

EI-535

EBETINO, FRED

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INTERVIEWER: CATHY NORTON

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ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Mr. Ebetino stutters and backtracks in his sentences at times.

ITALY, 1910

AGE 5

PASSAGE ON "THE CANARD LINE"

EBETINO: Yeah, I was, uh...

NORTON: Good afternoon. This is Cathy Norton for the National Park Service. I am student intern and bachelor's degree candidate from New York University's School of Continuing Education. Today is Monday, August 22, 1994, and I am in the recording studio of the Ellis Island Oral History Project with Fred Ebetino, who came to America from Italy in 1910, when he was five years old. Welcome, Mr. Ebetino. Why don't you begin by giving me your full name and date of birth, please?

EBETINO: Uh, I was Fred Ebetino, and my birthday's the 25th of February 1904, I was born.

NORTON: Where were you born?

EBETINO: I was born in Terilletzi.

NORTON: And could you spell that for me, please?

EBETINO: T-E-R-I-L-L-E-T-Z-I. 'Twas, uh, it was close to Bari, B-A-R-I, was the big town, and my dad worked for a Count Leoni, who was a big land owner, twenty-five thousand, or twenty-five hundred acres, where they grew all kinds of olives and fruits and nuts, and they, they, his father was a head of the gang of...they had all kinds of trees, nuts, and vineyards, and, and they were the pruners of all these thousands of trees, there, that they, that was quite an art over there that they prune trees, let them grow to a certain size, and then they, in order to get the best quality fruit that they could possibly get, and, uh... Of course, then he was, went to the army, and that was before he got married. I'm sorry. I'll get...maybe you'll want to ask that later.

NORTON: Tell me about the town.

EBETINO: Ma'am?

NORTON: Tell me about the town. Tell me about Terilletzi.

EBETINO: Terilletzi?

NORTON: Can you describe the town?

EBETINO: Well, I... My grandfather there or my wife's father [laughing] or my mother, mother's father, and it was a real nice town. It has a cathedral there and a highly, one of the real fine Catholic churches there. In fact, I still send some money over there to 'em for Christmas. And they have put a plaque up in the cathedral in honor of the Ebetino family. And then we later gave money for a new pew that they were changing that, and I still send some money over there to 'em for Christmas.

NORTON: Do you remember the name of the cathedral?

EBETINO: They, uh, well, it was the...

NORTON: We...

EBETINO: ...the Terilletzi cathedral.

NORTON: Okay.

EBETINO: 'Twas, uh, just about the...

NORTON: I'm sure we could look that up. Was your family...what was your religious life like with your family back home?

EBETINO: Well, yeah, we went to the Catholic Church there, and they... Then my dad, who came over, he came over in 1907, and we were in a section, like I say, a fruit growing section in southern Italy. And he was supposed to go to California, but on the way over, they were building the New York, New Haven, & Hartford [Railroad], and it went to Boston. They paid him such good wages because they knew a lot of the Italians were pretty good at rock cutting and stuff like that, and one would hold a big drill, you know, like that, and two with sledgehammers would pound on the drill to make holes for dynamite, to blast the rock for the rock bed for the New York, New Haven, & Hartford. And so he liked the town, and fortunate for me, it was right next to the golf course. [laughs] And I took a liking to the game. Just had sports in my blood, I guess. And they, I started out--I was too small to caddy--but I loved--oh, what was it--near the, where, not too far from where... So, we'd stand over there and

