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VERA WILLIAMS
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INTERVIEWER: KRISTA SENATOR
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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: KRISTA SENATOR

SENATOR: Good afternoon this is Krista Senator for the National Park Service. I'm a student intern from Skidmore College for the Ellis Island Oral History Project. This is the second interview that I've conducted. Today is the 31st of July 1999 and I'm in Montville, New Jersey at the home of Vera Williams who came from Naples, Italy in 1913 when she was five years old. Also present in Mrs. William's daughter Pat Daley and we may stop the interview should anyone enter the room. Why don't we begin by you giving me your full name please.

WILLIAMS: My full name, when I was born, Elvira Vincensa (ph) Iodice. Iodice was my father's last name. He was not with me when I was born because he was in South America at that time.

SENATOR: Could you spell your name please?

WILLIAMS: First or last or which? Elvira...

SENATOR: All three if you could.

WILLIAMS: Elvira is E-L-V, E-L-V-I-R-A , Iodice, that's an Italian name, that's I-O-D-I-C-E which later became Fodice because no one could pronounce the "I" in this country. But Iodice is my full Italian name.

SENATOR: And, please state your date of birth.

WILLIAMS: March the 28th 1908

SENATOR: Where were you born?

WILLIAMS: I was born in a town in Italy called Santa Elia a Pianisi Provica de Compo Basso [ph] that's the Italian version. In English its Saint Elia, um now wait a minute, a Pianisi it's a province of Cambo Bosso.

SENATOR: Could you spell that for me?

WILLIAMS: Which one?

SENATOR: The actual town where you were born.

WILLIAMS: Oh, Santa Elia, capital S-t. capital E, that's another word, capital E-L-I-A then there's an A with an asterix like ah,

ah and then its Pianisi, capital P-I-A-N-I-S-I, Pianisi. Have I got it right?

SENATOR: Thank you.

WILLIAMS: Sounds right. (laughs) Province, you have to say Province, um, Province of Compo, C-O-M-P-O, Basso, B-A-S-S-O, Basso. Provincia de Combo Basso that's like a province of free hold, you know in English it would be if you're near Crole you'd be a part of Free Hold so this would be a province of and I think I got that part all done.

SENATOR: What was the size of your birth town?

WILLIAMS: Oh, my gosh. It was a, a province of Combo Basso. Um let's see, I don't know, I never asked.

SENATOR: That's fine.

WILLIAMS: I'm sorry I can't help you.

SENATOR: That's okay, do you remember...

WILLIAMS: But it wasn't too big. (to Mrs. Daley) Saint Elia is um, I don't know I never even mentioned it even to you eather, it never came to my mind.

SENATOR: Where was it located in Italy?

WILLIAMS: Province of Combo Basso, Combo Basso was the main, was like the, like Trenton would be the capital of a lot of other cities surrounding it.

SENATOR: The northern or southern region on the country?

WILLIAMS: Oh, you got to show me the state otherwise I..

SENATOR: Well we can...

WILLIAMS: You know what it is, I'm getting older now, you know it's not too fresh anymore in my memory. At home I have it on my refridgerator, the whole thing you know, but I don't remember it now.

SENATOR: Okay, well, we'll look it up.

WILLIAMS: I was always proud of where I came from and I always will tell anybody cause it was a beautiful little town.

SENATOR: Can you tell me what it looked like?

WILLIAMS: Well I went to school there, cause I came to this country when I was about four maybe be going on five. But I went to school there to Kind.. what we call it Kindergarden here, but

I, I was about close to four years old when my mother sent me to school and I went to school for about a year in that town. And I learned my ABCs in Italian, Ah Be che de eh [Italian], A B C D E F G (laughs) you know. I learned something because right after that we came to this country.

SENATOR: Do you remeber any specific teachers or playmates at this school?

WILLIAMS: In Italy?

SENATOR: Um hum

WILLIAMS: Well, I had a cousin, Aunt theresa, she was my grandmother's daughter, my mother's sister and she had children and I think one of them was Theresa, the same as her mother. I can't remember the rest of them. Some of them came to this country, some of then didn't. This is ah, you know a year ago my memory was clearer than it is now. I wish I had come the year before. (laughs) Uh, let me see now, you want to know about friends that lived there intown, in my town.

SENATOR: Just if you have any memories of...

WILLIAMS: There were relatives there, we had they were called Testa [Italian] they were like cousins.

SENATOR: Could you spell that please?

WILLIAMS: Capital T-E-S-T-A, Testa. And um, some of them came to his country later on too. And they were related like cousins and aunts. I also have an aunt in Canada which I do corespond with. (laughs) Uh, what else do you want to know?

SENATOR: What is your father's name?

WILLIAMS: Salvator they used to call him Sam for short. (laughs)

SENATOR: Could you spell Salvator?

WILLIAMS: Salvator S-A-L-V-A-T-O-R there may be an E on the end of it but don't quote me, I don't know. In Italian there's no E.

SENATOR: What was his occupation?

WILLIAMS: He worked for Heller Brothers for years in Newark. He was, ah what do you call, a machinist and at one point in time when I was young, (to Mrs. Daley) how old was I, when I went to Ohio, how old was I. Ah, let me see nine, ten years old?

SENATOR: We'll talk a little bit more about...

WILLIAMS: When we go to..

SENATOR: Yes we're still in the old country.

WILLIAMS: Oh, we're still in the old country. Yea well see my father, when he was in Italy, I don't know, he didn't work in Itlay as far as I know. Because before he came to my mother's town.. he came from Casoria [ph] which is a Province of Naples.

SENATOR: Could you spell that please?

WILLIAMS: Casoria, C-A-S-O-R-I-A, Casoria which is a province of Naples. My God, it's a good thing I can remember these things. And before he came to this country my father was in South America for two years. My mother was still in Saint Elia cause he had married her and then went first to South America where he was in the Argintine and he worked, as a, oh I did know, in the Argintine, he was a machinist, I think he was a machinist.

SENATOR: Why did he go to South America?

WILLIAMS: For work. There was no work in a town like Saint Elia for men with a, that had, potential, you know, job, he knew what he wanted to do cause he learned it, he was in the Italian navy before he married my mother. So he learned a lot and he traveled the world with the navy so he knew a lot of things. And, now what was I talking about, I go from one thing.. (laughs)

SENATOR: Why did he move to South America?

WILLIAMS: He moved to South America for work cause there was no work in Itlay at that time. You know manual work to do, farmers yes, but not you know manual work.. what else did you ask?

SENATOR: When did he leave for South America?

