

EI-489  
JOSE RAMON AVARGUES MORANT  
BIRTH DATE: NOVEMBER 12, 1904  
INTERVIEW DATE: JULY 5, 1994  
RUNNING TIME: 1:42:44  
INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.  
RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME  
INTERVIEW LOCATION: NEW BRITAIN, CONNECTICUT  
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 11/1998  
REVIEWS BY: CHARLES MITCHELL, IRV SILBERG

SPAIN, 1918  
AGE 14

SHIP: "THE ANTONIO LOPEZ"  
PORT: VALENCIA  
RESIDENCES:  
    SPAIN: PILES, VALENCIA  
    US: WATERBURY, CT

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Tuesday, July 5, 1994. I'm in New Britain, Connecticut with Jose Ramon Morant. Mr. Morant came from Spain. He arrived in this country on January 1, 1918, and he was how old at that time? He was fourteen years old at that time.

MORANT: Yes.

SIGRIST: Mr. Morant, may we begin by you giving me your birth date, please?

MORANT: Well, I was born November the twelfth, 1904.

SIGRIST: And where in Spain were you born?

MORANT: Valencia, Piles, Spain.

SIGRIST: Can you spell Piles, please?

MORANT: P-I-L-E-S.

SIGRIST: And is that, is that a smaller part of Valencia?

MORANT: That's a, a town of Valencia, one of the towns.

SIGRIST: Valencia is like a province.

MORANT: Is it -- it is a province.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about Piles and what it was like as a town when you were a kid?

MORANT: Well, Piles is a - is a sea port, is next to the Mediterranean. And it's a small town, about one thousand inhabitants. That's where my parents had the flour mill and the orange groves that they had.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me the town itself and what it looked like when you were a little boy?

MORANT: Well, the town has two streets perpendicular and three streets straight down, and that's -- there was a big plaza and the church was there.

SIGRIST: What would happen in the plaza?

MORANT: On the plaza?

SIGRIST: What things took place in the plaza?

MORANT: Well, all the events and the festivities would happen mostly in the plaza. And during the festivals, each, each street -- it had the right for - for the festival. They were passing from one street to the other. And what they used to do, everybody that went to that street, the people of that street used to put tables and food and all that and treat everybody. Everybody was a family, everybody.

SIGRIST: Um, were these mostly religious festivals, or were they . . .

MORANT: Religious festivals, mostly religious - reli-mostly regi-religious festivals.

SIGRIST: Is there one that sticks out in your mind, a particular festival that, that was your favorite to attend for some reason?

MORANT: Well, Saint Barbara, which is the patron of the city, and Saint Philip, which also is the patron. But the - the greatest -- the greatest times, the festivals was Christmas.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me how Christmas was celebrated?

MORANT: Yes. Christmas in Spain, especially in our home town, is that everybody was around town on Christmas Eve singing songs and - and - and they've been treated by the - by the families. Every family that they stop and sing a song, treated by them. And then on Christmas day, that's - it's -- it's the greatest festival there is, and everybody was to - to church after the Mass, everybody have dinner, all the families get together. And the sons or the grandsons go to visit the grandparents and the great-grandparents, and they kill the hen. ( he laughs ) And they having kissing event for being in the family and respecting the family.

SIGRIST: Um, tell me about what your house looked like when you were growing up.

MORANT: Oh, my house, we were, we lived in a molido, a flour mill. We had waterfalls, and runned by water. And, and the house was like any - any house, additional to the flour mill, which is attached to the flour mill.

SIGRIST: Was that what your father's job was, he ran the mill?

MORANT: And my great grandfather. That's a tradition in the family.

SIGRIST: That was the family business.

MORANT: Business.

SIGRIST: Can You describe for me the mill itself, what it was made out of and how it was constructed?

MORANT: Well, the mill itself was, the - the wheels to grind, to grind the wheat and the corn and the rice were lower, because we had a waterfall about 25 feet high in the back of the - of the - of the building, and that used to go down, and the pressure of the water used to make the wheels, the wheels work, all by water. And, and then we have a cylinder that used to bring the flour to the upstairs, the cylinder, and it was refined, and classified, the - the -- classified in - in different way, all - all on the flour was for second, third, and also the, the bran used to be separated.

SIGRIST: The bran.

MORANT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: When you say classified, do you mean like a finely ground, and a coarsely ground, that?

MORANT: Well, then, the cylinder did that. They - they - they refine it. The wheat used to mill -- the - the right, you know, normally. And then, and then used to go up to the, to the cylinders, and the cylinder used to bring fourth grade, second grade, so forth. Also the bran, separated, separated the bran from the flour.

SIGRIST: Now, was this a big building, or just a small building?

MORANT: It's quite a big building.

SIGRIST: Were there lots of people who worked in the building?

MORANT: Well, no, about three or four people who were in the building, three or four.

SIGRIST: Where would the, uh, grains come from that were ground?

MORANT: Oh, from, we used to buy, we used to buy, my father used to buy wheat from Spain, from Manitoba, from United States. He used to buy wheat. And, and from the Ukraine, too.

SIGRIST: From the Ukraine?

MORANT: Yeah. From the Ukraine, too.

SIGRIST: So it, very little grain was actually grown in Spain. You were . . .

MORANT: Well, not enough . . .

SIGRIST: . . . importing most of it.

MORANT: Not enough to feed everybody in Spain. Today I think they - they grow much more.

SIGRIST: Now, did your father grind wheat for private citizens, too, if they brought him something to grind, or . . .

MORANT: Originally, yes. Then they stopped that. Originally, yes. They used to bring their own, their own wheat, and my father, you know, we had a wheel, we used to grind that for families. Originally, I read that when I was a youngster they used to do that, too.

SIGRIST: Did you used to work in the mill when you were a child, or a young adult?

MORANT: Always. When I was able to do something, I always kept on working, as a child.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me some of the tasks that you would have had to do in the mill?

MORANT: The same as the others, you know, to make flour. I had to, I knew already, when I was a youngster, already how to, how to prepare the flour, how to prepare the wheels, and grind, grind the, the grain in certain way to bring out the type of flour that we wanted.

SIGRIST: Now, who would purchase the flour after it was made?

MORANT: Well, we have different places in different towns, cities, that we used to delegate them to sell the flour.

SIGRIST: Did your father . . .

MORANT: Like a store.

SIGRIST: Did he sell in big quantities, or did you also package it in smaller quantities?

MORANT: No, no, big one - big quantities.

SIGRIST: How would, how would the ground flour be shipped? Like, how would you, what would you put it in to, to bring it to market, to sell it?

MORANT: In - in sacks of hundred kilos, of two hundred pounds. We used to put it in sacks of two hundred pounds.

SIGRIST: What was your father's name?

MORANT: Ricardo.

SIGRIST: And, um, tell me a little bit about his family background.

MORANT: Well . . .

SIGRIST: We know what his father did for a living.

MORANT: Yeah, yeah. His father used to do the same thing, and his great-grandfather was a doctor, a medical doctor. But the - the - the -- millers have been in the family, I had an uncle also in a different place being a miller. And my great, great-grandfather was a doctor in a place called Oliva.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

MORANT: O-L-I-V-A. Oliva.

SIGRIST: What do you know about the great-grandfather who was a doctor? Do you know anything about his history, or any stories about him, perhaps?

MORANT: Not, not much. On my gran-On my mother side, his great, great-grandfather used to be, he used to be (coughs) the one that carried the messages for, the great, the greatest Spaniard who conquered Valencia, El Conquistador, Don Jaime. He used to be the bellboy for - for Don Jaime. That was the, on my mother's side, the (coughs) , this -- the emblem of the family is a pair of, of sneakers. ( he laughs )

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about your father's personality, and what he was like as a person.

MORANT: As a person, he was the greatest man in the world. I'll tell you something. He always advised me not to stay in the - in town late, come home after school. Because we used to live about fifty, about two hundred st-two hundred wa-- I would say three or four minutes from the town. And he always asked me not to stay in town without advising my mother or him. But one day, this will describe the whole, his personality. One day there were, uh, can you stop that a second?

SIGRIST: Sure. We're just going to pause for a moment. ( break in tape ) We're now resuming.