some of the golfers would slice it over that, and we'd run over and grab the ball and take it in and get a dime or a nickel or something because I was too small to caddy at that time. And then I graduated to, from caddying, and I used to run the lessons ball for the pro that... He liked me because I'd run, and the golfers would get to hit more balls, and so, he started me in the pro shop. That started, and they had two club makers at that time that manufactured the clubs right there in the pro shop. Of course, you could buy 'em. And you had to sand the shafts. They'd, and we started out learning to, after they sand 'em down, wet 'em and let 'em dry, and get the--how did the--veins as the club get that was kind of, you know, a growth in the, and rubbed that out, and it would leave a little indentation. And that's why they'd put this stuff over and made it... And then I got to playin' pretty good, and I'd have going favors because I worked with the pro and he wanted me, and I'd get to playin', and it was, I thought it was great. And fortunately for [laughing] me, that was my whole life. That was an off. I want to, the first pro job I had was in Port Washington, Long Island. And I was nineteen years old when I started in the pro. And at that, uh, Port Washington was, uh, Julius Fleischmann, the east man, had an estate there, and he has a nine-hole golf course.

And the second wife had two boys, nine and eleven, and I was hired to teach the boys and take care of the guests and oversee the golf course there in Port Washington. And, he, that's where I met the Prince of Wales. He invited the British polo team to use his field to practice on, you know, because the matches were in Westbury, Long Island, the English against the United States. And when Mr. Fleischmann didn't play with Lord Windburn, who financed the team, well, then I'd play when I was--my orders is see that he had players, somebody to play with, and we were playing number seven, and the Ford company had given the British polo team, they turned over six limousines with chauffeurs, that they took the... And we were playing number seven when the Prince of Wales, who was then about seventeen years old, come in the gate, and we were playing number seven right near the gate, and he come in the gate, and he wanted to talk to the, the Prince of Wales wanted to talk to Lord Windburn, and so we came over to number eight hole, and I wanted, asked him, "Sir," I said, "would you like to play these two hole?" And he said, "No," he said, "I'll just watch you." And so, that was my first great [laughs] shaking hands and being real--of course, he was real down-to-earth for, you know, most people to... And then he, his wife was the second wife to Fleischmann, and he had two boys, and

that's what he built that golf course for. And...

NORTON: Mr. Ebetino, I want to ask you about your father.

EBETINO: Oh, yes.

NORTON: Can you describe your father for me, his personality?

EBETINO: My father... My father came here in 1907, and then we came over in 1910.

NORTON: What was your journey like?

EBETINO: And then we were... Ma'am?

NORTON: What was your journey like?

EBETINO: Oh, it was terrible. We, like I said, we headed to the Azores and headed south to stay in warmer waters and stay away from the icebergs, see, because that's what happened to the... Ten months later, they built a super ship over in England that was supposed to be sinkable, that couldn't be sunk. Well, the ship was built with three keels. They had one keel, you know, the ship come down like that about a third of the way back. And then there was a wall on

both sides. There was another keel like this, another one here, with a vacancy up to the, just so high, so that if one keel got, hit an iceberg, then it'd have two that... But, what happened was the helmsman called the captain, he says, "Captain," he says, "there's this iceberg in our path." And here he says, "The hell with the iceberg. Full speed ahead." And that ship hit that first, hit that iceberg and got up on it, and by that time, it got to the opening and it shot up there... [laughs] it shot up there, and that's why the ship went down in an hour's time.

NORTON: What was the name of the ship that you traveled on?

EBETINO: The, uh... It was from the Canard Line.

NORTON: Okay.

EBETINO: And that was the ship that we come in to, here to Ellis Island. And the only trouble was, my dad missed the train coming from Rye, New York, in to New York City, and then coming down here. And so he had to stay here overnight before they, before he could claim us and get it...

NORTON: Did you travel with other family members?

EBETINO: Ma'am?

NORTON: Did you travel with other family members? Did other family member come over with you?

EBETINO: Oh, yeah. There was some, quite a few Italians from the same part of Italy, which were...

NORTON: Mm-hmm.

EBETINO: ...were on the Adriatic side. Then we went to Naples on the...

NORTON: Did you come here alone? Were you alone on the ship or was there family with you? Did you...

EBETINO: Oh, no. Nah.

NORTON: Your family was with you?

EBETINO: Yeah, yeah, see...

