

EI-538  
VIRGINIA TULINO CLAPS  
BIRTH DATE: JANUARY 18, 1921  
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INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.  
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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 2/1998  
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY; IRV SILBERG

ITALY, 1928  
AGE 6

SHIP: "THE PROVIDENCE"  
PORT: NAPLES  
RESIDENCES:  
ITALY: ARIANO IRPINO, PROVINCIA de VALINO, NAPLES  
US: NEW YORK, NY

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SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Friday, September 2, 1994. I'm at the Ellis Island Recording Studio with Virginia Claps. Mrs. Claps came from Italy in 1928. She was six years old when she came to America, and she was detained for around a week or so at Ellis Island. Anyway, thank you for coming up here and letting us ask you some questions.

CLAPS: You're welcome.

SIGRIST: Mrs. Claps, can we begin by you giving me your birth date, please?

CLAPS: January 18, 1921.

SIGRIST: And can you tell me where in Italy you were born, please?

CLAPS: Ariano Irpino Provincia de Valino, Naples, Italy.

SIGRIST: Can you spell the name of the town for me off the top of your head?

CLAPS: A-R-I-A-N-O, I-R-P-I-N-O, Ariano Irpino.

SIGRIST: Great, thanks. Can you tell me a little bit about what you remember about the town itself?

CLAPS: Yes. It was - it's side of the mountain, it's mountainous. And they're mostly farmers, and, uh, well, I did go to school there, private school, that's Italian private school, for two years before I came to the U.S. And, uh, well, I had friends. I had a great deal of friends. And then I returning to Italy in -- when I was eighteen.

SIGRIST: Okay. Let's keep you in Italy before you get to America.

CLAPS: Oh, okay. Okay.

SIGRIST: What are your strongest memories of growing up in Italy? What do you think of first when you think about those six years you spent?

CLAPS: Yeah, well, my, uh, my mother and my father and brothers and sisters.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the house that you lived in?

CLAPS: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Can you describe that for me?

CLAPS: Yes. It was, it was upstairs and downstairs. Downstairs was the kitchen and the, uh, and upstairs was the bed -- bedrooms. And what I didn't like about the house was there was a cellar that you went way, way deep and it was dark and dismal. And it had its own well in the house. I still . . .

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of the furniture in the house?

CLAPS: Well, well, we had, like, well, the kitchen, the kitchen has a kitchen table, a cupboard, and so on and so forth, the fireplace, the cooking area. And upstairs was the bedrooms, with a - with a regular bed. And, of course, the dresser, dressers and closets that -- things to that nature.

SIGRIST: How did, how did one cook in the house?

CLAPS: Oh, they cooked over, uh, this - this -- this -- they were a st--a stove with hot plates, like. You - you made the fire in there, and then the hot plates, and you cooked with the pots and pans over it. You didn't have gas or electricity, you know, to cook on.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what kinds of foods you ate in Italy?

CLAPS: Oh, yes. We had, uh, we had a polenta. Italian people would know that. And we had lentils with pasta, beans with pasta. We had, maybe, meat once or twice a week, because it was very expensive there, the meat. And, uh, and vegetables, a great deal of vegetables and fruits.

SIGRIST: Why do you suppose the meat was so expensive?

CLAPS: What? For us.

SIGRIST: Oh, it was, just for your economic situation.

CLAPS: Right, for the middle class, sort of. Yes, for us.

SIGRIST: What did your father do for a living?

CLAPS: He - he - he worked on a farm, but we lived in the city.

SIGRIST: So he went out to work, then.

CLAPS: Right, on a farm, yes.

SIGRIST: What was his name?

CLAPS: Frank.

SIGRIST: And what was your maiden name?

CLAPS: Tulino. T-U-L-I-N-O.

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

CLAPS: Well, he was sort of a happy-go-lucky type. But he came to the S - to the U.S. a numerous amount of times. I don't know exactly, but he came when he had the first time at 17 years old. H would stay a while, get, accumulate some money, and then come back, back and forth. But then eventually he talked my mother into coming to the U.S. because she didn't want to leave Italy, you see? So finally, finally he persuaded her to come here, all of us, and that's when we came, in 1928.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

CLAPS: Oh. Antoinette, you mean her maiden name?

SIGRIST: And what was her maiden name?

