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TONINO (ANTHONY) MANCINI

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LEVINE: Today is [clears throat] November 24th, 1998 and I'm here in Portland, Maine in the office on Tony Mancini. And he came from Italy in 1956 in July at the age of 18 on the ship, the Roma. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. Okay, if you would start, maybe, by saying what your real name is and how you came by it.

MANCINI: My real name is Tonino and that's because my—in my family was—my grandfather's name was Anthony—Antonio. And—and there was three brothers. It was my father and two uncles and—plus my aunt. They're all passed away now but they had a good life, I guess. And each one of the—the family had a boy so they named Antonio. So my father thought was too many Antonios so instead of put Antonio, says, "We're going to call you Tonino." And that's what my registration of the name is Tonino. That's how we came about—

LEVINE: Yeah.

MANCINI: —the name Tonino.

LEVINE: Wow. And your birth date?

MANCINI: I was—I was born on November 14, 1937.

LEVINE: And where were you born?

MANCINI: I was born in a little small town in Abuzzi [PH] named Lettomanoppello. You have to be careful because, you know, there's all kinds of little towns but there's most of the same name on there.

LEVINE: How do you spell that one?

MANCINI: L-E-T-T-O—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MANCINI: —M-A-N-O-P-P-E-L-L-O. And it's a—it's right—right on the side of the [unclear] in—in Italy and it's really nice town. We have a panorama view, all the mountains there so it's real nice.

LEVINE: Yeah. Is it small, like how—how many people are there?

MANCINI: Well, 1950, I was involved in—about '48—I think it was 1948 or '49, I was involved in—in the Democratic Party, the first vote we had after the war. And we had 4,000 people there and 1998, I think still 4,000 people there. You know, so but it's—in this couple months of the year it inflates from 4,000 to about 10,000 people. Because everybody comes back and Lettomanoppello is one of the most busy town of exportational people in the world, I think, you know, so—

LEVINE: Wow.

MANCINI: —it's really nice.

LEVINE: So it isn't tourists that inflates it. It's people who—

MANCINI: No.

LEVINE: —left and came—and come back to visit?

MANCINI: Right. People that left, like when—in Americas and Canada. We have a lot of people went to Australia. A lot of people went to—they still work in Germany, France, Switzerland and north part of Italy.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: So in August—they're called lafaria [PH] in Italy—and everybody comes home. So the town just swells right up. And there's twice a year that happens. I'm pretty sure it happens every—the holidays. But in October—August is the Feast of August, about four-day holiday. Another one is in October, the Feast of St. Nicolan [PH]. And the people comes back at that time.

LEVINE: Ah. Huh.

MANCINI: So—

LEVINE: Well, now, what—what kinds of work were done in the town?

MANCINI: The town is well known for—at one time, it was for mining asphalt. Matter of fact, that's what my father's—worked, since he was nine years old. Then the asphalt kind of depleted from the mines so now it's—the—all the mountains in the area is like glaciers from volcanic ashes and what have you, I'm pretty sure.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MANCINI: I'm not a geologist but, you know—but they used this material to make concrete, cement.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MANCINI: The base of the cement. And that's what we have there now. That's one of the industry that we have.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MANCINI: Plus, any other industry in that town, there isn't any. So in order to flourish, the people, to—to progress, they had to leave.

LEVINE: I see.

MANCINI: But they loved the town so much, that's—that's why we all come back. You know, we go back, you know, to this little town to have a good time.

LEVINE: Do you love it so much because it's—it's so beautiful? Is—is—

MANCINI: Well, it's—well, it's a beautiful town. I—I—you know, I'm pretty sure some other people, different town in Italy, they think different. They thought it was beautiful, okay. So it's like Portland, I think is nice. [chuckles] You know?

LEVINE: Yeah.

MANCINI: But what it is, I think it's the people is they have a friendly and they go back to no lose that heritage, I would say. You know, if you want to put it that way.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. So [clears throat] growing up there, [clears throat] you were there till you were 18. Did you—did you go to school there?

MANCINI: Yeah, yeah. I went—actually, you know, [sighs] well, I don't want to get ahead of your question. I'll—yes, I did go to school there and I did my grammar school. And then my father put it to one time, working on a f—we have a small farm. [clears throat] Excuse me. And he took a—what we call a lubidenda [PH]. You know, it's like hoe, you know what I mean—to work at the—at the terrain. He says, "You see this right here? If you don't go to school you'll be doing this the rest of your life." So I think maybe that kind of steered me to go to school and I finished the high school in Italy and, of course, it was kind of tough at that time in 1950—'50—1950—it was 1950—'49. '49, '50. The first year of my high school that I went actually was like a 11, 12—11th grade, I think I recall, over here in this country.

LEVINE: Was there in your little town or—

MANCINI: No.

LEVINE: —you had to go out of town?

MANCINI: We had—we had to go to Pescara, to the c—the big city. So we had to take—was—I was the—was me—was two of us from that town that went beyond the grammar school. And we had to take a bus to go to the railroad station, which is about 20 minutes, then take a train from little sm—a small town named Scarfar [PH] to Pescara, which is about 45 minutes away, then take another bus, go to the school. So we'd get up at 4:30 in the morning and come home about 8, 9 o'clock at night. So it was kind of tough to study and I just barely made that year to pass my grades. So I—and at—at that time, my father just come back. You know, he was to World War II and a friend of his was in Rome, Italy, that he—he'd established himself, worked for the government and what have you. So they—can you stop this?

LEVINE: Yeah. We're pausing. [tape off/on] And we're resuming here. Okay, you were talking about—

MANCINI: So—and it's—my father was—talked to a friend of his and he said, you know, "Just let him come to my house. You know, come to Rome for two years." You know, finish up the high school because that way the school—and I have a son name of Rosario, which is the same age that I was at that time.

LEVINE: Now, this is someone your father met when he was in the Second World War?

MANCINI: No, he was—for—no, it was from the same town we come from.

LEVINE: Oh.

MANCINI: They were at the war together but he—after the war, he moved to—to Rome to work for the government. And my father stayed with us, of course. So I spent two years in Rome, which was—it was tough to leave home at that age, you know, but, you know also was better because I didn't have to listen to mother and father. And I thought of my aunt—well, I called him my uncle at that time—I thought he would be easier to live with. I found out different. It was a little tougher, you know.

LEVINE: He was strict?

MANCINI: He was very strict and he act—actually was good though because he made us, you know, toe the line and we did our things and, you know—and it worked out fine. It's—so I finished the school there for two years.

LEVINE: Well, you must have been—I mean, if there were only two of you who left your town—I mean, that—that's—was unusual. Why you? Wh—why do you think—

MANCINI: Well—

LEVINE: —you got to do that when most—most people your age didn't?

MANCINI: I—I—I really don't know. You know, that particular year when I finished at grammar school, you know, we just—all the guys, we talked about it. Nobody had—everybody had a farm to work with and everything else. And—and, you know, they—they didn't have any money or whatever because we had to pay our own buses and stuff to go. And poverty at that time of the year, or those years was really tough, especially from a small town. There was very few people with a lot of wealth to go to do anything they want. And the only guys—the year after that we had a few friends that came along. Then, like the first day we were there, there were only about three or four. Two or three went down. Then was, you

know, about another—then, next, when they finished at grammar school a few other people went. And so as years went by, everybody went, you know, so—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MANCINI: —they starting [unclear] that going to school, which I think is the most important thing there is, really.

LEVINE: So you were—you were on the vanguard. You were like the beginning—

MANCINI: Right, right.

LEVINE: —of—of your town—

MANCINI: We were—I used to call it the studente [PH], you know. [chuckles] Every time I walk up and down, you know, the town and the girls kind of look at us kind of funny because, well, we were big guys. We go to the big city every time, you know. So—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-huh.

MANCINI: But that was fun.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MANCINI: I had a lot of fun.

LEVINE: Now, what was your father's name?

MANCINI: My father's name, Rosario.

LEVINE: Rosario.

MANCINI: Yeah.

LEVINE: And—and what did he—was he working in the asphalt mines or—

MANCINI: Right, my father went to work in asphalt mine; he was nine years old.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: And he lied to the—to the application officer, you know, that was in charge. He told him he was 12 because my father was pretty big man in stature. So—and when he went inside the mine, there was his—my

grandfather was right there. He says, "What are you doing here?" You know, so my father said, "I'm working." And—and that's when he started working then.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MANCINI: And he stayed there till he retired at 55.

LEVINE: Wow.

MANCINI: So—

LEVINE: Hmm. And your mother, what was her name?

MANCINI: My mother's name was Antonella [PH] Cardinale. She's—was a housewife. She took care of the house and she took care of all the animals we had around the house, because in Italy, at that time, if—you had to grow your own food. There wasn't like a shopping center we have today, you know, so she took care of the—the pigs. We had the chickens, sheeps and—matter of fact, my job was every Sunday morning before I go to church I have to go take the sheeps out in the pasture for half—three-quarters of a hour and then bring them back in, then—then go to church. But these, we used for our own food, really, supplies, what it was.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. You didn't sell any—

MANCINI: No, very rare we sold anything.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MANCINI: You know, just things that we killed as we needed. You know, then we ate and so we lived pretty decent, really, compared to other people in the town didn't have that avenue to raise, you know, food and what have you.

