

KECK-105

ORESTE TEGLIA

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ITALY, 1916

AGE 12

PASSAGE ON "THE CASERTA"

DANE: This is Debby Dane, and I'm speaking with Oreste Teglia on Friday, December 20, 1985. We're beginning the interview at 2:05. We're about to interview Mr. Teglia about his immigration experience from Italy in 1916. He was twelve years old. This is Interview Number 105. We're going now. Would you tell me, Mr. Teglia, when you were born, what the day was and what year, and the name of the town.

TEGLIA: I was born in 1903, December 16th. And the name of the

town was Ponte Bugiano.

DANE: Would you spell it for me so they'll know?

TEGLIA: B-U-G-I-A-N-O. Ponte Bugiano.

DANE: What part of Italy was that? That was Northern ?

TEGLIA: Uh, Tuscany. The Northern part of Italy.

DANE: Uh-huh. What kind of town was it? What did people do there? Was it a small village?

TEGLIA: Well, the village was very small. We had, uh, our grandfather had, uh, given us two acres of land each, each of his children, and that's, that's what we thrived on. Of course, when my dad came to this country to make a living, so to speak, and between that and, uh, some of the produce from the farm and, uh, whatever, we managed to survive.

DANE: Uh-huh. Did you have animals? Chickens, or--

TEGLIA: Yes we did. We had chickens and, uh, we had goats and we had a cow. We were fortunate to have a cow and pig, which we would slaughter every year, you know, and make salami or whatever, or sausages and things like that.

DANE: Uh-huh. Was the slaughtering a big, would other families come and help, or did you just--

TEGLIA: Oh, yes. We, uh, the whole neighborhood, actually, got together and, uh, it was a sad thing because while you were growing the pigs they would become pets, you know. And then came the day for the slaughter. Why that, uh, that was very sad.

DANE: Uh-huh. Would you name them and everything?

TEGLIA: Yes. Pete.

DANE: And tell me, for historical purposes, how many brothers and sisters did you have?

TEGLIA: Uh, myself, my brother Gino, my brother Augustine, and, uh, four sisters. Two sisters were born on this country.

DANE: Where did you fall in the family?

TEGLIA: Where did I fall? You mean age-wise?

DANE: Uh-huh.

TEGLIA: I was the third.

DANE: Uh-huh. You were telling me when we spoke earlier that your father had come over when you were how old?

TEGLIA: Well, when I first met my father (he laughs), evidently he had been in this country because my mother was telling me that father's coming home and I didn't know who father was, you know. And then he stayed, uh, for about two years. Then, of course, he came back again. And he kept doing that for, uh, three times.

DANE: What would he be doing in America?

TEGLIA: Working on the railroad tracks.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Was he a, do you know what his job was, did he ever talk about it?

TEGLIA: No. Just a common laborer, you know. Uh, laying ties on the track, or repairing the tracks, or things like that.

DANE: Uh-huh. Would he tell you stories at all about what America was like?

TEGLIA: Yes, he did. Yes, he did. He said, "This is really, this is really wonderful out here." He said, "It's too bad that a lot of people don't have the opportunity to come to this land."

DANE: Was it easier for him? I mean, was he making better money? Would he--

TEGLIA: Well, they were paid, I believe, a dollar a day. But, then again, in those days, a dollar a day was pretty good, you know. You paid five cents for a pound of coffee, or something like that.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And your mom--

TEGLIA: My mom, when she had a child, like me, for instance, they would go to France, uh, to become wet nurse for the rich French families. So we would be given to somebody else so they could take care of us, but I do not know who take care of me.

DANE: And how long would she be gone for?

TEGLIA: Oh, about six, eight months.

DANE: Uh-huh. You were telling me earlier that you were from France, originally, French heritage.

TEGLIA: Our descendants are from France.

DANE: Did she speak French by any chance?

TEGLIA: Yeah, she picked something up. French, uh, some, a few words, and French cooking, of course.

DANE: Would you brothers and sisters all stay together when

she would go away? Would you be given to different families?

TEGLIA: Uh, yes. We would be together. That's right. This picture that you just saw.

DANE: School. Would you be going to school?

TEGLIA: Yes. We went to school and, uh, we had the necessary education, uh, read and write and history and things like that, which, uh, was very helpful.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Church. Was religion a major role in your life?

TEGLIA: Yes. In our area, yes. Of course, in Italy it was so, practically all over, you know.

DANE: Uh-huh. Catholic.

TEGLIA: Catholic.

DANE: Did you, can you describe the church? Your daughter was saying that it's still there.

TEGLIA: Well, the church is still there. It's not, uh, it isn't any different than you see some of the old churches here with the pillars, you know, on the side and all the statues and the, uh, paintings on the ceiling. The only thing is we didn't have any benches to sit on. We stood up in those days. When I was there we stood up, you see.

DANE: For the whole mass?

TEGLIA: That's right.

DANE: Oh, my word. That's a long time. Were there, were your teachers nuns, by any chance? Were you taught--

TEGLIA: No, no. Not in this, not in that, not in Italy. Our teacher was just a civilian. I still remember her name. She was such a little thing.

DANE: What was her name?

TEGLIA: (Italian name.)

DANE: Oh, God. Did you like her? Was she a good teacher?

TEGLIA: She was a nice soul. She was a very nice person.

DANE: Would you have the same teacher for many years, or was
it like here?

TEGLIA: Yes. The same teacher, yeah. I remember one thing,
that we all had to wear black smocks in the school. We went to school,
we put the smocks on, and then it was time to come home we would just put
the smocks away.