CLAPS: Perillo. P-E-R-I-L-L-O.

SIGRIST: And tell me a little bit about your mother --

CLAPS: Ohh.

SIGRIST: --what she was like as a person.

CLAPS: Oh, she was beautiful. She was a beautiful person, and she loved us all, and she worked very hard for us-- strive to get us educated. That was her main goal.

SIGRIST: Was she educated herself?

CLAPS: No, but she knew everything in her, she kept all, records or whatever, in her head.

SIGRIST: Could she read and write?

CLAPS: No, my father did. He read and write Italian and - and American.

SIGRIST: But you said your mother didn't want to come to America. Why not?

CLAPS: Yet she's -- I don't know. Maybe she didn't want to leave her, her immediate family, or maybe she was afraid. I really have no idea as to why.

SIGRIST: Did your mother ever tell you any stories about when you were born, or when --

CLAPS: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: -- she was carrying you?

CLAPS: Yes, yes, she had a great deal - deal of trouble carrying me, and, uh, she, she made a novena to a saint. It's Our Lady of Mount Virgin, that if anything went okay she would name me after this saint, and that's why I'm named Virginia. Yeah. So, so she really did have a hard time, but then everything straightened out.

SIGRIST: Did you have brothers and sisters in Italy?

CLAPS: Yes, yes, I did.

SIGRIST: What were their names?

CLAPS: My brother, my sister, my oldest sister was Francis, Carmine was next, and then me, Virginia, and then, uh, Joseph, and then my sister Carmella that was born here.

SIGRIST: Carmella was born here in the U.S.

CLAPS: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Um, did you have any extended family that lived with you, maybe grandparents or something?

CLAPS: Oh, yes, yes, my grandfather, my mother's fa--.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about your grandfather?

CLAPS: Oh, he was tall and stately, and he was really a handsome man. This was my mother's father, a real handsome man. And, uh, and we couldn't do nothing wrong, because right away he would get angry, you know, he would correct us immediately. Yes. But he married three times,

because he lived to 87 years old. So he took, you know, they arrived to take care of him.

SIGRIST: But when he lived with you was he . . .

CLAPS: No, he didn't live with us. He lived with his second wife, yeah.

SIGRIST: When you were a little girl in Italy, what did you know about America before you got here?

CLAPS: Me? Nothing, nothing.

SIGRIST: What were you like as a little girl?

CLAPS: You mean me?

SIGRIST: Yeah.

CLAPS: Well, I don't know. I, I'm trying to remember. I liked fun.

SIGRIST: What were some of the things that you enjoyed doing in Italy as a child?

CLAPS: Well, I liked, I liked going out to, with my immediate family when they got together, and they had dances and parties. That's what I liked.

SIGRIST: Did that sort of thing happen frequently?

CLAPS: Yes, yes, it did.

SIGRIST: Were your, were the members of your family religious?

CLAPS: Yes, oh, yes.

SIGRIST: What religion were you?

CLAPS: Uh, Catholic.

SIGRIST: And was there just one church in the town, or . . .

CLAPS: Oh, no, no, no, no. We had a cathedral.

SIGRIST: Do you have any specific memories of . . .

CLAPS: Yes, we had the cathedral named St. Otto.

SIGRIST: St. Otto?

CLAPS: Yes, that was the cathedral. When the high masses were said, we would go to the cathedral, but we did have our own parish. I don't remember the name of the parish.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any ways that you practiced your religion at home?

CLAPS: Yes, we would have to say the rosary. We would have to say, you know, grace before meals.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, perhaps, a prayer in Italian?

CLAPS: Oh, you mean you want me to recite one?

SIGRIST: Could you say one in Italian for us on tape? Is there one that you remember?

CLAPS: I used to know it even in Latin, but I forgot. I even knew it in Italian and Latin.

SIGRIST: Well, maybe it will come back to you as we're talking. What was your father doing in America?

CLAPS: Well, he would work on various jobs, whatever he knew, like the farms, factories, whichever - whichever that, you know, he could make money.

SIGRIST: Where was he living just before you came over?

CLAPS: Oh, he was living with my uncle, my uncle Mike Pasero[ph].

SIGRIST: Was that your mother's . . .

CLAPS: My mother, on my mother's side, it was her brother-in-law.

SIGRIST: Her brother-in-law.

