

EI-1032

ANGELA DICELLO STELLA

BIRTHDATE: NOVEMBER 1, 1907

INTERVIEW DATE: DECEMBER 23, 1998

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 91

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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ITALY, 1912

AGE: 4

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PORT:

RESIDENCES:

LEVINE: We're starting now. It's December 23rd, 1998. I'm here in the Oral History Studio at Ellis Island with Angela Stella, born Angela DiCello, who came from Nicastro [PH], Italy in 1912 when she was four years old, practically five years old when she—when she arrived. At the time of this interview, Mrs. Stella is 91. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. Well, I'm very happy you were able to come here.

STELLA: I am too. [chuckles]

LEVINE: And your—and your niece, Johanna—

STELLA: Pappeta [PH].

LEVINE: —Pappeta.

STELLA: And my sister, Antoinette Pappeta.

LEVINE: And—and Antoinette Pappeta, your sister, were able to come with you. And we're going to start right at the beginning. And if you could say, again for the tape, your birth date.

STELLA: November 1st, 1907.

LEVINE: And where in Italy were you born?

STELLA: [clears throat] Nicastro, Italy.

LEVINE: Okay, and you were describing to me its location.

STELLA: I'd say it's close—not too far from Naples, down, further south of Naples. It's around the ankle. That's all I can say. [chuckles]

LEVINE: That's a very good way of putting. Okay. [chuckles] So [clears throat]—and why don't—what was your mother's name?

STELLA: Joanna.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

STELLA: Buttera.

LEVINE: Could you spell that one?

STELLA: B-U-T-T-E-R-A.

LEVINE: Okay. And your father's name?

STELLA: Michelangelo DiCello. That's how I got—

LEVINE: The M.

STELLA: —Michelle and the M. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, because you really are M. Angela Stella.

STELLA: Right.

LEVINE: And the M. is for Michelle.

STELLA: Yeah.

LEVINE: But you never use it.

STELLA: No, never.

LEVINE: Okay. [chuckles] What do you remember about your father?

STELLA: Nothing at all, dear. He died two weeks before I was born.

LEVINE: Why don't you tell—now, you said he had come to this country?

STELLA: Yes, my father went back and forth a few times, I guess to get some money, like the young men did at that time, and left—left his wife and three children back in Nicastro. And—but he had a sister and a brother over here. And he came, stayed with them. And this last time he was coming over and take us back with him. In the meantime, he got sick and—and Mother was pregnant. But he died before I was born. He died the 18th of October, 1907. I was born the first of November, two weeks to the day. So I never saw my father. And then we were over there [clears throat]—

LEVINE: He died there?

STELLA: Oh, yes. He died there. Uh-huh. So then we weren't going to bother coming over here, since he was not going to be there. And—but we had relatives in New York and, as I said, my a—uncle and aunt were over here. So they came for us when I was about four years old and they insisted we come over to stay with them.

LEVINE: I see.

STELLA: Which—which is what we did.

LEVINE: Now, what did your father do when he—when he came to this country [unclear]?

STELLA: Oh, he worked in the mines. He stayed with his sister or brother. You know, he stayed with them and he worked in—we live in the—oh, I guess the capitol of the hard coal area.

LEVINE: In Pennsylvania?

STELLA: Yeah, uh-huh. And he—he worked in the mines. And my aunt lived in Anlandingville [PH], which is a little old Dutch town. It's as Dutch as can be. And when they mixed the Italian with the Dutch, you ought to hear that. [chuckles] But anyway, that's why we came over here then four years later.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: And these relatives that came were from New York. And they had been back and forth a lot. And that's why, I guess, we got on that nice ship, because they had been going back and forth, you see.

LEVINE: Oh.

STELLA: Uh-huh. So [clears throat]—and of course, they—we stayed with them about three years in New York and then after that was Pennsylvania all the time.

LEVINE: Where in New York were they?

STELLA: Buffalo.

LEVINE: Buffalo.

STELLA: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So—[clears throat] so was it your father's sisters and brothers who were already here?

STELLA: Yes, yes. Uh-huh. And that's how he went back and forth. They were the older ones. He was the youngest in the family. And he stayed with them. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: I see. Now, did you have grandparents in Italy that you recall?

STELLA: No, they were all dead before I was born.

LEVINE: Okay.

STELLA: I had a grandmother for one month. And when I was a month old—I can imagine what my poor mother went through, her husband dying. Two weeks after, I came along. And a month later, her mother died. It was a sad time of her life.

LEVINE: Oh, yeah.

STELLA: So I had a grandmother just for a month. The others were all dead.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: How about aunts and uncles over there? Did you have—

STELLA: No.

LEVINE: —some of them?

STELLA: No, they h—were scattered. Some were in France. I think I had an uncle in Argentina; Mom used to tell me. But I—I never met them, never saw them. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, do you know, by any chance, whether your mother and father—whether their families were from the same region in Italy?

STELLA: Yes. Yes, they were. Uh-huh. Yes, they were. Uh-hmm. Yes.

LEVINE: And do you know if your father went anywhere else before he went to this country to work?

STELLA: No. No, I don't think so. Not that I know of.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: See, I knew so little about him, not having seen him at all.

LEVINE: Right.

STELLA: And he—he doesn't know me. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Did your mother ever tell you anything about him?

STELLA: Oh, yeah. She'd tell me nice thing about him, yeah.

LEVINE: What did—

STELLA: Oh, how he used to take my older sister and brother, how he'd take 'em along with him when he was over there, you know. They had a horse or something. They were cultivating land and that he would take them along, you know. And when he was on his deathbed, I'll never forget my mother saying this, that he said, "You know, I'm not going to be here so you take care of our three children." He said, "No, four." He remembered that [chuckles] I was on the way, I guess. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: That's about all I can remember, really.

LEVINE: Yeah. And how about your mother? What—what kind of a person was she? Do you—

STELLA: Oh, yeah. She was a mother and father to me and—and, oh, I just loved her dearly. I—this older sister got married and then we lived with her. And my two brothers died during the flu epidemic in 1918. Yeah, they both died. And so she got married and we stayed with her. Now, I was 12 years old at this point and my mother remarried. She remarried. And that's the sister I have here, who's actually a half sister.

LEVINE: I see.

STELLA: Uh-huh. So it was just the two of us and we didn't have too much hardship during the Depression like a lot of other people did, because he—he worked outside of the mines. He always had a nice job and it was only the two of us. So we got along pretty well, where a lot of the people that—in the '20s, they were—oh, my; '20s and '30s, you know, they're all in relief and all that. But we're getting along pretty good. But I often wonder what my father would have been like.

LEVINE: Yeah.

STELLA: A stepfather is always a stepfather; let's face it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-huh. Well, tell me what you remember about the flu epidemic.

STELLA: I don't re—how old would I have been? Ten or eleven years. Oh, I don't remember too much about it. The one thing that stands out in my mind, my mo—and my mother told me, I guess, that she and I were the only ones didn't have it in the whole family. The brothers, the uncles and aunts, you know, and their children. And my sister had three, four children at that time. And they were all down but us. She and I, she said. And my mother was taking care of all of them. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Do you remember the illness and the deaths and—

STELLA: Oh, yes. They had so many deaths that the—the undertakers couldn't handle them. We had an armory in Pottsville and that's where they brought the dead. Yeah. I guess I remember part of that—I was 10 or 11—and then mother telling me about it too, was a sad time. Two and three people died in each family sometime—you know. So, yeah, that was a very, very sad time. I had—I don't recall how many people died in our little town of Pottsville. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Hmm. Do you remember the treatment at all?

