

EI-287

CARMINE PROTANO

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INTERVIEW DATE: 4/18/1993

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D

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ITALY, 1914

AGE 18

PASSAGE ON "THE VALOUCHA"

PORT OF EMBARCATION: NAPLES

RESIDENCES: CARACANO

CHICAGO

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service.

It's April 18, 1993, and I'm here today with
Carmine Protano. Carmine Protano.

PROTANO: Carmine, Carmine.

AINSWORTH: Carmine.

PROTANO: Okay, Carmine, yeah. Carmine is the way the New
York people. Okay.

LEVINE: (she laughs) For the New York audience.
(they laugh)

PROTANO: Okay.

LEVINE: Okay. And Mr. Protano's daughter, Lou Ainsworth, is also here with us. We're at Mrs. Ainsworth's home in Florida. It's, uh, it's, what, Largo, or . . .

AINSWORTH: No. Reddington Shores.

LEVINE: Reddington Shores, Florida. Mr. Protano came from Italy in 1914 when he was eighteen years old.

PROTANO: Oh, oh, oh, oh. It's a (?) (break in tape)

LEVINE: Okay. We're resuming now, having established that Mr. Protano was eighteen years old in 1914 because he was born in February, 1896.

PROTANO: That's right.

LEVINE: Good. Well, I'm very, very happy to be here, and I look forward to hearing your story.

PROTANO: Thank you.

LEVINE: And let's start with your saying the town and the place in Italy where you were born.

PROTANO: Where I live, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

PROTANO: Okay. The place, Visa.

LEVINE: V-I-S-A.

PROTANO: Yeah. Caracano. You ever been to Caracano? Caracano, it's . . .

AINSWORTH: It's the name of the town.

PROTANO: Yeah. Just like Illinois is (?).

LEVINE: How would you spell that? Caracano?

PROTANO: Caracano. That's where the (?) from.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, if you know how to . . .

AINSWORTH: Caracano, C-O-W-N?

LEVINE: O at the end? Caracano. Okay. Uh, so that would be like the state.

PROTANO: Yeah. No, Caracano, provincia, that's the state.

AINSWORTH: Providence is the state.

PROTANO: Providence is the state. And Caracano is . . .

AINSWORTH: Like the town.

PROTANO: No, no, Illinois is, like the capital, the capital of the state, Caracano.

LEVINE: Okay. So did you live in the city, or did you live in the country?

PROTANO: In a town.

LEVINE: In the town.

PROTANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Could you tell me what the town was like?

PROTANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: What do you remember about that town?

PROTANO: Well, what I remember was . . .

LEVINE: What did it look like?

AINSWORTH: Near the water.

PROTANO: (he laughs) We had the water around. We had the water all around, and we had to surround the water.

LEVINE: Did people farm there?

PROTANO: Huh?

LEVINE: Did people have farms?

PROTANO: Sure. In the state . . .

AINSWORTH: Out of town.

PROTANO: Out of town it was all farms, orchards.

AINSWORTH: The orchards.

PROTANO: The orchards.

LEVINE: Orchards, yeah.

PROTANO: Cabbage, and everything like that. That's what kind of farming they had.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PROTANO: All right.

AINSWORTH: See you later.

PROTANO: That's my son-in-law there.

LEVINE: Uh, so, what did your father do?

PROTANO: He used to work in the saw mill.

LEVINE: A saw mill, uh-huh.

PROTANO: At the time I was there. I used to fool around always with the ships and things like that, you know, merchant marine, whatever its called.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So would he go off for periods of time?

PROTANO: That's right. For six months sometimes.

LEVINE: Where would he go? Do you know where he went on the ship?

PROTANO: Austria, Germany and all over. All over the countries that couldn't grow the lumber. Because it was a ship that was big enough to go all over.

LEVINE: Did he bring cargo to these places?

PROTANO: Ma'am?

LEVINE: Did he bring cargo?

PROTANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: What did he take?

PROTANO: Lumber.

LEVINE: Lumber. (Mr. Protano laughs) I see. Lumber.
Uh-huh. And then did he bring back things?

PROTANO: He bring back (?) ship and bring something else, I
guess back. (?) a regular trade.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

AINSWORTH: Didn't you say you were born on the ship?

PROTANO: Well, that, wait.

AINSWORTH: He was born on that ship.

LEVINE: Oh. Tell me about how you were born.

AINSWORTH: Dalmatia, Dalmatia, Austria.

LEVINE: The ship went to Australia.

AINSWORTH: That's right. That's what we used to bring the stuff over.

LEVINE: And you were born there.

PROTANO: I was born in between. (they laugh)

AINSWORTH: Out in the water.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So did your mother go with your father on these . . .

AINSWORTH: Yes, yes. My mother, my father and me. (?) about it.

LEVINE: Was it usual for your mother to go on the ship?

AINSWORTH: Well, every once in a while she used to take a trip with him. I mean, a short trip, a few hours go on a trip.

LEVINE: What was your father's name?

PROTANO: Guido.

LEVINE: G . . .

AINSWORTH: G-U-I-D-O, Guido.

LEVINE: G-U-I-D-O. And your mother's name?

PROTANO: Lou. Lucille.

AINSWORTH: Lucy.

LEVINE: Lucy.

AINSWORTH: L-U-C-Y.

LEVINE: And your mother's maiden name.

PROTANO: Nobiletto.