MORANT: We had circus that day in town, and my cousins and I, we went after the circus. And then my aunt that lived next to the, to the church, said, "Your daddy knows that you're in town?" I said, "Yes." ( he laughs ) I lied. She feed me nice, everything, you know, perfect. They were well-to-do, too, like my father was. So I remain in town, and after when the - when the circus was almost finish, I saw my father next

to me. And we were, he asked me that he had delayed, and how was the circus, and all that, talk about the animals and so. Then we went home, he didn't tell me nothing, but I know him for he would. He didn't tell me so I went to bed, "Good night, good night."

And the following morning, I got up a little earlier, grab my breakfast, and from the other side, I went to school. And he stop me, he says, "How come you're going so early?" He says, "We have -- we'll have a little chat, you and I." He said, "You remember this and this and this?" I said, "Yes." "Then why didn't you do it? You could have come to home and tell them, and I would have allow to - allow you to go." So either there -- he took off his strap, and he gave me two strands on my 'hiney'. (laughs) . And that was his personality. He always did everything he could for all of us, all of us, always.

SIGRIST: But he was strict.

MORANT: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: What did your father like to do when he wasn't working? What kind, what did he do for entertainment?

MORANT: Entertainment? Well, he used to do a little hunting.

SIGRIST: Oh. Talk to me a little bit about it. This would be recreational hunting, or did . . .

MORANT: Recreational hunting.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things would he hunt?

MORANT: Well, whatever there was around, all kind of different, different birds. There is, not the sparrow, from the sparrow on, everything that, wailes [sic]. Sometimes they used to go to different places to hunt waile but not, you know, in our home town. There were no wailes there.

SIGRIST: Are you saying whales?

MORANT: Partridges.

SIGRIST: Oh, partridges.

MORANT: Partridges.

SIGRIST: Oh, quails.

MORANT: Quails. I mean to the quails. ( they laugh )

SIGRIST: Oh, all right. I said how did we get to the whales.

MORANT: Quails, quails.

SIGRIST: Quails. Um, did you ever go hunting with your father?

MORANT: Once or twice. I went to, with my brothers.

SIGRIST: Was that a common thing for young men to do?

MORANT: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: When you were growing up?

MORANT: Oh, yes. But I used to, my game was, my - my - my main enjoy in life was to play handball.

SIGRIST: Talk to me a little bit about playing handball.

MORANT: And it happened, when I was born I was a lefty, and my daughter is a lefty, too, but I never did anything, you know? So, my father insisted that my mother, you know, she said that I should use my right hand to read and everything else, so I developed a very strong right hand, but my left hand was even stronger. So when I was start playing handball, I used to play just as good with one hand and with the other. ( he laughs ) And without them, without them realizing it, they made me a good handball - handball player. ( he laughs )

SIGRIST: Where would you play handball?

MORANT: In our home town, against the frontal --.the front -- frontón You know what a fronton is. Or in the street, playing, just like tennis, but much longer.

SIGRIST: What is the ball made out of?

MORANT: Of -- of canvas - leather, made out of leather. The outside is made of leather. The inside I don't know what they put in, but the outside is leather.

SIGRIST: And then would there be contests among the young men, or some kind of organized contest?

MORANT: Oh, yes, oh, yes. Sometimes we used to bet two pennies, one penny. ( he laughs ) They had a (?), for us was a great thing.

SIGRIST: Um, we talked about your father. Let's talk about your mother. What was her name?

MORANT: Rosalea.

SIGRIST: Rosalea. And what was her maiden name?

MORANT: No, maiden name. Rosalea, her maiden name . . .

SIGRIST: Her name before she was married.

MORANT: Averages. You have it there.

SIGRIST: And, um, that's spelled . . .

MORANT: We carry the mother's name, too, also, in Spain.

SIGRIST: So your full name would be Jose Ramon . . .

MORANT: Morant, the father's name.

SIGRIST: Morant.

MORANT: And Avargues.

SIGRIST: Avargues.

MORANT: The family name. See, the lady, the women in Spain don't lose the name. They carry the name always, even though they'd be married.

SIGRIST: For the sake of the tape, let me spell, Avargues is capital A

BOTH: V-A-R-G-U-E-S.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about your mother's background and her family.

MORANT: Well, my mother, my mother's background, she lost her father and mother when she was little.

SIGRIST: How did they die?

MORANT: I don't know. One (?) the family. I don't know.

SIGRIST: She never talked about it.

MORANT: No, she never told nobody. And ( he clears his throat ) one uncle took her in, and she grew up as a nice young lady. Another lady that was close to the parents used to invite her, when she was a little older she used to keep her in their home, too, until she grew up. Then when she grew up, she met my father, and she married him.

SIGRIST: Do you know how they met?

MORANT: Oh, they met ( he clears his throat ) through the uncle. The uncle used to, used to be in Piles, too. And, and this other family that I'm talking about, she used to be in another town called Miltrejuarde[ph], and my father had customers in Miltrejuarde[ph], also in Piles, and he met her. And my mother was a beautiful lady, beautiful.

SIGRIST: Can you describe her in words for me, what she looked like, what color hair did she have?

MORANT: She had brown hair. Very, very nice features, very nice skin, very tall, close to my height.

SIGRIST: What was her personality like?

MORANT: She was a very, very good lady, but very strict. ( he laughs )

SIGRIST: You had a strict household.

MORANT: Yes. ( he laughs )

SIGRIST: Do you have a story about your mother being strict that you can remember?

MORANT: Well, my mother never spanked me, but she beat me two, three times. ( he laughs ) And she wanted us to, all of us, to be, to be nice. She was strict, when we had something that we wanted from our brother or sister, you know, because in a big family there's always the, well, she was very strict all the time. And she would always see to it that everybody was nice, too. And she'd always give examples of being good, and being bad, and what happens when you are not well, or when you are not good. So she was a beautiful lady.

SIGRIST: Um, tell me. Did your mother ever tell you anything about your birth or when she was either pregnant with you, or when she gave birth to you? Did she ever tell any stories about that?

MORANT: No, no. Because they gave home birth and it's not too, it's not too, too popular in, in Spanish families. They seem to keep that in . . .

SIGRIST: It's just not something that they would discuss with their children.

MORANT: No, no.

SIGRIST: You mentioned a big family. Can you name your brothers and sisters for me?

MORANT: I have a brother, a sister, the oldest one, Rosalea. My brother, oldest one, Ricardo, my second one, Xavier, the fourth, me. Then I have a sister, another sister, Rosandra, another sister Lauria, and another brother. So we were eight.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about, about, uh, growing up in the household. You're sort of one of the middle children in this big group.

MORANT: Yes.

SIGRIST: How did you get along with your brothers and sisters?

MORANT: Well, I get along fine, but they always blame me for everything, and they were right. ( he laughs )

SIGRIST: Is there a specific story that you remember about, about being blamed for something?

MORANT: Yes.

SIGRIST: Would you tell us?

MORANT: And they find out. ( he clears his throat ) When I was a youngster, they used to blame me for eating the, I used to have a sweet tooth, for eating candy. One time my mother used to make little cakes made of almond, made of almond, and inside very, very good, a little, it was fold over. And everybody blamed me, but I always got away with it. Nobody, nobody's ever caught me. ( he laughs ) And my mother that year said, "This year everybody is going to eat this kind of pastry, and I'll put it on the table." Besides that, nobody will see it, the pastry. And she hid that in her room. So one day I was walking barefooted, and my mother was going upstairs, and I went to my room, but I went behind my mother, and, and she didn't realize that I was behind her. So when she went in, I went behind her, and when she went out I was in back of the, of the door. But without, not trying to do that, but just, I did it. And then she went away. She locked the door, and I remained locked in the room. But I took a tray of that pastry, and ate, and ate, and ate, and ate, and was putting together so they wouldn't be, they couldn't tell what. At the end I ate too many. That was before noon time. They called me, "Ramon, Ramon, Ramon." For lunch. But I didn't answer, because if I answer, I was locked in the room. I didn't answer. And my father normally would be, after, after the meal, my father used to take a little nap, a little siesta. So when my father came, you know, I locked the windows a little bit more than normal so he won't see me. And when he came in he opened the door, so I was behind, behind the door. And when I heard him breathing hard, then I went out. And all my, all my brothers and sisters and my mother were in a place, like a dining room, we had, and I went out the other door, and I went around the building, the flour mill, and I came the other way. They says, "Where were you?" I says, "I fall asleep." Now I have lunch. My mother, also, says, "I know you're sick." ( he laughs ) You know when she find out? On one of my trips to Spain, I confessed what happened that day, after about four or five years. ( he laughs )

SIGRIST: Well, that's a good story. So you weren't very popular with your brothers and sisters, then, for having eaten all the, all the good sweets. ( Mr. Morant laughs ) You know, this brings me to ask you about food and what kinds of foods did you eat when you were growing up in Spain.