Williams: He left before I was born. He came back after I was born. And I remember him taking me out, cause my mother and grandmother lived in Saint Elia, my grandmother was a, um, wait hold everything now, she was a business woman, she had a store. They called it a Botega [ph]

SENATOR: Spell that please.

WILLIAMS: B-O-T or a D i'm not sure if its a, E-C-O. It's an Italian word so I'm not too familiar with that. It's called a Boteco or what they used to call them out west when they had a store, something, funny names. Well anyway, um, my father married my mother, he at that point, he was born in a town called, was it a province of Naples. (To Mrs. Daley) Do you remember? I know it like I know the fingers of my hand here but I can't think of it at this moment...

SENATOR: If you remember it after the interview you can let me know.

WILLIAMS: Is that all right?

SENATOR: That's fine.

WILLIAMS: And it was very close to Naples and Naples is right near the bay that takes you to this country. You know the ocean, the bay takes you to this country. And, um, what I remember, I think he was introduced to my mother through friends and she was living with my grandmother who was widowed and had a bodega, a store. And she sold, every saturday like the farmers came from the country, came to Saint Elia the town where I was born, and my grandmother had groceries and they brough vegetables and they traded, vegetables for, cause they didn't have money you know and the farmers, they only worked on farms so they'd bring in all the vegetables that they raised and my grandmother would have stuff that they couldn't buy where they were and they would trade. Isn't that facinating?

SENATOR: That's really neat. For how long did she do this?

WILLIAMS: Well before I was born it was going on so I don't know, it was going on after I was born so I wouldn't have known a thing about it and, um, my father was introduced to my mother by friends that knew my grandmother I guess, because Naples, Casardia which is a province of Naples, um, we used to go by carriage, horse and carriage to Naples, my mother and I.

SENATOR: How long of a trip is that?

WILLIAMS: It must have been almost an hour or more. As a little girl of four years old I remember going there. When we came to this country we had to go to Naples first. The ships were at the bay, the bay of Naples and that's where we had to get the ship to come here.

SENATOR: Let's talk a little more about your parents. Can you describe your father's personality?

WILLIAMS: My father's per, he was a happy-lucky guy, he'd been to South America two times before he married my mother. He had been in the Navy before that. Cause my mother was married when she was twenty eight, my father was a year older. (To Mrs. Daley) Wasn't he a year older? You don't remember? About a year older.

SENATOR: And where were they married?

WILLIAMS: They were married in Saint Elia where my mother lived. And my father once told me that when he got married, you know they had to go to church like a procession (laughs) you know, not like in a car, there were not cars. The church was close to my grandmother's house so they walked in the procession to the church. My father said that he was in the back of the procession and he was the wise guy because he was a citified guy and he smoked and if he wanted to smoke he had to go back because

otherwise he would have been critized. (laughs)

SENATOR: In his wedding procession?

WILLIAMS: No, he told me this, that's all I know, you know I'll never forget it. But, that's how, when he went to church he was in the very back so he could smoke before he got to the church.

SENATOR: What religion?

WILLIAMS: Catholic

SENATOR: Catholic

WILLIAMS: Yea, Catholic

SENATOR: Can you describe what it was like to practice your religion, were you...

WILLIAMS: In Italy?

SENATOR: Um hum

WILLIAMS: Oh, it was the same as here, you went to, you went to church um, sometimes you had to climb up, cause Saint Elia is in the mountains of southern part of Italy or the middle part I guess, I don't remember. And, um, I remember walking, if I had to go somewhere I had to go up and then maybe there would be seats you could sit down and rest and then keep going cause you know, it was in a mountain town.

SENATOR: Can you describe the church for me?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I was a little girl. Wait a minute now, let's see, church, I have to think...

SENATOR: Well let's talk about your mother for a little bit. What is her name?

WILLIAMS: My mother's name was Carmela, her maiden name was Testa and her married name became Iodice.

SENATOR: Could you spell her maiden name for me?

WILLIAMS: Testa, T-E-S-T-A, just the way it's pronounced.

SENATOR: And...

SIGRIST: I think Pat has something she'd like to say.

SENATOR: Okay

DALEY: (To Mrs. Williams) Wasn't mom's name...

SIGRIST: That's all right, say it full-voiced please.

DALEY: (To Mrs. Williams) Wasn't mom's name Carolyn? Your mother's name Carolyn...

WILLIAMS: Oh, Carolyn yea

DALEY: Not Carmela

WILLIAMS: Yea, Yea

DALEY: It was Carloyn

SENATOR: So Carolyn

WILLIAMS: (To Mrs. Daley) Carloyn, what did I say?

DALEY: Carmela, you're thinking of aunt Carmela

WILLIAMS: Ah yea, well it's the same thing only its paraphrased or something. But you can say, what my daughter just said was right, Caroline.

DALEY: Carloyn, Carloyn

SENATOR: What was her occupation?

WILLIAMS: My mother worked at home, beautiful sewing. She made her own shirts when she got married, she made her own ????, she had everything handmade.

SENATOR: She made...

WILLIAMS: Well wait a minute they had a sewing machine upstairs in the bedroom above the store that my grandmother had, the store was down here, you had to go upstairs to the bedroom and uh, and it was a sewing machine. And there were very few sewing machines years ago but my grandmother had one and my mother used to use that so she did a lot of her cloths on that sewing machine. And what did you ask me?

SENATOR: You just answered it, what was her occupation. Did she...

WILLIAMS: She stayed homeand helped her mother in the store.

SENATOR: What did she do after she was married?

WILLIAMS: She never worked when she got married, my father worked liek a machanic. He could do anything, my father could even build a house if he wanted to, but he didn't he worked for Heller Brothers in Newark, New Jersey.

SENATOR: Can you describe...

WILLIAMS: For many years.

SENATOR: Can you describe your mother's personality?

WILLIAMS: Sweet, pretty, very fair, and but she never learned to speak English. But she died when I was (to Mrs. Daley) what six, eleven or twelve years old. She never went out, you know to Cabitz [ph], she was a homebody and, um, that's how I remember my mother.

SENATOR: How about your father's appearance?

WILLIAMS: He was a handsome man, gee, I've got pictures of him, I don't know where they are.

SENATOR: That's okay.

WILLIAMS: I should have thought of that, I didn't think of it. UmHe was goodlooking, taller than me, a little taller than I was. Neither were tall tall, medium. And he, he was a man who could do anything, he could even build a house if you told him how to build a hosue. He used his hands, he was very handy, doing things with his hands.

SENATOR: What about his complexion?

WILLIAMS: Oh, he wasn't fair, just a little on the, darker side. Not dark, dark, but what should I call it? Like Pat.

SENATOR: Bronze

WILLIAMS: No, he wasn't dark.

