

EI-052

JOHN (CARMEN GIOVANNI) RAMUNDO

BIRTH DATE: MAY 2, 1906

INTERVIEW DATE: 6/24/1991

RUNNING TIME: 1:19:22

INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

RECORDING ENGINEER: BRIAN FEENEY

INTERVIEW LOCATION: ELLIS ISLAND RECORDING STUDIO

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 9/1993

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 1/1994

ITALY, 1922

AGE 16

SHIP: NAPLES

PORT: NAPLES

RESIDENCES:

ITALY: FUSCALDO

US: CINCINNATI, OH

Oral Historian's Note: This interview was filmed by CBS Television and portions were aired nationally on July 4, 1991. A detailed manuscript about Mr. Ramundo's life written by his son is also in the collection. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of the Oral History Project, 1/20/1994.

SIGRIST: Good morning. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. We're here at Ellis Island. Today is Monday, June 24th, 1991 and we're here up in the Oral History Studio with John C. Ramundo who came from Italy in 1922 when he was sixteen years old. Mr. Ramundo, good morning.

RAMUNDO: Good morning, sir.

SIGRIST: Let's start off by having you give me your full name and your date of birth.

RAMUNDO: My name is John C., no, Carmen Giovanni Ramundo. My birthday is May the 2nd, 1906.

SIGRIST: And where were you born, sir?

RAMUNDO: In Fuscaldo.

SIGRIST: Could you spell that, please?

RAMUNDO: F-U-S-C-A-L-D-O.

SIGRIST: And whereabouts in Italy is that?

RAMUNDO: In the Provincia Cosenza, the province . . .

SIGRIST: Where, what is it near?

RAMUNDO: It's near Naples, but it's in the middle of the foot
looking over the Mediterranean Sea.

SIGRIST: I see.

RAMUNDO: We . . .

SIGRIST: Is it right on the water, on the coast?

RAMUNDO: We are about a thousand feet above on the coastal side
which elevates gradually to a mountain.

SIGRIST: I see. Now, that's the province. What is the name of
the town that you were born in?

RAMUNDO: Fuscaldo.

SIGRIST: I see. And can you describe that town a bit for me, please?

RAMUNDO: The town is set way high, I would say about a thousand and better feet above sea level, but it's on the, gradually sloped, near the, closer to the mountain of which is the start of the Alps from the bottom, the foot of Italy, all the way to the Alps, which are north.

SIGRIST: What did the town look like?

RAMUNDO: Oh, it's more picturesque, because it has a drop that's like, I would say to a peak which on one side is a creek or they call, we call it a torrent of water that starts on the mountain, and then on the other side is the same, and this starts like a, I would say, a tail going up from the ocean.

SIGRIST: Let's talk about the actual town. Were there big houses in this town, little houses?

RAMUNDO: The, my actually birth place, they are one huge, it's about, in inhabitants it's five families in there which overlooks the sea, which originally I don't remember who built it because that goes way back in

the history.

SIGRIST: You don't remember who built the house?

RAMUNDO: The house?

SIGRIST: Or the town, you're talking about.

RAMUNDO: The house I was born in, yes. It's part of this building that's called Lamia. That's the neighborhood, like we call here street.

SIGRIST: I see. Can you describe the house that you lived in as a child for us?

RAMUNDO: Uh, the house that actually, when I was a child, used to belong to the family, and it was three-room house. In other words, we had a small room, and then one big room which they had like a curtain divided so some of the children could sleep in back there and the other ones on the other side. And also they used to use it for a cooking space, although when you walked right in you didn't think it was a cooking space because in those days they didn't have the convenience they got today. That was just an ordinary corner with the, most of the smoke sometimes stayed in the houses, instead of go outside.

SIGRIST: Was it an open stove, like an open fire?

RAMUNDO: Yeah, open fire.

SIGRIST: I see.

RAMUNDO: And they had a large tripod that you put the, when the smoke had, most of it, you put the pot and cook on top.

SIGRIST: Like a brazier, sort of.

RAMUNDO: That's right, you got the right word.

SIGRIST: Did you have a bake oven of some sort, or . . .

RAMUNDO: Well, the bake oven was built on the outside, where we baked the bread and the other commodities that you raise. Because we used to raise figs, and when the weather was good there is sunny, although it was sunny, but sometimes we may get rainy, then they would boil these figs and then they would use it as black figs. Otherwise the fig itself gets white.

SIGRIST: You said they would boil the fig?

RAMUNDO: We would boil in, then dry them up. That would keep for the winter as we use it as food.

SIGRIST: Now, you said that you raised figs. Did you have a garden plot that your family kept, or . . .

RAMUNDO: No. This was, I wouldn't call, here we call it a garden plot, but they would use it for many purposes. We could raise wheat, corn, beans, peppers, name it, anything. Oranges.

SIGRIST: Was this a communal plot, though? Did lots of different families . . .

RAMUNDO: No, no. Each one owns their own. That was, see, this was a plot that my grandpa had bought it while he was, got married, originally they didn't have no land. After he got married he bought this plot of land because originally that part of the country was ruled by dons or what. That was way before Italy became one country.

SIGRIST: I see. And before we leave your house, what was your house made out of?

RAMUNDO: A lot of stone and lime and sand.

SIGRIST: I see. Let's talk a little bit about your family. What was your father's name?

RAMUNDO: My father's name was Frank or Francesco.

SIGRIST: And what did he do for a living?

RAMUNDO: Well, he was, we cultivated a little piece of land, and then also we had a donkey that we moved a little bit merchandise, or sometimes we would get dry wood and sell it.

SIGRIST: I see. So he was doing a variety of different things.

RAMUNDO: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Did you come from a big family?

RAMUNDO: Our family was of five. Actually was six, but one died as an infant.

SIGRIST: I see. What was everybody's name?

RAMUNDO: My father's name was Frank. My mother was Rafael, and my first brother was Joe, the second, I was John. Then my sister Antoinette, and again another brother, Salvatore, that you would call Sally. And the last one, Angelina, Angie.

SIGRIST: And what was, you said your mother's name was Rafael. How did she meet your father?

RAMUNDO: Well, the way they met at those days, you see, if they was, you're supposed to have a dowry, and sometimes those weddings was arranged. You have a sister, I have a sister. And the parents would try to negotiate, although the girls and boys knew one another since birth, but still sometimes this wedding was matched up, and so my mother was Rafaella Novello, see. And she had a brother, and so my dad had a sister named Maria and so they negotiated, they just worked together, and they married. And that way if they had a lot of money the bride had to bring such dowry and the man who would marry also would have to guarantee that the dowry was, a guarantee that he would not blow (?), or . . .