NORTON: Okay.

EBETINO: Three of us were born in, uh, Italy.

NORTON: Mm-hmm.

EBETINO: And my other brother--oldest brother and my sister--and then we had two others. In fact, you got one of my younger brothers, Michael Ebetino, on your thing that you shown, the donors, and I made a family donation, too. But that trip, we was a day-and-a-half longer than it was supposed to be, and it was just--even going south--it was just so rough, seemed like we had a head wind.... There was only one time that they allowed the people up on the deck, up on the top deck because it rolled so much, it was dangerous for people to be up there. They had to... And, of course, we were sick, and there was a lot of moaning and people couldn't keep food on their stomachs, and the smell was kind of bad, and they told us to eat all pickled stuff, sour stuff, and not eat any sweets at all. And, like I say, we were a day-and-a-half late than our schedule because of the rough waters. And so he claimed us, and then we went to Grand Central Station, and New York and picked up the train to, New York, then Hartford, we rode to--uh, that goes through Rye, where he was working at that time. And we got on that train and I--little, five, wasn't quite six--was, and I was

crawling between the seats and found a quarter. And I took it to my mother, I said, "Mom, look what I found." She looked at it, and says... My dad knew what it was 'cause he was already, says, "That's a quarter." She said, "Gee!" She says, "I heard that people say that they found money on the streets." And so we rode to Rye and made our home there and was there until I was eighteen and would've been nineteen the following summer. And that's where I first got my pro, first pro job, was at Sands Pointe with Julius Fleischmann. That was at Fleischmann East Club.

NORTON: Tell me how you felt when you first saw the Statue of Liberty.

EBETINO: Oh... [laughs] I'll tell ya, I never seen such an emotional [gets choked up] outbreak. People kissed each other, they kissed the boat, and they kissed each other, and there was--unbelievable, the emotion of that crowd. And, of course, he sent for us after he was... He came over in 1907, and in 1910, he sent us, uh, we came on the Canard Line into, from Naples to New York.

NORTON: Did you have to go through any medical examinations here?

EBETINO: Oh, yes. Yeah, oh yes, yeah. 'Cause they warned us to, said that, "Don't get sick or fever or cold. They'll send you back." And so my mother was very careful in keeping us, you know, so we didn't have any coughs or anything like that 'cause they warned us that they, if you had some sickness or if you had fever, you would de-, you were held there. A lot of people, they sent 'em back.

NORTON: How long did you stay at Ellis Island?

EBETINO: Well, we were there, uh... The boat got in there, oh, on the 10th of February--or January. And we were at Ellis Island for two days. We had enough money, and my dad was there to vouch for 'em and pick us up. And, but he [chuckles] missed one of the trains. He had to come into Grand Central Station, and then from there to come down here, and he got, he didn't get in there till afterwards five o'clock, and at that time, five o'clock was the deadline. And so he had to wait and stay around there and get a room and then came over the next morning and picked us up and...

NORTON: How were you treated here while you were staying at Ellis Island?

EBETINO: How'd they treat us?

NORTON: Yes.

EBETINO: Oh, they, we thought they were real nice to us, and... 'Cause my mother kept us, and, pretty well cleaned up, and, uh... And the boys, and we were warned not to get a cold or not to have any fever, so then they didn't have too much of a time getting us out and coming by subway to the big station, railroad station.

NORTON: And what did you think of Grand Central Station?

EBETINO: Oh, that was some'n. The trains come in from all directions. We went out on the New York, New Haven, and Hartford, which goes along the east, along the coast. It goes through Rye, and Port Chester was the last town in New York, and then you were in Connecticut. And that's what they were building, and that's the railroad line on each side. Before there was only two lines, and they built it, one so that they'd have the fast passenger train. They only stopped at certain bigger towns. And we was on that. And then they had the locals, where you got off at, there's different smaller towns between there and Rye.

NORTON: What was your mother like?

