

EI-805/ROVELLI

EI-805
VIRGINIA LOVOTTI ROVELLI
BIRTH DATE: NOVEMBER 22, 1905
INTERVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 24, 1996
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INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.
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AGAWAM, MASSACHUSETTS
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 9/1997
TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

ITALY, 1923
AGE 17
PASSAGE ON "THE CONTE ROSSO"

many
8.
ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Funding for this transcript, one of
interviews conducted with Italian and Sicilian women, was
generously provided by interviewee Elda Del Bino Willitts, EI-
Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of Oral History, 8/14/1997.

you
SIGRIST: Good morning. This is Paul Sigrist for the National
Park Service. Today is Tuesday, September 24, 1996.
I'm at the Heritage Hall residence in Agawam,
Massachusetts, and I'm here with Virginia Rovelli.
Mrs. Rovelli came from northern Italy in 1923. Uh,
came in July, I believe.

ROVELLI: Yes.

SIGRIST: July. And, um, you were, you would be seventeen at
that time, not quite eighteen.

ROVELLI: That's right.

SIGRIST: Right.

begin

ROVELLI: Present also is her niece, Anita Amelio, and it was Anita who contacted me about Ms. Rovelli. Can we by you giving me your birth date, please?

ROVELLI: My birth date is November 22, 1905.

SIGRIST: And what was your name as it was in Italy.

ROVELLI: Virginia Lovotti.

SIGRIST: Can you spell Lovotti please?

ROVELLI: L-O-V-O-T-T-I.

SIGRIST: And that's your maiden name?

ROVELLI: Yes.

SIGRIST: Do you have a middle name, or . . .

ROVELLI: No. Jenna, Ginny. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Were you named after anybody?

ROVELLI: I was named after my aunt and my godmother.

SIGRIST: Was your aunt your godmother? They were the same person.

ROVELLI: No. It was just a friend.

SIGRIST: I see.

ROVELLI: Family, yeah.

SIGRIST: Um, where in Italy were you born?

ROVELLI: I was born in Avolasca.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

ROVELLI: Uh, A-V-O-L-A-C-L-A-S-A. Avolasca. It's A-V-O-L-O,
no, L-A-S-C-A, again.

SIGRIST: Where in Italy is that? We know it's in the north.

ROVELLI: It's in the north part of Italy. It's really a
country
town.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ROVELLI: Yeah. It's a nice place to live because it's very
healthy, there's a lot of good fruits and vegetables.

SIGRIST: What part of northern Italy is it in?

ROVELLI: A small, towards Switzerland.

SIGRIST: Towards Switzerland.

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me what the town looked like?

ROVELLI: Well, it's not really a big town. It's about, maybe,
I'll say eighty-five, ninety families. They're all
people that were born there, except my father. Well,

he was born there, too, but I mean, he's, um, his sister came from France. So that's what happened.

SIGRIST: What did the town look like? Can you describe the buildings in the town?

ROVELLI: See, I have a card in my thing there.

you
SIGRIST: When you close your eyes and see the town, what do see?

church
you
ROVELLI: Well, it's, it's a hilly side, believe me. The is way on top, but you have to really go up hills, know? And, uh, it's not very big, like I say. And it's, it's all right.

SIGRIST: Did you live in the town or out of the town?

ROVELLI: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: In it?

ROVELLI: In, yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the house that you lived in for me?

from
ROVELLI: Oh, yes. Well, it's (?) for two. We had four rooms, and five, it was for my father. He was a shoemaker. He was making shoes. And, uh, my father was from, where we lived, there's always a fountain, where you

get water, and you could see all the, um, the place where we used to work, my father had a little bit of land, not too much. It was really open where we were.

The front was really open that you could see all the, uh, outside there.

SIGRIST: What was the house made out of?

ROVELLI: Stone, mostly. Yes.

SIGRIST: And what kind of a roof did you have on the house?

ROVELLI: It's, um, tiles. What do you call them?

SIGRIST: Tiles.

ROVELLI: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Like a terra-cotta tile?

ROVELLI: Yeah. They were made, like this, so the rain would come out when it rained. Yeah.

SIGRIST: How did you heat the house?

ROVELLI: A stove, with wood. And we had a fireplace for the summer, and they used to put the stove under, there was a great, big fireplace, and that's where we put our stove so it wouldn't be so hot in the summer. Yeah.

SIGRIST: And how did you light the inside of the house?

ROVELLI: We had a lamp with kerosene. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What about water? Did you have water in the house?

ROVELLI: No. We had to fetch the water. Like I say, we were lucky. We had it right across from where we lived.

SIGRIST: Whose job was it to go get the water?

ROVELLI: Well, mostly, when I begin to, were old enough, first
was
I doing it.

SIGRIST: And how did you do it? What did you carry the water
in?

ROVELLI: Pails. We had, one was a wooden one, and the other
one
was, whatever you call it, metal, I remember. Yeah.
All I know that I never used to fill them up because
then I would, they'd be too heavy to carry.

SIGRIST: Um, what, do you remember any of the furniture in the
house?

ROVELLI: Not much. We had beds. We had three beds, one for
my
for
sister and I, one for my mother and father, and one
my two brothers.

SIGRIST: Any other furniture?

ROVELLI: Well, we had a big cedar closet, which you call it.

room
And
And

And, uh, not too many things. And another, in my
we used to put our clothes in it, you know? Yeah.
we used to hang up the clothes mostly.

SIGRIST: Hang them up on the . . .

know,

ROVELLI: Yeah, because we didn't have too much space, you
for all of us.

Italy?

SIGRIST: Do you remember what kind of clothes you wore in

had
afford

ROVELLI: Oh, yes. (she laughs) I remember that everybody
a communion, First Communion, and I, we couldn't
a white dress. But the dress was all right just the
same. And the teacher, we lived next door to the
teacher, in the school. I remember she used to, she
gave me, um, a white thing to put, what would you
call
had

that? But, anyhow, oh, then I was happy because I
something white, you know.

whisper.

SIGRIST: Anita, let me say, if you want to speak, don't

You

Say it full voice so that the tape can pick it up.
said that it was a shawl, a white shawl of some sort.

ROVELLI: Something like that, huh.

SIGRIST: Um, do you know anything about the day you were born?
Did your mother or father ever tell you a story about
that day?

ROVELLI: Not really the day, but it was hard before I was
born.

SIGRIST: Can you talk about that a little bit?

ROVELLI: My mother was here before I was born. She came over
here and she was here about six months, and then she
went back because she found out I'm supposed to be
born. And she was very busy at home, because my
sister, I had another sister that died. When she got
there, they had, my brother had diphtheria, one of
them, and then my sister got it. So she used to help
my mother to take care of my brother, and she got it.
My brother got better, and my sister died. She was
seven years old. Yeah. I remember my mother used to
tell us that.

