

**EI-23**

**PAUL MOSCHELLA**

**BIRTH DATE: JULY 8, 1898**

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**INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.**

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**SICILY, 1921**

**AGE: 22**

**SHIP: PESARO**

**PORT: NAPLES**

**RESIDENCES:**

- **ITALY: SANTA DI RIVA , SICILY**
- **US: PORTAGE, PA**

**SIGRIST:** This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. We are here with Paul Moschella, who came from Sicily in 1921 when he was twenty-two years old. Mr. Moschella, could you please give us your full name.

MOSCHELLA: My name is Paul Moschella. That what they say in Italian, Moschella, and I come from Sicily. I left Naples March the nineteenth, 1921.

SIGRIST: Okay. Let's, before we get too far ahead, let's talk about life in Sicily when you were growing up. What town did you come from?

MOSCHELLA: I come from Santa Teresa di Riva, province de Messina, Sicily, Italia, you know. And the reason I come over here because in Italy them days they keep, there was two class of people: the rich and very poor. And they did kept the poor like slave.

SIGRIST: And your family was poor?

MOSCHELLA: Very poor.

SIGRIST: I see.

MOSCHELLA: I started working, I was only ten years old and in place to go to school my father and mother, they send me to work to make maybe ten cents a day.

SIGRIST: And what were you doing? What was your job?

MOSCHELLA I was working in a factory, lemon factory, in a factory and we started after the middle of the night around one o'clock after the middle of the night to about two o'clock after the middle of the day. And them days if I was making ten cents in about eleven, twelve hours, that was a lot of money.

SIGRIST: I see. Now, you said you were ten when you went to work.

MOSCHELLA: I was ten.

SIGRIST: What was your birth date, sir?

MOSCHELLA: My birthday was July the 8th, 1898.

SIGRIST: I see. Now was your father working?

MOSCHELLA: Yeah, my father was working, too.

SIGRIST: And what was his name?

MOSCHELLA: Giovanni Moschella.

SIGRIST: I see. And what did he do for a living?

MOSCHELLA: What was he doing for a living?

SIGRIST: Yeah.

MOSCHELLA: He was working in the factory.

SIGRIST: Oh, he did factory work, also.

MOSCHELLA: That's right, that's right.

SIGRIST: And did your mother work?

MOSCHELLA: No, no because she had a big family, you know. And there was no work even for the women. Even if they wanted to work there was no work.

SIGRIST: I see. Let's stop a moment. (Interview is interrupted)

MOSCHELLA: (interview resumes, Mr. Moschella is talking about his mother) Angela, Angie, Angela.

SIGRIST: And her maiden name?

MOSCHELLA: Trimachi.

SIGRIST: Could you spell that, please?

MOSCHELLA: T-R-I-M-A-C-H-I, Trimachi.

SIGRIST: I see. Was she from that town, also?

MOSCHELLA: Yes, same town. Then days when they get married, they never go out of the town. They mostly the people that stay in the same town, you know.

SIGRIST: So her family all lived in that town then.

MOSCHELLA: Yeah, they all was living in the same town, you know, from the day they're born to the day they die 'cause they all was all people where they born they die. They never travelled them days.

SIGRIST: Was your family close to, say, her parents, your grandparents?

MOSCHELLA: That's right, yes. They was close. I say maybe half a mile close together between them, my mother and my father.

SIGRIST: Do you remember visiting your grandparents?

MOSCHELLA: Oh, yes. I remember.

SIGRIST: What kind of house did they live in?

MOSCHELLA: Well, I'll be honest with you. The house where we was living or my grandmother was living, my grandmother, she had six children--three boys and three girls--and they had only two bedroom. And my family, we was eight and we had only two bedrooms. Them days there was no like over here today. If you got four children, you got to have four bedroom. Them days maybe you had four boys, they all had to sleep in the same room or if you had four girls, that was same thing. That was different. That what I say, that was the reason I did come to the United States. My father come to the United States in 1901 for the reason to build himself a new life and that's same thing with me. I come in United States to better myself in life and all my brothers and sister, we all come to United States.

SIGRIST: Let's talk about your brothers and sisters. Let's start off by naming them.

MOSCHELLA: Well, my oldest sister, her name was Josephine. She was living in Pennsylvania. She die two years ago the age 92 and, uh...

SIGRIST: She was the oldest in the family or you were...

MOSCHELLA: She was the oldest one in the family and we respect her like a mother, everyone, because she was like a mother to us over here. When I come over here she gave me a place to sleep and she give me food on the table because in 1921, when I come over here, there was one month I guess over here in United States and I can't make even ten cents. There was no work. But thanks to God I had my sister living

over here and at least I was staying with her. And then, after one month, my brother had a, got a friend because he said that in the United States army, uh...

SIGRIST: Is your brother the next? We were listing the brothers and sisters.

MOSCHELLA: Oh, my brother.

SIGRIST: Was he the next brother?

MOSCHELLA: Well, now the other brothers, I got three other brothers that live in Fairlawn and I got three other sister: one living in Fairlawn, I mean Crestkill, the other living one she lives on Route 8. I forget the name of the town.

SIGRIST and what are their names?