MORANT: Well, we eat all kind of vegetables, all kinds.

SIGRIST: Did you grow them yourself, or did you purchase them?

MORANT: My, no, most of them were grown in the land my father had next to the flour mill. Like a round, shell beans. And meats, we used to eat quite a bit of meat, too, but not as much. Fish much more, because we were in a, next to the Mediterranean, and the fish there was very good.

SIGRIST: What kinds of fish would you have eaten at that time?

MORANT: Well, uh, whittings, and then, uh, sardines, and one, like mackerel, and another one, there is sepionettes[ph], I don't know, a little red, which is one of the best, about this long, very, very tasty. And then another called sepia, which is very, very popular there, and all that kind of fish.

SIGRIST: Was there one, uh, particular fish or way your mother prepared it that was your favorite, that you really enjoyed eating?

MORANT: Oh, yes. Sepia is big . . .

SIGRIST: Can you say that again?

MORANT: Sepia.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

MORANT: S-E-P-I-A.

SIGRIST: Sepia. It's a type of fish.

MORANT: But when they're small, very small, they're called sepionettes[ph], the little type of sepia. My mother used to take a big clay, clay pan like that, put it, put the sepionette[ph] inside with, uh, potatoes and tomatoes and other things, and then she used to bake it. And when that was done, I used to prefer that to anything in the world. ( he laughs )

SIGRIST: Now, would fish be sort of everyday fare, or would it, would you also get it for holidays?

MORANT: No, no. No, no. Almost every day, almost every day, every day. And sometimes we used to, the fishermen used to, when they used to get a big crab, they used to bring it themselves. Before we go for it, we used to bring them themselves to the molie[ph], to my father and mother.

SIGRIST: Did, what did you drink?

MORANT: Well, we always drank water, but my father never forbid us. They wanted us to drink a little bit of wine with the meals, wine. In my home, nobody been a drunkard, and we from, from when we were a little child, little children, my father trained us, and my mother, to have a little bit of wine in the meal. Not when they were too small, but when we begin to run around and all that, just a little bit of wine in the meal, and that's the way we were brought up, all of us, and nobody became a drunkard or, nobody.

SIGRIST: Was the wine purchased, or was it made locally?

MORANT: My father used to purchase it. He used to purchase it.

SIGRIST: Did your father know a lot about wines?

MORANT: Oh, he know quite a bit. And he used to buy wheat from the place where they produce wine, and he used to buy it from there. And some of the customers he had, they used to go to different places in Spain to buy wine, and they used to bring it, too. So we had no problem in any of those things.

SIGRIST: What about, um, animals? Did you, did you raise animals, or did you have pets, or have livestock? What did you have?

MORANT: We have, we had two teams of horses and mules in order to carry the big loads of flour. By the way, we had another flour mill in a place near Valencia, and we, that's why we had the two teams.

SIGRIST: So they would, they would be hauling the stuff in between the two mills.

MORANT: From one place to the other, yes. And we had a little horse and we used to have a little wagon, just like you're like a, just a little wagon, a little horse. And I still have, I still have downstairs the . . .

SIGRIST: The horse shoe?

MORANT: The horse shoes downstairs. I made a little thing to hang my clothes. And I used the horse shoe from that, from that little horse.

SIGRIST: So was that little horse more of a family pet?

MORANT: It was a family pet.

SIGRIST: Did it have a name?

MORANT: I don't remember. I don't remember. I don't remember.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

SIGRIST: What about, what about any other kind of livestock, like chickens, or pigs, or anything like that?

MORANT: We had, we used to raise chickens and pigs from the residuals of the mill, raise pigs and all that. And at home, I remember when I was a youngster my mother used to bring one or two ladies from town that used to be butchers, and they used to make hams and all that for the whole year.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how they would butcher a pig?

MORANT: Oh, yes. ( he laughs )

SIGRIST: What would, can you describe the procedure for us?

MORANT: Well, they used to put it on the table. They used to, no, no. Before they put it on the table, they used to, I don't know, right here they used to put a knife and it came almost dead, and they put it on the table, and then they finished it there. But you have to know, because pigs are hard to handle.

SIGRIST: I think it's interesting that you said two women were butchers in this town.

MORANT: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Um, can you talk a little bit about that? Was this a common profession for women at that time?

MORANT: Well, I said two women, but they're the ones that make the sausages and all that. The men also are the butchers, the family.

SIGRIST: It's interesting, it seems like in your part of Spain that it's, families would control entire businesses. For instance, your whole family seems to have been involved with the mill, and here, you know, the butchering family, the women, the men, it didn't matter, they all were involved.

MORANT: They all were involved.

SIGRIST: Did your mother work in the flour mills, too?

MORANT: My mother?

SIGRIST: Yeah.

MORANT: Well, she did, but not, she did to give a hand, and she knows all about the mill, she knows all about, except preparing the wheels that used to be turned over, too, so they can grind good the wheat. Except that, but the other things she knew as much, as much as my father. But you, you're dedicated to the family, you're dedicated to what everybody's doing, and you get involved in everything.

SIGRIST: Um, in your house, because you had such a large family and because you were, you know, comfortably well off, did you have help in the house?

MORANT: Yeah. We had, uh, for the, for the farm we had, for the mill, for the orange groves we had a man study, and he used to get the help to, when he needed it. He was like a foreman. We always, and we had, one time we visit one or two millers to help, to help the family.

SIGRIST: What about, like, domestic help in the house, like, did your mother do everything in the house? She didn't . . .

MORANT: And my sister. My sister, she was the oldest.

SIGRIST: You mentioned your father . . .

MORANT: Excuse me.

SIGRIST: Sure, go ahead.

MORANT: We had a lady, but she, she was helping my mother all her life. I just remembered now, all her life. She was at home. We treated her as an aunt, but she was a helper, a worker, but she was considered as one of the family.

SIGRIST: Did she live with you?

MORANT: She used to live with us, yes. And she used to, she had a home in Piles, and she used to go home once in a while, but then she used to come home and stay home with us and work. She used to come every day to work with us. As a matter of fact, she used to stay with us.

SIGRIST: Do you remember her name?

MORANT: Maria Dolores. ( he laughs )

SIGRIST: Is there a story about her that sticks out in your mind, something that may have happened that involved her?

MORANT: I knew that she, she was, I was the preferred boy for her, and she treated me like a king. In fact, sometimes she used to get one of those candies that we were forbidding to have, and she started to be, she used to sneak things around for me.

SIGRIST: Um . . .

MORANT: Things with no value, but, you know . . .

SIGRIST: She was just doing it to show that you were special to her.

MORANT: Right, yeah.

SIGRIST: You mentioned your father's got orange groves also. You said . . .

MORANT: Orange groves, yes.

SIGRIST: How much property does he have?

MORANT: Well, he had one, two, three, four, five or six groves.

SIGRIST: Plus the property of the mill, and the house.

MORANT: And the house. And then surrounded, surrounding the mills, he had two groves, and quite another one that he bought long, when I was a youngster. And then outside the main, you know, from the mill to the main highway was about, about a thousand feet. And the other side in front of our mill we had another property, which, my brothers and sisters still have it.

SIGRIST: Um, tell me a little bit about the orange groves and why he had them and what you did with the oranges.

MORANT: Well, the orange groves, originally, when I was a youngster, there were more vine farms than oranges.

SIGRIST: Vines meaning grapes?

MORANT: Grapes. More grapes than oranges. And little by little there was a big demand getting, a big demand for oranges, just before the First World War, a big demand. So they planted oranges, and my father had quite a bit of, five or six groves. Then during the war they could not sell the oranges. No one wanted oranges. So all the income that he was getting from the oranges disappeared during the World War, First World War. The help he had, he could not let them go, because they always were faithful to the family. And on the other side nobody used to sell the products, and they used to come to the molide[ph], "Ricardo, could you lend me, could you loan me twenty kilos of flour, or twenty kilos, or forty kilos?" And before he knew it, everybody owe him money. He had no money, no money to buy wheat, and no money to pay for the, for all the oranges, the orange trees. So that's when we came to the United States.