SIGRIST: Do you know what your mother's family gave as a dowry?

RAMUNDO: Like I say, they exchanged, accepted, the only dowry then they bring along is kitchenware and clothes for bed and their own wear.

SIGRIST: Domestic things.

RAMUNDO: Domestic things. See, there was no exchange of land because they had a little bit, and my father's side had a little bit of land, so each one of the land kept

their own land. But whenever, those days, if they both had a lot of land, then the man would expect some of the land for dowry.

SIGRIST: I see. Can you, let's talk about your mother a little bit. What did she look like?

RAMUNDO: Well, my mother was much lighter complected than my dad. And she was about, I would say, about five feet two or three, more or less, like that, because in those days nobody measured one another. And plus those days until my generation, especially up in the countryside, very few went to school, so neither one of the two knew how to read and write.

SIGRIST: I see. Did your mother work at all?

RAMUNDO: Yes.

SIGRIST: She did?

RAMUNDO: Yes, she worked very much. Not only the housework, taking care of the children, but work in the land, because all the land we had, or if you rent the land, there was no, uh, machinery or other means to cultivate land. Because the hillside is too steep and it all tears it that you cannot use mechanical force.

Everything is done by hand.

SIGRIST: So everyone had to chip in.

RAMUNDO: Yeah, everybody, children and all. Just like myself, since all the children, and we was going to school then because then the law came that everybody should went to school. Soon as we came home, there was always a chore to do, and we would say in the summertime when it's most of the work to be done, well, the children would gather grass to feed the stock, because no grazing place for, any stock you had was all hand-maintained. Then you got figs together. You got olives, which we produced quite a bit, olives that we make oil out of it. And the children, when they are four years old or younger, as soon as they can tell the difference from dirt and food, they have a little basket and says, the mother or another older one says, "See who can fill the basket first." And that was our play. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: I see. So everyone had to pull their weight. Let me ask you a question about your mother again. Was she a good cook?

RAMUNDO: A very good cook.

SIGRIST: What was your favorite food that she used to make?

RAMUNDO: Well, like I said, most of our cooking and eating was vegetable. We had very little meat.

SIGRIST: Why is that?

RAMUNDO: Well, because the meat was, in the first place, was scarce, and very expensive. Like, we used to say we fed a bull a year and that was sold, and it was, meat was going to the bigger city, and very little meat was butchered in that little town where we lived. Later on then they started butchering maybe one a week, and that was more for the people that was more well-to-do.

SIGRIST: So what kind of vegetables? How were they prepared?

RAMUNDO: Well, vegetables, now, we had cabbage, string beans, you name them. Escaroles, all this stuff, and then you have dry beans and all that.

SIGRIST: And you said you dried figs.

RAMUNDO: You dried figs. That we eat them on the, that's another word that's desert. (he laughs) And if you were hungry you will eat the figs during the day or something like that, because that's the only thing you

would be able to get, living out in the field like that.

SIGRIST: It's a very healthy diet.

RAMUNDO: Very. That's very seldom we were sick. In fact, I didn't know a doctor, that's right, till I came to this country.

SIGRIST: Interesting.

RAMUNDO: The only stuff we had trouble that was during World War I when they had the, what they, I forgot now the name of it they gave it. I know it was not the Spanish fever.

SIGRIST: Cholera?

RAMUNDO: Like a cholera, and a lot of people died during that time.

SIGRIST: Did you have any relatives who died?

RAMUNDO: We was fortunate. Real close, none. That was my mother's side family and our family. The only one died, but she died before, the war was my aunt that would have been the wife of Nicola Novello that when he exchanged, he only had one daughter with this, and

he remarried again and then he had a good large family, and she lived to be very mature age. In fact, they emigrated to South America.

SIGRIST: That's interesting. Were you a religious family?

RAMUNDO: Yes, very religious.

SIGRIST: Was there a church in town?

RAMUNDO: Yes, we had churches in town. We, not, the two closest churches was, where we lived, was one within about, oh, I would say maybe a quarter of a mile. No, less than that, way less. And either one was about the same distance to walk. But then we could walk to Fascaldo, which was, we called the main town.

SIGRIST: I see. Let's, describe Christmas for me, when you were growing up.

RAMUNDO: Oh, Christmas, a very joyful thing. We make like what they call the grotto, or we make like a, I would call the home that they would have, like the birth of Christ . . .

SIGRIST: Like a creche.

RAMUNDO: And they make a little, we call it presepio, that the

name here . . .

SIGRIST: The manger, the manger.

RAMUNDO: The manger, that's right.

SIGRIST: And you had one of these in your house or in the church?

RAMUNDO: Well, in the church was more bigger, but most all, everybody had a little thing in their home, too. Very small, though.

SIGRIST: Now, do you remember a special dinner or a special party or something?

RAMUNDO: Oh, yes. At the Christmas every family, even the worst one, they tried to have something special, which are made like doughnuts, but their taste is more delicious, out of white flour. And then you let them raise like bread, and then fry it, and then a lot of, we had more practical or available sugar, they would have made different kind of cookies or thing like that. But our special stuff was always homemade like these doughnuts, fried. And our dinner, then, we would have sausage because it was Christmas there, it's in the wintertime like here. See, we have the

four seasons. Even at the foot of Italy, which is considered south part and hot, but it could get hot as you wanted, but we never felt the heat because the breeze from the ocean, you would go on the shade of a tree and it was just so wonderful.

SIGRIST: Just a nice temperature.

RAMUNDO: Oh, wonderful.

SIGRIST: Did, now you said as you got older you went to school.

RAMUNDO: I started school when I was, there, in those days, we started at six years old.

SIGRIST: So there was one school in town.

RAMUNDO: Well, in our community, see, they had one school in our community, but when you go to the town in Fascaldo, they had more than one school. They had a high school also. But, see, our home town was just, what do we call here, grade school, but it was only three years. And anyway, I didn't have no more opportunity than three years to go to school because World War had started already and . . .

SIGRIST: I see. Well, tell me, just talk a little bit about

what it was like to go to that school in the little town.

RAMUNDO: Oh, I enjoyed to go to school, and everybody, in fact, there were very few of them that didn't like it. And the teacher was so lovely.

SIGRIST: Was it one room, or did you have . . .

RAMUNDO: One big room, and they, and she taught from the first grade to the third grade. And sometimes they were mixed, see, because, you see, you can't graduate all of them, and she would teach them.

SIGRIST: Now, you said you were in school for three years.

