

ROSA BIANCA SAN FILIPPO

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MOORE: Good morning this is Kate Moore for the National Parks Service and today is the thirteenth of January, 1994, and I'm in Fullerton, California, at the home of Ruby San Filippo, who came from Italy in 1946, when she was sixteen years old. And why don't you begin by giving us your full name and date of birth, please.

FILIPPO: Uh, my Christian name is Rosa Bianca San Filippo, I was born October 21st, 1929, in Rome.

MOORE: And, uh, the city was Rome right?–

FILIPPO: Roma doglia [ph]–mm-hmm

MOORE: And, uh, could you describe what the town looked like when you were younger?

FILIPPO: (Pause) From what I hear from my daughter who's been travelling over there, it hasn't changed. Um, the traffic has not become any less chaotic (laughs) or congested, um – the street vendor I believe used to be at the corner of every neighborhood, they'd be street vendors every day – the fresh – fresh air markets? I don't believe are there anymore. But from what I hear, the flowers at the Spanish Steps, the flower vendors still do come. It's really hard for me to say, I haven't been back for so long. It's been a very, very long time that I'd been back. In fact, thirty – (takes breath) – oh! Over thirty five years.

MOORE: And what was your – what was your father's name?

FILIPPO: Uh, Cesare. Civelli.

MOORE: Could you spell that please?

FILIPPO: The last name?

MOORE: Yeah, or both.

FILIPPO: Cesare is C-E-S-A-R-E. Civelli is C-I-V-E-L-L-I.

MOORE: And, uh, what was his occupation?

FILIPPO: He was a sculptor.

MOORE: Ah, a sculptor. And um, what did he look like? Could you describe your father?

FILIPPO: Well, gosh. He – uh – he could look about the closest thing to a devil. (Laughs) If you picture somebody in costume with these piercing eyes and this – the – what – the only thing I know of to call is a “widow’s peak,” but I – you know the point in the middle of the forehead? And the very sleek back hair – a – um – hair pulled back sleek? And kind of um – a thin face, and kind of a pointy chin, and with this absolute perfect Jewish nose. Perfect. In Rome, and I don’t remember the square, there’s a ministry of something that has the three profiles in bronze on its – on its front, and the um – the African and the white and the Jewish, I believe, are represented and my daddy has the perfect Jewish profile, so if you can picture that nose on a very small – small boned face.

MOORE: And what about his personality and temperament/

FILIPPO: Ah (sighs) – did not really grow up with my dad, so the – the little bit that I remember about him was that he was – he tried to find humor in some things to relieve tension –

MOORE: Mm.

FILIPPO: -- So I must say humorous, at times. Very deep – in though, and sometimes very negative. But it’s kind of vague. Kind of vague. I did not grow up with my family.

MOORE: Is there a story about your father that you associate with your childhood at all/

FILIPPO: Uh, he's superstitious? Superstitions were so extreme that I thought he was going to kill me once when I broke, or dropped a thing of salt. A little shaker of salt. And from that day on (laughs) I just, I guess I realize where superstitions was and what it could be, and I never been, so I still use thirteen as my lucky number and I love black cats and I walk under ladders every chance I get! (Laughs) He almost killed me. Oh, and then I broke – tha – that's right – I fell into a mirror and broke that, and I thought that was going to be (sniffs) absolute death, because he knew that we were all gonna – well – at least I thought I was gonna die by his hand. But anyway, it was a fiery – you know – temperament, but uh, he never really – you know, he never put a hand on me. So, was just the fear. (Laughs). Intimidation of children, oh, geez. Ay.

MOORE: What about your mother's name? What was your mother's maiden name?

FILIPPO: Ana Palcani.

MOORE: How do you spell Palcani?

FILIPPO: P, like Paul, P- A-L-C-A-N-I

MOORE: And what was her, uh, occupation?

FILIPPO: Well, she was a very creative, wonderful seamstress, that she did not really use her talents – I can remember some things that she sewed then that was odd. That the beaut – you know the fantastic, wonderful, perfect finish. I mean perfect, absolutely perfect – finish of the garments. Um, I don't think that she was, uh, happy person. I didn't see her utilize her talent or depend on it, or take any pride from it, somehow. That's about what I remember.

MOORE: And, uh, what did she look like?

FILIPPO: (Sighs) Very pretty, petite brunette with gorgeous blue eyes. And this kind of a chestnut – um, auburn I'd guess you say – hair. Um, gorgeous white skin. Beautiful teeth, never had a cavity in her mouth. Never. (Laughs). But that's the story I hear – I don't know, after I lost track – I don't – I don't know, but, uh, that was the story that grandma never had, um, a cavity. Um, and she was very pretty.

MOORE: What about the chores around the house, what did she do? Did she do – who did the work around the house?

FILIPPO: [interposed] See, now you're asking me really hard questions, because my mother and my father really didn't raise me.

MOORE: Mm-hmm. Who did?

FILIPPO: So, my grandmother, my aunt and uncle.

MOORE: [interposed] Ah.

FILIPPO: Who were, you know, the re – my – my father's, um, relations.

MOORE: Your father's mother –?

FILIPPO: My father's mother, my father's sister, my father's brother.

MOORE: Could you describe them? Describe the people who raised you then?
Your grandmother?

FILIPPO: [Interposed] (Sighs) Um, grandma was – grandma. I mean – the love – the love of my life, and the love in my life was grandma. So, I am gonna get very emotional when I talk about grandma.

MOORE: [interposed] Everybody does during these, yeah.

FILIPPO: But, uh, my aunt worked very hard, 'cause she was the – she was the – she supported grandma.

MOORE: Mm-hmm. What did she do?

FILIPPO: She worked at a – as a bank official with the Banco di Roma, Banco di – I don't remember which bank, but she was an official with the bank. Very responsible, very unhappy, was alone her whole life, she never married, she took care of mom. And then she took care of her brother's kid, so she just really –her life was burdened by all these responsibilities, and –

MOORE: What were the two names, your grandmother's full name?

FILIPPO: Uh. Maria Theresa. That's right.

MOORE: Maria Theresa.

FILIPPO: I had to stop and think – isn't it awful? – Grandma. Maria Theresa.

MOORE: And you're – aunt and uncle's names? What were they?

FILIPPO: [Interposed] Uh, Paula Civelli and Antonio Civelli. My – my – dad and my uncle had the, uh, reverse – Antonio Cesare Civelli, and Cesare Antonio Civelli. Those were their names. So Antonio was my uncle, and – and Cesare was my dad.

MOORE: How would you describe how your grandmother looked?

FILIPPO: She – she looked regal, absolutely regal, walked straight, held her head high, she had this gorgeous skin – never – I don't remember ever makeup on her. Uh, she just brushed her long grey hair, and piled it up on top of her head, with as little – but it was soft, it was wavy around her face. She was very – very – um, very warm tender person.

MOORE: Mm. And um –

FILIPPO: (Sighs)

MOORE: All right, so – what house did you live in as a child? Whose place did you live at? Your grandmother's?

FILIPPO: Well – uh – it's hard to remember because at times I can see myself with my dad in whatever apartment he lived in. I never remem – never! – never remember seeing me with my mother. I don't know – if I ever lived with my mother – if I ever did. I have no recollection. But the house that I remember mostly was the, um, apartment building that was mostly used by the bank's employees – most of those people were employed by the bank – um, um – Via Fami – um – Via – (pause) – Oh my God, could I forget? Oh! Viale Mazzini, in Rome.

MOORE: How do you spell that?

FILIPPO: Viale Mazzini? V-I-A-L-E M-A-Z-Z-I-N-I.

MOORE: And that was where your grandmother and your aunt –

FILIPPO: And the grandma and aunt had this beautiful apartment on the ground floor – I remember the marble entry and this beautiful statue – it was just a – a lovely – small –

MOORE: How big?

FILIPPO: Fairly small. I – you know it's gonna be hard, in the end, this business of real estate, I should know the square footage, right? Um, I would say – eight, nine-hundred square feet, possibly. Long, long hall with a nice long bathroom, a nice, um, nice-sized kitchen, and the two – uh – bedroom Louevre French doors going out to the front, so it – it was very nice.

MOORE: Yeah, was their indoor plumbing?

FILIPPO: Oh, yeah.

MOORE: And electricity?

FILIPPO: Oh, yeah.

MOORE: And so how was it heated?

FILIPPO: Uh – gosh, that's gonna be a tough one, I don't rem – I just don't know. I don't know.

MOORE: Um, did you have a garden at all?

FILIPPO: No. This was a – an apartment building, it was like seventeen, I don't know, sixteen, twelve, I don't know how many floors.

MOORE: Mm.

FILIPPO: But I remember standing outside yelling like crazy to reach the person that lived at the top floor that was a friend of mine to go out bik – bicycling, you know, bike ride, so – uh – I know it was – my – lots of floors.

MOORE: Where exactly in Rome was it? What set – what part of Rome was it in?

FILIPPO: Central. Very central. Viale Mazzini is right down – sheez – I – I can't – it doesn't – see my memories don't connect from – for instance, Viale Mazzini to – to – to w-w-Piazza de Spagna. I just don't remember the distance in between.

MOORE: [interposed] And what was Piazza de Spagna?

FILIPPO: The Spanish Steps.

MOORE: [interposed] Yeah – yeah – yeah – right – the – (laughs)

FILIPPO: A very central, tourist type of thing. And then Viale Mazzini would lead to Piazza del Popolo, which is another central, um, oh gosh, the – the [] runs into Piazza del Popolo. So I can't – I really can't – it's not the outskirts – I wouldn't – it – it was right in the middle of town, I mean there were stores, other apartment buildings, um, a big town square, where you know, there'll be a shoe store, and a delicatessen, and then on the corner would be this fresh-air market. So, it was – uh – a very residential area.

MOORE: And, um, who did the cooking in the family?

FILIPPO: Grandmother then, yeah. And I would help.

MOORE: What was your favorite food?

FILIPPO: (Sighs) (Laughs) People are gonna freak out. Brains. She fixed – what do they call them here? Sweetbreads?

MOORE: Sweetbreads?

FILIPPO: This was, uh – and I couldn't even tell you if – if it was – I guess it was beef. I don't know. All I remember is was delicious. And it was a long, long time before I knew what I was eating, and it didn't faze me because we did eat a lot of, uh, organs. Liver, and kidney, and they were all fixed very, very delicious. But fish, this was just a sp – would I want to say a delicacy?

MOORE: Mm-hmm.

FILIPPO: That she served? But it was mostly fish.

MOORE: And what type of fish?

FILIPPO: Ah – Gosh. Uh, squid, whitefish, um, not a lot of shrimp and crab and all that stuff that's so popular here, but mostly the – um – the salmon, the whitefish, you know that kind of thing. That was broiled, and served with lemon, no – nothing fried.

MOORE: What was mealtime like/

FILIPPO: (Sniffs) Well, mostly it was just grandma and I in the kitchen?

MOORE: You ate, how many times a day together?

FILIPPO: Oh, three times. She'd have a – the breakfast would always be the bowl of warm milk, and you know, the hot bread, you know, homemade bread. And

butter, or ricotta. And um, lunch would be, uh, maybe a bowl of soup and bread. And dinner would be some kind of green – cooked green – and maybe a plate of cheese at the end of the meal. What – wha – backing up to the fish – and, maybe a pasta, pastino, or rice.

MOORE: Did your aunt, co – have dinner with you – supper?

FILIPPO: Sometime she'd have supper. Mm-hmm. Sometime she'd be there, uh-huh.

MOORE: Um, now your other family members, why was it your grandmother – your grandmother raised you as such? Was it because you parents with other –?

