**Paul:** Good afternoon, this is Paul Seacrest for the National Park Service. Today is September 30th 1995. I’m in Flemington New Jersey with Melchor Castro. Mr. Castro came from Peru in 1927 when he was 19 years old and he was detained at Ellis Island for two or three nights. We’re not sure.

Present also is Tom, a big gray cat who is going to join us. Also, Mrs. Castro is in the room and daughter Maria and there’s a Pekingese puppy by the name of John who you may-

**Melchor:** Joe.

**Paul:** Joe, excuse me, that you may hear rustling in the background. Mr. Castro, can we begin by you giving me your birth date?

**Melchor:** January 6th 1908.

**Paul:** Were you born in Peru?

**Melchor:** In Peru, yes.

**Paul:** What was the name of the town that you were born in?

**Melchor:** Arequepa.

**Paul:** Can you spell that?

**Melchor:** A-R-E-

**Mrs. Castro:** No.

**Melchor:** Yes, Q-U-E-P-A.

**Paul:** Say it one more time for me.

**Melchor:** Arequipa.

**Paul:** Arequipa. We’re going to pause just … we’ll resume again. Can you tell me whereabouts that town in Peru is?

**Melchor:** Well, its south of Lima. It’s the second big city of Peru.

**Paul:** The second...?

**Melchor:** The second largest city in Peru.

**Paul:** Tell me what you remember about that city as a child. What things stick out in your mind?

**Melchor:** Well, the first thing that comes to my mind is the cathedral.

**Paul:** Can you describe it for me?

**Melchor:** It’s square. On one side is the cathedral and there’s stores around with ... the best business were there in that section and in the park, we had a ... we call it ‘Ateta’. Back then, either the army or civilians comes and they play there for two, three hours once a week and the church inside is a beautiful one.

**Paul:** Do you remember the name of the cathedral?

**Melchor:** No, no, I don’t remember.

**Paul:** Why was it particularly beautiful? What sticks out in your mind?

**Melchor:** Because it was made by the Spaniards. It was made by the Spaniards. See when they conquered Peru. We have ... in that town we have about seven or eight big churches but the biggest one was the cathedral, the most important one.

**Paul:** Is there another building in that town that sticks out in your mind from your childhood?

**Melchor:** From the childhood?

**Paul:** Yeah.

**Melchor:** Well, what building can I tell you? The only one that keep in my mind is the churches.

**Paul:** The cathedral, that was-

**Melchor:** Then they have other ones like the Merced’s Church, which was a very big one too. Then they have Santo Domingo that was run by the nuns. Then we have San Francisco, that’s not too far away from the cathedral. They all were in that section there, the ones I remember. The most important street that we have was … let’s see if I remember. Commercial, it’s Commercial Street, that was-

**Paul:** Commercial Street?

**Melchor:** Yeah, that was the biggest street there. It came right to the square right where the cathedral is.

**Paul:** Is that where a lot of the businesses were?

**Melchor:** Businesses and the residential, everything but that is … they were mostly business.

**Paul:** Did your family live inside the city?

**Melchor:** No, no, no, we live around.

**Paul:** Can you describe for me the house that you lived in as a child?

**Melchor:** We lived almost in the outskirts of the city like a farm. We had a small house, my father. We had a couple of cows. I used to take care of because I was the second ... not the oldest one in the family but when my biggest brother went away; I took care of the cows.

**Paul:** Can you describe the building itself? What was it made out of, the house?

**Melchor:** The house was built out of ... [inaudible 00:05:03], which is made clay and the ceiling was thin. We had a ... how many rooms did we have in our house? It was about four or five rooms that we had.

**Paul:** All one floor?

**Melchor:** Yes, one floor.

**Paul:** Did it have windows?

**Melchor:** No windows, just doors.

**Paul:** [inaudible 00:05:26]. What floor did the house have?

**Melchor:** Brick.

**Paul:** How did you heat the house?

**Melchor:** No heat.

**Paul:** Why was there no heat?

**Melchor:** The only thing that we had the kitchen where we stayed most of the time and in there was the stove. Once we go to bed, we just cover up.

**Paul:** Is it cold in that part of Peru?

**Melchor:** No, in that part ... it’s cold but not that cold. Not like here.

**Paul:** I see.

**Melchor:** There never is snow in that city. Never, I never saw snow in that city. We see snow in the … far away, it was the Balkans. There we see the snow but not in the town. We never saw snow in there.

**Paul:** So snow in the mountains but not down in the city?

**Melchor:** No, not in the city.

**Paul:** How did you light the house?

**Melchor:** Candles.

**Paul:** Where did you get the candles?

**Melchor:** We make it.

**Paul:** How do you make a candle?

**Melchor:** I don’t know [laughter]. My mother and my sister- I don’t know how she made it.

**Paul:** That was work that women did?

**Melchor:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Where did your water come from?

**Melchor:** In the corner, we had a faucet like it and there we took the water in pails.

**Paul:** Did you have a bathroom in this house? No?

**Melchor:** We don’t have no sanitation.

**Paul:** You mentioned that you had cows, your father had cows. Were there any other animals that you had?

**Melchor:** Yeah, we have a horse, which my father used. A horse and a mule because my father used to go to make business with the Indians, he used to take a trip once a month or every two months or three months. He would stay there for a couple of months and then comes back again.

