

EI-1021

MANUELA CARNERO ESPUGA:

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ESPUGA: ... and one sister had left Spain and she was in Brazil. By the time we left, she was already in Brazil. Instead of coming to the States, she went to Brazil. Her husband, she was married at that the time.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

ESPUGA: Her maiden name?

SIGRIST: Well, first name and maiden name?

ESPUGA: My grandmother's?

SIGRIST: You mother's.

ESPUGA: My mother's. Agustina. A-G-U-S-T-I-N-A. And her maiden name, Maniviesa, M-A-N-I-V-I-E-S-A. That's a long name (laughing)!

SIGRIST: Yes. I appreciate you spelling these things for me. Tell me a little bit about your mother's personality.

ESPUGA: Oh, she's what we used to call a gypsy type. Flamenco? You've heard of the flamenco? Oh, she loved that. We always had that singing at home. The flamenco. For any little thing she'd start in with it. And she was always telling jokes. In fact, even when we got here, got to know some friends, they would come over just to hear her jokes. It was always The Andalusian. That's the real flamenco and gypsy style. Always jolly.

SIGRIST: Do you know where she acquired her love of the flamenco?

ESPUGA: Just the country itself. I mean, being down there, southern part of Spain. Anywhere you go, tap dancing, you know that, that's it. And the guitar, and that singing. They have a type of singing, oh, I don't know, like – it's a storytelling in their soul. And it's sad at times, you know. I remember. The voice is very funny. Not with any training or so. You know, natural.

SIGRIST: Do you remember a song that your mother used to sing?

ESPUGA: No. Not a song. No. Not that I can recall any song. There were so many. Just the castanets, and the flamenco and any friends around. That was it. But ah, we always say the gypsy, you know, that she had the gypsy in her. The flamenco gypsy. Which is different from the other gypsies that you hear from other countries.

SIGRIST: You mentioned going to the brook to wash with your mother. Is there any other activity that as a child in Spain you shared with your mother?

ESPUGA: No. That was about it. That always set in my mind. Being at the brook. Even here, when I pass by a little brook and the rocks, I think of Spain and the kids and we're all there. And I have to say, it's not work. It's really a picnic. Enjoying yourself. And the weather was

always so good. I don't remember cold. Oh, yeah. At home, there was no heat. A furnace or anything. They used, they called it a copa. And it was just like a pan, a large pan and the coals are in it. And in the evening you just, my uncles, they would just sit around, or even my brother there, for the heat. And I remember the one incident my brother had. A little tiny bit of coal, he was so, he was always all over everything. And it just stuck on him on the side. And he still has...

SIGRIST: You're pointing to your neck.

ESPUGA: He had a little mark on there because of that. But I mean, that's how we lived. Because it really wasn't cold.

SIGRIST: How did people cook food? How was food cooked? And what did you eat?

ESPUGA: Well, I don't know. A lot of gazpacho. I remember that. You know that's that – today, they make it warm. Here, I don't remember, my mom used to make it. It was like a salad. But it was, with liquid in it. It was never dry. And the bread and everything in it. And of course, the chorizos. Everyone hears about that.

SIGRIST: Chorizos being sausage?

ESPUGA: The sausage. The red, with a lot of red pepper and paprika. And that. And bread. There was always a lot of bread in the house. I don't know whether it was made or bought. I used to have, I remember. Well, here they're called salesmen. But they'd come around the neighborhood selling fruit or whatever you want, or vegetables. That I remember. And then there was the other, another one. Horse driven. You know, they were all horse driven. There wasn't a car. Horse driven wagon. And they would bring the vegetables. And would stop at the homes, if you wanted anything from there. And there was one who, that would come, if we had saved bottles. You saved whatever bottles you had in exchange for merchandise that was in that wagon. I had wanted a doll. I remember that doll. So I had these bottles that we had saved, and I wanted that doll. And I didn't get to bring it here. I had it, but it seemed that my aunt also wanted it and she kept it in Spain. It was a china doll. It isn't like the rare dolls that we find here. A china face and the arms.

SIGRIST: Did you have any other toys that you remember?

ESPUGA: Oh, little pots, little things. But, no. It was the doll, for me.

SIGRIST: Did anyone in your family ever tell you a story about the day you were born?

ESPUGA: No. Don't remember.

SIGRIST: Or did your mother ever tell you about her experience giving birth to you.

ESPUGA: No. I just remember my brother being born here in the states. But not, my mother never spoke of that.

There are reas-, things like that, personal things. And way back then, you didn't dare. Whatever was said, was said.

SIGRIST: Now your first name is Manuela.

ESPUGA: Manuela.

SIGRIST: Do you have any other names?

ESPUGA: No. I always wanted another middle name but I didn't. I used to dream that my other middle name was Dolores. That's why my daughter's name is Dolores. But I never did take it.

SIGRIST: And what was your name when you were born? What was your maiden name?

ESPUGA: Carnero.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

ESPUGA: C-A-R-N-E-R-O. Carnero. And that's what you wanted to ask me about, my father.

SIGRIST: That's right. We talked a little bit about this before.

ESPUGA: Well, my father had left Spain before and he was in Cuba. And he didn't want to use the name Carnero because they joked about it so.

SIGRIST: Why would they think it was funny?

