

EI-148

CARMINE MARTUCCI

BIRTH DATE: DECEMBER 25, 1904

INTERVIEW DATE: 5/8/92

INTERVIEW TIME: 61:23

INTERVIEW LENGTH: 8,462 WORDS

INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

RECORDING ENGINEER: PETER HOM

INTERVIEW LOCATION: ELLIS ISLAND RECORDING STUDIO

TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: JOHN MORIELLO, 4/1995

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

ITALY, 1919

AGE: 14

PORT: NAPLES

RESIDENCES:

- **ITALY: BIDETTO**
- **THE US: BROOKLYN, NY**

SIGRIST: Good morning. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Friday, May 8th, 1992. I'm here at the Ellis Island Recording Studio with Carmine Martucci, who came from Italy in 1919 when he was about fifteen years old. Good morning Mr. Martucci.

MARTUCCI: Good morning.

SIGRIST: Can we start by you telling me your full name.

MARTUCCI: Carmine Martucci.

SIGRIST: And your date of birth, please. What's your birth date?

MARTUCCI: I believe it's the 25th of December, ten o'clock in the evening.

SIGRIST: And what year, do you remember?

MARTUCCI: 1904

SIGRIST: Where were you born?

MARTUCCI: Italy.

SIGRIST: And what town in Italy?

MARTUCCI: Biddetto, province of Bari.

SIGRIST: Where in Italy is that? What part of Italy?

MARTUCCI: It's below Naples. It's, it's across the water, uh, the Russian, on the other side is the Russia. I don't know how to explain, but it's on the Russ side. There's water in between Italy and Russia.

SIGRIST: What kind of a town is Biddetto?

MARTUCCI: A small town, not too many people. I'm too young, I was too young to remember but I know it's a small town.

SIGRIST: How long did you live there?

MARTUCCI: Well, fifteen years before, I was born there and before I came to the United States.

SIGRIST: Can you remember at all what the town looked like?

MARTUCCI: I do remember, even now I still remember the way it looks like. (he pauses) One thing I remember, there was a one, two, three, four, there was four churches in different locations in the town. They had a park, where the people go to the park. They had a soccer ball place, where they play the soccer ball. And also they had a small military place where the military used to stay, all the soldiers. They had a small place for that.

SIGRIST: What was the major industry in this town? What did most people do?

MARTUCCI: The people, most of the people, they were farmers. Everybody had a small piece of land, one little bigger than the other. But they were all farmers. There were not too many stores and what we used to do, our family, we used to make a basket and we used to sell them. And most of the time we make it for a week or two weeks and then we take the basket to the city over Bari to the market and sell it. The people that needed it to put fruits in and all that. They used it for anything. So that me, my brother and my grandfather, the three of us, we did the same thing.

SIGRIST: What did you make the baskets out of?

MARTUCCI: We call it, it's like a wheat. You, it grows near the water. The language, in Italian we call it " salga." It's a

tall wheat. And we used to go buy that. We didn't have it in our town. We go different town to buy that. My grandfather used to go buy it because we were too young. We were, and my brother, we started to do that at nine years old. So my grandfather used to go buy the materials and bring it home and the three of us worked in our own home. See we had a backyard where we stored the material and that's where we worked, the whole three of us.

SIGRIST: How did you weave the basket? Did you soak the wheat?

MARTUCCI: Yes, we had like a tub where we put the, if they were dry we put it in the water to soak them so it bends any way we want to bend, any shape that you make the basket. And after you put it in the water you can bend it. It will not break. And then it dries up.

SIGRIST: Who taught you how to weave?

MARTUCCI: My grandfather. That was his trade when he was younger so he teach us how to work. I was pretty fast work.

SIGRIST: How many baskets could you make in a day?

MARTUCCI: Well, it all depends how big or how small. Some of them, what we call a fancy basket where you use it around the table. You put cookies in, cakes in, and fruit and all that. Some of them it takes a little more time. It might take all day to make one. And some of the others would, it's more rougher and bigger, you can make a couple in one day. It all depends on the size of the baskets.

SIGRIST: You say that you made the baskets in your house. Did you have a separate room in the house where you made...?

MARTUCCI: No.

SIGRIST: Where did you work?

