

**EI-1080**  
**MANUEL BARRETT**  
**BIRTHDATE: MARCH 27, 1920**  
**INTERVIEW DATE: JUNE 16, 1999**  
**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 79**  
**RUNNING TIME: 1:04:16**  
**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.**  
**RECORDING ENGINEER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.**  
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**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE**  
**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:**

**SPAIN, 1929**  
**AGE: 9**

**SHIP: S.S. PATRIA**  
**PORT:**  
**RESIDENCES:**

LEVINE: Okay, today is June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1999. I'm here in Morris Township with Manuel Barrett, who came from Spain in 19—

BARRETT: '29

LEVINE: —'29 when you were nine?

BARRETT: Yes. Matter of fact, we arrived on September—I think it was September 17<sup>th</sup>. Is that Constitution Day or something? It was a holiday. I remember.

LEVINE: I—I don't know. I—

BARRETT: 1929, yes.

LEVINE: Okay. And—and so you were nine.

BARRETT: Yes.

LEVINE: And how old are you at the time of this interview? How old are you?

BARRETT: Seventy-nine.

LEVINE: Seventy-nine. So—and do you, by any chance, remember the name of the ship?

BARRETT: Yes, S.S. Patria—P-A-T-R-I-A. It was from the French line.

LEVINE: Okay, great. And if we could start with your birth date—

BARRETT: March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1920.

LEVINE: Okay. And where in Spain were you born?

BARRETT: Cedillo—C-E-D-I-L-L-O.

LEVINE: Cedillo.

BARRETT: In the province of Caceres—C-A-C-E-R-E-S.

LEVINE: Okay. And when you were born was your name Manuel Barrett?

BARRETT: No, it was spelled B-R-R-E-T-E. But my father came to the United States and some Irishman changed it. Now, the—as I understand it, this Barrett name has been spelled in various ways. There's a Barrette with two t's, e and a gun made in Italy. But I'm told that these were people who were probably some soldiers from—from Willinton's [PH], people who came to Spain in connection with the revolt against Napoleon. And they stayed on, and so the name was—but it was spelled by the Spaniards in a manner like the Italians with a vowel at the end. But supposedly, it was originally Brrette but it was Barrette. But when my father came to the United States, that's—this is your name. And they put it when he immigrated here in 1920. And some Irishmen, evidently in Ellis Island or where he entered through—this was before the 1922 act. And he—so he put that name on and he got his legalization papers and everything else. And that hasn't been the name we have. So, though, we've had correspondence with people continue with the old name that they know us. However, I've attempted to tell them that, "Look, this is what happened. That's my name. That's my school name, my college—law school and licenses." I happen to be licensed in the state of New York and New Jersey as an attorney. So they're all Barretts. So that is the name and I—I won't fight about how—why—or why—how it's spelled. There appears to be some

people that have an o on the end. In Venezuela there were some Barrettos. But that was not the name that I—with which I was baptized.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So as far as the family legend is concerned, it got changed by an Irishman at Ellis Island.

BARRETT: It appears that way.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

BARRETT: It appears that way. And the—so it was—and so my father—can you—can you see it?

LEVINE: Oh, yeah. Wow! That's a heron?

BARRETT: Yes.

LEVINE: Wow, beautiful. We're looking at the—for the tape, we're looking at the pond right outside the kitchen window and there's a beautiful white heron there. Okay, so that's the story of the name.

BARRETT: So that's the name. Right.

LEVINE: Okay—

BARRETT: Now, the other name that—by which I go, because in Spain you used your given name or—which you are ba—your given name, father's name, sir name and mother's sir name, because the women in Spain, and even in some of the Latin America countries at the present time, still con—like in Russia, they continue with their names—

LEVINE: Oh.

BARRETT: —that were given to them. And my mother's sir and father's sir name was Loro—L-O-R-O, meaning brown or parrot, two things. So I have used that name, Manuel Loro Barrett, but Manuel L. Barrett for the purposes of writing and things.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay. And what was your father's first name?

BARRETT: Joseph.

LEVINE: And your mother's name?

BARRETT: Ascension. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Wow, that's nice. [chuckles] Now, were they a religious family? Were you a religious family?

BARRETT: Well, as schooling required you to go, because we went to school when I was a little boy five days a week, and then on Saturday you went for a half a day, in which there was some religious instruction about sacred history, which included the Old Testament and the New Testament, but mostly the Old Testament because they wanted to show the ancient heroes of the—of the heroes. So that—that was a—and, of course, you had to go. You had to conform and it was part of your discipline in school to go to church. And I was—I received my first Holy Communion and I was confirmed. The bishop came—I forget—when I was about eight years old, came all the way from the—Casa [PH] was the capitol city, came in, the bishop, and all the children were [unclear] received their first Holy Communion and their confirmation.

LEVINE: I see. So it—was it Roman Catholic or was it—

BARRETT: Yes, Roman Catholic.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

BARRETT: Spain was—we still—at that time, they even had the king when we left there. It was only after we arrived here that the republic—that he abdicated and the republic was established in Spain.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. Okay. Well, how about grandparents? Do you remember grandparents in Spain?

BARRETT: Yes, yes. Yes.

LEVINE: And were they on both sides or mother's side, father's side?

BARRETT: My father's side. My mother's side, I think they had both died previously to my being born. But on my father's side I—I knew his mother. And her name was Agatha and I had a very pleasant relationship with her because I used to go to school. And on the way home—we went to school nine to twelve and two to four.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: So at 12 o'clock we'd go home and have lunch and have a little siesta. And then you went to school again till four to six.

LEVINE: Oh.

BARRETT: And—because sunlight, daylight, whatnot, that’s—so on the way home my grandmother would stop me and give me some water and whey from—if they were making cheese or whatnot. Now—

LEVINE: Did you eat whey all by itself?

BARRETT: Drink it. You drink the whey.

LEVINE: Oh.