ESPUGA: Well, carne means meat or slaughterhouse or something. It has something to do with the meat. And he didn't like that. So his mother's name was Perez, that's my grandmother and he stuck to that. He came to the states and he used Perez. And my one brother

used Perez through life even when he went into the army. He used Perez.

SIGRIST: Now, when you came to the United States what name were you entering under?

ESPUGA: Well, Carnero. Yeah, Carnero. I don't remember seeing any of the passports. I've never come across any of the papers. Maybe because we moved so many times when we got here and I wasn't thinking of saving anything like I do today. You know, you didn't save anything or put aside the papers. But it was Carnero.

SIGRIST: Did you ever use Perez when you came here?

ESPUGA: Oh, yes. Yes. I used Perez for the stay through school. I didn't speak English at all, and they did get an interpreter when they registered me at school and they got the names all mixed up down there because my father's name is Matias, M-A-T-I-A-S, and they put David. Where they got David, I don't know. But David was on those papers, and my last name – well, since he was using Perez, I was registered as Perez. Manuela Perez.

SIGRIST: And that's P-E-R-E-Z?

ESPUGA: -E-Z. Yeah. That's the Spanish. Because others use "s" on there. Portuguese.

SIGRIST: And when did you switch back to Carnero?

ESPUGA: Not, oh, years later. Years later. When I saw a document and it had, and my father had registered as an insurance company in Spain, from Spain, and I saw, my full name. And I said, gee! I'm not a Perez, I'm a Carnero! So then when I got married I straightened that all out. But that's the Carnero in there.

My one brother used Carnero, the youngest one. He figured, I had told him about it, so he used Carnero. But the older fellow, he went through school and all like I did. With the name Perez.

SIGRIST: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

ESPUGA: Two brothers.

SIGRIST: Two brothers. And their names?

ESPUGA: Germinal, was the oldest.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

ESPUGA: G-E-R-M-I-N-A-L. And the other's a little longer. Primordial. P-R-I-M-O-D, Primor, M-O-R-D-I-A-L.

SIGRIST: The first something, Primo?

ESPUGA: Yeah. Well, Primo. Today it's shortened to Primo. Yeah. He took the name of Jim. I don't know. He liked Jim. So we always call him Jim or Bubbi.

SIGRIST: Were your brothers born in Europe?

ESPUGA: My brother, the oldest fellow, born in Spain. He came with us. That's this fellow.

SIGRIST: So he's younger than you.

ESPUGA: Yes. Yes. Twenty-two months or so younger.

SIGRIST: I should say for the sake of the tape, we have a wonderful reproduction of a photograph of your mother and you and your

younger brother and you believe this was taken in Spain just prior to leaving.

ESPUGA: It was, it was in Spain. Because I'm about five or so.

SIGRIST: Yeah. It's a wonderful picture. And your other brother, you said, was born here.

ESPUGA: Was born here. Following year. Nine months after. 1921. By that time we had moved about, my father had the apartment for us to live in. We were there for a while and moved twice by that second time. That's where my brother was born.

SIGRIST: Let's talk a little bit about your father, just like we talked about your mother. You told me his name was Matias. What do you know about his background and his upbringing?

ESPUGA: Well, he was, all I remember is that he was from a different part of Spain. But he had settled down in Andalusia, and that's how he met my mother (coughing) in Spain. And that's all I know about Spain.

SIGRIST: Do you know how he met your mother?

ESPUGA: No. No. None of that. So when we got here, he's the one that taught me the Spanish to read and write. Like I knew the Spanish alphabet before I knew the American English cause he was... He liked books. He liked to read. He liked history. He wanted us to know more about the world and about Spanish history. Now one time, he sent for books from Spain, all the history of Spain. In fact, I still have them home. I never really gone through them. They're all in Spanish. I could read just so much on that. But that's what he wanted.

SIGRIST: It's interesting that he wanted to make sure his children had a sense of their Spanish culture.

ESPUGA: Well, yes, he wanted that. Not to forget your Spanish and all that. In fact, when I went to school, he didn't want me to do my homework at home. You know, they always had little assignments. And at home you spoke Spanish. And he taught me to read Spanish. And I, I always said, every evening, after supper, he'd get the newspaper and the editorials column in Spanish, I had to read that to him. And he did listen. My brothers weren't that good. You know, they didn't like it. But I guess I was more timid or something. We'd read it and it was okay.

SIGRIST: Did you ever learn like a little poem or something in Spanish that you still remember that you could say on tape?

ESPUGA: I remember but I can't say it (laughing).

SIGRIST: Or a prayer, perhaps? Did you ever learn a prayer in Spanish?

ESPUGA: No. No. That was another thing about him. He didn't force us to go. See, we were Catholic by birth. But he didn't say, you have to go to church. He used to say, when you're old enough, you pick the religion that you want. So he never forced us to go. See, I really started going to church more after I got married, had children. So they go.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any kind of religious activities prior to coming to the United States? At home? Maybe celebrating a holiday or something?

ESPUGA: No. No. Just the funeral. My grandfather died before we left, and ah, I remember the procession. You walked from the house, others carried the casket and the children stayed behind. And as you walked to the, to the gate, I remember, it was something – I don't know – superstition with the kids or something, you put your hands in front of you, when you go, and as you leave the center of the gate, put your hands behind. What that meant, I don't know. As kids, we were all

five, six years old. And then, the burial wasn't in the ground. I thought here, they had a wall, like they do now here, and that's how he was buried. He wasn't buried in the ground. Into this wall. So when I came here and went to a funeral, I couldn't believe that people were being buried in the ground on that day.