RAMUNDO: For three years.

SIGRIST: And then did you start working?

RAMUNDO: Well, full time, because you see although I loved to go to school, but while I was going to school I would get home and I had to do my chores, to do it. Because everybody had to do it to make a living, but then it became harder and harder because my dad, you see, we built a new home then, and we had a few debts.

SIGRIST: So you had moved, you had built a new home.

RAMUNDO: Yeah. We were with about four or five hundred, no, less than that, about four hundred feet away from the old home to our new home.

SIGRIST: I see. So close by. You didn't go very far.

RAMUNDO: No, no. Well, the land is very scarce and it's a hillside and they tried to always save the best for cultivation. And that's why those tribes that they moved years and years ago, most of the towns were built on the hillside or on top of a peak or a hill.

SIGRIST: To keep the best land for . . .

RAMUNDO: For cultivation.

SIGRIST: Well, let's, why did you want to come to America? What was it about America that made you want to come here?

RAMUNDO: Well, the problem, not what induced the need to come to America, the problem was that practically everybody would try to emigrate from there because the scarcity of food, no matter how hard you worked, you never would have enough food for the whole year and you would have to try to buy, and it was very scarce. In

fact, practically impossible.

SIGRIST: So the quality of life was very poor.

RAMUNDO: Very poor.

SIGRIST: So let's start talking about the whole process of getting you to America. Who, how did you go about . . .

RAMUNDO: Well, this happened. After World War I my brother was called in the army at sixteen.

SIGRIST: Which brother was this?

RAMUNDO: Joe.

SIGRIST: Joe.

RAMUNDO: Joseph. And the, I had to quit school also because my dad, just before the war started, we had just completely built this house, and left for South America in hope to make a little money to pay the debts.

SIGRIST: Your father went to South America.

RAMUNDO: Right.

SIGRIST: I see.

RAMUNDO: And right after the World War, my brother was released from the army. My dad also, my uncle, which was with him in South America, they all came home, and there was a big festival. Now, during that time of the war my brother corresponded with this young girl, because it was about his age, that was the daughter of my uncle Nicola and Maria that married and my mother married my father.

SIGRIST: So this was his cousin.

RAMUNDO: That was his first cousin. So corresponding during the war they became affectionate for love. Naturally, you're in the army and something happened. So when he came home he thought, well, he says, "Well, let's finish this love. Say, want to get married." And both families, not only was against the law, but both families, which was first cousin both ways through ladies and man, totally objected and said, "That's impossible." Well, there is so many way you can do there, so many girls. Because during the war a lot of death, and right away, soon they came home and all tried to emigrate because there was no way to make a

living. They says, "It's impossible for you. Why don't you pick somebody else? Or emigrate." And at that time, our cousin also was named Frank Trotta, he had an uncle which was uncle also to us in Ambridge, Pennsylvania.

SIGRIST: So you already had relatives who were here.

RAMUNDO: In the Pennsylvania. Another uncle, also, which that was more close. Both lived in the same place in Pittsburgh. Not Pennsylvania, I take it back, that word, it has to be correct. In Pittsburgh, Ambridge, Pittsburgh.

SIGRIST: So these uncles were corresponding with you back in Italy.

RAMUNDO: In those days. And so our cousin Frank wrote to his uncle to sponsor him. Because in those days you only need somebody to sponsor you. And being that my brother was in love, but at the same time the family refusing or totally against it, at the same time the girl must not have been so much truly in love, she turns around and marries another young man. Therefore my brother decided to, with his cousin Frank, that they both were in the army, says, "Well, let's ask the

uncle for both sponsors." So they did, and in no time they left for this country in April 1921, and they landed in Ambridge, Pennsylvania.

SIGRIST: Did they live with your uncle when they came here?

RAMUNDO: In Pennsylvania. But right after the war, which that was a city all steel industry, the war stopped, the industry stopped. So for two months they stayed there and no way of finding work. But Frank Trotta also had a first cousin in Cincinnati which was tailor. And at that time the tailor industry in Cincinnati was very, very progressive. So, and also told, which his name was also Frank and his wife Theresa, if they could come to Cincinnati and said, "I have cousin Joe." Which this family did not know my brother, although they knew my parents.

SIGRIST: You have this amazing network of family here, cousins and uncles.

RAMUNDO: So he say, "If you could bring along, why not? Bring him along with you." So they left Ambridge and came to Cincinnati. Frank landed in the tailor shop as a presser. My brother, he wasn't that lucky during that period of time. But he saw also there was very

progressive in tailoring. He wrote to me, to the family, of course, in Italy, and he says, "If you go to the tailor and learn how to sew, here we have a good chance of progress." And not only that, he was thinking not only of me but also my cousin Benny. That was also a first cousin of us to come. And at the same time he made the sponsoring papers which were necessary.

SIGRIST: By this time he was more established.

RAMUNDO: Well, he was here only a few months because, see, they only stayed two months in Ambridge.

SIGRIST: Then went to Cincinnati.

RAMUNDO: Went to Cincinnati. And right away soon they got there because I wanted to learn how to sew, and within only a year, because he was here, he left Italy in April, and I was here in September the following year.

SIGRIST: So in Italy, how did you go about learning how to sew?

RAMUNDO: That is, we used to have tailors that would sew for all, everybody, around there. Would take the measurement, and you bring them the material, or they would sell you the material and make you clothes for

ladies and men. And some of the ladies done their own sewing, whoever had a machine. Because in those days that's when the machine started coming out, but most of it was all done by hand.

SIGRIST: We're going to take a break right now.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

SIGRIST: Okay. So you went to the local tailor in Italy and he taught you how to sew.

RAMUNDO: Right.

SIGRIST: And how did you get your money for passage?

RAMUNDO: My dad produced the money for me to come to this country, and my brother, soon as he started work, although it was a very slow process, because when you first start you don't make much money.

SIGRIST: You're talking about your brother in Cincinnati.

RAMUNDO: My brother sent some money also from this country.

SIGRIST: I see. Were you excited about coming to America?

RAMUNDO: Oh, yes, very. Because, like I said, at that very

time, everybody that could emigrate, they would. Or to the great country, or North America, which was available to us, but not many at that time could afford to emigrate whatever they could, because they didn't have enough relatives to call them, but all the relatives that came, they always tried to bring somebody else. But to South America, where the emigration was more freely, they emigrated a lot over there.

SIGRIST: When you were learning how to sew in Italy, what did you know of America? What kind of image of America did you have?

