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Oral history interview with Pietro Lazzari,
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Transcript

Interview

HP: DR. HARLAN PHILLIPS

PL: PIETRO LAZZARI

HP: I think while we have the opportunity it's, I think, important to assess in a way what one begins with. You have at least, you know, a dual cultural view, more, probably, so what did you fall heir to in the way of luggage and baggage that you've carried?

PL: Well, I do believe I was quite lucky, if we can put it this way, I was born in the last century, 1898, in Rome and not from a family where cultural marked point was strong. My father was very inventive himself, he could draw horses. He loved to walk long distances. I remember as a young boy we used to walk outside the gates of Rome in Via Solaria or toward Ostia, and he was not a very tall man but while he walked, and while he talked he grew, I thought he was very tall, and he was inspired, his chest forward because he was the bandolier, which is a sort of an elite corps in the Italian army and he volunteered very young. So going back to our walks, he was familiar with the Roman ruins and frescoes in churches particularly those churches on the outskirts of Rome. Today they are no more.

HP: No.

PL: It's built solidly all around, you know. You have to watch for traffic, too. But the fact remains that that was some sort of beautiful beginning for me. And then my friends, and the gardens of Rome, with the nightingale in the late evenings in the latest sunlit August, you know, in those, I would say, cloister closed villas outside of Via Montagna and Santa Ana young boys used to climb those treacherous gates with a lot of broken glass at the edge or very sharp -- they looked like swords, you know. But we always managed and with torn pants to go there, and there summer was beautiful. Because there were overgrown gardens, abandoned for probably twenty years or more, and then there was a little space of grass not attended, in other words getting sparser and sparser, and then in front of let's say, a very dark laurel tree was a beautiful fragment of a statuary, maybe a female or male. And then on the grass was a head which had fallen there and so on and a misty leebie. But it wasn't mutilation, the head down in the grass was so beautiful. It wasn't placed like a stage arrangement, it was just natural. And that's the way it was in those days. And then around Rome going toward Via Montagna was a beautiful church, probably you all know it -- Santa Agnese -- and that church is the old church which is below ground level, and there there are catacombs and some of those stones are the early Christian bones. And there I discovered the bones. And I remember that about six -- my father was also, as I say, very unpredictable and very adventurous. Any time he could find a job outside of Rome he took suddenly all the family and there we were bound for Naples. And there I remember in a sort of very damp sort of ground floor abandoned apartment in Naples we used to take a _____ that is to say, we were two boys and two girls, and in one sort of room sheets were spanned across the room and the women -- my mother and my two sisters, and me and my brother on another side. My father used to love to take jobs at night so he could be free during the day. And on cold nights sometimes in winter he used to come with a stray dog, I remember, very hungry, you know, he used to bang that tail, he was so happy to be in a warm place. And then in the morning after being fed away he used to go again to find another in his own destiny. And that was our life there. I remember once in a square, I think it was in downtown Naples, some workers who used to throw iron, they were forging on this square, I rushed to touch that and it was red hot and I burned my hand, and I cried and cried. That time was when an uncle of mine was leaving for the United States. So we went to the port and I cried all the way and my uncle disappeared in the belly of the cargo boat, very sad, I don't know if it was a bad omen, he never came back. I remember too with my mother -- we used to go near the port in the late evening in Naples and there were those boats all in dry -- leaning sort of posture after all-night fishing and we used to be delighted to find a lot of flocked fish down on the bottom of those boats and we used to collect them and probably -- I'm sure they were delicious for supper. And the kids were all around. My mother, by the way, was a very red-haired person with big, blue eyes, because her ancestors her great-grandfather came with Victor Emmanuel to negotiate, or take Rome from the Papacy at this time. And so they were from between Turin and the French Alps. And so to my mother and ourselves and we were young -- and my father probably was asleep because he worked nights -- all the kids made fun of my mother. Such a flaming redhead with the blue certa of polacca, they used to call it, some sort of -- not a sweater, like a boughten garment in the after part and close to the neck, with a lot of buttons all the way down. I declare

she looked superb but strange to the Napolitan types, and they used to make fun of -- and throw things at us and call us foreigners. We were from Rome. I was anyway. So that is Naples, Naples memories. We were in the section which I recognize again in some of the movies of Sophia Loren, part of Naples, very busy, with the hanging -- they say they hand the pasta like clothes -- I never say no pastachoute, I mean the spaghetti when they're making it, I never saw that hanging, but a lot of clothes, many decks one on top of the other. And busy, busy people coming on. I still remember I have a friend by the name of Pupunello, that's his name, and when I used to go and eat outside I used to bring always a piece of good food to this kid, I don't know why, but I always remember Pupunello. We lived in the same long railroad, dark apartment. Then from there in 1906 the Vesuvio, the volcano there erupted and we used to go at night -- my mother, my sisters and brother -- we used to go out and see the beautiful, natural fireworks. It was very impressive there, you could see these pennants of fire, very much alive, you know, and then its lapilles, as they called them -- lapillae, they used to shower down just like burning little stars, like tears, like also a sense of liberation. I was very impressed but not frightened. I think it was a grandiose, or was some sort of supreme happening, some looked like this huge mountain was holding, sitting over this burning fire. And there was that moment. We left -- not long after the eruption in 1906 my father found a job in Florence -- what a contrast -- there we went to Florence. We just packed a few things and my father sold -- I remember those iron beds, we had a large one my brother and I slept in it and it was made of brass, you know, it was sort of rococo evolution, it was very tall and the mattress was very flat and skinny and hard, but we loved it, I managed to be so tired, to me it was like a feather sleeping there. I never saw a book except I was going to some preparatory school like a first class. There was an enormous priest in this class, he never told us anything, he used to come there and nap and we used to make a lot of noise. Once in a while he shook up someone and he got angry, you know, then he'd smile, he'd look at us, we were not even _____ prison and he fell asleep again. That was Naples. In Florence it was different. Everybody was sort of alert, erect, you know, the streets were different. And I remember we moved to many, many places that I remember. I was already eight years of age, nine. And I remember we lived in front of a villa, it was so beautiful a villa, I think it was at Via Pisani just on the outskirts of Florence, but still Florence. And I remember often my mother on sunny days she used to go and wash our clothes in the Arno. And there was there a sort of a thin wall called the Pescala and there the water was just playing and smiling around those stones, they weren't beautiful rocks like I see here in the Adirondacks but they were lovely in my eyes. I remember I used to go and swim sometimes in secret, and there were all sorts of boys there, and once I remember at Easter I went there just to picnic because it was getting chilly, with friends, and then I remember a watch which was given by my father for Easter disappeared. That was quite a shock for me. Well, that was Florence then. Then we moved to Via della Bella Donna, which was a narrow street, and if you know Rome, is not far from Mercata del la Palys where they sell old hats and things like that, not far from the Bargello and those narrow streets, streets from there suddenly open into the church there, the cathedral, a beautiful thing, and that Via della Bella Donna they told me it was a famous street of mal fame. But I think everybody was so sweet to us I don't remember these instances. I like Florence very much. And it was in my more maturing years. I was growing then more than in Naples and I remember going to school at Santa Maria Novella, which was an hospital and there my father took a job at night also. And Santa Marinella Novella I liked, the church of Santa Maria was not far and the hospital and then walking I think, if I'm not wrong, toward the southwest of Santa Marinella School I used to walk in the church where my father used to take me to see some of the paintings there, and there was the Piazza Santa Croce and then the Via Ghibellino not far from there where is the house of Michelangelo I remember very beautiful, I remember it impressed me very much, sort of a darkish place. As I remember I walked there after many years when I was making some sketch portraits of literati Italians, I think I went there to do Palazzeschi, a writer and to do a picture of Sophia, she wasn't far from there, and also Cicognani, who was the brother of the cardinal now, I think, Cicognani, he had a beard and looked like a revolutionary, sort of like an iconoclast. So going back to my early time, Florence impressed me very much. I think the schools were different there, nobody slept there, nor the priest, and we couldn't make much noise. And sometimes I remember I was standing in a corner because I misbehaved, but I always got out very luckily. I remember were very important to me when I stood in a corner all sorts of creative ideas were coming in my mind, it looked like standing there everything -- ideas of all sorts -- trips, traveling, sea, things like that. So it was quite revealing to me. And in Florence I tried to learn, it wasn't easy, I couldn't concentrate in myself. Maybe I didn't have enough vitamins, I was always hungry and bread, just bread alone tasted so good. And I remember I used to pick up fruits on the street. I never had bellyache, I never had any trouble, I didn't even know where the stomach was. And so I grew. And then one day after many experiences about Florence in my young age while I was in a church I had the opportunity to sing, I don't know why, because I was walking from where I was living and near -- see we left Via della Bella Donna we went to live in a more damp place down -- I remember Via della Bella donna was second or third floor but we went near the house -- it probably was Via Ghibellino and there it was very damp. I remember sometimes the cries of my mother because it affected her enamel, she couldn't chew any more, it was something sort of a rheumatism, I don't know. But there I used to go and get my father out at the hospital Santa Maria Novella and stay with him a while. And once I saw this church, I've forgotten its name, not far from the Piazza Santa Croce and I entered that church and I don't know why suddenly I was upstairs singing and they discovered I had a voice, so I was happy there and then after the ceremony, after the class of singing -- they weren't teaching -- they were just preparing us for Missa Cantata or something of that kind -- afterwards there were some beautiful, delicious bonbons, I don't know how you call them, in Florence they specialize they call them samali, something like that. In Rome

they call them bartots but they're different. They're very light inside, sometimes they're very delicious. I used to stuff myself so much I couldn't sing any more. And there I was home. And my brother, who was older, got a job delivering telegrams, I remember him tall with his bike he used to be -- I used to see him on the streets of Florence. Then one day my father got another job in Rome again so there was a return because I left Rome I think when I was about four and a half, almost too young to remember except the episode that probably at three years of age -- I don't have one of those memories, that they remember almost when they were born -- at three years of age I was sort of an actor, I had skirts, you know, in those days we had skirts to a certain age, and there was la Chiesa del la Traspontine it was called -- which is part of the Vatican. We were poor, as a matter of fact, I was baptized there and when I was baptized the compari -- the one who holds me to be baptized, you know, he was sick so they waited and waited and the priest said, "Walk along here." And there after that was the very early episode of Rome and everything is quite nebulous. But when I went back -- in Rome, I think I was three and a half years in Florence and we left at the end of 1906 or the beginning of 1907, it must have been in 1911 or 1910 when we went back, you see, what I'm telling you is not prepared, you inspire me, it just surges, springs like that.

HP: Yes.

PL: So I remember that I wasn't decided what to do. I remember very clearly that I used to walk, I used to live in a street called Via Baroni, which was before Santa Agnese and just after the villa that Mussolini lived in and that was bombed during the last war. There was a Via Baroni, it doesn't exist as such any more, there are a lot of villas now. And I used to live there in the basement and I remember there was a family from Naples and the father of this friend of mine who used to go to the same school was a tannery -- what do they call where they fix leather -- ? you know --

HP: Apprentice?

PL: Tanner.

HP: Yes.

PL: And I remember he had those fuming, big tubs, wooden tubs, and all these skins and he has his trousers up to his knees and just danced almost like a dance on top of it with his feet to work on this leather and then the stuff was sent back to Naples where they made those famous gloves. Well, that's what I remember about my friend. And then suddenly something happened. A sculptor moved down next to us, a large a famous sculptor, his name was Vincenzo Luisa Yerachi -- very ascetic, with a nice little goatee, solemn, tallish, with a velvet beret and when he worked I remember as if it were today he had a sort of short mantle also in velvet. He was a good sculptor, famous for his, I think, "Christ in Sardinia" over a mountain, where he stylized, you know. And he was so serious and so solemn, and I was so different I always saw him in tears, sense of humor I still have, and sometimes that's the trouble with many people, they're so serious and everything. At any rate he was good. By that time a cousin of mine, Leno Lazzari, he also became a good sculptor. Unfortunately, he died in Florida. Leno Lazzari also two years younger than I am, I must have been 13 or 14 and he was even younger, and we both worked there. Of course, we played a lot of tricks on Professor Yarachi and all sorts of things. We were bad but we liked it, we learned a lot. Or course, today I'm surprised we have a class in sculpture, we have to attend as a pupil, and there they pay you something it's true but then as they leave you have to clean after, there it was different. He didn't pay us, we didn't pay him. But I remember mountains of clay that had to be cleaned and a lot of preparation to build up a structure or something. I'm glad I did, though. And I remember he used to draw very well, he used to do some beautiful drawings, sort of allegoric things, of portraiture made with sanguine, some sort of soft stone, very red like coagulated blood that he used to get from France, I think and he used to do unbelievably beautiful things. He had a good temperament, he was originally from Calabria and I was surprised later the fire, the volcanic magma graycha soil was missing in his blood, but his work was fine really, I still remember. He had a detail there in the studio of the "Christ of Sardinia." And there, I don't know, actually following that period I was always restless. Then I realized that one of my friends a year older than I was joined the Navy, it wasn't just the Navy but it was a sort of preparatory school on terra firma, which after six, seven months would put you in a school steamer, or rather I think it was a combination sailing and engine kind, an old kind of boat in Naples. And there they used to travel around the world for six, seven years. And then they became probably petty Navy officers or something like that. So I joined and I was counting the days, I was six months younger than the age of admission to the Academy. So finally at fourteen and a half I left for Naples. I remember my father took me there. And it was some school which is near Castel del Wall, that is sort of an old medieval structure, which is on the sea, not far from Santa Lucia, I think, where they have those beautiful restaurants. And there I stayed for a few months. We had to get up at 5:30 in the morning with a trumpet and no breakfast yet, just jump into our clothes and our shoes and start washing like washing the deck I remember there were huge hoses coming from a pump near the water, we were actually -- the structure was over the sea there. And we used to wash every day. Then there was something -- coffee and bread, no eggs, no bacon, none of that, Italian food in those days was really something. And there was our school, we used to read a practical school manual, how to make knots with the ropes, all sorts of things, you know. I loved it. But then I got bored

and I managed to get sick. And then one day my mother appeared, I was in the hospital, I think I ate too much or something, it was always the same food, a lot of red sauce in Napolitan I remember, a lot of spaghetti, probably it did not agree with me because I used to grab a lot of fruits when I was younger. And so I went back to Rome. I remember like today in a third-class train, slow train, going from Naples to Rome, and my mother so silent with those blue eyes and that red hair and there I stood. She was not very communicative, she kissed me only once when I volunteered for the first World War. And I was not afraid, I felt that she could vibrate, you know I felt I was home again when I was near her. And then in Rome I did all sorts of things. I sketched in a cafe. At fifteen I was already quite older, I looked older, taller, all my friends were about seventeen or eighteen, but I was now admitted to the circle of my older brother because he was three years older, or rather five years older, and he had a different type of friends who smoked, they had long trousers, and so on. But he was very nice, very sweet, and he used to play guitar and mandolin, and he used to get together with friends and there was a musical -- I was addicted to music through my brother. Once in a while I used to go and I learned somehow to play guitar but never in a musical way. It was so difficult for me to remember notes even today, I always think if I knew how to learn about notes I could compose. But I never bothered with it. So that's my introduction to music, they were very romantic like Sperranza Berduti, things like that, fort of barbershop quartet. As a matter of fact one was a barber. The shop is still there, I saw it last year, but I never entered, probably he's not there any more, he was an older man. So that's how my introduction to music. And then I even joined -- I wanted to be an artist, I had a friend who died two years ago by the name of Achille Mattay. His father was a clerk in a color, an art -- where they used to sell art materials, but it was different from here, they sold colors in tubes, yes, but also they sold colors in beautiful jars like the drugstore and those were pigments and they were so shiny, so lovely. And Achille used to give me colors and canvas, I didn't have any money. We met in the river, by the way, I love the river, we'll talk later about the river. It was very inspiring, the Arno, from the Arno I was in the Tiber. And so I just started going out. I still have some of that work. I still go out. He used to give me small tablets of wood, about eight by ten, I used to paint _____ I couldn't get what I wanted, scenes of the bridges, I used to go underneath, like Pont Niveo, or like even in the center of the sea like Pont Roto where is the island of Pont Quatro Cardi, San Bartolomeo de Liso, is there by the way with an hospital of monks. You know, I'm breaking all _____ I'm bringing back all the memories to the new ones. I remember my father later said that when he was young he had two things: He used to go to San Bartolomeo when is the island there, and there's still an hospital I saw that those monks they say they used to slap the face and pull the tooth out. That was the method, you know.