MOSCHELLA: My sister, the oldest one, she is Dominica. And the youngest one is Antonine and my brothers, one is named Russ and the youngest one is name Pete and both of them are living in Fairlawn. I got the picture over here that I can show you the picture. I got them all together. And, as I said, we are five live yet. There's just my sister, the one in Pennsylvania, she's dead. She was ninety-two like I said, you know. Then I got one my sister, she's eighty seven and my brother is almost eighty four and the other brother is eighty and my youngest sister, she's seventy five, seventy six. We all get on in age.

SIGRIST: Quite a span, actually, in ages.

MOSCHELLA: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Quite a range of ages.

MOSCHELLA: The ages are very good.

SIGRIST: So in Sicily you had quite a house full. There were a lot of people in your house.

MOSCHELLA: Oh, yes. Well, like I say, we was eight children because two that die over there, two brothers are lost in Italy.

SIGRIST: When they were children or...?

MOSCHELLA: Well, no. One, he was in the army and he die, you know. He got TB when he was in the army. The other one, that was the first child my other and father had, and they had him on a little chair and one of my uncles, he wants to shake him, you know, because he was the first nephew that was in the family, and all at once the chair turned over and hit the concrete step and he opened his skull inside and he was what they call, in other word he can't walk anymore. His head got big and he was walking against the wall and he died at the age about twenty-eight. I was in the army when he dies, you know, 'cause I served in the army the other side before I came to the United States.

SIGRIST: And he was a couple years older than you were.

MOSCHELLA: Yeah, he was the oldest one. He was, right now he was in the hundred 'cause my sister, if she was living was ninety four, he was in the hundred, you know, ninety eight, something like that.

SIGRIST: So, for instance, as children what did you eat? Those were a lot of mouths to feed. What did...?

MOSCHELLA: Well, the only thing the other side, like I said, there was rich and very poor. And for the rich guy, he had like maybe three, four hundred acres of land. Maybe you get some other land and you cultivate it. You raise like beans, horse, like they call it fodder, you know, and we raised most

SIGRIST: So you had your own garden, then, with your house.

MOSCHELLA: Yes. We make, we raise our own garden and like I said, before the winter come my father but hundred kilogram dried beans. They keep them in the house and then, like for tomorrow, my mother, she get some that dried beans and she make them to soak them the night before and the following day they get some macaroni and that's how they fill the family. And naturally, you know, my mother I remember, she bake her own bread and like she did it fifty, seventy-five pound flour at a time and she bake maybe fifteen, sixteen loaves bread because they had their own oven where they baking bread.

SIGRIST: In the house?

MOSCHELLA: Well, it's outside the house, not in the house.

SIGRIST: But part of the property.

MOSCHELLA: Yeah, yes. And they make maybe sixteen, eighteen loaf of bread. The first few days the bread was pretty good because it was soft but after a week or so the bread was like a rock and many time I remember as a child when we get the piece of bread we soak them up with the little

Later and we had, they had garlic, and we rub it on top and that's what we were eating.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what the baking oven looked like? Was it...?

MOSCHELLA: The oven, the baking oven, there was like a bowl, round bowl on the top and they had tile on the floor. It was made of brick and then they get some wood and put in some wood for maybe half an hour 'til they make them tile red hot, might as well say. And after that they take all the ash out and then they put the bread inside, sixteen, eighteen loaf of bread inside and then they put the cover in the front. I think then some kind of mud they put to seal and they keep then about forty five to an hour and after that they take that out and that's how they get. Even my mother in (unintelligible) in Pennsylvania.

SIGRIST: Had an outdoor oven?

MOSCHELLA: They had an oven outside.

SIGRIST: When you were all children, did you have to help your mother do this, the bread baking or cooking? I mean, that's a lot of bread for one person to bake.

MOSCHELLA: Well, no, the only thing, no, I mean we had chores. The kids would never do that. But my mother, she done that by herself even. It was tough, no question about. It was tough even for the mother and father it was tough.

SIGRIST: Was your family very religious?

MOSCHELLA: I beg your pardon?

SIGRIST: Were you religious?

MOSCHELLA: Oh, yes.

MOSCHELLA: Catholic, that's right.

SIGRIST: Was there a church nearby?

MOSCHELLA: Well, the church, it was I would say about, I say three miles from where I was living and we was walking to the church because there was no transportation. And I'll be honest with you, my first pair of new shoes I had on my feet I was sixteen years old. And I had an uncle. He was in the navy and every time I got a couple penny, I had a place in the wall where I put the money. And there was a feast, Madonna Mount Carmel, July the sixteenth. There was a shoemaker. He was making a pair of shoes for himself and there was like goods on top. There was laces, there was like goods, you know. And when I see that pair of shoes I ask him how much they cost. He says, "Well, Sixteen lira," and I try them on my feet. Now I says, "I'm going to go get the money." I went home and I break that, I think it was like terra cotta, you know, like something you got them over here like piggy, you know, you put money to save money.

SIGRIST: A piggy bank.

MOSCHELLA: A piggy bank. And I went over there and I says, "Now you're going to make another pair for yourself." He says, "A lot of work!" I says, "I'll stay all night with you. You're going to make," and he did. We stayed there all night and he work all night to have a pair of shoes.

SIGRIST: And you were sixteen.

