

EI-946

CHARLES GERARD ERRICHETTI

BIRTHDATE: DECEMBER 26, 1909

INTERVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 21, 1997

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 87

RUNNING TIME: 31:37

INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

RECORDING ENGINEER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE

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ITALY, 1920

AGE: 10

SHIP: THE MADONNA

PORT: NAPLES

RESIDENCES:

SIGRIST: Good morning. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Sunday, September 21st, 1997. I'm in West Orange, New Jersey with Mr. Charles Errichetti. Mr. Errichetti came from Italy in 1920. He was 10 years old when he came. And present also in the room is his son, Jerry Errichetti, and daughter-in-law, Jane Errichetti, who had been to Ellis Island and got the form and filled it out. That's how we found Mr. Errichetti. I should also say for the sake of the tape, we may hear cars out in the parking lot and a coffee pot, which has suddenly become silent [chuckles] but was gurgling a few minutes ago. Mr. Errichetti, thank you very much for letting me come out.

ERRICHETTI: All right.

SIGRIST: Can we begin by you giving me your birth date?

ERRICHETTI: December 26th, 1909.

SIGRIST: And tell me where you were born.

ERRICHETTI: Rutoi Potenza, Italy.

SIGRIST: Can you spell the name of the town?

ERRICHETTI: Yes.

SIGRIST: Go ahead.

ERRICHETTI: R-U-T-O-I.

SIGRIST: And what was your name when you were born?

ERRICHETTI: Gerrdo.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

ERRICHETTI: G-E-R-R-D-O.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Do you know anything about the day you were born? Did—did a family member or mother or dad ever tell you anything that happened on the day you were born?

ERRICHETTI: No, not offhand.

SIGRIST: No, okay. What are some of your memories about the town that you grew up in?

ERRICHETTI: Well, most of the time in my young life, about seven, eight years old, I used to take care of sheep, take care of sheep, goats and everything else, which we owned.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me what you had to do to the sheep and the goats? How did you take care of them?

ERRICHETTI: Well, I'd take 'em out for feeding, had to feed and work out field, out field to where eating, when they get to around three, four o'clock in the afternoon, we bring them back at home. And that was my job for the day. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Is there a story you can tell me about something that happened one day when you were taking care of the sheep?

ERRICHETTI: Mmm, not offhand. I don't think so. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Okay. What—what—why did your family o—[clears throat] excuse me. Why did your family own the sheep?

ERRICHETTI: Well, we [unclear] made a living out of it nicely.

SIGRIST: What—well, how did they—how did they make a living with the sheep?

ERRICHETTI: Well, they all had this young sheep there. They would sell 'em for—to markets, like butchers or whatever they were out there, and then they paid for them.

SIGRIST: And what about the wool on the sheep? Did they—

ERRICHETTI: Well, they are—they used that also. You know, they used that for—for clothing and stuff like that—maybe they—people used.

SIGRIST: Did you ever have to shear the sheep?

ERRICHETTI: No.

SIGRIST: No.

ERRICHETTI: I was too young to do so. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Okay. [chuckles] Can you describe for me the house that you lived in?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, it was home like—not—not like this but a regular home.

SIGRIST: What was it made out of?

ERRICHETTI: Wood.

SIGRIST: And how many rooms?

ERRICHETTI: Mostly, about four or five in there.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what kind of a roof the house had on it?

ERRICHETTI: Not right offhand, no. Mostly wood. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: [chuckles] Okay. And do you remember any of the furniture in the house?

ERRICHETTI: Well, I remember we had a—a [unclear], whatever they had there. Not too much, anyway.

SIGRIST: Not too much. Can you tell me a little bit about what kind of a climate was—th—this town is in the—the area of Potenza —

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: —is what you said.

ERRICHETTI: [unclear]—not P—Potenza's the capital, the town.

SIGRIST: I see. So Rutoi is—

ERRICHETTI: The town.

SIGRIST: —is the town. Can you tell me, is it a warm place, a cold place?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, yeah. Very warm out there.

SIGRIST: So you didn't—did you ever have to heat the house inside?

ERRICHETTI: No, not much of the time.

SIGRIST: How did you cook the food in the house?

