

SERIES NUMBER: EI-1122
NAME OF PERSON INTERVIEWED: ALFRED AND AUGUSTINO MASCARO
BIRTHDATE: ALFRED: OCTOBER 24, 1923; AUGUSTINO: JUNE 9, 1921
INTERVIEW DATE: JANUARY 16, 2000
RUNNING TIME: 00:00
INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.
RECORDING ENGINEER:
INTERVIEW LOCATION: BRISTOL, CONNECTICUT
ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: KIMBERLY MAIER
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: CHARLES MITCHELL, 4/2007

COUNTRY, YEAR: ITALY, 1931
AGE: ALFRED: 7; AUGUSTINO: 9
PASSAGE ON "IL CONTE GRANDE"
PORT OF EMBARKATION: NEW YORK
OLD COUNTRY RESIDENCE: [FEROLICO], CALABRIA, ITALY
UNITED STATES RESIDENCE (S): CARBONDALE, PA; BRISTOL, CT

ORAL HISTORIANS NOTE:

LEVINE: Today is January 16, 19-, I'm sorry, the year 2000 and we're here...

ALFRED: Everybody makes that mistake.

LEVINE: ...here in Bristol, Connecticut with Alfred Mascaro and his brother, Augustino Mascaro who came to America with their mother, Felicia, in 1931, when ah, Alfred was seven years of age and...

GUS: Nine.

LEVINE: And Augustino was nine years of age. And Phyllis, Alfred's daughter and his wife are both present with us here today. Okay. If we could start at the beginning. Alfred, could you give your birthdate?

ALFRED: October the 24, 1923. Twenty-third.

LEVINE: Okay. And how about you Augustino?

GUS: June the ninth, 1921.

LEVINE: Okay. And where in Italy were you...

ALFRED: Born?

LEVINE: Born.

ALFRED: In Calabria, the city of Catanzaro.

GUS: The province of Catanzaro. It's a province.

ALFRED: Yeah. Calabria's a province just like ah...

LEVINE: A state, kind of.

ALFRED: Yeah. A city, you know, next to it.

GUS: I think the city was Ferolico.

LEVINE: Do you have any idea how to spell it?

ALFRED: I'm glad you remember that because I didn't remember that. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Just give it a try.

GUS: F-E-D-E-R-A-L-C (haltingly), I know it's not right, but...

LEVINE: Well, actually, it may actually be on the passport. Is that possible? We can... (paper rustling, they whisper). Province. I don't know. Can you read this? I think this is it? Is that what you're saying or is that something else?

GUS: It looks like it.

ALFRED: Yeah. I think it is.

LEVINE: Can you see how that's spelled?

GUS: It looks like F-E-R-O-L-E-F-O. (buzzing in background)

ALFRED: And then there's F-I-C-O.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, we'll take that and see if we can, see if we can locate it. Okay, now did you live in the same town that you were born in, up until the time you left for the United States.

ALFRED: Yes. Yes. Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, then why don't we kind of -- speaking one at a time -- tell me about your father and what his name is, and when he came to the United States.

ALFRED: Go ahead, Gus.

GUS: Well, his name was Angelo...

LEVINE: Okay. Here let me just take that.

GUS: ...and ah,

PHYLLIS: Louder.

GUS: Yeah. I really don't know what year he came. Had to be... Do you know, Al?

ALFRED: It would have to be...

PHYLLIS: Came the year Al was born. Cause Al was only a few days old when your father left.

GUS: Came in 1923.

ALFRED: 1923.

PHYLLIS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, do you have any idea, or were you told why your father came to the United States at that time?

GUS: Not really. Only that you know, like everybody else, to better themselves.

LEVINE: Do you know if your father traveled back and forth?

GUS: No.

ALFRED: No.

LEVINE: No. So he went, now what was his work in Italy? Do you know? Before he left?

GUS: I think farming, mostly.

ALFRED: Farming. I think farming was it. Farming.

