

EI – 1001

FRANCESKA BREGGIA PORTERFIELD

BIRTHDATE: NOVEMBER 27, 1923

INTERVIEW DATE: MAY 19, 1998

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 74

RUNNING TIME: 53:00

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D

RECORDING ENGINEER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D`

INTERVIEW LOCATION: CAPE ELIZABETH, MAINE

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: JESSICA GONZALEZ

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: DOUGLAS TARR

ITALY, 1928

AGE: 5

SHIP: AUGUSTUS

PORT: NOT GIVEN

RESIDENCES:

- **ITALY: LETTOMANOPELLO**
- **U.S.: PORTLAND AND CAPE ELIZABETH, MAINE**

LEVINE: Today is May 19th, 1998 and I'm here in Cape Elizabeth in Maine with Franceska Breggia, Breggia Porterfield, who is the sister of Hilda Aceto, who is also in this interview collection. Franceska came from Italy in 1928, when she was 5 years of age, on the Augustus we think, and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. Ok well I'm delighted to be here and I would like to start, if

you would again, with your birth date and where in Italy you were born.

PORTERFIELD: My birth date is 11/27/23, November, and I was born in Lettomanopello, Italy. Want me to spell that?

LEVINE: Yes that would be good.

PORTERFIELD: L-E-T-T-O-M-A-N-O-P-E-L-L-O

LEVINE: And can you, do you have memories?

PORTERFIELD: Yes.

LEVINE: What are the things you remember?

PORTERFIELD: Well I do remember the house that we owned and lived in. It's comparable to our town houses here. It was three stories high. We had a fireplace in the kitchen, which my mother used for cooking; we had one in our bedroom and one in the dining room, and we had, it was beautiful, it was a marble staircase with a, marble winding staircase

LEVINE: Wow.

PORTERFIELD: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Now that sounds like a very wealthy household, I mean it sounds like a substantial house, was the family well do by standards of the town?

PORTERFIELD: Well, not wealthy but we were, they were well off, I would say that, in this three story house there were two shops down, on the ground level, which my mother got the you know, rent from and, then she owned, she and my father owned in back of this house there was a smaller addition to the house and it was rented out and that had four rooms.

LEVINE: So you had three tenants plus your family in the...

PORTERFIELD: No, no, we lived in the big part of the house and in back of the house there were four rooms which she rented to a couple and then she also rented the two shops that were down at ground level in the same building.

LEVINE: And what were the shops?

PORTERFIELD: One was a, [?] they called it a coffee shop. They sold coffee in the morning and wine and probably I think they had, sold cookies, and cigarettes and tobacco and cigars, like a coffee shop. I would say. And the other shop I think was a tailor shop, from what I remember. It was, see my father was a shoe maker, not a cobbler, but he made shoes when he was in Italy, and then when he came over here, cause that art wasn't practiced that much. I don't remember when my father came over 1916 or 1917, but he opened up his own shop here in Portland and repaired shoes.

LEVINE: Now do you remember your father from before you actually arrived in America?

PORTERFIELD: No, no, no, my sister and I are twelve years apart. She's twelve years older than I and I don't remember him at all, till we came

over. Well I didn't remember him when I saw him either, I just didn't remember, I, I, I hadn't seen him at all.

LEVINE: Now did you, why don't you give your mother's name and maiden name?

PORTERFIELD: All right, my mother's name was Maria Carmen Donatelli

LEVINE: D-O-N-A-T-E-L-L-I?

PORTERFIELD: Uh huh.

LEVINE: And your father's first name?

PORTERFIELD: E-R-M-E-T-E, Ermete

LEVINE: And you, do you remember grandparents?

PORTERFIELD: No, I don't, no, no.

LEVINE: And how about aunts, uncles?

PORTERFIELD: Yes I remember we had aunts, we had aunts, we had an uncle that lived in Rome, an aunt and an aunt and an uncle that lived in Milano and, then we had closer relatives that lived close by where we lived in Lettomanopello, a lot of relatives.

LEVINE: Did you, did you see them, did you have experi... do you remember any experiences with them?

PORTERFIELD: The ones that lived in Rome and Milano used to come on holiday.

LEVINE: Like what holidays would that be?

PORTERFIELD: Like the summer holidays, you know the holy days that we have in the summer and, I don't think they, and Easter, yeah I don't think they came at Christmas time because the traveling was a little bit hard at that time

LEVINE: Do you remember those holidays, how they were celebrated there?

