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INTERVIEW OF

JOSEPH AND LYNN LAMBERTA

November 5, 1974

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

GEORGE K. VAPAA, NARRATOR
Vapaa: ....Tuesday ah, morning ah, 10 o'clock in the morning I guess this is, Joe?

J.Lamberta: Yeah, um-hum.

Vapaa: And ah, we're at the home of Joseph Lamberta ah, south of Smyrna, Delaware. Ah, Joe, do you want to give us your complete name and mailing address?

J.Lamberta: Ah, Joe Lamberta, Redford Road, Smyrna, Delaware.

Vapaa: All right, now do you have a middle name?

J.Lamberta: Ah, George. Never use it though.

Vapaa: You never use it.

J.Lamberta: No.

Vapaa: So not very many people know your middle name then?

J.Lamberta: No, I guess not outside the finance people you know. (laughter)

Vapaa: All right. Ah, Now Joe, we'll want--need a few vital statistics on you. Ah, when and where were you born?

J.Lamberta: I was born in ah, Middle Village, Long Island, New York in 1909.

Vapaa: Um-hum. And the exact date?

J.Lamberta: Ah, December 3rd.

Vapaa: All right.

J.Lamberta: 1909.

Vapaa: Un-hun.

J.Lamberta: And ah, that's it. I was born then.

Vapaa: I see. In town or on a farm?

J.Lamberta: Ah, the wh--well, Middle Village is the name of the town.

Vapaa: Oh.
J. Lamberta: Middle Village is the name of the town in--in Middle Village, Long Island, New York, Queens.

Vapaa: Queens, Long Island.

J. Lamberta: Um-hum. Um-hum.

Vapaa: Oh, so you were in--what is that, Nassau County?

J. Lamberta: That would be ah, ah, ah, Nassau County. Right. Um-hum.

Vapaa: Un-hun. All Right.

J. Lamberta: Excuse me--Queens County.

Vapaa: Queens County.

J. Lamberta: Queens County.

Vapaa: Queens County.

J. Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: Nassau County is the next county out.

J. Lamberta: The next county--right. Um-hum.

Vapaa: All right. Now ah, tell us a little bit about your early life. I mean ah, what your father did, where he was born, and so forth.

J. Lamberta: Well, my father was born in Sicily.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: And my mother was too. And they came over here from ah, Sicily. And they--they originally were in the ah, cabinet business making these here ah, cabinets and stuff like that. Then he--then he went into the building business and was a building contractor for a good many years. And in 1918 during the war he was going along pretty good until all of a sudden his help started to go on strike. And he give up the building and bought himself a
farm on Hamstead, Long Island.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J.Lamberta: And ah,--

Vapaa: And Hamstead, Long Island is how far out? Do you know?

J.Lamberta: That's about ah, oh, I'd say about 35 m--miles out from New York.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J.Lamberta: Where we lived in Queens.

Vapaa: In Queens.

J.Lamberta: And ah, they farmed there for a good many years. And of course, then he sold out there--I forgot what year it was he sold out--and moved out to ah, Commack, Long Island.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J.Lamberta: And he started farming out there ah, which was a wilderness in them days.

Vapaa: Were you born about that time?

J.Lamberta: No, I was born before that. I was born--

Vapaa: Before that.

J.Lamberta: ...in 1909. This was--this was late in the '20's when he moved out on Long Island.

Vapaa: I see. Um-hum.

J.Lamberta: So, do you know exactly where he was born in Sicily?

J.Lamberta: No, I don't, not really.

Vapaa: Well, you've been to Italy.

J.Lamberta: I've been to Italy. But we ah,--the time we went to Italy was ah--I believe it was in 1967 when they had that big ss--the flood that--storm in Europe.
Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: And we got there then. And we had a ticket bought to see Sicily—see—the area. It was somewhere around Palermo in that area there. And ah, we couldn't go on account of the storm.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: So we turned around and decided to go the other way. We went to Rome and from Rome to Nice, France.

Vapaa: Long as we're talking a little bit about your trip to Italy, Joe, ah, your wife didn't want to fly as I remember.

J. Lamberta: No, she didn't want to fly. We went by boat. We took that ah, the Italian Line to RafaelQ. And we had a hell of a time on that boat. It was real nice.

Vapaa: Un-hun.

J. Lamberta: And we dr--and we got there--

Vapaa: Was it a group?


Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: We went alone. And ah, we enjoyed it. And of course, we landed in Naples. And from Naples where we went to Capri and from Capri went to the Amalfi Drive. And of course, there we picked up a ticket, was going to go to Sicily. And we met these people had just come back from there. And ah, they ah, said not to go because of--they had no bathroom facilities and you know, like that over there. So, you better get off the other way. So we did.

Vapaa: How about drinking water in--

J. Lamberta: Ah, we ah, didn't--never tasted any water to amount to--(laughter)
Ah, long as—we were drinking a little bit of wine and Coca-Cola.

Vapaa: Coca-Cola.

J. Lamberta: Un-hun.

Vapaa: Were they really Coca-Colas?

J. Lamberta: Yeah. They—they—they were Coke.

Vapaa: Regular Coke.


Vapaa: Oh, my.

J. Lamberta: Yeah. And other that we had a wonderful time over there. We went to the Vatican where they picked my pocket.

Vapaa: Yes.

J. Lamberta: And ah—(laughter) so ah—(laughter) I guess the Pope had the boys out after me or something. (laughter) And—

Vapaa: Wh--go ahead.

J. Lamberta: Yeah. And of course, we stayed there 5 days. We stayed in Rome 6 days. And from Rome we took off and went to ah, Nice, France. From Nice we went to Barcelona. And from Barcelona to Madrid, Madrid to ah, Lisbon. We spent 3 or 4 days in Lisbon and then we flew back home.

Vapaa: And flew back.

J. Lamberta: Um-hum. She decided to fly. She was—she was so anxious to get home that it (voice overlap, unintelligible)

Vapaa: Oh. She didn't care whether—

J. Lamberta: She didn't care (laughter) She—
Vapaa: She wouldn't--she wouldn't fly out?
J.Lamberta: She wouldn't fly. No, she wouldn't fly ah, (murmur, unintelligible)
Vapaa: Well, I distinctly remember, Joe, you telling me that ah, she
didn't want to fly and that's the reason you went by boat.
J.Lamberta: That's why--
Vapaa: (voice overlap, unintelligible) ...in the first place.
J.Lamberta: Right. And then, of course, on the way back she was so anxious
to get home she did--all of a sudden decided she wanted to go
home. It was one of those quickie deals, you know.
Vapaa: How long was your whole trip?
J.Lamberta: About 35 days--34 or 35 days. Um-hum.
Vapaa: Have you been back since?
J.Lamberta: No.
Vapaa: Do you think you'll go back?
J.Lamberta: No. I don't really care to go back. I mean ah, the ah--it was
nice. I--we enjoyed it very much. I just ah--we have an idea
what it's all about--what it's like. I--I--maybe we'd like to
go back. But we have a lot to see right over in this country
here.
Vapaa: Un-hun.
J.Lamberta: Got a lot to see. And ah--but ah--let's put it this way. I
wouldn't mind going back. But I'm not that anxious to go back.
Really.
Vapaa: Um-hum. And you still don't speak Italian?
J.Lamberta: No.
Vapaa: Did you ever?
J. Lamberta: No. Never did. We ah--I can understand it. And we ah--as I say the cuss words. (laugh)

Vapaa: You're about like me in Finnish.

J. Lamberta: (laugh) Yeah.

Vapaa: Joe, my parents speak Finnish all the time. And--

J. Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: ...ah, I can tell you what they're saying. But I can't tell you exactly like--what they're talking about, but I can't tell you exactly what they're saying.

J. Lamberta: Right. I'm the same way. Um-hum. (laugh)

Vapaa: And ah, I think this is something that my parents ah, deliberately avoided.

J. Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: Having me learn to speak Finnish when I was a child. And I think that was a mistake.

J. Lamberta: Well, I was--well, in our family there were 6 boys and 6 girls we were--

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: ...we were 6 boys and 6 girls. And the first 6 can speak Italian. And the last 6 no--none of us can speak it.

Vapaa: Umm.

J. Lamberta: I don't know why.

Vapaa: Well, which number are you?

J. Lamberta: I'm ah, humm, let's see--1, 2, 3, 4, 5, I'm number 6 or 7 or 6--I'm 6 yeah.

Vapaa: Six.
J. Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: Un-hun. And your sisters are they older or younger--?

J. Lamberta: Well, I have a, yes--I have ah, 3 sisters older than me--4 sisters older.

Vapaa: And the younger?

J. Lamberta: Yeah. There's 4 sisters older. I have 1 older brother who passed away about 2 years ago--2 years ago. He died at 71. And I--we just lost my youngest brother here recently due to cancer.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: And buried him about--I'd say 2 months ago.

Vapaa: Um-hum. Um-hum. Well, Joe, let's get back to the potato business on Long Island. Because ah, because how did you do it in those days.

J. Lamberta: Well, we--I worked with my father on the farm all--back years ago. I never did like it.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: And ah, I'd just cuss farms. I--swore I'd never be--I'd never want to be a farmer. And ah, so of course, what I was doing there wh--ah, other than farming we used to buy and sell.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: Potatoes the--eh, and in Long Island.

