

Interview with Russell Magnaghi February 2, 2007

Georgeann Jukuri: This is interview with Russell Magnaghi at Northern Michigan University on February 2, 2007. Could you please tell me your name and where you were born?

Russell Magnaghi: Okay, Russell, Magnaghi. And I was born on October 12, 1943. San Francisco California.

GJ: What was it like growing up in San Fransico?

RM: Well even though SF is a city, a large city at that time, was about 750,000, it's lost people since then. It's divided up into neighborhoods, and we lived in what was known as the Bayview district, sub connection of that was butcher town. So it was kind of the, it was the eastern most part of the city, it was the warmest part of the city, you got the fog the latest in the afternoon in the summertime, which was great. But it was kind of an industrial area, most if it was heavy on ethnics. I think most of the kids that I went to class with were Italian. Some Polish kids, Hispanic. It was an ethnic community and in the neighborhood, I think I remember there was one Lutheran church, I think a black Baptist church, and there might have been some other small churches, but there wasn't like a large Episcopalian church or a big Presbyterian church and so on. And then, at one point they shut one down. There were 3 Catholic churches. There was the church for the Irish English, All Hallows, All Saints. St. Paul of the Shipwreck that was for Italians and Maltese people and St. Joan of Arc, where my mom had gone to Church, which was French. And St. Joan of Arc had a school where they taught French up to, within a few years when I went to school. I wish they had taught French when I went to school because I would hopefully have become fluent, because my mom still speaks French at 96. And she would have talked, and it would have been going on. But anyway, so we grew up pretty much in an ethnic neighborhood. But at the time, it's life and you don't think it's anything special. Actually that whole ethnic thing and kind of getting retuned to ethnicity happens many years after I'm back here. And I get a grant and I start doing interviews with Italians, and then it kind of, you go back and say Ohhh, all that stuff you were growing up with was ethnic. We grew up in an ethnic place. See my dad was an Italian salami maker, a sausage maker. You couldn't ask for anything more ethnic. The ethnic food when you went out, you went to Italian restaurants, you had North Beach, I was born on Columbus day, so that adds to it, so there was no escaping the ethnicity, you are immersed in it.

GJ: Okay, What did you do for fun in San Francisco when you were growing up?

RM: Well, we didn't have, this is an era when public parks and recreation areas weren't a big deal. And we lived in, and no there were a few parks where kids could go and play ball and so on, but they were like, I mean far away. I mean like at the other end of the neighborhood, 3,4,5 miles, you couldn't go to it, you

never even thought about it. And so for fun you played with the neighborhood kids in the street. We lived on a hill which added to the excitement. The big thing was, you look back on it as kind of crude, especially today where you have, in Marquette would be an example, you have summer baseball teams and leagues and equipment and uniforms and everyone is involved. We had your closed fist and a tennis ball. And that was the baseball and you'd play on the street. You'd have the baseball field set up on the hill. Which was sort of fun cause the ball would go shooting up the hill and then you could either go and catch it, or if you were lazy, you just wait for it to come down. So you'd play baseball, certainly never football or anything, not on the hard street. Or you might play something like that in the backyard. We had a big lawn and the kids would all come over and we'd play there. And then the big thing being on the hill was, we had fire trucks and wagons you could sit in. we had all the fancy stuff, but the best one was the little red wagon that we had, which we'd turn into a covered wagon. But the thing was to come zooming down the hill, and then hopefully you would make it, and either go into, on our side of the street, into the garage, well no, you couldn't go into the garage because the car was there. But you'd make a sharp turn into an alleyway into the yard. Or on the other side of the street, when you got down to the end of the block, and in front of you was what was known as 3rd street. It was a main route into San Francisco so you had busses, trucks, all the heavy traffic, and if you didn't make the turn, everybody made the turn into this parking lot, you'd be out in the street under something. No one, well my aunt and my mom would sit there in a state of shock watching all these kids, myself included, going down the street. And then I remember we had some neighbor kids, the Brock family, Joe Brock, and these kids, they knew how to make coasters out of wood. And they had older brothers that showed them how to make it with the big wheels and so on. It was just wild, we thought it was fun, but they were using ball bearing wheels, so you had this grinding sound on the pavement of these things, kind of a roar and grinding sound going down the hill. We thought it was great, sounded like a big motor. And they would have elaborate brake systems, and whatnot on these things. It was kind of incredible what the kids made. Everything was kind of pay as you go. You made your own stuff, you made your own fun. And then at the end of the street, we had projects from WWII, the end of the street was the beginnings of a hill, which went for several miles out into the bay. And at the end of it, it went back to the 1860's, it was a dry dock for ships. And then I think at the beginning of WWII, maybe even a little before, they began to take care of Navy ships, and then in WWII the Navy took the place over and it was called Hunters Point Naval Shipyard. And they had all the equipment to dry dock huge ships, I think they could even do battleships in the dry docks, it was huge. And that was at the end, so that's why when you talk about living in San Francisco, that hill was like a wild preserve. There was nothing there, but the slaughterhouses would send sheep up there to eat the grass, and sometimes cattle would kind of roam around there, and then they'd bring them down. And my mom lived right on the edge of that and my grandmother had like a miniature farm and she raised animals and whatnot. And so you're in the city, but you're on the edge of the city. And then when WWII