PORTERFIELD: Oh yes, oh yeah, oh food galore, and, one of the things there's a holiday that they still, well, not really, it's a festival in October, the first week in October, and it runs for the whole week.

LEVINE: Oh wow, what's the name of that one?

PORTERFIELD: And it's more like, they call it the October Fest, like in Germany they have. And they celebrate the whole week.

LEVINE: And what do they do, like...?

PORTERFIELD: Well, they have food tables out on the street, and they have, and they make up the most beautiful floral baskets and they win prizes, and they have, at night they have a band, and fireworks until one o'clock in the morning. This is a little tiny place. I don't know how they can afford to do that, but they do, every single year.

LEVINE: Now is it, is it a saint's, a particular saint's day or a week of observance?

PORTERFIELD: Yes it is. The holy day is the one day and they take this Madonna, from this little church that's way, way up on the hill. They go up there and they carry her down, the men carry her down on, on I don't know, I don't know what to call it.

LEVINE: Like a stretcher? Like a, a pedestal kind of?

PORTERFIELD: Well it's a pedestal but its put on something that there's three men on each side of it that carry it down from the hill, down to the main part of town

LEVINE: And how big is it? How big is it?

PORTERFIELD: Well she's 5 feet, I would say 5'7" or 8", and she's clothed with real clothes not..., every two or three years they collect money to make her a new outfit.

LEVINE: And is it always a sort of white robe with blue and gold?

PORTERFIELD: Yes, yes, uh huh, uh huh.

LEVINE: And flowers?

PORTERFIELD: Yeah, Its just beautiful and they do it at night, and you can and every body is holding a candle and across, across the way there's another town doing the same thing so its really a beautiful thing to see, if you look over and you see all these candles coming down the, yeah it is, its very, very impressive, I enjoyed it very much.

LEVINE: So, as far as experiences, well, talk about your mother a little bit, how, how would you describe your mother?

PORTERFIELD: Well my mother was very vivacious, and very compassionate person and when she married my father, she, my father was 27 and my mother had just turned, well she was 21, barely 21 and, I don't... how long he stayed with my mother before he came over here, but my sister Hilda was conceived at that time and, I think he stayed till Hilda was born and then he stayed about I think it was six month and then came back to America to make some money

LEVINE: And that was why he came? He felt he could make a better living here?

PORTERFIELD: Yes, yes, yes, that's why they all came over here, really

LEVINE: Yeah, so do you recall any stories about your father in America, while you were a little girl, in Italy?

PORTERFIELD: By my mother, cause my mother talked about him a lot, he worked and sent money home, and I think that's how my mother was able to buy this townhouse and, he, he, he got employment right away because that really is a trade, but only it was, he had a place uptown in Portland called Long Fellow Square, where, they had a shoe shine and then the repair of shoes, both men and women. And then they also had Stetson hats, which they used to, I don't think they made them, but cleaned them and repaired them or whatever.

LEVINE: So were you aware of like what your father was doing, while you were growing up in Italy? What you...

PORTERFIELD: Yes, well I was aware that he was working, but I couldn't visualize him at all, and when I came, I was very much in awe, of him. I used, we used to sit at the table and, I would kind of sneak up and look at him while he was eating you know, and, and he would look at me and smile and say don't you recognize me and I didn't think that was funny. I was really afraid of him, more or less.

LEVINE: What kind of a temperament did your father have?

PORTERFIELD: My father had a very, he was stoic, he didn't show his affections very much, but somehow I knew he loved us, loved me and I, I, we came in November and, I went to school that following September.

LEVINE: Had you been in school?

PORTERFIELD: No

LEVINE: In Italy, you'd never been to school?

PORTERFIELD: No, no, no so they put me in the first grade at the North School in Portland and, I couldn't speak a word of English. However the teacher used to sit me in the corner everyday with tape across my mouth, for talking too much, and I just don't know who I was talking to or who understood me.

LEVINE: Were there other Italian children in your class?

PORTERFIELD: There were other Italian children. They were born here but they had Italian background, but they couldn't speak Italian and, I don't know how I made it. I stayed in that same school until the eighth grade

and I was barely twelve when I twelve, thirteen when I get off the eighth grade and then I went to Portland High School.

LEVINE: Well let's just finish off with anything else about Italy, do you recall when your mother told you, you were coming to America?