SIGRIST: So your mother had come to America, she was here for
six months.

ROVELLI: She came here because my uncle was here, my father's
brother, with his family, thinking that she would be
able to stay, and maybe they would come back in time
with the others. But guess what happened? My father
wanted to go home, so she went home.

SIGRIST: I see. So she was pregnant when she went home, and then when she got there the children were sick.

ROVELLI: That's right.

SIGRIST: Ah, I see. Can you name everyone who was in your family? What was the sister's name who died?

ROVELLI: Santina, her name was.

SIGRIST: Santina. And, um, so she was, she would be roughly seven years older than you were.

ROVELLI: That's right.

SIGRIST: Right. And your mother, what was her name?

ROVELLI: Nancy, Anunziata.

SIGRIST: Anunziata.

ROVELLI: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: And what was her maiden name?

ROVELLI: Biardi.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

ROVELLI: Yeah. Hmm.

SIGRIST: Or as near . . .

ROVELLI: It's B-A, Bai, I-R-D-I. Biardi.

SIGRIST: Biardi. And, um, what was your father's name?

ROVELLI: Lovotti, Joseph.

SIGRIST: Joseph.

ROVELLI: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: And you said you had one brother, two brothers?

ROVELLI: Two brothers.

SIGRIST: Two brothers. What were their names?

ROVELLI: Peter, Pietro, and Luigi, Louie.

SIGRIST: Um, and so all these, except for your sister who
died,
of course, but everyone else is living in this house.

ROVELLI: Yes.

SIGRIST: In your town. Um, tell me a little bit about what
everyday life was like. What, when you were a girl
growing up, what was everyday life? What did that
include?

ROVELLI: Well, it wasn't, not for everybody, but it was for
us,
especially me. Because by not having too many, not
much (?) on a farm to work. That's just what they
were
doing over there. Farming. And so my father says,
well, instead of, in fact, it was the teacher that
suggested it. She says I wasn't very healthy, you

you know, supposed. And, uh, "It's better," says, "if
send her to the city, it would be a better life for
her, better, different, housework." I used, that's
where I learned how to cook.

SIGRIST: You mean send you to the city.

ROVELLI: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. So where did they send you?

ROVELLI: Well, the first place it was, not too far,
Tortona[ph].

It was the nearest city.

SIGRIST: Tortona[ph]?

ROVELLI: Tortona, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do we know how to . . .

It's ROVELLI: T-O-R-T-O. Yeah. And then from there, to Milan.

not far too Milan from there. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Not far from Milan, did you say?

ROVELLI: What?

SIGRIST: From that town that you . . .

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: It was a close city to the town that you grew up in.

ROVELLI: That's right.

SIGRIST: How old were you when that happened?

ROVELLI: Uh, I went away from home, I was thirteen years old.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about having to go away?

ROVELLI: Not bad, really. Because I was in the, I was eleven years old when I used to take care of children after school, at home, you know. But, uh, they not only you take care of children, they're supposed to, but they make me do other things, you know? Oh, yes.

make

SIGRIST: When, let's see, that would all be around the time period of World War One? Was that around the time of the first World War?

ROVELLI: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollections of the war, or . . .

ROVELLI: Oh, yes, I do. I do, because my brother was in the war, my first brother.

SIGRIST: Is that Pietro?

ROVELLI: Yeah. And, uh, all I know, that he came home for

just

a few days because he was very sick. Apparently they didn't have enough food or whatever. They were

there,

it wasn't very clean, you know. I know that he was very sick. But then he went back, and he finished. They were there for four years, I think.

anything SIGRIST: Yeah. Do you remember witnessing fighting or like that?

ROVELLI: No. No, that, no, I didn't. No.

you SIGRIST: Um, when you were a smaller girl, before they sent away.

ROVELLI: Yeah?

a SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about, you said your father was shoemaker.

ROVELLI: Yeah.

to SIGRIST: Yes. Can you talk a little bit about how he learned be a shoemaker, and . . .

ROVELLI: Well, I think, he learned from his father.

SIGRIST: His father was a shoemaker.

ROVELLI: And that's why I said, they came to this town, mostly the people in there, except, I think, for my family. They were all from there, you know, one after the other. That's why, when he came there, there wasn't any land. And when he got married apparently my

that's
grandma had some, you know, from her family, and
what happened.

SIGRIST: Did you say, you said your father's family was from
France. Was he born in France, your father?

ROVELLI: No. He was born in Alaska, in the same place.

SIGRIST: In the town. I see.

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: But it was his ancestors that . . .

ROVELLI: That's right.

SIGRIST: I see. Do you know how your parents met?

ROVELLI: How my parents what? Oh.

SIGRIST: How did they meet?

ROVELLI: Well, they both live in the same town, so that's
that.

Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about what your father's
personality was like.

ROVELLI: Well, my father was unique, I think. He was very
serious and very straight. He don't like people to
lie, and if he had to pay a bill, he make sure that
he

paid
again, you know? Because he would get, when the shoe
is finished, instead of paying, they wait until they
sell the wheat, or the grapes, so whatever they were
selling, you know. So some time he had to wait
almost
a year before he gets the money. That was the
hardest
part. And he was too, um, too straight. He didn't
want to, because he used to go buy the leather far
from
where we are. I think it was a little further than
Milan. And, uh, the man over there used to tell him,
he says, "Mr. Lovotti," he says, "if you don't charge
a
little more than what you do," he says, "you'll never
be able to pay me." He says, "So now this is what
you
buy today, it's more expensive than the one before,
so
make sure that what you have left, you charge them
the
same thing like this one, so, otherwise you'll never
make a penny." You know? My father says, "Well, I
grew up with these people, and I . . ." He thought
that it was an injustice, you know. But he says,
"They
won't pay you, so you have to. You have to try it."
He had an awful time, because he was too good.

SIGRIST: Yeah, it's hard.

ROVELLI: He was too good for his own self.

friends,

SIGRIST: Sure. As you say, he grew up. These were his

wear

so he didn't want to impose on them. Did everyone

shoes all the time in that period?

ROVELLI: Yeah. When they were out working, yes. But the

my

children, not that grown up there, very seldom. Not

just

father. He never want us to, no. But we used to

the same. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Do you remember a pair of shoes that he made for you?

ROVELLI: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Can you describe it for me?

that

ROVELLI: Well, I don't know how to describe it, but I know

and

I was so happy, I used to keep them just for Sunday

little

to go to school. We'd better, otherwise we have

slippers, you know. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What did your father do for himself when he wasn't

working? What did he do for his own enjoyment?

