**Willa:** This is Willa Appele and I'm speaking with Mr. Rocco Morelli. We're talking on Monday September 16th, 1985. We're beginning the interview at 10:15, and we're going to talk about when Rocco came from Italy and that was in 1920.

**Rocco:** On the date of December the 25th, 1919, we boarded the ship at Naples, the SS Regina D'Italia to come to this country and try our fortunes like everybody else but the reason we left Italy is because it was after the war and we weren't flush, we were kind of poor people, so we immigrated.

**Willa:** You came from Cosenza?

**Rocco:** Yes, from Cosenza, Italy.

**Willa:** Which is in Calabria?

**Rocco:** In Calabria, that's right.

**Willa:** Do you remember much about Cosenza? You were 12 years old.

**Rocco:** Well, I was 12 years old, yes. I remember during the war we were scarce practically in everything, so we were going through those farms and trying to pick up us something to eat because food was scarce. Then my father and my mother knew what was in this country. They were here before. In fact, four members of the family were born here in New York City, previous to 1907.

**Willa:** How long had they lived, your parents, in this country?

**Rocco:** Well, they were married the year 1898. 1899, they left Italy and came here and then 1900 my oldest brother was born in New York City on 12th street. They stayed here until 1907 in July when my father brought... Already he had five children born in this country. In July of 1907, they came there and I was born in December the 25th of 1907.

**Willa:** Do you know why he returned to Italy at that time?

**Rocco:** Well, the reason why I don't know. I know mother wasn't... As they told me because I wasn’t born but they told me that mother was a sickly woman. I surmised for that reason he say, "Well let's bring her back to the parts where she was born, she might recuperate," which she did.

I surmised that's the reason why they came back. But then my father left there immediately in 1907 before I was born and came back here. He was here until 1914, then in 1914 the war broke out and he thought the best thing to do was to go back to his family in Italy.

He did come back and his trade was a tailor, but in the towns there were so many tailors and so many shoe makers and so many doctors that not everybody... So he was a friend of the mayor of the town...

**Willa:** Cosenza we're talking about?

**Rocco:** Now Cosenza is the city, the capital, let's say. The town was Aprigliano.

**Willa:** Aprigliano?

**Rocco:** Aprigliano and that's where we come from, which is only about 20 minutes from Cosenza. So the best thing to do, he said, "In order to feed my family, I better start making the county bread," bread for the whole county. Because the law would issue the flour and you make the bread for the whole county and the county comes with the, what do you call it?

**Willa:** The ration card.

**Rocco:** The ration card and-

**Willa:** Tessera.

**Rocco:** Tessera, that's right. And according to the Tessera, my father would give them the bread. My father did that until 1919 when we left Italy, but we had to sell the house in order to pay for the passage. I wish I had that house now.

**Willa:** Do you remember what it was like, the house?

**Rocco:** Oh, yeah, sure. I remember it then. The house, we had an oven built in the yard so that we baked our bread in there. I used to go in the mountains and pick up- as small as I was, I used to go with the other people to pick up the branches of trees, because over there, there were all mountains, branches of trees to burn the oven so that we heat up the oven to bake the bread.

I used to get into the oven and pack all that wood in the oven. The thicker you packed the better the job and then I also used to go with a bag of grain on my head, go to the mill, have that bread ground into flour, bring it back home and that's how we made our living.

**Willa:** So your father baked the county bread right in your backyard?

**Rocco:** That's right. Yes, right in the backyard, over here. See from the house, you didn't have to go outside from the house. It was just like an extension. Over here was the oven. Right next to it, we had the goat and the hog that we killed every winter, the hog but the goat we used to use it for the children's milk. I never tasted milk until I got to Ellis Island.

**Willa:** Cow's milk?

**Rocco:** No, goat milk.

**Willa:** Yeah, you had goat's milk so cow's milk was-

**Rocco:** Over here, yeah. Well I didn't know the difference really. And that's how we made our living there until we left the 25th of December. Then on board ship, we were children, the ship was crowded because all ex-GIs with their families and all that, all want to leave Italy. So we weren't the only ones.

**Willa:** Could we just go back a moment to this town of Aprigliano before you left it, you were almost 12 years old?

**Rocco:** Yeah, almost 12. Yes.

**Willa:** Do you remember how you felt about leaving? What you thought about it?

**Rocco:** Well to me, at that age, on one side, it was adventurous because [inaudible 00:08:49] today. I had my two friends today.

