

KM-72
JOSEPHINE APPOLONI PETRUCCI
BIRTH DATE: JANUARY 6, 1921
INTERVIEW DATE: JULY 19, 1994
RUNNING TIME: 53:29
INTERVIEWER: KATE MOORE
RECORDING ENGINEER: DR. KRISTA VARANTOLA
INTERVIEW LOCATION: CHARLEROI, PENNSYLVANIA
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: CECELIA MUSSLEMAN, 12/1994
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL SIGRIST, 1/1995

ITALY, 1928
AGE 7
SHIP NAME NOT RECALLED

MOORE: Good evening, this is Kate Moore for the National Park Service and today is the 19th of July, 1994. I'm in the Charleroi area in Pennsylvania at the home of Josephine Petrucci, who came from Italy in 1928 when she was seven and a half years old. Why don't we begin by you giving us your full name and date of birth, please?

PETRUCCI: My name is Josephine Appoloni Petrucci. I was born January the 6th, 1921.

MOORE: How do you spell Appoloni?

PETRUCCI: A-P-P-O-L-O-N-I.

MOORE: And you pronounce your surname "Petrussi"?

PETRUCCI: Right.

MOORE: You're wrong, all right...

MR. PETRUCCI: It's in Italian "Petruchi"...

MOORE: Mm hm, Okay.

MR. PETRUCCI: But we go by "Petruchi"...

MOORE: And where were you born?

PETRUCCI: I was born in a little town, in Dorsino. The big city is Trento, and we're right I guess, a little, I'd say 30 miles north of Trento which is the largest city close to Dorsino.

MOORE: How do you spell Trento and Dorsino?

PETRUCCI: Trento is spelled capital T-R-E-N-T-O
Dorsino is D-O-R-I-S, oh wait, D-O-R-S-I-N-O.

MOORE: Right...

PETRUCCI: That's right.

MOORE: Alright, and how, what kind of town was
Dorsino?

PETRUCCI: It was just a small town. Ah, I really
couldn't tell you how many people lived there but we
had a church. There was a big fountain in the middle
of the square and I re- the schoolhouse.

MOORE: And what was the major industry of that
town?

PETRUCCI: Well, most of the people there traveled to
Germany to work.

MOORE: And how far was the German border?

PETRUCCI: Wasn't too far. See, this Dorsino was actually Austria before World War One which my father fought in. After the war, Italy took this part of Austria and made it Italy.

MOORE: When you say people traveled to work, by what means?

PETRUCCI: They used to go on on a bus and they'd stay all week and come home the weekend.

MOORE: And what were they doing when they were in Germany to work?

PETRUCCI: That I couldn't tell you because I was too little to really...

MOORE: Yeah. And you mentioned a church. Could you describe the church for me?

PETRUCCI: Oh, yes, I, it was a pretty church. It was small and it had beautiful paintings and beautiful statues...

MOORE: Was there a steeple?

PETRUCCI: Yes. And the bell rang every morning, you know, for masses.

MOORE: How many people fit inside, would you say, when they had...

PETRUCCI: Oh, the town would fit inside. In fact I think even some people from the town before Dorsino would walk up to our church because they didn't have a church at the time. They later built one down there but they used to, like, have it like, a community thing, you know.

MOORE: What was your father's name?

PETRUCCI: You want the Italian name?

MOORE: The Italian name, and could you spell it then.

PETRUCCI: Guiseppe, that's G-U-I-S-E-P-P-I-E [sic]. Right? I could write it better.

MOORE: Okay, we'll get it afterwards, that's all right. Giuseppe.

PETRUCCI: All right...

MOORE: And what was his occupation?

PETRUCCI: Now, whenever I, whenever, I knew my father I was three months old so I didn't know him. I don't know what he did for a living in Italy. I know he was in World War One but I don't know what he did afterwards.

MOORE: And what did he do in the United States?

PETRUCCI: He, he came to the States. He was a coal miner and then he, um, the mine shut down and he got a job at Wheeling Pittsburgh Steel in Allenport.

MOORE: Okay, and how would you describe what your father looked like to someone who had never seen him?

PETRUCCI: Well, he was, he wasn't real tall. I guess he was about five feet nine and a half inches. Stocky built, blue eyes, didn't have much hair.

MOORE: What about his personality and temperament?

PETRUCCI: Well, he didn't have much of a personality. (Mr. Petrucci laughs off-mike) I'm sorry to say this but he always looked angry, you know, but he, he would, he never, never touched us. All the whippings or corrections was done by my mother. He never laid a hand on us. All he had to do was look at us though and we knew he meant business. (Mr. Petrucci laughs off-mike)

MOORE: And is there a story about your father that you associate with your childhood? One story that stands out.

PETRUCCI: Well, probably the first time I saw him. We, whenever we left Ellis Island they put us on a train to Pittsburgh and he was at the station. Well, I was hiding behind my mother's skirts all the time because I was scared and every man I saw coming toward us I'd say to her "Is that him?" and she'd say "No." And that went on for a good while and finally he did start towards us. A man came towards us and here she says "Here comes your father now." I, I just hid from him because I, I just, that isn't who I wanted my father to... to look like.

MOORE: (Laughing) What did you want your father to look like?

PETRUCCI: I don't know. I just, that isn't the way I pictured him, I guess, in my mind. So then, she, you know, I but, I was always a little, I always held back. I could never get real close to him. I, everything I, I always went to my mother for everything which probably was wrong but she's all I knew 'til I was seven and a half years old and I just couldn't put anybody else in in her place, you know. Now my sister, she was different because she was born here and she had him all the time so she was closer to my dad than I was. But after Mom died he did come and live with me so he lived here for seventeen and a half years.

MOORE: And what was your mother's name?

PETRUCCI: Costantina.

MOORE: How would you spell that?