MARTUCCI: We only had one room where there was the bedroom. We did had a kitchen, separate kitchen, but one room what we worked was the bedroom. We had a bed in there, the tables in there, and we work in there. We did everything in one room. Although if it was a nice day and it was warm we might work in the backyard, but most of the time it was inside and one room, everything in one room.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the house a little bit for me? What was the house made out of?

MARTUCCI: Well, the house what we call it tufa, which like a block only it's not cement block, it's a soft block. I try to remember the size it could be --twelve, twelve by twelve or twelve by eighteen, something like that. They were big, square blocks. That's the way the house was built. But we had, we had two rooms which we call, you might call two different apartments, only with one room in one side and one and a half room in the other side, which we rented out. Somebody else lived there. So we live in the one room and we rented the one and a half room. But it was all in one building. There was only one partition that separate one to the other.

SIGRIST: How many people lived in your half of the house?

MARTUCCI: Well, we were only three. Before that, before my parents passed away, we used the whole building, which was two and a half rooms. When my mother passed away, then we rented the one and a half

rooms in order to make a living, my grandfather --me and my brother, we were too young when my mother passed away I was only five years old.

SIGRIST: What did she die of?

MARTUCCI: Actually, (he laughs) I don't know if it's nice to talk about, but what happened to my mother, my mother was going to college. Well she had me and my brother, she had two sons, which when she going to college I might be four years old, but when she pass away I might be five years old. She got a cold, she got a very bad cold and she was going to college to be a doctor. To be a doctor in a small town like where we come from, it's not easy. There was not a woman doctor in the town, and there was only two doctor that take care of the whole town. When my mother got sick she was not a, she didn't graduate yet. She got sick just before she got sick, but before that she had already one case, and she could not, she could not deliver it. She was delivering babies and she was doing that through the teacher that she was going to college, from the city. See, the teacher used to come out to cover her to do the work that she did that, before she got sick. But the only way she'd have done that, if the teacher would come out, and she did. And I remember that. So she did that. Now the reason I'm saying this because the doctor, the way I can explain, the doctor figured that my mother was going to take all the business in this small town and they would be out of business. So when my mother got sick, one of the doctor came to visit my mother. This was told me by my grandfather because we were too small. And somehow, my grandfather says that the doctor poisoned my mother. So finally she passed away, got poisoned, not just because that she got sick, they poisoned her and so she passed away. Although my grandfather tried to get ahold of the doctor, in those days, it wasn't like today, you know, you got the law, the law takes care of this and

that right away. In those days you're lucky if you have a policeman, one, I think there was only one or two in the whole town, and nobody bothers with the law. When my grandfather tried to get ahold of the doctor and he tried to kill him --but this is all I know --but he didn't, he got ahold of wrong guy. It was dark in the town. There is no lights in the street. He got ahold of the wrong guy but he didn't kill anybody anyway, and that was the end of that. So we forgot about about a doctor, my mother passed away, and my grandfather took care of me and my brother from, my brother was two years older, he was about seven years old, I was about five. And from there on the three of us were together, worked together, and sometimes we went out working on the farm for somebody else to get a couple of dollars, so we can make an extra dollar so we can live. And that's the way we lived and that's the way we grow up with my grandfather, until he was the one that send me here to the United States.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

MARTUCCI: Francesca

SIGRIST: And what was her maiden name?

MARTUCCI: The middle name? I don't remember if she had a middle name.

SIGRIST: What was her name be, what was your, was your grandfather her father?

MARTUCCI: Yeah, that was my mother's father.

SIGRIST: I see.

MARTUCCI: He was living with my mother, he was living with us, the four of us were living together.

SIGRIST: Was his last name Martucci? What was your grandfather's last name?

MARTUCCI: No, my grandfather was Vialanta.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

MARTUCCI: See, Franchesca Vialanta.

SIGRIST: Vialanta.

MARTUCCI: It's my father's name is Martucci. It was Franco Martucci. But my father was there in the United States. I never knew my father, I never seen my father. But he came to Italy one time, like I was too small, I could have been four, maybe three years old. I remember just about seeing him, it like a dream. He came to Italy. I don't think he stayed, a week or two he came back to the United State. So it was hard to remember him, and he passed away when he came back to the United States. And so that was the end of him. I never really saw, I saw him one time which I can't even remember too good, and that was the end of my father, and my mother pass away about a year after he pass way. So we were left, the kids, with my grandfather.

SIGRIST: Let's talk about your grandfather because he's obviously

very important to you when you were growing up. Now what was his name again?