SIGRIST: Why do you suppose no one wanted oranges at that time? Was it because they were more expensive than other types of food, or . . .

MORANT: Nobody, during the First World War, nobody had food. They wanted food, not fruit. Foods, bread, sold things, to survive. Even, even in, in France and in the other places that you used to buy the oranges, they were at war. They didn't want no oranges. Nobody, that had stopped completely. That had stopped completely.

SIGRIST: Tell me, tell me, um, how else your family was affected by the first World War. What do you remember firsthand about, about that time period, 1914, 1915, 1916? Um, or was your family affected aside from the fact that no one was buying the oranges?

MORANT: Not only that, people had no money to pay for the produce my father used to sell. And, and there were, there were families known to my father and mother all his life. They said, "Ricardo, please, lend me thirty kilos or forty kilos, and then, again, we can pay you. Maybe next year the crops will be worth money, and we'll pay you." So then the way he remained, I mean, he became without products from, without any income from the oranges, and no income from the business, and most of his money was lend to the people to feed them. That's when my father decided to come to the United States with my brother and I. And one of my brothers came first. That's when, we came to see, to, on his advice.

SIGRIST: Which brother was it that came first?

MORANT: Uh, the second brother. His name was Xavier.

SIGRIST: Xavier.

MORANT: Xavier.

SIGRIST: Um, what year did he come?

MORANT: In 1917.

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

MORANT: When he got here, he went to work in Waterbury.

SIGRIST: Here in Connecticut, in Waterbury.

MORANT: In Connecticut. And when I came over here, too, my father and brother, they got a job immediately with the Scoville Manufacturing Company where my brother used to work. And I started to, in the boarding house that we used to be, I started to help them clean the tables and clean this. And finally they, they told me that they hired me. After a day or two, they hired me. And I was doing a good job. But as soon as my brother and my father went to another project that the Scoville Manufacturing Company had in Waterbury, they asked if they could take me. So they took me, they gave me a job. They didn't ask me for my age.

SIGRIST: Okay, wait. Let's get you to America before me, because this is good, but I want to get you here before we talk about this. Your brother came to America in 1917. He went to Waterbury to work. What was the name of the company?

MORANT: Scoville Manufacturing Company.

SIGRIST: Scoville.

MORANT: Scoville.

SIGRIST: Manufacturing Company. Um, why America? Why did your father send your brother to America, when he could have sent him to South America, or, you know, other, could have gone in other places? Why America?

MORANT: Well, the United States at that time was the emblem of wealth and well-to-do and, and the land of all kind of possibilities to grow, for a person to grow. That's the reason why. Argentina was, was rich at that time, too, during the war. It became richer. But not as much as, as the United States. The United States.

SIGRIST: So even, when you were, when you were a boy growing up, America had this reputation. Um, did you have any, um, ideas about what America must be like before you got here?

MORANT: Well, I was fortunate to have a priest. His name was Father Salvadore, Father Salvadore, very close to the family, and his family and our family were always very close. He always talked to me about the United States. And at that time all the priests in my home town, they were pro-Germans. And Father Salvadore was pro-France, at that time. And many times he used to sit, they used to come with a teacher and him

and another priest, they used to come to my home, to our place, almost, during the good weather, every day. They used to sit on the big, great big fig tree that we had to, almost half an acre that big tree, a big tree. And sometimes we used to talk about the United States. Never before I had intentions even to come to the United States. And he always praised the United States very much. He used to be a well, a well-read man. And I remember when we decided to come to the United States, I told him that we start coming, and he said, "Where you going?" I said, "We are going to Connecticut." And he said to me, he says, "In Connecticut, it's a nice place, but for the money you make, will you be able to travel, enough money to travel. Grab that money, and go to California. California is going to be the richest state." At that time it was wild, yet. California was wild. He says, "California is going to be the richest state, and the best state in the union. Go there. You'll have to go. Whether you like it or not, you have to deal with it." I never did. But, but that remained, when I saw California growing and growing and growing and growing up to, up to today, because at that time it didn't have not even one fourth, or one, of the people today, no. It was nothing. California was nothing. But there were the possibilities of growing.

SIGRIST: Had Father Salvadore been to America?

MORANT: No. But he used to study a lot, and he used to read a lot. He was very like, he was very well-liked by all the people in town. ( a telephone rings )

SIGRIST: We're going to pause just for a moment. ( break in tape ) We're resuming. Well, tell me, um, your brother came and, uh, he got a job with Scoville. What is that? What do they make there?

MORANT: In Scoville Manufacturing Company? They used to make all kind of hardwares and everything, even money. They used to produce, manufacture money.

SIGRIST: Money.

MORANT: Money, yeah.

SIGRIST: Like coins and stuff.

MORANT: Yeah. And, uh, he used to work outside. We were not prepared to, to do any kind of fancy work because we were laborers. And when they . . .

SIGRIST: This is when you were here?

MORANT: Yes.

SIGRIST: Okay. Hang on. Let's get you to America before we talk about it.

MORANT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Um, well, do you remember, um, the process of getting your papers, getting ready to leave Spain, and what you had to go through before you left Spain?

MORANT: Well, at that time, things were fairly good in Spain. We were under a constitutional monarchy. The, the king was just like a symbol, and the people, the Spanish people were free. They were so free that even a republican party to overthrow the kingdom was, was within the law, Blasco Ibanez, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse writer. You heard of him? He was a, he was a senator from, from Valencia, representing the, representing the republican party, which I never, I never saw any country in the world, no matter how free they are, to have somebody to overthrow the government, the system of government, that they are allowed, and in Spain they did. In Spain they did.

SIGRIST: Was your father, um, a very politically-minded person? Was that an important part of your life?

MORANT: No, no. He was, he was always a leader, but not in the extreme. He never mixed up with politics, because politics were no good. They were no good for his business. He wanted to be friends with everybody. ( he laughs )

SIGRIST: That would make good business sense.

MORANT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: All right. Well, tell me a little bit about what you had to go through to get your papers to leave. And it's wartime, too, on top of that.

MORANT: Yeah. Well, uh, to get the, to get the papers was no effort, just went to the, to the government office, and they, they find the passport, and, you know, not a problem.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, um, did you have to undergo any examinations while you were getting your papers?

MORANT: No.

SIGRIST: Not in Spain.

MORANT: Not in Spain.

SIGRIST: How did your mother feel about you and your brother and your father going to America?

MORANT: Well, she took it hard. She took it hard.

SIGRIST: She had no family over here at all.

MORANT: No. Oh, no, oh, no.

SIGRIST: Even your father's side had no family.

MORANT: No one, no one. You remind me of something. When I, when I was working, can I say this? When I was working in Scoville Manufacturing Company.

SIGRIST: This is in Waterbury.

MORANT: In Waterbury, I was a water boy, and I was making more money than the others, because on Sunday I had to put the, there was some place that we would put light and all that, and I was in charge of that, also. And the superintendent used to like me like a son, and before my father and everybody went to Spain, we were there only one year when they'd have a little money. He had his own business over there. This man said to him, "Why don't you let Ramon stay here with me? I'll adopt him if you want to, and if he don't want to be adopted, I'll stay with him, I'll send him to college." And then my father told me what. I cried like a baby not to be able to see my mother. That was a big mistake, because, you know, I could have prepared myself better to, I could have prepared myself much, much better to, to face the world. But I didn't.

SIGRIST: Well, that was a very generous offerno , too.

MORANT: Well, he took a liking to me, and it was very, very generous.

SIGRIST: When, when, um, when you left Spain it was, your brother was already over here, right?

MORANT: Yes.

SIGRIST: So it was you and another brother and your father.

MORANT: Yes.

SIGRIST: Leaving Spain. Uh, do you remember what you took with you, what you packed?

MORANT: Well, a regular, a regular handbag, baggage. We call it maleta, suitcase. One suitcase for each, and not, not too much. Dirty shoes, and overcoat, because . . . ( he laughs ) Everywhere I get over here, boy, it was cold. The coldest year, I think, in United States, according to history, because they don't came records from before, but they came records from 1918. It was the coldest, the coldest winter we ever had in this, in this part of the country.

SIGRIST: So it was a real surprise to you coming from such a warm climate.