LEVINE: What kinds of, do you know what people were producing in that area in Calabria where you were? Do you know what kinds of crops they had?

GUS: All kinds of vegetables.

ALFRED: Vegetables.

GUS: And wheat. There was wheat.

ALFRED: Mostly vegetables. Cause it was my grandfather's land.

LEVINE: Oh.

ALFRED: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. So you, do each of you remember your grandparents at all?

GUS: I remember my father's mother, my grandmother from his side. And she used to go in the woods, more or less, to get wood. And she'd carry a bundle the time. And she was an el-, quite elderly. And I remember my grandfather on my mother's side. Well, he owned a store. They had a store. More like a, had tobacco and salt, wine and stuff like that.

ALFRED: Beer garden.

GUS: I can remember that. Going in there and he'd slip me some candy or something.

LEVINE: Was the store on a street with other stores? Do you remember what the store looked like?

ALFRED: No. It was in a little side street. And it was the house and the beer garden. Mostly beer garden it was like, in the front.

LEVINE: In the same structure. It was a house. You lived there?

ALFRED: We didn't live there. That was my grandfather and grandmother, lived there. We lived, oh, in another part.

GUS: That was up from them. A couple hundred yards.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. So do either of you remember any experiences with your grandmother or your grandfather? How they treated you? Or anything you did with them?

ALFRED: I remember that I used to go down to my grandmothers and I used to say that I was hungry, you know, and she used to, how did she -- where's your mother? Where's your mother? And I used

to go and eat down there. And I used to steal her chestnuts. More for him. Because they used to have a lot of chestnuts there.

GUS: I remember my uncle mostly, because he used to take me, he used to go squirrel hunting at night. (he laughs) And he used to take me and I could see the squirrels jumping from one tree to another. And he'd shoot 'em and then they'd take 'em home and they'd cook 'em I guess.

LEVINE: Huh. Wow. Do you remember eating squirrel?

GUS: I guess. Must have. (they laugh)

ALFRED: Oh, yes. That was a, that was one of the food that we had. Meat.

LEVINE: What else do you remember? Do you remember any dishes that your grandmother or your mother made, that you particularly remember about?

GUS: Mostly spaghetti. A lot of that.

ALFRED: Pasta. And a lot of greens.

GUS: Yeah. They had their own meat, like pork.

PHYLLIS: Pig.

ALFRED: Their own pigs.

LEVINE: Oh, so they had... Your grandparents had, had, like animals?

ALFRED: Chickens and that.

GUS: In fact, everybody in the area did. You know.

ALFRED: They all...

GUS: Had their own chicken, hogs and you know, maybe a few cattle. Not much, but few.

LEVINE: Were there special occasions that you can remember that were particularly...? Particular foods were served? Or maybe religious occasions? Were you a religious family?

GUS: Yeah. I could remember the priest would come around to each house. And at that time, I wanted to be a priest. (they all laugh) And I guess he'd hear confessions and everything, you know. He'd talk. He'd stay there a few hours. He'd eat sometimes.

LEVINE: Did you have a church?

ALFRED: Yeah.

GUS: Yeah.

LEVINE: But he would just come around and see everybody.

GUS: Visit every house, every so often. But I can remember sitting around, like a fireplace, you know. He'd be talking there and I told him when I grow up I want to be a priest. (laughing)

LEVINE: Did he encourage you?

GUS: Oh, yeah.

PHYLLIS: Did you do anything special at Christmas?

ALFRED: No. I...

GUS: There were like here, you know, there were special.... Families got together and you know, ate different foods and everything. But mostly for families to get together.

LEVINE: How about what you did for fun? Do you remember how you spent your time as little boys, in ways that were enjoyable?

GUS: I guess we just invented games among ourselves. There wasn't anything like over here.

ALFRED: No activities. Or baseball.

GUS: No little leagues or anything like that. Organized things. You did things by, you know...

