

EI-871

GIATTI ENRICO MONTANARI

BIRTHDATE: OCTOBER 16, 1922

INTERVIEW DATE: MAY 1, 1997

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 74

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: KIMBERLY MAIER

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: JANET LEVINE, PH.D., 2/04

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AGE: 2

SHIP: UNKNOWN

PORT: MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY

RESIDENCES:

URUGUAY: MONTEVIDEO

U.S.: NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

LEVINE: Okay, today is May the first, 1997.

MONTANARI: Right. May Day.

LEVINE: May Day, right. And I'm here in Rivedale, New Jersey, with Mr.

MONTANARI: Giatti.

LEVINE: Giatti Enrico Montanari who came from Uruguay, South America, through Ellis Island on October 16, 1922. Now Mr. Montanari was two years of age when he came through, but we're not sure exactly what day he did come through, nor do... You don't remember the ship.

MONTANARI: No. No. That I don't remember.

LEVINE: That you don't know. Well, that's fine. So let's see, if you were born in 1922, that makes you, at the date of this interview, (pause) 75? Are you 75?

MONTANARI: That's right. I'll be 75 this October.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. So you're 74 years of age at the time of the interview. Okay. This is Janet Levine, for the National Park Service. Let's start, if you would give your birth date and where you were born.

MONTANARI: Well, I'm, my birthday is 1922, October 16. I was born in Montevideo in Uruguay.

LEVINE: How do you spell Montevideo?

MONTANARI: You got me now. M-O-N-T-E-N-V-A-O, I believe. I'm not positive on that.

LEVINE: Now, did you live in Montevideo up until the time the family left for America?

MONTANARI: Yes. My mother had a business down there. Sewing business I guess, making doilies, embroidery and all that stuff.

LEVINE: Where were your mother and father born?

MONTANARI: Well, mom came from Spain. And pop came from Italy.

LEVINE: And had they been in Uruguay for some period of time?

MONTANARI: Well, for some reason, as far as I know, they met down in South America. They met down in South America and I guess they got married down there. And they had the kids.

LEVINE: Now, do you know the family story? How your father happened to come from Italy to South America?

MONTANARI: No. I don't. That's something that I haven't gotten into, and I'm sorry I didn't because . . . my brother passed away. In fact, my two brothers passed away. Pop is dead. Mom is dead. I have no way of finding out now.

LEVINE: Now, you mentioned Mario was your older brother. He was the first child.

MONTANARI: That's right.

LEVINE: And Mario was how many years older than you?

MONTANARI: Four years older than I was.

LEVINE: So we know they had been there probably for six years.

MONTANARI: Six years at least.

LEVINE: Six years before Mario. So let's see. Okay. And your father, what was he doing in Uruguay for work?

MONTANARI: I don't know, but as far as I know he was a painter. And he must have been painting down in Uruguay.

LEVINE: Was he painting pictures? Or houses?

MONTANARI: Well, he did a combination of both. He was mostly a house painter, but he also painted pictures. I had a picture of Christ walking on water that he painted, and Christ giving his hand to the fellow that fell into the water. And picking him up. But the picture now, I don't know where it was. It was on a case for, on a wooden case, where you got apples and everything,

and it was on one of those panels. And the panel kind of buckled up and I wanted to have it straightened out so I took it down to where I work and I told the carpenter down there what I wanted, and he tried to straighten it out but instead of straightening it out, he broke it. So it's gone. But he was into, into house painting and also into pictures.

LEVINE: Now, was it a religious family that you were born into?

MONTANARI: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Very religious. Mom was, when she, being from Spain, you know, so usually Spanish people are very religious and I grew up like that. Either you go to church or . . . you know, (laughs) When we came to this here country, mom and pop used to go to church but after a while, mom lost her kidneys, well, one kidney and she wasn't up to going but she make sure that we all went, the kids all went.

LEVINE: And your father, did he go?

MONTANARI: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: Were your mother and father strict parents?

MONTANARI: Well, Pop not so much because he was out working. But as far as Mom goes, (laughs a little) she was strict to a point that (pause) we had to do

everything she told us to do, and if we didn't do it, you know, we always got reprimanded (laughs).

LEVINE: You would get a spanking?