BARRETT: Drink—drink refreshing whey. On the way home, she’d give you some—she—her house was in between school and my—my house was.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: Because the—her side of the family were extensive landholders, my—my—my father’s family.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: But when his mother—when his father died, his mother remarried.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: And under their law there when a—when a person dies, under their—in the common law, civil law, is the spouse receives one prop—one half of all the assets and one share with the—with the children. So if the three children—in other words, she gets half the property and one-third of the balance. So as a consequence, with the—the—this economy was based on land. And with subdivision, subdivision it got to the point where the land was minuscule. As long as my father’s family were—and the mother had not remarried, the whole property was all operated one and with the consequence it was economically [unclear]. But with the remarry of his mother and the division—then had to be a division according to law, and removed large assets into small pieces and so on. The life was not too pleasant. On the other hand, my mother’s family were some landed people, had lands, but they were in business, the commerce and general stores and operated the town inn and a bar. So they were more in the business people, not strictly land. But with the Depression that occurred after the World War II, things got bad for everybody. So everybody said, “Go to America and work for awhile. Get some money and come back.” So my father immigrated here in 1920.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: And then he worked in a factory in a—as a lathe opener in the Agatha Works of the Crucible [PH] Steel Company in Harrison, New Jersey for many, many years. As a matter of fact, he—through 1932. He was a great smoker and with [unclear], they didn't have any extractors or what not—began to affect his lung and he didn't feel good. So in 1927 he visited us in Spain. And he and my mother decided that we would all come here, because he felt that he could be—would be happier and it'd be an opportunity for us to have a better life. So he said, "I can't bring you now because I haven't got—obtained my citizenship. But [unclear] under the new law I'll be able to work there." So in 1929 he had us all come over.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Who was—what was the family—what did the family consist of? It was you—

BARRETT: My mother and three girls.

LEVINE: Three girls.

BARRETT: Who—one, which was—who was born in 1909, one in 1911 and one in 1913. And I was born seven years later. My mother was already 38 years old; my father was just about 40. So—

LEVINE: Wow. What were you like as a—as a nine-year-old coming to this country? Can you describe the little boy you were?

BARRETT: Well, let me describe myself as I was there. From the very beginning, when I was very young, my parents rented a house they had to a military man and his wife who had no children. So they were very interested in me and bright and early they began to read books. And she's read to me and whatnot. And long—they decided that I—that I—was quite proficient in schooling. I loved schooling very much. And so I did very well in school. As a matter of fact, when I visited after 50-something years and I've met some of my old schoolmates, they remember me as the bright kid in the class, which made me feel good. But—

LEVINE: Yeah, sure.

BARRETT: My life with my—was very pleasant there because my grandmother went out of her way. I remember when she would take me for long rides and she—she put me on the [unclear] because these were [unclear] roads in the back street. And she always looked after me. And I had a very pleasant life and I had very many friends. So it was a little bit hard for me to give it all up to come.

LEVINE: Do you remember any stories or any attitudes or—

BARRETT: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: [unclear] your grandmother and father to you?

BARRETT: Yeah. [chuckles] She was feisty, as I said. You know, she—and after she lost her first husband, she—she wanted to run the place. And she—I remember as a small boy, sometimes I'd hurt myself and, you know, [unclear] seven, six and I would cry a little bit. And she would tell me the state—the province for where I was born and the province of [unclear] is the land called Extremadura—E-X-T-R-E-M-A-D-U-R-A. That is the land where Pizarro, Cortez and many of the people who, serving the king, came to the world—New World and discovered and conquered Ponce de Leon. Many of these people were all from that area. So, like the Serbians now, they have this tradition about these are men of valiance. So the old lady used to say to me, “Don't you cry. You're from land of [unclear]. And she would embarrass me into not crying anymore. And she used to say the old saying, “If you ever cry—you never cry for that unless your innards are coming out—you know, die. You don't—you don't cry.” So she gave me that attitude you could overcome things and you can—and counseling. As a matter of fact, my son, [unclear], once or twice said, “I always remember you as being feisty.” Well, I was always reasonable small but I didn't—I would not tolerate abuse from the older boys, because I just—just wasn't—wasn't in me. So the old lady had that [unclear]. Then [unclear] she always used to say, “Work. Work and you'll succeed and read and learn. And be educated,” meaning school, because she always felt that. And these were people who were middle class and upper middle class from—from limited places. In other words, there were frogs—big frogs in little pond.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: But an attitude assumed that—that got in me. And I always felt I've somehow succeed and whatnot. But that was the—remember about her. My mother was always study, study, learn and learn or not. Because on her side, we had several cousins—the children of her cousin who were doctors, who were mayors, who ran the political scene, at least during the time I was around there, a little boy. One of my cousins was—second cousin, I guess, was the mayor of the town. Another was the judge of the town. So there was some status to our life and that sort of made us feel that we could succeed. And then—and that's what I remember. My mother was very—a very dedicated woman, brought up my daughters—my sisters, taught them how to be

wives and how do housework and always instilled that, "We can do it. We can do it. It can be done." And it was—felt very, very good.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: Now, about our trip here.

LEVINE: Wait. Tell me about your father. Wh—how did you—as a nine-year-old coming here, did you know your father? Did you—how [unclear]?