**Willa:** In Italy?

**Rocco:** In Italy, yes. I had my friends there and I was sorry to leave my friends but at the same time, I was feeling a big shot that I was going to an adventure. Like you open a door and you see what you find in it, but the anxiety of opening the door was the whole thing and that's how I felt.

Then I was never in the city of Cosenza up to that time. When we left Aprigliano, there was a strike in the railroads and we had to hire... My mother went with the carriage and the small children. The others, us we were bigger, we went with the horse and wagon.

They had these wagons there that the pioneers used here also, four wheels, two wheels there, another two wheels over [inaudible 00:09:58] and all the children we left our [inaudible 00:10:03] with the baggage and all.

**Willa:** How many were you in all when you left?

**Rocco:** We were 12. There was, let's see, I'll start from the small one. Earnest, Esther, Consetta, Jimmy, Rocco, Anna, Rosie, Elvira, Louis, pop and mom. That's 10. Then we had my grandfather and my grandmother. That's 12, the whole family.

**Willa:** Your father's parents?

**Rocco:** My mother's parents, yes. My mother's parents and big family that was pretty hard to hold the smallest together because we were, particularly me, even today. I'll go into tunnel to see what's in it. I don't look at whether it's dangerous or not. Mother had it pretty hard to control us.

**Willa:** You were saying your mother was in a carriage with the small children?

**Rocco:** That's right.

**Willa:** And then the rest of you were in this large, horse-drawn, wagon?

**Rocco:** Wagon, that's right.

**Willa:** And where did you travel to?

**Rocco:** From Aprigliano we went to the station in Cosenza in order to board the train to take us to Naples. We would stay in Cosenza for three days waiting for the strike to get over. Then we got the train and we traveled to Naples.

**Willa:** Since you had never been in a city before, what was it like to you?

**Rocco:** It's like opening up a jewelry box at that age. You look around and go, "Oh look at how beautiful this is. Look at how nice this is." The stores which you had never seen, you see different things in the stores. You're like you're in fairyland in comparison to the town we came from.

But then when we got into Naples, it was a different story. Now in Naples, you had all those big stores and bigger streets and bigger things and I say, "Ooh, look at this." But then a thought comes to you, says, "I wonder what we find in America?"

**Willa:** Had you any idea what America was going to be like?

**Rocco:** No. There the grandpa used to tell, particularly grandpa, he used to tell us, "Grandson, you will never come back to Italy once you land in the United States." And we used to ask him, "Why, grandpa?" He says, "Because in the United States you have a lot of everything." But I say, "What do you mean a lot of everything?" We were kids. We didn't know what to think.

Well, he used to tell us, "See, the United States, it's a big, big country," because he traveled from Canada to California over here. He had traveled in the United States, grandpa but then we believed him and we didn't believe him because he was telling us such great things.

They're fibs, we used to tell each other and he's fibbing us. Alright, that was that. Then when we got on board ship, the people used to come in like cattle. We were like cattle.

**Willa:** Which class were you traveling in?

**Rocco:** Oh it was steerage. Third class, what they called them because as I said, my father had to sell his house in order to pay for the passage. That's how rich we were and we traveled third class in those days and that was damn [unclear 00:14:45].

**Willa:** What was that like?

**Rocco:** They took us down there. The sailor took us down there. He assigned us the beds. Well, what were the beds? What the navy uses on the ships, bunk beds. Not bunk, just a spring there, one, two, three high and you sleep here, here, here. The other one, next, next, and all along the length of the ship, there was...

This is on one side then there was the other side and the other side of the ship, which we didn't see. There were two rows, one against the wall there which we called the wall. They usually call it bulkheads today. A row of these beds on that side and a row on this side and you just had very little room to go up and down. We were assigned this, the others were assigned this.

They kept us all together, the men. The women were in another department, but that's how it was. And to tell you the truth, it was filthy because first of all we didn't have the soap and all that to clean ourselves.

Secondly there was no showers. In fact, we didn't know what it was. So then we're living like that during the trip, but the sea was bad, very bad. At night time, they used to close the hatch, and we would be closed in when we were sleeping. If the ship now, I guess we lived for years and years because everything was closed there.

**Willa:** Do you remember where you ate?

**Rocco:** Yes. They assigned us a tin plate with a fork and a knife and a spoon. That was our utensils. The time of morning breakfast and so on and so on, the bell used to ring on the ship and we used to go...