PETRUCCI: C-O-S-T-A-N-T-I-A. Was that? No. T-I-N-A.

MOORE: Right. All right, and what was her maiden name?

PETRUCCI: Regotti.

MOORE: How would you spell that? (they laugh)

PETRUCCI: R-E-G-O-T-T-I. I think is how I spelled it.

MOORE: What was her occupation? Did she work ever?

PETRUCCI: No. My mother never worked. I mean she, in Italy we never, we, you know she was bringing me up and she did go out and she had gardens, you know what I mean, she grew crops and she had a couple cows and things like that but she was always around the house.

MOORE: Now, would you describe what your mom looked like.

PETRUCCI: My mom, they tell me I look exactly like my mom.

MOORE: Oh, all right, we'll take a picture of you and include it. How would you describe that?

PETRUCCI: My Mom was a very nice woman, very affectionate, very outgoing. She'd give you the shirt off her back. She'd do anything she could for anybody.

MOORE: And how tall was she about?

PETRUCCI: I guess about five feet four.

MR. PETRUCCI: A little taller than most Italian women...

PETRUCCI: She was about five foot four and a half. She wasn't, she wasn't, she wasn't as tall as Dad.

MR. PETRUCCI: Well, no, but...

MOORE: So, what color eyes did she have?

PETRUCCI: Hers were brown.

MOORE: Brown, And what color hair did she have?

PETRUCCI: Hers was brown.

MOORE: And...

PETRUCCI: And curly. She had curly hair. She had nice hair.

MOORE: What are the, is there a story that you associate with your mother from your childhood?

PETRUCCI: Well, I know that when we were in Italy, her and I, she always took me with her whenever she went to the, to tend to her gardens whether she was hoeing or whatever she was doing and I didn't like that, you know, so I used to always run to my aunt's next door to hide. And she'd come looking for me and that's how I remember my aunt. Her name was Josephine, too. She's the one that had the polio. I used to hide behind her. And I could remem- I could till see her chasing my mother with the crutches. "Leave her alone. We'll watch her." I hated to go out to the, because I didn't have nothing to do out there. I had to sit and watch her. So I didn't like that.

MOORE: And you mentioned your sister, now how much younger is she than you?

PETRUCCI: Nine years.

MOORE: Nine years, and what's her name?

PETRUCCI: Isabelle.

MOORE: Isabelle. And she was born here?

PETRUCCI: Yes.

MOORE: What do you remember of your house in Italy?
How would you describe it?

PETRUCCI: Well, you know, the houses in Dorsino are like attached, like a big row and the walls are really thick. I didn't realize this until I went back to visit but because I couldn't remember as a little girl how how the walls were. I didn't pay any attention to them, but when I went back to visit twenty, twenty-two years ago the first time, why then I really did take notice. About the walls, how thick they were. And uh, there was, we were right next door to my dad's people which I guess was my grandmother and grandfather's house and his three sisters and brothers never had gotten married. They still lived there.

And there was like a little bridge that you walked up and then there was a door and then that was our house right next door to it.

MOORE: What was your house made of?

PETRUCCI: Oh. I would say it, ah, stucco. That's what we'd call stucco, now. It was rough.

MOORE: And how was it heated inside the house?

PETRUCCI: Well, you just had a cooking stove that that's what heated the whole house.

MOORE: And, and what was, the cooking stove was heated with what?

PETRUCCI: Wood.

MOORE: Wood. And you, you, how was it lit, the house?

PETRUCCI: They had, they had lights. I remember the lights hanging down. 'Course after I went back everything was modernized, you know, even my

grandpap's place where my aunts and uncle lived. I'd have never recognized it from when I was a little girl 'til then because everything was different.

MOORE: So your impression is that you had electricity at that time?

PETRUCCI: Yes.

MOORE: All right. What about, Where was your source of water?

PETRUCCI: The fountain right in the middle of town ran constantly and I, I even, you know they used to wash clothes. They had, it's all marble and they had it slanted, you know, and I could see these women washing clothes and my mother did, too. But the water ran constantly. It was real cold.

MOORE: And did you carry water back to the house then?

PETRUCCI: No, I didn't. No.

MOORE: But...

PETRUCCI: I was a little lazy. My mother...

MOORE: And what about toilet facilities, plumbing?

PETRUCCI: Well, they had an outhouse in the middle of town. That's where everybody went. Then, but you had those chambers...

MOORE: Chamber pots.

PETRUCCI: Pots in the house in case you had to go at night and then they'd empty it in the morning.

MOORE: So, um, how did you take a bath when you were a child?

PETRUCCI: In a tub, a round tub.

MOORE: In the house?

PETRUCCI: Yes. In the kitchen where it was warm. That's where the heat was.

MOORE: And what kind of furniture did you have in the house?

PETRUCCI: Well I remember a table and chairs.

MOORE: Were they handmade or store-bought?

PETRUCCI: Well, that I couldn't tell you. They were wooden, I know that. And, of course, I remember the bed. My mother and I shared the bed. There was two bedrooms but we only used the one because her and I slept together. And uh...

MOORE: And, ah, there was a kitchen, living room?

PETRUCCI: No living room.

MOORE: Just the kitchen...

PETRUCCI: And two bedrooms. And there was a, a, well, I guess you'd call it like a barn here but where they kept the cattle but they kept it right in, there was a separate room from the house but that's where you kept your cows.

MOORE: Was it underneath or attached?

PETRUCCI: Attached.

MOORE: So it was attached to the...

PETRUCCI: You could open the door and go into this, where the cows were.

MOORE: From the inside of the house?

PETRUCCI: Yeah.

MOORE: And, um, you mentioned a, there was a garden your mom tended...

PETRUCCI: Yeah, they had, they had...

MOORE: Was that attached to the house?