SENATOR: No, okay.

WILLIAMS: He was fair, he was not fair either. Like Pat.

SENATOR: Sort of in the middle.

WILLIAMS: What do I look like?

SENATOR: Yeah, okay.

WILLIAMS: He looked like me, I take after my father. So you can quote that, I'm the same as him.

SENATOR: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

WILLIAMS: I had, my mother had five children. She died when she was young, let's the world, second world, first world war. 1913 was that the first World War?

SIGRIST: 1914

WILLIAMS: Was that the first or the second?

SIGRIST: The first.

WILLIAMS: Alright, we were in this country when the war started. And my father wanted to go and my mother cried, no, she didn't want to be left alone so he didn't go. Now what was my subject, what was I talking about?

SENATOR: Brothers and sisters.

WILLIAMS: Brothers and sisters okay. She died after she gave birth to five children. We lived in Newark.

SENATOR: How many brothers and sisters did you have while you were in Italy?

WILLIAMS: Oh, just me and myu brother was a baby. He came to this country with me and my mother. He was about, not more than two years old when I was going on five.

SENATOR: And then your mother, did she have more children. Well there were two, she had three more. Three were born in this country. And the names of them are...

SENATOR: Pat, would you like to...

DALEY: Her brother who came to this country with her was Tom.

WILLIAMS: My brother Tom (laughs) he lives in, (to Mrs. Daley) in what is it South Orange? No. Verona?

SENATOR: Verona?

WILLIAMS: Yea, right here, not too far. And I have a sister Ann that now lives in Virginia. She visited us, (to Mrs. Daley) How long ago?

DALEY: In may

WILLIAMS: In may, she was here with her, (to Mrs. Daley) she had two children?

DALEY: Three daughters.

WILLIAMS: She has three daughters. My sister Ann. And I have a sister Mary who died.. (to Mrs. Daley) a year or two ago?

DALEY: Two years.

WILLIAMS: Two years ago she died and she lived in Nuttley while she was alive with her husband and she had (to Mrs. Daley) three children?

DALEY: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Three children, I don't know how I remembered that but I...

DALEY: And you had a brother Michael who was killed in France.

WILLIAMS: Oh, he was in the war and he was killed in France. And he's buried in France.

SIGRIST: We're just going to pause for a minute.

SENATOR: Mrs. Williams could you tell me about your mother's death.

WILLIAMS: Her illness. (To Mrs. Daley) What was her illness? She became ill where he had to be, my father took her to South Orange hospital.

DALEY: I believe she had a kidney infection.

WILLIAMS: Oh, a kidney infection. I couldn't remember, see I'm glad she remembered. But so she went to a hospital in either, South Orange, one of these local towns. But she didn't, she couldn't speak English. She couldn't understand what was wrong with her, they were telling her but she didn't understand and she couldn't convey it to my father when he came to visit her. And she would say it's something here, something here. That's the best she could understand. And, um, finally she wanted to come home. She came home. We living in Nuttley, no, not Nuttley, Newark, no we were not in Newark then, uh, Silver Lake. Where is Silver Lake now? There was a park not far, there was a church, I went to that church. I was only a kid.

SENATOR: How old were you when your mom passed away?

WILLIAMS: Yeah, about eleven or twelve, not more than twelve, but she took sick five years before I was twelve. It was a lingering thing with her kidneys. I think it was her KIDneys. She was in that hospital, in Newark. What's the name of that hospital now? Saint Joseph? Don't write it, I'm trying to think. There was one hospital where there's a central high school now.

SENATOR: Okay.

WILLIAMS: If I'm not mistaken that used to be a hospital at one time. And then there was a hospital...

SENATOR: Well, if you think of it later you can let me know.

WILLIAMS: Yeah, I can't think of it now.

SENATOR: Did your father speak English?

WILLIAMS: Brokenly, brokenly. And, where do I continue? Where was I?

SENATOR: Well, we can take you back to Italy for a little bit and talk about leaving...

WILLIAMS: My father was already, my father had been in South America two years, came back to Italy. And I remember this because I was about three or four years old and when my father came home he stayed for maybe six months or a year to be with my mother. And there used to be a bar next to my grandmother's shop and he used to go there to play cards with his friends and he used to take me and put me on his knee (laughs). Because my mother had to work with her mother in the shop. She couldn't take care of me. So he'd put me on his knees and he'd be playing cards and I remember this and I must have been not more than four, three or four years old. (laughs)

SENATOR: How did you feel about that?

WILLIAMS: Oh I didn't, it was just friends. He had to pass time. He couldn't work there, the work he did, there was nothing there to do that's why he came to America and South America, to get work.

SENATOR: When...

WILLIAMS: But everybody came to this country for work, not just my father.

SENATOR: When did he leave for the United States?

WILLIAMS: How old was I? I don't remember. (To Mrs, Daley) When did I come to this country again? When I was five?

DALEY: Four or five.

WILLIAMS: Yeah, then he must have left, he must have been here a year before he sent for my mother and I. He had a job, he was working for Heller Brothers. He was very, you know, good with what he did.

SENATOR: Where did he live?

WILLIAMS: Our first home was in Belville on Williams Street. (laughs) And I was just a kid. And it was one of those streets that runs down to the river. You know on Belville there's that river that floats around. I don't know if you know Belville, but anyway. And, and this here street rain into Broad, was that Boradway where all the stores are in Belville, even today. All the stores are on the main drag that will take you to Nuttley if you go strait through. You see, that's the best I can describe

it, I was only a Kid.

SENATOR: That's wonderful.

WILLIAMS: And we lived on this here street that ran toward the river, Williams Street. And we didn't live too far down from that main road. All right. And there used to be a, a first aid building on one corner and the store on the other. And the first aid building, they used to blow the whistle so loud, it scared my mother out of her wits. She wasn't used to that. Anyway, that's how I remember that.

SENATOR: How did your life change in Italy after your father left for the United States?

WILLIAMS: How did my life change? No change, I went to school for one year. My mother sent me to school when I was three or four years old and um, I remember. You know I went to Italy all by myself so I'm getting mixed up with when I went and what I'm telling you. This is what I wanted you to know. It's not that I want to tell you about it, I went to it later.

SIGRIST: Krista we're reaching the thirty minute mark.

WILLIAMS: Oh that's all then she's gonna leave me.

SENATOR AND SIGRIST : No, no, no (laughs)

SIGRIST: This way she can gage what the next set of questions will be.

WILLIAMS: Okay, I'm in the middle of everything, you can't leave me now. (laughs)

SENATOR: Not at all. So, who decided to come to America?