LEVINE: Did you have tasks? Did you have to, did you have certain chores you were expected to do?

GUS: Yes. Sometimes feed chickens or stuff like that. But we were small and I guess they wouldn't let us do too much.

LEVINE: Do you remember your father, Gus? From Italy? Do you have any memory of him before he came to this country?

GUS: Yeah. You know, but I can remember him.

PHYLLIS: He was only two years old.

LEVINE: Anything in particular that you remember about him there? I mean, I know you were young.

GUS: Yeah. I know. He had red hair (laughs). That was one thing. And then, not much.

LEVINE: How about your mother? What was her name and maiden name?

ALFRED: Gallo.

LEVINE: Gallo?

GUS: Gallo, yeah.

PHYLLIS: Felicia.

LEVINE: Felicia Gallo.

GUS: Felicia Gallo.

LEVINE: And what was she like? What was her temperament? What was her personality?

ALFRED: She was sweet as far as it goes because she was taking care of two kids, two boys. We could remember, we, ate good.

GUS: She was very forgiving. Easy to get along with.

LEVINE: And did she have a family, nearby?

GUS: Yeah.

LEVINE: The grandparents were her mother and father.

ALFRED: The one that had the store.

LEVINE: I see. And how about your father's mother and father? Were they around?

GUS: Yes. (tentatively)

ALFRED: The mother was but I don't remember... The father must have been... He must have passed away because I don't remember him.

LEVINE: Do you have memories of your grandmother on your father's side?

GUS: Oh, yes. I remember her when she'd go in the woods and pick up...

LEVINE: Oh, she was the one who picked up the wood.

ALFRED: She was pretty old at that while, well, old. Must have been in her fifty or sixty.

LEVINE: Which was old at that time.

GUS: Yeah.

ALFRED: Or for me. We were small. That was old. But she lived to be close to a hundred, I think. If I can remember.

LEVINE: Now were both your mother and father's families born in the same area? Had they been there?

AM/ALFRED: Yeah. They'd been there.

LEVINE: For a while?

ALFRED: Yeah.

GUS: Yes. From the beginning, as far as we know.

LEVINE: How about your mother? How did she get along for all those years when your father was here?

GUS: Well, my father sent money back there.

LEVINE: So she probably was as well or better off than the people who were there.

ALFRED: Than the people who were still there.

GUS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you know what your father did when he was here? What he was working at to send the money.

ALFRED: Yeah. He worked in the coal mines.

GUS: Well, before that, he was in New Jersey. He worked at a...

ALFRED: In fact, he had a car.

GUS: A transit company. And then he went, he had an uncle in Pennsylvania. He went to Pennsylvania and he worked in a coal mine. After that, he worked in a...

ALFRED: Cemetery.

GUS: Cemetery.

LEVINE: Do you recall your mother getting letters from him?

GUS: Yeah.

ALFRED: He should.

GUS: And I recall at school, the teacher, had made me, you know, write a letter. And he'd say what to put in there and everything, you know. And we'd write the letter.

LEVINE: Can you remember anything else about school?

GUS: I guess it would be like any other...

LEVINE: Was it like a one room school house? Or was it bigger? Were there girls, were there boys?

GUS: I think it was, I can remember a one room school hall.

LEVINE: Can you compare what it was like in school there compared with when you went to school after you came here?

GUS: Day and night.

ALFRED: Yes.

LEVINE: In what way?

GUS: Well, you know, the things, the books, and everything else you had. The different rooms. You had to go into different classes. Over there you were in one room, and had one teacher. You opened a book. That's it.

ALFRED: Gee. I don't remember anything like that.

LEVINE: Well you never went to school, is that right?

ALFRED: No. Not...

LEVINE: Well, is there anything else about life? Were you in a little town?

GUS: Small, very small town.

ALFRED: Small town.

LEVINE: Anything else you remember about the place, or the people?

GUS: Well, the people were poor but they were friendly.