DANE: Uh-huh. Were there grades like there are here, or
would you all--

TEGLIA: Yes, there were grades, one, two, three, four. We , we
went up to the fourth grade.

DANE: Uh-huh. Would you have shores to do on the, on--

TEGLIA: Yes. Incidentally, in the, uh, in the harvest season there we would be excused from school so we could help our folks on the farm. And then, of course, we would bring some of the goods to the teacher, you know, like eggs or grapes or peaches, whatever we had.

DANE: And harvesting grapes, or wheat, or what would you be growing on the farm?

TEGLIA: Well, we had wheat, and of course we, uh, our land were all surrounded by grapevines, you know, see. And we had figs. In fact, we had three figs. We had peaches. We had pears. And then we had vegetables, of course.

DANE: Would the woman you were living with, if it was your mother or, uh, whoever was raising you at the time, would she pretty much be self sufficient? Would she put up vegetables for the winter, and, uh, that kind of thing, or always going to the market every day?

TEGLIA: Oh, no, no. There was no such thing as going to the market. The only way you went to the market was maybe twice a month to buy a pound of beef to make soup. That's all.

DANE: So you were pretty self sufficient.

TEGLIA: Oh, yes. We were. No doctors, uh--

DANE; Electricity?

TEGLIA: No. We had an oil lamp for light, if you know what
that is.

DANE: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. And running water?

TEGLIA: No, of course not. (They laugh.)

DANE: And, this is a question I ask often, and usually, uh,
anyway, I'll let you answer. Did you. what kind of shoes did you wear?

TEGLIA: Well, we had, uh, we had a shoemaker about a block away
and, uh, we were able to, my father would send some money once in a
while. We were able to have shoes. And when the soles were worn out,
then the shoemaker would put the wooden sole, you know, like, uh, like
you see, those wooden bottoms. And we kept that up until the top was
gone, and then we had to do something else. Mostly we went barefoot,

though.

DANE: That's what I wondered. That's what--

TEGLIA: Oh, yes.

DANE: And would you pass the shoes down, too?

TEGLIA: Of course. We'd pass everything down, patches and all.
(He laughs.)

DANE: And as a kid, with your dad in America, were you ever
daydreaming about coming here, or were you just happy where you were?

TEGLIA: No, No I wasn't. I, well, I was too young to, for
those kind of thoughts, anyway.

DANE: Then how did it come about? Do you remember, when your
mom said, "We're going to America." How did that
happen?

TEGLIA: Well, uh, he, uh, I think. I think we had to wait two

years before we were able to come to this country, you know, with the immigration you have to get in line, or different things. I was too young to understand those things. But she kept telling us we're going to America pretty soon. That's all I, that's all, we took that for granted, see.

DANE: When it was time to go, did she, what did she bring?
Did she pack up belongings in--

TEGLIA: Well, we had very little belongings, belongings to bring.

DANE: Did she, some people have told me, maybe you didn't have it, uh, feather mattresses. Did you have those?

TEGLIA: No.

DANE: Huh. Interesting. A lot of people brought those over with them. Food. Did she pack food to come?

TEGLIA: No.

DANE: You just picked up and left?

TEGLIA: Picked up and left.

DANE: Do you remember the day you left your village?

TEGLIA: I remember the day, but not the date. We, uh, there was, uh, a horse and wagon that picked us up at the house, and then we drove to the station. Of course, that was the first train ride I ever had and it took us to Genoa. Incidentally, we stayed in Genoa overnight and I saw my first movie.

DANE: You did?

TEGLIA: We walked in to this place, it was real dark, I didn't even know, didn't even know where to look, you know. Finally it all focused on me. I just sat there and I saw it.

DANE: What did you think?

TEGLIA: It was movie about a German submarine, too. And we were going into the, into the waters where there were submarines.

DANE: Because the war had started by then.

TEGLIA: Yes. We had submarines. That's why I told you about
the stolen two guns on the boat.

DANE: Yeah. Did anyone ever let you know that it was
difficult at that time. I mean, did the war have any--

TEGLIA: Perhaps my mother was told about it, but we were too
young to know those things.

DANE: Yeah. Yeah. Were you sad to leave behind your village
and the people that you knew, and your friends?

TEGLIA: I was very sad, but mostly for my dog. In fact, when
we left, I left him in bed. He was in my bed, slept with
me.

DANE: What was his name?

TEGLIA: Pisarino.

DANE: Pisarino. Did you want to bring him with you?

TEGLIA: Yes, but there was no way. of course.

DANE: Oh, oh. When you got to Genoa, oh, I know, the train ride. Can you remember what it sounded like?

TEGLIA: The train?

DANE: Yeah.

TEGLIA: Well, it was very strange, you know. And, uh, when the windows were open the, uh, the smoke would come into the, uh, into the train and some of the soot would come into the train also, you know. And, ooh, we, I remember we had a lot of tunnels to go through. For about a half hour we went into the tunnel.

DANE: Was it adventurous or scary?

TEGLIA: Adventurous. It was really, we appreciated it.

DANE: Yeah. I talked to some, another man from Northern Italy that had come and he said it was so loud and he'd never been on anything that moved without a horse.

TEGLIA: It was loud, yes. It was loud and noisy.

DANE: And you get to Genoa, to a port, and it was time to get on the boat-- You were in Genoa one night.

TEGLIA: One night. We slept overnight.

DANE: Uh-huh. Was there an agent there, a man that was helping you get tickets and tell you where to go?

TEGLIA: Yes, of course, there was, yes.

DANE: And the boat, you were getting on the boat, do you remember your impression when you saw this ocean-going ship?

TEGLIA: Oh, God. The impression was terrific. It was just like seeing a, uh, like fantasy land, you know. Such large boats. It wasn't very large, but at the time it seemed very large.