ERRICHETTI: Well, like [unclear] they had their parts and stuff there.

SIGRIST: What about—what about to create heat? What kind of a—

ERRICHETTI: We used wood, mostly.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

ERRICHETTI: Mostly.

SIGRIST: But was it in a stove or in a fireplace?

ERRICHETTI: In a fireplace.

SIGRIST: In a fireplace.

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Who lived in the house with you?

ERRICHETTI: Well, my grandmother, my mother and a couple of uncles [chuckles] and so forth.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

ERRICHETTI: Rose.

SIGRIST: And her maiden name?

ERRICHETTI: Marinaa.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

ERRICHETTI: M-A-R-I-N-A-A.

SIGRIST: And was she from that town?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Yeah? What do you know about your mother's family background?

ERRICHETTI: Well, most [unclear] my grandmother there, her mother. She took care of me mostly when I was a youngster.

SIGRIST: Did your mother ever tell you stories about her own childhood and her growing up?

ERRICHETTI: No, no stories. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: No stories. Okay. [chuckles]

ERRICHETTI: More work than anything else.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ERRICHETTI: [laughs]

SIGRIST: Huh, and tell me about your grandmother. This was your mother's mother—

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: —who lived with you.

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What are some of your memories of your grandmother?

ERRICHETTI: Not much. [chuckles] At that time.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what she looked like?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe her for me?

ERRICHETTI: Well, a handsome woman, pretty woman or so, whatever you want to call. Took care of me well. Took—

SIGRIST: What—

ERRICHETTI: —care of me and all.

SIGRIST: What kinds of responsibilities did your grandmother have in the house?

ERRICHETTI: Well, she used to cook in the house. You know, cook food for the rest of the family.

SIGRIST: Yeah, what did she cook?

ERRICHETTI: Whatever they with m—make. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the kinds of foods that you ate in Italy?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, made—make my—my macaronis, you know. The homemade macaronis, what they make those days. Then they had their own flour, whatever, mix it up and cook.

SIGRIST: Anything else that comes to mind?

ERRICHETTI: They made raviolis for them, whatever they wanted. They didn't have—they practically work a whole day to make one meal. [laughter]

SIGRIST: And what about vegetables? Did you eat vegetables?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, yeah. Everything [unclear]—

SIGRIST: Where did they come from?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, they're raised themself.

SIGRIST: You had your own garden?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, we had gardens out there.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what kinds of vegetables you raised in the garden?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, peppers, green beans, potatoes, everything. So—

SIGRIST: What would they do with the potatoes?

ERRICHETTI: Cook 'em.

SIGRIST: Yeah. How?

ERRICHETTI: Put 'em in a pan, boil 'em, and make a—whatever you want.

SIGRIST: How many times a day did you eat?

ERRICHETTI: Three times.

SIGRIST: Three times a day.

ERRICHETTI: Oh, yeah. We had three meals a day. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: [chuckles] Great. Tell me what your mother's responsibilities were around the house.

ERRICHETTI: She worked on a farm. She—

SIGRIST: What did—

ERRICHETTI: —practically—she done all her digging around to bury—plant stuff. [unclear] there.

SIGRIST: Whose land was she working on?

ERRICHETTI: Their own.

SIGRIST: They owned the land?

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: This was her—her land or your father's land?

ERRICHETTI: My—my father and my mother and all the—they were all in—in the family together.

SIGRIST: I see. Can you tell me a little bit about what your mother's personality was like?

ERRICHETTI: [clears throat] She was wonderful, always good to people, took care of everybody when—

SIGRIST: When you were a little boy, what did you enjoy doing with your mother?

ERRICHETTI: Well, we—there isn't much that we could do out there those days, aside being around and whatever, wanted something to eat. I'd ask her. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: What was your father's name?

ERRICHETTI: Frank.

SIGRIST: [clears throat] In Italian?

ERRICHETTI: Francesco. Same thing.

SIGRIST: Francesco.

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And what did he do for a living in Italy?

ERRICHETTI: I don't know. To tell you the truth, I was only about—at the time when he left there, he came to this country, I was about a year, about a year and a half old—

SIGRIST: Yeah, very young.

ERRICHETTI: —at the time.

