



Citation for this collection:

MSS 179 Robert H. Richards, Jr., Delaware oral history collection, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware

Contact:

Special Collections, University of Delaware Library
181 South College Avenue
Newark, DE 19717-5267
302.831.2229 / 302.831.1046 (fax)
<http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec>
askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu

Terms governing use and reproduction:

Use of materials from this collection beyond the exceptions provided for in the Fair Use and Educational Use clauses of the U.S. Copyright Law may violate federal law.

Permission to publish or reproduce is required from the copyright holder. Please contact Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, for questions. askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu

A note about transcriptions:

Of the original 252 audio-recordings in this collection, 212 of these tapes were transcribed around the time of the original recordings (between 1966 and 1978). In 2012, Cabbage Tree Solutions was contracted to create transcriptions for the remaining tapes. Corrections to and clarifications for all transcriptions are welcome, especially for names and places. Please contact Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, for questions. askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu

Mr. Salvatore Ferrigno

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: Where were you born?

Mr. Ferrigno: I was born in Linchen City called Achira

Interviewer: Achiro?

Mr. Ferrigno: Achira.

Interviewer: Achira.

Mr. Ferrigno: It's near Naples.

Interviewer: It is there in Naples?

Mr. Ferrigno: That's a walking distance from Naples.

Interviewer: I see. Now, what did you do there as a child? Did you ever...?

Mr. Ferrigno: I came here when I was -- not quite seven.

Interviewer: You're not quite seven years old?

Mr. Ferrigno: I went to kindergarten and first grade.

Interviewer: In Italy?

Mr. Ferrigno: I was promoted to the second grade when we came here.

Interviewer: That's it. Now, what did your father do in Italy?

Mr. Ferrigno: He used to help his mother in the restaurant when his father died -- when my father is 14, he -- my father helped his mother.

Interviewer: Now, what decided your father to come to United States?

Mr. Ferrigno: Well, as far as I know, it was to improve himself.

Interviewer: To improve himself? Did he feel pretty much stymie in Italy and no place to go?

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Do you any -- now, you came over with your father, correct? Your father and your mother?

Mr. Ferrigno: No, I didn't. My father came here two or three years before we did to establish himself and then he sent for us there.

Interviewer: I see. Now, what year was it that you came here?

Mr. Ferrigno: 1921.

Interviewer: 1912. You came with your mother at that time, right?

Mr. Ferrigno: That's right.

Interviewer: Do you remember how you got here as you left Achira and how...?

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes, I do. I left from Naples. We were driven *[inaudible]* **[0:01:36]** by horse and carriage. My uncle and -- I don't remember who else accompanied us. I drove with my grandmother and probably saw a lot of people *[inaudible]* **[0:01:50]** Naples and we left from Naples.

Interviewer: Oh, in other words you went two Naples from your hometown in a horse?

Mr. Ferrigno: That's right.

Interviewer: Now, when you got to Naples, was the ship that you are to lead on import?

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes, it was import. Yes.

Interviewer: So you went directly to the ship.

Mr. Ferrigno: ...it was in a matter of hours. Maybe two or three hours, we left.

Interviewer: Do you remember the name of the ship?

Mr. Ferrigno: It's -- my mother tells me, it was Princess Irene.

Interviewer: Princess Irene?

Mr. Ferrigno: Actually, it was a German ship.

Interviewer: A German ship. Okay. How long did it take to get to the United States?

Mr. Ferrigno: Oh, I would say two weeks.

Interviewer: About two weeks?

Mr. Ferrigno: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: Did the ship make any of stops at any other ports?

Mr. Ferrigno: I don't believe so. We came direct -- oh, wait a minute, wait a minute **[inaudible] [0:02:28]**. I think they stopped at **[inaudible] [0:02:30]**. That was routine for ships.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything about shipboard life? Remember how it was when you're coming over?

Mr. Ferrigno: Well, it was pretty cramming.

Interviewer: And pretty bad, yes.

Mr. Ferrigno: I hadn't taken any trips recently to compare it with. But from what I recall, there wasn't -- we came in third class, which was pretty -- well, pretty low in the ship. But we did have -- we were able to see through the port halls.

Interviewer: I see. Now...

Mr. Ferrigno: So, it wasn't down the bottom altogether.