FILIPPO: Yup. My parents were too occupied fighting each other.

MOORE: (Laughs) So um –

FILIPPO: And living apart.

MOORE: So, you're closest to grandmother of all people?

FILIPPO: [interposed] Yeah. Oh, absolutely.

MOORE: And, um –

FILIPPO: But realizing, Kate, that – I don't mean to interrupt – but realizing that she was the – the emotional support of my life. But the financial came from my aunt. She supported everybody.

MOORE: [interposed] Yeah. Yeah.

FILIPPO: And my uncle was only in the picture very short time. He lived there for a time, but very short time because he moved out then to be married and a late – late age. But, so that was the three of us.

MOORE: Mm. Um, what about religious life?

FILIPPO: (Sigh) Um, religious life of course would be Catholic. Born and raised Catholic. Goin' to the church – the only reason I went to the church was because Grandma – again – expected me to go, and I wanted to be with her, so I would go, but I was not happy in church, I felt it was a very hypocritical system, and I still do. And I – I hope not to offend anyone, but – by saying that, that's just the way I felt as a y-young child, the things that I heard and saw in the church did not make me feel comfortable.

MOORE: W – um, how often did you go?

FILIPPO: Every Sunday.

MOORE: Every Sunday.

FILIPPO: If – if whatever came up in between, you know – her and I would walk.

MOORE: Where would you – which place did you worship in?

FILIPPO: Well, uh – there again, it wasn't very far, it was just to the square and a little short right – I could probably walk you there, but I can't tell you the name of the street, it was the La Pieta – is – is the, uh, chapel – a la – um – Capella de la Pieta. I guess I have to back it up. And that was my – um – most favorite statue to see there. La Pieta. It still is, to this day.

MOORE: [interposed] And did your first con – first – first communion then?

FILIPPO: Uh-huh. Uh, not at that church, that would be. Oh, boy, where did I have my first communion? Something to do with the, um, parochial school that I was attending then. (Sniffs) And that was more – closer to – uh, I want to say Piazza del Popolo. And it was a huge street that it was at an incline – they went towards the river and the ministry of – of – Army/Navy something – this is terrible, I don't remember. I just don't know. It's just – it's just –

MOORE: [interposed] It's never – y-y-you're doing a good job (laughs).

FILIPPO: [interposed] -- Rossalini's Institute was the uh – you know, the Sisters were the Chari – I think the Sisters of Charity. And, um, went from the elementary to the high school for a very brief time. 'Cause I wasn't allowed to finish school in a normal way. 'Cause at the time I was going to school, all hell was breaking lose in Rome, so that was –

MOORE: The war you mean.

FILIPPO: Yeah.

MOORE: Let's back up a little bit. How did your grandmother – at home, did you have any religious – uh, did she ha – teach you prayers, and things like that? Were there any other manifestations at home besides once a week at church?

FILIPPO: Just by – by everyday life. And – and the things that we talked about. I mean, there was prayers at night. You know? That we would say our prayers when going to bed. Um, but it wasn't an overabundance, it was just there, and it was just part of our daily lives and belief and that was it.

MOORE: Did you ever experience any prejudice or persecution because of your beliefs?

FILIPPO: No.

MOORE: No.

FILIPPO: I had so many other things to be concerned about that doesn't seem to be one that stands out in my mind.

MOORE: How about holiday celebrations, what type of holiday celebrations were the most favorite that you had?

FILIPPO: (Sigh). You know, I don't know how much of this stuff I'm blocking out – but I cannot for the life of me – so many people have asked me about holidays. It's really strange the way it's so fragmented, and I can see Grandma and I baking cookies, like cutting – you know, I could see me cutting – into the dough, you know, little –uh, these little forms that you cut. And then I can see me – and I don't even know who I'm with – and a big marble slab. Um, if anybody knows what gnocchis are – you know how you back with a potato flour and you roll 'em in a real long roll, and then you cut 'em, and you hafta mush 'em with your thumb, and shape 'em with your thumb. And I remember that. So, where that comes from, I have no idea. But I do know it's connected with holidays somehow.

MOORE: So do – do you have any recollection of Christmas or Easter –?

FILIPPO: Oh! I know what I almost forgot. My uncle – (sighs) – [something in Italian], my uncle used to build, while he was there, um, we had a corner in the study – that he used as a study – the living room that he used in the little corner as a study – and we blocked that off, and we would build the *presepio*, The Nativity. And I would help him, to build things out of papier mache – and some neat little things, and ca – [not understood] and all these neat little things. And

ca – you know these little figurines we would sometimes cut and – and accumulate. I mean we would – I don't know how we'd come by 'em – some were given as gifts and some we would just make.

MOORE: [interposed] So that was part of Christmas?

FILIPPO: [superposed] That was the big – yeah – that was the big thing, because we started that real early, and I do remember sharing that – with him. And I don't know why he was there more than my aunt. My aunt seemed to be the one that was away working most – most of the time. She worked in the day and she worked in the afternoon. Or she worked at night. Somehow she was – um – maybe she had to have two jobs –

MOORE: Mmm.

FILIPPO: -- To take on the responsibility, that's possible.

MOORE: Umm, what about Easter? Do you remember anything about Easter?

FILIPPO: Nope.

MOORE: Special dresses – for that special --?

FILIPPO: Nope.

MOORE: And what about – now t-tell about your school life? What was your school life, could you describe your school life? (Pause) I'm taking you back here –

FILIPPO: [interposed] (Sniffs) I'm – I'm – I'm gonna really hurt a lot of people, and I hope that they realize and not take it personal because this is my life I'm talking about, but (sighs) the most love and hate that I – I felt in – in – in – and as you

said before prejudice of any kind? – was from the sisters. There was one that stands out in mind as an absolute saint, and ever – sa – mm – ah – Sister Clara. And she was the sweetest, most wonderful, loving, little per – and I mean little person, I don't think she was five feet – but from the others, there were so stern and so – severe, and so angry! And I think that the more – they must have seen my need for affection as weakness or something, so maybe they tried to – wa – to help me be strong by being actually very mean.

MOORE: Like h-h-how?

FILIPPO: [interposed] Very hurting, very hurting. Umm, I was very tall and gangly. I'm five eight now and I think I must have been five seven wh – by the time I was eleven years old. So, you can just picture this old gangly – you know tall, skinny, gangly kid, that wasn't dressed quite properly, because I'm sure with all the hardship that you know, my aunt had, taking care of this family that she acquired (laughs), she couldn't so concerned about fashionable things. So this being a fashionable school –

MOORE: You didn't have uniforms?

FILIPPO: Uh, yeah, we did! I'm talking about uniforms!

MOORE: Oh, you mean –

FILIPPO: -- And the shirts and the skirts and the socks and the whole thing had to be changed every so often. And well, if it didn't get changed, guess what I grew out of 'em, didn't I? So, if I grew out of 'em, I was belittled and made to feel very much ashamed that I didn't have a new skirt this year, I was wearing last –

MOORE: [interposed] Who? Who did that?

FILIPPO: The sisters!

MOORE: The sisters!

FILIPPO: Ma'am, yes ma'am. The kids picked up from the sisters, but I mean when the Mother Superior sets the tone, the kids are gonna pick up, so I had such a – terrible memory of that time. I had a – not an easy life, but they made it so hard to accept. I just thought if – if – if love and acceptance doesn't come from here, where does it come from? (Tears)

MOORE: [interposed] Yeah. My father had a similar story in England about those public schools –

FILIPPO: (Sniffs) Wow.

MOORE: Where he had the proper clothes, but that was really for a kid horrible. And it was a very similar story like that.

FILIPPO: [interposed] Yeah, it's horrible! And then it – and that was worse in the first year of high school, when we were doing gym and whatnot, the Mother Superior -- I mean (laughs) this woman was so gorgeous, young, and so angry. And I really le – I guess later on in life I felt – I – I learned to feel sorry for her. More or less, and let her go with whatever love I had because (sighs) I can't tell you the humiliation of all these girls coming down the staircase and rushing into the gym, and her pointing me out and yelling and just stopping me, and yanking on my skirt and, "Where do you think you're going with such a short skirt?" And my bloomers were not down to my knees -- because you had to wear the little bloomer underneath the little pleated skirt, and that whole bit, you know, part of the uniform. (Sniffs) So that – I think that was the – I think that was the day that I turned –

MOORE: [interposed] Do you think they thought you were wearing a short skirt because you wanted shorter skirts?

FILIPPO: [interposed] Must have – but they never found – they never asked, did they? They just assumed.

MOORE: [interposed] I see they thought you were trying to wear risqué clothing.

FILIPPO: [interposed] Absolutely. I'm just so – and that's the why my thing is about communication and assumptions, because I think that whole thing was about assumptions. But she knew my life history, she knew my – my – she knew my background, or didn't know and didn't care to find out.

MOORE: Mm.

FILIPPO: She knew I came from a broken home – she knew – she should have known! But see, there's my "should". And I don't mean to lay my should on anybody,

MOORE: [interposed] She could have had a stereotyped that a broken-home child wanting to get away with different, you know –

FILIPPO: Could have. Never – never bothered to find out. Never talked to me. Just accused me, and antagonized me, and intimidated me, and just – put me down, and I thought, "Okay, you're on your own kid." (Sniffs).

MOORE: [interposed] Well, that's it – [not understood]

THIRD PERSON: Okay.

FILIPPO: Can you hold on? (Pause) Go ahead.

MOORE: Umm. The school you went to, how many children were in the class, altogether?

FILIPPO: [interposed] Oh, it was a big class. Gosh, hmm. Try to give you a number. Oh! Couldn't. Thirty-five, maybe, forty? I don't know, big class?

MOORE: Was it crowded then?

FILIPPO: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MOORE: It was crowded. And, do you remember specific playmates?

FILIPPO: Oh! Yeah, I can see their little faces, I couldn't tell you their names – I don't think any of – them we're from my building. The people I made friends with in the building somehow didn't go to the same school, and yet we were all Catholic, so I don't know why I was picked for that particular school! (Laughs)

MOORE: And it was a private, Catholic school?

FILIPPO: It was – yeah. Mm-hmm.

MOORE: Yeah – and – and what was your favorite subject?

FILIPPO: Boy, I sure didn't have many, I'll tell ya. Um, art. Drawing. Yeah. It always was.

MOORE: (Laughs) Did you learn English prior to coming to the States?

FILIPPO: No, mm-mm.

MOORE: You didn't know a word?

FILIPPO: I'd listen, I'd hear sounds, I'd say, "Okay, this is what it means," but I never would say 'em until I got here, I never said –

MOORE: But you heard some English before you got here?

FILIPPO: Well, yeah, the people around me – the sold – the – g-g-the guy I married.

MOORE: [interposed] Oh, yeah, Okay.

FILIPPO: You know, I would hear from – you know –those people. You know, we were liberated, you know, there's a lot of people running around using that language, so I got to learn it – the sound of it and what it meant, kind of. But I never used it, so it was kind of funny to listen to me (laughs) in Italian and them in English and we would communicate and talk back and forth, this is funny.

MOORE: So you spoke Italian to English speakers?

FILIPPO: (Laughs) And they spoke English to Italian-speaking.

MOORE: Now, what about entertainment? What did you do for entertainment as a kid?

FILIPPO: (Sighs) Ay.

MOORE: You mentioned bikes.