**Paul:** What was your father’s name?

**Melchor:** Lorenzo.

**Paul:** Lorenzo. Tell me about this work with the Indians. What kinds of things did he do?

**Melchor:** That I don’t know. He went there to make a trade. He took some things from Arequepa. He went there, he trade with the Indians and he get something from there. He get the blankets, we have a ... you saw that, ponchos and he sells them in the city. That’s how he make his money.

**Paul:** Can you tell me something about your father’s family background?

**Melchor:** I don’t remember. Not even one of my ... the only one that I remember is a sister of my mother. The rest I don’t remember. I don’t think I ever met them. I think they were dead.

**Paul:** Any relatives on either side except for the sister?

**Melchor:** My mother’s sister.

**Paul:** What nationality was your father?

**Melchor:** Peruvian.

**Paul:** He was born in Peru?

**Melchor:** Yes and my mother too.

**Paul:** Tell me what your father’s personality was like.

**Melchor:** Oh, he was very rough. We had to be like this or else he whips the hell out of you.

**Paul:** So he was a very strict man?

**Melchor:** Yeah, he was. He was not a mean man but he want to give things right or else. If you don’t do right ... well if were to get the cows for instance let’s say, if I don’t get back in time, he is going to give you a spanking or he’d … you know. Things are … we do something wrong. He was with everybody was the same.

**Paul:** Can you describe what he looked like in words?

**Melchor:** He was a tall man and he was about my size. A little heavier than me, darker complexion than mine- mostly ... more Indian than me.

**Paul:** Did he have Indian blood in him?

**Melchor:** Oh, yes, I have Indian too. My mother have blood Indian. I don’t have as much as my mother. My mother was much whiter than me at least.

**Paul:** Some of it is Indian blood and what is your other make up?

**Melchor:** Spaniard.

**Paul:** Spanish. How did your father like to spend his leisure time? What did he like to do for himself for his own enjoyment?

**Melchor:** I couldn’t remember that.

**Paul:** It’s a long time ago.

**Melchor:** No, they played cards, they played cards. Yeah, I remember that, they used to play cards. They get together for … just for the fun because we have a drink over there they used to have. They called it Chicha, made of corn and they … four or five guys, they played cards and they drink, they stay there. That’s the only thing that I saw him doing.

**Paul:** The name of the drink was chicha?

**Melchor:** Right.

**Paul:** Chicha?

**Melchor:** Chicha.

**Paul:** And it’s made out of corn.

**Melchor:** Out of corn.

**Paul:** How do they make it? Do you know?

**Melchor:** Yeah, I remember that. They got the corn, dark corn, we don’t have that here. They put them in the basket ... they make a box, cover up and put water. They keep it in there for three or four days, I think it’s a week or so.

Anyway, the corn comes up soft. Then they take it out of there, they dry it in the sun. They dry it. Once it’s dried, they chop it like we do here with the flour. The same way and then they boil it. That juice, they ferment it for a couple of days, for three or four days and that makes the drink.

**Paul:** Do you remember the first day you ever tasted this drink?

**Melchor:** [laughter] I don’t remember that, no. I don’t remember at all. I must have been around maybe 13, 14 years old, maybe I was younger. I don’t remember.

**Paul:** What was your mother’s name?

**Melchor:** Victoria.

**Paul:** What was her maiden name before she was married?

**Melchor:** Castro, the same name.

**Paul:** Castro, the same, yes.

**Melchor:** I don’t know if they were for relatives. That I don’t know. I don’t know if it was a relation but they had the same name.

**Paul:** Tell me about your mother’s personality.

**Melchor:** Oh, she was a wonderful lady.

**Paul:** She can do anything for you, anything and everything for you. She was very wonderful.

**Melchor:** Do you have a story about how she helped you when you were a child do something?

**Paul:** I remember one thing. I had ... it wasn’t ... not the measles, [foreign language 00:12:12]

**Mrs. Castro:** [foreign language 00:12:23]

**Melchor:** Anyway, I had a fever for I don’t know how many days. I was lying down on the floor and she would come, pick me up, bed me and ... at that time I was ... I have to remember that because I was maybe eight years old. That’s the most I remember of her.

**Paul:** Do you remember things that she had to do around the house? What were her responsibilities in the house?

**Melchor:** Cook, clean the clothing.

**Paul:** What did she cook? What do people eat in this part of Peru?

**Melchor:** Almost the same that we eat here. The only thing is that we don’t have ... we have rice, we had beans, we had corn, we had potatoes, we had meat, we had chickens. You raise that in the house. You don’t buy those things. We buy pigs, we raise one of them and when it’s big, you kill it and you eat it.

**Paul:** Whose job was it to kill the pig?

**Melchor:** My father.

**Paul:** Do you know how he did that?

**Melchor:** With a knife.

**Paul:** What did he do with the knife? Where did he stab the pig?

**Melchor:** By the chest. I guess he gets up to the heart, he goes…

**Paul:** Then what did they do with the body?

**Melchor:** They clean it. We have water and a knife. They take all the hair out, they wash it, they open up, they take all the guts out. They eat some of the guts and make some things with the block and the guts. The meat, we make ... dry meat and Chicharrón we call it. They fry the skin of the pork. Put it in a big can and they fry and it becomes very crispy, very good.

**Paul:** And that is called what?

**Melchor:** Chicharrón.

**Paul:** Chicharrón. Tell me how your mother washed the clothes.

**Melchor:** In the tub. They call it [inaudible 00:14:46]. It’s a big ... it’s not very square pail and in there they wash.

