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Mr. Louis Valeri

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: This is an interview with Mr. Louis Valeri, 1801 10th Street, Wilmington, Delaware. Mr. Valeri, where were you born?

Mr. Valeri: In Sant'Omero.

Interviewer: Sant'Omero?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's in Abruzzi, right?

Mr. Valeri: Yes.

Interviewer: Sant'Omero in Abruzzi. In what year?

Mr. Valeri: 1887.

Interviewer: 1887?

Mr. Valeri: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, Sant'Omero and Abruzzi are located right in the middle of Italy, right?

Mr. Valeri: Yes.

Interviewer: Perhaps, just right -- just slightly south of Rome and on the Adriatic Coast?

Mr. Valeri: Adriatic, but -- 10 miles from Adriatic Coast.

Interviewer: Okay. What did your father do in Italy?

Mr. Valeri: Well, he was a -- he was a -- buy cow.

Interviewer: He bought cows? He bought cattle?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: He was like a cattle broker?

Mr. Valeri: He was a merchant.

Interviewer: A merchant?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: Well, a cattle broker or something?

Mr. Valeri: No, no. Merchant. He used to go to the fair every day and bought and sold *[inaudible] [0:01:21]* village *[inaudible] [0:01:22]* and then we used to go there, buy and sell.

Interviewer: Bought and sold cattle.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did he buy and sell other animals as well? Sheep, goat?

Mr. Valeri: Yes. Horse.

Interviewer: Horses, donkeys *[inaudible] [0:01:36]*.

Mr. Valeri: *[inaudible] [0:01:36]* yeah.

Interviewer: So he had his own business?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you go to school in Italy?

Mr. Valeri: Yes.

Interviewer: Could you tell me what the school was like that you went to in Italy? Can you tell me something about it?

Mr. Valeri: Well, it was a little convent.

Interviewer: A little convent?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, yeah. And that's all there was. They built it. There was about 40 people.

Interviewer: I see. Was it a church school?

Mr. Valeri: Well, I guess it was around the...

Interviewer: At the state?

Mr. Valeri: The city, yeah.

Interviewer: In other words, it was a public school.

Mr. Valeri: Public. Public school.

Interviewer: Even though it was little convent building.

Mr. Valeri: Yes.

Interviewer: The building as owned by the state and it was a public school.

Mr. Valeri: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you have to pay anything to go school?

Mr. Valeri: No.

Interviewer: It was all free. Did they even supply you with books?

Mr. Valeri: I don't remember, yeah.

Interviewer: You don't remember, okay. How many grades did you have in this school?

Mr. Valeri: Nine grade.

Interviewer: Nine grades?

Mr. Valeri: It's a -- *[inaudible]* [0:02:40].

Interviewer: Did you stay for all nine grades?

Mr. Valeri: Yes.

Interviewer: How old were you when you started school?

Mr. Valeri: We went to the -- the kindergarten, it was six years. Five years then the six years, started school.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr. Valeri: ***[inaudible] [0:02:59].***

Interviewer: I know that you started in the kindergarten when you were five.

Mr. Valeri: Five.

Interviewer: And gone to first grade when you're six years old.

Mr. Valeri: Yes.

Interviewer: And you stayed in school for nine years?

Mr. Valeri: No. They were six years because I was 12 years went -- six years.

Interviewer: Well, you stayed in school for six years. Do you remember what sort of courses they had in school, what they taught you in school? Now, I know they taught you how to read and write, but what else did they teach there?

Mr. Valeri: They have a half-hour, not putting a day for -- there is a different course.

Interviewer: Like history of the country and ...

[Cross talk]

Mr. Valeri: Something like that.

Interviewer: Yes. Okay. What did you do after you finish school?

Mr. Valeri: I used to travel with my bag. I used to go to the fair.

Interviewer: Did you and your father gone to the fairs?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: Could you tell me what cities you went to when you're going to fairs ...

[Cross talk]

Mr. Valeri: We went -- we only have three cities there. We went at Ascoli, Piceno and Marche.

Interviewer: Again, Ascoli.

Mr. Valeri: Ascoli.

Interviewer: It's A-S-C-O-L-I.

Unidentified voice: **[inaudible] [0:04:11]** for you.

Interviewer: Okay. All right. The three places or three cities you went through are Ascoli, A-S-C-O-L-I.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: Piceno, P-I-C-E-N-O and Marche, M-A-R-C-H-E.

Mr. Valeri: We went at the three cities. We used to travel all the time.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Valeri: Teramo.

Interviewer: Teramo.

Mr. Valeri: In Abruzzi.

Interviewer: That's in Abruzzi.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah. And Nereto.

Interviewer: Nereto. Let's see. How do you spell Nereto?

Mr. Valeri: N.

Interviewer: N-E-R-E-T-T-O.

Mr. Valeri: What's this?

Interviewer: R.

Mr. Valeri: All right. That's the right name.

Interviewer: N-E-R-E-T-T-O, Nereto. Right.

Mr. Valeri: There's too many T. Yeah. One T. What's this?

Interviewer: There's two T. Oh, one T. N-E-R-E-T-O then, okay.

[0:05:01]

Mr. Valeri: *[inaudible] [0:05:02].*

Interviewer: I have to spell that. All right then. Nereto then is a village that's close to Sant'Omero.

Mr. Valeri: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr. Valeri: Then we went to the -- then we go to the market.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Valeri: You want the date?

Interviewer: Oh, the date that you went?

Mr. Valeri: Sure.

Interviewer: Oh, did you have a special date for each one?

Mr. Valeri: Sure.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Valeri: Ascoli, we go to a Wednesday.

Interviewer: Ascoli, you went on Wednesday.

Mr. Valeri: And Saturday.

Interviewer: And Saturdays.

Mr. Valeri: Teramo.

Interviewer: Teramo.

Mr. Valeri: On Giovedi.