AINSWORTH: Nobiletta. (Mr. Protano laughs)

LEVINE: Nobiletta.

PROTANO: Yeah, Nobiletta. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Okay. And, so, did you have brothers and sisters?

PROTANO: Huh?

LEVINE: Brothers and sisters.

PROTANO: Yeah. Oh.

AINSWORTH: Tell her how many brothers and sisters.

PROTANO: Okay. Let's see, one, five kids in the family.

AINSWORTH: Five children.

LEVINE: Okay. And who, who was the oldest?

PROTANO: Me.

LEVINE: Okay. And next?

PROTANO: Next there was, uh, (?), you know. (?) is a long time.

LEVINE: Okay, take your time.

PROTANO: (he pauses) I think it was Nicoline, the second one, and she died. And the third one, Annamarie, a woman.

AINSWORTH: All right, Nicolina.

PROTANO: Michele.

AINSWORTH: Yeah. And who . . .

PROTANO: That's a man. Michele is a man.

AINSWORTH: Oh, Michele is his brother.

PROTANO: (he laughs) Yeah. What else?

AINSWORTH: And then who's your sister?

LEVINE: Marie?

PROTANO: The one I got . . .

AINSWORTH: What's her name?

PROTANO: I forgot about it. Marie, Marie.

AINSWORTH: Marie.

PROTANO: Marie.

LEVINE: Okay. And who was the baby?

PROTANO: Uh, the baby, that would be Marie.

LEVINE: Marie was the baby. Uh-huh. Okay. All right. So,
uh, did you go to school?

PROTANO: No.

LEVINE: What did you do? Did you learn a trade?

PROTANO: Work.

LEVINE: What kind of work?

PROTANO: What kind of work? All kind I could do.

LEVINE: Like what?

PROTANO: Labor. Work as a mason and things like that. Yeah.
That's in Italy. I was seven years old, and I went
to work.

LEVINE: Seven years old?

PROTANO: Yeah. I was working in Italy.

LEVINE: Wow. And, um, was there any other kind of, like,
industry around there, mines, industry?

PROTANO: No, just a, where I work, where they make the lumber
and make the things like that. Lumberyard, you
know.

LEVINE: What was the kind of wood that was . . .

PROTANO: Huh?

LEVINE: What kind of trees?

PROTANO: What kind of what?

LEVINE: Trees.

PROTANO: The trees?

LEVINE: Yeah, that was there.

PROTANO: Maple, apple and things like that. All of them.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And were the houses made of wood? Were people . . .

PROTANO: Most of the houses were made of concrete.

LEVINE: Concrete, uh-huh. Do you remember the house you lived in?

PROTANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Tell me what it looked like?

PROTANO: Just a, it looked like, just like a house.
(he laughs)

LEVINE: Was it a lot of rooms? Was it one big room?

PROTANO: We had three rooms downstairs. Upstairs we had two

more rooms, and then upstairs is the attic, another room. (he laughs) We had (?) house. We lived just alike.

LEVINE: Did you have, what was your mother's kitchen like? Do you remember what she cooked on?

PROTANO: My mother's? She was a good baker.

AINSWORTH: Yeah, but what did she cook on? What kind of stove?

LEVINE: Did she have, like, a fireplace?

PROTANO: (?) Yes, we had the (?), yes.

AINSWORTH: A wooden stove.

PROTANO: Yeah, a wooden stove, yeah.

LEVINE: And how about water?

PROTANO: No running water. We had to go where the well water was and bring the water in the house.

LEVINE: And who went for the water?

PROTANO: What?

LEVINE: Who was the one who went to get the water?

PROTANO: I used to be the old one, I had to be the jackass.
(they laugh)

LEVINE: So you would go, what would you carry it in?

PROTANO: Huh?

LEVINE: What would you carry the water home in?

PROTANO: With a pail.

LEVINE: A pail?

PROTANO: Yeah. You ever saw the pail in the movies, the guy
in the back?

LEVINE: The two of them, one on each side.

PROTANO: That's right.

LEVINE: And how about, like washing? How did your mother do
the washing?

PROTANO: With the washboard.

LEVINE: And did she go, in the house, did she do it, or she

went someplace?

PROTANO: Mostly in the house, yes.

LEVINE: Okay. Is there anything else about the house that was particular to Italy, that isn't like a house here, say?

PROTANO: Well, no. I couldn't say that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

AINSWORTH: Well, didn't you say you lived on the side of a cliff?

PROTANO: Yeah, well, over the cliff, it's all cliffs anyway.

LEVINE: It's all mountains there.

PROTANO: All mountains, yes.

LEVINE: And that's where the orchards are?

PROTANO: No. The orchards, we had the, outside the city, we had the (?) in the orchards.

LEVINE: What kind of orchards?

PROTANO: Huh?

LEVINE: What kind of fruit were in the orchards?

PROTANO: Olives, orange. And celery and things like that,
too.

LEVINE: What?

PROTANO: Celery.

AINSWORTH: Celery.

LEVINE: Celery.

PROTANO: Yeah. You know, all the (?) and things like that.
Because we were right on the edge of the water.

LEVINE: Do you remember market days? Do you remember days
when the market, with open air markets?

PROTANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: How did you get your food?

AINSWORTH: How did Grandma get her food, you know, to cook
with? Yeah. Where did she get it?

PROTANO: (?) We had the groceries. I grew up.

LEVINE: A grocery store.

PROTANO: Yeah, we had that.