FILIPPO: Probably, as a little teeny kid – I guess – I was always considered a tomboy because I'd always be out there riding – [tape skips] so the – running, and uh – some – the running and, uh, somehow I remember me in a little –

wagon – somebody must have given me a wagon, but it was at Grandma’s house, I remember that street. And somebody pulling me in that wagon. And then the bi – the little tricycle? (Laughs) That I pedaled so hard and so long that I got -- that my legs and my groin, that whole – you know – my – my glands all swelled up (laughs) and I was sick the next day?

MOORE: (Laughs) So, did you have any games, like hide-and-seeK, or those types of games?

FILIPPO: Yeah, we used to hide – it – we – later on then – yeah. Uh, hide-and-seeK – the park across the street was wonderful, we used to hide there all the time. Jump the hedges, so we’d have jumping games, we’d have running games, and uh – yeah, we would hide and – and be hid –

MOORE: [interposed] Rope games? Did you ever?

FILIPPO: Oh, yes. Thank you for reminding me, I forgot that I was a great rope-jumper, yeah we did.

MOORE: And did you sing song with your rope games?

FILIPPO: Uh, you know that was just a kind of a rhythmic,uh, sing-song, it didn’t mean anything. I don’t – I don’t even remember what songs, but I remember the beat and the rhythm, I just couldn’t remember the song, but I know that we would pick up – that one would jump in, you’d change the leading – you know, the –the switching – from jumping to, uh, turning the rope and so on, and you had certain sing-song that went with that.

MOORE: [interposed] Mm-hmm. Did you have any games like kick the can or those things?

FILIPPO: No, I don't remember those.

MOORE: [interposed] Mm-hmm. Right.

FILIPPO: But the bicycling and the running.

MOORE: Is there any story they tell about you in childhood that typifies you? About something that you did?

FILIPPO: Oh. (Sighs) Something that I did.

MOORE: You either got in trouble, or you did something good or –

FILIPPO: Oh, I got in trouble for standing up to people all the time. I got in trouble in school all the time for standing up to people. (MOORE laughs) And then there were “the:” group of the “in girls” with all the status. And probably all the money, that would come to my desk, and I'm sitting down looking up at all of these people standing there with these angry faces and wondering, “What the heck do they want with me?” And they would just try to pick a fight and I would just sit there and look at them, 'cause I'm not a fighter. I mean I'll defend myself, but I'm not into violence, I'm very anti-violent person, (laughs) and all in all I was scared to death, but I wasn't going to pick a fight. So that maybe – something that would indicate whatever my –

MOORE: Yeah.

FILIPPO: -- I don't know, personality – I don't know.

MOORE: So, when it came to coming to the States, um, why don't you tell us a little bit about how you got into the position of coming over here and what happened?

FILIPPO: (Sighs) Well, as I said the years of the war and the Liberation movement, and all this chaos that was going on, with all these troops invading Rome, and the, um – well – the American troops that came marched in – see, there I go again, I don't know if it was June of '44. I can't even remember dates, but I can remember having to march down Di Famiglia [ph], which is where –

MOORE: What was the atmosphere then?

FILIPPO: All that day – was – I mean, everybody was screaming and jumping and running and waving and laughing and doing – you know – tricks, I mean, turning somersaults in the street; it was something that we waited for for so long.

MOORE: Mm.

FILIPPO: To see the, uh – the last of the, uh – uh – Nazis, and, uh, well, the Fascists and whoever escaped – and then these people come in the next day with all their trucks and their Jeeps and their – their flags, and it was (sighs) unbelievable. Uh. God. I-I don't even know how to describe it – the words just –

MOORE: And you were a teenager at that time, were you?

FILIPPO: Yep.

MOORE: And so –

FILIPPO: [interposed] All of –what thirteen, fourteen? (Laughs) I don't know, yeah.

MOORE: Yeah. And so do you remember, um, what – your grandmother's reaction to all this, did she have a position about what was happening?

FILIPPO: [interposed] M-m-my grandma died, that year.

MOORE: She died?

FILIPPO: [interposed] She never saw it.

MOORE: All right, so she died when you were about twelve?

FILIPPO: Thirteen. Fourteen. Just before.

MOORE: And what um –

FILIPPO: [interposed] She never saw it.

MOORE: --And then how did you get into the position to come over here?

FILIPPO: Well, I married a G.I.

MOORE: How did you meet him?

FILIPPO: Um, some social thing that we had at the house. Uh – they used our house at the time was – as I said my dad was a sculptor, he rented this – I don't even know, I can't tell you all the details, because that's the only time I can remember living with my mother and my father. Okay? Lo and behold, I must have been all of – fifteen. They were briefly together.

MOORE: [interposed] So when your grandmother died, you didn't live with your aunt anymore?

FILIPPO: Uh, no. That was the – the brief time that I lived with my dad, but I'm sure I didn't live there all the time.

MOORE: So when your grandmother died, what did your aunt do? She continued to work?

FILIPPO: Yeah, I'm sure I stayed with her for a while. Yeah, she worked, she just always worked. Uh, she also died very young – she was fifty-six when she died. My aun – my uncle had married in the meantime. My mom and dad were still not together (sighs), but I do know that they came together with this thing after the war. This Liberation thing --or actually it was just prior to that. It was prior to the, uh – the march. The Liberation. That as I– as I started to say about my dad having rented this huge, um, um, artist studio that is right on – I would say maybe not quite a mile down from Piazza de Popolo and Via Flaminia. (Sniffs) It had been considered the monument of some sort, because there's a fountain in the front of it – oh, this wonderful water – you can go any day and pick this water, I mean it was wonderful! It was right at the front of this building, where this ga – this big, big gate that led into the studio! So, it wasn't supposed to be lived in, it was just supposed to be a studio, but we ended up living there because there was no place else to live. And, so, I guess with the, um – the circumstance of – of my grandma dying – I don't know why they got together, 'cause they didn't last together very long, but that was the only time we were together.

MOORE: So the three of you live in the –

FILIPPO: [interposed] Actually lived in the studio for – I guess, maybe a year. Wasn't very long.

MOORE: And it was that studio that you had the social engagement where you had –

FILIPPO: [interposed] In the – in the – uh – the USO, whatever, it was a beautiful place – there was a gorgeous yard, and there was a little fountain and it was a very lovely like, um, uh, garden. I guess that was what it must have – or a build – where an artist could draw or build a statue, you know it was very much that kind of a place. And, uh, somehow they got to – and I don't even know who "they" are, if my dad was involved in it and volunteering the space, because of the troops that needed, you know, as I said – what did I call it? USO?

MOORE: Mm-hmm.

FILIPPO: Places to – to – to accommodate the – the soldiers that needed some R &R.

MOORE: Mm-hmm.

FILIPPO: 'Cause Rome was the place where a lot of people were sent for R &R. Um – but they had to wait an awful long time, so I guess what they did is have a place – uh, there was music and dance, and I think they could buy – not drink, like a bar, but they could come and drink, or somebody served them something, 'cause I know I wasn't allowed to go because they were serving drinks. So, whatever that was about, I think it was mostly my dad giving – excuse me – permission to use the place as much as – I don't even think there'd be a permit, you know, that the city would have to give a permit, I think it was just the person that lived there said, "Sure, go ahead and use it!"

So, but then – th-th-th-the, um – participation came by us wanting to see all this noise and happy sounds and music, and of course sometimes there were fights – we could hear them fighting and screaming and breaking glass, and then of course I'd be yanked back from the balcony, get back in the house, slammed the door. 'Cause whoever – whatever's going down there.

And, uh, that's how I got to meet a lot of neat, neat, nice folks that were just so homesick. So homesick. They would little by little approach my mom – uh –

and my dad, and say, “If you bring food, would you fix it for us?” I mean, c’mon, we were starved (laughs) – I mean we had been. We’d been – ration – you know on rations for a long time, so we didn’t have plentiful – you know food was not plentiful then. So, just the mere mention of all this – we would definitely, uh – I can imagine ‘em saying sure. You know, all I knew was there were some great feasts. They were fixed downstairs, fixed in a big table, and you know all these people would come, and they were so happy to be there, and then we fix – you know, spaghetti, risotto, and – you know the usual thing, and they’d always bring something, like a chicken or a steak – I don’t even know what, because they – I don’t know what, whatever their money, their pay, I’m sure they acquired this stuff, and brought it, and um – and we’d have these big cookouts, I guess, you know, twelve, fifteen people. I don’t know, whatever they – whatever the –um, amount of food and amount of people that participated it was – [tape skips] me –

MOORE: And that’s –

FILIPPO: [tape continues] It was like a big family, to me.

MOORE: And that’s where you met your husband?

FILIPPO: And that’s how I met him.

MOORE: And, can you remember the first evening you met him?

FILIPPO: Yeah. (Laughs) This is one of those where I ventured too far on the steps and nobody caught me you know, so he comes up, and says, “You wanna dance?” and I go, “Oh, wow?” (Laughs) See if I can sneak a little further and go dance! I mean, can you imagine, a fifteen-year old kid with all this music, and I loved to dance anyway, so I was dying to get out there and dance! (Laughs)

MOORE: What was doing at your step?

FILIPPO: And – well, because the place that led to this area came right up to the – it was a covered, it was a gorgeous entrance – through this huge gate, and a big, uh, like circular trellis, uh, covered with wisteria – it was just – absolutely gorgeous. And then it lead to the staircase, that then left up to, you know, huge steps, that led – I don't know, very – I don't know, long – that led up to the top of the studio.

MOORE: Mm-hmm.

FILIPPO: And this humongous, you know, wooden door – big double wooden door. That led into the area that we had made into a – a home. So those are the stairs, and I cr – k – kept going down the stairs to get closer and closer to the bottom so I could see more and more! (Laughs)

So, “you wanna dance” – so I was trying to sneak the dance floor, before we got there, he says, “I can't dance.” (Laughs)

MOORE: (Laughs)

FILIPPO: Anyway, that's how we met. And by that time, somebody found us, and somebody says, “What are you doing?” You know, run scared, like a couple of kids.

MOORE: And then –did he keep coming to your house?

FILIPPO: [interposed] And then he – eventu – yeah – then everybody got to meet him and he kept coming back, sure. That's what happened.

MOORE: And then tell us more what happened about that. I mean like, you decided to at least come here.

FILIPPO: [interposed] Oh, well. Um, deciding to come here? Oh, boy. Let's see, my dad was like. By the time he found that we – that – that he wanted to hang around for me reasons than just to be part of the family (laughs) and he had said, "I'm looking to marry this girl," um, my dad was definitely against it and we had a big row about, you know "Why should you keep me from doing this?" Um, and all he would say, was I was an only child, and he wasn't about to lose me to, you know, somebody that he didn't know from another country, and it was a big ugly fight.

MOORE: And can you un – understand him now?

FILIPPO: My dad?

MOORE: Yeah.

FILIPPO: [interposed] Yeah. Huh. Yeah. (Laughs) Yeah.

MOORE: But at that time did it seem different – like he was being unreasonable?

FILIPPO: Well, if you –if you realize what I've just said about these – these two people, I felt had no right to my life. They didn't raise me, they didn't really give me anything, how dare they say what I can and can't – but that was my – that was my fighting spirit, and you know, fifteen years old, of course I had to go by what they said. But, as I also said before, I – I – you know (laughs) would stand up to people that would get in my way, and I'd say, you know, "How – how can you refuse him, tell me what to do, when you haven't had a part in my growing up – nothing – you haven't been mother and father to me, so how come you're all of a sudden now you're mother and father?" So, anyway, I guess my logic –

MOORE: [interposed] Well, who proposed that you go to – was it your idea, was it your husband idea to come here?

