

**EI-1125**

**LOUIS [PH] BRIGIO**

**BIRTHDATE: OCTOBER 8, 1904**

**INTERVIEW DATE: FEBRUARY 3, 2000**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 95**

**RUNNING TIME:**

**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.**

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**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE**

**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:**

**ITALY, 1919**

**AGE: 15**

**SHIP: CANOPIK [PH]**

**PORT: NAPLES**

**RESIDENCES:**

LEVINE: Today is February 3<sup>rd</sup>, the year 2000 and I'm here in Bellmore at the home of the niece of Louis Brigio, who came from Italy on Christmas Eve, 1919, at the age of 15.

BRIGIO: Right.

LEVINE: And today, at the time of this interview, Mr. Brigio is 95 years of age. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. And before we start talking about your immigration experience, you were just saying you've seen so many changes.

BRIGIO: Well, like I dealt with the—with the people for most of 40 years, was almost—I had a shop.

WOMAN: A barbershop.

BRIGIO: I started during the Depression in 1930. And the fir—the first time I bought a shop in Ramsey, New Jersey. I stayed there about four years

and then I got this and that. At that time, I had two brothers, her—her father, and an older brother. They were working for the United States Bank. They went bankrupt.

LEVINE: Oh.

BRIGIO: Out of work. My father was laid off from what he was doing in a dye factory there. I was the only one working. There's the—my older brother with the gla—was—he didn't never did nothing until he—since that time he came over here in 1922. So I was the only support of the family.

LEVINE: Right.

BRIGIO: And so what happened, that I got tired traveling back and forth. I used to leave Ramsey, which about 10 miles past Paterson. I don't know if you ever see or heard of it. I got tired traveling. I went to [unclear].

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: And then I sold the shop and I bought a shop in [unclear], was there 26 years.

LEVINE: Hmm. Well, tell me the changes you've noticed in people and in—in—in—in the—

BRIGIO: A lot.

LEVINE: —society—

BRIGIO: Well, as far as my—my opinion is that there's some—everybody get—want to get something for nothing. Oh, everybody's crazy about money, wanted this, wanted that, which th—there's no more honesty. For instance, I had—I had a man put [unclear]. She didn't want it on the top. She wanted to bring underneath the—the stove. It—we bought a new stove. We had it connected. First thing you know, it was leaking. The gas was leaking. I call up the company, Long Island [unclear]. I said, "The—the gas leak." I had to shut it off [unclear]. When I called him back he said, "Why don't you call Long Island?" Said, "What do you want me to do? Get asphyxiated?" He charged me a hundred dollars for a half hour work. I mean, everything is grab and grab and grab, is scamming all over. Like l—the telemarket—they call you. "Buy the"—I say, "Lady, I'm not interested," and hang up. I said, "First of all, "Where the hell did you get my phone number?" I got a—on—I never—I don't have it on the telephone book. Where do they get it from? I pay [unclear] Monday just for—not to be annoyed. But you put up with it. That's—that's all.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BRIGIO: Then on television, every night there was scams this, was scam that. Even the politicians. I—I don't call them pol—they're human predators. Now, could I have respect for the—for the president when he's a pimp? How could I have respect, now, he's the pres—he's not president. He don't give—he—he's not teaching the younger people [unclear]. You know, a monkey does—a monkey does—a monkey—copy the monkey. Well, if the president did, why can't I do it? He don't set a good example. To me, it's unbelievable the way the things going from—from bad to worse.

LEVINE: Wow. Okay. Let me—let's pause here a minute. Okay, we're continuing here. We—Rose Brigio, who is Mr. Brigio's wife, is here, as is his niece, Gloria Schram. And they're just going downstairs and we're going to continue here. J—just pausing for a second. [tape off/on] Okay. So let's start at the beginning now. Tell me the name you were born with. When you were born, what was your name?

BRIGIO: Well, th—that's the name was given.

LEVINE: But it was Luigi when you—

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: —when you were Europe.

BRIGIO: Because—because my father had a brother by the name of Luigi.

LEVINE: I see. And you—your birth date, if you would say that again for the tape.

BRIGIO: October the 8<sup>th</sup>, 1904.

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

BRIGIO: The southeastern part of Italy facing the Adriatic side.

LEVINE: And the name?

BRIGIO: In a little—name of the town was named Turi—T-U-R-I.

LEVINE: And did you live in Turi up until you left for the United States? Did you live there whole first 15 years—

BRIGIO: Yes.

LEVINE: —before you left?

BRIGIO: Yes.

LEVINE: Now, I know Turi changed during World War I. But what do you remember when you were a little boy in Turi? How do you remember that little village?

BRIGIO: Well, when we go to school, it's only five hours over there, from eight to one, and a half hour in between. After that, you go home. You do your homework and what—whatever. If you're eight and nine years old, you learn—start to learn a trade.

LEVINE: Did you start to learn one? What did you start to learn?

BRIGIO: A carpenter. So when somebody died, they called the carpenter to make a casket. Then they will call me to help them out and make the casket. Over there, there's no—in—and—in [unclear], there's no embalming.

LEVINE: Oh.

BRIGIO: You got to be buried in 24 hours.

LEVINE: Oh. Can you remember what funerals were like when somebody died th—in that little town?

BRIGIO: Well, they go to church, you know. [unclear] the priests, they put the—the thing on and then they go right to the cemetery.

LEVINE: And did—do people carry the casket to the cemet—

BRIGIO: No, sometime they had it on—on—on the—on the carriage of—w—with the horses.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: You know, like they have with the cars now.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

BRIGIO: And sometime, they [unclear] on—like it was—the cemetery was no more than a half a mile away from the town.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And—

BRIGIO: So while the—while the—there—uncovered, I had to go over there and cover the casket, say the last goodbye. I would take the molding off of the feet of the casket and I'd bring 'em back for the next one.

LEVINE: Oh. You mean before the casket was covered by the earth?

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: You'd take off the [unclear]?

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: [unclear] covered. And I—I was afraid that [unclear]—I was 10 or 11 years old—I was afraid that—to be there alone with the dead. You know. So I asked the—the caretakers to stay with me. “No, they're not going to do nothing.” At the end, they tie with the rope the [unclear] on. And so I asked them, “What is that for?” “In case he wakes up, I hear the bell in the bedroom.”

LEVINE: [chuckles]

BRIGIO: All right. He said, “And then I come over. I give him something. Then he goes back to sleep.” That's his story, you know. I—well, I had to believe it because that's—a little—little scared. I say to him, “What do I”—and God forbid, I break the—the—the molding, you know, something—I go over—back over there. Then—and—and the boss, you know, gave me a beating.

LEVINE: Would he actually hit you?

BRIGIO: Huh?

LEVINE: Would the boss actually hit you?

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Wow.

BRIGIO: Many times, I got a slap—a slap in the face. If you get married, for instance, you [unclear] the furniture, go to him, the father of the bride. He—they pay for everything, the bride. They pay for everything. And you order the—the—the [unclear], whatever—whatever is necessary.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm. Like—you mean, like—

BRIGIO: A dresses—dress and anything else.

LEVINE: I see. So did you help—

BRIGIO: Of course.

LEVINE: —make all those things too?

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: He m—make the windows, you know, put the windows together. Then the—when he make a new building, we go over then and set ‘em up. I did all that.

LEVINE: Wow, uh-huh. Now, what was your mother’s name?

BRIGIO: Mary.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

BRIGIO: Maggipinto.

LEVINE: Could you spell it?

BRIGIO: M-A-G-G-I-P-I-N-T-O.

LEVINE: And your father’s name?

BRIGIO: Frank.

LEVINE: And you had other sisters and brothers.

BRIGIO: Yes. My oldest brother was Lenny, Leonardo because my—and I [unclear]. They go over there. They go—they repeat the—the [unclear], the grandfather’s name or a brother’s name. That’s how they go about it. So my father’s father, his name was Leo. That’s how he got [unclear], [unclear] Leo. Then Mary came along. And that’s his father—his mother name. And an—another girl, Ange—Angelina. So for short, they call her Elina. That was the mother of my mother.

LEVINE: Oh.

BRIGIO: Now, come down to Vito [PH], he had my—my—my mother had a name—a brother by the name of Vito. And he got the same—Louie [PH], ca—his—my brother's—my father's brother. He had the same name. He became a mayor, one with the town over there. And then they got—came Joe—Joseph. And he—on—on this side of my mother. One and one. So the last two, they ran out of name. [chuckles] So one was named Victor and on the youngest one, her—her father was name Alfred.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: That was it.

LEVINE: And all the children were born in Italy?

BRIGIO: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Yeah. When her father—he was the youngest. He was eight years when he came over here.