ROVELLI: Well, it's a long story. My father was very sick, my

his

mother said, when he was about twenty-five, because

job was always sitting and sewing, and he got sick,
because he, like I say, he used to get up, my mother
said he would get up maybe eleven o'clock at night.
He
would go to bed at nine, get up at eleven, and work
all
night. You can, saw that he was very, he couldn't
eat
any more. He was sick. And the doctor told him, he
says, "If you don't stop this business," he says,
"you
won't live long." He says, "You have to go out,
walking." He says, "I feel foolish to go out
walking."
"Go work on a farm." "I haven't got any farm." You
in
know? So he said, "Well, go hunting." Over there,
around,
the old country, you could go hunting all year
he
so long as there's no snow on the ground. And, uh,
says, "I haven't got any money. I need a dog to go
Sure
hunting." So he says, "Well, borrow the money."
the
enough, he found some good person that he borrowed
money, and then he began to go hunting. He said, "At
least two hours every day, you go out, then otherwise
you won't live." So that what started him.

SIGRIST: And what did he hunt?

ROVELLI: Mostly rabbits.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ROVELLI: I know he got, a few times, a pheasant or a
partridge,
yeah.

SIGRIST: What would you do with the rabbits? Would he bring
them back?

ROVELLI: Oh, we cook it.

SIGRIST: How do you cook a rabbit?

ROVELLI: Oh! (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Your father brings back a dead rabbit, then what
happens?

ROVELLI: Yeah, yeah. Well, he clean it, for sure, you know.

SIGRIST: How?

ROVELLI: He took the skin off and everything. My mother would
cook it. Yeah.

SIGRIST: How would she cook it, though? How would she prepare
it?

ROVELLI: Oh, she'd cook it with a sauce, some tomatoes, yeah.
Yeah, she'd cook it. It used to be delicious.

SIGRIST: So that was a way that your father sort of pleased
himself. He went out, and he hunted.

ROVELLI: Yeah.

his
SIGRIST: Um, was there something that he enjoyed doing with
family?

job,
ROVELLI: Oh, not really, because, like I say, that was his
you know?

SIGRIST: He was either working or hunting.

ROVELLI: Yeah.

do
SIGRIST: Well, you told me what your mother's name was. What
you know about her family background?

had
other
them,
ROVELLI: Well, my father's, she was the only daughter. She
two brothers. And one of them we know. But the
one, apparently he went to South America, and they
never heard anything from him. I know that my uncle
kept, everybody that would go over there he'd ask
"Please, let me know if you see my brother," but
something must have happened. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's personality like?

ROVELLI: Oh, more or less like I am, I think.

SIGRIST: But what is that? Tell us, tell us what that is.

ROVELLI: She was very good to me. She was good. Oh, she
didn't
have too much patience, that's for sure. She used to
slap us easy. I had curly hair, and I used to get
tangled, you know. Comb my hair, and she says, "Oh,
you're always going and getting all dirty." She was
a
fussy person, too, like my father. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What were some of the responsibilities that your
mother
had around the house? What did she have to do?

ROVELLI: Besides the cooking and the baking the bread once a
week, because we'd bake about fifty loaves of bread,
and we would help her. Yeah, between my sister and
I,
we used to cut the pieces. She used to (?) do it.
Yeah.

SIGRIST: What else? What else did she do around the house?

ROVELLI: Well, then we had a, then little by little we got a
little piece of land, and we used to plant, she used
to
plant things. And then it took him, I remember,
because I was already old when my father make the
vineyard, took for the wine . . .

SIGRIST: He planted a vineyard.

ROVELLI: Not much, not very much, but little by little he got

this piece of land. We could see it from the house where it was. Yeah.

SIGRIST: That's right, because you said from the front of the house you could see the land in front of you.

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did he make wine with the grapes?

ROVELLI: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: How do you make wine?

ROVELLI: Well, all I know is they mash it up, and they put it in a barrel, and they let it fermenting, till it comes out right, and then they have to put it in the stomping place and squeeze it out. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Were children allowed to drink wine?

ROVELLI: Well, not really. They call it the second wine. After they get the best wine out, they add water, and then, would but the only time, when we were sick, well, they makes give us a little bit the good one. They says it you feel better. I always remember that.

SIGRIST: So the children were allowed to drink the second wine, the mixed wine.

ROVELLI: That's right.

But

SIGRIST: Unless they were sick. Well, that's interesting.

what other foods did you eat at that time?

ROVELLI: The foods?

SIGRIST: You mentioned the rabbit. We've talked about wine.

What other food did you eat on a daily basis?

sausage

ROVELLI: Haaa. (she laughs) Not too much, until we got a little older. Maybe once a week we, I ate some

and she would cook them, and then . . .

SIGRIST: Did she make the sausage?

ROVELLI: No, you buy it.

SIGRIST: You buy it.

used

ROVELLI: Yeah. They were good, better than today. So we took sausage, we eat, the four of us, only she was, we

the

to want polenta, we call it. Cornmeal. And we would cook that, and she would slice potatoes in the, in

then

water, and when they're almost cooked she would pick them up with a pouch, or whatever you call it, and

put them in this pot where she fried the sausage. So with the potato and mixed with the sausage, it was

tasting good, and we eat with the polenta. Yeah.

SIGRIST: How many meals a day would you eat?

ROVELLI: REALLY it's two meals, breakfast, or, in the old country very few people had much breakfast. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What about for a special occasion, what would your mother prepare?

ROVELLI: Usually have chicken, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you have animals that you raised?

ROVELLI: We had dogs, oh, yeah. Dogs.

SIGRIST: Dogs.

ROVELLI: That was had, always.

SIGRIST: Do you remember one of the dogs?

ROVELLI: Oh, yeah. I remember a lot of them.

SIGRIST: Yeah?

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember a story about one of the dogs, something it did, maybe?

ROVELLI: Well, one of them, we used to call it Ayina[ph].

SIGRIST: Ayina[ph].

she's

ROVELLI: Yeah. It was a very good dog, but very, you know, my grandma, my mother's mother, she would come in very quiet, you know, she was a, and she would, you'd hear the dog go "grrrrr" right away, you know? And we'd say, "Shut up. It's only Nonon, the grandma, and okay." But anybody else is, yeah. He was a good hunting dog.

SIGRIST: So your father would take the dogs out hunting.

ROVELLI: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: What religion were you?

ROVELLI: Well, Catholic.

home?

