

KECK-83

ANGELO B. RUCCI

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INTERVIEWER: NANCY DALLETT

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ITALY, 1923

AGE 8

PASSAGE ON "THE ROMA"

DALLETT: My name is Nancy Dallett and I'm speaking with Angelo Rucci on Friday, November 15, 1985. We are beginning this interview at ten o'clock, and we are about to interview Mr. Rucci about his immigration experience from Italy in 1923. This is the beginning of side one of tape number 083. Let's go back to the beginning of your story, and can you tell me where and when you were born.

RUCCI: Yes, uh, I was born in Sapino, Province of Capalbaso, Italy, March 3rd, 1915.

DALLETT: Tell me a bit about your family life in Italy.

RUCCI: Well, my parents owned a, uh, olive orchard and a grape vineyard. In addition they had a great many sheep. I couldn't tell you how many at this time but, uh, I know that when I wasn't in school I

had to be the shepherd. In addition we, they used donkeys to, uh, transport the grapes from the fields to the wineries. And they would, uh, place these canisters, uh, well, baskets, over the donkey, and the donkey seemed to know the way back into town, and I would ride it into town. So that was another thing that I did.

DALLETT: How old would you have been at that time?

RUCCI: Uh, six or seven. Oh, we worked in Italy. Uh, we had to because my father, at that time, uh, was in the States, and so we were doing this for my mother, who was alone. She did have, uh, outside help with the vineyards and with the olive orchards, but we all had to chip in, that is, my sister and I, who was seven years older than me.

DALLETT: How was it that your father had, uh, gone to America?

RUCCI: His father had been here and, uh, he thought he could make a lot of money, uh, if he, too, came. So, he was only a young man, fifteen or sixteen years old when he came over. Uh, his first job was with the railroad, but he didn't stay there very long. He, uh, was fortunate enough to get a job with the, a public utility, the Hartford Electric Light Company. And, of course, in those days, everybody wanted to work for a public utility because it was a pretty, uh, safe, uh, job. Uh, they wouldn't have to

worry about depression or . . . ( he clears his throat Uh . . .

DALLETT: Do you know why it was that your grandfather, had your grandfather come to the Hartford area?

RUCCI: Yes.

DALLETT: Do you know why he had come to this particular area?

RUCCI: Uh, because he had some friend here. Uh, that's usually the case. Uh, there were friends in the Hartford area and so he came here. My father, naturally, came here for the same reason.

DALLETT: Did you know your grandfather, or was he gone the whole time?

RUCCI: Uh, no. I remember him only vaguely. He died while we were still in Italy.

DALLETT: So when your father came here, uh, did he write to you and give you an idea of what life was like in, in Hartford?

RUCCI: Oh, yes. Yes. As a matter of fact, , uh, uh, I wouldn't know where to find him now, but they are, we have half a dozen letters that I had written to my father. He kept. Uh, not only from me, but from my mother and from my sister. Uh, we look at them once in a while and read them, and we get a big kick out of it, because it's interesting how well I could write, even though I must have been five or six years old, seven at the time.

DALLETT: Do you remember anything that you might have said in those letters, from your recent readings?

RUCCI: Oh, I think, one of the rich things that, uh, because he kidded me about it later on, was that my mother was working me too hard. I never seemed to have time to go out and play with the other boys. Of course, they had a business, really, and she needed the help. And it was my sister who dictated things more than my mother. You know, she was older, and she had to work hard, so she didn't want me to get away with murder.

DALLETT: And how often would your father, then, be able to come back and visit?

RUCCI: It seems to me that he, from the time he was married, uh, he had made at least half a dozen trips between 1898. I think he was married about 1900. But between 1900 and 1914 he had made at least half a dozen trips to Italy. About every other year. Uh, and each time my mother, you know, refused to come with him.

DALLETT: Why was that?

RUCCI: Well, there was a close-knit family with her mother and sisters and brothers and, uh, she just didn't think she'd like it here.

DALLETT: What did he, uh, how did he finally convince her to come to this country?