came, they covered the hill with these projects, cheap buildings they put up for housing, and then they had taken some of those down, so we had a lot of fun playing in the foundation ruins and playing all over the hill cowboys and Indians, we had a wagon train and all this stuff, and I don't know all sorts of, I dunno we're throwing rocks at each other. Again as I said everything was pay as you go, so if you needed a sword, you got some kind of stick and you had a sword. If you needed ammunition, you had all this rubble from these buildings, so you're throwing pieces and chunks of concrete, bombarding your brother and neighbor and friends and whatnot, and they you with these pieces of concrete. So it was pretty wild. I remember one time, the only time, I had a tent, we were out in the west, so I had a tent and one of the kids went and took a rock, it was a good sized rock and drops it on the tent, on my head, you know plop. And he was up pretty high, and it hurt. But that was the only time we had some crisis. I don't know what happened, it wasn't that bad, we didn't have to go to the hospital. But I think at that time you didn't even worry about it, things like that. It was just oh yeah, you okay? Speak, okay. So that was kind of growing up, it was fun. But you were always looking out at industrial something, you know. One end of the street or the other end. And I remember on the top of the hill, the end of the street, there was a street that went North. And then you looked down on the slaughterhouses. And in this mess was like a dump. I think what they didn't bring to the towel works, which was also down there, all the waste of the animals, it went to the dump. But at night you would have this glow of stuff burning in the dump. Luckily I think the wind was blowing west to east so we never got the stench of burning stuff. But it was really growing up in kind of a really industrial area. The street we lived on was probably from the 1900's or so. I think a lot of people moved out there after the earthquake and fire in 1906, cause they wanted to get away from downtown. This was at the edge of the city, lots were cheap, they were almost giving them away. I know, we even had some relatives that lived in the middle, they totally got burned out, they were one of the first areas in 1906 to burn out. And so you see where they are at in 1905 the directory of 1906, and then you look in the directory 1907 1908, and they are out on the periphery of the city, they didn't stay in downtown San Francisco, it's too dangerous. And so you're looking in all directions at industrial gunk. I always wished that we could have moved. Even been in a nicer part of this neighborhood, the Bayview district. But my dad had his sausage factor, you know like 100 yards away, couldn't leave it so we had to stay.

GJ: Okay, could you tell me more about your parents? What they did and all that.

RM: Oh, my mom was born in the area. Her parents had come to San Francisco in probably my grandfather came in ,Martin Mendiara, he came, he came he was French Bask and his parents settle in Buenos Aries. And it seems that he wanted to go to the Alaskan goldrush, which was kind of winding down but they probably would have still talking about it. So I think that he and his brother and sister went along with another sister and parents and they went to Buenos Aries.