EBETINO: Well, she was [voice waivers] beautiful, and, a...

NORTON: How did she feel about coming to America?

EBETINO: ...hard worker. Ma'am?

NORTON: How did she feel about coming to America?

EBETINO: Well, she had her [chuckling] doubts, you know, especially because my dad had been, you know, he was in the army, and, before he got married, and went over there and fought in Ethiopia, and he almost got it. The, one of the natives with a bayonet caught 'im right across the--he dodged it, caught 'im there. And so they sent 'im back to Italy. It was a, kind of a bad wound, and it almost got this ri-, one eye of his. And we had a home there, and we bought the first home. It was three stories and an acre ground for eighteen hundred dollars. And mother and dad both liked to garden and stuff. And we spaded that acre ground by hand. We didn't have any plows or anything, spade that, hoed it. And we grew a lot of vegetables and stuff, and my brother and I, we had a little

wagon, 'bout like that. We'd fill it up with all of, all these vegetables, and sell 'em to the neighbors down through there, around different places, and... And mother was a hard worker. She baked all the bread, and 'course we did the [needlin' PH; variant of kneading?]. My brother and I did the [needlin' PH; variant of kneading?] of the bread. And we always do that on Friday, and bake enough bread to last us the week. And she'd always give us a piece of dough. And that's what--a pizza. First--and that was, you know, that was way back--and we'd flatten it out and put tomatoes and peppers and, and when we raised all this tomatoes, we, my mother, and they used to make sauce out of it. They'd boil it, you know, till it got about, you know, till the, uh... And she'd make round, you know, they were round rows, like, about, oh, about that thick and about eight or ten inches. And then she'd slice those, but she'd use a lot of, sponge with water, and keepin' it over. And it would build a crust on it. And that bread was fresh and good on Fridays as it was till the next Friday. And ev-, she was a hard worker and my dad was. We took our turns at the hard work, too. And, in fact, we had a little ground marked off that we used to do some spading before we went to school. And so they, a lot of people thought that our parents were mean to us, but I didn't. I didn't mind it. I didn't... And that's

what I was gonna say. We were making pizza before they ever [laughing] had any idea of it, you know, makin' it here in the States. And, my gosh, what a big business it turned out to be, that! Yeah, she'd put tomatoes and peppers and onion and tomato. She, we'd get a lot of the tomatoes and boil 'em, she'd boil 'em and everything and get the skin off of 'em, and then she made tomato sauce and put it in crocks, open crocks, and then put bay leaves on top of 'em to keep it. And we had three apple trees on the acre of ground, and we made cider and, made our own, and, uh, well, we, she was a hard worker and so was my dad. And we were work--I think today, if people made their kids [chuckling] work like we did, that they'd probably have 'em arrested for being, you know, mistreating these youngsters.

NORTON: Did your family speak English before they got to America?

EBETINO: Not, not before we got here, no. Then, we finally went to school, and they had a preliminary school where we lived for the first three grades, and then the Rye main school was about a mile-and-a-half downtown in Rye, just a short ways from the... And we didn't have any buses. We walked that mile-and-a-half to the school and walked back. And we had to go for a railroad. And there's kind

of a hi-, you know, it was a hill. And in the wintertime, when it was ice and snow, they had guardrails along that, and we'd walk, one hand on the guardrail and [laughs], going down and comin' up, almost the same thing. So, you know, we'd... I asked a lot of people about whether our mothers and dads were hard on us, but we didn't mind it.

NORTON: Mr. Ebetino, we're gonna pause for moment while our recording engineer flips the tape.

EBETINO: Okay.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

NORTON: Hi. This is Cathy Norton, and I'm speaking with Fred Ebetino, and we are on side two of our interview, on our interview tape. Mr. Ebetino, I'd like to ask you if you could tell me a little bit about your grandfather.