SIGRIST: When your father came to America, where did he settle down?

ERRICHETTI: In Jersey.

SIGRIST: Where in Jersey?

ERRICHETTI: I couldn't tell you now. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Do you know—

ERRICHETTI: I—I imagine it was in West Orange.

SIGRIST: Somewhere around where [unclear].

ERRICHETTI: Yeah, yeah. Right.

SIGRIST: And—and do you know what he did for a living when he first came over?

ERRICHETTI: Let me see. I don't know. Mostly carpenter work. Yeah, but about the only thing I can remember.

SIGRIST: Did your father write back to the family from America, that you remember?

ERRICHETTI: Not too often, but they got in touch to each other.

SIGRIST: How did your family support itself when your father was here in the United States?

ERRICHETTI: They practically done—worked on the farm there. That [unclear].

SIGRIST: Food wasn't a problem when you—

ERRICHETTI: No.

SIGRIST: —were growing your own food.

ERRICHETTI: We were growing our own food on our own place there. The only thing we had to do was buy clothes. [chuckles] That's the only thing they had to buy.

SIGRIST: Where would you go to buy? Anything that you had to buy, where would you go to do it?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, you had to go quite a ways into town.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me what the town looked like and what the—you know, the—what sticks out in your mind?

ERRICHETTI: I think something like this town would be around there. That's about the conditions of it.

SIGRIST: Well, what is that? Describe that for me.

ERRICHETTI: Oh, the main streets mostly had a lot of buildings are in there, few stores around there. That's about it.

SIGRIST: As—as a child, was there a favorite place that you liked to go to in town?

ERRICHETTI: Nah, not me. I was always ob—taking care of goats and sheeps out there. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Did you milk the goats and the sheep?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah? And what did they do with the milk?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, [unclear] they sold the milk and they made their own cheese and stuff they [unclear] make.

SIGRIST: Your—your family made cheese?

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Whose responsibility was it to make the cheese? Who—who did that in the family?

ERRICHETTI: Well, my—at the time, my uncles were there.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

ERRICHETTI: [unclear].

SIGRIST: These are your mother's brothers?

ERRICHETTI: My—well, between my mother's brothers and my uncles and my—on my side, the—the Errichetti family.

SIGRIST: Oh, so some are your father's side and your mother's side?

ERRICHETTI: And the other one, Marinaas on the other side, was with the gang of them.

SIGRIST: I see. So the whole family was [unclear] together.

ERRICHETTI: Yeah, [unclear] one.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me how they made cheese at that time?

ERRICHETTI: I—

SIGRIST: Do you remember?

ERRICHETTI: No. Well, you—usually, they put in the pot, boil it. They put wherever they—they—what do you call, the—like a yeast to break—break it up. And they watch it boil and then let—let it rest. And the thing [unclear] up.

SIGRIST: You mentioned your uncles. You had a couple of uncles that lived with you. Yes?

ERRICHETTI: I had three of them. [clears throat]

SIGRIST: What sticks out in your mind about living with your uncles?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, they took good care of me, for one thing. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Was there something special that you would do with one of your uncles?

ERRICHETTI: No, nothing. At that age, eight, nine years old. [chuckles] Nothing to worry about.

SIGRIST: What were you like as a little boy?

ERRICHETTI: The average kid, I would say. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: What would—what were some of the things you enjoyed doing when you didn't have to be out with the sheep?

ERRICHETTI: I used to love to throw stones around, slingshots, you know. I used to enjoy just hitting trees or something like that.

SIGRIST: When you were using your slingshot, were you aiming at something?

ERRICHETTI: Like a tree. [unclear] like how close I would get to it.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Did you ever use them for hunting?

ERRICHETTI: No.

SIGRIST: Like for birds or anything?

ERRICHETTI: Nah.

SIGRIST: No. Did anyone in your family ever do any hunting that you can remember?

ERRICHETTI: Well, my father used to do hunting but I was only a kid at that time.

SIGRIST: Right.

ERRICHETTI: I was only a baby.

SIGRIST: What religion were you in Italy?

ERRICHETTI: We were Catholics.

