

INTERVIEW WITH DOMENACA RUSSO AND VINCENT VILLA  
MARQUETTE, MICHIGAN  
NOVEMBER 15, 2007

SUBJECT: FAMILY HISTORY

MAGNAGHI, RUSSELL M. (RMM): Ok, interview with Domenaca Russo and Vincent Villa.

RUSSO, DOMENACA (DR): Brother and sister.

(RMM): Brother and sister. Negaunee, Michigan, November 15, 2007. What I'd like to do is start asking questions here about your background. However, before I go any further, could I have your birthdays?

(DR): May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1921

Villa, Vincent (VV): December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1922

(RMM): Ok. Good, now, could you tell me a little bit about your family? Where they were from in the old country?

(DR): Mother and dad were both **from San Jorjo Canavese**, and that is near Torino. And they had mostly power of the family in that area. In that little and stuff like that. **San Jorjo Canavese**. And Torino was kind of the big city. And we were both born over here, my mother and dad married and came over here because my father had two sisters over here before him. And my father had been here in America before the war, in the Copper Country, in the copper mines there. He was here for quite a while I guess. Then he went back to Italy, then met my mother, and married. Shortly after getting married, I think they came here because of his sisters being here. And that's how they settled in the same town down in New Swansy. And, like I said, they were all just like family, uncles and aunts and so on.

(RMM): But, in the meantime, he got conscripted into the Italian army.

(VV): That's right.

(DR): He used to come home, I remember my mother always saying, he would always sleep at home on the weekends because he wasn't too far away from where they lived. I always remember her saying that.

(RMM): They were living, when they went back, they were living at San Jorjo?

(DR): Right.

(RMM): So he went back and married, but before he was able to return then, he got conscripted into the army, the war began. Ok.

(VV): We had a little sister that came from the old country with my parents. She was the whole set of the family.

(RMM): Oh, so there were three of you?

(VV): Three of us, yes.

(RMM): What was her name?

(VV): Edith.

(RMM): And what about your father and mother's names.

(VV): My mother's name was Maria Cheretto, Cheretto was her maiden name.

(RMM): How do you spell that?

(VV): C-H-E-R-E-T-T-O.

(RMM): Now, what did your father.... You can come if you want as well. What did your father do in the old country before he came over here.

(VV): Well, my grandpa, Vincenzo, and they'd call him Chence, I guess he was a carpenter of some sort. He used to make caskets for the dead. Then when they all came over here, they thought, well, let's bring grandpa over. So they brought grandpa over here and grandpa went to work, he had to work in the mines. So he went to work in the mines. One day, he said, "That's not for me." So grandpa, was what we call in Italian, a **chicaton**. He was a lush! He liked his drinks, so grandpa spent all his days in the tavern. There was a tavern where now the Viet. W is, there was a tavern there. And it was run by the Rusilino family. So grandpa spent all his time in the tavern. So Uncle Valente, which was my dad's brother-in-law, says, "Pa, you're going back to Italy because we're not having you here. Drinking all day long and not working." So he sent him back to Italy and that was the end of him and his trip in the United States. He went back here again and he started his drinking again, a little bit of work, not much work, I guess working, he didn't agree with working, least not working with the mine so he went back to Italy and life went on with us.

(RMM): So he came, then, after your father returned?

*(speech inaudible)*

(RMM): So then his father came over?

(DR): Yeah, his father.

(VV): His father, my dad's father came over. Villa. Work didn't agree with him.

(RMM): He didn't work then.

(VV): Not in the mine, he didn't want to work in the mine.

(DR): They didn't have anything, they were young, they just came over too and they had to work, you know, hey, if you wanted to stay here, you have to work too. One of those. I guess he didn't believe in work for some reason or another. He didn't have to work very hard if they just had the one son, my father was an only child.

(VV): No.

(DR): No, no, no. Wait a minute, he was the only son.

(VV): Son.

(DR): I was thinking when he went into the service, he didn't have to go because he was the only boy over there or something. No, he had sisters, four or five sisters.

(VV): A blind sister.

(DR): A blind sister he had that played the piano. Very smart I guess.

(RMM): Now, did his whole family come over here?

(VV): No, no.

(DR): First the two sisters came.

(RMM): So the two sisters came?

(VV): There were three of them, two sisters and a son. Finally ended up here.

(DR): Three of them out of the family.

(RMM): So how many were left?

(VV): I don't know... Marzina the blind one....

(DR): The blind one. Monicep Chicina, she was a nurse. She delivered babies.

(VV): Chicina was here.

(DR): Chicina was here but her name was something like Chicina too, I don't remember. Then there was another one, another sister. But she was a kind of nurse, like she delivered babies, stuff like that. Now the other one, I don't know what she did.

(RMM): But they were all happy staying there?

(DR): They were all happy being there, yes.

(RMM): Now what did your father do?

(VV): Over there?

(RMM): Over there.

(VV): I really don't know unless he helped his father as a carpenter. My dad was sort of, what do you call it, half-assed carpenter.

(RMM): Handy man?

(VV): Oh yeah, handy man, yeah. He came over here and my dad went to work in the mines. And I told you about having to carry the pistol from New Swansy to (*speech inaudible*).

(RMM): No.

(VV): He had to carry a pistol with him to protect himself. You see, the Italians weren't too well liked you know, when they got over here. They'd get robbed on the way to work. So this pistol stayed in our house for years. When we came to Negaunee in 1940, the first thing we did is my mother took this pistol and gave it to me and said, "You get rid of this." So I roamed around the mines and the pits, the pits filled with water, and I heaved the pistol into the water. It was the end of the pistol. Because when your mother told you to do something in those days, you did what you were told to do, it's not like today.

(RMM): So he had problems then? There was a certain amount of prejudice then, and heated interaction between some of the local people there and the Italians?

(VV): Oh yeah, I can tell you one story. Dr. Reed Johnson owns a (*speech inaudible*). His dad told me, Reed Anders told me. He told me, "When I would go the Marconi Hall, there was a Marconi Hall in Princeton, all the Italians, for a dance, I'd be the only seed there, and when I

would dance with your mother, your father didn't like that very much. He would give me the evil eye, so I could tell she was your mother. Your mother was a good looking woman." He said, "And I liked to dance, but Pa was jealous."

(DR): But, it wasn't our mother. Because our mother didn't like to dance, my father used to go to those dances with his two sisters and their husbands. That wasn't my mother, he thought it was, but it wasn't my mother.

(VV): It wasn't?

(DR): No. Ma didn't like to go dance, that's why she took care of Johnny, Cousin Johnny, all the time. Because he was the youngest and he'd stay home with mom.

(VV): Oh, I didn't know that. Well that's what the guy told me, "That was your mother, a good looking woman, and your dad was jealous."

(RMM): Oh, but it was his sister.

(DR): Yeah.

(RMM): Were there, out in **New Swansy** was there a community of **kianokas** or was it just North Italians?

(DR): Just northern Italians and **Bergamots**.

(VV): There were some from Bergamot, like the Menelles, they had a tavern there, they were from Bergamot.

(DR): There were no southern Italians there.

(VV): Burties, I don't know what the Burties were.

(DR): Burties are Bergamots. There was no northern Italians down in Gwinn, but we were down there, at all. All the northern Italians, I mean southern Italians all settled in Ishpeming. I mean, this area here. There are very few.... (speech inaudible).

(VV): There are a few **Gardeners** in Gwinn.

(DR): Navaguida Mt.

(VV): (*speech inaudible*), you know, the maples. There was a mixture of Italians, really. A lot from Bergamot. Then they had some **Izanades**, there were from Benito, so there was a mixture.

(RMM): What tended to dominate? The Bergamots were the biggest group?

(DR): I don't know, I don't know about that.

(VV): The Zantes weren't Bergamots...

*(speech inaudible)*

(RMM): In your home, did you speak Italian?

(DR): Sure did, my father used to get the Italian paper all the time.

(VV): It was called the Bulletino.