MARTUCCI: His name was like me, Carmine.

SIGRIST: And what was his

MARTUCCI: Carmine Vialanta.

SIGRIST: Vialanta. What was he like as a person?

MARTUCCI: He was an, what would you call, a natural, he was a good man. He work hard all his life, he work very hard. And especial when he had to take care of me and my brother because we were too small. He never really bothered many people. He used to go out of town quite a bit to buy the material, and sometime even during the World War I because that was just about the end of the World War I. You couldn't even buy food to eat because during the War there was no food to buy. So sometime he go out of town, he used to buy some spaghettis and whatever he can buy with the material that he had to work to make a basket. He tried to get some fruit, too. Sometime I remember he brings spaghetti so we had something to eat. It wasn't easy to live and it wasn't even easy to buy food. So, all the way around, he used to do all that. But, regardless of the trouble and all there was, we got along okay; so we got through okay.

SIGRIST: What's a very fond memory you have of being a kid in Italy? What's something that sticks out in your mind as being something that you either enjoyed doing or that you enjoyed when it happened?

MARTUCCI: Well, (he laughs) the memory --it wasn't much because we had to worry how we're going to make a living; that was the most important --and that, what I really remember, when my mother was still living and I was, I started to go to the school, like going to first grade. Over here they might call kindergarten, over there you was first grade. And I didn't like to go to school. In the first place I was too young and didn't know any better, so I figured going to school, I like to play instead to go to school. So me and my brother was going to school and my mother was going to college. And so my mother find out that when I go to school I did not stay in the room where I supposed to be in my class. I used to walk out and go play, what they call playing hooky, that's what I used to do. And my brother used to stay in the school; he was in the second class. So what happened, my mother gave me a book, small book, so the teacher would write the note if I went to school or not, and then in the night when I go home my mother look at the book, see if I was there or not. Naturally she'd look at the book and there's nothing in the book because I didn't go to school. And she used to give me a good beating. And sometimes she tied me to the bed too; then my grandfather come and loose me up. (he laughs.) So my grandfather was on my side. (he laughs heartily) He used to help me and my mother used to give to me and give to me good. What happened one time, I went to school and I stay in the class. I don't know why but the teacher pick on me right away. I was the first one he picked to ask me questions. So the question he asked me is, first they call my name " Martucci"--we used to say " pronti " like you say " yes. " Then he asked me, in Italian, he said " Seta pernova " so --I don't know why --but I said to him " sixty-three ": It's seven times nine, that's what it was. And he looked at me for a second and then he said to me, " Who told you? " I look at him and I got surprised too that he's asking me who told me. Now I figured that I might have give him the

wrong answer, but it wasn't the wrong answer, it was the right answer. I said, " Nobody told me," because I was standing up when I was asking him the question. And I said, " Nobody told me," so he was surprised because me, not going to school, and giving him the right answer one, two, three, without even thinking I gave him " sixty-three " right away. (they both laugh) Me, he wrote right in the book. So when I went home, he even called my mother and he said, " I don't understand. How can he answer me the question, one, two, three right away when he don't come to school? " (he laughs) So my mother said, " If you only go to school, it seems to me that you got the brains enough to be a doctor," because she wanted to be a doctor and says, " You go to school, then I send you to be a doctor." So she wanted me to be a doctor like she was going to be a doctor. And she didn't make it and I didn't make because she wasn't there anymore. So we both lost it.

SIGRIST: I want to talk a little bit about your grandfather

MARTUCCI: Well...

SIGRIST: Well, go ahead.

MARTUCCI: Back then, grandfather, like I said, he was a good man. He used to treat me and my brother very good. He used to buy us clothes the way, as a matter of fact, he used take us to the tailor. They have the tailor make the clothes for us, not buying in a store because I don't believe there was a store in our town that you can buy the clothes. He had to go, I think, to the city. But we were close to the city. We were only about three and a half a mile away from Bari. That's the city.

SIGRIST: And it was your grandfather who wanted to send you to

America.

MARTUCCI: Yes.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit why he wanted to send you to America.

MARTUCCI: Well, in the first place, say during the World War I, he was, my grandfather was sending my brother to the United States, so he was afraid that he was going to get called in the army. So he got all the papers, the passport ready, and all the papers ready for my brother to come to the United States.

SIGRIST: What is your brother's name?

MARTUCCI: Victor.

SIGRIST: And is he older or younger?