PORTERFIELD: Uh huh, it seems to me that she told us we were coming to America and it seemed an awful long time before it really happened. It seemed to me, because you know how children are, they're, yeah time is...

LEVINE: Well did, did your mother, what did she do? Did she sell the house, or...

PORTERFIELD: No, no she did not sell the house, her niece, her niece lived in the back part of that addition I told you, and then she, her niece moved into the townhouse and rented the back, it was all rented, and she sent my mother the rental from there.

LEVINE: And, do you remember anything that your mother or anything you brought with you?

PORTERFIELD: No, well we brought our clothes, oh my mother brought over a lot of gold for her sister-in-laws and close friends, that she was going be, well she had close friends, but they were in Italy, so she did bring an awful lot of gold like earrings and chains for these people.

LEVINE: So, let's see, when you were leaving was there any kind of a gathering?

PORTERFIELD: Oh yes

LEVINE: What was that?

PORTERFIELD: I remember, Well cause all the relatives came, gathered together, and there was a lot of, there was a big meal and there was a lot of crying, and I remember my mother telling her sister don't worry, she said don't worry, don't cry I'll be back in seven years, and I don't know where, where she got the seven but she never went back, never.

LEVINE: Did your relatives from Milan or from Rome come when you were leaving?

PORTERFIELD: Yes, yes, yes, not that very day, but they came like maybe a couple of weeks before to say their good-byes.

LEVINE: And, were there many people in the little town that had relatives who had come?

PORTERFIELD: Oh, all of them, all of them, practically everybody in that little town had relatives that, that either lived in New York, Boston, Stonington was a place, Stonington, Maine and Portland, very few of them from that town went to the west coast at that time, very few.

LEVINE: So a lot of people had relatives here who came to say good-bye to you and your family.

PORTERFIELD: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: So it was your sister, and you, and your mother.

PORTERFIELD: Uh huh, yeah.

LEVINE: And, do you remember leaving, actually departing from the town?

PORTERFIELD: I don't remember that, I don't remember that very clearly, but I remember, I remember on the ship I was so sea sick, I don't think I ate anything all those fourteen days out on the ship, and then I remember Ellis Island very clearly.

LEVINE: Do you remember when the ship came into the New York harbor, your first impressions?

PORTERFIELD: Yes, yes, cause they spoke of the, Statue of Liberty, course that didn't mean anything to me, and my mother had two brothers, three brothers that lived in, Garden City, New York, so they came to meet us at Ellis Island.

LEVINE: And what do you remember about Ellis Island, anything at all?

PORTERFIELD: It seem to me, it was huge, huge, everybody was talking and I couldn't understand a word anyone was saying, really, it, really and then I think we had to have a physical exam before we could leave.

LEVINE: Was it crowded, when you were there?

PORTERFIELD: Oh, yes, yes, it was, it seems to me like there was so many people there, yes.

LEVINE: And were you treated well, do you have any sense of anything about the...

PORTERFIELD: The only thing that bothered my mother was the physical, because, they, you know, the only time they ever see a doctor, in fact, there was no doctor in my hometown, there was but, the babies were delivered a, delivered by a...

LEVINE: Midwives.

PORTERFIELD: Mid-wife, and then there was a doctor in case you broke your leg or something like that and then they would send you to Rome if it anything, if anything was serious, they would send you to Rome to the hospitals in Rome.

LEVINE: Was folk medicine practiced? Do you remember any kinds of home remedies?

PORTERFIELD: Yes, yes, yes, oh yes, yes, yes, um, no one ever took a pill, that I know of, or remember, but if you got a cold, my mother had a wonderful treatment for that, she would rub us with warm olive oil.

LEVINE: You mean your whole body?

PORTERFIELD: No your chest, if you had a cold, and then she would take a piece of a flannel and heat it and put it over us, and then she would take wine, sugar, cinnamon, and orange peel and bring it to a boil, and let us eat, drink that, and what would happen, you would just sweat that cold right out, with all the heat and the wine.

LEVINE: Wow, you probably would go to sleep after that.

PORTERFIELD: Yeah, try to. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Wow. [Laughs]

PORTERFIELD: Yeah, Yeah.

LEVINE: Did you, is that anything you ever practiced after you came here?

PORTERFIELD: Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, I used to do it for my children, my husband would have no part of it but, it worked, I'm telling you it did work.