STELLA: No, I don't, honey. No.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: But strange that I didn't have it and my mother didn't have it. Yeah, I guess we were supposed to take care of them. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: I remember going to the store. My mother'd send me to the store, the store on the other side of the street from us, about two blocks away on the other side. And she'd send me for sugar and coffee and that's about all I remember. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Well, let's—let's go back to when you—before you left Italy. Do you remember anything about Nicastro?

STELLA: No, not a thing.

LEVINE: Anything about life before you left there?

STELLA: No, not a thing. I don't know. I must have been a backward kid. But I took my mother there in 1954. I always wanted her to go back where she came from. I thought, 'If I could only do that.' So after my husband died, I worked—my husband died in '45 and I worked about 10 years so I got enough money for the two of us to go over there. In '54, we went over there and I took her back. But the place had changed. She didn't recognize it herself and where they lived was no longer there. And they were building a lot of these condos, like we have here, you know. They were building a lot of those at the time. It didn't seem like the same place.

LEVINE: Oh.

STELLA: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Do you remember growing up? Things that your mother told you? Like, i—ideas she had about how you should be or how you should live or what you should do?

STELLA: Oh, yes. We were brought up very, very strict. And in those days, nice girls never went out alone after dark. I don't know if it was only my mother [chuckles] or if that was the thing, you know, way, way back in—in the teens and the '20s, you know. I don't know. And not having any brothers, I was stuck in the house. And I really did listen. I know a lot of my friends, they were told the same thing. But they would sneak out once in a while. But I was afraid. Uh-uh. The minute I do something like that, I'm going to get caught. Then we had a pastor that was very, very strict. And the—then when my mother remarried, we went by ourself. We—you know, a place of our own. And this house was right behind our church. And I was over there helping at the church, did a lot of things at the church. So then I got a good upbringing, between the pastor and my mother.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: So—

LEVINE: What—what religion was it?

STELLA: Catholic.

LEVINE: Catholic.

STELLA: Catholic, uh-huh. Yeah, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: So [clears throat], let's see. If we—if we just go back to when you left, do you remember if there was anything that your mother brought with you that—that—

STELLA: No—

LEVINE: —she kept?

STELLA: No, other than papers, I think. I don't think she brought much of anything else, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

STELLA: Because she had three kids, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: So she—

LEVINE: Yeah. So—

STELLA: In fact, I don't think she wanted to come here. It was her relatives that—but she had no one over there either. She was the youngest of her family, you see, and they had moved away. And I think there was five years between the one next to her, and then the others were all older. They h—the oldest ones had children as old as my mother was. So that—as I said, they were—France and Argentina, that I know of.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: They were migrating, like—now, they're going to Argentina. A lot of them are—are going to—

LEVINE: South America?

STELLA: —South America, yeah. And where else? Australia. A lot of them are going there now. At that time, it was coming into the States. Uh-hmm. But I—I really don't remember a thing about it, not a—not—I swear. I should have remembered something. But I remember sitting in a wall over there and everybody saying goodbye. And I don't know whether—Mother was saying something about all the time but I kind of remember sitting in that wall.

LEVINE: I'm a little—tr—if you could try to not move your foot. [chuckles]

STELLA: Was I—

LEVINE: Do you know why? Because it—it'll pick it up.

STELLA: Was—oh, I see. I didn't think [unclear].

LEVINE: I was thinking it was clock. [chuckles] But your foot—

STELLA: My foot, yeah.

LEVINE: That's okay. [clears throat] Okay. So your mother really didn't have much family left.

STELLA: No.

LEVINE: And then—

STELLA: No.

LEVINE: And then it was your father's—

STELLA: Brother and sister that were over here. They had been—

LEVINE: And they came back for a visit?

STELLA: No.

LEVINE: No.

STELLA: It was other cousins in New York. No. No, the brother and sister lived in Pennsylvania, in Pottsville and Landingville [PH], which is just a little—five miles away from Pottsville. And, no, but these others lived in Buffalo and they were related. Now, let's see. Was it my mother or father's side? No, on my father's side. Yeah, they were on my father's side. And [clears throat] so they came over and they talked my mother into coming over, said they had the papers all ready and were going to come over. "And your husband came for you and you have your"—more family over there than she had over there, especially after her mother passed away.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: And now that she had no one there at all. Brothers and sisters, I think, were all gone. And some of them were dead too. Some—the older ones were dead.

LEVINE: Hmm.

STELLA: I think during the flu—flu, they lost people over there. That was pretty—pretty much around the world at that time.

LEVINE: Yes, it was.

STELLA: Uh-huh. So they lost family over there too.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: I know when we went back there was only one cousin that we visited. We—we didn't stay with—well, there was nobody there, really. You know, we just went to see the place and we stayed at a hotel there. So this cousin knew that we were coming over. So we'd see him everyday. He'd stop over at the hotel, the two weeks we stayed in that place. And we were in different places then too. And that was the only one. And he was, I think, older—older than her.

LEVINE: Hmm.

STELLA: Yeah, he mi—might have been a son of the—her—

LEVINE: Oldest?

STELLA: —oldest brother or sister. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: That's all that was over there in '54 so—

LEVINE: Well, now, the relatives who came over h—who came—went back for a visit—

STELLA: I—we came back—

LEVINE: —and convinced your mother to—to go, you said that they probably knew [unclear]—

STELLA: They had been going back and forth, like my m—like my father. See, had been over back and forth two or three times. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: So—

STELLA: I think that's why we got a nice ship like that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. It was the Duca—

STELLA: D'Aosta.

LEVINE: —D'Aosta. And—and do you remember the ship at all? Probably—

STELLA: I don't.

LEVINE: Yeah.

STELLA: I don't. Hmm-uh.

LEVINE: And did your mother—

STELLA: Some kids tell me they remember things at three years. I don't know how the do.

LEVINE: I don't either. [chuckles]

STELLA: Unless it's preached to them over time and then they know it more from—

LEVINE: Right, and then [unclear] remember their [unclear]. [chuckles]

STELLA: Yeah, I—I don't. I re—I do remember sitting on that wall in Na—in Naples, I guess, when we got on the ship. I—some kind of a wall, I was sitting on. And then when we got over here—I didn't tell you that. Am I going ahead with the story?

LEVINE: Well—

STELLA: [clears throat]

LEVINE: —you—when you got over here. You mean after you went through Ellis Island—

STELLA: Yeah.

LEVINE: —and everything?

STELLA: Well, I guess before we went through Ellis Island. They weren't going to let us through.

LEVINE: Oh.

STELLA: Because I wouldn't talk. They thought I was a mute. Oh, my mother was sick. And these cousins, oh. "Come on. Say something. Say"—I remember that. Remember that. And I wouldn't talk. And then I must have said something or they convinced the—whoever the officer—I don't know who interviewed us. But they were go—going to hold us back because I wouldn't talk.

LEVINE: I wonder why.