MONTANARI: Well, not a spanking. What Mom used to do, and I didn't thank her until recently. What Mom used to do, she used to hit me on the calf. Instead of hitting me on the butt, she used to hit me on the calf and I'm telling you, my calf got so hard. Just like iron.

LEVINE: She must have hit you a lot!

MONTANARI: Well, no. She didn't hit me a lot. But when she did, it's worse than a lump. So, my muscle got so hard that when I was in the army, we were going on a 12 or 25-mile march, and I would get tired at the half-way point. But then after I'd feel my muscles tighten up and I could go further because of what she'd done. Or else I never would have done it. But she was strict, she was strict. But like anybody else. I remember one time that we had the horse and wagon going along the streets, and the horse and wagon would come along selling vegetables and stop along, and I would follow 'em, you know. And I would know, more or less, the prices of what the vegetables were. So he would stop in front of our house, and mom would come out and mom would say, to the man, how much is this and how much is that?

And before the guy was able to answer, I would answer because I knew the prices, you know? So one day she ah, after everything was done, she got me in the house and said, look. I'm asking the man how much it is. It is none of your business, you keep quiet. I don't want to hear a word from you. Next time the man comes around, I don't want to hear you, I want to hear what he says. And since that time I kept quiet (laughs)'cause I knew what was comin'. (laughing)

LEVINE: That was in this country.

MONTANARI: Yeah. That was in this country, yeah.

LEVINE: Well, let's finish talking about Uruguay. Do you have any memories of Uruguay? I mean, you were two, but do you, is there anything that you think you remember?

MONTANARI: No. No. I don't remember anything at all from down there. I know that she had a, my mother had a shop down there; embroidery shop and she had 18 women working for her. With Singer sewing machines. They went out of style, and right now I wish I kept the one that she had, because it's worth money now, you know? But we gave that away. And I still got some of her works here that she done, but they're put away now. And some of her patterns that she used to use – I never knew we had until Pop died and

some of the stuff that he had, I got. I got myself and find out that the patterns are in there. But the patterns are all paper, with needle points, with prick points in there. It gives you the pattern of what she was doing.

LEVINE: Now, did your mother or father ever tell you why the family decided to come to the United States when they did?

MONTANARI: Well, no. They never told me, but I figured that at that time, everybody was coming to the United States because it's a golden road, so they say. At that time, everybody wanted to come to America because of the opportunities they had. And I think Pop made the most of it. Because as soon as he got to this here country, he found somebody where he would take him in as a painter. You know?

LEVINE: As a house painter?

MONTANARI: As a housepainter, yeah.

LEVINE: Did your mother and father ever say anything about the voyage? Of coming here? Or, when they first got here, on Ellis Island, or anything pertinent to landing here?

MONTANARI: No. But I could tell you one thing, they said it was rough. The water was very, very rough.

LEVINE: Where did they go? Where did they settle when they first come here, where your father got that painting job?

MONTANARI: They settled in Newark. North Newark. I remember the first house we went to is 101 Grafton Avenue in North Newark.

LEVINE: And how old were you when you actually left that house?

MONTANARI: Grafton Avenue? I don't know. I, I must have been five or six when we left that house, then we moved to I think it was Park Avenue in Newark. We moved, all in all, we moved about seven or eight times. And it was rough on Mom, because every time you moved, you know you got to wrap this up, and wrap that up.

LEVINE: Why were you moving so much do you think?

MONTANARI: I don't know. I imagine it was more for economy than for anything else. If the place cost too much at one time, that Pop couldn't afford it then he moved to another place where he could afford it.

LEVINE: Did your mother and father learn English?

MONTANARI: Oh, yeah. They went to school for ah, to learn English; to become a citizen.

LEVINE: They became citizens?

MONTANARI: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember when they became citizens?

MONTANARI: (sighs, pauses) I think in '32, Pop became a naturalized citizen.

LEVINE: Do you happen to remember it, like was it a big day in the family?

MONTANARI: No. I don't remember. The only thing I remember about what (pause) I remember that Mom went to school and when she became a citizen, then it was kind of a big day, so to speak. We was all glad for her.

LEVINE: Was that after your father had become one?