EBETINO: Yeah. Well, my grandfather, his name was Valerelli, and my dad come over here three years before we did. He came over in 1907. We come over in 1910. So, after we ate, we'd go to mother or take the kids, and we'd go over to my grandma's house, and grandpa would always get, he, in highchair, and I had to sit next to grandpa. And he,

he'd say, "Freddy," he says, "you're not gonna go to America, are ya?" I said, "Grandpa, no, I'm not gonna go to America." And boy, he'd feed me some good things, you know. Then when, when we got pretty close to the time, I'd gradually get away from the chair and sneak around and head for the door, and I'd get close to the door. I say, "Grandpa, I'm going to America!" "You little son of a gun, you!" [laughing] We'd go through that every time we'd go there, and he'd get me close and feed me the goodies, you know, and then I'd scoot around and get to the door and say, "Grandpa, I'm going to America!" "You little son of a gun, you!" he says. So, he was a wonderful old man, and, uh...

NORTON: Why didn't he want to you to come to America? Why do you think he didn't want...

EBETINO: I was named after him. Yeah, and, so he, his name was Valerelli, and we'd go there, oh, quite a few, two or three nights a week, and he'd, he said, "Watch him. Watch him sneak away and get over by that door." "Grandpa, I'm going to America" [laughing] "You little so-and-so," you know. I would go through that nearly every night that we'd go over there.

NORTON: Your family lived close to your grandfather's house?

EBETINO: Yeah, we didn't live very--because we walked, we had room, close to there. And, of course, too, I wanted to tell the reason why he came to the United States. I dunno whether you wanna put that separate, but anyway, would you want me, uh... That, uh... Let's see, I got my line of thought down and, uh...

NORTON: What did your grandfather do? What did your grandfather work...

EBETINO: He was a foreman with the Count Leoni. He owned twenty-five hundred acres. It was almost a grant because he was Count Leoni. And that twen-, they grew olives and grapes and nuts of all kinds. And then they would ship 'em from Terilletzi to Naples for shipment overseas, 'specially a lot of olive oil. And my grandfather and even my father, and they had, well they had a gang about five or six, and they were pruners. They pruned the trees, the fruit trees, got the most and got the best kinda fruit that you could possibly get, and his was well-wanted, this Count Leoni was. And he paid them, you know, a lot better than most Italians at that time because that was quite an art. But when he came, he came here in 1907,

and he was, like I told you, he was headed for California, but since they were buildin' the track and they were paying better, good wages to--you know, manual labor. So, we stayed there, and [laughing] I'm glad we did 'cause we...

NORTON: Now, when the family left Italy, and when you came with your mother and your family, did your grandparents see you off?

EBETINO: Well, they seen us off to the train in Terilletzi, I mean, Bari.

NORTON: Tell me about your train trip in Bari as you were coming to Naples to meet the ship.

EBETINO: Oh, yeah, well we was out say and things, was--between Bari and Naples, there was, we had to go along some mountains, and you look down there, and cows were [chuckles] about that big, and, horses and... And they would be shipped all over the...that the different fruits, and they, uh...

NORTON: How long did your train trip take? How long were you on the train from Bari to Naples?

EBETINO: We, well, Bari to Naples, we was on, uh, well, I think it was 'bout fourteen hours, I think it took the train to go there. And then we had to go there, and that's where we boarded the boat, and come through the Mediterranean and through Gibraltar, and that's where, like I told you, we had a--and the trip was just rougher, and it just--well, I told you before. Oh, do you want me to re-...

NORTON: What did you pack to take with you?

EBETINO: Ma'am?

NORTON: What did you pack to take with you?

EBETINO: Well, mostly it was, you know, just regular clothing and pants and shirt and we was lucky my mother was a pretty good seamstress. And she made our, you know, most of the clothes. The other stuff, why, we had to buy. And, uh...

NORTON: Did your mother take food with her?

EBETINO: Ma'am?

NORTON: Did your mother take any food with her on the journey?

Did she take any food?