RUCCI: Well, in 19, uh, '22, uh, the fascist organization, uh, was gaining a momentum where they were becoming pretty powerful. And the average Italian disliked their tactics of, uh, attempting to control prices. Uh, prices on everything, including the prices of grapes. Uh, they themselves formed a winery so that, uh, they wanted everybody to bring their grapes to their winery.

DALLETT: Did that affect your, your wine business?

RUCCI: Yes, yes. In fact, that's because we had a vineyard. Uh, they punished people who wouldn't cut the prices by forcing them to drink a pint of castor oil. That was part of the punishment. If the, uh, objection to the reducing the prices continued then they would find some means of putting you in jail.

DALLETT: Did they happen to people that you knew, or people . . .

RUCCI: Yes, to some of our relatives, yes. Fortunately my grandfather, uh, I'm sorry, my godfather was, who was a pharmacist, but in addition to being a pharmacist, uh, his wife, generally, ran . . . Because she, too, was a pharmacist. She ran the drugstore. He was one of the biggest attorneys, uh, in the, uh, area of Naples and Rome. And he heard many cases in Rome. So he was influential in getting some of these people, friends of ours, out of jail. Uh, my mother naturally wrote to my father about

what was going on, and my father and other people from that area, uh, who were residing here, heard, uh, about what was going on. They were pretty much aware. So he disliked the idea of our growing up in Italy with the dictator, uh, like Mussolini, who had become pretty powerful by 1923. So he urged my mother to, to come here. Uh, I'm sorry, but, you know, I get ahead of the story.

DALLETT: That's okay. You can drop back. That's fine.

RUCCI: How can I go back, now, since?

DALLETT: That's fine. Just go right back.

RUCCI: Okay. I got ahead of the story because in 1914, uh, my father's boss at the Hartford Electric Light Company said, "Listen, Tony, if you want to continue working here, I'd like to have you bring your family and raise your family in their country." And so, fine. My father made plans, and he went to Italy in 1914 to get my mother and my older sister. I was not born at that time. Uh, while he was in Italy, World War One broke out and Italy became involved. There was an embargo placed on all the vessels. So, consequently, he was unable to return to the States. And, being an American citizen, he was drafted in the Italian army, because Italy and the United States, at that time, were allies. Well, he served in the army, uh, from 1915, I believe, is when he was

drafted, or late '14, until 1919. In the interim, uh, I and my sister and a brother were born. After the war, uh, my mother declined to return to the States because she had lost two of her brothers in a war and my grandfather had passed away, uh, on my mother's side. and, uh, she didn't want to leave my grandmother alone, so she refused to come. But then, getting back to the fascist period, uh, finally my mother felt that she couldn't take it any longer and, uh, she wrote to him and said, "Okay, we'll come." And in 19, in June, I think it was, in 1923, we took a train from our small town to Naples and there my, uh, mother and sister had their hair done at a hairdressers. And while they were having their hair done I stepped outside and I was watching the boys, there was a trolley that went by that particular area and the kids were jumping on the rear of the trolley. Of course, being only eight years old I felt like running over and jumping on it too, but I was so afraid to do it for fear I wouldn't find my way back. Uh . . .

DALLETT: Was this the first time you had been to Naples?

RUCCI: No. I had been, yes, it was the first time.

DALLETT: Do you have any recollection of what that felt like as a young boy? Uh, what did your father tell you about what life was going to be like in Hartford? Any recollection of that?

RUCCI: No, I don't recall that he said . . .

DALLETT: Do you have any, any recollection of just what you thought it might be like?

RUCCI: The only recollection I do have, he had purchased an eight family apartment house. And, uh, of course, we had no conception whatsoever of what an apartment house looked like, uh, because we all had single homes in Italy. We had our own home. And, uh, so it was hard to visualize what an apartment house was like. And that we were going to live on a first floor, that didn't mean anything. So what? We lived on the first floor ( he laughs ) in Italy. Uh, he said that we would live at the, uh, looking at the building, we would live at the right side, which, apparently, was supposed to mean something, but it didn't mean anything to my mother, or to me, or to my sister. I mentioned only my older sister because my other, uh, brother and sister, were much younger, so they wouldn't have too much recollection.