MONTANARI: Oh, yeah. After Pop. Because Mom, all she was able to speak was Spanish or Italian. See, when we lived, when I lived in the house, I spoke Spanish

and Italian, but I mixed it all together and that's the way the family spoke. Mixed all together. I could speak Spanish, and before I know it, I turned it into Italian. My one sentence would be a mixture of Italian and Spanish.

LEVINE: So did you speak English when you started school?

MONTANARI: I had to learn English in school.

LEVINE: But when you first went to school?

MONTANARI: I didn't know anything.

LEVINE: So did you start school when you lived on Grafton Avenue.

MONTANARI: No. I didn't start school because I was too small. But ah, I think the age of school was five years. Like it is today. And ah, I might have gone to school on Grafton Avenue school, because I'm pretty sure we moved when I was six years old, from that place. And we moved to Park Avenue, about two blocks away from school. And I remember one instant that Mom grabbed me by the hand and she said, all right. I'll walk you to school but you'll have to come back. And this is the way you'll walk. You come out of the house, you turn right and you go to school and you turn left when you come out of school. You turn right. Walk two blocks, and then you

turn left and that's the house. Well, I came out of school, and I'm standing in the doorway and I'm looking left and right, wondering which way to turn, and I turned right. I'm walking along, and I'm looking to see where I'm at because nothing looks familiar. A cop comes up to me. Are you lost? I'm looking around and I guess the cop figures I was lost, you know. So he takes me by the hand and he says, okay. You come with me. So I went with him. And at that time, cops were very, very friendly. Not like today. I went with the cop. He took me to the police station, and boy, did I have a ball. He sat me up on the desk. They put hats on me. Every cop took their hats off and put them on me. Everybody was making a fuss over me. I had ice cream, cake and whatever else you could think of. And of course Mom and Pop were where is he? Where is he? So, I guess they didn't have no other alternative but to turn to the cops to find out a lost boy. So you walk into the station, here I am. Sitting on the counter with a cap on my head, candy in one hand and an ice cream cone in the other. And I'm having a ball, you know? And they say [Guccio], what are you doing? You know, in Italian or Spanish. So I told them, I says, these are my friends. They're giving me ice cream and candy and they're playing up to me. Making me feel good. I don't want to go home. But eventually I went home.

LEVINE: The school that you got lost from, was that Grafton Avenue? Or that was the one after you moved to Park Avenue.

MONTANARI: No, that was Seventh Avenue School. From Park Avenue.

LEVINE: I see. Do you have any memories of Grafton Avenue, of living there?

MONTANARI: Yeah. I was gonna say, Grafton Avenue was a big stucco house, and ah, at that time that was the only house on the block.

LEVINE: That was stucco? Oh, it was the only house!

MONTANARI: The only house period. Up the way from the house was a farm. While after Seventh Avenue, we moved again. I don't know why we moved, but we moved back to Grafton Avenue. And Pop and Mom worked the farm. And we was on the farm oh, I say about three years. And we planted corn and beans and potatoes and all that stuff. But the best thing I remembered about that was that every morning, Pop wanted to go down to the farmer's market to get food, fruit and vegetables for the farm, and I used to go with him. We used to get up at 3:00 in the morning. And on winter days, boy, winter days it was really cold getting up at 3:00 in the morning. Besides, that was a cold water flat. No heat, no nothing. So anyway, when we went down to the farmer's market on Market Street in Newark, we went down there, and while Pop is buying the fruit – naturally it was cold out there so I said, I'm gonna stay in the car. So he would buy all this fruit, put it in the

truck and everything, and then he says, okay. Come on. The best part about it, I liked, we went out and bought a hot dog. And hot dogs at that time was not like \$1.98 now. It was a nickel. And sometimes we'd get a foot long hot dog with sauerkraut. At that time they didn't have all the rigmarole they put on it, so he put on ketchup. Ketchup and sauerkraut. And I'm telling you, on a cold night and with a hot, hot dog. Oh, did that taste beautiful. Wonderful. And to tell you the truth, that's the only reason I went down with him. For the hot dog.

LEVINE: Now he would be buying fruit and things. Did he sell that stuff? Now, he had a farm, and he sold the things from the farm, but also went to the market and...