STELLA: I guess so scared. I don't know, you know. And—and then being born at a time like that, you know, you didn't get all the love and attention. My poor mother, you can imagine how she was. So maybe that has something do—do with it. I didn't get all the, let's say, quality time, maybe, with—[unclear] she had two other children, three other children, and—and then her mother dying on top of that. So it was a very bad time for her.

LEVINE: Do you know anything about that time after your father died and your mother was still in Italy, and how she got along and—

STELLA: Mmm. They just worked out in the fields. You know, they had no—no assistance or Social Security in those days. There was nothing. So she worked. I know she worked and I think it was in the fields.

LEVINE: Do you know what—in—in Nicastro, what—what kinds of things were [unclear]—

STELLA: Th—that was supposed to be the—like Potzel [PH] is the county seat. They had the courthouse there. And there were a lot of other little towns. La Bella [PH] was one. I—they talked about that a lot. And I saw that when we were over there. I can't remember. There's a lot of other little towns. But that was a county seat. The courthouse was there. Uh-hmm. That's what I remember about it.

LEVINE: And do you remember what they were growing in the fields?

STELLA: Well, they were pretty far south. I guess it was all kind of produce. That's what I would think. Now, I can't remember, though.

LEVINE: Yeah. And did your mother—well, before I get ahead of the story. Y—when you got through Ellis Island, there was—there was your mother's fear that you wouldn't talk.

STELLA: Yeah, I wouldn't talk. Yeah, they went—they were going to send us back but then these cousins said, "We heard her. We heard her. We know she talks too much when she talks." [chuckles] You know, and so I don't remember if I finally said something or they take—took their word for it, physically, I was okay. But I just wouldn't talk.

LEVINE: Hmm. And so then did you go to New York City or did you go Upstate after you left Ellis Island?

STELLA: No, we left here, went to Buffalo.

LEVINE: Buffalo.

STELLA: And then we stayed with them three years. And then, naturally, Uncle and Aunt, my father's brother and sister, wanted us down here. That's how we got to Pennsylvania then.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Now, did you start school right away?

STELLA: Yes, I went—I think I went to Catholic school in Buffalo, I guess for a year. Maybe I didn't go the first year. I might have gone the—we—because I think we were there three years. I remember going there, uh-huh. I was in first grade. And I remember my mother working out in the

field. They were picking strawberries and peas and things like that. Poor thing had to work in order to get along. And I know sometimes I'd be with her picking these big strawberries, you know. And I'd be picking some here and there. And so I went to school there, I guess it was a year, because I know when I came back to Pennsylvania I had to start in first grade again. [chuckles]

LEVINE: W—did you pick up much of the language during those years in Buffalo?

STELLA: I guess when I was in school, yes, I did. Yeah. Sure, they taught you then. Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: So you actually probably picked it up qui—more quickly than your mother.

STELLA: Yes, because you know what they did in those days? They were very clannish, I guess you'd say. The Dutch stayed with themselves. The German—Germans with themselves, Italians with themselves, the Polish with themselves, you know. And then with having all these relatives, they spoke Italian. And my mother would speak Italian to us. But in later years, we'd speak English to her, you know. And she'd understand it but she could never speak it as well as if she h—could read and write the language. But I don't know how those people got along, really, all those children and no help. No help at all.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

STELLA: It's amazing what they could do when you have to do it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: Because they didn't—they didn't have people on the relief rolls, like they have today. Young people. Very young people. No, there was nothing like that. And we got along, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Do you remember Buffalo? Do you remember that [unclear]?

STELLA: Very little. I know we were near a train. Yeah, I must have been six or seven by the time we left there, six years old. Six, at least. Why, we were near a train and everyday I'd be watching this passenger train go by. I don't remember much more. I—and I know one of these cousins had a—a girl, Margaret, about the same age as I. And we were always together. We were always together. I think that was another card that brought us there. The cousin wanted us to go there. They had a daughter the same age as me. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And did you like being here? Do you—can you remember when you were a little girl and how you felt about—

STELLA: Well, I liked being here because I was with my mother, sister, cousins, you know. And we were closer years ago. Now today, even at holidays when you get together, one's coming from the east, one from the west, one from south, one from—all over. In those days, before the cars and everything, you know, we were very clannish. We always got together at somebody's house for the holidays and parties and all that kind of thing. So I liked that, which we don't have that today.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: We don't have that closeness today. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, yeah. Yeah. S—so how about your mother? Did you—did you have a sense of whether she was glad she had come here or not? Or—

STELLA: Sometimes she was and sometimes she wasn't. I guess she would think of her—her youth back home, you know, and had memories there. Like, I'm staying in my home. My husband died in '45 and I'm living in memories. I shouldn't have that house to take care of. It's a pretty big house and a lot of ground. I shouldn't have that headache, you know. And it is a headache. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: And I don't know why I didn't get rid of it and go into a small apartment or something. But I have very nice memories. So I imagine she did have memories of over there when she was with her family and stuff like that. That's why I also just thought, 'If I could just take her over there.' And I was so glad when I could do that in '54.

LEVINE: Yeah, that was—that was wonderful.

STELLA: Oh, I just loved that I could do that for her. As I say, I saved almost 10 years because the plane rides were very high at that time. I think just the plane alone was 5, \$600 apiece.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: So that was the only thing because they were just coming into their own. We didn't even have the jet. It was a—what'd they call 'em at that time? Was partly jet. Oh, I can't remember it.

LEVINE: Hmm. I don't think—

STELLA: It had another name. It—it wasn't full jet, like today. And—and it took us much longer to get over there than now. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: So I was so glad that I could do that for her. And she was thrilled. She talked about that till the day she died.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

STELLA: In '63.

LEVINE: Yeah.

STELLA: Yeah, I took her over in '54 and she died in '63.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: She talked about it all the time. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: So [clears throat] let's see. So then when you moved from Buffalo to Pottsville—

STELLA: Pottsville.

LEVINE: —you—you started in first grade again. Do you know why?

STELLA: I don't know why. I—I don't know why. They just started me all over. I was always a year behind.

LEVINE: Hmm.

STELLA: I mean, a year older than some of the other kids.

LEVINE: Right.

STELLA: Yeah, uh-huh.

LEVINE: But you—but were you speaking English by the time you—

STELLA: Oh, yeah. By the time I came over here, yeah.

LEVINE: —moved?

STELLA: Because I—I'd been there three years. And kids pick it up faster than the older people, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: Yeah, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And do you—

STELLA: Maybe that's why over there I had to learn a language.

LEVINE: Right. [unclear].

STELLA: Maybe I didn't get ahead.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: I can't—I can't remember that either. But I know I started in first grade when I came here.

LEVINE: And did your brothers and sister also go to school—

STELLA: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Or were they old enough that they went—

STELLA: No, they—wait a minute. They were—if I was five, they were seven, eight years older. No, they—no, they didn't. They weren't old enough to work. I think they went a few years though. Just a couple of years. Well, then the two died. Then my other sister got married when she was only 17 and that's when we lived with her instead of the aunts—or the aunt or uncle.

LEVINE: In Buffalo?

STELLA: No, no, honey. In Pottsville.

LEVINE: Pottsville.

STELLA: Pottsville, yeah. Because she was only, what? She was maybe—if I was four, she was seven, eight years older than me. She was only 13, I guess, when we came over here. So she was still young. And—but by

the time she was 17 and she got married, and so we all lived together. And so I was there until, I guess, my mother remarried in—let's see—1919, I think. And then we went housekeeping, just the three of us.