LEVINE: Right. Cardinale? Is that your mother's maiden name?

MANCINI: Right.

LEVINE: How do you spell it?

MANCINI: Cardinale—C-A-R-D-I-N-A-L-E. And it's—you know, it's—it's a pretty name. My mother is a pretty girl too so—

LEVINE: Yeah.

MANCINI: Or she was. They're—I guess they have both passed away now so—

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Do you remember any—any experiences with your mother, just growing up, that—that kind of bring out sort of—

MANCINI: Well, we had—

LEVINE: —the way she was or—

MANCINI: We had all kinds of experience, my mother. I was the wise guy of the family. You know, little kid—

LEVINE: Where were you in the birth order?

MANCINI: I'm the last—I'm the baby.

LEVINE: Baby.

MANCINI: I have three other sisters. One—I have two sisters in Italy right now, still in Italy. My older sister, the next. My third—or my next to me sister, name of Dominica—she's in Argentina right now, or she'd been there since 1955. Our job was to—I mean, I don't know if the people liked us or not but our job was to make sure we have the food ready. We—my mother'd say, "Okay, we're going to kill a rabbit today," or, "We're going to kill a chicken or kill a duck," you know, for Sunday dinners. So we'd do the sacrifice before we went to church. [chuckles] I mean, people always said, "These—these guys are nuts." But this was a way of life. So—and being a little [unclear] at that time—I'm 9, 10, 12 years old—this was—happened before I got a little older. And right after the war—I'll never forget this episode—so me and my sister, Dominica, were supposed to kill a duck. And I know this could be rude, probably. But that's—that's when I got my first beating in my life. I said to my sister, being a little wise guy—I must have been about—I don't know, 8, 9 years old, I think it was. So—and I said—I says, "You know, let's cut the neck off and let it go and see what happens. You know, just an experiment." [unclear] said, "No, no. Jeez. We better not do that because Ma finds out, we're going to get beat up." "Come on. She wouldn't know." You know, we didn't know really what the experience, what would happen. And [chuckles] like I said, this could be cruel to animals, which it was, really. And my mother realized that too because, you know, the beating I got [chuckles]—I could tell you that. So we—

LEVINE: [coughs]

MANCINI: You know, we did that. We cut the necks off and that poor duck, it run all over the yard. You know, unbelievable. So my mother found out and, man, I was—I was black and blue for a month, you know, but—but very rarely, my mother hit me. Now, my father—you know, it's—people say, "Well, Jeez, coming from Europe, everybody beats everybody up." And it isn't—it isn't through—if you do something wrong in Italy when you're a baby, when you're a kid, they slap you. I mean, it's—that's a way of life, you know. And if you realize you did something wrong and they slaps you, then you—you know, you're going to straighten yourself up. If you think—if you don't realize you did something wrong, then you're—you're going to go a different road, I guess. So that's—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: I—I don't—but—

LEVINE: What was your—was your mother a religious woman?

MANCINI: Yeah, she was very religious. She'd go to church every Sunday and she'd make sure that we did. And a lot of times, to be honest with you, I skipped it, you know, to go play ball with a—with friends. Unknown to me, that—I learned after I get beaten a couple times—I—I mean, not severely. That's—the most beating I got was the duck thing.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

MANCINI: But other times, I got a few slaps. And she come—I come home from church, says, "Okay, what the priest say?" Boy, that was a good question because I didn't go to church, you know. So I tried to tell her. She said, "No, you didn't because I was there this morning." You know, so—and it—I learned that lesson, you know, [chuckles] so then I couldn't skip anymore because I knew she was there in the morning. She'd go to early mass and I'd go to late ones, you know, so—because you get a bunch of kids playing soccer outside, you know and—and you get—you know, you get involved. Forget the church, you know. So—

LEVINE: Okay. How about your father? Was he religious too or—

MANCINI: Yeah, my—in—in Italy, I think—I don't know how you de—religion is important, okay. I want to make this statement. People feel—is that religion—you should go to church every—every Sunday, which the ch—our church requires. I mean, I don't know. The Catholic—I'm Catholic and I will be Catholic till the day I die. That's very important to go to church on Sunday. I—I impressed it on my kids, my grandkids today. But in Italy, the men really—they don't go to church as much as we say we—I go myself today. My father didn't go to church all the time. My

father took us to church. Then he met his friends. After all, it was the only day off they had. They worked six days a week. My father work in the mines. Then he'd work in a—on a farm. We have a small farm. You know, not really big but enough—for us to support ourselves. So Sunday for them was a day of relax. And they didn't think were going to spend an hour inside their church because when all these men got together, La Piazza [PH], the little town—you know what I mean?

LEVINE: Yeah.

MANCINI: They want to play cards. They want to exchange things that happened for them in the week. And they—they ain't going to go listen to the priest. But if it was something religious happened, like the feasts or the—any feast that we had, these guys were the first guys to raise the money to make sure that, you know, the thing was done properly and—and everything else. So I don't know—do you call a religious person that goes to church every Sunday? Or you—you call a religious person a—really puts a lot of effort to make—to make sure that things happens? You know, so—and this is why. But it—to answer your question, yes, my father was a religious person in his own way, I—I will say. You know, so—

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Yeah. And how about your father? Were you close to him? I mean, you being the only boy in the family?

MANCINI: Yeah, I was—you know, [chuckles] my father and I, we just friends. And I—and my kids, the same way today. I—I don't want to be known to them as a—yes, I'm a de—what do you call it? The parent or the dominant person—

LEVINE: [unclear]—

MANCINI: —in the family. I've never been a dictator. It's—but it's—and my father wasn't either. We had a relationship that we understand each other, you know, and I—because I didn't spend that much time with my father. I mean, I left home when I was 11, like I told you before. But the time I spent with him was like a friendly thing. We did things together. We'd go—you know, we don't hunt. But we went fishing a couple of times, you know, at the little streams up there. And we'd go out to the farm together, pick grapes or figs and what have you. And we'd talk about life. We—you know, we had a relationship that I think's—probably is hard to come by with some of the families today, I guess. I don't know.

LEVINE: Hmm. Can you think of any things that he tried to instill in you? I mean, an education [unclear]—

MANCINI: That—that was one of the things, really, always wanted me to do. And I think I—I don't think I disappoint him. I really don't have engineer degree, diploma. But I have a few license, if that means anything, I don't know. I have a driving license.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

MANCINI: Yes, I—he always, you know, said that you have to respect people. If you respect the people, they're going to respect you. This is something they always install in me and I tried to do that with my kids. It doesn't mean it—it works all the time. And he say, "You're going to have some disappointment in life that you do respect somebody and some guy just flabbergasts you. But it's—most of the time it works for your favor, if you do respect people. And that's which—if you want to be respected, you've got to respect other people." And that's—always told us that. Respect other people's properties. I have an incident that—that was the only time that—I got beat a couple times. But this one I never forget. Matter of fact, I still got a mark on my butt. Was me and my cousins—my aunt had a little cantina at that time and they had a—bocce balls inside. And at that—right now, I'm—weigh about 230 pounds. But I weigh a hundred—hundred pounds soaking wet when I was growing up. [clears throat] Excuse me. And so he said—my cousins and I, we want to play bocce ball. But the bocce was, you know, locked inside the cantina. But it was a—a—a window open about that much. The top part of the window, just crack enough so I could fit in it. So my cousin pushed me up. You know, I went up inside, got the bocce ball, push it outside. And the only way I could come out was feet first. You know, if I climb out. And all of a sudden, I—somebody pulled my feet out. And so [chuckles] I don't have to tell who it was. It was my father. Man, I got it that time. That—what he's—tried to te—he told me—that time, he told me—he—he hit me. I cried and I had scars and everything else but what he tried to tell me, he says, "If somebody go—robs something on that cantina right now, they're going to blame you because you're the guy went in and out of there. Or somebody could break in, you know, and they saw you and they did it. And they're going to blame you because Tony can fit into that hole." You know what I mean? So he had—he had—every time he'd punish us, probably, he always had a message with it. And—which I think it's important. You know, I—I think it's—I did with my kids. Every time I punished them, was a message with them that Tom—this is wrong or that's right. You know, and that's—and I think it's worked now good for my kids. You know, and so on.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: And it's—being—I got to tell you this story.

LEVINE: Okay, good.

MANCINI: I mean, a husband, wife argues. And I was—I think it was during the war. This was, what, about five years old. Let's see, '44. Oh, I was five, six years old. And the Germans had pulled out, took the—they took our house over. They stole our horses and—and—and gas. Gasoline is drums inside the house.

LEVINE: This is in your town?

MANCINI: Right.

LEVINE: Oh, so the Germans were—

MANCINI: Oh, yeah. They were there.

LEVINE: —occupying? Were there soldiers in your town—

MANCINI: Right.