FILIPPO: Oh, well, now, he – by marrying me he wanted to bring me home. This was his home. So, that's what he proposed. And the more he talked about it, the more it seemed like a dream come true that I wouldn't have to – of course, realizing that my home life had not been very happy, this guy's talking about – this guy's talking about six boys and a family – this big family. I mean, it was like –

MOORE: Can you just, something – [tape skips]

MOORE: Actually, hold on, all right. So you say, where was your husband from? What?

FILIPPO: Uh, Pennsylvania.

MOORE: From Pennsylvania. What town?

FILIPPO: Johnstown. Jerome. I'm sorry! Johnstown was the city that we pulled into, Jerome, Pennsylvania.

MOORE: Where's that?

FILIPPO: It's a – yeah. (Laughs) Where is that, that's what I said. I don't think you'd find it, but it was a little coal-mining town. And close to Johnstown, it was – that was the closest city. I remember Johnstown was the–

MOORE: Well, let's back up a little bit. So he proposed to you, wanted to take you home – wh – do you remember the preparations you had to do before you –

FILIPPO: Oh, Lord! We had to be – well, packing, I had to be approved of, I had to sign things, I had to be interviewed by his captain, by his chaplain. By – before we could even think to – to – to set up whatever wheels needed to be engaged to get to the marriage date.

MOORE: So, what were those interviews like?

FILIPPO: Well, I don't know if they wanted to see if I was sane or if I was a -- [tape skips] – was I had to answer an awful lot of damn questions! (Laughs)

MOORE: Well, like, what type of questions did they ask you?

FILIPPO: Well – [tape skips] –an awful lot of damn questions! (Laughs)

MOORE: Like, what type of questions did they ask you?

FILIPPO: Well – where are you from, what do you want, how did you meet, you know – very much like these questions –where do you go to school, where did you go to school, where did you grow up – you know – what do you do, what's your mom do, what does your dad – you know, questions, digging into your background. So –

MOORE: And was it ever brought up that you were too young?

FILIPPO: Oh, of course. But, you realize that I didn't look fifteen. I probably looked twenty-one. I didn't feel like I ever was a child. I don't think outside of those games and things that we talked about that I remember doing – you know, wi-wi-with my friends. At different times it's – it's like – I don't remember being a happy child at all, so I felt like I was an old lady. (Laughs) I always said I was an old lady at nine. By the time I was nine. So –

MOORE: Well – so – all right, let's say you went through the interviews, and what about your home situation as you were preparing to go? When did you know it was possible to go? (Pause) You went through the interviews –

FILIPPO: I think when – when my mom and dad saw the determination, that we were going ahead with all this stuff, it was like, “There's no sense in fighting her, she's gonna do it,” kind of. So then we had to get their written permission, obviously. And we had another big row over that. Um, and another meeting, with, I think the chaplain. And then, because of my age, he was asked to sign on for another – another – what – six months – a year, whatever. Another year. To be sure that –

MOORE: [interposed] In Naples [ph].

FILIPPO: Yeah. To be sure that this is what we wanted. So he stayed on, longer than he needed to be, and he was shipped in April, which wouldn't be such a great distance here, for us, but then, it was. I mean, I didn't have any ways of getting there. And he'd have to hitchhike to get back up, and –

MOORE: Would he do that?

FILIPPO: Yeah, he did.

MOORE: He hitchhiked to see you?

FILIPPO: Yeah.

MOORE: Terrific. And what about um, okay – so, how – this whole process then took – took how long? You were actually, when you met what age?

FILIPPO: [interposed] Probably eight months. Oh.

MOORE: Fifteen?

FILIPPO: (Sighs). I think I must have been. Fifteen. Or not quite fifteen. I-I don't remember – exactly the months or the years. I'd have to be at least close to fifteen, because then I was like, sixteen – October's my birthdate.

MOORE: Mm-hmm.

FILIPPO: And then February 10th of '46 is when we were married. So I would say the whole thing took about eight months, nine months, ten months. And all this.

MOORE: And what was the atmosphere at home when they realized you were going to do this? Was it tolerable?

FILIPPO: It was kinda – no – it was kinda grumpy and kind of hurt. And kind of, you know, "we're tryin' to accept it but we don't like it," kind of. And I really didn't care. I mean, they cause me so much grief, you know? Wha – it's like, what's a little more hurt? You know, that's the way I felt then.

MOORE: But then – your mother – you don't talk about your mother's attitude as much as your father's. Why?

FILIPPO: I – I think that she – probably either didn't care, or showed her caring in a different way, or the way that I always felt, like she was hoping that I would make it, so she would be able to come, because then she did come after we got here.

MOORE: Oh.

FILIPPO: So it was almost like she was, you know, not helping but really wanted to see it go through, so that she could also – uh – come out here. Which, to me, wasn't coming to America, but I think to her it was. I mean it is now – don't get me wrong, I mean, this is my home now.

MOORE: Mm.

FILIPPO: But – the – the thing didn't strike me then as, "Oh, wow, I'm going to America." It was like "Oh, my God, I found this great guy, and I'm gonna leave this place, where I'm so unhappy." I mean I – it was only when I stood on that ship and pulled away that I realized what was happening. Believe me.

MOORE: So what about packing? What'd you pack before you went?

FILIPPO: I didn't have a heck of a lot. It wasn't –

MOORE: You weren't taking anything dear to you?

FILIPPO: (Sighs) [not understood] red sandals is about it. That's the first pair of little thong like kind – not really thongs, because I don't think we had thongs then – little strap suede – little red, flat sandals, they were just, to me it was like the best thing I ever had. That was mine.

MOORE: Well how was your – how did your aunt – uh – react to you leaving, though? She – you were obviously part of her house?

FILIPPO: My aunt absolutely disowned me. "After I went through this, and I raised you, I don't want to see you go and – and lose yourself, and you know, don't know what you're going to into, and you don't know what this family --" just totally – afraid of the same thing the people here were afraid to get from there. You know, they didn't know what they were getting from there. "My God, my

son is going to marry who? And what? From where?" And so the reaction was the same on both ends.

MOORE: But your aunt cared.

FILIPPO: My aunt cared, and the way she cared, is that she was fighting to keep me – I-longer than anyone else, she was fighting to keep me here. I mean, there.

MOORE: And how did you greet that?

FILIPPO: Pardon?

MOORE: Were you more tolerant than that since she was part of your life?

FILIPPO: [interposed] Yeah, oh yeah. Yeah.

MOORE: Were you flattered?

FILIPPO: Well, I knew she cared, and I – and I know that – I realize that how much she did care. And yeah, that felt good, and I didn't want to hurt her, but I wasn't about to change my plans, because, as far as I'm concerned, they were made.

MOORE: Right.

FILIPPO: So – and grandma was gone. (Laughs) And that – I hate to say it – it sounds terrible, that I didn't care about my aunt as much as my – my – a – my grandma. If grandma had been there, maybe it'd have been different, I think that's what I need to say. Maybe. I don't know.

MOORE: So, all right, so you packed your things, and what ship did you go over on? How did you get passage? Wasn't that a time when it was difficult to get passage?

FILIPPO: [interposed] Well, you have to, uh – yeah, it was very difficult, you had to sign on, you had to wait for your turn, you had – you know – you had to apply for all this stuff, you had to go through all these check-ups and shots and all this paperwork, and all this stuff. And then we had to, um, go on a hospital ship, and I'll be darned if I even remember the name of it, somewhere I guess I've got it written down, but it was a beautiful hospital ship that left, um –

MOORE: [interposed] Military ship?

FILIPPO: Na– Uh, hospital – yeah. Mm-hmm. And – in the meantime – he wasn't supposed to go before me, but he had been shipped. Because all this was happening where he was in Naples, and I was taking off from Naples, but I never got to see, because before I ever took off, they had shipped him back. It was, you know, one of these army things. I mean wha – you can't control that. So, by the time that I knew my voyage was coming closer, we had word that he had to go back.

MOORE: Mm.

FILIPPO: So he was already there – here. Ha! Listen to me, here, there. Uh, he'd gotten back to the States way before I'd even got on the ship. Strange.

MOORE: And re –describe being on that ship and what you were thinking.

FILIPPO: Uh. Um, I mean it just hit me all of a sudden that, my God, what have I gotten myself into, and what am I leaving, and where am I going? And I-I know what I'm leaving, but I don't know what I'm going to, and it was like (sniffs)–

when that ship started to move it was like – my heart was just being torn out my chest (tears), I don't know how to best – really emotionally time. (Sniffs).

MOORE: Were other people also having the same problem on the boat?

FILIPPO: Yup, yeah. Because all the ship was full of is, uh, war brides, and a lot of them had been – uh – living with their husbands there that had had children and some of them had come as– I don't even know from where – but some had gotten married there and – and made a family and made a home – and, and became a family, and others were like myself, you know married to G.I.'s and – to come out here. And some had waited an awful long time to be – um, immigration, I guess – because they were coming from other places, so in Naples we all came together from so many places, you know – uh – uh in Rome, and so many years of waiting, and all these different lines that came together was wonderful the camaraderie that afterwards on the ship – but, boy, that first pulling away was like – wow.

MOORE: [interposed] Umm, did you have to stay overnight in Naples when you went there before the ship pulled away?

FILIPPO: Yeah, they had booked some hotel where all of us had to stay, and we all had to be, uh, accounted for, so we couldn't – we couldn't do anything. You know, once I went on that trip to Naples, it was like I was prisoner. (Laughs) I mean, I wasn't, but it was like being a prisoner – I couldn't do anything, I wasn't my own person anymore, I belonged to the United States Government (laughs).

MOORE: So, so you had for this passage, you got there, they put you in a hotel, you got in the boat –

FILIPPO: [interposed] They were responsible for us until the day we got to the States and we were claimed by our husbands.

MOORE: [interposed] Did anyone see you off? Did your fam – what happened – what – Describe the scene when you left , you left Rome. Who was there?

FILIPPO: Absolute blank. I don't know, I don't' know where I left from, I can't remember if I got on a train – see my daughter keeps saying that I'm – that I'm forgetting pieces of my life –

MOORE: [interposed] Wait a minute, we can go a little bit – a little bit, um–

FILIPPO: I can't -- okay

MOORE: [interposed] Your aunt didn't want you to leave. Your father and your mother didn't want you to leave. Was there any teary sort of goodbye? Or did you just sort of leave?

FILIPPO: Yeah. I cannot remember, all these fragments that are – you know, I remember my dad signing this paper and throwing it –

MOORE: [interposed] It could be painful, I mean – it could be – it's very emotional.

FILIPPO: [interposed] Yeah, that's what I'm – that's why my daughter says, to this day, she says, "You oughta go into some kind of, you know, hypnosis, or some kinda regression thing to be able to pick it up,": because I see all these fragments, and as much as I sit and think about it, I can't put 'em together.

MOORE: Okay, so – you're on the boat – you remember that point, about pulling out, and having doubts about the unknown. Um, what would the accomo—

FILIPPO: [interposed] Ah, the fear –

MOORE: [interposed] Yeah, fear. Wh-what were the accommodations like on that boat? Where did you stay?

FILIPPO: Uh – I happened to end up in – happened to end up at the last – next to the last – bottom thing – it's a good thing I wasn't (laughs) I guess they go by alphabetical, and I was an "S"! I don't k– [tape skips] –alphabetical and I was an "S"! I don't know. But, uh – and I didn't have any children, so – and I was younger, so I think that they accommodated you – [tape skips] and we got into [tape skips]– much older and so on. And we got into these little bunks at the – I guess at the next to the last.

MOORE: And was it your own cabin with bunks? Or was it?

FILIPPO: Oh, no, no, no. It was like a big dorm. Big dorm, all these suspended –

MOORE: [interposed] Did it have sheets on the bed?