ALFRED: They helped each other. If somebody got sick or something. In that time, they didn't have the sewers or bathrooms like you have here. And the floors in the living quarters were more dirt than anything.

LEVINE: Did you have police?

GUS: Yeah. Carabinieri. That's what they were called.

ALFRED: Yeah.

LEVINE: And how about cafes or things like that? Did people congregate together anyplace that you remember?

GUS: Well, like I said, my grandfather had this store there.

LEVINE: The beer garden.

ALFRED: Yeah.

GUS: They congregated there. They sold tobacco. Wine. And they'd play cards. Stuff like that. You know. When they had time.

LEVINE: This would be the men, probably.

ALFRED: Mm, hm.

LEVINE: So did your father send a ticket? Is that how you, when you and your mother came, do you remember why you came at the particular time that you did?

GUS: Well, I don't remember but he must have sent...

ALFRED: He must have sent...

GUS: The tickets.

ALFRED: Or either the money. Because according to that, it was paid by money.

LEVINE: You mean the ticket had been paid. We're looking at this, I guess it's called a ship's card and it says Lloyd Sebodo and Il Conte Grande. I have to find out which of those is the name of the ship. Maybe you remember Gus? Do you remember if this was the ship, or this was the ship's name?

GUS: I probably, this would probably be the ship, Il Conte Grande.

LEVINE: Okay. Do you remember leaving home? Traveling towards Naples, for the ship?

ALFRED: When we left home, I just remember my aunt is carrying me down to the railroad station.

LEVINE: Carrying you?

ALFRED: I was small at the time and she was carrying me. And she lived in Argentina.

LEVINE: She was visiting you in Italy?

ALFRED: No. She lived in Italy.

GUS: Later she went to Argentina.

ALFRED: This is later.

LEVINE: Oh, later. Do you remember that aunt? Do you remember any experiences you had with her before you were leaving for the United States?

ALFRED: No. No. But that's...

LEVINE: But you remember that. Carrying you down to the train. And do you remember people saying goodbye?

GUS: Yeah, well, you know...

ALFRED: They all gathered.

GUS: Everybody, you know, come and wishing you goodbye and all that stuff.

LEVINE: In your little town, were there, was it frequent that people left for the United States or for other places? Do you remember other people leaving for example, before you actually left?

ALFRED: I don't remember.

GUS: But I know that later, well, right after the war, with the ruler in Argentina, after the war, I guess Italy was a, you know, poor, very poor country. And ah, the leader of Argentina gave them free passage if they wanted to go to Argentina. And a lot of them settled in Argentina. That's why we had relatives there. In fact, went there in 1979 to visit them. Had an uncle there.

LEVINE: I think I neglected to mention that you actually came here in February of 1931, with your mother. Okay so, do either of you remember anything about the voyage? Is there anything that stands out in your mind about the trip over?

ALFRED: The only thing I could remember is running around on deck of the ship. And as far as the quarters is concerned, I couldn't remember that. But that was the time, the first time I ever tasted ice cream. On the ship.

LEVINE: It was served in the dining room?

ALFRED: No. On the deck. Yeah.

LEVINE: Did you like it?

ALFRED: Oh, yeah. Yeah. (laughs)

PHYLLIS: Still eating it.

ALFRED: Strawberry ice cream, oh, yeah.

LEVINE: How about you Gus? Do you remember anything about the ship?

GUS: Well, I remember a lot of people on the ship. Going to eat. Recreation. There wasn't that much recreation, like today. There's a lot of people and you met, you know, kids that were on there that were comin' over. And you made friends, and you know, you talk. You know what kids do.

LEVINE: Was everyone coming from Italy on your ship, or had the ship other passengers from other places? Do you remember?

ALFRED: I think it was just from Italy. I don't remember stopping any other place. We got on the boat and got off in New York.

LEVINE: Do you remember if you slept in a dormitory kind of place or in a cabin.

ALFRED: There were cabins.

GUS: Yeah. Well, each passenger had...