MOSCHELLA: I was sixteen when I had my first new pair of shoes in my feet.

SIGRIST: Did your mother make your clothing? Everybody's clothing?

MOSCHELLA: Most of the time.

SIGRIST: She had a sewing machine.

MOSCHELLA: Well, no. No sewing machine. By hand.

SIGRIST: She did it by hand.

MOSCHELLA: Them days there was no sewing machine. They make their own sheets, you know, they make their own linen years ago them days.

SIGRIST: Did your mother do a lot of handiwork? Did she embroider or did she do anything like that?

MOSCHELLA: Well, she had a big family and not got enough money. But most of the time whatever they had in their own home they done for themselves. They not done for to sell stuff like that but for their own use they done it themselves. No question about it.

SIGRIST: I want to talk a little about, some more about your religious life. For instance, Christmas and Easter, were these big celebrations for your family?

MOSCHELLA: The only celebration they had, the day before Christmas we always had fish and on Christmas day the only celebration, maybe my father go to the butcher shop and buy a couple pounds of meat. Well, the meat was like once a week. Maybe buy a couple pounds pork, you know, and we mixed sauce and we have a dish of spaghetti. (Clock chimes) You was in luck if you can get that piece of meat that fat on was. Like over here even my own children or my grandchildren, you buy steak, cost you five dollars a pound and they say, "Who wants that garbage?" Over there if you had a piece of fat you was lucky and boy, it tasted good, too.

SIGRIST: And so that would be a sort of treat for the holiday?

MOSCHELLA: That was the holiday.

SIGRIST: Did you celebrate, for instance, you said the day before Christmas you would have fish, did you go to your grandparent's or were you just alone with your family?

MOSCHELLA: No, there was no gift.

SIGRIST: Nothing like that.

MOSCHELLA: There was no gift. There was no money. What gift? You was lucky if you can buy a loaf of bread.

SIGRIST: Where did you get the fish? Were you close to the sea shore?

MOSCHELLA: Well, no. The fish, see, the town I live, we were living near the ocean. There was fishermen that go out everyday and sell fish and they buy the fish but it was very cheap in them days.

SIGRIST: What kinds of fish did you eat?

MOSCHELLA: Oh, there were different kinds, you know, different kinds.

SIGRIST: All different kinds. Did your parents go to church every Sunday?

MOSCHELLA: Yes, oh yes. They never miss church.

SIGRIST: And so all the kids went.

MOSCHELLA: All the kids, that's right.

SIGRIST: Were you confirmed in that church?

MOSCHELLA: Yes. We was all baptized and everything, confirmed. No question about it.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of the church?

MOSCHELLA: Madonna Mount Carmel.

SIGRIST: see. And you said it was a big church.

MOSCHELLA: That a big church, yes.

SIGRIST: Well, you said that your father had come to America in 1901.

MOSCHELLA: First time, yes.

SIGRIST: And what did he do when he got a job here?

MOSCHELLA: When he come over here?

SIGRIST: When he came the first time.

MOSCHELLA: The first time he come he went to Pennsylvania and he was working in the coal mine them days and he stood it a few years over here. Then he made a couple dollars and then he come back in Italy. Then he took one this rich guy, he made a real contract, you know, for twenty-nine years. He give a piece of land to plant the lemon tree around and stuff like that. And believe me, to do that he was working night and day because, see, before you start getting the first few dollars, few pennies you might as well say, that take about five or six years. And then he come back. The last trip he had to the United States was in 1912 and he stood one year over here. There was no work and he just made enough money to pay his fare and come back in Italy.

SIGRIST: When he was in America the first time, what did your mother do?

MOSCHELLA: My mother?

SIGRIST: Because you said she didn't work.

MOSCHELLA: No, well, my father, every once in a while, he send a few dollars.

SIGRIST: And you were working. Oh, you were too young to work.

MOSCHELLA: Well I, well. I was working, no question about it and I tried to help the family as much I can.

SIGRIST: Did any of the other brothers and sisters work?

MOSCHELLA: No, because there was, you know, there was such. I had the sister them days, there was no work. Even for the women there was no work. Look, anyone got a little job, you know, to make a few cents. No, my sister take, nobody was working and my two brothers, they was too young because my brother, one, he born in 1907 and the other one born 1909 and they was too small.

SIGRIST: They were just too small.

MOSCHELLA: Too small to work. And both of them learned a trade: one was a tailor, the other one was a carpenter, you know. They learned a trade. They started to go when they was eight, nine years old to learn the trade.

SIGRIST: So your father came back to America in 1912.

MOSCHELLA: Yeah, that's right, about a year.

SIGRIST: And then he went back to Sicily?

MOSCHELLA: He went back.

SIGRIST: And then what happened? Did he just get a job in the factory at that point?

MOSCHELLA: Well, then, as I said, we all pulled together because then the family started to get a little big, you know, and things got, you know, I mean we no starve. No question about it. We no starve. I mean, we no have a lot of stuff that but we no starve. We always have enough food for the beans or horse, what the hell do you call it fodder, I forget what they call it in the United States, and, but we always have food.

SIGRIST: As a large family, did you ever do anything for entertainment? Were there any games that you would play as kids or anything like that? Were your parents musical, for instance? Was your mother...?