WILLIAMS: What made my father, the same thing, work.

SENATOR: But your, why did he decide for your mom and you and your brother to follow?

WILLIAMS: After he was here for a year, or so, he sent for us because a man needs his wife and his children.

SENATOR: Of course, of course.

WILLIAMS: And he had me, by that time my brother had been born, Tom, the one that lives yander. And then my mother, after we came here my mother had three more children, three right? three more children.

SENATOR: What was it like to get ready to leave for America?

WILLIAMS: Oh, we went to Naples. Where my father, my father came

from Naples. A little town called Casardia, I told you that. That was just attached to Naples just like the next town is from here. And he, and um, we went to his mother and father's home to stay until our ship came in.

SENATOR: And how long did you have to wait before your ship...

WILLIAMS: It must have been a month or more.

SENATOR: And what was the name of the ship?

WILLIAMS: Oh my gosh. (To Mrs. Daley) Do I have it Pat? You've got to be kidding. Oh, wonderful. Il Taormina, there it is. Thank you honey.

SENATOR: So that's T-A-O-R-M-I-N-A

WILLIAMS: That's a beautiful name, isn't it, Taormina

SENATOR: It is beautiful.

WILLIAMS: I love that word.

SENATOR: What did you take with you to the United States?

WILLIAMS: I was just a kid. I didn't take anything. I went, when I got on the ship, I started to eat. They were sending ice cream and all this stuff up in the ship and I would stand by the railing just waiting for that food to come up. (laughs)

SENATOR: Describe...

WILLIAMS: I was only about two or three years old.

SENATOR: Do you recall the accommodations on the ship?

WILLIAMS: I remember the dining room very well. (laughs) My mother and I had a room together. We went first class cause my grandmother she could afford to send up first class. And, um, and I remember the dining room on the ship very well because when no body was there, I would wander around, I was a noisy-body. So I would walk into, and see all these, the ship was um, I have to describe the dining room. This is the dining room, the whole thing right? Alright, there was a, right in the middle there was a place where you could walk and on either side were benches and tables where you could sit to eat. You got an idea of what it was like, right? Describe it.. and I walked up that isle and I was noisy and I was looking at the tables and um, some of them had glasses on them or something and I said, "that things gonna fall off when that ship tips and where will I be." Because, and it's true, you know, they have a lip, a wooden lip at the edge of the table so if anything go... but I didn't know that.

SENATOR: Can you describe the food on the ship?

WILLIAMS: Oh, golly, I don't know if I can describe it. It was a long time ago. They had food like that have today.

SENATOR: Was the voyage rough or smooth?

WILLIAMS: I don't remember the voyage cause I don't, you know I'm trying to remember. We had a room all to ourselves, my mother and me and my brother, who was a baby, and myself. We had nice accomodations, we had the best, first class so we had the best. And um, I remember standing at the railing looking out at the water with nothing but water you couldn't see anything but water. I remember that. And I remember siting down at one of the benches to watch. But that's all, there was nothing, what we did I don't remember.

SENATOR: How did you feel about leaving Italy?

WILLIAMS: Well, I was too young to feel. My mother, it was mother that you would have to ask that. She didn't want to leave her mother. She was very close to her mother. And she was a homebody. Like, to be with her mother was the safe thing to do. So, she missed her mother all the time that she was in this country even though she wrote, it wasn't enough. And my father used to worry about it becasue she missed her mother just like it was a child. She was a child. You know, how, we weren't here long when she passed away, how amny years. I was only four or five years old when she passed away. She left me with five children, me the fifth, there were four besides me and I had to raise them.

SENATOR: You did.

WILLIAMS: Yes I did, with my father.

SENATOR: Can you tell me about that?

WILLIAMS: I had no friends. Because I wasn't allowed to make friends cause if I did I'd forget about the kids so my father took care of that. And we were living in Newark when Newark was beautiful at that time, oh God.

SENATOR: Can you describe Newark?

WILLIAMS: We lived in North Newark. I used to walk on a sunday afternoon, by myself, high heels, walk downtown to Broad street where all the beautiful stores were and you look at the store windows and you eyes get that big you see so many beautiful things. All by myself, I would walk down. And that was Newark then, I haven't been there now and I don't want to go there now. But anyway, it was beautiful, Newark was the place. I went to school in Newark. I went to the S, I know the name of this school cause it's named after the street right next to it. And it was... (to Mrs. Daley) Can you remember the name of the school I went

to? Essex, essex...

SENATOR: Did you begin school after first arriving in America?

WILLIAMS: I wasn't old enough, you had to be about, close to four.. See I was too old to go to Kindergarten so I went into the first grade so I must have been four years old, at least. We were here for a while before I went to school, because, I don't know how long I was here before, I was about four at the time, I had to go to school at four. So, Elliot Street School I went to.
(laughs)

SENATOR: There we go. (laughs)

WILLIAMS: Elliot Street School. And there's a street right next to it by that name. I don't know whether the school's still there yet but that's the name of my school, Elliot Street School.

SENATOR: I'm going to ask you more about school in a little bit but I would like to return to your arrival in the United States. Can you describe...

WILLIAMS: I was too young.

SENATOR: Do you remember Ellis Island?

WILLIAMS: Oh yea, I don't remember the trip on the ship, I don't seem to have any memories of that, but when we got to Ellis Island, we were waiting for my father to come from Newark to pick us up to take us home. And he had to work until about seven or eight o'clock that night and my mother, they couldn't, where were they gonna keep us? They had to make a special place just for us. So they didn't rope it off, you know they had this kind of fence like a fence outside that was made into a square room with a door. You could see outside and people could see you inside but they fixed it so we couldn't get out or we'd get lost. The door was there but they fixed it so, we couldn't speak English, all of us. I was only a baby, you know how old was I three years old, four years old.

SENATOR: How long were you waiting for your father?

WILLIAMS: Quite a while, I don't remember what time it was when they put us in that room but I remember about the time my father arrived and it was about 7:00 or 7:30, it was starting to get dark. And he hugged us and kissed us. I remember that very well. And then we came home ny train and I don't remember cause I must have fallen asleep.

SENATOR: How did you feel about seeing your father again?

WILLIAMS: I can't remember.

SENATOR: You can't remember.

WILLIAMS: I can't remember. It was just nice to see somebody come and take us out of there cause we had been there a good while and I don't think there was even a chair to sit. My mother had to stand up and she was crying. My mother was crying by the time my father got there cause she couldn't understand them telling her that she had to wait there for my father. I guess she didn't understand why she was there so long. Unless it came to her later that she was waiting for her husband, you know, it must have occurred to her. I was too young, you know, I couldn't understand. Then, don't ask me how we got to my house cause I fell asleep. Wherever we were, on a train or ship or whatever we were on I don't remember. I don't remember how we got to our house, cause I was just a kid, a little kid.