EBETINO: Any food? Yeah, well, they would, you know, they'd make some, and then... It was all cookies and stuff that would last, you know. And 'course the trip was so rough. It was rough all the way. Like I say, we took a day, we were a day-and-a-half, a mo-, yeah, a day-and-a-half late comin' into here, into Ellis Island.

NORTON: Did your dad send you money?

EBETINO: Oh, yes.

NORTON: For the trip?

EBETINO: He sent us money. Yeah, he sent us American money, and changed into the lira, it was quite a lot, see, so we lived pretty good on... And he was only making a dollar and a quarter an hou-, a day! A dollar and a quarter a day. And they thought that was, 1907, that was big wages.

NORTON: Tell me about when you got settled in America with your father and you mother, you went on to be a golf pro. Can you tell me about your life, some of your accomplishments...

EBETINO: Oh, yeah, well...

NORTON: ...some of the people, interesting people that you've met?

EBETINO: Yeah. Yeah, there are, like I told you, that I lived close to the golf course. From a six-year-old on, I got to hang around, just hit the balls out. Then I got the caddy when you were about twelve, got the caddy. And, at, and then I would chase balls for the--well, the pro gave lessons, and I'd run out and get 'em, bring 'em back, and he always liked me because I would get the balls back, and the guys taking lessons were glad, too. They got to hit more balls. And then he liked me and he told me, "Would you like to work in the pro shop?" Had two club makers because the clubs, in those days, were all wooden shaft, and they would break, and then they had two club makers there workin' all the time, fixin', puttin' new shafts on clubs, makin' woods, and makin' sets of, matched sets of clubs for certain guys that wanted to spend a little more money. In fact, George Bush's wife was--they lived right acro-, about midway on the first green, first hole, up on the hillside lookin' down. And that was there. And then I worked there until I was--I

caddied and...

NORTON: Did you meet President Bush?

EBETINO: Yes, yeah.

NORTON: Can you tell me about that?

EBETINO: Yeah, well, I, we met General Bush--or President Bush. He wasn't president then at that time, but he was in politics, just startin' then, and... Very nice guy, and he went, and we were, we lived in Fairborn, Ohio, and when President Bush was runnin', he, you know, when he ran for presidency, we would, he was coming into Brookville, which was my wife's hometown, and he gave a talk, and we, uh, I was along the side of the rope line, and he came in from this way, made his speech, and then he, when he walked out, he walked out by the people, Elizabeth and I both got to both shake hands with him. And so he was one of three presidents that I had personal contact with.

NORTON: Who were the other presidents that you met?

EBETINO: Well, it was Bush and Reagan, and then, of course,

Eisenhower. See, I'd given Eisenhower, uh, played with him and gave him lessons, and, uh, but Eisenhower came when I was... Later, there was a job open in Dayton, and so I went, worked in Dayton and then got to work on Patterson, right Patterson Air Force Base.

NORTON: Was President Eisenhower a good student?

EBETINO: Uh, yeah. And I, uh, he came the right field, there in Dayton, and this colonel was showin' him around. At that time, the air corps wasn't a corps. It was a separate little...until the war started. So, he was here, Bush was, or Eisenhower, rather, was there to oversee what the, how the air corps was comin' along, and just to, and somebody, he liked golf, and somebody asked him, "Colonel," he says, "how's your golf game?" "Oh," he says, "That's pretty good," he said, "but my putting is stink'o," he says. "It's bad." And this Major told me, he says, uh, says, "We got a pro here that has a reputation for a pretty good putter. Would you," he says, "Maybe you oughta go see him." And they called me, and they said this Major called. "Say," he says, "Colonel Eisenhower is here. He's having trouble with his putting. When could you see him?" I said, "Well, when would he like to, me to come here. He can come whenever..." So, he did. He

came over, and we were on the putting green for about an hour, and got his putting straightened out. He was pickin' up the club too much instead of going straight back and straight through. And that helped him, and he, at that time, he gave me two dollars, and I [laughing] kept those two dollars for quite a while. And, then, of course, we met Bush. And...