SIGRIST: That's very interesting.

ESPUGA: Yeah. I thought so. And then from there, we went home. But that was the only thing. I guess the father, oh, the priest, was always at the house. My grandmother, the women are always more religious in a way than the men. They didn't care what, the husband or my father believed before or anything. But they were always at the home.

SIGRIST: Did you have any religious objects in the house in Spain that you remember?

ESPUGA: No.

SIGRIST: Pictures, or...?

ESPUGA: I guess they must, oh yeah, they must have been around, they had to be. My grandmother and my aunt, the two aunts there, they were

very religious down there. My mother too. But not as much since my father, you know, was kind of strict about that. Went along with it, with what he had to say...

SIGRIST: You talked a little bit about your father's personality, that he loved history and everything.

ESPUGA: Oh, yeah!

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit more about his personality.

ESPUGA: Oh, no. He was a quiet man. No violence. Never heard, never arguments or so at home. And that... well, my brother would cause some, but still. He wasn't that, he was good. Good husband. Good father.

SIGRIST: What did he do for a profession in Spain?

ESPUGA: That I don't know, if he worked in the mine. Rio Tinto was known for the mines. I don't know what he did there.

SIGRIST: What kind of mines?

ESPUGA: The tin, the metal tin.

SIGRIST: Tin.

ESPUGA: That's it. I think they're still known for that out there. But when he got here there were no jobs. So he worked at the Bethlehem Steel Foundry.

SIGRIST: In Pennsylvania?

ESPUGA: Here. No. Here.

SIGRIST: Bethlehem?

ESPUGA: In Elizabeth.

SIGRIST: Oh, in Elizabeth.

ESPUGA: We came to Elizabeth.

SIGRIST: Elizabeth, New Jersey.

ESPUGA: Yeah.

SIGRIST: He came, now you said earlier he actually went to Cuba first.

ESPUGA: Cuba.

SIGRIST: How long did he stay in Cuba?

ESPUGA: I don't know. It must have been a year or more.

SIGRIST: Why did he go to Cuba?

ESPUGA: I don't know. Might have been easier at the time, we never knew. I didn't anyway. All I know that he did get sick. He had malaria. So when he came to the states, he had a recurrence and that made it hard for us in a way, cause we didn't know why he was getting these, oh, seizures like, at night, where we had to call the doctor, and then two doctors would come to the home, no matter what time. That I remember. '20, '22, 1922 or so. Yeah. They were more frequent or so. But the malaria, he had picked up in Cuba.

SIGRIST: Do you know what he did when he was in Cuba to make money?

ESPUGA: No. No.

SIGRIST: Do you remember him leaving Spain?

ESPUGA: Nothing. I don't remember him ever speaking about his Cuba, in Cuba. I guess it wasn't very pleasant or so. He just came here with other men. At that time, men, instead of with their families, there were more single men at the time. Cause the apartment he had for us was with two, I think there were two other men living at the place there. Rooming at the same house that he had for us.

SIGRIST: Single men.

ESPUGA: Yeah. Yeah. They were all single men.

SIGRIST: Huh.

ESPUGA: There was a lot of that in town. Cause I remember other friends, that my mother had known and father had known from Spain, they were living together, men that would come alone. And then later on would send for their family. They did that.

SIGRIST: Do you have memories of your father while you were in Spain?

ESPUGA: No. I don't remember. As I say, we were there at my grandmothers, I must have been a year or more living there, and I don't remember him at all.

SIGRIST: Did you live somewhere else before you moved in with your grandparent, that you can remember?

ESPUGA: No. I don't remember any... As a baby, they said they took me up to Galicia that way up in the north of Spain where my father's father and mother – my grandparents, lived up there. The second grandparents. That's where they baptized me, cause as I say, my father didn't believe in it. So when we were up there on a vacation, I was a baby, but my mother had told me that so many times that I remember it. My grandmother was very religious. She said, well, this baby has to be christened, baptized. So that's where I got the name Manuela. That was her name.

SIGRIST: That's your father's mother, that you're named after. WOW.

ESPUGA: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And we were up there for, it must have been a few weeks or some, then we came back down south of Spain.

SIGRIST: Before we get you on to the ship and get you to America, do we have any, do you have any other memories of Spain that just kind of cross your mind as we're talking. Maybe about learning something, or...

ESPUGA: No. Just the home and that.

SIGRIST: Did you go to school, or was that offered to you at that time?

ESPUGA: No. No. No school at all.

SIGRIST: Could your parents read and write?

ESPUGA: A little. Oh, my father did, yeah. Much more. My mother, sort of learned in a way, because she used to correspond with him. And I said, Gee, how could she do it? I never see her really studying or anything. But she learned or something. She used to write.

SIGRIST: Do you think she learned when she...?

ESPUGA: No. She learned in Spain, but it wouldn't (pausing), I say, she wrote it, just like she talked, you know, in Spanish.

SIGRIST: Like how it sounds.

