

**EI-1376**

**DANTE GIURICI**

**BIRTHDATE: JULY 3, 1925**

**INTERVIEW DATE: APRIL 1, 2005**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 79**

**RUNNING TIME:**

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

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**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:**

**ITALY, 1948**

**AGE: 23**

**AT ELLIS ISLAND: 1949**

LEVINE: Okay, today is April 1<sup>st</sup>, the year 2005.

GIURICI: Yeah.

LEVINE: I'm here with Dante--?

GIURICI: Giurici.

LEVINE: --Giurici, who came here from Northern Italy, and he came through Ellis Island in 1948.

GIURICI: Go ahead.

LEVINE: Right? And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. And if we could start at the beginning, if you would say your birth date? Your birth date.

GIURICI: Yes, my birth date is July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1925.

LEVINE: Okay, and—July 3<sup>rd</sup>, did you say?

GIURICI: Yeah, July 3<sup>rd</sup>.

LEVINE: --3<sup>rd</sup>, 1925, okay. And where were you born in Italy?

GIURICI: Northern Italy.

LEVINE: What was the name of the town?

GIURICI: Well, it was near Trieste. Trieste is a big city.

LEVINE: Okay.

GIURICI: But I was born in this very small village, with no water, with no electricity, with no gas, with nothing!

LEVINE: Do you remember the name of the town, the little village?

GIURICI: The little village, I don't know. But you want the City Hall name, or what?

LEVINE: Just to put it—what was the province? Do you know the province?

GIURICI: Pola.

LEVINE: Pola?

GIURICI: And the city was Albona.

LEVINE: Albona.

GIURICI: Right.

LEVINE: Albona, okay. And did you live in Albona? When did you leave Albona?

GIURICI: When I left, when I leave. I lived 'til the time I was eighteen.

LEVINE: Oh, you left at eighteen?

GIURICI: I was eighteen years old, yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, okay.

GIURICI: I got to go.

LEVINE: Why did you leave when you left?

GIURICI: Because over there, there was trouble. Italy surrendered, if you remember. In 1943, Italy surrendered, and Hitler took over; the German soldiers took over. So, nobody could stay home. All go in the woods, the communists, or go in the merchant marines, on the ship. To go in the woods, I don't like communists, number one. Number two, you starve to death.

LEVINE: Right.

GIURICI: So I got a job on the ship, and I work on the ship, and I'm traveling.

LEVINE: I see.

GIURICI: And then there was a—because Germany was in charge then; it was an Italian ship, but Germany took over, and they put German soldiers for escorts, with the guns, on the ship. So, one day we go into the Adriatic with the ship, and then the communists hit the ship. The communist ship shoot on us, and the Germany shoot on them. So me, and another four guys, we went to rowboats, you know, the life preservers we got over there. We went to the rowboat, caught the line, and floated away. So we floating away, we were maybe, I don't know, maybe five or six hundred feet—say a thousand feet—away from the ship. The ship blow up!

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness! Do you remember the name of that ship?

GIURICI: Angelina.

LEVINE: Angelina.

GIURICI: So the ship blow up, so we floating in our little boat, the five of us. So the partisan ship came near us, and those communists, they shoot on us, in the boat! And they left us for dead, so according to them we were dead! And we were in that boat full of water, because the boat's got a tank, that even if it's full of water, it stayed afloat because you've got air. Then another boat came by.

LEVINE: A ship? Big?

GIURICI: Another ship, yeah. Another ship come by, and they saw that we were moving. So what happened? So they took us up.

LEVINE: Now this communist ship, the one that fired on you, were they Russians on that ship?

GIURICI: No, they was Yugoslav.

LEVINE: Yugoslav, uh-huh.

GIURICI: Tito was in charge.

LEVINE: I see.

GIURICI: Tito came, took over like he was, the communists from Russia or whatever it is, but they were Yugoslav. He make this group, they call them partisan. And they fight alongside the Russian and American and the English, all those things. But I was on the German thing.

LEVINE: Right.

GIURICI: So, they pick us out—

LEVINE: Now, the ship that picked you up—what country was that?

GIURICI: Yugoslav.

LEVINE: That was Yugoslav, too?

GIURICI: Yeah. Not Yugoslav, it was communist.

LEVINE: So it was a communist ship that fired on you, and it was a communist, Yugoslav ship, that picked you up?

GIURICI: Another ship came down. He saw that we were moving, because the other ship left us for dead.

LEVINE: Right.

GIURICI: So they saw that we were moving, so they pick us up. So I spoke Yugoslav—Croatian.

LEVINE: Oh!

GIURICI: We all spoke Croatian.

LEVINE: Because you lived in such close proximity?

GIURICI: My mother and my father, they were born Austro-Hungarian.

LEVINE: Oh!

GIURICI: And the Second World War—no, the First World War, Italy took over. That's when I was born, under the Italian flag.

LEVINE: Oh, but they themselves were Croatian?

GIURICI: They were Croatian. They were a group of communists. Then they pick us up. So we spoke Yugoslavian, so they banged us up, a little bit, on the ship, and they brought us to another island, or land, but it was other island. We were all banged up, and this, this. One guy died when they picked us up, and four guys, we were still living. So, they don't know what the hell to do with us. They've got us as a prisoner. Because we spoke their language, they feel, "Could you work for us?" So they make engineer battalion to build the bridges in the war. I was in the war! And we were fighting. I was there 'til 1945. In 1945 the war was over, if you remember, the Second World War was over.

