**Paul:** Good afternoon. This is Paul Seacrest for the National Park Service. Today is Sunday, September 24th, 1995 approximately 2 o'clock in the afternoon. I am in West Harrison, New York, which is just outside of White Plains, with Helene Morgado. Mrs. Morgado came from Brazil in 1929. She was 12 years old at that time. Present also in the room is her husband and the neighbor who has come over to watch this. Mrs. Morgado, can we begin by you giving me your birth date please.

**Helene:** May 31st, 1917.

**Paul:** And may I have your full name before you were married please?

**Helene:** My full name as it appears on my card is Helene Coelho Da Silva Manta.

**Paul:** Can you spell all of that for us please?

**Helene:** My first name too?

**Paul:** Yes.

**Helene:** H-E-L-E-N-E, C-O-E-L-H-O, D-A, S-I-L-V-A, M-A-N-T-A.

**Paul:** Were you named those names for a specific reason?

**Helene:** Well as far as I know in Brazil we used to take our mother's maiden name as well as our father's name when we were born as children.

**Paul:** Which one is your mother's maiden name?

**Helene:** Coelho.

**Paul:** Oh, that's interesting. Do you know anything about your birth? Did your mother or father ever tell you anything about when you were born?

**Helene:** No.

**Paul:** Where were you born in Brazil?

**Helene:** Belem Para.

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

**Helene:** B-E-L-E-M P-A-R-A.

**Paul:** And where in the country is that?

**Helene:** That's right beyond [inaudible 00:01:52] the equator runs through that. It's right at the mouth of the Amazon.

**Paul:** Can you tell me a little bit about when you were growing up, what that town looked like?

**Helene:** Well to me it was a nice town, just like here. It's a city area where I lived in.

**Paul:** Describe the buildings for me, what a typical building looks like from that part of the world.

**Helene:** Well not much different from here at that time. Of course now, there's a few changes, the last time we went there, we saw a few changes, but the buildings, the houses the streets...

**Paul:** Did you live in that town until you came to America.

**Helene:** Yes.

**Paul:** Is there one particular building in that town that sticks out in your mind as a child?

**Helene:** Well there was the army headquarters a few blocks away from there and there was a park in front of that and also on the opposite direction was the church that we used to attend.

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

**Helene:** [Portuguese].

**Paul:** Oh my goodness. May I ask you to spell that?

**Helene:** Our Lady of the Holy Trinity.

**Paul:** Okay, that's good.

**Helene:** Well I can spell it in Portuguese if you want me to.

**Paul:** That's okay. Maybe we can do it after this. You mentioned the army barracks, what do you remember about this army?

**Helene:** Well it really wasn't barracks, it was a great big building and then they had this old, I don't know what you call it, a small area where there used to be a guard all the time. I think the officers used to stay there, and they had a constant guard there. They used to change shifts just like over here, the police change shifts, the guard used to change every once in a while.

**Paul:** Was that something that you could watch?

**Helene:** Well it really was no big deal about it. It just a matter of... The only thing we used to there, there used to have a lot of mango trees and all the kids used to go when it was mango time, we used to go to the park and pick up mangoes.

**Paul:** Tell me a little bit about the house you lived in. Can you describe what it was made out of and how it was constructed?

**Helene:** It was very similar to one of these condos nowadays. They were all adjoining and they had this fixed fence in the front. Our house was about in the middle and it had a great big wall, all wooden and big gates. We used to have two stories. In the first floor used to be our living room, our dining room and a kitchen and the bathroom of course. Then the second floor used to be... No, on the first floor, there was also a bedroom for my parents, and all the kids, we slept on the second floor which was a great big room, just about bigger than this. We all slept there in hammocks. Each one had their hammocks. They had columns and they had hooks to the columns and we slept in the hammocks.

**Paul:** What were the hammocks made of?

**Helene:** Cotton. As far as I know, they were heavy cotton.

**Paul:** And how did you get these hammocks?

**Helene:** You had to buy them in the markets.

**Paul:** So it wasn't something that your family made?

**Helene:** Oh no, no.

**Paul:** This is an urban area in the city. Is there a piece of furniture that sticks out in your mind from that house for some reason?

**Helene:** Well we used to have our dining table. It used to be a great big dining table because we were seven children plus my father and my mother. There was a wardrobe that had drawers in the bottom and on the top. I used to use it to hang your cloths up. That as far as I know was made out of oak.

**Paul:** Did you have electricity in the house?

**Helene:** No. We used to have kerosene lamps and we used to have them in every room. If you go from one room to the other and if you needed more light, you'd bring another one and put it there. At around 5 o'clock or 6 o'clock, my parents would light up the kerosene lamps.

**Paul:** And running water?

**Helene:** Yes, that we did.

**Paul:** You mentioned the bathroom so-

**Helene:** We had a shower in the bathroom, which not too many people [inaudible 00:06:27] outdoors but we had everything was enclosed.

**Paul:** Was there an occasion where the house had to be heated?

**Helene:** No.

**Paul:** It's hot where you were?

**Helene:** Oh yes. As a matter of fact, we never even had sweaters till my father came here and he went [inaudible 00:06:42] sweaters.

**Paul:** Is there a story that sticks out in your mind from your childhood that reflects the heat and how hot it was at that time.

**Helene:** Well it was hot, but there was always a breeze. As a child, I don't remember sweating or anything like that but there always seemed to be a breeze. Then at night, my grandmother used to come over, she lived about a block away from us and either we'd go to her house or she would come to our house and sit outside in the front. We had a little garden and talk and at night I used to feel cold and I used to tell my mother, let's go in the house and sit because I'm getting cold. But how cold it was, I don't know.

**Paul:** Let's talk a little bit about your parents and why they were in Brazil, how that all happened. Give me sort of a thumbnail sketch of your parents' family background.