ESPUGA: Yeah. Sounds. In Spanish you write it that way too. You forget all the periods and everything else on there, or grammar, but you just write as you talk. So the sounds are easy.

SIGRIST: What were your parent's views about education, especially for their children?

ESPUGA: Wanted to education. He was always after my brother. It was easy to talk me into it, to study and read and all... but it was a little harder with my brother. The elder. The other fellow, he was a little young. They were about seven years apart, seven, eight years. So...

SIGRIST: Do you remember anything about the process of getting ready to leave Spain, as a little girl?

ESPUGA: No. Everything was packing and packing. Could hear them, my aunts and them talking. You're gonna take this, you're gonna take that? But there wasn't much to carry, because I don't think we had but a suitcase and then another basket. Like a picnic basket that I used to carry most of the time. Not much clothing or anything else in there.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any objects that your family took with them from Spain? Obviously clothing, but did they take...?

ESPUGA: I still have a little blouse. It's so tiny I don't know how I even got into it. My mother had made for me to bring. To wear, you know. And I still have it. I saved that. I have that in a little drawer. Yeah. But the other clothing. I don't know. I dressed there. But how it was made? Most of it was homemade, hand made, rather. Either, it was either my grandmother or my aunts that did most of the sewing for us down there. Just preparing, getting ready. It was sad. I remember a lot of crying and all that. Just leaving. You know, you're leaving the family, leaving the country.

SIGRIST: Your mother's father had died already.

ESPUGA: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What about your mother's mother? Was she still living when you left? The grandmother?

ESPUGA: Yes. She died after we were here. Very tall, thin woman. I remember that.

SIGRIST: And do you remember saying goodbye to your grandmother and your aunts?

ESPUGA: Yeah. Just out there, you hug, kiss and didn't think. You know, you were going away. You're saying, well, you're going to another town or something. It wasn't, we didn't know it was that far. That we were going to go that far. I didn't, anyway!

SIGRIST: How did you think about America, before you got here?

ESPUGA: No, no.

SIGRIST: Did you have any ideas about what it might be like?

ESPUGA: No. No. We're gonna go away. That was it. But nothing, no inkling of what we were to expect. Or what we were going to see on that. All we know, we're going to meet your father again. We're going to be with your father. That was that.

SIGRIST: Now was he already in Elizabeth by the time you left?

ESPUGA: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Okay, so he had already left Cuba.

ESPUGA: Yeah. He was in the States there.

SIGRIST: How long had he been in the States by the time you left?

ESPUGA: That I don't know. Whether it was a year, or two years. I don't think it was too long, because he always used to say, soon. My mother used to tell me, as soon as he's ready for us. We'll go. As soon as he's ready. So I guess he got the house, the apartment. It was an apartment that we went to.

SIGRIST: Do you know if your father sent money over to Spain?

ESPUGA: That I don't know. Money, things like that I don't know. Must have sent have sent something because there was no other income down there. My mother didn't work. I mean, women didn't work there, that way. So there must... Either he left money there for the passport, you know what I mean? For the passage, he must have left some of the money there for her to use. But I don't know.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, you have this photograph. Do you remember it being taken? Do you remember it?

ESPUGA: No. No. I didn't see that until we were in the States, long after that, and going through some of the papers at the house. That I came across, I says, well, this I'm going to save. And that's what I did.

SIGRIST: You're very lucky to have it, it's a wonderful picture.

Where did you have to go? You told me, to get on the boat, and I forgot.

ESPUGA: Cadiz.

SIGRIST: To Cadiz.

ESPUGA: C-A-D-I-Z.

SIGRIST: Thank you. Do you remember how you got to Cadiz?

ESPUGA: No. Might have been a train because we had trains there. They took long. But they had a train going. See from Huelva, we got from our village there to Huelva which is the city and then from there to Cadiz.

SIGRIST: How do you spell Huelva?

ESPUGA: H-U-E-L-V-A.

SIGRIST: And that's where you went to get the train.

ESPUGA: Yeah. From there to Cadiz.

SIGRIST: So nothing sticks out in your mind then about going to Cadiz?

ESPUGA: About the trip? No. Just carrying things. Just carrying. I had to make sure I carried that basket. That's all I remember.

SIGRIST: Your job.

ESPUGA: Yeah. That basket was bigger than me, in a way.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how your mother felt about leaving Spain and her family?

ESPUGA: Well, she was sad I know. As I say there was a lot of crying there because it meant leaving her two sisters, and brothers. Well, two were in the service and then there were two, three others at home. She had a big family and they were all... Everybody was still single.

She was the oldest and the other sister was already in Brazil. So these others were single women there that she was leaving. The whole family. And grandmother, I guess, wasn't too well, because shortly after, I don't know, a year or so, she passed away too.

SIGRIST: What did she die of, do you know?

ESPUGA: No. I don't know. But my aunt, the oldest of the ones that we left there, she died of TB, tuberculosis. You know, sometimes they give you, gave you a little detail in the letters and since I was learning to read Spanish, I sometimes would read the letters that my aunt would send my mother, you know, out here in the states. I was 8, but what I didn't understand, I would ask them to explain.

SIGRIST: And she was a young woman at that time when she died, probably, of TB, the aunt?

ESPUGA: Maybe late twenties or so.

SIGRIST: Well, great. We've gotten you to Cadiz, and I think what we're going to do is we're going to pause for a second and Kevin's going to flip the tape so...