Interviewer: Were there **[inaudible] [0:03:13]** aboard the ship?

Mr. Ferrigno: **[inaudible] [0:03:15]**.

Interviewer: **[inaudible] [0:03:19]**. How did you live there? Were you in compartments by families or...?

Mr. Ferrigno: No, we had no privacy at all. I think the -- it seem to me like one big area without any compartments. It might have been separations, partition separating into small areas, but I'm not quite sure. But there were bunks -- there were people sleeping above us in the bunk.

Interviewer: Was there a separation of men and woman?

Mr. Ferrigno: No, just separation of families.

Interviewer: That's it. So, okay. Now, once you got here, where did you land? In New York?

Mr. Ferrigno: We landed -- no, we didn't land in New York, we landed in Ellis Island and then we came through a hobo.

Interviewer: Did anyone meet you when the ship...?

Mr. Ferrigno: Well, my father came to meet us.

Interviewer: Your father came to meet you?

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes.

Interviewer: Were you held up very long at Ellis Island?

Mr. Ferrigno: No, I don't think so. I would say probably half hour to an hour.

Interviewer: Half hour to an hour? Now, where did you go from there?

Mr. Ferrigno: We came to -- we came directly to East Rutherford where my father established.

Interviewer: Your father --

Mr. Ferrigno: East Rutherford is from New Jersey.

Interviewer: What did your father do for a living there?

Mr. Ferrigno: He worked in an automobile tire factory.

Interviewer: He's making automobile tires there?

Mr. Ferrigno: Well, he wasn't making...

Interviewer: But in the manufacturing process...

Mr. Ferrigno: In the mill department *[inaudible]* **[0:04:47]** where they mix crude rubber with compounds and...

Interviewer: Do you remember the first house that you lived in when you came over?

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes, I do.

Interviewer: Could you describe that at all?

[0:05:00]

Mr. Ferrigno: Well, it was a frame house, two-story frame house. We live in the apartment.

Interviewer: Now, could you -- do you remember what your first impression was knowing what the Italian houses are like? Italian houses are much more massive than the American houses are. It's completely different concept in private housing in Italy from what there is here. What was your first impression when you saw the house?

Unidentified voice: **[inaudible] [0:05:30].**

Mr. Ferrigno: No, what impress me was not -- not the individual houses, especially. I don't recall any impression that they made, except they were fresh looking. And just like a **[inaudible] [0:05:44]** fresh looking, not crowded like the city was.

Interviewer: I see.

Mr. Ferrigno: And it wasn't really -- the house didn't impress me as much as just the overall picture of countryside. It was a small town atmosphere.

Interviewer: It's an atmosphere that is completely...

Mr. Ferrigno: Completely different. It was new. It was --everything about it was new and fresh.

Interviewer: Now, when you first arrived, what were some of the first things you did when you came to this country? Certainly, you were just a little boy and you did act on your...

Mr. Ferrigno: Well, we -- my father took us to meet some friends of his. And I was impressed, for instance, the lady gave us her banana, and I think she gave a cup of tea and the banana cost - bananas at that time, especially, were very scarce in the city. And that impress me with the lady, which I don't remember, other than recall having eaten the banana.

Interviewer: What kind of...

Mr. Ferrigno: That's what I can remember.

Interviewer: Yes, what time of year did you get here? I assume you got here...

Mr. Ferrigno: June 1st.

Interviewer: Right, in June. Now, when you got here your school age, of course, you have to go to school.

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes.

Interviewer: Now, before we get into school, I'd like to ask you one other question about the community in general. Were there many Italians in this community?

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes, there were quite a lot of Italians.

Interviewer: There were quite a few Italians there.

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes.

Interviewer: Why brought the Italians in that particular area?

Mr. Ferrigno: That I don't know.

Unidentified voice: Most of them came from Brooklyn, didn't they, the original?

Mr. Ferrigno: I don't know.

Interviewer: Were they drawn there by the rubber factory, do you think?

Mr. Ferrigno: That could have been. We had quite a bit of manufacturing. They're in that town.

Interviewer: All right. Now, when you started school, did you start at a public school or was it a catholic school?

Mr. Ferrigno: Public school.

Interviewer: A public school.

Mr. Ferrigno: Public school.

Interviewer: In what grade did you start?