Interviewer: On Thursday.

Mr. Valeri: Thursday, right. Nereto, on Tuesday.

Interviewer: On Tuesday.

Mr. Valeri: Martedi.

Interviewer: Right. Martedi is Tuesday.

Mr. Valeri: ***[inaudible] [0:05:45].***

[Cross talk]

Mr. Valeri: They have no mercato, yeah, a fair or mercato.

[Cross talk]

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Valeri: In other words ...

[Cross talk]

Mr. Valeri: ... daughters have been married or ***[inaudible] [0:05:58].***

Interviewer: Okay, ask me two times a week. In other words, you went to all these places every week, you went to them?

Mr. Valeri: Well, ***[inaudible] [0:06:04].*** This is not a -- unless they have a mercato or fair, you see.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. Ascoli and Nereto, you went to every week.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: And to Marche, you only went when there's a fair.

Mr. Valeri: Teramo.

Interviewer: To Teramo, you also went every week.

Mr. Valeri: No, just when they had the fair

Interviewer: Okay, fine. Now, how old were you when you started to go to these fairs with you father?

Mr. Valeri: I was nine years old.

Interviewer: Nine years old?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: And had you figured in working into the business with your father then?

Mr. Valeri: ***[inaudible] [0:06:38].***

Interviewer: That's what it was. Right. This is what you had to do.

Mr. Valeri: I used to get up in the night, travel to be ahead, early in the morning.

Interviewer: How did you travel?

Mr. Valeri: A horse in wagon.

Interviewer: Horse and wagon.

Mr. Valeri: And if he can ***[inaudible] [0:06:55].***

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Valeri: ***[inaudible] [0:07:04].***

Interviewer: No, no, no.

Unidentified voice: He says 1911. I ***[inaudible] [0:07:16]*** at all here. But I remember everything ***[inaudible] [0:07:21].***

Interviewer: Oh, sure. I did too. Yeah, I guess it's hard to forget.

Unidentified voice: I remember everything.

Interviewer: Good, I have to interview you then when I'm finished here with Mr. Valeri.

Mr. Valeri: My father used the *[inaudible]* [0:07:37] big boats *[inaudible]* [0:07:46].

Interviewer: Did you say there are a couple of rich men in the county who came to the United States?

Mr. Valeri: Three of them.

Interviewer: Three of them.

Mr. Valeri: Now, the two baked -- have bakery -- rich people, they had a lot of fun.

Interviewer: And they had ...

Mr. Valeri: Had this big boat.

Interviewer: Boat.

Mr. Valeri: They call that a boat.

[Cross talk]

Interviewer: Oh, big casks.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

[Cross talk]

Interviewer: 100-year-old wine.

Mr. Valeri: Up to 1,000, yeah *[inaudible]* [0:08:19]. They have a wine *[inaudible]* [0:08:23] right there. But *[inaudible]* [0:08:29]. You know what they do ...

[Cross talk]

Interviewer: Yeah *[inaudible]* [0:08:35].

Mr. Valeri: 100-year-old.

Interviewer: 100-year-old cask of wine.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah. And people in the village used to go there for a bottle of the bottled wine when they have *[inaudible]* [0:08:47].

[Cross talk]

Mr. Valeri: Yes *[inaudible]* [0:08:50].

Interviewer: Well, they use it for medicinal purposes.

Mr. Valeri: Medicine, of course. And used to give the wine a bottle or two or two more bottle. And they *[inaudible]* [0:09:02] a lot of time they give out.

Interviewer: Oh, in other words, when they took -- when they took out a bottle, they put a bottle so that ...

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: In other words, they kept mixing the old wines and new wines.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah. Yes. And I want to know about *[inaudible]* [0:09:16].

Interviewer: Yeah, how old you were when you started to work with your father?

Mr. Valeri: Nine years old.

Interviewer: You said you started when you're nine years old.

Mr. Valeri: Nine years old.

Interviewer: And you were traveling with you father at that time?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, when you finished school, it was probably -- let's say you were six years old when you started school which occurred in 1903.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: You went to school for six years, in 1909 when you finished, right?

Mr. Valeri: Went to school, we started in six years in school.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Valeri: And we quit at nine, three years.

Interviewer: By the age of nine, you ...

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, because *[inaudible]* **[0:09:50]**.

Interviewer: All right, fine. Now, when did you first thought to think about coming to the United States?

Mr. Valeri: Me? Well, I was 18 years old.

[0:10:05]

Interviewer: You were 18 years old.

Mr. Valeri: When I came here the first time. I wasn't 18 either because my father had -- he had very responsible for me. So I wasn't 18 that yet. There were a bunch of boys in the village and they said, "Let's go to America." We didn't want to stay home. We had two men who work for us. *[inaudible]* **[0:10:35]**. So we came to Unite State.

Interviewer: Now, I will ask you something, why did you come to the United States? How did you first hear of the United States? Were there people from your town who came here and then they came back?

[Cross talk]

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, yeah. There was *[inaudible]* **[0:10:57]** come for me in United States, it was *[inaudible]* **[0:11:01]** so we started to flicker. We started to say let's go to America.

So my father said, all right *[inaudible]* **[0:11:11]** to United States at all. So *[inaudible]* **[0:11:15]** so all right, we came here in Wilmington, month March.

Interviewer: The month of March. Okay now, let me ask you a couple more questions. Where did you get the ship that brought you to the United States?

Mr. Valeri: In ...

Interviewer: In Naples?

Mr. Valeri: In Naples.

Interviewer: Yeah. How did you get to Naples from Sant'Omero?

Mr. Valeri: On a train.

Interviewer: On a train? Where did you get the train, in *[inaudible]* [0:11:39]?

Mr. Valeri: In Tortoreto.

Interviewer: Tortoreto.

Mr. Valeri: *[inaudible]* [0:11:42] that's the station.