BARRETT: I hadn't seen him in 19—he had left here when I was little, the same year that I was born. And I met him in 1927. And he said that by work and perseverance a person could make a living, a good living. And life was much more pleasant. He felt, in a sense, you had cars and means [unclear] transportation now. In our town, the banker and the priest in town and a cousin of mine all had cars. But this—we're talking about the—'25, '24 where even cars were a novelty in the United States. So I had—we had seen some of the things. We had been to Lisbon. We had been—been—visited some of the bigger towns in Portugal and the other side. And before we came we visited Seville because we had to go to the American Council there to get our passports and visa. Because my father, being a citizen, of course, made us American citizens the minute you hit the United States. But we could get the passports and the visas in order to come. So life was—seven, eight-year-old, you know, you don't plan things. Riding a horse, you know, or—and meeting with your friends and play—we played soccer. And so I saw him in '27. I think he was there about six months. And he made some—he had some changes made in the house, which I approved of and whatnot. But it was like a vacation with someone. I really never got—got to meet him in '27. Then I came here in 1929 and in '32 he—this health started deteriorating. And he said, "Well, look. We've got a couple nickels. Maybe we should go back." So my mother said, "Why don't you go back [unclear] for your health?" Because at that time everybody was under the impression if you went back out of the city and you went to this country air, that maybe it be better to come back. Well, while he was there the Spanish Civil War broke out. And we were separated and he stayed there. And by that time our life started developing itself. I was finishing grammar school, finished high school, ready to go to college. My mother said, "You're going to go to college," and I did. I'm a—I'm a graduate of Bucknell University.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

BARRETT: And so I went there. So—

LEVINE: Well, [unclear]—

BARRETT: My relationship with him in '29—'29 to '32 but I'm talking about two and a half years. He used to go to work, work long, long hours, come in and I'd see him. And then he'd ask me, "What are you reading? What are you studying or not?" One thing he did for me when he—while he visited us in '27 is he brought in a little book and was simulated English so I could start learning in English. And I came here and I never had a bilingual—lingual teacher or anything else. But with what he taught me and I, listening and going to school, and would play with the boys who spoke English, because, as—as you probably have found out, the Spanish immigrants were very limited. There were maybe—of all the [unclear]—in the whole state of New Jersey there may have been 50 families altogether. And maybe there were 20 or 30 in Newark, New Jersey where we lived. So they—the—where the use—use of the Spanish language was very limited, because everybody spoke English and were trying to learn to speak English. My relationship—my father encouraged me to go to school and learn and—because this was going to be a wonderful life. And I began to see it was. You'd go on trolley cars. You'd go on bus. You'd go to [unclear] Park and things. So life was a little bit different from what it was—I had had when I was a little boy.

LEVINE: Did he work at same kind of work—

BARRETT: Yes.

LEVINE: —working on the lathe as he did in Spain?

BARRETT: No.

LEVINE: No.

BARRETT: He was—when he was in Spain he was the son of a large landowner and he used to go around seeing that the work was being done. As a matter of fact, if—if my—my—my wi—mother's theory is that he was spoiling rotten because he was the favorite son of my grandmother, Agatha. And so he had some schooling but it was all concerned about how to administrator the lands that they had.

LEVINE: I see. So really, he was—he was in a way doing a harder—

BARRETT: Harder work. Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Physically harder work—

BARRETT: Yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: —here. But he still preferred it?

BARRETT: He did. But because the pay was so good.

LEVINE: Oh.

BARRETT: And—and you know, the Depression began—matter of fact, the stock market broke us about—within a month after we arrived here. But it took a couple of years before things slowed down enough for him for work. But he—he enjoyed his work and he felt he achieved something. And he was regarded highly in the company so he was—satisfied for him.

LEVINE: Okay. So after you went—where did you go to get your passport, your—

BARRETT: Seville.

LEVINE: Seville.

BARRETT: My mother rent—hired a man who owned a car and we all rode to Seville. We were there about three or four days.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BARRETT: And we went to the American Consul and then—but the employees of the Consul's office were—all were Spanish speaking. So they—and I remember Seville to be quite warm. The little town where we lived was up on a plateau. The weather was kind of—very mildish. And by—when we went to Seville we found Seville to be very hot. This was in the—in June or July of 199—29. And it was very hot then. I remember going to the American Consul's office and somebody said, "Are you thirsty?" I said, "Yes," and they got one of these water jars. You know, they have [unclear], which is a jar, a—an earthen jar in which they keep water. And it keeps it very cool. So they gave me a drink and I finished, and after awhile he said, "Some more?" And contrary to my mother's expectations to say, "Thank you, no," I said, "Yes!" [chuckles] And I took some more water from him. So he says, "Here, I'm going to give you enough water for you to drown." I remember that. Another aspect, I said, when they were asking questions, he said, "Your name is Manuel so-and-so?" "Yes." "You are nine years old?" "Yes, yes." "Are you married or single?" I said, "Single." And he said, "And without a commitment?"—compromiso [PH] meaning compromised or committed to marry someone. [chuckles] So I thought it was very funny. It was very pleasant to visit the American Consul's office. We stayed there

and he said that they—they would have the papers ready the next day or a day later, whatever it is. We stayed a little while in Seville. Then we rode back to—to our [unclear]. But then—and right near where our town was is the main line that goes from Lisbon to Madrid to Leiria [PH] and then crosses over into Paris. There's a train service that goes all the way through, as my son found out in 1987, I think. He flew to Paris, then took a train into Spain—

LEVINE: Oh, nice. Yeah.

BARRETT: —to—and then it goes on to Lisbon. So we did. We went to Valencia [PH], which is a little larger town where—from us. And we got on a train and rode to Lisbon. And we were supposed to—at that time, come on the Italian line. Now, Italian line had two ships, were called Consulich—C-O-N-S-U-L-I-C-H Line and had two [unclear] ships. They had the Roma [PH] and the Soturnia [PH]. By the way, the Roma eventually, I think was finally sent to World War II. And they were, on the basis of—of fuel oil, diesel. We arrived but we missed it by a day or so. And then we stayed in the home of a friend of ours in Lisbon. And we visited the city of Lisbon—Lisbon and whatnot. And the question was whether or not the next ship, the alternate—we were supposed to go on the Soturnia—whether the Roma would come in and take us there, because my father had paid the tickets in advance. But there was some change in line and it wasn't going to come. So in the meantime, we were staying in this friend's house and my mother felt embarrassed. And she said, "We've got to get out of here because it's not fair. We were only going to stay here one or two days and now, this thing's turning out"—so she went to the French Line and told them, Look, we have tickets." I think it was second class for the—the Italian line. "Can we make arrangements so we can—we can go?" They said, "Well, the next ship is about a week from now—is the Patria. It's not as pleasant as the Italian line but if you want to, then we'll make arrangements." So my mother made arrangements. She got a refund and worked it out so we came on the Patria. The Patria was a coal-fired ship. And on the way here we stopped at the Azores at—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: —St. Michael, I think was the place. And they—and I watched the men loading coal—coal. This is the old coal [unclear]. Remember, this is 1929.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

BARRETT: And loaded—the—would watch while they—all the men from the ship—a big barge came [unclear] and they loaded the ship—ship with coal.