SIGRIST: And was there a church?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, yeah. That—that's all that was in that town, churches.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about going to church?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, going there and listen to the priest tell you about the Lord and all that stuff. Was very good.

SIGRIST: Who was the most religious in the family?

ERRICHETTI: They were all. They were all religious.

SIGRIST: Yeah. How did you practice your religion at home?

ERRICHETTI: Very good.

SIGRIST: What would you do at home?

ERRICHETTI: Well, we all get together at night and pray and then they go to sleep. That was a very good thing.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the prayer that you said before you went to sleep?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you say it for me on tape in Italian?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, not in Italian. [chuckles] Don't think I could do it.

SIGRIST: [chuckles] But you can do it in English?

ERRICHETTI: In English.

SIGRIST: Yeah, go ahead.

ERRICHETTI: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed would be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." And what [chuckles]—

SIGRIST: [chuckles] Thank you.

ERRICHETTI: [unclear].

SIGRIST: Did you go to school in Italy?

ERRICHETTI: Very little, was too small—

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ERRICHETTI: —at the time.

SIGRIST: Could your mother read and write in Italian?

ERRICHETTI: No.

SIGRIST: No.

ERRICHETTI: Nothing.

SIGRIST: What about your grandmother?

ERRICHETTI: None of them [unclear].

SIGRIST: No. How about your father?

ERRICHETTI: He did, a little.

SIGRIST: He did. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

ERRICHETTI: No, I was the only one.

SIGRIST: The only child.

ERRICHETTI: The only one and only.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me, when you were a little boy, how did you think about America? How—how did you picture it in your mind?

ERRICHETTI: I never dreamt of—never dreamt of being anywhere but my own town out there. No, I never figure about—even though—until I found out that my father was gone. In fact, I was eight years out there by myself and my mother, and he was here.

SIGRIST: Did—did your father send money?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah?

ERRICHETTI: He used to send money for her to take care of us.

SIGRIST: Do you—what do you remember about the period of World War I? 1914 to 1918? You would have been a small child [unclear]—

ERRICHETTI: Well, I was a small—about eight, nine years of age.

SIGRIST: But do you remember anything that happened during that time?

ERRICHETTI: S—yeah, I lost an uncle in that one. And my father was in the service from this country over there. He fought over there.

SIGRIST: On the side of the Americans?

ERRICHETTI: On the American side.

SIGRIST: Really? What do you remember about your uncle being killed in the war? Does anything stick out in your mind?

ERRICHETTI: Well, he was—I was—when my uncle got—got killed out there, I came over here. I was here.

SIGRIST: Oh, uh-huh.

ERRICHETTI: See?

SIGRIST: I see.

ERRICHETTI: When I—oh, ma—about a year, 1920, can—be about 1921 when he got killed in the service.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the day that your mother said to you, “We’re going to America.”

ERRICHETTI: I don’t remember the day, listened to her talking about something like that.

SIGRIST: Did you ever see anybody in your town who had been to America and came back to visit your town?

ERRICHETTI: No, none.

SIGRIST: None. When your father was fighting during the First World War, did you ever see him?

ERRICHETTI: No.

SIGRIST: No.

ERRICHETTI: He had a chance to but I guess he—and he flew [unclear] left. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: [chuckles] Well, what did your family have to do to get ready to leave your town? What kinds of things had to be done before you could leave?

ERRICHETTI: There wasn’t much to be done for my mother to move. [chuckles] Just my mother and I, that’s—

SIGRIST: Do you remember having to have a physical examination in Italy?

ERRICHETTI: [unclear]. I—I don’t [unclear] but, oh, yeah. They gave us a shot here, like—

SIGRIST: Yes, I—you still have the—the—

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: —scar from the examination.

ERRICHETTI: It’s still there.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Where did you—where in America did you—when did you get that?

ERRICHETTI: Not in America. When I came here. Then they just [unclear] aside there and alongside of my—

SIGRIST: So did that happen in Italy?

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: They—they vaccinated you in Italy before you left.

ERRICHETTI: Oh, that's—[laughter]

SIGRIST: Like a quarter size, huh?

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What about—did you have to be photographed for a passport?

ERRICHETTI: Not that I remember, no.

SIGRIST: What did your family pack to take with you to America?