HP: Yes.

PL: So, going back, let's see, where was I? I think I was with the Amigo Mattay -- Achille. So going back to Achille -- he silently used to show my exhibits, my sketches to some artist who used to go and buy there. I remember seeing those artist, they were older, well-dressed, you know, successful look. And so finally my friend, he almost cried, he said, "I try not to tell you but those fellows are great artists and they say you have nothing to, no talent, it's better you take another job. And I told them you do electrical work once in a while and they said, 'Stick to that'." Yes, I was an electrician because I like to go up stepladders, all summer used to put lines over roofs of Rome, I used to jump from one to the other, to me it was certain sense of acrobatic fitness I love it. So I used to take those jobs. Well, I smiled to my friend and I said, "Don't be so crushed. I will be one. They can't stop me from learning." So he used to give me more material. You know he never told me -- I suspected -- he became quite an important man, I saw him before he died some ten years ago because I go often to Rome, I sneak of ten there, and he told me, "Pietro, I never stole a thing in my life but I used to steal colors and material for you." That was quite touching. And well, it just happened that my mother was born at Rocacityboc. Rocacityboc was sort of a bastion just east of Riete which is an Etruscan city. Arriete is on a lifeline from Rome you go to Florence or Tuscany. There are many routes but this is nearest terminal which the railroads go by, there is also an ammunition factory there. Bariete is very beautiful. About fifteen or twenty kilometers east of Ariete is Rocacityboc. Its inhabitants probably they were I'm sure pontifical aristocrats in those days probably with a lot of blessing and giving a large sum of money and what not, they used to give the duke and the duchy duke of the city Baldi and they had a lot of land, it's a beautiful bastion by the famous military architect, they say the frescoes are by Julio Romano and even they claim now the early work of Michelangelo. At any rate, my mother when they took Rome, instead of going back north, all those Piedmontese married and settled around Rome. Now we have to go back to my father's people. My father for seven generations the were Romans, but they were plotting against the Pope. We were all Catholics, I'm a very good Catholic, I never go to church because I was baptized in St. Peter's because of the Traspontine because in Rome we don't go, we just work and we feel blessed, hundreds of churches and priests and nuns, Romans don't go to church, I know it is a fact but I feel it, when I hear bells and I hear things I don't know, to me it's like going back home. But the women some of them go to church, most of them, but not the men in Roman. And so my father it just happened my grandfather was a designer of shoes, he was a shoemaker, but he knew style, they knew how to make shoes, not like here now they have a machine, and he used to design for the ballerina, I heard it from my father -- the ballerinas of the Teatro Costanzi, now called the L'Opera in Rome. A beautiful teatro. And there his brother was Cristina Lazzeri, and Cristina there was a patron of the shoemakers and he came from a long generation of shoemakers. And the tanners and the shoemakers were all revolutionaries, I don't know why, the printers, you know. I don't know, there was a difference because all the aristocrats of Rome, they were too much -- I think there were some

liberals, oh yes, but they were in secret, because they weren't all somehow sold to the Pontificato. And my father used to say, yes, there were counts and things but they used to come under fictitious names and they used to give money, and even cardinals there were, they say sometimes when they were in trouble they found a way to escape. As a matter of fact, Cristina Lazzeri with his three brothers, there were six brothers, except the one who worked at the Vatican, he was a guard, but all five brothers were somehow, they were engaged -- they just wanted to have Rome reunited with the rest of Italy. So that's why my father I remember my grandfather escaped from the high walls of Castel Sant' Angelo, which was a prison. So he was an exile, he escaped into this Rocacityboc, and there he met my mother, red-haired. And that's the story. So from both sides I come from the north of Italy, the mountains and the mountains of the Apennines, Rocacityboc rock is hard, it's all a rocky place. Do you know who has that place now finally? Carress Crosby, who is an art authority in this country and Europe and Carress Crosby she was the inventor of the sunback dress many years, she was one of the group of scandalous Americans, including Peggy Guggenheim, and so on in the thirties, if you remember, MacLeish, and others. There were quite -- she was from Boston and New York. And then I met her later here in Washington during the second World War we got together with Edward Stone, the famous architect, and others, and we had a gallery here, and I showed her the first show in this city -- Washington. My first show in New York was in 1926 the year after I came as an immigrant. And I'll tell -- I'll try to be a little shorter because I can talk forever, you just opened this past that I never talk about. So to make it short, I there I have told you of the settling of the family in Rocacityboc. My father was very restless. Even before marrying, as a matter of fact, he volunteered to the bandoliers, which was this elite corps, which I joined later. And in this bandolier corps he was sent to combat the Mafia -- this was way back -- my father was born in 1861, or 1863, I think, so this was just -- and he joined the volunteers probably at seventeen, and it was after 1870 -- yes, that makes sense -- 1870 Rome was reunited and they had the famous Mafia phenomenon in Sicily. So they sent soldiers and, being an elite corps of infantry, my father spent some time in Sicily, and always talked about those brigands, who were bad but bad in a different way. My father loved gypsies and brigands not for their -- you know, sometimes they say they were brigands for injustices. And the Mafia of Sicily wasn't like the Mafia here, far from it. Sometimes they were -- that protection was that because in Sicily they had a history of opposition from the invaders -- either the Normans or the Spanish, like the House of Bourbon, and they thought they had these ladies, you understand, that's what it was, and those people, and then if somebody simply didn't agree, or misbehaved, they were thrown in jail. They were thrown in jail for years, their property was confiscated, so the Mafia in those days was some sort of heroic liberation front. At that time after the Mafia was started that way there probably -- like in any organization of that kind, they would try to survive as a parasite organization, just intimidation, and so on. And my father used to tell me later of his days in Sicily, and he never got into any trouble even if they ____ around, around in those mountains they finally caught one of the brigands, my father would either give them some smoke for the pipe, or if they were thirsty he would give a drink, it was a sort of a human touch no matter what kind of society it was. My father told me a lot of episodes which I don't see in books, I knew Bazzini later when I was a newspaper man but Bazzini writes books about Italy but they are pages, they are not written, because most of those people didn't have the opportunity, the fortune that I had of being born in that particular family. And I remember I didn't have money and my father always could buy food in trust, and always he paid, whether when we were in Naples or whether we were in Florence. I remember my mother used to say, "Did you send the money to David?" -- probably a year long credit, maybe just not very much -- "Yes, I sent the five lira." In those days five lira was a lot of money. So going back there, this was my relation with my father, my silent mother, and then I grew. And then in 1914 the war broke out. Italy was not war-minded, and I was with the groups, we were, we wanted Italy to war and naturally propaganda affects young people. I remember I was demonstrating in the square of Rome and we cried, Viva la guerra bas a lauv" and chanted " _____ " you know, things like that --

HP: Marvelous.

PL: As a matter of fact, I remember I had a straw hat you know, and goodbye to the straw hat the police banging here and there. Well, anyway, and then I volunteered, and finally Italy and later ____ I remember the Garibaldi brother the sons of Garibaldi, Guiseppe -- went to war, two or three died in the Argonne I think right away, that was a big thing. That was a ____ moment. At that period there were little symptoms of the Futurist group. On a sunny day I was going to the river because I love to swim and we stand there and then we create a little room north, just a mile before Pont Emilio, which isn't far from Via Solaria just then, now it's only a building, it was just across from where now the Forum Mussolini is, the stadium where they did the wolf, they have the games, you know. And we used to go there, and there were all sorts newspaper men, lawyers, even the son-in-law of the King, I think, he used to come incognito. I remember because he used to bring fabulous fruits that we had never seen, you know, he used to rob the pantry of the Casa Reale. He loved -- we were mostly naked there -- it was a beautiful no man's land called "Il Poverini", every Romano knows Il Poverini, I'm sure even Winston Burdette, the commentator in Rome, I met him in 1947 or '48 at my one-man show at Betty Parsons in New York. And we talked about Poverini, he knew, he said, "Pietro, there is no more poverini, it's no more poverini, now it's sold built, you know."

HP: Yes.

PL: Those sections, like they do here, one after the other, they do better than here. Here I remember I have a

friend he bought one of those houses outside of New York once, when he went there he didn't know, he didn't remember which one, they were all the same, he opened three or four doors before going in. So going back there, there was the sunny river and I learned how to swim and I competed there, seven kilometers, fifteen, you know, from Castel Jubeleo above Rome we used to come, of course, down with the current traveled south of Rome winter swimming, and actually I didn't think of art but I was very interested, I probably studied anatomy there or the groves, those canes, wild canes around the Tiber where they found Romulus, I'm sure. And it was very fascinating, the sand you know, and the going across and coming back, but the dream of the river, though, it was washed out when I saw the Hudson, Hudson River -- what a river! The North River so big, moving slowly there. Later when I went back and saw the Tiber it looked like a little brook, but in those days it was fabulous. I'm sure I still like it. If you go north of Rome after Pont Emilio go on those roads very close to the Wall which are winding up just across from Mont Rotondo in Montagna on the West Bank you come to a fabulously pretty place. That's where Poussin and all the artists of that period used to paint, until you go to Montserrat it's so beautiful, it goes up to some sort of promontory, you know. And, as a matter of fact, when I used to go to RocaCitty бага we used to go on the east bank of the Via Solaria and then there after Montagna, Mont Rotondo Montagna we used to go as far as Abini and then start climbing eastward, northeast going to Rocabicy bagna. And then if you continue there's a nice river called the Turano which comes down in gorges and winds all the way to Ariete. But from above it comes from just to the heart of the western part of Abruzzi. It's very fabulous, very beautiful setting. So going back there -- I have to put a string with a knot because I can lose my way again and again. Where was I? Oh, the manifestation about war and my first meeting with the forces of Marinetti. Marinetti was the centrifugal -- was at the center of this Futuristic movement. He was very dynamic, not too tall, but he looked tall, he looked like -- what do you call those things that go up in the air -- very much, you know, the Cape Canaveral -- ? what do you call those things -- ? He was like --

HP: Rocket?

PL: Rocket. He was like a rocket. And he used to inflame everyone. There he was, inflaming for the war, inflaming for the artists, he had _____ to burn, said "Italia my blood here everybody is asleep between spaghetti and between the Renaissance and between the old past we feel that everything is done and wiped dry and we are all asleep." In a certain way he was right. I was young, I was for him, now I would have my reservations, but in those days it was an inflammatory thing. So on rainy days we used to gather together in part of the catacombs, it later became the Teatro de Independenti with Bragalia. The Bragalia were three became the Teatro de Independenti with Bragalia. The Bragalia were three brothers, one was a publisher, one a playwright -- I think he's still in the movie, and one was Anton Julio Bragalia. Now Anto Julio Bragalia was not from Rome, it's fantastic that the most real Rome, like Ovido Nazaone from the Abruzzi, there were around Rome not far -- he was I think from Fozzinone -- where a lot of theatrical geniuses came from -- like even the Italian actor who started Sophia Loren on -- I can't get his name -- well, anyway you know him, he has a little mustache --

HP: Oh yes.

PL: You know him.

HP: yes.

PL: Well, he's from Fazzinone, but he's Romah. So this Bragalia was from there and these three brothers they came down, they did well, they made a dramatic life. I read in the paper that Anton Julio died not too long ago, a few years ago. And there in these catacombs, which later became a theater, we were together. And there I spent some time. In other words, in 1916 I went to war but after six months they dismissed the volunteer corps, we were bicycling, we had bicycles, volontiers bicyclists, I still have a photograph on the front page, a part of me, there was another fellow with a mother full of flowers leaving for the war. We didn't go too far, we didn't go to actual war, we were so many there were so many of us crying "War!" in the square of Rome, and we were just a handful of just a few when we left. That was my first lesson in propaganda. And we went there, I think we went to the Adriatic fearing an invasion of the Austrians. Well, nothing happened except I got typhus from drinking the Adriatic cistern waters. You know in Rome we're spoiled, we have seven qualities of water, Aqua Mancha, Aqua Feliza, Aqua Chetosa, Aqua Virgine, and so on, Aqua di Trevi, the famous fountain.

HP: Sure.

PL: And I know that fellow with the finger there, I know this for the record later I got the Fulbright grant, I went to Rome and I met a man like Joachino Belli and there is his Neptune with the fork in Fountain di Trevi with the finger there, he just says, "Bene", which means drink. He doesn't say any other thing. Joachino Belli if you walk in Transvere you see his beautiful standing statuary just off the bridge there not far from the island of San Bartolomeo. And there, let's see, where are we -- ? You have to help me because, you know, I come back --

HP: This is after the war period.