LEVINE: Eight? Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Now, [unclear], when I came here, I was 15. I had one year of college over there on account of war had broke up. Of course, then my mother, she saw her first—her firstborn [unclear] and said, "If the king got one of them, they ain't gonna get the other five." She sold everything and she had the dry goods store in—the only one in town. And she was doing fabulous. And the same way, my—my father, he was a dye—couldn't get no more dyes from Germany. He was out of a job and then 40 years old with eight children, no less.

LEVINE: Now, what kinds of [clears throat] material did he dye with the dyes that came from Germany?

BRIGIO: Well, mostly, ones were wool and skeins—wool—wool, silk or cotton. He used to take—they were all natural color. He used to dye 'em whatever the people wanted, the blue and that bl—red or whatever. And from there, they used to make their homespun, the cloth. That's what they did.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm. Now, was it a little factory that he worked in?

BRIGIO: Huh?

LEVINE: What was the circumstances where your father worked? Was it like a little factory?

BRIGIO: Well, [unclear] he had a big vat with c—with water colored and all they did, they take the [unclear] on a—on a—on a—on a stick, you know, on a bamboo stick and dip 'em in there and then [unclear] over and turn them over until they—till he got the—the desired color.

LEVINE: Oh.

BRIGIO: That—that was a—and he was taking—hanging 'em on the street to dry them. And that was it.

LEVINE: Were there a lot of people doing that kind of work? The dyeing of the—

BRIGIO: No, he was the only one in town.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. Now, did he work for someone?

BRIGIO: No.

LEVINE: It was his—it was his business.

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: So both your mother and father had a little business going.

BRIGIO: Yeah, my mo—m—mother, the dry goods store and he had the—the dye place there. He rent a—a—a little basement thing. They had the big—I remember he had big vats.

LEVINE: In the h—it was in the basement of where he lived.

BRIGIO: No.

LEVINE: No.

BRIGIO: It was a regular—regular, you know, and—like a store.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So it—was it unusual for your mother, who had eight children, to work at that time?

BRIGIO: Well, actually—actually, what she did, I used to go over to—in Barry [PH], which was about 17 miles away from my hometown.

LEVINE: Barry?

BRIGIO: Used to take the train.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Used to—the [unclear]—every two weeks, she used to go to these commercial place in Barry, was the big town. They had the college over there and everything, was the m—modern time town, you know. And we had—we had [unclear], used to buy wholesale, bring it home and used to sell and buy [unclear], whatever the people want for a dress, for a skirt, whatever. And then she had about four—four women, four girls to learn how to—on a Singer machine. And then a girl, one will make me a blouse, whatever. And the—they had to make—she never paid anybody. You learn the trade, like everything else.

LEVINE: You mean she paid them in goods? No.

BRIGIO: No.

LEVINE: Oh, she was training them?

BRIGIO: Right.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. So that was like their apprentice—

BRIGIO: Right.

LEVINE: —was to your mother.

BRIGIO: Right.

LEVINE: To—

BRIGIO: Like, I was the pres—apprentice in a—a carpenter shop.

LEVINE: Wow.

BRIGIO: See, my other two brothers, Vito and Leo, the only thing they had in town was a—a flourmill where they used to make flour from the wheat. They used to make 'em—the pasta, you know, macaroni and stuff like that, the only commercial thing they had in—in the town.

LEVINE: Really?

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did that employ a lot of people? Were there a lot of people working at that, making the pasta?

BRIGIO: Yeah. Well, it was about—I would say about 30 or 4—40.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: And I—I don't know if you ever saw it. They had such an experience, these guys, that the macaroni used to come down, you know, from the press. It used to go [unclear] like this, caught it, go around [unclear]. [unclear].

LEVINE: Wow.

BRIGIO: Around the [unclear], one on top of the other.

LEVINE: And then it dried like that?

BRIGIO: Huh?

LEVINE: And then it would dry?

BRIGIO: They used to take them outside, then dry them.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BRIGIO: Put that on a—on a stand there and then—and they used to—and they used to—used to dry. And then they used to ship 'em different places, you know.

LEVINE: Wow. Huh. Hmm. What was your mother like? When you were a little boy growing up, what—what was your mother like? What was her temperament?

BRIGIO: I—no, she was—she was a nice woman, you know, very gentle. And whenever somebody come in, she—you know, she spread that they used from the shop, “Do you like this one? Do you like that one?” You know. She had—she was a businesswoman. That—they—as a matter of fact, she—that was the only dry goods in this town.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: And everybody knew her, like they knew us like our [unclear] 40 years later when I went back. "Oh, you're the son of—so and so." [unclear] was a hero over there.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: My wife, sh—she was surprised too when I went back the same—40 years later, 1959. I—and my—I had a brother. He was also a barber. He took over the shop. I said, "Take care of it. Whatever you make, it's yours."

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: And I took two months of vacation.

LEVINE: Wonderful.

BRIGIO: Me and my wife, [unclear], she got—my daughter graduated elementary school. For two months, we went over there.

LEVINE: Beautiful.

BRIGIO: And the last two weeks, we stay at my hometown and my father's hometown, which is about four miles away.

LEVINE: So your mother's mother and father, were they born right around where you were in Turi?

BRIGIO: No, they were born—like I told you, when—we were born in a town they called Putiano [PH].

LEVINE: Putiano, and—

BRIGIO: [unclear], four miles away.

LEVINE: I see. And your father's family—

BRIGIO: That's—they were all there. And my mother's family were all there.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: That's where the priest lived too, also.

LEVINE: Now, who was the priest in the family?

BRIGIO: My—my mother's brother.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And you knew him, growing up?

BRIGIO: Of course.

LEVINE: Yeah. What was he like? What do you remember about him?

BRIGIO: Well, I remember about him that he used to come during the—during that time of—what do they call it there? The—some time, I forget the English word. Lent season.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Lent, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: The 40 days, used to come to my hometown. He was like a—say a sermon. He was very m—very much liked in my hometown also there—[unclear] like [unclear]. Alfonso [PH]. His name was Alfonso.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: And—and that's how he used to come once a week during the Lent to—for his sermon.

LEVINE: I see.

BRIGIO: And he used to stay at my mother's house.

LEVINE: Did everyone look up to him?

BRIGIO: Oh, sure.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BRIGIO: Sure.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. And what was—who was the one you were named after?

BRIGIO: Louis.

LEVINE: Yeah, what—

BRIGIO: Louis. He was my—my father's brother.

LEVINE: And did—did you—you knew—you knew him?

BRIGIO: Of course. Yeah.

LEVINE: What was he like?

BRIGIO: Was gentleman, is in effect—it was the mayor of the town.

LEVINE: Ah, and what did he have to do? Do you remember him being mayor?

BRIGIO: Huh?

LEVINE: What did he do as the mayor? What—what kind of duties did he have? What—

BRIGIO: Well, you know, like the same thing, he—for a—for a while, that he only had one son. And during the—the Libyan War in 1911, his son dies in Tripoli.

LEVINE: Oh.

BRIGIO: And—and from there on, he—he was no good no more.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm, yeah. Did you think you took after him at all?

BRIGIO: Huh?

LEVINE: Did you take after him at all?

BRIGIO: Well, in just that, you know, the same breed, you know. You know how it is.

LEVINE: Yeah. Was there anybody in your family that you felt very close to or that you looked up to, particularly, or—

BRIGIO: Well—and we never miss—we nev—especially when—during summer months, no school over there. We used to walk four mile, three miles, except some time they used to sees me and my brother going to—to Putiano [PH], like three miles away, to see my grandmother and my grandfather. They were still living. They used to come with their wagon, horse and wagon. They used to stop because they were known in town—you know what I mean—who—who we were. [several words unclear] and the son of a—married a—a dry goods store. And they—they used to pick us up and bring a—

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What do you remember? Do you remember any experiences with your grandparents?

BRIGIO: No.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: No.

LEVINE: No.

BRIGIO: Except one, that he got sick. He had to go to Naples, some kind of a—of a—what they call a bath. He had rheumatism. They used to call them bath that time. But he died over there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: That's all I remember.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: As a matter of fact, they couldn't even—they couldn't even bring him to [unclear]. They—he's buried over there.

LEVINE: Oh. W—do you have any memories of World War I?

BRIGIO: Oh, of course.

LEVINE: When it started and what happened?

BRIGIO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Tell me anything you can think of.