LEVINE: So, let's see, so, when you saw your three uncles, of course you didn't recognize them either.

PORTERFIELD: No, no, no.

LEVINE: Right, so what happened, when they came?

PORTERFIELD: Well, they came to meet us, and they took us to their home, I think they lived in, they lived in Garden City, that's where they live, and that was the first time I had ever seen or eaten a banana and I can't understand that, cause Italy is close to you know the, Africa or you know where the banana, that was the first, I know it taste so delicious to me.

LEVINE: Who gave it to you?

PORTERFIELD: My aunt or my uncle, you know, they had to, cause, they're always, the Italians are, always cooking for any occasion for that matter and we had, we stayed there, two nights and a day, and then we took the train to come to Portland.

LEVINE: What was the train ride like?

PORTERFIELD: I don't remember that much about the train ride, we must have taken a train from uh...

LEVINE: New York.

PORTERFIELD: New York to here, and my father met us at Union Station.

LEVINE: Could you describe Union Station?

PORTERFIELD: Well, oh it seemed huge to me, have you ever seen, you never saw our Union...oh, it was beautiful.

LEVINE: Yeah I bet it was.

PORTERFIELD: It was just beautiful and, he came to meet us and kissed my mom and kissed my sister and, I, like I said. I was really in awe of him. I mean here's a 5-year old girl and you say, well, "See that man, that's your father" You know. So we went home, we lived in, Portland, at 3-Goul [ph] street, I don't know if you know Portland.

LEVINE: I know it a little bit.

PORTERFIELD: Do you know where the, do you know where the Nessens bakery is?

LEVINE: No.

PORTERFIELD: No, Washington, on Washington Avenue.

LEVINE: Oh, Washington Avenue, yeah.

PORTERFIELD: Well we lived further, about two, three blocks down from there.

LEVINE: And what was that neighborhood like when you, when you were first here?

PORTERFIELD: Well, the neighbor was, the neighborhood was nice, the only thing, my mother, when she saw her house, she kind of felt, was disappointed because our house was a stucco in Italy, and this house was wood. She goes "Oh my gosh, a wooden house' you know, but her sister, her sister lived right around the corner from us. And then my father's relatives lived down on, Newberry Street, which was at that time, was Newberry Street, Fourth street, Middle street. It was called little Italy.

LEVINE: Oh.

PORTERFIELD: But we, we lived oh, about I would say a twenty minute walk from there.

LEVINE: Is there anything about Little Italy that you can recall about in those days?

PORTERFIELD: Oh yes, yes, our church is down there.

LEVINE: Saint Peters?

PORTERFIELD: Yes, Saint Peters and then further down is Middle Street and Deer Street, and Olive Street that's called little Italy and the, they all spoke Italian, and my mother never spoke English. She never had to because she'd go down to Little Italy and shop, and the church,

we had, Italian and English, so she could understand and she could say a few words but I mean she never was interested in learning it.

LEVINE: Uh, huh, was Father Romany?

PORTERFIELD: Oh that was way before Father Romany, way, way before...

LEVINE: So he came, so, you can conti... did the Italian community in Portland continue the same kinds of, festivals and, customs, ways?

PORTERFIELD: Not so much the festivals, as the customs.

LEVINE: What customs were preserved in this country would you say?

PORTERFIELD: Well, preserved, ok.

LEVINE: Were carried out.

PORTERFIELD: Starting with, well starting in January, the first, the New Year, we have a, a celebration for New Year's Eve and then...

LEVINE: Was that religious in any way?

PORTERFIELD: Well you did go, have to go to chur... mass and, and then, but you, you celebrated the New Year's Eve at a friends house, relatives house, houses and, and, then...

LEVINE: February.

PORTERFIELD: February, they celebrated, what did they, oh they have a holy day in February that they celebrate, Candlemas, let me see in February...

LEVINE: Is there anything specific to that one?

PORTERFIELD: Yes, you go to church, and its suppose to be the saint, that has, in charge of throats, you know they would bless your throat, you weren't suppose to have any sore throats, February, March, March was, nothing really. I think April naturally would be, Easter and then, they don't celebrate Mother's Day in Italy, so it would be, a Memorial Day at the end of the month. And June, really there's nothing in June or July. August there's a holi... a religious holiday around the 14th of August. September there's nothing and nothing in October. November, the beginning of November is a church holiday, oh yeah, that's the first and the second of November and then Christmas

LEVINE: And were there ways in celebrating any of those, that you know carried over from the way you did it, or did you, did, were they celebrated pretty much the same way? Is that...