PL: Well, no, at the beginning of the war, you see. It didn't last long -- the war was still on --

HP: Yes.

PL: And by then -- I left when I was seventeen, volunteered -- but then at eighteen I was drafted, and they put me in the artillery because I was tallish and square, not because of my choice, you know, they judge you and they tell you where to go.

HP: Yes.

PL: First they put me with the grenadiers which was tallest and, you know, sort of -- but there wasn't much use of grenadiers, they used to kill so many of -- they need artillery and the artillery needed to be _____ and so they asked what kind of chest measurements I was, I remember it was at one of those induction centers there, military things. So they sent me as artillery, I went to Gareta, which is south of Rome on the Tyrrhenian Sea not far from Naples, before you reach Naples you get to Gareta. It's very beautiful there, very beautiful. It was fornia, it was pleasant. Gareta actually is some sort of peninsula, very small, there's a fortress there so we were there and maneuvering, busy with cannon and so on, and then I was sick. I volunteered to go to the front line because I didn't like the discipline of Gareta, it was all for heroic things, I was no hero. We used to say in the Italian Army the heroes are those who die. I just worked and I was lucky, four years -- I was telling my wife the other day -- because I'm going to have a show in New York on the 17th of November and I was trying to put together biographical work, I said I was four years in the war, and I try to remember, maybe it's good, I remember that we marched, I remember spending fifteen days on the tent because I misbehaved, but at night the officers used to take me along with them because I bribed them by doing sketches, by doing caricature, so they liked me. They'd say, "You come with us." So I used to go and then return under the tent because I was supposed to be an army prisoner, you know, I don't obey really very quickly, I don't know why, maybe my father or mother they would tell me to go this way, I'd go the other way. So to make it short, I think in the war something happened to me, I don't remember, I remember to have met masked faces, tired hands, wounds, blood. And then first I was sent to some northern parts, like Trentino, then I was sent to Hunda other place, I love to climb and with artillery they shifted me to artilleria de la montagna, mountain artillery, and there I had 87 millimeter bronze -- there I started to like bronze cannon. I liked the fatigue of it to go after the mules shift into tele _____ aerial communication but the actual shooting our family choose not to do it. And I was lucky enough to be incorporated into a corps of Signal Corps. And there we used to put lines, I loved it, it was dangerous, more than being in the trenches because there you could dig in. Here we used to go out and just once in a while some shrapnel -- I don't know how you call it, shrapnel, some light artillery tried to chase us but wither went too far ahead or too far back, I don't know which it was, but we were able to shun Shanghai, you know, those things.

HP: Yes.

PL: And I did this for some time until -- there was a secret mission of the artillery corps, there wasn't much war there, they said, "Who wants to volunteer for going you cannot ask where?" I always loved mystery, I stepped forward, every body looked at me with admiration. So finally we were six or seven, we stepped forward and we were sent, and they took each -- volunteers were called from each batteria. And we went to Rome, and it was so wonderful, I walked into the cafe and my friends, you know, "Ah, bon revoi _____," you know, things like that. But I had to report every night, you know. Then I had permission for two weeks, I went home, you know, I still have photographs of soldier of artillery. I went to the river, I have a photograph I think, I'll show you upstairs. So from there I was sent to a famous place which later became Caporetto. Then we read that there was a very dangerous section. We went there probably six months before Caporetto and, you know, prior to Caporetto a lot of people died from both sides.

HP: Yes.

PL: Bombing and I remember I was in a blind bansitsa which was an advance Gorezzia beyond us, we were a protruding sort of a neck inside the enemy lines, and there was Montesan, Monte Cuckook, I remember the song "Montesan (Mr. Lazzari sings several lines of the song -- very melodious and lovely), that's the song about those diseases, sickly, used to see them lean -- it was -- . Today they say war is bad but in those days it was terrific, they used to chew each other, you know, and then strategically they used to move us of course, before -- I noticed that after a month or two of killing, of, bludgeoning each other then it became suddenly quiet, suddenly the enemy just stood in their trenches with their _____, we'd give them something, they used to exchange cigarettes, they'd do the same thing. It was a phenomenon that was renewed. Then they moved them again, you see, they brought the Arditti, as they called it, the "Tigers" from one place band! bang! bang! Killing, die, and then again the same phenomenon. And then I realized is war and destruction actually rooted in the hearts of men? No, I don't think so. And I was glad I was putting in those lines, which is more dangerous, but I loved it. And then Caporetto arrived. I was there. And later on I remember my brother-in-law, who was Evelyn's -- you know, you've spoken to my wire --

HP: Yes. Yes.

PL: Evaline's brother, in New York, it was way back, I think, in 1933, '34, there was a meeting in his house and there were writers -- like Dos Passos, I forgot, there was another one who became a famous Irish writer, I've forgotten his name -- and they were talking about somebody and somebody said something about Caporetto maybe it was Hemingway, I don't know, somebody was talking about Caporetto, and then he asked me if I knew that, and I remember my brother-in-law saying, "I know about it, I was there." _____ lots of fun. Fantastic rhetoric. Well, to make the story flow, I was there and then there were no more lines to be to be _____ because it was cracking there then. And there was also I think the psychological warfare was splendid. I think there was an Austrian officer who spoke Italian very well probably -- I don't know -- from Venice or from Vienna. Anyway, they were there, and there were Italians in the line like Italian officers and giving different versions, different everything is moving away, let's leave, and I saw tillya soldiers they used to come out with their mitralya -- how do you call it -- ? mitra -- the machine gunners they used to come out and they used to take a position and stay there and die there and there was the bombing. And then on our left there was Caporetto, all night it was like a volcano I remember from my days in Naples, and the bombs, you know, and so on. Sometimes there was a little silence like the hurricane eye, you know, and then again nights we couldn't sleep, and so on. I remember actually enough detail but I remember that kind of things. And also we were digging there those pieces of artillery and then all the people lost their positions they were cannons and volunteer and bang! bang! It was a terrific thing. Finally we were told to withdraw. And I was left there with three or four, you know, and a part of the battery, half of it was taken prisoner, but I liked to be prisoner so I managed to go toward the lines, I remember walking toward -- there were already Austrians, Germans there, I lost my helmet, you know, but we were, we took certain sections of the artillery pieces that we had they said then they were not operable, you see, they couldn't use --

HP: Yes.

PL: So we took them and we went down the So and So River, I remember there was a tunic and they were bombing a lot of things, and then I remember after the Talimento, the Talimento was all swollen, fantastic river, and before that we passed, I don't know, San Bernardino the quiz cow, the town, I don't remember, I never walked there, I don't know the historians but I remember the motions they were preparing then, they were boiled, and somehow I found them very good, sleeping a few hours but so soundly, I used to go to sleep with artillery muskets nights and banging of things, it was fantastic! And I was taken by this exile groups of people they used to leave their farms, their villa, some bringing soldiers who had invaded the villa pillaging just not to leave that for the Germans, and they used to carry embroidery, used to wear hats on a Sunday, all sorts of things, and they used to have cows, chickens, stuffed into those wagons, all sorts of things. I remember a wagon of nuns when we were approaching the Talimento and those nuns so frightened, so neat and in a certain sense standing there and I was so exhausted after not having any sleep and there was a little space on the floor, it was sort of a long carriage, it was going very slowly because it was jammed, and I went there, I slept, I remember those feet moving around my head or something, I slept all night and in the morning when I woke up there was nobody there, not even the horse, I don't know what happened just the carriage I didn't have belongings _____. And I remember like today another fellow from the same battery I found there because there was a moment when all our people became half prisoners including the captain of our battery. I remember like today he was Calabrese or polyaxon Brenda, very kind of elegant posture, he was taken prisoner and by then I was a corporal, I wasn't a soldier any more. They made me a corporal. The officers wanted me to sweep the -- when the times that we, you know, after you had two months in the front lines you're sent a little behind the lines and again the discipline of doing this _____ so they made me a corporal. That's as far as I went. Then I didn't know what to do. The enemy they said were all around us, you know. I thought maybe I'd swim a little because they were blocking the bridge because the Italians were going to, you know, my army fellows were going to blow the bridge. So finally they said, "You can't enter, you blow the bridge." I said, "I'll take a risk, because in fact I never was so glad. I'll die by drowning _____ much there was such current, curling trees and things I was exhausted, I said, I don't think I can make it. So I went and I walked, pushing things and finally crossed to the other side. On the other side suddenly great quiet, the village was still going about its own business. I think those people around there by the race of the blood have witnessed so many invasions that there was no enmity involved what if the Austrians came, and so on, you know, so there. It was suddenly quiet there little by little they started grouping us and they put us in some sort of caserno, fortress, you know, no food or nothing. Then they tried to find out where we were from, and what battery what things? And suddenly there was the voice of the enemy across the _____ they opened the gates again and we were _____ I remember provolone. I was so hungry _____ provolone and there were even loaves of bread from Adrella, I remember like today that bread was so good. Then we marched, it was raining on us all those things and you know later and later and then going back to Rome and sunning myself and my sort of ostinated bronchitis and lack of food, I wasn't well, I could feel well only in the outdoors, I couldn't stay any more in classrooms, and there I was twenty-one when I finally got back toward Rome. And another war, if it made any impression such as I have now in this war, in those days I remember the words they used to say, "This will be the last war, then there will be peace among men." I wonder.

HP: Right.

PL: Then later I was reading things of Greek philosophers and historians. They said -- they used to say the same thing.

HP: Right.

PL: I'm not a political thing. My father before I left Italy he told me, "Son, all our race it was in politics. Don't enter politics because they fight today and tomorrow they become friends and those that die, well, they're in heaven or hell, but still..." Which is true. So my philosophy I hope _____ they always the best thing for a country for all humanity they will have found a way, we spend billions we could spend billions of activating all those minds toward a peaceful existence. That's why I came here and I'm very happy I came to America because I was introduced to a wider kind of vista, of vision. Here I was able to have a library, you will see upstairs I studied Buddhism, I studied all sorts of directions in religious ideology that would have been difficult for me in Rome. I couldn't -- I was not exposed like here.

HP: Yes.

PL: Here with its freedom of religion I was able to study the philosophy, you know, the theosophist, the Rosicrucians, Mohammed, the Jewish heritage, and so on. I'm still a Catholic because I don't feel like changing. All the patriarchs are like the seeds, like the roots of a tree, they all mean brotherhood.

HP: Right.

PL: So I never felt, as I say, they change anything see I have to change, first I have to study my own religion, I haven't studied it much except some nuns gave me the Summa book once, and a French cure I read once about Christ and the eleven great he initiated, you know. In other words, I think my studies are scattered. They go back again and again. I met famous people philosopher, I met Nicki Lenonda, who is head of the Ramakrisna group, you know, in New York but still I read -- someone gave me the old Veda books and when I read about the cruelty toward those who misbehaved, cutting the hands and burning their wives, I said, "I wonder." So I don't switch very easily and this country gives me a home and all those things, I feel very dedicated but I'm a peaceful man. And if ever in my work I could build an ideology toward peaceful methods which is deep in the hearts of everybody and I cannot criticize what makes people go to bear arms, I won't criticize, I don't know, I went through and I have different idea. I went through and I think we should find how to live together maybe like paradiso terrestre and little by little not to eat those luscious steaks because just now talking to you reminded me I met in the Vatican Lorenzo Perrozzini, he was the brother of Cardinal Perrozzini. He was a musician and he was also an Esperantist and a Rosicrucian and he said, "You know why we have wars? Because we eat meat and this that that." Well, I don't know, I'm not -- I like to have a piece of meat or chicken and yet I realize that we keep chickens on the modern methods, at least they ate that in the old country in the old time, even here in pioneer days, but they had the job of grounds and farm, now they're stuck together in a little cell sort of tissue of life and different feeding. I wonder. And so with livestock. So I feel that man is heading for a different life altogether. After all, I'm still a product of the late Renaissance, decadent period. (Interruption for phone call)

HP: All right, --

PL: Now we were talking about -- we talked about the Futurists, about the war. Well, now let's go back and think where -- I was in Rome again, and again. I'm quite faithful to certain patterns except once in a while I take a break and start a new one. And there I was, I remember even to have worked in the War Department in Rome. I was still in army uniform. And after the war, the first World War they sent the older soldiers home, and I was born in 1898, so I was still young, so we worked there. The only difference was that we could go and sleep home, which I enjoyed. My father in those days was building a little house. He was finally in Rome and a government employee. And it was a cooperative and for disbursing just a little amount of money, not much, you could have the house built and then pay for it in twenty years or something. So we were lucky, it was the first time we had plenty of room, a little garden, and an uncle of mine from Roca sinabaggi came and planted a lot of fig trees. They're still there. And I was still in the Army and I remember I even made some paintings in the way they used to build so quickly, like here, those developments, you know, Silver Spring around New York, you know. It was a little bit different, you could choose a different style house from the architect's sketches. It was a nice little house. It needs a lot of repairs now. It was made with two by four blocks and masonry, nice marble stairs, which we didn't need, it occupies so much, but it was at that period, and a nice terrazzo, terrace. I always wanted one, probably must have been some sailors in my way, way back somewhere because I always liked to walk on bridges, you know, to see far away. But I didn't stay long there. My contact with the Futurists was good because I remember briefly I was in Rome in 1917, either followed '17 and when I was there I used to go down to Teatro de'Indipendenti which was in the center of Rome not far from Piazza Barberini. Via de la Vinyonese I recall was going uphill. And in the _____ I met extraordinary people, there was Picasso, Depiero, and Balla, Boccioni, and Marinetti used to come. It was an interesting period. There were poets, writers, and then from

Russia there was a continual stream of arrivals of all sorts of princes. (Interruption) To make the story short I was very lucky in those catacombs. There were dancers from Russia, like Laroscalya, and famous ballet. This Teatro de'Independents had a stage, it was a very modern theater. And there they were from France early plays, you know, I'm not sure but I think Cocteau was there. But I remember like Picasso, he was sort of an interesting man, always awake and two big eyes and the particular way his hair was arranged to his head. And he always looked like he was staring at a point somewhere. And then Stravinsky, and they all were friends, and I was there, I used to make sketches there to pick up a few dollars. Sometimes during the day I was doing electrical work. I remember -- just to take a step out from this I remember I did work in the Accademia Americana, I don't remember the exact date, maybe it was prior to that, I don't know, but I remember as a young man many, many years before I did help to put lines in this Janicolo section of Rome and there I worked in the Accademia Americana. And many years after when I went on a Fulbright grant in 1950 I talked with Robertson who was the director there --

HP: Yes.