(DR): And every night, after supper, he would say, "Come on, Mini, come sit at the kitchen table, it's your studying time." And he'd taught me how to read the Italian by the newspaper. That was my job at night, and after he died, I'll never *(speech inaudible)* And then, when my mother, was grieving, this was after 1940, my mother went to Italy. I wrote her a letter while she was there. And when she came home she said, "Where did you learn Italian?" I said, "Mom, with all those letters you saved all these years, and you got them in the drawer in the bedroom. I could read, so I read some of those letters, and took different parts from that letter and I wrote that letter." I wasn't that dumb, you know. Whatever I understood, I wrote a letter to my mother and I knew how to write Italian and surprise her.

(RMM): That was clever.

(DR): I wasn't very smart, but at least she came home she said, "I don't know about you." They asked her, "Does your daughter go to college down there?" My mother said, "No, my daughter never went to college."

(VV): She'd translate letters from a lot of people from Italy. They come to her and she translates them.

(DR): Several people have come here, and call me, my mother used to do that for them, see, and after my mom passed away, they'd call me and say, "We are going to call our people in Italy and we don't know how to talk, can you come over and we'll tell you what to say." But now nobody bothers me now anymore.

(RMM): Probably the older people...

(DR): Yeah, the older people and the younger people aren't the way they used to be. I was pretty proud of myself to be able to do that.

(VV): Yeah, my mother was pretty psychic. She would have a dream, and she'd say to us kids, (*speech inaudible*) "Somebody died in Italy. You wait and see," and we'd get a letter, a couple of weeks later we'd get a letter, trimmed in black. The letter would be trimmed in black, it'd be a death notice. When she'd get a letter, she'd send roses to who died.

(DR): My mother was pretty smart. After she came here to Negaunee, she went to school for medicine, papers and everything. She wasn't old then, but she was already in... she lived to be 95.

(VV): She could read the paper and tell you, she couldn't read the paper to you, but she'd tell you what was in it. She had the gist of what was in it, what was going on. She could read that well, and she never went to church in New Swansy but when we moved to Negaunee she went to church. You know a lot of Italians when they came over were not, they weren't church goers. They couldn't go in a church when they got over here. They were not happy with the Catholic Church over there because the Catholic Church had a lot of money but the poor people didn't get any of it. So they were unhappy with the Catholic Church.

(RMM): Now, was that true about people in New Swansy? A lot of them?

(VV): Quite a few in New Swansy didn't go to church.

(DR): Well my mother didn't go to church, but she sent us, we went to catechism. We went when the nuns came in the summer time, went to all the goings and everything else. But, hey, she never had no car and we had to walk all the time and stuff like that.

(RMM): What did she do with your father passing away then?

(DR): What did she do? She worked like a man. She washed clothes for a living in the mine, she worked in the garden, she had little chickens that hatched in the backyard, and she had turkeys, and she had rabbits. And she had a garden which we call now the expensive produces and stuff like that. And she worked. We got pictures of us chopping wood and finding wood and everything, she made us work.

(RMM): Do you have those pictures?

(VV): No.... I have some pictures of me....

(DR): I had some pictures I can't find!

(VV): Of me splitting wood. When I was a little kid. You know what we used to do? We used to buy wood in eight foot lengths, and they were big. So, I told you that when my dad died, his friend John took him to Ann Arbor, and he died down there. And when he died, he told John,

he said, "You go home and take care of my wife and my kids." So he used to buy logs in eight foot lengths and we used to cut them in half. When we cut them in half, I was able to with the maw and the wedge, split them in quarters, quarter logs, now in quarter logs, four foot long, I could handle. So with then with the buck saw, I would cut them in length for the stove, I'd split them. As a kid, a lad. In later years, we hired these saw rigs and we'd cut them up with the saw rig. I used to work the danger part too, but you gotta be careful there. Work meant nothing to me, all my life I had to work.

(DR): We had to work for hours, we had to help out mother. Go out in the woods and pick mushrooms and blueberries, anything that was out in the woods. We'd go in and my mother would make lunch and then we'd go out into the woods and spend the day and come home and then she'd work and do the work.

(RMM): What would you do with the berries then? Dry them?

(DR): We put them in bottles, everything was in bottles. No drying in those days, everything was in bottles.

(RMM): So then she kept a good cellar of?

(DR): Oh everything. Even when she came back, came here to Negaunee, she was so accustomed to canning and putting in bottles....

(VV): So in the cellar, my mother made moonshine. The cellar was just a dugout. The house did not have any foundation. So as a young kid in high school, sixteen years old, fifteen, fourteen, John, which became a stepfather to us, he'd go work the line, but we had a cement block making machine, Mr. Pogi, this Frenchman spoke Italian, had a block making machine And you had a tray and you had to take the seal off of it, so I would mix cement. You would mix it dry, and just enough water so it would pack. So I would put it in this machine and pack it in, pack it down, make a nice block out of it, and take the block out, carry, and put it away and let it dry. Then I would have another tray and make another block, I would make maybe five or six blocks a night after school. We made all the blocks for our basement so we would have a partial basement with blocks. So we talk about kids don't know how to work today.

(RMM): So how old were you?

(VV): Fifteen, fourteen, in high school. And I went, and would wait all summer long for forest fires. We would always wait for forest fires. Because Frank Fargrew would come along with his Model A and would take you out to fight fire. And I would fight fires, I would fight fires sixteen hours a day for twenty five cents an hour, I would bring it home and give it to mother. I never got any money, I brought it home. I would fight fires at sixteen. Then we get home all dirty and go down to the lake and get cleaned up, we didn't have a shower at home. We used to take the kids and a take a bath in the basement. Mini and I, sit in a tub and take a bath.



(DR): No running toilets, outside. Oh, Sears Roebuck catalog, or Montgomery Road catalog.

(VV): That was the toilet paper.

(DR): We'd work around it.

(VV): And you never used the shiny pages because they didn't have any holding power, we had to use the good ones.

(DR): We'd tear those pages out before we brought it into the toilet.

(VV): And in the winter time, you had to be careful, you had to take a stick or something because the feces froze up and piled up so you had to be careful you don't sit on. So you had to take a stick and break it and knock it down. (*speech inaudible*).

(DR): We always has plenty to eat though, always. All the time, all the time. Always, farmers used to come around, and they had, you know what you have to pay for veal now, and lamb and all that stuff, it's so expensive. My mother would buy a quarter of a calf or something like that, and she'd have an icebox with ice chunks in it and everything else. And my mother loved to make bread, we never had a hungry day, never. That was wonderful, and my aunts were both dressmakers so they sewed for my mom and for us kids, everybody helped one another and my uncle had a bakery and my father and mother had borrowed some money from him.

(VV): Lent him, lent him.

(DR): Lent him, yeah, so when my dad died, what was it, five thousand dollars or something?

(VV): No, no, the exact amount was, Johnny talked to me yesterday, he was going to come here today, my cousin is 92, but he had something else. He told me yesterday they borrowed a thousand dollars from the bank and they got eight hundred dollars, or six, eight hundred dollars from Ma and Pa to buy the bakery shop. And then when my dad died, my mother never got one penny back. My uncle used to carry some groceries, some canned goods and things like that, bread, and so we'd buy our bread from there, and cookies, and they'd charge it, and they paid off the loan by feeding us. That's how they paid off the loan.

(DR): That's what helped my mother along on her own.

(RMM): It worked out then.

(DR): Yeah it worked.

(VV): Then the stepfather walked in and he worked in the mine, and he ran the bus, Johnny told me this yesterday, he ran the bus but he never made any money. I said how come. He said, "He let all the ladies ride free."

(DR): That sounds like John too. So goodhearted, so goodhearted.

(VV): So, John, our stepfather, was a bootlegger. He was a runner. He ran booze from the copper country, moonshine, to Gwinn and all that. And he had a car, it was called a Jackson car, it was an eighteen cylinder car. I remember as a kid I used to go behind the garage door just to look at it. I'd see a big engine and he was running booze from the Copper Country and he was approaching Ishpeming and he realized he was almost out of gas. So before he let the motor die out, he'd get out and pour in three or four gallons of moonshine. Moonshine into the car, and he said, we got back to Gwinn with it. Course he said you could smell that booze burning, but that's how he got back to Gwinn. He was a very smart fellow, he knew how to do things. He was the only plumber in town, in Gwinn.

(RMM): Now what was his last name?

