

ROCCO AND PAUL RAZZECA

Magna, Utah

Tape No. I-12

An Interview by

Phil Notarianni

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Utah Minorities Series

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THE FOLLOWING IS A TAPE RECORDING MADE WITH MR. ROCCA RAZZECA AND HIS SON PAUL RAZZECA ON JUNE 13, 1971 AT MAGNA, UTAH. THE INTERVIEWER IS PHIL NOTARIANNI.

PR: What part of Italy did you come from?

RR: What?

PR: What part of Italy did you come from? Where did you come from, what part of Italy?

RR: Oh, I don't want to do anything.

PR: You tell me. Come on Pa. Turn it off. What's the name of...

RR: _____.

PR: And that is?

RR: Provincia Roma.

PR: Okay. Your family never had no priest or anything like that?

RR: What?

PR: You didn't have any priests or sisters? None of your brothers were priests or sisters?

RR: What do you mean?

PR: Your brothers, none of them went to the priesthood did they? I know that for a fact.

PN: Okay.

PR: My mother did, but he didn't. What did you do when you were in Italy?

RR: What?

PR: What did you do in Italy? You had a farm didn't you in Italy?

RR: No, I was doing everything; drove the wagon, the farm, everything.

PR: And when you left to come over here?

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RR: What?

PR: Why did you come over here, why did you want to come over here?

RR: Why did I come over here?

PR: Yeah, why did you want to come over here?

RR: I don't remember it was a long time.

PR: Well, do you figure that it was a better job; make more money here
or what?

RR: Well yeah, I guess.

PR: Are they satisfactory?

PN: Yeah that is okay.

PR: When you came over here, were you the first one? You had a brother
over here first, didn't you? A brother came over ahead of you?

RR: I come first then I went back and the brother come before I come.

PR: How old were you the first time?

RR: What?

PR: How old were you the first time that you came over?

RR: Who me?

PR: Yeah.

RR: I don't know around 15.

PR: Did you come over all alone?

RR: What?

PR: Did you come alone, all alone?

RR: No I come, somebody come with me.

PR: Somebody from your town, you came over with another guy. How long
did you stay?

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RR: In this country?

PR: Yeah.

RR: I think I stay 30 months.

PR: That's two and a half years, huh.

RR: Yeah.

PR: Then you went back?

RR: Then I went back, yeah.

PR: When you came then, you didn't come to Utah. Where did you go then?
Where did you come when you came the first time?

RR: Oh, I don't know it's so long I can't even remember. Don't ask me
anymore cause it's worthless.

PR: I'll help you. Was it Sharpsville, Pennsylvania?

RR: That was one time?

PR: Turn it off.

PR: Pennsylvania the first time?

RR: What?

PR: Didn't you stay in Pennsylvania the first time? Sharpsville or
something Pennsylvania.

RR: In here?

PR: The first time that you come you went to Pennsylvania didn't you?

RR: Yeah.

PR: And you worked in the coal mine or something.

RR: No, I don't remember where I work.

PR: I can remember you telling me that...

RR: Oh, I remember what I must have worked neither.

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PR: But didn't a bunch of guys get killed or something over there?

A boat tipped over or something and killed a bunch of them.

RR: What?

PR: When you were over there beofre, didn't a bunch of guys get killed over there just before you left to go back to Italy?

RR: Nobody get killed.

PR: I can remember the story, but I can't go into detail. Okay, you went back and you stayed over there what two years and then come back?

RR: Oh, ask too many questions; I can't remember that, how long I stay there.

PR: Okay, Then the second time you came back, you came to Utah. Can you remember...

RR: What?

PR: You came to Utah the second trip you came right to Utah. You came along that time didn't you?

RR: Yeah.

PR: You came to Utah because you had your brother here right?

RR: When I come the next time.

PR: Yeah, you came here because Paul was here.

RR: Yeah, my brother was here.

PR: Was Paul working for the Kennecott then? Paul was working for Utah Copper when you came wasn't he?

RR: That's too long, I don't remember where he was working either.

PR: I can remember that Steve up to Tooele said he worked here with him. They worked together. You started to work for Utah Copper in 1911

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wasn't it?

RR: I tell you all about it.

PR: 1911. What was your job? Did you drive a team? A wagon when you first started?

RR: Yeah, I drive a wagon.

PR: What else?

RR: A team of horses.

PR: Then where did you go from there? Did you go right...

RR: When?

PR: When you were driving the wagon and then when you left there, where did you go? Did you go to the bull gang from there?

RR: Don't ask me anymore questions. I don't remember what I do.

PN: Ask him if he remembers the famous strike of 1912.