PL: And he asked me if I knew the place and I said, "Yes, I've been here." I didn't tell him why or how. I remember those rooms and they were pretty high ceilings that I had to put the lines. But now there was my lucky part. And I don't know, I met all sorts of people, and I still like the poor like me, but I never felt poor, or I never felt I was starving. When I read stories of artists I don't know why maybe because I has capacity to enjoy just bread, it's delicious when you're hungry. And my father used to say with a sense of joy, he used to say, "It isn't the food, they say you need la lieto." La lieto means some sort of spice, garlic with a little rosemary, a little touch of la lieto, it means you had to be hungry probably. In other words, it's delicious. And we always had our credenza, you know, that piece of furniture that's always in the kitchen in Italy, could be a breadbox but it's a credenza it has bread, salt and things like that, it was always full of bread. It was delicious. And going back, talking about food, meeting Picasso in the Teatro d'Indipendente I remember in the morning he said, "Vitamins _____ sunlight to get?" Because in the morning I used to have coffee, coffee with a lot of chicory probably because it was expensive, a big sort of a glass or cup, I'd fill it with the bread and through the bread is swollen up and the bread used to swell up and eat that for breakfast. There weren't fruits, cereals, nothing. Fruits I used to -- even in old age I used to have that. And then during the day pick up fruit here and there, but bread there was always there. So going back then to that group that I was lucky to meet I was in charge in myself because I never can say -- I'm a simple person and I express in a complicated way but going back inwardly I'm very simple. I just like life, I like people happy, I like friends and there I felt that I belonged to them, to them I was a stranger just a sketch artist perhaps, those people were all older fifteen years, ten years, but then ten years more at that age means a lot --

HP: Yes.

PL: When I was, let's say, nineteen a person who was twenty-nine or thirty or thirty-two was, you know, was something.

HP: Yes.

PL: They all were -- Balla, Boccioni were older, and when I knew Marinetti he was forty-five or fifty, he died quite youngish. And so on. But there was a formative period, and I used to go with my -- and thinking of my friend Achille Mattay showing my work to those conservative academicians, you know, I felt that there was some sort of rebellion too. So I enjoyed those days, and my first one-man show just of colored croquis, they were drawings, desseins with a little touch of color here and there quite modern in a way. It was down in that Teatro de l'Independentes in the foyer. I remember it was a sort of grotto door like a grotto where they keep wine. You would go down, down and no steps, I remember it was some sort of very steep walk, you had to watch your step going down, and then you entered a sort of large room like a gallery foyer and then there were other rooms low-ceilinged, and there was one particular one taller than the rest which was sort of teatro-like, there was the theater. To the right there were all these tables very rustic. I think after all Bragalia came from Fossa nona where they have those osteria, those wines hanging down and the setting was just raw wood and good vino, warm vino, I remember some food, for a while there was also food, you know, things casa ricci, country-style. And for many years he did that and there I used to go there, but I couldn't stay there all the time so I left for my first trip in Paris. And I went to Paris -- oh no, that came in 1922, I once stayed there. Somehow I didn't like -- I was already in the war -- I had some companions in the war who became Fascists. My friends of the river were not Fascists. And I had already heard the first propaganda and I joined and I realized about violence of war, and this was the Fascists they were going to make an empire and going to do this and that and actually on the streets they were beating some of my friends and there was violence. I couldn't join. I remember like today a fellow who used to be in the war with me, his name was Condolore, he was a famous track champion he used to run the best of everybody, was tall, long legs and so on. Condolore appeared down in the Teatro Bragalia, you know, before 1922 when Italy went to war, I mean when Fascism arrived in Italy and he was some sort of centurion, you know they had different kinds of titles. And he said, "Pietro, you go and follow the grotto, we make you like me, you become a centurion." I said, "I don't want to be a centurion." And I said, "By the way," I

smiled at him. I knew him, one of my friends was beaten and taken down to the Gestapo, they used to call Cheka like the Russians, on the same street was another catacomb on the other side Via Lisi where they took these people I guess fascists they used to beat them there, you know, or give custody. So once I went there, I said, "Mario Condolore, free those fellows there!" Finally he did because he knew we knew each other from the front lines, he knew I knew how scared he was then, he was no _____ with all those decorations that I didn't have, I never asked for decorations. It is human decorations to me that we are to fight to get and help everybody in distress, this great compassion that's really like St. Francis of Assisi.

HP: Right.

PL: And there they were beating _____, you'd see the blood coming out from their mouths, those people didn't have defense. From our group of the cafe we used to go Via Repeta near Pont -- there's a pont there -- Via Repeta Cafe only one disappeared and became fascist, he came once in uniform and never came back, we threw everything we had at him. He never came back. But even though the fascists were smart I have nothing against no one. I was sorry when I saw photographs of Mussolini hanging down, I mean I have a different approach. I think humanism should work toward, to get together somehow, like Pope -- like what -- Pope John? whereabouts is that pope -- ?

HP: Yes, John XXII, yes. (XXIII)?

PL: He was terrific.

HP: Oh yes.

PL: All heart you could tell, he was so solid, you know. So we have to go back, I think the time is short. That's my opinion. So that was in my early days, you know, I was there. In 1922 -- this was prior to the march on Rome --

HP: Yes.

PL: Then in '22 legally -- by the way in '22 I won a swimming race, I still have it -- it was a Compagnato Italiano Studente because I was a bellae artes studente very briefly, and I have a photograph of myself slender, swollen-chested, and it couldn't even be publicized because there was a newspaper strike. You know, they preyed on Mussolini, there were a lot of strikes.

HP: Oh yes.

PL: Accusing the communists that were in Rome and all those students --

HP: Yes.

PL: So that's all there wasn't -- and I think of that gold medal I lost at Miami Beach later. But that's only one swimming race, other I used to -- I wasn't a great swimmer but I love it, I swim a lot. And so that's the story. Finally, in 1922 with another friend, Luigi Lucibello who has the chief printing press in Rome, and Romolo Angelini, the three of us left Rome. They were arriving by train at the station. It isn't true they marched there was no march. There were other soldiers, carabinieri, but to hold the people, not to hold the Fascists.

HP: Yes.

PL: They came by train a la Stazione Termino Porto Natu -- one of those stations, then they walked a little bit. But that very day with two of my friends we went to Naples I went to the Galleria and remembering I could sketch I got a lot of paper and pencils and I sketched all evening until late nine o'clock, you know the Napolitans are very communicative, very warm --

HP: Sure.

PL: And I used to take a likeness like lightning, lightning likeness, you know. I even ended with three of us later at one o'clock in the morning at the Mayor's house and I did some of the children, I don't remember his name, but one of my friends I don't know whether it was Lucibello or the other, they were the cashier, they used to pick up money here and there and we had a lot of money. So we took a boat the next day or after a couple days and we went to Cittavecchi and Genoa by boat, you know, and we worked there on the boat, it was sort of a small steamer. And I remember like today we were triumphant and so on, because we wanted to be free, we all had been in the army and we were not affiliated, but just to start to roam again, you know and in Rome _____ all the romans were -- they want to be free -- we have seen marches, it's in the blood from ancient Rome and the Papacy and whatnot and the mercenaries, they probably used to -- the French and the Austrians used probably to beat my grandfather, all the others, I mean it was I don't know, we never liked it, we liked just to be together with friends and the corner straterie and talk a lot of half-crazy and recite poems, things like that. So we were on the way to Genoa. At Genoa again we got short of money. Our friend Angelini went back by train. And with Luigi

lubibello -- oh, before going there that very summer I took a job as a lifeguard in La Dispoli, it's between Rome and Leghorn, just north of Rome -- La Dispoli., near Fragero, which is quite a resort. There I was a lifeguard and my friends Luigi Luccibello was a writer, and the other I forgot, a swimmer, that's it. So but they got sunburned and they couldn't walk, you know, because it was very busy there. Then we went to Genoa, Romolo went back and so my friend Luigi Luccibello and myself went to Marseilles by sea. And in Marseilles we worked at all sorts of things. My friend preferred better to work in those houses where they freeze -- a huge building where they used to freeze meat from Argentina. I tried to work there, after an hour I had to run out it was so cold, but my friend enjoyed it. I worked at the port unloading boats and I remember seeing my hands with all those hands -- there were Chinese, there were Negroes, all sorts of people. Some of them were in costumes like as if they had swam across from Africa. We were all there. And at night I remember we were there and there used to be above this cafe was rooms and we stayed there. Then from there we went to Port San Luis du Rhone which is toward Avignon back there, the Rhone River comes to the sea there. And there - we didn't know -- he had, Lucibello had a relative there who had a restaurant. When we went there we heard there was sort of a -- not a penal colony -- but those undesirables from other parts of France who were sent there, a strange combination of people, some boastful, some quiet. And we got a little scared, we didn't know first we were making friends with some people who had committed murders. But, you know, nothing happened, nothing was stolen there, it was fantastic. Society is fantastic. Then the money disappeared very quickly. And the friend said, "Well, would you like to work at the salt mine?" And I went there once. I couldn't endure it. You have no idea how hot it is the blinding this light reflection from the salt, these salt mines are very near the sea and they're flat, you know, beautiful to look at because they create a little mound and from a distance you don't see the water but you see chimneys like sometimes you see the East River in New York chimneys passing by. In New York I remember like today -- not now because of the tall buildings -- but in the early days in New York they used to like glide over the low houses near the East River. So there you used to see those -- and the sky, to me the phosphorescence quality of the salt, the sky was sort of a bluish-violet dark metal color and then this white panels, it was fantastic! And there I got a lot of sketches in, finally I was able to make a mural for his restaurant, my first mural was done there.

HP: Good.

PL: Portrait mural. And all those people, the refuse of society, were the clients there, they were there. While in Marseilles in those places there was a lot of shooting there, there nothing happened, it was very tranquil. Some people would build a little cabin and provide shacks, all sort of accommodation, they didn't pay rent, they were there, they were doing work at the salt mine and then go back. And that was the only restaurant in Albergo there and where we stayed. But at night somehow to sleep more securely we used to barricade very silently the door because there was no lock so we thought if somebody tried to come in we'd wake up. My friend used to say that I was very strong to others, because he was tiny. He was the brain of, you know. That was those days. Then from there we walked to Paris. As a matter of fact, I have an admission here, the Encyclopedia of Abstract Art I mentioned that, it was published in Germany and French, and now in America, that's the story of abstract art. And I'm mentioned there. And then in Paris -- we have to talk a little longer and I think I'll take a drink of water.

HP: Good. I'll turn this over. END OF SIDE 1 SIDE 2

HP: You were on foot on your way to Paris From Marseilles with a temporary stop-off at where your friend's relative had a restaurant.

PL: Yes, that was at Port St. Louis du Rhone.

HP: Yes.

PL: Port St. Louis du Rhone.

HP: Yes.

PL: And that's right on the sea, you know.

HP: Yes.

PL: And I remember so vividly it was a sort of desolated area, you know, no man's land, could have been in Martinique. I mean I lived for a while -- not long -- but I lived let's say a Beau Soleil, just above Monte Carlo, but there it's like a big hotel even in the town itself, terraced a lot of terraces and roads winding up and the garden flowers, golfers and so on like also San Remo on the Italian Riviera. As a matter of fact, Monte Carlo used to be part of Italy way back.

HP: Yes.

PL: The House of Grimaldi is a solid Italian name, which is the actual Prince of Monaco. But Port San Louis du Rhone is different, it's not even mountains, if there are some hilly parts they're just receding way back, it's just

flat salt mines, and they dig sort of geometrical, sort of a pool where water goes, very beautiful. I think I have to go back some day, go back. And then from there we started walking. And my friend Lucibello when I was in Rome last year I had dinner with him, he knows so much of it, he has more memory, he told me a lot of episodes I have forgotten. As a matter of fact, when we left Port St. Louis du Rhone we started walking and then later looking at the pictures that Van Gogh did of the south of France, we took the Rhone those canals with those sort of bridges like a Chinese sort of door on top, you know.

HP: Yes.

PL: They have -- those are for the locks.

HP: Right.

PL: The same pictures I saw there, Van Gogh was there, and I understood, they helped me to understand Van Gogh. I had briefly the same feeling except -- the Van Gogh phenomenon, which I love deeply all his life it could not be repeated. Van Gogh was born from a nice family, we know all the story, he went to London and then he fell in love and so on. But he was an introvert, whatever happened inside the people around didn't know that girl didn't know at all that he was in love with that girl and he was so shark and so earnest and so on. And his brother I think he could have been almost like him but I think he chose the other way so he could watch his brother, could help him. And he became a merchant, and the other -- we know the story, his traveling, his humanitarianism. I'm no Van Gogh, I have feelings for humanity but I don't know I chance that I found women with children alone, I didn't take them home, I went to them. My mother -- redhaired, told me always watch out, try to keep, you know, the way you leave home so that when you come back, you come back in one piece, you know.

HP: Sure.

PL: And extraordinary for me because my mother just died a few years ago, and she was almost ninety and always was an extraordinary power, silent and undemonstrative but inside she was -- she never told me to stay home, she never told me not to do that. As a matter of fact, my father told me that. That was the luck of an artiste. I was very lucky. I remember when I was younger with every other kid used to go to work, you know, school I couldn't profit, I couldn't sit on a bench at school. All I remember those books, we used to bury them on a good day and go swimming or go around and walk anywhere around Rome. Now it's obstretto all those constructions, but in those days Via Appia and all those things they were all open.

HP: Yes.

PL: Once we walked to Ostia. When we arrived we were so sunburned, you know. And life like this, but I think I was lucky to learn by contacts, by experiences, as you said before when we were having coffee --

HP: Just unfold. Yes.

PL: And by experiences. That was in the big book. And I was lucky. At the right moment the right person appears, you know.

HP: Sure.