LEVINE: —a lot?

MANCINI: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: [unclear]?

MANCINI: Yeah. So they kick us out of the house. They use the house as, like—like I say, for tying horses and whatever. It has the barn in the back and everything else so one night, my father got feeling pretty good, as—because he was in the—World War II on what they called the [unclear] Campaign. And he was wounded, you know, on the legs, both legs. It was fortunate that he [unclear] have the legs on. Anyway. So, you know, one night he had an argument with my mother. I don't know what happened. He was feeling pretty good. And this place where we stayed, it was like three-room house and was about three families in it. And underneath the house was a stable with a bunch of—it was a couple, three cows and what have you, animals. I didn't know what was going on. I was just laying down in—they had—we had cots in the ground and stuff that—so I—somebody out—somebody picked me up and says, "You're going to go with me." You know, it was my father. And I said, "Well, what did I do wrong?" You know, in Italian. I—you know, so—"No." Said, "They don't deserve men in this house." He said, "And we got to get out of here." So we went and we slept downstairs in the—the stable with the animals. So I—next morning when I get up I said, "Wh"—I told my sister. I said, "What did I do wrong? I didn't do

anything wrong.” [chuckles] I said, “Just because my—my father—you know, Ma and Pa, they argued a little bit, I got to—I got to go sleep on the stable downstairs.” [laughter] So when he sober up, I told him about it. He said, “Jeez, I didn’t mean to do that.” But, you know. So—but we—we were real close. We—so, you know.

LEVINE: Hmm. Can you say anything about when your town was occupied by the Germans during World War II?

MANCINI: Was [clears throat]—it was—actually, we—the occupation was like friendly occupation, more or less. They just moved—they—was ahead of the front. The front was like, maybe, 20, 30 miles away from us. And then they swerved. They went around. Instead of coming around through the—the other side, they went around through the Naples side on the—on the—on the Mediterranean side. So we—we avoid most of the front, in other words. Okay, but we had—I remember it was 1943 or ’44 when we got kicked out of the house and the German came. They took over the house and they wanted to take my father. Then they found out my father was—they looked for the young people to let him go work on whatever they work, would all put ‘em—pump gas or whatever they did, bring ‘em to Germany, work on the factories. That’s what the saying was. They were saying they were looking for, like, 17, 18, age 19 or 20-year-old kids—guys that then wasn’t in the war, they were going to take to Germany, work in the factories. So all the young people was hiding all over the—all over the mountains up there. And we—you know, we—the area we was in, we was away from the—we don’t live right in the center of the town. We’re outside the town and they—they come in. They took over. So we escaped the house, me and my mother, my sisters and my father. And then they were looking for my father. They knew he was home. But when they found out, which I thought was pretty n—when they found out he was wounded from the war they left him alone. They didn’t bother him no more. And you know, we just went—then, because the other town, like I mentioned before, Scarfar, was—is down below the mountain from where we are. And the Ger—the—the—the American planes used to come in, you know, bombing and they used to disengage the bombs just about where we were. You can see the bomb come out of the plane and just land, you know, down to that town. And then we used to have a good time watching that thing blowing up, you know, as kids. One episode was by the German, what was there, that we refuged four Americans, pilots, and I wish we’d kept the paperwork, okay. And they stop overnight. We fed them and they slept in the grotto. We—we built a little grotto so we can hide during the bombing raids, you know. And we let ‘em sleep in there. And the next morning, the Germans came down and they questioned my father and my mother and want to know why was like, you can tell, somebody slept in the [unclear] there. So, you know, they told them that

we slept there, the kids, because we were afraid at night. You know, we slept in there, inside there, you know, so they took that and they left us alone, because they find out we harbored Americans, we would have been—it would have been the end of us.

LEVINE: Wow.

MANCINI: Um—

LEVINE: So then what happened to them?

MANCINI: They—they left and they went towards the mountains and to—to—I presume, to join the American force that was coming the other way. So I don't know if they made it. W—we had their names and I don't know what happened, during the move and what have you, that we went back from the farmhouse or the w—we call it farmhouse [unclear]. You know, it's just like four walls—and back to the house where we was in, those things just escaped us, anyway. So I wish we kept those papers now so—

LEVINE: [unclear]

MANCINI: —it would have been nice. But that would have led to us, names and everything else. They gave the address in the States and everything. I remember that vaguely, just like a dream, but we can't—

LEVINE: Oh.

MANCINI: Every time I go back there I look for them but I looked through all my mother's things and father's and I never could find 'em, just—

LEVINE: You mean you corresponded for—afterwards for a while?

MANCINI: No, we didn't.

LEVINE: Oh.

MANCINI: But they left us the—they us there so we—

LEVINE: [unclear].

MANCINI: You know, after that—after the war—you know, during the war we just—you know, we didn't think nothing of it. And after the war we was looking for these papers so we can write to them, you know—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MANCINI: —and see if they made it home or what have you and just, you know, we couldn't find the papers. So—

LEVINE: Mmm. Hmm. Well, [clears throat] did you have family members who had come to this country before you did?

MANCINI: I had a—an aunt that came over here in 1955 and—

LEVINE: Is this your mother's sister?

MANCINI: My mother's sister, right. And she's back in Italy now. But the reason, really—we actually—you d—you didn't ask that question but I have to tell you this. The reason we—I'm here is because, actually, I'm American. I was born in Italy but I'm American citizen.

LEVINE: Because your father was—

MANCINI: My mother.

LEVINE: Your mother.

MANCINI: My mother. I have a—my mother—my a—aunt was born—one was born in Conway, New Hampshire.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: And one, my mother, was born right down Newbury Street right here in Portland.

LEVINE: Oh.

MANCINI: And my grandfather came here as stonecutters and I've been trying to t—look through the archives in Castle in the Clouds up in Wolfborough [PH], New Hampshire. And I got a feeling that's what he worked when he come over here in 1900, my grandfather on my mother's side.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MANCINI: And—

LEVINE: He brought his whole family then?

MANCINI: He brought the whole family, had all the girls come over. And about three of 'em—there are five sisters in the family—two of 'em was born here and then one was born back—one back in Italy. And the other two

was old enough. They were, you know—my grandmother was here with him. They all came in the family by boat and I imagine in the 1800s [unclear]. I had—I had a good time coming over in the boat but I didn't—imagine what it was in the 1800s. I—you know. But they come over here and they worked—I know he worked as a stonecutter. And like I say, I—I can't find his name but I understand they kept the records of all the people that work on that castle there. I don't know if you heard about that, is—is a—

LEVINE: [unclear] is in New Hampshire?

MANCINI: Wolfborough, New Hampshire.

LEVINE: Wolfborough, right. Yeah.

MANCINI: And this was built by this multimillionaire from Boston, I guess. And so I'm pretty sure he worked there and he worked in the quarries in New Hampshire. And then when the work was—slacked off he moved back to Portland. Or he moved to Portland and he worked, longshoreman, w—waterfront—

LEVINE: Oh.

MANCINI: —for a while and then till my grandmother had my mother, because my grandmother was pregnant with my mother. She—he didn't want to travel, the trip to go back to Italy. And after my mother was born—she was about seven months old—and that's when they went back to Italy. And they never come back.

LEVINE: Because your grandmother wanted to go back or he wanted to go back?

MANCINI: I—I think it's like, oh, some immigrants today, they came over here and they like it, the country, like to make a few dollars. But Italy is Italy. Okay, and I have a couple of cousins that did the same thing. They came over. They worked for a while and just—they went back to Italy and stayed there. Right now. They're still in Italy right now.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: I mean, it's nothing wrong with that; I don't think. I just say—some people say, "Well, Jeez. Come over and make the money and then you go back." I mean, some people get so offended by it and I don't think they should because, after all, they are Italians or German or French, whatever they are, they come over here. And they work hard and they make a few dollars or whatever, because they work.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: And I'm—I haven't seen none of us in the welfare system. Okay, I never collect a dime from them yet.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: I hope—I say yet. I don't know. [chuckles] Maybe. You never know.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

MANCINI: But that's what they did. And so my grandfather felt that he have enough money to do whatever he wanted and went back to Italy. And he just—when, you know, he had enough to stay in this country.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MANCINI: And actually, when we went back to Italy he bought himself some land and some houses. And he did real well for himself. And some of the wealth was left to my mother's and my aunts. So—which wasn't lot. I mean, it was enough, you know, to make him—

LEVINE: Quite comfortable.

MANCINI: —pretty well to—comfortable guy in the town. He was the big chief there, you know, so—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MANCINI: And so that's a little background.

LEVINE: So you were an American cit—

MANCINI: An American citizen when I come over.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MANCINI: Really.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MANCINI: So—

LEVINE: Well, why did you personally decide to come over? And did you come over by yourself or did you come over with someone else?