**Helene:** My father was born in Portugal and he came to Brazil for better standard of living.

**Paul:** Do you know when he went to Brazil?

**Helene:** When? No, that I don't know.

**Paul:** What was his name?

**Helene:** Jose De Silva Manta, then it was changed to Joseph Manta. To make it easier when he got his citizenship papers.

**Paul:** Can you spell Joseph in Portuguese?

**Helene:** Jose? J-O-S-E, with a mark on top of the e.

**Paul:** Do you know roughly how old he was when he first went to Brazil?

**Helene:** I don't know if he was 18 or 19 years old.

**Paul:** But a young man?

**Helene:** Yes

**Paul:** And what work did he find when he got there?

**Helene:** Right away, I don't know, but I know before we came, he had had a different business like restaurants and then he was working as a traveling salesman or sales representative and he used to go to the Amazon with the workers to take supplies to the people in Amazon.

**Paul:** What kind of supplies?

**Helene:** Well households, food, clothing, things like that.

**Paul:** Everyday necessities?

**Helene:** Yeah, that's right.

**Paul:** What was your father's personality like?

**Helene:** Well he was very conscious of education. He was always trying to get, like when we lived here, trying to get the Portuguese people to get together. He started up quite a few social clubs in Yonkers, New York City, [unknown 00:09:19], different spots. Then every Sunday, there used to be a dance at the one in Yonkers and it used to be like a family affair. The kids used to dance with the old man, it was really nice.

**Paul:** Is there a story you like to tell about your relationship with your father before he left to come to America?

**Helene:** Oh yes. Of course he used to be away from home when he used to go to the Amazon-

**Paul:** And that's what you remember him doing, the flying and the-?

**Helene:** That's right. And every time he came back home, he would always take us places and as I said, we were seven kids and he used to take turns. Every week he would take two or three of us either to the museum, to the zoo, any places, sometimes just for trolley rides. And then he used to take us what we call a botiquin. That's what over here maybe it's translated to bodega, whatever it is, but then we used to have a drink like a ginger ale, and everybody we used to buy a bag of bon-bons to take to the kids that were left home. Every Sunday we used to take turns.

**Paul:** Can you spell that name in Portuguese of the store?

**Helene:** Botiquin? B-O-T-I-Q-U-I-N.

**Paul:** Thank you. You know it's like it's a spelling bee today.

**Helene:**  But I went to school.

**Paul:** That was going to be my next question. You said your father was very education oriented, could he read and write?

**Helene:** Oh, yes definitely.

**Paul:** He was educated?

**Helene:** Oh, yes.

**Paul:** How did the importance that he placed on education how did that affect your life as you were growing up?

**Helene:** Well when we came from Brazil, we had a do our school homework at the school and then in the evening, we used to sit around the dining room table, and my two oldest sisters used to read a paragraph out of the book that we would assign the day before. My sister Catherine, she used to have to read during the afternoon a chapter and explain the meaning, translate the meaning. Me, I used to have to teach my younger sister and my brother how to read and spell in Portuguese, then at night, used to be like our teacher. We had to go through the whole program with him and then he would assign us work for the following day.

**Paul:** It's very interesting. Tell me what your father looked like. Can you describe him in words? Well we're looking at a photograph, but this is an audio tape. Just describe-

**Helene:** Oh, I'm sorry. Well he had a reddish blond hair and a mustache and he weighed I think about 135 pounds and he was about 5'5", 5'7" around there.

**Paul:** Again before he left to go to America, what sticks out in your mind about the way your father liked to spend his leisure time? You told us about taking the kids, that's obviously one thing, what kinds of things did he like to do for himself?

**Helene:** Well for himself, he used to go to school practically every evening. He continue going to school and then when he was home with us, he used to play the accordion and sing, and we used to sing and dance until it was time to go to bed.

**Paul:** Do you remember any of the songs you used to sing in Portuguese back then?

**Helene:** Gee, I don't remember.

**Paul:** Maybe as we're talking. If you can think of one, I'd love to have you sing it on tape. Tell me what your mother's name was.

**Helene:** Catharina Coelho Manta.

**Paul:** Can you spell Catharina?

**Helene:** C-A-T-H-A-R-I-N-A.

**Paul:** The other names you've already spell them.

**Helene:** Yes, I've spelled them before.

**Paul:** Tell me her family background.

**Helene:** Well as far as I know, her father was born in Portugal also and her mother was Brazilian, and I think they were 11 children. I'm not so sure, but they didn't live near us. Only my grandmother and about three of my relatives lived near us.

**Paul:** Had your mother been born in Brazil?

**Helene:** Yes.

**Paul:** So her parents had come to-

**Helene:** No, her mother was Brazilian born. Only her father was born in Portugal.

**Paul:** Is there a story about that that you can think of? Do you know how your grandparents met?

**Helene:** No, I have no idea. Sorry.

**Paul:** Do you know why her father came to-?

**Helene:** No, I don't.

**Paul:** Do you know how your parents met?

**Helene:** No, I don't.

**Paul:** Well answer some of the same questions I asked you about your father, use your mother now. Tell me what her personality was like.

**Helene:** Well my mother was very easy going, she was a sweetheart. She was very religious, and the one thing that she taught us, every Friday to clean the house because she says on Saturday, our blessed mother would visit all the homes and she wanted to make sure that the house was clean.

**Paul:** A way of getting the kids to clean the house. Do you have other things you can tell me that would reflect how religious your mother was? Some of the things that she-?

**Helene:** Well we used to go to Catholic school. My father was not Catholic but he never kept us from our religion.

**Paul:** What was he?

**Helene:** He was Protestant.

**Paul:** Really? Do you know what Protestant, which-

**Helene:** In Brazil, what they had, they used to call the espiritismo was all about the spirits and all that. But I never attended, I never knew but that's what they used to say so I really don't know.