SIGRIST: Catholic. How did you practice your religion at

ROVELLI: All I know, before we go to bed, we lean down, and my mother tell us prayers.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of those prayers?

ROVELLI: Oh, yeah. I know some already in Latin better than Italian.

SIGRIST: Can you say, can you say a prayer for us in Italian that you learned as a child?

ROVELLI: In Italian, you mean?

SIGRIST: In Italian?

ROVELLI: Well, it's Our Father.

SIGRIST: Yes, can you say the Our Father in Italian?

ROVELLI: Yeah. (Italian) Amen.

SIGRIST: Thank you. Who was the most religious in your family?

ROVELLI: My mother, my grandma.

SIGRIST: Did your, did your grandmother live with you?

ROVELLI: My grandma, yeah, for a long time.

SIGRIST: Yes. Whose mother is that?

ROVELLI: My father's mother.

SIGRIST: That's your father's mother. She lives with you.

ROVELLI: Because, uh, she was alone, but then she got old, and my father was worried to be alone, so she came with us.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about living with your grandmother

other than the dog growling at her?

ROVELLI: I remember we used to sit up at night. It was cold, everybody near the stove. And she would say, "Send those girls to bed. They listen to everything we say!"

And we used to say, "Nonon, she's mean." (she laughs

) You know, yeah.

SIGRIST: Nonon is Italian for grandmother?

ROVELLI: Nonon, grandmother.

SIGRIST: How do you spell Nonon?

ROVELLI: Nonon. It's Nonon. Nonon. Nonon.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Um, was she the only grandparent that you remember?

ROVELLI: No, we had my mother's mother.

SIGRIST: Did she live with you, too?

ROVELLI: No, but just not too far from where we were.

SIGRIST: What memories do you have of your mother's mother?

ROVELLI: Oh, she was nice, because when we needed an egg or something, my mother said, "Go to Nonon, maybe she'll give you an egg for Daddy." Yeah. And she never say no. I remember that.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how your family celebrated any of the religious holidays, Christmas or Easter?

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How did you celebrate Christmas?

ROVELLI: Well, mostly like over here, really, only we couldn't

for

do that much, you know? I remember that my brother, when he was, got older, he used to buy dates for us Christmas, and he would put it in the shoe. And he thought I was too old, I must have been about seven, and he started to put, he put the candy, whatever he bought, inside the shoe, and on top he put the potatoes. When I ever saw that potato I got so mad I throw the shoe off. And he was laughing, he was looking, I'm . . . (she laughs) He says, "I you were too old, but I still give you some." Seven years old, I was too old.

thought

they

SIGRIST: Well, who wants to get potatoes for Christmas? (laugh) Did you go to school in Italy?

ROVELLI: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Yes? How old are you when you start school in Italy?

ROVELLI: Uh, I was almost seven.

SIGRIST: You were almost seven.

ROVELLI: Because I wasn't going to be nine, I made, six, they usually go at six. But she thought, well, you better keep her until she gets, so I started at seven years old.

SIGRIST: Could your parents read and write?

ROVELLI: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Both?

ROVELLI: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Both your mother and your father could read and
write.

ROVELLI: Oh, yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Um, can you tell me just a little bit about
what going to school was like at that time? Where
did
you go, first of all?

ROVELLI: Well, it's, uh, it's right next door, really.

SIGRIST: That's right. You said the teacher lived next door.

ROVELLI: And, uh, that's it. It was, all of us, the boys on
one
room,
side, the girls on this side. It was a great big
you know.

SIGRIST: And did you have the same teacher for all that?

ROVELLI: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the teacher?

ROVELLI: She was there for so many years. Her name was Agnes.

SIGRIST: Agnes. And what sticks out in your mind about that

teacher?

ROVELLI: She was very strict, very severe. But she wanted you to learn.

SIGRIST: Do you remember being punished?

ROVELLI: Once.

SIGRIST: Why, what did you do?

ROVELLI: Because I'm, over there there's no spelling, so this was a big words. I forgot which it is now. And I didn't spell one word right. I left it. And I thought I was doing fine. And she says, "Go sit on your bench, and stay there for the rest of . . ." I did, I did. She says, "When you're ready come over." And I kept repeating the same thing. So all I know, that was the first time I had to stay after school. And she had a daughter, she was very nice. After a little while, she send her daughter downstairs, "Go down." "I know," she says, "she knows her lesson, but she, it's a long word," in other words, I forgot which, what it was. And she says to me, "Did you learn your lesson?" And I was crying. She said, "Don't cry." And she says, "My mother told me come and see you." And she says, "I'll

show you what it is." She said, "Take your time when you spell, when you read it. My mother listening to you." So then I know. She says, "Go home." She says,
do
"Tomorrow when you come in, if my mother tell you to it, you do it. Take your time." She said, "Do it." Yeah.

SIGRIST: You were lucky.

ROVELLI: I was, I was.

SIGRIST: When you were a little girl, what did you know about America?

ROVELLI: Nothing much really. We thought they were all rich people. And when we come over here, we're going to have a wonderful time. And it was harder than what I worked for.

SIGRIST: Of course, now, when you got older you were sent away to do housework for people.

ROVELLI: Yep.

family
SIGRIST: Correct? Well, how was it all decided that the was going to come to the United States?

ROVELLI: You mean because they didn't, they don't come to the United States?

SIGRIST: Well, who made the decision that in 1914 . . .

ROVELLI: My father, my father.

SIGRIST: Were you still living somewhere else at that time?

brother
a
to
that
died.

ROVELLI: Oh, yes. He make the decision because when my
come home from the service, and he said, "This is not
place to live. Pretty soon the other boy is going to
come, and so we did, all the money we saved, we used
send it to him, because there weren't, like they feed
them better here, the soldiers. Maybe now, I don't
know about before. But if it wasn't for the money
we used to send him, I think he would have maybe

you

SIGRIST: This is money while he was serving in World War One
were sending him money.

ROVELLI: Yep.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

SIGRIST: Who was the first to come to the United States?

it

ROVELLI: My, first one was my father's brother. That's what
is. Which, I know him, no, I don't even know him,

After
brother.

because when I came here he was already dead when we
came. I know the family, I know these, cousins.

him it was my brother. My mother and then my

Yeah.

SIGRIST: Which brother?

ROVELLI: Both of them.

SIGRIST: Did they come together?

ROVELLI: Yes.

SIGRIST: What year did they come?

ROVELLI: To tell you the truth, I don't know. They came 1920,
I think. Three years, yeah, three years before we did.
Yeah.

SIGRIST: They came in 1920, and where did they go in America?

ROVELLI: They went to Windsor Locks because my aunt, one of my
aunt lived there for a while.