MANCINI: No, I come over myself. The reason I come over here, I—like I say, I finished school. I didn't—I finished my high school in Italy and then I went—I—one year—well, in Italy, the high school is—we—you have to remember, in Italy goes six days a week and eight hours a day, used to. Not anymore either. That's changed over there too. Okay. So we—in the '50s, '50, '51, '52, Italy was really big recession, was nothing going on anywhere. And it was a law, said, you know, if you had anybody was born in this country, what have you, if you have somebody you could go to, like a sponsor—not a sponsor in a way, but some—an address to come to—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: [clears throat] And—and I didn't vote in Italy. I didn't go in the army yet. Okay. And I was able to still retain my citizenship papers, or citizenship, not the papers. So we—you know, my mother asked me, says, "Would you want to go in America?" I says, "I don't care." Because I think being away from home since I was 10, 11 years old, going to Rome, my uncles and what have you and away to school, I got used to being away anyway. So I says, "Yeah, no problem. I—I'll go." You know?

LEVINE: [coughs]

MANCINI: And so we wrote to my aunt. And so they wrote a letter back that says, you know, from the consul, say the religion, address and everything else and went to the consul in Rome. You know, that was the first—you know, that wasn't the first time I was in Rome because I knew Rome pretty well. So I went for the American Consul of Rome. I got the paperwork done and there we are. But I waited about eight months to get all the paperwork done, because at that time, I quit school. I didn't go to school no more, which I should have stayed in school. I—

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

MANCINI: So, and that, you know, would decide, you know, to come over because the recession was—I mean, there was no work. I mean, I see a [unclear] with engineers, professors. I see schoolteachers without a job. I mean, it's—so I go to school in Italy. I finish my—whatever. I—I wanted to be electrical engineer at that time. I don't know if I would have made it or not anyway but, just saying. And I see two or three of my friends, older friends. They're finished in school and live in different towns that didn't have no jobs. They're walking the streets. And—and so with that in mind, I said, "Jeez, if there's a chance to go, let me try it.

I—I'll go. If I don't like it, come back." You know, that's—that's where we left it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: And that's why I come over here.

LEVINE: So you were thinking that you might come back. You—it wasn't like you were leaving forever and you were never going to see your mother and father again. Is that—

MANCINI: Well, at that time, it was like you come over for a couple of years and see how you like it and, you know—and that was, you know, and, you know, I'll go back to Italy if I like to, maybe bring my mother and father because she was still American citizen. I come back and [unclear] America and so I—you know, that was the idea at that time.

LEVINE: Do you have—did you have an idea of what you would do when you got here?

MANCINI: Well, in Italy, I—and during my schools I took welding. I was certified welder in Italy, which doesn't mean that in the States. But it did mean a lot. When I come over here I found a job of welding and I really didn't like it. In Italy, you weld. You work in a machine shop. You do all kinds of things. In this country, when I came over here you put a welder—you got a welder stick in your hand. You work for eight hours welding and I just didn't think it was my cup of tea. So I—I talked to my uncle, you know, at that—which I stayed with them. My Uncle Danny, Aunt Annie, that—that—the aunt and uncle who was here and I says, you know, "Check with your contractor guy you're working with, see if he needs anybody to work with." And he says, "Yeah." So the next day he said, "Tony, got a job if you want, pick and shovel." I said, "No problem. I just—I got to get out of that machine shop." You know, it was just—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: Was driving me crazy. First of all, it wasn't the work either but it was just the—you know, the—the language that was—language barrier and everything, [unclear]. You know, I wasn't really getting along with the guys. And I only worked there for about two, three weeks. So went and worked with my uncles, pick and shovel and was a contractor at the time—contract name of Sam Asido [PH], which was the same town as with come from. And I worked with them for about a year and a half.

LEVINE: Was this in Portland?

MANCINI: In Portland, right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MANCINI: So during that time, then, you know, that—that was fun. You know, my hands would bleed a little bit because I wasn't—got used to working pick and shovel. But I—you know, I bear it out.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: So—

LEVINE: I—if we could back up for a second, you—you took the Roma, was the ship?

MANCINI: Right.

LEVINE: Was there anything about the voyage that—

MANCINI: Oh, yeah. I was—

LEVINE: —stands out? [coughs]

MANCINI: It was the first time ever been at sea. And so when we get to Naples, I—you know, my father walked to me on the boat and I had the suitcase. And I had—I think it was 30 or 40,000 liras. That's what I had in my pocket. And—

LEVINE: What would that be equivalent to?

MANCINI: Oh, that's about—well, in today's money, 40,000, about \$20. Okay?

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: So, you know, I'm by myself. Now, I'm really alone. Okay. In Rome was my uncles. There—and, you know, I went to school, Pescara, go back and forth, but now, that's it. Just me, at 18 and a half, bango.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: So I went down to the cabin. It was, like, in the lower cabin. The porthole was just level with the water. I said, "Oh, Jesus. What's happen—if it sinks, this thing?" You know. But that's all right. I says, "No problem." So I put my suitcase away. My father went back out and there I am by myself. So that was quite a—you know, that was kind of tough. But I met this professor. I can't remember their names. He

taught Italians in a university of—in New York and he was going back [unclear] vacation like a tourist. He was on the same cabin. And then was supposed to be four people on that cabin, ended up being just three of us. And was a guy named Tony Lucco [PH], which, you know, we kept in contact for all these years. And I haven't heard from him in the past three, four months. I don't know what's happened but we—you know, since 1956 to now, we're still in contact.

LEVINE: Wow.

MANCINI: Ah—

LEVINE: More than every three or four months, you—you hear from him more than that?

MANCINI: No, usually goes by a couple of years, a year and a half. And once in a while, I get a phone—or I call him and, you know, we get shooting the breeze. But we're going different ways anyway, so that's—I mean, it was a good relationship at that time. And Tony was a fisherman from Naples Bay so—and we got talking, the three of us, before the [unclear], says, "Jeez, we're in the same cabin," and, you know, we met each other, three of us. And this professor tried to teach us English because I never took—I took English in—in school but, you know, grammar English and if you don't speak, forget it. You know, you can't remember. And then I was away from school almost a year before I come over. You know, and so the English was kind of tough. I didn't know anything. So he—you know, he tried to teach the English and everything else. So I told him, "One thing I'm worried about." I said, "I've never been on the ocean before. All right. And if I get seasick, what do you guys do?" He said, "Tony." He says, "Don't worry about it. I'll take care of you." I says, "All right. That's good." So then you know what's got to—you know, what you have to do. And that professor said the same thing. I says, "Okay." So sure enough, we—and it's—we started to have a good time. Every—we went from Naples, like I say, to Genova, from Genova to Barcelona, from Barcelona, Halifax, Halifax to New York. So on the trip from Gen—Naples to Genoa was—they had to be—the Mediterranean was nice and calm. It—just—just like riding on a—"Jeez," I said, "This is great." And every night they had dancing. You know, Jeez, 18-year-old kid, no parents to worry about. Right? Wow. You know, had a good time.

LEVINE: Was this boat—was there—were there different classes and was this—

MANCINI: Yeah, was first, second and—and passenger—

LEVINE: And third?

MANCINI: —or tour—whatever you want to call it. [chuckles] Was the dummies down below, right.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

MANCINI: But we all had a good time. We was—you know, we were—couldn't go to first class. Okay. And then we didn't want to go to first class because, you know, the—these people were—like today, I don't like stuffy people anyway, so that's what they were.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: And—but the second class, we'd be able to go up there and they had the dances every night, you know, and so, like I said, we went to Genoa. We got off, the Genoa. We had a few hours. We went—walk around Genoa a little bit. Then from there, we went to Barcelona in order to, I don't know if refueling or I don't know if they picked more people up. I don't know what they did. But, you know, we stayed on the ocean. We didn't go into Barcelona. The trip was great. I met a couple of people from Canada. You know, I have some pictures at home, you know, that—I still got 'em.

LEVINE: Oh.

MANCINI: And, you know, it was f—it was fun. We had a—I had a good time. I spent every dollar I had, or every dime I had. It wasn't a lot. And, you know, it's—when I arrived in New York it was—I had 50 cents in my pocket and that's all I had. But it—on—on the boat itself, like, then we go to the dance. I met a couple of girls from Can—that were from Italy, were going to Canada. And we'd date, like. You know, that was fun. You know, it was a good time and they had bingo—bingo every night, you know, and, like I say, and—and the food was great. I mean, just—we ate, you know—

LEVINE: Huh.

MANCINI: It was unbelievable. And the tough time we had was about a couple of days before we got to Halifax. We got on a big storm and they had ropes. I said, "Jeez, what the hell's going to happen now?" You know. But they tied the ropes out so you can—don't fall when you walk around. So and then I told Tony. I said, "Remember what you told me; you're going to take care of me. Right?" He says, "Yeah, no problem. Don't worry about it." Come to find out, he was the sick one. I—I took care of him.

LEVINE: [laughs]

MANCINI: Don't ever let him live it down now. Every time I talk to him, I say, "Remember that. I took care of you. You and that professor, was a guy from the mountains taking care of you guys from the sea." I said, "What's the matter with you guys?" You know? But—

LEVINE: So what happened when the ship came into the New York harbor?