Vapaa: Yeah. Did you like that part of it?

J. Lamberta: Yeah, I did like that part of it--buying and selling. And we was doing a lot of exporting at the time.

Vapaa: Because you've been doing this since you've been down here haven't you?
J.Lamberta: Yes. I've done that out there. We did that--we did that for a good many years on the Island there too.

Vapaa: Un-hun. So you had a brokers license on Long Island to buy and sell?


Vapaa: As well as to ah--to ah, grow?


Vapaa: Oh. Oh. I see.

J.Lamberta: And in fact ah, what got me to Delaware here was ah, Ed Brown had bought over here--

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J.Lamberta: And ah--

Vapaa: Right across the road wasn't it?

J.Lamberta: Right across the road from where I'm living now. Um-hum. And ah, ah, he--he got a hold of me--the boy I used to buy some of his potatoes on the Island--to come to--come down and ah, and ah, buy a few potatoes from him.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J.Lamberta: So ah, sure enough I did. Took a ride down here one--just before Long Island season started. And I started buying some potatoes from him and around the area. This was in 1949. And I was buying from the Zimmermans and ah, from ah, Joe Wild. Do you remember him (voice overlap, unintelligible)

Vapaa: Oh, yeah.

J.Lamberta: ...Joe Wild and who else--Bergolds were here--wasn't the Bergolds, but different ones.
Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: And I had hooked up with Tony Carpenter.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: And of course, he had—he moved quite a bit more volume that I

Vapaa: I see.

J. Lamberta: And ah--

Vapaa: And where were you doing this buying, Joe? Right where you still

J. Lamberta: No, no, no, no. I ah, (laugh)—we had ah, no place to stay. And we stayed at the old Richardson Hotel, if you remember?

Vapaa: Oh, yes. How well I remember.

J. Lamberta: Yeah. (laughter) We had a room there. And it was one hell of a mess.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: But ah, we stayed there. And ah, we were working out of there.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: And I'd go back the fourth week end to New York and to my buy (?). Come Monday ah, buy (?). And we bought some in Snow Hill, Maryland. We used to go in.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: And ah, ah, down here and buy from Ed Brown and had—. We kept jumping the price each day. And I kidded Ed Brown one day. I says, "Brown, I'm going to buy a farm. Your farm has made too damn much money." (laughter) And ah—and no more said that this Mr. Kemp drove in the yard over there. Says, "Mr. Brown, if you know anybody wants to buy this farm over here, it's for sale."

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: So E—Ed Brown finally kidded me into buying the thing. Otherwise
I would have—probably never have been here wasn't for Ed Brown.

Vapaa: That's this particular farm?

J. Lamberta: This particular farm I'm on now.

Vapaa: And how big is this particular farm, Joe?

J. Lamberta: 112 acres.

Vapaa: Un-hun.

J. Lamberta: And ah, he kidded me into buying it. And I said, "Damn it, I will." I had--didn't have the price of buying it at the time. But I borrowed a few dollars and bought it.

Vapaa: Un-hun.

J. Lamberta: And ah, well--

Vapaa: Well ah, we got a lot of time here, but I'm trying to think of some questions, Joe. I've got some notes here that ah, I want to use. Ah, somewhere along the way you got married.

J. Lamberta: Yes, Un-hum.

Vapaa: And when and where was this?

J. Lamberta: Well, this was—I don't remember the date. I'm glad she's not here. (laughter) Ah, we were married ah, well, it was ah, 20 ah, (murmuring, unintelligible)

Vapaa: Um-hum. (laughter)

J. Lamberta: Ah yes. Anyhow, ah, quite a while ago we got married. It was in New York. And ah--

Vapaa: New York City?


Vapaa: Um-hum.
J.Lamberta: And we had ah--. Come down here. And of course, ah, when we come down here--. We--we didn't want to come down to the farm after we had bought there. She cried 7 days a week to get back to New York. She didn't want to be part of Delaware. She couldn't see any future in Delaware. 'Cause where we--we used to go to some of these shows in New York. And of course ah--

Vapaa: She looks like a show girl. (voice overlap, unintelligible)

J.Lamberta: (laughter) Still does. (laugh)

Vapaa: Yeah, still does.

J.Lamberta: And ah--

Vapaa: Was she?

J.Lamberta: No, she never was. No.

Vapaa: 'Cause I used to go to--I remember when I used to go to New York fairly well. I was born there myself.

J.Lamberta: Oh, is that right? Um-hum.

Vapaa: And I went to high school in Wilmington High School.

J.Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: And one of our English teachers was Miss ah, Ward. Now she was about the size of your wife.

J.Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: Your wife's a lot prettier. And ah, very nice. And she took us up--. I--I know I was ah, then interested in the Scholastic Press Association up at Columbia University.

J.Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: And ah, she took a bunch of us up to New York City. And ah, I'll
never forget it. Because it was my first chance really to get a ride on the subway.

J. Lamberta: Is that right? Um-hum.

Vapaa: And to ah, go up on Times Square. I remember some of the first plays I saw.

J. Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: Of Thee I Sing was one of them. Did you see that?

J. Lamberta: No.

Vapaa: Um-hum. But I used to like the musicals. And ah--

J. Lamberta: Yeah, that's what we like--musicals. We really like musicals.

Vapaa: And ah, of course, they were quite a bit cheaper in those days. This was depression days now. This was back in the late 20's and early 30's.

J. Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: And ah, we saw these ah--several shows. And of course, the primary purpose of going up to New York was to go to this ah, Columbia Scholastic Press Association meeting.

J. Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: And ah, this was the high school students you see. And they held the meetings in the big hotels downtown--the Roosevelt Hotel on 42nd Street. And ah, oh, a number of others as well as of course, out at Columbia itself way up on--in--I guess you'd call that Harlem?

J. Lamberta: Harlem, yeah, right. Um-hum. When you get past 125th Street it's called Harlem.
Vapaa: Yes, well let's see, it's 116th Street as I remember where Columbia was.

J. Lamberta: Yeah. That's--it's right--just right in the area.

Vapaa: That's right in the general area, yes.

J. Lamberta: Yeah. Um-hum.

Vapaa: And I was real impress, of course, with Columbia. And ah, as I say, I too have a liking for New York. I haven't been there since my stroke. But ah, just because it's ah--I'm supposed to stay out of large crowds. And so I don't ah, pay too much attention to it. You know, last week for example I went out to Tucson, Arizona to that convention.

J. Lamberta: Yeah, you told me.

Vapaa: County Agents. And ah, we ah, had almost 2,000 people there.

J. Lamberta: Um-hum. Is that right?

Vapaa: Including Barry Goldwater.

J. Lamberta: Was he there?

Vapaa: He was there. He was on the program.

J. Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: We knew he was on the program. And funny thing, he gave a talk--one of the best talks I've ever heard given more or less off the cuff so to speak. And he was talking about need for water in the West.

J. Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: And ah, in this talk he ah--he said, "First of all, I don't claim to be a farmer." He says, ah, "Most politicians like to claim that they were born in a log cabin and raised on a farm you know."
He says, "But I don't." And ah, he says, ah, "I can't claim to be one of you." But ah, he says, "I do appreciate the need for water that we have here in Arizona and particularly in the growth that we're having right at the present time you know, and the development of housing and so forth." And they're setting up priorities and planning and so forth in Arizona. And he was working ah, campaigning as a Senator to ah, run again. And ah, he mentioned that in kind of an off hand manner. And then after he finished his talk why you wouldn't have known it was a political speech the way he gave it.

Somebody asked him the question, "Mr. Goldwater, in view of the fact that you ran for President once, would you want to do it again?"

He says, "Why, no." He says, "I had my chance and I muffed it."

And he says ah, "As a Vice President you are told what to say and as a Senator I can say what I please." So he says, "I'll be satisfied to run for Senator and represent Arizona."

J.Lamberta: He's a good man. I liked him.

Vapaa: I think so.

J.Lamberta: Yeah. I--I think--I'd like to see him go for the Vice President to tell you the truth.

Vapaa: Well, I don't think he'll be--

J.Lamberta: (voice overlap, unintelligible) ...I say I'd like to see him (voice overlap, unintelligible) ...rather than Rockefeller.

Vapaa: Yes. Very impressive.
J. Lamberta: I like him very much.

Vapaa: Yes. And I'm a registered Decline, Joe.

J. Lamberta: So—(voice overlap, unintelligible)

Vapaa: I don't know what you are.

J. Lamberta: I'm with you.

Vapaa: Oh, you are?

J. Lamberta: Um-hum. (laugh)

Vapaa: People say we're foolish not to register one way or another, but—

J. Lamberta: Well, I like to keep myself open to be very, very frank when I was within (?). And I like to go for the man regardless.

Vapaa: Right.

J. Lamberta: And I am sorry to say that ah, a lot of (unintelligible) register as a Democrat or a Republican. But I'm sorry I just ah, ah— that's the way I feel.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: I'm going for the man, right? I can't help—

Vapaa: Do you feel that this helps or hurts you in your business, Joe?