MOSCHELLA: I no hear what you say.

SIGRIST: As children, what games did you play? What did you do for entertainment?

MOSCHELLA: We no have nothing.

SIGRIST: There wasn't much.

MOSCHELLA: There was no game. The only game we had like when we was kids we play with the lemon, you know, stuff like that. Or sometimes we take, well, that was in the age like they got over here, what they call, uh, oh gosh, (to his daughter) the game you play, Mary, what you call it?

DAUGHTER: Soccer?

SIGRIST: Soccer? With a ball?

MOSCHELLA: With a ball, you know.

SIGRIST: But you were using a lemon?

MOSCHELLA: We used a lemon. I mean, we don't have. (Everyone laughs)

SIGRIST: But what did you do with the lemon? Did you roll it and hit something, like bowling?

MOSCHELLA: That's right, that's right, that's right.

SIGRIST: I see, like a bocci...

MOSCHELLA: Like a bocci but we had bocci, too, you know.

SIGRIST: Well, that's a game. That's entertainment.

MOSCHELLA: That was tough, that was tough. No question about it.

SIGRIST: Very slim times.

MOSCHELLA: Oh, yes. But one thing I can say, thanks God we all stick together.

SIGRIST: Close family.

MOSCHELLA: Very close family. Even today we all, the youngest is seventy-six, we stick together just the same. Like I got two brothers. They live in Fairlawn. One sister live in Crestkill, another one live in (unintelligible) and if you can't visit one each the other, we call them up every week, one each the other to see how we are and everything. Because now to visit my sister, my brother, I got to depend on my children or my grandchildren and I got wonderful children and grandchildren.

SIGRIST: Well, let's talk a little bit about why you wanted to come to America. You said because you knew things would be better for you.

MOSCHELLA: That's right. I come to America to live a better life.

SIGRIST: Had you been thinking about this for a long time or did you just decide it was time to go and...?

MOSCHELLA: No, I'll tell you why. Because when I find out I had a sister living over here, I was on the police force on the other side. During the First World War I was on the police force and they wanted me to continue to make a career in the organization. "No," I says. "I want to go in the United States because I got a sister living over there and my father went over there and I heard that there are better lives what we got over here."

SIGRIST: When did your sister come over?

MOSCHELLA: She come in 1919.

SIGRIST: By herself?

MOSCHELLA: By herself and she got married over here, with my brother-in-law she got married. Because, see, he was in the United States Army. After he got discharged because he was wounded in the army in the First World War and then he sent for my sister and she got married over here.

SIGRIST: And she was doing very well over here.

MOSCHELLA: That's right, yes.

SIGRIST: So you decided you could probably do well, also.

MOSCHELLA: That's right, yes.

SIGRIST: Well, so how did you go about getting your ticket and all that sort of thing? You went with some friends?

MOSCHELLA: Yes. When I decide I made my passport to come to the United States, I find out how much cost my trip to come over here to United States. And during when I was in the army the other side I saved the money because, you know, my father, he can't afford to pay for my trip because he had a big family and the wage was very low wage them days, you know. And I save enough money to pay for my trip and I don't remember exactly what I pay. That I don't remember. And then soon I went home, I apply for the passport to come in the United States and that took about four, five months before, you know, because they started closing the immigration them days.

SIGRIST: Yes, that's right. You were still working in the police force at this time.

MOSCHELLA: That's right. Then, like I said, we was three from the same town we left together. There was me, one my cousin--he was only sixteen years old and I was the one that, you know, guaranteed for him--and this friend of mine. He was about nineteen when he coming over here, too. They're both dead now. And we left from Naples the nineteenth of March and we reach New York, when we see the good Statue of Liberty, the fourth of April.

SIGRIST: How did you get from Sicily to Naples?

MOSCHELLA: By train. See, from Sicily this train go through all over Italy. In other words, to cross the channel in Sicily we got like the, what do they call it, over there they call it "ferryboat," you know the word? It's a boat. You dock and they got the track on the boat.

SIGRIST: A barge?

MOSCHELLA: Yeah, no, no. It's a boat that people travel. It's covered and everything but you can put I believe it's six or eight, uh, them train.

SIGRIST: rain cars?

MOSCHELLA: You know, a boat, something like that. The people, they never get off from the train. They stay inside. They put them, they got two. They put four like on one side and four the other side. And when they reach on the other side, when they touch Italy, "Calabria" what they call it, and then they hook them up with the engine and they take four at a time and they hook them up and that train continues, go all through Naples, Roma, Milan, to Switzerland, too.

SIGRIST: Isn't that interesting. So, did it go right to Naples or did you go to Roma and down or...?

MOSCHELLA: That's right.

SIGRIST: You went to Rome first.

MOSCHELLA: No, no, no.

SIGRIST: Naples first.

MOSCHELLA: Naples first.

SIGRIST: I see. I've never heard of that before. Very interesting.

MOSCHELLA: Oh yes, oh yes.

SIGRIST: How long did that trip take?

MOSCHELLA: Uh, that take almost all night or all day, depending what time you leave Messina, because my wife, she come in 1961 and she took the trip. We was on the train, you know, and when we left Naples to go to Messina in Sicily, we took the train and to cross the straits of Messina, the ocean you know, the Mediterranean, then you got to go on that.