The kitchens, the galleys were on top on the main deck, and we used to stand on line, raining, sunshine, bad seas or good seas, we had to stay on that line with our utensils. There was the guys with these urns and whatever you got, scoop this in the tin plates.

**Willa:** What did they serve? What food?

**Rocco:** Well, they served you fish. They served boiled meat or potatoes. You don't get like today. I took my wife a couple of trips to Italy this time and every once in a while, we go on a cruise and this is better living at the Waldorf.

Whereas, in those days, we were better living at home. We got more food on board ship as long as it lasted. But that, don't forget we were on board ship for 28 days. Well you can figure out there how long we were on board ship. They used to catch fish from the ocean to feed us because we had run out of food.

**Willa:** Why did the passage take so long?

**Rocco:** Well first of all, we got to Gibraltar and we had to supply ourselves with coal, but they were on strike in Gibraltar and we had to wait until the strike was over and we lost six days over there.

Then after six days, we left Gibraltar and it took us so long to come over because the seas were bad. We had very, very rough seas. It didn't bother me in any way, but it took us so long that we had run out of food.

Now there was stacks of onions on the main deck, I guess they were importing it here or something because they weren't for eating purposes. But kids, young fellows, we started stealing them.

They used to give us about that much bread for the whole day, just a small piece of bread. First of all it's because I love bread, even today. Secondly a young kid, I wasn't the only kid in there.

There was many, many children and we were growing up, we were children, we needed food, so we stole whatever we could aboard ship in order to get along but no, no.

My grandfather, he used to tell us, "Son, don't worry about it. You won't die but when we get to America, you're going to eat your heart out because you're going to fill up and fill up and fill up," he says, "Because there's plenty of food there." I say, "We live with that wish. What are you going to do?"

**Willa:** So you were really hungry on board ship?

**Rocco:** Sure we were, certainly.

**Willa:** Were you sea sick?

**Rocco:** No, no. I wasn't. That's one thing. We had two sisters and one brother in sick bay because they had caught pneumonia. As I told you before, one of them passed away on board ship.

**Willa:** How old was she?

**Rocco:** I think it was one year old or two years old or something like that, and she was buried at sea. The others, when we got to Ellis Island, was the reason why we went to Ellis Island.

**Willa:** With your sister who, your baby sister who died, it seems to me that would be very traumatic to a young boy.

**Rocco:** Sure it was traumatic in the sense that there's... I was, I don't know whether I was, I won't say the black sheep of the family but it seems to me that every child that my mother used to get, used to wind up in my arms and take her in the piazza to get her away from the house. She would be sleeping in my arms, sitting on a benches in the piazza, in the town and every one of them, "Rocco, take the children out."

"Alright, [inaudible 00:22:35]" There was times I had one baby here, hanging on my pants, another baby hanging on his pants and another one in the arms going to the piazza, a little [inaudible 00:22:47]. And as long as we were there, that was my job.

**Willa:** You took care of the younger children?

**Rocco:** Of the young children and that's how we got along there. When you [00:23:05] my little Frannie dies, you cry but what are you going to do? Then you're a young kid, you get over it. You don't get over it in 15 minutes but after a week or so you feel that's it. Then on board ship, we had to clean our own utensils after we eat. We had to put it away, not to lose it because we had to pay for it if we lost them and we had those rules.

But my grandfather, early in the morning, used to say, "Son, go and look. If the weather is clear, go and reserve the benches to sit down outside." Otherwise whoever went first got those benches.

The rest of them either sit down on the decks or don't sit down at all. I used to go up there and spread on the benches and save the seats for my father, my mother and that's the job I had on the ship.

Then we got to New York and when we hit the Statue of Liberty, I'll never forget it. My grandfather said, "Son, you see that? That's a lady. That represents liberta," liberty, he said. "Now you don't know what it is today but the passing of the years, you will realize what that Statue means to you," he said.