FILIPPO: Yeah.

MOORE: So, was it clean?

FILIPPO: Sheet – blank – oh, yeah. Yeah, this was a hospital ship.

MOORE: So who were your other bunkmates in that same dormitory?

FILIPPO: Lost track of every one of 'em. Mimi, and Francesca – and all of these people that were wonderful and we stuck together, four or five of us and somewhere I have pictures of these wonderful ladies. Um, that never – never saw each other again.

MOORE: How long was the trip?

FILIPPO: Um, nine days? Nine days, ten days?

MOORE: And did you talk at all with the other people about the fear you had? Did you talk amongst each other about what was coming?

FILIPPO: [interposed] Oh, we all – we all shared, yeah. We all shared the – the – you know, “I wonder what’s going on,” and “I wonder if what – what he told me was – is true.” Because at this point, we didn’t know, not at a – I mean – how do you know?

MOORE: Mm.

FILIPPO: --- Whatever somebody represented? The – the fear starts – I mean fear is a horrible thing, ha! But all these doubts started to creep in about, you know, Are we gonna find what we were told? You know, what if we’re not there? What if they don’t – ha – what if – what if they got another wife, what if they’re criminals, what if – where are we gonna end up? I mean horrible: the insecurity, you know, the not knowing. ‘Cause we had never – none of us had ever been in touch with the people at the other end, and knowing that most of us weren’t really welcome! (Laughs) They weren’t – they weren’t looking to welcome us with open arms. But they did. The bottom line is good that they did, but we didn’t know it then.

MOORE: Mm.

FILIPPO: And I know one was going to New York, and one of the gals was going to, uh – um, California. I mean there were so many different areas that we were going to, but we each had to wait for our mate – or an agent of the mate to pick us up a-a-a-a-a – what do I want to say? – a responsible party, before they will

release us. And so when we dock, we were there like three, four days, just waiting for all these people to come and claim and get off the ship.

MOORE: [interposed] And vouch for you.

FILIPPO: Yep.

MOORE: Well – let's go back to the boat for a little bit. Were you allowed on deck?

FILIPPO: Oh, yes – we were absolutely treated – oh, sure , it was just like a cruise.

MOORE: And did you have any entertainment on the boat?

FILIPPO: Uh – no – just what we did ourselves, you know music, and going to listen and see movies, and lectures, and there were things, you know – like the movie room. They would have different movies and they would have different, like, travel things and it was nice.

MOORE: So, um, was the trip rough or smooth?

FILIPPO: No, it was smooth. Absolutely smooth.

MOORE: [interposed] That's nice. First one (laughs)

FILIPPO: This ship was humongous, I mean it's a – very, very comfortable, and then also I didn't fear the ocean, I don't get seasick. It was, you know, we'd sit up there in our little bathing suits and get suntanned, my God, but – (laughs) I must have – well, that's probably the best tan I ever had in my whole life¹

MOORE: What about your travel – travelling companions, did any of them – the people you were there by chance with – did any of them become ill, on the boat?

FILIPPO: Oh, yeah, if you're talking about being seasick, yeah. We – I had to leave my quarters because I was becoming sick listening to them be sick.

MOORE: Oh, yeah.

FILIPPO: And so, we were trying to rush them up in air, 'cause we were quite a bit – quite a ways down – quite a ways down. So, yeah, I remember that. But that was something you just do when you're in a situation, somebody needs help, you just do it, so we all just grouped together.

MOORE: And, what about the food? Do you remember the food in the boat?

FILIPPO: Plenty. Plenty of food. It was great food, it was plenty of food – there were, you know, meats, vegetables, fruits, rolls. I know if we got hungry, we'd go back and get crackers and rolls. 'Cause we were starved – I mean, we were all young and so hungry, I mean, the sea air makes me so hungry.

MOORE: So, actually the boat trip was actually quite nice.

FILIPPO: [interposed] It was great! Mm. Yeah, it was very, very nice.

MOORE: Do you remember seeing, um – do you have any other anecdotes about the boat trip? Anything that happened, foolish, or not foolish, or –?

FILIPPO: No, actually, it was – it was fun to – it was, uh, the camaraderie was great, and, like I said the four or five of us that hung around together and just talked

about our dreams, and sat and got a suntan, uh, was really the-the-the most that I remember.

MOORE: What were the dreams? Do you remember any dreams?

FILIPPO: Oh. Wonder what kind of house we're gonna live in, and gee, isn't that gorgeous – you know, the house on the hill, and the house in the pool, and all this stuff you hear about America – and I wonder if there's a tree growing in the backyard that grows money. You know, the money tree? So kind of in a joking in -- no, I was in jest, but it's – what people hear about America. You know realize –

MOORE: What did you think about – what were your expectations before you left about the States?

FILIPPO: I-I think that I expected to be coming to a place very much like what I left. And I can't tell you (laughs) the shock! Whoa! They say sho – and I mean, it never occurred to me, I'm coming from Rome, it's gonna take a lot to, you know, match up to it – didn't occur to me! I'm coming from a town, and I expect to find a town that looks like that. Well, guess what.

MOORE: (Laughs) All right, and what about –

FILIPPO: I mean, no streets, no sidewalks –Yes?

MOORE: And what about in terms of material wealth – did you expect everybody to be wealthy, or --?

FILIPPO: No. No. Because he – he'd – my husband had been concerned about mom and dad's ability to take care of whatever they needed to take care of was gone, and he was – um – had so much allotted to go back to them while he was

in the – in fact, even after we were married, he had asked me, “Can I still continue to send my support?” And I said, “Sure.” I mean, what was money? I mean money had not been anything that ever helped me with anything! (Laughs) With all my problems, money wasn’t going to help anything! So, I never really had any, and I didn’t depend on it. Although, I mean, I’m not stupid, I realize, you know, the importance of money, and therefore I didn’t feel – I didn’t need anything, so why not? If he was concerned about ‘em – and he seemed to be more the – the more concerned – he always was – of the six boys. He always took care of mom and dad.

MOORE: [interposed] Yeah. And six boys – what birth order was he in that six?

FILIPPO: Three.

MOORE: The third one. All right, and wh – can you – back on the boat now, can you remember seeing land for the first time?

FILIPPO: Yeah.

MOORE: Can you describe that?

FILIPPO: Yeah. Well – (laughs) we were all looking for it. We saw the dolphins before we saw the land – about the same time. Something was ju – I guess it was dolphins. And then saw the line – we thought, “My God, is that it?”

MOORE: What line?

FILIPPO: (Sighs) Ground. You know, ‘til it got closer – the skyline [ph]. Right.

MOORE: The skyline. Yeah, yeah.

FILIPPO: And then as we got closer of course, the – the – the, uh – the buildings, but the Statue. I mean, my God, the Statue of – to see that –

MOORE: The Statue of Liberty?

FILIPPO: Yeah. That was, uh, kinda awesome.

MOORE: And what was the atmosphere on the boat then?

FILIPPO: Well, ecstatic. Everybody's screaming and jumping, and –and –so elated, and then everybody got so quiet, it's like – we didn't have anything to say. I guess we were all in our own thoughts. (Tears)

MOORE: Yeah – so it was an emotional time. [Tape skips]

FILIPPO: (Sighs) Ye –

MOORE: Um –

FILIPPO: Oh, sure!

MOORE: Um – What about the New York City, uh, skyline from the boat? Did you see that at all?

FILIPPO: Mm-hmm.

MOORE: And what was your impression about that?

FILIPPO: It was a big city – I mean that's – that seemed like – yeah, I'm coming to what I left, kinda sort of. 'Cause it – you know – you could see it's a city.

MOORE: And you went through Ellis Island, did you not?

FILIPPO: Yep.

MOORE: And how did you get from the boat to Ellis Island?

FILIPPO: Boy, you got me. I have not idea. Well, I'm – [tape skips] boy – I remember when we went back to visit, this past year [tape skips] to visit this past year, that little, that little shuttle-type thing, I said, reminds me of um, some kind of a sh – what? Is that what I want to call it? A shuttle, a dinghy, a what? Something that takes so many people

MOORE: [interposed] Tugboat.

FILIPPO: Yeah – type of thing – at a time, and get over there. It must have been either alphabetical order, somehow, I don't know what order, I couldn't tell you.

MOORE: And, you remember taking that small boat?

FILIPPO: Very, very vaguely. I'm just thinking that I'm putting it there, but I really don't see it. I'm putting it there since our trip to New York, for my daughter's last year, and remembering, "Oh, this is something like I've taken." But I can't really see it. Or see the people in it, or know how many people, or in what order, all I know is that getting off this – this thing – whatever it was – was Ellis Island, that I knew, but I didn't know where I was then. And it was such a huge – it was like – so big and so high and so congested and so noisy and so dir –

MOORE: Was it clean?

FILIPPO: No. I don't remember clean at all.

MOORE: Do you remember seeing anything for the first time that you'd never seen before?

FILIPPO: Well, all these – all these – like a barra – well, it's not like a barracks, I don't even know what word to give it, it was such a – a lot, a lot of space and bodies. So crowded, and noisy and not – and – and chaotic. I guess is the word I want. Although there were people there attempting and – and accomplishing, you know, lines of some sort. It was just – maybe it was just my state of mind. The confusion was more my mind, that's what I remember. It was fea – very, very frightened, absolutely.

MOORE: Do you think your companions were also – as equally as frightened, was that something that was–

FILIPPO: [interposed] Well, I don't know. I don't know that I ever saw 'em.

MOORE: Once you got on Ellis Island.

FILIPPO: Yeah.

MOORE: And, um, how were you treated by the staff at Ellis Island?

FILIPPO: What's the word? N-not rude – but – business-like. Bru-brusqe. Uh, not – I don't think they understood how scared we were. I don't think they understood.

MOORE: [interposed] And what were you scared of, were you – would you be scared that your bags –

FILIPPO: [interposed] All these bodies and all these hands grabbing at you, and all these people telling you to take off this clothes and you know, r-r-roll up this sleeve, and – I mean I'd never been –

MOORE: [interposed] You had a medical examination.

FILIPPO: Yeah! I'd never been through a medical examination in my life! I'm sixteen years old, you know, I-I've never been to a doctor's office, leave alone in a – in a stirrup with a vaginal examination, my God, it was like – geez!

MOORE: [interposed] So wait a minute, they gave you an examination – you said you before they didn't gave you shots.

FILIPPO: [interposed] They didn't do a vaginal, probably they looked. They didn't – I don't know that they examined.

MOORE: Right.

FILIPPO: I gotta – you know – I'm trying to be correct here.

MOORE: All right, so when you get on the boat, walk us through what happened – what you remember. You remember the people in that – when – what happened – they yanked you out from the room?

FILIPPO: [interposed] (Sighs). And the lines, and the lines and the lines, and the benches and the sitting and the waiting. It was – it went on forever.

MOORE: [interposed] At point did the medical examination come into this?

FILIPPO: I have no idea after many hours. I don't know how long I was there.

MOORE: And what did – now, you had shots and things you said –

FILIPPO: Mm-hmm.

MOORE: -- In – uh – in Naples before you left –

FILIPPO: Mm-hmm

MOORE: --You had some sort of examination, didn't you?

FILIPPO: Well, before we went through the , uh, the counseling with, uh – uh – the chaplain and all that, after that I had to go through my blood tests and all that stuff. But I think here's where I got whatever shots you had to get for immunizati – [tape skips] What?

MOORE: -iptheria

FILIPPO: I can't even re – I can't even think, what?

MOORE: Diptheria.