MANCINI: Well, we stopped at—right at the Statue of Liberty. I—I think we arrived, was early morning, was—I don't know if it was one or two o'clock in the morning. And we waited right at the—right at the Statue. And on the—the captain—I remember vaguely, it couldn't dock till—was seven o'clock in the morning or daylight. They were waiting for daylight to come in or what have you to dock. Okay, so were right at the harbor right there for almost all—well, three or four hours. And then there was a time—they told us—they showed, like, New York, the skyline, the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, you know, Manhattan Island, that, you know, they show all it's—and they talked about—and it's when—the first time I found out that immigrants before us—I think it was just suspended for a couple, three years.

LEVINE: Right, two years.

MANCINI: I think in 1952, '53—

LEVINE: '53—

MANCINI: —'54 that we—otherwise, we're supposed to stop there and go in. Okay. But now, they don't have to do it anymore. You—we can go right in. So they told us a little bit about it but I didn't pay attention. I says, "Yeah, okay. Big deal." You know?

LEVINE: Yeah.

MANCINI: But then, you know—and we had—we docked and—

LEVINE: You docked, like, at Battery Park in Manhattan? Like the—

MANCINI: Yeah, right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MANCINI: Right at the waterfront with the waterfront—

LEVINE: And did you get any kind of examination or any kind of—

MANCINI: No, because I was citizen at that—non-citizen people had to go through different areas, okay. Because I was citizen, I went through like you would do today in a, you know—in a—when you arrive in a port with the airplanes today, you know. So I did—I just met my aunt and uncle and, like I say, like, I was broke, so—oh, one thing I got to tell you, like they say everybody wants you bring stuff over in this country. Now, even today, cheese, you can bring it over. Nobody says nothing. Even today, prosciutto, salami, [unclear], you can't bring it. So we know that. We don't bring it anymore. But those days, I didn't know it. So they gave me a—a half a prosciutto, some homemade salami, which is real delicious. I'm—my water's mouthing right now.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

MANCINI: And they—you know, and I kept telling them today, "Some people say take it. Some people don't take it." So when we arrive in Halifax, all these friends that I made on the boat, they had all that stuff to take with them because they're going to Montreal and Toronto. The Customs took everything. They took it all. Now, what they did with it, they ate it, what—we don't know. Okay.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: So from New—so from Halifax is three day with a boat to come to New York. And I says, "Okay, you guys. We're going to have parties every night. I'll bring all my cold cuts out. You know, I've got the prosciutto, the salami. No way we're going to let those guys take 'em. Might as well eat it." So the professor, "What are you going to tell the people you got to bring the stuff to?" "They took it. What do you mean, what am I going to tell 'em?"

LEVINE: [laughs]

MANCINI: They—might as well eat it. I said, "No, I—I'm going to tell 'em we ate." We tell the story and we—we had a party on the boat. Said, "If they get upset, it's their problems." Sure enough, every night, we ate all the—the whole thing, even some of the sailors, you know, the guys that work on the boat there because then half the boat was empty because went to Canada. Was only a few people going to New York. We had a good time. We ate everything up. So when I landed in New York and my aunt says, "I have a letter," you know, to her. She said, "Where's [unclear]?" You know, "Where's the prosciutto?" I says, "Auntie, we ate it." You know—

LEVINE: [laughs]

MANCINI: She started laughing. They says—because they took—she—when she come over, they took hers. They took her—away. You know, they took it away from her.

LEVINE: Oh.

MANCINI: So—

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

MANCINI: But—

LEVINE: So, can you think of any first impressions of this country, like the first few days or weeks that—that you were here? The things that struck you, particularly, about America?

MANCINI: Well, the impression that I—after I got that ride from—I still can see the road coming from New York to Portland. A friend of my aunt's, who lived right down the street from me at—a friend of my aunt's come pick us up with her car. And looking at the roads and—and certain area, you see the panoramic view of certain—the area, you know, like coming from your—Connecticut. I didn't know where I was at that time but [chuckles], you know, now I know where it is, you know, coming through Connecticut, Rhode Island because, well, right—course—of course, at that time you don't have 495. You don't have anything.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: And I think we took about 12—12, 13 hours to come back. And it's—you know, the vast—how big it was—you know, that's—it really impressed me. And—and, of course, the skyline in New York, that was quite an impression at that time, even though it was [unclear] many as that today, but it was quite a few tall buildings. We never seen buildings that tall before.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: So those are the things and—and that—because the language barrier was a problem. I found out how when I went to work and that's—you know, it was pretty tough to communicate. And that's when I started taking, you know, little night school and lessons, what not.

LEVINE: Do you remember when it started to click? That, you know, you could actually speak?

MANCINI: That—when I first came—like I said, worked a couple weeks on that foundry thing there, which I didn't like. Then I went and worked for the general contractor. I worked with a couple of guys. Matter of fact, one is in California right now as a lawyer. They were summer schooled—I mean, during the summer they work in construction. But they go to school. There's a—they—they were going to, I don't know, Bates or Bordon [PH] or what have you for becoming lawyers. And they—when [clears throat]—when we used to work in Brunswick in the construction company—from here to Brunswick, so about 45 minutes, an hour. And I'd ride with these guys. They'd pick me up in the morning, back and forth. So all the way out and all the way back they'd teach me, you know, to say different words in English.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: And that's how I started learning. You know, like, we started with some of them, like the pen and pencil and good morning. You know, and they started conversation and what have you. And of course, being young, I wasn't—you know, like I say, 18 and a half, 19 years old at that time. And it—I'm not saying I'm bad looking or nice looking, what have you, but we started dating some of the girls, American girls.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: Okay. That we had to communicate, you know what I mean? And so that—that really helped us. You know, me and my cousins. You know, it really helps out to—started learning the language.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: And of course, then we joined the night school. They have—at Portland High School they had adult education, which they still do today. And I took some English course. The trouble of it is, like, supposed to go three nights a week, but you meet some girl so you go one night a week, you know. That was—I should have stayed there a little longer, really.

LEVINE: Well, you were learning English anyway, weren't you?

MANCINI: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: [laughs]

MANCINI: No better way, you know. So—

LEVINE: So then after you worked with the pick and shovel in the construction, then what happened?

MANCINI: Well, [clears throat] during that time I met my wife, you know, cause I didn't know I was going to get married either. So that was all [unclear]. I—you know, it's—she's—her mother—my wife's mother's come from the same town we come from. And my mother, ironically, when they were growing up in Italy, they played together. That was the child's—you know, so she told me, says, "When you go in America, go see Mariette." [PH] And her name was Mariette. And I says, "Yeah, no problem." So when I went to my aunt I had a couple little package my mother gave me to take to her. So went by a couple of weeks, two, three weeks after we come over and we went and visited them and, you know, it—and they had five girls too. So I said, "Jeez, it's just like your friend, like my mother." You know, my mother's family was—they had five girls, you know. And, you know, we got talking. I saw Phyllis. She was my age, you know, and she still is, you know. And, you know, I didn't think nothing of it. That's a nice looking girl, says, "Oh, all right." So in a—you know, and I go up visiting my mother's friend, Mariette, but I see a daughter there and all the girls are there, you know, shooting the breeze. And—and I met one of my brother-in-laws now, but at that time was just a friend. We were—on Friday nights I used to go out and they used to call me up. They used to come to the house, "Come on. We'll go have a couple of beers." So—because, you know, those days was 17, 18 years old, I think it was, you'd be able to go to the bar anyway. So I'd go have a couple of beers with them. And just like—was like a brother-in-law to them. But I even wasn't going to go with that—my wife at that time. You know, I—she's a nice looking girl but [unclear]. I had my good time, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: So one day, I think it was the last time I was working Keene, New Hampshire. Never forget that—with this contractor. Still with them. And I worked with this Italian guy named Delonzo [PH]. I'll never forget him, Vincenza Delonzo. And the only thing I don't know how to order in the morning was pancakes. You know, I learned how to say pancakes and I was—I like it anyway. So he said, "Tony, that's all you know how to order in the morning." I said, "That's so I know what it is. I know what I'm eating." You know, I don't know what other to order. So he started ordering some other stuff anyway, but while I was working I'd get hurt. I—you know, I was inside of this manhole and what have you. I get hurt and I said, "Jeez." You know, I—my back was really bothering me. So they said—well, I can't take it. This was on a Tuesday. So the rest of the week I didn't do anything, just sat around with them and everything else. They brought me back and I went to the doctor's, you know. So when I went to the doctor's, I—and the doctors says, "You're going to have to stay off—you can't work for a couple, three weeks." So

meanwhile, I'm—got nothing to do. Three weeks with nothing to do on my hands. So—and I used to go up—down Congress Street. You know, go to the movies and stuff. And then once in a while I'd see my wife to be—I didn't know this—Phyllis come out of school. You know, this—I say, "Hi, Phil." Because I knew it's—try to speak Italian to her. And she says, "Can I take your books?" Like in Italy, you do that. The girls, you know, they take the books, carry home. You know, it's—and she used to make fun of me. And I says, "What the hell does this guy want?" You know? So—and we did that for, you know, a couple of weeks and I—I didn't say nothing. So one night I says, "Jeez, I'll ask her to go to the movie. Maybe that'd be good." Right? So I asked her and she accepted. Was me and my cousin, Sammy. I'll never forget that. So—and I didn't have any money. I had enough money to buy the books—I mean, to buy the tickets. So I said to Phyllis, "Please, don't order any popcorns."