SIGRIST: All right. So you're in Naples now. How long did you have to wait before your boat came?

MOSCHELLA: The boat was over there.

SIGRIST: The boat was already.

MOSCHELLA: Yeah, the boat was over there.

SIGRIST: Did you stay overnight in Naples?

MOSCHELLA: Not, well, I believe we stayed all day. No question about it. I don't remember that if we stayed all night or all day but the boat was over there, you know.

SIGRIST: Did you have to undergo any kind of examinations or anything before you got on the boat?

MOSCHELLA: No.

SIGRIST: No.

MOSCHELLA: No, that we didn't have any because we were, as I say.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the boat?

MOSCHELLA: "Pessaro." That was a German boat. Italy got it through the First World War and that was, uh, I don't know, chock full, what the hell do they call it, because there was just one floor. There was no was cabin like today on a boat, you know, you got your own cabin, stuff like that. It was just all one floor.

SIGRIST: You were in steerage.

MOSCHELLA: Huh?

SIGRIST: In steerage?

MOSCHELLA: Yeah, that's what...

SIGRIST: Third class? The bottom?

MOSCHELLA: There was no first, second or third. There was just one class, you know, them days. And there was the bunk maybe three, four feet up the floor and in the morning-- because what you call it, the trip was tough and many people started to throw up, stuff like that--in the morning you got to get up because them guys, they had a fire hose and they washed the floor. You got to get up.

SIGRIST: Where did you go? Did you go up on deck when you got up?

MOSCHELLA: That's right, on deck, yeah, stuff like that.

END OF SIDE ONE            BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

SIGRIST:            What other things were there to do on the boat?

MOSCHELLA: On the boat I remember as soon as we left Naples they gave you a pillowcase. Inside that pillow case you had your aluminum dish, your fork, knife and spoon and a cup, you know, metal cup, stuff like that. When it was time to eat you line then up yourselves and got your stuff and go around and (clock chimes) they give you a cup of soup, piece of meat and piece of bread, you know, and cup of coffee, whatever it was, whatever you desired. Then you got to find a place on the boat to sit down because there was no table.

SIGRIST:            There was no dining room.

MOSCHELLA: No, no dining room, no, like I say. That was one of those transport, troop transport boat, you know, and that was the trip on the boat.

SIGRIST:            And you said they gave you soup and bread...

MOSCHELLA: And a piece of meat, you know.

SIGRIST:            And a piece of meat.

MOSCHELLA: That's right, yeah. Most of the time, everyday we have soup with a piece of meat. That's all there was.

SIGRIST:            How often did they feed you?

MOSCHELLA: Twice a day.

SIGRIST: Twice a day.

MOSCHELLA: Twice a day.

SIGRIST: Did you get sick?

MOSCHELLA: No, I can take it a little rough. (He laughs)

SIGRIST: But a lot of people did?

MOSCHELLA: Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes. A lot of people. No question about it.

SIGRIST: It was pretty unpleasant.

MOSCHELLA: Yes, yeah, that was. And like I said, when we all reach New York we thank the good Lord.

SIGRIST: Yeah, you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

MOSCHELLA: I remember seeing the Statue of Liberty and then they took us to Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: When you came into the harbor, did they bring you up on deck when you went...?

MOSCHELLA: Oh, yeah. We was all on deck.

SIGRIST: You were already up there.

MOSCHELLA: Yeah, we was on the deck, you know and, but I remember on Ellis Island we was like a bunch of sheep.

SIGRIST: Yeah. It was very crowded?

MOSCHELLA: Oh gosh, yes. We bumped one each the other and everybody had a suitcase and dragging their suitcase, stuff like that, and I remember the first meal they give to us. They give sandwich, whitebread with a piece of cheese and a piece of ham, wrap them up and put them in a little baggie and give to us and it tasted so good.

SIGRIST: Yeah, of course, a sandwich...

MOSCHELLA: Yeah, sandwich.

SIGRIST: Did you ever have sandwiches in Sicily? That would be sort of an unusual form...

MOSCHELLA: No, no.

SIGRIST: So that was something new.

MOSCHELLA: That was something new for us. I never seen sandwiches in Italy, no. That was something new for me, to tell you the truth, and it tasted like I had a nice piece of cake. It tasted good.

SIGRIST: At Ellis Island do you remember them doing, for instance, any of the medical examinations or anything...?

MOSCHELLA: Yes. They examined if you had lice in your head. If you had lice they shave your hair. I remember that. Quite a few they shave the hair and if you had some kind of disease in your eye, then they send you back.

SIGRIST: Were you afraid this might happen to you?

MOSCHELLA: No, no, because I tell you the truth, one thing I can say, we was poor but we was poor-clean. My mother, she check the hair everyday of the children because sometimes, when they start to go to school, something like that, you know, and, but we was poor-clean. I wasn't worried about lice, stuff like that, because I was in the police force on the other side, you know, and I wasn't worried about that.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you brought with you? What you took from Sicily with you?

MOSCHELLA: What I took? I took a little suitcase and I had just a few pairs of socks, couple of handkerchief and couple of underwear and a couple of shirts. That's all I had.

SIGRIST: So you weren't at Ellis very long. You went through very smoothly.