PL: Because during that period a friend of mine used to tell me that there was a newspaper man also a count, Conte Locatelli, Julio Locatelli, and Julio Locatelli was a newspaper man, a Journal d'Italia and he used to live not far from us in that Ja Jordino, that Monte Sacro group of homes which were built after the war and my father built, I mean he had the association build for him. And once in a while I used to meet him and he used to see me with a box of colors and we'd start talking. "Are you a painter?" I said, "Yes." And we became good friends, he was twenty years older than I was and he was a big influence on me, a learned person. He said that somebody claimed that his family was even related to St. Francis. But anyway in the spirit he was. And he was born in Assisi in the same place where St. Francis was, but he lived in Rome. And the wife, a very tiny little woman, quite deaf, she used to have sort of a tartarugga -- how do you call a shell, you know, tartarugga in turtle shell trumpet, you know, for hearing. And she looked so pious and once I asked her who she was, Contessa Locatelli. She said, oh, she come from the Borgia. Can you imagine! She was so lovely and so pious -- descended from a Borgia. Brenda Locatelli. And they have the most delightful children, all girls, no boys in the house, three or four. I remember Juliana, the youngest one, she was very affectionate when she was very tiny, she used to sit on my lap, and I did sketches of the family, a good black and white drawing of the Conte Julio Locatelli, my friend. And every time I went back to Rome we managed to get together. As a matter of fact, when I had a Fulbright grant in 1950 I went straight to him and the newspaper Journal d'Italia in Rome and we got together and he said, "Of course, I'll help you in this project." Because I had a pre-Renaissance project, research in Etruscan art and methods not just through books and libraries, but through the voice of mouth, of going, like you're doing now here, to go from place to place, to go let's say, to Arrezzo or to the Cornett D'Tarquin, which now is called

Tarquinia, you know it used to have a different name, and to go to Chevaterry, all those zones, and there are potteries there, you'd be surprised they still do ceramics very much in the spirit of the Etruscan, not so glorious, it's not like the Apollo Vayo, which is in the Museum of Vale Julia, the Etruscan Museum, which is polychromes, very handsome pieces, or it's not like the beautiful funerary tomb with the bearded male with his wife lying down on the sarcophagus very majestically, beautiful and big, bigger than life size. And they just did do sort of urns, and sort of pottery to fetch water and things of that kind, you know, for utensils. But they way the methods are the same -- I got a lot of information. So that's variation from there, let's go back on the road to Paris. Then we stopped at many, many places, sometimes we even helped to do jobs, you know. I remember in one place I was helping to put straw on chairs, but I was very distracted, I didn't do a good job, my friend always did a better job, so instead of that I used to carry heavy things and that was my specialty to carry big bundles of wood or this and that. Then on the way to Paris, about half-way there were many beautiful villages, but we preferred always small villages and crossed huge fields, there were beautiful farms around there a we always took those sort of canals, they were always in the direction we used to go. Some pieces we did by train, those choo choo kind of small train, yo know. Somehow we progressed. It was a long voyage and I remember one time there was a circus on the way, very small circus because they had a few cub lions very timid and sickly they had lost weight and they were, you know, their fur wasn't very healthy, a little dusty. But talking with them they were a sort of caravan, we walked with them, you know, and we ate a little bit, I remember cutting lard, you know beautiful sort of bacon lard, you know, from the farm -- they used to buy from farms -- and I made some minestrone, you know, in a big, huge sort of cauldron that I see here in the South. And I heard wonderful things, and the appetite was different. Somebody, the fellow wanting the -- he used to put -- I said, "Where are you going with that?" "I go to the lions." _____ the minestrone _____. And I remember the owner, I could draw him now, he was sort of stocky and very burberous, I know burbero in Italian means rough, you know, but in the end his warm black eyes betrayed his real intent, he was a nice person but he was a leader and he had a hard time. He was like Columbus crossing the water, he had to keep in rank because every once in a while there was a rebellion. And I talked to him, he spoke some Italian and I was speaking French, he was a Corsican so he knew some Italian, a wonderful man, he had a big mustachio, very dark, with a low forehead, with a like a brush, not curly at all, his hair was coming out like a, each one like a stiletto, like a black porcupine, very thick, so were his eyebrows. I can see him now, his head roundish and square. And he said, "I have to be like this, when I bought, when I associated myself with the circus there was a lot of stabbing here, you have to rule them, otherwise they kill each other." And he worked. As a matter of fact, I think -- I'm not sure -- but we helped to pitch those canvas (tents) and I don't remember if I did sketch -- I remember I was in front talking with some people, there were a lot of Italians in those days working on those farms, I tried to get them to come the next day, opening, and there was a very luscious, well-built female who used to put, I think, a lot of sort of plaster dust on her body, she used to be called the statue, she used to be very still. And then there was a fellow used to eat fire, you know, he used some sort of kerosene and then from this mouth he used to light it with a torch, it was very dramatic those nights, and there we stayed for a while. But then we kept going my friend and I. We kept going and then there were some rivers I remember. We entered from the side that is now Versailles, I don't know how we got there. And at Versailles I had a cousin of mine, he also became a sort of a great mechanic, he was working with De Lage Automobile factory out side of Paris. We found him. And from Versailles to Sartreville crossing the racetrack place, which might be northwest of Paris, it I'm wrong, northeast, but I think it's north of Paris. As a matter of fact, later I used to go by Etoile which is the Arch of Triumph and then I used to take a double-decked bus that used to take me there. So there we found my cousin Leno Lazzari and there we were able to find some sort of lodging. He said, "Well, what I have you can use." With another Italian, a mechanic who married a Frenchwoman I met at the DeLage factory we built a shack just near this racetrack in Sartreville, and there we lodged for a while. And I was again in the cooking business because I could be free all day long to roam around between this place I remember and Versailles there was an abandoned villa. And that's my love also for certain dreamy, decadent things and this abandoned villa where there were hundreds of thousands of little fires and burned stolen things it must have been a hospital or a maniac of health because there were hundreds of bottles of the kind medicine comes in out staining the sand, and clothing, and embroidery all soaked. And I used to sit there and just look. there were locks, I used to take a piece of beam over the door and lie down there, I was so happy and it was sunny. And in the evening I wasn't sure I should go back and sit an hour, I used to understand the sun hours, and then I cooked the minestrone or some stuff, soup, for the laborers, the workers. I tried to work in De Lage but they kicked me out after two hours. No matter where I was I couldn't succeed. So I loved that rule. At night I used to sleep soundly, it was beautiful in the shack, and I was sleeping on the floor. And Luigi Lacibello I think he went back about that period. He was nice. I saw him last year, yes. And then from there I remember I left and I went to live elsewhere by myself. And I got closer to Paris because I was interested in the arts was my work. So I was to have a little room not far away from just Etoile I think it was called and just after the Arch of Triumph on the right side going out of Paris. And from there those long walks I loved around the boulevards and then the Seine River is very handsome and so beautiful and majestic with the Eiffel Tower and then on the other side there's the Left Bank and there's Montparnasse, Montmartre, those wagons with the books and galleries things. It was so gay in those days. That was 1923 just when Mussolini took over Italy. And there -- I like the French, they liked me. I used to go to Boulongne, you know, and have soup, I didn't need much money. My father he didn't make much but without scolding me he was always sending me a tiny little money order, they were lira, they didn't go far, I mean they didn't last long but there was enough. I was economical.

Once in a while I used to go to Boulevard Crechy and those infamous houses, which to me they were all right, they were human, they were, I mean -- and usually they were very cooperative in those -- they used to bring me customers, I did sketches. As a matter of fact, about those sketches I left Paris and by train first and then I went to -- it's a city with a famous cathedral, I think it was bombed, going up the river on the way to LeHavre, I always forget -- Rouen.

HP: Rouen.

PL: And at Rouen I took a boat, I worked for a while there and I went on those barges -- I'll find some sketches upstairs -- I like life on the barges along the river, it was bigger than the Tiber but it was lovely. That quiet river coming toward you as you just go up the river. It was beautiful. And then they passed farmhouses and groups of trees like in a dreamlike procession, you know. On both sides it was beautiful, sun setting, and this what do you call that little boat that pulls the, you know -- ? It used to puff, you know, pum, pum, pum, pum, and continued to put you to sleep. So there was my sojourn in LeHavre, for a while. When I arrived there I was completely without money, and I felt it was better I take a room with what I had left. A tiny little French woman, very old -- I knocked on the floor in Le Havre -- this house looked modest -- and I said, "Vous avez mange et chambre _____". She said, "J'en ai un petite on top of this dud of the..." I walked all the way up, it was a tiny little room, but it turned out to be very beautiful. This was room was small and the roofs in LeHavre are very steep and I couldn't stand at all at the end of the bed because it was a little higher there. And I had the most unique period there because I could live with practically no money and the financial aspect of life there was very important because as a matter of fact my father sent me a check thinking I would use it to go back home, instead I went to LeHavre, I was going further from Rome. When I got to LeHavre I didn't have the heart to write to my father again, so I remember one Sunday morning there was nothing, you know, once in a while I consulted my finances, which was very easy to consult, I used to travel with only a small bag it was not much, you know, I used to wash my shirt where I was. So it was on Sunday morning, it was a beautiful day, it was still cool, and little chilly, it could have been, yes, it could have been early spring and I went to the port and there was a boat waiting for the tide to leave and there were nice Frenchmen bringing their children one for each hand to see the boat leave, so remembering the days of Paris where I picked up a little money by sketching, I started doing some drawings of the boat and things. So a nice Frenchman came, one of those people probably a travette as they say there, an office worker, he said, "Oh, an artiste?" I said, "Mais oui." "Vous-voulez desseinier un portrait de ma fille?", you know, I said, "Yes," so the little girl sat there, I did a sketch. "Combien?" and he gave me some money. Oh, I liked that. I did the santo and then after a little while I had a little crowd there so I made a little money. On top of it one of them invited me for Sunday dinner. And I went there, I was so healthy and I started eating very slowly because I wasn't used to -- my stomach was very much reduced in size, I was afraid to be carnivorous, you know, so I was able to put _____ a good dinner, but not too much, you don't get too hungry after you're used to -- . And then I met a nice little companion, a little girl, he was working there, and once in a while we used to walk in the park there and go to see all those rocks there and then finally I saw her at the train when I left, and I went back to Paris, and she waved I saw her smaller and smaller. I hope she's still alive after the liberation of France. And then in Paris things were getting worse somehow, I couldn't find any work, I couldn't stand work, I'd try, and I didn't want to go back to this cabaret at Boulevard Crechy, I had enough. Really I'm not born for the night life, there are more constructive things. Those people in agony, they take drugs, and they sit there and they look -- I don't know how they live -- it's so good outdoors just -- I used to walk and walk and walk, until I had to go back, there was no other way. I went to the Italian consul and he gave me a ticket, he was a nice fellow, later when I was working on a newspaper after a few years in Rome -because you know even from America I went back to Italy even under Fascism because I didn't commit anything against Fascism except in spirit I was free and liberal -- because Lucibello for ten years he had to be in Paris because he was exiled -- not I -- so that's later, but when I went to this fellow -- I saw him later in Italy. He said, "You remember you came to me." A very nice person, he recognized me at one of the shows in Rome. So he repatriated me. So I went back home. And I took another trip to France but not for long. When I was in France I worked a little bit with Bourdelle in his atelier. He was doing colossal things in those days sort of -- a good sculptor. Evenings -- this was my Parisian life -- I used to go to the Cafe de la Rontonde where a lot of artists go, and there I met Carlo Silvana, he was from Rome originally but I never met him in Rome, he was a little older than I was, he was a sculptor, and he worked at Bourdelle's studio. And then from there finally I went back home, I went to Rome. And then I had a brief stay in Montecatini and I like Montecatini, it's just between Florence and Rome, and because of my knowledge of cabarets of that day I went to this cabaret and told them I was an artiste -- always I had not much money I didn't want to use it, my family was poor, and I try, I say I'm a veteran of the war -- oh, by the way there was no pension nothing, the Americans they give scholarships they go to the universities -- not there, I was left out cold, I mean you had to pay for your own shoes or your carfare. But I wasn't a bit sorry, I'm glad, I was happy I did what I could, that's all we can do in life. I was not here but I stood there, danger was all around and I did my duty. But nobody could stop me from having my own philosophy in art, in life. Art is life and vice versa. So when I went back to Rome I went to Montecantini and I thought to organize a show of Roman painters at my friend in Montecantini, and there I discovered I was able to. And then this director -- I still have a pamphlet on it -- he said, "You've been in Paris?" "Yes," I said, "I've been in Paris?" "Yes," I said, "I've been to Milan and Paris." He said, "Well, you know cabaret?" I said, "Yes, I know." He said,