And the ship arrived in New York [unclear]. Although we were American citizens, they arrived here on a holiday, so we couldn't be processed so we had to stay overnight in Ellis Island. The next morning—everybody got a medical examination. The next morning my father arrived there with a friend with a car and we all came back and went to Newark. He had a house and we went there to live.

LEVINE: Now, did you have any physical examinations while you were still in Spain, before you got on the ship?

BARRETT: I think we did by some doctor, but not at the American Consul, by—

LEVINE: By your doctor.

BARRETT: Just by a doctor. I think so, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, right. You're probably right, yeah.

BARRETT: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And then—okay, so do you remember when the Patria came into the New York harbor?

BARRETT: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: What was that—

BARRETT: Everybody stood on the line. They looked at the Statue of Liberty. I forget—at that time, I didn't notice. It was somewhere in the—I think it was the North River, if I recall correctly, because I think I remember going through the Holland Tunnel. And we said, "Whee! Whee!" You know, it was a fun novelty. The Holland Tunnel was—had been opened already.

LEVINE: Huh.

BARRETT: So went there and they came over and crossed over through the—

LEVINE: Oh.

BARRETT: We went from the ferry—we went from the pier where we were. We went by fer—one of the ships to Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Right.

BARRETT: And we went into the hull. But I was just watching other people and watching other things. Now, I've visited. I've gone there just recently because I took my guest that I had from—

LEVINE: Right.

BARRETT: —Texas A&M there. And we tried to find our names and we were limit on time. We saw that but we—we didn't—we saw the Statue of Liberty but the wait was too long, so I couldn't get them. But we did take them to Macy's and we took them here and there, and we visited with my niece [unclear]. And he enjoyed it very much and he went back.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BARRETT: He hopes he'd come back again. But the sh—the trip from the pier to Ellis Island was very pleasant on one of those ferries there, you know.

LEVINE: Yes, uh-huh.

BARRETT: And we stayed. We were there and, of course, my mother was looking after me. I was just nine so—and, yeah, I think they stay about a day or so because it was holiday and there was no servicing. They couldn't stamp you in and [unclear]. And—

LEVINE: Now, were your three sisters with you?

BARRETT: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BARRETT: My—my mother and the three sisters—

LEVINE: Mother and the three sisters.

BARRETT: —and I.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And do you remember anything about Ellis Island that day that you were there? Anything else that you can recall about—

BARRETT: Remember eating—eating in a dining hall and they had this white sliced bread. We thought there was no body to it. That was the thing about it.

LEVINE: There wasn't.

BARRETT: There was no—no body to it.

LEVINE: [laughs]

BARRETT: No, we had eaten—the bread we—I ate there was more cracked wheat or—you know, it's more substance. Bread is a very important aspect in the meal. And many persons, you know, they say bread and—wine and bread, you can live on it. But I noticed that the meal was fine. I remember—I think [unclear] went up to [unclear] and, God, with the cafeterias down, they filled you a plate and you went back and [unclear]. The silverware was fine. And I did notice—I recall there were linen tables—two linen tables and linen napkins. I remember that. There was—yeah, we had—we had visited in hotels and dining halls and—while we were in Spain and permit us to—to appreciate some things. The sleeping was—I think I was just too tired. I would have slept on the floor and felt happy. But there were many persons and I remember one thing. I remember that there were—in one of the big halls where we were waiting, some women came, very well dressed, spoke French. And they were smoking cigarettes. My mother was outraged, the idea that women were smoking like that. Then there was a little boy and I brought a little pot in which there was a little cactus plant that I had cultivated. And I brought it with me and nobody challenged me so I had it. And he was playing ball with someone else and knocked over and broke my pot. I—you know, I felt I—at that time, I thought—manifesting my feistiness and hitting him. What was he doing playing ball in the hall like that? But anyway, was—the lady said, “I'm very”—she spoke French, said, “Very sorry,” and whatnot and they're on their way. But our stay at Ellis Island, I would say, was pleasant. They did check me and whatnot and gave—I don't know—I know—what they did to the ladies, but as I say, we had—you know, we were American citizens so we found no problem. And we knew we were delayed because the Immigration Service wasn't working on that hol—I think it was a holiday or something. So we stayed a day or so.

LEVINE: Did you all stay together in one room or were you separated?

BARRETT: No, no, no. The—the women were on one side and I remember staying—of course, it was one bed after another. You know, it'd been [unclear] one big dormitory. And—but I had my clothing and my washcloth and—then, but that—that was [unclear]. I think they even supplied us with some elementary things for—for our stay there.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. And how did you feel as a nine-year-old? I mean, how did you feel about coming to—

BARRETT: Well, I was coming—go see my father, was going to come to a new country and I had all positive aspects of—of the concept of coming here.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: What was behind me was behind me. You know, I felt very sorry there because I was leaving my cousins. I had these cousins with whom I played quite a bit, and a lot of people, but, hey, my father had asked us to come and, you know, you—you assume the attitude of “Father knows best.”

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: And so we—I had no problems. And then when we moved into a place and there were several little—young boys about my age talking to me and my—my English was very poor, but nevertheless, playing didn’t require too much of a—so—

LEVINE: Now, do you remember anything about the trip from—after you got on the mainland from Ellis Island? You went through the Holland Tunnel. Anything else about that trip to Newark that—that struck you, or in those first few days or weeks that struck you as new, different?

BARRETT: No.