**Paul:** Can you spell that too please.

**Helene:** Espiritismo? E-S-P-I-R-I-T-I-S-M-O.

**Paul:** Is this a sort of local nature worship?

**Helene:** Yeah, that's what it is. That's what it was. And thee reason it came from Brazil to the United States is because every time he went to the Amazon, he'd come back with malaria and he always would end up in hospital. The doctors told him, either he would have to change his job and go to a different climate or he would have six months to live. He had an uncle here in Provincetown, Massachusetts who used to be a fisherman. He wrote to him and asked him if he would sponsor him. The uncle said he definitely would, he'd be glad to. My father came with my oldest brother who was 14 years old in 1923.

**Paul:** So you were how old when he leaves?

**Helene:** Six years old.

**Paul:** Do you remember him leaving?

**Helene:** Oh yes. I remember crying.

**Paul:** Can you explain the circumstances of the night he left or something around that?

**Helene:** Well the night he left, the neighbors came over to say goodbye and we were all crying. We didn't want to see him go.

**Paul:** I realize we were talking about your mother and we've sort of gotten side tracked. But it makes me think, did your father ever tell you or did he ever talk about some of his experience in the Amazon dealing with these-?

**Helene:** No.

**Paul:** He never really talked about-?

**Helene:** No. Except that he did say that he felt sorry for some of the people that were so poor and he says many times he gave them things just because they looked like they were in need.

**Paul:** These were the Indians, right? That he tried-?

**Helene:** Well Indians and there was a lot of Portuguese too there because Brazil is very similar to the United States. You get all kinds of nationalities.

**Paul:** And in a way, I suppose these are like homesteaders. They're going out into the-

**Helene:** That's right, yes. That's right.

**Paul:** Well let's get back to your mom here. We were talking about her religious preoccupation. Can you tell me how you practiced your religion at home?

**Helene:** Well we used to say the rosary practically every evening, and we used to go to Catholic school. We used to go to church on Sundays, and a kid, that time I used to sing in the choir at church and in school. And we used to go to processions and my mother was always there for us. She was always with us.

**Paul:** What language did you pray in?

**Helene:** Portuguese.

**Paul:** Is there a Portuguese prayer that you remember that you could say for us on tape?

**Helene:** Our father, the Hail Mary.

**Paul:** If you could do it in Portuguese, great.

**Helene:** Oh no. I forgot.

**Paul:** Take your time.

**Helene:** [Portuguese 00:18:33]

**Paul:** It's okay. That's great. Thanks. What was the language was the church service. When you went to church, what language was the-

**Helene:** Latin.

**Paul:** In Latin?

**Helene:** In Latin. The prayers.

**Paul:** The prayers? And what about, you said you went to a Catholic school, what language was spoken in school?

**Helene:** Portuguese. We speak Portuguese all over.

**Paul:** Who were the teachers of this school?

**Helene:** We had some, I believe they were nuns, and once and twice a week, a priest would come to the school and we had catechism.

**Paul:** Why don't you set the paper up here on the table because you're...? No, that's okay. Do you have any stories about the nuns?

**Helene:** No, except they were very nice and the school we used to go to, if you just went in the morning, you didn't have to pay. But if you wanted to go in the afternoon, then your parents had to pay. I don't know how much it was. But then you could learn different hobbies, arts and crafts, or you could continue with your reading and writing, things like that.

**Paul:** Were there certain household things that your mother taught you at home?

**Helene:** Well she taught us how to clean, how to keep ourselves neat and clean and never to lie.

**Paul:** What about actual things to do? For instance, like handiwork? Were you taught how to embroider?

**Helene:** Oh, [inaudible 00:20:16] embroidered, crochet, sewing, no knitting because we didn't need... And then we used to have making lace by [inaudible 00:20:28]. There was a pillow filled with straw and then they used to have all these different things with the threads and the pins. You make the different styles of the lace.

**Paul:** And then what would you use the lace for?

**Helene:** Well some people used to sell them, if they made a lot, but at home we used to make [inaudible 00:20:47] of our slips or doilies for the tables.

**Paul:** So you pretty much made it for your own use?

**Helene:** Oh yes. Right. Just to train us, just to keep us busy.

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

**Helene:** Well my father used to have, she was a distant cousin and she was a deaf mute, and twice a year, she used to come to our house for two weeks and she used to make all our clothes, underwear, slips, dresses. My father had a habit, the three girls, younger girls, would all dress alike and the two older sisters would dress alike. But the boys were different.

**Paul:** How did the girls feel about having to dress alike?

**Helene:** We didn't mind it at all.

**Paul:** You just accepted it.

**Helene:** We just accepted it, that's right.

**Paul:** Is there a dress, one or two dresses that stick out in your mind from your childhood that you remember vividly for one reason or another?

**Helene:** Well we had one that was blue and white stripes, long sleeved with a white collar. We all had... The three girls, and the other one was like a pink silk that was a dressy dress and with embroidering on the top with a collar and they were short sleeved. There was pleated skirt and we felt very comfortable with them.

**Paul:** And this were the distant cousin would have made for you?

**Helene:** Yes. Of course my father still paid her.

**Paul:** You mentioned that you have quite a few brothers and sisters-

**Helene:** Two, two brothers and five... We were five girls and two boys.

**Paul:** Can you list everybody from the oldest to the youngest?

**Helene:** Yes. My oldest brother's name was Armando.

**Paul:** And if they're Portuguese names, please spell them.

**Helene:** Yeah. A-R-M-A-N-D-O. My oldest sister was Clara, C-L-A-R-A. My other sister was Maria, M-A-R-I-A, and then Catharina, C-A-T-H-A-R-I-N-A. I was the next one, H-E-L-E-N-A or N-E, whichever and then was my brother Albert, A-L-B-E-R-T and my sister Cecilia, C-E-C-I-L-I-A.

**Paul:** What is the span from the oldest to the youngest?

**Helene:** Gee we were all like two years apart, about 14.

**Paul:** Do you remember the birth or births of your younger siblings? `

**Helene:** Well my brother Albert was March 2nd, he's the youngest one. No, my sister Cecilia was the youngest and her birthdays is April 18th. My sister Mary's birthday was March 27th. My sister Clara's birthday was July 17 and my brother Armando's birthday was December 25.