**Paul:** Did you have any brothers and sisters?

**Melchor:** Yes, I had a brother who was the oldest one with the family. Then I have a ... six ... no, five sisters.

**Paul:** Can you name everybody?

**Melchor:** Maria, [inaudible 00:15:10], Anne-Calita, Marximilianna and Catalina.

**Paul:** I’ll have to call you for spellings [laughter] later. What was your brother’s name?

**Melchor:** Gabino.

**Paul:** We’re going to pause just for a second. Resume now. The only relative you remembered was an aunt, your mother’s sister?

**Melchor:** Yes.

**Paul:** Why do you remember her?

**Melchor:** Because she’s the only one that we have and she was a neighbor. We live next door.

**Paul:** I’m just wondering if here was something that stuck out in your mind about her that-

**Melchor:** No, no, no, we live next door and how many kids ... they have a bunch of kids too. They have-

**Mrs. Castro:** Was it four?

**Melchor:** No, seven or eight kids or whatever.

**Paul:** What were your chores around the house? What were your responsibilities as you were growing up on the farm?

**Melchor:** As I was growing up? To get the cows to the field, bring them back and the chores. I had to cut the grass because we had pigs in the house and I had to bring some food to them. We have a ... and we have two alfalfa, we had alfalfa. That’s what we grow up over there. We’d chop it and bring it home for them.

**Paul:** Did you say you had pigs in the house, in the house where you lived?

**Melchor:** Well, it was separated.

**Paul:** Oh, they had their own... [Laughter]?

**Melchor:** Their own place.

**Paul:** I just wanted to make sure they weren’t wondering around the house.

**Melchor:** No, no, no.

**Paul:** What were the cows used for?

**Melchor:** To milk and milk.

**Paul:** Were they ever slaughtered?

**Melchor:** Yes. Once in a while we kill one. Not all the time but once in a while, we kill one but we don’t let it get too old to kill.

**Paul:** Let’s talk about your religious life, what religion were you?

**Melchor:** I grew up in Catholic.

**Paul:** You’ve already mentioned the cathedral that was in the city. How did you practice your religion at home?

**Melchor:** At home? I was against the religion so at home I didn’t practice any service at all. On Sundays, I had ... my mother used to wake me up, she takes me to church for the mass otherwise, I would never go.

**Paul:** Why were you against the religion?

**Melchor:** You want me to tell you?

**Paul:** Yes, please, if you want to.

**Melchor:** Well, the first year that I heard my confession the priest asked me a personal question with regards to [inaudible 00:18:11] and that stuck in my mind. I said, “If my priest is going to ask me what I do, if I did it or not,” and I ... from that day. The priest don’t have to tell me why I do or ... you know what I mean.

**Paul:** Who was the most religious person in your family?

**Melchor:** My mom.

**Paul:** Were there ways at home that she ... what did she do at home that was an expression of her religion? What things did she do at home?

**Melchor:** Well, for one thing, before we start eating, she...

**Paul:** She crossed herself, gesturing to cross herself?

**Melchor:** Then at night, she prays with her sister, with my sisters. I never prayed with her.

**Paul:** Did you celebrate any of the religious holidays?

**Melchor:** Oh, yes.

**Paul:** How did you celebrate Christmas in Peru at this time?

**Melchor:** Christmas in Peru, we celebrated far away. We don’t get presents in Christmas but we have a mass at [inaudible 00:19:25] but before we go to mass they prepared dinner and in that table, you have everything, I mean everything. They cook beans. They cook eggs, a lot of food, salads.

We go to mass, we come back and then we eat and then and then they start dancing and jumping and celebrating. Drinking that my father would get drunk … never drunk but he drinks.

**Paul:** But that was part of the celebration, the drinking?

**Melchor:** The celebration, yes.

**Paul:** Was it the Chicha that they would drink?

**Melchor:** Yeah and we have a drink that we call Pisco, they sell them in here.

**Paul:** Pisco?

**Melchor:** Pisco.

**Paul:** P-I-S-C-O, pisco, and that was also part of the celebration?

**Melchor:** Yeah. We had beer but I don’t think I ever tasted beer in there.

**Paul:** Were most of the people that your parents associated with, were they farmers also?

**Melchor:** Yeah, mostly, mostly, yeah.

**Paul:** Because your father really isn’t a farmer. I mean he has another sideline.

**Melchor:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Any other holidays stick out in your mind?

**Melchor:** Well, the 6th of January. The big celebration that we have, the Three [inaudible 00:20:49] Feast, that’s when we got the presents. We have [crosstalk 00:20:55]

**Paul:** [inaudible 00:20:54] the three kings?

**Melchor:** The three kings, right. We have [inaudible 00:20:59] we have it in January the sixth.

**Paul:** What was special about that celebration?

**Melchor:** The presents, everybody is expecting something.

**Paul:** Yes and what would you get as a present?

**Melchor:** I don’t remember. I don’t remember one single present that I got.

**Paul:** Only that it was exciting because you got the presents?

**Melchor:** Yeah.

**Paul:** That’s interesting. Tell me about schooling. Did you go to school in Peru?

**Melchor:** Yes, I went to school.

**Paul:** Could your parents read and write?

**Melchor:** No.

**Paul:** So they were not educated?

**Melchor:** No.

**Paul:** No, where was the school?

**Melchor:** I say maybe 15 minutes from the house so probably maybe 20 minutes.

**Paul:** How old were you when you began school?

**Melchor:** I must have been seven or eight years old.

**Paul:** What kinds of things were you taught in school at that time?

**Melchor:** First of all, to read and to write. Then after that, they start arithmetic, geography, history, things ... no science. At that time, we don’t have no science.