DANE: Uh-huh. Do you remember the name of it?

TEGLIA: Yes. S.S. Caserta.

DANE: Caserta. Do you know how to spell that?

TEGLIA: C-A-S-E-R-T-A. Caserta.

DANE: Does it mean anything?

TEGLIA: It could mean something but I don't know.

DANE: Yeah. I wondered. Did you have, uh, third class
passage?

TEGLIA: Yes. We were down below.

DANE: Can you describe it? Do you remember what it was like?

TEGLIA: Oh, I sure can. We had a long dormitory and the, uh,
cots were stacked about four, one on top of the

other, you know, maybe separated this far apart. And, uh, most of the time the portholes were under water.

DANE: Was it dark?

TEGLIA: Yes, it was dark. It wasn't, well, we did have some sort of, sort of light. But, uh, I don't remember whether it was electric. I don't know if they had electric in those days, but we did have some light.

DANE: Were you separated from the girls, the men and the boys?

TEGLIA: We were all in the same room.

DANE: Did you, was it mostly Italians that were there? Had come--

TEGLIA: Yes. Mostly from the North and from the South. When we got into the boat at Genoa, I think the next day we got to Naples. When we got on the boat, there was, passengers were very few. But when we got to Naples then the boat filled up. And you had those little, uh,

little boys on the, on the pier, they would beg you to throw some coins into the water and then they would dive and pick them up, you know.

DANE: No kidding. Did you throw coins, did you--

TEGLIA: My mother, she threw a coin, yes. And she dove right in and picked it up. It was pretty deep, too, you know.

DANE: Wow. Wow. What time of the year was this, warm, cold?

TEGLIA: It was, uh, I believe it was January. But then, the weather was mild there.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. On the boat, do you remember, you were twelve years old. Did you, were you adventurous at all? Were you, did you go up into sort of the second class, or on deck?

TEGLIA: I explored the whole thing.

DANE: Any images of what it was like? Because you were down in the hold of the boat. Any images of what second class looked like, or did you meet sailors on the ship, or--

TEGLIA: Well, sailors? Of course, yeah sailors. And, uh, well, the second class, well, the people were, they were sitting there and sometime they would sing or play accordion, and sometime they would dance, you know, when they weren't seasick.

DANE: Did you get sick?

TEGLIA: I did. Practically, most of the time.

DANE: Uh-huh. Did your family get sick?

TEGLIA: No. I was the only one, really.

DANE: Uh-huh. It's supposed to be horrible.

TEGLIA: Oh, it was horrible. (He laughs.) Especially when you smell the food in the kitchen.

DANE: Do you remember what you ate on the boat? Did they--

TEGLIA: Well, we had, we had, uh, eggs in the morning, and

toast and coffee. And the noontime we had a lot of pasta. Almost every day we would have pasta. And they would give us a tin of wine, maybe about so much wine, you know.

DANE; Hmm. Would yo go to a cafeteria, or did they come?

TEGLIA: They had a large dining room with big benches, you know. Sometimes, when the boat went like this, then the dishes would slide over.

DANE: Wild. Wild. And this was wartime.

TEGLIA: This was wartime in Europe.

DANE: Uh-huh. And you had said that they had out two guns?

TEGLIA: Two guns on the ship. Tried them out, when we were quite a distance from Genoa, which, uh, everyone was ordered down below. The vibration was terrific when the guns went off.

DANE: Was it loud?

TEGLIA: Yes. Shook the whole ship.

DANE: Ooh. What did you think of that as a young boy? Was it, again, was it exciting, or did it make you think?

TEGLIA: Well, it, uh, like I said, it was like a fantasy. It, uh, it was really nice. I sort of enjoyed it.

DANE: Uh-huh. Oh, I would imagine. Then you were telling me, uh, you were in the middle of the ocean and, uh, there was a sailor?

TEGLIA: The ones at the guns, yeah.

DANE: And they saw--

TEGLIA: It was a whale, actually, but he got so excited, he thought it was a submarine, and he started yelling and everybody got scared, you know, panicking.

DANE: And it turned out to be--

TEGLIA: It turned out to be the top part of a whale, see.

DANE: Funny. Did you see porpoises also?

TEGLIA: Yes. They followed the boat all the way through, just
up and down, up and down, you know.

DANE: Friendly.

TEGLIA: Very friendly, yes. And, of course, we always had
seagulls.

DANE: Storms? Any big storms that you--

TEGLIA: Very, terrific. Sometimes instead of going forward it
went backwards.

DANE: Hmm. Hmm. Was that frightening at all?

TEGLIA: As far as the first couple of days. But then, uh, it
was all right.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. How long, do you remember how long

the crossing took?

TEGLIA: Sixteen days. Because we, uh, ordinarily it takes nine days but, uh, on account of the, oh, troubled waters, the war, we would go this way, that way, this way, that way, you know. And when we got to the Straits of Gibraltar, we got there during the night, and before we got there the steward came downstairs and he, he warned everyone not to make any noise and not to show any lights. Of course, I didn't know what the purpose was at the time. Then, of course, when, uh, after we, uh, left Gibraltar then we were in safe waters.

DANE: Wow. Just like in the movies.

TEGLIA: Right. Can make a book out of it.

DANE: Oh. After two and a half weeks, you came across the ocean, and you were getting close to New York. Did they let you know what day you were going to be landing? Did someone come down and say--

TEGLIA: Well, if they did I didn't know.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Do you remember when you first saw

New York harbor?