NORTON: What was President Reagan like?

EBETINO: How...

NORTON: How did you meet President Reagan?

EBETINO: Well, he came to speak, in, in the Fairborn and the Green County, and Dayton area. And he was out there, and we, uh... He was... Let's see, the connection was there. Oh, I was on the Republican Committee in Dayton, there, to meet with him, and we had the part of the interstate, part of the high-, you know, the superhighway... And the thing--which is 275 now in Dayton--it stopped just about after you got to the field, there because people in Beaver Creek, the interstate had to go through some trees, and they didn't like the idea that, cuttin' them all down, makin' the highway through there. And so this went on

for about six years. And, you know, they kept, back and forth, and the mayor in Dayton, he wanted the interstate to come right through the town, you know, right through the city. And that's where it did. They put it to the... And the people hollered, they, after... We got down in Florida, people come down there, says, "That Dayton's the worst place." He was mayor, and he got 'em to ta-... Now, they built 675, and that's where I met with the, with Bush. And we met with him, and we talked to him about it, you know, that the shame that they can go ahead with this. And he said, "Well," he said, "I can promise you people that if Reagan was elected that we would see that it was done." And that's what happened soon as Reagan got in, and Bush was the vice-president, they started, he says, "It's darn shame," he says, "It'll co-, gonna cost about three times more to build it now than if we'd of built..." And, yet, you know, they put it right down through the middle of Dayton almost, yeah.

NORTON: Mr. Ebetino, your wife was telling me that you also knew Al Capone.

EBETINO: Oh, yeah, well...

NORTON: Can you tell me something about that?

EBETINO: Yeah, well, this was when I was down in Miami Beach. I'd go there with, in the wintertime, to keep up my golf and stuff like... And I was, uh, worked in the pro shop there, and, uh, starting. And Al Capone lived on, they called "Star Island" between--"Causeway"--between Miami and Miami Beach. And he had a big fence around there, and it was about, I dunno, but thick enough that men could walk through there and guard. They would guard it. And then there was the Capone boys, there was three of 'em, and the others, they played together. And you wouldn't've known, you know, they're real gentlemen. And they come in the pro shop and buy balls by the box and toss 'em around. And then there was Jack McGurn. He and this girlfriend, they'd play golf all the time. And one period there, in February, we missed 'em. He wasn't, we didn't see him or his girl. So, the talk around there was somethin' was gonna happen in Chicago. And it did. That was when he got 'em all in the garage and mowed the opponents that was tryin' to ruin his beer business in Chicago.

NORTON: Mr. Ebetino, I'd like to ask you... You brought a lot of clippings we were talking about before we began our interview, and I wonder if you could tell me a little

bit about your career as a pro golfer and just tell me a little bit about the articles that you brought here with you today.

EBETINO: Yeah, these are just a small few, and, but, uh, but the, uh, I... I don't have my glasses, if you could...

NORTON: I see we've got something here from *Ripley's Believe It or Not*.

EBETINO: Yeah, yeah.

NORTON: And can you tell me what this is about?

EBETINO: Well, that was a, see, I shot my age, seventy. And I had a seventy on the golf course. And I had a two on a par five hole, see, and that's what the, part of the article, the...

NORTON: And what about the score, here?

EBETINO: Yeah, and then the...this, this...

NORTON: Can you explain to me about...

EBETINO: Yeah. This was the, when, uh, this was in Florida at the golf course on the, down there, where we rented. And it was fenced in. It was for seniors, mostly, and the men golfers to get together every Friday, and they'd play, make games up and play handicap thing, and they'd try to move around, play with different players. And this one day, we started out on a Friday, and we started out to play, and the guys running the tournament told us that they were workin' on number four green because they, in the wintertime, they plant rye on the Bermuda grass down there 'cause the Bermuda dries off because, and they said they're workin' on number four, which was this one. He said, "Hey, you, just drive and pick up your ball, and don't play" because they were workin' on it, and we played the other holes and the other... First nine holes, I had, outside of that hole, I had eight straight threes, which is, uh, I got quite a [rye PH], and then of course...