SIGRIST: To Windsor Locks, Connecticut?

ROVELLI: Windsor Locks, yeah. And then they came in Agawam.

SIGRIST: To Agawam, Massachusetts.

ROVELLI: Yeah.

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

ROVELLI: I think they did all kinds of work. I know that my younger brother, he went on a farm. He worked on a farm for a long time, you know? And then he had horses, and all those things. And then little by little by little they find a different job, yeah.

SIGRIST: Okay. So they came some time around 1920. Why is it that your father wants to go join them?

ROVELLI: Because it figures, it's, this life, he says, I work all my life, and I ain't got much to show. Maybe if
I
go over there it'll be a lot better. So when he came he did work, a hard work that he never believed he would do it, but he did.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about leaving Italy?

ROVELLI: It didn't bother me. No. I was happy to come here. Even though I didn't know what kind of life I was
going
to have. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about what the process was like getting ready to leave Italy?

ROVELLI: Well, my only worry was that I didn't think I had
between
dresses enough. I know that a friend of mine, the two of us, I was home for about two months before we left Italy, and she helped me, so we sew up

something here.

SIGRIST: Had you saved up your own money from working?

ROVELLI: Well, not too much, because they didn't pay you that much.

SIGRIST: Did you live in . . .

ROVELLI: But most of the time I would give it to my father.

SIGRIST: I see. So you sent the money.

ROVELLI: And, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Did you keep any for yourself?

ROVELLI: Oh, yeah. I used to buy my things, my own things. Shoes, and, in the city everyone dressed different, you have to.

SIGRIST: Yes, right. (Mrs. Rovelli laughs) All right. So you came home about two months before you left.

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about getting the right papers, any kind of examinations, that sort of thing, before you left?

ROVELLI: Oh, no. That's all it is, they vaccinate you. That's it.

SIGRIST: You had a vaccination.

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What about getting your papers together? Did you do that?

ROVELLI: Well, that I don't know, because my father must have done all those things. Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the dresses that you made to take to America?

ROVELLI: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Yes, what, describe for me what they look like, what color they were, and . . .

ROVELLI: It was kind of plain really. I wore them over here, and apparently they were okay. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how they were cut, how they looked?

ROVELLI: Yeah, something like here, really more or less than
the same, uh, yeah. All the shoes were the same.

SIGRIST: How long were they, the dresses?

ROVELLI: Huh?

SIGRIST: How long were the dresses? How long did they go?

sure. ROVELLI: Oh, they were always below our knees, that's for

Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Okay. What else did the family pack to take
to the United States? What did they pack to take?

ROVELLI: Oh, we pack all our clothes. They even brought, my
mother even brought a mattress. And the pillows, I
remember, because she used them when she was here,
and all our sheets and things, the linen, yeah.

SIGRIST: What about food?

ROVELLI: No, we didn't bring any food.

SIGRIST: What about objects of some sort, like books or
statues,
or . . .

ROVELLI: We couldn't bring much of anything, really, because
it was too much, you know, to, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what they put the mattresses and the,
the mattress and the pillows into?

ROVELLI: I remember they were wrapping them up. The pillow
inside, wrapping them up tight, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember saying goodbye to your, to your
family
that was still . . .

ROVELLI: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Especially the friend, mostly the cousins, we had a lot of cousins.

SIGRIST: Was there, like, a special gathering or something before you left to say goodbye to you?

ROVELLI: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Can you describe that to me?

ROVELLI: They do that. They were all outside, lined up, to
say
goodbye to us, and everybody. Yeah. The whole town,
my
in fact. Yeah. They did that when I went back with
go.
husband. They were all out there waiting for us to
Yeah.

SIGRIST: Where did you have to go to get on the ship?

ROVELLI: We had to go to Genoa.

SIGRIST: Genoa. And how did you get from your town to Genoa?

ROVELLI: We had to go on the train.

SIGRIST: Had you, well, you'd been on a train before?

ROVELLI: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Yeah, of course, if you were traveling to the city.
Um, who is going to America with you? It's you . . .

ROVELLI: My father, my mother, and my sister.

NIECE: The youngest sister.

SIGRIST: The youngest sister.

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Right. Well, the older sister . . .

NIECE: Had died.

SIGRIST: Right. Um, your younger sister, what was her name?

ROVELLI: Rosie.

SIGRIST: Rosie.

ROVELLI: Rosina.

SIGRIST: Rosina. Do you remember when Rosina was born?

ROVELLI: No.

SIGRIST: No. I see. Um, all right. Do you know how long it took to get to Genoa?

ROVELLI: Oh, it took us a couple of hours, three hours,
because
we had to go get the train in, uh, in the city,
Tortona, and from there we went to Genoa.

SIGRIST: I see. And how long were you in Genoa before you got on the ship?

ROVELLI: Only one day.

SIGRIST: So it all happened very quickly.

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the ship?

ROVELLI: I think it's The Conte Rosso.

SIGRIST: The Conte Rosso.

ROVELLI: I think so.

SIGRIST: Very possibly.

ROVELLI: I know there was two, Conte Rosso and Conte Verde.

SIGRIST: Right.

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Right. Had you ever been on a ship before?

ROVELLI: No.

SIGRIST: What did you think when you were going up the
gangplank
into this ship?

ROVELLI: Oh, it really didn't bother me. Only then I got
sick,
when I begin to. I was okay until we got to
Gibraltar.
And then my mother says, "You'll feel it," she says,
"because I don't feel it yet, so when I get sick . .
."

was
It's true. My sister never suffered, but I did. I
just like my mother.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me where you slept on the ship?

ROVELLI: Where I do what?

SIGRIST: Where did you sleep on the ship?

ROVELLI: Oh, we had a cabin. We were lucky, because they, I
think it was a porthole on the (?), they call it.

And
this, this person here, he was a rich guy, that he
posted a lot of land to go hunting in my home town.
And my father used to go hunt with him, you know?

And
because of him, we had a cabin. We were lucky. It
was

she
I, my mother, and there there was another lady that
was born here but she went and visit people over
there,

so we come back with her and she was talking Italian
pretty good, you know, we understood her.

SIGRIST: Did your father stay in the cabin, too?

ROVELLI: No.

SIGRIST: No. Where did he go?

ROVELLI: No. Him and this friend of ours that came with us,
because he was underage, too, he was about fifteen, I

slept
it
we

think my sister's age, and my father's supposed to be responsible for him, so he came with us. And he with my father. I think he slept with him, I think was a great, big room, because when we saw it, when went in I says, "Oh, my God," I said, "we're going to sleep there." And my father said, "I don't think so, not you and Mom." He says, "You're going to go to another place." Yeah. (a banging noise is heard in the background on the tape)

to

SIGRIST: I just have to say this is the noisiest nursing home do recordings. The last one I did here they were mowing the lawn, now I don't know what they're doing outside.