(VV): Negra, John Negra. Any rate, the baker shop, that my uncle bought that we lent the money to, he was Negra, and Batista Valente bought the bakery shop.

(DR): Now that baker shop is gone and there's the funeral home there.

(VV): Gwinn funeral home.

(DR): There's the big funeral home there now where they had the baker shop.

(VV): Canelli's. Canelli's bakery.

(DR): Canelli.

(RMM): Now did, so they had Italian bakeries and that in Gwinn?

(VV): Oh, yes. Oh yes. Wonderful baker shop. They had the ovens, see, the brick ovens, and they heated it with wood, they used to buy slabs, hardwood slabs, and start the fire every, so nights and mornings they baked bread.

(RMM): Because the way it is today is, the bakeries are all gone. So you don't even think of the bakeries, did they have one or two or?

(VV): Danny's had a bakery. But they didn't bake.

(DR): But they didn't bake, they had the oven. But they had a store.

(VV): They had the oven but they never used it. But they had a store. Marenelli's store, Giardi's store, and Massado's store. Three grocery stores in town.

(RMM): I'm curious about this because of something I'm going to be presenting. How did you celebrate, or your family, celebrate Christmas?

(DR): At first, when my mother was expecting me, it was turn for my mother to have Christmas at our house. The aunts and uncles and all that. Well, my mother didn't know this, she had to cook a cat. They killed the cat, and put it on top of the hat and froze it, left it there to Christmas. They showed my mother how to cook this cat.

(RMM): A cat?

(VV): A cat, gato.

(DR): A cat, a kitty cat. You know what a cat is? A regular cat.

(RMM): Just wanted to get it correct.

(DR): So we were having a dinner and somebody wanted to be smart. And they were going, "Meow, meow." My mother had to get from the table and go up to her bedroom because she was pregnant she got so sick, she didn't enjoy Christmas dinner at all. I don't know, she was expecting me, and I hate cats. I've never liked cats all my life.

(VV): Tell him why though.

(DR): Because of this devil here. We always had cats but we never had animals in the house. They were always outside, and we had barns and they'd sleep in there. He would chase me and scare me with them all the time.

(RMM): With the cats?

(DR): With the cats, yeah. And up until today, I see a cat on a TV and I shut the TV off or change the station. I can't stand them.

(RMM): Did they eat the cat?

(VV): Sure.

(DR): Yes, that's what they had for Christmas dinner.

(VV): What's wrong with a cat? That's good. That's clean animal.

(RMM): Cat?

(VV): Cat, yes, gato, gato.

(DR): Kitty cat.

(VV): Can I tell you something right now? On TV the other day, they were selling rats. That's what they were selling.

(RMM): To eat?

(VV): Yes, rats to eat. In India.

(RMM): Oh, oh.

(DR): But I mean they're still animal.

(RMM): But there wouldn't be much meat on a cat.

(DR): I don't think so.

(VV): Not much meat on a rabbit but we eat rabbits. We eat rabbits, there's that much on a cat too. Can I tell this story? A friend of mine, Joe Paris, the mason, he came from Italy, and he was by the book, came from Italy, and went to school. He was 16 years old, went to school for two weeks and he quit.

TAPE 1 SIDE A ENDS

TAPE 1 SIDE B BEGINS

(VV): So he's a mason. His father came over here, and he worked for the lumber companies here. All winter long, he had his sleeves rolled up, and he just wore a little uh, no heavy shirt or something. Course he lived over here by the ice rink. Made his wine and his moonshine and all that. Of course one day, he got caught, the police pulled him over and they tall all his barrels of wine and his moonshine and they booked him up. He was tried, he was running down the trade in his basement. All his wine and all his moonshine. To make the end of the story short, he had some friends. He had a couple of young teachers that were friends of him that would come and visit him. And he had a couple of cats running around. They'd come over and they'd say, "Why don't you make us an Italian supper one night, polenta and that with chicken or whatever." He says, "Yeah, I'll make that." Next week he invites them over, so anyway, they came, they came for the meal. And they were eating the meal and were enjoying it. And they said, "Where's your two cats, I don't see them around." He said, "Ah, I don't know, I left them

out the other day and they disappeared and never came back.” He had killed the cats, he was feeding them cats.

(RMM): So they would eat cats?

(DR): Well they didn’t even know what they were eating.

(RMM): Well they weren’t, but he had no qualms about killing cats.

(VV): No, no, no, he killed the cat and enjoyed the meat. It was good, he said, “That was good rabbit,” or whatever he told them it was.

(RMM): So this was something they did on a regular basis, I mean, ate cats.

(VV): Yeah, eat cats.

(RMM): Was this something they did that your family did or other people did.

(VV): No, a lot of people did that.

(DR): A lot of people did that, I don’t know.

(VV): You would let your cat out at night and it would never come back.

(DR): My mother never even knew what she was cooking as far as that goes. I guess, when they cut it all up and everything else. You know when you cut up meat you don’t know what it is.

(RMM): What I heard, the other part of it, was that they would do birds. Did your family eat birds?

(DR): Yes, I remember, yes.

(VV): They called them **oozily**. A friend of ours went straight to Italy, the guy with the banjo, and he ordered oozily, and when it came, he didn’t know it, it was little birds and he couldn’t eat them. But we used to set scratch feed. You know what scratch feed is? Scratch feed is what they fed the chicken. It was from the meals, it was scraps of corn. Scratch feed, well you get an old bed spring. We had one. And you put the bed spring up there and throw scratch feed on it the ground and you put a stick to keep the spring up and you put a string to the stick, and when all the birds are in there eating, you pull the stick and you trap the birds under the string and you’d have the birds. We’d have to clean them and then eat them. So we did that so we ate them, I don’t remember eating them, but we must have.

(DR): Just the little breast, I thought that was a delicacy.

(RMM): But when you serving it then, each person got a number of birds.

(VV): Sure, whatever, they were delicacies. Song birds.

(RMM): Those I heard about I just wanted to get your confirmation that you were doing that. Now, most of those Italians out there in New Swansy, Gwinn, and whatnot were eating birds and what not.

(DR): I don't know about Gwinn.

(VV): Gwinn was high class, they had running water, sewers, toilets, we didn't have that. We had outhouses.

(RMM): So everybody in New Swansy, I mean the Italians, were eating birds.

(VV): Not all, not all. Some. Some people would.

(RMM): But it was part of the diet.

(DR): It was part of the diet, yeah.

(RMM): And some of you ate cat.

(DR): I never ate it.

(RMM): Did you have a cat?

(VV): Not that I remember, this was before my time.

(RMM): These were sort of the old timers, the immigrants.

(VV): Yeah, we never ate it.

(RMM): So that by time it had become, it had ended.

(VV): I ate rabbit. Tame rabbit. And my dad, when he killed a rabbit, I remember he'd grab it by the hind legs and give it one crack across the neck, break his neck, and that was it. My mother would kill a chicken. She'd grab the chicken and put it between her legs and hold it. Then open its mouth and take scissors and cut the inside with the scissors and bleed them out. That's how you'd kill them, you're bleeding them out.

(DR): But they'd save the blood.

(VV): With the blood they'd make, what's it called? Torta. What do you call that in English? You make it with pumpkin and everything else. (*speech inaudible*).

(RMM): How do you spell that word?

(DR): Torta, T-O-R-T-A. Torta.

(RMM): So they'd just fry it, cook the blood?

(DR): I don't know, I never made it.

(RMM): You never made it?

(DR): I never made it.

(VV): They'd put it in the casserole and fry it, it's something like making blood sausage. Did you ever eat blood sausage?

(DR): Yeah.

(VV): It's similar to making blood sausage.

(RMM): So you'd just cook it in a casserole or something else?

(VV): No, just the blood and whatever else they'd put in there, but the condiments were. It's be softer.

(RMM): Like a pudding?

(VV): Yeah, like a blood pudding.

(RMM): Blood sausage is the same thing.

(DR): I don't remember my mother ever making it now that I think about it.

(VV): I do.

(DR): Did you eat it?

(VV): Yes, yes I like blood sausage.

(RMM): So it's blood sausage without it being put in the casing?

(VV): Well, you know, when you butcher a pig, you always got the blood. They say with a pig you use everything but the squeal.