LEVINE: I see. Because it was the—because your two brothers had died. Your sister had married.

STELLA: Married, uh-huh.

LEVINE: And then your mother remarried and you were the only child—

STELLA: Yeah.

LEVINE: —at that time.

STELLA: Uh-huh. And then we—there's 12 years difference between Antoinette and me. So, yeah. I was 12. I was 12—11 or 12, I was when they got married. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Well, do you remember any ways that your mother kept of her Italian upbringing in this country?

STELLA: Ah, especially their Christmas holidays. Yeah.

LEVINE: What were they like in [unclear]—

STELLA: Well, we still had the food they had over there, you know, for the—like, Christmas Eve and all that. Nothing but fish, the strict day of fasting and abstaining too. And, yes, we kept that for years and years. Uh-hmm. That's the only thing, really.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. And how about—you—there was an Italian community in Buffalo.

STELLA: Y—

LEVINE: In Pottsville too?

STELLA: Yeah. Well, my aunts and uncles and they—they were practically a lot of them from the same town too. So they kind of stayed to themselves and I think it's good and bad, because had she been around a different neighborhood, she might have picked up more English too. Now, in later years, we moved to a place where they had—it was a League of Nations up there. We had Polish, Jewish. Meyers are Jewish. Italian. Let's see.

LEVINE: Where were the Dutch? Were they there?

STELLA: There were a lot of them there. That's all Dutch.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: It's all Dutch down there. Uh-huh. My—my aunt—my cousins—my aunt's children, you should hear them speak Dutch. Oh, that was so funny. And we didn't know what they were saying, of course. But they could speak Dutch with the other kids, uh-huh. But no, in Pottsville, no, it—a couple of the towns, Pine Grove and Landingville, they're strictly Dutch. And you can tell—I have friends who went to college. One is a—she was a supervisor in a—of a—of the music department in the Lebanon schools. And the other one was a dietitian for the VA Hospital. And they went away to school. But when they say certain things, you know it's Dutchy. They still have that accent, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: And they were born and reared here, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

STELLA: But they were all Dutch. And my husband was in the fruit busi—produce business. And he would sell and collect, you know. And when he'd go to these places, I had to laugh. He'd come home and he'd say, "Well, now, you know." He said, "When I go to Pine Grove or even Skuklehaven [PH] or Landingville, I think I'm in another country. The little kids come in with their penny and they ask for candy in Dutch." It was so cute. Uh-huh. He said, "Yep, they—they get that at home. They're taught that at home." Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: So how long did you stay in school?

STELLA: Well, I went from—what do you call it—grammar to a business school, Taylor's Business School. Then I had—went to hairdressing school. And I did hairdressing until I was married and after. In the '30s, when you got married in our area, and I think it was a pretty well—law everywhere. It wasn't a written law but everybody abided by it. When you got married you left—you quit your job.

LEVINE: Hmm.

STELLA: Where it was an office—you're too young but I don't know if you've heard of that.

LEVINE: Sure.

STELLA: Yeah. You h—you quit your job. And everybody did, you know. Well, after all, you're going to have a different life. You had a husband to take care of, a house to take care of, children, probably. So that I was going to quit, but I was managed this shop. And the boss said to me, "Oh." He said, "What am I going to do?" We had four or five girls there and I was managing that one because they—he and his wife had a—a shop at the—or hotel in Pottsville. He—she had the beauty shop and he had the barbershop. Well, down where I was was the old place. I had the beauty shop, managing for them. And they had a barbershop and they had a manager for that. He said, "What am I going to do?" He says, "I can't depend on those girls." My—workers were different years ago than they are today. Today, oh, you go in the store, they're doing you a big favor to wait on you. But however, he said—they had a shower for me. And then after, he said he wanted to talk to us. He said, "Could you possibly stay? I wish you would stay, at least till my lease runs out. Then I'm not going to renew the lease at the hotel." They're coming back to the other place. Well, that was so unheard of. I didn't know what to do, you know. So I said, "Well, we'll think about it. We left and then I—I was going to move from Pottsville to Minersville. And that's where my husband was from. That's where they had the business. And I thought, 'I don't know anybody in Minersville. I don't know—I don't even like Minersville. I think I'm going to work.' I liked the work and everything. So I worked for about—well, I was going to say until we had a family. We never had the family. I'm going from one doctor and no family. So I guess I worked for about five years and then my husband said one day. He said, "The heck with this. Let's look for a house." We were in an apartment until that time. I thought, 'When we have a family, we'll get house.' So anyway, we looked and it took us a year to find a house that we liked. So, all right, we moved in 1940. And I was married in '33. So we were there. He only lived there four years and four months. Then he had a heart attack.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

LEVINE: —you meet him, to begin with?

STELLA: Oh, my. That's a long story. At a Sunday school picnic. Where else?
[laughs]

LEVINE: Oh.

STELLA: I told you, I was all wrapped up in the church. Yeah, at a Sunday school picnic. I never knew him. And he was with somebody from Pottsville. See, he was from Minersville, which is about five blocks away—five miles away. And it was raining and very few people had cars. And he had a car. His friend had a car. And I passed—it was a Sunday school picnic. Well, he give us the—it was quite a distance from Pottsville. It was about four or five miles where the—the grounds were for this picnic. So the pastor would have trucks and cars going back—it started to rain. After an hour, it was pouring and there was no shelter. There were trees and all that but no shelter. So he said, “Now, you people wait here and whoever comes to bring you back and forth, then you can go home.” So anyway, there was a car that came and I had four or five friends with me, my girlfriends. We went together and we’re g—sticking together. So here this car came along and Father said, “Now—now, you’re next. Get in that car.” And I piped—I said, “I can’t. Somebody gave me an”—my husband—they were leaving to take a carload home and—and it was raining. And he gives me this umbrella. Out of the four or five, he said, “You wait for us. Now, don’t go home. You wait for us.” He gave me this umbrella. So when Father says, “This ride is yours,” I—“I can’t go. I have somebody’s umbrella.” He says, “Whose?” I said, “I don’t know.” Because I didn’t know him. I didn’t know him at all. I knew his—friend because he was from Pottsville. So anyway, Father was mad. He said, “You have a ride.” I said, “I—I don’t know who this umbrella belongs to.” So he—he just [chuckles] let the other people go. And he came back and he picked us up. And that was the start of it. I was only 17 years old and it was so funny. I never saw him before. And after that, it seems that every time I’d go for lunch, there he was in Pottsville. See, he went to the stores and the restaurants, you know, to sell. There he was. And this went on for a long, long time. A long time. Boy, I was hard to get, I guess. I—well, I wasn’t thinking of marriage at all. I saw my sister married so young. And she had seven children. I thought, ‘Oh, I don’t even want to think of a man till I’m 25.’ So anyway, that—that stuck with me. That stuck with me. So anyhow, but it was so funny. I was going to night school too. And he knew when I was going to night school. Sometimes—I thought he was passing by. “Let me take you home.” I said okay. He was real nice. He was very nice. And he wanted to come in. I said, “Oh, no, no. Hmm-uh.” In those days, if you went with somebody for any length of time you were almost engaged.

LEVINE: Wow.