He said, "I'm quite sure," he said, "You will thank God that you are in this country." Me, I took it lightly. I used to agree with him but I took him lightly as a child. We landed in Ellis Island. My brothers and sisters came to Jersey City. They separated us-

**Willa:** These were the-?

**Rocco:** Citizens.

**Willa:** Three?

**Rocco:** Four citizens.

**Willa:** The four siblings who had been born in America before your parents returned to Italy.

**Rocco:** That's right, returned to Italy and they came to my aunt over here.

**Willa:** So, that left eight of your on Ellis Island?

**Rocco:** On Ellis Island, that's right.

**Willa:** Seven. Because of the-

**Rocco:** One of them was passed away. Mom and the two sick ones, Esther and Earnest which were the smallest, they took them directly to the hospital in Ellis Island. So they let my mother and my brother, I was 12, he was about seven years old go with them in sick bay so that Jimmy was so small that he couldn't be taken care of in the auditorium where the rest of us were. So alright, we didn't see them as long as we were there. We saw them just a day before they let us out.

**Willa:** How long were you actually on Ellis Island?

**Rocco:** On Ellis Island, we were there 22 days. We got in there my grandmother was an elderly woman. My grandfather had one leg. They took all us men on one section of the rooms and they stripped us all. They took all our clothes and they only left our papers in our hands and we used to go through like a cattle booth.

There was a booth here, a booth there, booth there and all of these booths, there was a doctor. All these doctors, they examine you. In the meantime, your clothes were gone. When you get through all these doctors, if you were a sick person they put you on this side and wait here. If you were alright, you continue with the rest of the examinations.

**Willa:** What kind of examinations?

**Rocco:** Well the eyes, the heart, the teeth. The whole body, they used to examine you. We went through then they brought us into a big hall and that big hall, I don't know how they did it because I was a small kid, I didn't look at it.

But all of a sudden, they called your name and there's your cloths, all cleaned, packed and everything. They used to smell nice and clean, and I looked at the fella, I was a little kid, I looked at him.

He smiled at me because to tell you the truth, I've got to be honest about it, they deloused us. Excuse the expression but they deloused us. As I said the ship wasn't a clean ship. You couldn't clean yourself anyway because even the water of the fountains was frozen and in order to drink some water sometimes we had to break the ice with something and melt it in order to drink that ice on board ship. That's how, so how can you keep yourself clean. The mom was always looking, you know how mothers are.

**Willa:** Was it cold going through all those medical examinations on Ellis Island without any cloths?

**Rocco:** No, they had steam heat. They had steam heat. We didn’t feel the cold. The only cold we felt is just before we got in there. We got off the boat and from the boat to the entrance of Ellis Island is just a little walk. Once you're in there, you felt relieved and said, "Oh boy. It's nice and warm in here." So that was that. At night time, they assign you a bunk also and you slept down there.

**Willa:** Was that in a dormitory room?

**Rocco:** Dormitory, yeah. It was a big dormitory where you slept. In the morning... see in the evening we went to bed, it was nice. Outside it was... And they had hedges which I didn't know what they were then. Now I know they were hedges. You know how hedges are.

When we got up in the morning, those hedges were covered in snow. I had to call grandpa. I say, "Grandpa, grandpa." He says, "What's the matter, son?" I said, "Look at the snow outside." Now in Italy where we come from, when you got a brush of snow, not even a shovel would pick it up.

But then seeing so much snow, I figured by the hedges. "Oh," he says, "Son, get used to it because every winter you're going to have that."

**Willa:** This is the beginning of side two with the interview with Rocco Morelli.

**Rocco:** So he said, "Don't worry about it. You're going to get used to it.” “Alright." Now the following day at breakfast was the first time that I even saw boiled prunes. When they brought us down to the dining room, they said we file in pairs. A bowl of milk would boil prunes in it [inaudible 00:32:55] water.

I asked my grandfather because I always directed myself to my grandfather. I asked him, "Grandpa, why did they put the prunes in the milk?" "Oh" he says, "Son, that's good for you. That's very good. Prunes are good for your system," he says, "And milk is nutritious. You drink it all and eat all those prunes."

There was about 5, 6 prunes in there. They gave us plenty, so I said, “Alright, grandpa,” and I ate it, I liked it. Then they gave us- I don't remember if it was one egg or two eggs, sunny side up. I say, "Ooh, grandfather, look at the eggs. This is good." And the American bread naturally.

Me, I ate it all. I was hungry, I ate it all but grandfather, "Don't eat too fast. Nobody's going to chase you. Just take your time." And then there was butter. Now I had never seen butter either in the old country.

We have our special butter, what we call [? puttiro 00:34:29]. It's a sort of a cheese in a form of a bell. Its round on the bottom and then it comes to a finish like a bell. Inside that, there's what we call [? puttiro 00:34:50], which is milk.

