lot. I met a few Italian ah, fellows over there that I became friendly with for a little while afterwards and all that. But then I ah, as I became more proficient with the language I began to get more, and then I went to the ah, high school and here I am.

LEVINE: Well, now is there anything else about that immigration school, because that's interesting.

VISCAROLA: I remember attending there and they had, in the mornings they had classes for all – I remember attending classes with the Chinese people, the Italian people. The Swedes, you know. And then you could attend special classes. It was a big building, I remember. It was what they called a continuation school. So this continuation school, you know, was primarily for (coughs), excuse me, for ah, children that wanted to continue their education. And it was very nice. You could take all kinds of courses. And I took some special courses in mathematics and things like that. But it was interesting in the fact that it gave you an opportunity to really get started. That was the big thing. To become more ah, ah, oriented and ah, learn by osmosis, so to speak, into the American way of life.

LEVINE: So in a way it was like, it was like the school in your little community in that there were all different classes in other words.

VISCAROLA: Yeah, so to speak. All one mass of people learning whatever you could, really. But ah, and then I took an awful lot of courses. I went to school summertime. I was in school all the time. Really, because I wanted to learn the language.

LEVINE: Then what did you do? Did you learn a specific thing?

VISCAROLA: Well I went to, then I went to, what they call the Boston Trade High School. In high school, I learned a trade. Aircraft mechanics. And I graduated from that school. And ah, then at the, ah, at the beginning of World War II is when I graduated. Imagine. I was only twenty-one years old then, and ah, I graduated as an aircraft mechanic and lo and behold they were waiting for me, so I went to work for Pratt & Whitney aircraft in East Hartford, Connecticut. I worked there for a couple of years. Then I had a, a bad ear problem. You know I couldn't work near the airplanes because of the noise, and I came into Boston, I returned to Boston with my dad, and then after ah, oh, after a little while in Boston, ah, ah, I got a job with the Gillette Company in South Boston. I started as an interpreter, but I didn't work out that

well. I wasn't that knowledgeable in translating or interpreting. So because of my technical background I, I went to work in the machine shop at the Gillette Company. I worked there oh, I don't know how many years. Several years. And I got into engineering and then from engineering I went into management, lower management and I worked for Gillette for 37 years.

LEVINE: Wow. And how did you meet your wife?

VISCAROLA: Oh, one of those days when I happened to go bowling and I met this stranger at the bowling alley and every, we met and ah, we had a wonderful time and one thing led to another so here we are. Really. Yeah.

LEVINE: And do you have children?

VISCAROLA: I have a son.

LEVINE: And his name?

VISCAROLA: His name is Peter. He's up in New Hampshire. Ya. We're going to see him tomorrow.

LEVINE: Oh, and also mention your wife's name and maiden name.

VISCAROLA: Constance Foundas, F-O-U-N-D-A-S. Foundas. Constance. And she's from Brighton. Born in Brighton, Massachusetts. Right outside of Boston. It's actually a suburb.

C. VISCAROLA: I wasn't born there. We lived there.

VISCAROLA: Right. You lived there.

LEVINE: Now. Connie is Greek. Was there any issue about not marrying somebody Spanish? Or Connie not marrying somebody Greek?

VISCAROLA: No. Not to my knowledge.

C. VISCAROLA: There certainly was.

VISCAROLA: No. Well, my mother, my mother, you know, she, my mother was very (laughs) how would I put it?

LEVINE: [Drive-minded] or the opposite.

VISCAROLA: The opposite. The opposite. Having born in the little village, you know, ah, she had her own opinions, but ah, I just wouldn't go along with it. That's the whole thing.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

VISCAROLA: I just won't go along with it. She wanted to tell me that I should marry a Spanish, a nice Spanish girl, you know, and al that. I just won't go...

C. VISCAROLA: I was irresistible.

LEVINE: (laughs) Actually, we have a little bit of time left on this, but looking back on it now, and looking back on coming to a new country as a fourteen year old boy, how do you think, well, I guess you can't disentangle the ah, Spanish Civil War with your leaving and coming here, but how do you think that affected you as a person, as a personality? What affects do you think that had?

VISCAROLA: It's hard to tell. Very, very difficult to tell. Because (clears throat), excuse me, bear in mind that being in a, in a community that is strictly a farming community, an agrarian community, you just don't relate too much to the outside world. Really. You ah, I had a happy life. You

know, we had our farm, we had our animals. You took life on stride, so to speak. It just, went along. Do your daily chores. You ate well. You play whenever you felt like it. You know? It's hard to tell really, at that age, because you haven't really... To put it this way, you have very little at that time and point, and, and, and, and age, anything to relate it to.

LEVINE: But as you see yourself now, having lived your life....

VISCAROLA: I'm delighted everything happened the way it happened. I mean in spite of all the hardships that we had to go through, you know, and all the pains and all the misery that we went through. But the thing is that it is easy for us, for me to say it now, now, looking back.

LEVINE: Right.

VISCAROLA: Whereas looking from that initial point forward, it just, you just can't relate it. Because it isn't right. It isn't, you have nothing to hold onto to. We took everything in stride, you know. We had to evacuate within the, notice of less than 24 hours, we had to evacuate.

LEVINE: But you never felt effects later in your life, positive or negative, or neutral, that you could sort of trace back to the fact of, of starting a whole different life again?

VISCAROLA: I think in terms of what would have happened to me had I stayed there?

LEVINE: What would have happened?

VISCAROLA: Who knows? We might not be alive.

LEVINE: Right. Right.

VISCAROLA: I know my mother wouldn't have been alive. That's for certain. Because even after we came over here, I couldn't have gone back for, until I was over the age of forty, I think it was, because I was subject to military service over there. Although I had become a citizen and all that, still wasn't valid. Ah, my mother, I'm sure had she stayed there, she had, she would have been executed. No question about it.

LEVINE: Did you have to get your own citizenship?

VISCAROLA: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

VISCAROLA: Through my father. I got a derivative citizenship. But it was an easy thing to do, really.

LEVINE: Okay. We're just about at the end of this side of the tape. If you could just say what was it like visiting Ellis Island?

VISCAROLA: It's quite an experience. And it was nice. Because it's very memorable. Ah, I was exposed to foods that I didn't know existed, you know? I didn't know what corn flakes were.

C. VISCAROLA: Yeah. Visiting it.

LEVINE: This time when you visited it. Years later.

VISCAROLA: Oh, very, very memorable. You know it brought back a lot of things in mind that ah, my god, it's unreal that I was here.

LEVINE: So you feel a connection.

VISCAROLA: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Was very, very, it was very pleasant experience for me. It was. Really. Because I have very, very vivid memories of it.

LEVINE: That's great. Okay. Well, I think we're going to close here. I want to thank you for a most extraordinarily interesting interview.

VISCAROLA: Oh, my pleasure. It's been nice. Very nice.

LEVINE: Thank you so much. I've been speaking with George Viscarola, who came from Spain in 1937 at the age of 14. He's 75 at the time of this interview and I'm in Cape Cod, and this is Janet Levine signing off.

END INTERVIEW