TEGLIA: Oh, yes. When I first saw the Statue of Liberty, it was during the night, in the evening, and the most amazing sight was the, uh, tall buildings, with their windows lit, you know, my God, just like a fantasy land.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And did you see the Statue of Liberty?

TEGLIA: Yes, we did.

DANE: Did people, did anyone now what it was?

TEGLIA: If we did, I didn't see any reaction. We, we knew because my mother came from France. She was, she was telling us the history of the Statue of Liberty, you see.

DANE: So was that an exciting moment when you saw it?

TEGLIA: It was very exciting. Like I say, like a fantasy.

DANE: Uh-huh. And the city, had you ever seen that many buildings, and that much light?

TEGLIA: Never. Never.

DANE: Especially at night. And the harbor, it was pretty busy at that time, in 1916. Was it busy, were there lots of boats in the harbor, and--

TEGLIA: Yes. There were lots of boats and a lot of carriages and things, and a few cars, too, at the time, a few Model T's, I believe there were.

DANE: Ellis Island. You were there for--

TEGLIA: About three weeks.

DANE: Do you remember when you first landed, if they put you through medica; exams?

TEGLIA: Before we got off the boat we were all examined. Then

they put us on a ferry. All of us had a, a name tag on our coats, you know. And then we, uh, we settled at Ellis Island there, which we had, uh, well, we stayed there until, uh, my sister took sick, I took sick, my other sister took sick. So then we had to wait for the others to come out of the hospital before we could come back to Chicago.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. On the ship when they gave you the medical exams, do you remember anything about what they looked at, what they were looking for, what they did?

TEGLIA: The tongue, and your eyes and, uh, they didn't, uh, they didn't check your pulse or your heart or anything like that. They just looked at you, mostly.

DANE: Did they ask your mom any questions that you remember?

TEGLIA: Yes, they did. But, uh, I wouldn't know what it was.

DANE: Yeah. You told me that when you got on Ellis Island, and you were separated from your family--

TEGLIA: Uh, when they took me to the hospital, yes.

DANE: Describe what that was like.

TEGLIA: Well, it was pretty sad and scary, because we had no interpreters, to my knowledge, and my mother didn't where, where I went, where the kids went, for at least a couple of days, until someone was able to tell her.

DANE: Uh-huh. Did you think you'd never see her again?

TEGLIA: No, I didn't. Uh, those thoughts didn't run through my mind at all.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Do you know what was the matter with you, why you were put in the hospital?

TEGLIA: Well, it was a slight cold. I had a low grade temperature and, uh, my eyes were red. I wasn't used to the electric lights, I suppose. Different environment, you know. And that's, uh, that's how I come to tell you about the poor man next to me. Because the rooms are separated by glass.

DANE: Tell me that story as though you were telling Flawn.
(Referring to sound engineer.) I know the story, but--

TEGLIA: Oh. Well, the second day I was there I noticed this old man. I didn't pay to much attention the first day. Oh, he must have been about seventy. Of course, when you're a kid, a man of forty years old looks old, you know. So he took the two tongue depressors and he made a cross out of them, you know. And he, he got at the end of the bed and he would kneel with this, oh, for a long time, every day, just kneel and pray. The poor man was so scared and, uh, lost, you know. No one to talk to.

DANE: Did that frighten you, too?

TEGLIA: Well, I guess, uh no, not really, but, uh, I did do a lot of thinking. And, uh, my parents used to tell me that when you have a cold or you have a fever you should sweat it out. So one night I decided I wanted to sweat it out. And I sweat it, I really sweated, perspired very much, and, uh, the next day I was fine. So they sent me home. That is, to the Ellis Island.

DANE: And you were brought back to your mom?

TEGLIA: That's right. Then eventually when my sisters came back, then we all got together in preparation for the trip to Chicago.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. There's one other story that you told me, but again--

TEGLIA: The oatmeal?

DANE: Yeah, yeah. It was your sister, right?

TEGLIA: No. Me.

DANE: Oh, good. Tell me that story.

TEGLIA: Oh, you mean my sister crying?

DANE: Both those stories.

TEGLIA: Okay. Which one do you want to know?

DANE: The oatmeal.

TEGLIA: Well, (he laughs), we got oatmeal for breakfast, and I didn't know what it was, with the brown sugar on it, you know. So I, uh, I couldn't get myself to eat it. So I, I put it on the windowsill, let the birds eat it.

DANE: (She laughs.) Did the nurses ever wonder why you weren't eating anything?

TEGLIA: No. Well, the nurses couldn't talk, we couldn't, uh, communicate. And, uh, of course we had milk and bread and different things.

DANE: Would they feed you in bed three times a day? Did they--

TEGLIA: At Ellis Island?

DANE: Uh-huh.

TEGLIA: Yes. Each time we were fed they took headcounts.

DANE: Would a doctor come around and look at you?

TEGLIA: Yes. Yes.

DANE: Could you speak with him?

TEGLIA: No. Just look at you.

DANE: How did they treat you?

TEGLIA: I think very good. Very good. Of course, we didn't understand, but the treatment was fine. We, we weren't, uh, nobody seemed to be rough or scolding, or things like that.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And then there was the other story that your sister--

TEGLIA: Oh. Well, when I was in the hospital there for a couple of days I heard someone screaming in the hall. You know, screaming, I mean, really screaming. I found out it was my younger sister. She, she was so scared.

DANE: And were you able to, I can't remember, were you able
to run out and talk to her?

TEGLIA: No. We couldn't see anyone for the duration of our
hospital stay.

DANE: Hmm. Were you aware of the fact that if you were sick
you might not get into this country, they might
send you back to Italy?

TEGLIA: We knew that, yes. We knew that. But it had to be
more of a sickness than, uh, what we had.