Mr. Ferrigno: I start in the first. The reason for that was I wasn't quite seven and that was the rule. I mean, I wasn't seven until October 1st. And just for two weeks I was *[inaudible]* [0:07:56].

Interviewer: I see. Then you went through school, your entire schooling in the public school system of the United States, right?

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you stay in East Rutherford all of your life?

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes, right through high school.

Interviewer: Right through high school? Now, as a youngster, now we're going back to 1912 when you started school in the United States. Would you say that in school there were mostly Italian-Americans or Italians?

Mr. Ferrigno: No, no...

Interviewer: Half or smaller percentage?

Mr. Ferrigno: No, not smaller percentage. I would say 10 percent.

Interviewer: About 10 percent Italian. How would you treat it as an Italian? Did the people treat you all right or did -- was there any discrimination of any kind?

Mr. Ferrigno: Most of them. Not in school. I don't think they show too much discrimination in school. Out of school, yes.

Interviewer: What sort of discrimination did you get out of school?

Mr. Ferrigno: Well, you know, the names I called in Italians.

Interviewer: Names called, yes, this sort of thing.

Mr. Ferrigno: Minor things.

Interviewer: All right. I mean, nothing really major.

Mr. Ferrigno: No.

Interviewer: Would you say there's any job discrimination of any sort?

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes, there was. I remember in one occasion. I went -- after high school I went for a job. I applied at -- I don't want to mention the company. I don't think it's fair to mention the company.

Interviewer: Well, it makes a difference...

Mr. Ferrigno: Well...

Interviewer: Just about all are more guilty of it.

Mr. Ferrigno: That's right. That's the reason I don't even care to mention.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Ferrigno: And the man that review my application said, "Hey, it looks fine. I think we'll give you the job. But one more thing, I have to take it up with my manager." And he went to his manager and he stayed there about four or five minutes and he came back and he said, "Well, I'm sorry I got bad news for you. I said, "What's the problem?" He said, "Well, I don't think we're going to give you the job because we had another Italian boy here and he gummed up the work." Those were his exact words.

And I was really disappointed. I thought, "Well, maybe it happens this way because I wouldn't want to work for anybody as an apprentice like you people are." I could be that small. So they turned me down because another young man of Italian gummed up the work.

[0:10:01]

That was the case with extreme pressure, and that's all it was.

Interviewer: Yes. Certainly. Now, where did you go to university after...?

Mr. Ferrigno: I went -- I work at day time and went to Columbia University, School of Architecture. I took the course there in years, for about seven or eight years.

Interviewer: All right. Now, when World War once started in this country, do you have any fresh recollections of that?

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes, I have some recollections.

Interviewer: How did this affect the Italian community? Now, did you live in there, for example, what we might call Little Italy in East Rutherford or *[inaudible]* **[0:10:37]**?

Mr. Ferrigno: Well -- on the **[inaudible] [0:10:39]** we had only one other Italian family on the street. I live there.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Ferrigno: But in the neighboring area, there were quite a few Italians and some Negro families in the same area and we got along very nicely together. It doesn't seem like the situation today.

Interviewer: What was it like when World War I was starting? How did people react? How did they feel?

Mr. Ferrigno: Well, I think there was -- most people were very, very patriotic, and they showed it. It seems there is a reason for going to war as I compare it with the situation today with Mr. Johnson's word. It was just **[inaudible] [0:11:17]...**

Interviewer: An entire different atmosphere.

Mr. Ferrigno: They showed that patriotism.

Interviewer: How about the Italians? Did they want to go back to Italy to find the Italian army or did they choose first here?

Mr. Ferrigno: I don't think -- I don't think they even thought of the Italian army.

Interviewer: They did not able to think?

Mr. Ferrigno: No, I think it was -- no, they were really Americans. One of the American was named after an Italian boy...

Interviewer: This was in East Rutherford?

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes, in East Rutherford. It was named after him and also after one of our teachers, one of our male teachers. His name was Reagan, **[inaudible] [0:11:51]** from East Rutherford.

Interviewer: Oh, really, in World War I?

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes. It was a young man, 18 or 19. I remember when -- I was on the corner when he received his greetings from the president and he really was very proud and he couldn't wait till he got his hands on.

Interviewer: Really?

Mr. Ferrigno: And that was the general expression. Don't forget to bring *[inaudible]* **[0:12:12]**. There was a lot of patriotism demonstrated.