PETRUCCI: No, she had to walk. I mean none of the gardens are right in Dorsino. Most of them had to walk to their piece of ground that they had given, you know, that they were given to work. Ah, I would say maybe a, a mile from the house.

MOORE: And you mentioned you had cows. Did you have...

PETRUCCI: Two.

MOORE: Two cows? Did you have any other animals at all?

PETRUCCI: No.

MOORE: Chickens?

PETRUCCI: No. No, just two cows.

MOORE: No domestic, like dogs or cats?

PETRUCCI: No.

MOORE: Now, in the gardens that you had out in the fields what did you grow?

PETRUCCI: Beans, potatoes....

MOORE: And these were gardens that you used for what purpose? The produce that came from those gardens, where did that go?

PETRUCCI: Were for yourself.

MOORE: Were they sold also?

PETRUCCI: No, I don't think my mother sold, I don't know whether other people did or not but I know we didn't. She used to grow it for herself, you know, for her and I.

MOORE: Who did the cooking in the family?

PETRUCCI: My mother.

MOORE: Did anyone else live in the house besides you two?

PETRUCCI No, but, my grandmother you know, she used to come and eat with us quite a bit.

MOORE: And what was your favorite food as a child?

PETRUCCI: Polenta. (Mr. Petrucci laughs off-mike)

MOORE: And did you help cook ever?

PETRUCCI: No.

MOORE: Describe the kitchen. How was the kitchen arranged?

PETRUCCI: There was a sink where they, you know, washed the dishes. All I can remember was the stove, the sink and the table and chairs. That's all I can...

MOORE: The stove was, how was the type of stove?

PETRUCCI: It was a square, a wood-burning stove. It had like four hickeys on top, you know, that you picked up and put your pots in. That.

MOORE: And what was, you mentioned mealtime, now, how many meals a day did you eat and how did you organize them in your family?

PETRUCCI: Well, we had breakfast and lunch and, and dinner. We'd call it lunch but they, the main meal over there is at noon or one o'clock. Between twelve and one o'clock, that's when they have their big meal and that's when you usually have a full-course meal, whatever you're going to have. I don't know I, you know, my mother was, my mother always said I was

spoiled because I had more than some people had but that's because she only had one child and everybody else had a half a dozen, you know.

MOORE: And you said your grandmother came to eat with you?

PETRUCCI: Sometimes, yes, and some...

MOORE: And who else? Did anyone else?

PETRUCCI: Well, I had one favorite cousin that used to come. Because she liked, she did, wasn't afraid of the cows and I was and I used to call her to come in to eat with us so she would feed the cows whenever my mother would want me to go in there and throw the hay. I was scared so I would ask her to come up and eat with us and she'd feed the cows for me. She was the same age but she wasn't afraid.

MOORE: Ah ha, and what was her name?

PETRUCCI: Yolanda.

MOORE: Yolanda. And your grandmother, who's mother

was that?

PETRUCCI: My mother's.

MOORE: Your mother's mother. Were you close to anyone besides your mother? Was there another family member you were very close to?

PETRUCCI: I would say I was close to my mother's sister and her husband...

MOORE: Josephine?

PETRUCCI: No. Her, her, my mother's sister's name was Palma and my uncle Rico. Ah, he was like a father to me, I mean he put up with me just like he did with his other kids. He had six of them so one more didn't make any difference to him.

MOORE: What about religious life then, now, were you religious?

PETRUCCI: Well, we went to church...

MOORE: How often did you go?

PETRUCCI: Well, every time there was mass, you went to church.

MOORE: And that was how often?

PETRUCCI: Well, I don't remember from, you know, that time. I know that I, I know I was baptized. I had my Holy Communion and Confirmation before I came over here.

MOORE: What do you remember of your Holy Communion and Confirmation?

PETRUCCI: Well I know it was a big day but that's about all I can say.

MOORE: Did you have special clothes that you wore?

PETRUCCI: Yes.

MOORE: And did you say grace before meals?

PETRUCCI: I think they did at, over home, yes.

MOORE: Were you taught prayers at night?

PETRUCCI: Oh, yes.

MOORE: Do you remember any?

PETRUCCI: Well, I used to know the Our Father in Italian but I've forgotten it.

MOORE: And did you ever experience any religious persecution at all?

PETRUCCI: No.

MOORE: No. The church was how close then?

PETRUCCI: (she laughs) Well, I'd say from here to next door, to my...

MOORE: So you'd say a hundred, a hundred yards

PETRUCCI: Yeah, not any further.

MOORE: And so when you said that they went whenever there was mass, was there mass daily, do you think?

PETRUCCI: Well, I don't think it was because they were

short, you know, I mean, like I said I think they had mass only once a week because some of the other people had to come up to the one church.

MOORE: Right, okay. What was your favorite holiday celebration that you had?

PETRUCCI: Well, the favorite was the Epiphany because that, over there, was bigger than Christmas. That's the day you got gifts and we used to put a bowl out before you went to bed, outside the door, and then the next morning it would be filled like with nuts and candy and fruit. That was your present.

MOORE: And who gave that present to you?

PETRUCCI: Well, I guess my mother did.

MOORE: But who did you think was?

PETRUCCI: Well, I thought it was Sa-, I guess I thought it was Santa Claus but I didn't know what they called him at that time.

MOORE: And what else did you do at Epiphany besides

gifts?

PETRUCCI: Well, there was, there was always a big feast, you know, I mean you got together with your families.

MOORE: And what did you eat, do you remember?

PETRUCCI: No.

MOORE: Was it a religious day at all?

PETRUCCI: Oh yes, you went to church and that was the first thing you did, you went to church, I mean. But it was just a big holiday and I liked weddings.