And at first it sounds weird, but in 1904, the Panama canal wasn't built yet, so Buenos Aires was on a world shipping route. So it would make sense that they could go there, be with their parents, do whatever, and then continue. And when I've looked for his name in Ellis Island, he doesn't appear. So allegedly he came in a cattle boat, which would make sense, and went to San Francisco so probably if I went through Federal Records Center and looked at the immigration records, I would find him. So I think he landed directly in San Francisco and then decided to stay. And then got moved to the Bayview district and ended up working in a hide house tannery. And he eventually was trucker hauling these hides around. And then he passes from the scene quickly because in 1918, he has 3 kids, ones a few months old. And he dies from the flu, the Spanish epidemic there. And then my grandmother, she was from southern France, close to him, but not French bask, they were farmers, but they were tenant farmers. We've seen where they lived and they moved from place to place to place. They looked like gypsies moving all around the area there. But people from this part of southern France, a lot of Frenchmen don't leave, but many of them do from southern France. And they get into laundries. These people from this area around Pole, France, get into laundries. So when she came over she worked in a laundry. And what happened is, a person would come over and they would open up a laundry. And then they would hire new immigrants to work in the laundry, and a lot of time they would have bedrooms for them and it was like a boarding house, and they would have their bedroom, and they took their meals in a dining room, and then a lot of times they would close up the dining room and bring out the ironing boards and then use the area for running the laundry. And then what they did was with the laundry, they would wash the clothes, and then iron them, and then it was a French laundry, so they would do fine work. If you had a frayed collar, a frayed sleeve or something, they would fix it for you. She worked in a place in downtown San Francisco, and then in 1906, I'm pretty sure they got burned out. And that I don't know if she was in downtown San Francisco, or in another part of the city (unable to decipher). But, and I haven't found her in the city directory, so I think they weren't settled enough, she was just a young girl, so she didn't make it into the directory. Then she somehow met my grandfather, I think at a picnic or something and they got together and then they got married in 1909, and then they moved out to (unable to decipher) well he was already working out there, so they moved out to the Bayview district, so that's how they got started. And then my grandfather Louis Luigi Magnaghi went to San Francisco, he was from Switzerland, Swiss Italian border. And he went to San Francisco. We had some alcoholic problems. His wife had died and left him with 4 children, all very young. My dad was maybe 6, 7 years old. Anyway, you can imagine, he lost his wife, who he considered the most beautiful woman in the town. And then he turned to liquor and so then his father kind of kicked his butt and said hey, out of here, see what will happen in San Francisco. And then he went to San Francisco, and there weren't any jobs so he worked up in the lumber mills in Northern California for a short time and then as WWI started the economy began to pick up. Before that, it was kind of slow. And what they were looking for were trained sausage makers in S.F. they were getting orders and things

were happening. So this guy hears about this trained sausage maker, he had been trained in Milan but had never been a sausage maker. What they did was kind of interesting. What they did was make sure that all of the children, boys and girls, obtained a trade. So the girls would become seamstresses, or they would send them to convents to learn, as apprentices, how to make lace and things like that. So then okay fine, they have the trade, they've learned this, they get married, fine fine fine. And then the husband dies. What do you do? Well they could become a seamstress. A nice clean job you could work at home, with your children, you could work out for some fancy company and so on. And then my grandfather was sausage, and one of his brothers, so one of my great-uncles was very good at doing cartoons and drawings and whatnot. And he got into making monuments, cemetery monuments, well any kind of monuments. But he had a cemetery monument business, and then the other brother was in blacksmithing, wagons and eventually automobiles. So they were all trained and then all the girls were seamstresses. And anyway, he went to SF probably about 1913 or so, and then gets into the sausage business, and lived in North Beach in the Italian section of SF and my dad comes over right after WWI. He was going to join his father right away, but he would have been too young at that point, he would have been 10, 11 years old. And then when the war ended, he came over, I think he was about 15. And he had to come, he tells this story. He had to be with an adult. So there was this Italian woman, and they went through Ellis Island, but he had to travel with the woman. But the problem was that the woman's family lived out in some rural area, and they couldn't get communication at that time. They sent a telegram and they didn't respond, and so I guess my dad had to sit at Ellis Island for a number of days, waiting for this woman's family to say yes, send her. Because immigration was not going to send this poor woman, not knowing the language, saying here, get out of here. So they had to have an address to where she was going. And so anyway then, he arrived. And then what they did was my dad, my grandfather, and then some colleagues, friends or whatnot began to go out and do work, make salami at night and on the weekends. They would make sausage and salami for Italian grocery stores. And finally I guess my grandfather said Well if I'm doing it for them, why don't I put up a little business. And it doesn't take too much space to make sausage. You bring the meat in, you chop it up, you mix up the spices, you get a stuffer and you stuff the sausages, and you put it in the refrigerator and sell them. The salami was a little different in that it took a month to cure, but you could put it down in the basement, which was cool, which was what you wanted. So they started then around 1919 1920 when my dad got here, making salami and he had the Swiss Italian sausage factory, with salami and all the Italian sausages. And I found by looking at records, they sold primarily to ethnic customers, they are all Italian restaurants and different things. So that was kind of my dad's story. And then all he had was a European education, maybe 8th grade, and then when he came here, he always regretted that he didn't continue going to school, but he was into motorcycles, you know kinda young guy, good time, good clothes, and just went to work. And was able to do well on his innate skill and whatever he learned. He never learned English, never went to school. He never wrote me