RAMUNDO: Well, the only image we had from this school and people to talk about. Some would say it was a great country, but some that they came in this country at first, they used to take them to work on the railroad. That's when these two uncles in Ambridge came to this country. And also there was another one with them. The one was more on the delicate part, and it was too cold through the mountains where they were building a railroad from New York through the, to go to Pittsburgh and all that, then I found out later what they did. It was unbearable. And, in fact, there was

one man come back and he said, "Oh, that's terrible there. You can hardly live. If you don't be careful you die of starvation or cold, worse than over here. At least here you go to the wall, you pick some grass and you can eat it, but there you can't find nothing in those mountains." So he came home within a year. He said, "If I make enough money to go back, I'm going to see my wife. I ain't going to die here." But my uncles, they stayed on the railroad first, but then they was lucky because the war started and they got into Ambridge and they worked on the steel mills.

SIGRIST: I see. So you knew that it might be good and it might be bad.

RAMUNDO: Well, we didn't actually knew how good it was. But when my brother wrote, then we was very happy because if he said it's good, it's going to be good.

SIGRIST: I see. Do you remember saying goodbye? Was there a dinner or a party or something to say goodbye?

RAMUNDO: Well, the hardest thing is to part, because sometimes you don't know if you go back. And practically, yes, we have a special dinner, like spaghetti or a roast or something, or the ones who had. The ones who had it

don't even have that. But the tears are very, very hard to bear.

SIGRIST: Do you remember saying goodbye to your parents?

RAMUNDO: Oh, yes. Hugs and kisses all. Because although they said, "Don't forget us," well, we never would forget, but some of the people would say, which was happening, that they went to South America or to this country and they forgot what they had left back.

SIGRIST: What did you take with you? What did you pack?

RAMUNDO: Well, the packing that I packed is this little suitcase, we'd call it, that my brother had brought from Tripoli. Because after the war was over, not over, but Armistice, because Italy signed the Armistice before the war was over, they transferred into Tripoli which, at that time, was a colony of Italy. And when he came home he got this little suitcase made out of wood, and my dad smoked, only smoked in the evening, the pipe. And in Tripoli tobacco was in abundance, but the soldier was only allowed to bring enough cigarette or tobacco, would be enough for a month. And so he was wondering how could he bring some tobacco to his dad. So he filled the

bottom of this little suitcase with tobacco in a little package, and he put like a little false bottom on the top because naturally they would inspect it before they would enter Italy again from Tripoli. And they didn't find no tobacco, but we had a very good time, a festival, well, I'll say, when he came home. Because at the same time my dad and my uncle came back from South America.

SIGRIST: I see. So everyone was smoking all the tobacco.

RAMUNDO: (he laughs) They enjoyed. Well, good food, good wine, all went together.

SIGRIST: So you used this little suitcase.

RAMUNDO: And I used this little suitcase with me.

SIGRIST: And what else did you take? What did you have to bring with you?

RAMUNDO: Well, I had enough underwears, shirt, and with me I brought along to give to my brother, of course, that's what I was thinking of, I didn't have any friends, a little bit of cheese because we thought it was scarce here, and that's about all, because it's not a very big suitcase.

SIGRIST: Did you take anything as a memento of Italy with you,
or . . .

RAMUNDO: We didn't take nothing that was taken along. The
only . . .

SIGRIST: You just wanted to go.

RAMUNDO: And we just wanted to get out, to go and see the great
America. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Now, who is travelling with you? Yourself and your
brother?

RAMUNDO: No. Myself, my cousin Benny, and four more which I
don't recall their names.

SIGRIST: But they travelled with you.

RAMUNDO: All six together.

SIGRIST: What port did you leave from?

RAMUNDO: Naples.

SIGRIST: How did you get from the town to Naples?

RAMUNDO: By train.

SIGRIST: Now, had you been on a train before? Was that your first time on a train?

RAMUNDO: Well, the train, yes. I was on before because the train passes right alongside the coast where we live and goes to the tip where there they have a ferry boat which goes to Sicily. In fact, the first time I really had a long train ride that when I had to go to pass the Vista in Messina, which is on the other side of the strait, that was my first train.

SIGRIST: Actually, and you're sixteen at this point, too, so you're a little bit older.

RAMUNDO: Well, I was, well, yeah, because . . .

SIGRIST: You weren't a little child, is what I'm saying.

RAMUNDO: Yeah. That's all I was, sixteen years old. Because all this started, to go to the tailor, when I was fourteen and I only went to the tailor not quite a full year.

SIGRIST: So you arrived in Naples and . . .

RAMUNDO: No, first I went to Messina. Then from our home town we took, packed our little suitcase, went to Naples.

In Naples, again, we go through a shower. It's a common shower where all the men are in groups and shower and the ladies the same way. And then you go through total physical examination.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things did they do?

RAMUNDO: Well, they examined your body, see if you have any marks or any spots and all that. Heartbeats, oil, I mean, eyes, examinations, throat and all that things.

SIGRIST: So before you even got on the boat they wanted to make sure you were healthy.

RAMUNDO: Right, right.

SIGRIST: How long were you in Naples?

RAMUNDO: In Naples it was two days.

SIGRIST: Where did you stay?

RAMUNDO: In a hotel that's near the train station, and the, from the train station to the harbor is about, because I made so many times the trips, later then I knew exactly how far it is. It's about fifteen minutes with a bus or a taxicab.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of the boat that you came in?

RAMUNDO: The America.

SIGRIST: The America. What a great name.

RAMUNDO: It was. The only bad thing was, the boat was in, well, it wasn't much of a boat, it was a small boat. But since the first morning I got up I was sick all the way through to New York.

SIGRIST: Oh. Talk, tell me a little bit about the boat ride. What was it like for you?

RAMUNDO: For me the boat ride, my mind, I always was vivid and strong that I'm going to see my brother. But on the boat I could hardly eat anything. I would throw up continuously.

SIGRIST: What kind of things did they feed you?

RAMUNDO: Oh, they had good food. The bread was delicious, and the cooking was good. You could get anything you wanted. Cooking, anything. There was no limit, especially the sick ones. But the arrangement on a boat in those days, are not like you would go and sit down. They assign you a set of dishes to each six.

We were lucky we were six. And it was made out of tin with a little sack made out of cloth. And you have to clean, keep those dishes clean all the way through the trip. Now, they had started really a system, each one take a turn to wash these dishes. Well, when it was my turn, I never ate because anything I wanted I used to go to the kitchen, try to get a little bit of bread or something, and soon as I eat it I would throw up, and I would be laying on the top deck, any place I could lay down, because totally I was in misery. So one day they said to me, they said, "That's your turn to wash dishes." I said, "Yeah, but you guys lucky. Look. You guys eat and go around. I can't eat, and I didn't dirty the dishes." He says, "Well, we agreed." I say, "All right." Where you wash the dishes there was near the rail. They had a big sink there. Well, I acted like I took the dish from where we ate on the corner there and I was going to wash it. They walked away. (he inadvertently hits his microphone) Oh, pardon my movement of my hand.