STELLA: Yes, it meant marriage, almost. I thought, ‘No, no, no. Uh-uh.’ And people came and asked your mother. Did you people have that—your grandmother? And they would try to arrange marriages, you know. You had a nice girl and somebody else had a nice boy. You know, they knew the families and they’d try to match you up. And I thought, ‘No, no, no.

No, I don't want anybody.' So there was quite a few that asked Mom. They were friends. No. So anyway, he did this for two or three years. And I thought—on a Sunday, we'd go to church and then we'd have a meeting in the afternoon. And the girls were all from another little town. They always met at my house. And after the meeting we'd go downtown and they'd take the trolley home. It was back to the trolley days. And you can imagine, it was in the '20s. I was married in '33. That was all before. So lo and behold, here comes Archie. "Where you going, girls?" This went on for a long time. Well, the girls are going home. He said, "We're waiting for the train"—or the bus—trolley. And, "I'll take you." And I'd be going home. He'd say, "Come on along. You can go along for the ride." And I did, like a dope. There were a couple other girls there that were older than me. He was about eight years older than me, see. And there was a girl that was five years older and two of them—one was two years older and the other, one years o—one year older. And I thought, 'He must have a case on one of these gals,' you know. And that went on and on and on until—well, I was married in '33, which I was 24. And I knew him since I was 17.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, was he of Italian extraction?

STELLA: Yeah, he was from the Rome area. Yeah. And he came over here when he was 12.

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness. And did he come through Ellis Island? Do you know?

STELLA: Gee, I don't know. I have a citizen—what do you call it?

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

STELLA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: But it was sad though and such a beautiful marr—he was—he was just a wonderful per—of course, everybody says that but I mean it. Those 10 years, I wouldn't give 'em for 50 years that some people have. Yeah. And that's the reason I'm there in that house. Just memories.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

STELLA: He only lived four years and four months.

LEVINE: In the house.

STELLA: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Yeah.

STELLA: Then I had to go back to work. So I went back to work and I didn't know what to do. I just—I was just devastated. I thought, 'Oh.' I wanted to die, didn't want to go on but—and for five years, I did nothing but work, m—my mother and church. Work, my mother and church. That's all I did. But shortly after, about a year after, I wasn't happy with hairdressing. Different ones call me because I was one of the first in Pottsville. They only had three, four shops. Now, we have that many in a block, you know. And—because very few people had their hair done and then it was just once a year for a perm or something like that. We had four shops in the whole town. As I say, now there's about a half a dozen in my—just my few—few blocks of where I live. And so anyway, what was I going to say about that? I wanted to tell you something and I got stranded.

LEVINE: Oh. Well, let me—

STELLA: Oh—wait. Well, I had to get out to work. Sure. And I worked, I guess, about a year and I thought, 'Gee, I'm not happy with this.' I didn't know what to do with myself. I didn't want to go on. I wanted to die. I didn't die. But something pushed me to go into electrolysis. And that's what I did after my husband died.

LEVINE: Hmm.

STELLA: I came to New York here, the Cree [PH] School. Is it still here?

LEVINE: I don't know.

STELLA: In Manhattan. It was right off of 41st Street, right off of Fifth Avenue.

LEVINE: Well, we can look in the phone book.

STELLA: Yeah, I wonder if it's still here.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: And so I went there and I thought—well, we used to come to New York, oh, about once or twice a year just for shows, you know, and for dinner and stuff like that. I came here and went to night school and day school. I never even made up with a friend. I was like a zombie. And I went night and day, got through there, I guess two or three months. I had to have—I had the hairdressing. Otherwise, at that time, you had to have hairdressing. If you didn't, you had to take hairdressing up because you couldn't do—

LEVINE: Yeah.

STELLA: —the electrolysis. So I had that. So it was just a matter of months for the—for the electrolysis. So then I went back and opened a shop and I did very well at that. I was—I was the—you might as well say the guinea pig or—no, that's not what I want. What's the word? Pioneer, I guess—

LEVINE: Pioneer.

STELLA: —of the field. Because a lot of people needed it but they didn't know, and I knew that from the hairdressing because people would want wax or tweezer—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: Chin or their—their lip or whatever. And I knew there was a lot of that. So I thought—and that—that was the best thing I ever did.

LEVINE: Hmm.

STELLA: So I worked there till I retired, about 35 years. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Well, it sounds as though you were progressive in many ways. I mean, the fact that you kept working when you got married.

STELLA: Yeah, I was only home those four years. That's all I was home.

LEVINE: And then you—

STELLA: [unclear]

LEVINE: —started—

STELLA: Right away.

LEVINE: —something of your own.

STELLA: Then I had to go out. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: And he was getting along so beautifully. Oh, my, oh my. He was doing so well.

LEVINE: Now, what did—if you could just kind of sketch. He came here when he was 12.

STELLA: Uh-huh, about twel—

LEVINE: And then—and then how did he happen to go into the fruit business?

STELLA: Well, they had a store at first. They had four or five brothers. And they went into the business. And—no, three of them in the—they had four—oh, I guess there were four or five altogether but three of them went in the business. And the one died. Well, I think it was after I was married to Archie. One died so there was just two left. And—but they did have a store. Then they went into the—just a regular neighborhood store. But—and they used to have trucks at those days and they'd go to the houses. The baker went. The milkman went. The produce man went, you know. And people didn't get out very much. I remember we used to wait for the farmer and the butcher, you know, to come to the house. So they—they had the store, like on a—on a—

LEVINE: Truck.

STELLA: —truck, I guess. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: And they went out to the valley where people didn't get out very much outside of Minerville [PH]. Then finally, they went into the wholesale business, wholesale fruit and produce. And, yeah, when I—when I met him they were in the wholesale business. So it was just he and his brother. And—and the brother was much older. But Archie died at 40.

LEVINE: So his name was Archibald Stella?

STELLA: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: Mmm. He always went by Archie.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: I don't know if he was baptized Archie or not. I don't know. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Oh, yeah. Maybe Archibald wasn't—

STELLA: Yeah, that's not an Italian name anyway.

LEVINE: No, it isn't.

STELLA: And they were Italian. They lived right outside of Rome. Perugia [PH]. They had that candy. If you ever saw that P—

LEVINE: Oh, yes. Sure.

STELLA: That's where he came from.

LEVINE: That's where he was from.

STELLA: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

STELLA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, can you say anything about how the beauty parlor business and trade has—

STELLA: Oh, I was—

LEVINE: —changed since you—

STELLA: —right in the beginning.

LEVINE: Yeah.

STELLA: Oh, my dear. You know what was the best thing? If you were a good marceller, you were a very good hairdresser. Today, the kids don't even know when marcel is. It was done with an iron, you know.

LEVINE: Why don't you describe it for somebody who might hear this tape—

STELLA: For the first time.

LEVINE: —and not know.

STELLA: Well, it was—am I moving my feet again?

LEVINE: Yeah, [whispers] keep those [unclear]. [chuckles]

STELLA: [whispers] Gee, that's sensitive. Why, yes. Marcelling. If you were a good marceller and—and my boss was an excellent one. She was an excellent marceller, because, as I told you, the wife took care of the

beauty shop and the husband took care of the barbershops. Then when they got the places at the hotel, they both went up there to the beauty shop. And I was managing the one down below. And do you know what the prices were? You're going to get a kick out of this. Shampoo, wave and a manicure, one dollar.