letters, let me put it that way. So I mean, we weren't into narratives at that point. Did very well business-wise and mathematically, and whatnot in terms of operating and he this was before you have all your computers today, and he'd be on the phone with What's the price of this? What's the price of that? Of meat. And then you had futures and whatnot, and buying now and getting it in a few months. And he had all of that down. Everything kind of clicked for him. It was kind of amazing that it was just innate ability that he was able to do this. So he ran that till he retired in about 1969. Then they sold the business to a larger company, so there's a larger company that is technically making this type of salami. So that's kind of his story. And then my mom and dad met, because after my grandfather died, his wife Katherine has 3 kids and no job, nothing. She then falls back to the laundry. And it's sort of interesting because you hear these stories of immigrants, how hard it was and so on, and you get the mythology. Oh you know my mom is into it. If we were to call her up right now, she would have (unable to decipher). But my grandmother, kind of ended up with a clean operation. She had a little store. People would deliver their dirty laundry, she would put it into sacks, and then the big French laundry company would come by, take all the sacks of laundry and so on, and then return it. They would have to iron it, so she did have to do some work there, but she would iron it, and her kids as they grew up, they would all work in the store and everybody had a job. So my mom always had this story that Ohh woe is us, oh this and this and that. Well they obviously weren't working for nothing, the woman wasn't there working for nothing. So she was making some money, yeah it's sad that her husband was gone and so on, but she had the business. And then my mom tells a story that they would work until 9:00 at night. You're hanging around, you've got these 3 kids, you're walking home at 9:00 at night? People are coming in to get laundry at night? Well then you go and find out that they have a little kitchen area, kind of a back room. Well it was prohibition, she was selling drinks in the back. Which was something widows did. It was a way to make money. And these guys would come down and have a coffee royal, which was coffee and whiskey. And they'd come down and have these drinks and so on, so yeah, my mom's kind of, you're not supposed to talk about that. Yeah, I mean it's part of the climate of doing business and surviving. And she also rented her basement out. And an Italian guy was making wine in the basement, they didn't have a car and it was a dirt basement. And then one day, I don't know, somebody, the neighbors saw what was going on, and they had some friend who ended up being, in general we can say a horses ass of a human being. Later on he did some outrageous. (unable to decipher) He then calls the police, the police come in, raid the place. They didn't do anything to my grandmother, but they poured all the wine down the gutter, it was floating down the street. So yeah, she was involved in that. And then my mom and dad got married in 1931, and then spent the rest of their lives. The whole family, we actually lived probably within 100 yards of where my grandfather originally settled. I mean, it was all in the neighborhood, it was junky, old industrial buildings. It's not something you'd go back and wander around. It's not something I'd want to go back and savor. And then all the family lived I'd say within 2 miles of each other, if you put a circle out,