CLAPS: Yes. And that's where we entered when we finally came to Brooklyn. That we--

SIGRIST: So your dad was living in Brooklyn then with the uncle.

CLAPS: Yes, yes. That's where, in Brooklyn.

SIGRIST: Do you know why your mother finally broke down and said, "I'll go to America."?

CLAPS: I guess my father pestered her, and finally she gave in. And then this is what happened. That we -- we got stuck here in Ellis Island. ( she laughs )

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the process of getting ready to leave Italy?

CLAPS: Oh, well, naturally we had to go to the, uh, travel agency, and then we had to go to Naples to the consulate, and got everything straightened out, and naturally we - we came by-- by car. We rented a car. Somebody drove us there. We had to hire somebody to drive us.

SIGRIST: You drove into Naples, you mean, from your house.

CLAPS: From my home town, yes. And, uh, and then when we did leave, we, when we got to Naples, to the port, everybody had to take a bath, and that's what I got pneumonia, and I was -- throughout the whole trip I was in the hospital with pneumonia.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me the process of having to take a bath and how they did that?

CLAPS: Well, we had to get on line, you know, take a bath and everything, my whole family, you know, the three of us. And then we would go in and they would bathe us, and so on and so forth.

SIGRIST: This was part of the process of getting, before you could even get on the ship.

CLAPS: On the ship, right, right. I remember distinctly the water was cold. ( they laugh )

SIGRIST: Do you remember what your mother took? When she left, what did you all take?

CLAPS: Clothing, clothing. Only clothing. And I don't know how much money she took. That I don't know.

SIGRIST: Was there some kind of a goodbye celebration for you that you remember at dinner?

CLAPS: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that?

CLAPS: Well, all the relatives got together, and then of course they were all crying that we were leaving, you know what I mean, not knowing if they'll ever see us again.

SIGRIST: I'm just curious, do you know if your grandfather had ever been back and forth to America?

CLAPS: No, not my grandfather, no.

SIGRIST: So after you say goodbye to everyone you go to Naples and you end up taking this bath that you caught a pneumonia, you said, from.

CLAPS: Yes. I don't know if it was from that, but right away I had pneumonia and I was in the hospital throughout the whole trip.

SIGRIST: Right on the ship.

CLAPS: Yes.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the ship?

CLAPS: Providence.

SIGRIST: Providence. And, um, tell me a little bit about the experience of being in the hospital on the ship. What was it like?

CLAPS: Well, I don't think it was pleasant for me to be in a hospital with all those sick people, especially one of them passed on.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that?

CLAPS: That, uh, she, uh, ( she whispers ) vomited blood. That was awful.

SIGRIST: And you think that, you know, as a small child, that it had an effect on you.

CLAPS: Oh, it was terrible.

SIGRIST: How long was the ship voyage to America?

CLAPS: Not, I don't know. I know that it got lost through a storm at sea. That's why my father wasn't at the pier. But I don't know if it was two weeks or three weeks. I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Are there any other memories of being on the ship?

CLAPS: On the ship? Well, before I went into the hospital, being crowded, very crowded.

SIGRIST: Were they all Italians who were on the ship?

CLAPS: No, no. They weren't. Were from different nationalities. And my mother, I remember my mother making friends with this Maria, and she came to Ellis Island also, so we, you know, we had a friend.

SIGRIST: At least you had someone you knew.

CLAPS: Yeah, from the ship. Nice.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when the ship docked?

CLAPS: Yes, yes. It was beautiful.

SIGRIST: Did you know what that was?

CLAPS: No. I just saw, you know, a statue, I don't know. I guess later on, you know.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me what happened that you ended up at Ellis Island?

CLAPS: What do you mean?

SIGRIST: When the boat came in, after it's in New York Harbor, then what happened?

CLAPS: Then all of a sudden we were brought here, and we felt like we were in jail, because I remember they gave us breakfast the next morning and, uh, and after breakfast they opened up these wide gates and they let us outside for air, and then they closed them. So my mother would say, "We're in jail," in Italian, of course, you know.

SIGRIST: And the reason you were brought here was because your father didn't come and get you.

CLAPS: Right. He wasn't there to receive us.

SIGRIST: Do you think that this was because the ship was delayed because of the storm?