BRIGIO: First of all, everything was rationed. Bread was rationed. Meat was ra—even the kerosene was rationed. I—if you go—you get up. You— [unclear] on the family four—well, [unclear] six—well, five—five—six brothers, two sisters, you're allowed four—four loaves of bread. But they had to get up at 12 o'clock at night and stay on line. If you go there late, when the bread is finish, y—you want to get [unclear]. You got to wait the next day. For the meat, you had to go to doctor, sign a thing, you know, you need the meat. I tell you, you got meat if you could afford it. You couldn't afford it anyways so what the hell the difference? The kerosene, they used to have the lamps, you know, where you got to go up with the ladder, like the lamp on the corner of the—the town, normal. At six o'clock, the town completely dead. You go to bed because what could you do there? You know what I mean? Except for the summertime, you went outside [unclear]. After it got dark, you can't do nothing. So that was the living of four years.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm. Well, what about your religious life? Was your family religious?

BRIGIO: Oh, yes. Yes. I served mass. I was an altar boy, used to sing in church.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: I used to [unclear] my uncle many time, take the mass for one [unclear] but after I [unclear].

LEVINE: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And [clears throat]—

BRIGIO: As [unclear], that was the life. There was no such a thing in ice-skating or bicycle. There was never—you couldn't afford it in first place and—

LEVINE: What did you do for fun?

BRIGIO: Huh?

LEVINE: What—what did you do for fun?

BRIGIO: Play [several words unclear]. What do you do for—was there—just, oh, things that you do. Used to name the [unclear], like a guessing game. You know, that's all you did.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: There was nothing else.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Tell about your oldest brother, who went off into World War I.

BRIGIO: Well, at the beginning, he was a—a little short and they wouldn't take him. They put, like, classify like, say, had that over here, 3—3B or what—3A or whatever. 1917 was the big retreat. Whatever they gain on the Eastern Front with Austria, the—they always—they came almost in V—in Venice. The Austrian Army came, took over Venice, and there were a lot of people there that—that came. This was [unclear]. They were afraid to stay there. They all came and reached down and got so many people at the time. They had to support 'em. And they came all the way up from—of north of Italy. And then the war—the war ended in 1918 when they—after the United States got in. Otherwise, that war would still be there.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: And finally, [unclear] they sunk the—the ship, but was, you know—that was already prepared. And what are you going to do? They're looking for excuse to go to war.

LEVINE: Hmm, mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: Same way, when the Second World War, they—they bombed Hawaii over there. They knew it. They knew it all the while, it was going to happen.

LEVINE: So what happened to your—is it Leo—your older brother, Leo. Leonardo.

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. Tell about when he went into the World War—

BRIGIO: Ah, [unclear] you don't retreat. The Italian Army, they took anybody. They took anybody—took anybody, even [unclear] one end. They took everybody, the town, that was available at that—of the age. So my brother, he went there in 1917. Six months later, he was back already. As a matter of fact, we had to leave him in Naples because he was still in the hospital when we came. We left him over there and when he came out of the hospital the priest took care of him until he was able to come over here. And he came in 1922. Took my father three years [unclear] that there wouldn't be a boat charge.

LEVINE: Oh.

BRIGIO: Would you believe it?

LEVINE: Huh. So—

BRIGIO: He had to sign a bond that, for him, he wouldn't be a public charge. We could afford to support him. You know what I mean?

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Tell me what was wrong with him when he came out of the World War I.

BRIGIO: What was—

LEVINE: What was—what was wrong with your brother?

BRIGIO: He was gassed. So that if, from what—from what I—he—the story tells us that he laid on—in Alps over there. You know, a [unclear]—a—how cold it was, that the leg frozen. And he—he was—lay there for three days. When the leg was frozen, that's how he got—they cut off the legs up—to here.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: And they gave him artificial leg but—

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: You know, it was no good no more.

LEVINE: Hmm. So tell about your mother then, her decision to leave because of that.

BRIGIO: Well, she—she had intentions that, first, her husband, he got out of business because on account of the war. Then they took her up—her first son, on account of the war, he said, “Well, we go to America.” Is if the king—I remember—I never forget her word, “If the king got one of them, he ain’t going to get the other five.” But in war, more [unclear]. And that’s—and that’s how, what happened, [unclear]. So my older brother and my two sister, they came in August, 1919. And on account that there were so many people going the—the—almost 10 million people left Europe to come to America in that year that they—they was impossible to—to [unclear] and [unclear] enough to bring ‘em all on one time. You had to wait. So my—my—my two sister, my brother had a chance to go three on a ship, and the travel agent said, “Go to Naples right away.” Same they did to us. We had left Na—we left my hometown. She sold everything in the bedroom and everything she had. We went to Naple and—and on—on 11 of December. We didn’t get on the ship till on the 14. We had to stay three days in Naple because there was—what—you—you know, was—soon as the ship got full, they went. Then [unclear] another ship went right away. Then they—you know, because the people were there waiting to get on the ship.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did you hear stories about the United States from people who had been here and went back to Italy before you left Italy?

BRIGIO: Yeah, the—the—the—the—they used to call it the—the t—the t—the country of gold. They said, “You go like this. You find gold on any [unclear],” you know. Well, they used to call that “Terra de lauro.” [PH]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: And—and some people believe that there was—there was a lot of good account when came back four or five years later, whatever they did. They always talk high about how good their country is, you know, a lot.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. [unclear]—

BRIGIO: Nobody had a bad word for it.

LEVINE: Really? Now, did you know, like, men in town who came to America, worked and went back, and came back and forth, back and forth?

BRIGIO: No. Most of them, they—they remain here.

LEVINE: Oh.

BRIGIO: They made the money. They m—they bought the—the land. They know—it—they made money over there or in this country. Whatever they made, they brought back to Italy.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: See? As long you take it on time, like my father used to send dollar bill in an envelope and the letter, used to take to the bank in Barry. You got five liras and three cents.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: Almost even. But today, one lira, you have to put up 1,700 lira to get one dollar.

LEVINE: Wow.

BRIGIO: Imagine the difference.

LEVINE: Yes, uh-huh. Uh-huh. Yeah, well, [clears throat] let's see. So your mother—your mother made the decision to go. Then was it—was it Leo who went with your two older sisters?

BRIGIO: No, Vito.

LEVINE: Oh, Vito. So Leo stayed in Italy?

BRIGIO: No, no. Vito and Mary and Elina, they came in August, 1919.

LEVINE: Okay.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

LEVINE: And who sponsored them? Who was here in this—

BRIGIO: My father. He came—he came in 1916.

LEVINE: Oh.

BRIGIO: During the war, after war broke out, because he was out of business. He couldn't do nothing else. So my—my mother's brother, he was—he was here before. In 1910, he came over here. You know why? He—he—he avoided the draft.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: At that time, and they—when the—and—and when war with Tur—Turkey, about Libya and Tripoli [unclear]. Libya belonged to Turkey at one time and Italy took over.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: Through the war. So to avoid the draft, he escaped to this country.

LEVINE: I see.

BRIGIO: He didn't want to go in the army.

LEVINE: And then he sponsored your father?

BRIGIO: He—my father, yes.

LEVINE: And did your father come with any of his children?

BRIGIO: No.

LEVINE: No.

BRIGIO: He came alone.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: And—and then after a while, the following year—no, three years later, we just—on account of my mother, so my—her first—her firstborn [several words unclear]—I told you the sad story—she decided to come over with the rest, the rest of the family. That's how I happen to be here.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: If it weren't that war, I think I would have finished college, would have been a schoolteacher. But that's those things. You know what I mean?

LEVINE: Do you regret that now?

BRIGIO: Of course.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Yeah. Well, so, in other words, your father came first. Then Vito and your two older—

BRIGIO: And the two sisters. Yeah.

LEVINE: —sisters came. Then a few months later—

BRIGIO: We came.

LEVINE: —you came.

BRIGIO: With three brothers.

LEVINE: With three brothers.

BRIGIO: And myself and my mother.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: [unclear].

LEVINE: And among—among those brothers was Leonardo that came with you.

BRIGIO: No.

LEVINE: No. He stayed?

BRIGIO: He stayed because he was still in the hospital, like I told you before.

LEVINE: Oh. He was still in the hospital.

BRIGIO: So—so my—so the priest said, "No more. So he comes out of the hospital, I'll take care of him." And he went to live with my uncle for a few months till he was able to come over here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And—and t—say a little more about the fact that your—your brother had—had had his leg cut off. Wh—was there difficulty getting him into this country when he did come?

BRIGIO: Well, in—then one time, being that the allied were in United States at that time, I took him to—to the hospital, American hospital, you know, which—where we're living in Brooklyn was [unclear]. It was a headquarters there. And they told me what hospital to go and they put him—artificial leg.

LEVINE: Oh.

BRIGIO: And of course, [unclear].

LEVINE: Mm-hmm. I see.