LEVINE: Unusual?

BARRETT: No, no. No. As a matter of fact, we lived in Newark in a section where there was a very small park not far away. I could go there and—and play. And my father introduced me to school and the teacher was very tolerant of me. She—I just sat there and watched what they said and she was teaching. And I saw what she read—she put on the board and what they said, because th—this was the elementary grade.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

LEVINE: How did the school compare with what school you had had in Spain?

BARRETT: I thought the teachers were very, very nice. In there, if you were—if you misbehaved, the teacher was not above applying a switch to your backside. So I didn’t see any of that. And the teacher would reprimand someone in a stern voice. But I could understand that they were doing something that was improper when I—I felt it was very—I guess today you would say more liberal, because there was just a little bit—the teacher was right and you wouldn’t dare. And—and my wife, who also

comes [unclear], said, "We wouldn't dare go home and, say, complain about detail," because we would be accused [chuckles] of giving the teacher cause for reprimanding us or punishing us—whatever punishment they meted out. So I felt that way. And I thought it was very nice going to school.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

BARRETT: And then, of course, shortly thereafter, the cold winter started coming around and school was a very nice, pleasant place to be at. And began to see snow. I had never seen snow in my life when I was in my little town because, in spite of the fact that it's—it's on a plateau and high, no snow. Only in the eastern part of Spain and the weather [unclear] not much ready to have snow, but not where we were.

LEVINE: Did you—how did you feel about—did you like it?

BARRETT: Cold, I didn't like.

LEVINE: Oh.

BARRETT: I didn't like cold. But my father saw to it I had a—shoes and galoshes and a good coat. And I—I accepted it and then, before you know it, it was spring again and it was pleasant.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BARRETT: I—I had no reason to complain.

LEVINE: How about your sisters? What—what did they do when—

BARRETT: My sisters, being—shortly after they ca—came—one of them was just going on 17 and all of them got into the needle trade. You know, used to employ sewing—sewing—dress factories, and they did that for some time. And after my father left, one of them went into the restaurant business—went into the restaurants. And one worked for a chemical company and the third continue in the needle trades until she married and then their life developed.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: But that was within four or five years after my father left in 1932.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how did your mother and your sisters like it here?

BARRETT: My mother never complained. I [unclear] learned that from my mother. She never complained. My sisters—the youngest one was very unhappy for awhile because she felt she was in love. As a matter of fact, when we were getting ready to leave, she manifested, “I wish to get married.” And she went out with a—the son of a second cousin of my mother, who ran a store and her half—his family loved my sister. And—and she asked to stay behind. But upon consideration and consultation with my father, he said, “No, she’s too young. Let her come and she can make up her mind later on.” Well, as it turned out, I guess when she came about 22, she found someone else and married him. Matter of fact, she died a couple of years ago.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BARRETT: Never had any children. And she became a housewife and her husband ran a restaurant and, of course, she met him in connection with the restaurant business.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

BARRETT: But—

LEVINE: So it seems as though—

BARRETT: And my—my—my oldest sister—husband—they did sort of amalgamate themselves into the Spanish colony, my oldest sister. And they opened up a restaurant in small—in a pool hall in Newark. And then she began speculating in—in real estate and she did very, very well. She died a multimillionaire. And she had one son who we see now and then. But my middle sister is the one who had a boy and a girl and—and they live in Woodbridge Township here in New Jersey. The boy is—is a bachelor, never married. The daughter married and she has six children, all very, very—although they were of more limited means, she’s done a wonderful job. Went to—three of her children have be—have graduated from college. One is—is an employee of Arthur Andersen as a cert—certified public accountant. One joined a religious order, the one boy, and the daughter is—just graduated from Kean [PH] College here summa cum laude. Matter of fact, they’re having a party, I think, Sunday, or next week to celebrate. And then the—they have two other children that are married, in college. One works part time for Merrill Lynch. And the other one, he got into music and development of audio sounds. And he’s the type that works with a company that—where you’re going to put on a show or concert or whatnot, they go there to install all the regular equipment. He’s interested in that. He says, “Gee, I should have been an engineer. They make all the money and I do all the work.” But—and my older

sister, who had this one son, she did very well. She speculated in real estate. They—they were business people and she was always good at math. And everything she touched she made money. She died multimillionaire. Great. They had a son and he married some Brazilian young lady from Brazil who is handicapped, had al—lost one arm, and the one—a very loving lady. And they have a—they have a daughter who is now in—in college.

LEVINE: Oh—

BARRETT: So—

LEVINE: The family—

BARRETT: Everybody—everybody—of all—of the whole of the family, I was the most privileged or whatnot that—because I was the male, I—they wanted me to go to college. My mother—as I said, my mother had nieces and nephews who are doctors—doctors and held offices and whatnot. So she always said, “Study, study, study, study.”

LEVINE: Hmm.

BARRETT: To that effect, I—I dedicated myself to study and did quite well.

LEVINE: So you went—you went through grammar school in Newark.

BARRETT: Yes, Newark.

LEVINE: And [unclear]?

BARRETT: Graduated from—at the same time as my wife. As a matter of fact, we have a picture of us—

LEVINE: Oh.

BARRETT: —when we graduated from—and I met her there. Her family was one of the few families there. But—and we knew each other, more or less, but when I was in the military service and I came home on leave, my mother, who was very friendly with her mother, took me to say hello to her. Of course, there’s some [unclear] in the military service. And I met my wife and I—and I invited her and we went to the movies and dinner. And then, you know, well, she wrote to me and whatnot when I came back. I was in the Naval Reserve but I had not received my full degree. And in the Navy, unless you had a degree you couldn’t get commission. You couldn’t get a commission. So I became a cryptographer.

LEVINE: A what?

BARRETT: Cryptographer.

LEVINE: Cryptographer.