PR: In 1912 they said that they had a strike. Can you remember anything about a strike up here in 1912 just after you started up there?

They said they had a strike around then.

RR: I don't know that's too damn long.

PR: When you went to work for Kennecott, Utah Copper how did the company treat you? Did they treat you pretty good or were they mean? Or...

RR: I don't know if I was working for Kennecott or not.

PR: Well, it would be Utah Copper then. Were they hard to work for or were they pretty good to work for?

RR: After long if unless I tell you don't ask me more questions.

PR: You just keep answering that's all. As far as I know he always got along all right. He never had any problems like that. I don't know

he worked for some foreman that was rather rough and that would be Bull Barton, they called him. And then, I can't remember whether he retired or whether he died. He took the rigger crew from there, and he was the rigger foreman for 32 years, at Kennecott.

PN: What type of work did he do at Utah Copper that might have been dangerous?

PR: Well rigging was always dangerous. Any type of rigging at that time it was always blocking type of work, in pull, mainly just all hand work where today we have cranes to do all that stuff that was all done by hand then. The rigger gang was usually kind of... it was made up mostly of at the time of you foreigners. Your Italians and there was a few Greeks and like that would work on it. It was hard work. It wasn't anything like the operation, it was all hard work. They did all the maintenance work. In 1916 he was the front line foreman or the rigger foreman when they put the big crusher in at the Arthur Plant. That is when they put the big 27 in. One of the big jobs that he was on...Tell you what we'll do. Why don't you ask me the questions, and I will try to answer them and then I will refer back to him off and on, if that will help you. We are not going to get too much out of him.

PN: Okay. Did he belong to the union?

PR: No, he never a union member, he was when unions came in a supervison at that time. But he was one of the supervisors who never had any problems with the union. He was noted as being kind of fair with his people, and the union never did bother him

much at all. In fact, like they said he was the only man around there that could cuss a man out right and never had any repercussions from it. Because of his manner they know that if a guy had a balling out coming he got it. He got it then and there, and then it was forgotten unless the guy brought more on himself. There was no holding a grudge or anything else like that.

PN: Do you recall how he got his job at Kennecott? Did he have a brother that worked at Kennecott?

PR: He had a brother that worked for Kennecottt at that time. I don know this, through what other people have told me. My Uncle Frank who is my mother's brother was working for Kennecott at that time. He came in and went right to work for them.

PN: And how many eyars did he work for them all together?

PR: How long were you at Kennecott, 42 years weren't you?

RR: What?

PR: You worked for Kennecott for 42 years? 1911 to 1952. So that would be 42 years, I think it is three months or six months or something.

PN: Did he live in Magna?

PR: Yeah, he lived in what they call Rag Town, for awhile, and then he moved down here in Magna.

PN: Do you recall what the living conditions might have been like down here?

PR: Well, they learned to live on what they made. I mean there was no going in debt for anything. You lived on your salary. Dad has always been of the old school; if you haven't got the money don't buy it. So he got along pretty fair. Then he was one of

the lucky ones who had a job. He worked for Utah Copper all through the depression. He was never laid off. His living conditions for him were good compared to what they were for the other people because he was never affected by the depression or strikes or anything like this.

PN: He got fair treatment from the company, then.

PR: Yes, he got fair treatment and probably a little better than average due to the position he held at the time. He was given the position, I think he was recommended through a man by the name of Ross Hatton, who would be an uncle to this Dave Hatton. He was recommended because of the work that he had done and the manner and the ability he had in being able to pick up things. How Dad cannot read or write English at all. Everything he learned he had to memorize. Everything was done strictly from memory. He could do a job and in fact, there are still jobs that come up now and he had been retired since May of '52 and I am in a job that he had similar; I am not the rigger foreman, but I am a field repair foreman and cover the riggers. I will come in and ask him questions on jobs because I know that he knows them. It will take him a few minutes, but it will come back to him and he can tell me everything step by step. In about '66 or '64 I think it was, Dad had been retired for 12 years. They had a problem on the 27 crusher. Mr. Baldie, who at that time was the general maintenance superintendent came down and asked Dad about this and what they did and how to remedy the problem. Which he was able to tell him and explain to

him because it was something that had happened once when he was a foreman, and he was about the only one around here that could help them out with it. The rest were all gone. He has got a terrific memory and this has stemmed from not being able to read or write. Anything that he did he had to memorize and he knew that the jobs had to be up in his head because he knew he couldn't go back to notes or anything else. He had no other means of doing a job except from memory.

PN: One thing you could have said and that's when did he become a citizen of the United States, a naturalized citizen?

PR: Oh boy.

PN: Do you recall at all? He probably doesn't remember.