ALFRED: Passage in a cabin.

GUS: ... on the cabin.

LEVINE: Was it just like the three of you in your cabin?

GUS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. And do you remember when the ship came into the New York Harbor? Can you remember that part?

GUS: Well, I could remember seein' the Statue of Liberty, so I said to myself, I must be here. (laughs)

LEVINE: So you had some idea about that.

GUS: I had read about, or heard about the Statue of Liberty. And it, when I seen that I said, oh, boy, we're here.

ALFRED: Then we get to get off the boat and that's all you seen, was a million people.

GUS: Oh, goin' through Ellis Island.

ALFRED: Goin' through. It seemed like it was a million people that was goin' through there at the time. Because they were hunched shoulder to shoulder. That's how many people were there at the time. And you all had lines to go through and everything else.

LEVINE: Do you remember the examination at all?

ALFRED: No.

LEVINE: How about you? Do you remember anything about Ellis Island, anything that happened to you there?

GUS: Well, like he says. You had to go through a line then, I guess they checked you for any diseases or anything.

ALFRED: Yes. That part there yeah.

GUS: And ah, but otherwise, you know, to me it looked like utter confusions. So many people and everybody doin' different things and people running around. I said, oh, boy, how can they have anything done here. (He laughs.)

ALFRED: In fact, when we went ten years ago, when we went to Ellis Island, we took a tour, remember? And we seen the little cubby holes where you took a shower and you, they check you out for all kinds of disease and what not. And that brought back memories as far as it goes, because I wouldn't, if I didn't see it, I wouldn't have remembered.

LEVINE: Do you know if you stayed overnight?

GUS: I don't think, I don't know, I really don't know.

LEVINE: Most people didn't.

ALFRED: No. I don't think, I don't think we did.

GUS: Cause I remember getting' on a train. Next stop, Philadelphia.

LEVINE: That's where your father was?

GUS: Father was meeting us there.

LEVINE: So I guess your papers were in order.

ALFRED: Grand wasn't it?

LEVINE: And you were sent through. And you probably had, did you have something, do you remember if you had a little...?

ALFRED: Tag.

LEVINE: Tag on you.

ALFRED: Yeah.

GUS: Yeah.

LEVINE: And how about the train trip, from New York to Philadelphia? Anything that you recall about that?

GUS: I probably fell asleep, I don't know. (they laugh)

ALFRED: Tired or something. I don't remember anything about that.

LEVINE: Do you remember your mother? Do you remember how your mother was dealing with all of this with two little boys and not knowing the language?

GUS: No, yeah. You know, nervous and everything. And worrying about, and I can remember when we reached Philadelphia, the bus stop, and ah, met, I couldn't picture my father. Right away he came up, you know, and hugged my mother, and kissing her. And I went over there to pick a fight with him.

ALFRED: And I was scared. I was scared. I didn't want to go to him. Hello! [] Because he never, I never seen him when I was born, so...

LEVINE: What was your father's name?

ALFRED: Angelo.

GUS: Angelo.

LEVINE: And did it take some getting used to? I mean, how was it being with your father like for the first time at that stage in your life?

GUS: The first few months, you know, it's like living with a stranger. You, you're afraid to do anything or, you know, I don't want to get hollered at. (laughs)

LEVINE: What kind of a temperament did your father have? What kind of a personality would you say?

ALFRED: He had a good personality.

GUS: Yeah. He...

ALFRED: He was happy.

LEVINE: Was he strict?

ALFRED: He was happy that he got...

GUS: He was strict, but fair. If he said, be home at 9:00, that's what he meant. Be home at 9:00. You know, no 9:30 or, but otherwise...

LEVINE: So where did you go? Where did you stay, once you got to Philadelphia? Did you stay in Philadelphia, or you went on from Philadelphia?

GUS: I can't remember if we went from Philadelphia.

ALFRED: Scranton.

GUS: Scranton, Carbondale, Pennsylvania.