MOSCHELLA: No, no. We was, I believe we reached it about eight o'clock in the morning, Ellis Island, but we left in the night for Pennsylvania.

SIGRIST: I see. Let's talk about that, then. Did your cousin and your friend, did they go to Pennsylvania, also?

MOSCHELLA: Yes, we went together.

SIGRIST: Is that where your sister was?

MOSCHELLA: That's right, in Pennsylvania, yeah. Portage, Pennsylvania. It's between Altoona and Johnstown. It's the west part of Pennsylvania.

SIGRIST: Where did you pick up the train? I assume you went by train to Pennsylvania?

MOSCHELLA: I beg your pardon?

SIGRIST: Did you go by train?

MOSCHELLA: By train, yes.

SIGRIST did you pick up the train?

MOSCHELLA: We pick it up in Pennsylvania Station in New York.

SIGRIST: New York City.

MOSCHELLA: New York. I remember we left in the middle of the night. We had a number. Everybody had a number, like me, my cousin, my friend, we had a number.

MOSCHELLA: Yeah, and we had a number, stuff like that. Then, when we reach in the morning, we left the Pennsylvania; they put us on a train. When we were reaching Pennsylvania the time we are supposed to get off in Portage, I remember the conductor saying, "Come on, John! Come on, John!" Who the hell is John? My name is Paul. Then he come and grab me. We got to get off. Then we get off in Pennsylvania Station, I mean Portage.

SIGRIST: Right. Was that a long train ride?

MOSCHELLA: I beg your pardon.

SIGRIST: Was it a long train ride from New York to...?

MOSCHELLA: Oh, yes. Well, all night.

SIGRIST: And you were sitting up?

MOSCHELLA: Them days, yeah. We were sitting. Then days the train stopped almost every station. That isn't like now because the people that did the work in the coalmine and the railroad and the factory, you know, they stop every station. There was no much transportation or automobile or bus like today. No, the train was the most. And we get off in Pennsylvania and I remember when we got off there was quite a few people who got off on that town in Portage. Everybody who got to go to work, you know, whatever it is. They all disappear and on the platform there was only three people: me and my cousin and this friend of mine. We don't know where to go.

SIGRIST: You didn't speak any English, did you?

MOSCHELLA: No, nobody was speaking English and it was, in the month of April it was kind of cold. And we had the Italian clothes on, very light because, you know, where I come is Sicily. It's warm part like Florida. And we feel right away (he makes shivering noises) and all at once there was old man. He was making fire with, the coal in the station to keep the station warm, you know, for the people buying the tickets, stuff like that. And he was just working outside and he sees us three over there, each one of us with the suitcase and staying over there and he's coming and he asks us, he says, "Hey, where you going?" We don't know what the hell he says. And " (in Italian), Italiani!" Oh God, my heart went. (Mr. Moschella gestures, Paul laughs) We say, " Yeah, si, si!" Then he

asked us where we supposed to go and I ask him, I give the name of my brother-in-law and my sister. He says, "Oh, yeah. I know them." And then he got in touch and then my brother-in-law come and got us and thanks to God, and this was the trip.

SIGRIST: Yeah. In that town was there a large Italian population in that town?

MOSCHELLA: No, and I don't think it ever grow very much from what it was seventy years ago because, see, in that town there was no industry. There was just a coal mine and a railroad. That's the only people that had a job. If you was working in the coalmine or if you was working in the railroad. Otherwise there was no other industry at all, even today. There is a generation that stay over there. Once you had children, once they graduated from school or college they get away, you know, because there is no industry. Now over here you buy a house for \$150,000. a house over there you buy for \$35,000. \$40,000.

SIGRIST: Right, right. What was your sister's husband doing in that town?

MOSCHELLA: Well, my sister's husband, the way I said before, he was wounded. He was over here in the army in the United States.

SIGRIST: In World War One.

MOSCHELLA: In the leg he was wounded. Then when he was coming home the government give chance to learn a trade because, you know, and he wanted to learn to be barber and it was very useful because he can stay on his feet because he was wounded. Then he decided to be shoemaker and he was shoemaker. That way he can sit and he do the work and support his family as shoemaker.

SIGRIST: Did they live in a nice house in that town?

MOSCHELLA: Yes, it was just a house because my sister, she raised five boys and, as I say, first they had a little store with my brother-in-law and his brother-in-law. They had a store together but then they divide them up and my sister, she took care of the store and my brother-in-law took care of the shoemaker's shop, stuff like that.

SIGRIST: Can you describe their house at all, what it looked like?

MOSCHELLA: Well, not today anymore because they knocked the house down and there was a two story house; first story there was the store and second story there was the living quarter.

SIGRIST: I see. Well now, so the gentleman got your brother-in-law to come and get you, the Italian gentleman. Then what happened? Did you get a job in that town?

MOSCHELLA: The only thing, like I say, I was one month living with my sister and I can't find a day's work, not even for a half a dollar a day.

SIGRIST: And did your cousin and your friend also live with your sister?