even then it wouldn't be a broad circle, it was all very compact. So if you wanted to see an aunt or a great aunt or something, decide on the street. You'd find somebody. Because the streets were alphabetical. My uncle lived on Hudson, we lived on Turkwood, there was somebody on McKinnen, some relatives on McKinnen, my aunt on Neukam. Oakdale was another whole cluster of family. And then my aunt, she kind of went out to the edge of the town, and she was out at Underwood. But it was only, now that I look back at it, when you count up the things, about a mile and a half. A walk, no big deal. So they all lived within about 2 miles of each other. At the time you didn't think about it, but everybody was there. You know, you're cousins, everybody was there. And then about 1957, about that time. A number of things had happened. One of the things, in our back yard, there was a big empty lot, there was like a cliff, at the edge of our yard, and there was a fence. But there was a cliff and a big empty lot. And they put in a Heister company, which was a company that makes forklifts and things like that. And trucks that lift wood, piles of wood and whatnot. And that goes in and back at that time, we don't worry about the environment, so they had this big fan, that came into our house practically, blowing out banana smelling oil. So it was paint, and god knows what we were breathing. And you'd be out there breathing and (unable to decipher). So there was that that went up. And then you had this roof, before you could look out onto the main street, now we're looking on this roof. So there was that that came in, and then at the end of the street, they either built or expanded, before that time it was like a swamp, they put in this Southeast sewage plant, this huge plant for the southeast end of the city. And this big smokestack. And my mom used to joke, she said yeah they're burning all the turds from the factory. And I don't know what they were burning, but there'd be this smoke that would come out of it and it was just, the industrial thing was now approaching. And then at about that time, because these projects had begun to bring in, well there had been a lot of black people had come into the area to work, so it became a prime location. So something must have happened, I think because the traditional black section was Filmore Street, part of the city. And this became kind of an extension, but in the 50's then, as I think all these things blended, but there was always a lot of talk that, this would have been in the 50's when we were growing up. Like '55 '56, we moved in '57. But anyways there was talk that real estates were encouraging blacks to move there and so on and so on. Part of it was that, since I had mentioned earlier, they were all immigrants. They had all pretty much made it like we had done. They had all been successful. Many of them, and usually what they did everybody like everybody in the UP worked in the mines, everybody there worked in the slaughterhouse. When I was a little kid, we went through and through the killing floor and all, so you got the picture. And my dad, very interesting, very shrewd, always made it disgusting to work for him, and to get involved in the meat industry. And my mom was never privy to this, she was up in her house. And we'd be down there, and he'd always have you do the worst jobs, the stinking rotten jobs, terrible things. But I think it was all done to get us out, that we would never say I'm gonna work in the sausage factory. Because he saw that it was a pain in the neck. And he would always say I'm the boss, anything that happens I