SENATOR: Can you describe your house.

WILLIAMS: Oh, I can describe it because after we lived there a while I could. It was on Williams Street. I bet the house is still there. I never can tell cause I have no car anymore, I can't go to places I want to go cause I had to give up driving.

SENATOR: How many rooms?

WILLIAMS: Oh, it was upstairs, we lived on the second floor. How many rooms, now that's a good question. I never counted them so I don't know. (laughs) All I know is it was nice and that at the end of the street and the other end of the street, there was a river and I was a noisy-body and walked down there by myself and sit at the bank of the river, I loved it. I used to do that, by myself, you know, and I was only about at that time, about four years old. And on the other end was a street with all big stores, a five and ten and all. The other end of the river, that's all I can tell ya. And there was a firehouse on the corner. The stores were on this corner and the other corner was a firehouse. And the fire whistle used to blow, used to blow my mind, my mother's mind right out, oh it used to kill her, she couldn't stand it, she wasn't used to it, she thought it was terrible. And we weren't there too long because of it. My father made, we moved to Newark. And we moved on Summer avenue. I'd like to go there again, see what it's like. It used to be all stores on Summer avenue on the block that we moved into, across the street from our house we moved to a place that had first floor and second floor. First floor were all stores, upstairs people rented. We had about four, five rooms. And we had a gas range with it, that came, it was an old black gas range and I, firewood and I, one time I, and these were railroad rooms, one, two, three, four I think there were five, could have been five but I can only remember four. One day my mother was on the other end of the room, making the beds and stuff, and I was in the kitchen and was noisy-body. So I wanted to put something, a picture up, the stove was here and where that picture is, that's where I wanted to put a picture and I was leaning over, I had a child's dress on. I must have been four or five years old and (laughs) my cloths caught fire. My mother had

something on the stove with a pot on it. But gas flows out, you know how if you put something on gas it flows out well I didn't that. And I caught fire so the flames were coming up to my noise.

I screamed and screamed and then I see my mother starts running toward the kitchen and I jumped out of the chair and met my mother and my mother put her arms around me and put the fire out.

SENATOR: Oh my goodness.

WILLIAMS: Honest to God. That's the way she... That's for being noisy, as noisy as I am, I can't remember things. (laughs)

SENATOR: Well, speaking of the stove, could you describe the kind of food that you ate?

WILLIAMS: Where?

SENATOR: At home.

WILLIAMS: At what time, what period?

SENATOR: Well, how about in Italy.

WILLIAMS: Ah, in Italy, ohhh.

SENATOR: And how did you...

WILLIAMS: Pasta, a lot of pasta was used. And my grandmother, she did the cooking. We lived upstairs, above the store. We had two beds. My grandmother slept in one bed, my mother and I slept in this other bed on the other side but I always wanted to sleep with my grandmother, her bed was that high. I couldn't climb in it, they had to pick me up to put me on it. But I didn't want to sleep with my mother I liked to sleep on the high bed so they had to pick me up to put me... no the food we ate was a lot of pasta, vegetables, cause we used have the farmers come in with the vegetables. In Italy the town was called Santa Elia, did I give you that? Well, it was on the mountain and I can remember walking on up this way to go on the next road and that's something I wanted to tell you, it's missing, food. My grandmother, oh my grandmother used to have olive oil to sell in jugs that, you see jugs with the neck that high, there almost green looking and glass...

SENATOR: A couple of inches high? For the sake of the tape...

WILLIAMS: Well the jugs with the necks were about, wait a minute, that high. Now the neck was here and it started here to here the rest was like so.

SENATOR: So about how big would you say?

WILLIAMS: So big.

SENATOR: Okay.

WILLIAMS: My grandmother had about three of them. As you went down to the store, there was a shelf and that's where she kept her olive oil which she sold. And we used it too for ourselves. She used to make bread. You see, in Italy, in my time, my young time, people didn't have ovens in their homes. Somebody had to have an oven made special and it was a kind of when you open it you can see the fire. You know, you've seen it on television sometimes. Because you had to go out and buy your bread, cause my grandmother and my mother used to make the bread and bake it and sell it. Because they're the only ones had the oven in the area, see. And, that I remember clearly cause I remember watching my grandmother making that bread, Italian bread, you had to go like this you know to make it nice and even and pliable so you could eat it.

SENATOR: How did you eat in America? What kinds of foods did you eat here?

WILLIAMS: Oh, well we got to live in Newark where there were Italian stores and they made the bread, the Italian bread. My mother used to send me out for it. As little as I was, I used to do all the shopping for my mother because she couldn't speak English. Until the day she died and she died...

DALEY: 42

WILLIAMS: 42

DALEY: 42 years old.

WILLIAMS: When she was 42 years old. She must have been, she must have been about 30 or 32 years old when she came here. She didn't live here too long. And, um she used to send me to the stores. I remember she used to send me for soup meat and there was a butcher shop on the corner in Newark, on Winthrop Street and Summer Avenue, I remember that. Winthrop and Summer Avenue, on the corner there was this butcher and don't ask me how but I brought home soup meat for my mother. (laughs) I don't remember how I did it. He knew what I wanted.

SENATOR: Who did the cooking in your family?

WILLIAMS: When my father was working, my mother did the cooking. She was a good cook, good baker. She could make cakes at Christmas time that, you, you would just suffocate to have some. And my father, when he was home, he would cook. My father was a good cook too, just like my mother. And, when, I'll tell you one thing they used to do that might surprise you. In the fall of the year or early cause it was still summer time, my father would bring home tomatoes, ripe tomatoes from the garden, buy them, bring them home and he and my mother would sit in the kitchen, you know, peeling them after they had been in hot water for a certain period of time, they peeled them, they were crushed and they made

a salsa with it. You know, what you put on spaghetti, the red stuff.

SENATOR: Marianara sauce?

WILLIAMS: Yeah, right that's another word for it, Italian is another word.

SENATOR: How do you spell it in Italian?

WILLIAMS: Salsa, S-A-L-S-A Cause there's no Zs in the Italian alphabet. I know it (laughs). But you know, if you don't put something there than you don't know what you're talking about. What, what they would do was make this, no I want to tell you more about that, it was summertime, you have to do it in the summertime. Now you have to dry all that stuff that my mother cooked and it was soft and you could almost drink it cause it was crushed. She would put it on wooden boards and it had to go outside where the sun shone because it had to dry, it dried to a point where you could, what, what else could I describe it with, like, something soft that you could pick up with a spoon, it would be soft. And then it had to go in jugs, you know I'm talking along time let me have a drink of water. I can't talk anymore.