J. Lamberta: I don't where it has anything to do with it.

Vapaa: Un-hun.

J. Lamberta: (voice so low, unintelligible)

Vapaa: Un-hun.

J. Lamberta: (voice so low, unintelligible)

Vapaa: Un-hun. Well, now you said you didn't like potato farming in Long Island. Why didn't you like it?

J. Lamberta: Well, I didn't like being tied down on the farm working long hours
you know. I was chipper then and wanted to do some hopping around. (laugh) And Pop used to keep on our tails. And you know those old timers, well th--th--they--they--we didn't have the freedom you have these days you know.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J.Lamberta: Them days we worked or else. And ah, you didn't eat or you get your tails knocked off you know.

Vapaa: Un-hun.

J.Lamberta: And ah, he was one of the old timers. They were very, very strict Italian. And ah, I know I went out with a girl one time. They caught me. And I said, "Boy, pshew!" (laughter) I received hell. Wasn't doing nothing--just sitting there talking. (laughter) Boy, things have changed since my day you know.

Vapaa: Oh, yes.

J.Lamberta: And ah, I didn't like being tied down on the farm. I thought, you know, I seen other people out having a good time and ah, we had to work. But ah, I'll tell you one thing. I--today I appreciate what we had to do. I realize--

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J.Lamberta: ...what it is to do a days work is.

Vapaa: To do a days work. Yeah. Now, Joe, I don't think there are too many people that know that you have a bad foot..

J.Lamberta: Yeah. I have an artificial right leg. Um-hum.

Vapaa: Bad leg. Artificial leg.
J. Lamberta: Um-hum. Um-hum.

Vapaa: Right. What happened?

J. Lamberta: Well, we ah--I used to at one time race motorcycles. And I give it up because they told me I'm going to get killed, and this and that and everything else. So I give it up and play--started to play baseball.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: And we played baseball. And I broke my leg playing baseball. And the ah, took me to the Huntington Hospital, Huntington, Long Island. And what they did, they put the leg in a tight cast. It was a plain break--just a plain--it was a clean break. It was no compound fracture--fracture. And their--they ah, had ah, ah, the thing in a tight cast and the leg swelled up inside the cast and--and just must have (unintelligible) the foot I guess.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: Circulation wise.

Vapaa: And they had to take it off.

J. Lamberta: As a matter of fact, they didn't do it right away. And then after that we had ah, the--the leg wouldn't knit and they took a bone out of one leg and grafted the other. We saved a leg, but still the circulation wasn't there. So it was a matter of time that had to have--had the thing amputated about 4 inches below the knee.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: And ah, that was it.
Vapaa: And ah, the way you walk now, Joe, you don't use a cane or anything like--
J.Lamberta: Oh, no.
Vapaa: ...this. You don't list. You don't do anything that--
J.Lamberta: No. We go to dances and I hold (unintelligible) hand. (laugh) I play golf and--
Vapaa: Yeah. When did you start to play golf?
J.Lamberta: Ah, when they opened Garrisons. Never did--never did play a day until they opened Garrisons Lake over here. And I ah, didn't play then of course. My wife is the one talked me into it. She started ah, you oughta go out and try, go out and try. I said, "I feel stupid hitting a damn white ball (laugh) and going after it and hitting it again." You know. And we finally got into it. And we--we're really enjoying it now.
Vapaa: Oh. Do you ride or walk?
J.Lamberta: I ride most of the time. I walk about 6 holes without a bit of trouble--6 to--. I could walk 9 holes. But I--afraid a little of irritation and stuff like that. So I'd rather--. I ah, have a little deal with 'em over here. They give me a little break on the cart. And I ride most of the times.
Vapaa: Um-hum.
J.Lamberta: 90--95% of the time I--
Vapaa: Yes. Well ah, I know ah, at the time you came here why ah, Charley Ewing, who owns the Garrisons Lake Country Club I guess, was still farming that ground.
Vapaa: Do you know how he happened to gr--get into it?

J.Lamberta: Well, I guess he wasn't very successful in farming the way he was operating. He just got this brainstorm of the golf course. I don't know how he got into it. But I think it was one of the things. (laugh) I think it is healthy air. We really--we're really enjoying it.

Vapaa: Well, the story I heard, Joe, and I think this is probably right. 'Cause I was down there and I've seen it. Ah, Charley used to go to Florida every winter.


Vapaa: And he would fly down in his airplane.

J.Lamberta: Right. Um-hum.

Vapaa: And he'd manage the farm--2 men he'd leave--2 men up here on the farm--

J.Lamberta: Right.

Vapaa: ...to run the farm--one to milk the cows and to take care of the herd--

J.Lamberta: That's true.

Vapaa: ...and the other man would take care of the machinery.

J.Lamberta: Right. Um-hum.

Vapaa: And ah, these ah--and then he would when he had any problems or the men had any problems he'd get on the telephone and he'd talk to 'em and tell 'em what to do and straighten 'em out.

J.Lamberta: That's right. Um-hum.

Vapaa: And that's the way he managed. And we had that herd on official
test at the time. And he was doing very well. 'Cause that man he had you know ah, only had one good arm.

J.Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: And he milked 34 cows with one hand using a milking machine of course.

J.Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: And ah, I don't know, I thought Charley did a better job with farming than most people gave him credit for.

J.Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: But he got interested in golf in Florida. That's what he went for.

J.Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: And he also had a boat in Florida.

J.Lamberta: He did. He has a boat there. And I--I visit with him at Naples one time there.

Vapaa: Um-hum. Well, back in 1961 I didn't know--you weren't with us--. But ah, I took a bunch of farmers down to Florida. And we spent a whole week touring the Dade County--that's the Miami area--

J.Lamberta: Right. Um-hum. I know where it is.

Vapaa: ...and north of there, Belle Glade, and back to West Palm Beach area. And ah, in this week we after--at the end of the week we decided to go out to see Charley. So we took--we had ren--we had some cars there that we just drove across the ah, peninsula to ah, to Naples.

J.Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: And ah, Charley--
J.Lamberta: Tammmi Trail wasn't it?

Vapaa: Tammmi Trail? Yeah. And ah, (cough) excuse me. I've got a cold. And ah, Charley ah, took us in tow and took us out on his boat and we went fishing. Well, they had the red tide or something like this--

J.Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: ...that killed all the fish. We didn't catch any fish, but we had a good boat ride. (laughter) And ah, Charley really entertained us well.

J.Lamberta: Um-hum. He was quite a guy. I like Charley.

Vapaa: Oh, yes.

J.Lamberta: He was noisy, but he's a lot of fun. (laughter)

Vapaa: Well, he is nice. He--but ah--as you say, he is a lot of fun.

J.Lamberta: Yeah. We get a kick out of him when we're out on the golf course there and all of a sudden you hear Charley just laughing and giggling and hollering all over the place. And hi, Joe. (laugh)

Vapaa: Now he's sold his airplane.

J.Lamberta: Yeah he--

Vapaa: Do you know why?

J.Lamberta: I ah--I don't know why he did. He--he sold it--he traded the other one in for a twin job you know. And I think it was too damn expensive to run or something like that. So he--he did ah, get rid of the twin. Ye--I--I think she needed a lot of repairs on it.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J.Lamberta: He bought it and thought it was in better shape than what it was.
Vapaa: Well, I know that he used to buy these Beechcraft airplanes and--
J. Lamberta: Right. Um-hum.
Vapaa: ...they're like the Cadillac of small airplanes.
J. Lamberta: Right. Um-hum. UM-hum.
Vapaa: And ah, he wasn't--he's not satisfied to drive anything but a good--
good plane.
J. Lamberta: Yeah. Right. And ah, he was talking about a jet. I don't know
whether he's going to get it or not. (Vapaa coughs) He's been
talking about one, but then he's--. The last I talked to him
he's talking about helicopters.
Vapaa: Oh.
J. Lamberta: Now, whether he's going to get one or not, I don't--
Vapaa: Why I don't think he'd fly a helicopter to Florida.
J. Lamberta: No. No, he wouldn't. Just use it to--to go to one--
Vapaa: But he still goes to Florida.
J. Lamberta: He does. Um-hum.
Vapaa: But instead of ah--he used to have a home down there--
J. Lamberta: Um-hum.
Vapaa: ...in Naples.
J. Lamberta: Well, he had a home in Naples then he had one in ah--in ah,
Jekyl Island. Not Jekyl Island. In ah--what's that island
over there?
Vapaa: I have no idea.
J. Lamberta: (murmer)
Vapaa: It's over on the west coast anyway.
J. Lamberta: Yeah. Right. Un-hun. And he's--
Vapaa: Near Naples.
J. Lamberta: Yeah. He--he--just the other side of Naples.
Vapaa: Um-hum.
J. Lamberta: And ah, and he sold that too I understand.
Vapaa: And he bought a trailer.
J. Lamberta: No, it's not a trailer. No. A motor home.
Vapaa: Motor home.
J. Lamberta: Um-hum.
Vapaa: And ah, he uses that in the wintertime?
J. Lamberta: Um-hum.
Vapaa: He and his wife.
J. Lamberta: Um-hum.
Vapaa: And ah, spends the winter down there still. I guess--has he
gone yet.
J. Lamberta: No, he hasn't gone yet. I talked to him the other day. But they--
I don't think he's going this year. He and his motor home--.
He's traveled all over the United States with it. Even in to
California and ah, and ah, and ah, Canada and around with it.
And he--he really enjoyed it. But he said he got tired of it.
He said that after a while it started to close in on him, He--
(laughter) he thought he had enough of that he said.
Vapaa: That's what they tell me, Joe, about most people who have these
ah, motor homes--that they do get tired of them after a bit.
They are fine for the first little bit.
J. Lamberta: Yeah. Right. That's what he told me. He says he had enough of that.
He says that's why he just closed down--in on him and he didn't--

Vapaa: Well, we're getting away from the potato business and I don't want to do that, Joe.