BARRETT: Cryp—I—I got pulled in my—my—just my—became my senior year at Bucknell University and I was called in and I had to go back to the service. So I went through some training and then I took a test and I did exceedingly well [unclear] because I was a college student. And I knew Spanish and I knew a little bit of Portuguese, which I had studied, of course. So the Navy plucked me out of the camp right—before I had to do KP, only dirty work. As soon as I got my shots, whatnot, and they sent me to a military school for the Army in Camp Crowder, Missouri near Joplin, and—for cryptography work and for code, that kind of work. There was a team supposed to go overseas. We were going to capture the Azores because the Portuguese government refused to give us landing rights and bases there. And so we were going—they were to invade and then we were going to take over and we would operate then, because we could talk to the people so they would be kind of nice. But England eventually convinced Portugal to give the United States the Azores. So then the ships and planes could fly from here to the Azor—to—up to Newfoundland to the Azores, from the Azores over to Europe. So we've never—finally never invaded the Azores. I served in Iran and Algeria, Bezerti [PH], when Bezerti had been demolished completely. Everything was sunk. I was there. From there I went to Palermo in Sicily, stayed and worked there for awhile on the naval base. And from there I went back to Algiers just as Eisenhower left to go to take the command in Europe—European operation. I stayed there about six months and I—we flew from Algiers to Naples and I finished my—and sometime in 19—early '44. And I stayed there through—through the end of war in Europe in—well, in 1945, the end of—be—beginning of May, 1945.

LEVINE: Now, were you working with—with codes and with crypt—

BARRETT: Yes, codes and messages, yes.

LEVINE: [unclear], uh-huh.

BARRETT: Yes, yes. I saw the advent and how the advances we made. When—when the war started, most of the British were really way ahead of us and so messages—used books and transmission. And—and we learned how they set up the messages and sent the message and, of course, they were all in code. They taught us how to work it out and use code. And then the officers supposedly would break them, but got

to the point where they were so busy they—"You know what to do. Get it." So we'd break the code, get the message and put it down.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BARRETT: And administrate it. I served on the—on the admiral staff so it's very, very nice, mostly base work.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: I never—I served aboard a ship a couple weeks but after that they returned me. I served on a ship that went all the way to [unclear] when it carried Mr. Roosevelt. And I thought, '[unclear] going to go.' Oh, it was important. Gee whiz, because I was interested. I was a college student so I felt, Jeez, this is going to be wonderful. Because we knew it was Roosevelt because when we were in—in—in Palermo they built a special ramp for ship, so every—everybody we had talking about it says, "Looks like the old man's coming." Because then we kn—we knew we had—needed a ramp to push Mr. Roosevelt up there. So I thought I was going to go, and I got on board the ship and everything else. And they sent me down to Palermo from—from Naples so I could join the ship. I got down there and they counted. "Too many of you. So you, you, you, you, you, back you go." So they put us on a—on maybe an old cruiser and I went back to Naples to [chuckles] my routine job until the war ended.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BARRETT: So I've missed some one—those who went to—

LEVINE: We're going to pause here for a second. We're resuming here. Let me ask you—[clears throat] let's see. I wanted to back up—about, oh, the—was there a Spanish community in Newark?

BARRETT: Yes.

LEVINE: And what—

BARRETT: At first—

LEVINE: What did it consist of and how did your family participate?

BARRETT: Well, they had a club there that every Saturday they'd have dances and you'd—you—you'd get some fresh drinks, no alcohol. And they'd dance and they played music. And one year they—I forget what was the occasion—they wanted representation, the Pan American Union.

And every one of the women was dressed or wore a unifor—a costume or thing or banner of each of the Pan American Unions, Columbia, Ecuador, et cetera, et cetera. And three of my sisters, they are also—because there were so many—so very few persons. It was wonderful. They had three women, [chuckles] at least to—to represent [unclear] of the company. So they had to get a band [unclear]. But outside of that, there was no formal or no alliance, nothing like that. Matter of fact, everybody wanted to become integrated. We wanted to be Americans.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BARRETT: And, you know, we were—we felt a little bit better than—than someone else. We were American citizens from the very beginning, where some other people would still have to go through a lot of processes and weren't eligible then, because with the—I think with the 1922 law, which, you know—

LEVINE: '21 started it with the quotas?

BARRETT: Yes, well, to—

LEVINE: And then '24 was even more.

BARRETT: More.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BARRETT: But my—because my father had a green car—had a permanent resident, he could get a—took—took the test and became an American citizen. And of course, what we Americans come—then after we came, and, of course, what became the Depression, and again, you know, '30s and whatnot, then things became a little different. But from the—right at the beginning, we were—we were Americans. We were, you know—so we felt that no, the [unclear] was not—not as now, for instance, although, as I was saying, after the war I came back and I went to Bucknell and finished my last year. And then I went to Rutgers Law School and graduated. And immediately, I was hired by a law firm in—down in downtown Wall Street who represented the public utilities companies that operated in Latin America. So my facility of the Spanish language and Portuguese, which I had learned—see, when I was in [unclear], Missouri in the army camp, I—I took Portuguese.

LEVINE: Oh.

BARRETT: It wasn't too difficult because I had heard some of it already. So I got hired by a law firm, which still exists, by the way, Reed and Priest [PH].

And they represented the public utilities companies that operated in all these countries in Latin America. In other words, the power companies, electric companies.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BARRETT: And in Brazil they also operated the trolley cars and some of the things. So I got introduced into that kind of law.

LEVINE: I see.

BARRETT: And their—

LEVINE: Well, how did you come to decide to be a lawyer? Do you remember?