**Paul:** This leads me to ask you, what language did you speak at home?

**Melchor:** Spanish.

**Paul:** And what language did you speak at school?

**Melchor:** Spanish.

**Paul:** Did they teach any other languages?

**Melchor:** No.

**Paul:** Everything was Spanish?

**Melchor:** Yes.

**Paul:** Do you remember a specific teacher at that time from your time at school?

**Melchor:** I remember the very day. I don’t remember the names though but it was the father, the son, two of them, they were teachers there. Then another son came so they got two sons and a father in the same school.

**Paul:** So the family situation that taught you?

**Melchor:** Right.

**Paul:** Can you describe the school building for me?

**Melchor:** The school building was a big room. A big room and there we have the [foreign language 00:23:06]

**Mrs. Castro:** [foreign language 00:23:10]

**Melchor:** No, no. See I can’t remember because ... what is the name of that ... the seats where we sit.

**Paul:** The bench?

**Melchor:** The bench, not a bench, it was a bench for one person. You sit in there and you have your little table-

**Paul:** Like a little desk?

**Melchor:** Like a little desk.

**Mrs. Castro:** [foreign language 00:23:32]

**Melchor:** Yeah, they had one line in here. Three lines because the room was big, three lines.

**Paul:** What time did you go to school in the morning?

**Melchor:** Oh, we go at eight o'clock. Eight o'clock then we go home twelve o'clock and back one o'clock and four o'clock.

**Paul:** So you went home and ate lunch?

**Melchor:** Yeah.

**Paul:** What time was the first meal of the day?

**Melchor:** Oh, it was around 12 O'clock, 11 O'clock. There was never a set time to eat.

**Paul:** Did you eat school before you … Did you eat food before you went to school?

**Melchor:** Oh, we had glass of milk and a piece of bread.

**Paul:** Then when you came home from school at what we would call lunchtime, noontime, tell me about that meal.

**Melchor:** That’s a heavy meal, a heavy meal in there.

**Paul:** What do you call that in Spanish, the noontime meal?

**Melchor:** Al muerto, al muerto.

**Paul:** Thank you. Then when was the next time you would eat?

**Melchor:** Oh, around 5:30, four O'clock, 6 O'clock maybe and that’s very light, maybe something that was left from lunch.

**Paul:** Tell me what you did for your leisure time activities.

**Melchor:** Played soccer. We used to make our own ball and go and play soccer.

**Paul:** Can you describe for me how you made a ball?

**Melchor:** Well, we get a cardboard and we’d take a piece like a [inaudible 00:25:16] and then we’d cut the rubber and then we sew, put together so many pieces to make the ball round. We sew it and that’s it. Though you buy the inside part of it. That, you can’t make it because it’s made of rubber. You roll it up and you play the ball.

**Paul:** Whom did you play against?

**Melchor:** Against all the kids.

**Paul:** So it was an informal way of playing?

**Melchor:** Right.

**Paul:** Did you wear a uniform when you played?

**Melchor:** No.

**Paul:** No, what did you wear? What kind of clothes did people wear at that time?

**Melchor:** At that time? Pants- short pants.

**Paul:** Yeah, short like above your knee?

**Melchor:** Right and shirt and a coat.

**Paul:** Where did you get your clothes?

**Melchor:** Mummy makes.

**Paul:** You mother made your clothes. Does anything about that stick out in your mind about your mother making clothes? Do you remember perhaps a situation where she made you a specific piece of clothing that you particularly liked or?

**Melchor:** No.

**Paul:** Okay, when you played soccer, was that part of the school too? Did you-

**Melchor:** Oh, yeah, it was part of the school. That’s where we learn to play. Because it was part of the school, we used to do some exercises and then play soccer … we call it football over there, not soccer, football. We’d played that and all the games too because not everybody in the school is playing the same game. There was a different game that we play.

**Paul:** Did girls ever play football with you?

**Melchor:** No, it was only men, no girls in my school.

**Paul:** Oh, no girls even in the school?

**Melchor:** No, it was only for men.

**Paul:** Was that the situation for all schools at that time? Women were not being educated?

**Melchor:** No, no, they were educated but they have separate schools.

**Paul:** Their own schools? I see.

**Melchor:** They don’t go to the same building, not even in the same section. They have their school there.

**Paul:** Your sisters went somewhere else to school?

**Melchor:** Right, right.

**Paul:** I see. When you were a young man growing up, how old were you when you got out of school, when you finished school?

**Melchor:** I don’t remember. I must have been 16, 17.

**Paul:** What did you do between that time and the time you left to come to America?

**Melchor:** Mostly I was helping at home. My big brother left the house in … it wasn’t that … 25 or 26, he went to Chile and stayed there for, I don’t remember exactly how long. He came back, he stayed a couple of months in the house and he went back to Lima.

Then when he went back to Lima, then I said, “I got to get out of here too.” I talked to my father and my mother and talked and talked. Finally they say, “All right, you can go,” so I went to Lima. I met my brother. We lived together there until I got my papers set up and I left.

**Paul:** Why did you want to come to America? Once you got to Lima, why weren’t you satisfied with Lima?

**Melchor:** Well, I tell you. I don’t what it was in my mind or I hear something or I read something in magazines, the greatest America. We don’t call the … we call the Yankees, right, and I said, “Why not? Why not?” My brother went to Chile and I go to start in the United States. My father say, “All right, you go.”