DALLETT: So you're in Naples, and you're about to begin your journey.

RUCCI: Uh-huh. Now, I had, apparently I had, I don't remember this, but apparently I had curly hair and the hairdresser had recommended that I have it cut because they were afraid, and there was nothing wrong with my scalp, but they were afraid that it might create a problem. So my mother protested, but, uh, she was

pretty tenacious about having it done. So my hair was cut.

DALLETT: Do you remember the baggage you were traveling with?

RUCCI: Uh, yes. Uh, we carried, I thought they were much too heavy but, of course, again I repeat, I was only eight years old, but they felt like they weighed a ton. Uh, we had four pieces of luggage that we carried. Mine was, naturally, the smallest. They had, uh, my mother carried two, my oldest sister carried one, and I carried the smallest one. Uh, I can remember mine, mine was a silver-looking type of a luggage, and it was, it was a very inexpensive piece and, for the most part, it had my things in it that I was going to need.

DALLETT: Such as?

RUCCI: Um, on, aboard ship. Everything else, by the way, was shipped by truck, and that was in the hold. Uh, there were, I guess we had about three or four trunks.

DALLETT: What kind of things would you have brought it in the trunks?

RUCCI: Well, we had, um, I think we had, in my case, I had two or three changes of suits. We wore suits on Sundays, and trousers. And my sisters had their dresses, uh, and my mother had dresses. And some of the things that my mother cherished that we had around the house, she put some of those things, certain dishes, vases,

uh, put some of those things in the trunk. I can remember she was very disappointed when we finally did get the trunks, two of the vases were cracked. Uh, getting back to, uh, Naples, uh, we finally sailed. I believe we stayed overnight at a hotel, uh, in Naples and we sailed aboard the ship early the next morning.

DALLETT: What was the name of that ship?

RUCCI: Rome.

DALLETT: Do you remember what that voyage was like? Tell me about the Roma itself.

RUCCI: Well, I thought it was a great ship. The biggest thing I had ever seen. Uh, how big it really was, or how many tons it was, I have no recollection. I'm not sure I ever knew.

DALLETT: Right.

RUCCI: Uh, but it was a large ship because I think they had something in the vicinity of five or six hundred passengers, so it must have been quite sizable.

DALLETT: Were there different, uh, classes traveling?

RUCCI: They had three classes on the ship and my recollection is that we came by second class. Back in those days, it's not true today if you are traveling, uh, first of all there aren't too many first,

second, third class ships today but, uh, if you were traveling second class you could not go to the first class area. The first class area had, uh, the rights to go anywhere. Uh, third class couldn't go to the second or first. Uh, as a boy ( Ms. Dallett sneezes ), God bless you. ( they laugh ) Uh, as an eight-year-old boy, one day I decided to, uh, explore the ship from bow to stern, from top of the hull and so, uh, when I, uh, got to the bottom of the hull, this is the area where they had all the food stored. They had barrels of flour, uh, apples, pears and the men were moving things around. And I asked if I could help. And, uh, they gave me some menial jobs to do and I, for whatever I was doing, they reimbursed me, or rewarded me, by give, letting me eat all the fruit I wanted. I loved fruit. Uh, so while I was enjoying myself all day in the hold, my family and the officers of the ship were trying to find me because I was gone from early morning until about six o'clock in the evening. Uh, my mother was sure that I had fallen overboard. Uh, I, at the urge, insistence, really, of one of the men, I left. Otherwise, I probably would have stayed there till midnight.

DALLETT: Did you have, uh, separate room of your family? Did you have a cabin all to yourself?

RUCCI: We had, uh, we had two, two cabins.

DALLETT: Two cabins.

RUCCI: Uh, my mother, myself and my brother were in one cabin, and my two sisters were in the other.

DALLETT: Anybody else traveling from your town?