LEVINE: What other shops were there in the town, besides the grocery store?

PROTANO: I couldn't (?).

LEVINE: Were there?

PROTANO: Huh?

LEVINE: Was there like a main street with stores?

PROTANO: Oh, yeah, yeah. We had the main street, yeah. I mean, the coffee shop, everybody in night time would make a, because the girl come in and we wasted time over that.

LEVINE: So you'd sit around the coffee shop?

PROTANO: That's right.

LEVINE: That was just the men, not the women?

PROTANO: No, no men, no women.

LEVINE: Yeah. Where did the women sit around?

PROTANO: They do theirselves. (they laugh) (voice off
mike)

LEVINE: So what would the men do, like, when they got
together?

PROTANO: Play the cards.

LEVINE: Play cards.

AINSWORTH: And baci.

PROTANO: Huh?

AINSWORTH: And baci. And the balls.

PROTANO: Well, baci, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh, what did you get around on? What kind
of transportation?

PROTANO: Walk.

LEVINE: Walk. Uh-huh. Were there any kinds of events,

like, uh, get-togethers? What would be, like, a celebration? What kinds of things were, like, special occasions?

PROTANO: Special occasion, (?), coming down day, till the day, we had the . . .

AINSWORTH: They were called name days.

PROTANO: Huh?

AINSWORTH: Name days.

LEVINE: Okay. What, what was the name day? What was that all about?

PROTANO: Celebrate the, whatever we (?).

LEVINE: Like, what was your name day?

PROTANO: My name day? February 9th.

LEVINE: February 9th, which is your birthday.

PROTANO: That's right.

LEVINE: Now, was that a particular saint?

PROTANO: No, just, that's right. Just, no particular, no feast on that. The feast coming in on a (?) day, like the (?) happened. Things like that, you know.

AINSWORTH: St. Joseph's day, he meant.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So, uh, what would happen on a name day? What would . . .

PROTANO: Feast, feast, like.

AINSWORTH: Feast.

LEVINE: What would be special on a feast day? What would make a feast day?

PROTANO: Food. (he laughs) Food.

LEVINE: What were the special foods that you'd have on days like that?

PROTANO: Well, we, I didn't think I'd get them. Some days, whatever, couldn't get lots of food.

LEVINE: Well, was food plentiful or not so plentiful?

PROTANO: What?

AINSWORTH: Was there a lot of food, Dad?

PROTANO: Huh?

AINSWORTH: Was there a lot of food that you could have?

PROTANO: Well, we had, we kind of take about the food, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. How about fish?

PROTANO: Fish? Oh, when we was in the water, we could take all the fish we want.

LEVINE: And what about meat?

PROTANO: Meat, no. No, only thing we had the goat meat, goat.

LEVINE: Goat. Uh-huh.

PROTANO: That's it. No liver, no, nothing else. We didn't have no ground. Italy was very poor on the ground.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. So, uh, so did you, what about music and dancing?

PROTANO: Nah.

LEVINE: Not so much. (Mr. Protano laughs)

AINSWORTH: Why don't you use that?

PROTANO: Dry . . . I mean, I'm . . .

LEVINE: If you want me to stop at any point, you just tell me.

PROTANO: It's all right.

AINSWORTH: He's got emphysema.

LEVINE: Let's see. So, uh, were you religious?

PROTANO: Huh?

LEVINE: Was your family religious?

PROTANO: Yeah, Catholic.

LEVINE: Did, uh, what did you do? In other words, did you go to church on Sunday, or did you go more than that?

PROTANO: No church.

LEVINE: No church.

PROTANO: My mother, she want me to go to church, I don't want to go.

LEVINE: Did your mother go?

PROTANO: Yeah. My sister, too.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So what did you do for fun when you were growing up? What were your activities?

PROTANO: I was over here when I start to grown up, or fourteen year (?) in Italy.

LEVINE: When you were still there what did you do for fun?

PROTANO: Swim. Swim.

LEVINE: Swim? Uh-huh.

AINSWORTH: He always worked.

LEVINE: Yeah, you worked hard, at an early age.

PROTANO: Work, work. That's right. Working, seven years old I was working.

LEVINE: How about your sisters? What did they do?

PROTANO: That's something I can't say, because I can't remember that.

LEVINE: Were the boys treated different than the girls as far as what chores they had to do or, you know, uh . . . (Mr. Protano laughs)

AINSWORTH: She's trying to say, Dad, was there jobs that the boys had to do and a job a girl had to do?

PROTANO: Naturally.

AINSWORTH: All right. You went out to work. What did your sisters do?

PROTANO: My sisters? They got to work, too.

AINSWORTH: They had to go to work, too. They helped the mother, I guess, just like I did when I was growing up.

LEVINE: And what was the situation that decided that you would come to America? Why did you decide to come, or why did your family decide to come?

PROTANO: My mother send me over.

LEVINE: Your mother sent you.

PROTANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Had your father come over here before that?

PROTANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: When did he come?

PROTANO: That's, a little before me, about six years before me.

LEVINE: Six years, uh-huh. So then he stayed here, and he was working?

PROTANO: No, he come back, and I come in America. He come back in Italy, and then he say to me, "It's no good to stay over here. You'd better go in Italy." And in Italy, my mother she has a brother, a brother and a mother, what's that, a brother and a mother, well, anyway, I come in, just they send me over my uncle. My mother's brother was over here, and I was over there yet. But when I come here I come to see my... My mother, my grandma and my uncle.