BRIGIO: Because he was [unclear]—

LEVINE: Injured—

BRIGIO: He was a veteran, like a veteran there but he was treat like a veteran. He said, "Well, put it over here."

LEVINE: And so did he have any trouble getting into the country?

BRIGIO: I told you one—well, my father had to sign a paper, put up a bond that he won't become a public charge.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. But was your father a citizen by then, or no?

BRIGIO: No, no.

LEVINE: He wasn't a citizen yet but he—

BRIGIO: No.

LEVINE: —just could do that. Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: We—I don't know [unclear] what it is because he—he was a citi—we—we were underage. Automatically, we—we would become a citizen. But for some reason, he never bother.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: He never learned the language.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: So each one of us had to be [unclear]. I became a citizen in 1928.

LEVINE: Oh.

BRIGIO: Seven years. No, no. Almost nine years because then in those days you had to wait seven years before you become a citizen.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: You have to bring witness and all, you know. Today, so different.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BRIGIO: You come here. No passport, no visa, no nothing. You come and you go on relief. That's why [unclear]. I mean, so much change that—mind boggling to me. Why? Before, so much [unclear]. After a while, I think—you know, I think, '25 or '27, they put a quota, how many that could come from each nation. I don't know if you know about it.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm, yes.

BRIGIO: They put a quota. So many people came from Italy and that was it. But after a while, when—when I went back, they all lived just as good as the people lived there. America, [unclear] we'd make a good living there, which I did.

LEVINE: Right.

BRIGIO: You know, the global—the global thing that they're doing, going over there in the—it's unbelievable.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm. Well, you mentioned earlier, before we turned on the tape, about the influenza epidemic. Could you say something about what you saw of that?

BRIGIO: Well, because they—we knew there was—they used to call it Spanish influenza in 1917. We didn't hear from my father for almost six months. But it wasn't his fault. He wrote but during the war over—there didn't come no ship, especially when the—this country came—got in the war. We're going about—bring a—a letter from—you know what I mean? And we waited and we waited. I used to go over to the post office, the letter carrier, "Any letters?" "No." For six months we didn't hear, but after a while we got all the letters that he sent one time.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: They were nice. He did write but we didn't get delivery. They delivered maybe a year later. And that's what—

LEVINE: Well, did you see people dying of influenza?

BRIGIO: Oh—

LEVINE: Did you see people dying of influenza?

BRIGIO: No, we—no, not—not in Italy.

LEVINE: Not in Italy?

BRIGIO: No.

LEVINE: No, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Only in America, you'd hear—I used to read a lot.

LEVINE: I see. I see.

BRIGIO: I said, "How come?" We couldn't understand why.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Okay. So your mother sold her little store? And she sold all her—her dry goods in what—before [unclear]?

BRIGIO: Everything. She sold the—the—the beds, the—everything, the furniture, the whole furniture. She sold everything. As a matter of fact, the last week we had to stay in—in her hometown where the priest live in order to—we were ready. "Hey, come. Get on a train." You know. That's the way it was over there. There's a—this day, you're leaving. When it came, get on the train and you're—you're ready to go. But when you get to Naples, you're not ready to go. You wait.

LEVINE: Yeah. What did your mother bring with her? What did she take with her from Italy? Do you remember?

BRIGIO: Yes. She didn't take n—no. She didn't take anything at all.

LEVINE: Oh.

BRIGIO: She took whatever we [unclear]. Oh, wait. Yeah, one thing she took. My father said to her, "Bring this and bring that." Liquor. At that time, it was Prohibition.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: And oil. I—and in the carpenter shop, I made a—a case with 10 gallons of oil. I had the—I went to tinsmith. You know, they make a little vat. And

I—to cover that, I put all the—the—the [unclear], the [unclear]. They—they put to the pillows, you know.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: They used to—I put that all around and I'd [unclear]. And that was it. And when we got off the ship, I took care because I had three younger brother. I look after everything. When we got off the ship, we [unclear]—I got off, Statue of Liberty. And then we took the ferry, only had one address, my uncle. He had a fruit and vegetable store. They only had—the address that I had because I didn't know where my father lived, because we—by the time we move and all that, he had the apartment ready in Green Point [PH]. So I gave it to the taxi guy, said, "Put all the stuff on the top of the—the taxi." Crossing over the bridge—

LEVINE: The Brooklyn Bridge.

BRIGIO: —the car skidded. Everything fell off. I went to the guy. I tried to tell him. I didn't know how to say, "Stop." I grabbed the—he finally caught on. He backed up. It was Christmas Day in the morning—and pick it all up. We—and we got to my uncle's house. We—

LEVINE: Did you—

BRIGIO: We thought that my father would be there with my two sister and a brother, Vito. He got invited to another [unclear] over there—he—for Christmas dinner. We waited. We finally—that's when we met my father, my uncle's house, at night.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, did you get to your uncle's house with the—with the oil and with the—

BRIGIO: Yeah, with everything.

LEVINE: —liq—liquor that you had?

BRIGIO: Yeah. And then my uncle said, "Leave this stuff here," because used to go to World [unclear] Market to buy the vegetable or fruits, whatever. He had a fruit and vegetable store. It wasn't far from where we lived. Said, "I'll bring it over with the horse and wagon." And that's what he did two days later.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm. Talk about the voyage a little bit. Canopik, right? The ship? Canopik.

BRIGIO: Canopik, yeah.

LEVINE: Canopik. W—was there anything that happened on the voyage that you remember?

BRIGIO: Well, the only thing I remember, as far—as far [unclear], I would—[unclear]—told you the course. We had—have to go Strait of Gibraltar, was perfect. You know, no—no waves, no nothing. Soon, we passed the Strait of Gibraltar. We stop and in Izor [PH] and pick up more people there and then was a—you know, [unclear], one—one [unclear]. Was two people there. So we stop over and I was [unclear]. I said, “How come”—I asked one of the crew over there. I says, “How come one is empty? Why they didn’t fill that up?” Said, “We’re going to stop on island of Izor, pick up more people.” And that’s why that—so when I saw it come in, I—I had a little kid, about five, six years old on the top of me. Then one night he peed. I—I got pee all over the place.

LEVINE: Oh, no!

BRIGIO: I’m—we got [unclear]. I told the ship was sinking. [chuckles] I called the guy, said, “What the hell did you put him on—when he gonna have to stay on the top? Put him on the bottom.” So I changed places I had. My mother, after the—we passed Gibraltar, she was—I th—I thought she’d never make it.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: Sick all day lo—all the day long. Whatever she took, she threw up. All the people threw up. And every morning, rain or shine or cold, yeah, they get out of the ship, they had to fumigate.

LEVINE: How did they do it?

BRIGIO: With the spray or something, whatever they had. And my mother had the—in her breast, whatever she sewed, she had 25,000 liras. She had—she had the bonds from the First World War, which were due 10 years later. And that’s how we bought the house.

LEVINE: Oh, mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: She—they were—they were—the bonds were due and she got 25,000, a lot, so we bought the house.

LEVINE: In Green Point?

BRIGIO: Yeah—no. No, in Green—Bay Ridge.

LEVINE: In Bay Ridge, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Wow.

BRIGIO: And that's where we lived there for—till my mother and father died and—  
and it was next door to—to my wife.

LEVINE: Oh. Now, did your—

BRIGIO: And—

LEVINE: —father have a job or [unclear] when you—

BRIGIO: No, no. He—he—he got sick on the job.

LEVINE: Of—of dying wool?

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: That was much bigger, of course, but had the same thing.

LEVINE: I see. Now, did your—did your mother work after she came?

BRIGIO: No, no.

LEVINE: No, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: And she missed it.

LEVINE: Did she? How do you know? Wh—

BRIGIO: Because she used to complain about [chuckles] the—"I was never a cook  
[unclear] because the girls used to cook." [laughs] The girls used to do  
everything.

LEVINE: How did your mother like being in this country?

BRIGIO: She didn't like it.

LEVINE: Why?

BRIGIO: To—to her, it was a letdown.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: And she didn't like it at all but she had to make the best of it. You know, then you get used to it a little bit, you know.

LEVINE: Well, do you know what she was let down about? Wh—what was it that she expected that she didn't get?

BRIGIO: Well, n—not that she didn't get but she wanted to be active o—on this. She wants to be active. What was she? About 45 or 46. She—with eight children, she was on a—she—she never took care of us. The girls took care of us.

LEVINE: Hmm, mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: They were the babysitters. You know what I mean?

LEVINE: Mmm. How about your father? How did he—how did he ada—adapt to this country?

BRIGIO: He—he did adapt. You know why? Because he had a lot of people from the same town.