LEVINE: Right.

GIURICI: So, I went home. But we're not supposed to go home. They give you a ten day permit to go see my mother and my father. So I went home for ten days. So I don't want to go back no more.

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: So they picked me up, in Albona, the City Hall! They picked me up, and they shipped me back to the, where I was, in the communist. So they give me forty days in jail. After forty days jail, I went back to the company, to the communists, because they don't want to make me stay home. So, what I did, instead of go to company from the jail, I went home again. I went home, and over there, they was Yugoslav. So one lady was in charge to make the passports. But we were all together; we know each other. So they give me a new passport, and I went to Pola.

LEVINE: Oh.

GIURICI: Pola was run by Italy.

LEVINE: Is that San Paolo?

GIURICI: Yeah. That was run by Italy.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GIURICI: Because there was a lot of trouble over there, how much Yugoslavia got to take, because Yugoslavia wanted to take it back, whatever belonged to Austria. But they don't want to give it to them. But then, riffy raffy, they give it a bit part. Now, where I was going now is Croatia. And, so I went home from there, after the war, Second War.

LEVINE: Yeah, right.

GIURICI: And I stayed home for a while. Then I went to the ship. I said before, I got a job—you can't stay home. So I went to the—no, no, no, that's after.

LEVINE: Okay.

GIURICI: I made a mistake.

LEVINE: Okay.

GIURICI: I made a mistake! [Laughs]

LEVINE: That's all right.

GIURICI: So, what was I stop?

LEVINE: Let's see. You went back to Albona, and then—

GIURICI: That thing was before I got to that ship. Leave this thing out, like that. But when I was—oh yeah, that's true. Yeah, you're right. [Unclear] So then, I went to Pola, then I went to Trieste—that was Italian. I was looking for the job. In 1948, I was in Genoa, Italy, in Genoa. I used to go every day to look for the job to go on a ship. But finally, there was a ship, Italian ship, it was in Staten Island, in repair. So the crew, some of the crew, like the Croatian, they deserted. They were like, they don't want to stay on the ship. They got a job, like me, in America. But we were illegal! I didn't come legal. I came illegal.

LEVINE: You jumped ship?

GIURICI: So I went on the ship for one day, and I went to see my uncle in Manhattan. So my uncle told me, "Why don't you stay here?"

LEVINE: Now wait, you got on that ship in--?

GIURICI: I got on that ship in Staten Island.

LEVINE: Well, how did you get to Staten Island?

GIURICI: The agency in Genoa shipped us by plane.

LEVINE: By plane?

GIURICI: Yeah. So we came from Genoa by plane, about seven or eight of us.

LEVINE: And you had papers to get into the country and everything?

GIURICI: Yeah, because I was through the agency. I went to get the ship in Staten Island. I got a job on the ship.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Oh, I see, as a merchant marine?

GIURICI: Right, I got a job on the ship, as a merchant marine.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GIURICI: So, all my family, my relatives, my friends, they were all over here, in Manhattan.

LEVINE: Oh.

GIURICI: So my uncle said, "Stay here. Don't go back on the ship." So I [unclear] one day on the ship, I don't go back. So I was—jumped the ship.

LEVINE: Yeah, mm-hm.

GIURICI: So I jumped the ship, and my uncle find me a job in the agency, to go to a restaurant, to work.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GIURICI: So then I worked there, and seven days a week, for thirty five dollars. That was 1948. That salary was small then. And then I went to—I told you, Immigration came to the restaurant, and they wanted to take me away right away. It was eleven-thirty. So the boss say, "Do me a favor. Don't take him now, because I've got a rush of people coming to eat for lunch, and to take him away, who's going to cook? Who's going to serve?" So he say, my boss say, "You sat at a table," the Immigration, "I feed you, and I guarantee you that he won't go no place. When the rush is over, then you take him."

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: So the rush was over. So they took me to Columbus Avenue.

LEVINE: Hm.

GIURICI: And from there—

LEVINE: Where on Columbus Avenue, do you remember?

GIURICI: There was some kind of Immigration thing over there, [unclear]. And then they shipped me to Ellis Island! And I was there, big hall, sleep on the floor—believe me, it was a mess! And I was there, I slept one night. And then, called my uncle. And my uncle put five hundred dollar bond, and I went home.

LEVINE: Oh!

GIURICI: But then I was in trouble; I'm illegal. So I got a lawyer. So we got preference over here, because we were like a refugee.

LEVINE: I see.

GIURICI: See, I run away from Yugoslavia, I run to Italy. But Italy wasn't that good. So, I stay here. So what happened, I was [unclear] this and that. Then what happened, I got married. Found a nice lady; I got married. So then, I was safe, because they make me get out, they make me go to Canada, out of the States, and come in legal.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

GIURICI: And come in legal. So after I come in legal.

LEVINE: So was it a lawyer who suggested that you do that? That you go to Canada?

GIURICI: I had the lawyer. That cost me money, that lawyer. Those lawyers, they do a lot of things.

LEVINE: But they—

GIURICI: They suggested to get married, too.

LEVINE: Yeah, and also to go to Canada, and come back in?

GIURICI: That's by United States law.

LEVINE: Oh.

GIURICI: I got to get out from the States--

LEVINE: I see, I see.

GIURICI: --and some in legally. So I came in legal, to United States. And I went to work, and I'd been working for five years in the restaurant. Then after, that job was not the best. They don't even pay much, and all these things.

LUCILLE: Hi.

LEVINE: Hello.