MARTUCCI: Two years older. See, that's why he was going to get called. I think he was about seventeen. And they were taking, I think, down to seventeen and eighteen years old they were taking in the army. And he did, he did get called, he did get called. When he got the passport to come here, he got called in the army. So what happened, my grandfather took the papers and sent me here instead of my brother. So he figured might as well send somebody here, so he, he took all the, only had to do, change the name of the passport, instead of Vito put Carmine. And I got the papers and I came to United States without even know I was coming here.

SIGRIST: What did you know about America when you were a kid growing

up in Italy?

MARTUCCI: Nothing. There was a lot of people from our town that they been in the United States, they come back to Italy, and I hear them talk between themselves. All these people that they've been in the United States say, " Well, you go to the United States, you can make a lot of money." They said, some of the, I don't know if they were joking or, but that's what they were saying, " If you see some money on the ground," they say, "you don't pick them up because it's a shame if you pick it up." And so, when I hear all this, I said to myself, " I pick them up." (he laughs) So that was one of the things that I used to hear that the United States you can make money, you can live a better than they live in Italy. But my idea wasn't, I didn't even know I was coming here. But that talking, these people talk that gives me the idea I'll pick up the money, see, but it wasn't that at all. It wasn't that easy at all.

SIGRIST: Now, your father had died already, in...

MARTUCCI: Oh yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you have any relatives in America at all?

MARTUCCI: All the relatives that I had, they were all, most of them, they were in the United States too, which I never knew. I never see them, I never knew. There was one, one cousin in Italy, no, two cousin in Italy, those are the ones that I know from Italy because they, in Italy, and also they came here in United States couple of years before me. And they were older than me anyway. But I did know couple of cousin, but I didn't know anybody, anybody else. As a matter of fact, when I came here it took me a couple of years before I

know my, my father's brother who was there, my father's sister, I think there were two sister that were here, which I never know; and some of the, yeah, some of the sister already pass away too. I never did know. And they tell me, that was his sister, and that was his brother-in-law, and that I met his brother-in-law that was there, too. See, I met these people after, but before that my father had a son here, and he's the fellow that send away for me. His name was Patsy, Patsy Vialanta. I didn't know him. And I didn't even know he was receiving me.

SIGRIST: Oh, so that's, I see.

MARTUCCI: See when I came to the United States...

SIGRIST: But did your grandfather arrange that?

MARTUCCI: My grandfather was the one that did all the getting together with his son and his son send my grandfather the money for my trip, which I didn't know that neither. See, nobody told me anything.

SIGRIST: You really were in the dark about all of this.

MARTUCCI: Yeah, but my grandfather didn't tell me neither. I find out later when I got to the United States that this is his son, which I never know him neither. He was in the United States a long time before. He was the brother of my mother, see? And he was a long time in the United States. He was in the ice business. In those days they used to sell ice. They had ice box. And so when I, when we got here to the Statue of Liberty on the boat, a lot of people that they came with me from Italy, their brother-in-law, their brother, their sister, they all came to the boat to see if they were there. And my

uncle, but this is my uncle to me, that is supposed to receive me, he said he came to the boat but I didn't see him. But he told me later that he did come to the boat.

SIGRIST: We need to pause right now so Peter can flip the tape over.

END SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

SIGRIST: Okay, we're now continuing on Side II. How did you feel about leaving your grandfather?

MARTUCCI: Well, I always had in mind, because the way he raised and the way we lived together, I always had in mind to, I had to send him some money from time to time, that is if, if I had money to send to him that he can live a better than we used to live. I had that in mind all the time. But it wasn't easy to do because it wasn't easy to take care of myself.

SIGRIST: Do you remember saying goodbye to your grandfather? Do you remember saying goodbye to your grandfather when you were leaving Italy?

MARTUCCI: Oh, yeah, yeah, say goodbye because before I came to the United States I went to Naples to get the boat.

SIGRIST: Did you travel alone or were you with other people?

MARTUCCI: Alone, all alone.

SIGRIST: No one else from your town went with you.

MARTUCCI: No, no one else from family. See, I went to Naples and when we got to Naples the boat wasn't there. And we had to stay in Naples one week. And I figured well, there was a big feast in our town, I say, "I'm not going to stay in Naples one week." I said, "I'm going back to the town and celebrate the feast." And I did that. Now this was part of the money that my grandfather give me, that he got from his son, that, to come to the United State. So I went back to the feast. We had a good time with one of my cousins that was in Italy, and they came to the United States after me. We had a good time, then I went back to Naples about four days later and got the boat to came to the United State.