Interviewer: Now, were there many Italians who volunteered for the service would you say? Or did they all wait to be drafted? What else do you remember?

Mr. Ferrigno: Would you repeat that question, please?

Interviewer: Where there many Italian-American boys or Italian boys who would come from Italy that were living in the United States during the time of the First World War? Where there many who volunteered for the military service or did they all or mostly all wait till they were drafted?

Mr. Ferrigno: I couldn't be able to answer that question. I don't recall.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr. Ferrigno: It was -- it will be my belief that there were a lot of volunteers, comparatively speaking.

Interviewer: Now, what changes would you say took place in the community where you live preceding -- from preceding the First World War II post World War I time, what changes would you say that were noticeable?

Mr. Ferrigno: You mean socially?

Interviewer: Socially, economically for the Italians.

Mr. Ferrigno: Well, that seem the surge of -- the business seem to be true wages on the increase. And I think the condition in general seems to improved.

Interviewer: Would you say that opportunities for Italians had increased?

Mr. Ferrigno: Oh, I would say so, yes.

Interviewer: That was a lessening of prejudice against the Italian?

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes, as they became educated, I think the prejudice became less and less.

Interviewer: In other word -- right. In other words, the education, not only the Italian...

Mr. Ferrigno: Not only Italians but the people in general. I think this was -- the prejudice was, you know, is always due to ignorance. And I think there were a lot of other people of other *[inaudible]* **[0:14:04]** Italians.

Interviewer: Right. Now...

Mr. Ferrigno: Maybe there are more Italians because of -- there were the poor class that held back in some way.

Interviewer: Now -- and so far as religion is concerned, were you always a Catholic?

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes, I was.

Interviewer: Now, when you came to the United States, was there an Italian Church in the community where you live?

Mr. Ferrigno: No, it wasn't exactly Italian church.

Interviewer: Did the church which you belong, do this church cater mostly to Italians in the community or...?

Mr. Ferrigno: I would cater to everybody.

Interviewer: To everybody?

Mr. Ferrigno: Yeah.

Interviewer: Was there any distinction made between the people there?

Mr. Ferrigno: No, I never felt that there was any distinction, any partiality or -- anything.

Interviewer: In other words, it's different any mass you wanted to go to whenever you wanted to go?

Mr. Ferrigno: That's right.

Interviewer: And there was never...

Mr. Ferrigno: I tried to switch since the war.

Interviewer: Right, it was exactly that. Okay. Very good.

[0:15:00]

Now, we're going to -- I'm going to jump from this period of World War I up to World War II. But before starting with that, I'd like to ask you if you remember prohibition and the effects of prohibition and also the depression and the effects of the depression. Could you comment on both of those items?

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes. Well, I do have recollection of the prohibition era.

Unidentified voice: ***[inaudible] [0:15:30].***

Mr. Ferrigno: Huh?

Unidentified voice: How many barrels of wine ***[inaudible] [0:15:34]?***

Mr. Ferrigno: Oh, lots of it. Well, we were allowed to make wine for the family.

Interviewer: Yes, for family. Yes.

Mr. Ferrigno: We used wine like the American people use water at the table. That's applied to me ***[inaudible] [0:15:55].***

Interviewer: Right. So, in Italy, if you go to a restaurant, they never put water on the table, but it's expected that you're going to get...

Mr. Ferrigno: Some wine.

Interviewer: Some wine.

Unidentified voice: ***[inaudible] [0:16:04].***

Interviewer: Right. But what were the effects on the Italian people in general or in the community in general, not just the Italians. From your advantage point, how would you view the effects of the -- of prohibition?

Mr. Ferrigno: Well, I think as it was proven later, more people are against or doesn't favor on it.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Ferrigno: And actually, when Roosevelt was made president, that was one of the things he had probably agreed on the front line. One of the items on his platform to appeal the prohibition. And, of course, he kept his promise. And I think the whole issue was quite happy about the repeal of prohibition because it had effect in a way of certain freedom for people.

Interviewer: Would you say the effects were more negative than positive of the prohibition?

Mr. Ferrigno: Well, it had some side effects, which you're all aware of. I mean, it cost people *[inaudible] [0:16:58]* and also they had to make people break the law. The demand was so strong for wanting what they wanted and breaking, that they -- they didn't mind breaking the law.