DANE: Did, did it ever worry you, though?

TEGLIA: No. No. We were fairly healthy. We didn't have and
contagious diseases, or anything like that.

DANE: When you got better you were brought back to your mom.

TEGLIA: Yes.

DANE: And then you just, where did you sleep when you weren't
in the hospital?

TEGLIA: In the hospital?

DANE: When you, after you got out of the hospital, did you
have to wait for your sisters to get better?

TEGLIA: No.

DANE: Oh, you all got better pretty much at the same time.
Then you took the train to Chicago, another train?

TEGLIA: Yes. And then before we boarded the train they gave us
a lunch bag, they gave my mother a lunch bag consisting of, uh, salami,
bananas and bread a few oranges. Enough for the trip to Chicago.

DANE: Did it last you to Chicago?

TEGLIA: Yes, it did. And boy did we enjoy it. We didn't have
anything for that, outside of salamis, and stuff like

that.

DANE: Uh-huh. A lot of people say that they never seen, uh, bananas before. Was that the case with you? Had you ever seen a banana before?

TEGLIA: I'd never seen a banana, but I knew of it because the people from America would tell me about it. They would come back to, uh, Italy once in a while and they would talk about bananas. In fact, when I got to this country, the first thing they gave me was a banana.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Did you know how to eat it?

TEGLIA: I did.

DANE: Also, other impressions people have had, they saw their first black person in America. Was that the case for you? Do you--

TEGLIA: I, my mother used to tell me about those, because there was quite a few in France at the time. But, uh, it didn't bother me much. I was warned about it. That is, I knew about it. It was amazing, the black faces and the white teeth, you know.

DANE: Yeah. It was surprising, I would think. Did you see Chinese men? Was that a--

TEGLIA: Not on our boat. No.

DANE: Because those are usually two things that people say, "I just never knew that people could be made like that." It was such a new impression for them. Was your father waiting for you in Chicago?

TEGLIA: Yes.

DANE: At the train station?

TEGLIA: At the train station.

DANE: Did you recognize him? Did you--

TEGLIA: Well, I knew he was a tall man. Of course, I hadn't seen him for a couple of years, but I did recognize him. There wasn't too much affection there, you know, because you had to grow, you had to sort of grow with your parents in order to get, uh, to love them like you

should. Strangers, more or less.

DANE: Yeah. Yeah. And how about your mom and father. Did they, once now they were back together, how did that work out?

TEGLIA: Worked out fine. Oh, yes. Fine.

DANE: Even after all those-- Back and forth.

TEGLIA: Oh, yes. Well, it, it was a way of living in those days.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Did he have a place of his own in Chicago, or was he living with a family?

TEGLIA: No. We, uh, we came, uh, we landed, uh, 1400 South Kilborne. My, my uncle and aunt. We lived with them for, until we got situated. In the meantime, uh, my mother and dad were able to find work, and my older sister was able to find work, and I was left at home. I was the oldest then, uh, almost the oldest. I had to do all the chores and, uh, the cooking and the baking

and the washing and the babysitting. All that kind of stuff. Of course, we knew how to do that, how to do that in the old country, you see.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. I need to turn the tape over. This is the end of side one, Interview Number 105. It is 2:40.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DANE: This is the beginning of side two, Oreste Teglia, Interview Number 105. It's 2:40. Okay. It was your responsibility, then, to make sure that the household really was--

TEGLIA: Yes, for a certain period of time.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. What were your impressions of Chicago now that you were living here, you're in America?

TEGLIA: Well, everything, like I say, was like a fantasy land. I even used to pick up tin cans, I liked them so much. You know, we

never had anything like that. Really, everything was really appreciated, it was something wonderful. It was amazing, really.

DANE: What else? The food must have, was the food different from here? No, because you would cook it, but-- What other impressions, exactly, like the tin can, and cars were here.

TEGLIA: Cars, and, uh, the language and, uh, the behavior of the people. I'm sorry to say, the behavior of the, uh, American people towards the immigrants was pretty sad.

DANE: Uh-huh. Do you remember that?

TEGLIA: Oh, yes. When I went to school, of course, I couldn't understand English or nothing, and, uh, during recess time I would sit outside and with my, with my old country clothes on, you know, and people would, uh, the kids would sort of poke fun at you and call you a wop and a dego. Maybe I shouldn't say this, but that's the way it was.

DANE: Uh-huh. There was, and I'm not exactly, I mean, it's historical, there was one woman who said an expression she was called was "garlic breath." Did you ever hear that?

TEGLIA: Never heard that, no.

DANE: I mean, she was little at that time. What were you--

TEGLIA: Well, we did grow up on garlic. Garlic is associated
with the Italians, you know.

DANE: Did it make you mad, or did you feel like this is
something you had to be, out up with?

TEGLIA: Well, I, not really mad, bit I was very, uh, I didn't
feel very happy about it, you know. It was sort
of confusing and, uh, scary, let's put it that way.

DANE: Yeah, oh, yeah. And your name Oreste.

TEGLIA: Yes. (He laughs.) Eventually the kids started calling
me Rusty. It was easier. Rusty.

DANE: Did that bother you either?

TEGLIA: No, no. I like that.

DANE: Did it make you feel, sometimes people say--

TEGLIA: It made me feel like I belonged, you know.

DANE: Did your mom call you Rusty, or did she--

TEGLIA: No, no. She called me by mt name.

DANE: You mentioned the clothes, the old country clothes.
Did you start wearing more Americanized clothing?

TEGLIA: Well, maybe a year afterwards.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. How was it different? How was your
clothing different from the others?