LEVINE: Oh, working with him or living here?

BRIGIO: Yeah, some working with him.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. I see.

BRIGIO: Some—he baptized some other children of his—he—w—you—es—especially was a foreman of the—of the place there. And I got very close with my—my father used to come, my house. We used to go to their hou—first, you know, another—another family, that they came from the same town. That's what it was, the—in those day, you go to their house. You have a little sandwich or coffee. And then they come to my house, the same thing. You had the—the—the gramophone there.

LEVINE: Oh, the Victrola.

BRIGIO: Yeah, Victrola.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Used to put the—the disc on it, dance a little bit with the girls, you know. That w—that was our life.

LEVINE: What—do you remember the music of that time?

BRIGIO: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: What—can you remember any other songs?

BRIGIO: Yes.

LEVINE: Wh—what—what—what ones do you remember?

BRIGIO: Well, like Irving Berlin, “Three O’clock in the Morning.” I—another one was, let me see—“I Miss You.” I was—I was singing during the night.

LEVINE: [laughs]

BRIGIO: Believe it or not.

LEVINE: Really?

BRIGIO: I was—but I can’t remember it now.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So you would dance. You would play the Victrola and dance in—

BRIGIO: Oh—

LEVINE: —in each other’s houses [unclear].

BRIGIO: It—well, you know, had the little front room, what is called front room.

LEVINE: Oh, the front room.

BRIGIO: Yeah. And I—I used to—I used to dance a little bit.

LEVINE: Oh, boy. Well, now, talk about when the ship came into the New York harbor.

BRIGIO: Okay.

LEVINE: What it was like.

BRIGIO: We got off the ship and after—[unclear], you know, we started—the rest of the stuff came off. And my—on it—while I went on the ship you heard about Prohibition. There was a rumor about Prohibition. Take the liquor over there, you're going to take—be arrested, they said. So some, they drank it. They throw the bottle overboard. Some, they sold it. But when my father said, "Bring a—bring [unclear]. Bring—bring all kinds of l—of liquor." I said—I said to my mother. I said, "I don't care." I said, "Whatever they do, most of—the worst they could do, take it off me." I broke the lining of my coat and put 'em all around. And here I am. I couldn't sit. I couldn't lay down. I couldn't lay down. When we got off for the, you know, for inspection at Ellis Island the guy looked at me, started to laugh. I said, "What the hell they laughing at?" [unclear] let me go by and in a [unclear] back and forth. None—none of them broke. Finally, I got in a taxi and I took all the bottles and had about six bottles all around my—the [chuckles] line of the coat.

LEVINE: [chuckles] Wow. How about the Statue of Liberty? Do you remember seeing that?

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Wh—when was that and what was it like?

BRIGIO: Well, the—this—this was the—the evening n—of Christmas Eve. We—we got there. We were still traveling. Finally, at dawn of Christmas, my mama—my mother [unclear], "How come we don't get there?" I said, "Well, we'll get there." At dawn, I saw the Statue of Liberty. "Here we are," I said. "Thank God!" We're going to meet my father, this and that, but I didn't know how to take the ferry. I didn't know that they're going to wait at the ferry. I get to the ferry; I look around. Nobody. As I told you before, I had one address, my uncle. That was it. I w—I would—I was completely lost. I said, "Well, where we going? How we going to get there?" This and that. I finally got the—give the—the address to one of the taxi. He put those stuff in the top of the car and we got—finally got to my uncle. He used to have a store in Brooklyn, Bay Ridge, 72<sup>nd</sup> Street and Fifth Avenue. Finally, we got there and that's when my father, my two sister and my brother were—well, you know, of course, he didn't know. He—how could—how could he know?

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: They—we didn't even know what day we're going to get here. You know what I mean? Because we left my hometown on 11 to—we had 25 already. You know what I mean? We didn't know.

LEVINE: Yeah. So when did you—do you remember the meeting with your father?

BRIGIO: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: When they finally did get—catch up with him?

BRIGIO: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. You know, everybody was crying and all that.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. It must have been quite emotional.

BRIGIO: Yeah, it was.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

BRIGIO: Hadn't seen him for three years.

LEVINE: Yeah. So by the time you got there, everybody but Leonardo was now in the United States. Is that right?

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Then the—then finally, we got—we—[unclear] we—from there, from Bay Ridge, we—he had a [unclear]. That—my father ran the [unclear] in Green Point, you know, what they called the railroad room, you know.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm, tenement. Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Yeah, tenement.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: No—no—no electric light. Had a gas—a gas lamp, you know. Put up—put up a bubble, a gas bubble on there. That's what—no heat, no nothing. But we made the best of it.

LEVINE: Now, when you left Italy, did you have, like, electric and water—

BRIGIO: No, no.

LEVINE: —and all that?

BRIGIO: No.

LEVINE: No.

BRIGIO: No.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Each—each house had a—a well with a—with the pail, used to bring up the water. And then they had the public well. Whenever it rained in the street, all that water went in this public well till they got a [unclear]. And people got the—had the—the private well in their own house. They had to go where they got the water. Big vats, used to put 'em on top of the head, the women. They used to sing coming home or going there and that was—that was life. You know what I mean? What else?

LEVINE: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: And so after we got to—to Green Point over there, one week we had to go to school. So all, including me and my other three—younger three brothers, our father—was only eight years. He only went—he went there two years with the other son from first grade. They had [unclear] in the fourth grade because [unclear]. But they say, “What the hell am I doing here?” So he had [unclear]. I was desperate. After all this, I got to start elementary again. And then, again, [several words unclear] smart—[several words unclear]. I don't know what the hell they were talking about. By the time I got—I left in less than six months, I graduate elementary. From there, I—wasn't good enough for me. I said, “I got to learn the language, no matter what.” I went to high school at night. That called Boy's Evening High, no girls at that time. And I did that for four years. In the meantime, next door, I got friendly with some Jewish fellow next door to where we lived. He got me—like, “Don't ask for [unclear] brother?” I never forget him. “You do this,” or “You do that.” He—he guided me.

LEVINE: Oh.

BRIGIO: He got me a job in—and nobody knew I was only eight years—he got me a job in the office, National Liberty Insurance Company. When I misspelled a word, he's, “Hey, what happened?” Said, “I'm only here three years.” [unclear] me. I talk as if was a native, the way I talk today. Nobody believe that I—I came here, 15. So then—then in the office I met—met a nice fellow. He was—he was—he was six in—in the office. Lee [unclear] was the cashier [unclear]. The other one was Kramer [PH]. They had two girls writing policies, fire insurance, you know. And I

worked there two years. No, two or three years. Then I—he's [unclear] a job, you know, [unclear]. I took an exam for [several words unclear].

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: So I passed. I came out second. So—and this fellow said, “Why don’t you go to the alderman?” Which today they call the consulate. “Why don’t you go to see if this—the [several words unclear]. Maybe he could help you.” I went to see him. [sentence unclear]. And I told him the situation. He said—oh, I’ll never forget the word he said to me. “My son, have you got the \$500?” Where am I going to get \$500? That was the job. He got a job for the city in the tax department. He tried to help, you know, [unclear]. And that’s what happened.

LEVINE: Hmm. Well, now, wh—

BRIGIO: That’s what happened, wound up to be a barber instead, because my older brother, Vito, he was a barber. My younger brother, he came about—we put up a shop in New York, three of us, three brothers and four other barbers and a manicurist and a—and a shoeshine. The war breaks out. At that time, haircut and shave, shampoo [unclear], a dollar.

LEVINE: Where was the shop?

BRIGIO: Thirty-sixth Street and Sixth Avenue, before they took the elevator down.

LEVINE: In Manhattan?

BRIGIO: New York, yeah.

LEVINE: New Y—uh-huh.

BRIGIO: The war came along, the Second World War. The four—the four barbers that were—got drafted. [snapping sound] No barbers. My moth—my—my brother, Vito, he went to work in Jersey, Camp Kilmore [PH]. A GI’s haircut—you know, before they left the—they left, my—my younger brother, he got [unclear] working in a—in a—what they call that building?

LEVINE: Pentagon. Pentagon?

BRIGIO: Pentagon building, yeah. And what am I going to do? I went to work in Republic [PH], you know, plane in Long Island, went to work making B-47.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: I worked there six years. That's when my—my daughter was born, '46. And I lived in Kopay [PH], Long Island all that time.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: Meantime, things happened. I said, "They only come in [unclear] Republic." I said to myself, "The people dying [unclear]. They're giving up their life and we"—and they're screwing around with the union. They want to put a union there. I never want a—I never believe in union. I believe in America, work—whatever man is worth, not because he got protection of—of the union. I quit—after the war was over, I could still stay there. They didn't lay me off because the supervisor—they knew. They got [unclear] a honest worker. I [unclear] people there. I said, "Is that why the war is all about? These [unclear], just to sit down in the cockpit of the"—but my job was to put the—the panels of this to panel. Had to do it in certain time because they took the time sheet. This—the guy—by what time I started and what time I finish. And it was [unclear]. I go in there and the guy's still there. "How come you're not finish? I—I got to do my work in there." You know, there was a—[unclear] got the plane—we're moving up.