LEVINE: Hmm.

STELLA: And that's in the '20s and the '30s. Yeah.

LEVINE: Now—

STELLA: Depression days, you know.

LEVINE: Okay. Describe what a marcel wave is.

STELLA: You—you layered the hair. You layered the hair with a—an iron. And in those days, we had gas irons. We'd heat 'em on the little gas jets that we had, you know, protruding from the wall. And you had two irons going. And of course, you'd use the one and when that got a little cool then pick the other one up and put that back. But you had to layer the hair and that would stay in for almost two weeks. And they were pretty waves. And that's what most got—people got because they all had long hair at that time. See, they weren't all cutting their hair in the '20s, yet. And, well, that was a marcel. And then one way that—that you never here of, a comb wave. Did you ever hear of a comb wave?

LEVINE: No, what's that?

STELLA: You had big, long combs and you put one in and shifted it this way and then got another one and shifted the other way and you got a wave, back and forth with these long comb waves.

LEVINE: Now, did the combs stay in?

STELLA: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Or did you put 'em and take 'em out?

STELLA: No, no. Stayed in and you formed your wave, see. But the comb stayed in. Then came the finger wave. Now, you heard of the finger wave.

LEVINE: I've heard of it but say what that is.

STELLA: Well, that you did with your fingers. And you just worked your fingers and—and you shifted the holder one way and held it between your

fingers. And then you shifted the other way and held it between your fingers and you formed a wave. And you went right through the hair. And you had these beautiful waves, uh-huh. And the permanent wave was the old, old Edmond [PH]. That's an old—well, I don't know if it's still in existence because I got away from the hairdressing then when I did the electrolysis.

LEVINE: Electrolysis.

STELLA: Yeah. So—and they—I always said you had to be a carpenter in order to do that. You had these big, [unclear] rods and you put a—a little disc, which protected your scalp from the heat, because you put this thing on and they're all sticking up like a porcupine. You probably se—

LEVINE: I've seen it.

STELLA: Yes, uh-huh. Then we—so we'd section the—like the little inch squares of the hair. And each one of that square inch had one of these rods. So then we would wrap the hair around that and tie the end with some lamb's wool and let the—the long part—because we were doing long hair—and left the other part straight. So we just did about half of the strand and let the other—and then we put these cups over these—big—big spiral things and then turn on the heat. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness.

STELLA: Oh, very—that was hard at that time. I think it's nothing today. They want the short hair and they wrap a—a perm out and up in a half hour. You know, it's nothing today. And they only—we only had three—four shops in the whole town.

LEVINE: Wow.

STELLA: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And—and you said that the—that what people came in for was different then.

STELLA: Oh, yeah. Mostly perms. Mostly perms and once in a while—then when they started cutting their hair, they'd come in for a comb wave or something like that or the finger wave. And we had mostly—mostly teachers. That's all [unclear] with. They're the only ones could afford it. I was getting \$10 a week for 12 hours. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Wow.

STELLA: Ten dollars a week when I first started in the '20s and—and the teachers were getting 25. Can you imagine that? What they get today.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: So, yeah, they were getting 20—they—they were the only ones could afford it. So we had teachers from all over the ar—all the little towns out—maybe had the 30-, 40-mile radius because there were no other shops. And—and they just got these permanent waves once a year. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Wow. And probably, there weren't home permanent waves at—

STELLA: Oh, no, no. They came out way later, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: You can get color today. You can get anything today, do it yourself, you know.

LEVINE: Were people coloring their hair at all?

STELLA: No, no. That came way later.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: I think that came even after I was married and then went back the second time. And, yes, I was doing electrolysis when that came out. Uh-hmm, yeah. Because I know we used to have shows. Now, the big show was here in New York. I always came here so that—I came to the hairdressing show and the electrolysis show in New York. That's how I got to know New York so well, you know. And you would have that only maybe once a year. Now, they have 'em in different states, in California and all over. But New York was the main point for everybody. Then they would have these little shows in our town. Just the hairdressers would get together and maybe the jobbers. And I'll never forget. I was doing electrolysis and they wanted a—a model to put color on. And I was the one. I only had about 10 gray hair but I was the one. And, well, every time we went, I was the one that they put that on because I was interested in the hairdressing, even though I wasn't doing it anymore but was very much interested. So—

LEVINE: Well, you got a good head of hair. I can imagine they would want to—

STELLA: Yeah, yeah. Even at 91, it's not too bad.

LEVINE: Yes.

STELLA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: So we were putting this on. Then finally, I guess when I was about 50 years old I noticed more gray hair. So then I've been doing it ever since. [chuckles]

LEVINE: [chuckles] Tell me this. You know, the beauty parlor—like the barbershop, I suppose—is always kind of a social place where—

STELLA: Yeah, you made very good friends and I kept friends. And most of my friends were teachers because of—that's all you worked on in the beginning.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

STELLA: You know. Now, everybody goes, even the little schoolgirl, the little—the kids. The little kids go now. Everybody goes.

LEVINE: Yeah. And it—was it the kind of thing where pe—where somebody would go in to get their hair done and they'd end up telling you—

STELLA: Their life history?

LEVINE: —[unclear] [chuckles] story?

STELLA: Especially—especially in electrolysis because that was very private, very personal. Nobody knew who came in and nobody knew who went out.

LEVINE: Was it—was there a stigma against having it done? I mean—

STELLA: They felt that they were the only ones, don't you see? They thought nobody else had it. And I—when—after I got through with them, they felt a little bit better. I said, "Look, I could really tell you that eight out of ten people have some hair, whether it's a little or a lot." I worked on women in—in that beauty shop. And I was putting this stuff on for them. And I said, "Look, if you have a toothache you go to the dentist. You need glasses, you go to the—so you want a couple hair out. So what? You want your hair [unclear]." They felt a little better after they got out of there. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: But still, some of them did not want anybody to know. Uh-uh. Even their husbands didn't know with a lot of them.

LEVINE: Wow. Now, did they—

STELLA: So they keep pulling it and, you know, as soon as they found one, they pulled it and that made it worse.

LEVINE: Did—did you have to, like, redo the same people? Or did—

STELLA: Oh, you have to—well, see, if they were pulling them out you weren't going to get that hair in a week. They would pull them out. Maybe every week they were pulling some. It wasn't—they thought they were the same ones. No, no, no. A hair—when you pull a hair out, it takes sometimes two, three, four months, depending how deep it is and how fine, how strong it is. And of course, they would think that I was taking the same ones every week. But I cleared many a face, [unclear] cases. But they listened to what I said. I said, "I can do this but you have to work with me. I don't want you to keep pulling them while you come in here. Now, if you want to pull the—the back, all right. We'll do something to the back. But where I'm working, I don't want you to touch it. I want you to come in here and I'll take out whatever I see." Oh, I cleared many, many people. Uh-hmm. I had even under my arms done. And that's like a pubic area. You know how that's strong. So it does work if it's done properly. Yeah, it does work.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. So you really were a pioneer with electrolysis too.

STELLA: Yeah. That—they didn't even know the word. I think I had the business because they knew me from hairdressing. See, they knew me from there.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: Because I really got—there's no one in the town now that does it.

LEVINE: Oh.