LEVINE: Who's mother was your grandma? Your father's mother or your mother's mother?

PROTANO: My mother's.

LEVINE: So your mother was still in Italy when you came?

PROTANO: Yeah, yeah.

AINSWORTH: He came all by himself.

LEVINE: You came all by yourself.

PROTANO: All by myself. And I met my grandma over at the railroad station.

LEVINE: Oh. Well, now, tell me, when you, what did you know about America? Before you came here, what did you think America would be like? Had you heard about America?

PROTANO: Sure. We heard a lot about America.

LEVINE: What were you looking forward to?

PROTANO: I cannot remember exactly what I was.

LEVINE: How did you feel about coming?

PROTANO: Oh, good.

LEVINE: You wanted to come.

PROTANO: Oh, yeah. Even, it was the first World War when I wanted to volunteer with America, I couldn't go to Italy and volunteer, too. Either way I couldn't think my (?), which way I want to go.

AINSWORTH: He could either join the American or the Italian army.

PROTANO: That time Mussolini was, that was good that was (?).

LEVINE: Did you want to fight with Mussolini, or you didn't want to?

AINSWORTH: He didn't want to.

PROTANO: Well, no.

AINSWORTH: You didn't want to join the Italian army?

PROTANO: No, I don't want to join. I see myself, that's when I come in, and that's what I'm gonna say.

LEVINE: I see. So part of why you came to America then was

so you wouldn't be in the Italian army.

PROTANO: That's right.

AINSWORTH: You could come here . . .

PROTANO: I want to change the American (?).

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh, so, how did you get the money to come?

PROTANO: My mother and my father gave me. After they scrape around, they gave me the money.

LEVINE: Okay. And do you remember leaving your town?

PROTANO: (?)

LEVINE: Do you remember when you left your town to come to America?

PROTANO: Exactly, no.

LEVINE: Did you bring anything with you?

PROTANO: Just the rags we had, that's all.

LEVINE: And where did, where did you take the ship from?

PROTANO: From Naples.

LEVINE: From Naples. So how did you go from your town to Naples?

PROTANO: We are, we all took the wagon, or we (?), or whatever it is, you know. It was a wheel.

AINSWORTH: A cart.

PROTANO: A cart, yeah.

LEVINE: Were you by yourself, or other people?

PROTANO: No, other people go there, too, just like (?). You know, (?).

LEVINE: So other people were coming to America from your town?

PROTANO: They were coming to America, and we used to go to Naples, some place.

LEVINE: Were there a lot of people going from your town to America at that time?

PROTANO: Oh, no, no, not too many. Not too many. Because my father, we're doing it six years, and in my town six

years we might be going about four, five families in six years' time. Too much, (?) with (?).

LEVINE: Was it your father's idea that he would go back to America?

PROTANO: No. He used to, when he was in Italy he would go there, now (?).

LEVINE: Yeah. You wanted to stay in Italy.

PROTANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So how about your mother? Did she want to go?

PROTANO: I (?) come get my mother over here, too.

AINSWORTH: No, no, no. Your grand, you will tell that later, but at the time you were coming, did Ma want to, Grandma want to come with you?

PROTANO: No, no, no.

LEVINE: This is what she asked.

PROTANO: Because she had a family. She had two boys and

three girls they had.

AINSWORTH: He's trying to, he's getting ahead, because he did send for his mother.

LEVINE: Okay. So, uh, what was the name of the ship that you took from him?

PROTANO: That's what I was just telling, I was just telling you two.

AINSWORTH: Can you remember?

PROTANO: Avalojo.

AINSWORTH: Avalojo.

LEVINE: A-B-O . . . Abolo . . .

PROTANO: Volojo.

LEVINE: L-O-J-O?

AINSWORTH: Could be. You got me. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Avalojo. And how long did it take you? Do you know?

PROTANO: To come to America?

LEVINE: To come to America.

PROTANO: Thirteen days.

LEVINE: Thirteen. And did anything happen aboard ship?

PROTANO: No.

LEVINE: That you remember?

PROTANO: Nice, no.

LEVINE: It was a nice, uh . . .

PROTANO: A nice trip.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And were you down in the bottom, in the steerage?

PROTANO: Yeah. The second.

LEVINE: Second.

PROTANO: The second. I was four stalls down. The second stall. (he laughs)

LEVINE: Oh, in the bunk.

PROTANO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: In the bunk. Uh-huh. And what about food? Do you remember what kind of . . .

PROTANO: Very good food on the ship.

LEVINE: They gave you food?

PROTANO: Very good food on the ship, yeah.

LEVINE: And, uh, so you weren't seasick?

PROTANO: No, no. I've never been seasick all my life.

LEVINE: That's because you were born on a ship.
(they laugh)

PROTANO: (?) already know.

LEVINE: Okay. So when you got to the New York Harbor, do you remember what you saw when you, when the ship came to New York?

PROTANO: It was sort of, the Battery. The statue, where I was.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

AINSWORTH: The Statue of Liberty.

LEVINE: And did you see the statue?

AINSWORTH: Yeah.

PROTANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did you know what that meant?

PROTANO: Oh, yeah, we know what that meant. I get off there, and that's why they kept me for four days in the hospital.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. Well, tell me, what did you think when you first saw Ellis Island? What was it like?

PROTANO: Kind of strange.

LEVINE: Strange. What did it look like to you? What was going on there?