SIGRIST: That's okay.

RAMUNDO: And I laid down near the rail. The wind came along, whoops! All the dishes went in the ocean. (Mr.

Sigrist laughs.) When they came and they says,
"Where are the dishes?" "Well, I'm sorry. I tried to
wash them, but I had to throw up and I left, and I
laid down. I throw up over the rail and I laid down.
I don't know what happened. The wind must have blown
them in the ocean." So they said, "Oh, gosh, now we
have to go to report them, and we have to go through a
lot of details." I says, "Well, I don't know what you
guys are going to do." So one go one way, another guy
goes another way. When they come back they had two
sets of dishes. Where they picked it up, I don't
know. It must have happened the same way mine was.
(they laugh)

SIGRIST: So how long were you on the boat? How long was the
trip?

RAMUNDO: Well, the trip was, the way I could figure it, I
wasn't so sure actually the timetable, but I think it
took fourteen days. I thought, at first, it was
twelve. But after we started to figure out the dates
the legal papers are it must have took around fourteen
days.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

RAMUNDO: Oh, that was the most exciting thing, especially when we came approaching land. It was real foggy that morning, and we tried to look for land, you know, all on the top deck. Finally we looked at the, we started to see the forms, and see if we get closer and closer we see that, and everybody started screaming, "Liberta! Liberta!" In Italian, see. So everything like that was very joyful.

SIGRIST: Were you feeling better by that time?

RAMUNDO: Oh, as soon as I started feeling the boat was on land I started to feel better. Sunday, Saturday night that we, the boat was already anchored to be, unload the passengers, they started process the paper, I felt good. I felt hungry, that I could eat anything, nothing bothered. But to my way of thinking I thought, and I still believe that American citizens must have got out on Saturday, because most of the other passengers, on Sunday we was on the top deck. We ate a big dinner. We called it spaghetti, it wasn't spaghetti, it was mastaccioli, but that long (he gestures), and oh, made very good. And we ate till the (?), all we wanted. And anything we wanted out of the kitchen we did. So we stayed on the top

deck for all Sunday. And while it was on top deck everybody looked out and we'd see people from the side of the boat sending fruits up. There was two girls on top there, which I didn't know first, but then in the island here, in this same building here, I happened to be all together again. So they sent some bananas up, and that's it, and we passed the day like that.

SIGRIST: Had you seen a banana before?

RAMUNDO: No.

SIGRIST: What was that like?

RAMUNDO: It was yellow, looking good, but I didn't taste it there because, you know, everybody, they sent just a few for the friends that they had, or that they themselves. And there was not enough, because most of the passengers were still on the boat.

SIGRIST: So now how did you get to Ellis Island?

RAMUNDO: Well, we come here to stop. Monday morning right away the thing is passed, everybody get their suitcase.

SIGRIST: What is the date? When did you arrive? What month was it?

RAMUNDO: That was in the beginning of September, I think.

SIGRIST: Of '22.

RAMUNDO: Of '22, yes.

SIGRIST: You're on the island and . . .

RAMUNDO: Now, coming up, the disembark, everybody formed a line following, and I happened to be the last on the line of us six. Because, see, being that I was a minor I had to have a sponsor also. But not, (?) was not signing any paper. But the, on the boat from Italy, their son, well, he's a minor, but my paper was totally perfect because no one objected, nor did the American Consul in Messina, nor in Naples, that they wasn't correct. So when we was coming along side I could still, in my mind, because that's why I was telling my son today that I could not see the column thing, like. We was coming up to a ramp, like, and as we came there was an inspector there. He would look at the paper and hand it right back to you and you keep on walking. I walked toward, I forgot if we entered this way or that way. They go that way and I come this way. All of a sudden I saw them go down.

SIGRIST: You're talking about the men that you were with.

RAMUNDO: Were with.

SIGRIST: Your cousin and . . .

RAMUNDO: Yeah. The cousin and the other one go down the ramp, and I walked about twenty feet away from the interpreter. I laid my suitcase down and run to him, and he motioned to me to wait, in Italian, because the line was still coming, see, the passengers. Soon the line stopped. I stayed right next to him. I wouldn't go away. I says, "Please, could I talk to them?" He says, "My dear son, they're gone." I said, "My, couldn't they at least let me see them so they can tell my brother that, why I'm here?" He says, "It's impossible." Although emotionally feel excited, but to cry, none. I walk back, because you got to go back. You throw the, a lot of people kept their suitcase with them, but I didn't care. I just throw mine in a pile with the rest because they throw them there, and I went back to him again. I said, "Look." And I asked, "What is for me to do? Why I'm here?" I said, "The paper was okay." No objection. Healthy-wise I was okay. He say, "Yes, but don't mean nothing

now because you have to go to school when you go to the United States." And I said, "What I'm going to do?" "Well, contact your brother." I said, "Well, he's in Cincinnati. He's not here. Otherwise he would be here." He says, "Well, if he can afford to come and get you, he would have to guarantee that he'll keep you to school. Otherwise, he goes to someplace there which is, they got the Italian consul in, make papers and able to guarantee you that they keep you in school for two years." So my brother, and the family of this Trotta, thanks to them, Frank Trotta and Theresa Trotta, they went to the Italian consul, and the Italian consul says, "Well, you should have some money to guarantee." I said, "Put anything, guarantee." Although the poor brother didn't have no money because he just started working very little, and some he had already sent to us. He says, "Well, put a thousand dollar or more. Whatever, we guarantee that he goes to school and he comes here." So naturally it took time.

SIGRIST: So how long? How long were you here while all this was going on?

RAMUNDO: Seven days.

SIGRIST: You were here for seven days.

RAMUNDO: Seven days.

SIGRIST: Well, let's talk a little bit about, what was it like to be at Ellis Island for seven days?

RAMUNDO: Well, the first day was, for me was a little bit worry part.

SIGRIST: Were there a lot of people here?

RAMUNDO: Oh, yes. It was practically full of all different nationalities, different things. But I was, not that I would sit on the corner after I'd left my suitcase there and I started walking around. The first thing attracted me was an Italian guy, and I started talking, which he was showing that he could talk English. And I asked him how was things. He says, "Oh, it's beautiful over there." But I said, "Why are you detained? Why are you here?" Because on the boat one guy lost his document, and he also was there. Somebody stole it, because you had to have so much money with you. See, I had twenty-five dollar in American check, in an Italian check but I changed it on the boat, plus I had also three hundred liras yet

left.