GIURICI: This is my daughter.

LEVINE: Hi.

LUCILLE: How are you doing?

LEVINE: Good.

GIURICI: My daughter Lucille.

LEVINE: Hi Lucille. Should we keep going?

LUCILLE: Keep going. I'll stay inside.

LEVINE: Oh, okay, thank you.

GIURICI: And then, I becoming work on the waterfront.

LEVINE: Oh!

GIURICI: You know Longshoreman?

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: Longshoreman. I become a Longshoreman.

LEVINE: On the Brooklyn waters, on Staten Island?

GIURICI: In Brooklyn, because when I got married, I live in Brooklyn.

LEVINE: Brooklyn, uh-huh.

GIURICI: And I worked there. I was a Longshoreman for thirty-seven years.

LEVINE: Oh, wow!

GIURICI: And that was a good—good money, good thing, very good. And then, in 1990 I retired. But in 1984 I lost my wife, and she left me with five kids. And from that time, I stay with the five kids, because I know if I bring another woman inside, they'd be disappointed. So I was happy. I was fifty-nine years old. I said, "I don't need another woman." So I stood my kids. And now my kids

are married, and I've got seven grandchildren, and one coming in a couple of months. [Laughs] And I'm happy. I have a happy life. I've got this house.

LEVINE: Yeah, it's lovely.

GIURICI: And that's my wife, me and my wife, bought it together, this house.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, let's just back up a minute. When you were in Albona, what was your mother's name, and what was your father's name? When you were a little boy, growing up? What was your mother's name and your father's name?

GIURICI: My father's name was Dominick.

LEVINE: Dominick

GIURICI: My mother's name was Lucia.

LEVINE: Lucia. And what was Lucia's maiden name, your mother's maiden name?

GIURICI: Lucia Cose. Cose.

LEVINE: C-O-S-S--?

GIURICI: I think C-O-S-E, something like that.

LEVINE: Oh, okay, uh-huh.

GIURICI: Over there, they was all mixed up. Because my mother don't speak Italian; my father don't speak Italian.

LEVINE: Now, where were they born, your mother and father?

GIURICI: Under the same roof that I was born.

LEVINE: Oh, in Albona?

GIURICI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, did you have grandparents?

GIURICI: I got two grandparents, my father's side, and one grandmother on my mother's side.

LEVINE: And did they live in Albona, too?

GIURICI: They lived with us, too, in the same—they lived, not really in Albona, in a small village, called Cose.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

GIURICI: There were only six houses!

LEVINE: Oh! That is a small village!

GIURICI: [Laughs] I told you, there was no water, there was no gas, there was no latrines. You know, it was tough. I mean, I don't know any better!

LEVINE: Yeah, right.

GIURICI: My father know better, because he used to work on the ships. He traveled. He come South America, all over the world.

LEVINE: Was he in the merchant marine?

GIURICI: Yeah. Everybody—all the men was merchant marine, and the ladies took care of the little farms, because we got a lot of farms in there. So we don't buy nothing. Ninety percent you grow up with the farm.

LEVINE: I see. Well now, were your mother and father Italian? Or were they--?

GIURICI: Well, they were born—when they were born, there was Austro-Hungary. So, the Second World War—no, the First World War, Italy won the war against Austria.

LEVINE: Mm-hm.

GIURICI: So Italy took Croatia. Where we were born, Italy took it. But, they're really not—we're really not really Italian descent. We're like more Croatian descent.

LEVINE: Croatian descent?

GIURICI: Yeah. But we were born, we were born, in Italian place.

LEVINE: I see.

GIURICI: And my sister was born in the same roof with me, with my father. And she was born in Yugoslavia, Yugoslav, because in 1950, Yugoslavia took that place. So now, it's Croatia. Yugoslavia don't exist no more.

LEVINE: Yeah, right.

GIURICI: Like, Milosevich, whatever you call him. They don't exist no more.

LEVINE: So in other words, you would consider yourself more Croatian by family?

GIURICI: I mean, descent, the descent that we got—see, my last name was Juricich. That's Croatian. That's Yugoslav.

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

GIURICI: Mussolini took, when Mussolini took over, he changed. He called us Giurici. Mussolini, you know, it's got to sound like Italian.

LEVINE: Right.

GIURICI: But he did a very good job in us, what we got—Mussolini. He built the city. He built, did a lot of work. And another thing—Mussolini, he made a big mistake when he went with Hitler.

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: But especially in north Italy, that was a little bit politic, that he wanted to get everybody to like him. So, we were, I was fascist. [Laughs] As kids, Barilla, they called all the stuff. But, the life was tough, but we don't know any better!

LEVINE: Right, right. How did you spell your name, the original name? Do you want to write it?

GIURICI: No, no, I can't even write it myself.

LEVINE: Wait a minute. Don't forget you're hooked up here.

GIURICI: Oh.

LEVINE: Yeah, wait. Just hold on.

[Pause in Recording]

LEVINE: We're resuming here. Okay, so the original name was a Croatian name, J--?

GIURICI: U—

LEVINE: U—

GIURICI: R-I-C-and H. Does that sound like Juricich?

LEVINE: Does that look right? Jurich?

GIURICI: Juricich.

LEVINE: U-R-I-C-H?

GIURICI: Something like that, a Yugoslav name.

LEVINE: A Yugoslav name.

GIURICI: But I can't spell too much. I'm not good on spelling.

LEVINE: Okay, so in other words, that was your original name. Now, was Dante your original name, when you were born?