LEVINE: [chuckles]

MANCINI: 'All right? Because I don't have any money.' And she—all she [unclear] she understand me. The first thing she says—Sammy asks his girlfriend—he had a girl with him to—he says, "Do you want popcorn?" Says, "Yeah." Phyllis says, "I want popcorn." I says, "I"—"Sammy," I says. "I didn't get any money. You got any money?" So, fortunately, Sammy had about 10, 15 cents. I don't know what the hell it cost at that time. I'll never forget. And now I ask—I said, "Every time I ask you to do something, you never pay attention." Even today, I tell her. You know?

LEVINE: [laughs]

MANCINI: All right. We—going together and, because I stay with her for, you know—that was—went about a year and half together and we got married. We got married in 1958 so—

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did—was there ever a time when you wanted to go back?

MANCINI: A lot of times. The first couple, three weeks I really didn't click until I started to go out, I think. The first couple, three weeks I stayed around the house and stuff, go to work and come home, you know. So my aunt told me, said, "Tony, you better go out a little bit." You know, I went out. We found a bar. They had a pool table and stuff, played pool. I missed—I missed that. You know, I—like I say, I was away before but not that completely separated, that far. I mean, like Rome, Pescara, three hours with the train—those days, was five hours with a train but, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: Here, there was like a permanent thing. It was kind of tough. That was hard but, you know, you get—you get—adjust to it, I guess.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: So—

LEVINE: Do you remember when you felt really like you were happy you were here and you knew that you wanted to stay and—

MANCINI: I think—I—I don't know if the marriage had something to do with that because a lot of time, to be honest with you, I felt like leaving, go back and leaving her here, you know. I mean, if she hears me say that she's going to—

LEVINE: [chuckles]

MANCINI: —wh—which is okay, anyway.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-hmm.

MANCINI: But it—you know, I—it's—Jeez, you got to stick it out, you know, and—and to try to move along, you know. And so—and then the kids came. Okay. That was it. I—I wouldn't—after I got married and had the first child, I'm—I'm here. Matter of fact, I still was working pick, shovel at that time and, you know—and I was making in 1958, '59 when the kids was born—I still was making \$3.00 an hour; 3.50 was pretty good money then.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: But, you know, I didn't think that was my future, you know, working pick and shovel all my life and—

LEVINE: What—what did you—what happened to bring you to where you are now?

MANCINI: Well, it's—you know, it's—my wife, she's—she's a pain in the neck but she really never questioned what I wanted to do. And she always started telling me not to do this and don't do that, you know, and—but she was really—you know, she doesn't nag me about it. She does, certain things. She—every—I think every women nags anyway, really. [chuckles] Maybe I shouldn't say that in front of you, right. But, you know, at that time what came about, it's—we got married. I really got a

big blowout. I mean, when I got married we had—we went to a honeymoon. And that—that's really upsets me about Italians. And I—I—we—we have good things, bad things about ourselves. But it's—this was one of the bad things that happens. I wouldn't do this to my men today and—but I—it was done to me by Italian people. I went to my guy that I worked for at that time. I had changed jobs from Sam Asido on—working with contract—name of Romano. And I told him. I said, this is—was in April and I says—his name was Al. I said, "Al." He's dead not, anyway, but which I confronted him years and years later about this problem. I said to him. I said, "Look, I'm going to get married in May." Okay. May 8—9th. Oh, boy, 10—9—10. May 10th.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: And, you know, "I'm going to take a week off and go on our honeymoon." I don't have any money but I think—they say in America when they get married they give a lot of money. You know, people brings envelopes and stuff. I hope I get enough to go on a honeymoon. And he say, "Okay, no problem." So, you know, I—this could go on for hours but it—so I got married and I—nothing of it. I didn't invite him. I didn't think nothing. I didn't invite nobody. My mother-in-law, God rest her soul, and the family did everything. The only people I invited, I had my aunt and uncle at that time, they moved to Boston. Okay. And I was left here because I was going to get married. And the work was scarce in Portland at that time so they took the family, went to Boston and I end up here, stay by myself. And matter of fact, I spent the last three, four months in my wife's house, you know, because I had no place to go. So we got married and I—we got a few friends that—Italian people. My mother-in-law took care of everything. She paid for everything. I think I bought the flowers. I don't know if I bought that [unclear]. I think—I know I bought a ring. I know I did that. And I paid a hundred bucks too. That was good.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: She still got it too. So [clears throat]—and it—when I come back from the honeymoon, all right, and it's—went back to the job. There's no work. I said, "What do you mean, there's no work?" I says, you know, "I got married now." I said, "I—I got a house." I opened up an apartment. You know, I had to pay the bills. I—I put a water heater in, you know, and I had to do all kinds of—I did a lot of work myself, painting and everything else. I says, "You got no jobs? Are you crazy?" "There's no work." They says, "You're laid off." I says, "Well, thanks a lot." And it—I couldn't find a—there was—I—I don't say that you should have kept me working. Don't get me wrong. Okay. But I think at least give me a couple weeks, you know, to find me a job or something. You know, find

something else. And I was three months without work. We lost the apartment and we—you know, we just—we said forget it, you know, told the guy that—was Italian guy that—I says, “Look, I can’t pay the rent anymore. We’re going to get out.” And my mother-in-law paid the—whatever rent had to be paid. So, fortunately, there’s an apartment she owned and it was empty and we move into that one. And we were paying \$25 a month for rent, which that helped quite a bit.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: And I still don’t have a job. My wife worked in Nissen’s [PH] Bakery at that time. So—and it’s—you know, she’s supporting—now, she let me forget it. Every time we talk about it, “Remember, I support you for at least three, four months.” Was a carpenter working there and he says—his name is Tony Polanza [PH]. I said, “Tony.” I says, “Jeez, if you need any help, you know, I’ll do anything. You know, I’ll—I’ll work.” He says, “Yeah, if I need somebody I’ll let you know.” And meanwhile, this contractor called me to go back to work with him, not the same guy, another contractor, still in construction and they were making 3.50 an hour at that time. And Tony said, “I would have hired you, Tony, but I got another guy that I promised a job. But it’s this guy named Cassidy. Jim Cassidy is electrical contractor. He’s by himself. The helper just quit and he’s looking, a helper.” So I says, “Well, Jeez. I’ll go talk to him. I [unclear] was the Fourth of July. I took my father-in-law with me because he could speak English a lot better than I am. And fortunately, I get down to see Jim, right. His mo—his wife is Italian girl name Amaros [PH], which relate to the Amaros Sandwich Shop. Okay. So Ellen—so I could talk Ellen more than the old man, you know. So I told him was—you know, what I wanted to do and everything else. So we talked for about three, four hours and I had a couple drinks. And I didn’t drink that much those days; I was feeling pretty good. So they gave me the job. Jim says, “The only thing I can give you, cost—gonna start at a dollar an hour.” I says, “Oh, boy.” So I don’t know how I’m going to explain this to my wife. I’m making 3.50. We’re going to go down to a dollar an hour? So—and I—I never forget that because after we—we was leaving. They had a little baby in the carriage, the top of the carriage closed. They cut a little finger off, you know, the side of the fingers. So my father-in-law says, “There goes the job.” I said, “We must have been hemon—you know, demon to go down there and the kid got—cut his finger off.” So anyhow, I came home. I got the job. I got the job. I came home and told my wife about it. I says, “You know, we’re going to be tough.” But we had it tough anyway so what difference it make? You know, it can’t be any tougher than we had. “And we have to talk to your mother. Maybe we can’t pay the rent for a few months until I get going. But I think it’s a good chance for me to

learn a trade. That's what I want—I think it's what I want to do.” And that's what—I stayed with him for—you know, for eight years.

LEVINE: And then you—that's how you learned the electrical—

MANCINI: That's—I went into the electrical—I took an ICS course. I went to night school in [unclear], in South Portland, yeah. You know, they helped me with the English and they helped me because I had to learn all the—the trades that I needed to—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: —for the electrical work. And it's 1966 is when I started. I was with him for eight years. I went with him late part of '58 and I worked with him till 1966. Matter of fact, ironically, I went in business May 9th. That's why 9 and 10—that's [chuckles]—

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

MANCINI: You know, it's kind of coincidence. You know, so—

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And Mother's Day comes in there too [unclear].

MANCINI: Right, right. We got—we got all kinds of holidays celebrating that time now so—and that's—really, that's the way the thing started.