CLAPS: Yes. Yes. He didn't -- he didn't get the telegram until maybe a day or two later, so they had, like a -- a court case here. I remember being in the courtroom.

SIGRIST: Well, talk to me a little bit about what you remember about being in the courtroom.

CLAPS: About here?

SIGRIST: Yeah, about what you remember being here at Ellis Island.

CLAPS: Well, they, we would sit in a large room. I imagine that - that they call there. And, uh, you could do anything you wanted, arts and crafts, knitting, you know, crocheting, whatever, whatever you wanted to.

SIGRIST: Were there other children here?

CLAPS: Yes, yes, oh, many, many children.

SIGRIST: By the time the ship docked, had your illness gone away?

CLAPS: Yes. What they did, they packed my chest and my back with wads of cotton to keep me warm.

SIGRIST: And that was on the ship.

CLAPS: Yes, on the ship.

SIGRIST: So once you were here, you were fine.

CLAPS: Fine, right.

SIGRIST: Talk to me about eating at Ellis Island, and what sticks out in your mind.

CLAPS: Oh, I'll tell you. ( she laughs ) Well, when we sat down to eat the first meal, we thought the frankfurters were sausages, and the beans -- we weren't used to being sweet. So, of course, we didn't like it, because the frankfurter didn't taste like sausage, and the beans were, you know, were sweet, so we didn't eat. We just didn't eat.

SIGRIST: Were there any other things that you had never seen before that you saw here when you were at Ellis Island?

CLAPS: Not here, but when my father took us home, and we -- remember going by train, and he bought us pretzels, and we thought they were the hard, hard pretzels that they have in Italy, and when we bit into them, first of all, they were salty, and second of all, they was moist. And we were used to eating the, they were the pretzels made with eggs, flour and eggs, whereas these, the pretzels are just flour and water. So that sticks up in my mind, too. ( she laughs ) And I remember also that they changed our clothes. They gave us, I don't know who came in, and we changed all our clothes.

SIGRIST: Did you ever get your other clothes back, or you were just given new clothes?

CLAPS: We were given new clothes, yeah.

SIGRIST: It was a nice gift. ( he laughs )

CLAPS: Yes, of course. And I remember the bed. Now, I saw in the -- that they had the bunks. No, I slept in the regular cots, and they were very clean.

SIGRIST: Were you allowed to stay with your mother, or were you . . .

CLAPS: Well, no, we slept in the same room.

SIGRIST: In the same room. Let's see, it's your mom and you . . .

CLAPS: And my brother.

SIGRIST: And your brother.

CLAPS: Yes. My brother was three years old.

SIGRIST: I see. But you had older brothers, an older brother and sister.

CLAPS: Yes. My sister was here already.

SIGRIST: She was already in America.

CLAPS: Yes. But my brother couldn't come in because, I don't know, something had to be straightened out, but he finally got out to the US.

SIGRIST: Did your father come out to Ellis Island to get you when you were released?

CLAPS: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Tell me about seeing your father.

CLAPS: Oh, it was, he was so, I can't explain it. I was so happy to see him, thinking that we were going to get out of here, because we felt like we were in prison.

SIGRIST: Did he bring any presents for you when he came to see you that you can remember, other than the pretzel?

CLAPS: No, I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Tell me where your father took you when he took everybody off the island. Where did you go?

CLAPS: We went to Brooklyn, to my uncle's house. But he did have a, you know, a room set up for us, but we went, we had dinner in my uncle's house, and it was a house full of relatives, yes.

SIGRIST: How did you get to your uncle's house?

CLAPS: By train.

SIGRIST: You went . . .

CLAPS: By train.

SIGRIST: Like a subway, or the . . .

CLAPS: Subway.

SIGRIST: The elevated?

CLAPS: No, subway.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Well, tell me, tell me a little bit about those first couple of months in America, and what was different for you.

CLAPS: (laughs) Well, anyway, so I was enrolled in school. I didn't know what they were saying. I didn't know what the teacher was writing on the blackboard. Nothing. It was just, you know, letters -- letters, words. Didn't understand a thing, because I understood Italian. So the first year, of course, I was left back, at the half, half a year. Then the second half I started to --. And then all of a sudden, all of a sudden it just came to me. All of a sudden I started to read and everything, and I also skipped grades that I had missed as I went on.

SIGRIST: Do you know what the first word was that you suddenly clicked in on?