Interviewer: In other words, one of the effects of prohibition, one of the effects that might -- you might say felt today, a lack of respect, a lessening of respect for law?

Mr. Ferrigno: For law, that's right.

Interviewer: Is it? And also, one of the things which plays us today is the organization, I think for the first time in this country, a lot of us is. A real organization of gangsters...

Mr. Ferrigno: That's right. Yes, yes.

Unidentified voice: *[inaudible] [0:17:42]*.

Mr. Ferrigno: That's right. There were a lot of people who were really hypocrites about this thing too. There were a lot of places of East Rutherford where our band could get a drink, our families in restaurants that serve -- have -- you know, this was not the prohibition *[inaudible] [0:18:06]* and across the way in Rutherford where the -- supposedly the elite men, they wouldn't permit tyrants in their town, plus it was okay for them to come and be served in our town where we have permitted tyrants.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Ferrigno: I thought that was somewhat hypocritical in those people. But...

Interviewer: They're willing to live with it.

Mr. Ferrigno: That's what they were.

Interviewer: Now, would you say -- where are the most of the Italians on, East Rutherford or in Rutherford?

Mr. Ferrigno: There were more in East Rutherford than Rutherford.

Interviewer: That in Rutherford? Now, what were the effects of depression?

Mr. Ferrigno: The effects?

Interviewer: Yes. What were the immediate effects, when you speak of effects? The ones that were right before you. How did it affect the people that you knew?

Mr. Ferrigno: Well, it didn't affect in our family.

Unidentified voice: ***[inaudible] [0:18:57].***

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes, there were a lot of factories shut down and a lot of people lost their homes because they couldn't keep up their payments. They were given every opportunity, but they just couldn't hold on. And...

Unidentified voice: ***[inaudible] [0:19:20].***

Mr. Ferrigno: Even in our case, we had to -- we were fortunate enough to have ***[inaudible] [0:19:29]*** that we had to get a mortgage on our home in order to survive because most of us were not working at that time. And I myself had temporary jobs, which most people have. In most cases they last in three or four months and then maybe it was otherwise in a period of six months or so.

And then in five or six, those jobs are -- throughout the depression. It's about 1937.

[0:20:00]

Interviewer: During the depression, were you going to school in the evening?

Mr. Ferrigno: I was still going to school at that certain point, and then for one year or two I wasn't even able to afford to go to school. I did go to School of Fine Arts in New York for one year, which in my recollection is it was a preschool, it was operated by the city itself. I don't know if Columbia own that.

Interviewer: What sort of jobs did you hold during this time?

Mr. Ferrigno: Well, mostly this time, I had been working for architects up to this period of depression, and then that became very scarce. A lot of them went out of business. And most in my work then was through the government agencies or state agencies. For instance -- one was under ERA, Emergency Relief Administration. He stayed at ERA. We did

historical survey. A survey on historical buildings with records up to date or preserve records, plans of old buildings. We used to make measure drawings. Most of the people would be in the field measuring buildings. And I myself worked in the office from these notes that is people taking.

Interviewer: Would you say that this kind of work was really valuable to...?

Mr. Ferrigno: I would say it was valuable. Yes. It wasn't -- I wouldn't say it was a waste. Plus, if it hadn't been for the depression, they wouldn't have done this one.

Interviewer: Right. In other words, you wouldn't be *[inaudible]* **[0:21:40]** just a lot of busy work to keep on...?

Mr. Ferrigno: Oh no, no, I wouldn't say so. No, it was not that. And then I was on another project. I think this was a state project. Also, it was to -- it was a -- a study made. There was enough money created for the study how to drain the -- prevent floods in the River Valley Basin. And this was mostly the project with engineers and surveyors, and I believe there were only two or three architects on the project, and our job was to make preliminary studies to show how this could be practical. But in the long run, the economy, we didn't have enough money to appropriate -- to push ahead on the job. And the survey was the end of the job. It died right there. They didn't think it was self-sustained. They had planned their recreation center in the middle of *[inaudible]* **[0:22:44]** for the recreation center in the middle of it. Maybe the idea was to attach. That seems a very practical thing to hold it against for creating money to construct this thing.

Interviewer: Now, the depression would bring us right up to the start of World War II. Now, we're all aware of the fact that the United States and everything were on different sides on World War II. How is this viewed by all Italian people? And how was it viewed by the Italians that you know? How do they feel about this?