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ESPUGA: I ought to shut up for a while (they laugh).

SIGRIST: Then we'll get you to America.

END SIDE ONE

BEGIN SIDE TWO

SIGRIST: Okay, we're now beginning side two. You got us to Cadiz. Do you know how long you stayed in Cadiz before you got on the ship?

ESPUGA: No. I think it wasn't long. We got on to that.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the ship?

ESPUGA: Montevideo.

SIGRIST: The Montevideo.

ESPUGA: I don't have to spell it? M-O-N-T-E V-I-D-E-O. (they laugh) The stinky ship.

SIGRIST: Tell me some of the things that stick out in your mind about being on a ship.

ESPUGA: (seriously) Well, getting on. We came in steerage. You know, way down. Not first class or second class. Way down there. And the smell of it was just terrible. And I remember the cots. No separate sections for sleeping or anything. That was it, down there. It was just like going into a dungeon or something. The impression you get of being here, but that was it. It was very bad that way. We were allowed to get up on the deck. There was a section for us that were down below. A section there. And then they would pass out a tin plate, and a cup. A tin cup. And they were always pouring that wine. Till this day, that makes me sick. To smell that red wine. Here they would soak, I guess it was lunchtime or so, bread. People. Others that were with us would come up and they would soak the bread in that wine. And, I, I, as I say, 'til to this day, if I smell that, I get, it upsets me. And it wasn't very pleasant. And my mother, (laughs a little) I think the second day out, she was seasick or something, so she spent most of the time in the infirmary. So we were left on our own. And there was a friend, some one of our friends that worked on the boat there, he sort of looked over, took care of us in a way. Cause I remember at one time, we were in a cabin. My brother and I were in a cabin and we had to stay there, and for sleeping, he pulled out – to me it looked like a drawer, a drawer from a bureau. But he pulled it out of the wall, and I'm being so small it was all right for me to sleep in that. I mean, it was very nice. It was a friend of the family

that my mother had known from Spain, so while she was very sick and she was in and out of the infirmary the whole trip. On that.

SIGRIST: Do you know how they treated her sea sickness?

ESPUGA: No. I don't know. You were sick, you just threw up and stuff. Kids get over it faster than the adults on that. And my brother, he was all over that place. You couldn't hold him down. I thought he was going to go right over the rail.

SIGRIST: How much younger is he?

ESPUGA: Let's see, we're about twenty-two months apart.

SIGRIST: So if you're six, he's four.

ESPUGA: Four. I would say four years old. They had to grab him so many times. Otherwise he'd go over that rail. It was rough coming out. I think it took about two weeks. When you figure, a trip like that, on a ship that was so slow. And the water's getting rough. The water would just come right over at times.

SIGRIST: Do you remember as a six year old, when you were getting on the ship, how you felt about getting on this?

ESPUGA: No. Just going away. You know. Kids, you don't think that much at that time anyway. You're just going for another trip or something. Although we didn't do much traveling while in Spain, but I mean, this was a big thing. You're just going away.

SIGRIST: Had your mother ever been on a ship before?

ESPUGA: No. No.

SIGRIST: Had your mother ever been out of Spain before?

ESPUGA: No. No. In Spain all the time

SIGRIST: When your father initially went to Cuba, was that the first time that he had ever left?

ESPUGA: Yes. Yes. With others, I think one of my cousins or so. Some one else from our family went with him too. A couple of the men went there. That cousin that later came to the States too.

SIGRIST: Were you traveling with other people from your town, or anything?

ESPUGA: No. No. A total stranger. Just strangers. Although my mother, she knew the schoolteacher. There was a schoolteacher among us. And this man that worked as, I don't know what he did, a quartermaster or something on the ship that was very helpful.

SIGRIST: Did you see anything on the ship that you had never seen before?

ESPUGA: No. Oh, yeah. When you looked out there were the people from the, on the upper deck, walking around, parading around, looking down, but the crowd downstairs – they was just, themselves. Singing, or just talking, or something like that. The kids were just running around. There were a few other children in there at the same time.

SIGRIST: I was going to ask you, do any of the other passengers stick out in your mind? Any person you remember seeing that made an impression on you, or some of the other children perhaps?

ESPUGA: No. No. There was only, at the, when we were going out, I call it checking out, going out, when you had to open your briefcase, your suitcases and that. And this schoolteacher, was, she was the closest to us, while my mother was away in the infirmary, she would

sometimes talk to us or stay with us. But when it came time to open the suitcases, I don't know why they wanted to see us, see in the suitcase, she had a lot of brushes and things in there. I don't know why does she want brushes? This was a schoolteacher. Why does she want brushes in her suitcase? (laughing) I always think of that. That struck me funny. Here I'm a kid, I'm just about reach that table over there. And here she opens it. We had nothing, just clothing. But she had brushes.

SIGRIST: Maybe she had really nice hair. (they laugh).

ESPUGA: I don't know. That was part of it. That was going through. When you're being... It's in the island. Already on that long table.

SIGRIST: So you think that the ship took about two weeks.

ESPUGA: I think so. When you figure out the time, and that, and when we got here.

SIGRIST: Which I should say, August 19, 1920.

ESPUGA: In the early part of August, so I would say about two weeks. And it was rough waters. You know, they were rough.