**Paul:** Did you know anyone who was in the United States?

**Melchor:** No.

**Paul:** Had you ever seen anyone who had been in the United States and then come back to South America?

**Melchor:** No, no, no.

**Paul:** No, so it was just out of magazine pictures that you got this idea?

**Melchor:** Yeah, yeah.

**Paul:** How did your parents feel about you going to the United States? Of course, going to Lima is one thing but going to the United States is different.

**Melchor:** Well, the same way that they felt when my brother left to Chile, this was because it’s another country.

**Paul:** Why did your brother go on to Chile?

**Melchor:** I guess he went looking for fortune because he was looking for something. Like I came here for some reason, to get bigger, do things different than my country.

**Paul:** When you decided to go to the United States, did you go back to your mother and father before you left?

**Melchor:** No, no.

**Paul:** You left from Lima?

**Melchor:** Yeah, I left from Lima.

**Paul:** What did you take with you to come to the United States? What did you pack to take with you?

**Melchor:** It’s hard to remember. I don’t think that I had a suitcase, which [inaudible 00:30:29]. What I have there, I don’t know.

**Paul:** Was there an object that you took that was a remembrance?

**Melchor:** No, no.

**Paul:** No, nothing like that.

**Melchor:** Nothing to remember Peru. That’s how much I love it.

**Paul:** When did you say goodbye to your parents?

**Melchor:** When I was going to leave, I sent them a letter that said I’m leaving such and such a day.

**Paul:** But they didn’t actually see you.

**Melchor:** No, no, they never … The last time I say when I left home.

**Paul:** That was the last time, when you went to Lima was when you said good-bye.

**Melchor:** I stay Lima, let’s see. I went I think at the age of 26 because I stay in Lima for about four or five months while I sold the paper. It was not easy to get the passport, the Peruvian passport.

**Paul:** That was going to be my next question, actually. What did you have to go through to get the papers and to get ready to leave?

**Melchor:** First of all, I went … we call it police department. In there I say, “I apply for a passport,” and they asked me why I wanted to come to the United States and all the questions there. Finally, they fill out the papers. They took a picture of me and the passport piece of paper.

Then they told me there you have to go now to the American Consul to get the visa, so I went to the American Consul. Well, not the same day, it was a different day. When I got there, I don’t know if it was the consul or somebody working in that office. He called me up and asked me why I wanted to come to the United States so I told him.

He says, “Do you know how to write and read?” I said, “I think so,” so he give me a book, and he told me read so I read. Then he start filling up the paper and the … I remember there’s something … I don’t remember if he give me a paper or not. I don’t remember that. One thing he says, “All right, you are ready, you can go.”

**Paul:** He just wanted to prove that you could read and you could write?

**Melchor:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Did you have to undergo any kind of medical responsibilities before you left?

**Melchor:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Before you left.

**Melchor:** Before I left and not only that when I got here I went through again.

**Paul:** What did they do in Lima? What kind of examination did you undergo in Lima?

**Melchor:** What kind of examination the doctor give you, the one that makes the money. He test my chest and my lungs and that’s it. I don’t remember anything else.

**Paul:** Where did you … did your brother go with you to get to the ship? Where did you have to go to get to the ship?

**Melchor:** The name of the town is Callao.

**Paul:** Can you spell that please

**Melchor:** C-A-L-L-O. C-A-L-L-A-O.

**Paul:** How far away is that from Lima?

**Melchor:** Oh, maybe … not even 30 minutes.

**Paul:** Oh, so it’s very close. Did anyone travel with you to Callao?

**Melchor:** No. My brother was working so he said, “You go,” so he went to work.

**Paul:** You went by yourself?

**Melchor:** I went by my … well, you see at that time we have a trolley car and we have a bus that goes to Callao so I took a trolley car.

**Paul:** How long did you stay in Callao before you could actually get on the ship?

**Melchor:** Not long. I got there and I hired a boat because the ship stays far away from the … and they charged me, I don’t remember how much. All alone in a little boat, they took me there.

**Paul:** In a little boat, they take you out to the big boat, which is anchored outside. What was the name of the ship?

**Melchor:** Aconcagua.

**Paul:** Can you spell that, please?

**Melchor:** A Chilean company. [Inaudible 00:34:53].

**Paul:** Actually, I think I have it here. If I spell it, Mrs. Castro, you tell me if this is correct. A-C-O-N-

**Melchor:** That’s right.

**Paul:** -C-A-G-U-A.

**Melchor:** A, Aconcagua, right, that’s right.

**Paul:** It’s a lot different than the Hamburg-American line, the ships on use, the Aquitania [laughter].

**Melchor:** It’s Chilean boat, anyway.

**Paul:** Can you describe for me … Was this the first time you’d ever been on a ship?

**Melchor:** No, because when I came to Lima I came in another boat.

**Paul:** Oh, I see. You went from your town to Lima by ship.

**Melchor:** By ship, yeah.

**Paul:** Was this … which boat was bigger, the one you about to get on or the one that you had come down to Lima on?

**Melchor:** I’d say about the same. I think one that … it’s not the same boat but I think it was a Chilean boat also.

**Paul:** I see and they were roughly the same size?

**Melchor:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Where did you sleep on the ship?

**Melchor:** In a cabin. There was two. There were two or four beds. I know it was one on top of the other. I don’t remember exactly but it was two or four beds in each cabin.

**Paul:** Where in the ship was the cabin? Do you remember?

**Melchor:** In the middle [chuckle]. I don’t remember that.

**Paul:** Who else was in the cabin with you? Where there other people in the cabin with you?

**Melchor:** Yeah, there were other people but I don’t know whether they came from Chile because the boat thing it [inaudible 00:36:25] we left Callao. We came in straight. We stopped in Colon. It was panama, on the other side of the canal and then US.