MOORE: Why did you like weddings? (she laughs)

PETRUCCI: I liked it when they had weddings because I remember all us kids would line up the road from the church. We'd all line up and with our aprons, we'd hold our aprons out and as the bride and groom went by they'd drop candy in them. (Mr. Petrucci laughs off-mike) They would.

MOORE: And how long did weddings, wedding festivities last?

PETRUCCI: Oh, I don't know how long they lasted, all I know was after I got the candy I went home. (everyone laughs)

MOORE: All right now, what about school life. You said you went to school there?

PETRUCCI: I went to school. I went to school and it was nice. I remember, I don't remember the teacher but I remember a couple of the children that were in the same room as I was and I got the pleasure of seeing them when I went back twenty--two years later.

Well, I mean it was twenty-two years for me but I hadn't been home over there for, how many years then?

I had never been back until Isabelle and I was back twenty-two years ago and I came out here... over here in 1928 so I don't know, figure it out. But anyhow, that's, ah, the one boy lived like three doors up from where we did and whenever my aunt told him I was coming he did come down and, of course I didn't recognize him 'cause he was short and fat. He was just a little kid when I saw him last. But anyhow it

was nice seeing him and the schoolhouse was still there.

MOORE: And what was your favorite subject in school? Do you remember that?

PETRUCCI: No, I don't remember.

MOORE: And did you learn any English prior to coming here?

PETRUCCI: No. None.

MOORE: Do you remember any types of games or what you did for entertainment as a child?

PETRUCCI: Oh, we had games but I can't, I can't recall. I know I played but I can't recall what they were called.

MOORE: Now tell us how you came and why you came when you did to the United States. Now, your father, you said, went first...

PETRUCCI: My father came over when I was, well, in

1921 I was three months old when he left and...

MOORE: What was his contact here? How did he get here?

PETRUCCI: His brother...

MOORE: Who lived where?

PETRUCCI: In Charleroi. North Charleroi, really.

MOORE: And what was he doing here?

PETRUCCI My brother, my uncle worked for the government. He worked on the locks. That's where he worked. But he couldn't get my dad a job there but anyhow when my dad came he went into the coal mine because there was a coalmine in Charleroi. That's where he went. Um, can I get, I have to go to the bathroom. (break in tape)

MOORE: So we were talking about how you had actually gotten the contact that your father had here.

PETRUCCI: Well, my dad had his brother here and one by one he had all his brothers come over. He just felt it was better here than it was over there. So anyway my, my dad came and he stayed with my uncle and he had wanted Mom and I to come over sooner but like I said my mother didn't, her mother was still living and she felt that she wanted to help her because her sister had six kids and, and her brother had five and she just felt she was the one that should give to her mother. So anyhow, we stayed 'til Grandma died and then the year after Grandma died then we came over.

MOORE: Do you remember getting ready to come to the United States?

PETRUCCI: Mmhm, but I, I remember getting ready and I remember the day that I left so vividly but I didn't realize how far we were coming. I just didn't realize, you know, but anyhow...

MOORE: Do you remember when your grandmother... Do you remember your grandmother's funeral?

PETRUCCI: Yes.

MOORE: And do you remember your mother then bringing up America after that?

PETRUCCI: Well, I remember my mother went to her, ah, I guess an attorney, it would be. Anyhow, and she told him to go ahead and start the papers and she had papers from here from my dad and so that we could make arrangements to come over. And that's what, that's what happened. And, uh, I remember the day that we were leaving. My dad's youngest brother, John, he had me on his shoulders and he kept saying, he was carrying me on his shoulders to the bus stop, which wasn't very far, but, He kept wanting me to give him a kiss good-bye and I wouldn't give it to him because I said well I, I wasn't going that far. But he just didn't, you know, he'd kiss me instead. But like I said Mom and I left on the bus. We went to Genoa and we took the boat from Genoa to New York.

MOORE: Did they give you a party before you left at all?

PETRUCCI I don't remember. I don't think so...

MOORE: Do you remember leaving your house complex

before the bus?

PETRUCCI: Oh, there was, the whole town was there. I remember that. Even the kids right there wait, waiting with us while we were catching the bus. Even the kids from school were left out of school that day so they could come down and say good-bye.

MOORE: And what did your mother do with the property and the house and the cows?

PETRUCCI: Well, they, well, the cows I think she sold before we left. But the property she held onto it for, oh years, she thought maybe her and dad would go over one day and clean, you know, settle that all up. Well, my dad didn't have any desire to go back and Mom sort of did and she didn't. She wanted to go back one more time and then she didn't know whether she did, she never really said much about going back. Only time she ever said that was when she'd get mad. (she laughs)

MOORE: What would she say?

PETRUCCI: She said "Well, I'm going back to Italy and

I'll die over there!" But she never did. (she laughs)

MOORE: And so they had, they, they...

PETRUCCI: But they had the property, but, in later years she had one niece of hers, my aunt's daughter, that she wrote and gave her power of attorney and she sold the property and the house and one of my, my cousin that used to come and help feed the cows bought the house. She had gotten married and she had written and asked Mom and Dad if they, she, you know, if they'd consider selling her the house. And they talked about it and they said for her to go ahead and sell it, so she took care of all that and she sent them the, the money.

MOORE: And do you remember your mother selling other things at all when you left?

PETRUCCI: No.

MOORE: What did you pack when you, do you remember packing?

PETRUCCI: Yeah, we had a big trunk.

MOORE: What was in that trunk?

PETRUCCI: Oh, she had her copper pots, pans. I have them. And our belongings, all that she wanted to take with her, you know...

MOORE: What was that, like, what type of things would you put in a trunk if you only had a trunk to take?

PETRUCCI: There was more than the one, I can't remember whether there was one or two trunks, I can't remember. I know there was, I think there was two big ones. All our clothes that she wanted, you know, to bring with us...