SIGRIST: Did you get sick at all?

ESPUGA: I think so, the first day or so. But then it wore off. You know, a kid is more active. And it wears off in a way, unless you eat a lot. And I've never been a big eater anyway.

SIGRIST: Did your mother bring food with you? That you know of?

ESPUGA: I don't know what she had in there, but it must have been something. Like fruit, and maybe nuts and bread. Bread that was hard, or not, or something to nibble on. In the basket there. There was some of that. But otherwise I don't remember any big dinners, or eating anything big on that ship at all. I don't remember the food. All I remember is that wine and bread. They gave you an awful lot of bread. And they dunked it in. (giggling) They were all other men and women older, they would dunk it into that wine. Ugh.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when you came into New York Harbor?

ESPUGA: No. No. No one pointed anything out like that. You couldn't, I just remember when they start, the men and them, on the deck, we were,

start saying oh, we're near, we're near. Because to me, they looked, I don't know why, close to the ship, they would be – oh, I'm sorry I did that.

SIGRIST: That's okay. Hit the microphone.

ESPUGA: They were swimming close to ship. And it looked, as I looked at it, they looked like pigs or something. You know, the face of a pig? But what is it? Dolphins or something? They're close to the ship. Well, anyhow. Whatever it is, they're near because they figure there's food or something. And the men start saying, we're almost there. We're there. You know, in Spanish. Pronto. Pronto. Pronto. They kept saying that. That's how we knew we were near. And then we just looked, you know, ready. But I don't know how I even got off the ship. You know?

SIGRIST: Do you remember being at Ellis Island?

ESPUGA: Yeah. That. And my mother getting ready. She was feeling better. Packed everything what we had. Wasn't much. But got that. And then you're in line. One line. The other line. All through. In Ellis Island there. As I say, the suitcases had to be opened. They did that. And then we had the medical exam. Well, that's where the problem

started. I was fine. I checked out. My mother did. Everything okay. But my little brother would always have sores. You know, he got these fever sores.

SIGRIST: You're pointing to your mouth.

ESPUGA: He had fever sores on it. We didn't think anything of it. He's had them before. But little boys at that time wore like a little coat over his panties. Like a little jacket. A little smock. So when he's going through in that, they marked his coat. On that. And ah, they didn't put anything on me. They didn't mark me for anything. They examined the eyes, pressure something. But with him, they took a little more time. And as I say, they marked his little coat there. And then you got out of line. You go to the side. So my mother went to the side, and him. So, she didn't like that. Somehow or other she says, why is, thinking, why is he marked for that. So she grabbed me and the two us and she headed for, it must have been like the rest rooms. All I remember, they were little, like they have um, the rest rooms here, the tile and stuff. Got in there, and got something out, took the coat, took his coat off and took one out of the suitcase and put it on, and then we went out again. And that's how we passed through. I mean, she was clever that way. She didn't do much studying, but she was saying, there's something that they're marking him for that, and he's an active

kid, he's not really sick. He just has these sores on him. So that's how we got through. By changing. I remember going in because of the stalls. That's right. The stalls. There was a whole row of them, and got into that, and changed his little coat. And we came right back out.

SIGRIST: This story that you told a little bit before about the hairbrushes, the teacher. Was that at Ellis Island too?

ESPUGA: Yeah (excitedly) the teacher. Ellis Island when they're examining. It's a long table. And you put your suitcase on that. I don't know, they still have it. I'll show it in there. And you open. They want to examine it or something. Man standing on one side. All this. I could just about see. And I'm not tall. And I looked at her, and she had these brushes. And I said, why? They used to say, maestra, maestra means like the schoolteacher, maestra l'escuela.

SIGRIST: Maestra.

ESPUGA: Yeah. Schoolteacher. So I said, gee, []. My mind is working at it.

SIGRIST: Does anything else stick out in your mind about Ellis Island? What it looked like on the inside, or

ESPUGA: Not much on the inside. As I said...

SIGRIST: Did you eat anything while you were here?

ESPUGA: No. I don't remember eating at all. Remember that table. And then these doctors. There were several. Checking the people through. You go here, you go to the other side. And then we had to wait. And my father was nowhere around. You know, he was supposed to come. But they got the dates or something mixed. And I think we stayed about two days. The day of that exam, plus the following day. Cause he didn't, he didn't get to the island because they told him in, we weren't there, or the ship wasn't there. Something about that. That delayed it. So we waited about two days.

SIGRIST: So you were here. For two days. Wow! Do you remember anything about staying overnight here?

ESPUGA: No. We were out somewhere. And then the railroad. Whether it was the old, I don't know, the railroad tracks, was that Central. I don't know where. And they put us on this train. I remember my mother, they must have told her where she was going. And I still had this basket. And we're crossing tracks. I remember the tracks, crossing

these tracks. It was long. And my mother and brother in front of me. I was in the back. And there was someone else in back. And then my mother turned, and she says, and she noticed this man, bending down, picking something up. And she says, then she spoke to me, where's the papel? Papel? The paper? And she ran back, to where this man was and took it right out of his hand. It was something that had fallen out of the basket. Where she had like her, maybe the money and the papers wrapped up with the black kerchief that she had. That was on top. I remember that was in the basket, but on the top layer. And she dashed so fast. I remember standing in the middle of the tracks. Here she's running back, to see this man bending down, picking up something and she figures it was hers and she took it right out of his hands. And it was hers. Because it belonged with that kerchief that she had wrapped. I guess it was the money and maybe passports or something. And then we got to the train. How we got onto the train. And that was the train that was taking us to Elizabeth. Because my father had tried twice to get to the island, and couldn't. So we came all the way to Elizabeth that way. By putting us on that train, in Jersey City or something, to Elizabethport. Got Elizabeth. There was no one there and it was raining, cats and dogs. It was, it was August and it was raining! I was all dressed up or something. I remember losing my shoes, because of that rain. That's how good they were. From Spain.