MORANT: A real surprise. Too much, we could know that surprise.  
( he laughs )

SIGRIST: Um, was there like a goodbye dinner or some way of honoring you before you left? Was there a special dinner that your mother prepared, or some kind of a party or something?

MORANT: Yes, they made a paella, my mother made a paella for the three of us, and all the others. All the other brothers and sisters were, were there.

SIGRIST: And paella, is that sort of a special dish?

MORANT: A special dish.

SIGRIST: What is paella? Could you just describe it for us on tape?

MORANT: Paella is a big, it's famous in the United States now. All the well-to-do restaurants, they have paella. Paella is in a great, big pan. You start it with olive oil and, and meat and all that, and then you put beans, and then when that's done you put the rice, you put a little, you've got to make good broth, too. And then at the end you could put shrimps, or part of lobster, or things like that, and decorate it, very presentable. We have a pan that's about this size.

SIGRIST: Which is, this is, what, about four feet round.

MORANT: Yeah. We have smaller ones. I got five or, four or five downstairs. The big one, my son who lives across the street has it.

SIGRIST: And that would be the whole meal. That's what your mother prepared.

MORANT: Well, first, first we always have hors d'oeuvres. That's very customary, we call it, it's called tapas.

SIGRIST: Contabas?

MORANT: No, no, tapas.

SIGRIST: Tapas.

MORANT: Tapas. If you go to Spain, Spain is famous about the tapas, before the meal, there's always hors d'oeuvres, different, different kind of hors d'oeuvres, like a little bit of ham, prosciutto. You know what prosciutto ham is, ham, and a sausages, and all that, that was in the family, sliced into small bits with little pieces of, of bread to go with it, and that's the beginning.

SIGRIST: Now, did anyone give you a present or something before you left that you took with you?

MORANT: No, no, no. Not at that time, no. Now they do it, now they do it.

SIGRIST: Was your intention to go to America and just make some money and go back to Spain?

MORANT: Right.

SIGRIST: That was the intention.

MORANT: That was the intention of my father and brother. They did that. I went with them, also, back to Spain, but then I came back.

SIGRIST: Of course, your father's got this business going on, I mean, he's got to go back.

MORANT: Sure, sure. And my father always wanted me to stay. Not only that, even, even when we had a depression in 1933 . . . I'm going ahead.

SIGRIST: That's okay.

MORANT: 1933, my father tell me, "Come back to Spain, and I'll have a business prepared for you. You can put up a store with all kind of things." And I was there, but I didn't like it no more. I could not get used to, I became accustomed to the American ways, and I love Spain for a visit, but not to stay there all the time, no.

SIGRIST: When you went back in 1933, did you find things any better economically in Spain than they had been in America? I mean, really, was there a reason for you to go back there?

MORANT: Well, at that time, in the United States, in 1930, '31, '32, that was the big depression we had, in that way my father asked me to go back to Spain because, and I went over there, and they were prosperous, but not, that prosperity didn't go to anywhere. So that when I came back I begin to deal with olive oil.

SIGRIST: Um, what port did you leave from to get, where did you go to get the ship?

MORANT: Valencia.

SIGRIST: You got the ship in Valencia.

MORANT: In Valencia.

SIGRIST: Um, and what was the name of the ship?

MORANT: Antonio Lopez, you have it.

SIGRIST: And, um, was that the first time you had ever been on a large ship?

MORANT: That's the first time that I ever been. Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Now, who went to Valencia to get the ship with you? I know you're with your father and your brother. What other family members traveled with you?

MORANT: A cousin of mine who lives next to the, next to the, next to the (?), the lady that I said that feed me that time, her son.

SIGRIST: And, uh, how did you get from your house to get the ship?

MORANT: Well, from my house to get the ship we took the, the bus, and we took it to Valencia, and from Valencia we took another bus that took us to, to the, to the port.

SIGRIST: When you say a bus, are you talking about a . . .

MORANT: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: A regular motorized . . .

MORANT: A motorized bus, yes.

SIGRIST: Um, and did you have to stay, uh, any length of time before the ship left?

MORANT: Well, no, because we knew when the ship was leaving, and we got there about three or four hours before the ship, boarding time.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what time of the year this is, what, um, it must be, if you arrived January first, it must be in December some time.

MORANT: December the second or third.

SIGRIST: Of 1917.

MORANT: 1917.

SIGRIST: And, um, so your mother didn't go with you to say goodbye.

MORANT: No, no, no, no, no.

SIGRIST: She stayed at home.

MORANT: Yes.

SIGRIST: Of course, she expected to see you all again eventually.

MORANT: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, she did, she did.

SIGRIST: Um, and, uh, tell me how long the ship took. How long did it take to get here?

MORANT: Twenty-eight days. Twenty-eight days.

SIGRIST: That's a long time.

MORANT: Too long.

SIGRIST: How, did it stop at any of the places before it got to . . .

MORANT: No. We were, we were zig-zagging all over the place, because Spain was neutral. We have two great, big lamps showing the Spanish flag

on both sides. And according to the, according to the, to the people in our boat, continually they used to tell us, "Today we're going east, tomorrow we're going west, after tomorrow we're going south." You know, we were zig-zagging all over the place. It normally takes about eight or nine days to make that crossing with that boat, but it took us twenty-eight days, because we kept zig-zagging, zig-zagging, zig-zagging all the time.

SIGRIST: And, uh, did you see any submarines or . . .

MORANT: No.

SIGRIST: Anything like that.

MORANT: No. But we went, the submarines were in contact with the boat continuously, according to the, according to the people in the boat, the people in charge.

SIGRIST: Because Spain is neutral and because Spain is still running ships back and forth across the Atlantic, were there lots of different nationalities traveling on this ship, or was it mostly Spanish?

MORANT: There was an Englishman on our ship, only one Englishman, and they asked for him. The German submarine asked for him, and we find out, and the boat find out that he was English, he was English. He spoke Spanish like you and I . . . ( he laughs ) Like me. We were landing in the United States, and he was on the boat. They asked, they asked for him. They gave a description and everything else. But he was traveling incognito. But the Germans know that he was, he didn't, they didn't know, because they would have stopped the boat. They stopped another boat about two weeks before, and they, they took off one, one person off of another boat ahead of us, a Spanish boat.

SIGRIST: Interesting. So the ship, so it went right from Valencia to New York.

MORANT: To New York.

SIGRIST: Zig-zagged, you didn't stop to refuel or anything like that along the way.

MORANT: No.

SIGRIST: Um. All right. We're going to stop just for a second.

MORANT: Surely.

SIGRIST: And I'm going to pop another tape in the machine, and then we'll get you to New York.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

SIGRIST: We're now beginning Tape Two with Jose Ramon Morant, who came from Spain to America and arrived on January 1, 1918. Mr. Morant, we were just talking about being on the ship and zig-zagging all around because it was wartime. Can you tell me where you slept on the ship?

MORANT: Oh, we had one . . . ( he laughs ) About a hundred people, three layers, one, two and three. And if you were, I was, I was in the middle. And good thing the one on top of me never vomited. ( he laughs ) My cousin, the one we were talking about, he used to cry every single day.

SIGRIST: So your cousin is traveling with you also.

MORANT: With us. He was crying every day. And I said, "Why are you crying?" "Why am I crying? Because when I come back, I have to go through this here again." ( he laughs ) That's how he felt. And, shall I carry on with him?

SIGRIST: Talking about being on the ship?

MORANT: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yeah, sure.

MORANT: Because he fell sick every day, he used to throw up every day. So finally before Christmas we had a day that the sea was like just a lake, and he was feeling good, and I took him up to the, to talk the, the deck. And the following day we had the paella, because we used to work in the, we used to help the cook peel potatoes and all those things. We had nothing to do so, and the cook, and the chef said, "For Christmas Day, I'm going to make a paella for you guys." So he made the paella. And we had a place similar to this with all those (?) of the boats that they carry there in the (?). And we took five or six of those (?) and put them around the center, and we were very close together, and we invited him to eat with us. And he was feeling pretty good that day. So the pan was, the paella was here, and we were all close together, and when he took the first spoon and put it in his mouth, the, he had to vomit, and he couldn't throw it on top of this guy, and he didn't throw it on top of this guy because he was (?) ( he laughs ) he threw it in the paella. Nobody, everybody, I got sick that day. When I saw that, I got sick that day. And that was the end of the paella.

SIGRIST: So much for your Christmas paella.