TEGLIA: Well, we did, uh, we wore knee pants, we, our, our
clothes were knee pants and they, when we came
to this country they were still selling knee pants for
a few years afterwards, but there was no such thing as

long pants for a, for a kid.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And a jacket, would you wear any, a different--

TEGLIA: Well, the jackets, they were of, uh, all different types, different shapes, you know.

DANE: Uh-huh. And would you wear a cap like in this photograph?

TEGLIA: Cap all the time. Always wore a cap.

DANE: Did the other boys, too? Did American born boys wear--

TEGLIA: Everyone wore a cap.

DANE: At that time.

TEGLIA: In fact, I had one cap I liked so well I kept buying the same thing for four years.

DANE: That's great. What was so special about that one cap?

TEGLIA: I just happened to like it.

DANE: Oh, that's beautiful. Oh, that's great. And learning English, you were twelve. How did you, did you learn in school, or--

TEGLIA: Well, that wasn't so easy. When I went to school, I, they put me in kindergarten. So, uh, the teacher didn't know what to do with me so I, she, some way she found out that I was able to, uh, I was good with clay, making figurines, you know, things like that. So she put me to do that and I would, I would fix the animals and put them on the windowsill and eventually learn a few words, you know, and sort of get into it.

DANE: Were there any special classes for you? Was there a teacher that would come around?

TEGLIA: No. Not in those days. My, uh, the last school I went to we did have, this was sister school.

Incidentally Mother Cabrini was there. You heard of Mother Cabrini. I did know how to speak a few words in English but, you know, they were broken English. So they would take me downstairs once a week for elocution, or whatever you call it, like thirteen or thirty, things like that. Which helped a lot.

DANE: Would you go down with other kids, or--

TEGLIA: Just myself.

DANE: That's great. Were there other kids from other countries in your school or did you hang around with other Italian kids?

TEGLIA: Not at that time, no. Not at that time.

DANE: Were your brothers and sisters in school with you?

TEGLIA: Not with me. My, uh, sister came to our school later, but that's all. Just my sister. I didn't have much schooling. After the, uh, (?) school, that's all the schooling I had. Whatever I learned I just picked

it up.

DANE: How long, the, did you go to school when you were in
this country?

TEGLIA: Two years.

DANE: And then did you go to work?

TEGLIA: Well, then my dad got a permit for me to work. I was
fifteen years old. And I kept working ever since.

DANE: Uh. Where did you get your first job?

TEGLIA: Well, we did anything we could. I sold papers, I
worked in a art factory, and I made banana bushels at the, uh, at the
market and, uh anything you could find to make an honest buck.

DANE: At the art factory, did you say? What kind of factory
was it?

TEGLIA: Where we'd make, you know, we'd make banana bushels,

you know that, those bushels that you put the bananas, the bunch of bananas in?

DANE: Yeah. And what would you do, exactly?

TEGLIA: I would, uh, staple the bushels together.

DANE: Was it a big factory, or just a small--

TEGLIA: Well, it was, uh large enough. Uh, it was, they did other things besides making bushels.

DANE: Uh=huh. How long did you work each day, do you remember?

TEGLIA: Six months. Oh, each day?

DANE: Yeah, like in the morning?

TEGLIA: Eight hours.

DANE: Eight hours. And do you remember how much you got

paid?

TEGLIA: I think it was three dollars a week. It was a lot of money then.

DANE: Did you keep it, or did you have to give it to your--

TEGLIA: No. We, uh, we gave, uh, we kept, kept giving our father our earnings until we were of marriageable age.

DANE: And you lived at home?

TEGLIA: Yes. We all lived at home.

DANE: Was there any--

TEGLIA: For most of the time, anyway.

DANE: Was there, at any point during those first few years, that you wished that you could go back to Italy?

TEGLIA: Well, I was homesick for quite a few years. I was very

homesick. In fact, I used to dream that I would go there. And when I got, when I came into view of the land I would wake up. Each time I would wake up. I never got to land.

DANE: You dreamed you'd be in a boat and you'd just be almost--

TEGLIA: I'm just there, then I'd wake up. That happened, that lasted for about three, four years.

DANE: No kidding. Would you tell anyone these dreams?

TEGLIA: Yes, I did.

DANE: Oh, that's interesting. And your mom? Was she very happy here right away, or did it take--

TEGLIA: No, my mother wasn't very happy. My mother was happy in France. That was the sad thing about it.

DANE: Did she learn how to speak English?

TEGLIA: Able enough to communicate, uh, the every day affairs,
you know. My dad, the same way.

DANE: Uh-uh. Uh-huh.

TEGLIA: Of course, we lived among, amongst the Italians, which
made it, uh, they did that in those days, you know.

DANE: Would there be a social club, an organized social club?

TEGLIA: Something like that, yes. They would get together once
in a while, the same language.

DANE: Any special events during the year, uh, like holy days,
or, uh, special things that you would have done in Italy that you brought
over here and did?

TEGLIA: Well, yes. We, uh, like, uh, around a certain time of
the year we would have, like, they'd call it,
St. Joseph's table, where they'd have all kinds of
food. You don't know what that is?

DANE: No.

TEGLIA: They'd have all kinds of food and, uh, it's a, it's the feast of St. Joseph, isn't it? Yeah. All the goodies, all the statues. Everything that you could think of.

DANE: What time of the year is it?

TEGLIA: That's uh, it's in the fall, isn't it? Yes, some time in the fall. On St. Joseph's Day. Isn't that the day when the swallows come back to Capistrano?

DANE: Ahh. And then, would it last all day when people would come together?

TEGLIA: A couple of days sometimes, yeah.

DANE: Oh, no kidding. Oh, great.

TEGLIA: Really nice.