MONTANARI: Yeah. We had a stand. Well, on the farm, he raised mostly corn and potatoes and all that stuff. But when he wanted something fresh, he would go down and buy. Because how much could you put on a farm? So we went down and bought oranges, apples and whatever kind of fruit. And I used to eat oranges like nobody's business. Because at that time, the oranges came out of the orchard and they were really fresh. And boy, I used to eat oranges like coming out of style. We used to get crates and crates of them. In fact, Mom said at one time, you know, we buy the oranges to sell, not for you to eat. But boy, it was beautiful.

LEVINE: What do you remember about learning English when you started school?

MONTANARI: Well, I don't remember too much about learning English, but I can tell you that it was kind of hard. It was kind of hard, yeah. For me to pronounce some of the words that they wanted me to pronounce, after speaking home Spanish. It was a little on the rough side. But just like any other kid, I picked it up and didn't think anything of it.

LEVINE: Were there many immigrant children in your classes? In your school?

MONTANARI: Ah, no. No.

LEVINE: It wasn't a community of immigrants that you were living in?

MONTANARI: No. No. It wasn't a community. We moved into ah, English speaking community. As far as the other people going in there, it's...

LEVINE: In other words, there weren't other children in the class that also didn't know English.

MONTANARI: No.

LEVINE: Your father, he went to Newark because he knew someone or he just found a job there once he got here?

MONTANARI: I think he knew somebody. I think he knew somebody that was going to give him a job. Because he found a job so fast that he must have known somebody. At that time, I should have asked questions, but when you're a kid, you don't think of these things.

LEVINE: How long did you stay in school?

MONTANARI: Who Pop?

LEVINE: No, you.

MONTANARI: Me. I, well, moving back and forth. I stood until 12th grade. And then after 12th grade I went to vocational school.

LEVINE: And what did you eventually do for work?

MONTANARI: I became an auto mechanic. I was three years in vocational school and at the year I graduated, they changed it to vocational and technical high school, so actually I got a technical high school diploma.

LEVINE: And then did you work for yourself? Or for other people?

MONTANARI: Oh, no. I worked for other people. I ah, I ah, worked for a man down at North Newark by the name of Barrow. He had a one-man shop. He was all by himself. And my father used to take the car down to him all the time. And he says, well, I got my son here; he's an auto mechanic. He can't get a job anyplace. Would you help him out? So I went down and helped him out. He gave me a job. I think I made something like three to five dollars a week, at that time.

LEVINE: It was the depression then wasn't it?

MONTANARI: And it was pretty good, pretty good money as far as the Depression goes. And then I worked myself up to twelve dollars a week. And oh, that was big money at that time.

LEVINE: Now, do you think your mother and father fared better in this country financially than they had in Uruguay?

MONTANARI: Well, that's hard to say, as far as financially. I know that they ah, they were more content because of the family status. I remember in Grafton Avenue, even a cold water flat. Mom was sick in bed. She was sick in bed and it was at nighttime, and for her to get heat, we had a small kerosene

stove. One of those small ones – maybe three feet around, maybe a foot and a half. We had it in her room to keep warm. So we had a cold water flat and at nighttime we didn't have nothing to do in the kitchen so we all went into the living room where it was nice and warm. And I'm telling you, between Pop, Mario, me and Mom, and the heat from that stove, there was so much love in that room (chokes up).

LEVINE: Now did your mother have your younger brother in this country?

MONTANARI: Yeah Joe? He was born in this country.

LEVINE: And how many years younger than you was he?

MONTANARI: Four years. (laughs) I was right in the middle. I was the middle guy.

LEVINE: Well, it sounds like you had a close family then.

MONTANARI: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: And did your mother or father carry over some ways of living from either Spain or Italy or Uruguay? Did they bring with them certain kinds of customs, traditions, ways of doing things?

MONTANARI: Well, not really that I can think of. The only tradition that they brought over was that I'm the Pop, I'm the mother, you listen to me or else. She had, when we came here, Mom always cooked the way she always cooked. Spanish.

LEVINE: What might she cook? What Spanish dish?

MONTANARI: Well, she would make mostly Spanish rice or from the Italian side she would make chicken cacciatore with, sometimes it would be Spanish rice and sometimes it would be with macaroni. Well, I'll tell you. Whatever she cooked, I liked. Cause I ate everything.

END SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

LEVINE: Okay, you were saying your mother had one rule.

MONTANARI: Yeah. She had one rule. She said, if you're going to take food, and put it on your plate, you eat it all. If you didn't eat it all, it goes in the refrigerator. The next meal, you ate it and cleaned the dish up. Or else you wouldn't get anything else. That's one rule she had. And to this day, to this day, anything that's put on my plate, I'll finish. Whether I stuff myself or not, I'll finish it. And if I don't want that much, I don't take that much.

LEVINE: Now, did you have any relatives either on your mother or father's side that came to New Jersey?

MONTANARI: Oh, yeah. None of my mother's relatives came to this country.

LEVINE: Did she have relatives in Uruguay, from Spain?

MONTANARI: No. No. In Spain she had her mother and her cousins. And I think she had two sisters, or one sister, I don't know. But they were all in Spain. Nothing in South America. My father – two brothers came over here with him. One moved in to Bloomfield. That was Uncle Sam. And the other one moved to Brooklyn. That was Uncle Quinto. Now the one in Brooklyn, for some reason or other, their last name, instead of ending with an "i", they ended with an "o". Montanaro. But we always kept the Montanari, with the "i" at the end of it. Now why they changed it, I have no idea.

LEVINE: Speaking of changing names, you had mentioned on the questionnaire you filled in that when you came through Ellis Island, there was an incident – you had pink eye?

MONTANARI: Well, when I came here, I was two years old. Pop was carrying me. And we were carrying all our luggage and everything. And we come up to this here guard, that's guarding the gate to come to in. So he takes a look at Mario, Pop, me, Mom. Everything's okay. But when he looks at me – pink eye. You know, my eyes were all pink. I don't know whether I was crying, or what happened, but I had pink eye. And he says, oh, no. This baby can't come in. You can't come in. And at that time, when he said, you can't come in – I don't know, I just slapped him. You know, you don't slap 'em hard, but I slapped him. And the guy says, there's nothing wrong with this kid. Come on in. We came right in. If we wasn't able to come in, they had a quarantine section there, that we'd have had to stay there seven days. But that little slap done the trick. We came right in.

LEVINE: That must have been a family story, of how you slapped the inspector. Well, you also mentioned something about post cards that were written in Italian. What's the story with them?

MONTANARI: Well, I got the pictures right here. In fact, I pulled them down yesterday to, not yesterday, the day before yesterday, to look at 'em. There's a picture of him, of Pop and Mom coming in, waiting at the dock, that's written in Italian. And now, I can't read Italian and I can't read Spanish, but I got some postcards over there that are written in Italian. I'd love to know what it is, but I don't. I don't know. I wish I did.

LEVINE: You can find that out. That you could do.

MONTANARI: Yeah?

LEVINE: Yeah.

MONTANARI: My older brother, he learned how to read and write Spanish for the simple reason he was an accordion player. And he played in Cuban and Hispanic clubs. And he had to learn how to speak their language. But I never...

LEVINE: Did your brother play the accordion as a child?

MONTANARI: No. No. He started when he was seventeen years old. He started at seventeen years old and at that time – we lived in Bloomfield Avenue at that time, and the guy came up. The teacher came up and he had an accordion because Mario was interested in it, and my god, the guy wanted 500 bucks for an accordion. Wow. That was a monstrous – like a million dollars today. So anyway, I wanted to play the mandolin at that time too. But then, Pop or Mom said, hey, it's got to be one or the other. Mario was first, he's going to get the accordion. You, you want the mandolin, maybe later on. So I figured, it was kind of Depression time. And you know, how much could you push? You can't. So I don't know. I don't know where

Pop got the money. But he had the \$500 cash. Anyway, he gave the guy \$500 for the accordion. He left it there. He left the accordion there. And this is the funny part of it, boy. He left the accordion there. And we started... He put the money in an envelope and left it on the table and we started gabbing, having coffee this and that, a lot of stuff. This here guy, he gets up, puts his coat on, gets in his car, goes home. A half hour later we're cleaning up the table and everything, we find the envelope in there with \$500. The guy forgot to take it. Now what are we going to do? And this is, how strict. We have to find the guy. We gotta give the money back. We can't keep the accordion. If we can't find him, we can't keep the accordion. We gotta call him up. So luckily, the guy went all the ways home, took off his coat, checked all his pockets to see if he put in the \$500. He got in his car, drove all the way back. It must have been about two hours later, two and a half hours later. And yeah. They were both Italian, you know? Pop knew him from someplace. But they were both Italian. So, yeah, we got your money. Here it is. And he gave it to him. And the guy wanted to leave something extra, because we gave him the money. We got the accordion. It's good. Mario likes it. Keep your money. Go. So...