**Paul:** The ship goes up South America, through the canal, through the Panama Canal and then right to New York. It didn’t stop anywhere.

**Melchor:** Nowhere.

**Paul:** Tell me what sticks out on your mind about being on the ship and that trip.

**Melchor:** I don’t remember anything. That’s it. We played games in there. I don’t know. I don’t even remember what kind of games we played.

**Paul:** What was there to do on the ship during the day?

**Melchor:** Drink, eat and you sleep.

**Paul:** Where did they feed you?

**Melchor:** A big hall. It was not a table for two or three. It was a big table there and we eat in there.

**Paul:** Do you remember what they fed you lunch? No, do you remember being up on the deck of the ship?

**Melchor:** Oh, yeah, we go there every day.

**Paul:** What did you see from the deck of the ship?

**Melchor:** Water here, water there, water there, water, that’s it.

**Paul:** Did you see any animals?

**Melchor:** Oh, yeah, we see a lot of birds.

**Paul:** How long did the ship take from Callao to New York?

**Melchor:** 17 days.

**Paul:** That’s a long time. Did you get seasick?

**Melchor:** No.

**Paul:** No, did anyone get seasick?

**Melchor:** I guess that somebody did but I never did get sick.

**Paul:** What time of the year are you traveling?

**Melchor:** May. I left Lima the 17th of May. I was over there beginning of the week there and I …

**Paul:** That’s right because of the seasons.

**Melchor:** I got here the 4thof June.

**Paul:** Was there a storm along the way over here?

**Melchor:** No, no, it was … no storm. A little times we’d hit a rock but no, no big waves, no.

**Paul:** Do you remember there being safety drills on the ship in case anything happened?

**Melchor:** No, we didn’t have that, no.

**Paul:** It was a calm, relatively uneventful trip.

**Melchor:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when you came?

**Melchor:** Oh, yes.

**Paul:** Did you know what that was?

**Melchor:** No. I found out later. When I was in Ellis Island, I found out that it was that.

**Paul:** Tell me how you ended up in Ellis Island.

**Melchor:** When we got in Brooklyn, I don’t remember. It was early in the morning or middle of the day. I don’t remember the time.

**Paul:** The ship docked in Brooklyn.

**Melchor:** Yes and do you know where is that? Do you know Atlantic Avenue? I remember that, down there. I never forget, next to the … we stay there and then one day they say it’s time to leave so we start coming out. They put a bunch of [inaudible 00:39:41] in a … to the ferry and we took off to Ellis Island.

**Paul:** What happened when the ferry docked at Ellis Island, what happened?

**Melchor:** Somebody say, “You come this way.” They took us to a room and in there, they say that you … and all in English. I didn’t understand anything. I just follow what they were doing. I guess they say that you have to go here, we went there, and it was a big dining table. We eat there. I guess it was lunch.

Then they took us upstairs and they say, “This is the bathroom, this is where you are going to sleep and this is where you are going to do exercise, and then you go to this other room.” It was a tour.

We went back. We took a shower and the next morning … we went to eat supper. The next morning we had to go back and stay in a big room there. The big room, the biggest room that they have there and everybody is there. The room is full, and then there they call names. I never forget, and those names that they call, they was going to leave Ellis Island, to go home or wherever they want to go.

My name wasn’t called the first day. The next day the same thing, another bunch leaves. Finally, my day came. My day came and I took off, and they told me to go, I went. I came to … I took a ferry because the ferry is going back and forth to Ellis Island. I get in the south ferry and I got the … a guy in the boat give me and he told me … he give me all the directions how to get there in [inaudible 00:41:49] because I was a brother of him living in that house.

I came, and I went, and I took the subway [inaudible 00:41:59]. Going, going, going, with the other, I got the 110 Street where he told me to get off. I get off from there. I found the street 112. I look for 112 because they told me I see numbers so know numbers and he told me exactly how to get there.

I get there. I went to the house, and I was lucky that the lady was in the house. They rent me a room there and I stay there.

**Paul:** Let me just back up a little bit to Ellis Island. Where did you sleep on Ellis Island? Do you remember what it looked like, where it was that you slept?

**Melchor:** Yes, like a hospital room, a lot of beds. No one bed, no two beds, a lot of beds. I don’t remember how many beds but it was beds on each side in the second floor.

**Paul:** What kind of people were in there with you?

**Melchor:** From all over. You cannot describe one person because they were from Europe, most of them from Europe.

**Paul:** Men and women.

**Melchor:** No, no just men in there, no women. If there were women, they were mostly [inaudible 00:43:15] away because I saw them in the big room but they were separate from us.

**Paul:** Did you see anything at Ellis Island that you had never seen before, something that was totally new to you?

**Melchor:** Everything that was there was new because I thought, first of all, we don’t see such a big rooms in my country and the way they build, we don’t see that over there.

**Paul:** It’s like the cathedral. It was probably the biggest room you’ve ever been in.

**Melchor:** The cathedral was big. It takes the whole block but outside of that…

**Paul:** You said they fed you in the dining room, did you say or did I say?

**Melchor:** No, no, no. You go to the kitchen. They give you a tray and you move and they … put and then you go to the table and eat there.