NIECE: Dumpster.

SIGRIST: They're dumping the dumpster and hammering.

ROVELLI: They're fixing the place up. They make it better.

SIGRIST: I guess. Well, it will be forever on the tape with you. (they laugh) The fixing it up. How long did the ship take to get to New York?

I

ROVELLI: I think it took us twenty, I won't say for sure, but think it's over twenty days.

SIGRIST: Over twenty days.

ROVELLI: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: And did the ship stop anywhere once it left Genoa?

ROVELLI: Yes. It stopped in Gibraltar. That I didn't . . .

SIGRIST: Yeah. Did it stop anywhere else in Italy?

ROVELLI: I stopped in Italy, in Naples.

SIGRIST: In Naples.

ROVELLI: And then in Gibraltar.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ROVELLI: I don't remember any other place. Like I said, I was so sick, I didn't care if it stopped or not.

did SIGRIST: Tell me about being sick. What happened, and what do you?

ROVELLI: Oh, it's just that you can't, you feel sick, and you don't want to eat. That's it. That's it!

SIGRIST: Throwing up. And so where did you go when you felt sick?

ROVELLI: I was, I was in the cabin.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ROVELLI: I won't get out of there. Yeah.

SIGRIST: How did they, how did they treat your seasickness?

ROVELLI: They were okay.

SIGRIST: But I mean, did they give you medicine, or . . .

ROVELLI: No. No, there's nothing for seasickness. That's all there is to it. They put.

SIGRIST: You've just got to ride it out. Um, did you see anything on the ship that you had never seen before?

ROVELLI: Most everything, really, because I was never on the ship, you know? Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember being on deck of the ship?

ROVELLI: We did in the beginning, yes.

SIGRIST: What was there to do up on the deck?

ROVELLI: Oh, it wasn't, it's altogether different than when we went back afterwards, believe me.

SIGRIST: Well, what was it like in 1923? What was there to
see
up on the deck?

ROVELLI: As long as I remember is this, when we first went in, like I say, for a couple of days, it was a great, big open room, you know? Out. And we could see outside, the water, and everything like that. Yeah.

to SIGRIST: So the ship takes twenty days, approximately, to get
New York.

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the ship coming into New York Harbor?

ROVELLI: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about all of that?

ROVELLI: I remember because I wasn't sick any more, you know?
That's why. And I see all this confusion, and, oh,
boy, all these people running around, you know.

SIGRIST: Did you see the Statue of Liberty?

ROVELLI: Yeah. Yeah. They show it to us.

to SIGRIST: Yeah. Well, tell me what happens. How did you get
Ellis Island?

ROVELLI: (she sighs) I know we got into this very big room.
It was so big, so huge, and in this kind of (?) sort
of, you know? I said, "I wonder where we are."
That's
where we were in already. Yeah.

SIGRIST: And what happened there?

ROVELLI: And then all I know that I was worried about my
father

my

and my mother because they, uh, they, they sent us,
sister and I and the boy, on one place, and my mother
and father on another place. And I was so worried!
And, uh, so when we go by, (she laughs) we went by
there, they put us in line, and this guy, he, he

rubbed

my hands and he hold them. He says, "How old you

are?"

I told him. And I said, first I says, "Eighteen."

And

then I said, "No, seventeen." He talks in Italian.

And he says, "What is seven and eight?" I said, "I

know

told you, I'm seventeen." He says, "And I want to

is

what seven and eight is." I says, "Seven and eight

fifteen." I thought that, you know, I said, "These

people don't know how to count." "Okay," he says. I

are

said, "But where's my father and my mother? Where

they?" "Don't worry about your parents," he said.

"They're going to meet you in a little while. They

have to go to pass examination for something."

Because

they were older. That's what I was worried, about

them. Then finally, sure enough, little by little,

after, they come, and we were in another room. And

we

were wondering what we're going to do here, and then

pretty soon somebody came in and they gave us a big

loaf of bread. The bread, I thought like a cake,

some
because it was so soft, you know? And we all had
of that bread. But I was sick. I had an awful cold.
And, uh, after a little while they put us in a boat,
the
some kind of a boat, I don't know, and we went near
train or something. It must have been there.

SIGRIST: How long were you there for, do you think?

ROVELLI: On the train?

SIGRIST: No, at Ellis Island.

ROVELLI: Oh, we were there quite a few hours. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Several hours.

ROVELLI: Oh, yes.

they
SIGRIST: Did your mother or father ever tell you later what
went through when they were there?

ROVELLI: Yeah, they examined them, find out if they were, some
sickness they couldn't, you know, come. Yeah.

SIGRIST: How did you feel through that whole experience?

sick.
ROVELLI: Oh, I feel it was awful, because I wasn't, I was
that
Like I say, I had an awful cold. And, uh, I know
when we got on the train we says, "This is the train.

you You go down, and the stop, wherever it stop is for
to get off, in Springfield."

SIGRIST: Springfield.

were ROVELLI: And all I know, I was so thirsty. In fact, we all
thirsty, but I was worse than the others, so. I saw
drinking. this guy over there with a glass, and he was
there So I says, "I'm gonna get up and going to go over
to and drink, too." So I got up, but I didn't know how
and get the water, because there was something to push,
remember I, I just didn't know, you know? And I always
as long as I live there was a black guy, a young man.
When he saw that I couldn't get the water, he got up,
and he gave me the water. And I drank, and, oh, boy,
gave and I says, "I want some more," in Italian, and he
me another glass. I brought it to my sister and my
mother. And then when he saw that I was going over
there, he got it and he brought it to us. And I
said,
welcome." "Thank you," in Italian, and he says, "You're
I said, "God bless him."

SIGRIST: Had you ever seen a black person before?

ROVELLI: No, that was the first time. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Um, did someone meet you in Springfield?

ROVELLI: No, because they didn't expect us that soon.

SIGRIST: Who was supposed to meet you?

ROVELLI: My brothers.

SIGRIST: Your brothers.