FILIPPO: Whatever they gave you, that's when they give it – yeah that's it. And I'm horri –

MOORE: [interposed] You had your papers with you?

FILIPPO: Mm-hmm.

MOORE: But even so they gave you an examination?

FILIPPO: Mm-hmm.

MOORE: And how thorough was that examination they gave you?

FILIPPO: Well, the ears, the nose, and you know as I said, drop the clothes, get the gown on – and –and put your feet up on the stirrup, and I'm trying to remember, really truly, could I have blocked it off? They have a vaginal exami – I don't think I really did a vaginal examination, but a [tape skips] – they probably looked to see that I had no sores – I don't know – looked to see that I had no sores

MOORE: [tape skips] That sort of --

FILIPPO: [tape skips] No! – Things of sort –

MOORE: [tape skips] And you had never had that sort of examination before –

FILIPPO: [tape skips] No, uh-uh.

MOORE: [tape skips]-- never had that sort of examination before. Had you had –
And what were you – had – did you have any fear of being sent back?

FILIPPO: (sniffs) Yeah.

MOORE: And was that –

FILIPPO: If he hadn't didn't come to me, I woulda had to send – be send back. Sure, that fear was there.

MOORE: [interposed] Or they rejected many? [ph]

FILIPPO: Oh, sure. Absolutely.

MOORE: Um –

FILIPPO: All kinds of fears, I mean, you name ‘em, they were there. I’m just horrified that – what happens today, from one extreme to the other – put us through that, and now people come with all the disease and all no papers and no permission, and it’s like a free-for-all, I’m just –

MOORE: Did – did everyone have the same exam – examination?

FILIPPO: Well, I’m sure.

MOORE: And where did they do that examination, do you remember where they took you?

FILIPPO: Well that had, uh –uh – partitions of some sort, I don’t remember if they were actually rooms or partitions, but everything was set up with the little cots and the little tables and the people with the white coats, and, you know, whatever they were. I don’t even know if they were doctors or nurses – I’m assuming they were doctors or nurses.

MOORE: And did they speak Italian to you?

FILIPPO: (Sighs) God. No.

MOORE: What’d they – what’d they speak? English?

FILIPPO: Yeah. English, I’m sure, because I remember the –saying, “What are you doing?” And trying to figure out what they were saying and what they were doing, ‘cause I had no way of knowing.

MOORE: And did anyone at any time translate for you?

FILIPPO: Well, I don't remember. I really, truly don't remember.

MOORE: Were you detained? Were you detained for any length of time at Ellis Island?

FILIPPO: No.

MOORE: Where did you eat? Did you eat there?

FILIPPO: Boy, I don't remember eating, isn't that awful? No, I don't remember eating, totally not.

MOORE: [interposed] No. Okay, and you didn't have to sleep overnight at Ellis Island?

FILIPPO: Well, somehow we were put back on the ship, because I wasn't released from Ellis Island, I was released from the ship. So somehow we got back to the ship until whoever was supposed to claim us, claimed us

MOORE: [interposed] All right, so you went through this whole –

FILIPPO: [interposed] That doesn't make sense, yeah.

MOORE: [interposed] No, you went through this whole experience, and then you were put back on this ship to sleep?

FILIPPO: Mm-hmm.

MOORE: I see.

FILIPPO: [interposed] Until someone came to claim me. Right. And it was like –

MOORE: [interposed] Okay, all right. Umm – who came – who came to meet you?

FILIPPO: Well my husband, then, but he was not notified that we had already docked, and it took him, I don't know, from Pennsylvania to New York, however ma – long it takes to make arrangements, so I was sitting there three or four days thinking for sure I was never going to be picked up.

MOORE: In the boat?

FILIPPO: Yeah.

MOORE: And were you – anybody else in the same situation?

FILIPPO: Yep. Yep.

MOORE: So, the – the people you chummed around with on the boat, were they in a similar situation?

FILIPPO: Oh, absolutely, and some got picked up, and some were not. By the time I was picked up, some stayed behind, and some had gone. But that was a long time to wait, know that the people at this end were notified, and he – when I finally was able to discuss that with him, that he had not been notified until the actual day that – that the ship pulled in or something. 'Cause it took him time to get arrangements –

MOORE: Mm-hmm.

FILIPPO: -- Get the train, or what – I guess he said train. Yeah, train, because we went back on a train.

MOORE: Um, so why don't you describe what on in those three to four days. What did you guys do – three to four days, did you just sleep?

FILIPPO: [interposed] Communication, again, eh? We just moped.

MOORE: [interposed] You just moped?

FILIPPO: Moped, depressed, sl – you know, slept. Yeah, tried to talk and keep each other's spirits up, and not knowing where we were gonna end up. More or less accepting – trying to accept the fact that if we're not picked up, we're gonna go back and try to get accustomed to the – the idea that, you know, maybe this was, you know tr –bottom line, you know, can you accept the worst thing? And then anything seems less in between, kind of.

MOORE: And what was the bottom line?

FILIPPO: That we'd have – that we'd go back and nobody'd pick us up.

MOORE: Mm. Well, what about – what – describe what happened when you were finally were united with your husband-to-be?

FILIPPO: Oh, they had to carry me. I heard my name called, and I passed out. I mean totally, I mean, the stress – I hold myself up for so long, and then whenever ha – whatever happens that is supposed to happen, then I – you know, I do that with the children, with any emergency, I do the same thing.

MOORE: So you collapsed.

FILIPPO: I'm Ms. Strong, and Superwoman, and then I go (raspberry). (Laughs)

MOORE: So you collapsed? You fainted?

FILIPPO: [interposed] Yeah, I literally collapsed.

MOORE: You fainted?

FILIPPO: Well, I don't know that I fainted dead away, but I had – everything spun around, my legs go away, and I felt these g – you know – my buddies arms – you know pi – I mean, my hands on my arms, and they literally dragged me, screaming, “He's here, he's here, he's here! C'mon, c'mon!” Slapped my face, pick up my arms, slapped me on the butt and dragged me, literally dragged me to the waiting room. Where he –

MOORE: And what happened then?

FILIPPO: Well –

MOORE: Did you regain your consciousness?

FILIPPO: Yeah. My legs came back kinda quick, but I felt so sick in my stomach, I thought I was gonna throw up, I don't know – (Laughs)

MOORE: (Laughs)

FILIPPO: Ohh!

MOORE: And what was he feeling?

FILIPPO: Well, he was feeling happy that he got there, but he was wondering, you know, he couldn't wait to find out – “How long have you been here?” He didn't know! He didn't know anymore than I knew.

MOORE: And was – was that filled with other reuni – people reuniting?

FILIPPO: Oh yes, there were other – oh yeah, we could hear, the names were being called over the loudspeaker every so often. You know, so-and-so, so-and-so, and so-and-so, and it went through at such a fast – such a fast pace that for a minute it's like, "Oh! Was that me?" And when I realized that was my name, is when I jumped up and then I (raspberry) – re – proceeded to fall over, so that was pretty much everybody's reaction. I would – but I don't know to what extreme (laughs) or the same thing – (laughs) extent that I was, but it was like everybody was jumping up and running, and the people were happy for us, but then after we left, and I looked back they were like, "Oh, my God, I'm still here," kinda thing.

MOORE: [interposed] Oh yeah.

FILIPPO: Oh that was a – that was sad. (Sniffs) 'Cause I – I never knew.

MOORE: [interposed] People –people that had brought you, and saw you reunited.

FILIPPO: Yeah, I never knew.

MOORE: Well, what about – where did you go from there, from Ellis Island? What happened?

FILIPPO: Uh, right back to the – to the train station.

MOORE: And you went from the train to Pennsylvania?

FILIPPO: Mm-hmm.

MOORE: Was there anything in that time you saw, you never saw before?

FILIPPO: (Sighs). A lot of train tracks. Bear country. It wasn't pretty at all – it was like, uh – [tape skips] pretty at all, it was like, uh, I don't want to say ghettos, 'cause I don't know if it was just – around the train stations.

MOORE: Mm-hmm.

FILIPPO: And again, the dirt. Was a lot of dirt. And a lot of dreary-looking stuff. Just dreary. I mean, it was just not pretty.

MOORE: (Laughs)

FILIPPO: And I was like, "Oh, my God. Is this America?" (Laughs) A-And of course, f-first impressions, you know, I would think this is the way it's going to be all throughout America, well, I found out different, but I – right at the moment, it was so much – it was a long ways, by train.

MOORE: And, uh, where were you going to? What city?

FILIPPO: Jerome.

MOORE: Jerome, Pennsylvania, and once you got Jerome, where did you go?

FILIPPO: [interposed] From – fro – Oh, his home. His parent's home.

MOORE: And how did they receive you, what was that exchange?

FILIPPO: Oh, they were great. They all came running out to me, and they'd all wa – been waiting to have a party, and you know, they wanted to give me – like – what I found out was a shower, I guess, and so everybody came with presents, and

everybody was teasing me, and giving me business about, uh, why didn't I speak – how come – I don't know how to put this now – see, what I spoke, and what these people spoke was two different kinds of Italian! (Laughs). And so I would look at them, saying whatever they were saying in Sicilian, and saying, "Can you say it in English?" And so these people would look at me and say, "What's wrong with you? I'm trying to talk to you in your own language and you're asking me to speak -- ?" I didn't know what they were saying!

MOORE: [interposed] His family was Italian? His – your husband's was Italian?

FILIPPO: Oh, they were – yeah – they had migrated over – yeah, Mom and Dad – yeah, his Mom and Dad had also been – five and six years old, or six and nine years old when they came from the old country.

MOORE: And so he spoke to you in Sicilian, did he?

FILIPPO: No, no he didn't, the family did.

MOORE: Oh, the family did –

FILIPPO: [interposed] Yeah.

MOORE: -- So the parents – who were from Sicily were speaking to you in Sicilian, and you're–

FILIPPO: [interposed] Yep. To make me feel at home, all right? And – the fam – and her sister and her brother –moms brothers and sisters and neighbors, you know, all these people that had lived together for so long, and worked in the same mines together, they were all there, and they were all trying to make me feel at home, and I was like, "They must be Mars, because what they're saying,"

Oh, wow. It was funny. It was something we laughed about for a long time.
After that.

MOORE: [interposed] But –wh – what about – what about the fact that – you think you were accepted more because they, themselves had immigrated?

FILIPPO: Oh, yeah, I'm sure. I'm sure.

MOORE: [interposed] Than other people?

FILIPPO: I'm sure. For a point, I'm sure. But I still think they had so many reservations, because, why – you know – why is he bringing this kid from – from Rome? I don't know what they must have thought. All I know is they had as many fears and wonder – you know doubts as the rest of us.

MOORE: What about the place that you went to? What did it look like? Wh-wh- where did he live?

FILIPPO: A cute little – it's a cute little, because Mom made it, you know clean and cute, but it was a real li – rustic little cabin like. And I don't know how she managed to keep it the way she – she cooked, and did everything on this old, what I call an old Franklin stove, you know? I mean--

MOORE: Wood-burning?

FILIPPO: Wood-burning.

MOORE: Or coal-burning?

FILIPPO: Wood-burning, coal-burning. Wood-burning. I think. It was a coal mining town. But it was a wood-burning stove, does that make sense?

MOORE: (Laughs)

FILIPPO: Um, and she did everything, like – I mean it was like the – the big-

MOORE: [interposed] Was there indoor plumbing?

FILIPPO: Eh – no. Had to go outside. Uh, didn't have a washer – I don't know, she washed everything by hand. Until then, I can't remember when, but she finally got a washer, and I think maybe it was there, before I left.

MOORE: What was the address? Do you remember?