Mr. Ferrigno: Well, I would say the Italians had -- it makes me feel that the Italian people have a mixed feeling. And in that particular case, I had someone with mixed feeling too and I was hoping that they are not happening to everybody.

Interviewer: Yeah. You were in the...

Mr. Ferrigno: I was in the service, yes. And I don't believe -- at any time, there was any demonstration against in my nationality while I was in the service.

Except on one occasion when I was refused a job in Washington because of my Italian race, because I felt quite upset about it because I didn't think it was fair. I wasn't trusted while I was in the service with a lot of sequent documents. And they trusted me then and -- for this other job so I can complained about it and I was told that another name was turned down even though he was American born but his parents had been Russian born.

And at that time, I remember the Russian was even ally.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Ferrigno: So, I don't know what the job was, but it must have been...

Unidentified voice: But you were turned down because you were foreign born.

Mr. Ferrigno: That's right, that was the reason because I was foreign born. That wasn't on the officer who interviewed me and he apologized for all this rule. But that was a rule he had to abide.

Interviewer: Yes. Now, after -- where did you serve during World War II?

Mr. Ferrigno: In the illusions.

Interviewer: In the illusions. Well, that kept you pretty far from Italy, didn't you?

[0:25:00]

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes.

Interviewer: Now, after World War II ended and you got out of the service, how were things then?

Mr. Ferrigno: Well, things were fairly good.

Unidentified voice: That's when he got better.

Mr. Ferrigno: Oh. I went -- I took a refresher. Some refresher courses in the University of Pennsylvania. I just didn't feel like going back to work. I was already married at that time.

Unidentified voice: **[inaudible] [0:25:28].**

Mr. Ferrigno: A few months before I was discharged from the army. And -- but I just went to school for one term and then I go back to work. I got a job with

an engineering firm in the Philadelphia for a short period of time in the community. So I got beat down with my -- eventually got a job with the company here in Wilmington.

Interviewer: With the department?

Mr. Ferrigno: That's right.

Unidentified voice: But you don't have *[inaudible]* [0:25:55].

Interviewer: And you've been with them ever since?

Mr. Ferrigno: That's right.

Interviewer: And -- well, you've had a pretty good view of the growth of the Italians in this country during the century.

Mr. Ferrigno: I would say I have.

Interviewer: Would you able -- could you pick out any one particular face or any one period of time during which the Italians particularly made great advances, and so far, is their own position in the community's concern? I had people pick out different times. Some people will say that, "Well, we're on World War I. It marked a big turning point." And that prior to World War I, the Italians were very definitely held second class, even less than second class citizenship in this country and the feeling towards them changed dramatically.

Mr. Ferrigno: I would say -- are you through?

Interviewer: No, go right ahead.

Mr. Ferrigno: I would say this -- the biggest period -- the best period was after World War II.

Interviewer: After World War II?

Mr. Ferrigno: I would say so.

Unidentified voice: After World War...

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Ferrigno: I believe -- well, not only through education, the association -- the soldiers together in fighting, you know, their own country after they

became American citizens. Most of them, of course, were American born by that time. I believe there were very, very few Italians who fought or Italian born.

Interviewer: There are also been people who have said that they thought that the greatest change came with the election of Roosevelt because he supported the creation and the growth of unions, and unionism for workers. Many people feel that this is the thing that really freed the Italian from the almost observant in which they had to live here because so many of them were involved in the labor, in the trade which now are practically all unionized and they feel that this was...

Mr. Ferrigno: Right, that's a big stuff.

Interviewer: Okay. This is kind of good -- bit of the information that I was looking for specifically. Do you have anything that you could add to this that I missed? Certainly, I haven't covered everything. There's a lot more materials...

Mr. Ferrigno: Well, I believe what has done a lot for the advancement of the acquisition of the Italian in this country is outstanding Italian names. I think more and more people has got educated, even the Italian themselves realized this. I think the Italians have made tremendous contribution to civilization. There's nobody can deny. I mean, this is a big thing too that has helped the Italians pull out of their rug that they were in.

You mentioned, like, Michael Angelo, and these names have been almost stressed on in the last 10, 20 years.