CLAPS: The alphabet. The alphabet.

SIGRIST: Did the kids ever make fun of you in school?

CLAPS: Oh, sure. Of course.

SIGRIST: What would they do?

CLAPS: Like the teacher would say, "Who could go and tell Virginia what I'm talking about?" So they'd raise their hand and come and whisper things in my ear which they didn't know how to talk Italian. So then the teacher would get mad at me because she thought that whoever came to whisper in my ear had told me what to do, but I didn't know, because they didn't know how to talk Italian.

SIGRIST: Did your mother try to learn English?

CLAPS: Oh, yes. In fact, she opened a grocery store - fruit and vegetable.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about what your mother's life was like maybe that first year in America, and how she adjusted in this country.

CLAPS: Well, you know, there were a lot of relatives around who spoke Italian, and they took her along, you know. She wa-she picked up right away to go food shopping, grocery, to go to chicken market, to go to the butcher. You know, she, I think she adjusted very well.

SIGRIST: Did she miss Italy at first?

CLAPS: Sure. Of course she did.

SIGRIST: Did she ever want to return to Italy?

CLAPS: No, she didn't want to, but then my father, after so many years, we - she did - we did return.

SIGRIST: That's right. You said when you were eighteen you went back.

CLAPS: Yes, we did return.

SIGRIST: Um, why did he want to go back?

CLAPS: Well, he had brought property, olive groves, he had bought. So he figured we had people working on the olive grove, and he figured, well, we'll live in the town, and we don't have to work. But then when he did come himself, he didn't like it. He was used to the U.S., and he decided, by God, to come back to the U.S.

SIGRIST: Your father's . . .

CLAPS: I know.

SIGRIST: You know, one foot in two different countries. Um, tell me a little bit about what you did for fun when you were a kid in Brooklyn.

What kinds of things did you do for entertainment back in those days in Brooklyn?

CLAPS: Well, my father was extremely, extremely strict, so I wasn't allowed to have any friends, so I don't think I did anything.

SIGRIST: What were some of your father's rules that you had to abide by?

CLAPS: Oh, well, we couldn't have friends, we couldn't go to their house. I had gone to a birthday party as a child. My sister had sneaked us, my older sister. He found out, and he came and got us out of there, and I'll never forget that, me and my brother. And, uh, well, he was very strict, so there was nothing.

SIGRIST: Was, was this, was this typical of Italian men at that time?

CLAPS: Yes, definitely. And as I got older, I couldn't wear lipstick, I couldn't go for perms, I couldn't do this, I couldn't do that.

SIGRIST: What about your mother? Was she, was she as strict as he?

CLAPS: No, no, she wasn't. She was more reasonable.

SIGRIST: What was the first apartment that your family moved into that was yours?

CLAPS: Well, we lived on Prospect Place in Brooklyn.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the apartment for me?

CLAPS: It's not, it wasn't an apartment -- it was a private house.

SIGRIST: Or the house?

CLAPS: Yes.

SIGRIST: How long had you been here before you moved in?

CLAPS: Well, no, as soon as we . . .

SIGRIST: Oh. I thought you stayed with your uncle first.

CLAPS: No, no, we didn't. No. We went there because they were having a party. It was, uh, you entered into a main little hall, and then four rooms downstairs and the bedrooms upstairs, and a huge, huge backyard. Yeah.

SIGRIST: How would that compare to the house that you had in Italy?

CLAPS: I think it was on the same order, sort of, you know what I mean? Downstairs, and the upstairs, yes.

SIGRIST: Did your mother like the house that your father had gotten?

CLAPS: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: So that helped, maybe, ease her . . .

CLAPS: Yes, yes, a relief, right.

SIGRIST: Tell me the first job you ever got that you got paid for.

CLAPS: Oh. I worked as a, in a shoe factory that I, I, uh, had to mix colors and fix and repair. These were new shoes, for the - for the windows to be displayed. And I had to re-- you know, repair the - the damages on the shoes.

SIGRIST: How old were you?

CLAPS: I was seventeen.

SIGRIST: And how much did you get paid?

CLAPS: Fifteen dollars.

SIGRIST: Fifteen dollars a week.

CLAPS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And that must have been just before you went back to Italy, then.

CLAPS: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about having to go back to Italy?