RUCCI: No, we were the only ones from our small town to come at that time. So everybody aboard ship was a stranger to us. One other thing I do recall, sitting at those long tables, uh, for our meals. Everybody, of course, was a stranger. But everyone was very nice to us, and we were nice to everybody else. Uh . . .

DALLETT: And how long did the voyage take?

RUCCI: It seems to me it's at least two weeks.

DALLETT: Do you remember when you came into, uh, came into the harbor?

RUCCI: Yes. Uh, as we were approaching New York Harbor, uh, there were quite a few, uh, motorboats approaching the vessel. And, uh, we were watching them. And suddenly my older sister and my mother got all excited because they spotted my father in one of the boats. He had a large brown paper bag and it was apparently filled with fruit, oranges, bananas, apples, pears. And he was attempting to throw them aboard. We were on the second deck. Uh, but most of the fruit fell back into the ocean. A couple of

apples and a couple of oranges hit the deck. And although, uh, of course, everybody who was watching was aware by this time that this was my father who was throwing the fruit, so whatever they caught they gave it to me.

DALLETT: How many years had it been since you had seen him?

RUCCI: Uh, three years.

DALLETT: Three years.

RUCCI: Because he had left in 1920. Uh, the, it was my mother's understanding that the process in, uh, Ellis Island, wouldn't take more than a day, and we should be out the following morning.

DALLETT: Oh, I just forget to ask you one thing.

RUCCI: Oh, yes.

DALLETT: Did you have any sort of medical examination before you got on the ship, or before you got off the ship?

RUCCI: Oh, yes, before. I neglected to mention. That had to be, we all had to have certificates that we had certain, uh, inoculations that were necessary. Uh, the regular, which I still have.

DALLETT: Right.

RUCCI: Uh, and, uh, we were examined, uh, just prior to our, uh,

being . . . Well, this is the process that I mentioned. Um, we were processed. Everybody was. We had to go through this series of, uh, examinations. And then we were all, uh, told to go into this large hall where they had . . .

DALLETT: This is actually at Ellis Island?

RUCCI: Yes.

DALLETT: Okay. So that was the first time that you had your, any kind of medical examination.

RUCCI: Uh, yes.

DALLETT: Okay.

RUCCI: Oh, well, we had before we left, uh, before we left Naples . . .

DALLETT: You had one?

RUCCI: Before we boarded the ship we had to be examined there.

DALLETT: Okay.

RUCCI: Uh . . .

DALLETT: Do you remember anything about, uh, when you actually came into Ellis Island for the first time. You're now off the boat and . . .

RUCCI: Well, yes. One of the things, everybody was making a big, big thing about the Statue of Liberty, but I didn't think that much about it at the time. We saw it and, uh, it looked like a great big building in the middle of the ocean to us. Uh, for some, for some reason it didn't impress any member of my family at that time.

DALLETT: How about when you came into the building itself, Ellis Island?

RUCCI: Uh, well, you really didn't see much. You know, you were hauled in from the ship down in, uh, I think they took us by, uh, small boats. I'm not sure about that. No. And, so we didn't really see very much of it. We could see the buildings but, uh . . .

DALLETT: So you'd, you'd seen your father while you were on the boat, and now you had to go into Ellis Island. So, uh, he couldn't go through that process with you, right? Okay.

RUCCI: No, no. He, there was a waiting area for people that were waiting for passengers. They couldn't go beyond a certain restricted area.

DALLETT: So what happened on that first day at Ellis Island? Did you have to go through a medical examination there?

RUCCI: That was before we were herded into a large room. We were through a, a medical test, an exam.

DALLETT: Do you remember anything about that, what they looked at?

RUCCI: Well, they did examine my hair, as this gal had, in Naples had suggested. They, of course, they examined the girls' hair, too. Uh, they looked to see if I had the inoculations, and all of us had the inoculations. They, uh, I remember they used the stethoscope on my chest, so I guess they were checking us out. I don't know what they did to my sisters and my, you know, my other brother but I can only recall what they did to me. I assume they had similar exams.