have to take care of it. The other guys go home at 5, I have to come back and open the windows and make sure the air is just right for the drying salami, or I lose the whole thing and money. And so he had made it, and with the changing status of the neighborhood, and as houses become available, black people begin to move in. So what happens is you have the development of a black ghetto in this area, which then by the 1970's you have drug dealers on the street, in our little area around us, there were drug dealers on the street and so on. I mean, at that point, people wanted to get out. When we left, a lot of people stayed beyond that because it was a nice neighborhood, it was large but there were areas that were very nice and sunny and so on, which was rare in SF in the summertime. And so people stayed, but then finally people just left, and a lot of people wanted to move to the suburbs. Like we had a summer house, we call it the ranch, like people call it camps here. Out west it was a ranch. And it was a few acres, or maybe an acre with fruit trees, prune trees, plums. And we would go there all summer, it was to get out of SF, we wanted to leave the strain and stress of the city. So then in 1957 we moved not that far, about 12 miles, away from our house to our new place in Burlingame, out by the airport. So then it was interesting, I was there for 4 years while I attended high school and then I went to the University of San Francisco in 1961, so then I was back in San Francisco. I stayed there even though it was a short commute. Again my dad interceded and he said You're going to the University of SF and you're going to live there. Well I'd like to stay at home. Nope, you have to live at the University. Yeah, but it's going to cost... You're living at the University of SF. Which was very good. He had talked to this friend of ours, well he was Jack Ryans, a Catholic priest. The chaplain for the branch of the Knights of Columbus, that my dad belonged to. And I guess my dad asked him You know, what do you think, Father? Should the kid go there? And he said yes, so anyway, whatever the priest said, that was the thing to do. So all of a sudden, I'm packed up in my car and up at the University of San Francisco. And then I spend the next 4 years, back in SF, but right in the middle of the city. So that was fun, there was an excellent educational experience at the university of sf. And then I and my friends and all kind of used san Francisco. We would go to the movies, we would go to the foreign movies, we would walk the city, you know whatever was going on. Go to Golden Gate park, which was close by on Sunday afternoon. And really utilize it. And the come on with the university was we had this little, urban campus, now it's changed considerably, much nicer. But it was an urban campus, and to make the students feel better about it, said And you have the second campus, the City of San Francisco. Okay, whatever you say, but it was. And you had all of the, and you're a student and you don't have a lot of money, so you weren't running to the fancy restaurants in SF or going to the opera and so on and so on. But periodically, I remember one time one of the Jesuit priests there had some tickets to the opera. And he said Russ, hey you want to go the opera? I said okay, and I went and took a date and went to the opera. And it was one of the Von Buriens operas, and then tend to be very ponderous and just drag on and on, and we got to the intermission, and I don't know if I or she said Uhm, you know I think there was a coffee place we could go to or something. And I said Yeah, fine. The both

of us said that's enough, we got our opera experience, so it was interesting. But it was fun going to school there, and utilizing everything that surrounds you.

GJ: How did you get to come to Northern? What did you do that led you here?

RM: How did I get to Northern? I did 4 years, got my degree in History at the U of SF, and then I had a very good mentor and teacher, and friend. Father McGloyn John McGloyn. He had gone to St. Louis University, he was a Jesuit priest, he had gone to St. Louis. He said you know, living in SF, now this will sound strange, but he said living in SF you're kind of on the edge of the country. You know, we didn't think of SF as being, now today California, you mention San Francisco, it's kind of a mythic place, but at the time, it was a small city, very charming, very picturesque, beautiful location, beautiful views, but isolated. You're at the end of the country. McGloyn said you should think about going to the Midwest, getting out of California to see how other people live. When we would go on vacation, we went on vacation every year, and that's kind of one of the things I think that got me into history, was seeing the history (unable to decipher) But my dad would only take two weeks, and we would travel by car. There was never that time, oh we're all going to get on a plane. We could have done it, but you aren't going to do that, that was wild. So the best you could do was go out for two weeks, a week out, a week back. And I remember the farthest, it was a big thing, the farthest we went east one time was a Knights of Columbus convention in Denver. And then we're in Denver, and I'm kind of looking at the map, I became the navigator, I was into maps and geography, I told my dad, I said, you know, I said, maybe we could continue to Chicago. Well, that would have been another 1,500 miles. That would be another 3 days going, some days there, and 3 days coming back to get to Denver, to then continue. So Denver was the limit. And I remember when we were coming down from Denver, I was trying to see as many states as possible because I thought hey, I'm back to isolation here. So I remember we went and we cut down, took the map out, and said if we take this road, we could go through the panhandle of Oklahoma, and the panhandle of Texas, two new states, and we work around into New Mexico, and so on. We did this thing, we bought postcards, and souvenirs because this was it. And so that was my view. And when I was growing up I always had, the thing was, you'd see things on TV. Ads, but then they would have you send for stuff and whatnot. You'd always hear New York, New York. And then you'd hear about the New England winters, and whatever. And there was always this idea, what about the rest of the country? Now, a lot of people there would say, well this is it, this is our world. And then part of it was, I think in 1963, my roommate had to drive a car back. His dad worked for Penny's and they had a vice-president that was being relocated to New York, and so anyway we had an extra car. And my dad gave the okay, I came up, and he knew I was fudging the figures. I told him Dad, at a dollar a day, that's all I'll eat, I'll be able to go. Things were cheap at that time, so anyway, he let me go. So we did this cruise across the country, and again, plotted it out. This is my one and only trip. We went to Mt. Rushmore, the Corn Palace in Mitchell, South Dakota, Chicago, and