Interviewer: The station Tortoreto.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: There, you got the train and took you straight to Naples.

Mr. Valeri: Yes.

Interviewer: When you got to Naples, was the ship that you wanted to get on in the port? That ship that you're going to board?

Mr. Valeri: *[inaudible]* [0:11:57].

Interviewer: Was it in port?

Mr. Valeri: No, *[inaudible]* [0:12:00] Tortoreto.

Interviewer: No, I mean in Naples.

Mr. Valeri: Oh, yeah, in Naples, yeah.

Interviewer: Was the ship already ...

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Well, did you get -- go right on the ship when you got to Naples?

Mr. Valeri: No, no, we got in the morning. We got in the afternoon.

Interviewer: Do you remember of the ship?

Mr. Valeri: Yes.

Interviewer: What was the name?

Mr. Valeri: Manuel Carlo.

Interviewer: Manuel Carlo, C-A-R-L-O? Was that an Italian ship?

Mr. Valeri: Spanish. A Spanish ship.

Interviewer: Spanish. A Spanish ship.

Mr. Valeri: ***[inaudible] [0:12:24].***

Interviewer: Good. Tell me about the ship. Tell me about this ship you were on?

Mr. Valeri: Probably not to -- I will left home. We had everything we want, to eat, and the -- that damn ship was ***[inaudible] [0:12:40]*** stinking. I don't think I eat the meal twice ***[phonetic] [0:12:45]***. We had our stuff taken with us, ***[inaudible] [0:12:51]*** then the sea was so bad, took 23 days.

Interviewer: To come over here.

Mr. Valeri: Well, we stopped, made three stops. One in Barcelona in Spain.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Valeri: Cadiz.

Interviewer: Cadiz.

Mr. Valeri: Cadiz.

Interviewer: Cadiz.

Mr. Valeri: Barcelona, Cadiz.

Interviewer: ***[inaudible] [0:13:17].***

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: So there you stopped at Barcelona first, then you finally stopped at ***[inaudible] [0:13:24]*** second, right?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: And then as Cadiz because Cadiz is on the Atlantic ***[inaudible] [0:13:29].***

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did you stop any place else?

Mr. Valeri: No, no, no.

Interviewer: And then you ...

[Cross talk]

Mr. Valeri: We got off then. We went to a Spanish restaurant, out there over there.

Interviewer: Well, in Cadiz?

Mr. Valeri: In *[inaudible] [0:13:42]* a couple of days and we *[inaudible] [0:13:45]* there three percent.

Interviewer: *[inaudible] [0:13:51]*.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, and then I know how much *[inaudible] [0:13:54]*. They didn't our Italian money. We had *[inaudible] [0:13:57]* so we went to – we had to go to New York and change it. One other Italian man got there in that bank and changed their money. They didn't want Italian. So then we came to this country. We got off New York. Yes, New York then we got the train with ...

Interviewer: How was it when you got off the train or the ship, rather? Did they have you quarantined or anything or just broke off the ...

Mr. Valeri: No, they *[inaudible] [0:14:33]* and the doctor *[inaudible] [0:14:37]*

Interviewer: So the doctor checked you out. What year was that, now?

Mr. Valeri: What year?

Interviewer: Yeah, the 1915 or ...

Mr. Valeri: *[inaudible] [0:14:52]* 1915.

Interviewer: All right. So you got here 1915?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, when you first got here, did anybody meet you in New York?

[0:15:02]

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, my cousin.

Interviewer: Your cousin, where was he?

Mr. Valeri: He came right to – straight to Wilmington.

Interviewer: Oh, he came right straight to Wilmington?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, Ben *[phonetic]* **[0:15:11]**.

Interviewer: And did your cousin meet you at the train station?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah. Well, he had another friend. They come down to meet at the station, yeah.

Interviewer: Now, was it the Pennsylvania station or the ...

Mr. Valeri: Pennsylvania station.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's the one down French Street?

Mr. Valeri: French Street.

Interviewer: Right, right, French. Okay. Now, when you first got here, where did you live when you first arrived?

Mr. Valeri: *[inaudible]* **[0:15:34]** in – yeah, and in *[inaudible]* **[0:15:43]**. It was three months.

Interviewer: You stayed there three months? Did you find a job right away when you got here?

Mr. Valeri: There were no work, no job.

Interviewer: What did you do?

Mr. Valeri: We were – my uncle had *[inaudible]* **[0:15:59]** and I worked one day to tear down the old station, old Pennsylvania station because we were at a – what would have been the new station, it was the old station. I worked around there, got 50 cents.

Interviewer: 50 cents for one day? Where was the old station located, do you remember?

Mr. Valeri: Was it off the 1st Street *[phonetic]* **[0:16:30]** or off of that? *[inaudible]* **[0:16:32]** was in the middle of the station. I *[inaudible]* **[0:16:39]** percent I worked there three months and I went back month of May. When I left here, month of May, I went back home.

Interviewer: You went back to Italy?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: After three months here you went back to Italy?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah. There was no work here. My father *[inaudible]* **[0:17:05]**

Interviewer: Okay. Now, did your father have to send you the money from Italy to get home?

Mr. Valeri: Natalie *[phonetic]* **[0:17:12]** sent me \$30. See, this fellow was – he then ran to me for a ticket. Then in April he went to another place and I went to another – to go home. And that’s why I had to return this \$30, thanks to me.

Interviewer: Oh, you paid somebody *[inaudible]* **[0:17:30]** then for a ticket?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, when you went back to Italy, how did you make a – your father sent you the ticket from Italy?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah. Nat *[phonetic]* **[0:17:41]** sent me \$30 that – at Napoli when we got back. This fellow *[inaudible]* **[0:17:46]** ticket for the ship here in Wilmington. When we got to Naples -- and I returned the money.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. Now, where did you get the ship to get back to Italy here? Did you get the ship in Philadelphia or New York?