DALLETT: Were they speaking to you in Italian, or what?

RUCCI: Yes, yes.

DALLETT: Yes, so it was an Italian doctor or official?

RUCCI: Uh, yes. I suppose everyone was herded to a particular area. I'm just assuming that, too. Because this doctor was Italian. I, I spoke to him in Italian.

DALLETT: So how long did you stay on Ellis Island, then?

RUCCI: Well, for, as I said, uh, my father had, had informed my mother that it wouldn't take more than one day to process us through the Island. But then, for three days, some different men went by calling the name Bucci. We paid no attention to it because Bucci

was even more common than Rucci. And finally, uh, my mother, uh, sent my older sister to check with the powers that be to find out what was holding up our being, uh, held for so long in the island. And when she mentioned that our name was Rucci, "Where have you been? We've been calling you for three days." And they checked the records and discovered that the letters somehow had been written in such a way so that it spelled Bucci and not Rucci. My father, in the meantime, he had been worried on the outside, and they had, he had been informed that we were not on the Island. Of course, he knew better because he had seen us aboard ship. He couldn't imagine where they had taken us if we weren't on the Island. But once the error was discovered and corrected, uh, within, within the hour we were on our way.

DALLETT: Do you remember where, where'd you sleep in those three days, or what did you do while you were waiting?

RUCCI: They had, uh, they had bunks. And we slept on bunks. I remember sleeping on a bunk. But I could never see my mother or my sisters. I don't know where they went but they, uh . . .

DALLETT: So you were separated form them.

RUCCI: Yes, yes.

DALLETT: Do you remember being fed there, or what you did during the day

to pass the time?

RUCCI: I, uh, I don't recall too much about, any recreational area, except that we were . . . They had an outside area where we went out, and I could look up and, it was walled in like a prison. And I could look up and see small planes go by, often wondering, wishing, that I could be in one of those. But other than that, I don't have too much more recollection. Uh, should I mention toilet facilities?

DALLETT: Sure, yeah, go ahead. Please.

RUCCI: One of the things that I do recall was a distinct odor in the toilet facilities which remained with me for many years after we came to Hartford. Uh, it seemed that each time I got a strong odor of Ivory soap it reminded me of Ellis Island because somehow it must have been that type of an odor. I, obviously I got over it years later, but it was at least ten years it stayed with me. Uh . . .

DALLETT: So did it feel like it, you said it, mentioned it felt like prison in some way.

RUCCI: Yes, it was.

DALLETT: You were just waiting to get out. And you couldn't have any contact with your father at that point.

RUCCI: No, we did not.

DALLETT: But once you got that cleared up with the Bucci-Rucci, uh, tell me what happened then.

RUCCI: Uh, my father had promised some friends in Astoria, Long Island, that we would visit them, uh, before we came to Hartford, and we boarded a, uh, subway, uh, to Astoria. We hadn't been on too long a time, but apparently we were make, we were going to make, no, no, it wasn't the case of a transfer, but I do recall that after being on for a short time, uh, I happened to look out the window and I saw my mother and father and my sister and brother standing on the platform, and there I was still sitting. So I dashed over to the door, attempting to pry it open, and some man came over and he grabbed me and I told him, I said, "My family's left me." And, uh, he didn't understand me, but he got some man who apparently spoke Italian, and I repeated my story to him, and he said, "You just stay with me. Uh, don't worry. Uh, we'll find your father and mother and family." And he suggested that we get off at the next station on the assumption that my father would, uh, be smart enough to do just that, and he did. Within ten, fifteen minutes my father spotted me standing at the, uh, platform. And he got off at the . . . I think he could have killed me, but not having seen me for three years. I don't think

he wanted to get off on the wrong foot with, uh, with me, and starting a new life in the States with him.

DALLETT: That is the end of side one, of interview number 083 with Angelo Rucci.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DALLETT: This is the beginning of side two of interview number 083 with Angelo Rucci. Uh, can you tell me how it felt to be a little boy? Here you are, you've just come off Ellis Island and you're on this subway. Did it, did it seem very strange to you?