SIGRIST: Now, and you're traveling alone? No one else from your town is going with you?

MARTUCCI: I'm traveling alone except, see when you come, when you're young like that, you're supposed to have somebody to take care of you when you're coming here in the boat. So there was a guy there, but I hardly know the guy anyway. The grandfather tell him to keep an eye on me, see? But he couldn't keep an eye on me because I was too young to, that anybody can keep an eye on me. I do what I want to do. As a matter of fact, everybody was sick on the boat from the ocean, and it was me and another fellow, we used to run from one corner of the boat to the other corner; we used to raise hell everyday and was only me

and him that didn't get sick because we kept moving. So everybody was sick. There was about twenty-one people from our town. Just from one town, twenty-one people.

SIGRIST: From Bidetto?

MARTUCCI: Yeah, so, but let's say we all know each other, but nobody had anything to do with me except this guy is supposed to keep an eye on me. Now when we got to New York here...

SIGRIST: Wait, wait, let's not get to New York yet. Let's, I want to ask a couple more questions about the boat, before we get to New York. Where did you sleep on the boat?

MARTUCCI: They had, they had a room. In those days is not like today, you're lucky you get a room something you get a small room, nothing fancy about it. And, what we did on the boat, that's another thing, me and this fellow, we kept close together like two good friends. We bring in cookies and stuff like that from Italy that we make ourself, and that's what we were eating. An orange, so we brought some orange on the boat. We did not eat too much, almost nothing of what the food they had on the boat. We didn't care for that. So we had to eat our own food, what we supposed to bring here like say to my uncle, to the people over here. So we didn't bring nothing to them, we eat it all ourselves. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you took with you? What kind of luggage did you take or what did you pack?

MARTUCCI: Luggage? (he laughs)

SIGRIST: What did you take?

MARTUCCI: I don't even remember if I had any luggage. And I don't believe I had a luggage, only the clothes that I had on. I don't think I had any luggage, not that I remember. The clothes that I had on because --I don't know if you want to get into New York, when I got off the boat? When I got off the boat one of my friends, his brother-in-law was picking him up. He was receiving him. And his brother-in-law and all his, also received me because I never know my uncle and I never saw him when I was on the boat, which he did say that he came there, but I never see him. And so my friend's brother-in-law receive him and receive me and I went with him to his brother-in-law in his house. I didn't go to my uncle. I never did see him. Now what happened there, over night I slept in his brother-in-law, in his house, and next morning he give me a shirt, a silk shirt. When I saw the silk shirt they told me, " Put on this shirt," I thought I was getting a, like a gold shirt, you know. I never saw a silk shirt before. And from there is, the question was, " Why you want me to put on a silk shirt?" He gave me the shirt and he says, " We're going to the feast." They had a feast in Brooklyn. This was the next day we got off the boat. So we went to the feast in the evening the next day and there's a lot of people that came from the same town. They all go to the feast. Here I met couple of them that I know, that they came here before me. And they started talk about where I was going, where I was staying. So I tell them that my friend's brother-in-law took me in but I'm supposed to go to my uncle and I don't know where he is, I don't know, I never see him before. So some of these people, they're not even a relation of mine, we just know each other from the same town. They know my uncle. They were here before. They know my uncle. They say, " Oh, we know where your uncle is. He's in Brooklyn." And then, I don't know which one of them, they tell my

uncle where I was staying, and then, the brother-in-law of my friend, he check up with my uncle and tell him to come and pick me up; and this is how I met my uncle. So he finally find out where I was. He came over and picked me up. From there on he had, he had three children with a, he had a French wife and he had a ice business. So now is to go to work in the ice business with him.

SIGRIST: Okay, before we get to that, let's back up a little bit, I want to ask you how long was the boat trip? How long did it take?

MARTUCCI: In the boat?

SIGRIST: Yeah, how long were you in the boat?

MARTUCCI: Twenty-one days.

SIGRIST: And then, do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when you came into New York Harbor?

MARTUCCI: I remember who?

SIGRIST: The Statue of Liberty. Do you remember seeing...?