**Paul:** The food like a cafeteria kind of thing.

**Melchor:** Yeah, exactly.

**Paul:** Do you remember the food being different than what you were accustomed to?

**Melchor:** Of course, of course it was different.

**Paul:** Did you have to undergo any medical exams?

**Melchor:** Yes, they really give me an exam there. They took everything from me, naked, and they went all over me.

**Paul:** The shower, had you taken the shower before in your life?

**Melchor:** No. Oh, we took showers, yes, but with a hose. No shower like here. We go to the river and we jump in the river.

**Paul:** When you went to this woman’s house, was she Peruvian?

**Melchor:** No.

**Paul:** What was she?

**Melchor:** Chilean.

**Paul:** She was from Chile?

**Melchor:** The lady and the husband were Chileans.

**Paul:** How did they accept you into the house?

**Melchor:** Well, when I showed the papers that I got from their brother, I guess he called them up or they got in touch with him and they received me just like I was something of the family.

**Paul:** They rented you a room, you said.

**Melchor:** Yes.

**Paul:** How long was it before you got your first job?

**Melchor:** Maybe a couple of weeks.

**Paul:** What did you do during those couple of weeks before you got work?

**Melchor:** Looking, looking for a job and asking the man there to show me. He took me to 6th Avenue and 42nd Street. He walked from 42nd Street towards 50th and in both sides of the avenue where employment offices in the second floor, everyone was in the second floor. The first floor was a store. You go up there, you ask for job.

They say, “What can you do?” I didn’t speak English so finally I got a job as a dishwasher.

I don’t remember how much it charged me for because it was for one day, maybe 50 cents. I don’t remember what they charged me. I went there, I wash, dishes, I eat lunch and then I went home. I come back the next day to the same place and finally, I got a job, a steady there as a dishwasher. I work 12 hours.

**Paul:** How long did you stay at that job?

**Melchor:** Maybe … not even a month.

**Paul:** How did people that you worked with, how did they treat you?

**Melchor:** I didn’t speak English. Most of them were in same boat but they … Spanish, I didn’t meet anyone. Italians and all the rest but not Spanish. We stayed there because at that time it was no working here. I’m talking about 28, 29, 30, no work so you take what you can get.

**Paul:** What were some of the other jobs that you got during that time?

**Melchor:** Mostly dishwasher and bus boy. Waiter, I work as a waiter.

**Paul:** Tell me how you learned English.

**Melchor:** I went to night school.

**Paul:** Can you describe what that was like for you?

**Melchor:** I couldn’t understand at all what they were saying. I got this course there because I couldn’t understand anything. I loved the night school.

**Paul:** Do you remember some of the first words you learned in English?

**Melchor:** Ham and eggs. Ham and eggs for breakfast, ham and eggs for lunch, ham and eggs for supper.

**Paul:** It’s appropriate for working in a restaurant, I guess [laughter]. Was there a large South American population in New York at that time?

**Melchor:** No. If it was, I didn’t meet them until later, maybe two … I say about two years later because as I … I played soccer, and in here was a Spanish paper. I read the Spanish paper and they announce the games so I used to go to the parks to see the games on Sundays. I met some guys there and I played with them and then things just started coming up.

**Paul:** By reading the paper, you really should have made your connection to the rest of the South American group. What were some of the other countries that these people were from?

**Melchor:** I met people from Chile, from Argentina, from Paraguay, from Bolivia, from Spain, we play soccer. I played soccer with them.

**Paul:** How long did you live with the woman from Chile?

**Melchor:** Oh, I’d say about a couple of years.

**Paul:** You lived there quite a long time.

**Melchor:** Yeah, because it was cheap, the rent was cheap. I don’t know. I don’t [inaudible 00:49:31].

**Paul:** Did she speak English?

**Melchor:** I never heard. I don’t think they did. I don’t think they did.

**Paul:** I’d like you to tell me how you met Mrs. Castro but I’d like you to do it all in Spanish, the two of you speaking Spanish to each other telling about how you met each other.

**Melchor:** When I went to Europe, when I joined the army. Why don’t you ask me about that?

**Paul:** All right, we can do that first.

**Melchor:** That’s important that I met her.

**Paul:** It’s important and I also want to get the Spanish on tape. All right, you’ve got three minutes to tell me about going to Europe and in the army.

**Melchor:** All right, in the army.

**Paul:** What year is this?

**Melchor:** 1942, I went in the army. In ‘43, they send me to overseas.

**Paul:** Where you an American citizen?

**Melchor:** No, I became an American citizen when I was in the army but before that I went to volunteer. I went to volunteer for the army and they didn’t take me because I wasn’t a citizen. I had to wait but they … what did they call that? I forgot already that you had to register for their service.

**Paul:** The draft.

**Melchor:** The draft. I was registered for the draft. When they told me … they directed me and said, you [inaudible 00:50:51] when they saw I’d got my papers, they put me in, I think it was four, or classification four or something, a high number. But in volunteer they say, “You come on. We want you,” and they sent those to Camp Upton in Long Island. There we sleep one night, and they give us the clothing.

The next day we took a train and I don't know how long it took us to get to Chicago. In Chicago, we stayed I think it was maybe a week then we took another train south and we went to Mississippi, Camp Shelby in Mississippi. I took my basic training there.

From there, we were traveling to go to the Pacific but somehow we had two divisions in that camp, somehow, the order was changed and they sent us to Europe.

**Paul:** Where in Europe did they send you to?

**Melchor:** France.

**Paul:** How long did you stay in France?

**Melchor:** In France, not even a week because they put us right away to the front and fight. We went fighting there, French, Belgian, Germany [inaudible 00:52:26].