PROTANO: Nothing. IT looked nice.

AINSWORTH: Just a bunch of people.

PROTANO: Huh?

AINSWORTH: Just a bunch of people.

PROTANO: Just the people, that's it.

LEVINE: So did you get examined?

PROTANO: Oh, yeah. I, that's why they, I had the fever with a cold. I go that on the ship, so that kept me back.

LEVINE: And where did, where did you stay?

PROTANO: Right on there.

LEVINE: Did you have to go to the hospital?

PROTANO: Where (?). What's it called?

AINSWORTH: Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Ellis Island. You went to the hospital there.

PROTANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how were you treated?

PROTANO: Huh?

LEVINE: How were you treated?

PROTANO: Very good.

LEVINE: Yeah? Uh, now, your uncle was going to meet you?

PROTANO: My mother, my grandmother in Italy, she come over to get me.

LEVINE: Did you know your grandmother?

PROTANO: Sure I know her, because we were, I know her from Italy, because they're both in Italy.

LEVINE: And what was your grandmother's name?

PROTANO: Maria.

AINSWORTH: Maria.

LEVINE: Maria. And was she Protano, or she was your mother's mother?

PROTANO: Nobaletta.

AINSWORTH: Nobaletta.

LEVINE: Nobaletta.

PROTANO: The second name, I know what she had, her maiden name, or whatever it's called.

LEVINE: Okay. So she came, do you remember when you met her at Ellis Island?

PROTANO: Sure.

LEVINE: What was that like?

PROTANO: Just running, after so many times, you know, so long we never seen each other, naturally we all got (?).

LEVINE: So then you went with your grandmother?

PROTANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Where did you go from Ellis Island?

PROTANO: Well, we went to the motel, and the next morning we got to the train and went to Chicago.

LEVINE: Oh. And do you remember anything about the train ride?

PROTANO: Yeah. IT was a, I was all getting, a cake, a coffee cup, then I told, "Ma, I want a coffee cake." So

she went and got me coffee cake.

LEVINE: (she laughs) And did you remember like your first few days or weeks in the United States?

PROTANO: In Chicago.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything that struck you as very different here?

PROTANO: It was different here, because we had everything we wanted, and we thought we would starve to death.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So did your grandmother take you to her house?

PROTANO: Oh, yeah. Took me over to my uncle.

LEVINE: Your uncle's house.

PROTANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And what was that like? What did it look like?

PROTANO: Not bad.

LEVINE: Not bad?

PROTANO: Because he had a good job over in Western Electric company. Western Electric.

AINSWORTH: Western Electric.

LEVINE: Western Electric. He had a good job.

PROTANO: Yeah, he had a good job.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And, so, what did you do, then? After you got here and you went to your uncle's house . . .

PROTANO: First he helped me to get a job. I was too young to do this. So anyway, my uncle say he has a friend there, he has an ice cream factory. So they took him over, went to work in an ice cream factory for a while.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And, uh, how was that?

PROTANO: Huh?

LEVINE: Did you like doing it?

PROTANO: Well, work is work. In Italy I was carving stone with my hand, and I was about to carve stone and ice cream, no rock. (he laughs)

AINSWORTH: (?) stones on his (?).

LEVINE: Yeah. So it was easier doing the ice cream?

PROTANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay. So after you left that job, then what did you do?

PROTANO: Bum.

LEVINE: Bum?

AINSWORTH: Didn't you go to the service?

PROTANO: Huh?

AINSWORTH: Didn't you go to the service?

PROTANO: No, no.

AINSWORTH: He just didn't work.

LEVINE: You didn't work.

PROTANO: No.

LEVINE: Did you, did you have fun?

PROTANO: No. One way no, one way yes. What I wanted to say.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: Well, then, when did you join the service?

PROTANO: When what?

LEVINE: When did you join the service?

PROTANO: 1917.

LEVINE: 1917, I see. So in between the ice cream factory work, and going in the service, what did you do in between there? (Mr. Protano laughs) Okay. So what made you join the service?

PROTANO: I had to.

LEVINE: You had to.

PROTANO: Sure.

LEVINE: Well . . .

PROTANO: They would draft me if I would have gone in, no.

LEVINE: Were you a citizen?

AINSWORTH: No.

PROTANO: It don't make a difference if you're a citizen or not, if they want you they pull you in anyways.

LEVINE: Were you able to speak English?

PROTANO: I was, just like the way I do now. A lot of work, like I do now.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you learned it just by . . .

PROTANO: Just by, you know, no school.

LEVINE: Experience.

PROTANO: No school.

LEVINE: And, um, so, uh, you thought you'd be drafted, so you joined the army.

PROTANO: I was donated. So they were asking me if I want to go in Italy, join. I want to stay in this country. That's why I come in, and that's where I'm going to stay.

LEVINE: Okay. So where were you sent? Did you join the army?

PROTANO: Sure.

LEVINE: Yeah. Where were you sent?

PROTANO: Columbus, New Mexico.

LEVINE: New Mexico?

PROTANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what, and what, how long did you stay?

PROTANO: 12th Cavalry, I went in. And I stayed there for about six months, and then I was, you know, a little better than that. Only one people took the (?), the one we're talking about.

LEVINE: Oh, yeah. Tell me about that.

PROTANO: That was the only trip I took, (?) the guy up, and I couldn't care. And then the next two days or three days, I was (?).