(RMM): Was there a certain time when they would slaughter the pig and process the meat?

(VV): In the fall. You got pigs you know and then they'd come and eat.

(RMM): How would they do that, did your family do it, would they buy a pig?

(VV): We never bought a pig, a lot of people didn't, but they'd make sausage.

(RMM): What would they do then? Buy a piglet in the spring and feed it through the summer?

(VV): And fatten it? Yeah.

(RMM): What would they feed it? Anything in particular.

(VV): Corn, and all kinds of stuff, and anything any food garbage that they threw out to the pig. He ate that too.

(RMM): But they would actually buy corn for it as well?

(VV): I'm sure, they had to fatten it up.

(RMM): Any, did they ever throw milk products to them?

(VV): I don't know, if they had a cow they might, but most people milked the cow themselves.

(RMM): I'm just thinking if they made cheese and had waste from making the cheese.

(VV): We used to buy milk for five cents a quart. It used to come with the little tab on it and I told my kids we're so poor we'll eat the tab too.

(DR): We never drank very much when we were kids. That's why I think I got arthritis so bad, and osteoporosis. My mother had it too. My mother had it real bad.

(VV): She's talking about my mother would buy meat, she wouldn't put it in the freeze in winter time. She would buy a veal and hang it in the barn and let it freeze. I remember when I was a kid, I had a knife and I would take a knife and go there and take a slice or two of that veal and eat it frozen. My dad used to take, you've heard of steak tartar haven't you? That's hamburger. My dad would take raw meat and chew it all up, and put it with oil and vinegar



with onions. And he used to eat it salted like that, and I used it with the raw meat. It's good meat you see. Nothing wrong with wrong meat.

(RMM): Ew.

(DR): I never ate that either.

(RMM): Now back to the Christmas celebration. So did they have this cat meal often or just one time?

(DR): No, that's the only time we had it.

(VV): We never had, but they had it.

(DR): I don't know who's idea that time to have it but they didn't have much money so they said kill the cat and put it on the roof to freeze it. And then cook it.

(RMM): Now did you have any special foods or celebration that you did that's connected to Christmas?

(VV): None of that, no.

(RMM): You didn't do anything in your home, you know your mother.

(DR): We had a Christmas tree, my mother never put a Christmas tree up, my father put it up all the time. My mother never put a tree up in her life. Even when she came to Negaunee and we were born. My dad was the one who put the tree up.

(RMM): But then after he passed, what happened?

(DR): When then we were old, we would put the tree up.

(RMM): You would put the tree up?

(DR): She never put the tree up. (*speech inaudible*) My dad would start to do it and then you know.

(VV): Our house was so cold, that we would go to bed at night, I still remember this, after my dad died, I remember this. I remember taking my clothes off and putting a chair by the buck stove by the buck stove, and put my clothes on the chair. So by morning my clothes would be warm, same thing. Remember that?

(DR): Yeah, I remember it.

(VV): Our house was not insulated. On wash day, when mother put the big kettle on, the copper kettle, and heat the water and put the water (*speech inaudible*) not the soap, she'd cut it up. And then she'd (*speech inaudible*) and then we'd go to bed at night, in wintertime, and the walls would have ice on them, the moisture would freeze on the walls. And I'll tell you something, it'd be cold some nights. After we moved to Negaunee, I slept upstairs in a bedroom with no heat. My stepfather and I didn't have electric heat. And my mother would fix my bed, it'd be just like a sleeping bag, and I'd come home I'd jump in the sleeping bag and lie down and go to sleep. It was never cold. Just like the sleeping bag, my mother took care of us. She was a good mother.

(DR): She was a good mother, that's for sure.

(RMM): Now did she, she didn't do any outside work?

(DR): No, well there wasn't ever, there wasn't any work. Really.

(RMM): So everything was around the house. Now, did you ever take boarders in?

(VV): Yes.

(DR): Yes, she had boarders, when she came to Negaunee she had boarders.

(RMM): So all of her life, she had boarders.

(VV): After we came to Negaunee, since 1940 she had boarders.

(RMM): Oh, so she did that here, not in out in New Swansy.

(DR): Not in Gwinn, not in Gwinn, too expensive.

(VV): We didn't have a big enough house.

(DR): Our house was too small, but we have a big, we're still in the same house. My mother bought that house in 1940, paid five thousand dollars for it. It's right next to Koski's Funeral Home. It looks like uh, a Japanese-Chinese roof on it, have you ever noticed that, the one behind there?

(RMM): No, no.

(VV): It goes like this, the roof. Next to Koski's Funeral Home. That's where I got my bride, she was in the funeral home next door.

(DR): Through the back window. (*speech inaudible*). **Patchel** I can still hear her.

(VV): I played the saxophone and I used to sit in the toilet, which was her side of the house, and their kitchen was upstairs, and I'd play 'In The Mood.' See, I knew how to see that and a few songs by ear. So I told her, that when I came in, in 1940, I started at Northern, I told you I started at Northern, and was supposed to graduate in 1944, and she was supposed to graduate in 1944. I said, "The day that you graduate from high school, and I graduate from Northern, I will have a date with you." Then I got called into service. In the meantime, she got engaged, and she broke her engagement and then we got married.

(RMM): Oh, you were lucky.

(DR): That is good luck. Yeah, we were both pretty lucky with who we married.

(VV): Next year is sixty years.

(RMM): Oh, congratulations.

(VV): And we only had one fight in our life. The first time I met her, we fought and we've been fighting ever since, that's one continuous fight, sixty some years.

(DR): There fighting, but they don't know what they're fighting about, it's past time for them. It's been a past time all their life, I'm telling you.

(RMM): Just back to the Christmas thing, you just had a regular Christmas. No special cookies, no special events or anything? Did you have, for instance, some Italians, or I think there were some Italians, have fish on Christmas eve?

(DR): Yeah, they had certain items, yeah.

(RMM): How about the other Italians out there. Did any of them do fish or anything?

(VV): I don't know.

(RMM): I mean it was nothing that different that you remember?

(DR): Yeah, nothing different that I remember.

(VV): I know we probably had **banyacaba**.

(DR): You know what banyacaba is?

(RMM): Yeah, yeah.

(DR): We always had that, we had that.

(RMM): Especially for Christmas eve?

(VV): I'd say we probably had that on Christmas Eve.

(DR): Yeah, we probably had that for Christmas Eve. Yeah.

(VV): We ate a lot of that yeah.

(RMM): That'd make sense then, you had to eat fish on Christmas Eve, and banyacaba is fish.

(VV): Did you, do you like banyacaba?

(RMM): Yeah.

(VV): What do you like of it? The juice or you like the bottom. What'd you like the juice or the bottom?

(DR): The bottom is all the garlic.

(VV): Garlic and fish.

(RMM): Well, try to mix it around. Did you make it with cream or olive oil?

(VV): You make it with oil.

(RMM): Yeah, because with the cream it blends together.

(VV): Which way do you like the best?

(RMM): Well, if it's going to have the pieces and you did down to the bottom of the pieces....

(VV): I always hunted for the bottom. It made, I always got a piece of it like it was like a shovel. You always made sure you got to the bottom. You know if you ever make banya, do you make it all or not?

(RMM): I have it done it in a while, no.

(VV): If you ever make it with the oil, not with the cream now, don't use the cream, you put it in the refrigerator and of course it solidifies. Then you take that spoon or a knife and you mix

that real good. This way, you're mixing the garlic and the anchovies with the oil. It makes a good hors d'oeuvre.

(RMM): And then just put it on, a?

(VV): A cracker or uh....

(RMM): Yeah, yeah.

(DR): It's good on everything.

(VV): If you ever make, do that. It makes a good hors d'oeuvre. That banya is good, it's better than the banya caba to me.

(RMM): That's less work to get at it. That's on the bread.

(DR): Where did your folks come from, up in Italy?

(RMM): My dad came from, my mom's French and she was born here, but my dad came from, well they actually lived in, where the family was from, where was it uh.

(VV): (*Italian*)

(RMM): No, they were east of Milan. Just like, down a ways from the, it was like the Ticino River, and west, the west side of the river is Piquant, the east side is Lombardi. So they were in, I can't think of the name now.

(DR): Have you gone back?