MOORE: Any family photographs or...

PETRUCCI: Oh, yeah, that, pict- big pictures...

MOORE: And what about any religious articles?

PETRUCCI: Well, she, she had a rosary all the time and, and, of course, like I said she, her prayer book. But most of the stuff, like I said, ah, her copper

cooking things she brought because I have them.

MOORE: And, did those belongings survive the voyage all the way to Pennsylvania.

PETRUCCI: Hm hm, hm hm, no problem.

MOORE: Do you bring anything special with yours, for you?

PETRUCCI: You know, I don't remember. I, I, I remember that when we came and... here and after my Dad picked us up and we came to Charleroi on the, on the train. He took me to Charleroi one day and he bought me a big baby doll. I remember coming through town carrying this baby doll. I do remember that. But that's all I really remember as far as toys is concerned.

MOORE: So you had the two big trunks. How did they get to the bus?

PETRUCCI: Well, I think they were shipped. Ah, they were shipped on, you know, to the boat and then from there, I don't know how got, I don't remember when

they arrived. I know they came because I... In fact, I think we just got rid of one of the trunks whenever, after Mom died. It was all... a big wooden thing. It was really big. And we burned it because we didn't have no room for it. (Mr. and Mrs. Petrucci laugh)

MOORE: And did you take any food with you?

PETRUCCI: Well, ah, I don't know whether she had snacks or not, but all I remember is after we got to Ellis Island, I don't remember even eating there but I'm sure that they fed us something. I, I, you know, we were there a good while. But...

MOORE: Did you take food for the bus trip?

PETRUCCI: But whenever we, we, they put us this, this, interpreter put us on the right train to Pittsburgh. I remember the redcap that goes up and down selling things, you know. My mother kept, she thought, she wanted to buy some food because we were both hungry by this time and everything, every time she bought something it was candy. Because she didn't understand and I didn't understand and nobody was there to tell us what it was so I don't know how many boxes of candy

we ended up with.

MOORE: So that's the food you ate, you ate in the train?

PETRUCCI: Yes, coming to Pittsburgh.

MOORE: Now, you went to Genoa on the bus, you said?

PETRUCCI: Yes.

MOORE: And from Genoa where did, is that where you had...

PETRUCCI: We got the boat.

MOORE: And the boat's name was, do you remember?

PETRUCCI: No. I don't remember.

MOORE: Did you, did you have to sleep in Genoa the night or did you go straight?

PETRUCCI: That I couldn't tell you. I don't remember.

MOORE: Okay, do you remember, what do you remember about the boat?

PETRUCCI: Well, that was fun. Me and, like I said, this friend of my mom and her son was sharing the same cabin with us and, of course, they were friends, you know, and the boy and I must have been around the same age. But him and I used to run down for, every time a bell rang for some kind of food we ran. We never got sick and I remember all that water. I couldn't get over how much water every time I looked out and this one day my mother spotted this big whale and she did get me up to the porthole and I did get to see it. And I just couldn't get over how big it was. I thought maybe it was going to turn the boat over. It was so big, but it didn't.

MOORE: What about accommodations? What class accommodations?

PETRUCCI: Well, I couldn't tell you that.

MOORE: Was it first, second or third class?

PETRUCCI: I don't know.

MOORE: Did you have your own cabin?

PETRUCCI: No, we shared it with this friend of my mother's.

MOORE: Right, so there were...

PETRUCCI: There was four of us in the cabin.

MOORE: Okay, let's take a break to change the tape here for a second.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

MOORE: So you were in a cabin with four people?

PETRUCCI: Hm hm...

MOORE: How big was the cabin would you say?

PETRUCCI: I don't know. It had four bunk beds. I remember the bunk beds because I wanted on top.

MOORE: And did you have fresh linen and...

PETRUCCI: Oh, I, I couldn't tell you. I really couldn't. I don't remember. I don't think I paid any attention. I knew I had a bed to sleep in. That's. That's it.

MOORE: What about the dining room? What do you remember of the dining room?

PETRUCCI: Well, everybody was there eating and, you know, whenever we'd go to dinner, like I said, my mom, never went down too often. But, this little boy and I, we used to go tea, we had tea. You know I didn't like tea for years after that. I, I, I don't think it's because of that but it was years before I would drink warm tea and but yet on that boat I was right there.

MOORE: And how fan-, how fancy or plain or whatever, were the conditions in the dining room?

PETRUCCI: All I can remember were the tables...

MOORE: And they were set with, with regular dishes?

PETRUCCI: Yes.

MOORE: Did they have tablecloths on them?

PETRUCCI: Yes, the white tablecloths.

MOORE: And was there anything else that you had never seen before that you saw on the boat?

PETRUCCI: No, not that I recall.

MOORE: Any foods that you ate that were new?

PETRUCCI: I don't remember that. I remember I ate. My mother said I never missed a meal. (Ms. Moore laughs)

MOORE: And was your mother sick?

PETRUCCI: No, she wasn't sick but her friend didn't feel too good. She was kind of squeamish and I think that's why my mom stayed back in the cabin with her a lot, you know. But I would bring her things to eat, you know, whenever I got through eating. (She laughs)

MOORE: Were there any activities on the boat for you to do?

PETRUCCI: I don't remember that, either.

MOORE: And how long was that voyage?

PETRUCCI: I think a week.

MOORE: And do you remember seeing land or the Statue of Liberty for the first time?

PETRUCCI: I remember people hollering, you know, that we were approaching and, but I don't remember seeing the Statue. I didn't see the Statue 'til years later when our oldest son worked in New York and we went and visited it.

MOORE: So what do you, what's the first thing you remember?

PETRUCCI: Seeing the land. You could see these buildings, you know, which we hadn't seen for so long. All we saw was water. That, that was, that's what I remember. And the buildings.