J.Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: Ah, now you were buying and selling potatoes up in Long Island and down here.

J.Lamberta: Yes, I was buying in Long Island until--until--until I--as I said until I talked to Ed Brown. He asked me to come down to buy a few from them ah--'cause he was new in the area. Ah, Ed Brown moved down here in 1949. It was his first year.

Vapaa: And your first year was when?

J.Lamberta: '50. I moved--moved down in--. I bought in '49 when he kidded me. And then I moved down in March of 1950.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J.Lamberta: Moved down here. And ah, ah, ah, as I said, it was the best move--move I--I've ever made when I did it. And I'd like to thank Ed Brown for he's the one who kidded me into it. I--(laugh)

Vapaa: Now, the house that you moved into is still standing.

J.Lamberta: Oh, it's still there. I have my men living in there. I have the colored men living in there now.

Vapaa: Oh.

J.Lamberta: Um-hum. Um-hum. It was--around a 100 years old now I guess. When I lived in it--

Vapaa: Yes. And you had your office building right across the lane didn't you?
J.Lamberta: Right across the lane. Yes. A little yellow building we fixed up into an office. And ah, we did pretty well over there. It was all right. But in the meantime I was able to buy this place on the highway here. And I bought this place and it makes it a little more convenient for it's on the highway for trucks, you know.

Vapaa: You say the place on the highway--you're talking about Brenford?


Vapaa: That's the Brenford intersection I guess you call it don't you?

J.Lamberta: Over here?

Vapaa: Yeah.

J.Lamberta: Is it? Oh, yeah. Well, I--the--the--(Laugh) they changed the name of Brenford Road the other side. They turned around and had it through the Levy Court or something. They called it Big Oaks Road or something.

Vapaa: Oh. Is that right.

J.Lamberta: And I had raised--they tried to change this and I raised the devil with them over there. And I--this was Brenford Road on my ah--Paper (?) orders was made out in Brenford Road. And we lived on Brenford Road. And I lived in Brenford. And I'll be damned if I want this thing changed. So they left this side here Brenford. The other side's called ah, (voice drops to murmur, unintelligible)

Vapaa: Um-hum. Well ah, Now, let's see--. Well ah, you started in the potato business down here, Joe. Ah, did you grow all the land in potatoes?
J. Lamberta: Well George, I'm down here, George. I ha--happened to be--we had been off the farm. Because when I was on the farm with my father it was the horse days. We had no--we had just one ah, ah, 10-20 International tractor what we had on the farm. The rest was horses. We come down here, started with tractors over here. And I didn't know more about farming over here than you know about flying 2 airplanes at one time.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: And I had all my truck drivers come down here with me. And we planted 100 acres in--little over 100 acres in potatoes. And ah--

Vapaa: But you were primarily interested in buying and selling?

J. Lamberta: Buying and selling. Yes. That was--that was my--that was my first love. Still is. (laughter)

Vapaa: You know, Joe, I've never seen you on a tractor.

J. Lamberta: Oh, yeah. I used to run--. Damn right I run 'em. I run 'em day and night there. When we had to go, we'd go. Yes, sir.

Vapaa: Well I--you can say that again. 'Cause I think of all the farmers in Delaware that when they work they're potato farmers really do. I can--still think--of course, we except at Middletown (?).

J. Lamberta: Right. Um-hum.

Vapaa: You've been there at planting time. And I went up there one time that I put some ah--I even forget the material you put on the seed potatoes piece. But any rate--

J. Lamberta: Captan was--?
Vapaa: No, it wasn't Captan (?) Not getam (?) either. Doesn't make any difference what it is.

J.Lamberta: (murmuring, unintelligible)

Vapaa: But ah, whatever it was I was trying to keep up with him filling that into fertilizer boxes. And he was putting fertilizer and seed in the thing.

J.Lamberta: Thimet -- was it?

Vapaa: Thimet. Yes, it was thimet. There that's right. And ah, Phorate is the technical name for it. P-h-o-r-a-t-e. Ah, thimet--t-h-i-m-e-t is the trade name.


Vapaa: And I guess you sold that too?

J.Lamberta: We do, yes. Um-hum. Um-hum.

Vapaa: Now, you sold supplies and you sell machinery as well as sell the potatoes, right?

J.Lamberta: We sell grader equipment. Yeah. Yes, ah, potato grader equipment. And we have ah, parts that (voice drops, unintelligible) Ah, like Bill Halleck (?) and ah--

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J.Lamberta: ...we sell ah, first (?) line machines, so on and so forth--bags special one (?). Bags is the--is the big goer right now.

Vapaa: Ummm.

J.Lamberta: Potato bags.

Vapaa: Yes. All right. Now, Joe, this tape is about run out. We're going to have to turn it over in just a minute. And ah, so ah,
I think I'll just go ahead and let it run out. And then we'll pick it up again. Let's see. I can see it here. As long as it's still turning I won't keep it going because it means we'll have just that much longer to talk with you. (laughter) Which is important I think because we've got plenty to say here. Oh, my. Come on tape run out. You know you got an hour tape on these things.

J.Lamberta: How long is it--30 minutes?
Vapaa: Runs 30 minutes on a side.
J.Lamberta: Um-hum.
Vapaa: Then they'll take this thing and they'll transfer this to a newer ah, recorder up at the University.
J.Lamberta: Oh, is that right?
Vapaa: Yes. And I like this machine because ah--even though it runs slower it's a little easier for me to handle and run here.
J.Lamberta: Yeah, right. Um-hum--um-hum.
Vapaa: 'Cause all I do is pick up the cassette, turn it up and turn it over. That's all there is to it. And ah, that makes it a lot easier. Well, I thought it was about ready to run out. I don't know. Now, let's see here.
Appreciate your time, Joe, in doing this job.
J.Lamberta: (murmur, unintelligible) I enjoyed it. Shooting the breeze with you. Haven't seen you in a long time.
Vapaa: Well, that's a fact. Been over a year I expect.
J.Lamberta: Wife's seen you (?) (murmur, unintelligible)
Vapaa: Um-hum. And don't you know I miss it.
J. Lamberta: I bet--

(TAPE 1, SIDE 1, ENDED)

Vapaa: Now--now you said you started with 100 acres here and started from scratch and ah, with no machinery I take it.

J. Lamberta: No, we had all used machinery that I had picked up on Long (redacted) Island. I had--had bought two 70 Olivers--one 4 wheel job and one 3. And ah, we had the--had bought a potato planter from a friend of mine, Joe Kowalski. Of the following year--a potato planter was a used steel wheel planter.

Vapaa: Two row or 4 row?

J. Lamberta: Two row.

Vapaa: Ummm.

J. Lamberta: Two row. For $50 and it was in good shape. And we bought that and the only thing we started with. And ah, as I say, before I come down here I had--I had a problem with the--with the exporter over there. He beat me out of $32,000.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: And I was a little bit--sweating it out for dollars (?) then. And ah, so I bought this used equipment as I say. And we ah, I bought a disc and 2 old tractors and we went on with that.

Vapaa: Now ah, when you left Long Island did you leave for good or did you still go back and forth?

J. Lamberta: Well, we we--had to go back and forth. Yes. We didn't leave for good. But we come down here and we still had a home to sell in Long Island. Had bought a home in St. Albens out there before and--.
Vapaa:  Was your father still living at the time?

J.Lamberta:  No. No. He passed away in 1934.

Vapaa:  Um-hum.

J.Lamberta:  He had a heart attack and passed away.

Vapaa:  How about your mother?

J.Lamberta:  Ah, she lived until about 5 years ago. She died at ah--at 81.

Vapaa:  Um-hum.

J.Lamberta:  Age of 81. Um-hum.

Vapaa:  My mother's 86.

J.Lamberta:  86 (murmur) Um-hum.

Vapaa:  And ah, I lost my baby brother January the 4th--

J.Lamberta:  Is that right?

Vapaa:  ...this year.

J.Lamberta:  How old was he?

Vapaa:  He was--he was 56. I'm 58.

J.Lamberta:  Jeez.

Vapaa:  And ah, my stepfather died 5 days after my brother.

J.Lamberta:  Humph.

Vapaa:  The afternoon my brother was buried my stepfather died in a nursing home.

J.Lamberta:  Is that right?

Vapaa:  And ah, so my mother is living with my niece now--that's my brother's daughter of course--

J.Lamberta:  Um-hum.