MOSCHELLA: No. My friend, he got, he went to another town near Indiana, Pennsylvania because he had his cousin living over there. He come and get him. My cousin, he stay with us and he stay with my sister too, you know, and my sister feed me and my cousin. Then he started to learn. Well, he work in a coal mine, too, and then railroad but then he learned to be a barber and that's what all his life he was a barber in Englewood, New Jersey and, what they call it, Westwood, you know. When he die he was a barber, you know. The other friend, my friend,

he went to Pennsylvania and was working at the coalmine but then he die. The house got in a fire and he tried to save his wife's life and they both died in the fire.

SIGRIST: What kind of work did you finally get?

MOSCHELLA: The first work I done?

SIGRIST: Yeah.

MOSCHELLA: There was a friend of my brother-in-law. He took me into the coal mine with him. There was three feet coal and you work on the, with the mud you hit your feet, you know, all the way in the back. And we was working two days, three days a week and we was making eighteen, no more than twenty dollars every two weeks. But still was pretty good then.

SIGRIST: Yeah, sure.

MOSCHELLA: At least I want to buy a pack of cigarette and I ask, you know, to my sister or my brother-in-law, they give me fifteen cents because I was smoking. And that was good. Then I work for about six months in the coal mine. Then I got a job on the Pennsylvania Railroad. That was better. More money.

SIGRIST: Were you living in your own place by then or were you still with your sister?

MOSCHELLA: No, still I was living, 'til the day I got married I was living with my sister. Then I was making eighteen dollars a week.

SIGRIST: What were you doing for the railroad?

MOSCHELLA: Well, like changing the rail, changing ties, I put the balls underneath the ties, stuff like the...

SIGRIST: Physical labor.

MOSCHELLA: Labor. I had no trade and I wasn't rich enough to learn a trade anyway.

SIGRIST: That was hard work.

MOSCHELLA: Oh, yes. No question about it but still it was pretty good. After that, in 1926, no, yeah, then I got married and then I move in Englewood for three months. I was married and I move in Englewood, New Jersey because my cousin and my brother, one of my brother-in-law, the other sister, her husband was living over here, my second sister. And they call me and says, "Why don't you come on over here?" And then I move to Englewood.

SIGRIST: Had you learned English by then? How did you pick up English?

MOSCHELLA: Well, I start to pick it up through you say one word. Whenever say, even today, even if it's seventy years I've lived in United States, I can speak good English, I still got that dialect in my, but I never went to school. And, you know, you pick them up through. Then I got married and I pick them up through my wife. My wife, she's born over here in United States and I pick them up a few words but then that's it. And then I move in Englewood. In Englewood I was a laborer on building the line and I live (clock chimes) but still there was no work. I live since 1926 to 1934. No, wait, yeah, 'til 1934 I was living in Englewood. In 1934 there was a business for sale in Nanuet on sanitation and I

decided because there was no work. My wife, sometime I must take care of my two children, my two daughters, my two older daughters and my wife, she got a job in a factory where they was making neck tie for seven dollars and a half a week.

SIGRIST: Those were very tough times in the 1930's.

MOSCHELLA: They were tough times. That was during the Depression.

SIGRIST: Sure.

MOSCHELLA: Then I bought a business in Rockland County in Nanuet on sanitation for one hundred twenty five dollars a month and I had all of the money to pay for the truck and for the business. But my sister and friend, they help me. They lend me some of the money and I was collecting garbage in Nanuet for one dollar a month, three times a week service. Them days the people, they was burning coal, not burning gas for fuel.

SIGRIST: There was a lot of ash.

MOSCHELLA: That's right. For dollar a month sometime you got to take three, four can, you know, for one dollar a month. And then, when you go to collect that dollar the people, they no have it. They close the door in your face.

SIGRIST: Well, it was hard times for them, too.

MOSCHELLA: But then I was sick. But through my life I was very sick with a pain in the stomach and I thought maybe too much liquor or too much. Then I give up the sanitation business and I work, I went on the bar in the restaurant. Then I was two weeks in medical center and they was

taking rush everyday X-rayed and they can't find what it was my trouble. And I ask one of the head nurses, "I want to see the head doctor today." I thought I had a cancer they didn't want to tell me. And when they had doctor coming in, he says, "Mr. Moschella, you want to see me?" I says, "Yes." I was on the fourteenth floor. I says, "Between you and I, man to man, tell me what the hell I got! It's three weeks I'm here." I says, "They're taking X-rays everyday and still nobody tell me what is my trouble." And he says, "Well," he says, " Mr. Moschella, don't think that way. When you think you're losing weight but when you feel a little better you gain weight," he says, "Yes, if you got in your mind what you're thinking," he says, "once you start losing, you'll never gain." I thought I had cancer. He think it was pancreas trouble and that he said to me. He says, "We think it's your pancreas but that I don't advise nobody to go under the operation because, look, if it's one in a thousand they survive."

SIGRIST: Dangerous operation.

MOSCHELLA: And that's how Fiorello Laguardia die, with that. And he says, "If you can stand the pain, " he says, "you're better off to be there." Then I says, "What the hell are you keeping me over here for? I don't have no insurance, no hospitalization." I had a couple dollars saved and the hospital took them all. Then I come home. Then, like I said, I had the bar and restaurant. My wife says, "Well, there's somebody wants to rent them." I says, "Are we renting?" So we closed the door because she was a woman with two kids. Good thing I had my brother-in-law staying with us and helping a little bit. So I said, "Go ahead. Rent them." And I rent the place.