**Paul:** Christmas baby. I guess what I meant by the question was do you remember when any of the younger siblings when they actually were born? Do you remember the circumstances around their birth?

**Helene:** Well I only remember my sister Cecile was born because my father had just come to the United States, my mother was pregnant at the time. I remember she had the baby at home and I guess she was having a hard time because my grandmother and the midwife told my sister Clara to go and get my uncle. He worked a few blocks away because they needed help.

My mother might have to go to the hospital. My sister, I said, "Let me go with you." So I went with her, we ran all the way. It was like the distance from here to White Plains, to Main Street in White Plains and we ran and we told him, he used to have a tobacco shop store. He left and by the time we got home, my sister had been born.

**Paul:** Can you talk a little bit about when a woman was pregnant, how she presented herself or didn't present herself? What were the [inaudible 00:25:15] around that sort of things?

**Helene:** Well she had clothes like we have here?

**Paul:** Maternity clothes?

**Helene:** Maternity clothes, yes. At least where we came from, we were. I don't know what they did in the interior.

**Paul:** Would your mother go out into public for any reason when she was pregnant?

**Helene:** Sure, why not?

**Paul:** How was all of that explained to the kids? Do you remember?

**Helene:** No. That's one thing they never mentioned. They never... We just took it for granted we're going to have another brother or sister and that was it.

**Paul:** Well you said your father went in 1923 because he was getting malaria a lot. Do you remember any instances when he had malaria, how it was treated or what they [inaudible 00:25:56]?

**Helene:** Oh, he always had to go to the hospital.

**Paul:** And do you know how it was dealt with at that time?

**Helene:** No. I know at that time, they used to give him a kind of medication. I can't remember the name. I remember because his urine used to turn blue and the one time it was explained that that's the reason because of the medication that they gave him.

**Paul:** Actually this makes me think, were there household remedies that your mother would make at home or to deal with common ailments that you can remember at that time?

**Helene:** Well she used to make for colds. She used to make a tea out of the skin of lemon and garlic, honey, a little bit of black pepper and a little bit of water. We used to have that as syrup for colds if you had a bad cold. Then if you had [00:26:52] used to put plaster padding your [inaudible 00:26:57] and they used to put that on your chest and on your back.

**Paul:** Do you remember as a child an instance where you were very ill?

**Helene:** Well I was always sick. As a matter of fact, my father was always telling all his friends that I was very fragile. When he was home, he always used to him with him because the doctor said that if I lived up to the age of 14, then I would have no problems. But he was always afraid by the age of 14. I'd be gone, because I was always sick. I had bronchitis, which left me with bronchiectasis, according to the doctors. It did permanent damage to my bronchial tube and my lungs.

**Paul:** Do you remember how that was treated and what you would have to do, like where they put you and what they did to you?

**Helene:** No, just as I said, [inaudible 00:27:47] on the chest and drinking that tea. That's how I used to be treated. Once in a while mother used to take me to the doctor or sometimes just to the drugstore because the drugs stores there were just like a doctor. They told you what medication to take and all that and the doctors used to agree with it.

**Paul:** I haven't asked you, what kind of foods did you eat?

**Helene:** Just like here. The main food there is what we call feijoada.

**Paul:** Can you spell that for me?

**Helene:** Feijoada, F-E-I-J-O-A-D-A.

**Paul:** Thank you.

**Helene:** That is black beans and you have a dried beef, smoked meat. The meat is cooked with the beans and on the side, they serve white rice, plain cooked rice. Then usually with that they would serve, not to the children of course, not the whiskey. It's what you call that... Yeah, they call it cachaca, tequila, with a lot of sugar. They used to put the sugar in with a piece of lemon. They used to squeeze the lemon and they used to serve that. As a matter of fact, they do that in the restaurants, the last time we went to Brazil. On Saturday nights, the restaurants all had that specialty.

**Paul:** Can you spell that?

**Helene:** Cachaca. C-A-C-H-A-C-A and the C has a little hook at the bottom that changes it from a KA to a sha.

**Paul:** I see. And that's a typical Brazilian kind of thing?

**Helene:** Yes.

**Paul:** What about for special occasions? Let's say for a religious holiday like Christmas or something? Was there a special food that was prepared for that occasion?

**Helene:** Well as I said, the feijoada.

**Paul:** That would be it.

**Helene:** And then sometimes they had festivals and they used to make the, I can't think of the name. The milk from the coconut and... They used that a lot down south. It looked white corn?

**Paul:** Oh, cornmeal?

**Helene:** No, it's not cornmeal. It's...

**Paul:** Grits?

**Helene:** Grits. But whole grits and they would cook that in the coconut milk with sugar and they put cinnamon on top and they used to sell that or your parents would make that as a treat for the kids. Or French toast, my father used to make a lot of French toast at holidays. One holiday, he always did the cooking. The big holidays, especially Christmas, because it was my mother's day off, and he used to do all the cooking.

**Paul:** Did he do that in America as well as in Brazil?

**Helene:** Yes, that he did.

**Paul:** So that was another way that he, something he enjoyed doing?

**Helene:** That's right.

**Paul:** Alright. Your father goes to America in 1923 for his health basically. What does he do when he gets here in 23?

**Helene:** Well I don't know what that [inaudible 00:30:58] Yes. He was there for a while. Then he went to New Bedford. Then from New Bedford, then he came to Yonkers, and when we came to Yonkers, he was working for the Bronxville Nursery.