RUCCI: Uh, yes. I had never really seen so many people, uh, gathered together, uh, on a train. Because the train that we had taken from Naples only had a few people. The seating arrangement was entirely different.

DALLETT: Is this the first time you were hearing English?

RUCCI: Uh, yes. Of course, I didn't speak a word of English, uh, and although I had been promoted to the third grade in Italy, so I could speak quite well in Italian, and I could write the language quite well. And I had been corresponding with my father for many years, actually.

DALLETT: How was it that you got separated from, from your family on, on

this first subway ride?

RUCCI: I became interested in some conversation of colored people in the corner of the subway. Uh, I had never seen, uh, but one black person in my entire life before, and I can remember he pinched my cheek, and for days I thought I had a black mark on my cheek. Uh, so this was very interesting to me, and watching their actions. Uh, in the meantime, my mother and father had left the train and I didn't realize it. So, lo and behold, they were standing on a platform. Uh, I dashed to the door to pry it open and a man came over to stop me and he asked me what was wrong and I told him in Italian that my family had left me. He didn't understand but he, uh, brought over another man who did speak Italian, and I repeated my story to him and he said, uh, "Don't worry. We'll find your father and family." So he suggested we get off at the next station, uh, which we did. And we stood there for about ten, fifteen minutes, and the next train that came along my father, uh, was there. He had gotten off the train. He had spotted me from the window and uh, he was so angry, he could have killed me. But I guess he didn't want to get off on the wrong foot with, with me, since he hadn't seen me for three years. Uh, from there we, uh, got back on the train and made, I guess, another change before we went to our friends' house on Long Island. I can remember people waiting for us

there. I guess my father either had telephoned in advance, but they were waiting for us at the subway station for us and they drove us in a car. It was really my only time, or first time, that I had ridden in an automobile. We stayed there overnight, and the following morning we took a train to Hartford and saw our eight-family apartment house.

DALLETT: What did you think of it when you saw it?

RUCCI: Well, we thought it was a monstrosity, because it was nothing like the home we had, uh, in Sapino. Although once inside we liked it, we liked the arrangements they had, uh, as opposed to our, uh, house in, uh, Italy.

DALLETT: Were there other Italian families living in the apartment?

RUCCI: Yes. Uh, yes. There were two other Italian . . . This is like a duplex, eight-family house, four on one side, four on the other. And the family who had the other first floor also was Italian, and there was an Italian family above us.

DALLETT: And were there any children in that family so you could immediately have some . . .

RUCCI: Uh, yes. Yes. The family next door had two boys and a girl. One boy was about my age, and he is the one who, he and, uh, uh, my father took me to school when school started in September.

And, uh, he's the one who probably taught me more English words, because every day I tried to learn two words from him, uh, on the way to school. And on the way back, I would try to use those two words. Uh, and between that and some special, uh, teacher they had who devoted one hour with me every day I, uh, picked up the English language pretty quickly, uh, so that instead of going, oh, one thing that bothered me, I hear I had been promoted to the third grade, but they started me in the first grade. And that annoyed me. And, uh, but I was far advanced in math, in history, in geography, than they were here. They knew no geography in the first or second grade at all. They knew no math. In fact, the math that I had learned through the second grade I didn't get until I got to the fifth grade. So I skipped from, back in those days, they had, you go from one, grade one, to grade one-and-a-half and the put me to two, and I, grade, skipped grade, uh, two-and-a-half and I went to three, I skipped grade three to three-and-a-half, and that was it. I sort of caught up with, uh, my class.

DALLETT: How about your mother? How did she, uh, adjust and be able to pick up the language?

RUCCI: My mother was ready to return after the first month. ( he laughs ) Uh, she had, uh, a difficult time. Although my mother was a very intelligent woman, because she used to teach, uh,

people, illiterates, how to read and write. They used to come to the house. And in her spare time she used to do. This is for friends. She didn't charge for it. But, uh, she wasn't going to learn the language, because she was going back. She just didn't like it.