LEVINE: Yeah. Carbondale. That's how you described it. You went to Carbondale.

GUS: I really can't remember if it was the same day, but that's where we went. It couldn't have been much later than that anyway.

LEVINE: Can you remember any differences that struck you about this country, early, when you first got here? In the first few weeks, let's say.

GUS: Well, mostly the houses. They were all separate.

ALFRED: Streets.

GUS: Over there, the houses were like, you'll see in larger cities...

LEVINE: Attached.

GUS: And they were mostly out of mortar and brick and stone, and over here they're out of wood.

ALFRED: And at the time, electricity. Yeah. We had electricity here. They didn't have it back there.
Roads are paved. Some of the roads are paved, more.

GUS: Another thing, we came at a time, going toward Depression over here too. And everybody was almost in the same boat. Everybody was poor. So you didn't have anything, I didn't have anything, so you didn't know any, didn't know any better. That's the way, you know...

LEVINE: Was your father, did your father still have his job during that Depression when you first came?

ALFRED: Yeah.

GUS: Well, in the coal mine, they worked pretty steady, during the winter. But in the summertime, when nobody bought coal, you know. So sometimes they get laid off. No workmen's compensation at that time. So, always had a big garden. And ah, my mother and my father, they canned everything. You know, we had a cellar and they had shelves with everything in there. So you bought spaghetti, you bought it by the box, not the pound.

LEVINE: You mean a big box.

ALFRED: Big box.

GUS: Big box. Twenty pounds. Twenty-five pounds. Potatoes the same way. You bought them by the bag. Well, we used to grow a lot of that stuff ourselves. And he planted potatoes, green beans, everything.

LEVINE: Would you say you were better off, or about the same during the Depression when you first got here.

GUS: Well, still a little better.

ALFRED: A lot better yeah. I'd say, it's a lot better than what we had over there.

LEVINE: Did your father ever talk about the coal mines or did you ever get to go down into the coal mines?

ALFRED: Oh, yes.

GUS: Yeah. He talked, he said, that he didn't want any of us to ever go down there.

ALFRED: He never wanted us to work in a coal mine. He says, before you go in a coal mine, he says, I'm going to have to break your back. He said, I don't want you down there. And we never did.

GUS: He got hurt a couple times. Lost a couple of...

ALFRED: Fingers.

GUS: He got banged up all over. You could always see the scar there.

ALFRED: And black on the inside.

GUS: And every once in a while you hear the sirens going off. Something's wrong in the mines. So you always lived in fear that, you know, maybe, like you know, the older people, maybe it's my husband or my brother.

END SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

LEVINE: Did he describe to you what he did when he went to work in the mines?

GUS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Could you say as much as you know?

GUS: They had to work on their stomach, you know.

ALFRED: Almost on the stomach.

GUS: The water. There was rats in there. All that stuff. Different conditions. Sometimes ah, you know it was better. And you didn't have to be on your stomach all the time. The mines or whatever was higher.

ALFRED: You had to go down, you'd have to go down a mile, almost a mile in, under the earth. But we used to play in there.

LEVINE: Really?

ALFRED: Oh, yeah. In wintertime, I mean in summertime when it was really hot outside we used to go down there and keep cool. It was nice and cool down there.

GUS: It was air conditioned. (they laugh)

ALFRED: Oh, yeah. But we wouldn't, we wouldn't go all the way down deep in a car.

LEVINE: And you wouldn't tell your father I imagine?

ALFRED: No-o-o. And we used to go picking coal for the house. That's another thing.

LEVINE: When you say picking coal, where did you go?

ALFRED: Up in the woods. Up in the hills.

GUS: They had different, where they did mining, and they dumped some of the stuff. There was a lot of coal there. And I can remember when I was, well, must have been thirteen, fourteen years old, and ah, about a half a mile from our house, they had a strip in, they would strip with these big shovels, you know. And six o'clock, they trucks would go in there and they'd load 'em with coal. Takin' them to a breaker.