(RMM): Oh yeah, we went, we've gone over. We went to the town they were from in Italy. The problem was, for some reason they migrated then fifty miles to Switzerland, and they were on the Swiss-Italian border. Why I don't know, because they were living on a plane, the Coal Valley, where you had good farm land. Then they move up to the base of the mountains, and they did some farming and they were into drainage, my grandfather was a hauling trucker, hauling things and what not. And then, so they were from there, but the problem was all their family then was up in Switzerland. And they either, some of them stayed and we met some of the southern ones when we there. And then some had passed away. The rest of the family were all out in California. So we've never, I don't know anything about sort of the home town they came from. There is a place called Magno, which might be where the Magnaghi's come from.

(DR): Where they came from, yeah.

(RMM): But we were there, and we were looking for names in the cemetery, but we didn't find any Magnaghi's, in that cemetery, in that town. Which, I don't know, I'd like to go back sometime, but when you do something like that, you have to make that the trip. Not you go see this or that, you have to go to Milan and then find someone who can speak the language or something. Probably find a college student or something that wants to make some money. And then probe around and try to find out some of the history and what not.

(DR): Has your dad ever done that?

(RMM): Who?

(DR): Your father, has he ever done that?

(RMM): He went back in '65, that's when we all went. He took us on the trip. But he never had an interest per say.

(DR): He's not interested that, eh?

(RMM): He left there that was it, and my aunt would go back.

(DR): That was it yeah, you don't have any deep roots.

(RMM): No. I think he had, his mother had died, then his father had left. His father was a drinker, so they sent to the San Francisco so during World War I then, he wasn't with father. So he was kind of brought up by his uncle and grandparents and what not. There were some stories there, he got some whippings and what not. So when he left, it was adios, yeah. And so, I would like at some point to go back and see what about the family, try to get some information. What church did they go to, look at the records and what not. In retirement.

(VV): Are you Catholic now?

(RMM): Oh yeah.

(VV): What is your real name now? His dad didn't like it.

(RMM): Mario.

(DR): Mario? Your dad didn't like that name Mario?

(RMM): He didn't want, he.... That's what I was baptized as in 1949 when I went to school, into first grade, he said he'll go with his middle name, Russell, it's sort of a name, just a name and I'll sometimes look at people, you know people have Italian last names and have these very

American names. Which you know... I look at myself and I'm in that same category. It's not like a John, or a Mario, or Michael or something. It's Russell.

(VV): Mini speaks good Italian, pretty good Italian.

(DR): Oh I forgot, how long has it been now? Sixteen years. I think sixteen, I've forgotten a lot but I always (*speech inaudible*) and now my grandchildren say, "Grandma how come you didn't teach us Italian?" "How come you didn't want to?" You know?

(RMM): How old are they now?

(DR): Thirty-two years old.

(VV): I can speak it pretty good. I can say (*speaks Italian*). See, I can still. But not, you see, I'm uh Manic Depressed Bipolar. I didn't know it until I was retired. When I'm manic, I'm manic I can't sleep, I can speak Italian like you wouldn't believe. I can speak it when I'm manic. It's just like, I can play the organ pipes and saxophone by ear and all that. If I'm manic, I can (*speech inaudible*), but if I'm manic, I can do it.

(DR): He's been sick for what, four years now?

(VV): Oh yeah.

(DR): Over four years.

(VV): I've been manic for uh, known that quite a few years ago. And the doctor, how come you didn't know you were manic? You should have known before you were thirty. I scratched my head and said, all I can tell you is I was a workaholic, and I was a workaholic and I'd still be if I could but I can't. But when I'm manic I can type and (*speech inaudible*), but now when I want to speak Italian, I have to think, I have to work at it.

(DR): We forget, we forget.

(RMM): That's the problem when you don't practice. Then what you used to know and used to speak and are familiar with, the verb forms and all, then are gone and you're thinking, "How do I say that. Where if you are using it, it's there.

(VV): Russ, I got to tell you about John Negra, our stepfather. My dad told him to take care of "My wife and my two kids." And he did. And during the depression, we were back behind the Canali Funeral Home, just a little to the north of there is a bluff that we would call it the Batch, a little bit of room, a one room place. It had the sewing machine set up there, and he was working, he didn't have any money, but if you had an old overcoat and needed a new jacket, you brought it up to him, he was a, he learned to tailor, and he'd make a new the jacket for you

and you'd bring him a bowl of soup. Let me tell you about him. He went to a Catholic school in Italy, maybe he was going to be a priest or something. But anyway, he went to a Catholic school and he became an altar boy. He tells this story, and my wife's (*speech inaudible*) says, "You believe what he tells you?" Well, I believe what he tells me. Of course you know when they have the incense in there, he says he had this priest was so slow, and he said of course this church had a fire place in it to keep warm and I take the chain and throw it in the fire pit. He said when I handed it to him I'd take the part that was cool and hand him the hot part. He said he'd refuse and he'd go. He was telling us this when he was like, in the seminary. He said they fed when they fed them meat, they used to hang the piece of meat on the table and you'd take the polenta or the bread and you'd hit it against the meat to get the flavor but you'd never eat the meat. Well the meat was scarce, just like, you know, we have a cousin right now he tells him it's scarce. And when he comes here he eats meat, he likes meat. .

(DR): Oh, when he came here in '95 you won't believe. What we took him out to eat, the way he would eat.

(VV): And then John used to tell us that on Friday he fed you meat and the priest would come and say this is fish, eat it. Remember when John used to say it. I believe him.

(DR): Yeah, I believed him. Well you know, maybe, you think he was in the seminary or something like that, maybe uncle John had a poor life over there and he didn't have anybody and he was in one of these homes or something like that.

(VV): An orphan, could have been an orphan.

(DR): An orphan, could have been an orphanage or something like that too.

(RMM): And then he wouldn't have had anything, meat and so on.

(DR): I often thought of that, maybe that's where he was.

(RMM): So maybe when he came here, was he a family relative, friend?

(VV): Friend. Good friend of my dad, I don't know how they became friends.

(RMM): And then he was, his job was tailor? He was a tailor?

(VV): No, he came over here not as a tailor. He did tailor work to get by during the depression. He was a miner. With my dad. They worked in the Garde-magna Mine, which is as I've told you, southeast of Gwinn, going towards Ricely. And there is what they call the Cyr Mine, and it closed, of course, during the Depression, they both worked on the road and got two days a week and got two dollars a day during the Depression. Of course my dad got hurt in the mine, so when he got sick, John took him to Ann Arbor and he was nearly dead when he got there.



That's what the doctor said, what kind of doctors do we have up there that sends a man down that's practically dead.

(RMM): So he was injured in a mine accident?

(VV): My dad was injured in a mine accident. It might have caused a tumor around his heart or something, it might have been cancer, who knows what it was. We figure it was caused from that slide, all he had was a broken arm out of it, but he got pinned by a big slab of ore.

(RMM): Oh, oh, I see, from a collapse of some sort.

(DR): We wonder how people lived those days and got through it, and they lived to be an old age and all that. Well food isn't the best thing for you, we find that out. We don't live too long all the time.

(VV): Dangerous and (*speech inaudible*) during the Depression that a friend of ours that lived not too far, and he came over to our house one day, we were having a gathering and someone gave him a dime. And Marino, (*speech inaudible*) and he took the ten cents and he went to the Masada's store that was three or four hundred feet away from our house and he came home with ten cents worth of candy. And his father said, "Where'd you get that?" "I-I...." "Did you steal that?" "Someone gave me a dime at the Villa's house." His father said, "You take that candy back to the Masada's and you give it to Mr. Masada, and you get one penny worth of candy and bring the other nine cents home." Well that's how poor things were. And Mr. Masada gave him those nine cents back.

(DR): That little boy just lived across here like this. He was at our house, I think we raised him, he was at our house all the time. I found a cute picture of him yesterday when I was looking for pictures.

TAPE 1 SIDE B ENDS.

TAPE 2 SIDE A BEGINS.

(RMM): Tape 2 of the Villa interview. Ok.