DALLETT: What did she not like about it? Do, do you know?

RUCCI: Well, I think one of the reasons was, we were living on Broad Street in Hartford, far removed from where all the Italians were. They were still living on Front Street back in those days, Front Street in Hartford was primarily all Italian families. And, uh, so my father tried to pacify her by . . . ( break in tape ) The only person she had, really, on a day-to-day basis to converse with was the woman next door, uh, and apparently she wasn't too interesting as far as my mother was concerned. ( he laughs )  
Uh . . .

DALLETT: Was your father back in business with the Hartford Electric?

RUCCI: Yes. He was back to work.

DALLETT: He got his job back even though . . .

RUCCI: So he was gone, oh, yes. He was gone all day. And it seemed that, my mother was a hard worker and she'd do . . . When in Italy she, she kept buy with her business of the olive orchards

and the sheep and the, and the, uh, grape vineyards. She had nothing to do here now. And she wasn't accustomed to that.

( break in tape )

DALLETT: So she, uh, she was not happy with her situation.

RUCCI: Right. So my father would take us on picnics and visit all the Italian people, relative that we had, uh, uh, living in Hartford. Uh, that seemed to pacify her a little bit. She never was really happy here. Uh . . .

DALLETT: But she never did go back?

RUCCI: Oh, no. We never, we never went back.

DALLETT: Tell me, give me a nutshell, of how you went from, uh, a young boy learning two, two words of English every day, to . . .

RUCCI: Well, uh, the used to call me daygo and greaseball and things, names that back in those days, the foreigners. At first it didn't mean anything, but I asked the boy next door, these are words that he hadn't taught me yet. ( he laughs ) I asked him, "What does that mean?" He said, "Well, they're not nice words." So I said to him, "Well, tomorrow, if that certain boy in particular, if he calls me that again I'm going to punch him." He said, "Oh, no, don't do that, because he's a pretty tough boy." I said, "Well, I'm going to punch him." And he sure did,

the next morning he did and, uh, we had, uh, a good wrestling match in the schoolyard. Uh, I liked school, I liked this country. I became interested in track, I became interested in baseball. Uh, I played on the grammar school baseball team, I was on the track team. Uh, these are the things I enjoyed. Uh, and, uh, from, uh, grade school I went to Hartford High. At Hartford High I was on the track team, I was on the football team, and I was on the baseball team. Uh, I enjoyed, uh, all sports, both in participating them, in them and watching them.

DALLETT: So how, how many years did it take before you felt you were part of and understood the American culture?

RUCCI: I think it happened in high school. Uh, as a matter of fact, it's interesting because when we first came to this country everybody called us "Russi." And I thought, well, that must be the American version of Rucci, so, uh, whenever anyone asked me what my name was I said, uh, Rucci. But when I got to high school I had, uh, I was taking Latin and French and some of the subjects, and I can remember my French teacher the first day of class we had to call off our name and I said, "Angelo Russi." She said, "Are you Italian?" I says, "Yes." She said, "Well, uh, you should know better than that. It's not pronounced Russi, it's Rucci." And so it became Rucci from that point, because that's what it was in Italy, it was Rucci. And it's been Rucci,

as far as I'm concerned, since.

DALLETT: Right.

RUCCI: Uh, I think in high school when I, uh, had taken the various courses that I did enjoy, uh, and mixed with, uh, our class, I was very active, uh, I was on the student council. I was elected to it. So I participated in many activities, the biology club, the debating club. Uh, so I became really Americanized, so to speak, in school.

DALLETT: How, did you have citizenship by virtue of the fact that your father was a citizen?

RUCCI: Yes, there's some, I couldn't quote the particular regulation, but there was some regular, uh, 19, 19 regulation, that the minute we set foot on Ellis Island we were all citizens, including my mother. I did, uh, back in 19, uh, '70, I believe, I took my own citizenship papers, because we were going to Europe and I didn't want to have to borrow my father's papers as proof of citizenship, so I had my own. Uh, I remember I went to work with the Internal Revenue in Washington back in 1939 and I had to use my father's papers. I was always a nuisance whenever I had to prove that I was an American citizen.