ROVELLI: So we were there, we don't know what to do, because
it
was late. It must have been, I think it was over,
almost eleven o'clock at night. And, uh, because we
had an address where my brother first, when he first
came, to go. And, uh, this guy came around. And he
said, "Did you just come from the ship?" and so and
so.
I said, "Yes." And he says, "Did everybody get off
we
from the ship?" I said, "As far as we're concerned,
think they all get off." He says, "My father's
supposed to be there." And he said, "And I can't
find
him. I couldn't see him. He's not here." I says,
if
"That I don't know." I said, because we don't know
they kept him back for some reason, maybe he was sick
or something, like they did to my father and my
mother,
you know, they had to examine them. So the guy, he

we're

was, he says, "Where are you going?" I told him
going in Agawam. "Oh," he says, "well, I'm going to
take you there. I got a car." He had a little Ford,
I
think. All I know, we all squashed in in there, but
he
took us. He was very nice. He took us over this
friend of ours where my brother's supposed to be.

All

I know, they were in bed, and they, they woke him up,
and they come down, and then they brought me over my
brother, where they live. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was it like to see your brother?

my

ROVELLI: Oh, I don't know. It seems so funny, because I, for
three years we didn't see him, you know? Especially
sister. My brother says, "Oh, my gosh, she got tall
all at once." They says, "Not all at once. It took
three years." (she laughs) Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did your brother look different to you in any way?

ROVELLI: Yeah, yeah, they did, especially the young one.

SIGRIST: How?

had

ROVELLI: He was dressed different, you know, altogether
different, and his hair cut different, because they
curly hair, like me and my father. Yeah.

your
day?
SIGRIST: So you stayed overnight, and tell me how you spent
first full day in America. What happened the next

he
ROVELLI: (she sighs) Not the first day, but the second day
took us to Riverside.

SIGRIST: To Riverside Amusement Park.

ROVELLI: It's, uh . . .

NIECE: Yes.

ROVELLI: It's towards Connecticut.

SIGRIST: Yes. Riverside Amusement Park.

ROVELLI: It's a park, yes.

SIGRIST: Yes.

ROVELLI: Yeah. But I didn't care. It didn't bother me to go
there. No. He thought maybe we had a good time. To
me, I don't care, because I never went afterwards.

Park?
SIGRIST: What was there to do at Riverside Park Amusement

ROVELLI: It's just enjoyment, you know, playing games and see
things, yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about your father getting work.
How long did that take, and what kind of work did he

get?

the ROVELLI: It didn't take him very long. He went to work over
Strathmore.

SIGRIST: The Strathmore?

NIECE: Paper mill.

SIGRIST: Paper mill.

ROVELLI: Yeah, they made paper.

SIGRIST: And where is the Strathmore?

ROVELLI: In Agawam.

SIGRIST: In Agawam.

ROVELLI: Yeah. And, uh, he, I think he had one of the oddest
jobs, really, for his age. He never thought he was,
you know, and he had to go in this great, big boiler,
and they used to put rags in it and boil them. I
don't
make
was
end
know if they put bleach, or whatever they did, to
paper. And, uh, he had to go in there after the
water's out, and take all those rags out of there,
boiling hot. I know that he used to come home, he
all sweaty, and he would say to my mother, "You know,
it's hard work." He said, "But, believe me, at the

of the week I get paid." And that was all he needed it. Because at home he used to work and work, he had to wait till they paid him. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you know how he got that job? How did he get that job initially?

ROVELLI: Well, by asking people, you know. The friends. They said, "If you want a job, they have one in there." Because my brother, my first brother worked there.

He

works as a fireman. Yes.

SIGRIST: Aside from getting the paycheck and being happy to get a stable paycheck . . .

ROVELLI: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: How did your father feel about doing work that was not making shoes?

ROVELLI: It doesn't bother him. It didn't bother him at all. That's like he said, he says, "Well, they pay me."

And

that's one thing, he thought it was nice.

SIGRIST: Yeah, that made it all worthwhile. What about you? Did you get a job?

ROVELLI: First I went in tobacco.

tobacco

SIGRIST: How long were you here before you went into the fields?

ROVELLI: Oh, maybe a week, that's it.

SIGRIST: Yes. And what did you have to do?

ROVELLI: First it was outside.

SIGRIST: Doing what?

ROVELLI: The hoeing and planting the things, you know. But then, uh, we got to go inside. That's what I didn't like. From the tobacco, you get all, I never liked that.

did

SIGRIST: Well, but what job did you do inside? What exactly you do?

ROVELLI: Inside?

SIGRIST: Inside, yes.

ROVELLI: Well, they're supposed to get all this tobacco. Sometimes it was all wet. And you put it together.

SIGRIST: Like the tobacco leaves.

ROVELLI: Two leaves together, and hang them up on the things, you know. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much you got paid for this?

ROVELLI: I don't remember how much I got paid, but I got paid.

SIGRIST: How long did you work in the tobacco fields?

ROVELLI: Not too long. Only two weeks, I think.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. And then what happened?

ROVELLI: And then I went back to, to work over at the Kibbey
Candy Shop.

SIGRIST: Kibbey?

ROVELLI: In Springfield.

SIGRIST: Kibbey Candy Shop.

ROVELLI: That's a long time ago. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Kibbey, K-I-B-B-E-Y.

NIECE: Kibbey Candy.

SIGRIST: Kibbey Candy. And what did you do in the candy shop?

ROVELLI: Well, there's this machine that you put, in the
beginning you put pieces of candy inside on this,
it's
like a fork, you know? And they, the chocolates,
milk
chocolate will go over it. And I'll be at the end
over
there. And my sister and I, with the lamp all over
us,

thing
quite
there,

with a little gadget that you touch on top of the
and you make a design on it. So we did that for
a long time, but it was sickening. I would stay
you know? That's, that's when I went back to the
Strathmore Paper Company and looked for a job over
there. It was a dirty job, but I liked it better.

SIGRIST: And what job did you get in the paper company?

the
the
up.
end

ROVELLI: It was sort of, the rags. You're supposed to take
buttons out, if there's any rubber, which that was
worst part, to take it out, and then they weigh it
And that depends how much you make, you get, at the
of the week.

of
go

SIGRIST: Oh, like piecework. Uh-huh. Did you have all three
these jobs within one year? How long did it take to
through those (?)?

ROVELLI: Just about.

SIGRIST: Just about a year.

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about how you learned to

speak English?

ROVELLI: How I learned what?

SIGRIST: How did you learn to speak English?

ROVELLI: A little bit by listening. And some going to the movies, once a week, and I would listen, and I think, you know, and learn. And then we went to school, because I wasn't, like I say, not quite eighteen, and I had to go to school. But the school, we had to walk, and until there was not any snow, we were able to go for about, oh, ten days, I say, we went. This was long three or four of us. But we had to walk, quite a and walk. It took us, easy, three-quarters of an hour, walk fast. Because we had to cross the bridge and to the go up, and then down the hill. But then the, when even snow begin to come, we couldn't make it. Because if you get a trolley car on top, a meg-meg[ph], they call it, even that, before you get there you're all much, wet, you know. It was awful. So I didn't go too the but when I did (she laughs) went, I remember that teacher was very nice. She tried to talk to us open, so I can see she wanted me to repeat what she was saying. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what grade they put you in?

and,
ROVELLI: I think they're all the same, all in the same room
yeah.