STELLA: And I'm retired about 25 years or more. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: Yeah, they have to go to Reading or larger places, you know.

LEVINE: I see. So after you went back, I—I guess that—that's what helped you come out of your grieving for your husband.

STELLA: To keep busy. I found that out. That was the only thing because, really, he died so suddenly. He wasn't sick at all.

LEVINE: Oh, what did he die of?

STELLA: Heart attack, suddenly. He wasn't—he didn't even sneeze in those 10 years we were married and I near died twice. I had strep throat and scarlet fever and I was sick almost six years—six months that I wasn't working. And, see, there were no miracle drugs, no antibiotics in those days. So—but they pulled me through. And then I'm going to one doctor—from one doctor to another for this pregnancy thing. And so, I don't know. I was in the hospital the one year and they did something. I don't know what they did to the uterus. And the year after, here I have a tubal pregnancy. And back then, with no miracle drugs—back in the '30s—late '30s, that would be. Yeah. Yeah, it was the late '30s, why—oh, they thought I'd died. They thought I'd never get over that. I was in the hospital many weeks with nurses around the clock. But I finally got over it. Now, I had those two close calls. My husband didn't even sneeze. He never even had a cold. And he came home this day. We had dinner, a nice dinner and he was upstairs. In five minutes, he was dead. I could never get over that. See, if he had been ailing, maybe it would have been a little bit easier. Or if he was sick I could have taken care of him a couple days or something. But he just died within five weeks—five minutes, he was—there.

LEVINE: At least, he didn't suffer. That's one thing. Yeah.

STELLA: I—I didn't hear that.

LEVINE: At least he didn't suffer.

STELLA: Yeah, that—but I—I—

LEVINE: It w—the shock of it, yeah.

STELLA: I could never get over it. Five years before I ever got over it.

LEVINE: When did you begin getting over it?

STELLA: Five—five years.

LEVINE: And you were already working in your own—

STELLA: Oh, yeah. I—yeah, I was working at the electrolysis by that time. And a friend of mine wanted to go—a schoolteacher wanted to go to Bermuda.

And she wanted me to go along. I thought, 'Well, maybe I will.' I didn't know. I had to make up my mind. Finally, I did. See, I remember what he used to say after the war. See, during the war he had to work so hard because the men were taken in the service, you know, and he couldn't get help. All his men were taken. And he d—I think that's what killed him. He did two men's work, I think. But anyway—but he always said, "Honey, after this war's over we're going to get lost for six months." He always said that. He never saw the end of the war. He died in April and the war ended in October, I believe, of '45. So—but after five years—yeah, it was 1950, Martha and I took this trip to Bermuda. And went by ship, the Queen of Bermuda and flew back. That was our first trip flying back. I thought, 'Oh, my God.' But behind her back, I did more crying. All I could think of, the trip I would have taken if he were living. But that was my first trip. And then after that, traveling was my love. And I traveled the world.

LEVINE: Really?

STELLA: Uh-hmm, yeah. I happened to get in with a group that was a religious group. And they went all over, like with a peace mission.

LEVINE: Oh.

STELLA: Yeah, uh-huh. And we went all over Africa. I've been in South America, in India. Oh.

LEVINE: Were you there as tourists or were you there as—as a mission?

STELLA: Religious—part of a mission. Now, you're—are you Protestant?

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: Why—but you've heard of our—

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A]

LEVINE: —second tape and I'm speaking with Angela Stella. And you were telling about when you—you went to Bermuda and then you started traveling—

STELLA: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: —the world. And you were with the religious group.

STELLA: Yes, called the Blue Army. Uh-huh. And it—Our Lady of Fatima, which is a—a shrine in Portugal. And they had their own plane, which carried 200 people. And we went to all these high spots, all these cathedrals and shrines, you know. And we would deliver a statue if they wanted. The 50th anniversary—that operation was in 1917. In 1967, we went all over Africa, North, East, West and South Africa delivering these statues to the main cathe—whoever wanted them, the main cathedrals usually—or the main shrines. We would be there for this religious ceremony and—for that day. And then they would always treat us lovely because the bishops and the priests were with us, the—a lot of religious, you know. And we were treated royally. Then after the first day, we were taken on sightseeing of the area. So, yes, that—we—just like tourists. And, really, I could afford that because we went to North, East, West and—Africa. Didn't cost us as much as anybody that went over there on a safari, like to South Africa or West Africa. So that's why I could do it too, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: And so they were mostly all things like that. Maybe it was a conference, a—a religious conference or something like that. But we had the main speakers with us. And—but it was always pertaining to religion. And they didn't do it for—for profit, just so they, I guess, covered their expense. And then we got away with a lot less. I could never have afforded some of these trips. We went to Australia, South America, India, Egypt, Jerusalem. Oh, my! I had a wonderful time there. Oh, my goodness! When we crossed Jordan to go to Jerusalem we got through. But I felt so sorry. There was a Jewish family there, was held up for five hours. That's when I realized that they did not like each other at all. And when we went to Africa, South Africa, they didn't want a religious group there. They didn't want us at—Johannesburg is one of the places, the main places we stopped. Every place else, our leaders would get—everywhere we were, rather, they would get the morning paper. And it was big headlines, you know. They—the Our Lady of Fatima Touring Group, you know. And we got to Johannesburg and we were about eight, nine miles away from the airport to the hotel. And it took us about three hours. The crowd was—the crowd was so—so heavy, the traffic, for about eight or nine miles. So anyway, the next morning our leaders went to get the paper. There was not one word in the paper. They hated us there because they were—oh, they were so bitter against each other. They had separate places for the colored, the black and the white. And they didn't dare mix in those days. They didn't dare mix. And if they went together and got married they were arrested. They—they just couldn't mix. And that's when we found out how much hatred there was around the place. And when we went from Jordan to Jerusalem, and I met this man and wife at the airport. And they started talking to me. We had been over in Egypt and I had the same hat his wife had. So he came

over and he started talking to me. He said, "I know where you were." At first, I thought, "Who's this fresh thing?" He says, "My wife has a hat just like yours." Because he—they were sitting back there. And so anyway, and I was sitting there, Tel Aviv, waiting for my plane, because these teachers that I went with, they had six weeks. I only had three weeks. I couldn't afford six weeks. See, they went by ship and they had a—a luxury cruise, you know, and they were 10, 12 days on the ship and landed in London. And then they left from London to go back again. But I just took the—the land tour, which was three weeks. It was only half as much. But I had to fly from New York to Rome and then met them in Pompeii just as they were having lunch. And then I took all the land tour with them. And that's the first time I went to Jerusalem. And we had no trouble. We had—the four of us. That was an optional tour. You didn't have to take that. It wasn't included with the regular. We did that on our own. And we went right through, like you did any other place. You know what I mean? We had to go from one state to another over Customs. And then this man tells me. He said, "How did you make out in Jordan, coming over the"—what was it? Mendel [PH]—what was that pass? They—Mendal—Mendalhall [PH] Pass? I can't remember. I'm not sure. But anyway, I said, "No, we didn't have any trouble, anymore than going from German to Italy or France, you know." And he said, "You didn't?" He said, "They kept us there five hours." And this is cute. He said, "Well, you are Jewish, aren't you?" I said, "No, honey. I'm not Jewish." [chuckles] I've been taken for everything among these travels. Well, he said, "I am. With a name like Cohen, I couldn't get away with it." And they—they hated each other over there at that time. That's when I found out all that hatred, between South Africa—oh. And—but he—he was so nice. And they were from Michigan.