LEVINE: So you—so you learned what you needed to know and you worked on it for eight years and—and—and went to school—

MANCINI: I could a went—I couldn't a went in business myself earlier but I didn't have the drive. I—I—I—not that I didn't have the drive. Every time I'd mention it to my wife she'd say, “Jeez, you know, now we making”—I was—that was making, like at most, \$4, 3.75—\$4.00 an hour again. We're doing pretty good. And, you know, we had two—two kids at that time. Three. And so with Gino [PH]—I mean, with the kids coming up and I need more money. And it's—it was, like I say, eight years and I—I do the work myself. And I—I was—you know, I—I never afraid to work anyway so I went to Jimmy and I said, “Jim.” I said, “I need another 50 cents an hour. I have a lot of people offering me a job, 50 cents an hour more than you paid me. But I won't leave you for 50 cents an hour. You know, I—it isn't worth it. If they give me a buck, buck and a half, a dollar, dollar and a half more, maybe I would. But, you know, 50 cents ain't worth leaving it.”

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: And he says, "Tony, I can't pay anymore than that." I says, "All right. No problem. I didn't think nothing of it. I—we—and a matter of fact, even today, I know where the house is that we was wiring at that time. And I go by there most of the time. And at—this gentleman was a sheet rocker from Lewiston, Maine. I forgot his name. And he said, "Tony." And we were, you know, like guy sits on the job. They—eating lunch and they talk about family, talk about money, talk about, "We all should make more money." And I'm pretty sure my men does that today. Okay. And, you know, he said, "There's this guy"—first, he asked me, "Do you have a license?" I says, "Yeah. I've got both of them. I've got the master license. I'm—I could go in business tomorrow if I want to. But I really don't want to start." And, you know, "And I really don't feel comfortable because the only people I know is Jimmy's customers."

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: "And I don't feel comfortable taking customers away from Jimmy." And he says, "Yeah, but there's this guy in Rumford, Maine." Okay. Which is about two and a half—two hours from here.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: "Is looking for a electrician. The guy that was doing it is—was from Lewiston. He was traveling to Rumford to do the work and they—they don't get along. He's going to get rid of him." Because he did the sheetrock up there. I said, "Jeez, Lewiston—if he can go from Lewiston to Rumford, do the work, I can go from Portland to do the work. You know, it's only another 40 minutes away."

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: So that's the only time I ever lied to J—to Jimmy. The next couple days went by. I said, "Jim." You know, I called Jim up that morning. I says, "Jimmy." I says, "I can't come to work. I don't feel good today." All right. So I took the car. I just bought a car. And I went to Rumford.

LEVINE: Okay. Let me pause here. I need to change the tape.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A]

LEVINE: Okay. So you take the car and went to Rumford.

MANCINI: Went to Rumford and met Mr. Landry. And I—you know, like I say—make a long story—this could go—you know, this—about 40 years of it is really—

LEVINE: [chuckles]

MANCINI: I—I met him and I—I told him what I was doing. I says, “I never figured a job in my life.” Okay. “The only thing is,” I says, “I saw the work that the guy did for you. I know I can do better work than he can. So that’s—that’s guaranteed, I can do. But the price, I don’t know.” I said, “I’m going to give you a price but if I’m too low, you’ve got to tell me because I don’t know what it’s going to cost to do stuff. I’ve never done it before.” He says, “Go ahead. Just give me a price and then I’ll talk to you.” So I got to a little restaurant named Lerusta [PH] down in Mexico—Mexico, Maine, which is next to Rumford. And I went there, took a—matter of fact, I still got the little book that I figured that job with. Okay. And I went back to him. I said, “It’s going to cost you \$325 to wire the house.” Wiring a house for 325 bucks. That’s with light fixtures and everything. He says, “You’re \$25 too high.” I says, “Jeez. I don’t know.” I says, “I—I don’t know think I can do it for 300.” He says, “Well, you do the first one for 300. Okay? And if you do a good job I’ll give you 350 the next one.” I says, “It’s a deal.” Then I ask, “How many houses you do in a year?” Or—you know, because now I’m look—how much work I could get, right?

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: He said, “You just get the job. You wondering how much you’re going to do.” He said, “First, let’s see if you can do it.” So now I’ve got to come home and tell Jim about it. So I’m going to leave him. And I—I gave him a—three weeks, whatever he wanted, you know, too, because all I had, that, and that’s it. And—and that’s where I started up there in Rumford. And I was up there for three years, went up every—like, three times a week, twice a week, depends. We could go on—[unclear] went up, you know, working.

LEVINE: So this was a man on construction who was—who was hiring you for the electrical part? [unclear]

MANCINI: He was building—he built houses in Rumford.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MANCINI: And, you know, so and that’s what—when I first started. I started more or less in residential work and, as year went by, you know, the—of course, the kids got bigger, you know, and so I started things that—

residential work. There's good money in it but it just—it doesn't give you the freedom that—that I have today. And finally, we decided, you know, to go into commercial, you know, and spread out, you know, do commercial, residential. So we kept both aspects going, which is working out fine.

LEVINE: And are you [clears throat] only—[clears throat] are you exclusively doing work in Portland now?

MANCINI: No, we go—we cover areas—I call it—what they call it, the—the avenues or the turnpike route. I like to stay within maybe 10, 15 miles outside of the turnpike or, now, 95 too, so—which is easy travels. We go to the—we've been to Bangor. We've been to North Conway's and what have you. But I try to stays—like, Augusta, that 30, 40 miles area. We—you know, the loop that we like to cover, 40 miles.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: You know, so sometime we go a little beyond that but I like to stay within that corridor. That way there, it's easy to travel because most of my guys come from this area.

LEVINE: How many people do you employ at this point?

MANCINI: Right now, we've got 35.

LEVINE: Oh.

MANCINI: But it's—all of us are about 38, counting the office and everything else.

LEVINE: Hmm. Wow.

MANCINI: So it's—it's grown quite a bit.

LEVINE: Yeah. So do you—do you feel proud of yourself for having—

MANCINI: I—I—

LEVINE: —built this up and—

MANCINI: Not really. I don't know. It's just work, I think. What I'm proud of is my kids and the family. It's—the rest of it, it goes with it, I guess.

LEVINE: Well, tell me your wife's—your wife's name is Phyllis?

MANCINI: Right.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

MANCINI: DePetro [PH]. DePetro, Antonio. DePetro, his name is. She's—you know, she done her thing. She really stood behind me. You know, I—did all kinds of other things. I venture out in real estate and what have you and—and it's—we had a good time, a tough time. But she's—she done well with the kids. She brought the kids up real well. And—but the three months she worked, she still reminds me of that so—

LEVINE: [chuckles] And how—and what about your children? What are their names?

MANCINI: My oldest boy is named—believe it or not, his first name is Rosario Anthony, which we call him Anthony, because was afraid in school they were going to plug this little nickname, Rosie, on him, so—which was kind of tough. Then the next is Gino, Michael Gino. That's the—is downstairs right now. And I have a daughter named Jeanine, which is—they have three years apart. And then we start a second family. I got a—a kid named John. He's 28 years old. So—

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: I—the kids really—my—like I say at the beginning of the conversation here that school is important. And I made sure they all got college degrees, graduation. College degrees. And Gino's—well, I should have started from the top [unclear] be better. The oldest boy is—he went to Brown University, graduated from medical school in Vermont University. Today he's a orthopedic surgeon. He's doing real well. I'm very proud of him. I mean, you know, it's—it's [unclear]. [clears throat] Gino is a electrical engineer. He graduated from the University of Maine. He's—he's doing well. I mean, he's going to take this thing over in the next couple of years anyway. Actually, he's taking over right now anyway, so—and it's no big deal. So I can go play golf.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

MANCINI: And my daughter graduated from La Salle University and—and she—she has a real estate license now. She got a [unclear] license. But, you know, she got a family and three kids so—and she's still selling real estate too. So she's doing real well.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: Plus, she run my real estate part. We—whatever we accumulated. It isn't much but, you know. And then I got Johnny, is the baby of the family, which is—still isn't married. I wish he'd out of the house but—

LEVINE: [chuckles]

MANCINI: It's kind of tough. My wife will kill me, anyway but—

LEVINE: [chuckles]

MANCINI: No, he's doing real well. They're all doing real good. And that's—like I say, the important thing, make sure they went to school and—and they did. They did, all got diplomas, which is important to me.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: So they're doing well.

LEVINE: Well, do—when you look back on having come to this country and start a—started over again, do you think—do you think that experience did something to you? And do you think that there's—there are qualities that you have that, in part, come from that fact that you changed cultures and started from the bottom and—in a new place?