MARTUCCI: Oh yeah, that I remember 'cause as soon as the boat gets in the harbor there, everybody's looking for the Statue of Liberty. Everybody thinks you seen paradise, you know, that's the way you feel, you know. You feel like well, you're in the United State, there's the Statue of Liberty, and now you're, like you're a free man and now you feel like you're getting big already. (he laughs) But you're not getting big at all, in those days.

SIGRIST: Now what do you remember about Ellis Island and being processed here at Ellis Island?

MARTUCCI: Well, not much about the island. The only thing that I remember, we came in with a boat, we, as a matter of fact we didn't get off the boat, when we got here we had to go through the, through the doctor examination. If you're okay they let you off, if you're not you're supposed to stay someplace in there, I don't know where, until you're, you're well enough, then to let you in in the United State. As matter of fact, one of the inspector was telling me when he was asking the question who's going to receive me. He know I was all alone and he know that I didn't have nobody to take care of me in the United States. And he was talking to this guy that is supposed to watch for me, he was telling this guy maybe we should send me back to Italy. I said, " Why should I go back to Italy?" I said, "I came here to stay in the United States." I said, " If I go back to Italy, I figure, look at the money that I spent to come to the United State; then I'm right back in the hole." (he laughs) And so that's why I got together with my friend, that his brother-in-law would received me, and I went off with him to his brother-in-law. His brother-in-law was there.

SIGRIST: So you didn't have to stay overnight here at all, did you?

MARTUCCI: No, we didn't stay overnight because, like I said, me and my friend, we were running all over the boat. We're the only ones feeling good. Everybody was sick. Lot of people they stay overnight or two days, I don't know how long, sometime a week. But not me. Me and my friend went off, we were all right. Now I remember, we didn't have no luggage because we just walking, (he laughs) we didn't have no luggage.

SIGRIST: All right, so, so, you're in America, tell me what was the hardest thing for you to adjust to, once you're in America?

MARTUCCI: Well, it's a long story and now to get to the, to the hard, the hard time that I had here in the United State. See, when I first started to work with my uncle, and this is his own business, in the ice business, he is not paying me nothing. I'm living with him, I'm eating with him, but I'm not getting any money. I might have been younger, but still, a week goes by, months goes by and few months went by, I don't see no money. He's take, well his own business, he's not paying me anyway. I figured I got to get some money. In the first place I had in mind all the time to send some money to his father because this is my uncle, it's his father, and he hardly send anything to his father. I remember that. When I was in Italy he hardly write a letter to his father, maybe once a year.

SIGRIST: This would be your grandfather, right?

MARTUCCI: Yeah, my grandfather, and it might be once every two years, that's, I remember that. That's why I didn't know nothing about him, because we never talked about him. His grandfather didn't want to talk about, he didn't want to say that he didn't communicate between the two, once in a while, in a year. Anyway, I figured I got to get some money, I can't work here for nothing. What happened there, he claim he, the business couldn't afford to pay me. That was the first thing I know. Well, I said, they couldn't afford to pay me, then I have to work with somebody else. And then they were talking to me that the law was coming after me to send me to school. I said to my, " That's all I need. I didn't want to go to school in Italy, now I have to go to school over here, which I got to make a living." So, I got to do something. And there was somebody in Coney Island, in

Brooklyn, Brooklyn, Coney Island, an iceman come from the same town that I come from. He had a good ice business in Coney Island, so I went to work with him. He was paying eighteen dollars a week. I says, " Well that's good." So I work there two weeks, and then I see my uncle came over there, and the guy didn't pay me the two weeks, he pay, he give the money to my uncle. But the only money I had, because while I was working there for two weeks, the people used to give me a tip. So, this, I seen some money, see? When he come, my uncle come over there he got the two weeks pay. I guess he was happy and I wasn't happy. He told me to go back home and work for him again. I don't understand why he did that, but that's what he did. So I had no choice because, first, I can't speak English, you can't get, you know, you can't just run away on the street. I couldn't even speak English. So I went back with him, then I find out, I ask him, " What about the money?" " Oh," he says, " I got the money. I got the money." So when I went back, the same story, I didn't get paid. I didn't get no money. He give me fifty cents if I want to go to the movies. The movies, I think, was fifteen or twenty-five cents. He give me fifty cents a week. I said, " This, this can't do. I can't do that." So what I did, I talked to one of my, one of my cousins, and I think I over, I jumped conclusion there --before this I went to work --I talked to my cousin and he, he was here about four years before me and he was a die and toolmaker. He was working in a factory in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Die and toolmaker and he was making twenty-four dollars a week. He was a good mechanic. And he got me a job to work with him in the factory, to pick up the trade, the die and toolmaker. So I went to work with him and it was only eight dollars a week. He was making twenty-four dollars. Now that I went to work with him, he got me a room downtown in New York, in the Bowery. That's the worst place you can get a room. You should have known, those days, not today --I don't know what it is today --but