MORANT: Good thing the chef made sandwiches and all that for us. When he knew about it, he laughed. But he, he made sandwiches for all of us.

SIGRIST: Now, except for that day, did you get sick during the whole, no. How about your father?

MORANT: No, none of us, no.

SIGRIST: You said there were been about a hundred people in this one room with the stacked beds.

MORANT: Yeah, it was open.

SIGRIST: Were they all men? Was this divided up . . .

MORANT: Yeah. The men were in one section, and the women were in another section.

SIGRIST: And what parts of the ship were you allowed to walk on?

MORANT: On deck, all over the deck. But there were first class and second class. We could not get in there. They carried first class and second class. But very little, because nobody went, most of them were all immigrants.

SIGRIST: Um, why did, why did your father choose to go third class, because financially he . . .

MORANT: Because financially he could not afford anything else.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much it cost?

MORANT: I think it was about seventy dollars or seventy-five dollars to come over. I'm not sure. But at that time seventy dollars, seventy-five dollars was a lot of money.

SIGRIST: Well, and, as you say, especially for your family, because you're in a bad way economically because your father was owed so much money. Did your brother in America send you money?

MORANT: No, he didn't. He wasn't here long enough to send money. But when we came over here, all the money we made, we gave it to my father. All the money, all of us. We were working like a team.

SIGRIST: And send the money back.

MORANT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You said that because you had nothing else to do you sort of helped the cook in the kitchen.

MORANT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Talk a little bit about how you got to be able to do that, how . . .

MORANT: Well, one time I asked the cook, you know, we become friendly, you know, and I asked the cook for a sandwich, and he gave it to me. And I said, "Can I do something for you?" He says, "Yes." He says, "You got somebody else that can help you, too?" I said, "Yes." Because I talked with the other, after I talked with the other boys. So we got three or four fellows, we begin to go there every morning to peel

this, to peel that, to do this, to do that, wash some dishes, and all that. So he, for us it was part of spending the day better than not doing anything. So we did that.

SIGRIST: Being wintertime, were there any bad storms?

MORANT: Well, we had one or two bad days that we had to be under deck. And, uh, and the sailors, I noticed the sailors had ropes from one end to the other, and they had a, and they had to strap over here, and they put the wing, uh, a ring into the rope to walk, to walk on deck, otherwise they could be washed out. Yeah, two days like that.

SIGRIST: What about safety drills for you people? Because it's wartime, do you remember having to undergo any kind of training about where to go in case there was an emergency?

MORANT: At that time I don't remember. Today all those, all those drills are made. In the other trips, they made a drill every single time. But at that time I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Of course, that time was probably the most dangerous to be out on the ocean.

MORANT: ( he laughs ) Yes.

SIGRIST: All right. So you're on the ship for twenty-eight days. Um, do you remember coming into New York Harbor?

MORANT: Yes.

SIGRIST: On, what do you remember about the approach to the U.S.?

MORANT: Well, the approach was, we got close to see the Statue of Liberty that everybody, everybody came out to see. But then we have to remain outside because we could not get into the harbor because of the ice. We had to wait one day outside to have an icebreaker come outside and let us come in. And when we got, when we got into the harbor, I saw five or six, this is funny, five or six men working, and I listened to them, and I said to myself, "I understand a few words that they're saying." I said, "English, I'm going to find, I'm going to learn English in no time." ( he laughs ) And it happened that they were Italians. ( he laughs ) They were Italians. ( Mr. Sigrist laughs ) And I, on accord of my business, today I speak Italian fluently. But at that time I don't know, I couldn't tell Italian, you know, English, Italian, to me it mean the same thing.

SIGRIST: Um, tell me about, did you know what the Statue of Liberty was when you saw it?

MORANT: Well, I saw, through Don Salvadore, through Father Salvadore, I saw, uh, pictures of the Statue of Liberty, and he talked to me about the Statue of Liberty, and the gift that France made to the United States for reasons. He was a very well-known man, and I really liked him. We were talking about him before. During the Spanish Civil War three

priests, the communists got in there, and three priests were killed. And they went to Father, to Don Salvadore, too. And there were a few communists from the city itself, and everybody in town, and these communists themselves, too, made, got in front of his house, and told the other communists they were from another town, that nobody's going to pass here. They protect him, even the communists.

SIGRIST: So he was much loved by. Well, he obviously had an important influence on your life, and certainly got you prepared for America very well. Well, tell me what happens, after the ship comes into the harbor, then what happens.

MORANT: Then, they took us to Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: How did you get from the ship to Ellis Island?

MORANT: I think there was a boat, a little boat, a little ferry boat. I don't remember clearly. When we got there, boy, I think that they thought that everybody had eye disease, because they went through our eyes completely. You know, we passed, we passed everything. But, you know, at that time, there was some Spanish influenza. The Spanish influenza, I don't know if you ever heard about it. I don't know why they call it the Spanish influenza. And they examine us thoroughly, too, so we pass, we pass. But, uh, it's, I remember those white corridors on the second floor. The other day when I was there, it came back to me.

SIGRIST: Were there a lot of people there when you were there?

MORANT: Oh, yes, yes. And a lot of people from other nationalities, too. Flooded, the place was flooded, flooded with people.

SIGRIST: Do you remember exactly what kinds of examinations you had to undergo?

MORANT: Well, my chest and my eyes. They examined me, and my father and my brother, and, no problem.

SIGRIST: Do you remember if there was an interpreter to help you?

MORANT: I think one of the men that used to be examining knew a little Spanish, and another one broken Spanish, but we understood each other.

SIGRIST: How long do you think you were on Ellis Island?

MORANT: We got there, oh, maybe close to a day.

SIGRIST: Did you eat while you were on Ellis Island?

MORANT: I don't remember. I don't remember. I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Now, was there somebody there waiting for you when you arrived at Ellis Island? Did your brother come down to meet you?

MORANT: Oh, no. No, no, no, no. My brother was in Waterbury. ( he laughs ) He stayed there. Yeah. But everybody was, we were talking to Spanish people. Everybody said, "The eyes, the eyes, the eyes." The eye examination was the hardest thing that they used to go through.

SIGRIST: Tell me, um, once you were released from Ellis Island, how did you get to Waterbury?

MORANT: Well, they took us to the, to the Grand Central, I remember. From the Grand Central we went to, originally we thought my brother was in, in, because he transferred himself to Waterbury, we went to Derby.

SIGRIST: To Derby.

MORANT: Derby. We stopped there that other night, and then we got, we communicated with my brother. And somebody took us to through Bridgeport, to Waterbury. And the, and we left our baggage in Derby. And then we transferred to, to Waterbury.

SIGRIST: So how did you finally find your brother?

MORANT: Oh, yeah. Well, we knew some addresses over here where he was, and where he was they knew his address in Waterbury, and we communicated. We had no problem.

SIGRIST: When you first got to this country, did you see anything that you had never seen before?

MORANT: I saw black people that I never saw before, Chinese that I never saw before, Asians that I never saw before. And, and all the other different nationalities that, most of them, like Italians and French and all, they looked like Spaniards, you know, different, but you could tell a little, a little different, a little different. Swedes. That's the biggest impression that I got in this country after a while. But this country's, I had the feeling that this is the whole world itself over here. And I liked that. I always like that, I always liked that.

SIGRIST: Well, what's interesting, of course, is, I mean, you were around Spaniards in Valencia all the time, but even on the ship you're around Spaniards, you shared the whole experience.

MORANT: Everybody.

SIGRIST: Tell me . . .

MORANT: Well, first the Italians, the little bit of Italian that I thought they were speaking English, they were speaking Italian.

SIGRIST: You were really very innocent about the world.

MORANT: Yeah, very.

SIGRIST: Um, tell me a little bit about how your father adjusted to this country. He was here, what, a year before he went back, you said, or . . .

MORANT: Not quite a year.

SIGRIST: Not quite. Tell me what he thought about all this.

MORANT: Well, we landed in Waterbury. After about a week or two we went to that new project that Scoville[ph] had, and we remained there until we went back to Spain. So . . .

SIGRIST: But I mean, what, what did he think about what he saw in this country?

MORANT: Well, he said it was a great country.

SIGRIST: But he was really looking towards Spain. I mean . . .