SIGRIST: How did you lose the shoes? (they laugh)

ESPUGA: They must have had cardboard soles. So, well anyway, we get to the station, that was the Elizabethport. They must have instructed the conductor or somebody to let us off in Elizabeth. I don't know, cause we didn't speak the language. But anyhow, we landed in Elizabeth. Elizabethport Station. It isn't there today. They've done away with it. But that was the Elizabethport Station.

SIGRIST: So what happened when you got to the station?

ESPUGA: We just sat there and waited. Waited, thinking my father would come. In fact, he wasn't too far from there. But ah, he didn't know. And there was no way of us getting to there. There were people around, walking. And it seemed there were a lot of Spanish people around there, cause this one person passed by and he's talking in Spanish, and my mother approached him. It was a man, approached him. She had the address where we were going. First Street, in Elizabeth. And as I say, it wasn't too far. And there was like a bus that would take us right there. But he said he knew. He knew the address, the place on it. And got us onto the bus, and in the meantime, with all that rain, it rained so hard that my feet were wet, my shoes were wet. I got onto

the bus and the sole came right off the shoe. (laughing) That was my Elizabeth memory.

As I say, they took us right to the place, to the apartment. Because it was like across the street from the bus. We had to cross the street. I didn't know what, all we knew is that we got off that bus and across the street was the apartment.

SIGRIST: Was your father there?

ESPUGA: In the apartment.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you remember about seeing your dad for the first time.

ESPUGA: Well, we were so wet, we didn't even think about that. We wanted to have something warm, or something. And change, and that. But we knew we had a roof over our heads there, were safe.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the apartment for me a little bit?

ESPUGA: It was a big apartment. It was, what do they call it? The kitchen, I remember the big kitchen. Then there was a big dining room. And bedrooms off there. Like, there were usually five to six rooms in that

apartment. It was one of the main streets in Elizabeth. Today it is still a main street, but it's quite different.

SIGRIST: Did you have electricity in the apartment?

ESPUGA: No.

SIGRIST: How did you light...?

ESPUGA: Gas. Gas.

SIGRIST: Gaslight!

ESPUGA: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you have any stories about using the gaslight in the apartment?

ESPUGA: We weren't to touch it. You weren't to touch it. And you don't touch the matches. And the boxes of matches were big. You weren't to touch any of that. And even when we were left alone, the two of us, my brother and I were left while my parents had gone out, you don't open the doors. You don't... (laughing) She's saying, you don't touch

this, you don't touch that, and you stay right here until we come back.
Which was short. You know.

SIGRIST: And you mentioned before that there were two single men who were living in the apartment also.

ESPUGA: Yeah. I don't even remember their names or anything. Then my cousin, the one that had gone to Cuba with him, he came to stay at the house too. He stayed in there. One goes out, and the other comes in. But we all had our separate rooms. My brother and I were in the one room, and the parents in the other.

SIGRIST: Tell me some of the things that you did, those first couple of weeks. When you first got here.

ESPUGA: The house, I remember it was nice. It was like a second, a second floor. And the back had a porch, with a railing, the porch. And you looked out the back door and you see the yard. Cause later on, we stood there for a while, I used to see my father going to work. Cause the foundry wasn't too far from there. Bethlehem Steel was like a block or so away. And I used to see, he'd come home for lunch, and then he'd go back and from that porch, from the back I could see him walking or running through that lot. On the back street.

SIGRIST: Were there other Spanish people who lived in this neighborhood.

ESPUGA: Oh, yeah. Yeah. But most of them were just men, no families. No families. The men would come, and work, and then their families would follow. So, say a year or even less. That I remember seeing, knowing about. And there, that's how my mother met one of the friends. She had come with her husband and they became good friends. And she knew Elizabeth a little bit better than my father, and took us around.

SIGRIST: Do you, how long was it before you put into school?

ESPUGA: Well,

SIGRIST: You arrived in the middle of August.

ESPUGA: Yeah, but now, that year, we didn't. I think it was wait until, let's see. We were living... I have to think of the homes we had moved to by the time I got to school.

SIGRIST: You mentioned you moved quite a bit.

ESPUGA: Yeah. It was almost a year, something like that. My brother was born by the third house we had moved to. I don't know. I can't remember that house. We were, whether it was on Pine Street, the second house, where they enrolled us in a school. I just sat there because I didn't know what was going on.

SIGRIST: Yeah. I want you to describe a little bit for me the experience of first being put into an American school and how that made you feel.