LEVINE: Hmm.

STELLA: And he didn't look Jewish, anymore than I did. He was very fair, very fair. But he said, "With a name like Cohen, I thought I'd get away with it." Oh, God, he was—but anyway, that's how I saw the world because we always traveled with this religious group. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Wonderful. Well, now, what would you say were the high—I mean, maybe you've just said it, but what were the high times and the low times of your life?

STELLA: I guess the lowest time in my life that I really remember were those five years after my husband died. I really wanted to die, really wanted to die. I had a little dog and he ca—went with me everywhere I w—no, I only went, as I said, to work, church and my mother—worked, that's all I did for five years.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: And that little dog, if he could talk. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Ahh!

STELLA: Yeah, those tears I shed and—

LEVINE: Yeah.

STELLA: I know when you tell that to a person, they say, “Well, everybody dies.” I know everybody dies or you’re a little bit prepare—or they’re older or something. But I certainly had no inkling of that. No.

LEVINE: Do you think that you had a—do you think your personality, in any way, was affected by the fact that you were born in another country, came here and—I mean, I know you were very young, started over again. Do you think that had any influence on the kind of person you became?

STELLA: No, but you see, I don’t remember anything about over there at all. So to me, there wasn’t even an “over there.”

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STELLA: I started here, you might say.

LEVINE: How do you feel about your Italian side, or part or whatever and your American—

STELLA: Well, now, I don’t know how you mean that. But if somebody would ask me, “What do you wan—what would you be, if you had a choice?” I’d say, “Italian.” I don’t know anything else.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: Of all the traveling I did, it’s like, people say, “Well, now, what place did you like the best?” I said, “There were many, many. They Taj Mahal, that can’t be compared with anything, you know.” But I always liked my little Pottsville house. I—always glad to come back to little old Pottsville, as many beautiful things as I saw all over the world. Yeah, was always glad to come back there. So I think it would be the sa—I don’t know anything about that, although I traveled to Europe then, because these people, as I said, it was a religious group.

LEVINE: What was the name of it, again?

STELLA: The Ava [PH] Maria Tour. It's a Fatima group. See, the apparition happened in—in 1917 in—

LEVINE: Portugal?

STELLA: —Portugal. Fatima, Portugal, yeah. And of course, they have this traveling group. And I got with them and there was four other girls in town for—they were teachers that went. And, well, I was just thrilled that I—

LEVINE: Yeah—

STELLA: —I could do that. I wouldn't have been able to do it otherwise, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

STELLA: So I—I can't tell you what the highlights were. I saw many beautiful—Australia was beautiful. Egypt. We had a ride on the—what are the things? The camels.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: And we were right on the Nile. We were in the Hilton right on the—on the River Nile. It was beautiful. And then the Holy Lands. Well, you know, being a church group, what that meant to us.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STELLA: So—and the time we went there, I don't know, that must have been in late '40s or—no, it had to be in the '50s because, '50, I made my first trip to Bermuda. Had to be in the '50s or '60s. It's way back, anyway, 30—35 years or more. It wasn't traveled quite as much as it is today. And I remember we went in the Garden of Gethsemane. And it wasn't fenced off like it is today. We were there a couple times since. Today, it's all fenced in and I don't think you can walk through it. We did at that time and I saw this olive tree. I thought, 'Oh, my God. Two thousand years, this tree has been here and [unclear] have this hand on this'—the tears were just running down my face. Oh, it—it was so awesome. And then all these things were beautiful that I saw. Oh, my gosh. I went to Jericho and—and all—all the different churches there, you know. They have all denominations, you know. We went to all of them. But—

LEVINE: Hmm.

STELLA: —I was always ready to come back to little ole Pottsville.

LEVINE: Wow.

STELLA: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Well, is there anything else you can think of that we maybe haven't covered? How's this time in your life? This—I mean, you're 91 and you certainly are [unclear]—

STELLA: Well, God has been good to me. Yeah, God has been very good to me. I'm loaded with arthritis, polymyalgia. In fact, I was in the hospital on Monday. I—I think I told you.

LEVINE: Yes, you did.

STELLA: Intravenous [unclear], and to have a needle in my back, and I got a little bit of relief but not too much. Now, there's a—a drug coming out, ah, the doctor tells me 15th of February. And it's supposed to be the best thing they have had so far for arthritis. And I've had them all the past 20 years, believe me, and nothing helps.

LEVINE: Oh, that's good news, huh?

STELLA: Yes, I'm really waiting for that. And that's why they gave me this shot. They think that I'll have more relief from that than any of the other. I've been on prednisone, all that cortisone stuff, which is bad. It's bad for your health, you know. It's the only thing would help a little bit. So I'm waiting now for that. But I've had a lot of problems, yeah, with this arthritis, especially. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

STELLA: But other than that, I'm glad I kept my brain and I was able—you know, I was able to save a little bit, because really had nothing. You know, starting out, just four years mar—you know. And that we had our house four years. We were married 10 years but—so I—I don't know. I think God was right there helping me. I don't know because I knew nothing about finances. I didn't know a thing. But as soon as I got \$50 I would put it in AT&T or I would put in the—in water or I—I knew nothing about the market because nobody could tell me anything about it. They knew less than I did. And—but that's what I did, honey. And so today I have this little income. Because you—you have something put in—even it's a hundred dollars for 40 years—50 years, between the interest, the income and they split and then you add a little to it, you have a nice little nest egg when—after 40, 50 years.

LEVINE: Oh, that's good.

STELLA: So that's how I'm getting along now. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Okay. Is there anything else that you would like to say before we close? How about being here at Ellis Island? I know you visited before. How—how—[unclear]—

STELLA: Well, I'm thrilled. I don't remember anything about my first visit, of course. But I'm just thrilled to come back where I—where I was. And I think we were here twice before. And this is my third time and I'm delighted because I want to see the renovation and everything that's been done since I was here the last time.

LEVINE: [unclear]

STELLA: And I thank Miss Levine for—for this interview.

LEVINE: Oh—

STELLA: You're so sweet. You had—to do this for me.

LEVINE: It's a pleasure and I—I would never know that you're in any pain whatsoever. You just have a wonderful—

STELLA: Really?

LEVINE: —remarkable ability—

STELLA: I think I told you I was going to the hospital.

LEVINE: Yes, you do.

STELLA: And there's the—there's the sign to show. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Yeah.

STELLA: I don't know why she put the intravenous there. I usually had it here when I went to the hospital, around here somewhere.

LEVINE: Wow, you're a real [unclear].

STELLA: That—that was ugly yesterday.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

STELLA: That was really ugly yesterday.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I want to thank you very, very much for a lovely interview.

STELLA: Well, thank you. I appreciate that, and a pleasure to meet you. I felt as though I knew you, just talking to you over the phone.

LEVINE: Ah.

STELLA: Yeah.

LEVINE: That's very nice. Okay. Well, this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I'm—I've been speaking with Angela Stella, who came from Italy at the age of four, practically five years of age, in 1907 and is 91 years young at the time of this interview. And I'm signing off.

[END OF INTERVIEW]