SIGRIST: So you had plenty of money.

RAMUNDO: I had plenty of money with me, but I would not tell them that I had the money. And I said again, I says, "Why are you here?" "Well, I'm a travelling salesman, and they find some fault and they detained me." Which he was in and out before our boat landed. So he says, "But I wish I would have had my citizen paper." See, the people, as soon as they get here they get out. I had to wait like you did. Of course, I was only a kid. I didn't care.

SIGRIST: Well, you must have, I mean, how were you feeling?

RAMUNDO: Still, in my mind, I say, "I'll be all right, see?" And I walked around and started looking around, and then I went back to him. We started talking about money. Well, then I wanted to learn how, the value of the money. And they showed me the penny and a nickel and a dime. That was the first day. At noon time the next day, this was then, we ate.

SIGRIST: Where did you eat?

RAMUNDO: In a hall. They had a big long table and we all, and

they served breakfast. The night before we had a dinner, because we had dinner on the boat Sunday, but in the morning we had coffee and anything else on the boat before we landed. And then in the evening we had a big dinner and we would go to bed. When we went to bed, here I wished I could go around and see if they still have a system. They had, some of the, no mattress but the, the bottom of the bed was made out of a little metal . . .

SIGRIST: Like springs.

RAMUNDO: Like a spring, but they're crossed like that.

(he gestures) And boy, I didn't rush for nothing because, well, the first night. That's the only thing I found was available when I went there. And I slept, and they only gave you a little blanket and that, boy, in the morning my, ooh, I says boy, this is worse than I was sleeping on the ground in Italy.

SIGRIST: Were there lots of people here while you were detained?

RAMUNDO: Oh, yes. Very many. I don't know. But pretty many, because it was a big, big table, long. And so in the morning then I look around. I says, oh, they got,

good. They got springs made out of web which does not hurt. And then they also had some tied-on poles so you could sleep on it like, what do you call it there?

SIGRIST: Like a hammock.

RAMUNDO: Hammock. I say, well, this is the first time that's lasted. As long as I'm here I'm going to see that I get one of these things to sleep on, which I did. Now, the next morning, naturally we had nice breakfast and all the eating. Then I started walking around. Here I find these two girls I had saw on the boat with tears in their eyes. And I says, "Why don't you get up and walk around? What are you doing that for?" "Ha," she says, "you talk like that because you're a man, but we girls, you know. That's the first time we saw our boyfriend from the boat was Sunday. Otherwise we only knew them by pictures." That was a wedding arranged by the family. The family knew one another. So the girl was supposed to come to this country and get married. But then was the, that's when the women's suffrage was adopted here and a rumor was going that a lot of men would get girls that they would promise to marry and then put them in this boarding house. And that was really terrible for

them, you'd hear all kind of rumors. You'd learn fast. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: So you were here for seven days.

RAMUNDO: Seven days.

SIGRIST: And you never lost hope.

RAMUNDO: Never.

SIGRIST: You were worried, but you didn't lose hope.

RAMUNDO: No hope.

SIGRIST: Now, was there any communication with your brother during those seven days?

RAMUNDO: Nothing.

SIGRIST: So how did you finally find out that you could leave?

RAMUNDO: Well, then all day long we would go for mail, because every day somebody was called and every time I would go to the interpreter. He said, "Nothing," he says, "just go sit down, do what you want to do." And well, Tuesday I met the girl, afternoon, we ate. Here comes a man that was selling apples and he was selling a nickel apiece. But there was great, big red

delicious, and being that I was raised in the country I loved fruit and I bought one. It cost a nickel. I already learned the money. And every day I got that.

So talking to this salesman, he talks English.

Wednesday I still take him around, walking around, and walk to this, see these girls again, and they had a telegram that the boys had sent to them, but it was written in English. The, this guy, I said, "Come on.

This guy can talk good English. We'll show him."

They came. He looked at it. He opened his suitcase because he always kept his suitcase with him and he took a book. I says, "Well, I thought you could read in English. He looked at me, I said to the girl,

"Give me." I took the telegram back from them and I said, "Let's go with me. I'll show you." Because I

used to go to the interpreter every time I had a chance. He looked at me, said, "What can I do for you today?" He always had a smiling question. I said,

"Oh, it's nothing for me. It's for these girls." So

he told him. He says, he read the telegram and explained to them. He says, he reads, "Saturday you will get married here. Then you'll be free to go."

And naturally the girl still was in tear, and I ask him, I says, "You know," I says, "what's going on.

The girls just can't smile no more. They're worried they're going to put them in this boarding house."

"Oh, no," he says. "We know there's rumors like that, but not when things, this is illegal, and you're going to be married here. And if somebody should try to do anything to you, even your own husband which you'll be married here legally, you just run to a policeman or any place, and you'll get a lot of help." And the reason I knew all that because with one girl, she went to California for a couple of years. We used to send postal cards at Christmas.

SIGRIST: I see. I see. Now, Mr. Ramundo, we need to get you off of Ellis Island fairly quickly, so just explain to me, your brother sent you a letter to Ellis, and what did it say?

RAMUNDO: Well, he told me that, no. The letter did not come direct to me. The paper came.

SIGRIST: Yes.

RAMUNDO: Through the office, because on a Monday morning, like every other day, we used to present ourselves for mail. And as soon as they call your name, they would say, "Baggage." But we used to call them, "baggage,"

because we didn't know how to pronounce it. And as soon as he called my name, he say, "Get your suitcase, boy." You run like a horse to grab your suitcase and run to get out.

SIGRIST: I see. So you must have been excited.

RAMUNDO: Very.

SIGRIST: Now, did your brother come to Ellis to get you?

RAMUNDO: No. My brother and our relative, this already happened. I went to New York. I missed the train direct to Cincinnati. So they put me on another train, which I changed in Pittsburgh. That I found out later. And when I got to Cincinnati, my brother and the relative already had left home because the stationmaster told them, he says, "There are no more trains from Pittsburgh, I mean, from New York. You've got to wait till tomorrow." But I had to spend all night again in that station. That worried me a little bit, too. I said oh, gosh, this never end. But early in the morning, soon as daylight . . .

SIGRIST: Where did you sleep in the station?

RAMUNDO: On a bench.

SIGRIST: On a bench. Did anyone, did a policeman give you any hard time?