AINSWORTH: Why don't you tell her about Pancho Villa, Daddy?

PROTANO: About what?

AINSWORTH: About Pontsevella. That he was stealing from the rich . . .

PROTANO: Well, naturally, everybody knows that.

LEVINE: No, tell . . .

AINSWORTH: No, we want you to tell us.

LEVINE: We want to hear it on the tape.

PROTANO: Well, the guy, as I told, was doing. (?) from America, (?) America, I give you poor people. That's what . . .

LEVINE: In Mexico.

PROTANO: In Mexico, yeah.

LEVINE: So as part of . . .

PROTANO: You used to go around and fill holes and everything. And that was the Cavalry. That was my duty to go (?) with a, whatever they would have done.

AINSWORTH: He was in the cavalry, dear.

LEVINE: You were in the cavalry?

PROTANO: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: And part of what you had to do was chase Pancho Villa.

PROTANO: That's right. The 12th Cavalry.

LEVINE: Wow. Did you ever come close?

PROTANO: No. (they laugh) No.

LEVINE: How long did you chase him?

PROTANO: Huh?

LEVINE: How long did you chase him?

PROTANO: Oh, about three weeks or ten days. I went back to, I went back again. I went to go out, to go . . .

AINSWORTH: To ship out.

PROTANO: To go across the sea.

LEVINE: Okay. So where were you shipped to?

PROTANO: France. I was, I used to be, I used to be, when we were (?) from Columbus, New Mexico, shipped out for M.P. And I couldn't, a lot of times I ride on the range, so they send me across to M.P. Now, the one that still I couldn't write or no read in (?), because (?) . . .

LEVINE: In the cavalry.

PROTANO: No. Wait a minute.

LEVINE: Okay.

PROTANO: Of fifty-six pioneers. Fifty-six pioneers, building the bridge making the rolls. That's what, they shipped me out.

LEVINE: I see. So were you doing, in France?

PROTANO: In France. In Germany.

LEVINE: And Germany.

PROTANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And how long did you stay there?

PROTANO: Oh, about nineteen months.

LEVINE: Oh, wow. So you were doing those construction kinds of work over in Europe.

PROTANO: (?)

LEVINE: So were there other Italian men in your . . .

PROTANO: Oh, there was a lot of Italian, a lot of German, you know, all over, the war was there. There was French, Germans, everybody there.

LEVINE: So did you have any bad experiences when you were over there?

PROTANO: A little bad. (?) because I forgot, you know, just talking.

LEVINE: Okay. So when did you get out of the service?

AINSWORTH: Can I interrupt?

LEVINE: Sure.

AINSWORTH: Why don't you tell her about your days of your breaking your horse in, Pandaman.

PROTANO: What?

AINSWORTH: How, when you told us kids about how letting a guy break your horse in?

PROTANO: Oh, what about? What about?

AINSWORTH: Tell her about that.

LEVINE: Yeah. Let's hear about that. (they laugh)

AINSWORTH: That's kind of nice to have. Go ahead.

PROTANO: Well, you know, the horses that we got always (?). So I went over one day, I went in the cavalry, I went in, and they give me a horse. And I had no horse (?). So I got the sergeant, can you break that damn thing for me? I told the sergeant that. The sergeant says, "Sure. I can break, but you got to give me ten dollars."

AINSWORTH: To break the horse in.

PROTANO: So I give to him, so I got a horse. So, and he was all right, I could ride him and everything. Then they took the horse away from me. The same horse

that was trained, and they weren't supposed to do that. So that was (?).

AINSWORTH: That's all right. Just take your time. So you lost your horse to the officers.

PROTANO: The horse, the colonel took my own horse.

LEVINE: Oh.

PROTANO: He liked the horse, he took.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PROTANO: So if he took it that way, I could take him, too. (?) because he just (?), you know what I mean? (?) That's it. I need to rest.

LEVINE: Okay. So that was when you were in the cavalry.

PROTANO: In the cavalry. Twelve cavalry.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. And what were you in, what was your division or what unit were you in when you were overseas?

PROTANO: When I went overseas?

LEVINE: Yeah.

PROTANO: That's the time they keep me in the 56th Pioneer.

AINSWORTH: 56th Pioneer.

PROTANO: Pioneer.

LEVINE: Pioneer.

PROTANO: Make the bridge and the road and things like that.

LEVINE: I see. Uh-huh. So, uh, do you remember when the war was over.

PROTANO: Sure.

LEVINE: Where were you?

PROTANO: Koblenz.

AINSWORTH: Koblenz.

PROTANO: Koblenz, Germany.

LEVINE: And what happened when everybody realized the war was over, what . . .

PROTANO: (?) regret. (?) started celebrating, as long as

everything.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And then, and then what, what did you do after you got shipped back?

AINSWORTH: When you come back home, what'd you do then?

PROTANO: Well, they give you a warning, they're going to take off whatever, take off what you got. What they take and everything like that, and that, too. So now we don't know. We were just away till we say, "Come on, let's go." That's all.

LEVINE: So then when you got out of the army where were you living?

PROTANO: Chicago.

AINSWORTH: Chicago.

PROTANO: I went back to (?), Chicago.

LEVINE: What did you do for work then?

PROTANO: (he laughs) Picking up, picking up waste papers.

AINSWORTH: A trash man, picking up waste paper.

PROTANO: Yeah.

AINSWORTH: And rags.