LEVINE: Oh.

BRIGIO: They started it from a—the time they—they came out of the paint shop, just a body. No more than a—a wi—no wings on that, just a body. But they had to do things inside. Then, as we went along the line, they put the wings, they put the motor. And they put everything. The guy took it out. He tried it out. I came to the time they were going up 60 [unclear] a day by the time the war was over. Sixty planes a day with the line.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: I start there 65 cents an hour. That's what I started with. I left it when they were a dollar, thirty. That used to call it merit raise. Then they fi—they had, if you have an idea how to reduce the job, less time [unclear] better—better [unclear] is you used to write and how you—how you're—every time I got \$10, \$20. I made about 60, \$70. I wrote that—how this job be done better.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: And quicker.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: They gave you that—that privilege, you know. And even after the war, they kept me there. The supervisor said, “I know who to lay off.” I didn’t get laid off. I was there another two years.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: Then my brother, Joe, he had a—let me see. No, he—he had a shop. He said, “There’s a shop for sale in Valley Stream.” [PH] In 1949, I went to work. I bought the shop on Wednesday, 26 years.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: From there, I left. I sold it. I wanted to retire, not for me. I—I started working for somebody else. I left there 20—another 20 years later, to ’86.

LEVINE: Wow, wow.

BRIGIO: So that’s the—the story of my life.

LEVINE: Boy! It’s amazing. Well, how did you meet your wife?

BRIGIO: She lived next door to me.

LEVINE: Where was that?

BRIGIO: In Brooklyn, when we bought the house. Her father bought a house right in that attached—semi-attach. So I was sitting in the stoop one night. She comes out. She started talking, you know, make a date. We go to movies. Y—you know how you start out. And what do you do? You go dancing [unclear]. And my brother, they would keep me company. At first, you know, it was a group of—of three, my two brothers. The other one to marry. They turn out for—add the girls. And I had a girl so we made a three-couple group, whatever. We went together, like a—the—the—the three dominoes. [chuckles] We [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: And that’s how it started.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So did your mother and father and her mother and father get involved in making a match or—

BRIGIO: No, no.

LEVINE: Not—nothing like that?

BRIGIO: Never.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Then—no.

LEVINE: No, uh-huh. Yeah.

BRIGIO: Say—when my father used to say, “Whatever you do in your life, you do it. I had mine. Now, you do yours.” That’s the one principle that they had.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm. Were there other principles that they tried to pass on to you? Ideas they had about how you should live or what you should do?

BRIGIO: Well, we saw life as it was. You know what I mean?

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: Like when we’re in Italy, coming over here was entirely different life. So we had to learn the living over here. Quite different from what we had over there.

LEVINE: Okay. We’re going to pause here because we’re at the end of the tape. But I want to put in another tape.

BRIGIO: Okay.

LEVINE: We’ll keep going. Okay. Stop.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A]

LEVINE: Okay, this is tape two now that we’re starting. I’m speaking with Louis Brigio. And he came from Italy when he was 15 years old in 1919. And you were talking about how it was so different for your mother and father and for all of you when—when you came—

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: —to this country. Do you remember any of the differences that struck you in the very beginning when you first got here and everything was new and different? Anything that stands out that—

BRIGIO: Not—not—not—not on that scale because when, like I said, they had—they had no electric. They had no—had no—no bathtub or shower. They

had what they call a—a public shower. You used to pay 10 cents, soap and a towel. [unclear] where you'd get a shower.

LEVINE: Oh.

BRIGIO: They had the one in Green Point six blocks away. And that's how we got—because there was no bathtub in the house.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: No steam heat.

LEVINE: How do—how do you remember those public baths? Were they—were they clean? Were they [unclear]?

BRIGIO: Well, each one, you know—

LEVINE: Separate [unclear].

BRIGIO: Separate, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Most of them were showers anyway. There was no bathtub. Y—you just soap up and, you know, they gave you a towel and that was it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And most people must have used them, right?

BRIGIO: Of course.

LEVINE: Because most people h—

BRIGIO: Of course. They—the same houses the—all—all the old houses, they were the same. Then they start building private bathtub, 1925, when we bought the house. That's the first time I saw a private bathtub and a shower.

LEVINE: Hmm, mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: I didn't see it before. In Italy, there was no such thing.

LEVINE: Oh.

BRIGIO: You know, when you'd take a shower? When you went to the—to the—to the—to the—to—there's a [unclear] where they had the beach.

LEVINE: Oh, when you went swimming.

BRIGIO: Yeah, you went in the water. That was it because you had no—those facility—they didn't have any.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Yeah. Now, you said your mother was able to buy the house—

BRIGIO: With the money she got, she carried from Italy, the—the bonds that were due, and ones she got for—for the furniture or—or the rest of the stuff that she had to sell. I don't—if [unclear] was—altogether, there was 25,000 liras, not dollar. Liras.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: But at that time, was worth 25,000 dollar.

LEVINE: Wow.

BRIGIO: Each dollar—each lira was worth a dollar.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Was your family connected to any Italian organizations in this country? Were there—were there social clubs or—

BRIGIO: No, no.

LEVINE: —you know, cemetery clubs?

BRIGIO: No.

LEVINE: Banks?

BRIGIO: No.

LEVINE: No, mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: No. I—I was only—after I—that I joined a club.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Like the Sons of Italy and belonged to the [unclear] Knights of Columbus.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: And—and—and that's—and that's why, before that, we—we didn't know anything about that.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: Except like, used to have a lot of dances, used to go dancing on a Sunday there, used to enjoy yourself five, six hours. Then you wen—went for a little supper. He went home. That was—or you went to see a movie. At that time, 50 cents a movie.

LEVINE: Hmm. This is the Sons of Italy? No.

BRIGIO: No, regular movies.

LEVINE: Regular, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Used to go dancing, 40 cents. They had two bands all—dance all night.

LEVINE: Wow.

BRIGIO: They used to give ice cream if you belonged to the club.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: I mean, was—was enjoyable. You—you—you didn't have—you didn't have to have so much money.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BRIGIO: Now, if—when I think about it, my God, how could it happen? What made it happen? I don't know.

LEVINE: What do you think? What do you think made it happen?

BRIGIO: I don't know. If I know the answer, I would've tell you.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: It just—even if you go by, what to call anybody—every—everybody wants a hundred. Every—you know, certain—the—the dollar has no value anymore. One time, used to—used to go to movies, 40 cents, and 40 cents and 80 cents. I used to get an ice cream soda, 10 cents. Now, it's a dollar. You enjoy yourself for two people. No more today.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Like, we order oil today, \$1.69 a gallon just for the heating oil. It's unbelievable. I remember the time used to sell—used to have seven gallons for a dollar on—on gasoline. Would you believe it?

LEVINE: Wow.

BRIGIO: And this was during the Depression. Seven gallons for a dollar. My first car, I bought, Ford, was \$60. A Chevrolet, brand new [unclear]. [unclear] was \$60, paid cash, not 30,000, 40,000. She bought a car, two years old, \$20,000. How could—like some family, how could any—I don't know.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: You—You—you have to earn money. He was a rich man, only make \$75 a week. Not today. Today, you're—you're a poor slob if you don't make 5, \$600 a week, you cannot live.

LEVINE: Well, how else—what else do you remember about the Depression in this country? What was it like for you and your family?

BRIGIO: Well, we—we—we didn't—as much as we saw Depression, actually, we didn't see Depression because we were working. My father got here, almost retired. I was working. I was m—whatever, brought home. I—I went couple weeks to bring home \$15. Work all week and still was money, because you were able to buy for [unclear]. Used to buy a pound of ham, 40 cents. You—you—even though the money was small but you had value. Today, the money ain't got nothing. Whatever you spend, it—it's not enough. And that's—and—and then that's the thing that I—I can't bring it to my head why such a terrific change. Probably could be global change or something because if I take a trip to—you know, I going to see a lot of change over there too, I guess.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: It's unbelievable. I just—I just can't bring myself to say, "Well, that"—and I think, 'Well, that's the way things are.' You have to accept it.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: She bought gas this morning, \$1.69 a gallon. [sighs] From seven gallons to a dollar? I—I—how you figure that? Would you believe it? I can't.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BRIGIO: So after a while, you re—resolve yourself, well, that's the thing you have to—have to go by.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: Otherwise, you—you lose your head.