LEVINE: Now, when you were growing up in your family, were there things that you did for fun?

MONTANARI: Fun, forget about it. But I'll tell you one thing. Pop made me, when I was about oh, I guess, ten or eleven, we lived at Bloomfield Avenue. And Pop figured we needed some more money in the house. So he made me a shoebox that I could keep shoe paste in, a brush and all that stuff. And he made a little foot rest on there where people could put their foot on it, and I shined it. So he used to drive me down to Washington Park in Newark, which is more or less in the center of Newark. For the first time, I was scared as all get out. Go out there. With all these here people? Go out there and shine shoes? I went down and while, I had to swallow my pride and Pop said, we need the money. We need the money. So I swallowed my pride and I went up to the first guy. Shoeshine? No. I went up to the next guy. Shoeshine? No. And after rejections like that you, so finally I hit a guy, he says, all right. Give me a shoeshine. A nickel for a shoeshine! Could you get a shoeshine for a nickel today? Well anyway, as time went on, I got better at shining shoes. I found out one thing that no other shoeshine boy had. I bought myself a black liquid so that before you shined the shoes, you cleaned the shoes off with this here black liquid to take the dust off. One day, I went down and I'm working there from nine to about three. So around twelve o'clock this one day, there's a whole line of people sittin' on the stone fence, or stone edge. And I said to the first one, shoe shine? He says, yeah, okay. So before I shined his shoes, I put this here liquid on, and the guy saw that I took the dust off before I shined it, you know. So I gave him a shine, and another shine boy comes and he

asks the next guy for a shoeshine. He say, no. I'll wait for him. That was me. That day, I think I done ten pairs of shoes at a nickel apiece. That's all I wanted. But everybody saw that I done such a good job, cleaning the dust off first and then shining, they gave me either ten cents or fifteen cents. And that day I was so happy, I went home with something like \$3.50. Three dollars and fifty cents. I'm telling you.

LEVINE: Did Mario do work too as a child? Did he take on any kind of jobs that you remember?

MONTANARI: Oh, he apparently did, but I don't remember what he done. All I remember is what I done. Mario was, he was the first-born and naturally, he, at that time, he got away with a lot of things. And I'm not saying that he didn't do his share, I don't remember him. All I remember is what I done. And I was kept pretty busy with it, too. Yeah.

LEVINE: But as far as, did your parents have friends that were from either Spain, Italy, South America – do you remember?

MONTANARI: No. No. No. You mean in this country? No, as far as this country, well, yeah. I guess you could say that they came from the other side over to this country because we knew two families. [Argenti] and another family, I forget what it was. But every summer, every summer, we used to all get

together, go up into South Mountain Reservation, up Eagle Rock Avenue, or Eagle Rock Hill they called it and we used to have guitar, mandolin, accordion. Somebody played the accordion. And we used to have a big three family get-together. And I'm telling you at that time, the place wasn't as populated as it is now. But we used to go on South Mountain Reservation and we used to have a big table, as long as this here room, all full of food. Of dishes. Different people bring different things. And with all the kids running around, and the food, and the music. We had such a good time. I'm telling you. (pauses) Today you don't see that.

LEVINE: How about looking back on it now? Looking back on the fact that you came here as a two year old, and lived your life here. Do you think that experience of immigrating to this country made a difference in the kind of person you became? Or any difference?

MONTANARI: I think so.

LEVINE: In what ways?