(VV): So Masada's, there were three stores. And we did most of our shopping at Masada's store. And a little big at Giardi's. But, if you went to Masada's store, if you walked into the store, there's all kinds of things in the store. Not a price on anything. Not a price. You wanted to buy something, you had to ask, "What's the price of that, Mr. Masada?" He'd tell you ten cents a can or five cents a can or something. And he charged (*speech inaudible*) and you never knew what the price was. So if you charged, I'm sure you paid more money than people paid cash. So you had, so the person that was charging, you paid interest. I'm sure of that.

(RMM): And most people did that, charged that is?

(VV): I know we did, a lot of people charged. We did too, and you pay it off at the end of the month or whatever.

(RMM): Right.

(DR): I can remember I was young there and Masada said, Ok Mini, you work on the story, you can wait on people, go ahead. I would go to Giardi's they would tell me the same thing. And then when I got married, I worked until I was 75 years old in a store.

(VV): This continues. Tell him when you to Gwinn. She came into Negaunee before we came up. Tell him what you were working for.

(DR): (*speech inaudible*) I met him, he met me when I was working in Negaunee, Monty's store, a little, small, tiny store you know.

(VV): (*speech inaudible*)

(DR): (*speech inaudible*) Was it only three cents an hour I was getting?

(VV): Seven cents an hour you told me. She got room and board, seven cents an hour.

(DR): So I was asked that when I was getting married, and I said yeah, you saw me in the grocery store and you had a grocery store. I said that's why you married, I said so you can put me to work all my life. My son retired before I did.

(RMM): Really?

(DR): Yeah but he had back problems. That was his problem.

(RMM): So you worked in Russo's Market then?

(DR): Yeah, yeah.

(VV): She was owner.

(DR): An owner, my husband was owner, there were four brothers.

(RMM): Oh, so you're deeply....

(DR): I worked until I was 75.

(VV): He retired.

(DR): My husband died, and I didn't want to go back to work at all. I worked all my life, you know. It was the best thing I ever did, the best thing I ever did.

(RMM): So you worked there until they closed it?

(DR): No, I worked uh, I retired before that. I'm 86 now, I was 75. I'm trying to figure what year, I don't remember.

(VV): You retired before me, didn't you?

(DR): Yeah, yeah.

(RMM): That would have been '94? '96?

(DR): Let's see, after he died, then the four nephews took up the store. My husband, my son was the first one to retire. After he retired, then they all went. One was a teacher, another was something else, he liked better.

(RMM): So they all went, and then they closed it down? And then what, one developed, and focused on the sausage?

(DR): Yeah, yeah.

(VV): He built that store, what's that store. Johnny.

(DR): Johnny sold that store.

(VV): Who's in that store now?

(DR): There's nobody in our old store.

(VV): I'm talking about that new one up here. That Johnny built. Johnny started, what is it called?

(DR): I don't know, I've never seen it. I've never been in that place.

(VV): You know what I'm talking about?

(DR): Yeah, I know. Yeah, yeah.

(VV): Super One! Johnny built it. And he didn't do too good and Super One bought him out. And then Johnny is in the business now making sausage.

(DR): And catering, meals, stuff like that.

(VV): But the store you worked in was in downtown Negaunee?

(DR): Yeah, it's still there. Went to heck, every time I see that place I say, oh god.

(RMM): It's closed then?

(VV): Yeah.

(RMM): Oh, that, ok, that makes sense now. You were right in the middle of things. Russo's.

(VV): You like sausage and that?

(RMM): Oh yeah, see, my dad was a sausage maker.

(DR): Was he? Oh.

(RMM): He made, I mean that was his business.

(DR): That was his business.

(VV): You should know how to make it then.

(RMM): Oh well....

(DR): You never took any interest.

(RMM): Well, I've seen it made and what not. And we have recipes for the different kinds of sausage and what not, but you have to test them out very carefully because they are written in backward Italian and backward English.

(DR): Little bit of English, little bit of Italian, and everything else?

(RMM): Yeah, and I don't know if you'd want to get 100 lbs. of meat and start mixing....

(VV): My son makes it. You like sausage? You like breakfast sausage with eggs? You like.

(RMM): Yeah, I like it.

(VV): I have a recipe for you so you can make your sausage for breakfast. You know what a (*speech inaudible*) meat is. You use two and a half, or two and a quarter, pounds of meat and you put in, oh Julie....

(RMM): So you make this, let's get back to recipe then. Two and a half pounds of meat.

(DR): I don't know what he....

(RMM): And then he said all spice.

(DR): All spice, nutmeg, cinnamon, clove.

(RMM): Cloves, yeah. A quarter of....

(DR): A quarter of a teaspoon of each.

(RMM): And you said it's better to put less nutmeg in.

(DR): Yeah, nutmeg is good but you can't put in too much of it. It's too strong.

(RMM): And then he was saying they put some wine in it? Garlic?

(DR): Garlic and wine, yeah.

(RMM): And then you let it set for a period of time.

(DR): I've never made it. We used to make it in the store, but that was it. We used to make our own spaghetti sauce, which is mild spice. My nephew has a store, makes all kinds of it. Have you been by Russo's spaghetti spot?

(RMM): Is this sausage 'kudigyt'?

(DR): Yeah, it's called 'kudigyt.' Yeah, mmmm. Then they make the larger, the regular salami. And put it in bigger cases and they let it dry. I don't know for how long. They experiment with something different all the time.

(RMM): Now this, what we are talking about here, this recipe, this is pretty much a kudigyt recipe.

(DR): This is the kudigyt recipe, yeah.

(RMM): It might vary, but those are the spices.

(DR): Those are the spices, yeah.

(RMM): And so everybody, what I'm trying to do is, I've been working on this for awhile, but all of the Italians, the north Italians, ate kudigyt?

(DR): All the northern Italians didn't make the kudigyt, I think. It was more the southern, then from the southern Italians, the other ones picked it up.

(RMM): Because the spices are north Italian spices. Interesting.

(DR): Yes, they are.

(RMM): Now they make kudigyt with hot peppers. Now that's south Italian.

(DR): That's southern Italian, yeah.

(RMM): But, the typical kudigyt is kind of mild, light spices and so on.

(DR): They've put hot peppers and stuff in and call it hot sausage.

(RMM): Because, what do you call it's there, Casa Calabria had a pizza, which I had, a kudigyt pizza. With a mustard sauce on it and it was fantastic.

(DR): But it wasn't hot.

(RMM): No, mild. I went back a second time, I had told people about it and so on. They were serving it with hot peppers, and ruined it.

(DR): They ruined it.

(RMM): I don't like hot peppers, and then when I complained to the guy, to the owner. He said that's the way we make it. I said, no, no. Two weeks ago, it was mild and very good. And now I'm not eating pizza and all that. So I don't have it. But we were trying to find, talking to people, trying to find the origin of kudigyt and actually what is and what are the spices of it. And given the flavor you are telling me, it's right on the dime. Those are the spices, with variations.

(DR): With variations, yeah. You start putting in a little of this, a little of that. And different kinds, hot peppers and all that stuff. I rather enjoy it.

(RMM): So this would be the way Russo's makes it.

(DR): They used to anyway, I don't know if they do now.

(RMM): Right but I mean this was then.

(DR): That's the ingredients.

(RMM): Because we were trying to talk to people and then we nabbed the Barbier's that have Casa Calabria and then another in the family has Villa Caprice. And they were talking about how their father made the kudigyt in Ishpeming and sold them out of his window. And so we got that story, but then it didn't.... and he seemed to be the first one to do it and he got the recipe from Chicago. Then we talked to other people and they said no, no. We were baking kudigyt way before, it's just something everyone did. He sold it, you know, commercialized it.

(DR): But individual families made their own.

(RMM): Ok, because the ingredients there taste like north Italian sausage. That's why I thought of the southern Italians...

(DR): They like everything hot.

(RMM): And with fennel.

(DR): I don't like fennel.

(RMM): That isn't part of it. You know they actually make, in Tuscany, they make fennel salami, dry salami. My dad never made it or talked about it, but we went over there and there it is.

(DR): Did you eat it?

(RMM): Yeah, it was very good. They put fennel in, you know on the salami. But yeah, it had a good flavor.

(DR): I was surprised when I had went over there, I had taken a bus trip.

(VV): You want history, look at that? Look at that.

(RMM): Oh my god. Where is this, where is this?