DANE: And so most of the time that you stayed within the

Italian community.

TEGLIA: Within our own colony, yeah, yeah.

DANE: Were they people that had come from the same area?
Were they, or did Southern Italians?

TEGLIA: You mean the feast?

DANE: No, just in general, socializing in the community that
you stayed within.

TEGLIA: Well, some, uh, were the lately comers, and others had
been here for years, you know. So we, that's how we got acquainted.
Some had relatives. From one to another we sort of mingled together.

DANE: When you moved out of your home, was that when you got
married, or had you moved out before that?

TEGLIA: No, no. After, uh, after the first, uh house on, uh,
South Kilborne, then we moved on, uh, Institute Place. That's, uh, in
Chicago near the Moody Bible, the Moody Bible Institute. It's not there

any more now. The, uh, house is not there any more. And then we moved, uh, in Oak Street, and then we moved on Hill Street, and then eventually my father was able to buy a house on, uh, near North Side, which we stayed there for quite a few years. And then, uh, my wife and I got an apartment there for a couple of years. Then my brother-in-law and I we, uh, had enough money to, uh, for a down payment on a house, so we, the two of us, we bought a home in, uh, Chicago, Illinois, and that's the house that I sold before I came here.

DANE: Was that a big deal to, to be able to buy a house?

TEGLIA: It was a big deal. Well, we, we bought a house in 1940. (He laughs.) My brother-in-law had, uh, one thousand dollars. I had five hundred dollars. So between the two of us we were able to put down a down payment.

DANE: Wow. Wow. And so both families lived there.

TEGLIA: Yeah. We had, uh, three apartments. We rented one.

DANE: That's quite a thing.

TEGLIA: And then eventually I bought, he bought a new home. He was, he was a butcher, pretty fortunate. So I bought the other half.

DANE: And what kind of work were you doing?

TEGLIA: Well, I was, mostly I was self-employed. When I was, uh, sixteen, let's see, when I was fourteen years old, or fifteen or sixteen years old, my, my cousin, that is, the son of the people that took care of us in the old country, he had a, he had the, uh, candy store on the near North Side. So he took me in. And then, uh, I lived there, of course. I didn't commute. So then I, we learned how to make candies and ice cream and all those things. And I stayed there for thirteen years.

DANE: Huh. And you learned how to make ice cream?

TEGLIA: Yes.

DANE: Italian ice cream.

TEGLIA: Those days it used to, uh, you used to do it by hand, you know, ice , salt. And then I, uh, after thirteen years I decided I

wanted to, I got a job downtown at Maurice L. Rothchild, in the, uh big building on Jackson Estate. I was in the alteration department.

DANE; Oh, no kidding. Now, how did you learn how to do that?

TEGLIA: Well, I learned. I, uh, my assignment was to, uh, when, uh, when the clothes, the suits were brought in for alteration, I had a book with all different color pencils, I would enter in the book what, uh, this charge is for, what day they come in, and what day they should be ready and, uh, different colors, you know. And then I would take care of the steam boilers, right behind me, so the pressers could have steam.

DANE: Uh-huh. And how long did you stay with that company, with that job?

TEGLIA: Oh, about seven years.

DANE: Wow. Oh, wow. Did you miss the candy store?

TEGLIA: No, no. I was glad to get out because there was too, the hours were too long. Seven days a week, you know, fourteen, fifteen

hours a day. I just couldn't hack it any more.

DANE: Yeah. You've married to it--

TEGLIA: Yeah, I was married at the time. 1928, yes.

DANE: Uh-uh. Uh-huh. Citizenship. At what point did you,
are you a citizen, did you--

TEGLIA: Yes, I am.

DANE: At what point did you decide?

TEGLIA: 1936.

DANE: Why?

TEGLIA: Why? It was normal. It was right for anyone in this
country to become a citizen. I waited quite long, but I did become a
citizen.

DANE: Did you have to go and take a test?

TEGLIA: Yes. Yes.

DANE: Was it a big day when you became, when you got your citizenship papers, or--

TEGLIA: Yes. It, uh, I was quite happy. I felt like, uh, I was somebody.

DANE: Uh-huh. I often ask this question of people and since you came when you were so young maybe it doesn't mean anything. But you were Italian born, came over to this country, was able to buy a house, have a family, became an American citizen, learned English. When did you first feel that you were an American and no longer strictly an Italian?

TEGLIA: Well I, I felt like I was an American. I started associating with, I was able to communicate with other children, I, I felt I was an American then, even before I got my citizenship, my papers.

DANE: Uh-huh. What did it mean to you? Anything in

particular?

TEGLIA: Oh, it means an awful lot. Uh, first of all to be, uh, able to be in this country and whatever I achieved which, uh, wouldn't have been possible in Europe, means a lot, everything. My life, my children.

DANE: If you could have done it differently, would you have--

TEGLIA: No, no.

DANE: I think that's about it? Can you think of anything else? Any other--Does he ever tell you any particular stories? You know, most families always have one or two, (His daughter speaks.) in the church, in your town, the bells that would ring?

TEGLIA: Oh, yes. Once in a while we were allowed to ring the church bells and, uh, (he laughs), we were so small, you know, every time the bell went this way, the rope went up, we'd go up with the rope, you know, up and down.

DANE: Oh, what fun.

TEGLIA: It was fun, really.

DANE: Would you do that with your brothers, or friends, or--

TEGLIA: Yes, my brothers, and friends.

DANE: Oh, that's wonderful. It's a sound that yo don't hear
as much as you hear in Europe, the sound of church bells.

TEGLIA: Oh, it was really nice. And then we had another
experience. We had a flood. Oh, incidentally, I did tell you that I saw
the Haley's Comet, though.