that was, in those days, the worst place to live, the worst people to live. So, he got me a room there and I was working for him and I had to take a train to go to Brooklyn, to the Greenpoint, to go to work everyday. Got to buy my own food, my own laundry, I could not, eight dollars wasn't enough. So I talked to the foreman, I says, "I can't work here. I got to quit. Eight dollars is not enough." So he give me ten dollars, and ten dollars wasn't enough. He give me twelve dollars, and that just about make it. So I figured, it's no good. I went to see the Italian Consul somewhere in New York. I tell him I wanted to go back to Italy. He says, " Okay," he ask me where I was staying. I tell him down the Bowery. I give him the number, the address, right under the Third Avenue in the Bowery. (he laughs) I can never forget that. I used to cry in the evening. It's like, it's like you're dead. You hardly, you can not only make a living. So he said," Okay," he told me, as soon as we have a boat, as soon as we get a room on the boat, we'll call you, send you back to Italy." He agreed to send me back. I tell my cousin. I said, " The consul going to call. I don't know what day, but the consul going to call me. I tell him where I am, and I'm going back to Italy." So, what my cousin did, he tell my uncle. See, my uncle didn't know where I was. See, 'cause I left him and he didn't know where I was. I didn't want him to know where I was. So my cousin tell my uncle and uncle came and got me back again, see? So this where the problem really start, when I went back to him and back to work for him, still no money. Now I want to know why I'm not getting paid. So finally I got enough guts to ask. I said, " I don't mind working, but I don't see money. Fifty cents a week, what's fifty cents?" Said, " Well maybe you want to go movies." I said, " What happened to my wages? Why don't I get paid? Even if it's, let's say a dollar? Five dollars? Like I used to get eight dollars and ten dollars when I went to work. Nothing." " Well," he says, "You have to pay back all the money for the trip."

He said, " I sent my father the money to get you here." I said, " Oh," I said, " Nobody tell me that." And I said, " Why did you send him money for the trip?" I said, " Why do you want to get paid back." I said, " Why should I pay back, without me knowing before I came here that I got to pay you back." " Well," he says, " that's what it is." And, up to now, he didn't even tell me how much I'm going to pay back. See, he didn't tell me anyway. He said, " You still owe me money," at this time while I'm talking to him. I says, " Well, okay." I didn't want to talk to him no more, I got mad. I think it was a couple of days after, I still don't have luggage, no luggage. I got a big bag. All I had I think it was a couple of shirts, maybe a pants. I put them in the bag and I got a, I think I got a dollar, maybe dollar and a quarter in the pocket, and I left without telling nobody nothing where I'm going. I don't even know myself where I'm going. I went to the, to the railroad station, I went to the, and I got on the train, and the conductor asked me, " Where you going? Where you want to go?" I said, I think I show him the dollar. I said, " How far can I go?" As far as, just by speaking English, " As far as I can go. All the way." I think he took eighty-five cents, and that would take me from New York to Long Island, a town named Little Neck, Long Island. 'Course I don't know the town, I don't know the name, I don't know nothing. All I know, when I got to Little Neck, he told me, " This is far as you go," with the money that he took. So I got off. See, I found out later where I got off, was a little lake. I didn't know then.

SIGRIST: Let me ask you a question right now. Were you really unhappy that you had come to America...

MARTUCCI: No!

SIGRIST: Because so much, so many...

MARTUCCI: No!

SIGRIST: Bad things are happening to you?

MARTUCCI: I wasn't happy at all. No.

SIGRIST: You wish you'd stayed in Italy?

MARTUCCI: No, I wasn't happy at all. I wanted to go back to Italy because, see, up to this point I was making a better living in Italy, and I couldn't see why they talk so good about the United State, where if you don't have a job, which it wasn't easy to get a job, if you don't have a job you're starving to death!

SIGRIST: Well, and your uncle seems like a rather mean person.