PORTERFIELD: Well they would celebrate like Christmas Eve and Easter the same way but, it just was a big meal, and, and, relatives lot of just visiting and friends, yeah.

LEVINE: So, did your mother grow accustomed to being here? Did she like it here?

PORTERFIELD: No.

LEVINE: No. She never did, uh, huh.

PORTERFIELD: Well she did years and years later, but at first she used to, she used to cry because she missed her nice home so much, over there as opposed to what we had here.

LEVINE: And how about your father, did he like it here?

PORTERFIELD: Yes, yes, he did, he did like it here, because after we came over he never went back and neither did my mother, and never went back, cause we came in '28 and the Depression started in '29.

LEVINE: So did, did the Depression hit your family hard?

PORTERFIELD: Yeah, my father lost his shop, yeah, and he had to go work with the WPA.

LEVINE: Oh really, what did he do with the WPA?

PORTERFIELD: Well all I can remember is that, my father was not a physical person, wasn't a make, brick layer or anything like that, he used to pitch, what it, pitch and shovel, was that what they called it? Pick and shovel? Oh yeah, just a laborer.

LEVINE: So just working...

PORTERFIELD: Uh, huh.

LEVINE: Wow so, the WPA, that he, the group that he was working with were, were doing their labor around Portland?

PORTERFIELD: Around Portland, you know, surrounding Portland, like the parks and the public buildings, and things like that.

LEVINE: So what happened after the depression? Did he get his shop back?

PORTERFIELD: Yes, after the Depression, he, I don't know, we, my father used to get 26 dollars a week from the gov, 26 dollars every two weeks from the, from the, WPA. I don't know how, they, he, they saved some money but after the Depression, he was able to rent a shop up in Portland in the Mount Joy field area and he had his own business again, for shoe repair, yeah.

LEVINE: In the mean time your mother or your fath... mother and father were collecting rent from...

PORTERFIELD: Yeah, but it didn't amount too much. The exchange was very very low at that time. So, I think it got to the point to where my mother told her niece not to even bother to send it anymore.

LEVINE: Wow.

PORTERFIELD: Yeah, so that was eventually sold, but it was sold, in thirds, and, I think where it was one oh, oh, one family house, they made it like a two family house and...

LEVINE: That was that.

PORTERFIELD: Compared to what the house was like, they got very, very little from it.

END OF TAPE A BEGIN TAPE B

LEVINE: So, do you remember a turning point when, did you like it at first, when you first came?

PORTERFIELD: Oh I loved it.

LEVINE: You liked it right from the start?

PORTERFIELD: Oh yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: And how about the language, was there a time when it started to click for you?

PORTERFIELD: Oh yes, yeah. I got through the first grade. I was speaking English.

LEVINE: And what was it like? You were speaking English and your mother was speaking Italian. What was that like?

PORTERFIELD: Well, in, I was kind of ashamed of it, you know, but when I think of it, it was wonderful because I, kept up my Italian with her, and moved back with my sister, we still speak Italian and so, and that made me, you know, kind of hold on to that and, I took 3 years of French and 2 years of Spanish in High School, which my Italian background helped me very, very much in that.

LEVINE: Yeah, well you must have been the best English speaker in the fam... well I suppose your father, but being a child where you can pick it up so much more easily...

PORTERFIELD: Yeah, well see, they, my father had an acc... accent, my sister has an accent and I for some reason don't have it, but I think its because I was so young when, you know, I learned the language, that, that's probably why I don't have it, have an accent...

LEVINE: Well did any-body become a citizen here or...

PORTERFIELD: My father was a citizen, yeah, and my mother was, she became, I was, my sister and I were citizens naturalized through my father, and then my mother got her citizenship years later and...

LEVINE: Was that a big deal, I mean was that, a particular happy day to become... I mean how did your mother and father feel about becoming American?

PORTERFIELD: I really don't know if they spoke about it that much, cause most of them became citizens in order to bring more relatives over.

LEVINE: Right.

PORTERFIELD: And, I know a lot of them that, just got over here by, with not being a citizen. They had to go, they came, they went from Italy, from New York to Canada, a lot of them migrated to Canada till they saw fit or were able to come to the States.

LEVINE: Yeah, You mean if they weren't fit enough to be, accepted?