MOORE: And then what happened? After you saw the buildings...

PETRUCCI: Well, the boat came in and, like I said, and then they all rushed us all off and put us in this big building.

MOORE: Did you go, how did you get from the boat to Ellis Island? Did you have another boat or did you go straight?

PETRUCCI: I think they had, I, they had a dock there and we just walked up there, you know, and, but like there were so many people, you know, and everybody's hanging on to their own family. It was really...

MOORE: Tell us what it was going into Ellis Island then. What do you remember?

PETRUCCI: I remember going into this big room and seeing all these big, long benches. No padding on them. They were hard. And they were dark, it was a dark wood. Must've been mahogany, I guess. Ah, and I remember they weren't very comfortable and you got tired sitting on them, you know, but my mother

wouldn't let me walk around too far because there was a lot of people in there, you know, and everybody was going different places and she didn't want me to get lost, so she was holding on to me

MOORE: And do you remember going, being processed in terms of...

PETRUCCI: I remember them, well, my mother did all that but I remember just that we each were given a physical.

MOORE: And what did you have to do for the physical?

PETRUCCI: I, I don't know what they did. I know that we had to go into this room and the doctor checked us to see that we didn't have any kind of diseases or lice or anything like that, you know.

MOORE: Did you ever have any fear of being sent back?

PETRUCCI: No. I didn't because I think I, I was too little to, to think of those things but I think my mom

was worried because she couldn't get someone, she couldn't get a hold of anyone that could tell her why we were waiting. Nobody was speaking that language until, like I said, we got, finally there was this interpreter that came over. I don't know, after a good while. And then my mother, she explained to my mother that, you know, it took time, that they wanted to be sure they sent everybody in the right direction and this is what they were doing, you see, and that you had to wait your turn.

MOORE: And so you sat on those benches and waited for what?

PETRUCCI: I don't know how long. It was a long time.

MOORE: And what were they going to do that you were waiting for?

PETRUCCI: We were waiting for this lady to put us on the right train to Pittsburgh.

MOORE: How long did you wait? Did you stay overnight on Ellis Island?

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

MOORE: Did they give you any sort of identification on you at all?

PETRUCCI: I can't remember that.

MOORE: What were you wearing, do you remember?

PETRUCCI: A dress. (she laughs) It was long. That's all I remember, the dress and the shoes. I think the shoes, they were the high tops, you know, with the buttons. That kind. And I had a pigtail, a long pigtail.

MOORE: Did you ever hear of or see any people who were rejected?

PETRUCCI: I don't remember that, no. There might have been, you know, but I don't remember.

MOORE: Did the other family leave at the same time you did?

PETRUCCI: No, they left before but they were just

going into New York and I guess that they were among the first to leave.

MOORE: Were there other Italian families there in the same situation?

PETRUCCI: Well, there probably were but I, I don't, my mother knew this is the only two that we, her and her son were the only two that we really visited with because they stayed with us and she knew her.

MOORE: What were the conditions at Ellis Island in terms of cleanliness?

PETRUCCI: Oh, I can't remember that. All I know it was full of people. Wall-to-wall people. I do remember that.

MOORE: And was there any entertainment there?

PETRUCCI: No.

MOORE: Now how, what happened? You were sitting there waiting and what happened then?

PETRUCCI: Well, finally this interpreter came over and my mother told her what, you know, what she wanted. She asked her why we were being held and why we weren't getting on a train to go to Pittsburgh 'cause she says, "My husband is waiting for us." And she said to just to be patient, it's going to come, you know, Well, it did finally. We did get on a train and ate candy all the way (she laughs)...

MOORE: And you ate candy and you get off the train and you don't know who your father is...

PETRUCCI: No, but my mother knew him. She knew him right away but, like I say, I didn't know him although there was pictures of him in the house because I've seen the pictures but it's not the same as putting a, you know, a real live person to that picture. And like I said I kept saying to her, "Is that him?" "No."

MOORE: And what was, what do you think your mother had as expectations for America before she came?

PETRUCCI: Well, I don't know whether my mother really had. I know she was homesick for a while.

MOORE: Here?

PETRUCCI: Well, yes because my aunt, who we were, my aunt, my uncle understood and talked Italian. But my aunt, she was Italian, but they never talked it at home so she didn't, she could understand a little bit but she couldn't talk and I have, she had four children which, I couldn't talk to them, they couldn't talk to me because we didn't understand each other but we got along because they would haul me outside. We played, I remember playing, ah, hide-and-go-seek and they'd just point me in the direction and, you know, and just tell me what to do and I did and then I started school that fall...

MOORE: So, at the beginning how did your mother adjust to life here?

PETRUCCI: Well, it was, I think it was hard for Mom because, like I said, Aunt Mary didn't speak that much Italian and with the men at work, you know, she really didn't have, but she cooked and she cleaned and she washed and she ironed.

MOORE: And where did you live at that time?

PETRUCCI: We lived with them for a good while.

MOORE: Your aunt and

PETRUCCI: ...uncle, uh-huh.

MOORE: And where did they live?

PETRUCCI: In North Charleroi.

MOORE: And do you remember the address?

PETRUCCI: Mmhm... Five...

MR. PETRUCCI: 574 Highland...

PETRUCCI: No, that's where we lived...

MR. PETRUCCI: Your house was 547...

PETRUCCI: Oh, Okay. 574, yeah, Avenue.

MOORE: 574 Highland? Now, what were the conditions of that place that you lived? How big was that house that you lived in?

PETRUCCI: Well, it had seven rooms, I think, in there.

MOORE: And did they have indoor plumbing or outdoor plumbing?

PETRUCCI: No, they had indoor plumbing. Yeah.

MOORE: Did you have running water?

PETRUCCI: MmHm.

MOORE: What lighting did you have?