Vapaa:  ...and her 2 children at Cranston Heights. But she seems very happy.
J. Lamberta: Well, as long as she can take it.
Vapaa: Yeah. And ah, we sold the ah, home which ah, was up near Childs Fairly (?) which is up near Elkton.
J. Lamberta: Um-hum.
Vapaa: I don't know whether you--you know where Elkton is?
J. Lamberta: I know where Elkton is. Um-hum. Um-hum.
Vapaa: And Childs is just north of Elkton.
J. Lamberta: Um-hum.
Vapaa: And ah, we just gotten rid of the (unintelligible) out of that home.
J. Lamberta: Um-hum.
Vapaa: But ah, well Joe, we don't want to talk about me. We want to talk about you.
J. Lamberta: No, I like to hear about you too. Um-hum. We ah--we know each other long enough that I--I would like to hear something about--
J. Lamberta: Um-hun.
Vapaa: I followed Bill Tarbell. Now Joe, if you remember back in those early days, why you fellows didn't have a whole lot to do with the extension service down here.
J. Lamberta: No. Right.
Vapaa: You got most of your information out of Long Island.
J. Lamberta: Um-hum. We did, yes. Um-hum. Um-hum.
Vapaa: And most of it came out of Riverhead. Right. Um-hum.
Vapaa: Un-hun.
J. Lamberta: Um-hum. And Wells was the county agent out--A. Incidentally, I just saw him last week in--in Tucson. And he's retired.
Vapaa: Is that right? Um-hum. I haven't seen him or heard of him in a long time.
J. Lamberta: (voice overlap, unintelligible) Still living in Riverhead by the way--or outside Riverhead. And ah, still very much in touch with things, I think.
Vapaa: (murmur) Well, once you get into it I suppose, George, you just can't ah--you just don't walk away from it.
J. Lamberta: It gets in your blood. (laughter) You can't get away from it. Nah. (laughter) No, sir. But ah, Joe, you fellows didn't work a whole lot with extension when I came on the job at the end of 1952. But ah, you got most of your information out of Long Island as I say from Riverhead. And ah, I think if I'm not mistaken, I was one of the first people that ah, really had a great deal to do with the potato growers in Delaware. Because ah, I didn't mind your cussing. I didn't mind the fact that (laughter) you were Polish and German and Italian--
Vapaa: ...and everything else. (laughter) This didn't bother me in the fact that you could cuss and--
J. Lamberta: Right.
Vapaa: ...say just what you please.

J.Lamberta: Right. Right. Um-hum.

Vapaa: I mean I always felt that was kind of a--

J.Lamberta: Well George, I think you did more for us—all potato growers including myself—rather than any—anyone else we ever knew before. And ah, in other words ah, if we needed any help, we just called George Vapaa. And we used to get some help. And you knew what it was all about. And ah, don't think we didn't appreciate it. And don't think we don't miss you right today.

Vapaa: Well, thank you, Joe. I mean ah, I—I--

J.Lamberta: And that's the truth.

Vapaa: ...I appreciate those--

J.Lamberta: That is true. I'm not—I'm not ah,—I'm not saying this because you're here. It's just ah—it's the truth. And I ah—we've talked about it a good many times. And ah—and I know many times I didn't feel like going to Georgetown. And you'd get on my tail—come on, we gotta go. And we went. (laughter) And it was—if we didn't expect—ah, wh—whe—eh—very good.

Vapaa: Yes.

J.Lamberta: And we enjoyed every minute of it.

Vapaa: Well, I certainly enjoyed working with the potato growers, I think as much as any group we've had here in Kent County. And they've got—we had at one time ah, quite a few potato growers. In fact I--

J.Lamberta: We had—we had 86 growers here at one time, George. It was down
to about 28 or 30 now.

Vapaa: We are?

J.Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: Oh, my.

J.Lamberta: Just about 30.

Vapaa: And how many acres would you say, Joe?

J.Lamberta: Well, we were up around 11,000 acres one time--ll something. And I think we're down about 7,500 now.

Vapaa: Un-hun. I think you're right about that. Yes.

J.Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: In other words even though we have fewer growers, you're growing more potatoes.

J.Lamberta: Yes. Some of the growers--

Vapaa: (voice overlap, unintelligible)

J.Lamberta: ...more

Vapaa: (voice overlap, unintelligible)

J.Lamberta: Right. Right. Um-hum. They're doing that because of the equipment--larger equipment and ah, 4 row planters and ah, more sprayers and--

Vapaa: Large fields.

J.Lamberta: Larger fields and things like that. Yeah. Um-hum.

Vapaa: And ah, how would you compare the working conditions in Delaware with ah, what they have in Long Island today? You probably get back enough to see what's going on up there.

J.Lamberta: I haven't been back in--been back in Long Island the last 3 or 4
years, George, to be very honest with you. And ah, I'm not
crazy about going back with the traffic situation over there.
(laughter) Every time go back there get jammed up in 'em,
and glad to get out of there.

Vapaa: Well, they tell me they have an awful time because their fields
of course are smaller.

J.Lamberta: They're smaller fields. And they don't have the--. It's mostly
family affairs, though. They--they just can't get the help.
And we're not getting the help on these farms either. This is
going to be my last year growing potatoes this year right now.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J.Lamberta: Due to the fact of the labor situation.

Vapaa: Yes.

J.Lamberta: And ah, it's not the idea of paying. They just don't want a
work on a farm anymore. And ah--

Vapaa: You mean you'll rent the land out?

J.Lamberta: No, I'm gonna--I'm gonna farm with the--more in grains than in
potatoes. Might put in a few potatoes in just because (unintelli-
gible) Not too many of them. And go in to grain and cut this
labor eh, this labor situation. We have these--some of these
do-gooders that's giving us a problem in plain English. And I
may let them grow a few and see how they like it.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J.Lamberta: And ah, ah--

Vapaa: Are you saying you have trouble with your labor camp, Joe.
J. Lamberta: Well, late--well, I--everytime I rebuild then they wreck it. And they come back and see it after it's wrecked. And then, of course, and they're giving us a hard time. So, I think I'd better let them grow 'em and see how they like it for awhile.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: And they've been--they're--well, we've been to quite a few of the meetings there with them. And they just keep demanding this and you must do this and you must do that. But they don't tell them that they should do something themselves. Just what we should do for them.

Vapaa: That's right.

J. Lamberta: And ah, I'm just sick and tired of it.

Vapaa: Well, I sympathize with you, Joe, ah, on these growing problems. Because it isn't the farmers' problem entirely. In fact, ah, very little bit of it I would say is actually the farmers' problem. I think ah, the growers by and large thats over the State that I've seen have tried to do the best job that they can as far as housing their help.

J. Lamberta: True. Well, there's a few exceptions. I'll go along with that.

Vapaa: Yeah.

J. Lamberta: There is a few exceptions.

Vapaa: But you have to teach 'em really how to use these facilities.

J. Lamberta: Right. Right. And ah, like they say, they want us to teach 'em. I say we pay--we pay for these educators to teach them. If they can't teach 'em, how the devil do you expect us to teach 'em. We're potato growers.
Vapaa: That's right.
J. Lamberta: We don't have time to teach 'em. We have time—we—we're trying to grow our potatoes and grow our crops. Like years ago, George, we used to grow ah, cabbage and cauliflower—you know that—tomatoes and ah, cucumbers and things like that. And you just can't get labor to do it anymore. So we just went straight in to potatoes. Now, we're having a problem getting help for potatoes. So, we're back to the same old story. And now we're going into grain.
Vapaa: Un-hun.
J. Lamberta: And ah—
Vapaa: How many acres of potatoes did you grow this year, Joe?
J. Lamberta: This year I grew about a little ov—about 125 acres this year.
Vapaa: Um-hum.
J. Lamberta: And—
Vapaa: And it's still all in potatoes then?
J. Lamberta: Do what?
Vapaa: It was still all in potatoes?
J. Lamberta: Yeah, all in potatoes. Yes. And ah, ah, I did grow as much as 300 acres at one time. I just kept backing down each year due to the fact that—
Vapaa: Say, you have also rented some land haven't you?
J. Lamberta: Yes, we ah—we have rented 2 or 3 farms at one time, but I gave 'em up.
Vapaa: Now you say we—
J.Lamberta: I say we--I let's put it that way.

Vapaa: Yeah, but ah, you have some help don't you? I mean ah, family help?

J.Lamberta: No. I had. No, I don't have 'em anymore.

Vapaa: You had--well, let's see--sons-- (?)

J.Lamberta: I had my brother--well, John worked for me for awhile and then I had Preston Burris.

Vapaa: Preston Burris.

J.Lamberta: He worked for me for 3 years. Of course, he went into the horse business and doing very well. Thank God. And ah, he's had that Silk Stockings--I guess you heard of him. And is doing very well with him.

Vapaa: He was a little fellow anyway wasn't he?

J.Lamberta: Yeah. Right. He--he's a little farmer.

Vapaa: Un-hun.

J.Lamberta: But he got so--he got fed up with the help situation or something like that. And he just wouldn't take it. And so he got out of it.

Vapaa: Now, don't you have some children?