ESPUGA: Oh, bad. Because I didn't understand a word that was being said. And these interpreters were supposed to be Spanish interpreters and they didn't speak Spanish the way I did. They had a dialect. Like Guyagos ?, that's the northern part of Spain? They don't speak the Castillian. They speak more like Portuguese. They had that. So, a woman, and the fellow that was there, they spoke, with asking my name in that and I didn't understand them, so I guess from papers or something they made up the rest of it. So I was enrolled in that school, and only stayed there for a short time until we moved. Because in Elizabeth if you live in a certain area, then your school will change. The district. You have to move. Then my, the second time, I couldn't straighten, I didn't straighten out the names or anything else in there. But it was frightening. When you sit in a classroom and things are happening that you don't know a thing about, you just sit

there all day long. And nobody to help you. That was my first school. Then we moved, down to near the waterfront there. Then I was enrolled in another school. A school which was near. A few blocks from the original apartment. It was only a few blocks. But meant another school. And the same thing happened there. They advanced me because of my age, they put me, I say about second or third grade. And I would just sit there all day long. Not knowing a thing. What was going on. I'd just sit quietly. And the teachers taught, but I didn't know what was going on. And then, they took me from the third there, and put me into the kindergarten. And that's where I started picking up the language. A little bit more on that. You know, I caught up to those kids in the third grade. (laughs)

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of your first words, some of the first English words that made sense to you?

ESPUGA: In the kindergarten you learned, and then out playing with the children. Some of them were already here. Oh, and we lived, the second one, the other school – we lived in a neighborhood where there were all Lithuanians, and Polish, so, and that's why they couldn't pronounce my name. They started calling me Mary. And still, Mary, I'm Mary to a lot of people. Mary. Cause they couldn't pronounce Manuela.

By that time we had my little brother with us. I used to take care of him. It was only seven years apart, but I was...

SIGRIST: You mentioned you remembered your brother, who was born in the United States. You mention that you remember him being born. Can you talk a little bit about that?

ESPUGA: Well, I just remember, it was a midwife. You didn't go to the hospital. My mother and her friend, that's who helped her, her friend saying, Mom's going to have a baby, she's going to have her baby. And I don't even think the doctors knew. They didn't come to the house. It was just the midwife. She says it was going to be at home, and you stay in your room and no matter what, you just stay there. You don't come out; you just stay there all the time. That's what I did. I could hear her screaming and screaming. I wouldn't come out of that room. I was in a separate room. That I remember. His birth. I remember the house too. And the street, and the house he was born in. But ah...

SIGRIST: Do you remember how they explained it to you? Where he came from?

ESPUGA: Oh, no. They didn't know then. They didn't talk then. I mean not at that time.

SIGRIST: Well, did a stork bring him?

ESPUGA: No. There was none of that.

SIGRIST: Did kids ever make fun of you for being foreign, for being an immigrant?

ESPUGA: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Is there a story you can tell me about that actually happening?

ESPUGA: Yeah. What was it? They used to throw what, no that was a section in town. I remember there were other, there were Italians in town, and ah, others that had been here. I was also in a mixed and Irish neighborhood. It was Polish, Irish. And they used to throw stones and things at the people. I didn't know why. I didn't understand that, at the time, why they would do that. And you go to, you go to the store, well, it isn't like going to a supermarket today where everything's here. The things were displayed in a little grocery store. You had your rice and other things all out there, and you wanted

something, you just pointed to what you wanted, and that's how you got it. And I remember stories of these other families that would come, the man, I remember, he wanted eggs and there were no eggs there. He said he just crouched down on the floor and started cackling like a chicken to get the storekeeper to understand what he was saying. That's how you, you sort of acted out what you wanted, even in a pharmacy. The drugstore. You didn't know what you were buying. You had to act out what you wanted, or tell them.

SIGRIST: Did your mother make an attempt to learn English?

ESPUGA: Very little. Although she could go shopping, even years later. She'd go shopping. She knew what she wanted. She'd get it. But not fluent English.

SIGRIST: We know that your father, of course, was very, like his...

ESPUGA: His English, he held back on it too. Like I say, he wouldn't let me, when I got to the school, the second one, where I had homework, I wasn't allowed to do my homework at home. Spanish. You speak Spanish, you study Spanish. You do all day long at school. So on my way home from school, there was a little club. It's a church. It became a church later. But it had the front steps. I used to sit there

and do my homework before getting home, so that I wouldn't have to cause any friction at home by the time I got home. I'd do my homework.

SIGRIST: When you look back on.. Right now, when you look back on your father's insistence that you not do anything in English in the house, how do you feel about that now?

ESPUGA: Well, that's wrong in a way. You should continue with the new language and try to make them learn it. Because they didn't want to learn it at the time. But it was very hard, very hard on them.

SIGRIST: Did your mother get a job outside of the home?

ESPUGA: No. No. Never.

SIGRIST: Or did she take work into the house?

ESPUGA: No. Years later, a few years later, we had a boarding house. My mother and father, he couldn't get a job either. Jobs were very hard. And he was getting these seizures from the malaria. So the best thing to do is to rent an apartment or two and have a boarding house. She

would do the cooking. Oh, she was a very good cook. Did a lot of cooking. I remember that.

SIGRIST: Did they become citizens?

ESPUGA: My mother did, but w-a-a-a-y in her seventies. She wanted to take a trip...

END SIDE B

END OF INTERVIEW