ERRICHETTI: Nothing.

SIGRIST: Nothing. Clothes? Anything?

ERRICHETTI: Well, clothes. That's about it.

SIGRIST: Do you remember taking something that was yours, something that was very personal to you? Do you remember taking that to—

ERRICHETTI: Yeah, a harmonic.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about your harmonica?

ERRICHETTI: I used to play with it, play it all the time, songs and stuff like that in order to just pass time with it. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Play it for the sheep while you were out? [chuckles]

ERRICHETTI: Yeah, probably would. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: [chuckles] Who gave you the harmonica? Where did you get it?

ERRICHETTI: Well, my mother t—bought it for me at that time.

SIGRIST: And who taught you how to play it?

ERRICHETTI: I had to learn myself.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ERRICHETTI: [chuckles]

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

ERRICHETTI: Naples.

SIGRIST: And how did you get from Rutoi to Naples?

ERRICHETTI: [unclear]. We—we got a ride there from a cousin of ours, traveled there.

SIGRIST: In what kind of a vehicle?

ERRICHETTI: I don't know what it was he had. I don't remember, tell you the truth, but—

SIGRIST: But the cousin took you to Naples.

ERRICHETTI: I—they took us to Na—in fact, we took a train. They brought the—that train going from there, going over there.

SIGRIST: Do you remember saying goodbye to your grandmother?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: What—what sticks out in your mind about having [unclear]?

ERRICHETTI: Well, mostly, crying [unclear] and saying goodbye, was rough.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how you felt at that time about leaving your family and your—your home?

ERRICHETTI: Wasn't much for a 10-year-old. What can you remember? Very little.

SIGRIST: Mom's going so you're going.

ERRICHETTI: Yeah, that's it.

SIGRIST: [chuckles]

ERRICHETTI: Because I didn't have no other brothers or sisters so—

SIGRIST: Right.

ERRICHETTI: —didn't worry too much.

SIGRIST: Were there any other children that had died?

ERRICHETTI: No.

SIGRIST: No.

ERRICHETTI: Nothing.

SIGRIST: Just as far as you know, you were the only child.

ERRICHETTI: I was the only one.

SIGRIST: I see. When you got to Naples, how long did you stay in Naples before you got on the ship?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, we got over there the same day we took off.

SIGRIST: What did you think—

ERRICHETTI: And we got over in the morning and found we have to move to—to [unclear].

SIGRIST: And wh—as a—as a 10-year-old boy, what did you think when you saw the ship for the first time?

ERRICHETTI: I was surprised. [chuckles] You never get to see a ship like—and, in fact, I was even scared to walk onto the ship and [unclear].

SIGRIST: Had you ever been on a—on a—

ERRICHETTI: No.

SIGRIST: —boat of any kind?

ERRICHETTI: I was never [unclear].

SIGRIST: Oh. What was the name of the ship?

ERRICHETTI: Madonna.

SIGRIST: And tell me where you slept on the ship.

ERRICHETTI: Oh, they had bunks there. They had regular beds and everything in there.

SIGRIST: Did you have a—did you have a—a—a room, just you and your mother—

ERRICHETTI: No.

SIGRIST: —or were you in a big room?

ERRICHETTI: No, I—we had separate rooms for us. You know, different people, different rooms.

SIGRIST: What are some—some of the things that stick out in your mind about being on the ship?

ERRICHETTI: [unclear]. One thing I did every day, I used to go to the end—front of the ship and watch the [unclear] water. I enjoyed that, just watching it. I had a big—and even today, I'll never forget it. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Watching the ship go through—

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: —[unclear] water [unclear].

ERRICHETTI: Yeah, cutting the water.

SIGRIST: Huh.

ERRICHETTI: And I was 14 days on there.

SIGRIST: Fourteen days on the Madonna. Tell me about what your mother did while you were on the ship.

ERRICHETTI: Well, she just sat down. What else can she do? Sat around and talked to different people.

SIGRIST: Were there any other people from your family or your town—

ERRICHETTI: No—

SIGRIST: —that were traveling to America—

ERRICHETTI: No.

SIGRIST: —at the same time?

ERRICHETTI: None. Not that I know of.

SIGRIST: No.