J.Lamberta: Yeah, I have a girl. And she left home about 3 years ago with 3 other girls out of here. She's living in ah--in ah, Santa Fe.

Vapaa: Is she married?

J.Lamberta: She was. And she is divorced.

Vapaa: Um-hun.

J.Lamberta: And ah, they're living over there. And ah, she likes it. She don't want to come back to Delaware. Don't ask me why. (laughter) So I been very upset about it. But ah, that's the situation.
What are you going to do?

Vapaa: Santa Fe?

J. Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: Long ways from home.

J. Lamberta: Yeah. We--we went and visited with her 2 years ago. Beautiful country over there. And--and I like it. But to me Delaware is my home.

Vapaa: Um-hum. Glad to hear you say that, Joe.

J. Lamberta: That is true. Delaware is my home. And ah, over in New York (unintelligible) . I mean ah, I don't have any--any desires to go back to New York.

Vapaa: How does your wife feel about New York now?

J. Lamberta: Well, let's put it this way. The first year we come down here she cried 7 days a week to go back to New York. (laugh) So she as much as called a cab--and she's leaving. She called a cab in Smyrna and the guy would pull up with the cab. I'd give the guy his dollar and tell him to get the hell out of here. (laughter) Anyhow, to make a long story short this went on for 2 years off and on. And ah, finally about 8 - 9 years ago she took a trip to New York with ah, Uniático's.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: And we're going to show 'em New York. And ah, when she got there she got so confused she was glad to get back to Delaware (laughter)
And swears to this day she'll never go back to New York. She loves it here.

Vapaa: Yeah. Joe, we ah, going to have a little bit of trouble with our typist as far as spelling some names is concerned and Uniatowski is one of 'em. That's U-n-i-a-t-o-w-s-k-i.

J.Lamberta: s

Vapaa: k-i

J.Lamberta: I can get you the spelling--correct spelling.

Vapaa: No, that's right. That's right.

J.Lamberta: (murmur, unintelligible)

Vapaa: Is that Mickey?

J.Lamberta: Mickey, yeah. Um-hum.

Vapaa: Un-hun.

J.Lamberta: She even took (words run together, unintelligible). They went in there. And they--wh--he--she was going to show her New York. And she got so upset in New York with the crowds. And you know, after being in Delaware here (laughter) She had a little room.

Vapaa: So she's happy to be here?

J.Lamberta: Tickled silly, yeah. She wouldn't go back for all the tea in China.

Vapaa: Un-hun.

J.Lamberta: In fact, we ah, went to visit New York a few times. She couldn't wait to get back.

Vapaa: Hun.

J.Lamberta: So--

Vapaa: How often do you go now?
J. Lamberta: Not too often. As little as possible, George.

Vapaa: UM-hum.

J. Lamberta: I ha--I have to go in next week on some bu--on business. And we might go in for Thanksgiving. But ah, we like it down here. And I ah, I say we play golf here. And I finally bought myself a boat. And we do a little bit of boating here in between.

Vapaa: Now you have some other hobbies too, Joe.

J. Lamberta: Yes. I--snowmobiling. And I do it in the winter.

Vapaa: All right. Tell us a little bit about it.

J. Lamberta: Well, we just hook up with the boys over here in ah, ah--. We went to Vermont ah, 2 years ago.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: With Calvin Meyers and Freddie Cartanza. And we spent the week over there at the hills. And we went to the Coolidge Park--and beautiful scenery.

Vapaa: Do you hunt too?

J. Lamberta: No, I can't shoot an animal.

Vapaa: Do they?

J. Lamberta: What was that ah--?

Vapaa: The people that go with you--?

J. Lamberta: No, they don't hunt either. No. No.

Vapaa: Un-hun.

J. Lamberta: They just more or less--

Vapaa: Just snowmobiling.

J. Lamberta: Snowmobiling and sightseeing and things like that. We enjoy them. Racing and ah--. Have a lot of fun.
Vapaa: Um-hum. And you have 2 of 'em?
J.Lamberta: I ha--I sold 1 of 'em. I'm going to get another one. I'm going to have 2 of 'em when I get done.
Vapaa: Oh, I see.
J.Lamberta: (unintelligible) I sold one of the old ones and--
Vapaa: Does your wife like snowmobile?
J.Lamberta: No. (laughter)
Vapaa: So she stays home when you go?
J.Lamberta: She--she--no, she goes. She goes. She--she snowmobiles. She--she runs 'em. But she's not crazy about it. She don't like the cold weather. And so--
Vapaa: Un-hun.
J.Lamberta: She's not much of a snowmobiler. But she ah--we went out to Vermont and she stayed with the rest of us. And she dumped one of 'em. She took a little (unintelligible) on one and put it back on it's feet and off she went again. (laughter) So ah--. I enjoy that very much. I like--
Vapaa: Now, your wife is a good bit smaller than you are, Joe. I'm sorry she's not here--
J.Lamberta: Yeah.
Vapaa: ...because I want to take her picture. But--
J.Lamberta: Hey, Lynn!
Vapaa: No, she's not there.
J.Lamberta: She's not there yet. She was getting dressed(?) She'll be here in a minute. Um-hum.
Vapaa: No, I think you said she had an appointment--(voice overlap)
J. Lamberta: Yeah, she has—she has at 10:20—quarter to 11?—the time she'll be leaving in a few minutes.

Vapaa: Oh. Yeah, it is quarter of 11.

J. Lamberta: Yes. So, she'll be popping off here. But she has to get her car out, George, and you ought to see it.

Vapaa: Oh, is that right?

J. Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: Well, anyway we got you snowmobiling, we got you playing golf

J. Lamberta: Yeah.

Vapaa: (voice overlap, unintelligible)

J. Lamberta: And ah, we ah—we used to bowl. But I give that up now. I enjoyed golfing.

Vapaa: Are you approaching retirement, Joe? Do you think?

J. Lamberta: I'd like to, but I just can't. I mean I just got to have—I—I've got to have something to do.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: I ah, keep saying I'm going to retire—I'm gonna quit. And I just sit around for 2 days and I go crazy. And I just go back and start adding on to something else you know. So--

Vapaa: Now, let me ask you this, Joe. Most of the brokers around here—people who buy and sell potatoes—also finance some of this for farmers. Have you ever done any of this?

J. Lamberta: Oh, yeah. We do it every year—some of the farmers, yeah. But lately they've—ah, ah, last year they've all made a pretty good buck. And ah, they're pretty well paid up. There's still a few of 'em still financing.
Vapaa:URN-hum.

J.Lamberta:Sure we do. You have to. Otherwise you—you know, you more or less give 'em credit for the seed. And of course, we--

Vapaa:URN-hum.

J.Lamberta:...finance 'em on that. The end of the year they're paid up and they're figured (?) and we carry 'em along (7). Have to charge a little interest on some of 'em. Never charged interest until the last--til money got tight--

Vapaa:Umm.

J.Lamberta:...and then we charged a little interest to carry over--what we should do.

Vapaa:So tight money does make a difference in the potato business?

J.Lamberta:Oh, definitely. You're darn right.

Vapaa:Do you know what the price of potatoes is today?

J.Lamberta:Right now they're due to about 3--Long Island is getting $2.75 naked.

Vapaa:What do you mean naked?

J.Lamberta:Naked meaning the farmer takes the potatoes to the packing house. And what they grade it out they pay him $2.75. And they--the packing house pays for the bag and the grading which would be about $3.50 packed out--$3.50 per hundred.

Vapaa:That's per hundred weight?


Vapaa:UM-hum.

J.Lamberta:And right now we bought some over here that we sell some on the highway over here and we paid 3 and a half--bagged 'em--
Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: ...to retail on the highway. We sell 'em out on the highway for 2 and a half (cough) Ah, 50 pound bag. Our no. 1's. And we have these off grade they sell 'em for $2 for a commercial grade. No pick out--the commercial grade.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: Unintelligible)

Vapaa: Um-hum. Well, what else can we think about as far as potato business is concerned now. That's what I'd like to talk about John (?)

J. Lamberta: Yeah. Well-

Vapaa: What's your feelings about it and so forth?

J. Lamberta: Well, I tell you it's--. Gee, I don't know what to say. But ah, ah, the--there is fewer growers and fewer potatoes in the area. And ah, just (unintelligible) it seems to be petering out just a little bit more. And there's only a few big--real big growers left in the area. And the rest are starting--. A few of 'em is quitting. I see John Laduc (?) is going to quit. John Laducovich (4). He's quit too this year. And ah--

Vapaa: Yes.

J. Lamberta: ...and there's a few others who have talked about quitting--because of the labor situation and conditions. And you can't get supplies. Your fertilizer is up--. Last year we bought it for $62 a ton and this year they want $118 for fertilizer.

Vapaa: What analysis is that?
J. Lamberta: That's a 10-10-10.

Vapaa: 10-10-10.

J. Lamberta: Yeah. And--and we were selling for $114.25. We were selling-- handling fertilizer for 18 years. And they called up there--to one of my division over here and put me in a heck of a spot. Because I was selling ah, about 2,000--2500 ton.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: And we sold around to boys we did business with. And they put us (laugh)--put us on the spot right here and now. And I had to--. So this year I bought some. We had to buy for a couple of growers. And we charged 'em $114.25 for the 10-10-10--that's paid cash. And we take now (?) and so on and so forth.