**Paul:** You were there right until 1945. Did you miss … and actually, we are going back there, back to the early 1927, 1928, 29, did you miss Peru at all?

**Melchor:** People from my country.

**Paul:** Did you miss your family?

**Melchor:** I tell you one thing, I missed my parents but my parents died in ’31 or ’32 right next to each other and from that day, I lost everything. I didn’t care for anybody in my family. I had one sister that I used to write to, Maria and when we got married, when we got our son, I called her up, and I send them a letter saying that I have a son. She didn’t answer me the letter. I said forget it. You don’t want my son. I don’t want you.

**Paul:** Did your parents ever want to come to America? Did your parents ever want to come to America?

**Melchor:** No, I don’t think so because we never talk about it.

**Paul:** Where you writing to them when you were here?

**Melchor:** Yeah, once I was here. I used to send money once in a while to them. I remember the bank that I had, I put the little money that I made, Diamond Saving Bank on 6th Avenue, I used to go there, take a check, and send it to them.

**Paul:** I’d very much like to get you two speaking in Spanish to each other on tape, if you can just, I don’t know. Talk about the garden if you want. You don’t to have to talk about meeting each other if you don’t want to but I would like to get a couple of minutes and Mrs. Castro, when you speak, speak full voice. I know it’s hard.

**Mrs. Castro:** [foreign language 00:54:19].

**Paul:** Talk a little bit. How did you meet Mrs. Castro in Espanola?

**Mrs. Castro:** [foreign language00:54:28].

**Melchor:** I was [foreign language 00:54:33] in New York City. [foreign language 00:54:40]

**Paul:** Of course, I don’t know what you are saying. [Laughter]

**Mrs. Castro:** My [inaudible 00:55:59]was yelling-

**Paul:** With milk.

**Mrs.** **Castro:** Yellow with milk[laughter] I’m sorry.

**Paul:** No, no it was wonderful because you were acting like I did understand and…

**Mrs. Castro:** [foreign language00:56:14]. She speaks Spanish.

**Paul:** Yes, Maria speaks Spanish. What year where you married?

**Melchor:** In ’47, no?

**Mrs. Castro:** In ‘47.

**Paul:** You told me before that you had flown in from the Dominican Republic just so we get that on tape. Mr. Castro, when you became a citizen, when you fought in the army and you became a citizen, how did that make you feel?

**Melchor:** Great. Great.

**Paul:** Did you have to go through a ceremony to do that or how did they do it when you went to the army?

**Melchor:** Let’s see. The corps was full of soldiers, all soldiers’ no civilians and they took... and it was the ceremonies there.

**Paul:** They did, even though you did it through the army, they at least they gave you a ceremony.

**Melchor:** We went to a corps house Hattiesburg. The name of the town is Hattiesburg, Mississippi. It was a bunch of them. I’m telling you the corps was full. No, no, no civilians there. I don’t know how many soldiers were there.

**Paul:** Lots of immigrant soldiers, you know, people who…?

**Melchor:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Interesting.

**Melchor:** In my company, we had one from Yugoslavia, one from … where’s the other one that I can remember? Yugoslavia. Oh, Hungary.

**Paul:** Hungary. When you think about your nationality, when you think about yourself and what your nationality is, how do you think of yourself?

**Melchor:** Listen, listen. This is from the bottom of my heart. Nothing. This is my country, all right.

**Mrs. Castro:** [foreign language 00:57:58].

**Paul:** How do you think your life would have been different if you stayed in Peru?

**Melchor:** You never know. One thing, the politic is so dirty there, then probably I would have been killed there because we always had dictators there, always and you can’t say one word against the government because they send up an island and you disappear, never seen again. How can I say we are living my future there?

**Paul:** The one thing we forgot to mention was children. How many children did you have?

**Mrs. Castro:** We got three.

**Paul:** Yes, can you name them?

**Mrs. Castro:** Melchor.

**Paul:** Melchor?

**Melchor:** They say my name.

**Paul:** Aha, Melchor.

**Mrs. Castro:** Flora.

**Melchor:** Laura.

**Mrs. Castro:** Laura and Maria.

**Paul:** Maria and Maria is sitting here.

**Mrs. Castro:** We adopt. When my sister died, we adopt another … a girl from her. She was about two or three years old.

**Paul:** What was her name?

**Mrs. Castro:** Jacqueline.

**Paul:** Jacqueline. Mr. Castro, thank you very much. It was a good place to end.

**Melchor:** It was.

**Paul:** This has been a most interesting interview.

**Mrs. Castro:** You don’t want to know what me and my doing? You don’t want to know my kids doing?

**Paul:** All right, what are your kids doing? Quickly, you’ve got 50 seconds.

**Mrs. Castro:** No, no. That’s too long.

**Castro.** My son is a judge.

**Paul:** A judge.

**Melchor:** My daughter is a technician in computers.

**Mrs. Castro:** Laura.

**Melchor:** Laura is a teacher. The two of them studied they studied for a teaching but they don’t practice.

**Paul:** Are you proud of your children?

**Mrs. Castro:** Yes**,** very.

**Melchor:** Very, very.

**Mrs. Castro** Very proud.

**Paul:** We are going to end the interview now. This is Paul Seacrest signing off with Melchor, Melchor Castro on September 30th 1995, late Saturday afternoon with his daughter Maria and Mrs. Castro and various other family, furry family members in attendance.

**Mrs. Castro:** [inaudible 01:00:10]

**Melchor:** Okay.

**Paul:** Thank you very much.

**Melchor:** You’re welcome, I’m sure.