MONTANARI: I think in this country, in this country I think there's, or there was, a lot more opportunities as far as bettering yourself to get ahead than there was in South America or anything like that. Because South America at that time was ah, I would say that it's mostly rural areas. I don't think down

there was the opportunities that you would have up here. If you wanted to better yourself, you could get any kind of job up here. Even shining shoes. You could make money shining shoes. Or being a mechanic, you could make money being a mechanic. There were so many opportunities up here that you didn't find down there. Now my father, my father made a pretty good money at painting houses. Painting houses and usually in those houses that he painted, sometimes there was little panels –like that flat wall there. On that flat wall, they would have this kind of molding, to make a panel. And in those panels, Pop used to paint pictures. And his biggest thing, though, was making roses. Painting roses. Now, he taught me how to do that because nine times out of ten, if he had a big job, and even though I was only fifteen, sixteen at that time, I'd go along with him. And when there's no school, I'd go along with him. And he taught me how to do that. And it was surprising on how, it was simple how he'd done it. He wouldn't make the stem. Then he'd make a ball in red. Make a ball in red, and then he would get a rag, and ever so gently he would twist it one way or the other to make an indentation in the paint. And it came out so beautiful. I'm telling you.

LEVINE: Did you have an artistic inclination yourself?

MONTANARI: (laughs) No. No. But I was fascinated the way he worked.

LEVINE: Did your mother and father keep contact with anybody from Uruguay that you knew of?

MONTANARI: No, I don't think so. I don't think so.

LEVINE: But they kept contact with relatives in Spain and Italy?

MONTANARI: Oh, yeah. In fact, Pop went over to Italy at one time. He spent there (sighs), I think he was there maybe a good two or three months in Italy visiting family and all that. He went over by himself. The family was here.

LEVINE: When you look back over your life, what makes you feel satisfied, or proud?

MONTANARI: Family life.

LEVINE: The family that you grew up in?

MONTANARI: Yeah. Everything we done, (voice breaking) we done for the family.

LEVINE: How did you meet your wife?

MONTANARI: Well, I met my wife by my brother. My brother Mario married her sister. So when I came out of the army, when I came out of the army, my brother's wife, which is Shirley, her sister, had an old '36 car that kept breaking down on her.

LEVINE: This was like 1945 or '06?

MONTANARI: And after she found out that I was a mechanic, well, she naturally wanted her car fixed up! (they both laugh)

LEVINE: Mechanics must get that a lot.

MONTANARI: So that's how I met her. Met her and eventually we got married.

LEVINE: And what's your wife's name?

MONTANARI: Shirley.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

MONTANARI: Niebergall.

LEVINE: Can you spell that?

MONTANARI: N-I-E-B-E-R-G-A-L-L.

LEVINE: Now, was she born in this country?

MONTANARI: Yeah.

LEVINE: And did you have children.

MONTANARI: Yeah. Three children. Two girls and a boy. Right now, one of the girls, while she's working down in East Windsor. But she's a bell director, bell quarter director at Pompton Reform. She teaches people how to play bells. The other one is the, she ah, lives in New York, and she's the director of the genetic department in New York.

LEVINE: What's her name?

MONTANARI: Well, the first one is Marie. My second one is ah, Phyllis. The one that's up there. And George, he's a minister over in Oklahoma. He ministers to the Indians.

LEVINE: Is he a certain denomination?

MONTANARI: Protestant. Reformed Church.

LEVINE: You can't because you're hooked up. Why don't we wait? We're just about near the end, and then you can show me. Well, let's see. Is there anything else you can think of? How is this phase of your life? Now that you're retired and the children are out of the house?

MONTANARI: Well, I'm satisfied with this phase of life. You know, (pausing) thinking of where the girls are, and George is, I'm satisfied with what I done. (slowly) And, now my wife is gonna graduate college. She's going to graduate on the 10th of this month. Yeah, this month. So that makes four people gone to college and I paid the bills. (laughing)

LEVINE: Well, you're important. Very important. That's very nice.

MONTANARI: But I'm satisfied with the way the family went. What can I say. You know there's an old saying, that if you make life a little easier by one deed, you got it made.

LEVINE: That's a beautiful place to end. I think we should stop here. That's lovely. Thank you. I've been speaking with Giatti Montanari, who came here when he was only two years old, from Uruguay, and has had a productive life and a good life with his family. And this is Janet Levine. It's May 1,

1997, and I'm here in Riverdale, New Jersey. And I'm signing off. Thank you very much.

MONTANARI: You're welcome.

END INTERVIEW