SENATOR: Would you like to take a little break?

WILLIAMS: Yes, I think it would be a good idea.

SIGRIST: Alright, why don't we pause for a little...

PAUSE....

SIGRIST: We are now resuming the tape.

WILLIAMS: Yea cause you have to put it in there.

SENATOR: Could you continue to describe making the salsa?

WILLIAMS: Yes, where was I, I don't want to repeat myself if I don't have to.

SENATOR: Drying the tomatoes and...

WILLIAMS: Oh, after the tomatoes were cooked, peeled and then squashed eaither with a something or hand. Everything had to be done clean, you know, my father used to help my mother do that. Then, what was left, where did I put it through a siv or something, it had to be soft, smooth. Then, she had big boards like this, this square, clean that were only used for this purpose every year. She would set them out in the garden where the sun was shining, put the boards, and then pour the tomato sause and spעד it out on the board to dry. And I was elected to be out there and turn it over every once and a while so it would dry evenly. That was my job in the summer time. (laughs) Cause I was

the oldest and I was like five years old, six, seven, eight, every year we used to do it. But that's what, when they were dry, then you could take a spoon and gather them like this, if you wanted to, cause, the, the water, whatever it was, was all out of it, was dried, it was pliable. My mother had jugs, what do they call that? Maybe clay, what do you call clay jugs? There's a word for that..

SIGRIST: Crock.

WILLIAMS: Crock, thank you. They were crocks. (laughs) And they were scrubbed and cleaned and everything. Oh, salt had to be used on this before it was put into the crocks. Salt is a preservative and it kept all year round, you could keep it in a cold place in the house, it would keep. And that's what we had to do in the summertime. This was every summer. The older I got, the more work I had to do. But I started at four or five years old turning it, turning it, I didn't mind, I used to like to do it. When, in those days there wasn't things like today that child could run away and do it. You know, there was very little you could do when you're near a home and everything, anyway.

SENATOR: How long did it take to make the sauce?

WILLIAMS: It sits outside depending on the sun, the sun had to dry the fluid that was in the tomato before you could use it. Then it would be up to you how dry you wanted it. And when you wanted to use it, after it was in the crock, you would just take a spoon and spoon it and it, when you made tomato sauce for spaghetti, after you cooked the tomatoes, this would thicken it, would thicken the sauce so that when you put it on the spaghetti, it would be nice. That's real Italian, you got something you won't get in many places today. That's where I described it, that's the way it was cause I remember that well.

SENATOR: Great.

SIGRIST: We have about three minutes Krista.

SENATOR: And, during the break, Pat had mentioned that your father made wine. Could you tell us about that?

WILLIAMS: That's what you call house wine, not something you sell. And, the best I can remember, (To Mrs, Daley) did I tell you how he used to make it? Is that what you want me to tell? Oh okay. We used to have gas stoves in those days, you know tall with four burners, maybe they're still in use today, I don't know. But, this was when I was older, my mother was gone, she had died already. She died when I was about five or something like that. So this was when I was about eight years old. We had moved to Belville and I was taking care of the fam, I had to leave school. My father came to school and told my teachers that I could no longer go to school, I had to stay home and mind my brothers and sisters. Either that or go to a, oh, across the river, what do

you call that...orphanage. And he asked me, he said, "what do you want to do? Go to an orphanage? Or take care of the children?" I didn't want to go to an orphanage I had roomers that accross the river where the orphanage were, the nun, I think the nuns ran the orphanage. They , the kids would have bugs in their hair and other things and I didn't want to go there so I told my father I would stay home. So he had to come to school and take me out. He told them why but, I had to go to school in Newark, once, one day a week. I forgot what they called it, the name of the school for people, for children that couldn't finish schoo, they had to go to this place. I used to take the trolley car to go downtown Newark because we lived in North Newark and, um, I went to school all by myself and I was just a kid.

SENATOR: Can you describe the school for me?

WILLIAMS: It was just a classroom, that's all I remember.

SENATOR: When were the classes, what time of day?

WILLIAMS: Oh, in the morning. I had to be there by ten o'clock, I think. Of course, I couldn't make it on trolleys by nine. But it was only a couple of hours. What'd they call, they had a word for it, I can't remember, for the school I mean. It was for chilren like me , who had to leave school for some reason or other. Maybe they had to leave school because they were stupid. But that wasn't my reason, my reason was because I didn't have my mother. My father had to get permission from Board of Education and all, I don'd know, I was too young, but he took care of of that.

SENATOR: Okay, this is Krista Senator at the end of tape one with Vera Williams. The date is the 31st of July 1999, we are in Montville, New Jersey.

TAPE TWO:

SENATOR: This is the beginning of tape two, I'm Krista Senator here, interviewing Vera Williams in Montville, New Jersey. Also in the room is her daughter, Par Daley and Paul Sigrist who is running the recoding equiptment. The date is the 31st of July 1999. Mrs. Williams, could you, I want to take you back a little bit to your mother's illness and I'm wondering if you could just tell me a little bit more about that.

WILLIAMS: Yea, I'm trying to remember the hospital, there were two hospitals. What's the name of that hospital, you know where Central High school is in Newark? Um, everything is at the tip of my tongue but it won't come out.

SENATOR: That's okay, that's okay.

WILLIAMS: She was in first one hospital and I think it was Montclair, Montclair hospital. She was in that first. But

because she could not understand English, she misunderstood as to why they wanted to operate. She, my father went to the hospital to see her, she cried, she cried, "take me home" she said, "they want to operate over here, they want to operate. I don't want to stay, I don't want to be operated on." So my father couldn't bare to see her crying and he took her home. In the meantime, I'd been home and I was, (to Mrs. Daley) how old was I at that time?

DALEY: Well you said she took ill about five years before she passed away.

WILLIAMS: I must have been about five, six, seven, eight.

DALEY: Around that.

WILLIAMS: I was a teenager. Not even a teenager. And I used to do the housework with my father, my father was like a woman. He did things, he knew what to do, you know, he was no dummy. And he did all the things he though my mother would do for us, you know we were five children at that point in time. We started with two or three, now we were five. And, so, I used to take the rag and try to clean but as soon as my mother got home, she had the rag and she used to clean. The nurses told my father when he was taking her home, "Mr. Fodice" he said, "your wife is going to have a relapse" and she did. She was home in bed again, for I don't know how long and she wasn't getting better. So when the doctor came one day, my father said, "Doctor what should I do with my wife to make her better?" And he was mad because the doctor was taking him money and doing nothing. "Well she should.." and it was Dr. (laughs) oh, I know his name, I know, he lived on Mont Prospect avenue. He said she should go back to the hospital, so then, I wish I could remember the name of the hospital.