LEVINE: Hmm, mm-hmm. Yeah. How do you think about yourself as far as being Italian and being American? How—how do you—how do you equate the two in—in your own person and life?

BRIGIO: Well, to me, was a disappointment, but I had to do a lot adjustment. Like I said before, I had to drop out the first year of college. And my ambition was to be a schoolteacher.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: I used to help kids. Then the—that—the teacher, he—he said, “We’ll help you.” And they blamed me because I did, even before they—he got upstairs in a room. And they used to bring me fruits. They make [unclear] boys do—do this for me, sometimes to make a mistake on purpose.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. [chuckles]

BRIGIO: Because the teacher know I helped him and that he didn’t want that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: And—

LEVINE: So you were disappointed that you had to give that up and—

BRIGIO: Huh?

LEVINE: You were disappointed that you had to—

BRIGIO: Of course.

LEVINE: —give that up. Yeah.

BRIGIO: Of course.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BRIGIO: And then again, well, that’s a part of life. And wh—where you—where you—you did it or you made a mistake, it’s—it’s a part of living. You can’t do nothing about it, as much as you’d like to. It can’t be done. And the second thing, I—I think I didn’t want to be bum. But to have enough to be

[unclear] would, due to necessity, I said, "I want—want something. I want to be my own boss." And that's what—and that's what happened. Even today, you got [unclear] Barber. They don't know how to cut hair. Ah, before it was a profession. Today, it's a disgrace. You see so many guys [unclear] hair or something they do themselves. They take a machine and go around and leave a little bit on top. I don't know. Today, is not a trade anymore.

LEVINE: Because the skill isn't there, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: And that's—and that's why it—I'm disappointed in a way but it's [unclear]. I lived so long a time. How much more? You know what I mean?

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: I seen enough for me to see what the world is all about.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: Between politician and between this and that. This kind of government that [unclear] don't go—Mussolini was no good and Stalin was no good. And it's that type of government they got in—what—what is good? What is good for—for people? If you—say, there, if the politician can't have—be honest, how you expect that the—the general public to be honest. I mean, it drifts down the line. The—the [unclear] that whatever—I could do it. Why not? Why? Is he privilege? I could do it. Divorce [unclear].

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: You don't laugh anymore, which is so many divorces. A couple months, you get married. Five week, they got divorced. What the hell for? What happened? Nobody got patience anymore. Nobody adjust themselves from what they were to what they gonna be. They don't take care of their children. They wanted this. They want that. To me, it's a different life entirely from what I—from what I see when I was a—a youngster.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: Different. Absolutely different.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm. What do you consider the high points of your life? What were the best times? What—what would you consider satisfying that y—that, in—

BRIGIO: Well,

LEVINE: —your life, when you look at it?

BRIGIO: Well, when—when I got married. We had a happy life for [unclear] 58 years. We travel a lot and we enjoyed a lot, as much as we could. Outside of that, I have nothing to—that we could say I didn't do. We did it all. Yeah. We traveled all over. We travel all over United States. We went to Japan. We went to Asia. We went to Egypt. We went to Greece, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, except Russia.

LEVINE: Oh.

BRIGIO: We went to London, all of them.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: Start [unclear] when my daughter was working. Whatever [unclear] I could get, I used them.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: And all, of course, was \$10.

LEVINE: Wonderful.

BRIGIO: Of course, another thing. Now, they go first class. We did that too.

LEVINE: W—tell me your wife's name and her maiden name. Your wife's m—name, including her maiden name.

BRIGIO: Her—her—the real name is Nancy.

LEVINE: It's—it's Rose.

BRIGIO: Nancy Rose.

LEVINE: Oh, Nancy Rose.

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And what was her maiden name?

BRIGIO: Desidrio.

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

BRIGIO: D-E-S-I-D-R-I-O.

LEVINE: Okay. And you had one child?

BRIGIO: Yes.

LEVINE: And what's her name?

BRIGIO: Carol.

LEVINE: Carol? Uh-huh, okay. Okay. So what do you consider the worst time of your life? The low point, maybe, of—of your lifetime?

BRIGIO: The low point was—was when I had to give up my—my education. And the low point when I first came here, I had to make a lot adjustment, start from the time I went—started to—had to go to elementary school all over again. And then I couldn't reach my—ambitious. I could not reach that, no matter how big was—I had to bring home money to support the rest of the family. I had to give my mother \$10 a week for room and board, no matter where I was working. [unclear]. There was a time when I had the shop in Ramsey, New Jersey. I was the only one supporting a family. My two brothers, the bank—went bankrupt back [unclear].

LEVINE: Oh.

BRIGIO: And they lost their job. My f—my father lost his job and my brother, he couldn't work. I was the only supporter of the family. And I wasn't even living home. Whatever I made, all from the shop, Saturday night, I used to give my brother, my mother all of it. Sunday afternoon, used to make little things for me to bring—to bring, already cook. I used to go back. That was my life for three years, back and forth, back and forth and back and forth. At that time, went through tunnel, 50 cents. Now, it's 2.50. [sentence unclear].

LEVINE: Hmm. And what were you bringing home a week then?

BRIGIO: I used to be Saturday night and leave Sunday afternoon.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: So—

LEVINE: And how much money would you make, like in a week?

BRIGIO: Well, at that time, when—even though—even though the haircut was 75 cents, but you was busy all week. Sometime, I—I couldn't have lunch on

a Saturday. And I had one guy working on a Saturday. From—the rest of the time, I was all alone.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: And I lived in the back of the shop to save money. I didn't want to stay in a—in a furnish—a furnished room.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: That was my life, three years.

LEVINE: Wow. And how did your brother, who—who was so wounded in World War I, Leonardo—how did he make out in this country?

BRIGIO: When I had the shop, he—I put him on shining shoes. Just—

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Just to keep him busy because, you know, he—he—he was crying most of the time anyway.

LEVINE: He was crying?

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Ah, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: Never got married. Never went out with a girl.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: He suffered. [unclear] and he—he was only 40 when he died. He had a heart attack and he died. I—sometime, I wonder, the longevity, whether it's a curse or a blessing.

LEVINE: W—why do you say that?

BRIGIO: I don't know.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: I couldn't understand yet.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm. Hmm.

BRIGIO: I went through a lot.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm. Yeah. [clears throat] Let's see. Did you ever have any heroes in your life? People that you looked up to? Either people you knew, like the neighbor who guided you, or—or people you just heard about who were famous or whatever, that you looked up to that maybe inspired you in some way?

BRIGIO: Well, like I say, this fellow, Sam Fisher, he's my closest friend I ever had when I first came to this country.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: From the day I—I—I lived in that house, for six years, he was my guiding light and my inspiration.

LEVINE: Hmm, hmm.

BRIGIO: He had an office job but then he got a—a city job. That had the—a paper that he used to come out every week, used to call it "The Chief." I don't know if you remember. They had all the—all the job [unclear], had to take an exam and all that, have to be so—so—so—how much education, night school or college, whatever. At that—that, [unclear] what I really continue. But things happen in life where you just [unclear] no good.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: I wanted to continue college and the war broke out and [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: And that's the whole thing.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

BRIGIO: [sniffs]

LEVINE: When you look back on it now, when you look back at coming to this country as a 15-year-old boy and starting over again, do you think that experience of leaving what you knew and coming to a new place and a new life, do you think that made a difference in the kind of person you became?

BRIGIO: Well—

LEVINE: That it affected you in some ways that you can think of?

BRIGIO: Well, I was disappointed in one way because it broke up all of my—my dream.

LEVINE: Of the—being a schoolteacher?

BRIGIO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

BRIGIO: But you have to accept it because, well, it can't be done. You try something else. And that's what happened. And my mother used to say, "Well, look at your two brothers. They're making money." This and that. That's how I came to be a barber, which I never—

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: Never appealed to me.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Do you think that—that idea of be—of learning to accept things the way they turn out and going on is—is something that came from your immigrant experience, do you think?

BRIGIO: Well—

LEVINE: The fact that you, you know, had to change what you thought you would do and—

BRIGIO: Whatever came along, you have—you have to accept it because, whether it's your fault or not. You have to accept it, "Well, this is life." Whether it's good or bad or—or critical, you have to accept it. And [unclear] thing is that you have to make adjustment, whatever the future holds.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: That's all.

LEVINE: Yeah, right. Okay. Well, is there anything else you can think of, connected with your coming here and making another life here, and your family coming here? Anything else that maybe we haven't talked about that—that you can think of?