ERRICHETTI: No.

SIGRIST: Did you see anything on the ship that you had never seen before—

ERRICHETTI: No.

SIGRIST: —that you remember? What about food?

ERRICHETTI: Food—

SIGRIST: What do you remember about food on the boat?

ERRICHETTI: I think that was good food.

SIGRIST: Where did they feed you?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, they got trays now. They [unclear]. You sit down there and they—

SIGRIST: The ship took 14 days to get—

ERRICHETTI: Fourteen days.

SIGRIST: —to New York.

ERRICHETTI: Yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

ERRICHETTI: We went by it.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Did you know what it was?

ERRICHETTI: No. That didn't mean nothing—remember nothing about that.

SIGRIST: The ship comes into New York harbor.

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Does anything else stick out in your mind about when the ship came into New York harbor?

ERRICHETTI: Well, I felt that this was the [unclear] place that the ship stopped, dropped us off, and my father was about to pick us up there. And that was it.

SIGRIST: And did your father come and pick you up?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah?

ERRICHETTI: He came.

SIGRIST: And where—

ERRICHETTI: In fact, my fa—my mother didn't recognize him and I hadn't seen him. You know, my—my—when he came in the—to—in the office there and I—were sitting there, I looked at him and I says to my mother, I says, "That's my father." Said, "No, that's not him." I recognized [unclear]. [sentence unclear].

SIGRIST: And how did your father greet you?

ERRICHETTI: Very loving. [unclear] kissed me and that was it.

SIGRIST: And what did you think when you saw him? Because you've never seen him before.

ERRICHETTI: That's right. I couldn't believe [chuckles] I was [unclear]. I hadn't seen him. The only thing, we had a picture of him. That's it.

SIGRIST: Did you—did you have, like, a photograph of him in Italy?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah, so you—

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: —sort of knew what he looked like.

ERRICHETTI: Sure, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. And where did that happen? Was that at Ellis Island that you met your father?

ERRICHETTI: When I come over here, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

ERRICHETTI: That was the first time.

SIGRIST: Did anything else happen at Ellis Island—

ERRICHETTI: No—

SIGRIST: —that you can remember?

ERRICHETTI: That was about it.

SIGRIST: Were you examined?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Medically?

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that?

ERRICHETTI: Well, it—[several words unclear], “You’re in good shape.” And that was it. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: [chuckles] Where did your father take you when they released you?

ERRICHETTI: We got on a bus there, came over across the [several words unclear], kept coming across, and we wound up in this town.

SIGRIST: To West Orange.

ERRICHETTI: To West Orange on Walker Road.

SIGRIST: Walter?

ERRICHETTI: Walker.

SIGRIST: Walker.

ERRICHETTI: Walker Road.

SIGRIST: Walker Road.

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And what kind of a apartment or house did he bring you to?

ERRICHETTI: It was a home, regular house that—they had a house there.

SIGRIST: Was it his house?

ERRICHETTI: No. No, he—they—he rented up there. He used to work for a quarry up there. They had a house.

SIGRIST: What kind of a quarry?

ERRICHETTI: Stones.

SIGRIST: Stones?

ERRICHETTI: They used to break stones [unclear].

SIGRIST: So he was working in a quarry.

ERRICHETTI: He was one—yeah, he was working up there.

SIGRIST: Huh. I didn't even realize there were quarries—

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: —in this area. Did other Italians work in the quarries?

ERRICHETTI: Yeah, plenty of them.

SIGRIST: Yeah? That's interesting.

ERRICHETTI: [sentence unclear]. [unclear] the stones out.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what kind of stone it was that he was working with?

ERRICHETTI: No, I don't know.

SIGRIST: And—well, and what did they do with the stones after they were—

ERRICHETTI: I imagine they built up for streets and stuff like that, you know. Whatever.

SIGRIST: Huh. How long did you stay in that place where Dad brought you that first night?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, we stayed up there where—we practically lived up there.

SIGRIST: For a long time?

ERRICHETTI: For quite a while, yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Can you describe it for me, what it—

ERRICHETTI: Well, about four or five rooms there. You know, to take care of us.

SIGRIST: Did you have running water in the—

ERRICHETTI: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Electricity?