Interviewer: Well, you know, Italy and things Italian have enjoyed success, had suffered periods of disrepute, you might say, in this country. In the early days of this country, there were Italian -- Italians, really, who are among the founding fathers. You had William Pack who is one of the science *[inaudible]* [0:29:25], who was Italian born. Jefferson was quite friendly with an Italian humanist with whom he carried on the correspondence. And many say that this Italian influenced Jefferson greatly in his writing of many of the pros in our constitution and decoration of independence and so forth.

In those days, Italian was considered almost a must aligned to itself, almost a must for anyone who's going to have a well-rounded cultural education because you most certainly could not enjoy the finer things of life unless you knew the Italian language because the basis of poetry, the meaning, and so forth, were Italian.

Mr. Ferrigno: The expressions of music.

[0:30:02]

Interviewer: Right, expressions in music also Italian. So you had to have Italian. You had to know Italian. However, with the great migrations of Italians coming to this country, you had different class of Italian coming. You had an uneducated Italian.

Mr. Ferrigno: That's right.

Interviewer: A man who really brought no high culture, and then certainly he brought culture. I think everyone has a culture.

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes.

Interviewer: But he didn't bring -- right, he did not bring the high culture which people might have associated with Italy through the great names as you mentioned.

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes, that's right, that's right. But disappointing for this people who knew...

Unidentified voice: And these poor ones that came over are the ones that were inspired by the ones that were higher class than they were in Italy.

Interviewer: Yes.

Unidentified voice: And I think this is the reason why they came here hoping that they could go back and say, "Well, now, my son is able to do this, where to some wouldn't have been able to do it."

Interviewer: This is true. But when you take the effect of the Italian coming here, the poor illiterate Italian coming here with no skill, all he had was a body. And this is what people do, people rented his body to dig ditches and to lay track and this is...

Mr. Ferrigno: And it amazes me, if I may interrupt with that.

Interviewer: Sure.

Mr. Ferrigno: My father, well, he was in that area. Now, he could read the newspaper also beside bringing his Italian paper. And I believe he went to the second -- through second year of high school. In Italy I think that was

applied at that time. I don't know what it is today in the school, **[inaudible] [0:31:34]** high school.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Ferrigno: And it wasn't comparable to Julian High. They were a lot of more advance there.

Interviewer: Yes. We would understand, somebody said they went through elementary school and they say, "Elementary school is **[inaudible] [0:31:44]**."

Mr. Ferrigno: But despite that my father was not able to speak English when he came here and took a long time to learn what he had learned, and yet he became -- in a very short number of years, he became foreman in the -- where he work.

Unidentified voice: **[inaudible] [0:32:00]**. What are they German?

Interviewer: Yes.

Unidentified voice: And they too don't forget **[inaudible] [0:32:10]**.

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes.

Unidentified voice: And they recognize ability because I think that they promoted him regardless of whether they were Italian or German. And I think that **[inaudible] [0:32:22]** German who I think did well too because of his ability, and it was recognized by the company. And some of these companies I don't think had that personal interest **[inaudible] [0:32:33]** was foreman. He took a personal interest. When your father would quit, he would go back to getting because he felt that, you know, he was a bad person.

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes, so he know it was worth it.

Unidentified voice: Yeah, and that's what I mean.

Mr. Ferrigno: ...when my father quit. What he had made -- he was threatened to leave because they force them to do something against his will. He knew -- whatever they asked him to do wasn't going to work for his experience. And they insisted that he try certain method. They had to do something with mixing crude rubber with compositions in a mill from which they made side walls for tires and materials to make tape, adhesive tape, and so on. And he was sure that it wasn't done in

Oregon. He says, "Well, I promise you, as soon as this doesn't work, since I filled up the works here, I'll probably put my hand and go on and leave." And then *[inaudible]* **[0:33:35]** cool off a couple of days and then ask them back.

And twice, I witnessed the manager himself, the plant manager would get in his car and come and -- come and get my father home. If he needs him he's got to come back. So my father -- he went on and cool off by him and then go back.

Interviewer: His Italian pride allowed him to go back then.

Mr. Ferrigno: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Fine. Is there anything else that we can add to this?

Mr. Ferrigno: Oh, I can't think of anything that's because you have small questions.

Unidentified voice: *[inaudible]* **[0:34:08]**.

Interviewer: It's probably not well...

[0:34:11] **End of Audio**