Vapaa: Um-hum. Now, you're buying your fertilizer in bulk too today, right?


Vapaa: And ah, how does the farmer get that fertilizer on the ground now, Joe, if he's handling it in bulk?

J. Lamberta: Well, we fixed the building up over there--one of the old buildings and--and ah, fixed the floor and then we--we put in a beltway which comes in with dump trucks. And the beltway we blow--we--we put it right in their heap. And they have these funny rollers. And they have a little platform built where they can back up where the front end loader load it into their ah, tenders.

Vapaa: Oh.

J. Lamberta: And of course, they have a little engine on there and blows right
into the potato plant.

Vapaa: Well, some of this is different from when I was county agent.

J. Lamberta: Oh, yeah.

Vapaa: Business changes every year.

J. Lamberta: Um-hum. We used to have it in those bags and things. We--wh--125 lb. bags wh--eh--80 lb. paper bags.

Vapaa: Now, Joe, they tell me you have sold irrigation equipment.

J. Lamberta: Oh, yeah. We did--sold a lot of that at one time. We sold the Wade Rain system at one time.

Vapaa: W-a-d-e R-a-i-n?

J. Lamberta: Um-hum. Right.

Vapaa: OK, that's it.

J. Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: And ah, where was that system made?

J. Lamberta: Umm, somewhere in the West. We used to work through ah--fo--through Babylon (?) farms out of Jersey. He had the distributorship and I had the dealership here. I worked for him for a few years.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: And we sold quite a few systems in the area at the beginning of course. And then ah, for some reason or other they took the distributorship away from Babylon Farms and turned it over to outfit out of Virginia which worked with Clement Supply. So they wanted them--they were handling the Wade Rain. And we handled a new system called Ravit. We had it innovated (?).
Vapaa: How do you spell it?
J.Lamberta: R-a-v-i-t, I think.
Vapaa: Um-hum.
J.Lamberta: t---R-a-v-i-t-t. And ah, that was made in Israel. And that would fit the Wade Rain Systems. It would hook up. And so we sold quite a bit of that.
Vapaa: But you're not selling it now?
J.Lamberta: Well, there's nothing to sell now. Everything is going to automatic. Everything is going to wheel systems. And we sold 2 or 3 wheel systems, but the price is so high I'm afraid even--- (laugh) I try to sell 'em.
Vapaa: Well, all of those systems that you sold were--most of 'em you had to move by hand?
J.Lamberta: Yeah. All by hand. Yeah (murmur) Um-hum.
Vapaa: And ah, I don't suppose there are very few growers now that are moving pipe by hand.
J.Lamberta: There is still quite a few.
Vapaa: There are?
J.Lamberta: Yeah. There's still quite a few. There is ah--I--eh--and in fact, some of 'em run into wheel systems. And of course ah, other fields where they--where they have this piping eh, they didn't trade it they have--they use it.
Vapaa: Um-hum.
J.Lamberta: Use hand stuff (murmur) I'd say there's quite a few using the old system.
Vapaa: Um-hum. Well, is there anything else, Joe, about the ah, potato
business that you can think of that ah, would be pertinent? Ah, I mean--I mean we talked about the decrease in acreage and, I mean, total acreage and the increase of acreage on an individual farm. So we still have about 7500 acres. Are we likely to hold that acreage--7500?

J. Lamberta: We're going to be lucky to hold it. I'd say if we can hold it. I'd like--I'd like to see 'em hold it. But ah, I--eh--has me wondering. I mean eh, eh, the way the situation is. I mean ah, come by--it's going right back to labor again. Some of these boys--you get these coons come in. You can't do nothing with 'em. And a lot of 'em are going to automatic packing getting these here Baker machines.

Vapaa: Yes.

J. Lamberta: And a lot of 'em are on these 50 lb. automatic baggers. All on account of the labor situation. And that's what's getting my darn goat. There are all these people on welfare and we can't find help.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: And we're paying them to sit on their tails while we're knocking ourselves out trying to find help. And ah, that's going to be the big hurt right in our labor. And I--I believe that if we were able to get some help--some decent help on the farms eh, I think--I think eh--

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: You know--you--you--
Vapaa: Here's your wife. (sounds of different voices, unintelligible)

Mrs. Lambert: Hey! It's nice to see you again. (sounds of different voices, unintelligible)

J. Lambert: She--she ah--he says she looks good, you know.

Vapaa: Yeah, your darn right. (laughter) You know you could--you potato farmers I--I don't know. But seems to me that ever since I've known you why you all have good looking wives.

L. Lambert: Ah, ha, thank you. You're being very kind.

J. Lambert: We don't grow good crops though. (laughter)

Vapaa: And grow good crops.

J. Lambert: And don't grow good crops.

L. Lambert: He don't he said.

J. Lambert: (voice overlap, unintelligible) ...good looking wives.

Vapaa: Oh, yes, they do.

L. Lambert: They do grow good crops don't they? They do.

J. Lambert: Yes, they do.

Vapaa: I'm telling you, Joe, I quit this life (?). I've never seen anybody quite like her. (everyone speaking at once, unintelligible)

J. Lambert: Yes, she is.

L. Lambert: I think all of them are. I think the girls are really nice. So I hear you got a job cut out for yourself, huh?

Vapaa: Well, we're doing an oral history right now. The tape is running so whatever you say is being recorded so--

J. Lambert: Yeah, whatever you say will be held against you.

Vapaa: So don't worry about it. But this is part of the University and--
Vapaa: ...ah, so ah, we're simply trying to ah, find out ah,--
L.Lamberta: How they got started?
Vapaa: How they got started, why they came to Delaware and this kind of thing.
L.Lamberta: That's a good story.
Vapaa: And Lynn, the University wants this story for students maybe 50 or 100 years from now who want to know what happened in 1974 in Delaware.
L.Lamberta: Is that right?
J.Lamberta: Umm.
Vapaa: As far as farmers is concerned. Or no--not limited to farmers particularly but ah, to ah, to ah, people who have ah, come into ah, Delaware. Will you back up please? No, Joe, you sit right where you are. No, just back up so I can get your pictures. (click) There. Now I got your picture. (laughter)
L.Lamberta: I didn't know I was going to get my picture--(everyone talking, unintelligible)
Vapaa: Well, I tell you--
L.Lamberta: I think that's great really. (everyone talking, unintelligible)
Vapaa: This will be a part of the history.
J.Lamberta: Yeah. Right.
L.Lamberta: Right.
Vapaa: If that picture comes out. And I think it will.
L.Lamberta: I hope it does.
Vapaa: You have a very nice home here.
L.Lamberta: Thank you. We like it.
Vapaa: Yes.
J.Lamberta: I--I was telling how we got the plans for it. We ah--
L.Lamberta: Did you tell him how you got started farming?
J.Lamberta: Yeah. Umm.
L.Lamberta: You know what I call the story?
Vapaa: No.
L.Lamberta: The potato and me.
Vapaa: The potato and you.
L.Lamberta: The potato and me. You remember that book--. Ah, I forget who wrote the book.
Vapaa: The Egg and I?
L.Lamberta: Egg and I. Betty something was the Egg and I. I said, "By, God, I can write a story too--The Potato and Me." (laughter)
Vapaa: That's cute.
J.Lamberta: She always keeps telling me about the family first come down here. And ah, as I say, money was tight.
L.Lamberta: I never saw a farm before.
J.Lamberta: And she had never seen a farm. And I had to go to New York. And we had to go--and we had some cabbage and cauliflower out here and didn't have too much help. So she thought she was going to do a great thing. One day they heard about the heavy frost, you know. (laugh) Her and my brother--she's pregnant--
have--have ah, Cheryl--and ah, and she cuts 100 crates of
cabbage--her and my brother, Johnny (?). So I come back
(dog whining) in from New York. They ha--er--I says, well
she's ah--

L.Lamberta: I thought he'd be very proud of me.
J.Lamberta: ...just as proud as a peacock, you know, that ah, she had
ah, cut this 100 crates of cabbage. So me--I come home--
I says, "Why the hell didn't you cut the cauliflower?"
(laughter) (talking while laughing, unintelligible)

L.Lamberta: The funny thing is, see, the cauliflower--(laughter over
talking, unintelligible)

J.Lamberta: She cried for a week after that. (laughter) (dog whining)
I--I say, I've been very successful. We--we worked eh,
George. Her and I we worked day and night. And we didn't
go running around until we were able to (dog whining) spend
a little money to do it with.

Vapaa: But I've noticed when you go to a party you really have one.

J.Lamberta: Oh, yeah. We have fun. I--

Vapaa: Remember the potato growers parties years ago?

J.Lamberta: Yeah.

L.Lamberta: I--I enjoyed that. (dog whining)

Vapaa: What do you mean that--those.

J.Lamberta: Those. (laughter)

L.Lamberta: (everyone speaking, unintelligible) ...wasn't it?