GIURICI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Dante.

GIURICI: Dante.

LEVINE: Yeah, okay. All right.

GIURICI: And now they call me Danny.

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: When I went to work in the artist's club.

LEVINE: Oh, they called you Danny? [Laughs]

GIURICI: Because they don't know how to pronounce Dante.

LEVINE: Yeah!

GIURICI: Nobody speak—everybody speak English. So they put the name Dante, that will stay Danny. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Okay, well now, how about your mother? What was her name?

GIURICI: Lucia—

LEVINE: Oh, Lucia.

GIURICI: Lucia.

LEVINE: And that was Cose?

GIURICI: Cose.

LEVINE: And then your father was Dominick?

GIURICI: Dominick Juricich.

LEVINE: Right, and then what about—and your grandparents—do you remember your grandparents?

GIURICI: I remember my paternal grandparents, the two of them. They lived to be ninety-five. Over there, people live a long time, because they eat everything from the farm.

LEVINE: What were they growing there, do you remember?

GIURICI: They grow mostly potatoes, wheat, like to make flour, to make bread. Tomatoes, eggplant, and lettuce, cabbage—all that stuff, all the things from the farm. And they got a little grapes, and fruit. And we raised animals. My mother raised cows, sheep, and goats, rabbits, chickens. And when she want a piece of meat, she killed a rabbit, or she killed a chicken.

LEVINE: Hi.

GIURICI: And that's when we eat the meat. The rest, we eat beans all the time!

LEVINE: [Laughs] I see! So, you had little, but you had healthy food?

GIURICI: Yeah, we had healthy food. And my father used to earn good money, and with that money, my mother used to buy—of course, we don't make no pasta. We don't make rice. We don't have any clothes. We used to buy clothes; we were three boys. And that was use the money. But for food, very little bit. Ninety percent we eat from the—

LEVINE: From what you grew?

GIURICI: --what you grew.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and were you the oldest or the youngest, or in the middle?

GIURICI: In the middle

LEVINE: In the middle.

GIURICI: The oldest was my brother, then me, then my other brother, and then my sister. After fifteen years, she was born.

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness!

GIURICI: My mother was pregnant for nine months, and nobody knew!

LEVINE: Wow!

GIURICI: She was a tall woman, and the clothes she wear, nobody knew! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, what was your mother like? How would you describe her, when you were a little boy, growing up?

GIURICI: Well, she had to—she wasn't that healthy. But she lived to be ninety. She got sciatica. Sciatica, you know? She can't touch [unclear], she can't wash clothes. You know, everything you do by hand. Like, we're taking a bath. We used to cut the bottle in half, and full up the bottle, half a bottle with water. She'd heat it up on the firewood, to make it not that cold, and that's how we took a bath!

LEVINE: Hm.

GIURICI: That was. And we got the little lake, and that's water we use, from the lake.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

GIURICI: Then, after later, everybody built their—what do you call? Little tank, concrete, that was—

LEVINE: A well?

GIURICI: Yeah, but in the concrete, but the water was coming from the roof. So they put a guard around the roof—

LEVINE: Right.

GIURICI: --with a pipe to go down in a nice place that was all pebbles in there. This is the filter, they filter the water from the rain, and that's how we live.

LEVINE: Did you drink that?

GIURICI: Yeah! We got no choice!

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

GIURICI: [Laughs] We had no running water! It was tough, but we don't know any better!

LEVINE: Yeah, right.

GIURICI: We were happy.

LEVINE: Was there a little—was there a school in that little town?

GIURICI: There was a school, one school, maybe in seven miles distance—one school, that was built in Austria time.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

GIURICI: And everybody, with one room, big room. And it was only up to fifth grade. We only went up to fifth grade. That's all the education we got.

LEVINE: So did children come from the other little villages around, besides from Albona?

GIURICI: Well, there was seven miles. Sometimes we walked seven miles to go to school.

LEVINE: And were the children coming from other places besides Albona?

GIURICI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did they come from other little villages?

GIURICI: From small villages.

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: Because there was only one big school.

LEVINE: Right, I see.

GIURICI: And there was first grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade, all together in one room.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

GIURICI: And that's what we got. So people that got the money—very few—they send to—

LEVINE: Trieste?

GIURICI: --to Trieste, the big city, [unclear], in Italy, to go to high school. But were very few, because cost money.

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: Some people, they got the money, and they went. But we were—

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: Ninety percent or more, fifth grade. That's all we got.

LEVINE: So what do you remember about school? That school with all the grades in together? How did you learn?

GIURICI: Well, there was—I think they separated first and third, first and second. But we learned just like that. I don't know how they teach us; I've forgotten, really, because I don't like school! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. Were girls and boys in together?

GIURICI: Everybody together. It was only one school! And that's the story for what we got. But as I mentioned before, we don't know any better. Now, you take my kids, send them over there, without water, without—now they've got latrines. They've got everything now, they've got it. But before. We went to—I got, my daughter got a timeshare, so we go every year to the timeshare.

LEVINE: Where?

GIURICI: Florida, mostly down in Florida.

LEVINE: I see.

GIURICI: And one time we got to one apartment, with one toilet. My kids, my grandchild—they were disappointed: "How can we do with one toilet?" We don't have any! When I was born, I went behind the bushes! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Very different, yeah!

GIURICI: But they can't do no more, this.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GIURICI: And matter of fact—

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END OF SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

GIURICI: --my oldest son, when he was about ten years old, probably, we went to Canada to visit my niece, my cousin. Her husband worked in a mine, coal mine. So this coal mine in Canada, they got the houses from the company. No toilet.