**Paul:** What is the span of time from the time he goes to Provincetown to the time he gets to Yonkers do you think?

**Helene:**  About a couple of years. Maybe a year or so.

**Paul:** So it took a while? [Inaudible 00:31:24] home changed if it changed after your father went to America in 23?

**Helene:** No it didn't change because he used to send my mother regular [inaudible 00:32:35] to take care of us. The only thing that changed was, because my mother was always very kind hearted, anybody that came to the house asking for anything, she would feed them. She would let them sleep, spend the night, whatever it was, and my father didn't go for that because he was always afraid that we would catch something from the other people. Whenever he was away, we always had somebody outside that we never knew that my mother would take in.

**Paul:** I can see where he would be a little concerned [inaudible 00:32:12] situation like that. So he's sending money regularly, did your mother seek employment out of the house at all during that time?

**Helene:** No, they didn't. Before what she used to do was there's somebody coming in, do the work, the house cleaning.

**Paul:** You mentioned grandparents down there, grandfather-

**Helene:** I never knew my grandfather.

**Paul:** Just your grandmother?

**Helene:** Yes.

**Paul:** Did she help out financially while your father was-

**Helene:** No, because my uncle supported her. He used to work and then support my grandmother.

**Paul:** Do you have a story about your grandmother from your childhood?

**Helene:** Well just that I was very close to her. I loved her very much, and I was always at her house.

**Paul:** Did she live by herself?

**Helene:** No, she lived with my uncle. There was a single uncle and there was a married uncle and his wife. The wife as my aunt really and her husband. They had two children, and they all lived with my grandmother, all in the same house, a big house.

**Paul:** Close to you, I think you said?

**Helene:** Yes, just a couple of blocks, not even that much.

**Paul:** When you were growing up, maybe when your father was in America, what did you know about America? How did you think about America when you were a little girl in Brazil?

**Helene:** To be honest with you, I really didn't. I really never gave it a thought until my father wrote home because for a while he was working in the ships, but he could go back and forth without paying so he used to work aboard the ships and that's how he used to visit us.

**Paul:** So he did come down occasionally?

**Helene:** Oh, yes. That he did. Then he wrote home, he wanted to know if mother would like to come to the United States because it would be much easier and he would like to have the family back here all together. My mother, first she didn't want to come, but we all as kids, "Oh come on, mom. Let's go. Let's go, come on." So she agreed to it. But I give her a lot of credit because life over here for her was altogether different. She didn't know anyone, she didn't know the language.

**Paul:** What were her fears about coming? Why didn't she want to come initially?

**Helene:** Well because she felt she was leaving her mother, she was leaving her family and she just didn't know America and she was afraid that she wouldn't be able to get along here. It would be cold in the winter, and she didn't know just how we would get used to it.

**Paul:** Did your father come back down to Brazil to get you?

**Helene:** Yes, he did.

**Paul:** He did. How long was he in Brazil before you all left? Was he down there...?

**Helene:** I really don't know. All I know he went to get our passports and all the legal papers and make arrangements on the boats for us to come here.

**Paul:** Do you remember packing to leave?

**Helene:** Oh, yes.

**Paul:** What sticks out in your mind about that whole process of getting the house ready and getting yourself ready?

**Helene:** Well my uncle, my father's brother, the one that had the tobacco shop, he took over our house, where we lived. The furniture, everything, was left to him, and we just packed our clothes that my father felt that we needed because he felt after we got here, then he would be able to dress us the way, like for winter clothes and things like that. But our clothes that we had, it was just like here. As a matter of fact, when we went to school, the teachers says, "Did you bring that from Brazil? Did you bring that from Brazil?" They were surprised because we were dressed just like over here.

**Paul:** Right and she was probably-

**Helene:** They thought that we were Indians.

**Paul:** Do you remember objects that you packed? Aside from the clothes, what objects did you take if any?

**Helene:** I don't think we brought any.

**Paul:** Did you bring anything that was uniquely yours, like a toy or a book or something like that?

**Helene:** No, no. I don't remember that.

**Paul:** Do you remember how your other brothers and sisters felt? One brother was already here, did one of the brothers or sisters not want to come like your mother didn't want to?

**Helene:** No, nobody ever mentioned anything. We figured whatever my mother decided, we would go along with.

**Paul:** Was there any kind of a sendoff given to you before you actually left your town?

**Helene:** Well just our close friends, neighbors, they came over to say goodbye, my relatives.

**Paul:** Where did you have to go to get onto the ship?

**Helene:** To the port, wherever the ships left, from the lane. I don't know the name of the...

**Paul:** How did you get from your town to the port?

**Helene:** We walked. It wasn't too far away from where we lived.

**Paul:** Oh, I see. So you were pretty close to the ocean from where you were.

**Helene:** Yes, the Amazon River.

**Paul:** You walked with your luggage or?

**Helene:** No, my father carried the luggage and my mother and a couple of our friends and my uncle they took whatever enough that we wouldn't have to carry anything.

**Paul:** How did you feel about leaving? You're 12, you're old enough, you're in school, you've got a life in this town. How did you feel about being uprooted like that?

**Helene:** The only thing that really would bother grandmother behind. That really would bother me and the day that we left, we were on our way to the ship, we had to pass where my grandmother lived from here to the corner. They were all there waving to us, and I felt like taking off and running and giving her a last hug and kiss. But we just waved and we just [inaudible 00:28:06].

**Paul:** What was the name of the ship that you got on?

**Helene:** Stephen.

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

**Helene:** S-T-E-P-H-E-N.

**Paul:** Did you have to wait any period of time before you could get on the ship when you arrived in the port?

**Helene:** No, we just went on. Before we boarded the ship, my father had all our passports ready and then we just got on the ship.

**Paul:** Did you have to undergo any kind of medical examination prior to getting on the ship?

**Helene:** Yes, we did. Yes. As a matter of fact, when we got to America, I was scared stiff because I had fallen in a hole. We had been to a procession during the day and I was very tired-

**Paul:** This is still in Brazil?

**Helene:** This is still in Brazil, yes. And my sister had gone to her neighbor's house to ask her mother if she could visit her neighbor. It was about 8:30, my mother felt that she should be home, so she told me, "Go tell Clara that it's time for to come home." I was tired, I didn't look where I was going [inaudible 00:39:08] about the next block from my house, the same street. I never noticed that the workers had been working on the water system whatever it was and there was a hole and I fell in the hole and I scraped my leg.