(VV): I don't know where this is.

(RMM): But is it your family? Or?

(VV): No, I picked that up some place. Crystal Falls or something.

(RMM): But it's UP?

(VV): It's UP, I think, yeah. It was years ago.

(RMM): But the picture, you don't really need much more, I mean, you don't really need to know where it's at, it's pretty self explanatory. Oh my god.

(VV): The Mining Journal said they'd take the picture and put it in the paper. Ludlum, you know on uh....

(RMM): TV.

(VV): On the TV said he could probably take the picture there.

(RMM): I can, well, yeah, if I could borrow it, what you do is, can I borrow it?

(VV): Well sure you can borrow it.

(RMM): You go down to Shopko, put it down into the Kodak picture, print it out. Probably make a better picture, I mean it wouldn't, well, it'd come out probably better than it is.

(DR): That must be an old picture, where'd you get that?

(VV): That? I had that for years, I had that hanging up in the basement.

(DR): I didn't think it was hanging in the house here.

(VV): I want it back.

(RMM): Oh yeah. It has there, this is not the date, but it has 4/17/48.

(VV): I put that on there, that's when I got the picture.

(RMM): Oh my god, you had that since 1948. What do you have up here? What did you right up there? Good....

(VV): Good ol' days. Good ol' days yeah.

(RMM): Oh, good ol' days. Somebody didn't just put a little something in the corner here, I see where it was. But you bought it up here in the UP?

(VV): I picked it up someplace, I don't know where.



(RMM): Right, I mean, it's not like from Virginia or someplace.

(VV): No, no, no, I got it up here in the UP. I think the best I can do is Crystal Falls or something. You know something, I've been looking all over. I got a head on me like, I wrote a bunch of stuff. My wife said, "What are you doing?" I moved that thing, is that all right? I moved a bunch of stuff I wanted to talk about.

(DR): Turn the light on. Can you see?

(VV): I can see. But, I'm looking all over for what I saw for you and guess what? I got it right in front of me. I knew I saw it place in here.

(RMM): Ok.

(VV): I keep a bunch of junk you know. I'm a doodler.

(RMM): All right.

(VV): Something fills my head, I draw things.

(RMM): Well, it's good to do that, otherwise, at least I know I forget about them. Oh, this was the one. But you're saying this is the one that you make.

(VV): Yeah, that's the one. For yourself to make. That's two pounds, little better than two pounds. You know, give or take, you don't have to be exactly two pounds. You don't have to put it inside, in casing.

(RMM): You're saying this is also the kudigyt?

(VV): Well it's something like that, it's something kudigyt.

(DR): And you make it once, and you think you put in too much spices, just put a little less.

(VV): No, you'll like it, you'll like it though. I mix it in a little steel bowl we have. And then I put it in the refrigerator and let it sit for a couple days. Take some out, make a little patty, cook it with eggs or something or whatever you want for breakfast sausage.

(DR): I bet those would make good meatballs too. Those little meatballs you put in the sauce. Just a take a little bit and experiment. Little meatballs, put some sauce over it.

(RMM): Ok.

(DR): Did you bring him his (*speech inaudible*)?

(VV): Huh?

(DR): Did you bring him his (*speech inaudible*)?

(VV): Oh, I got lucky for that day. Anyway, I was going to tell you about this medal right here. This is the Medal of the Purple Heart. That one right there, his name is on there see? Georgo. It's on the back I think. It says on there, Bravery. It's like a purple heart they give out now. That's what he got for saving his captain. I'm sorry about that (*speech inaudible*).

(DR): Yeah, my mother, well my father got a pension over in Italy.

(VV): I got it all written down.

(DR): Oh you got it written there? Oh I didn't know that. Oh. All right, then yeah. I was repeating it.

(VV): (*speech inaudible*).

(DR): These have been around a long time, I'll tell you.

(RMM): These are all of his medals?

(*speech inaudible*)

(DR): Yeah, put it in the glass, it'd be better.

(VV): You want spice in there? You want spice?

(RMM): Yeah, if you, yeah. Here's one in Russia.

(DR): Russia?

(RMM): Yeah, or something. (*speech inaudible*)

(VV): Mini, want something?

(DR): No, I don't want anything, thank you. I don't have my glasses on.

(VV): There's a sawmill near a lake, and John had that truck and he would go down and get a load of slabs, cut up, and then he'd bring it, and haul it and sell it to people. He'd go down and get it for the people.

(DR): Yeah, he did all kinds of jobs, he was no slack of hand, I'll tell ya.

(RMM): Ok, so this one is... let me just mark it.

(VV): John Negra, he was our stepfather.

(RMM): And he was, N-E-G-R-A?

(VV): N-E-G-R-A.

(RMM): This was in, where do you think this was taken?

(VV): That was taken in Italy.

(RMM): This one is...

(DR): Mother.

(RMM): Who are the people across?

(VV): Vincent.

(DR): Vincent right here. And this is my mother, and this my mother.

(RMM): And what was her name?

(DR): Maria, Maria Villa. Domenaca, Villa then.

(RMM): And that was in?

(DR): New Swansy. In the snow.

(RMM): Ok, and this one?

(DR): The two of us, I believe, yeah. And I. In the snow.

(RMM): Who was it now? Oh, the two of you?

(DR): Vincent and I, Domenaca.

(RMM): Was that a regular year or a big snow?

(DR): Well, it was a lot of snow. We had a, what do you call it? A bungalow house. My father had to get out of the window to shovel snow. It was over the thing.

(VV): Did you have one there of my dad shoveling snow?

(RMM): This one?

(VV): That's how the snow would, it got so deep we had to make tunnels some years. We had tunnels.

(RMM): Oh to get out of the house, or in the house.

(VV): You were in the house when it was so deep.

(RMM): This is the two of you?

(DR): The two of us, yeah.

(RMM): So you're on the... oh yeah.

(VV): You don't want that do you? This is Confirmation, her and I. Confirmation, you want that?

(RMM): Yeah. This one is?

(DR): That's my mother and....

(VV): And me.

(DR): And Vincent.

(VV): Vincenzo.

(DR): Vincenzo, Nino we used to call him all the time. Nino. Nino!

(RMM): And this is Nino chopping wood?

(DR): Chopping wood, yeah. Daily chores. I guess you don't look like Tony there, eh? And Paul.

(VV): There's our dad with his new car, 1929.

(DR): Oh, our car, yeah. That's where I got my driver's license.

(RMM): Who is this fellow?

(DR): A cousin.

(RMM): What was his name?

(DR): Meccio. M-E-C-C-I-O.

(RMM): First name?

(DR): Uh, no, that is his first name.

(VV): Giovani.

(RMM): G-I-O

(DR): V-A-N-I

(RMM): Milwaukee?

(DR): Yup, Milwaukee. Then you want me to put that over here with the rest?

(RMM): Yup. Now this one was? 1929, your dad had a new car.

(VV): Drives a new car, paid \$700 for it. New Chevrolet.

(DR): That's where I learned my first driver's training, from my brother. So I never learned to drive.

(VV): You want that one? I didn't think you wanted all these pictures.

(DR): You got some with the snow already, you don't want this one, we got those smaller ones there. That's the two of us.

(VV): Tell him why Ma is dressed in black.

(DR): Hmm?

(VV): Right there.

(DR): Oh yeah, there she is.

(VV): Somebody died, they dressed in black, for years. My mother.

(DR): God, and the baby of the family.

(RMM): Now this one was?

(DR): That's the two of us again, and that little dog. Tatina, Tatina.

(RMM): Tatina?

(DR): We used to call her Tetini.

(RMM): Oh, and this your mother and you?

(DR): No, no, no. Him. That cute little boy.

(VV): You're going to be taking a lot of pictures there, Russ.

(RMM): Yeah.

(DR): We had a railroad track, that's mother and dad, and the two kids.

(RMM): Oh, this is all of you before he passed away.

(DR): Yeah. Before he passed away. And not too long after that I think.

(VV): That spring, 1934.

(DR): '34. Huh?

(VV): 1934.

(DR): Well, we had a railroad track by our house, an old track.

(VV): This thing still going?

(RMM): Yeah.

(VV): We'll tell you something about the railroad track. We used to put pennies on there. Flatten them out.