MARTUCCI: (he laughs) I'll say, he didn't give a darn for nobody except for himself. He mistreated his wife, too. I find out, all this I, I see it later. It was his wife that liked me very much, but she couldn't do nothing. And she couldn't say nothing. And so, as a matter of fact, his wife pass away while I went away. While I was away, when I left, she only live a couple of months and she pass away. He lost his wife.

SIGRIST: Did you miss your grandfather? Did you miss your grandfather?

MARTUCCI: Yeah, he's the only one that's like a, let's say like a father or like my mother. He was the only one in the family that we

were, we grew up together, see. The only, the only three of us; me, my brother, these are the three people that we grow up together and we like each other. Whatever we did we did it together, the three of us.

SIGRIST: But you didn't want to write to your grandfather to tell him that his son was being mean to you?

MARTUCCI: I was writing a letter to my grandfather and telling my grandfather all about it. And before I mailed the letter, my uncle came into my room and pick up the letter. And he read the letter and throw the letter away and he was raising hell. He got mad because what I put in the letter, he didn't like it at all. Well, but that was the truth whether he like it or not. After that, I didn't write the letter any more. After that I left anyway, and I didn't tell nobody where I was going.

SIGRIST: We have five minutes left and I do want to ask you how you learned English.

MARTUCCI: How I what?

SIGRIST: How you learned English. We have five minutes left and I want to ask you how you learned English.

MARTUCCI: The English I figured all out by myself. Your five minutes that you got left, that isn't enough to tell you the whole story. The English, I pick it up myself. I used to pick up paper, look at it, and whatever I know in English, whatever I can read now, everything I pick it up myself. Everything I did, up to today, I did it all by myself. I build up myself, all the job, I went into the building

business, all the different work that I did, I did it all by myself. And, to finish the five minutes, is, when I went off the train I walk, I walk, walk, keep walk to the end of the world, I want to go to the end of the world. And now it's getting dark and now I'm hungry too; I only got fifteen cents left. There was a car parking along side of the road, and when I got to Long Island, the name of the town Roselyn, Long Island, Roselyn. So I got in the car, I wanted to go to sleep. And soon as I got in the car, a couple of minutes a lady came out. She said, "What are you doing in my car?" I says, she thought I was stealing in the car. I said, "I'm trying, I want to get some sleep, and I don't know nobody so I figured I want to get some sleep." So I ask her there was any Italian people around. So she took me to, back, this, I was just passing the town. She took me back to the town. There was a hotel there. She thought maybe I could go to the hotel and sleep, because I told her I wanted to get some sleep. So she got me in there and there I find a Polish fellow that he knew some Italian people, what they call a Shore Road in Roselyn, in Long Island. They it Shore Road. So he took me there. And there was a store there, Italian people run the store. And I ask him if I can get a room. I want to get a job and go to work the next day. There was a sand bank there. Sand bank name was Nassau Sand and Gravel. I say I go to work in there if he can find a room for me where I can sleep. So the guy says, "No, I can't help you." But there was another Italian guy, he heard me talk to this fellow, and he says, "Come with me." And he took me in. He was a blacksmith working in the sand bank. And the next morning I went in the sand bank and went to work. Now I'm getting twenty-four dollars a day.

SIGRIST: (they laugh) So, it worked out well then.

MARTUCCI: Now I like the United States. (they laugh) Now I said

everything is okay. But this is the guy that took me in, and made me, give me the sleep, give me the bed, and he give me some pork and beans to eat. That I never forgot. He didn't live, maybe a couple of years he die, too. So, that was the only guy that helped me, and I couldn't do enough for him because I really needed the help.

SIGRIST: Well, I'm glad that there's a happy ending to these first few years in America. I have one final question for you. Are you happy that you came to this country? You had a rocky beginning.

MARTUCCI: Now I'm happy, yes, but look what I had to go through. And I'm not even telling you half what I, what I went through. This is only, maybe third of it. And, not to build me up, to get to the state that I am today, so I'm happy, but I work hard, and I was never free to do any works, not, I don't want to brag about. And if I work for anybody that I work, they always got a day's work, a good, I earned my money, and they never complained because I was a good worker.

SIGRIST: Well, Mr. Martucci I want to thank you for coming out here and for doing this interview for us for the Oral History Project. Thank you.

MARTUCCI: How about I come again to tell you the rest of the story.
(they both laugh) Thank you. Nice to meet you.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off for the National Park Service with Carmine Martucci.

END OF INTERVIEW