**Paul:** This was your right leg-

**Helene:** My right leg, yes. I went home naturally and my mother scolded me because she says well I should have been paying attention to where I was going. But she washed it and she took care of it, but then I got very infected. And as a matter of fact when father went, my leg was all swollen and he took me to the doctor. The doctor said well I was pretty bad infection because you could almost see the bone, and he says, "Well I'll give her the medication." I don't know what he gave me. He gave me an injection of some kind and medication to put on my leg and that I should always keep it covered.

So when I was told that maybe when we got over here, it hadn't healed, maybe they wouldn't let me get off the boat. I was petrified. I says suppose that my family stays here. We were in Ellis Island by now and I was shaking. I was actually shaking of fright so the doctor asked me, "Why are you shaking? Are you afraid?" I said, "Yes." He says, "Why?" So I told him. It's about my leg because I was told that I may not be allowed to leave the boat. The doctor looked at it and he asked me how it happened, so I told him [inaudible 00:40:36] we only keep people here that are contagious and you are not contagious." I started to cry.

**Paul:** How long before you left to get on the ship did that happen? When did you fall in the hole in regards to when you got on the ship?

**Helene:**  Oh, it was about a month.

**Paul:** I'm just curious, were you the only one in the family who was worried about that?

**Helene:** Yes. At least the other ones never mentioned anything. We never discussed it, but I was just afraid.

**Paul:** So you got to the ship, tell me about the accommodations. What did it look like where you stayed on the ship?

**Helene:** Well at first, we were overcrowded. We had a lot of people going to some port on the way. We had to sleep... We were about 16 people children and women, all in one bunk. Each one had their own bunk beds, but we were all in one room. But we didn't think anything of it.

**Paul:** Am I to understand then that the men were separated from the women?

**Helene:** Oh, yes.

**Paul:** You had separate women and children in one room.

**Helene:** Yes, right. And then when they got off, these people got off this place, then it was different because we had the place to ourselves. The captain of the boat was very nice. I was very, very seasick, I couldn't even walk, so he used to take me every morning with my father one holding on each side for me to walk around the deck. But I thank God I finally got over it, but not as good as I would have liked to. I thought he was very, very nice. Every morning and every night he used to come and take me with my father, make me walk around.

**Paul:** What time of the year was this?

**Helene:** In June.

**Paul:** June of 1929.

**Helene:** Right.

**Paul:** All those people that were crowded with you, who were they or what were they?

**Helene:** Oh I can't think of the name of the place. They were blacks most of them.

**Paul:** Maybe going to the Caribbean somewhere?

**Helene:** No, it was not Caribbean. Wherever it was, I know that... And then some ship had trouble aboard the ship and they didn't have a doctor. Our ship had a doctor, and we went out of our way to help. I don't know if they had an accident, somebody was hurt or what it was, but they needed a doctor and our boat was the closest to them. We went out of our way, close to two weeks by the time we got there and back to our...

**Paul:** So two weeks to go from Brazil to New York?

**Helene:** Oh yes.

**Paul:** Wow. Tell me where they fed you on the boat. And what.

**Helene:** They used to have big tables in the deck, which was very nice. As you were eating you could see the water. It was very nice.

**Paul:** Right up on deck?

**Helene:** Yes. And of course they had also windows in case of rain or bad weather. The food was regular eggs for breakfast, toast, and stews, beef, potatoes and meat and rice and you know, regular food.

**Paul:** Was this a Portuguese ship or an American ship?

**Helene:** No, I think it was English line.

**Paul:** English?

**Helene:** I think it was English.

**Paul:** Tell me about your brothers and sisters on the ship and if there's a story that you remember about something that may have happened to one of them on the ship.

**Helene:** No, we all used to play together. Used to sing. There was some man that used to play guitars, and we used to go on the deck and sing. My brothers and sisters, we always got along. We used to stick for each other, if one got hurt or something or if you did something wrong, we always tried to hide it so they wouldn't be punished.

**Paul:** Did something happen like that on the ship?

**Helene:** No, the only thing I could remember is my sister Clara tried to cut my sister Mary's hair. She didn't like the way my sister Mary's hair was cut. When she tried to cut over here, she cut a little nip on the earlobe. She was so scared, but then the ship doctor came, oh sorry. The ship doctor came, he said, "Don't worry about it. That's nothing." But she was more afraid of my father punishing her.

**Paul:** After all those people got off at whatever port that was did you still have to be segregated where you slept? Did all the women still sleep together-?

**Helene:** Well we were the only ones, my mother and about three other women that came from Brazil and us kids.

**Paul:** Oh I see. I thought that maybe like a hundred people got off and a hundred people were still on the ship.

**Helene:** Oh yeah, but they had different... No, we weren't that many on, but they had different rooms different people slept in, but after they left, it was a lot of people got off the boat. Barbados.

**Paul:** Barbados?

**Helene:** Barbados.

**Paul:** I'm just curious, did your mother, in later years, because she had her doubts about all of this, did she ever tell you later about how she felt about being on that ship?

**Helene:** No.

**Paul:** Because I can only imagine a lot of things are going through her mind.

**Helene:** But she didn't say anything except the day when we were about to land, my father made us all get up early to see the Statue of Liberty. He made sure that we get room, we're at the top to see the Statue of Liberty, and my mother got a big feel out of that too.

**Paul:** Did you as a child know what that was?

**Helene:** The Statue of Liberty? Well my father tried to explain to us how it was donated to the United States, and for the people that needed to come to the United States, they would be welcome to the United States.

**Paul:** Alright, well so you're in New York. The ship comes into New York and you're taken to Ellis Island, what else sticks out in your mind about being in Ellis Island? You mentioned the exchange with the doctor...