PR: You got your citizen papers when, around 1920?

RR: What?

PR: When did you get your citizen papers? Your American citizen- when did you go get them?

RR: When I was sick.

PR: No, when did you get your citizen papers? Your American citizen- when did you get your papers, around 1920?

RR: I told you that was a long time and I don't know.

PR: I would say it was in twenties.

RR: Leave me alone.

PN: Did he get married here in Utah?

PR: Yes. He was married here, well he came to Utah, then they were married a short time after in Tooele.

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PN: What year was that about, do you remember?

PK: It would be in 1911, September of 1911.

PN: Your mother was Italian, right?

PR: Yes, she had come, her parents had died and my uncle who was the oldest brother had sent for her and she had arrived in Tooele. Dad came just a month or so before she did, I think. Then they were married. They are both from the same town.

PN: Same town.

PR: Same town, and yet I don't think they knew each other there. It was a small town. Well, comparably it would be a farming community about half the size of Magna actually from the description that I have gotten of it.

PN: So they didn't know each other there, but they met each other here.

PR: Yeah and were married. It was more or less just a planned setup in advance from my uncle.

PN: Where did they get married, which church? Do you remember?

PR: In Tooele I believe. You got married in Tooele didn't you Dad? When you got married you and Mamma, you got married in Tooele didn't you?

RR: No I marry...

PR: No, I mean when you got married it was Tooele, you got married in Tooele didn't you?

RR: Yeah, I got married in Tooele.

PR: Was it Father Sanders, the priest?

RR: What?

PR: Was the priest, Father Sanders?

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RR: I don't know who the father was in there, either...

PR: I think that maybe it was. Cause I can remember that he was the one that baptized me. It is kind of hard for him to remember a lot of that.

PN: I know, well he is 85 years old now isn't he?

PR: Yes. Well things are slipping a little for him.

PN: What we are interested in generally is just to find out his treatment over here and his living conditions. From what you have told me apparently he got along well with the men that he worked for and both company and the laborers.

PR: They got along real well all along. As a little kid, I can remember the crew, the riggers would have like beer busts and things which he was always a part of. They would have ball games between the two plants, they would have soft ball games, the two rigging gangs. Which Pete Rinaldi had one and Dad had the other. Dad would never play ball, but he would always go down and watch the ball games and they would have parties and things like that. They always got along real well.

PN: Did he have any trouble at all with anybody that you can recall? Did any of the local residents give him any trouble because he was Italian?

PR: No, not really. Actually this neighborhood here and he lived here just about all the time. They lived where there were mostly Italian people.

PN: Who were some of them? Are they the same Italian families here now?

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PR: Well there was Tony Conti, Sam, Rock Polidoni from Denver. There was a Sarroni, Terry Sarroni's Dad from Denver; they were all in the community here. They pretty well stuck together. As far as problems go, I don't ever recall them saying they had problems because of nationality. Some people might of looked down a little on him but they never said anything to him about it.

PN: Did he belong to any Italian organizations, for instance there, is the Societa...the Christopher Columbus Society in Salt Lake. Did he ever belong to any of these?

PR: No, he never joined any of these. He has been kind of a loner all of the time. He has never been a member of any society or group or anything like that.

PN: Was he active in the church when he first settled over here, or was he pretty much tied down to his job then?

PR: I think that he was pretty much tied down to his job. He went to church as he could, but there wasn't too much that he could do, under the circumstances. Then my mother was sick all the time. Through her sickness the priest use to come up home quite a bit. He was close to the church even though he wasn't a real what you could say mass attender, until after she died. Then after she died...

PN: Excuse me which year was that? Which year did she die?

PR: May of 1950. From then up until about September of 1970, and all the years I can remember he missed mass two weeks. That is because he was in the hospital with pneumonia one week and the second week

I wouldn't let him go. I had him over home and I didn't feel that he should be getting out of the house yet. So he was a regular attendant of Mass until then. He was just as faithful as he could be. And now he says that he is just too old, and he is afraid to drive down, and he can't walk that far. So he hasn't gone to mass since then. But he is still a devout Catholic. He still believes in his religion and lives by it although he doesn't go to mass.

PN: What kind of traditions did he carry from the old country?

he made wine didn't he?

PR: Yes. He made wine.

PN: What other type of things did they do? For instance did they make sausage?

PR: Well, they use to take care of their own meat, cure their own meat which I am sure your Dad has done. Pork, they would cure their own pork. Oh like they would put up their own olives. Well actually they provided, they were pretty well self-sufficient. If anything ever came up they would can all their own fruit, can their own tomatos, everything. They had, I can remember pigs, chickens. The only thing that they didn't have were beef. They didn't raise their own beer around here. But I can remember as a little boy, he would buy a quarter of beef off and on, but at that time you had no place to store it. So what you brought, you had to but some that could consume. Just keep cold for so long and then you would consume it. I can remember, Mom... they use to always make the homemade spaghetti all the time, noodles, different things like that.