LEVINE: Oh!

GIURICI: So they got a little house outside, with a board, with a little hole. My son won't go there. He's afraid to fall in. I take him to the hotel! [Laughs] That's the way it is. That's the way life was.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, what were you like as a little boy? How would you describe yourself? Were you shy, or were you, you know--?

GIURICI: No, I was a very handy man around the farm, and then when I was finished with school, one of the friend's house, that was builder—he was a builder. So he build the houses. So I was there like an apprentice. And I did it for a few dollars, for a few lire, whatever it was. And I worked over there. But over there when they built a house, they built the house of stone. All stone. When they build a house, the builder does everything. In the summer time, worked outside, in the winter time, worked inside, making doors, windows, and all that stuff. That's the way it was! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Wow, so that's what you did?

GIURICI: Yeah, that's what I did. And after, I went to the ship, and that's where I almost died. As a matter of fact, I even said, "My mother's going to get notice now that I'm dead." [Laughs]

LEVINE: Now, when you were on the ship, when did you think you were going to die?

GIURICI: When we went off the ship, when we floating in that—

LEVINE: In the little boat?

GIURICI: --in that little boat.

LEVINE: You figured that was it?

GIURICI: Figured that was it. Because if the other boat, the other company's boat, never come around, we would have died out there, in the ocean.

LEVINE: Right. Wow!

GIURICI: And that was miserable, believe me!

LEVINE: How long were you in that little boat?

GIURICI: Maybe about seven, eight hours. And we were wounded. Over there, over there, all over, because they shoot us. Thank God, from eighteen years old, I become eighty years. Thank God.

LEVINE: Yeah. So can you remember what you were thinking when you didn't know if you were going to get—if you were going to die in the ocean?

GIURICI: The only thing I remember, that I was talking to myself. I say, "It's my mother's going to get a notice." Because all of the people on the ship, where I was from, when the ship sunk and these people died. So they send a notice to the mothers, to the parents, that their sons had died. I said, "This is going to happen to me now." But then, I survived.

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: That was tough. Believe me, the people, the communists, it was tough to live. Over there, it was cold. That's the north--it's cold. You've got one pants, and one shirt. And sometimes we get a jacket. Freeze to death! And the food? Forget about it. They make a big pot of soup. Matter of fact, we got the stuff that the United States send them, because United States was with the communists at that time. Because the communists fight alongside the Russians and the United States.

LEVINE: Mm-hm.

GIURICI: United States send us five gallon cans of potatoes, carrots, all that stuff. And when you cooked that, on the top of the soup, all [unclear]. Eat everything! Got no choice. And that's when I started smoking, because there was no food, but there was cigarettes. Plenty of cigarettes! [Laughs]

LEVINE: How'd you get so many cigarettes?

GIURICI: They passed them to us, the communist party. Because there is a lot of tobacco over there.

LEVINE: I see.

GIURICI: And I smoked 'til 1983.

LEVINE: From 1940--?

GIURICI: From 1943.

LEVINE: So you smoked for forty years?

GIURICI: Yeah. Then one day, I worked Longshoreman, so I was living in Staten Island then. I was ready to go to work, be on the job at eight o'clock. I got the pack of cigarettes, and I wanted to take a cigarette. So my son Michael, he said, "Daddy, you know what's today? Smoke-Out Day."

LEVINE: Oh! This was in the eighties?

GIURICI: Yeah. It was Smoke-Out Day. So I say [pause] my nose is dripping! [Blows nose] So I don't smoke all day. Came home, wait for midnight, today pass over.

LEVINE: Oh, so you would smoke, you were thinking?

GIURICI: I would say—midnight came, and I got the cigarette. That's when I say, "I struggled out all day. Why I got to spoil it?" I never put a cigarette in my mouth since then!

LEVINE: Oh, good for you!

GIURICI: It was tough. My kids could never believe that!

LEVINE: What do you think made you stop? Why do you think you were able to stop?

GIURICI: Because I start one day with no smoking. Thought, "Maybe try more. Let me try more." And then, pass about a week or two, maybe more. My throat cleared up. You know, you got sore. I smoked so much, sometimes four packs of cigarettes a day!

LEVINE: Ooh!

GIURICI: Too much! And I've been feeling better. My throat cleared out, my stomach, everything. I said, "Who wants to go back?" Matter of fact, we went to Florida, in 1984 it was. And on the way back, we stop in Carolina. You know, down there, Virginia, the cigarettes are very cheap.

LEVINE: Oh, right, right.

GIURICI: Very cheap. I said, "Let me try." We stop over there. I said, "Let me try, see if I can buy a couple of cases of cigarettes." But then I got to the store; I changed my mind. I said, "Let's go. I don't want any." It's a good thing I don't even buy them, because they say if you stop smoking, if you go back, you smoke double.

LEVINE: Oh, really?

GIURICI: Yeah.

LEVINE: I didn't know that. Yeah, uh-huh.

GIURICI: Yeah. And this is it. And I'm, right now, I'm happy. I've got these five kids, and all nice, good. I got a nice family.

LEVINE: What was your wife's name?

GIURICI: Angela.

LEVINE: Angela, and her maiden name?

GIURICI: Oh, that's a long one: Costigliola.

LEVINE: C-O-S—I bet I unhooked you.