Mr. Valeri: In New York.

Interviewer: In New York?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: All right. What kind of a ship was it you went back to Italy on?

Mr. Valeri: I don't remember the name of it.

Interviewer: Was it an Italian ship?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But I don't remember ...

Interviewer: You don't remember the name. How about the conditions on that ship? Not on the Spanish ship but in this ...

Mr. Valeri: **[inaudible] [0:18:17]** the Spanish, yeah. Okay.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, when you got back to Italy and got back to San Fernando **[phonetic] [0:18:23]**, what did you do, go back to work for your father?

Mr. Valeri: We sent the – yeah. That year, in the same year, I started **[inaudible] [0:18:32]**. I wanted to come back here. I was 18 then. And he has to be consent and he had to come at the municipal.

Interviewer: Oh, he had to give you the consent to go to the ...

Mr. Valeri: The second time when I was home – when I come back here – when I wanted to come back here again. The second time I asked him. So he has to give me the consent. He won't give it to me. So I couldn't come back. I didn't want to stay home.

So we were a bunch of boys. You look at the **[inaudible] [0:19:08]** they go to Germany. So we went to Germany. But before that, I tell my father, "See, I want to go to Germany. "Well," he said, "You want to go to Germany? It's right across the **[inaudible] [0:19:22]** to the Australian convention." So when he gave the consent, I went to Germany.

Interviewer: Now, what year was that, do you remember?

Mr. Valeri: I was 18 years old then.

Interviewer: So the 1915?

Mr. Valeri: 1915.

Interviewer: And World War I was about to break out and you had already saw it happen?

Mr. Valeri: No, it was '16, wasn't it?

Interviewer: The 1915 it started?

Mr. Valeri: I don't remember. We were in Germany. And they were 17 and I was to take care of the boys. We got there in the month of April.

[0:20:01]

Interviewer: What was that again?

Mr. Valeri: We got there the month of April in Germany.

Interviewer: Oh, in the month of April. You got to Germany in April.

Mr. Valeri: And there were *[inaudible]* **[0:20:09]**. There was no work in here. We were sleeping in the station for three days, a big station in *[inaudible]* **[0:20:15]**. They let us sleep right there in the station because they *[inaudible]* **[0:20:18]** or not.

So, we got the job and then we come over – oh, no. All the sudden they – his bros went back to Frankfurt in Germany, counselor really. And then she sent back her territory.

Interviewer: And the counselor, the county counselor sent them back home to Italy, yes?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah. And there was three of us together. Me, a butcher and a brick layer, Solina *[phonetic]* **[0:20:55]**. Solina *[phonetic]* **[0:20:56]**, that guy Solina *[phonetic]* **[0:20:57]**.

Speaker 3: Tolina is ...

Mr. Valeri: Solina *[phonetic]* **[0:20:59]**, Solina *[phonetic]* **[0:21:00]** *[inaudible]* **[0:21:01]**?

Unidentified voice: Yes.

Mr. Valeri: *[inaudible]* **[0:21:06]**.

Unidentified voice: *[inaudible]* **[0:21:07]**

Mr. Valeri: But anyway, me, butcher and brick layer. And we got a job there. We got the 35 Saturday night and *[inaudible]* **[0:21:26]** for about 9 – 11 cents an hour. And that was the – and they were all involved.

Interviewer: And what kind of work were you doing?

Speker 3: Construction.

Mr. Valeri: And lasted there about two, three months there, didn't like it. They went back and I remained by myself. I was there. In the fall of the year, I come back here and ...

Interviewer: Did you come back to United States?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: From Germany?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, I didn't go home at all. But I had the passport already. It's a *[inaudible]* **[0:22:05]** and I got to come back soon and I have to be shy again so I come back here. I come back here, I went to the *[inaudible]* **[0:22:16]** man on the railroad. And with my cousin, he was following this with another friend of mine and we were staying at the *[inaudible]* **[0:22:30]**. I went to work on railroad and I was sleeping on the caboose.

Interviewer: On a caboose?

Mr. Valeri: Right there cooking. I was there two months, not even two months. I think only, you know what, payday. So I come back to Wilmington and I got a job doing anything, banker, I swear I got a job. Yeah.

Interviewer: Don't worry. What was life like in Germany for you?

Mr. Valeri: Best country I ever put the foot in – best country, the best days. You're for the country and are good people. And the Saturday after 5 o'clock, they got the place dancing and they go ...

Unidentified voice: And enjoy yourself for one thing ...

Interviewer: Were there a lot of Italians where you were?

Mr. Valeri: No, no, no.

Interviewer: What was the name of the city where you stayed in Germany?

Mr. Valeri: Kassel.

Interviewer: Kassel? You do remember how to spell it? Is it K-A-S-E-L?

Mr. Valeri: K-A-S-L, Kassel.

Interviewer: K-A-S-E-L.

Mr. Valeri: Kassel.

Interviewer: And you stayed there about three months, you were saying?

Mr. Valeri: No. A friend of mine stayed there three months and left. And I left there the following year.

Interviewer: Oh, you stayed there for a year?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: And you really liked it there?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah. And from there, I come back here. I went – as an *[inaudible]* **[0:23:56]** across to Kassel called Piedmont *[inaudible]* **[0:24:00]**

Interviewer: What was the name of the city again?

Mr. Valeri: Piedmont.

Interviewer: Piedmont?

Mr. Valeri: Piedmont, like the cigarette.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah. Okay.

Mr. Valeri: And I borrowed 3 price for a mineral water.

Interviewer: Now they call it a spa, a health spa. I guess this is the third cause and effect. Yes.

Mr. Valeri: We never had a -- there they have the -- of course the size of mineral water there, price is at two, three girls, maybe four woman. And they give you the -- yeah, you can have a lot of glass then. They give you water

until you need *[inaudible]* [0:24:40] not allowed to go into *[inaudible]* [0:24:43]. Then I came here.