DANE: Oh, tell me.

TEGLIA: Yes, I saw Haley's Comet.

DANE: What year was that?

TEGLIA: 1910. My mother, she says, "There it is." Big head

and real long tail, and the sky was clear.

DANE: So you could rally see it, not like--

TEGLIA: Absolutely. Sure.

DANE: Was it as big a deal as it is now? Did people, were people aware of it?

TEGLIA: Well, it covered, well, we, you know, in a small town you don't hear so much talk about it, but my mother knew, and it was really quite a sight. Scary, also, because they had all kinds of predictions, you know. And the a year after that we got a tremendous earthquake. I was upstairs when, uh it happened. In fact, I was looking for the cat. In three jumps I was out doors. When I came out I saw my kid brother hugging the tree. This was, and there, at the edge of the road, we had the ditches, you know, that, uh, and the water was going swish, swish, swish, all over, you know. (He laughs.) That was terrific. That was fantastic. Scary. Frightening.

DANE: Did buildings fall down at all?

TEGLIA: Cracked and, cracks in the earth. In fact, we didn't
go back in the house for two months.

DANE: Really. Afraid that it would happen?

TEGLIA: Afraid that it would, uh, after shocks, you know.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Did you know what an earthquake was?

TEGLIA: No. I had heard about it, but I never knew what it
was. My mother used to tell us about it. And then we had a flood.
That's how I happened to, uh, learn how to row boats, you know.

DANE: Oh, tell me about that?

TEGLIA: Well, we had floods. The, uh, the flood, it was about,
uh, we were involved in a flood, and then, of course, you go about a
block, two blocks away, that it was dry, it was high. At that particular
time the city would send us somebody to bring us bread. And, uh, we were
so close to dry land that, uh, people that came in by boats they would
leave the boats by our house, more or less. So we would, uh, sort of
take the boats with the pole, you know, and learn how to, uh, maneuver

those boats.

DANE: Oh, it sounds like fun.

TEGLIA: It was a lot of fun, yes.

DANE: Would that happen every year, or--

TEGLIA: Only once that I'd been there.

DANE: Did you lose your house?

TEGLIA: No, no, I didn't lose my house, but we were under water for, oh, a long time. We had to take, uh, the cow and the pig, we had to take them upstairs in the graining room because they were standing in the water, and whatever animals we had. (He laughs.) It was quite an experience.

DANE: Gosh. And, wow, there was no insurance then.

TEGLIA: Oh, no, no, no. No such thing.

DANE: What was the name of the river? I didn't ask you that.

TEGLIA: Pecia.

DANE: Pecia. Does that mean fish?

TEGLIA: It does, in a way, yes. Fish is peche and this is Pecia ("Pay-sha").

DANE: Would it get cold in that town in the wintertime, where you were?

TEGLIA: Only once I saw snow, but it would melt by, uh, eleven, twelve o'clock. Of course, in the wintertime the, everything would be frosted solid, then it would melt again.

DANE: Was it hard for you to come to this climate in Chicago?

TEGLIA: Well, it took a long time to get used to this, uh, frigid weather we have here.

DANE: Yeah. 'Cos I don't imagine in Tuscany it would get this

cold.

TEGLIA: My mother is almost froze.

DANE: That's right. That's what I wondered.

TEGLIA: And, you know, in those days, we didn't have adequate heating, you know.

DANE: Did you have coal?

TEGLIA: Coal we had, yes.

DANE: Was it hard coal or soft coal, do you remember? The dirty, dirty kind, or the--

TEGLIA: Well, us kids used to go to the railroad tracks with a bushel and pick up the chunks of coal that were dropping from the, from the engines, you know, the coal tank. It was legal, of course.

DANE: Yeah. Would you have do that once a week, every day?
How often?

TEGLIA: Well, we had, uh, you know, so we could, so we could manage to have enough coal to keep us warm. And then once in a while we bought coal.

DANE: Was there a stove in your home, or-- Like, right in the kitchen, or was it down in the basement? How did it--

TEGLIA: The stove?

DANE: Yeah.

TEGLIA: Well, actually, the only source of heat we had in those days was a cooking stove. That was it. You, you'd derive heat and, uh, for all your cooking.

DANE: And keep it going all night for the--

TEGLIA: Yes. Keep it going all night.

DANE: Amazing.

TEGLIA: The washroom, uh, the bathroom was so cold you couldn't even sit on it. (He laughs.)

DANE: Ooh! But you had running water, right?

TEGLIA: We had running water in those days, yes.

DANE: Do you remember the first time, some people do, the first time that you sat at a, that you used a flush toilet?

TEGLIA: Yes. It was on the ceiling.

DANE: Uh-huh. It was a chain. It;s funny.

TEGLIA: It's funny. It was strange.

DANE: Was that here in Chicago, or on Ellis Island?

TEGLIA: In Chicago. Yeah. Of course, Ellis Island, too. And, uh, the washroom on the boat was on the very end of the boat.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. I can't think of any-- Citizenship--
I think we're about done. (Break in tape.)
We're stopping tape, starting again. Oreste is going
to sing a selection of his choice for us. Singing was
always a hobby for him, that we've discovered now.
And, Oreste, can you tell us what it is you're going to
sing?

TEGLIA: Yes, the name of the song is "For You Alone." It is a
love song where the, where the man offers a woman a rose, you know. In
other words, it says, "Take now this rose." Well, the name of the song
is, uh, "For You Alone," and it goes like this. (He sings the song.)

DANE: This is the end of side two, tape one of Oreste Teglia,
Interview Number 105. End of interview.