GIURICI: No, that's all right. That's all right. C-O-S-T-G-L-I-O-L-A. I don't know if I spelled it right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GIURICI: I can't spell those things.

LEVINE: Okay.

GIURICI: Let me see, my kids are at home. Andrea! Andrea!

LEVINE: We can ask them at the end.

GIURICI: Yeah, right.

LEVINE: Okay, so when you left, you were—how old were you when you left Albona?

GIURICI: I was eighteen years old.

LEVINE: Eighteen.

GIURICI: 1943. I was born in '25, and I left Albona in 1943. I went back once, on the ship.

LEVINE: When you left, you left on a merchant marine ship? Is that--?

GIURICI: I left to go out in Italy. I didn't want to stay with the communists. I deserted the communists.

LEVINE: I see. And so you went to Italy. Then where did you stay there?

GIURICI: Well, for a while, about a year, I stayed in Trieste. I couldn't get no job over there, because it wasn't that much. So Genoa, Genoa was a big port, a lot of ships, a lot of stuff. So I went there. I got a job, I got a ship, big ship. And we made one trip to Africa, to Masaba, to Masaba in Africa. We passed the Red Sea, and we saw that. Then I come back. I got sick, and I got to stay home. And I stayed in Genoa. I got an apartment. I got a few dollars I made on that trip, and I got a, I rented an apartment, and that's where I stayed. And every day I used to go look in the agency to get a job.

LEVINE: To get on another ship?

GIURICI: On another ship. But I got another ship, but I got to come, to travel to Staten Island.

LEVINE: I see.

GIURICI: We came by plane.

LEVINE: I understand. So how long were you in Genoa, roughly?

GIURICI: I guess one year.

LEVINE: Mm-hm, okay. So you had to fly to get a merchant marine ship on Staten Island. You had to fly?

GIURICI: In repair.

LEVINE: Yeah, and so you flew here. That's when you saw your uncle in Brooklyn, who said, "Why don't you stay?"

GIURICI: No, he lived in Manhattan.

LEVINE: In Manhattan?

GIURICI: Yes. So the people from the ship—I don't know how to travel. So they give us money Saturday afternoon, to go out eat in a restaurant, because the

kitchen was under repair. So the people that were here on the ship quite a while, they learned to travel. So they took me to Manhattan, to my uncle! [Laughs] And my uncle suggested, because my brother was here—he did the same thing, jumped a ship.

LEVINE: He did the same thing? He was in the merchant marine?

GIURICI: He was in the merchant, but he came on a ship over here. When he got to New York with the ship, he never went back. He jumped the ship. And we all do that!

LEVINE: Yeah, a lot of people.

GIURICI: But a lot of people, they get caught, especially the Italian people, they get caught, they send them back. But because we got a preference, the preference because we were refugees. I left my house, I left, like, the place that was Yugoslavia, because they were communists. I left my house to come. In Italy there was a free democracy. And we were like a refugee. You know what refugees means?

LEVINE: In other words, you, because your country had become communist?

GIURICI: Overrun by communists.

LEVINE: Then you were considered—?

GIURICI: Considered, I don't want to stay there.

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: Because believe me—

LEVINE: What was it like? What did you perceive of it, when you went--?

GIURICI: Believe me, what they say—don't believe what they say or they do. They say we all eat from the same dish. It's not true. It was either watery soup, and they were eating steak. But they don't say that. They say, "We all got to be the same." Matter of fact, they say the doctors have got to do like we do. He's got to go work on the farm.

LEVINE: Oh.

GIURICI: The farmers, they're going to do the doctor? The farmer can't do the doctor! [Laughs] So, they were crazy. These communists, some of the people, they really fall in for the communists, because they say, "Oh, we're going to be all the same!" It's not true! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Yeah, mm-hm.

GIURICI: It's not true, believe me.

LEVINE: So now, tell me about being taken to Ellis Island. What happened?

GIURICI: Well, because I was illegal.

LEVINE: So in other words, your uncle said, "You just stay here," and then you were picked up, were you?

GIURICI: Yeah, I was picked up where I was working. They picked me up, and they brought me in Columbus Avenue, whatever was up there. I forgot.

LEVINE: Immigration.

GIURICI: And from there, they asked questions, this and that. And then they put me to Ellis Island.

LEVINE: And what do you remember about Ellis Island?

GIURICI: Well, I slept one night, but believe me, I remember. I got there. The people in there, some of them were like me. Some of them were legal in there, like when they come from other countries, they put them on the Island. But, that wasn't a good living!

LEVINE: Was it crowded when you were there?

GIURICI: Yeah, but it was a big hall, like from here to across the street, big hall, some tables, some this and some that. And everybody would play cards, or do this or do that. But I was only one night there, and I wasn't satisfied! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

GIURICI: And I never went back!

LEVINE: Now when you were at Ellis Island, that was what—1940--?

GIURICI: I guess it was '49. I think it was '49, because I came in '48, and I worked for a while in a restaurant. And then when they got me, I guess it was in '49.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, okay, 1949. Okay, so, and aside from people who had been picked up because they were here illegally, do you know why the other people were there? Were they coming from Europe, some of them?

GIURICI: I really don't know anybody. But they were, must be around Yugoslavia, around there.

LEVINE: Did you ever keep in contact with the other mean who were in that little boat that you were in, the lifeboat?

GIURICI: One guy died right away, when they picked him up.

LEVINE: Right.

GIURICI: Another guy was in the Yugoslav War, because he never came home. I don't know nobody. The only thing, when I went home, one of the parents of the guy who died, I saw him. He came to see me. So he wanted to know officially that he was dead.