"You know how to organize cotillion every Friday night?" I said, "Of course, I'm an artist." I was I saw in Paris. So he made a big poster, "Professor Pietro Lazzari from Rome, Milan and Paris will have a cotillion." So he gave me money, I went to Florence which is not far away, I bought a lot of tricks, you know, things you blow and shoots out and comes back, all those things, hats and so on. And then I organized the first night "All to hell" -- toute el diablo, you know, and that was fun, it was, I think, at the Trianon Cabaret. It was wonderful. I even found a colored fellow, I don't know where he came from, so I put him in a red garment done quickly by very fast needles and we put him at the door with a fork like _____ and then we fixed -- I did even Dante's Inferno -- we bought those cartoon papers, you know, we rolled all around the wall. We put out advertising, I sent girls over to post advertising in every strategic station, and the library, all the hotels. And that night there was a lot of champagne and things I carried -- in Paris, in LeHavre I made a great discovery that cider agrees with me so I had bottle of cider, it looked like champagne somehow, just to show that I was a square peg. And there I met Pierrot de Mallot, the show went very well, and they sold -- But it wasn't enough of what I wanted. Always I wanted to emigrate. I wanted to come to this country. At first I didn't know actually where to go. I even thought of Australia and I went to the library in Rome, to the Libreria Nazionale and then I got scared so many rapids and so many desolated places, that's years ago, you know, many years ago, so I didn't go to Australia. Then in Argentina the pampas and things, maybe a little Spanish, and then finally I thought why not the United States. And I remember on that trip when I landed in Genoa with that boat, when I went to Paris with Lucibello and Angelini, I knew that a cousin of mine, who was a sister of Leno Lazzari, the sculptor, was leaving for America for the first time with her husband and two children, a girl and a boy. And walking at the port I knew the boat from a letter of my father, I knew the boat that he was leaving on and we met just before sailing. So he said, "I want to give you some money." He had come from America and for his girl and he was a rich Americano. He said, "You need some for yourself, because..." He lent me some money. When I saw him in Florida he was very rich, you know. We talked about it and he told me that I had helped him too once in Rhode Island. I don't think I did, but it was useful at that time. As a matter of fact, right away we bought a lot of food, you know those long narrow bread, it looked like the French style, and then music of the military parade passed so I was separated from the boulanger, from the for a -- how do you call it --? from where I bought the bread -- from the baker. There was this march and my friends on the other side I started eating it and they were so jealous, they said, "Come across." So that's how things went there. So I finally wrote to my Costantini, beautiful name -- Celestino Costantino and he was born originally near -- between Forn and Greata, just between Naples where I was a soldier once. And it was very romantic, he was a soldier in Rome and met my cousin when she was sixteen and she married right after, you know he was older that that. And he already had been in America, his father is in America. So he made a request. Otherwise I couldn't emigrate. He requested me and I went to Rhode Island, you know. At that period he was very helpful, this is just a parenthesis. So I wrote to him and I arrived, I remember when I arrived I traveled with the Cossoullege Line boat, with a boat which was Austian but after the war, the first World War became Italian and the Cossoullege being in Trieste became Italian, and Guiseppe Cossoullege who was of the family, he was a great navigator. And we had a most fantastic story. There were even sailors got sick and people got wounded, I mean they got broken legs and this and that, the boat for several days was coasting, you know, it blew toward the wind, it looked like it would blow off the ocean. I said maybe I shouldn't go to America. Well, anyway, it took seventeen days to cross. The first land we saw Halifax, Nova Scotia, it was in October probably around this time. But incredible! The coloring stretches so neat, I still see that, it impressed me a lot. We didn't land, just the boat came a little ways somehow, and then from there we arrived in New York. That was a beautiful sight in New York, we arrived on the fourth of July -- no, no, in October -- fourth of July was the last trip I made. It was in October. We arrived there and went through a lot of examinations, and things, you know, and then was put on a little tiny -- not ferry boat, a very square -- it was a little ferry boat from Staten Island to Lower Manhattan. And when I arrived there, you know, it was so fabulous to see those buildings sprouting from the water, that's the impression you get as you arrive. It was fabulous. And it was so busy, it was toward evening when finally we landed in Manhattan, and then there was all sorts of traffic, of things going very fast, you know, and the people in the ferry boats, some of them looked very Italian like you see in Naples, but they were born here, but they used to talk differently, you know. And I had learned a few words of English when I was in France, I used to say, "Good morning" _____ sort of country lane, you know, sort of sound, extraordinary to me. When I arrived I was young and I wasn't left alone there, I had to reach Rhode Island -- Providence. And I had a tag in my left lapel and I had sort of a guide who wasn't Italian but he spoke some Italian, and he was watching me and a few others, he had to put us on the train. The Train was leaving at twelve o'clock at night or something. So there we arrived and took a taxi I think, I've forgotten, but anyway I had a couple of heavy suitcases, I had art materials and things like that, and I arrived at the station, Grand Central Station, I was very impressed, it must have been a holiday of some kind because when I came out from the station, you know, Grand Central Station, to take a train and I looked all these buildings were shooting out and looking up and then there were I was going to say the Course -- it was not the Course -- it was Fifth Avenue, I think, around there, there were all these parkay I don't know, I know that there were a lot of sort of bridges you could go out here and there, I know now very well but in those days actual recollect an impression these enormous tall buildings, and then lights were yellowish like, they say they put for certain holidays, you know. So finally that fellow I was trying to take away the plaque and he insisted for me to have because he was in _____ I said, "Look, I don't get lost, I've been in Paris, I've been everywhere, I didn't get lost in Caporetto, I went back home." So finally he left me there and I waited for the train, I went to the gate, and then arrived in Providence. It

was probably four in the morning or something, it was probably three hours, three and a half hours, not very long. When I arrived there there was of course, nobody, I had an address written so I took a cab and I arrived there it was still dark and I started banging on the door and some people came, Italians who lived there and it was sort of a kitchen, there was a big stove in the middle, it was a cold morning, you know those stoves where you cook too -- ? made of shiny metal and black and pipes?

HP: Oh yes, yes.

PL: So I arrived, that's what was there and right away I said, "Where is Cousin Celestino Costantino?" "Oh! Vous avez arrive d'Italie? Oh, comment ca va en Italia!" They said "Ils avaient quit you. They're not here any more. You just arrived, they moved to the country not far away about fifteen, twenty miles." They said "We'll take you there." So in the meanwhile they gave me coffee in an enormous cup, very thick you know, and coffee there and they cooked some bacon sorts of things, you know, and I was hungry and I -- That was my first arrival. But perhaps they were fantastic, this woman was enormous, eyebrows so across, you know, those dark eyes and she said, "I'm not Italian, I was born here." But she spoke some sort of fragments of Italian, they spoke some dialect there, and I couldn't judge their English they used to speak among themselves, I used to pick up some words that probably were mutilations of Italian and English but I couldn't judge their English because I knew only "How are you?" "Good morning," "Thank you very much." That's all I knew, you know. I mean things I learned through books in Paris or Rome. So from then on they drove me to Costantino, Celestino Costantino and then there he was, very happy to see me, and there I stayed a month between there and Providence and to go to New York actually I didn't know how to go, I didn't want to offend them, they called for me and then leave them. So I had to tell them that I had to go take a trip and I went to New York by boat at night remember.

HP: Night boat, yes.

PL: Yes. I don't know if it exists any more.

HP: I don't think it does.

PL: No, It was a beautiful trip. I loved it. I had a little cabin and I had listen at the crossing nice boat every time from the porthole I used to see lights on the coast. And we arrived in New York it was about Christmas then. And there I had the address of Pietro Garolfo, I knew him in Paris, rather in Monte Carlo where I stayed for a while, and also I knew him from Rome. And when I reached Pietro Garolfo he wasn't there, it was snowing, it was cold, bitter cold, and I had heavy suitcases and this new American-born Italian who used to look at me like if I was Ericson you know, that I had crossed, because he was so tiny, and it was his first trip, he wanted actually to go with me around the U.S. I said, "Well, I'll go for a little while, but I don't know how far because I'm tired of traveling." So we arrived there and there was a friendly little card on the door -- I remember it was a sort of modest house probably two-family house and after climbing a staircase on the landing there was this windswept porch and there was a piece of paper still attached there, and it said, "Cara Pietro, if you're lucky enough to find this paper we are at such and such a place." So we walked and finally we reached there. And when we arrived there we opened the door, it was Sunday I think, they were still banqueting from Christmas, it was the day after Christmas, which in Italy is a holiday.

HP: Yes.

PL: And I was there and they were still eating and drinking and so on. So Pietro Garolfo with his eyes ablaze said, "Pietro! Fine! Sit down." My friend stood there ready to leave again, you know, so I looked at my friend, I said "Stay here a few days." "No, I have to leave, I'll leave in the morning." I said, "Stay here, it's wonderful here." Well then I look at the fellow with such courage, I said, "Look, my trip is over. I'm arrived." And the next morning he left. And I Stayed there many months until I started on my American life. In other words, there I met through a library, you know, the Aquila Branch library I think is on 110th Street in Harlem in New York between First and Second. I was there and there I met Miss Ansoni, she was a wonderful librarian, she spoke my language with a Napolitan accent, she took me to some reunion of some society, Italian-American society, Dante Alighieri, Figlii d'Italia -- things I felt a little strange because you don't come in contact in a city like Rome or Florence, you know. So probably most Americans think Italy is like that, you know, not because they have been traveling so much to Rome and other cities, but in those days after all that was in 1925. But she was very nice, very friendly and then I was able to contact a man by the name of Cosgrave who was the editor of, one of the editors of the New York World. And somehow he liked my work so I was assigned to his staff, and I did some work on the New York World and then I met George Hellman. He had a gallery called The New Gallery on Madison Avenue. And George Hellman took me in his group. Now I have to stop again -- (INTERRUPTION)

PL: ...New York because actually I have a lot o material, maybe in New York we can talk a bit. In New York life was completely a succession of periods of my life of which some of it I have completely forgotten, I can sum it up briefly. It was sort of a shock like a transplanting something and then it becomes dormant. I always loved the people who grew with me, but I didn't belong to them either. I was in the war with them and when I was young

man naturally I needed -- we were very spirited friends, friends who could draw, they could write, we used to go to the Opera in Rome, a small theater like a metistazio an old anacolo of Rome. I remember we used to be -- an actor was a marquis by the name of Castona Molante, and he used to have very beautiful plays, popular, in Romanesque, as we say, and actors. And then I met Pirandello, I met the Futurists. And here I was in the heart, in the lap of groups who were talking of money, of a fellow they used to pass by briefly in an elegant car that was all shiny and they said he was at the head of the block of Harlem. And I said, "Why is he the head of it?" They said, "Well, he's very powerful, he's a millionaire with a racket or something." I didn't know, to me it was new because in Italy those things don't exist. In Rome nobody comes to you if you have a business and say, "I'll protect you." I don't need protection. Those things were very medieval. From the time when my father went to Sicily perhaps there, there were some. But here they were flourishing, they had force and I remember I met an interesting man, I think he was very sweet in that period, two, of course there were. One was by the name of Marcantonio, he became a Congressman, he was then a student I think at Fordham he was about to become a lawyer in those days. He was also an actor. And I remember him, he used to be my translator because he was born there, his father was a tailor, I think. I think Marcantonio had a genial way, too bad that he ended that way, I don't know, I'm no politician but when I knew him he was an open heart. I remember he used to make speeches at the corner for La Guardia. As a matter of fact, he arranged a meeting for me and I went downtown I think to the same place where the New York World was, that was before I took the job at the New York World, because I stayed in New York for many years. And when I went there La Guardia started shouting, "Il parla Italian _____ a lot of talent." in his speeches, he always looked funny, you know, and I was looking funny, you know, and I was looking a tiny little fellow with _____. I said, "He wastes all the oratory on me." I don't know, I always was a veteran of the circus, you know, went to Paris, things like that. But he meant well. He spent a lot of time talking to me how to get started, how to do this progress, aggressive, talk, talk, you know. My philosophy was a little more relaxed. On the other hand it was _____ like some other friends used to take me downtown sometimes or up in Harlem and play cards. I used to get bored, I used to play cards and I used to look at the people playing, I thought of the Cardplayers of Cezanne and I used to lose and the partner used to get angry at me so I didn't fit well either there. But I liked it in the end, they were nice guys you know. And then I used to go to Holland House and there somehow I got together with a head worker, she was a very lovely soul, older than I was, and somehow after a few months, maybe six or seven, we got married at the Church Around the Corner, a lot of people got married there, I think it's down in the Twenties or so, and Madison. I remember it was a Protestant church, she was a Protestant. Her father actually came from London way back, he was a French Huguenot part, and part English. His name was Payne and he was a minister and he fought with the Northern army, you know, against the South. And then they finally settled in St. Augustine, Florida and even was a pioneer in building better homes for the Negroes there. And then there was Elizabeth Paine and Elizabeth Paine was not married and she was a social worker all her life, she was a friend of Mrs. Sankovitch, who was the head of Greenwich House, I think. And also she started downtown I think where the Chinese have a famous settlement house in downtown New York. She was there working with that group I've forgotten the place, that's long ago. But anyway we got married in six months and it lasted for many years. And that was a period of a little bit of slumber for me, I knew I took many trips, I bought a car, learned how to drive a car, and the nature of my first wife was so wonderful so interested in people and as a matter of fact in those days I was thinking of dedicating the rest of my life to teaching hoboos around -- what do you call the section in New York down -- ? the bowery --

HP: The Bowery?

PL: The Bowery. Richmond and Flowers. And have a Bowery art gallery or something a place they didn't need to get soup, they'd have to pay nothing, they'd just come there but if they would do a little sketch or work there at something artistic we'd have a gallery, you never know. And I wouldn't want to tell them you shouldn't drink, you shouldn't smoke, nothing of that kind. But it never materialized. Maybe some day before I travel in other conscientiousness or that word. So we got together and she was a great inspiration I think because all her life -- she came from a family, they were -- the father from England, a minister dedicated his life -- probably always poor -- but a beautiful character; the daughter Elizabeth -- my wife -- told me that once overnight he gave up his position because the men who helped to erect the church in St. Augustine were encouraging him not to say in his sermons not to drink wine. That's a brief interlude, let's say. And she was from pioneer stock, oh, probably they were early settlers and then they went westward, and there were some bankers in their family and so on. Her first cousin I think by the mother, she was Mrs. Cosgrave. That's why I had that job on the New York World, you know. And Mrs. Cosgrave was the head of the Finch School, she was a Finch by her first marriage, I think it's still an Eastern school. She passed away somehow rather young. She was a nice soul. Tall Australian-born Cosgrave -- Irish I couldn't understand him, he had a tiny mouth, he would speak with a brogue and so fast and so -- for me it was hard. So he told me, "Pietro," after a drink when he used to invite me, you know, he'd say, "you will be known and famous when you have mastered English." I said, "I never will because I will never master English." Anyway, there I met Macheea who was editor of the Redbook. I met a lot of people. And he introduced me to George Hellman who had a gallery. So I did briefly on the New York World, I did some pay, I used to do from life, I did the McManus trial people, the McManus trial, he either was a racketeer or he murdered another racketeer, it was a famous trial, I was new, I didn't know what was going on there, but I did his picture in court because you couldn't take photographs.

HP: Right.