PN: Were you the only boy in the family?

PR: I was the only one that lived. There were six others that died within two weeks to two months after birth. They were all born at seven months I believe.

PN: Do you think that the second generation Italian, this is your generation and mine my generation being second. Do you think that you have lost some of the old traditions that he use to do?

PR: I think that we have lost a lot, but we have still retained a lot. I mean, you and I, if we buy say we buy our pork now, we'll have it cut, and wrapped and froze. They didn't. They would go buy. Well, they use to raise their own pigs; and then they would take it. When they killed it, they would cure it themselves. They took care of all their own meat, which we don't anymore. Wine making, I have been making wine with thim ever since I have been able to walk. Now you can't get the permits here so that is a thing of the past too.

PN: Do you remember any superstitions that he had? Oh concerning making wine and following the moon and things like that?

PR: That's right... they had-the wine had to be made at a certain time-when the moon was full, I believe. And twice a year, once in February and I can't remember; it would be October I think they would have to change their wine. They would have to get down, and they'd take it out of the barrel, wash the barrel out and put it back in. They said if you didn't, all this settling from the barrel would work back up and get into your wine. I can remember

that. The gardens that they use to plant their gardens by the moon. They would go according to how the moon was when they'd plant their gardens.

PN: What else? Did they have anything to do with sickness that you can remember that were part of these superstitions?

PR: I can vaguely, not so much my Dad as my Mother. On this when they'd...you'd call it the evil eye.

PN: Yes.

PR: I think you remember with your mother.

PN: Tell me a little bit about that.

PR: Well they said when ever you get a severe headache you couldn't, aspirin or anything wouldn't help. They would say that somebody had given you the evil eye. In Italian they use to call it the mal occhio, think. I can't remember just how they did it, but there was oil and water in some way and they would make the sign of the cross on your forehead and let the oil drip into the water through some formation that it had, they could tell whether it was that or whether it was just a natural headache which you had. Actually they felt that they could cure a headache by that, if somebody was giving you the evil eye. Through superstition I guess, a lot of them were cured from it. I can't remember too much about it. I can just remember a few times I got a headache, why they would say that, and they would do that. The one that I can remember mostly, remember your mother use too. When I was a little kid about four or five years old she would do it for me when I

would get a headache, and Rose Conti, the two of them. My mother I can never really remember her doing it. I can remember your mother and Rose Conti doing it. Then there was another one and to me tradition is followed on this that bread is considered sacred. There is one thing you didn't do and that is mutilate any bread, at all. To me I was brought up with this and my kids will not do that. That is one thing that I will not put up with.

PN: It is just something that is carried on then.

PR: It is just carried on. I mean if the kids take a slice of bread at the table they will eat it or they will leave it. They will not take it and crumble it up and throw it down. That is the quickest way to make Dad fly off the handle there is.

PN: Is that true Tim?

RR: I don't know; I don't eat bread.

PR: That is about all the superstitions that I can remember that they had, customs.

PN: Has he ever gone back to Italy since he came back the second time?

PR: No, he hasn't. He has talked about it a lot. He has I think three sisters that are still alive back there, but he has never gone back.

PN: Did he help bring anybody over here that you remember?

PR: No, I don't think he did. He, when mom was sick he tried to get one of his sisters whose husband had died to come over as a care taker, you know to help take care of Mom and it fell through for some reason. I don't know why. It was shortly after World War II. There was quite a bit of effort put into it and then

dropped. I never did find out the actual details on it.

PN: Well I think that is about all that we have to do. Thanks a lot.

There is another question that I would like to ask. Was your father in World War II?

PR: No, he was in Italy at the time and the story that I got from him. He was called back in the service, he had been discharged previously and he was called back in. When they called him they had so many men that they gave him a ten day furlow, and that is how long it took him to get his passport and come over here. I think that is one of the reasons that he was never too anxious to go back. Previous to that, I think that he served two years in the army in Italy. That would be similar to the Marine Corp over here. During the Italian-Turkish War, and at that time he got a medical discharge due to-he got pneumonia. The story that I heard him tell, they didn't think that he was going to live and when he came out of it, why they discharged him. This would be after the time that he came here and then went back. He went in the service; and served his time in the service and was discharged; and World War I broke out again, he was called back and that is when he decided he was better over here than in the war over there. So he came over here.

PN: I see. Thanks Paul.