DALEY: It was in Newark at this time.

WILLIAMS: It was in Newark, it was in Newark. And I used to know... Can you make a blank and I'll remember before I finish.

SENATOR: Okay you can tell me later.

WILLIAMS: Yea, cause I can't remember now. And I think that's important to know. Cause, Montclair hospital, she was in first. You can make a note of that. And this one was in Newark, oh God if I could...

SENATOR: Where was Montclair hospital?

WILLIAMS: In Montclair. Well, anyway maybe it will come to me, just leave a blank. Anyway, um, where was I?

DALEY: The doctor told your father..

WILLIAMS: To go back to the hospital. That's why she, they took her to this other hospital. In the meantime, she got, she had no

operation, she was just very sick and getting sicker. And she didn't understand where they were going to operate on her. And my father's English was very broken too, my father's was, these were foreigners that came to this country, they couldn't speak the language, you know. And then, they took to this other hospital. She was at this hospital about six months, she didn't know where they were going to operate on her because they were feeling her out, you know taking all kinds of tests and this and that. Then before you know it, they told her that she was going to die. And when, my father, we were living in Silver Lake at that time, Belville, my father was told that he wanted to take her home, you can't take her home. Ah, he said, "I'm taking her home." "No you can't." He argued with the nurse, they were nuns, Saint Joes? Saint Joes Hospital? And my father said, "If you don't let me take her home, I'm throwing her over my sholder and I'm taking her home myself." And he was mad when he said that because he had five children adn he wanted his, his wife to see us before she died. Of course, they couldn't understand that and it was hard for him to explain all this. And so then, they sent her home in a prop, in a way they should. In the meantime, this is the thing that I don't understand myself, the day, was saturday that my father went to take my mother home and on saturdays, I used to dust and clean cause I didn't go to school. And, we had railroad rooms at that time and my room was right next to the kitchen and I thought, "if he beings mom home, I got to have a nice clean bed for her to sleep in." That was my bed. So I changed the sheets on my bed, I didn't know for sure where they were going to put her. And I changed the sheets on my bed and they brought her home and where did they put her, in my bed. And that way, when my father, when they brought her home my father took each one of us to her. I remember he took the baby in his arms and he brought it to my mother and my mother went like this, that's not what she wanted to see. And then he took the next one until he came to me. And when I got to her, she put her arms around me, she knew she was dying, she knew I was going to have the burden of raising the family. And she put her arms around me, she cried. And I didn't understand this at that time though, believe me all I knew was my mother was home and I was glad to see her. But the reason that I even, even now.. I remember (crying.)

SENATOR: Would you like to take a break?

SIGRIST: Just take your time, you'll be okay.

SENATOR: It's okay.

WILLIAMS: I'm sorry, I can't help it.

SENATOR: No, it's fine.

WILLIAMS: But, um, then sdhe died shortly thereafter. And, we used to have a tiger cat that my mother used to feed diligently because she was a good mouser. But she never put her in her arms or hugged her or anything. Always, the cat was in good shape.

She took good care of her. And I remember her, we had a back porch that was just, a, two railings and a steps. I saw her on the long railing when people were going in and out cause years ago you didn;t take a demise person to a, be, a you know what its called..

DALEY: Funeral parlor.

WILLIAMS: Funeral parlor. You just, they went from home, I don't know if you know that or not.

SENATOR: No.

WILLIAMS: See I said something, I don't know. The demised person was taken from her home, put in a coffin right there in the house and taken out to the cemetary. There was not beatles, I call them bealtes and keepels...

DALEY: Funeral parlors. (laughs)

WILLIAMS: Funeral parlors. In keepels we have beatles. (laughs)

DALEY: They were laid out at home and not...

WILLIAMS: Yea, I coldn't think of the word laid out. Anyway, so, she was laid out from home adn the cat was there on the thing all the time people were going in and out, in and out. That cat knew my mother was dying. After my mother was gone buried and everything, we moved accross the street to another house that was there. We never saw that cat again, that cat disappeared. I though that was an interesting thing. We went back for it, we though maybe she didn't see my mother but she was haging out, never again did we see her, maybe she went somewhere, laid down and died too. Pets are very knowedgable. Anyway, that's the story of the cat. And that's when my mother died and I was, five or six years old.

DALEY: Eleven or twelve.

WILLIAMS: I was twelve? I was, alright, thank you. I can't remember. Um, so then we moved, as I said from that house, we moved accross the street. Then we got, the neighbors were saying, "you know someone in that house died before, they say there is a ghost in the celler." We used to hear all sorts of things about that house, of course we were living right accross the street from it, you know. it was boot, what bootlegging time, what did they call it?

SENATOR: Right.

WILLIAMS: Bootlegg time when you couldn't but liquor. There was a time when, stores weren't selling. My mother was out a job cause he had to take care of my mother, he lost his job. He used to go to New York, Mount Vernon, where my mother's brother lived. He

was broke, he had five kids to feed. He'd help them out but he had to do something. He couldn't go to New York all the time to get money. Other people were doing it so he started to make booze. I guess, what's the other word?

DALEY: Liquor

WILLIAMS: Liquor. He used to do it on the stove. And he had, you know what he was using, milk cans. You know what milk comes in those big cans, from the milkman, they keep them in these big cans. I don't know what they call them. But in the olden days that's what they used. I don't know what they used today, maybe they don't use them anymore. Once in a while, you'll see one in a store. They're metal and they're the kind you put in water and it cleanses them very good. Well anyway, that's what they used to bring milk in and then the milkman would put them in quart jars to bring them into the houses. But it was a house thing in those days you didn't have what you have today. This was years ago, oh, my God. How can I remember. By anyway, my father had these containers and they were about from the floor, about that high. They had tops on them, you know. And he had one that he used to boil the water cause, gee I got to go through that process, I don't want to, I think we better say to be continued, I'm getting tired. Is that alright?

SENATOR: Okay, yes.

WILLIAMS: Because I have to describe things and I won't be able..

SENATOR: Can you tell me a little about the kinds of responsibilities you had...

WILLIAMS: As a child?

SENATOR: After your mom passed away?

WILLIAMS: I had to take, my baby sister, the youngest one, she was about three years old.

DALEY: No, she was about eighteen months old.