PL: Then I did the Princes Maria Pavlov of Russia, she spoke beautiful Italian, she knew Rome, she knew some people I knew, so we got along well. I did a picture of her. And I did some others. But then at the right moment the basis of -- there was -- actually we reached 1929 almost, yes. In the meantime I had a show in '26 with "Nine Europeans" at the George Hellman gallery, the New Gallery, including Picasso and others, I was a European still. And Benton and others were in this American Group -- Nine and Nine. And then I did some activity, I did some paintings -- I don't know where they are now, and I did the show of Independents Salon of American artists. And then the paper was sold, I think it merged with another paper, so I was out. And from there I started travelling. In the meanwhile I used to correspond all the time with my first wife until it reached the point that she insisted on a divorce because she wanted me to have a family, and so on. And the separation was painful because, as I say, she was so important to me and so nice and so selfless, something very rare. I learned a lot from just the example of her life. And I traveled. I went to Florida many times, I went to California and always by car, you know, sometimes I'd walk a little bit when the car broke down I'd go back looking for a garage and things, always I was trying not to be costly to no one, trying to do sketches and murals, I worked in many places. And then I used to know a young girl, a blonde by the name of Clara Treckman, I think her name was. She used to work on the newspaper. I met her through a nephew of Jack Cosgrave. This fellow is now in Miami, and editor of a paper I think -- Vonnie Smith is his name, Howard Smith is the name he writes under, he's a Pulitzer Prize winner, he was a cousin of mine by my first marriage. And through him I met this Clara Treckman who was also a newspaper woman. And every time in town Elizabeth was in -- sometimes used to take trips, vacations, meetings - she was the head worker there -- so I used to take her out -- not take her out -- at first I used to go to Holland and through Holland I met Clara, this newspaper woman. And once I went to look for Clara and there I found a young girl from Chicago by the name of Evelyn Coyne and this is when I met my second wife. I wrote to Elizabeth and she was glad because she thought I should have a family, and she thought because she was older and so _____. And Evelyn was very lovely and I met both social workers. And my first wife used to vote for Horman Thomas; and Evelyn's -- my second wife -- family knew and had had in their house -- Dr. Coyne -- Hyman Coyne -- used to have Debbs, who was an early Socialist that went to jail for _____. They used to know Norman Thomas, so somehow it was of the same nature, the same materials. So we became so inseparable when Elizabeth, you know, little by little, she got her freedom again, she divorced. And then the story is very simple. For a while I had to stop wandering around. Evalina worked day and night and I used to be like in a tower drawing, painting, and I made a production that I still have, simple things and I'm so fond of it. The depression years from 1933 and '34 and '35 and '36 is the year the WPA was born and I worked, I did murals, in '36 I developed the technique of painting with polychrome materials which actually springs from fresco, which I learned in Rome, when I worked over with Bargellini. He was a teacher of mine. And then I developed this work because thinking the weather is stronger here, a fresco like you could have in Spain or Italy, France, couldn't endure here, the climate like in New York, so I used concrete instead of lime and I incorporated good pigments and there, and I'm still doing some of that, I make murals here, and I make a living most of the time. And then I was with the early group called the Secession Gallery and there was Mark Rothko and there was Adolph Gottlieb and there was Byron Browne and there was Milton Avery, Ben Shahn, Lou Harris, a group that they all went to '57 and most of them became famous. It was a group in those days was almost a sin to think differently or modern. The galleries and the museum were all impinged or representational things, nothing wrong because my works spring from nature, from the elements. And from there we stayed together in the same group and the head of this group was a man by the name of Ludwig Godsoe (spelled G-o-d-s-o-e, I think) with a friend of his named Hartzell. And together we had good things including some plays and my somehow brush for some time with the gallery in Rome, with the Teatro d'Independentes gave me ideas, and there were three short plays once. I wrote one called "The Lenders" of the destruction of the past, which was anchored up to Marinetti. But the plays didn't last more than twenty or twenty-five minutes. That's probably a certain play. But it was good, they had masks and there was a lot of phonetic expression and ritnicolan and so on. I must come to a stop now again. What time is it? I have to make a phone call.

HP: It's twenty minutes of two. (INTERRUPTION)

PL: Now in New York something happened in those days. The depression was still on, a lot of organizations were grouping, I remember like today there were all sorts of groups and artists following them and somehow by nature I have always been away from those groups. I tried, but either they didn't accept me or they didn't -- I'm not a conformer, you see, I'm distraught at times, but always I did what I could, always for benefit I tried to help, I tried to give drawings here, drawings there, everything somehow I follow what was more human, people who had the same needs I had, same materials, I sympathized with them. And then came Roosevelt on the horizon. I was a period of beer to get back at five cents a glass and so on. In the arts it was in the air this project of having like Renaissance in Florence in Italy have it here in America. So the art projects came, at first they came from Washington different type of name, you know, organizations and they were in New York certain leaders who used to say those worthwhile they could be helped by the government or the city, I've forgotten exactly where it was. And there I joined them. I was living in the Village in those days, in New York Greenwich Village and I remember I brought some work _____ the gallery, the Secession Gallery with Godsoe came there. Anyway, I

was accepted and at first we got a little salary I think it was \$18, or \$20, or \$23 a week, it wasn't much but to us it was like a million, you know, that never had _____. My wife was working, a social worker, got home so tired, that was Evelyn, at that period you see we married in '34. And I joined WPA at that time, the group of Secession Gallery '33, '34, and WPA was then and there I worked on many projects and then more and more I became identified with a group, first I used to work and then later they assigned me to a mural, Riker's Island mural, that was one of the projects, the Hebrew Congregation I think up in, north, you know, going way up Broadway almost to the Bronx, there was a Hebrew orphanage. I was supposed to do a big mural. Then I worked in the new wing building of Bellevue Hospital Psychiatric department. And there I started as mural assistant and there I made my great discovery because there were two Mexicans preparing the wall, they were very good mason artists, let's say, they learned methods with Rivera and Orozco, but I knew my Italian way of doing frescoes so they assigned me there. And I always liked line, you know, slick line and I liked the trowel, you know. So I started working with them. I remember Miss Ludens (spelled L-e-u-n-d-s or g-s) was the chief of the project, she was a so-called artiste. We were mural assistants and there one day while I was giving the last coat to the wall something happened, some of the color, I kicked the color, and it splashed on the wall, part of it, and instead of getting frantic and stretch back I began to play -- it was toward evening -- and I wouldn't see anybody until the next day so I began to play and I made some forms in sgraffito and I sketched others, and there the idea of this polychrome concrete, which I've used in many murals, was started. That was the end of 1935 I think. As a matter of fact, in '36 I copyrighted this method called fresco mosaic. It was done in sections at first. Of course then I cleaned the place, I gave it a new coat. But from then on I started, and I started first also thinking of polychrome sculpture. And in that day it was quite new. Today it's widespread knowledge since people have discovered working with polymer, anything you throw in polymer sticks, rags stick. I never use it, I don't know what polymer is. But it's very expensive, but I don't use it. After all, I'm an academic _____. But since then I still have the first, and second and third pieces I did at the time. I have it here in the barn. And they were a little bit in relief, a little bit geometric kind of details of mural sketches and I worked away during that period until we were separated. The Hebrew Orphanage home was canceled somehow and I was sorry, it was, I think, either Congress or the Senate they were stopping this flow of money and criticizing, politics got into it, and the WPA got in trouble and little by little we were left in a studio without orders to do something, you know, and it was a painful period until it was started out.

HP: Mmmhmm. Did you deal in this period with Burgoyne Diller?

PL: He's my close friend. He died recently. I know _____

HP: Yes.

PL: I'm sorry, I was with him on the project, he was my supervisor. Wonderful, slender fellow, a good painter.

HP: Very good.

PL: I'm glad, I'm glad you knew him. He was very good, I cooperated, I worked with him, and our boss was McMahan.

HP: Audrey McMahan.

PL: Yes. And I'm sorry Diller died -- I think last year.

HP: Yes.

PL: And he was my supervisor. I think he was wonderful and he liked my work, and he did fight for me because I did not have crutches or powers, you know, being distraught at things I could easily have been removed, you know, others you can't very well, they're attached chainlike _____ but Diller always stood up for me so I could have another month's assignment, which was important in those days. It was the days when I was bringing this polychrome materials together. Then from there I was for a while without work because the project was disintegrating and they kept a skeleton kind of activity alive, you know, but in the meantime this art in federal buildings was coming, which were done and governed by competition, not just by name or something like that.

HP: Yes.

PL: So I started competing and I got several murals, I did the Social Security here, I almost got, I was runner up, and Vachon got it, but he told me once when we cooked spaghetti together and he told me that after his, mine was the best. But my murals were not in Washington D.C. usually smaller murals and most all of them were done in the South. I was winner of a mural in three states in New Jersey and things like that but it was given to someone else in the end. But I did several murals, some in Florida, I did one in Brevard, in North Carolina -- near Asheville. Things were the drivel mills or something like that. _____ delivery of the mails. Jasper, Florida I did the raising of bright leaf cotton, the tobacco with the kilns, where they have turpentine, you know, that was in the Post Office I did two murals there. And I did one in just south of Raleigh -- Sanford, North Carolina in

the Post Office. Once in a while when I drive South I stop there, it's still there. In that period I met an important man in my life, who was the directors, I think co-chairman -- Bruce was the head at that time --

HP: Yes, Ned Bruce.

PL: Ned Bruce. He was an important man. A very wonderful man. I never met him. As a matter of fact, I thought I met him in Florence but I never did actually. I was with Elizabeth, my first wife, in Florence once and we visited several people and I always thought that one was Bruce, but it was someone else. I think it was Berenson. I don't know why I thought it was Bruce.

HP: Who was the man that you met -- Ed Rowan?

PL: Ed Rowan. He was my close friend that died also. This is Ed Rowan, I have two letters upstairs, he believed in me, but he always said, "Pietro, your work it comes from the guts, from inside, others are more commercial, they do a finished job in their sketches." And my sketch was never finished, they were like you cut nerves like _____ serpents, you know, and that's why somehow I was lucky, I think equally the others were probably very good, I'm sure. So there it was a very exciting period, I did sculpture sketches. As a matter of fact it was Ed Rowan that when I did -- they're still outside two sculptures there -- and I exhibited one during the second World War at the Metropolitan Museum "Art for Victory". And he went to see it. I never saw the show, I was in Washington very poor and he commented "miles and miles of sculpture, yours is the best and touching." So he was very -- he believed in my work. You know even if a person believes it's a lot.

HP: Sure. Oh sure.

PL: But financially I was poor and we were here, first I rented, I spoke French and this Madame Bartlett the studio that now I think the Weldon has -- those fabulous sculptures, you know, Ino Jima brings a lot of money and prestige, you know. And he's all right, he probably is equally good. But I had a different direction entirely, I couldn't _____ but Rowan was to me a light, you know, he believed in my work, we got together many times, and he has some of my work in his collection he left, I have a lot of his letters and he was very important in my art direction, he felt that I knew the people, I knew their sufferings and never used them for political or other things. I said, "Even if I tried I wouldn't be able, that feeling would disappear, would desert my very hands." And that's the way it is. I had to. It isn't that I had a choice. It just happened.

HP: Right.

PL: And you know I was never a book man but growing in years and slowing my muscular activity and peregrinations and because we were in Washington so I was able to study more. The first I know, of course, of WPA -- how I happened to come to Washington was that I left New York because the war came and I was the winner of these two murals. As a matter of fact, the government still owes me a mural somewhere but the war came and so they stopped. And I was caught down in northern Florida, a beautiful section of the country, Jasper, Florida. And there is a swamp I think it's in lower Georgia there, I don't know if it's the Okeenokee or the other -- I've forgotten, one beautiful swamp I saw the outskirts of it -- I don't say outskirts -- but the edges. It's very primitive and Swanee River beautiful, pure clay on the banks. Really I'm glad I was granted to visit this country, part of it. Of course I don't know the Grand Canyon or those fabulous things. I've seen pictures, they must be lovely. But how can an artist go? I'm not rich. You know what I mean. They go tourist, they can go take photographs and the camera and the photograph and the one dress in the car cowboy dress -- clothes you know. I don't know that kind of America. I know the rural one, I know the routes, I know -- I met a great man down there, by the way -- John Rust, the inventor of the cotton picker, I did his bust, it was unveiled in Memphis, that was many years ago. Memphis. And he took me then -- we became good friends, a very nice man -- and his wife, Thelma, wonderful -- in Little Rock, Arkansas, beautiful country around there and driving toward there you cross Tennessee and you climb -- once in the fall with John Rust we traveled there, I took him back -- he came to finish posing for the portrait the sculpture. And we traveled, I took him back, Thelma was here but she had to fly back and we went -- and I never saw -- it was at this period the fire, the gardens of explosions of color all through those valleys, the spectacular -- I don't see those qualities in certain painters.

HP: No.

PL: Too bad.

HP: Too bad is right.

PL: Too bad. I have a certain aspect of all the ammunition of preparations for painting to be once in a while I do one or in a drawing and usually they're circling the United States, of, let's say Memory of Dixie, things like that, you know, rural things. But it's beautiful. Not the expressways of today, the old Route One --

HP: Right.

PL: inaudible

HP: Yes.

PL: And all those visions I saw around I still -- northern Florida is very lovely, around Jasper which is middle northern, it's just across from Augusta, Georgia.

HP: Right.

PL: Just a few miles from there. It's beautiful southern Georgia.

HP: Did you get down into the Florida Keys?

PL: Only once.

HP: -- with Julius Stone?

PL: No. No. No. No, I didn't have much possibility of travel, I regret, I did it by myself sometimes sleep in the car and my wife too Evelyn, we slept many times, we were young, you know, and the chilly mornings the cars still were cold but a little _____ floor you couldn't fall, it was full of junk, pictures, piece of guitar plastic around the shoulders and so on. And there were those motels different from today, they were just little cabins --

HP: Yes.

PL: And I used to like in the middle I used to plug my coffee pot _____ and the old car wouldn't start in the morning. I think today is to different. I hope that they will enjoy the Americans to come those passing things. I hope so.

HP: Yes.

PL: It was completely different. And I've got fragments of that life, you know.

HP: Back in New York were you part of the Artists Union movement that sprang up?

PL: Not really. I wasn't.

HP: No?

PL: No. I'll tell you why. Maybe luckily or not luckily, I don't know, anyway -- I used to listen much -- I started and then I look at someone else's composition, somebody like composition, holding the chin and so on, but I never actually joined anywhere. I don't know if -- that time I think they said there was a war in Spain, I may even have made drawings and they said, "Well, it's against Fascism" and things like that. I'm not a Fascist. But actually I repeat, when I saw photographs of Mussolini strung up I felt a great pity. Maybe I'm -- I don't know, I think I'm really human. And I remember my father saying, "Don't enslave yourself in politics because it reaches a point at which people go back to their belief, they change, and those left with the same belief they find isolated or dead and so on or crippled." That's what he said. But anyone who does something that we want peace that we want things. I'm interested in the arts no matter how to achieve it, I really don't know. And I'm not a judge. I'm not against anyone, if a fly gets hurt I'm sorry and yet probably I've killed some flies when I'm angry or something. So I don't know. But suffering that's why as I said before when I studied the sudden expression of Buddhism, you know, before Bahain theory of Buddhism became more king like imperialism of power, force, obedience when it was shows this enlightened man the Buddha it's like the Christian belief, and they said he was nobody, he was humble, they say he was and I think it's logical vision I mean they could be from a fantasia of man but still he just appeared where he was and he said -- and I think I have a lot of those books, I think they're very human, Caros write a lot of material it's very beautiful. I cannot help at my age after the experience to follow that. But I'm not a protagonist, I think a man has to find it by himself. That's my idea. Because I think we have all media of information today and people have to settle their mind by themselves. So the Union then I resented a little bit one thing that if you didn't pay your dues, you know, you were in disgrace. That I didn't believe in. That I don't believe. As a matter of fact, I never was chosen to be this or that, so I still like -- that's why also during Fascism I never was taken from a front in anything because I never joined anything. So I could have survived during Fascism in Italy. Because nobody can stop men from thinking.