Interviewer: Now, when you left Germany, where did you leave from?

[Cross talk]

Mr. Valeri: We went to *[inaudible]* [0:25:01].

[0:25:02]

Interviewer: In *[inaudible]* [0:25:02]? It was in the north? How did you know? It was a German port?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Had to be in north. I can think of any other port *[phonetic]* [0:25:15].

Mr. Valeri: No, Frankfurt.

Interviewer: Frankfurt is in ...

[Cross talk]

Interviewer: But it's really not that important. Anyhow, now the ship that you left over, was it a German ship?

Mr. Valeri: Yes.

Interviewer: How was the German ship compared to the other two ships you've already been on?

Mr. Valeri: Oh, it's nice, pretty good, basically.

Interviewer: Did you have a cabin of your own there or did you ...

Mr. Valeri: No, no, no.

Interviewer: You're in just ...

Mr. Valeri: I think we were six *[inaudible]* [0:25:43].

Interviewer: **[inaudible] [0:25:45]** okay. Now, the first time you gotten back here in the United States and you got settled back in Wilmington, you went to work at Bancroft.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: What kind of work did you do at Bancroft?

Mr. Valeri: They call it the **[inaudible] [0:26:00]** the kind of work I did in Bancroft, the textile.

Interviewer: The textiles, weaving of textiles. What was the pay like at that time? And this what, 1916?

Mr. Valeri: It wasn't too much ...

[Cross talk]

Interviewer: That was 75 a day? And what year it was?

Mr. Valeri: I can tell you that.

Interviewer: What year was that?

Mr. Valeri: It was in the '16.

Interviewer: 1916. Now, the war started **[inaudible] [0:26:29]** right?

Mr. Valeri: Not quite then. Well, I remember **[inaudible] [0:26:33]** from there I went to work to **[inaudible] [0:26:35]** quarries. They have about **[inaudible] [0:26:43]** up there. There, we went **[inaudible] [0:26:48]**.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Valeri: That's why they call it **[inaudible] [0:26:55]** quarry and nice to work.

Interviewer: And you worked there **[inaudible] [0:27:02]**.

Mr. Valeri: Right.

Interviewer: You know, just blast the **[inaudible] [0:27:04]**?

Mr. Valeri: Not me. I was a young boy. But we have a man *[inaudible]* **[0:27:09]**. I used to fire *[inaudible]* **[0:27:14]** then I've run cranes that load there. And from there I went to work *[inaudible]* **[0:27:23]** commissary.

Interviewer: A commissary?

Mr. Valeri: A commissary. I was my wife's assistant. I was married to her then who was a friend *[inaudible]* **[0:27:34]** look was his name. And then from there we went to Stony Creek, Connecticut, the same company, in a quarry down there. And then I went to work, come back in Wilmington. I got married, went to the -- I work, started that time Du Pont building.

Interviewer: Oh, they started building the Du Pont building?

Mr. Valeri: Du Pont building.

Interviewer: You went to work to contractor ...

[Cross talk]

Mr. Valeri: It's all right that then. It was fairly huge. People were afraid. *[inaudible]* **[0:28:23]**.

Interviewer: Well, you just run the elevator up and down bringing building materials and people *[inaudible]* **[0:28:31]**?

Mr. Valeri: Well, the people and the *[inaudible]* **[0:28:33]** people.

Interviewer: Well, what I mean is the workers

Mr. Valeri: And material, anywhere.

Interviewer: Right. Now, tell me, when you worked there, were you working *[inaudible]* **[0:28:43]** Italians or were they all different people?

Mr. Valeri: Well, mixed out there.

Interviewer: Oh, mixed. How were you treated as an Italian, how were you treated?

Mr. Valeri: All right. I was treated nice.

Interviewer: Would you say that anybody treated you badly because you were Italian?

Mr. Valeri: No, no.

Interviewer: No?

Mr. Valeri: No, no.

Interviewer: Okay, fine. Now, when you first got to United States, what did you do when you weren't working? What were your free hours like, your recreation or ...?

[Cross talk]

Mr. Valeri: ... in the evening. But when I got to commissary, we're up in the morning about 6 o'clock and everything close at 9 o'clock **[inaudible] [0:29:28]** 10 o'clock.

Interviewer: Yeah, this commissary belong to the company?

Mr. Valeri: They belong to this Johnny Luke **[phonetic] [0:29:36]**, the name. Of course, the company get **[inaudible] [0:29:42]** 10 percent.

Interviewer: What did you sell in this commissary?

Mr. Valeri: Everything, shoes and clothes and meat, groceries, everything.

Unidentified voice: Whiskey, coke.

Mr. Valeri: Yes, whiskey too.

Unidentified voice: Everything, everything.

Mr. Valeri: Beer. And **[phonetic] [0:29:56]** we have about 190 people working on the quarry.

[0:30:03]

Interviewer: Okay. Now, did you go to church or anything like that those days? Was it a Catholic church you go to?

Mr. Valeri: We go to a Catholic church. I went there when we were in Wilmington **[inaudible] [0:30:13]** country, there's church there.

Interviewer: Yeah, which church did you go to when you're here in Wilmington?

Mr. Valeri: We went over to Saint ...

Interviewer: Saint Thomas?

Mr. Valeri: Saint Thomas, yeah *[inaudible]* **[0:30:25]** we got married there.

Interviewer: Okay, how was Saint Thomas? Could you go to any mass you wanted to or did they have one mass for the Italians or?

Mr. Valeri: No, no, no, go to any mass you want.

Interviewer: You go to mass you wanted to. Okay, did you belong to any sort of clubs? Did you join any clubs here?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, I belong to the Oaks *[phonetic]* **[0:30:44]**.