Vapaa: Every year they'd have one.
L.Lamberta: (evidently speaking to dog, unintelligible)

J.Lamberta: Yeah.

Vapaa: I remember the one down at the Gun Club--Rod and Gun Club.

J.Lamberta: You remember that? That--that was--that--

Vapaa: (everyone speaking, unintelligible) ...oh.

L.Lamberta: Oh.

J.Lamberta: I--(everyone speaking, unintelligible)

L.Lamberta: That was the best one.

Vapaa: With Ralph Wine. (everyone speaking, unintelligible) Ralph Wine.

J.Lamberta: (laughter) Ralph Wine--threw him out. (laughter)

L.Lamberta: Remember the mud all over the floor--the wax?

Vapaa: Yes. (everyone speaking, unintelligible) The water came up through the floor.

J.Lamberta: Right.

L.Lamberta: Took off our shoes and danced holes in our stockings. (laughter)

J.Lamberta: You do remember that, huh, George?

Vapaa: Sure, I do. (laughter) Who wouldn't? (laughter) (dog whining--murmurings to dog) And I think that's the thing that makes ah,--

J.Lamberta: Life worth living.

Vapaa: Life worth living.

L.Lamberta: We--we had more fun. I'll tell you, we had a lot less money then but we had more fun.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

L.Lamberta: We have more money now but we don't have as much fun. (laughter) Now how do you figure this? I really don't understand it. It's
hard to believe. I--

Vapaa: Yes, it is.

L. Lamberta: Well, I think it was a fun though--I really think it was the fun of accomplishing things then.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

L. Lamberta: You know, really you didn't have much, but everything you did--like you went--let's say it was a milestone. You accomplished one and then another. But now, well, what else can you do?

Vapaa: Well, let's see, to get this thing officially on here I want your full name and where you were born.

L. Lamberta: Oh, my full name?

Vapaa: Yes.

L. Lamberta: Louise (dog whining) Lamberta. And my maiden name?

Vapaa: Maiden name.

L. Lamberta: Maiden name--M-a-i-e-s-t. (dog whining)

Vapaa: OK. And where were you--

L. Lamberta: I was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania. (dog whining)

Vapaa: Scranton, Pennsylvania.

L. Lamberta: Un-hun.

Vapaa: What did your father do?

L. Lamberta: He was a tailor.

Vapaa: A tailor.

L. Lamberta: Um-hum.

Vapaa: And where was he born?

L. Lamberta: Italy.
L. Lamberta: Yes. In a little town—a little town (dog whining) in Calabria (?) (dog whining) I think it's called ah—I think it's called ah—
L. Lamberta: Near Calabria supposedly.
L. Lamberta: Supposedly. Right. Ah—
J. Lamberta: Well, no, this is—this is—the—(voice overlap, unintelligible)
J. Lamberta: ...further north.
J. Lamberta: Further north.
L. Lamberta: Palermo is in Sicily
Vapaa: Oh, yes.
L. Lamberta: See. Now that's across the river.
L. Lamberta: Across the—the pond they call it. River. Ye—river.
J. Lamberta: Well, it's not a ba—it's more of a bay.
J. Lamberta: But (unintelligible) in (unintelligible) Pennsylvania.
Vapaa: Um-hum. Now ah, do you speak Italian?
L. Lamberta: Yes. Yes, I speak a little.
J. Lamberta: Ahpessa (word spelled like sound) Poco
L. Lamberta: Yes.
J. Lamberta: That the way you say it?
L. Lamberta: How do you say ah, ah—
J. Lamberta: I'm getting how do you say—
L. Lamberta: Poco Poco (words spelling like sound—more Italian words said with laughing, unintelligible) Sicilian. But I ah—I understand it quite well.
Vapaa: Um-hum.
L.Lamberta: And let's say I can read it. When we were in Italy—we went to Italy in 1958--
J.Lamberta: 7
L.Lamberta: '57 that's right. And I think I did very well. In fact, on the boat—we went by boat.
Vapaa: He told us—the Rafael.
L.Lamberta: Yes. Oh, well, we certainly enjoyed it. And they gave lessons every day—Italian lessons.
Vapaa: Um-hum.
L.Lamberta: And I went to school every day on the ship. And I really thoroughly enjoyed it. Joe wouldn't go. And he had a miserable time evidently trying to understand the language. (laughter) He couldn't understand a word they said. And we had a friend there--
Vapaa: All he had to do was pay the bills anyway.
L.Lamberta: Right!
J.Lamberta: Yeah, right.
L.Lamberta: Right. And this friend was a friend—was a friend of ours in Philadelphia. So they insisted we had to go see them. And they were in ah—they lived right across the street from the Vatican.
Vapaa: Um-hum.
L.Lamberta: So we went there. And it was great. It was so funny. And ah, she was happy to see us. And she wanted to know how we came over here—did we come over by ship or did we fly. So ah, in
Italian--I knew the ship was called ah, nahva (spelled as sounded). I had learned that on the--

Vapaa: How do you spell it?
L.Lamberta: Navi? I believe it was n-a-v-i. I believe. I'm not sure. They didn't teach us how to spell it, but how to spell it. The ship was navi.

Vapaa: Navi.
L.Lamberta: So I told this--her in Italian, you know, we didn't come--. And she says, "Ahyah?" (spelled as sounded) You know airplane. I says, "No, we came on navi." And she says, Oh, that was nice--you enjoyed it very much. And Joe said, to her--to me in English, "What are you telling her we came with the Navy? (laughter) You know I'm not in the Navy." (laughter) I said, "Joe, I'm telling her we came by the ship." He said, "You're telling her Navy."

Vapaa: Oh. (laughter)
L.Lamberta: And this went on for--and I told--
J.Lamberta: That's how much I know Italian.
L.Lamberta: But she knew, you know. (laughter) That was a riot. And then we got out of there he says, "Why did you tell her I'm with the Navy?"

Vapaa: Um-hum.
L.Lamberta: I said, "I told her we came on navi. The navi is a ship."

Vapaa: Um-hum.
L.Lamberta: In Italian of course.
Vapaa: Um-hum.
L. Lamberta: And it was—it was really ah, an experience.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

L. Lamberta: I thoroughly enjoyed it, but Joe was very miserable. And then she called every day. And I didn't even know this like (unintelligible). You speak on the phone. They say—the first thing you pick up the phone—they say, chow (spelled as sounded). So chow is hello and chow is good-by. They say good-by they say chow. And when you leave they will say, you know, arrivederci.

Vapaa: Arrivederci.

L. Lamberta: As you were leaving. So of course, if you go to see them the next day, they'll say chow. But she called every morning at the hotel. You pick up the phone and you hear her say, chow. He pa—he was paralysed. (laughter) He'd just stand there and he'd grab the phone and hand it to me. (laughter) Why didn't you just say chow back?

J. Lamberta: She talking in Chinese. See the Sicilian dialect in—in Rome is al—eh—na—if she was speaking with the Sicilian dialect I could understand her.

Vapaa: Um-hum.

J. Lamberta: But in Rome they speak all the other different—I am—they—mi—you might just as well talk Polish to me. It's the same thing.

Vapaa: Yes. (laughter) Um-hun. Well, I tell you, we're about at the end of our tape here and I think we may as well wind it up, Joe.

J. Lamberta: OK. Um-hum.
Vapaa: I certainly do want to thank you two for--
L.Lamberta: Oh, you're very welcome. I think it's fun.
Vapaa: And I'm sure the University will appreciate a--getting this information because ah,--. Well, there's an awful lot about Kent and Sussex in--
L.Lamberta: Oh, really.
Vapaa: ...downstate Delaware that a lot of people will want to know 50 or 100 years from now. And--
J.Lamberta: Right. Um-hum.
L.Lamberta: I think that's interesting.
Vapaa: ...and that's what it's for.
J.Lamberta: Um-hum.
L.Lamberta: I think they're doing very good up there. Don't you? I think that's a great school.
Vapaa: Yes. Yes.
J.Lamberta: Yeah. Well, here's a guy that did the best. He's got a lot on the ball.
L.Lamberta: I know. We got a granddaughter up there now.
Vapaa: I see.
L.Lamberta: She's an--ah, taking the 4 year nursing.
Vapaa: Um-hum.
L.Lamberta: She's in her third year in fact.
Vapaa: Um-hum.
L.Lamberta: And it's tough.
Vapaa: Yes.
L.Lamberta: But she really loves it.

Vapaa: Yeah. Well, this thing is still running so--. It's all right.

L.Lamberta: (murmuring, unintelligible)

Vapaa: No, that's all right. I mean, I'm going to let the thing run right on out. So when it runs out, it'll just stop and the secretary who's going to change sides on this thing will have to stop too.

L.Lamberta: We can cut out spare parts anyway.

Vapaa: We can cut parts, if necessary. But I don't think we'll do it.

L.Lamberta: Some of it's not--you know (laughter) (unintelligible) Well--

J.Lamberta: George, I'm really glad to see you getting along the way you are and--

Vapaa: Well, I'm glad to (everyone talking, unintelligible)

J.Lamberta: You--you're darn right. I mean ah, the way ah--you know it just shows what you could do if you have to.

Vapaa: That's right.

THE END