PETRUCCI: Electric.

MOORE: Electric. How would you compare the house that you went to compared to your house in Italy? Would you say the conditions were...

PETRUCCI: Well, they were better because we lived, it was more improved over here from what it was over there.

MOORE: Were you, what did you think when you first saw the house you were going to live in, do you

remember?

PETRUCCI: No. I was just, I think I was just tired and I just wanted, I was glad I was someplace.

MOORE: And did your mother ever comment on the area, what she thought of being in...

PETRUCCI: I have to go again. (break in tape)

MOORE: Your family, did your family live, what type of neighborhood did you have when you were there?

PETRUCCI: You mean here?

MOORE: Yeah.

PETRUCCI: It was a nice neighborhood, I mean, North Charleroi is a nice place.

MOORE: Was it, what other nationalities were there there?

PETRUCCI: Oh, there was, there was a, all, a mixture. There was a little bit of everything.

MOORE: But was it predominantly Italian?

PETRUCCI: Oh, no, no no no, huh uh. There were a few Italian families but there was all kinds. All kinds.

MOORE: Now, you went to school...

PETRUCCI: MmHm.

MOORE: Did you know any English before you went to school?

PETRUCCI: HmMm.

MOORE: What was that experience like?

PETRUCCI: Well, I'll tell you what, I had a really nice teacher. Well, she lived in (?), too. She lived in North Charleroi and my cousins took me down to introduce me to her before school started. But she was a very nice person. Her name was Anna Bruce. I'll never forget her. And she had a lot of patience and of course I had to start in first grade again, you know, 'cause I didn't, I didn't know how to talk so I had to go to first grade. So, but I did pretty good

that, that year. But my mother, like I said, when I came home from school Mom would want to know what words I learned and she would want to learn them, too, so we didn't really talk that much because she wanted me to talk American, you know, and I didn't, it wasn't that easy to learn but I did learn it. And um it was our first year we lived in North Charleroi and then the, the mine closed down so my dad and mom and I moved to Verona, Pennsylvania to live with my Uncle Tony. That's my dad's brother, too. He wasn't married and he had a big house, so we moved in with him and he got a job at the steel mill there in, in Verona. So that's where he worked and that's where my sister was born. She was born in Verona in Uncle Tony's house.

MOORE: When you first went to school...

PETRUCCI: But I had to, I started to tell you I had to start back in first grade again when I went to Verona because my mother and dad wanted, my mother wanted to send me to Catholic school so they put me in first grade but I skipped a grade after that, you know.

MOORE: So you were only a year behind.

PETRUCCI: Yeah. I was, but still, I was older than most of the kids because I was, you know I was eight when I started, you know, but anyhow, everything worked out fine

MOORE: Did, did other children ever make fun of you for being foreign?

PETRUCCI: No. No.

MOORE: How did your um, mother, you said your mother learned English from you...

PETRUCCI: Well, she, yeah, and, you know, from me talking to her, and like I said, she would pick up a word here and there and she'd be able to go to the store and get what she wanted. You know, she'd learn the words.

MOORE: Was anyone ever, did anyone ever make fun of you mother or give her a hard time for being foreign born?

PETRUCCI: No. No. They were very nice to her. Huh uh. I can't say that anybody ever was. Everybody was

real nice and patient.

MOORE: And what about religious life then here in this country. Did you continue practicing...

PETRUCCI: We went, we went to, you know, we went to the Catholic church and just the same as we always did, you know...

MOORE: And where was your church in town, in Verona?

PETRUCCI: No. it was up on the hill, it was St. Joseph. But we had a little walk, but we went.

MOORE: Did your, you said your father never really wanted to go back...

PETRUCCI: Hm mm...

MOORE: ... at all?

PETRUCCI: Hm mm...

MOORE: You mentioned that when your mother was

angry she would half-heartedly...

PETRUCCI: Yeah, she'd say, "Well, then I'll go back to Italy and that's where I'll stay and die." She will leave everybody.

MOORE: And did she ever get back before she died?

PETRUCCI: No.

MOORE: But you've been back a few times, have you?

PETRUCCI: Three times.

MOORE: Three times?

PETRUCCI: Mm Hm.

MOORE: Do you think that your father and mother in the course of your life were satisfied with their lives here?

PETRUCCI: Mm Hm.

MOORE: Do you think that they thought, how do you

think they thought about their original decision?

PETRUCCI: Well, my dad always said he would never go back. He, he said he had nothing to go back for. He still had family there but he said that didn't matter.

But like I said, Mom every once in a while, I'll tell when she did. One time she said to me, I had, our oldest boy was at college and our youngest one was going to going to go to college and ah, this one, she called me one night and she said to me, "Why don't me and you go over to Italy." She says, "This way why I'll settle everything up." And she says, "It won't cost us any there because the money is there." She says, "All it'll cost is the trip over." I said, "Hey, Mom, I can't do that." I said, "I have one in college and one going to start." And I said, "I can't, I just can't do it." You know, and he only, he was working at the mill but I mean, you know, that's just impossible. She never mentioned it any more and then she died. So my sister and I decided we were going to make a trip for her. But everything had been settled before that. But my aunts and uncle, oh, they were so happy to see us and really know us because they never knew Isabelle. Although my uncles and aunts knew me but I didn't remember them like they

remembered me, you know. But they were really really lovely and we enjoyed our visit and I always, I always wrote to them after I come home and I'd call them.

MOORE: And you speak Italian to them?

PETRUCCI: I speak Italian to them. They don't know one word of English.

MOORE: What about your sister?