CLAPS: I was crying. I was crying. ( she laughs )

SIGRIST: Did your brother feel the same way, too?

CLAPS: Oh, he was too young.

SIGRIST: Yeah? Tell me a little bit about what your life was like when you went back to Italy.

CLAPS: Went back, yes. My mother got a tutor for me, and it turned out to be my boyfriend. ( they laugh )

SIGRIST: Did your father know that?

CLAPS: Well, he was here already.

SIGRIST: Oh, he had come . . .

CLAPS: Back, he had come back. And, uh, well, he, uh, so I took up Italian again, and he was interested in English, so I helped him in

English, and he helped me in Italian, which I still read and write somewhat. And, uh, well . . .

SIGRIST: Was it difficult to adjust to Italy for you?

CLAPS: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Because you had pretty much grown up in this country.

CLAPS: Right, right. It was culture shock. It was really bad.

SIGRIST: What were some of the things that were noticeably different in Italy than they had been in America?

CLAPS: Well, of course, we had, uh, we had heat here in the house, you know, throughout the house. We had gas to cook with, electricity, and a bathroom and bathtub and showers here. You didn't have all those things in Italy in those -- especially in those small towns.

SIGRIST: What year was it that you went back?

CLAPS: Well, let me see now. I don't remember. I was, I was eighteen, so . . .

SIGRIST: Well, let's see, if you're eighteen, that would have been in 1939?

CLAPS: Mmm. Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: Can you, can you talk to me, just quickly, a little bit about the political climate in Italy in 1939?

CLAPS: At that time, at that time. I know.

SIGRIST: That's kind of a, yeah.

CLAPS: El Ducho [sic] was in power there.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that time?

CLAPS: Everywhere was "Vive el Duche, vive el Duche," all over the walls outside. And also these soldiers, they're, the soldiers trading in my home town. Yeah. It was really, I like, I was kind of frightened. I was frightened.

SIGRIST: Understandably so. That's a dangerous time to be anywhere in Europe.

CLAPS: We just made it in time to come back.

SIGRIST: How long did you stay in Italy?

CLAPS: A year-and-a-half.

SIGRIST: A year-and-a-half. So you came back, um, tell me, when you came back, when you got back here, and your father's already back here, I understand, did you come back with your mother and . . .

CLAPS: No.

SIGRIST: Did she stay in Italy?

CLAPS: No. What happened was, see, we became, me and my brother, we became automatic citizens because of my father that he had served in the army here, in the U.S. But what he did wrong was he made my mother's passport, Italian passport, so therefore she couldn't enter again in the U.S. So another court case there, and, uh, it took about a year for her to come to the U.S. And that was a terrible time for me to come back.

SIGRIST: Wow. She must have felt terrible.

CLAPS: Oh, yeah. She got very sick, yeah.

SIGRIST: We have just three minutes left, and I want to make sure I get the name of your husband.

CLAPS: Oh, okay. My husband's deceased. And his name is Victor Claps.

SIGRIST: And, um, how many children did you have?

CLAPS: Two. Two girls.

SIGRIST: And what were their names?

CLAPS: Maria and Virginia.

SIGRIST: And what year did you get married?

CLAPS: 19 . . . ( they laugh )

SIGRIST: Well, how old were you when you got married?

CLAPS: I was twenty-eight. ( they laugh )

SIGRIST: So you met, you met him in America then.

CLAPS: Yes, yes, yes.

SIGRIST: You left the tutor in Italy. ( they laugh )

CLAPS: I have the same name.

SIGRIST: That's interesting. And, uh, do you have any, um, feelings, when you came back here today to visit Ellis Island, did . . .

CLAPS: Yes.

SIGRIST: What did it feel like to do that?

CLAPS: I was, I was visualizing everything we had done, everything that we had been through here, me and my mother and my brother, Joey. His name, in fact, is on that wall there, my brother Joey.

SIGRIST: You had a beautiful day to come out here, too.

CLAPS: Yes.

SIGRIST: Well, Mrs. Claps, thank you --

CLAPS: You're welcome. You're welcome.

SIGRIST: :very much for coming up and just taking time out from your trip.

CLAPS: Thank you.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Virginia Claps on Friday, September 2, 1994, at the Ellis Island Recording Studio. Thank you.

CLAPS: You're welcome.  
EI-538/CLAPS