In fact, it's richer than butter because that's just pure milk. It isn't pasteurized, it isn't nothing. We just take a little bit of that and we spread it on the bread and that's what we call our- but the word butter didn't exist. Anyway, that's the first time I ate butter.

For 21 days, for 22 days, whatever as long as I was there... I didn't like some of the foods that they had. All these creamy stuffs and the cream macaroni, I was Italian. I didn't care for the creams. Even today I don't care. But anyway what I ate, I always went back to the- I used to take a few slices of bread from the table, I used to put butter on there and take them upstairs in the big room where we used to stay because they wouldn't let us walk outside.

**Willa:** How did you fill the days?

**Rocco:** That's it, by looking at those men playing Italian games, the cards and all that. That's how you spend your day. I didn't have no other child companion, children companions there. I was the only one until about two weeks after that I was there then another boy came from another country. I don't even know what country it was because he spoke to me, I didn't understand him but we used to get along. We used to pal out together.

He was about a year or so younger than me and that's how we spend our time but until then, most of my time was spent with my grandfather because outside was cold. Inside we had the radiators, nice and warm. We used to stay near the radiators and keep ourselves warm and then, while I was in there, I ate my first banana.

My uncles came to visit us about three days later that we were in Ellis Island and one of them brought me his pockets full of chocolates and another one brought us a whole -now I know it's a hand of bananas. Every banana was like that, nice and yellow.

They picked me up like you pick up a football. They were big guys and I was a little boy. So they told me, "Now you eat all the bananas because if we come back tomorrow and you didn't eat them..." Could I eat a whole bunch of bananas like that? But after they'd gone, I said to my grandfather, "What do you do with these?"

He says, "You eat them, son. They're good." He says, "They're the American figs." He said to me, "You know how you like figs?" I said, "Yeah." Well he says, "That's how you'll like these bananas." "Is that right?"

So I grab one and I went to put it in my mouth. He says, "No, You've got to take the skin." Well I said, "You said they're like figs. We don't take the skin of the figs." He says, "No this you take the, you know." He says, "Yeah, I'll show you."

He peeled it. He says, "That's how you do it." So I started to eat bananas. That was the first time I ever saw, which even today, if I have to eat 10, 12 bananas, I'll eat them just like that. I don't care. I like them that much. [Inaudible 00:39:38] used to bring me chocolates and biscuits and all and I didn't care if I never went down to dinner anymore. As long as we were there, they used to come every other day to see us.

One of them came from Canada, Uncle Sam. Helen knows him too. He died just a few years ago. He was living in Canada. He was a bachelor, and he came all the way from Canada so he could be with his cousin, which was my mother. Then he stayed here until he passed away.

Anyway that was how I passed my time in Ellis Island. What I used to hear the people grumbling in there was the money exchange, they had a money exchange down stairs, booths like. They said that they used to shortchange them on money. Now I can't verify that because I was young kid, but these immigrants, they used to complain about that.

**Willa:** Do you remember being aware that there were people from many different countries with you?

**Rocco:** Oh, yes. I'd say all nationalities now, but then, I didn't know how many nations there were anyway but everybody used to sit like groups talking among themselves. If you were near those groups, you didn't understand what they were talking about.

The Italian men, whether it's a dialect or whether it's the Italian, I used to understand it. You can ask me, well how could you when you never heard a [unknown 00:41:43] talk?

Well you understand it because every once in a while, they'll throw in an Italian word and there's where you know that they were Italians because if we had talked the Calabrazzi there, which we did, they didn't understand us either.

But we do throw in every once in a while an Italian word that you understand but there was a lot of Yugoslavs, Frenchmen, Germans that you didn't understand. If somebody came to see us, they used to take us in another auditorium and-

**Willa:** There was a special place where visitors used to come.

**Rocco:** Visitors used to come. Once there was a fellow that got sick and he was Italian and we used to talk with him and everything, my grandfather. One day my grandfather says, "Go and call your father over there." My father was gambling, how are they going to pass the time? So they were gambling, playing cards.

I called him, my father. He says, "What's the matter, Rocco?" I said, "Nana wants to see you. There's a...” I forgot his name. I said, "He looks sick." He said, "Alright." He got up. He came and said, "What's the matter?" He had fever, this fellow, so my father knocked on the door where the guard, outside we used to have the guards. The guards open a little, on the door there was a little hole.

**Willa:** A little hole.

**Rocco:** Yeah, a little hole. He opened that. He says, "What's the matter?" So my father, I was with my father, he started talking English.