FILIPPO: No.

MOORE: What street?

FILIPPO: It was route something or other, you know, uh, Jerome. Yeah, I don't know the street.

MOORE: How was the house lit?

FILIPPO: Bulbs.

MOORE: Electricity?

FILIPPO: Yeah, they had electricity. They had electricity. The wood-burning stove, the outside bathroom, yeah, they di – they had to have wires and electricity, yeah. 'Cause of the washer.

MOORE: How big was the house – the cabin?

FILIPPO: Well, you know what. The kitchen seemed to bigger larger than the rest of the house. The rooms were actually small, you know I can't even remember where I slept that first night, now that you're asking me these things and I'm walking through that kitchen and I can't remember?

MOORE: Now, were you married when you got here, or --?

FILIPPO: [interposed] Oh, yeah!

MOORE: [interposed] You were already married?

FILIPPO: We marr --oh, yeah, we got married --

MOORE: [interposed] You were married back in Italy --

FILIPPO: [interposed] Oh, my -- it was hard enough to get (laughs) -- you think they woulda let me leave without being married? No. I'm just kidding. No.

MOORE: No -- so you were married by the chaplain?

FILIPPO: No, it was actually in our own church, my, you know the priest --

MOORE: [interposed] But you never mentioned that part though -- you just didn't mention your wedding.

FILIPPO: [interposed] Oh, oh! Okay, that's true.

MOORE: [interposed] You had a wedding back and Italy -- and who attended?

FILIPPO: [interposed] Yeah, we got married – his captain, his lieutenant. Um, my, uh –some attorney friend of my dad’s that was my best man. You have best men, you don’t have women, you know, you don’t have the same kind of weddings it was just a guy [tape skips] –um – um – and all my friends that I remember growing up with, uh, all about the same age. Some of their older sisters, and some of their brothers and some – well some, some – very nice celebration and this attorney, um – Diagostino – doesn’t that sound wonderful? Diagostino – umm – umm – had the reception at – at his house. So it was very nice.

MOORE: And so, then was that – were people really – by that time, resigned to your wedding?

FILIPPO: Oh, yeah, everybody was really happy, was really accepting, yeah it was fine after that.

MOORE: And how long was that before he left?

FILIPPO: Well, that was February, and then I left in July. So, quite a while.

MOORE: Okay, so we’ll – we’ll go back to Pennsylvania now. The house that you went to, how many people were living in it?

FILIPPO: Well, Mom and Dad (sighs) and Joe was there. And Sam. And – Tunney? Sam was the oldest, Tunney was the youngest. I don’t remember if Lou – who’s next to the youngest – was there. For some reason, I don’t see him in that house as much as I see him in the one in Michigan. I remember Lou in that house, but I don’t remember him in this one.

MOORE: Okay, so you, um –

FILIPPO: [interposed] So that, would be –four, five people?

MOORE: I counted six, okay –

FILIPPO: What you count? Ruby and Joe. Mom, Dad

MOORE: [interposed] Mom, Dad.

FILIPPO: – oh Sam and Guy, yeah, six. You're right.

MOORE: And so, um, how many bedrooms were there? In the cabin?

FILIPPO: I'm telling you, I don't remember where we slept. I truly don't remember.

MOORE: Well, because it was crowded, let's put it that way. With all the people.

FILIPPO: (Sighs) Mm. Yeah. But not really us – because that kitchen was so big, we coulda slept in the kitchen for all I know – I remember the living room and all the neighbors, and all the presents, how many there were – because I'm getting – [tape skips] how many there were, because I'm getting it mixed up in my head with the house in Michigan. Where mom and dad's room was and – [tape skips]

MOORE: --nearest neighbors. Okay, I-I-let's look at that, what were the nearest neighbors to that cabin? How far away were they?

FILIPPO: [interposed] Huh, okay. Pretty much like it is here. Across the street. Although it was just dirt.

MOORE: There were dirt roads, and –

FILIPPO: Oh, yeah. There were no sidewalks in dirt, they had all little gardens in the back and their clotheslines, and they were just individual little – you know – houses. I'd say half the size of that and about a si – maybe a little further than that apart. So, I don't even know how to measure – lots. You know, the little lot houses were all in the backyard.

MOORE: And, um – what job did your husb – what was your husband's name, Joe?

FILIPPO: Joe. Joe San Filippo. Joseph.

MOORE: Right. Joseph. And what job did he first get when he got to the states?

FILIPPO: Well, the job that he was, uh – to – to get the job, we had to go back to Harrisburg, I'm trying to remember, why Harrisburg, he must have worked at some branch of this, um, it had to do with stocking – um – parts of some sort.

MOORE: For what? Parts for what?

FILIPPO: Airplane maybe? Some kind of a plant?

MOORE: Mm-hmm.

FILIPPO: [tape skips] All I know is that he did not get his job back, that he was supposed to get back, like if boys came back to their jobs, and that was – just – something that didn't happen.

MOORE: And let me get this straight, because I didn't ask, specifically – in the Army, what was his position, exactly? His rank.

FILIPPO: [interposed] Oh. Um, I think he advanced to – it was not a career thing for him – he was corp [tape skips] corporal. And th- [tape skips] – corporal.

MOORE: [tape skips] In the army –

FILIPPO: [tape skips] He was in the – he was in – [tape skips]

MOORE: [tape skips] Got started in the army –

FILIPPO: He was in the – he was in the Air Corps.

MOORE: Air Corps.

FILIPPO: Mm-hmm.

MOORE: Okay. Um, let's see – describe briefly – um, how did you learn English, by the way – did you have any stories about that?

FILIPPO: Just by – just – yeah – by reading the newspaper. Now mind you, I was reading English. And somehow that made – I don't know how, but it made sense to me. I would listen to it on the radio. And I would read the newspaper. And I guess the sound and the words – don't ask me how, but I did it. I'd go out and I'd point to things. If I had to go out to buy anything, I'd go out to point to things. And then I'd wait for that person to say, "Oh, chicken." Whatever it was that I was pointing to, or whatever fish it was I point – so that's how I learned, I guess.

MOORE: Did anybody ever make fun of you, or have any prejudice because you –

FILIPPO: No, everybody was really friendly. Very helpful, very, very helpful.

MOORE: Did you experience any bigotry or persecution for being foreign in this country?

FILIPPO: Well, strangely enough, it was when I – took my first job that I really did not know how to speak the language well. But that lady saw I think the possibility of having this – this – um – (sighs) –something out of the ordina – I can't think of the word. Something to draw business, to attract attention. Something –when you do in the business world to attract attention and advertising is always bring something ou – outrageous. So here I was (laughs) in this super sharp sportswear, where they handle, you know, riding clothes and things that I never even handled. And knowing that – the manager I'm talking about – this woman knew that I didn't know the language that well, but I was willing to learn and she knew I had a sense of style, because I did like the – you know I could put things together. I don't know how she figured it out, but I was – before long, I was modeling stuff in her store. I think there was a lot of jealousy. 'Cause I wasn't speaking as well as people who were born here and was going to school here, and yet she had hired me – a novelty, is that what I'm trying to say?

MOORE: Novelty.

FILIPPO: A curiosity, and a novelty, maybe. So, I was involved in a little fashion show, you know showing whether they were sportswear – it was a sportswear riding – um very, a very prestigious little – st – you know, specialty shop in Harrisburg. And I think that was probably the reason why the girls were not as friendly. I don't know why, I didn't do anything to them. You know, I just did my job, I came and went. But they made fun of me being so –naïve.

MOORE: Mm.

FILIPPO: And, um, would come out with outrageous things about them going out with so many men at the same time – just stupid stories Like they were trying to impress me, or shock me, and I would just look at them and think, "Gee, you're sure mixed up, kid." (Laughs) But it did – it did hurt me. Of course. 'Cause I

wondered why would they want to be upsetting me? I –I didn't understand why, I wasn't – I didn't feel I was doing anything to hurt them.

MOORE: Was that the only experience you had like that?

FILIPPO: Yeah. 'Cause after that I just learned to –

MOORE: Speak.

FILIPPO: You know, not only to speak. I mean, I was speaking then, but there were times when I had to run and say, "What's jodphurs?" For instance, somebody'd come in and say, you know, "I want to see jodphurs in a size, whatever, twelve" and I'd go, "Sure!" And run to somebody and say "What's jodphurs?" (Laughs) I didn't know what they were!

MOORE: I didn't either, so we're–

FILIPPO: They're riding britches. Oh! (Laughs)

MOORE: So, what about your religious life? Did you continue to go to church here?

FILIPPO: Um, there was a time – I don't even think we were close to a church – I don't remember that being such a big important part of our life until after the kids came. Somehow I don't – you know, I don't remember any connection. I know we went.

MOORE: Mm-hmm.

FILIPPO: But it wasn't a belonging kind of thing. Like after the kids and the catechism, and the choir and the ushering, and all you know, you become part of

that community, kind of. So we did that. We did the right thing after the kids came! No. (Laughs)

MOORE: Well, describe your life briefly in America [ph] – you had children, or what happened after this initial phase in your life? How did the course of your life go here in the states?

FILIPPO: Oh, well, we just kept trying to better our position, because, you know, the income was not satisfactory to him, he did not receive his same job, he was not making enough money to support us or pay the rent. And, um, I immediately said “I’m going to go out and get a job in th – (phone rings) in those days.” [Tape pauses]

MOORE: Um, you mentioned that you tried to better your life. Name, say some of the milestones in your life since then. What’s happened to you, sort of, you had a family?

FILIPPO: Are you talking about how we progressed from that point to get to be –

MOORE: [interposed] Yeah, to now. To now.

FILIPPO: Oh, to now. Oh, that’s a long time, lady.

MOORE: (Laughs)

FILIPPO: We’re talking, what forty years? (Laughs)

MOORE: But, I mean, if you were to briefly describe –

FILIPPO: Well, we moved from that situation in Jerome, knowing that we had to go back to work, we went to Harrisburg. And moved on from that to Michigan.

MOORE: Where in Michigan.

FILIPPO: Right outside Detroit. Right outside Detroit.

MOORE: North or South?

FILIPPO: Dearborn.

MOORE: Dearborn.

FILIPPO: River Rouge. Allen Park. Pla –That’s where – that’s where Mom and Dad San Filippo had decided to move to. Because with all these boys and work being so scarce, there was the – Sharpos.

MOORE: Sharpels [ph]

FILIPPO: Sharpels Steel or something, and so a lot of ‘em got jobs there. And that’s where, um, Joe was encouraged to go to be able to get permanent – you know more secure work and some benefits – you know the usual thing –

MOORE: Mm-hmm.

FILIPPO: And, I of course, um – oh, we went to live with them, because now they had moved, so they got this big house on Perry Place in Wyandotte, Michigan. And so that’s where we ended up moving to with them. And uh, they could use the help with -- you know – the uh – you know payments on the house, so we had this little – um – this little basement, kind of a bedroom set up. It was nice, it was like our own little – you know little – our own little pad. And we helped – I helped with the chores, but we paid rent. So we were helping each other, that

was great. So when he went to work at Sharpels, I went to work at Sears, which was –

MOORE: Lincoln Park.

FILIPPO: This was in Wyandotte. This was in – this was still Wyandotte – was not our home, our home came – Lincoln Park was when we bought our own home. Ah. My oldest was born in Wyandotte General. Wyandotte General, can you believe that? Anyway, I went to work at Sears. That was then the biggest store in Wyandotte – and the whole store [tape skips] you could play this – store –and the whole store (laughs) you could probably put it in this house, I don't know – [tape skips] small, by today's standards, okay? But it was a complete store, and – uh – course I was a salesman without knowing I was salesman from day one, I guess that's either my personality, or – I don't know, I enjoy people, I'm a people person, so I immediately got a job in display, in advertising, window dressing, I had an absolute ball and learned a lot about the country, a lot about the business, a lot about the language.