RAMUNDO: Nobody. In those days you could. Anyway, in the station I couldn't sleep anyway because every, maybe every couple of hours or an hour I would go to the ticket office there, which they used to have a ticket man there all the time. He would say, "Go sit, go sit." Soon as it got daylight he gets a taxicab and he told them, because I just figured in my mind later, the explanation. Because as soon as we got to the address, 111 Pitt Street, he stopped and I get out. He gave me the little suitcase, and I gave him a dollar, and he took thirty-five cents and he gave me the other money back, but he waited till I knocked at the door to see if I was at the right place.

SIGRIST: Okay. Just pause for a moment, please. (break in tape)

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist at Ellis Island. We are about to begin Tape Two of the interview with John C. Ramundo,

who came from Italy in 1922 when he was sixteen years old. Mr. Ramundo, let's talk about what it was like to adapt to America. You arrived in Cincinnati. You arrived in Cincinnati to your brother's.

RAMUNDO: I thank you. As I stated on the other, I knocked at the door at 111 Pitt Street. My brother was the first one to appear on the front door. We hugged and kissed. And then the taxicab left to his ways and that morning we had a little chat, but everyone left to go to work because just was the time for them to go to work.

SIGRIST: This was early in the morning.

RAMUNDO: Early in the morning.

SIGRIST: Did your brother look different to you?

RAMUNDO: No, because he couldn't change much. It was only a year in time. Except dressed different, but looks and things were the same.

SIGRIST: Well, you say he dressed differently, how would he have dressed in Italy versus how did he have dress in America?

RAMUNDO: Well, see, although to go to work, see, he didn't find work to, like, inside. He almost was dressed like we worked out in the country because he found work, worked on the street, which was, at that, which still is, we used to call Eastern Avenue, and he was showing me where he worked because the following year he was lucky enough to find work in the tailor shop with this relative that's, again, Frank Trotta and Theresa.

SIGRIST: So did he get you a job right off the bat?

RAMUNDO: Soon I came in this country, naturally, the guarantee was that they had to keep me in school.

SIGRIST: Oh, in school, right.

RAMUNDO: And right away the same week we went to the Board of Education with a lady that she knew well English, writing a little bit English, also, and her children. Which Theresa Trotta, the poor lady, did not know how to read and write.

SIGRIST: This is your aunt.

RAMUNDO: Uh, my cousin.

SIGRIST: Your cousin.

RAMUNDO: And yet her husband knew a little bit Italian, but to read and write English he didn't either. But this lady, which lived in the house also, renting a flat, was pretty much more advanced. We went to the Board of Education, got a permit. So the following Monday, soon the week was over, I went to work where Frank Trotta was working with them. And I worked there for six months at nine dollars a week.

SIGRIST: And was this doing tailoring?

RAMUNDO: Tailoring, the same job that I had in Italy, that I learned. And I tried to progress, learn every day. But, at the same time, I never missed a night of going to school, although at that time the following year that I got to this country, that is, one winter we stayed with them, then we find a flat very near them and we stayed us three together. My cousin, and the cousin, also, Frank Trotta, and we lived like that. Made our own cooking, our own washing, and also scrubbing the steps every fifth, because there was five families in the building, every fifth week we had to scrub the steps from the third floor all the way down to the first floor. (he laughs) And every other week from the second floor to the third floor,

or the third floor to the second floor.

SIGRIST: Now, when you started working, of course, you don't speak English. What was it like?

RAMUNDO: Well, the, they all talk Italian.

SIGRIST: Oh, so, I see. In the shop everyone was Italian. Was this an Italian neighborhood that you moved into?

RAMUNDO: No, no. There was very few Italian families in those days because the, most of the emigration got there was from all different towns. And the, those Italians that they came as tailors, they all landed in the tailor shops, which the tailor shops was progressive.

So no matter which way you went, they was Italian and you could talk. But I did love the English language, so after six months, if I stayed there, I went to work with somebody else. The first week I made almost three times as much as I made the first week.

SIGRIST: Doing tailoring?

RAMUNDO: Tailoring. That's when I started progressing. Not only going to night school, but trying to advance in my tailoring, because when I came from Italy I only knew how to sew. I said I was a tailor but I was no

tailor. I was just an ordinary citizen that I could sew like that. And here, then, all the machines were electric, and during those six months, though, not only was I going to night school but I tried to advance my tailoring and right away I made friends, ladies and men, and the first thing I got to be real friendly was a young lady that she was working on an electric machine, and I asked if she would teach me how to run the machine. Although I was week work, I was so much a week, they was piece work, how much they made they would get.

SIGRIST: I see. Let's talk a little bit about how you learned English, because you are going to school so, I mean, that, I'm sure, is helping. But tell me, in your own words.

RAMUNDO: My words was that I didn't care what the pronunciation was or what. If I would hear a word, I would try to re-use it. And a funny thing, this girl that she was showing me, she was an English girl.

SIGRIST: Do you know what her name was?

RAMUNDO: That I forgot because I was only six months, and things passed fast through your head.

SIGRIST: Well, it was a long time ago. (they laugh)

RAMUNDO: A long time.

SIGRIST: So anyway, she was English, or she was American.

RAMUNDO: Yeah. An American girl. And one guy was Italian. He thought he could talk good English, but I found out he didn't know much at all because I was going to school and I wanted to learn fast. But he didn't. And he told me to tell him a dirty joke, a dirty word, and I did. She laughed at me and she says, "I know you don't know what it means, but I explain to you." And she did. I never used that word again. (Mr. Sigrist laughs) But the following week when I went to work I told them because, you see, I was going to school. I couldn't make a good sentence, but I could get the words together, and I said to him, "Look, sunshine, bridge, jump off." Then I told him in Italian. I got kind of worked up. I says, "Look, don't tell me those kind of words because I was not taught to talk like that. You're a pig." He says, "Well, I thought that was funny." "You think it was funny. It's not funny for me." I thanked the girl and she's going to show me, you here are in a few weeks or months I teach you

how to talk English. (he laughs) Which I did. That's how I did. Because I'll never forget the two teachers. Their name, vivid in front of my eye, which one gave me, although belonged to the Board of Education, but she signed her name and gave it to me for a present. And when she would say the word, she says, "Walk to the door. Get up." And she would take you by the hand and walk to the door and put my hand on the table. See, oh, she was so explicit that you just couldn't forget unless you didn't care, but I did.

SIGRIST: But you wanted to learn.

RAMUNDO: I wanted to learn. I loved this country. Because I says this, right away, as soon as I got here I started to understand good what it was. I said this is the only land in the world that gives you the opportunity and freedom as it is.