(DR): Not we, him. Not we, him.

(VV): You did too.

(DR): I-I did not. I never played near the tracks.

(RMM): No?

(VV): You want to know something interesting about this CCI company? Well, during the Depression, the CCI company gave everybody a plot of land to grow some food if they needed one. And they took you down to Autrain to cut wood, hard wood, and then they would haul it back on the railroad track for you.

(RMM): But you cut it?

(VV): You cut it. And you had, Else and I, had a railroad pay car. And that car would come up to Gwinn and go up to Austin, which is between Princeton and Gwinn. At the Austin location there is what they call a turn house up there. And there is where the train would go up there and get on this thing and turn the train around and the train could go back the other way. By any rate, when this pay car came up one time, I was small, and I went up to my uncle Valente, Mr. Valente, his house, to get the newspaper, the Italian Newspaper called the Bulletino. I was uh, how old?

(DR): You weren't in school yet.

(VV): I was in school, and on the way home, I picked up a rock and I put the rock on the railroad. And when the car came back from Gwinn, it flipped over. Or flipped off the rails. They came over in the house looking for me. But of course, when they went to our particular house, my mother said, "No, my little boy isn't around, he's not around here. He's someplace, I don't know where he is." I was under the bed hiding, I was scared. They wanted to find out who put the rock on there.

(DR): That was the day you ran into the house and down into the basement. And Ma was tapping the beer bottles, she was putting beer in the bottles. Not the time?

(VV): No, no, no. That's the day I had a new pair of shoes, a new pair of shoes I had got them dusty. I had come in to show Mom my shoes were dusty and I sat down on the floor and knocked all the beer bottles over. She was tapping beer.

(RMM): They were all open, she hadn't capped them yet?

(VV): No, they didn't have caps on them. I never got in trouble though, I was my mother's little boy anyway. My mother, if someone was fighting me, my mother would go after them with a broom. Just like a mother hen would take care of her little chicks. That's the way she took care of me.

(DR): She never hit him, never hit him. He never got very many lickings, I'll tell you, he needed a lot of them too.

(VV): This is something interesting. They would take, I gotta take care my muscles are starting to hurt. (*speech inaudible*) They would take cheese and right (*speech inaudible*) and then my dad would put in a little jar and put it in the basement. And then every once in a while, my dad would go down and he would look in the jar. And when it got the little pig worms in there with the little black head, the cheese was ready to eat. You scrape the worms out and then you eat it. Oh Jesus, that's what cheese is you know.

(RMM): Yeah.

(VV): And then I guess I told you about Carl Pudum, the meter man. He would come and read the meter for electricity? Did I tell you that story.

(RMM): No.

(VV): You knew when the meter man was coming.

TAPE 2 SIDE A ENDS.

TAPE 2 SIDE B ENDS.

(VV): The meters were open so you could take and put a wire across there, and then the meter wouldn't register anything so you wouldn't have to pay for electricity. So in the worst times, you knew when the meter man was coming, you took the wire off, but you would leave it on so you are paying something. And then when he read the meter, a couple of days after, you put the wire back on. Well the meter reader knew that this was going on, because he probably did it himself. That was Carl Pudum. So they cheated, they had to, they were poor, no money. I never had a bicycle. I had to, the paper boy, I had to steal his bike to get a ride. And I'll tell you another story, about making wine and all that. I'm not much of a wine drinker, drink a glass once in a while but to sit down and get inebriated and drunk that's not for me. Drunk on wine, that's not for me. But when I went to the school dance at Gwinn Clubhouse, they had a basement, where the toilet was in the basement, and a swimming pool and all that. So I say to my mother, Ma can I have a bottle of wine to take to the dance. So I'd go down to the basement, I'd get a bottle of wine, And I would put the old cork on it and put it a paper bag and take it to the Clubhouse, I'd go down to the basement, put it in the basement, and then a basket, and cover it with toilet paper. Then I'd go upstairs and tell the principle's son, and the superintendent's son, there's a bottle of wine down in the basement. Then it'd disappear. They'd drink it but I wouldn't, but they would. So I was bringing the wine for them. So there was drinking going on then too.



(RMM): Yeah, yeah. Now did you have some other information you wanted to, to add?

(VV): I'll tell you about the bakery shop. Our stepfather John worked for his uncle, and he was divorced, and he made bread. They'd fill up the wagon with buns and bread and all that, and he'd go to Austin and Princeton and those places and deliver, and every place he went, he had a shot of moonshine or whatever, and by the end of the day he was drunk. So they put him on the wagon and they'd give the horse a snap in the rear and the horse would take him home. In the meantime, our friend Chizo said, we used to steal buns from him. They used steal pop from the pop man. They'd steal a pop, drink it and then they'd fill the bottles up and they'd put them back in the pop truck. And Chizo's mother would buy a bottle of pop and say, "Chizo, there's no pop here, it's just water." Chizo wouldn't tell her he'd stole it and filled it with water.

(DR): And they talk about kids now a days.

(VV): Now Johnny was telling me yesterday that his dad worked for John Negra's uncle, Tony Negra, who owned the bakery. And Mr. Valente, who was my uncle, worked for him as the baker. And he was going around and taking the horse and going and delivering for Tony. So he said the first time he got up there, he got on the horse he told it "Giddyup, giddyup, let's go." And the horse wouldn't move, so he said, "Giddyup!" The horse wouldn't move. So he went in and told Tony, "Tony," he said, "That horse won't move." Tony said, "Did you give him a jelly bun?" He said no, gave him the jelly bun, the horse took off. He had to give it a bun before it would go.

(RMM): Who owned the bakery then?

(VV): Mr. Valente... uh, Tony Negra owned it. Mr. Valente bought it, borrowed money from my mother, my dad, and the bank. He sold it later on to a fellow named Russ, Bill Russ.

(RMM): And what was Valente's first name?

(VV): Batista.

(DR): Batista Valente.

(RMM): Now is he related the Valenti's out of Ishpeming?

(VV): No, no this is spelled with an 'e.' Valente.

(RMM): E.

(DR): And out of six children he had, Valente's, six kids.

(VV): Three girls.

(DR): And three boys, yeah. One boy left, the youngest boy. Which was our cousin, and he came back to live in New Swansy, and he is ninety years old and would never, never think he was that old.

(VV): Ninety-two.

(DR): Yeah, he's going to be ninety-two, not ninety.

(VV): *(speech inaudible)*

(DR): He's the only one left in that family, the youngest in that family. We see him once in a while he comes up.

(VV): Heard enough of us Russ?

(RMM): I think I did, a lot of good stuff here. You got me cleared up with the kudigyt. I was saying, we've been trying to identify the origins of it. This has been this ongoing thing, where did the kudigyt come from. There are all sorts of stories that have been told, and, even the name.

(VV): I think the Gregamas gave it the name.

(DR): The who?

(VV): The Gregamas, the Gregamas people.

(DR): The Gregamas? Maybe they started it but everybody makes it now. Yeah.

(RMM): But even then, everybody made it, nobody bought it.

(DR): Nobody ever bought it. They experimented and made their own. You know. They say I put this much in mine, and this much in mine and people go 'Oh!' and try it.

(RMM): The information you've given me here, I got things from other people, and now you've begun to put the ideas together so it's not.... One person told me it was Mr. Felix Barbier was the first one to make it, and then I talked to another guy, like you're saying, they all made it. And I think with Barbier, he was the first one to sell it.

(DR): Yeah, to sell it.

(VV): They make it hotter, they make it hot.

(DR): Well yeah, they make it hot.

(VV): The southern Italian people make things hotter.

(RMM): Because even now the Russo's has some mild and spicier, the hot.

(VV): They also make it, they put fennel in it.

(RMM): Yeah, I've seen that.

(DR): He likes fennel.

(VV): You like fennel?

(RMM): Yeah, it's not bad, as long as it's not fennel and pepper. Then we lose me on it.

(VV): I gave the recipe to a fellow in Florida, our recipe, he made it, and the next time we went down he said, "I don't like that, I like the plain salt and pepper." And he's like, I like the fennel mixed in, that kind.

(RMM): So anyway, this has been a very good interview. What I will do now, let me turn this off here.