HP: No.

PL: But I don't -- because many people sometimes also they want to join certain things for power, for personal power. I have no desire, I don't want power, I see good in everybody, that's my opinion. And patsalaw I don't know, I'm not a judge. But I still believe that we should find methods of survival, methods of living with each other, send food to the needy, I think that if we send grain, rice, God knows to whom, they cannot help but

sympathize with us, when I say "us" it doesn't mean just America but everybody. Because today we have the media like what you have there, the short wave transmitter in Alaska, in the North Pole or wherever they are even -- now around the planets, you know, even the astronauts they can hear what we're doing. There is no more distance.

HP: No.

PL: We must find somehow, maybe America will be the leader, I don't know, I'm not a judge and I'm not a political scientist, I'm in human contact, I know I spent four years and I didn't do it for self-advantage, we were treated going to war was not because looking sightseeing the world or for money, we used to get no pay practically nothing, we did it for the country, which I believe in. Like now I'm an American citizen and I wish the best wishes for this country. I give my best wishes. I have a daughter born here, who is deaf. She's at Barnard College. She'll probably marry here and she will have children. Of course we want a better country and a better world. But how to proceed I don't know. I hear all sorts of things from politicians and then they may change, I don't know. I'm not a judge. I just like to cooperate where I can, I keep quiet, I'm no teacher, I don't have to give sermons. I think if people listen with their heart and follow what Christ said, "Don't do to others what you don't want them to do to yourself." Better guide. Or even Buddha. I'm a Catholic but what Buddha said -- Buddha said, "Be a light unto yourself." That's terrific. Be your own light. Don't expect help from without. You help -- your salvation comes from within. And that's the Christ and Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. There's where I am interested. St. John the Baptist and the Crucifixion. But they were -- they were the Jews -- it was just the mechanism under the Roman and it was the Romans who they had quincley -- men like Herodotus who naturally was like Petain in France. In other words, he had to do some rule, be the head of the Jews of those days, and the Romans were exacting money and things so this fellow who could have been a communist of those days by the name of Jesus he was really for brother hood and not far from the Jordano, the River Jordano where the sea is, near the sea there was the Dead Sea or something of that kind, and there they used to -- sometimes very bossy sort of -- what do they call those settlements -- ? I read some of these laws. I'm more a product of the Renaissance, of the liberati, of the time the period of the Germans in certain parts of Europe. And also the Church at the beginning before the Inquisition, you know, the spirit of --

HP: Mmm. How much communication was there along these lines in the Secession Gallery with that group that you described?

PL: Oh, that's a strange name but it doesn't political things _____. As a matter of fact once I applied for a government job and they asked my _____ or something, they thought the Secession Gallery was the spirit of secession from the government. No. No. It was not.

HP: No.

PL: It was only in the spirit of art, you know.

HP: Yes.

PL: It was a wonderful group, a very wonderful group. Too bad that in reading about Rothko and others no one mentioned he started with a group of ten which he started when they all deserted the Secession Gallery and there was left only Byron Browne and myself. They all went and they formed a group of ten and they didn't ask Byron Browne and me because they thought we wouldn't move. They all seceded from Secession. It was fantastic. It was wonderful crutches. This Harris was the pianist, a singer and a church pianist, he was English from New England I think. And he sang in a synagogue and everywhere trying to support -- we didn't make any money. And there we had the play that I wrote, I had a lot of shows, I still have some of the clippings from the New York Times -- Jewell used to write, I used to know him. But then there were these projects with Ed Rowan from the -- you know,

HP: Yes.

PL: Then from there it was dissolved with the war I came back here, I did all sorts of things to make a living, the war was on, New York for a while was sort of panicky you know things the beginning of the second World War. So I had to look around here. I even had a collision when I arrived, I couldn't move, so I phoned Ed Rowan. Ed Rowan found a little room with a man in West Falls Church or East Falls Church and there we stayed, Mr. Wine, I remember, an interesting old man. The wife very vigorous doing everything very bossy, he was retired and working in his garden, you know, he had beautiful veins along his hands so I used to draw him at night when he slept, I used to go very silently -- the wife finally I used to bribe her tell her how beautiful she was, so she let me sketch the old man. When they rented all the rooms he used to sleep in the kitchen. The old man. He had a beautiful garden, the fruits I used to impinge myself. I had a wonderful -- Then from there, as I say, I worked -- I rented a studio -- Mrs. Bartlett -- using my French, "Mais non, Madame, vous avez un atelier?" "Oh, mon mari l'tue a Paris -- un automobile went over him in Paris." He had a studio in Paris, a studio here, an enormous studio, it was of the period of big horsed, you know, things, you know, after Donatello and Paolocello, but not

that powerful. And they did all these buildings some very ugly one after the other. They put too much the Parthenon here, the Temple of Jupiter here -- they need space. The Parthenon they put -- I saw finally a year and a half ago -- last year -- luckily I did some murals in that concrete technique with Carl Freeman here, he's a builder, I was lucky \$5,000 that we spent on this trip, and there we went my daughter Nina, and my wife and myself and we went to London, we went to Paris, we went to Switzerland -- I love Zurich -- we went to Athens, we went to Rome again -- which I was in the Fulbright -- and we went to El Prado, Spain. We spent everything and we came back, it was worth it. No, I think the project was good but everything comes to an end, everything so that today -- the Secession Gallery was a terrific thing. And in that period also I met Stella but he was in a different direction, a different group, and I met Varese with him and all that group. You see I've always been going somewhere between things, forces. But now I wonder if these forces -- I have -- this is a recumbent form here because I've seen people die at Caporetto to try to bury themselves or to escape from this torture, this is a part of the body that _____ and these are these fires, I see these fires, you know -- I'm not like those people who say "I hear voices," I really don't, I don't hear voices, I don't see fires, but a certain imaginative presence that's there. And so I'm making these pictures. Carress Crosby was here in the spring, she told me she would like to enter them in a show in London but I said, "Carress, how can I come to London?" There's one of Bota Costello Rocabity balda near Riete, you know. So I think America is in a very challenging but lovely period. I believe the forces of freedom like it has always been like the time of Lafayette, the time of, you know, those early Americans. That's what fascinated me to come to this country, and my cousin -- my relatives in Providence -- Celestino Costantino. But what I read in the Libreria Nazionale in Rome was the history of this country and the way was popular rebellion from Boston Tea Party and so on. I think it's fascinating. The only thing I'm a little sorry about is that period of go westward and traffic in wars with the American Indians. I don't know why but it looks like a law of man where they see an empty space they occupy it, you know. I met many American Indians and they accept me, you know, they don't trust the whites, not yet. I talk to them, you know.

HP: They have good and sufficient reason not to.

PL: Yes. And I think actually it's their land no matter how we put it, you know. I don't want to enter into that _____.

HP: I was wondering if you had the same, or developed the same feeling about this country -- Providence, New York City -- that you had wandering along the banks in Italy?

PL: Well, I'll tell you I feel more and more within my stay I feel like I'm a guest in this world. I don't think I belong. No one belongs actually the way they think -- "this is mine," "this is here" and I think you cannot trespass. I do the same thing, of course, I put a gate where I can. My house in Rome has a gate. But at least philosophically I don't think so, I think we don't even own our body. So it's this. But I do feel that this country probably more than anywhere in the world you can feel to be your own home as much as you can feel -- . I by nature even in Rome I don't feel -- when I'm in Rome I want to be in Paris, when I'm in Paris I want to be in New York, and so on. I think particularly the Americans will understand this because everyone is here, outside of those who escaped, they came here because they had wanderlust of some kind, that migratory spirit, otherwise they wouldn't be here. I'm only here because I was anti-Fascist. If I was in Rome I would be glorified and later on God knows what. But still it didn't mean anything to me. To me when I came here I was amazed by space but that doesn't make me ridicule the Tiber's smallness. Not at all. So I think the American in particular belongs everywhere. That's my opinion. And also the different races you meet to me has been an expanding source of knowledge. I contacted different races. I have a good friend who came from Scotland and people of Jewish origin -- I married one -- and I have friends from everywhere. I have a friend of mine -- Dr. Enrico Cuccia -- he was a newspaper man with -- Enrico Cuccia in Rome, he was ten years younger than I was when I was on the newspaper in Rome I didn't say that but for a while I was back and forth going to Italy because I returned. My friend Luigi Lucibello stayed in Paris for ten years he couldn't go back. But I went back, I didn't do anything, actually so I couldn't go back. Only once on the boat the first trip I took back after I married Elizabeth I went back, it could have been in '27, the end of '26, anyway and there was a planted spy from Fascism, I think. I didn't understand I know and I used to -- He said, "How do you like Fascism?" He tried to find out what thought _____ I was going toward Italy, you know, I used to make fun of him. He reported me to the police so they called me to the court in Rome and the head of the chief of police was a friend of my father. A nice man. So I'm not in danger, I'm not a political thing, I'm not a fellow traveler because also I don't have memory, my memory is just to get with an inspired soul like you and talk and that's my very essence. I think to be efficient toward destruction toward doing evil or doing good as people judge us for something you have to be a clean, clear, astute piece of machinery.

HP: Yes.

PL: I don't believe in spying. My father was not a spy, in Italy we loathed spies. I wouldn't try to get information. It was a joke when I went on a Fulbright to Rome a friend said, "Are you doing some spying?" I said, "Look, I have no memory and nobody in the U.S. told me to spy, I don't know, probably they thought I'm not bright enough." But I said "I'm not ____." That's my nature.

HP: What did you do or did the group in the thirties do and think about a fellow like Colonel Sommervell? How did he fit into the -- ?

PL: Who was he?

HP: He was the man who -- the military man who was above, I believe, Audrey McMahon in the WPA organization.

PL: I never

HP: You never -- ?

PL: I never ran across him. _____ McMahon because I used to get reports, I still have upstairs Diller because we were elbow to elbow. Yes.

HP: Yes. Did you bump into Harry Knight in those days?

PL: Yes. What happened to him? He was a painter, wasn't he?

HP: Yes.

PL: Yes? Yes. I lost -- Knight -- Harry Knight -- he was mal for a while. He used to be a friend of Levenson, he used to make frames. He made some at the time of Ryback, he did mosaic and then he had this gallery, group like that.

HP: Yes.

PL: _____ they won't take me. Luckily our work _____ because my work was Futuristic, too, you know...

HP: Yes.

PL: ...from the Balla-Boccioni days.

HP: Oh sure.

PL: And in those days they wanted work like Diego Rivera or Orozco, protesting work. See, my work isn't protesting, just evocative man-made volcano vertically man-made volcano those fires, I'm not -- I don't believe -- I mean actually those people all those muscles they usually don't work, the people I meet are different. No. I don't believe in that -- I don't think I would have prospered in Mexico with my belief, you know. I'm much more like -- I like Goya, I like the Frenchman -- what's his name -- ? In the Phillips Gallery, beautiful, protesting things, he did cartoons also. I like art for art too and if your mind sympathizes with something it's all right, should be --

HP: Oh yes.

PL: Than _____ protest and so on. But when you plasma the work, you know even outside of the burnt form outside, I don't do things of this kind, I don't have necessarily enough views person because nobody can reach to your freedom. That's my opinion. Your freedom is freedom.

HP: Right.

PL: And there's an _____ thing in the external when there will be mistake try to bribe or corrupt others. _____ work (INTERRUPTION)

HP: He's a --

PL: He's and important man.

HP: Yes, he is.

PL: He died recently.

HP: Yes.

PL: He died in Brooklyn.

HP: Yes.

PL: I used to be with Knight but Knight was an administrator --

HP: Under Audrey McMahon.

PL: Yes. See I never was chief, I was just, I became head of my own project and I had models, I had all artists assistants, that's as far as I went. There was a terrific period. In other words, it was WPA, Secession Gallery with Godsoe, on which he was a good force, he came, he was the old man --

HP: Yes. Yes.

PL: Rothko was top banana one, I'm three years older than Rothko but to go to every _____ he was ten years difference or fifteen years difference -- he was the old man.

HP: Mmm. But this is a strain that was developing all through the late twenties and the thirties.

PL: Yes. Yes, he started actually with a gallery called the Uptown Gallery, and the Uptown Gallery was, let's see, a continuation of what is today Ninth Avenue probably one of those _____. I had the first show there with our friends, the first show of our friends and of the things I did in the Village and things like that.

HP: Mmhmm. Did the Whitney Club figure at all in the -- ?

PL: Not much.

HP: Not much?

PL: No. That was the time that --

HP: Benton and --

PL: Benton, the famous Brook, Alexander Brook --

HP: Yes.

PL: They were the dominating factors.

HP: Yes. Yes.

PL: Yes. They wouldn't look at us, you know, we were in some of the openings, used to be number 8 or 12 on Eighth Street, you know, 10 or 8.

HP: Yes.

PL: Now the Whitney has one of my paintings but in those days -- I showed in the first abstract show in America, I was in that group I think in '35 or '36 at the Whitney. I was there.

HP: Yes.

PL: And you read in that book I was also in Paris I showed -- I exhibited. But my work, I say, was -- it was not what was thought of as kosher. That's why then they put me out of the group of the Four, because there was Malcolm Greene. Well, at that time he believed in pure abstraction, and mine was either some sensuous or more carry man toward abstract experiences.

HP: Yes.

PL: And now strangely enough he does human things, Malcolm Green has changed. But in those days he was very ferocious. I remember him. I remember David Smith. He was in our group then.

HP: Oh, was he?

PL: Yes. He came at the end of it. I think he's terribly important in the history of art in this country -- Godsoe, because at that day he was able to rally around him all these _____ around him --

HP: Yes.

PL: And I'm glad I was one of them. I'm glad. Prior to them I met George Hellman, that was in '26 I showed. But then for many years I traveled, I went back to Europe, I worked on the newspaper, the Italia Literaria and I was quite restless, I went to Paris, saw my friend Lucibello who couldn't go back to Italy, you know. But even by meeting -- I think an artist should go around and meet all sorts of people, I'm lucky I did.

HP: Well, was there -- by then standards, was there much economic success in the Secession Gallery?

PL: No, no. Not at all.

HP: How did he sustain it? Do you know?

PL: Who?

HP: Godsoe.

PL: Godsoe -- through Harris's singing.

HP: U-huh. TELEPHONE OR DOORBELL RANG END OF INTERVIEW