MORANT: Oh, yeah. He, and, and he said, and it's amazing, it's amazing. He said that to put the (?). He says it's amazing how much concrete and how much buildings and how they did, they put up with so few years. ( he laughs ) He thought, "The United States is a young country," he says. "And they build so much, everything is great, everything (?)." ( he laughs ) Yeah, he said that to me many times. That's the impression he got. He knew that the United States was growing fast, and big buildings, and at that time the, the Singer, I think, was the highest building in New York at that time, 1917. And, and he made a, he used to make remarks, he says, "It's amazing how much they build, how much they dug, how much concrete they used to build the whole city in so little time." In my home town, Piles, today it's changed, because next to the seashore, and that has been in a boon for quite some, for years. But at that time Piles was just like it was a thousand years ago. The same, the same, the same, the same. It didn't grow anything.

SIGRIST: Small buildings.

MORANT: Small buildings. It didn't grow a bit. Everything was like, like a thousand years before. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me about, how did you learn English?

MORANT: Well, I learned English not as, not as good as I would like to, going to night school.

SIGRIST: Can you explain for me on tape just what, what the whole procedure of night school was, what you had to do.

MORANT: Well, at that time I, I applied, I, in the papers I heard about night school, and I applied to go to night school, and they accepted me right away. And I kept on working very hard, but I had a job, a hard job then. I used to work in the, on that time I used to work in the railroad company. They made me a foreman. I was the only one I could say I don't know in English, they made me a foreman. I was a

youngster. ( he laughs ) And I had about thirty-five, forty Spaniards working for me. And at night time I used to work hard, too. At night time I used to go to school. And my teacher was Miss Hickey from here, from New Britian, and she took a liking of me, and she used to teach me sometimes after school. She said, "Stay, stay a little longer, and I'll teach you this and that and that." So he gave me, she gave me instructions. But I was so tired that many times while in night school I fell asleep. A good many times. But then that's, working, working hard. But then very, very young, I met my wife, Sonia Morant. And her mother, the doctor told her that she would pass away. I had no intentions of getting married, or nothing like that. Her mother would last two, three weeks at the most. So I said, "Well, we've got to get married, because she would, to be left alone." And I was only nineteen-and-a-half, nineteen years-and-a-half. So we decided to get married. We got married, and his, and her mother lived with us twenty years more. ( he laughs ) Twenty years more. And the doctor passed away. ( Mr. Sigrist laughs ) And I used to love her mother, was a very intelligent person. She was sick. She had a kind of an arthritis that I used to carry her. Good thing she wasn't heavy. Sometimes upstairs we used to go visiting on the second floor, I used to carry her upstairs. And, and she was, even though she was sick, I love her company and her way of reasoning and her way of talking. She was a gentle lady.

SIGRIST: Was your, was your wife Spanish?

MORANT: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. From . . .

SIGRIST: What was her name?

MORANT: Rosario.

SIGRIST: And her maiden name, her married, the name before she was married to you?

MORANT: Ciscar.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

MORANT: Ciscar? C-I-S-C-A-R.

SIGRIST: And so her mother was Spanish, too, obviously.

SIGRIST: Yes, oh, yes.

SIGRIST: When had, was your wife born in this country?

MORANT: No, no, no, no, no. My wife came in 1920, in April 1920. April 1920.

SIGRIST: And how old was she when she came?

MORANT: She was a youngster, too. She was about my age.

SIGRIST: So am I to believe, then, that there was actually quite a large Spanish population?

MORANT: At that time, yes. But most of them went back in 1921 or '22, there was a little, a little, a little depression, and most of them went back.

SIGRIST: That's interesting. Um, because it also reflects your father's mentality when you hit, when, you know, during the depression here, come back to Spain, things are better over here.

MORANT: Yeah. See, we are lucky, I mean, my father, and most of that group that, in Gandia[ph], a town named Gandia[ph] in the province of Valencia, it's very famous for its products, and for the land, very famous. All the product around there been sent all over Spain, and it's a rich agricultural section. And Valencia itself, well, Valencia got oranges and all that has been famous. You heard of the Valencia oranges.

SIGRIST: So even in bad economic times there's always food, and it's always a very rich . . .

MORANT: Right, right.

SIGRIST: Tell me what the first job was that you got here. Was that with Scoville?

MORANT: Well, a few days I was in, before I came to Waterbury, I was in Derby, Shelton. To Bloomingfeld, I used to make clothes for the lumbermen.

SIGRIST: So you stayed in Derby for . . .

MORANT: For a few days.

SIGRIST: Just for a few days.

MORANT: And then they hired me right away.

SIGRIST: How did you get that job? How did you know it was available?

MORANT: I went with some friends that used to work there, and they introduced me to the employer, I had the job. They didn't ask me for my age either. So, and I liked that job, but then when they told me in Waterbury to go to, my father come to Waterbury, so I told them in time. I told them in time. I says, I think it was a few days, and I told them, "You don't have to pay me." They says, "No, no. We've got to pay you." ( he laughs ) They says, "We don't do those things over here." I remember as a little young boy, I was fourteen, I said, "You don't have to pay me." Because I was still, I felt guilty to give me the job, and then I was going away. So, they said, "No, no, no."

SIGRIST: So, um, so you, so then you all went to Waterbury and you . . .

MORANT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Hooked up with your brother who was already in Waterbury.

MORANT: Yes, yeah.

SIGRIST: Then did you get the job at Scoville?

MORANT: The first job that I got was in the, in the boarding house, a few days, too. And after I got the job in Scoville I had to, I told them, and they told me, "Don't go, we'll give you, we'll give you more money." I said, "No, no, no, I have to go." So I went. So my first job was in the Scoville[ph] Manufacturing Company.

SIGRIST: And what was that position? What did you do there?

MORANT: I used to be the water boy.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much you were paid?

MORANT: I think it was thirty cents an hour. I think the others were making, the (?) was making thirty cents an hour till that changed.

SIGRIST: And how long did you stay as the water boy?

MORANT: Up to the time I went to Spain.

SIGRIST: So a year?

MORANT: No, not quite a year.

SIGRIST: Not quite a year. You said your father was here less than a year.

MORANT: Yeah, not quite a year.

SIGRIST: Now were you, were you living in a boarding house with your father and, and brothers, prior to his leaving?

MORANT: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you explain for me a little bit on tape about what it was like to live in a boarding house? I mean, what was the situation like in the boarding house?

MORANT: Well, just like in a, just like in a normal, in a normal hotel, in the Valencian, in the, more (?), and then, and then for the, for eating we used to have a nice, a nice big dining room, and we used to break for dinner in the same place, everybody.

SIGRIST: How owned the boarding house?

MORANT: Who owned the boarding house? Uh, a fellow by the name, a fellow that came from Spain, from that section of the country too, he

used to speak Valencian. In Valencia they speak, in Barcelona they speak, Valencian or Catalan, and they speak Valencian. But when we went to school we learned Spanish, we speak Spanish in school. But outside the school and at home, we speak Valencian.

SIGRIST: And so in this boarding house were they all people from the Valencia area?

MORANT: I think all of them, all of them.

SIGRIST: Were they all men?

MORANT: There was a lady. One lady came two, three days after I was there, and she was there, too. But they were all men.

SIGRIST: And what did you do? Did you pay an amount weekly, or monthly?

MORANT: Normally they pay in the week. I never had to pay because I, I made enough effort to, to cover all my expenses. But normally they pay weekly.

SIGRIST: And then you were given three meals a day?

MORANT: Three meals a day, breakfast, lunch and dinner.

SIGRIST: Now, did you share one room with your father and two brothers?

MORANT: No. We, we share one room for two. Two and two.

SIGRIST: So did you stay with your father?

MORANT: With my youngest brother.

SIGRIST: our youngest brother. And what about your cousin who came over? Where did he end up?

MORANT: Well, he end up with us, too, but he, he went to Cuba.

SIGRIST: How soon after he got here did he go to Cuba?

MORANT: After about a month or so.

SIGRIST: Why did he go to Cuba?

MORANT: Because he had an uncle that was a very well-to-do family related to his father and, his father. ( he clears his throat ) And he used to communicate with them, and they asked him to go. And he was there for about seven or eight months, and he didn't like it. He came back. That was the time that I was being a foreman in, in the railroad company. And I hired him, told him to come out. And he came with white shoes. ( he laughs ) White tie. I said, "You don't work today. You go home, and you get dressed up like a working man." And he was the water

boy for about two or three months there. And then he, he went someplace else. He was not studying like I was.