NORTON: And what does that mean to a golfer, to be able to...

EBETINO: Uh, eight straigh-, well, most of 'em were birdies. I had a birdie, or, you know, one under par. And then there were some were just par threes. But, I had eight straight threes. You know, the yardage was there, and then, of course, like, I shot my age when I was seventy and made

it with the, uh... The paper picked it up on it, and I, and then I sent it, they told me to send it in to *Believe It or Not*, and that's the article that was published.

NORTON: And do you still play golf today?

EBETINO: Oh, yes. I won my age group, eighty to eighty-five, at eighty-four. And then I won my age group from eighty-four to, uh--yeah, from eighty to eighty-four. And then, from, the next one was from eighty-five, uh, to ninety. And I won--that's the championship of the whole United States. And I'm one of the oldest golf pros in the association. I still belong to it, member of the PGA. And I'm lookin' forward to playin' in the eighty-five to ninety group, see? So, I don't know when they're gonna have a group that high, but I think I talked to somebody about it. I said, "Well, they had a..." They've been talkin' about it. Maybe they'll... And I'm hopin' they have it because even though [chuckling] I got bad knees, I can ride a cart and play and still play pretty good.

NORTON: Mr. Ebetino, your family is here with you today. Are there any special thoughts, anything you might wanna share with us?

EBETINO: Well, she's [gets choked up] married to a real fine person, Bill. And, uh...uh...

NORTON: What is your wife's name?

EBETINO: Elizabeth. She worked by Meadow Brook Club, and I was there. I was pro there when I was nineteen years old. And there was a grocery store across the street from the entrance to Meadow Brook, and I'd go down there a lot of times, need some change, and shop up there. And one of the kid's caddies, Carl Wright, said, "Freddy, why don't you go out with Elizabeth?" "Well," I said, "I would like that if she asked me." Uh, said, "Why don't you ask her." So, I said, "Well, I like her for what I've saw, I've seen of her," and so I... She was in the store one day workin' and--she'd work in the store there, not too far from where dad's, where they lived--and so I said, "Elizabeth, 'dyou-'dyou-'dyou like go out sometime?" [laughs] And she thought for a while, and she said, "Well, yes and no." But she had told the kid, Wright, one of the caddies, to tell me, you know, that she would like to go out [laughs] with me. So, went out, and we hit it off pretty good and got married, and so we been married ever since, so far.

NORTON: Any special thoughts about being American, being in America?

EBETINO: Oh, it's the greatest. Nothing as great as that. Later, so on, everything...of [voice waivers] coming to America and the opportunity it gave you for a little ol' greenhorn kid and [chuckles]... But I like sports, I like golf, and I even built a golf course. And, it, uh, for, one that didn't have the chance to get too much edu-, I had a grammar school education and got up into high school, and I like golf so much, and these, uh, some of these players, the course that they were going, they were millionaire playboys, and they played for a lot of, which we thought it was a lot of money at that time. And I would, uh, we had a rule that the caddies, the closest ball to the hole would have to hold the pin, and the other caddies could go next to ya and sit down. But I, even though that, I'd run over there and hold the pin. Then I...

NORTON: Well, Mr. Ebetino...

EBETINO: Then I'd put my foot down where he was supposed to play for the roll.

NORTON: Mr. Ebetino, on behalf of the National Park Service and

the Ellis Island Oral History Project, I would like to thank you for taking your time to share the story of your immigrant experience in America. This is Cathy Norton signing off with Fred Ebetino on Monday, the 22nd of August, 1994, for the Ellis Island Oral History Project.