BARRETT: Yes, I was in—when I was at Bucknell a man named Ernst Meyer [PH], who was a refugee from—from Germany, was a professor, was a lawyer. And he'd gone to Princeton. Then in Princeton they—they sent him over to Bucknell and he taught political science. And I was there and many persons had suggested to me that with my facility of learning languages and, since I knew Spanish, I could learn easily Portuguese, and I knew some Portuguese, that I could probably serve in the Foreign Service. So—and I—as I tell you, my visit and my memory of being—meeting the people in the Foreign Service was very pleasant. So they—well, I think I'd like that sort of thing. Some other people said, "You could always become a Span—teacher." But I said, "No, I think I'd like that." So at Bucknell I took political science, thinking of that. Well, halfway through my school, I met this Ernst Meyer. And he said to me, "Barrett." He says, "You're good at this. But I'll tell you something. "If you're going to get any recognition and really move up, even in the Foreign Service, you've got to get a law degree. That will make it easier." Said, "Well, [several words unclear]." "Listen to me," he said. "I'm your—you listen to me." He was my advisor. He said, "After you get here you can do well, get yourself a law degree and then you go out and you say, 'Look, I was born in Spain. I can speak Spanish. I—I took up Portuguese. And the law firms in New York will be falling all over then to—to hire you.'" So I decided that now, I went overseas and I realized, because I missed—I had less than one year of college to do—I used to see some, and forgive me [unclear]—some of these dummies that were ensigns, who came from some southern schools, couldn't speak, couldn't know when to say who and whom. And they were ensigns and, because they had finished some part-time college or whatnot, they were—but they had full degrees. So they were officers. So I said to myself, "Meyer says, 'Get—get—get the law degree and then you—because you'll be missing out on a lot of opportunities.'" So I decided to do that and I went to law school.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BARRETT: I got out of law school and I went—immediately, I put around—found that out. I also got a very nice mentor, who used to be the pre—the attorney for Pan American Airlines. And I met him through somebody and he says, “You’re just the man.” Matter of fact, he tried to get me a job with Inter—Continental Hotels, who’s—who’s building hotels all over Latin America. And—but they told me, “In all honesty, you just graduated from law school. We need someone a little more experienced.”

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: Well, maybe we—maybe we can work out something.” But nothing worked out. Then I went to the—Reed and Priest, who then represented. They said, “You’re just our man. Our library’s a mess. You can help us straighten it out while you’re getting ready.” So I was waiting to get—take the bar in New York and get pa—passed, because I had to, if I was going to work in New York. So I worked there and worked a big—[unclear] bonds and all these refinancing and all. And I said to myself, “Is this what I want to do?” [chuckles] So I said, “Gee, I’m not a lawyer.” I thought I wasn’t a lawyer. So I came back to New Jersey, took—I passed the bar there and got a raise on a cold—one of the coldest days of the year, March of 1950. I got sworn in. It took a long time before they [unclear] the papers. When I came to New Jersey, we took the review, pass. In October of 1950, I took the bar and passed it, got sworn in within a couple of weeks after that. So then I decided that I was going to try to be a lawyer. So I came to New Jersey and I went to—I had to do some clerkships. And I worked for somebody who was doing—who was in the mortgage business in banking. So I got into that and liked it. I—I hated going to court and whatnot. I felt it was just—so I worked for—for them for awhile. And then I graduated in ’48. Then I had a friend who was influential in Standard Oil. And I said, “I want to get a job and I want to work because I—you know I’m good. I”—and I said, “Now, you know, I can be useful to you because you’re all over Latin America.” So they said to me, “You have to wait until you’ve been now out of college—law school 40 years. That’s what they—they tell me around here.” Because he sounded somebody out about getting me a job. So in 19—so I worked for awhile and did some bank work in 1952. I was just about going to be out four years [unclear] law school. I called him up. So he says, “Just a minute. All right. Come and see me.” So I went to see him. I went to see him in New York at Rockefeller Center. They were—this is where Standard Oil was. Picks up the tel—picked up the telephone, says, “So and so, so and so. Taylor Fly. [PH]” He was from

Texas, the other man. He says, "I have a man here, just what you want. Because you—I know you're having problems down in Venezuela. I have just the man for you here now." He says, "So, look. I'm going on vacation. Have you—come and see me right after Labor Day. I'm back"—so and so on. So I went to see Mr. Fly. Mr. Fly says, "Yeah, I think you're—you're the man for us." So, as my mother always said, "Study. Do the right thing by people. Get—use influence and if you use it and use it properly, then you can just elevate yourself." So I was then married and I had—we—between my wife and we had a little two-year-old daughter or something. So the day after I went to New York and I worked there about three months, I got acclimated to what the job was and everything else in Standard Oil. And the—the day after Eisenhower got elected I said to myself, "What a sad country this is going to be. Let me get out of here." I got on a plane in [unclear], it was then—was then called and flew to—to Venezuela and landed there the next day. I spent 12 years down there. We did very, very well. My children [chuckles] were delighted, which—two children were born after we—we were down there. But my wife came to the United States to have them because they [several words unclear], God forbid, something went wrong, my in-laws would never let me live it down. So she came here. She had my son, Richard. Presently, he's an attorney in Phoenix, Arizona. And we have Laura—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: —whom you—you talked to and that. And we have another daughter that's in Denver and she has two children.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BARRETT: But the bigger portion of our life where we spent a good time of our life was in Venezuela.

LEVINE: Wow.

BARRETT: Where it was—

LEVINE: Wow.

BARRETT: Which was very, very wonderful.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BARRETT: Very privileged position, senior attorney, everything that you'd want. The weather was hot and uncomfortable. My mother suffered, I think. And—and it was pleasant.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What—h—have you had—did you have heroes? Would you say that there any people in your life that you would consider heroes? Either people you knew or—or just people you knew about that you looked up to that you think maybe made a difference?