SIGRIST: Um, what about your mother? Can you tell me a little
States,
bit about how your mother adapted to the United
and how she learned English, if she learned English?

ROVELLI: No. She don't know English. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: So what did your mother do when she first got here?

we
ROVELLI: She was really home, and cooked for everybody. And
were working, we all worked. And then she'd be home.
And then one of my sister, my brother's wife had a
baby. She would take care of the baby in that big
house, we lived in it, and do all the cooking. No
cleaning, but all the cooking.

NIECE: They all lived together, all four of them.

ROVELLI: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me about how your mother felt about being in the
United States.

ROVELLI: Oh, we liked it, they liked it, they all did.

SIGRIST: But did she miss, I mean, her mother was, was in
Italy

still. I mean, did she miss Italy at all, or . . .

talk
ROVELLI: The people? Oh, yeah. Next door people come and
to her. Oh, yeah. She loved it.

SIGRIST: So there, there were other Italians?

ROVELLI: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: In the area?

ROVELLI: Yes.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ROVELLI: They were born here, but they, the mother was from
Italy, you know, they got to be friendly. Yes.

SIGRIST: I see. What were some of the ways that your mother
maintained her Italian culture in the house when she
was in America?

ROVELLI: The same thing, a dialect. You don't talk real
Italian. You use a dialect. She liked it here,
anyhow.

had
SIGRIST: What about cooking? Did she cook the same way she
cooked in Italy, or did she change?

because
ROVELLI: Yeah, she do the same cooking, only more meat,
she had more. (she laughs) Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you not have much meat in Italy?

ROVELLI: No, not too much.

SIGRIST: No.

ROVELLI: No.

SIGRIST: Um . . .

ROVELLI: It used to be fresh meat, though, very good.

SIGRIST: Rabbits. (he laughs)

ROVELLI: No, but they used to kill, uh, like for Christmas
they
would kill a, uh, a wheel, a big animal. About twice
a
year they would kill a big one, and then otherwise
they
kill a pig, you know.

SIGRIST: I see. So in America, one of the differences in the
eating was you had more meat.

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Um, tell me a little bit about, you said you
worked with your sister at the candy store. When you
went to the paper factory, did she go with you to the
paper factory?

ROVELLI: Yes, yes.

belong

SIGRIST: Did all the people in the paper factory have to
to a union?

ROVELLI: I don't think so.

SIGRIST: You didn't. What about your father?

ROVELLI: No, I don't think they did.

SIGRIST: Were there other immigrants who worked in the paper
factory that you remember?

ROVELLI: No, I don't think so.

SIGRIST: The people that you worked with, you don't remember
them being immigrants.

ROVELLI: Oh, the one I work with?

SIGRIST: Yeah.

ROVELLI: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: From other countries.

ROVELLI: I remember a lot of them. Only now I think they're,
most of them, they're all dead.

SIGRIST: Right. But I'm just wondering, if you were working
with people from lots of different countries.

(VOICES

GARBLED)

name

ROVELLI: Yes, one of them, especially she's here now. Her
is Enda[ph]. They were French, and her sister. And
then we got to be very friendly, you know. Yes.

SIGRIST: And she worked in the paper factory

ROVELLI: Yes. She was . . .

SIGRIST: And she's here in this . . .

ROVELLI: Now she's here now.

SIGRIST: Heritage Hall. (he laughs)

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, I'll have to ask the administrator about her.
And you think she came from France?

ROVELLI: Yeah, I don't know. The mother did.

NIECE: Canada.

SIGRIST: Canadian French.

ROVELLI: The parents, yeah.

SIGRIST: Um, well, tell me, we just have a, we just have like
two minutes left. Tell me when you got married.

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What year did you get married?

ROVELLI: In November, my birthday.

SIGRIST: Yes, what year?

ROVELLI: In 1922.

NIECE: No, 1926.

ROVELLI: See, we were here in 1923. 1926.

SIGRIST: 1926. And what was the name of the man that you married?

ROVELLI: Arselio.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

ROVELLI: (she laughs) I never did.

NIECE: Uh, it's A-R . . .

ROVELLI: Arclio, I think. Arselio.

NIECE: A-R-S-E-L-I-O.

SIGRIST: Thank you. And where was he from?

ROVELLI: Well, he was born in South America. His parents were there. And then he went back to Italy. After so many years, he went back to Italy. He was about twelve, I think. And they were there a few years, and then they come here. They came here in 1920.

SIGRIST: What year did you meet him?

ROVELLI: Right away.

SIGRIST: 1923?

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. And, um, tell me your childrens' names, how many children did you have?

ROVELLI: I had none.

SIGRIST: No children.

ROVELLI: No. I had one, we adopted him. I was very sick. I hurt myself when I was young. I fell out of a story building in the old country, which was ruined my health.

SIGRIST: Oh, you mentioned that earlier that you were not well when you . . .

ROVELLI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You fell out of a building when you were a kid.

ROVELLI: Yep.

SIGRIST: How old were you when that happened?

ROVELLI: I was about, not even twelve years old.

SIGRIST: I see. What was the name of the child that you adopted?

ROVELLI: John.

SIGRIST: John. And, uh, you mentioned earlier that you went back to Italy with your husband at some point. Yes? Did you go back to visit Italy?

ROVELLI: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: What was the first time you went back to Italy? What year?

ROVELLI: 1932. Because, like I say, my, I was operated on,
and
I got very sick. I was very run down, and my doctor says, "If I were you I'd change, go away someplace." He said, "Don't you know any place to go. Change everything. Forget about everything." He says, "Otherwise," he says, "you won't get better. You
have
to have different." I don't know what to do. We didn't have enough money to go back. But my
father's,
my mother's brother was very good. He says, "If you want to go," he says, "I'll pay the trip for you."
In
fact, he came with me. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Well . . .

ROVELLI: And I was there for a couple of months.

SIGRIST: Yeah? How did it feel to be in Italy?

ROVELLI: I like it better here. I like it over there, like I say, the people that I know and, but I don't think I would like to live there. No, no more.

SIGRIST: Well, that's a good place for us to end before they knock the building down on us here. Mrs. Rovelli, thank you very much for letting me ask all these questions. And thank you for helping out. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Virginia Rovelli on Tuesday, September 24, 1996, in Agawam,

Massachusetts.

Thanks.