MOORE: What year was this?

FILIPPO: Uh, '95 – ay, [not understood] 19 – I'd have to remember – 50 what? See, my kid was born in 54, so this woulda had to be somewhere between 50 – '49, '50, '51. Well, I was seventeen. Does that help? I was all of seventeen. (Laughs) I wasn't even legal!

MOORE: [interposed] It was '47 then

FILIPPO: I wasn't even legal! Was it that? '47 – '48?

MOORE: So it was the '40's and '50's you were there.

FILIPPO: God! Anyway –So.

MOORE: [interposed] So then – then you had –you moved to Lincoln Park at one point?

FILIPPO: Then from that job – I'm tryin' to remember – when he had been at the f – firm – factory – the steel mill long enough – he wasn't that happy, he was very much more a creative person, he was not that happy doing that kind of work, and people were fallin' into lime pits and coming out with no legs and arm, I mean it was horrible, scary. So we – um – I'm trying to remember the connection, I think we went directly from there, and bought our own little house. We found this couple that wanted to move, it was a brand-new subdivision, it just seems like I was always involved with sales and houses – this –this – this darling couple that had just bought this little house that was built on Liberty Street and Lincoln Park right by the edge of that Park. At the very end there was a park.

MOORE: [Not understood]

FILIPPO: I – I – I know that we walked through that to go to school for – for my oldest one that was born there. This was where this kid was born. She was born, outta Liberty, but she went to Wy –

MOORE: [interposed] What school – what school was it?

FILIPPO: Don't remember. Grace is the only – Grace Court is the only thing that comes to mind, and that was Arizona, so, I – I don't know –

MOORE: [interposed] No, [not understood] I know Liberty [not understood] Park. Okay.

FILIPPO: [interposed] So, there was a little – uh – one, two, three from the corner, maybe. We were only the second or third from the corner, and we walked through the park to go out through that school, to get to that school for her to – go to kindergarten. So we were there that long. ‘Cause she was born in ‘54. Went, started kindergarten, that would have had to be ‘59 –

MOORE: Mm-hmm.

FILIPPO: No, ‘58, ‘59. She started school when she was – four. We didn’t have those – as many restrictions then. She was ready. Um –so where was I going this? That we bought our own home, and that this couple was losing –

MOORE: [interposed] [not understood] and it wasn’t Goodell School that she went, was it?

FILIPPO: Yeah, I bet it was. Because Goodell sounds – that sounds – I mean the minute you said it.

MOORE: Yes, Goodell School was at – at Fort and Champaign. Yeah.

FILIPPO: [interposed] Oh, wow. Mall worl– s-s-small – small world.

MOORE: She went to Goodell, it’s no longer there. I went to Goodell, that’s why.

FILIPPO: Was it inside a park? – I mean, did you walk through the park?

MOORE: [interposed] In 1950 – 59, I started at Goodell.

FILIPPO: Wow.

MOORE: So. (Laughs)

FILIPPO: You were born in '54 also?

MOORE: '53.

FILIPPO: Wow. Wow.

MOORE: Okay – so, anyway, so you're in Lincoln Park, and you're – you're –

FILIPPO: [interposed] She was born at Wyandotte General, did I say that?

MOORE: Yeah –

FILIPPO: Yes. So, somehow we got this little house on a land contract, I'd never forget that at – in those days, it was taking up their contract and buy – paying them so much, 'cause they couldn't wait – uh – they wanted to leave, they weren't sure that we could take – we weren't even sure – they – there was no consideration of doing it the way it's done now, to go through the bank and be qualified and get a loan. And all that. We just did it directly – you know got a house to sell, I wanna buy – boom, you know, that's it.

MOORE: Mm-hmm.

FILIPPO: (Laughs) We dropped the contract, and that's the way – they went. And then after so many years, I guess we bought it – we took it over from them. And paid them off. So then it became hours. And then when we moved, to Arizona, we sold it.

MOORE: And when did you move to Arizona?

FILIPPO: Uh – she had to finish kindergarten, or first grade – fir – kindergarten. So '54 – '59. That's right! It was the very end of '59, the very tail-end of '59.

MOORE: You moved to Arizona.

FILIPPO: Moved to Scottsdale, Arizona. Was brand new, you know, subdivision.

The house had just been built, we'd taken a trip to go look at the subdivision that was – um – being built by Hallcraft of all people, and this – uh – was supposed to be the latest thing in opportunity, well the VA and all that, the loans that come about, the VA loans that we could buy with nothing down – and, you know, we had this really great three-bedroom, you know, kinda large, double drive, we had air conditioning put on. Of course, in Arizona, how can you live without air conditioning? So she finally got settled in the school, so that's where we started with the church and the school and all the activities and built that neighborhood, because it was very much built out of all the, um, alfalfa fields and wheat fields, I mean it was a very rural community, and it was just building up. So we were a part of that – wave that came in.

MOORE: [interposed] And what did you do for work down there?

FILIPPO: Uh, what we did for work is that he looked for in – uh – I – I – I failed to mention that in Michigan, he had started to go and was not happy with that – m-mundane type of job, so he'd started to go to school through the – the VA Bill of Rights –uh, Commercial Artist school that he completed, so when we moved, he was able to pursue that, and hired out – some shops, some sign shop (clears throat) that was hiring apprentices and so on, and work for – some outfit in Scottsdale for, you know, a couple – three – four years, I don't even remember how long. Uh, and then decided that we would probably be better off to go in business for ourselves, because this man was looking to retire, and wanted my – you know, my then husband to take over that operation, but it wasn't satisfactory. He was going to do all the work but take none of the profits, and not have any ownership, so we decided to go ahead and start out own. So we did! It was kinda lean, but it was – it was good. Started our own shop.

MOORE: So, then – did – did you have more children – you have one daughter, right?

FILIPPO: No, I've got another one –

MOORE: Huh.

FILIPPO: -- Uh-huh, in '60. And, uh –

MOORE: Her name is --?

FILIPPO: Karen.

MOORE: Karen. And did you have any other – any family tragedies that occurred in the time that you lived in the States here at all? That would be major?

FILIPPO: Oh, slightly few. Um, lost a baby between my first and second child. My, um, husband's father was very, very ill – well, he had cancer, we nursed him – our cousin – also had cancer that we nursed, I'm sorry. Um, my husband had a – a bout with – um – what they thought was cancer because of the family history, and it turned out to be nothing but a – aggravated appendix of some sort, and uh, Thank God. Um, I can't remember besides my father – my father, his father – all this happened in a – in just a very short time. The loss of the baby, losing his dad, losing my dad. His cousin that I just met, you know, again, over there. Um, and I was involved in nursing all these people, and it was just kinda sad that it happened so fast.

MOORE: What about your mother coming here? You didn't mention that.

FILIPPO: (Sighs) Uh. My mother coming here – we had to go through my – you know that man went through – my husband did go through an awful lot of

hardship to be able to – bring that about. I mean we had to – we had to, uh – vouch and – and oh! [not understood] we had to have a certain amount of money and certain income we had to have – just to get a Visa for her, to be coming here, to live. And, um, I guess she thought that we found the money tree, because she would come and go at will, and we'd pay for the trips, and it was a hardship, because instead of paying for my house, or starting my family, I was paying for trips back and forth. This man wasn't – be – able to take care of it all. Um, so she came and went about three times. And the last time she left, I vowed that was gonna be the last time, because I was about six weeks away from giving birth to my first child, and – she felt the need to back and not be here. And not be assisting, or be in present when that child came. So I said, "That's it." I think I paid my dues.

MOORE: Mm.

FILIPPO: I'm done. I got my own family to raise. So, that was it. Um, what else can I tell you?

MOORE: So she stayed in Italy?

FILIPPO: Mm-hmm.

MOORE: Yeah. Um, I – when you look back over you life, have you – do you have – how do you feel about having come to this country?

FILIPPO: Wonderful.

MOORE: You have no regrets.

FILIPPO: (Laughs) Absolutely not. Absolutely not.

MOORE: [interposed] And so, you would do it again if you had the same choice?

FILIPPO: Sure. Sure. I've just taken a big step from Arizona – thirty some years and coming out here to California. So I don't think a person changes – much as we like to change for the better, some things don't change. You know, if you've got a fighting spirit or you're a survivor – that's it. Don't stop dreaming, or you die.

MOORE: [interposed] Do you think – do you think – your life here's been – has been pretty – there have been opportunities for you?

FILIPPO: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Sure. Absolutely.

MOORE: And as you come here to California, did you come alone, are you here alone, or with your family?

FILIPPO: [interposed] I'm here alone. No, I was divorced in s – in late '78.

MOORE: Mm-hmm.

FILIPPO: Um, lived and started my real-estate career in Arizona.

MOORE: Mm-hmm.

FILIPPO: Um, my oldest daughter's still there – owns a cute little place, in Scottsdale. My youngest one was always – uh – pursuing her own type of PR, and – uh, she knew exactly what she – both of my girls knew exactly what they wanted to do since they were little. Uh – my oldest one's a math teacher at the high school where she graduated from, in Scottsdale. And the youngest one is here in Santa Monica – works with a big PR firm in – in – uh – well, I'm not sure if it's LA or Beverly Hills, somewhere downtown. And so I've got – I'm always in a

position where one's gonna be by me and one's away from me. When I was in Arizona, this one had come out here – oh, I'd say – whoops, I'm sorry –um, I'd say it's about ten, eleven years. It's been a while. Yeah. Yeah.

MOORE: [interposed] Oh yeah! So at least you have somebody here.

FILIPPO: Yeah. So we're always going to be close to one and away from the other, but that allows the other two to travel. Which we do. And this – this thing to New York was wonderful. We all three traveled together –

MOORE: To see Ellis Island?

FILIPPO: Yep. They had this idea about getting involved in the restoration, and come to find out all the wonderful things that were coming out of this –you know – this – this – uh, Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island. So, they youngest one that's here started to put this thing together, and once she knew that it was going together, then she told me, "This is what we're planning. This is what we're gonna do. So plan it, you know." Uh – to do this together, and we did. We spent the 4th of July there this last year. (Laughs)

MOORE: Really?

FILIPPO: Yeah. Whoops – I'm sorry I keep doing --

MOORE: Did you speak Italian to your children – that's all right – did you speak Italian to them at all?

FILIPPO: Nobody wanted to have any part of it. My husband didn't want to learn it from his family – this is the strangest thing – and my kids never wanted to learn it from me. Never wanted to – fought me – like, now, "Why didn't you make me learn Italian?" Okay? So now they both have tapes and classes and things, I go,

“Great, when they were ready, they did it.” They didn’t want to do – I wasn’t gonna create – what we were gonna do, fight – make you learn Italian? Ca – you’re not gonna do that.

MOORE: (Laughs) Okay. I like to thank –

FILIPPO: Make me learn it! Hmm?

MOORE: I’d like to thank you on behalf of Ellis Island for participating.

FILIPPO: You’re welcome.

MOORE: And, uh, we’ll send you a tape of this, too. A copy of this.

FILIPPO: [interposed] Oh, my. Whew. (Laughs)

MOORE: So, this is Kate Moore signing off from, uh –

FILIPPO: Fullerton, California. Orange County—(Laughs)

MOORE: [interposed] (Laughs) Fullerton, California! On January 13, 1994.

[END OF INTERVIEW]