BARRETT: Well, when I was in Bucknell University, I had a professor in Spanish who lear—soon found out that I—I was quite proficient in Spanish. Because contrary to the other children who came here and began—and the Ita—for instance, I find that in the Italians and some of these people, the language of their parents were something to forget about. I didn't because I felt it was a beautiful language. And when I was young and we attended a church in Newark, the Franciscan brothers were the priests there. And then on certain days of the week they would teach the children of the Spanish-speaking people grammar and how to read and write. So I took that and then I went to co—high school I took it again and did very well. Then I went to college. Of course, I took the tests and I really realized that I could—that I knew grammar as well as the language, not the language of the people in the street. So Mr. Sprague [PH] was very wonderful to me. I became an assistant at the department, even though I was an undergraduate. I used to get paid 25 cents an hour under the National Youth—Y—NYA. People ought to know that nowadays. Get 25 cent an hour [chuckles] and most of the kids who—or students who were failing, were having trouble with their—didn't [unclear] have enough time to teach, would go to me. And I would teach them. I'd—I'd schedule my classes 9 to 12 and then in the afternoon from 1 to 4 or thereabouts. I would help them with their work, review their work. And I took care of the football players because they want to keep them, make their eligibility. Of course, it's more formal nowadays. I understand they go around—for a teacher, going around with them, whatnot. But at that time—but, no, I wasn't that interested in football. But the football players who didn't—they did have—wanted them—you know, keep them eligible. So I used to help them out. And I used to get paid 25 cents an hour, which went towards my expenses.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: Then later on I got—and Mr. Sprague always saw to it. And then I—I came in one day and I'd put in my hours, and he'd have to approve them before I would get paid. And every so often he said, "Now, wait a minute. Last week you stopped by and you talked to me so I want you to put in two more hours." [chuckles] So he was—he was my hero.

LEVINE: Oh, [unclear].

BARRETT: Very nice to me.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

BARRETT: He was very good to me.

LEVINE: When you look back on it now—it sounds like Bucknell had a big influence, the—the years there with—with—

BARRETT: Well—

LEVINE: —Mr. Meyers and—

BARRETT: Unfortunately—unfortunately, I didn't join a fraternity. There were social events and some things that I didn't. On the contrary, I—I had a job at the hotel where I was liked and I would do my lessons at the hotel, and I was the—worked in—in the front d—front desk at the hotel. And I used to get my meals. Now, [unclear] I—I bused the meal and whatnot. I could even order anything except T-bone steak because the boss says, "I don't eat them." So—

LEVINE: [chuckles]

BARRETT: I got my meals there and they wanted—they offered me rooming but I didn't—I didn't want the room because they would—it would entail my getting called up in the middle of the night or whatnot. I didn't want a room. So Mr. Sprague fixed that for me, got me the job. And he got me that I got paid for enough to meet some of my expenses and made, you know, things possible for me to go—school. When school was all over I didn't owe anybody a nickel. I wasn't in debt to anybody, whatnot. My mother made up the difference and—and my—my sister—my sister, Mary, who was quite well to do, she helped me out. And if I needed any money, the bills were always paid for and whatnot. And then tho—those were troublesome years. And you wanted to help your children or your brother or sister because, when you're in college you weren't going to get called up. Matter of fact, I entered a Reserve at the end of 1941—shortly after Pearl Hartford and waited. And I was supposed to be called and the Navy said, "Continue studying. Continue studying. When we want you, we'll call you." Well, unfortunately, called me [chuckles] right at the wrong time. But Mr. Sprague was very wonderful to me. Mr. Meyer was very good in that thing. And also, the head of the Political Science Department was very good. He—as I indicated to you, I was indoctrinated. You did what you were told. And I went to college in that, lessons had to be done, I'd do it. Very funny. Sometimes we were supposed to do three—I—study Constitutional law. We were supposed to study three—three cases

each night and turn them in the next day. I always did it. As a matter of fact, some of the children come in and they, "I only did one, two." "What are you going to do? Turn in your three." I did it. That's what I was supposed to do. That's the way I left.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: I tried to instill that idea in my children.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: That, as I said, if I'd—if I criticized my teacher, I would be reprimanded and punished because my teacher seeks my welfare. So I—I always felt that, even when I was in school. I [unclear] now. At that time, they had about 800 men and 400 young ladies. It was a small school. The head of the department taught the languages. The head of the department taught English.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BARRETT: You know, you—that—you didn't have any graduate student or anybody else [unclear]. As a matter of fact, today, the lady there who's my neighbor there has a—has a granddaughter there. And she—she went there and she just loves it. The reason she wanted to go to Bucknell, because her grandfather had wanted to go there [chuckles] and never made it.

LEVINE: Ah.

BARRETT: So she—her—her granddaughter is now there and she just loves the place. I enjoyed it very much. It's a small town, kind of like the little town I was born in. You get to know almost everybody in town even—so—sooner or later. And Mr. Sprague was very wonderful to me. And Mr. Meyer was very good in telling me, "This is—this is the way—this is the way to success."

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BARRETT: "And then do things." And—

LEVINE: We're just at the end of the tape here.

BARRETT: Yeah.

LEVINE: Is there anything else about coming to this country and looking back on it now that you want to say before we actually close?

BARRETT: I thought—my father said this would be a wonderful opportunity for—for our children. When my father went back, the question was whether or not he—he talked as if, “Well, when I get better or—I’ll either come back or you people come.” But with—the civil war in Spain just obliterated everything. In meantime, things were—it wasn’t—it was just—circumstances just weren’t that way, you know. You—you—something [unclear] achieve. But I felt it was [unclear]—as I say, I served in military service. I felt a wonderful opportunity and very fortunate. As I said, I had a very nice position. My wife sometimes denigrates my position in the service. “You didn’t serve,” and whatnot. But the [unclear] I got my [several words unclear]. And I felt that we did wonderful things. And I was in Italy and I used to have soap or candy, whatnot. And the people used to come outside and beg. And I had a lady who washed my clothes and I only gave her a little soap. I know it was much more than she needed to—to wash my clothes. And I had extra candy, which I couldn’t eat and I gave it to her. And I realize how wonderful and fortunate we were and how lucky I was that I came to this country.

LEVINE: Okay. I think that’s the perfect note to end on. I want to thank you so much.

BARRETT: You’re welcome.

LEVINE: A wonderful interview. I’ve been speaking with Manuel Barrett and I’m at his home here in—in Morris—

[END OF INTERVIEW]