PORTERFIELD: Uh, huh, not fit enough but, they weren't legally American...

LEVINE: Oh yeah, I suppose, cause you're talking about after the quotas came in...

PORTERFIELD: Yes, maybe after they could...

LEVINE: Maybe they could get into America first.

PORTERFIELD: And they could go to Canada and then eventually come to the United States, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

PORTERFIELD: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah that makes sense, yeah. And, when you look back on it now, do you think the fact that you came here as a five year old and , and were sort of started fresh again, do you think that immigration experience somehow had affected you, the kind of person you are, or became?

PORTERFIELD: Uh huh.

LEVINE: In what ways do you think that might have happened?

PORTERFIELD: I, I graduated from High School and I went to business school for six months and, the thought of going to college never entered my mind because my, we couldn't afford to. So I got out of High School when I was seventeen and I got an office job two weeks later and that was, was the most stupid thing I ever did, was take a commercial course. I mean, I, there was so many other things that I could have done, but, that's how it wa... that's how it happened with me. But I was always proud of my heritage.

LEVINE: Do you, how, is there some way that you think about your Italian heritage and the fact that you grew up in this country and have a, have a, an American side to you? Do, how do you think about this?

PORTERFIELD: Well no matter what, this is my country, but you still have the teachings and the beliefs in the, in the background of, of, of, your, your European, upbringing and, and I don't think you'd never lose that, once, once you have it, I don't think you can ever lose it, and I think in certain things it does determine your way of thinking.

LEVINE: Can you think of any specific ways of that background determines the way you think about life and, the world?

PORTERFIELD: Well, I think, they're not as bigoted in Europe as we are over here.

LEVINE: Mmm, in what, in what ways?

PORTERFIELD: Well, they, I mean to them color is just, that's the way God made them, and the same with religion, you know, and, they accept a person, well there is a kind of class difference, there is over there a class difference between the, between the, the, farmers and the middle class, they still have class distinctions over there, which we don't have here, but not because, well I think you would call that bigoted too, but I think we're more bigoted over here than they are over there. Because that little town you wouldn't see a, a, another person of color, or religion, so maybe that's why they don't, they don't have any reason...

LEVINE: Mmm, Did you experience any prejudice against you for being Italian in this country?

PORTERFIELD: In grade school.

LEVINE: What, in what ways?

PORTERFIELD: Names, names that they used to call us, or me especially you know.

LEVINE: Why you especially?

PORTERFIELD: Because most of the children that, at, a, that, grammar school were all born here.

LEVINE: Oh, but they were Italian mostly?

PORTERFIELD: There were, yeah, but they were born here, and a, and a little bit, but it never really bothered me, cause at the beginning I didn't know what the heck they were saying anyway.

LEVINE: Yeah, by the time you understood what they were saying it...

PORTERFIELD: It didn't matter.

LEVINE: It didn't right. Yeah, well how about now, now that your, your children are grown, you're, you're, finished working, or whatever, how, what is this period of your life like?

PORTERFIELD: Oh, its very, I'm happy, my husband and I are happy, were in good health, we're not rich but we can do what we want and my children are all well. I did lose two sons and, they're all doing well, the ones

that are living, and I have one granddaughter and really I am very, thankful for, for what we have today.

LEVINE: And when you look over that, your life, can you think of, the high points, what were particularly, either happy or significant for you?

PORTERFIELD: Oh, well I had a, we had, had a great time in high school and, I had a lot of friends, wonderful friends, which I still have today, that I grew up with and everything, and, during the war, I met my husband during the war, he was stationed on the Missouri.

LEVINE: Oh, in Portland harbor.

PORTERFIELD: Yeah, uh huh...

LEVINE: Oh.

PORTERFIELD: So.

LEVINE: So how did you meet?

PORTERFIELD: Well, I used to go, we used, I used to belong to the USO and, I had a great time at the USO really, I met a lot of really nice fellas and, the "Missouri" wasn't docked off, in Portland and they had a ship's dance at the milk street armory and I went, my friends and I went and that's, my husband asked me to dance, which I did and that was it. I met him June 9th, and we were married September 14th.

LEVINE: Oh.

PORTERFIELD: And my daughter was born thirteen months later.

LEVINE: And, and, what was it about your husband that you liked?

PORTERFIELD: Well, he was cute, he wasn't much of a dancer but he, he was nice and, the fact he proposed to me two or three weeks later.