MANCINI: I—the only thing I tell my kids is nothing comes easy. All right. If you work for it—like I say, my father told me that, if you work for it, it's going to come through. Eventually, it's going to help you. I—I think the problem we have today is that—and I see with the young generation today is that they want everything too quick. It took a long time to get what I want. I had to work at it. And I—what—what this taught me over here—in Italy I had to work whether I wanted to. I—I think it's like—I'm going to say just the times. I think every—everybody emigrates in this country. They look to work for what they get. I—I don't know if it's true today or not but, you know, I'm not going to get into that because then I—then we got a problem here. But it—I—I—I—at work, [unclear] very important to respect the people you work for, your customers or your bosses. I—if you don't like the guy, nobody holds you down. This is—I have a big problem with unions and I had problem with unions in Italy and I got problems with unions in this country. Okay. Because they protect the weaks. And that's bad. That's bad for the economy and bad for everybody else. I think—and maybe it's—if this goes out, I got a problem. I don't care anyway, really. But it—not because of that. I—I think we needed it at one time and we need it probably today too, okay. But sometimes I think they don't like it themselves either, the—the guys that runs this—I don't want to say the name anymore. But it—what happens, you get a bunch of people that really—they are useless. They

don't want to work. And that's the problem we have. And it's—I [unclear] telling my kids, "It's very important that you do your job. Do it right and—and respect who you work for. And—and I think that eventually it's going to pay back." And that's, I think, what I try to install to them and I try to install my men to that. "You don't like me?" I says, "I don't have any problem with that. Okay. You don't like the people you work for. Just go someplace else. And that—I think that's what happened to me. I—I never had any problem with Jimmy. Jimmy told me what he can pay me and I had to take it. Now, you know, that's all he could pay me and that's all he could take it. And that was great. And it came the time I left him and I did my thing. But I—even today, I won't give a price to people that his kids does work for. That's me. Now, call me stupid.

LEVINE: Say that again. You wouldn't give a pri—

MANCINI: I wouldn't—if he—Jim Cassidy's kids today—got two boys in the business—does work for you and you call me for a price to give you a price for your jobs, I won't give you a price.

LEVINE: I see. Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: The respect of them. Now, maybe somebody else will, which is no problem. But I won't do it. And I—to me, I think that's very important and I said that when I first left Jimmy. And I told him. I says, "I won't go after your customers." Because I could have took 'em all away. I did all the work.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: I did all the work that Jimmy—all these customers, I was doing the work. Okay, so they all liked me. All I had to do, make a phone call and they would have gave me the work. But I didn't do it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: And I—and then when I tried telling my kids, "It's very important to respect whatever—you know, the person that you work with and everything else." And it—it paid off.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: And it's—and I think it's very important. I—it doesn't happen, that, today. No—not as much as it did years ago, but I think—and that—this is what—to answer your question, I guess—I don't know. Maybe I went a different way here but—

LEVINE: No, no. That's—it's great.

MANCINI: You know? So—and that's very important, I think.

LEVINE: Yeah. Now, just—how about the Italian side of you and the American side of you? Do—do—how—how do you think about yourself in—in those two ways?

MANCINI: Well, I'm Italian. Actually, I was—you know, I—I think I'm more Italian that people thinks I am because I respect Italian people. W—we have to respect each other. If we don't, we got a problem. I respect all the people. Don't get me wrong. But Italian, especially, I try to do different. I don't say favors, but I treat 'em different. Okay. You say, "That isn't right." Well, I have a lot of Jewish friends. They treat themselves different than they treat other people and they're good friends of mine. And they—I think it's great, you know, and it's—I think it's important that—for the [unclear] people to—to say, "Yeah, I'm from Italy. Jeez, you're—nice to meet you, from Italy." You know what I mean? And some people might say, "Well, Jeez. You're Italian. Big deal," you know. I don't look at it that way. And I think that's important. So then the American part, say, "Well, I'm American." And then I have to—so the American part, I think, is my business part. Okay. You know, and I say, "Yeah. You have to treat this guy right, you know, because it's a business or it's a friends that—Americans. I mean, we're talking Americans. All of us are Amer—immigrants anyway so, you know, I tell you German or—German or French or English and what have you, or Hispanic, black or—you know, I treat them the same as I would anybody else. But when I hear the guys from Lettomanoppello, you know, or Pescara, it's a different feeling. Now, if they feel the same way towards me, I don't know and I really don't care. You know, that's how I feel towards them. I—I—it's a perfect example. I was out where—what—last August, we were in Akron, Ohio, the—playing golf. Met this good—Mark Ferraro. You know, I says, "Jeez, you must be Italian." [unclear] I know Berldine—Geraldine Ferraro and everything. I says—he says, "No, I'm from—my parents—my mother's Italian and my father's from Spain." I says, "Come on. The name Ferraro, can't be from Spain." I says, "Of course, then Italy was all over the place anyway so you must be Italian." Okay. But it—I want to make him Italian with the name Ferraro, okay. But it was nice kid. Don't get me wrong. But it—just saying—when they say the name, Italy, it's different. They say, "Well, how can you serve two countries?" I mean, people fought for this country. They would—if we cannot serve two country, then you wouldn't have had no army in this country. Okay, because every one of us here are from different countries. So you serve the country you went but it

doesn't mean you forget the country you're from. And it's—that's what I'm—I know it's that—tell you the difference, the two.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MANCINI: I mean, America's been good to me. And I think I've been good to America. I pay all my taxes.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: You know, and it's—I—I don't have any problem. You know, [chuckles] I don't like it but I pay it. You know, but it's just where—that's—I think—and that's—I mean, I'm—maybe I—I don't want to get into the politics part of it but it—to answer your question, I—you know, it's—it's two different—and some people, maybe they don't—maybe I say they are fortunate or unfortunate, lucky or unlucky than—than I am, because I got two countries that I can say is mine. You know what I mean?

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: I'm American citizen but yet I was born in Italy. You know, and I—I enjoy both. So to summarize that, I really have a good time in both places.

LEVINE: Yeah, I think you're lucky that way.

MANCINI: Right.

LEVINE: How do you see your life now and—and for the future?

MANCINI: Well, the only—the only problem I have right now is my wife doesn't like to fly.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: Okay? Not really. [chuckles] This is just a—not a joke but I mean, I would like to travel more but I can't because she doesn't fly. And so we go somewhere, we drive a lot. You know, and so it's kind of restricted area to go. What I see in the future, I—I like to, you know, like I said, I told Gino, "This office, you'll have it when I die. And if you can't do that for me you've got a problem. I've got too much stuff here that can't move. I can't find no place to move all this stuff. You know, and so you'll have this when I go. Then you can redecorate it the way you want it." I think another couple, three years—I would like to stick around, you know, to see—really, transition over to—the business over to—to the kids. And once that's over, then I still gonna work but at my own pace. I

don't want the responsibility to pay the bills. I don't want to see the banknotes. I don't want to see none of that stuff.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: I just want to say, "Okay. We've got a job in Augusta. I'll go up there and go over with the foreman"—I don't—I'm not going to work anymore, even though I worked last Saturday. But I—you know, I will still work. If I have to, I would anyway. As long as I'm able, I will do it anyway. You know, this is the thing I want to do for him. You know, for the kids. It keeps me busy.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: You know. If, you know, that comes to it. Then if my wife really decide to go, then I retire completely, get my little pension and go. You know, and I would like to spend time in Florida, you know, play a little golf. I—I enjoy the game of golf a little bit. I'm not that good but, you know, I have a good time at it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MANCINI: So that's the things we look forward to doing, plus enjoy our grandchildren, I guess. You know, that's—and with my wife. But it—like I say, she always say, "I want to go Las Vegas." And every time I try to buy the ticket she's—she begs out, you know.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MANCINI: Makes it kind of tough, you know. So—

LEVINE: Is there anything else that you might—that you thought of maybe that we haven't covered that—that has to c—to do with coming here and staying here and what you've accomplished here and—

MANCINI: I—accomplishment, I don't know. I think—I don't know if I'd even measure accomplishment. I—I think the accomplish—the best accomplishment I have in this country today is my four kids and eight grandchildren. The rest of it, you know, that's—it's important. I mean, for the kids and everything else. It's like, I say I leave a legacy behind me? No, not really. You know, I—the only thing I wish I—I say, I leave behind me that they're going to remember the old man when I die. No, that's—you know, but it's—to say—I'm pretty sure other people that come from Italy accomplished a lot more than I have, which—but I—I wouldn't swap my family for theirs any—there is no money in the world can swap my family with theirs. That's—I don't care how much money

they got. We—you know, when we get together, we get together. That's fun. And especially my grandchildren. They're great. I—I got 'em all right there on the wall. I got all the kids. I got everybody right there. You know, that's—that's really our goal. [unclear], I think. You know, it's a good family life and it's fun. And it's—and to demonstrate that—you know, I haven't said it before but I've been going back to Italy—you're talking about Italy. I've been going back to this for 25 years, every year and sometime twice a year just to see my sisters and my mother and father before they passed away. I was—my father passed away. I wasn't there but I went back for the funeral. And my mother was there in the [unclear] when she passed away, which to me was very important. I—for her, was important to see all the kids around her. So those are things I think money can't buy. I—you know, I—I don't see how you could put a price to that. So the accomplishment is to me—really, it's very important is to my family, I think.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I think that's a nice place to end. I want to thank you very much.

MANCINI: You're welcome.

LEVINE: I've been speaking with Tony Mancini, who came in 1956 to this country when he was 18 years of age. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm signing off.

[END OF INTERVIEW]