SIGRIST: Did your brother learn English? Did he speak?

RAMUNDO: Yes, he spoke. But being he was older he took more responsibility. He came to school, but he didn't learn as much as I did because I was more younger and more enthused. I really wanted school.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Talk a little bit about your religious life once you moved here. Now, of course, you're a group of young men sort of living together. Did you keep up the strict religious beliefs?

RAMUNDO: The religion, very much. In fact, there was an Italian church which now is not there any more, but they moved it, switched it with another one, but they called the Italian Sacred Heart Church and the first year we was going down there, many times we used to walk, which was about at least two-and-a-half miles.

SIGRIST: Were services in Italian?

RAMUNDO: In Italian. That priest was an Italian. But of course he could talk English too. But the sermons was in Italian. And I started to go pretty steady. And then in there they used to serve dinners. They used to cook and try to make a little money, I guess, for the benefit of the church. And I think, I don't remember exactly if it was the second year or the third year I was here and right away they invited me to help on it because the lady would make all the stuff by hand. Spaghetti, they used to roll them by hand, and in those days you hear now it's ravioli.

The lady used to roll the dough by hand, make ravioli, and sell them. And he says, "You gather the dish on the tables." To help, busboy. Because I was so small, I'm still small. But I grew up a little bit more after I came here at sixteen. And I helped there. Then a few years later, of course, then I could talk good English because I kept the school pretty good. They put me in the kitchen, I helped cook, and that's what I, I still, now my children do help a little bit. My nephews that came from Italy also landed the helping cooking the spaghetti at this festival. This festival is still going, do it twice a year. And they serve over three thousand people from seven to eleven thirty in the morning till seven o'clock in the night.

SIGRIST: Now, were you lonely for your family?

RAMUNDO: Yes. If I would say no it would be mean because we was very close and we never, at any time, abandoned, my brother and I, our family.

SIGRIST: So were you writing to them?

RAMUNDO: Writing, plus we sent money.

SIGRIST: Now, did any of them come over?

RAMUNDO: We were trying to, but the only one we could have brought here, because I got my citizen paper, right five years after I was in this country.

SIGRIST: Oh, very quickly.

RAMUNDO: Oh, yes. That's why I say I love this country.

SIGRIST: Tell me about how you felt when you got your citizen's papers.

RAMUNDO: Well, in fact, they invited me. They says, the teacher says, "Do you mind to say a few words when we get that?" Because in those days it was pretty big classes, and they give us special lunch to the class. And says, "Do you mind to say a few words because the judge will be there and all that?" I said, "Not at all." I says, "But I don't want you to make it too long." "Oh, no," I said. "I can make it as long as you want." She said, "Oh, I'll give you five minutes." I said, "Oh, I don't need five minutes what I wanted to say."

SIGRIST: I see. So was that a big moment for you when you got your papers?

RAMUNDO: Very. Oh, yeah, everybody. That I could vouch for anybody. In those days anybody became a citizen if they was, and they had to work hard, too. They had to learn all the amendments. Not, of course, I did learn them all by heart. (he laughs) I did know all of them, but you had to know a lot of the answers that the judge would ask you.

SIGRIST: Do you remember if your whole class was Italian, or if you had all different nationalities?

RAMUNDO: No, it was mixed. Different nationalities, always mixed.

SIGRIST: I see. That's interesting. Well, I guess, as we wind down here, let me just ask you, did you go back to Italy?

RAMUNDO: Yes. I went back in 1931, which . . .

SIGRIST: Your parents were still living?

RAMUNDO: Oh, yeah, the parents, the family was, my sisters, one was married, and my brother was young yet, but it's in this country now.

SIGRIST: Did you see, when you went back in '31, did you see

Italy differently when you went back?

RAMUNDO: Oh, totally different. Everything gets changed, because then my mother and father was in better condition because, well, although they built a house, you know, on the land that my grandpa had left to my dad, because they shared, they divided up the land in four of them, because there was four children left, because my grandpa died young. But we bought a big piece of land for them to enjoy it while they was living.

SIGRIST: And nobody came back with you when you went to visit?

RAMUNDO: Well, my dad wanted to come, but I said, "Oh, don't be." I said, "You don't need to come there, since you was already in South America." And you know the country." I said, "You didn't never call the family there. You see, now we all divided." I says, "You is here, there." But at that time he says, "Well, if, I hope some day you're going to see South America. Then tell, if I would be living, you would tell me why I didn't call the family." Which is true, then, after World War II, my two sisters had married in Italy, they went to South America. And I went to, my

brother, which didn't go back to Italy. We went to South America because my younger sister was born just the day he left Naples. And my brother did not know her, only by pictures. So I said, "Look, before you die, or before we die," I said, "let's go meet your sister in South America." Because he didn't like to travel, especially boat. I was sick all the way through. But the way he was telling me and other people was with him, I got up once in a while, but he never got up. He says we had to bring him a piece of bread or something because he was so sick and he did swear. He said never go back on the ocean, and we never did. Then see, we went to South America on a plane. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: You probably never wanted to see another boat.

RAMUNDO: No, I didn't. Uh-uh. I went back in 1931. See, when I tell you, you could add that if you wanted to, I got just sick the same way the first day. The guy says, the guy says, "Look. You're not travelling to be sick. You're travelling to have a good time. The reason why you've been sick, you're afraid of the water." I said, "Impossible. I make you a bet. If you eat continuously, you throw one up and eat again,

I bet you'll break it." In one morning I made the bet, and I ate six times, six times I throw down, and the seventh time I never throw up. On the trip, any time I went, because I made two other trips, and then I made the trips . . .

SIGRIST: So it worked.

RAMUNDO: It worked.

SIGRIST: Isn't that funny. Well, I guess my final question for you, Mr. Ramundo, is, and actually you've sort of said this to me through the whole interview, is did you make the right choice coming here?

RAMUNDO: Oh, yes, from the first day I thought that there was the best place in the world that anybody had the chance to come if they wanted to work and progress. But a lot of people maybe don't feel that way, but my conscious, it would be a sin if I would say that this country is not the greatest country in the world.

SIGRIST: Well, I want to thank you very much for coming out here to Ellis Island, and for donating the suitcase that we heard so much about.

RAMUNDO: I appreciate very much, and thank you a million for

EI-052/RAMUNDO

having me here. And I wished I could see these walls
like I seen it before.

SIGRIST: Oh. Well, thank you very much. It was our pleasure.
This is Paul Sigrist signing off for the National
Park Service.