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: Well—

LEVINE: Do you ever think about that, that boat, being in that little boat?

GIURICI: I think of it, believe me, many times!

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: I say, I wasn't supposed to be here now!

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GIURICI: But, God is up there. I wasn't ready to go.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

GIURICI: That's what it is.

LEVINE: Were you a religious family, growing up?

GIURICI: Yeah. We grow up, my mother, every Sunday, we got to go to church.

LEVINE: What church did you go to?

GIURICI: Catholic.

LEVINE: Catholic, uh-huh.

GIURICI: There was a little church in the middle of the villages, so we used to all go there. Matter of fact, there was no room inside that much. We stood outside, and listened to the priest from outside.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GIURICI: And the collection came outside. It was fun, because this, we meet each other again, you know. Like those villages, one over here, one two miles away, another one two miles away, and we're all coming to the same church.

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: So we see each other. And young boys, we saw the girls. The girls saw the boys. And that was good, because we don't know any better! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Right! Well now, when you left on that merchant marine ship that you took— oh no, wait, you left by plane. You came to this country by plane.

GIURICI: By plane.

LEVINE: Right.

GIURICI: To get the ship.

LEVINE: Yeah, okay. And you came in 1948, but you were at Ellis Island in 1949, probably?

GIURICI: Yes, because I worked about a year in the restaurant before they got me.

LEVINE: Now do you think they were going to deport you?

GIURICI: Well, I got really thinking in my mind that because I was a refugee, they probably won't do it, because they can't send me to the communist country.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GIURICI: Because my house was in a, run by communists, when the communists took over. And usually, they asked me so many questions. You know, what's this, what's that? So they ask me, "What nationality you are?" I told them the same thing what I told you. Me, my father, and me, and my sister were born in the same house. My father was born Austrian, I was born Italian, my sister was born Yugoslav. They were communists. So, I got no country. Where they going to send me?

LEVINE: Right.

GIURICI: They can't send me to Italy, because this wasn't—I wasn't born there.

LEVINE: Right.

GIURICI: They got to send me to the communists. But when they cleared up that I really was saying the truth, that I'm not a communist, that I hate the communists, and they helped us.

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: They helped us. They was a good help.

LEVINE: What do you feel really proud of that you've done in your life?

GIURICI: Well, I was proud in my life that I came to this country.

LEVINE: Mm-hm.

GIURICI: Because I remember when I was a kid, I was home, and people in the village used to come to the United States, on the ships, merchant marine. And then they'd come, and they'd say, "I was over here." They'd say, "Over here, you've got to work. If you don't work, you don't survive." And the tough work—at that time, it was tough work over here. They said, "But in United States, they buy the chicken, they make the soup, they eat the soup, and they throw the chicken away." And really, you want to know the truth? My daughter's cooking over here now, and she's cooking, same thing. She go to the store, she buy chicken for the soup, chicken. She make the soup, and she puts the chicken on a side dish, that she can do. And she put on the table, that's the way she goes in the garbage. You don't eat chicken!  
[Laughs] Boiled chicken.

LEVINE: [Laughs]

GIURICI: Boiled chicken they don't eat! But they make good soup! And that guy was right when he said that, but we could never believe. I said, my mother used to kill a chicken, she'd cut it in four pieces. She cooked four times with that chicken.

LEVINE: One chicken.

GIURICI: And we ate, it's like—and the pigs, a lot of pigs, they could be eaten raw. That meat, the pork meat over there, was better than over here now—much better! But maybe because it wasn't enough, you know?

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: When it's a lot of stuff? No good.

LEVINE: Right. So you thought that the United States was a land of plenty?

GIURICI: It was land of opportunity.

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: It was!

LEVINE: Mm-hm, yeah.

GIURICI: I mean, in Italy, when I was in Trieste, I depend—because it was a lot of my paisans that was on the ships, that traveled the ships. And they got money. When they used to come to Trieste, when they come back to Trieste, it was me and my cousin. We had no jobs, we had no money. And matter of fact, there was an old lady that she give us the room for nothing. She used to rent the house to the people. But to me and him, she'd say, "When you get the money, you pay me." And know what she used to do? Over here they give you free meal, in Trieste. The old people get a free meal. She used to get up in the morning early. She'd go to the place, she'd get the big pot, and she'd take it home, and she'd give it to us, because we had no money to buy the food! But when the ship used to come, then we got the friends, one of my brothers, too—we wasn't worried that time. We used to go eat on the ship.

LEVINE: Oh.

GIURICI: The captain on the ship where my brother was, he say, "When you cook," because he was a cook, my brother, on the ship. He say, "Make extra, two extra dishes, one for your brother, one for your cousin." And we used to go there! And the other ships, when they come, they do the same thing. Some people give you their money, too. They give you their money, you know. Because we grew up together!

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

GIURICI: And that was a good help.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GIURICI: And, [unclear].

LEVINE: Yeah. How do you think things have changed in the world, or in your life, since—I mean, you've had a long life, and you've seen a lot of changes, I'm sure?

GIURICI: Oh, yeah! But I never—I was always satisfied over here. I got a good job—good job. I had to work.

LEVINE: Yes.

GIURICI: But I got opportunities to put a dollar away, and to support my family. Over there, it's not that easy. Over there it was easy because you grow from the farm. Over here, you don't have any.

LEVINE: Yeah. So were you happy that you were a Longshoreman all those years?