then I remember, we even went, this friend of mine, Jim Parkin and his brother wanted to go back to Indianapolis, because they had grown up there. So we went there, and I said, well I'm not interested in that one. I had a number of places, I went down to Mammoth Caves, got on a bus. Get down to the turnoff there and then how in the heck do I get up to Mammoth Caves? You know another 10 miles. Anyway, did all that tried to see as much as possible. And then the following year, 64, a friend of mine who was from Saudi Arabia, which today, you know that's all that's in the news, but then it was like Saudi Arabia? What are Muslims? What's this and so on and so on. Anyway I learned a great deal from just being around him and so on. We were good friends. He was going back to Arabia, and he said you know, you've talked so much about what you've seen last year and so on. He said, would you be willing to come, you know he paid for my trip back or something. So anyway, the two of us set out on a bus across the country on a continental railways. They weren't the number one busline. Shoulda gone with Greyhound. That was an experience, going through the south. And this was like at the time of Freedom Riders, and so you were seeing, and we had never grown up with this, but you were seeing colored-only restrooms and what not. It was on it's way out but the signs were still there. So that was an experience, went to New Orleans for the first time, and we stopped and we were there for maybe the day and then 5 o'clock we were back on the bus and we usually get on a bus that was going to do long distance traveling at night so we wouldn't have to get a room, just slept on the bus. And so we got to Washington and he went back home and I went back to San Francisco. And so it was at that point that it was kind of an idea. So I went to St. Louis University. Okay, so with that in mind, having seen the rest of the country and so on, I decided to go to St. Louis. The big reason was I got a fellowship, which meant some money, and I was going to study under John Francis Bannan, who was into the history of the Americas, studying the whole western hemisphere as a unit. I was kinda caught up with that idea, even back then. So anyway, I came back and I went to graduate school from 1965-1969. And then in 69, no earlier in Mid-January about this time of the year 1968 a friend of mine had been hired mid-year, was coming up. So I came up with him, he was bringing a carload of belongings up, and then his wife and son, who was about a month old at the time, were coming up by plane. And so I came up again, I was still going to return to California, and I said well I want to see as much of the Midwest as I can. I'd never been to this area so I came along for the trip. And then I'm looking in the fall of 68, I'm now looking for a job. And I remember, I thought about Northern and I said well, I dunno it's way up north or something and I put it aside. And then I had sent out all the letters looking for jobs, and I had one envelope, one letter and one stamp left and I said well who haven't I sent to yet? Ah, Northern Michigan University. Okay, so I sent it. And then a few weeks later or something, maybe months later, I get this call and at that time we didn't have all the fancy-dancy hiring that you do today and the federal laws and so on and so on. And they had me come up and I interviewed for the job, and I got it. And I've been here since September of 1969.

GJ: How did you get involved with doing the interviews at first?