PETRUCCI: Now, Isabelle can understand everything but she always answered in American. Even when my mother talked to her in Italian, she'd answer in American. So when I was there, I was the interpreter. They'd ask her questions and she'd tell me the answer and I had to translate it. But you know what, it's been such a long time and after Dad died, you know, towards the last few years of dad's life, ah, he grew, he forgot all about that he was an American. He reverted back to Italian and him and I would sit and talk about Dorsino and Tegodo and San Lorenz, I mean all these little towns, you know. And I could, I could keep up with it. Except for now there's nobody I can talk to so I'm forgetting a lot of it. I have a hard time

when they call me to tell me my, well, I always called my aunt on her birthdays and all the holidays and I still talk to them in Italian but I would have to stop and think real hard before I dialed that number to get myself oriented. But while I was there, the first time me and Isabelle went over it was so funny because I'd go to bed at night and my head was so full I didn't know what language I was in. (she laughs) But it was real nice, it was a nice experience and I'm so happy that I got to meet them and I loved them and they loved us, too. Now they're all gone.

MOORE: Well, describe for me the course of your life in terms of your schooling and then when you got married. Your husband's sitting in front of me so I suppose at one point you made that...

PETRUCCI: (She laughs) Yeah, we did get married. We've been married fifty-three years.

MOORE: Oh. So, um, how did you meet? And when did you meet?

MR. PETRUCCI: We were...

PETRUCCI: Well, weren't too, yeah, we didn't live too far away from each other.

MOORE: And how old were you then?

PETRUCCI: I was going to high school when I met him. Probably fifteen, sixteen, seventeen.

MOORE: And how long did you go together before, how did you know he was going to be your husband?

PETRUCCI: I didn't. It just happened. (they laugh)

MOORE: And where did you, you met at, says he was next door, almost next-door neighbors.

PETRUCCI: Well, I guess we just, we, we lived not too far apart.

MOORE: And what year did you get married, then?

PETRUCCI: 1941.

MR. PETRUCCI: We had our fiftieth three years ago.

MOORE: And you were? And, um, you had children, you mentioned.

PETRUCCI: We have two boys.

MOORE: When were they born?

PETRUCCI: Ah, our oldest son was fifty-two last month and our baby was forty-seven in March.

MOORE: And their names are?

PETRUCCI: Ronald and Jeffrey.

MOORE: And what do they do now?

PETRUCCI: Ah, Jeffrey, he was the head coach at California University of Pennsylvania for twelve years. Then he, he resigned from that. Now he... he is...

MR. PETRUCCI: He helps the athletic director, money raising.

PETRUCCI: He's a money raiser, fundraiser. That's

what he does.

MR. PETRUCCI: Money raiser includes stuff for, it's only nine miles from here, California University is.

MOORE: This is your oldest?

PETRUCCI: No youngest.

MOORE: Youngest son.

PETRUCCI: Our oldest son works at um, he graduated from California University of Pennsylvania also as a teacher and he went to New York and he worked for pharmaceuticals for a while because that's what he wanted to do. Then he got out of that and started teaching there. He taught in New York at a private school somewhere and um, that didn't pan out. He had gotten married and his wife was a stewardess and she decided she didn't want to be married any more. So that was kind of sad and I think it shook him up a lot, so he came home. He came back home and he stayed here and ah, he did a lot of substitute teaching here at Cal-, at Charleroi High School but he couldn't get in steady so he, Volkswagen opened up over in New

Stanton, so he got a job at Volkswagen so he worked over there until they closed up. Now he's working at Western Center. It's a rehabilitation center, ah, he went to school for, he went down to Armoryville for a year and a half and then he went and took some classes and so he, that's what he's at.

MOORE: And what was, what did you do? What was your husband's profession then?

PETRUCCI: He's a, he worked...

MR. PETRUCCI: I worked in the steel mill.

PETRUCCI: ...in the steel mill in Monessen.

MOORE: In, in Mon...

PETRUCCI: Monessen.

MOORE: Right.

PETRUCCI: Pittsburgh ah, Wheeling. Pittsburgh Wheeling Steel.

MOORE: Pittsburgh Wheeling. And you're retired now?

PETRUCCI: Yes. He's done retired.

MR. PETRUCCI: I worked there thirty-six years. I was a crane operator all them years.

MOORE: And um, when you look back now on your life how do you feel about your original decision, your mom's, mother's and father's decision to come here?

PETRUCCI: Oh, I'm glad. I, I always, I always... I was always happy here. I would never, I would, I didn't mind going over to visit but I would never live there with them. Never!

MOORE: Why?

PETRUCCI: Oh, no. We have it too nice.

MOORE: And you think it's better opportunities here for your children?

PETRUCCI: Oh, yes. Definitely.

MOORE: When you think of yourself, what is your identity nationality-wise?

PETRUCCI: American.

MOORE: And do you think of yourself as hyphenated or...

PETRUCCI: Hm mm.

MOORE: You think of yourself as American?

PETRUCCI: I think of myself as American.

MOORE: And do your children, are they, were they interested in learning Italian at all?

PETRUCCI: Well, they, they were when my mother and dad was living, now, they'd pick up a word here and there, you know what I mean. They weren't. Nothing bad but I mean just crazy little sayings, you know. They would ah pick those up from them but they never seemed to be interested in it. Now, all of the sudden they're mad because we didn't talk to them in Italian. That they should have learned it. I said, "Well, why

didn't you say something?" But my granddaughters, all three of them, want to go back. They'd like to go to Italy. They want to drag me [sic] with me. I says, "Hey, honey, I'm too old for that anymore."

MOORE: Well, I'd like to thank you on behalf of Ellis Island for helping us and sharing with us this story...

PETRUCCI: Oh, it was my pleasure.

MOORE: And we'll send you a copy of this as well.

PETRUCCI: Oh, that's nice.

MOORE: So this is Kate Moore on July 19th, 1994 in Charle-, Charleroi area, Pennsylvania signing off for the Ellis Island Oral History Project.