Interviewer: The Oaks *[phonetic]* **[0:30:45]**. When did you join the Oaks *[phonetic]* **[0:30:46]**?

Mr. Valeri: That was when I went to work with *[inaudible]* **[0:30:51]**.

Interviewer: How long was that?

Mr. Valeri: I left in 1922, that must have been 1919.

Interviewer: 1919, you joined the Oaks *[phonetic]* **[0:31:07]**.

Mr. Valeri: I joined in the west chapter, Oaks *[phonetic]* **[0:31:09]**.

Interviewer: Okay, did you ever belong to anything like the Eagles?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: Sons of Italy, anything?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, were you in Wilmington when Saint Anthony's was founded?

Mr. Valeri: Yes, yeah. I was one of the committee.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, what was the life like in Wilmington before Saint Anthony's was founded? The reason I ask you this question is because I want to ask just what sort of an effect on the Italian community did the founding of the Saint Anthony's Church.

Mr. Valeri: The fact there has this church, it was built, the people at the church and **[inaudible] [0:31:57]**.

Interviewer: Well, why did feel it necessary to have an Italian Parish? Why couldn't they just go to the other churches that were around here?

Mr. Valeri: We had Father Tucker, that was the first parish church priest up then.

Interviewer: Yeah, I know. He founded the church.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah. I was in committee, me **[inaudible] [0:32:25]**.

Interviewer: I want to ask you. Did the Italian people feel unwanted in a lot of these other churches like Saint Andrew's, Saint Thomas or Saint Peters?

Mr. Valeri: Well, they want because -- all right, the Italian people have no choice to go **[inaudible] [0:32:43]** go in their own church, you see.

Interviewer: Did they feel uncomfortable on these other churches?

Mr. Valeri: Yes.

Interviewer: Why did they feel uncomfortable?

Mr. Valeri: I guess, they like more, but they built a little church on the side there.

Interviewer: I remember the little church, the chapel.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: It's where right where the priest houses now.

Mr. Valeri: In this site a little bit more because I worked there. They helped it running.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, what were you doing at the time when this church was built? Where did you work?

Mr. Valeri: I worked for Jay Bager **[phonetic] [0:33:24]** Company.

Interviewer: The Bager, Jay Bager **[phonetic] [0:33:26]**.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: What kind of work were you doing?

Mr. Valeri: We're on the elevator.

Interviewer: Yeah, elevator. This building you're building down the Du Pont building?

Mr. Valeri: Well, from one place, went there to another.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Valeri: Then we discard *[inaudible]* **[0:33:39]** market there, the queen used to be there.

Interviewer: The queen, yes Queen Elizabeth *[phonetic]* **[0:33:49]**.

Mr. Valeri: And there used to be *[inaudible]* **[0:33:51]** because there *[inaudible]* **[0:33:56]** out there. I used to there. Then I worked there. I worked *[inaudible]* **[0:34:05]** too. That's when the war going on then.

Interviewer: Okay. Tell me, how did the World War I affect the Italian people living here?

Mr. Valeri: Well, I can speak for myself. We worked at the *[inaudible]* **[0:34:23]** little of *[inaudible]* **[0:34:26]** for the people, used to work around the *[inaudible]* **[0:34:30]** house too, build a temporary home there. And we didn't have no trouble or course, just begin the war then was in '16. I remember now.

Interviewer: How about the *[inaudible]* **[0:34:45]** Italians now? The *[inaudible]* **[0:34:46]** Italian mingled back to Italy, they get and go to the Italian army?

Mr. Valeri: They did. Some of the ...

Interviewer: Did they have to go or they did it voluntarily.

Mr. Valeri: The Italian government require it -- for me too, required to go home. Otherwise, you couldn't come back.

[0:35:03]

Mr. Valeri: And some went. Some didn't. I didn't go. And I went back, 1922. They never bothered me.

Interviewer: Now, those who went back, did you go into the American army?

Mr. Valeri: No, I was 35 years old. I remember now. Yeah, I was in Westchester then at that time. And I had three children. I was 35.

Interviewer: Well, that was what, World War I?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah. But *[inaudible]* **[0:35:39]** or they call a -- I claimed I had three children, 35 years old. Then exempts me. They exempt me.

Interviewer: Then you got exempted. This is for World War I, right? You were exempted.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And you were working in Paynesville *[phonetic]* **[0:36:01]** this time?

Mr. Valeri: That time I was working in *[inaudible]* **[0:36:04]** at Longwood.

Interviewer: At Longwood. Okay. Now, after the war was over, how did your life change then? Now, certainly *[inaudible]* **[0:36:20]** big changes are made, changes in the way we life. Now, maybe it's because of the advances made during the war even though there's a lot of destruction done, there are a lot of advances made. How did your life change? For instance, your living, working standard, your standard of living and everything else.

Mr. Valeri: *[inaudible]* **[0:36:42]** it was the same and I was there. After the war, it changed a little bit. Price too went up too. And that's all.

Interviewer: Prices went up, wages went up too, didn't they?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, the wages, yes. Yeah.

Interviewer: Everything went up.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: All right. Now, there were certain changes that you're probably not even thinking about now. Screen doors came out after World War I, right? You don't remember that? Well, how about centralized TV? When did centralized TV first start *[inaudible]* **[0:37:24]** here? Before then, we have a stove in the kitchen. I remember, when I was a kid, we just had a stove in the kitchen. That was it. There was nothing else.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: And after World War I, we had a ...

Mr. Valeri: Well, we -- I was up to Longwood then. I was up there about a year and a half, two year, three, four years. Yeah, in fact *[inaudible]* **[0:37:51]**. That's before this, before that. After that, we had a house there *[inaudible]* **[0:38:01]**.

Interviewer: What was the village called?

Mr. Valeri: Before we get right on the course, they call it Emerald *[phonetic]* **[0:38:11]**. *[inaudible]* **[0:38:15]**.