**Willa:** Your father spoke English.

**Rocco:** Well I thought he did then. He was telling them, he says, "Man, febbre, febbre," he was telling him, my father was telling him. And I said to myself, "Gee, my father speaks English." I thought it was a big thing, until I found out the American language but anyway he made himself understand and the doctors came up and took the fellow away.

We didn't know what happened to him after that. That's how we passed our time in Ellis Island. Then we came over here and we lived down here and my aunt found us five rooms with the back house.

**Willa:** The outhouse.

**Rocco:** Yeah, The outhouse. That's how we started our lives in America and after about two, three months... I went to school immediately. My aunt sent me to school right away because the school was near with her daughters and I became friends with some Italian fellows.

They were born in this country but they spoke Italian and our relationship always grew until they passed away, both of them. This fellow said, "Hey, Rocco, you want to make some money?" I said sure. So he said, "Come and sell papers with me." I didn't even know the value of the money, but I told my mother.

My mother didn't want to send me. I said, "Mom," I was loyal, I says, "Make some money." I convinced her. I started to sell papers. I went to buy 25 papers for 25 cents and you used to make a penny a paper. Sometimes they gave you the, "Go on. Forget about it." You know how it is.

Anyway at night time, I had to be home before my father saw me because my father used to work in New York. He used to get off at the general square here, that's where I was selling papers, and if he ever saw me, he'd kill me.

I used to get home. I used to give my mother the money that I used to make. In those days, with five cents, you bought a loaf of bread. You bought a quart of milk. If I brought a 30, 40 cents in the evening, you used to get pretty good with that money and it always helped. Then my mother was happy. She [inaudible 00:47:43] and that's how after that why....

**Willa:** When you think about it, you had said that your grandfather, when he told you about America, you felt maybe he was fibbing, maybe you partly believed him. After being in America for a while, did you think your grandfather was telling the truth?

**Rocco:** I started realizing that my grandfather was telling me the truth when I was the age of 21, 22 years old. Then I started to realize what America really was, because then you start thinking, you read books. I'm very fond of reading of geography, history and about wars. I like that, to read about these things. In other words, I want to find out, if it's possible, when was this world created?

Then you start learning things, then you start to realize what was really America and what it is America. At the age of about 21, 22, [inaudible 00:49:05] the most thing I feel sorry about was that my grandmother and grandfather died in California and not in Jersey City.

I loved them that much and as far as this country is concerned, I said it then and I'll always say it, there'll never, never be another country like this, never. I don't care what country you pick on, no other country will be like this.

**Willa:** In what way?

**Rocco:** Well, for instance, in productivity, in science, so far there's other scientific heads all over the world, but the advancement of science that this country has made, no other country in the world. They copied from this country. They stole some of its scientific data from this country but they never caught up with it by themselves. That's why I say this country led the world and leads the war. There was, and from time to time, there will be just let's say a person here or a person there that will discover something from other countries but it's not in group form like this country it is.

**Willa:** And from a personal point of view when you think about it, what do you think coming to America, your parents' decision to come to America, meant to you?

**Rocco:** Well to me, it was mostly my mother. My father was in this country. He worked in this country he worked in New York but as soon as the war was over, my mother said, "Look. Anthony," He says, "I want to go back to the United States. I want to go back to New York. I don't want to live in Italy anymore." She said, "I want my children..."

This I know because I was always there when they argued. At that time, I paid attention for the simple reason I thought maybe my father is going to jump and hit my mother or something like that. But I did want to know what they were arguing about.

She told him, "I do not want to raise my children in this country any longer. I don't want no wars. I don't want no famine. I don't want no poverty. I want to go back to the United States. You work over there, the children will work over there and at least we'll eat."

That's how I thank my mother more than I thank my father of course I thank them both, understand, but I'm more inclined towards my mother than my father, that it was her persistence to come to this country. To me she took me out of a hole and brought me out in the open.

That's what I feel about it and up to this day, I went to war for this country. I'd go back again if I had to. I'll defend it in every way. But don't get me wrong. I do love Italy and in fact, my wife says to me, "You've got two mothers," she tells me, "The United States and Italy. Which one do you like the most?" I cannot choose. I do love them both, and from time to time, I take a trip in Italy just to satisfy my desire to go back to the place where I was born.

**Willa:** This is the end of the interview with Rocco Morelli.