SIGRIST: Was Cuba a place where, where Spaniards, if they didn't come to America, might they go to Cuba? Was that a place where a lot of people went to?

MORANT: Oh, yes, oh, yes. Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Had that been a consideration when you, when your father was considering leaving?

MORANT: No, no, no. It never passed our mind, no. It was the United States. Through Don Salvadore, Father Salvadore and other people, you know? The United States was in imagination just like heaven itself, before we came here.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO

SIGRIST: Um, what part of, were there any aspects of America you didn't like those first couple of years when you first got here, something that, that you just couldn't quite get used to?

MORANT: Well, I have to admit that in this country I had to work, and I didn't work in Spain. ( he laughs ) That's the difference. But, still, still, I begin to like the country, I begin to like the way, I begin to feel like, like I was in, living in the world itself, because in this country I used to see people, white people, yellow people, all kind of people, and I used to communicate with them, and I made some friends with different, different races, and I love that.

SIGRIST: I think that, um, in our remaining minutes, I'd like you to talk about how you got involved in the olive oil business, because I think that's very interesting.

MORANT: Well, during the, in 19, 1932, '33, when the big depression, I went to Spain. When I came back, when I came back I used to work in Landers, Freddy and Clark[ph] before I went to Spain.

SIGRIST: Where?

MORANT: Landers, Freddy and Clark[ph], in the bottle room, making thermos bottles. And we were fifty, fifty people there. ( he clears his throat ) And the employer told me, he said, "Well, if you ever come back, come to see me, you'll get a job." And I told him, I asked permission from them to go to Spain and try the business that my father had prepared for me, and all that. So when I went over there, after a while, I didn't like to be there, so I came back. When I came back, there were only four men working in the bottle room. Out of fifty, there was four, four left. And I went there, and I ask him, really what happened. I, I don't like to work over there, I'd rather work over here. And he said to me, he says, "I promised you a job when you come back.

There are only four men there. Starting tomorrow, whatever work comes in will be divided with five people." So he gave me the job back. And all my friends, they used to work there, and they were laid off. They said, "Don't go." I said, "Well, I'm going because the man told me . . . ." Evidently he liked the way that I was working, and evidently the superintendent wanted me to come back too. So I got the job back. But after a while, after a while I begin to say to myself, "I'm not doing anything, my children are growing." So I started the olive oil business. I started the olive oil business, buying from different people, two, three concerns that I know from Spain.

SIGRIST: Why the olive oil business? What attraction did that have?

MORANT: Well, because it was something that I, that I got in touch with the, with, my father used to have friends, the olive oil business was good, and I said, well, maybe I'll start from here. So I went to New York with, bought a few cans of olive oil, brought it over here, on my own, sold it. It was going pretty good. Then I said, "Well, I have to register." I register as a distributor of olive oil, food products. And that was going better yet. And I used to work, doing that part-time. And then I said to the company, Landers, Freddy and Clark[ph], I said, "I'm grateful to you people that you give me the job back and all that, but I, I have a little part-time job that's growing, a little business of my own that's growing, I'm doing pretty good. I have to work that." ( he laughs ) So they said, "Well, all right." So I started a full time job. And I created my own brands. After I was in the business, I created my own brands. I went to Spain, I had people to, good packers, to pack my own olive oil with my own brand, and that's how I started, by working at it and working at it. I came to, sometimes (?) three or four containers, sometimes two containers, or used three, and each container had eight hundred thousand, eight hundred cases of sixteen-ounce cans, or seven hundred, eight hundred and fifty, eight hundred. And that's the way that I started the business. I created my own brand, I designed all that, as you have seen, and people used to tell me, "You're crazy. Why don't you sell brands that are known?" I said, "Well, no, I want to sell my own, and I want my, I want to have my quality of merchandise in it, so I can promote it." And I did. My son today has the business. Just by sitting at home my son, Ramon, he can make a good living.

SIGRIST: What, um, when you were growing up in Spain, was there an olive oil industry over there? I'm just trying to define why olive oil. ( a telephone rings ) Oh, we're just going to pause. ( break in tape ) Okay. We're now resuming. Um, you said to me that your son now has the olive oil business.

MORANT: Yes.

SIGRIST: Um, I should ask you about your family. What year did you get married?

MORANT: In 1924.

SIGRIST: 1924. And, uh, do you remember the dates, the month and the day?

MORANT: June 9, 1924.

SIGRIST: June 9, 1924. And list your children for me.

MORANT: Well, my oldest boy was born in 1926.

SIGRIST: And his name is?

MORANT: Ricardo.

SIGRIST: Named after your father?

MORANT: Yes. He went to college, he went to Harvard University. He is an experimental, he has a doctorate, when he was a youngster he got his doctorate in experimental psychology. And he has written quite a bit. While the United States was at war, he was a petty officer, and he has done very well for himself and the family. He has four children, one of them, the oldest, the eldest, he's a doctor, and the other ones all went to universities. And he has a beautiful family.

SIGRIST: That's your oldest son.

MORANT: My oldest son.

SIGRIST: Okay. Who's next?

MORANT: My oldest boy went, did I say that my oldest boy went to Harvard University?

SIGRIST: Yes.

MORANT: My youngest boy, Ramon, he is in charge of, of the business. Today it's his own business. He went to Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine.

SIGRIST: It's a beautiful school, Bowdoin.

MORANT: Yeah, yeah. And he worked, when he was a youngster, he worked for, what is this concern that makes all kind of things for the ladies?

SIGRIST: Some sort of makeup, or . . .

MORANT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: It could be a lot of different companies.

MORANT: They had a factory in Cuba. So he went, they sent him to Cuba. He was the manager of the concern over there for about seven to eight months, almost a year. But he could not, they could not put up with Castro, so they had to close the factory, they came back. So when he came back, they wanted to send him some other place, so I kind of wanted him to get into my business, and he says, "All right." Then I told him,

I said, "Listen, get into the business, everything we make will be for us, for the two of us, we'll divide it, and if, if you like it, all right, if you don't like it, then I will sell the business." Because I was trying to give up. I was tired of working already. So he, we were one year together, and he liked the business, so he took over the business, and he's doing very good. He has two boys and two girls, too. All of them are doing good. His wife is a professional teacher of piano, and his oldest boy, he likes music. He made, has a little band. ( he laughs )

SIGRIST: So those are your two sons. Do you have any daughters?

MORANT: Yes, I have a daughter. She's in Providence. Uh, they got three girls.

SIGRIST: And is she, was she born between the two boys?

MORANT: No, no. She's born, the last one.

SIGRIST: She's the youngest.

MORANT: She's the youngest.

SIGRIST: And what is her name?

MORANT: Uh, Dolores, Dolores. Uh, she has a beautiful place, a beautiful home, a beautiful husband, beautiful children. One of the girls, the girls are doing very good in New York. They have a place in New York, too, for, next to the river, for, for weekends, but now the girls went to New York to work in New York, and they got beautiful jobs. They all went to college. And . . .

SIGRIST: So you have the three children.

MORANT: Three children, very good.

SIGRIST: Um, well, I guess, uh, one of my final questions for you is, uh, were there things that your mother and father taught you, philosophies in life, that have sustained you through your whole life.

MORANT: Not only that, that I pass it, that philosophy, to my children, and I'm very happy to have my children pass it to their children.

SIGRIST: What are those philosophies? What . . .

MORANT: To do with family togetherness, be together. Like when I was, my children, my children, when they were small, my boys when they were small, I didn't go, never went hunting or fishing or in a picnic or togetherness with friends that they didn't come with me. Today they reciprocate. When I'm around, they never go anyplace, they never do anything, if I'm not there, too. With these words, I explain everything. And that philosophy of life is my, my parents injected in me, I injected that to my children, and they reciprocate beautifully, and they're doing

the same thing with their children. And family togetherness, there's no time, no time that we don't get together, the whole family, the whole children, even today, at least two or three times a year, together. So.

SIGRIST: Great. Well, Mr. Morant, I think that's a good place for us to, to, um, end the interview. I want to thank you very much for having me . . .

MORANT: Well, I want to end this. I'm very grateful to USA, very grateful, very.

SIGRIST: Thank you. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Jose Ramon Morant on July 5, 1994, on Tuesday. Thank you.

EI-489/MORANT