PROTANO: And the rags. The rags (?). You know, the people that go around rag (?). I did that. (he coughs)

LEVINE: What did you have? Did you have . . .

PROTANO: I got it. (?) horse on the cart, I would pull it out of the car on my shoulder with a strap around it.

LEVINE: You were pulling the cart yourself without a horse?

PROTANO: Without a horse. That's right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you would go around and collect papers . . .

PROTANO: Collect, that's (?), who lived on top of that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So, uh, how long did you do that?

PROTANO: A couple of years, two years. Then I bought a horse, then got married. (he laughs)

LEVINE: How did you meet your wife?

PROTANO: I was a bum. (he laughs)

AINSWORTH: How did you meet Mom?

PROTANO: Yeah, well, same way.

AINSWORTH: Did someone introduce you to her, or did you just meet her on someplace?

PROTANO: No, somebody (?).

AINSWORTH: Somebody.

PROTANO: By (?).

AINSWORTH: Okay.

PROTANO: YEah.

LEVINE: Did you, were there a number of people from Italy that you saw and were friends with?

PROTANO: Well, we used to get here, at that time, we used to, a number of people would (?) here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Is that how you met your wife?

PROTANO: That's right.

LEVINE: Yeah. So did you have like social clubs?

PROTANO: What?

LEVINE: Did you have what's called a social club or anything?

AINSWORTH: They used to go to each others' houses.

PROTANO: What's that?

AINSWORTH: You didn't meet her at a club. You met her at somebody's house.

PROTANO: Oh, somebody's house. We used to go to the grocery store man.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So what was it about her that you liked?

PROTANO: My wife?

LEVINE: Yeah.

PROTANO: What do you mean?

LEVINE: Why did you get interested in her?

PROTANO: Just like a lover.

LEVINE: Love at first sight?

PROTANO: That's right. (they laugh)

LEVINE: What was your wife's name?

PROTANO: Marie.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

AINSWORTH: Grittieno.

PROTANO: Grittieno.

LEVINE: G-E-R . . .

AINSWORTH: G-R-I-T-T-I-E-N-O.

LEVINE: And, uh, did you court her for a while?

PROTANO: Huh?

AINSWORTH: Did you go out with her for a while?

PROTANO: It costs money to go out. It keeps me going, too.

LEVINE: So what did you do? When you would see her, where

would you go?

PROTANO: Go to show. What are you going to do? What are you going to do in them days?

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So, uh, then, so you got a horse, then you got married.

PROTANO: And then I got a truck.

LEVINE: Then you got a truck.

PROTANO: See, I got bigger and bigger. I make, I've done a good (?).

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And you settled in Chicago?

PROTANO: I settled in Chicago, and then I moved over here to Florida.

AINSWORTH: No, you went to DeKalb first, Dad?

PROTANO: Yeah. I went to DeKalb, and then I come in Florida.

LEVINE: Did you have any children that were born in Chicago?

PROTANO: Oh, yeah.

AINSWORTH: All of us.

PROTANO: All of them.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PROTANO: Five of them.

LEVINE: Five children. Now, what are your children's names?

PROTANO: Lucia.

AINSWORTH: No, say Guido first.

PROTANO: Guido. Guy, the oldest one. Then come the next one, come JESSIE come the third one, Anthony's the fourth one.

AINSWORTH: No, Elizabeth.

PROTANO: Elizabeth the fourth one, and Tony the fifth one.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And they were all born in Chicago.

PROTANO: All born in Chicago.

LEVINE: So, uh, what made, then why did you leave Chicago?

AINSWORTH: He found a business.

PROTANO: I've been working hard all my life.

AINSWORTH: Dad, you found business in DeKalb.

PROTANO: Oh, I bought a business in DeKalb. I bought a, the auto wreck in Chicago, in DeKalb. I make a . . .

LEVINE: Auto wrecks? Is that what you said?

PROTANO: A wreck.

AINSWORTH: Used auto parts.

PROTANO: Auto parts. Then I make some money, and then I want to come in to Florida to . . .

AINSWORTH: To retire.

PROTANO: To the (?). I've been working hard to support all the family. In another way, too, no school, nothing. Fully (?).

LEVINE: So, uh, do you have grandchildren?

PROTANO: Oh, yeah. How many I got? (he laughs)

AINSWORTH: Nine.

LEVINE: Nine grandchildren. And how about great-grandchildren? You got any of them?

PROTANO: I got the great, great, too. You (?).

AINSWORTH: Yeah, he has great.

PROTANO: Huh?

AINSWORTH: Yeah. It's, uh, Chelsea and, uh . . .

PROTANO: Only two?

AINSWORTH: Uh-huh. Stop it for a minute. (break in tape)

LEVINE: Okay. We're resuming now. So we say there are nine . . .

AINSWORTH: Grandchildren.

LEVINE: Grandchildren.

AINSWORTH: By his own family he had seven. But after my, he remarried again after my mother passed away, then he had, what? Total of sixty-one?

PROTANO: I don't know lots of them. (he laughs)

AINSWORTH: A whole lot of them, yeah.

LEVINE: Sixty-one?

PROTANO: That's a lot of them.

AINSWORTH: His second wife had twelve children.

PROTANO: And his sister (?).

LEVINE: Well, you get the prize.

PROTANO: I got the prize, that's right.

LEVINE: Well, okay. So you, when your wife, after your wife died, you married your wife's cousin.

PROTANO: That's right.

LEVINE: And she had twelve children.