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Were you put into school?

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yes?

ERRICHETTI: Sure.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about being put into American school?

ERRICHETTI: I couldn't believe [unclear]. I didn't understand any of it. But I had two teachers. I had Italian teacher and an American teacher at the time when I went there.

SIGRIST: And how did they help you?

ERRICHETTI: She helped me; the Italian teacher would tell me what the words were in Italian. Then they explained it in English. So that was—so remember then [unclear]. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Was it d—was it difficult to learn English?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, not too bad. Once I got all of it, I got to it.

SIGRIST: What about your mother and father? Did they learn English?

ERRICHETTI: No, not—yeah, well, they learned a little.

SIGRIST: Your mother—

ERRICHETTI: My fa—my mother [unclear] not too much. My father spoke pretty good.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Um—

ERRICHETTI: Because he was in the service a while. And he learned a lot.

SIGRIST: That's right. That's right. Did your father become a citizen?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember—

ERRICHETTI: [unclear]

SIGRIST: —what he did when that happened? When your father became a citizen, were you in America?

ERRICHETTI: No, I wasn't here.

SIGRIST: Oh, it was before you got here.

ERRICHETTI: He went in the service. And when he come out, he became—he was a citizen. That's how he got the citizen—he gave him a citizen papers.

SIGRIST: I see. He served—

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: —for the United States.

ERRICHETTI: And they gave him citizen papers and my—put me on it.

SIGRIST: So you became a citizen through your dad.

ERRICHETTI: Right over through him.

SIGRIST: What about your mother?

ERRICHETTI: My mother's about the same way.

SIGRIST: And how long did you stay in school?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, let's see. I went to the fifth, see. I went to the fifth grade, five grades.

SIGRIST: And tell me the first job that you got.

ERRICHETTI: Oh, I was a—oh, I had all kinds of jobs. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: [chuckles]

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What's the very first job that you got that you were actually paid for?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, I—I got a job in a—in a factory there [unclear] on this town where I was paint—it was paint pulleys, see. You know what pulleys are? They put them on a belt.

SIGRIST: Pulleys?

ERRICHETTI: Pulleys.

SIGRIST: Oh.

ERRICHETTI: What the belt goes around. I used to paint the end of them. [chuckles]

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

ERRICHETTI: Big deal, \$17 a week.

SIGRIST: And what did you do with your money?

ERRICHETTI: Take care—take care of my mother with it.

SIGRIST: So the money went to the household.

ERRICHETTI: Sure.

SIGRIST: Did your mother—

ERRICHETTI: I was only 14—I was 17 years old at the time.

SIGRIST: Your mother, did she get a job outside of the house?

ERRICHETTI: Yeah. She used to work on a farm.

SIGRIST: Here in America? What did she—what farm did she work on?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, up there in [unclear] someplace there, they had a farm. Italian people had farms.

SIGRIST: It was an Italian farm.

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And what did she do? What kinds of work?

ERRICHETTI: Pick up tomatoes—tomatoes, lettuce, whatever.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ERRICHETTI: So she worked hard all her life.

SIGRIST: Where you lived in West Orange, were there other Italians?

ERRICHETTI: A few, yeah.

SIGRIST: What—what were some of the other nationalities that made up the town—

ERRICHETTI: Well—

SIGRIST: —in the 1920s?

ERRICHETTI: You mean Italian speaking?

SIGRIST: Well, I'm just curious if—if there were other people from other countries too. What—

ERRICHETTI: Oh, yeah. A lot—a lot of Jewish p—quite a few Jewish people too there. Irish, French.

SIGRIST: And how much interaction did the Italian people have with the people from other countries?

ERRICHETTI: Not too much, I don't think. [laughter]

SIGRIST: Everyone still kept to themselves?

ERRICHETTI: Yeah, all to themselves, I guess.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Did your mother or father ever want to go back to Italy?

ERRICHETTI: They had intentions but they never got to it.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Did—did your mother like America?

ERRICHETTI: Made no difference when she was there. What [unclear] she do? [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Did she miss her family back in Italy?

ERRICHETTI: I imagine some. Yeah, sure.

SIGRIST: Did—did any of the other relatives ever come over to America?