GIURICI: Well, I was very happy, because Longshoreman's got a very good deal.

LEVINE: How's that?

GIURICI: So when they make all this automation, you know, the big containers, container ships?

LEVINE: Oh, yeah.

GIURICI: You know that, the big container ships? They cut a lot of labor.

LEVINE: Oh, right.

GIURICI: Before, we were thirty thousand Longshoremen over here, between Staten Island, between Brooklyn, Manhattan, and New Jersey. We were thirty thousand Longshoremen! You know how many there are today?

LEVINE: No.

GIURICI: Maybe a thousand.

LEVINE: Oh!

GIURICI: And they've got the same merchandise, the ships bring the same stuff, but it's all in the containers. You don't have to handle them. They put one big guy on the crane, and another couple of guys to hook up, and it's an easy job!

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: And you know the pension they get now, Longshoremen? They just—new contract. You wouldn't believe it! That's only the union, only the Longshoremen. Because I saw a couple of guys that worked next door in the house, they work Longshoremen, but they just started. You know, they're new.

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: But the old guys, that retired this month, they were working forty years. I retired in 1990. At that time it was—at that time I only got sixteen hundred a month, the union pension. Now they get five thousand a month!

LEVINE: Wow!

GIURICI: The guys that stood up to now, they've got forty years, because now the job is easy. You can stay down 'til the time you are eighty, because you don't do nothing!

LEVINE: And you get five thousand a month?

GIURICI: I don't get it!

LEVINE: No, I mean now.

GIURICI: The guys that retire now, they get five thousand a month! You figure that. And they get fifteen hundred dollars from the Social Security.

LEVINE: Mm.

GIURICI: They live like a millionaire.

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: They're all retired now, all in one shot, because working they don't make that much money. To make five thousand dollars a month!

LEVINE: How many years do you have to work 'til you make that?

GIURICI: Forty years.

LEVINE: That's a lot, though.

GIURICI: That's not a lot. I worked thirty-seven, and I only get sixteen. But the people that retired before me, they was getting three hundred! Another guy retired about three years before me, he's getting eight hundred. And they never raise; they stay like that. The only thing that raises is the Social Security, a couple of pennies. You don't get that much.

LEVINE: But they raised it right before you retired?

GIURICI: No, when I retired, they give us a one-shot deal. If you have forty years, sixteen hundred dollars a month. That was good! And you get the Social Security, you get close to three thousand dollars.

LEVINE: That's very good.

GIURICI: And that's, to me it's enough, because I'm retired. I don't go buy out clothes. I don't buy nothing. The only thing that costs me, expenses for the house.

LEVINE: Mm, wow!

GIURICI: But their life—the Longshoreman's life is good. You know how many people? And then, I forgot that. So when they cut down from three thousand, from thirty thousand to—

LEVINE: One thousand.

GIURICI: Now it's one thousand, but before I retired there was about three thousand. There was no work.

LEVINE: Oh!

GIURICI: No work. So you'd go out—when Kennedy was President—I remember. I'll never forget. They make this automation. The company, the steamship company got the containers, all that stuff. There was no more work, because the ships come in, half a day, it finished. Before, it was two weeks those jobs. There was a lot of jobs. But now, with those containers, they finish right away! And they don't need that many. But President Kennedy passed a law: you've got to pay those people. Whoever is still there, there's no work, you've got to go to ship in the morning. There's no work, you go home, and you get paid the same thing. They send you a check home. Because Kennedy passed a law. And after that, they even changed that. You don't have to go to the ship anymore. You don't have to go to the [unclear]. You call up by phone. You call up, "Any orders for so and so?" "No orders." And you've got to stay home 'til nine o'clock in the morning. And I stayed home 'til nine o'clock in the morning, and wait for the phone. If they call, you've got to go in. but they never call you. Ten years!

LEVINE: While you were still working?

GIURICI: I was ten years on the guaranteed wages.

LEVINE: Wow!

GIURICI: In those ten years, I worked maybe—oh, there's Kathy.

LEVINE: Oh, good. We're just about done.

KATHY: Okay, because you know what I was thinking? Should I go back home?

LEVINE: No.

KATHY: Okay, because we're just passing through. So I said, let me just call.

LEVINE: Yeah, we're right at the end.

GIURICI: We are at the end.

KATHY: Terrific. Take your time.

LEVINE: Okay.

GIURICI: In the ten years, I worked maybe ten days, but I got paid the same thing, like I was working!

LEVINE: Oh my goodness!

GIURICI: But now they took that off!

LEVINE: Oh, well you were lucky, weren't you?

GIURICI: Yeah, I was lucky for that. We was lucky, all the Longshoremen.

LEVINE: Yeah.

GIURICI: Because I was ten years. People were there twenty years; they never worked a day!

LEVINE: Wow!

GIURICI: There was a guy across the street; he died now. He was twenty years. He maybe put three days' work in twenty years.

LEVINE: Wow!

GIURICI: And he got the same money like people that were working!

LEVINE: Wow, that's amazing.

GIURICI: And then, I started collecting Social Security when I was sixty-two, because I could make as much money as I wanted, because that wasn't earned money. That was like a gift.

LEVINE: Oh my goodness!

GIURICI: My Social Security wasn't touched!

LEVINE: I see.

GIURICI: I could make as much money as I want, and I could collect Social Security. And that's because the guy at Social Security, he recommended me, because I told him the way I told you. He said, "You'll do better retired," because—

END OF INTERVIEW