**Helene:** Then another thing is that I looked around all the women were dressed in black, black shawls, only could see their faces. Black outfit, except my mother. I was so happy, so proud of her. She had this beautiful blue dress. That to me, I was so glad my mother never dressed like that.

**Paul:** Were you curious about why this was? Had you ever seen anything like this before?

**Helene:** Well no. Some of them, they were coming from other places and they didn't speak Portuguese, so really my father, he was very nice but he had, what shall I say? He wouldn't let us associate with people that he felt was below us. Aboard the ship, except the few that came from where we lived, our area, we were not allowed to associate with anybody so we had that.

**Paul:** So here you are at Ellis Island where there are probably lots of people, he doesn't want you to associate with.

**Helene:** That's right. Not only them, there were people from Russia, from all over the world and they didn't speak the language and we just stayed in our own group.

**Paul:** Did your father speak any English at this point, having been in America for a while?

**Helene:** Well he spoke a little bit, yes, because he used to go to evening school to learn.

**Paul:** Do you remember, and you may not, but that whole exchange with the doctor was there an interpreter that was there?

**Helene:** No, the doctor spoke Portuguese.

**Paul:** Did they examine you for anything else that you can remember?

**Helene:** Well I remember like a complete physical.

**Paul:** Oh, they gave you a complete physical?

**Helene:** Yeah, a complete physical, yes.

**Paul:** What else sticks out in your mind about what you saw on the island like maybe where the physical was or-?

**Helene:** Oh you mean in there? It was small room which you went and took your turn. They would call you and take your in there, and they had all different areas.

**Paul:** You started to say something and I interrupted you.

**Helene:** Well the Statue of Liberty and then the grounds around we thought it was just beautiful, the scenery, the sights around and then towards New York, all the big buildings.

**Paul:** Did they feed you while you were at Ellis Island?

**Helene:** No, I don't think so because I know my father had a friend with a car and my brother was there in a car to pick us up, and from there we went right to a restaurant.

**Paul:** In New York City?

**Helene:** In New York City, yes.

**Paul:** So once you got of Ellis Island, you went to the restaurant.

**Helene:** Yeah, went to the restaurant, right.

**Paul:** What sticks out in your mind about that first day in New York going to the restaurant? What things did you see that you had never seen before, that were new to you?

**Helene:** Well actually nothing.

**Paul:** Because you came from sort of a city.

**Helene:** The city, right.

**Paul:** Do you remember what you ate at the restaurant?

**Helene:** No, I really don't. To be honest with you, I don't. I've tried to think about it before but it never...

**Paul:** Well there's no reason why you should remember necessarily. Where did you go after you ate?

**Helene:** We went to Yonkers. We went to live at 2 Lawrence Street in Yonkers.

**Paul:** Describe the house or the apartment or what-

**Helene:** Well it used to be a boarding house. The people that run it were Portuguese and they had about four or five boarders. But they had a big house, big place and we had two floors for ourselves. We stayed there a few weeks and then my father got an apartment for us on South Broadway and we lived there until just about a year before I got married, Morris Street, which used to be a very nice area before. But now I understand it's...

**Paul:** So the Morris Street apartment, you were there for quite a long time?

**Helene:** No, no. South Broadway, we were there.

**Paul:** South Broadway, that's where you were.

**Helene:** Right at the corner of McClain Avenue, there was a park across the street and we used to go to the park or we used to go to right at the border of New York, the park there. We used to walk to the other park. I can't think of the name.

**Paul:** Tell me about going to school, registering to school and actually going there, what that was like.

**Helene:** Well we lived close to school number three which was only about three blocks away from our school. But we couldn't go there because we didn't know the language and they didn't have a special teacher to get us started. So they sent us to school number 19 which was about two miles away from where we lived and we had to walk, there's no buses at that time. You walked and there was no cafeteria.

We used to have our lunch packed and we used to eat outside until the janitor, he got acquainted with us and when he realized that we were eating outside, he says, "You can come in at school, sit on the stairs here, eat your lunch, and then you can go out, call me and I'll unlock the door for you." That's what we did.

We did that for a few years until one of the fourth grade teachers saws us siting on the stairs. He said, "What are you kids doing in school?" We said, "We're eating our lunch." And she couldn't understand us so she says, "You don't belong here," so she went to the principle and then we were transferred to school number three. Of course by then, we know the language and how to read and write.

**Paul:** How? How did you learn English?

**Helene:** Oh there used to be this teacher, and there used to be five Italian students and in the morning, and in the afternoon, we used to go to her, her name used to be, I never forget, Mrs. De La Socce. She was an Italian and she used to explain chair, how to pronounce it and what it was and that's the way we learned.

**Paul:** Do you remember the first word in English that you knew?

**Helene:** Alright, come on and yes.

**Paul:** What about your mother? Did she make an attempt to learn English?

**Helene:** She did, but she didn't have friends that spoke English. When she became acquainted with Portuguese, they spoke Portuguese so that's...

**Paul:** Was there a large Portuguese community where you lived?

**Helene:** Oh, yes. In Yonkers, but we only associated with them on Sundays at the social. But as far as visiting, there were only two families that were allowed to come to our house and we could go to their house but not to the other. My father just didn't want it.

**Paul:** Your father would allow you to associate with these two families but [inaudible 00:53:52]

**Helene:** Right, yes.

**Paul:** What was your father doing at this time again? I forgot.

**Helene:** At that time, as far as I know, he was working for the Bronxville Nursery.

**Paul:** Doing what exactly?

**Helene:** I don't know. I don't know if he was a gardener or if he was a salesman there. I really don't know.

**Paul:** As a child in Yonkers, did you ever experience any kind of bigotry or prejudice against you because you were a foreigner at that time? Did kids make fun of you?