WILLIAMS: Eighteen months old, see I'm forgetting. I had to take care of her. I used to be like a mother. I had to take the diapers adn change the diapers. I learned, my father was teaching, my father was good to teach, you know, thank God. And, I , I don't remember things. I mean I guess I'm tired, I don't know. You know I think we better, we better just knock it off. Is that the word you use, knock it off? (laughs)

SIGRIST: Or end the interview. (laughs)

WILLIAMS: I remember the kids using that word.

SIGRIST: Krista, maybe you could ask one final question.

WILLIAMS: I mean I can continue this.

SIGRIST: Yeah I know, but I can tell you are getting tired. Perhaps you could just get in marriage, children and then the final signing off.

WILLIAMS: Are you coming back again for some more information when you get through with this?

SENATOR: No...

WILLIAMS: This has got to be the end?

DALEY AND SENATOR: Yes..

SENATOR: That's fine, you have already given us so much wonderful information.

WILLIAMS: Oh..

SIGRIST: We'll just ask you a couple informal questions.

DALEY: One of the things..

SIGRIST: Go ahead, speak loudly.

DALEY: One of the things that was important was that her dad tried to keep the children together and it was very difficult for him to hold a job and take care of children. And so, at one point he decided to put the children in a catholic home.

WILLIAMS: He wanted to.

DALEY: He did. They stayed for a short time.

WILLIAMS: No, no, we weren't

DALEY: You didn't. Aunt Ann, and Uncle Tom

WILLIAMS: I don't remember that. If I told you to...

DALEY: And then he was heartbroken that he decided to take them back and he took my mom out of school.

SIGRIST: Actually, while you were outside, she talked about that.

WILLIAMS: I was in the seventh grade then, when he came and told the teacher I had to leave school. And I cried all day, I cried in school, I loved school. I mean today I wonder if you find somebody like that but I didn't want to leave school, I loved it.

And I had to leave in the seventh grade. But I used to go to school one day a week, downtown Newark. I forgot the name of the street but you just went for a couple hours. What did they call

it something? They had a name for it. Maybe it'll come to me, I'll tell ya later.

SENATOR: Can you just tell me quickly, did it take you, or how was it learning English?

WILLIAMS: Oh, It just came, it just came naturally. When you're in a school with all other children and then I'd go home and speak in English to my mother and she wouldn't understand me. I had to speak Italian so I used to be able, I can still read Italian. My father taught me to read *Il Progresso Italiano*, that's the newspaper it's called *Il Progresso Italiano*. You know what that means. He taught me to read that paper and I can read it to this day.

SENATOR: In the time we have remaining, could you tell me about the remainder of your life. When were you married?

WILLIAMS: I was 28 when I married. And I didn't go anywhere, I was a homebody for a long time. I didn't seem to resent it although I used to miss people, I used to miss my friends. Once and a while, and every once and a while I would think, I hear a name that sounds familiar in those days and I think, I wonder if they could be the people I used to know. (laughs) And I don't have the nerve to ask them. But, uh, it was a good while, I didn't go anywhere I had to stay home. I remember one time, we had a house where it had a big porch in the backyard and in the backyard there were garages that people would come and store their cars when they weren't using them. I would sit on the back porch and the tears were running down my cheeks, I wanted to be out there somewhere with all those people. You know, and I wasn't learning anything. And another time when we moved across for a college, what's the name of that college, oh, I knew it. There used to be a college across from our house.

DFALEY: Saint Vincents

WILLIAMS: No, I don't think so. They used to come for recess, girls with pretty dresses on. I could see everything they were doing and I would cry, I stared out the window, the tears running down my cheeks because I couldn't do what they were doing.

SENATOR: How sad.

WILLIAMS: And that was my life. Until everybody grew up and took off.

SENATOR: What was your husband's name?

WILLIAMS: My husband's name, what last name? Full name?

SENATOR: Full name.

WILLIAMS: What was his full name? (laughs) It's so long ago, I

forgot.

DALEY: It was John Williams and they called him Jack.

WILLIAMS: Yeah right, oh God, I forgot.

SENATOR: What was his country of origin?

WILLIAMS: I think, I think he was born in Poland but he lived with his mother in...

DALEY: Philadephia.

WILLIAMS: Philadelphia.

SENATOR: When did he come to the United States?

WILLIAMS: Who me?

SENATOR: No him, your husband.

WILLIAMS: Oh he must have been a baby. I, he never told me. I think his mother once said something about it.

SENATOR: And could you name your children please?

WILLIAMS: Well my oldest child is named Walter John Williams, after his father. He died, he's not living. I got to remember who died and who's alive. My other son, my Pat was second. Patricia Ann Daley. Then came Michael, Michael Don Williams and my son.

DALEY: That's it.

WILLIAMS: That's it.

DALEY: It was just the three of us.

SENATOR: One final question, could you tell me about your feelings about America?

WILLIAMS: Oh my God, I'm an American, I'm not an Italian becuse I grew up in American schools. I have no, I have no bad feelings about Italy. What I knew of it, it was lovley. My grandmother made sure I had everything cause she was that kind of grandmother. She had in the town where wer lived, as I said she was in business, so she had everything that I could have in Itlay for a child. And, I remember going to Naples, did I tell you, in a carriage, a horse and carriage? (laughs)

SENATOR: You daughter Pat just mentioned to me something about your becoming a US citizen. Could you tell me about that?

WILLIAMS: Well, I don't remember. I was about fifteen, fourteen,

fifteen years later, I became a citizen.

DALEY: Wasn't that after you were married?

WILLIAMS: Oh yea, I was married.

DALEY: We went to the judge together when I was very little.

WILLIAMS: Yea, I told you about it. She knows more about it than I do.

DALEY: I believe we went together, you became a citizen. And I remember being about three and you holding my hand and we went to the judge and he passed out the silk flags to each person who became a citizen...

WILLIAMS : See, I forgot that.

DALEY: And I think we still have that silk flag. It was an awesome experience for me being so little with this black robe.

WILLIAMS: I for, she remembers, I forgot, I forgot. I completely forgot that, now don't ask me why, I don't know.

SENATOR: Well, I think this is a good place to end the interview. I want to thank you, Mrs. Williams, so much for letting us come out and speak with you today...

WILLIAMS: What are you gonna do with all that information?

SENATOR: It is so interesting. We are going to preserve it so that others can listen to it and read it.

WILLIAMS: For years to come?

SENATOR: Absolutely.

WILLIAMS: Well, how'd you hear about me?

SIGRITS: Your oral history form.

SENATOR: Okay, this is Krista Senator signing off with Vera Williams on the 31st of July, 1999 with the Ellis Island Oral History Project.

WILLIAMS: Oh, through the fact that I was interested in Ellis Island.

SENATOR: Yes.