RM: Ah, how did I get involved in Oral History? Well, I came up here with the idea of teaching Latin American history, the history of the Americas, early colonial history of the French and Spanish. And then I remember I had, it was about 1975 or so sometime maybe before, I remember I was at a conference in Oklahoma City with a good friend of mine, and he was from here, he had gotten his masters degree. We were at the conference and we were sharing a hotel room and we were sitting there talking, and he said you know, you're bringing all this Latin American stuff with you to Marquette, he said there's not much of a market for it. And there wasn't. We weren't into it at that time. Multi-cultural diversity, travel, take courses and so on. Now we can't keep students out of the history of Mexico, they are clambering to get in. Then, I could barely get 10 people to take the course when we offered it, we didn't give any special credit or what not. So at that point he said, if you went into local history, you would get grants, people are going to know you. You have a blank check to get into that type of history, not a lot of people have gotten into it. So I did. And then in I think it was about 1978 or so...79 I think I offered my first workshop at the public library and kind of got into Oral History with the idea that this is a way to preserve a lot of the history that is never going to be saved. And I started at that point, and at the beginning I talked about it, that's why I tell the students don't procrastinate, go out and do the interviews, like you're doing now. Because I didn't do anything. I had the theory down the book knowledge, okay. But hadn't gone out and done it. And then in the early 80's, I forget the exact date, 81, we had had this coming together of people, we were supposed to bring a bunch of ethnic people together and this woman had a grant to do interviews and what not. We brought them together, we didn't too many people, and then these two guys show up. One was a Catholic priest, Monseigneur Spelghatti, David Spelghatti and Leonard Alebello, and he worked for one of the banks up in Ishpeming at the time. And they came in, and I dunno, they just, quite a coincidence, and they said, you know we have money in our Pizzano club funds to do a study, interviews of Italians in Marquette County. And so anyway, that led to me doing a study of Italians throughout the Upper Peninsula and I eventually did I dunno, about 300 plus interviews. And that's what got, really got the whole thing going. And over the years, I've either done workshops around the UP or actually had a class, like you're having, and I mean, it just goes on and on. For instance, this morning I'm over in the archives and I see an interview, later on I have to go and get the fellows widow to sign the release form, but here was an interview I did in 1983 with this guy George Javour and he was a foreign language teacher here. And he was a little slight individual, and I'm talking to him about Italians going to Alaska to fish. And here we are, an August day in Marquette Michigan, and he says "oh, I was up there. When I first came from Hungary I was looking for a job, and they didn't have anything, and I heard about good money to be made in Alaska. So he was a waiter in one of these boarding houses up there, and he had an interesting story. And I taped him, well we have it in the thing and I've kind of forgotten about it, so I saw it today and I said well

I'll take it with me and have his wife sign the release forms so we can use it. But yeah, so it just kind of got started with the idea. And for me it was kind of like a chase. You get one interview, and say well, you know we did Iron Mountain, what about Gwinn? So all of a sudden you start going across the UP, and I went to all the areas where Italians were and then as time goes on, it was really a wonderful experience because number one, I got to know intimately different areas of the Upper Peninsula, because when they are talking and talking not only about Italians but about everybody else in the community, and then you met people. And subsequently I've gone back and done different ethnic groups. Slovenian women, Croatian woman, so on. And then the better part of it is to train people, and to train students who then go out and do interviews. And so now, probably, I've maybe done, or overseen maybe 500 plus interviews. I don't know, I've never counted. I know I did over 300 of the Italians, and then I did other ones, and I've done interviews in other areas, like Italians in Memphis, Tennessee, in Alabama, in Oklahoma I think I did one down there, Idaho. I've done these other places, and then usually deposit them in the local historical library or museum or something. So it's been kind of a lot of fun. And I see myself when I retire being able to go anyplace in the country and tie up with a local historical society, library or something, and nobody really does that. So it can be a fun outlet for me in retirement, with a schedule a plan, what am I doing here and here and meeting people learning more about the community, seeing photographs. And basically what I see it doing is creating an archival base of photographs and what you don't realize is that ethnic groups and so on, people have saved photographs in their family, but they haven't been saved, preserved in a library, where if you're doing something, like now. An editor of the *Discovering the People's of Michigan* through the MSU Press, and we have a manuscript on the Belgians of Michigan and I think now we have photographs collected, but how do you find photographs of Belgians in Lower Michigan? Who do you contact and so on? Well I stumbled onto this woman, Margaret Broughs, and she's been wonderful and she's got photographs. The Cornish, I thought there will be boxes of photographs, but no. Nothing. One kind of crummy picture of a Cornish restaurant. But after that, I even had to get Candice Miller, now she's a representative, member of the House of Representatives downstate. But she was secretary of state, so here I am writing to Candice Miller, Secretary of State, do you have any photographs of your great grandfather, who had a store up in Calumet. So it's led to meeting people now around the state, around the country, and on a personal level, you know the Italians who have good food, drinks and wine. So it's been a fun experience, and one that I can continue without too much trouble. So that's kind of how I got to continue doing interviews.

GJ: Okay uhm, I don't think I have any more questions, is there anything else you'd like to add?

RM: Yeah, no that's about it.