ERRICHETTI: No, they didn't.

SIGRIST: No. Did—did you ever go back to see—

ERRICHETTI: No.

SIGRIST: —your town? Did you ever want to?

ERRICHETTI: I didn't care to go there. There's not much to see there, town. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: So you've never really had any interest in—

ERRICHETTI: No. And I had no in—I even had property out there that my father bought. I didn't even bother. I let my uncles use it.

SIGRIST: Oh. Did your mother and father have any other children when they came to the United States?

ERRICHETTI: No.

SIGRIST: Did your mother and father send money or clothing or something to the relatives in Italy?

ERRICHETTI: No.

SIGRIST: Never. That you know of?

ERRICHETTI: Not that I know of. Now, my father was—one thing, I come out of the service. I come over here in 1920, maybe about 1921. 1922, he was in the hospital here and that's when he passed away.

SIGRIST: Your father died in 1922?

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And what did he die of?

ERRICHETTI: I don't know what he had there. I don't even remember, to tell you the truth.

SIGRIST: But he died in the hospital?

ERRICHETTI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did your mother remarry?

ERRICHETTI: No.

SIGRIST: No? How did—how did her life change after your father died?

ERRICHETTI: Not too much because we were together—I finally took care of her.

SIGRIST: Did she continue to—to—to do the field work?

ERRICHETTI: No, not too much.

SIGRIST: Did she keep working, you know?

ERRICHETTI: Nah.

SIGRIST: That was more when you first got—came.

ERRICHETTI: Yeah, but after I got out and started work and I was taking care of her.

SIGRIST: I see. We have a couple minutes left. I just want to find out, when did you get married? What year?

ERRICHETTI: What year? 1933.

SIGRIST: 1933, and—

ERRICHETTI: 1934, I had a son, number one son. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Is that Jer—Jerry over there on the sofa?

ERRICHETTI: No, no. Not Jerry.

SIGRIST: No.

ERRICHETTI: Frank.

SIGRIST: Frank. What was the name of the woman that you married?

ERRICHETTI: Elsie.

SIGRIST: Elsie. And what was her maiden name?

ERRICHETTI: Oh, God. [chuckles]

MAN: Jacobus.

ERRICHETTI: Jacobus.

SIGRIST: Jacobus. J-A-C-O-B—

ERRICHETTI: B-U-S.

SIGRIST: U-S. Jacobus. And so how many children did you have?

ERRICHETTI: Two.

SIGRIST: You had two.

ERRICHETTI: Two.

SIGRIST: Yeah. And do your children have an interest in your Italian background? Learning about—

ERRICHETTI: I never asked them. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Your daughter-in-law is shaking her head up and down. [chuckles]
Yes. [laughter] What—what aspect of your personality do you think
is truly Italian? What part of you is truly Italian?

ERRICHETTI: [unclear]. What can I tell you? [chuckles]

SIGRIST: What did you do in your life that you were the most proud of?

ERRICHETTI: Play the accordion.

SIGRIST: The accordion? Uh-huh. You gave up the harmonica for the
accordion.

ERRICHETTI: In fact, I still got it inside there.

SIGRIST: Wow. Could you play something for me on tape?

ERRICHETTI: [chuckles] I couldn't.

SIGRIST: No, I'm serious.

ERRICHETTI: [laughs]

SIGRIST: Well, we'll just—we'll stop it for a second. You can get it and you
can play—

ERRICHETTI: No.

SIGRIST: —something for me.

ERRICHETTI: I haven't touched it in a long time.

MAN: [unclear]

SIGRIST: Sure, sure.

ERRICHETTI: I don't know your—

MAN: Just give him [unclear].

SIGRIST: Well, I'll tell you what. What we'll do is I'll sign off just quickly and
then we'll put it on pause and then you can go get it. So—

MAN: Yeah.

EI-946/ERRICHETTI

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Charles Errichetti on Sunday, September 21st, 1997 in West Orange, New Jersey. And we hope that we can coax him into playing a little bit of music for us after we stop. [tape off/on] Okay, Mr. Errichetti's going to play for us and we're just going to play till the tape runs out. So go ahead. [playing accordion]

[END OF INTERVIEW]