LEVINE: Wow.

PORTERFIELD: Yeah.

LEVINE: And what's your husband's name?

PORTERFIELD: Russell

LEVINE: Yeah.

PORTERFIELD: Uh huh.

LEVINE: And, and how many children?

PORTERFIELD: Five, we had five children, yeah.

LEVINE: And, so, so, we were talking about the high points, and so you really liked high school working at, with the USO, and, would, this is a sort of a funny question but did you ever have any heroes, in other words people you either knew or people you knew about, that you thought was, we're inspiring.

PORTERFIELD: Well Frank Sinatra was my hero and, but not personally, I did not like the boys in Portland that I met, you know the high school boys, I didn't care for them at all but...

LEVINE: What was it you just didn't...

PORTERFIELD: I don't know, they, they seemed like jerks to me at the time and...

LEVINE: Was your husband, where was your husband from?

PORTERFIELD: Wisconsin.

LEVINE: Oh.

PORTERFIELD: In Wisconsin, yeah and, he was only seventeen when he went into the service, and he went to boot camp and then they sent him right down to the Pacific, yeah, he was there four years.

LEVINE: Did he...

PORTERFIELD: He was on the "Missouri" when they had the, the peace signing.

LEVINE: I was gonna say how did the war affect you personally?

PORTERFIELD: Not, cause we were rationed, we had rationed books at the time, but, that's about all, I mean cause the, the Navy was in Portland all the time and, I didn't go out with the sailors unless I met them at the USO club, and you couldn't go to the USO club, until you, you had to fill out an application, and then they would, investigate you.

LEVINE: Oh really.

PORTERFIELD: Then they would issue you a card. Yeah. Oh, I had, I had a nice time during the war, I didn't have any brothers that were in the service, you know I didn't have brothers, so...

LEVINE: Was your father strict with you?

PORTERFIELD: Yes, when I started going to the USO, I was nineteen I think and I had to be home at nine o'clock and I was home at nine o'clock.

LEVINE: Yeah, well, lets see, what else, is there anything else about, early Portland, or Portland at, in, 1928 and the years there after that has changed dramatically?

PORTERFIELD: The whole city, has changed.

LEVINE: What, what, what was there that is no longer?

PORTERFIELD: Well, the, the, the North school that I went to, which is right at the foot of Mount Joy Hill, is, is a, not a school anymore, it's a, what do they call it congregate, a home for elderly people.

LEVINE: Oh, um hmm.

PORTERFIELD: And, a lot of the shops were, that were along the streets, they're gone.

LEVINE: What was Mount Joy Hill like in those days?

PORTERFIELD: Well, of course the ocean's right there and, it, it's beautiful now and it is beautiful, it was beautiful then and in the summer time we would all pack a lunch and go up to the hill, up the hill, and swim.

LEVINE: And the Eastern Prominence.

PORTERFIELD: Yes, yes. It was polluted too, but no one ever told us that, at that time, and we stayed there all day long, go home around 4:30 or five o'clock in the afternoon, and no one was afraid of, of, no one, no, children weren't afraid at that..., we, we didn't have any reason to be.

LEVINE: Right, how about the other ethnic groups that settled in Portland, the Irish, the Jews?

PORTERFIELD: There was a lot of Irish in Portland, Greek, Armenians and, that's about it, and Italians.

LEVINE: Was, was there mingling amongst them or not?

PORTERFIELD: Yes, yes, yeah there was, I had a lot of, I made new friends, but, and there was never any question about oh, of your ethnic background you know, everyone accepted you.

LEVINE: eah, let's see is there anything else that you can think of that we might not have covered? As far as life before, or, the values of your mot... how about the values of your mother and father, do you think you carried them out with your own children? In what, in what ways?

PORTERFIELD: Well, they, I don't, well I kind of set them up for my children the same way that my mother and father, I mean getting pregnant, that was enough to shoot your brains out at that time, you know, but course today, a lot of things have changed, I have not changed my,

I will never change my position on abortion, and I think that's because of my religion also, but, they, they, we were more lenient because, my father never owned a car, never had a car, so my children, they had a car, well we had a car that they could use, but they always had a curfew, but I did not say you had to be home at eleven o'clock, and that was told to me by a very good friend of mine, older friend of mine, and she said "Don't tell em, don't say you have to be home at a certain time because they might be late and they might try to rush home and accidents do happen that way." Though, at a reasonable time, but it was eleven, around eleven o'clock.