Interviewer: Oh, Emerald *[phonetic]* **[0:38:22]**. Yeah, Emerald *[phonetic]* **[0:38:23]**.

Mr. Valeri: Right there was a *[inaudible]* **[0:38:24]** army quarry along Longwood and we're living.

Interviewer: Well, it's called Emerald *[phonetic]* **[0:38:31]**.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah. And we were living near there. I used to know about this, it used to army quarry. And we were living there about a year and a half. From there, we built a new home for the -- in fact, we have a big home for those people. We had a lot of Finish coming to work for the Longwood. We used to *[inaudible]* **[0:38:58]** that time *[inaudible]* **[0:39:01]**. And so we had lots of people.

Interviewer: A lot of Italians from Finland.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: And so, they were brought by Du Pont, worked there at the greenhouse.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, we used to be in *[inaudible]* **[0:39:15]** agent at New York. I used to go in New York *[inaudible]* **[0:39:19]** month to get those people.

Interviewer: Oh, you used to go up and get them.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, I was *[inaudible]* **[0:39:24]** up there. And then we used to pay \$5 a head for those people making up there. They are a bunch of people *[inaudible]* **[0:39:34]** getting on the train when your next station and *[inaudible]* **[0:39:39]** went back.

Interviewer: Oh really.

Mr. Valeri: **[inaudible] [0:39:41]** got in there, had to pay it from the **[inaudible] [0:39:46]** so we went to that no more. We had a life, all right.

Interviewer: **[inaudible] [0:39:54]** problem, then.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: Now, in the early '20s around 1923, '24, '25, Mussolini was coming to power in Italy. Okay, now, you should you went back at 1922.

[0:40:11]

Mr. Valeri: Yes.

Interviewer: Was there a lot of talk about Mussolini there in Italy?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah. In fact, at a village or in a city over there, there were **[inaudible] [0:40:25]** more. And they worked with me over the **[inaudible] [0:40:33]** quarry, on the commissary.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Valeri: So, he was helping me in the office out there. Now, I used to go gunning. I like gunning. And it was him, **[inaudible] [0:40:48]** was a lawyer. And he won't give it to me. He said, "You're American insurgent **[phonetic] [0:40:56]**." What I had to do, I joined Mussolini.

Interviewer: Did you join the Fascist?

Mr. Valeri: The Fascist. And I would leave money on the table for the last **[inaudible] [0:41:09]**. And it was a terrible **[inaudible] [0:41:11]** I got my license, I used to go to gunning there.

Interviewer: What did the people think of Mussolini then?

Mr. Valeri: I think he was the best man **[inaudible] [0:41:24]**. Tell them they done good for Italy. Very good.

Interviewer: And most of the people thought the same thing about it, right? When you went back to Italy, how long did you stay **[inaudible] [0:41:34]**?

Mr. Valeri: Eight months.

Interviewer: Eight months, then you came back here.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: What did the people in the United States think of Mussolini?

Mr. Valeri: The Russian people didn't like *[inaudible] [0:41:41]* they said, they were barbaric people but they never -- I remember ...

Unidentified voice: *[inaudible] [0:41:55]*.

Mr. Valeri: I remember and said to place them in fire.

Interviewer: Where is that? In Italy?

Mr. Valeri: In Italy. And also people *[inaudible] [0:42:05]* anarchist and all over it. And they didn't like it.

Interviewer: The anarchist of course, they were the communist. They oppose Mussolini. And you see you have friction there. You had friction between the two moves?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: But here in the United States, what did people say about Mussolini?

Mr. Valeri: What I could say, they're like, some will like it, some didn't like it.

Interviewer: How about the Italians here in the United States? What did ...

Mr. Valeri: The same way.

Interviewer: The same way. Was there any fascist organizations that you knew out here in the United States?

Mr. Valeri: No, not I know.

Interviewer: Did you hear the Fascist League of North America?

Mr. Valeri: No.

Interviewer: You haven't heard of it? This was the fascist organization here in this country now. And it was active here in Wilmington. So they had a group here in Wilmington. I don't know if you remember Joe Moreno?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, sure.

Interviewer: Joe Moreno was in it. And my father was in it. So I just thought maybe you might remember because they're a lot up there.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, I remember. I know Joe.

Unidentified voice: Maybe your father *[inaudible]* **[0:43:03]**.

Interviewer: Huh?

Unidentified voice: Maybe your father was like anybody else.

Interviewer: He's just like anybody else.

Unidentified voice: *[inaudible]* **[0:43:09]** people, they're Latin.

Interviewer: That's right.

Unidentified voice: And it really depends on actually ...

Interviewer: Yeah, I'm surprised that how many people never heard of this organization ...

[Cross talk]

Unidentified voice: Personal, myself *[inaudible]* **[0:43:22]** speak up.

Interviewer: Yes.

Unidentified voice: *[inaudible]* **[0:43:25]** I can speak.

Interviewer: Yes.

Unidentified voice: If I say the president is bum, he's a bum. But in other words, he say he's bum, he's a bum too.

Interviewer: Yes.

Unidentified voice: *[inaudible]* **[0:43:33]** what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah, well, I was ...

[Cross talk]

Interviewer: Okay. Now, when Mussolini got power in Italy, he eventually rose to power. And of course, you have sort of cleavage between the United States and Italy.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: And World War II started, I'm jumping from frankly from World War I to World War II, there was a little bit of a problem for most Italians here in this country. And the reason that the problem existed now, in World War I, the United States think they're on the same side. And of course, in World War II, they're on different sides.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: How would you say this affected the Italians here? What was your impression of everything? How did you personally feel? How did you feel when the United States had to go against Italy? How did you feel about this?

Mr. Valeri: Well, I was American citizen then myself.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Valeri: And what I felt -- I didn't know that it was a very good idea for me anyway. Before, when I thought -- well what I can say **[inaudible]** **[0:44:56]**.