AINSWORTH: Yes.

LEVINE: So then you had . . .

PROTANO: Thirteen.

AINSWORTH: Thirteen children.

PROTANO: Thirteen children.

LEVINE: So then you have sixty-one grandchildren. (Mr. Protano laughs) And then great-grandchildren.

PROTANO: I had it all. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Oh, wow. Okay. So, when you look back on your life, when you think about, you know, starting out in Italy as a boy, and then coming here, what does that mean to you? How do you, did it make a big difference in your life that you had come from Italy and became an American?

PROTANO: No, it's just like a dream.

LEVINE: A dream?

PROTANO: Just like a dream.

LEVINE: He didn't become an American citizen until, my God, Dad, how long before you became an American citizen?

PROTANO: Forty-three years.

AINSWORTH: How long?

PROTANO: Forty-three.

AINSWORTH: Forty-three years before he became an American citizen.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you had to take a test and everything, did you?

AINSWORTH: You had to take a test when you went to get your national papers . . .

LEVINE: To become a citizen?

AINSWORTH: To become a citizen.

PROTANO: Oh, yeah, yeah, sure. I had to go through those things, sure.

LEVINE: Were you proud of that?

PROTANO: Naturally. I was (?).

LEVINE: Okay. So what else do you feel very proud of in your life?

PROTANO: What I got to say? I was married, and I had a good wife. The second wife i had a pretty good life too.

And I've been working, and the rest of the time I was doing my work, that's all.

LEVINE: And how about this part of your life, your old age part, here in Florida.

AINSWORTH: He's been living here, what, thirty . . .

PROTANO: Thirty-three.

AINSWORTH: Thirty-three years.

LEVINE: Thirty-three years you've been here.

PROTANO: In Florida.

LEVINE: Were you retired when you came here?

PROTANO: Yeah, yeah.

AINSWORTH: Semi-retired first.

PROTANO: Huh?

AINSWORTH: Semi-retired.

PROTANO: Well . . .

AINSWORTH: And then he retired about 1960 . . .

PROTANO: '62.

AINSWORTH: '62. Well, now, when you're, when you're sitting here retired, do you think back over your life?

PROTANO: Oh, sometimes I do, yeah. Sometimes you think about what you, what I went through. What you, yes, I do that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And what do you think about? What kinds of things do you think about when you think back over the life you've had?

PROTANO: I don't know exactly. (he laughs)

LEVINE: Well, is there anything else that you'd like to say before we close?

PROTANO: What I got to say? I never, what I got to say? I don't know.

LEVINE: Well, I would say you look wonderful.

PROTANO: What's that?

LEVINE: I said you look wonderful.

PROTANO: Well, thank you!

LEVINE: You do. And, uh . . .

PROTANO: For eighty-seven years old, I think I do.

AINSWORTH: Ninety-seven.

PROTANO: Ninety, what is eighty-seven? What (?).
(they laugh)

LEVINE: Well, I'm very happy I found out you were here so I
could talk with you.

PROTANO: I'm glad to talk to you, too.

LEVINE: And now this tape will be at Ellis Island in the
library. And this is Janet Levine . . .

PROTANO: So you give out information and things like that,
because (?), she got more mind than I got. I think
my mind is like a (?).

AINSWORTH: He has a son who is sixty-nine, a daughter sixty-
two, a son who's sixty-one. He lost his daughter,
my sister and his daughter. She was fifty-seven
when she passed away. And, uh, has a son who is

fifty-five.

LEVINE: What?

PROTANO: That's the ages of the children.

LEVINE: Wow. Okay. Well, I've been talking with Carmine Protano, and his daughter Lou Ainsworth, and we're here in Florida, and it's April 18, 1993. Mr. Protano is ninety-seven years old.

PROTANO: Ninety-seven, that's right.

LEVINE: And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm signing off.

LEVINE OK. We're adding a postscript to this that deals with what you have done since you were in Florida. So tell me what kinds of things you've been doing here.

PROTANO Fishing.

LEVINE Fishing.

PROTANO A little garden. What else you wanna know?

AINSWORTH what kind of a garden? What did you grow?

PROTANO Vegetables, vegetables. Tomatoes, cucumbers, things like that.

Levine And what about, how have you been getting around? Transportation?

AINSWORTH he drove until he was ninety-three.

PROTANO until I was ninety-three, ninety-three.

LEVINE So you drove a car until you were ninety- three.

PROTANO Ninety- three.

LEVINE And now what?

PROTANO Now (?) drove the car. When I want things I (?).

AINSWORTH But she's still registered.

PROTANO Yeah, I'm (?).

AINSWORTH You used to.

PROTANO Yeah, Yeah, everyday.

LEVINE You rode your three-wheeler every day?

PROTANO Oh yeah, until then.

LEVINE Okay. Anything else you want to say about what you've been doing since you've been down here in retirement?

PROTANO What I've been doing? What everyone else is doing?

AINSWORTH She had a lot of visitors from Canada come in a visit. (?) in Canada. They all come over to see her garden.

PROTANO This year I've got no garden at all. Everyone said
 the storm would kill everything in the fall.

LEVINE But you had a garden up to the summer.

PROTANO Oh yeah, oh yeah.

LEVINE Why do you like to garden so much?

PROTANO Something to do. My time, something to do with my
 time. I enjoy my self. (unclear)

LEVINE Okay. Well I think this is a good place to stop

PROTANO (Laughs)

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