DALLETT: How about going back to Italy? Have you visited the town where

you were born? did you take your children there?

RUCCI: I'm glad you asked that question, b we had been to Europe three different times and, uh, the first time we went back it was in 1970, and we were on a tour in Italy, and we were in Rome, and I wanted to visit, the highlight of my trip was going to be a visit to my small town, but unfortunately we were going to leave on Monday morning, and this was Saturday evening, and somehow we couldn't find any means of transportation, so it would take us, Sunday morning, to our little town and back that same evening. Because everyone said, "Sunday, it's a Roman holiday, too many cars on the road, so you can't take a bus, and if you fly you're going to have trouble getting transportation from the airport to the small town. There's no real transportation." So, consequently, we missed that opportunity to visit. But we were back again ten years ago. We went to Italy for the canonization of Mother Seton and, uh, we were going to be in Rome for nine days, and so we rented a car and we drove to the small town where I was born. And, uh, it was really one of the most enjoyable periods of my life because I visited the home where I was born. There was a girl there about nineteen years old, she had just had a child, and she was just thrilled at the thought that here's another generation born in the same house. I had described the house to my wife and my brother-in-law and sister-in-law who came

with us. Uh, I had mentioned the fact that we had an oven that was worked into the wall and my brother-in-law nudge me, he says, "Where's that oven?" And, uh, so I asked this girl in Italian, "Where's the oven? There used to be an oven here." So she walked over to the end of the room and slid a sliding door. There was the oven. They had built a sliding door over the oven. So it was still there.

DALLETT: Did you keep up your Italian?

RUCCI: Uh, yes. I, uh, as a matter of fact, lately I don't speak very well because I haven't had a chance to use it, but when my mother was alive I used to speak to her in Italian, for the most part. When I went to work with the Treasury Department I was subsequently transferred to the Social Security board, many people there used to write, uh, about questioning their Social Security in their native language, and naturally a lot of people wrote in Italian. I was doing the translation. They furnished me with their dictionary so that, I didn't know all the words but, so, yes. I did keep it up for some time. So, getting back to Italy, we had the, we spent two days, we had the most wonderful time, those two days, period. Uh . . .

DALLETT: Did you, did you think at all about what it would have been like if you had stayed in Italy, how your life would have been different than it turned out to be in this country?

RUCCI: Well, uh, I didn't visit our cousins. We had a couple of cousins. I didn't visit them. I just didn't have the time. I didn't visit with them. But I'll tell you, I felt sorry for them, because they were still working hard, they were still doing farming, and I didn't care for that type of life at all. I had gone through, uh, college, and I had, uh, studied accounting and I was now an accountant. I was the Treasurer of my firm, and that, this was the last thing I wanted to do was farming. So, I sort of felt sorry for these people. So I was glad that my father and my decided that it was best for us to come to this country.

DALLETT: I just really have one other question, and that is do you have any of the original papers, uh, like the original passport or visa. You mentioned you had some letters that you wrote to your father when you were a child. Anything else like that, from that period, the National Park Service is interested in knowing who has what where for the museum.

RUCCI: If I look for them I may be able to find them. I have, I know I have my father's and mother's, um, marriage license, for example. That I ran across recently. Uh . . .

DALLETT: Any of the, maybe the ship ticket, or . . .

RUCCI: Well, I'll tell you what happened. Uh, after my father passed away, all the papers were, got thrown out in the apartment, before we had a chance.

DALLETT: Photographs, yes.

RUCCI: Unfortunately we lost all of those things, except what I happened to have here prior to that.

DALLETT: Uh, I think I've, I've asked everything I need to. Is there anything else you just want to add about anything we've talked about? I don't mean to put you on the spot.

RUCCI: I, I guess that would be about it. We are making plans, you don't have to record this, but . . .

DALLETT: I thank you for telling me your story. Okay? This is the end of side two, and the end of the interview number 083 with Angelo Russi.