SIGRIST: I see, I see.

MOSCHELLA: And then...

SIGRIST: You've done all kinds of different things.

MOSCHELLA: Oh gosh, yes. And then, in 1954 they discover what it was my trouble. I had an ulcer but the way it was located nobody can find out with the X-rays and everything. The only thing they find out when it started bleeding and they took me to Nyack where they give me that stuff to drink, that white stuff. Then they see the blood go through that and the doctor say; "You got a bleeding ulcer." Then they took me to Nyack and they put me in the hospital. They give me a few transfusions and then the doctor say; "You got to have an operation. "And they operated me for the ulcer. Five years later it comes back again to me. I had two operations. I got twenty-three trips to the hospital between bleeding and the operation. I got quite a few operation on my body. I had...

SIGRIST: But you're all right now?

MOSCHELLA: Oh, thanks to God. Hey, everyday I see the daylight I thank the good Lord. Every night I go to bed I thank the good Lord. (Everyone laughs) Hey, many people my age, they pushing daisies for years. I'm still here arguing with you people.

SIGRIST: You know, not to change the subject but, you know, there was a question I wanted to ask you because all your brothers and sisters are here now, right?

MOSCHELLA: Yeah, that's right.

SIGRIST: And I wanted to ask you, I just thought of it, how did they all get here?

MOSCHELLA: They all come.

SIGRIST: Did they come all at once or did they...?

MOSCHELLA: No, no, no, no. Uh, my sister, one of my sister, well, they're both my sister, their husband was over here and they called for them. One my brother, he come in the banana boat.

SIGRIST: Yes, a banana boat?

MOSCHELLA: Yeah. Well, first he went to Costa Rica and then he come in a banana boat. Then he got married over here.

SIGRIST: What year was that?

MOSCHELLA: In 1933, I believe. And then he got married. His wife born in Pennsylvania. Then they went in Canada and he come in to be American citizen, you know. naturalize himself, American citizen. That's the one, he live in Fairlawn. My younger brother, he had a trade. He was carpenter. He was cabinetmaker. Then he made it for him to come over here because they need people with a trade and I sent for and he come over here.

SIGRIST: Was that in the 1930's, also?

MOSCHELLA: And all six, we was six in family, was all was in the United States.

SIGRIST: I see. What about your mother and father? Did they die early on or...?

MOSCHELLA: Oh, yeah. Well, my mother, she die during the Second World War and I find out because at that time Italy went with Germany. They was against, you know, United States. I found out about eight months after she was dead when there was peace, you know. They sign the peace; she was already about eight months dead. My father, he die, we was over here but I had a brother. He was still living the other side, the younger brother, and he die. My brother and sister-in-law was living in the same house. He die over there.

SIGRIST: I see. Were they of advance age or were they young?

MOSCHELLA: Well, my father, he was about, I'd say eighty-five, eighty-six, you know, what the age he was over there. My mother, she was in the seventies, I guess, when she died, sixty-five, seventy, stuff like that.

SIGRIST: And you said she died during World War Two.

MOSCHELLA: That's right. She die during the Second World War.

SIGRIST: Well, so are you glad you came to America?

MOSCHELLA: Oh gosh, yes. Everybody thank the good Lord. God bless America and Christopher Columbus, the discoverer too.

SIGRIST: Yes, right. Five hundred years ago next year. (They laugh)

MOSCHELLA: That's right. That's what I says, yeah!

SIGRIST: Well, I think that winds up this interview. I want to thank you very much.

MOSCHELLA: You're welcome, I'm sure.

SIGRIST: It's been a pleasure meeting you and talking with you.

MOSCHELLA: And like I said, before I close I can say this. I raise a nice family. I got three daughters. They're wonderful to me and my wife. I got three nice sons-in-law, seven grandchildren and six great grandchildren. They all got a college education, my grandchildren. We got a doctor. We got an architect. We got a teacher and everybody in the family; they all got a nice college education. They are wonderful to me and my wife.

SIGRIST: You've come a long way from the two-room house in Sicily.

MOSCHELLA: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: A long, long way.

MOSCHELLA: Yes. Like one my daughter, this one over here. (He gestures) She got a son, he's an architect and the daughter, my young daughter, she live in Virginia. She got three boys. One is teaching college, he got his Ph.D. He is only twenty-seven years old and he's got his Masters and Ph.D. And the youngest one, twenty-four, he's assistant coach in basketball.

SIGRIST: Wow. Busy people, too.

MOSCHELLA: They're all nice. They're all nice.

SIGRIST: Well, it's nice to see, you know, a family that is as big and has remained close and...

MOSCHELLA: And may I be honest with you, even though I'm born in a different country, you see that grandfather clock? (He gestures)

SIGRIST: Yeah.

MOSCHELLA: Over fifty years serving in the Volunteer Fire Department. That's fifty years. This forty years, (he gestures) the one hanging on the wall in all plaques I got from the Fire Department and my grandchildren, on the other side (he gestures) belong to the Knights of Columbus and that's my life.

SIGRIST: Wow. Well, again, I want to thank you very much.

MOSCHELLA: You're welcome, I'm sure. Nice to know you nice people God bless you.

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

MOSCHELLA: Nice to know you.