Interviewer: I guess it unfortunate, an unfortunate thing.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, and you have to somehow ...

[0:45:02]

Interviewer: I imagine you were pretty well torn inside.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: And your family. You came from Italy and your family over there.

Mr. Valeri: No, no, *[inaudible] [0:45:09]* my mother and father right there. I have some *[inaudible] [0:45:16]* son and the children, any sister or brother would be -- I would feel worse but I didn't have ...

Interviewer: Okay. Now, excuse me, the United States went to you several periods while you were here. For example, while you were here the Prohibition became the law. How did prohibition affect the daily life of most people? How would you say, if I can ...?

Mr. Valeri: *[inaudible] [0:45:47]*. I let the law *[inaudible] [0:45:52]* and so I -- yeah, and I had a price. I never *[inaudible] [0:45:57]* for anything. If I wanted any liquor, I know where to go get it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Valeri: I mean, not to good *[inaudible] [0:46:02]* then but this was our liquor, our good stuff. And *[inaudible] [0:46:09]* was very severe.

Interviewer: What did you think of Prohibition? Do you think it's rather stupid thing?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, I think it wasn't *[inaudible] [0:46:20]* and a lot of *[inaudible] [0:46:25]* pushes it up to get to discuss about it *[inaudible] [0:46:38]*.

Interviewer: Now, here's a question for *[inaudible] [0:46:42]*.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, after the Prohibition, of course, coinciding with Prohibition, we also had a depression.

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: What effect did the depression, the crash in '29 and the '30s, that effect did this have on most people from the way you could ...?

Mr. Valeri: Well, in '29 I was working *[inaudible] [0:47:05]* excavating there. And I went to work *[inaudible] [0:47:14]* he was a contractor. *[inaudible] [0:47:18]* stock across the street *[inaudible] [0:47:22]* street.

Every morning, we used to come down and *[inaudible] [0:47:27]* people like the *[inaudible] [0:47:33]* couldn't get it. And the other one like to have it? Why don't you go get it? So *[inaudible] [0:47:40]* I bought 120 shares *[inaudible] [0:47:45]*. And I pay \$70 for it.

Interviewer: For 120 shares?

Mr. Valeri: A piece.

Interviewer: A piece, a share. Okay.

Mr. Valeri: The other brother combined to buy some *[inaudible]* [0:48:01]. He tell I got *[inaudible]* [0:48:05]. This was after the depression was going on. *[inaudible]* [0:48:11] and he said that I got to pick. He had a bunch of share too. He trade his General Motors for one brother. Then the thing went down *[inaudible]* [0:48:24] share was worth *[inaudible]* [0:48:28].

So I never changed *[inaudible]* [0:48:35]. I don't know how to *[inaudible]* [0:48:39] to look around where I had it. And finally, I went down a bank. Yeah. This General Motor, I went to work *[inaudible]* [0:48:53] down the bank. I told him, I said, Muscani *[phonetic]* [0:48:57], understood that -- anyway, I changed one General Motor to one brother.

He say, you want to do it? I say, everybody is doing this all right, I said. *[inaudible]* [0:49:09]. And that's all it was. That was it. *[inaudible]* [0:49:21]. I was working and then I would shovel up to three trucks, laborious day.

Interviewer: Oh, you have business for yourself?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh, where did you go for business for yourself?

Mr. Valeri: In Wilmington.

Interviewer: When?

Mr. Valeri: Like in '22. I left Longwood. I come back '23. I worked in *[inaudible]* [0:49:44] one year, '24, '25.

Interviewer: 1925? You got to shovel a couple of trucks and ...

Mr. Valeri: Yeah, I worked with the *[inaudible]* [0:49:54]. But he is a crook. So we used to take trim extra men on the payroll and fire out *[inaudible]* [0:50:09].

[0:50:14]

Interviewer: But you are a part of this *[inaudible]* [0:50:15]?

Mr. Valeri: Yeah.

Interviewer: Now, we're getting back now to when Roosevelt was elected. Okay. Now, Hoover was the president when the crash started. What kind of an effect did Roosevelt have on the country as a whole when he was elected?

Mr. Valeri: *[inaudible]* [0:50:39].

Interviewer: You don't remember what changes occurred or anything? Okay, I want to ask you one other thing here. And I don't have too much more to ask you. What would you consider to be the biggest change that has occurred here in this country since you first came here? And there have been a lot of changes. But what is single thing that you say is the biggest change that ...

Mr. Valeri: The change that right now we have.

Interviewer: The change that we're having right now.

Mr. Valeri: Right now, we have ...

Interviewer: Could you be more specific in that thing?

Mr. Valeri: Between white people and colored people.

Interviewer: The trouble between the two.

Mr. Valeri: Yes.

Interviewer: You say that's the biggest change we've had?

Mr. Valeri: Yes, yeah.

Interviewer: There has never been such friction before here.

Mr. Valeri: No, no.

Interviewer: And you say this is the biggest change. Have you ever regretted coming to the Unites States?

Mr. Valeri: No, I don't.

Interviewer: Okay. Would you say that you prefer the old days to the present?

Mr. Valeri: Oh, yes, anytime I'm doing *[inaudible]* **[0:51:36]** people with better *[inaudible]* **[0:51:46]** we used to get along very nice.

Interviewer: What do you mean? What you mean is maybe people enjoyed one another more then than they do now.

Mr. Valeri: Sure.

[Cross talk]

Mr. Valeri: ... friendship.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Valeri: More friendship.

Interviewer: Okay. Is there anything you'd like to add to this?

Mr. Valeri: It's all I can say. It's all I can say.

Interviewer: Is there anything that maybe I didn't ask you about that you would want to mention?

Mr. Valeri: No, no.

Interviewer: Okay.

[0:52:24] **End of Audio**