LEVINE: Mmm, so, but was your husband strict with your children?

PORTERFIELD: Yes, he was the boss, he was in the service twenty - two years, yeah, and, he thought they were his soldiers to command, but you know, they have told their father that they're glad that he was strict like that.

LEVINE: Uh huh, well he doesn't have an Italian name, is he Italian?

PORTERFIELD: No.

LEVINE: No, how, what was that like for your family, for you to marry someone...

PORTERFIELD: Uhhh, it was quite a trauma for me because, he's not Catholic, cause he's not Italian, and I had never been anywhere out of Maine, maybe to Boston and that first year was I think I cried every single day for Maine and my fam

LEVINE: Oh you mean he was stationed in Boston.

PORTERFIELD: No, no,

LEVINE: Ohh he was in Europe.

PORTERFIELD: No, no he was not, out of the service when we got married, he'd just gotten out, and we got married in, we went to Wisconsin to where, where his parents lived and I just hated it, hated it. What I missed a lot was the ocean, missed the ocean terribly and then, my daugh, when my daught, after my daughter was born, she was born in Green Bay, Wisconsin. My first child and, after a year, I told him, I said I'm going back to Maine, if you want to come fine if you don't, don't and he did, two weeks later he came, couldn't find a job in Portland and, let's see, Mary was born in '47, jobs were still a little hard to get after the war and he couldn't find a job, so he went back in the service.

LEVINE: Oh.

PORTERFIELD: And stayed for twenty-two years.

LEVINE: So, there was, there an Italian community in, in, Wisconsin where he...

PORTERFIELD: No, no.

LEVINE: So you didn't have any of those connections.

PORTERFIELD: No, no.

LEVINE: So that was very gutsy at that time for you to take that stand.

PORTERFIELD: Yes, yes, yeah I just, the peop... no they say Yankees are very stoic and cold, that's not true, it isn't true, cause that's what, that's the way they are in,

LEVINE: Wisconsin.

PORTERFIELD: Wisconsin and Michigan, they are nice people, hello, how are you, and that's it. Well here you say hello, how are you, come in, have a cup of coffee or a visit up not, there not like out there, and, my mother always had the coffee pot ready, you know, I just couldn't stand that way of life.

LEVINE: And, I, I should have asked you earlier, but how is it with your father? I mean when you first came, over, you didn't even know him and then you kind of tried to get, how did that work, play itself out?

PORTERFIELD: It came close to my father, after I got married.

LEVINE: Oh that's interesting.

PORTERFIELD: Yeah.

LEVINE: And how did that happen?

PORTERFIELD: Well I think it was because of, he liked my husband right off the bat and, and then af... when his grandchildren started coming, he was crazy about my children and that was it, that was it, he, I think he

understood me more or I understood him better, I don't why, what the reason was, but that's when I really began to enjoy my father.

LEVINE: And did, did your family frown on your marrying someone who wasn't Italian or a Catholic?

PORTERFIELD: No, no, that was another thing going to Wisconsin, I missed my religion very much.

LEVINE: There was no Catholic Church there?

PORTERFIELD: Yes there was, but I didn't go, see we were married by a Justice of the Peace, therefore as far as the Catholic Church was concerned, I was not married.

LEVINE: So you wouldn't didn't go to church?

PORTERFIELD: No, no and that was another thing that preyed on my mind after all those years, I was twenty-three when I got married, you know I wasn't no baby, but, I'm glad I came back to Maine, cause we been here ever since.

LEVINE: Yeah and, lets see, I can't think of anything else, unless you can about, coming to this country and how your life has been since.

PORTERFIELD: Well its been a wonderful life when I look back, you know, we had, three bad, two bad moments, I lost two sons, one was eighteen and the other was thirty-six and, that was that, that's painful, but otherwise, its been a wonderful life, wonderful life.

EI – 1001/PORTERFIELD

LEVINE: Okay, well I want to thank you so much, its been a wonderful interview, really, very interesting, I'm so happy I had the chance to talk with you.

PORTERFIELD: Well, I'm glad you did, and I'm glad you came.

LEVINE: Yeah, and I've been speaking with Franceska Porterfield who came from Italy at five years of age, in November of 1928 and this is May 19th, 1998 and this Janet Levine for from the National Park Service and I'm signing off.

END OF INTERVIEW