**Helene:** You mean in Brazil?

**Paul:** No, no, in Yonkers.

**Helene:** Over here in Yonkers? Well the only thing they used to ask every time, did you bring that from Brazil? They couldn't get over that, but otherwise, they were all very friendly, very nice. I was in the sixth grade when we had a test, we were studying about different countries, and we had been studying about Brazil. We had a test, and one of the questions was what language is spoken in Brazil? So I put Portuguese, and the teacher marked it wrong.

When I got my paper back I noticed it, and I raised my hand, and he said yes. I said, "You marked this question wrong and I'm right." So she got all... She says, "Come over here." I went and as I was walking to her desk, I was sitting in the back row and I told her, "We speak Portuguese in Brazil not Spanish." She didn't like that. She told me I embarrassed her in front of the class. I had to stay one week after school because I embarrassed her in front of the class. That was the only incident that we had.

**Paul:** Well of course you were right.

**Helene:** Yeah, but I made her...

**Paul:** What about night school. Did you parents ever attend night school?

**Helene:** My father always did and my two older sisters.

**Paul:** Oh, so some of the kids did too then?

**Helene:** Yes. Oh, yes.

**Paul:** What do you know about their experiences in night school?

**Helene:**  Well they learned how to read and write more than... Of course they went to work soon after we got here, well not right away, but so that they would be able to go to school, work and get a job. They used to go to night school plus at that time, they were able to leave school at 16 years of age and then from there they used to go to night school. My father saw to that.

**Paul:** When you guys first got here and of course the older brothers and sisters are in their teens, did any of them have to go right into work without going to school at all.

**Helene:** No.

**Paul:** So all of the kids got some schooling?

**Helene:** Yes, definitely.

**Paul:** What sibling got a job first?

**Helene:** My oldest brother.

**Paul:** And what job did he get?

**Helene:** Gee, I don't know.

**Paul:** What that the brother that came with your dad?

**Helene:** Yes, my father. Yes.

**Paul:** I see. What about of the kids... What about your other siblings?

**Helene:** Well my sisters later on when they started working, they went to work in a dress shop. They were sewing machine operators. That's what they did.

**Paul:** What was the hardest thing for you to get adjusted to in this country?

**Helene:** The cold weather.

**Paul:** Do you have a story about... Well you told earlier the sweater story but-

**Helene:** Well the thing was my father, like one week, he bought me a coat, the other week he bought my sister a coat and then my brother Al hadn't gotten a coat yet . We went to school. It was so cold one day. So what I did with my sister Catherine, we put him between the two of us, we opened our coats, and we walked sideways to school so that he could be covered with our coats to keep warm. When we got home, we told my father that, so he says, "Alright, I'll take him out tomorrow and buy him a coat."

**Paul:** Do you remember seeing snow for the first time?

**Helene:** Oh, yes. Oh, we loved it.

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

**Helene:** Oh, was a cold evening and we went out and we were dancing in the snow and throwing it up in the air.

**Paul:** What do you think was the hardest thing for your mother to get adjusted to in the country?

**Helene:** Well over here, she had to do all the work. Of course we used to help her out, but in Brazil she didn't have to do that. My father what he earned was enough to get a maid and sometimes there, you get a maid for just their room and board and they're willing to work for you. Of course you get their clothes and you buy everything they need.

**Paul:** And the cost of living is much lower too [inaudible 00:58:33]. So she actually had to do work that she wasn't accustomed to?

**Helene:** That's right.

**Paul:** Did she keep contact with her family in Brazil?

**Helene:** Oh, yes all the time.

**Paul:** Did any of them ever come to America to visit or to live?

**Helene:** Not to live, but we had a cousin that used to be an airline stewardess and she used to come and visit us.

**Paul:** Of course that would be later.

**Helene:** Oh yes, later on. My grandmother died not too long after we came.

**Paul:** I'm just curious how did your mother react to her mother's death?

**Helene:** Oh she was very depressed, felt very bad. We all did.

**Paul:** I was wondering if she just felt like that was her last connection to [inaudible 00:59:22].

**Helene:** She did feel that way although she kept writing to her brother, but the correspondence after a while just faded away as usual. Then he died two years after we were here.

**Paul:** So she sort of losing [inaudible 00:59:42] quickly.

**Helene:** Yes, right.

**Paul:** When you think of yourself, do you think of yourself as Portuguese or American or what? How do you think of yourself in terms of nationality?

**Helene:** Brazilian. Brazilian-American citizen.

**Paul:** When did you become a citizen?

**Helene:** Well when my father got his citizenship papers, and we were not old enough to get our own, so we became citizens under his citizenship.

**Paul:** Do you remember what year that was?

**Helene:** I don't remember.

**Paul:** Was it soon after you got here?

**Helene:** Oh yes. Not too far after we got here.

**Paul:** We have just a second left and I want to make sure we mention Mr. Morgado what year did you get married?

**Helene:** May 31st, 1936.

**Paul:** And your husband's name?

**Helene:** Joseph Morgado.

**Paul:** And where did he come from?

**Helene:** Portugal.

**Paul:** And what year did he come to America?

**Helene:** 1919.

**Paul:** 1919 and Mr. Morgado had told me he had come through Providence, Rhode Island. What was it that you liked about him when you met him?

**Helene:** Well I didn't like him to be very honest with you because I met him at one of the dances that my father...

**Paul:** One of his social [inaudible 01:00:52].

**Helene:** Right. And he was always staring at me. Every time I danced around, he was always staring at me and I didn't like anybody staring at me. So I told this fellow I was dancing with, I said, "Let's not dance by that fellow." So he says, "Why? Is he getting fresh with you? I'll take him out." I says, "No. I just don't like him."

**Paul:** Did you have children?

**Helene:** Two boys.

**Paul:** Their names?

**Helene:** Joseph Martin Morgado Jr and Richard Anthony Morgado.

**Paul:** Great. We have to end. We've got like a second left. This is Paul Seacrest signing off with Helene Morgado on Sunday, September 24th, 1995 in West Harrison outside