BRIGIO: No, I—I—I couldn't thi—no, I—I don't think so.

LEVINE: I think we pretty much covered everything. Let me just see if there's anything else.

BRIGIO: All—all I know, I had a full life and I'm satisfied that I've reached this age and I'm thankful. I'm grateful, with my family, whatever happened.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: Had a good marriage and that's all you ask for. What more can I ask?

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: So you're satisfy in life. You're [several words unclear]. You think, 'Well, whatever comes, it comes.' You have to accept it or else. So other people—you know what I mean? Thank God, I—I am [unclear] still to go out, still able to talk, have a conversation. And that's all.

LEVINE: Well—

BRIGIO: And—and I—whenever I'd go—once a year I'd go to the doctor. He had those—he puts a thing on [unclear]. And he says that, "Your—your hearts beats like a teenager." What's—I'm recycled teenager.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

BRIGIO: "I can't make no money on you." I said, "I'm sorry, Doctor. I'll start a trust fund for you."

LEVINE: [laughs]

BRIGIO: But of course, hundred dollars a month for health care. Unbelievable. I got three—three—three doctors in my family. So I—I wanted to ask them why. Even your apartment [unclear] television they going to do something about it. But forget about it. I went to my eye doctor. Even though it's a double [unclear]. I don't have to pay a hundred dollars a month. What they take for Social Security, what I take besides [unclear], I have to have—I have to [several words unclear]. Then he puts a prescription. I don't know what happened there. I have to go to eye—eye doctor this week. Well, [unclear] this, \$40. It—it's out of my mind. That's my [several words unclear], what people do, they get it for it. Outside, I'm paying on the—hundred dollars a month. Hundred dol—\$49 a week for a—a private senior and \$49, they take off of Social Security. Why? If I don't go to a doctor, I still have to pay insurance for this, insurance for the car, insurance for the house. You got to put the security for the house, another \$500 a year. I can't live.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: It's unbelievable.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: A lucky thing, that she work. Now, where she got a place and she got—she got a little pension plus her Social Security, plus my Social Security. We make—we manage to make—we invest a little money. We—we are luck—we—we live. [unclear] people, how can they do it? They need 500, especially if they have kids—they need \$500 a week right there. And they're going to make a living. How you going to buy it? I don't know. So I don't even—I don't even want—think about it.

LEVINE: Think about it, uh-huh. Yeah, I—yeah, you're—

BRIGIO: To me, it's mind boggling because I saw a complete reverse.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: One—one type—one type of life to another.

LEVINE: Tell me, was there anything—any values, any attitudes that your mother and father tried to pass on to you that you either passed along to your daughter? Or maybe you didn't. Maybe you passed along a different kind of set of attitudes—

BRIGIO: Right.

LEVINE: —toward your daughter.

BRIGIO: My—I remember my father used to say, "Lead—lead a clean life."

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: He would have no fear.

LEVINE: Huh.

BRIGIO: Only thing he ever told me over and over again, and being honest with yourself and you'll be more happier. That's one thing my father ever told me. My mother, she used to [unclear] so long, you know, whatever you did, you did it for your own good. So knowing my fath—whatever you do, you do for own good, I did mine.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: And in my life, I raised [unclear] children. I made my contribution to the world. Now, it's up to you to carry on.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm. And did you give the same message to your daughter? Or did you give her a different idea?

BRIGIO: No, the same thing, you know. You know, you like this fellow, you get married. You know, you never had the objection. Never, never interfered. Whatever you do, you do for yourself. That was his—his i—his idea all the time.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: If you do this thing, you [unclear] commit the mistake, it's your mistake. Not mine. That was it.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm. Okay. Well, unl—can you think of anything else you'd like to say before we close?

BRIGIO: I don't think so.

LEVINE: Well, I think this has been such a wonderful interview. I want to thank you so much.

BRIGIO: Yeah. You found it interesting?

LEVINE: Very interesting.

BRIGIO: Oh.

LEVINE: And you're a very good speaker. Yeah. So I want to say I'm speaking with Louis—

BRIGIO: I—I'll say one thing.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BRIGIO: When I go to the center, probably I'm the oldest guy in there.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: And I see people with canes and wheelchair. God, I say, "I'm grateful." I pray, God. I read [unclear] in good health.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: Not dependent on anybody. I don't need no help from anybody. I take care of myself the best way I can.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: And that's all I ask [unclear]. If my death comes tomorrow, I will have no regrets.

LEVINE: Wow. That's quite a statement. Thank you. I'm speaking with Louis Brigio, who came here from Italy in 1919 when he was 15 years of age. He's 95 at the time of this interview. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm signing off. [tape off/on] Okay. We're resuming now because Mr. Brigio has remembered some stories from when he was a little boy and his mother—going with his mother to—to bring back goods from Barry to—for her to sell in her dry goods store. So why don't you tell—

BRIGIO: [unclear].

LEVINE: —what else you remember.

BRIGIO: So it was one big commercial place—the owner there. Thank God, they used to give me something to eat or once—by the time she got home, she didn't have—she didn't have a cent in her pocket. No lunch, no nothing.

LEVINE: Wow. Tell what you told about going, carrying all the bundles.

BRIGIO: Being that the—that I want—[unclear] to be a certain night before they charge you for a—for a—for railroad fare. One—after you—after you passed [unclear], you paid for a—for the fare. And that's how I got away with going to almost a couple years—almost twice a month to bringing the goods home without paying freight. [laughter]

LEVINE: Do you have any more stories you remember about that?

BRIGIO: No, no.

LEVINE: When you were little? Wow. Wow. How about learning English? How was that for you?

BRIGIO: Huh?

LEVINE: How was it for you when you were learning English?

BRIGIO: Well, I—I didn't—I—they—I had it hard for a time but I—I finally happened to grasp the—where I wanted because I continue my—my education by

even going [unclear] at night. The minute I—I could get from—from the office. I was working in the office that time.

LEVINE: The insurance office?

BRIGIO: Huh?

LEVINE: The insurance office? Is that where you were working when you went—

BRIGIO: National Liberty.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BRIGIO: National Liberty Insurance Company.

LEVINE: Right, mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: Soon I come home, I had supper. I take the trolley and go to high school, had to be there at seven o'clock. From seven to ten, three hours a night without a stop. And you go from one room to the other until I graduated. Took me five years.

[END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE B]

BRIGIO: I never went anywhere. I never—I didn't know what a pool room was. I never know what a skate was. I didn't know anything, except for my education. That was my only—ambitious as I got to get through one way or the other.

LEVINE: Hmm. Where do you suppose you got that idea? The idea that you really wanted to have an education, because your mother and father weren't—weren't—

BRIGIO: Well—

LEVINE: —encouraging you.

BRIGIO: I was the unique in the family.

LEVINE: How so?

BRIGIO: Yeah, because my older—my younger brother, they think they—when I come here, who had the second grade? Who had the third grade? The older ones, they couldn't make it the third grade. They had to stay back

one year. No, two years. For my brother to graduate, he could graduate from third grade and in the meantime, the—the principal says, “Take him out because he old.” And they already hold me back and [unclear]. I lost a year on account of that. I had—I had to stay in the same class for—on account of him.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: [unclear]. He only got to third grade. I went to the six grade and I went for a year but got—the only one in the family that did that.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: Then the war came along. It broke my—all my ambition, broke my—my dreams and everything else. But my ambitions was to be educated and educates somebody else.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: That was my idea, only help—even today.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: Always try to help somebody.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

BRIGIO: If a guy can’t—can’t put his coat on, I gonna put there—on. That was—but it never turn out to be that way.

LEVINE: Hmm. Well, I’m sure you—

BRIGIO: But in a way—

LEVINE: —you’ve done—

BRIGIO: In a way, I resented but I—as I said before, you have to accept it.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BRIGIO: Otherwise, you’re going—

LEVINE: Well, I’m sure you’ve helped people in lots of ways in your lifetime.

BRIGIO: Yeah. I—I did all the time.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: As a matter of fact, it was why I got [unclear] there. He couldn't afford to give me—he had no money. I gave him a free haircut for two years.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: I never accept a penny. Only once, he got me a pack of cigarette.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: Now, they want a—I know he couldn't afford.

LEVINE: Hmm.

BRIGIO: Now, the haircut is \$8, from 75 cents.

LEVINE: Yeah.

BRIGIO: It's awful.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, we're going to—we're going to end here now. And I want to thank you again—

BRIGIO: No mention—

LEVINE: It's a wonderful interview.

BRIGIO: Well, likewise.

LEVINE: [chuckles] O—

[END OF INTERVIEW]