LEVINE: What was a breaker?

GUS: A breaker where they...

ALFRED: Clean the coal.

GUS: They broke the coal up in different sizes.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. It comes out in great big chunks.

ALFRED: Yeah.

GUS: And then they take it to the breaker and the breaker...

ALFRED: Crush it.

GUS: They crush it in different sizes. Chestnut, pea, lump, you know. But we knew some of the drivers. I know. And ah, before I went to school, at six o'clock in the morning, the trucks would go by the house and they'd slow down. To let us get up on top, push these big chunks off (laughs) for coal and then have to take 'em, and throw 'em in the cellar so. I didn't mind that so much. But every Saturday, they'd say, you want to go out and play baseball? Had to go down first and crack coal. (they laugh)

ALFRED: Oh, yeah.

GUS: Someone's got to crack 'em. And your fingers were always cut because of the sharp.

ALFRED: Sharp.

GUS: But you wanted to play baseball. Played a lot of baseball. Every lot had a baseball field, you know. And the kids played there all the time.

LEVINE: Did you play baseball in Italy?

ALFRED: No.

GUS: No.

LEVINE: The kids didn't play it there.

GUS: No. Too young anyway, then. But like one side of town would play the other side. And then they'd come over here, or we'd go over there.

LEVINE: Were there a lot of Italian, either immigrants or first generation, in Carbondale?

ALFRED: Yeah.

GUS: It was like ah, a typical, you know, American city then. It was Italians, Irish, Polish. It seemed like everybody had their neighborhoods. And ah, there was no arguments like there are now. I mean, everybody got along pretty good. That I can remember. We played each other. We'd fight, but we were friends and we'd play again.

LEVINE: And were most of the people there because the fathers and husbands were working in the coal mines?

GUS: That was the main industry there, you know.

LEVINE: And all the different ethnic groups worked in the mines?

ALFRED: There were some of them that worked in the mines and there were some of them that worked in the ah, railroad yard. We had big railroad yard there, and a lot of people, a lot of men that worked in there.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. And probably the railroad yard was there because it was transporting coal.

ALFRED: Mm, hm. That was their main...

GUS: Main source.

ALFRED: And they had two, two different railroad companies going through the town.

LEVINE: Do you remember what they were called?

ALFRED: Yeah. D&H and (together) O&W. Which sometimes we used to steal coal off the train.

LEVINE: Oh.

ALFRED: We used to get up, the train'd have to come over a trestling, over the city. And they used to slow down. So we used to hop on there with a bucket and shovel everything on. And go pick it up and take it home. But as long as we did that, things like that, we got coal for the house, and everything else, we used to get a quarter for go down to see the movies. At the time, you could see the movies and you get....

GUS: Buy an ice cream.

ALFRED: That's right.

LEVINE: Wow. Can you remember any of the movies that you saw that you liked when you were little?

ALFRED: I think the biggest thing that we used to go is ah...

GUS: A lot of cowboys and Indians.

ALFRED: Cowboys.

LEVINE: Tom Mix.

GUS: Tom Mix serials.

ALFRED: The range, the Lone Ranger. They used to have a series. Every, for maybe two or three weeks they'd run. Used to be Tom Mix, Lone Ranger, Roy Rogers, um, somebody else there, I forget.

GUS: All the cowboys.

ALFRED: Yeah. And like I said, they had these serials and at the end, they'd have the girl or somebody being tied up by the bad guy, you know, so you'd have to go next week to find out what happened. (they laugh). Continuously.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Let's see. So when you finished school, what did you do? Each of you.

ALFRED: Me? I quit school in the eighth grade. I went into the service. 1940. And never returned for my education.

LEVINE: Do you know why you did that?

ALFRED: Ah...

GUS: Stubborn.

ALFRED: Stubborn. I think mostly because if my parents were well-educated, or had any education at all, they wouldn't have signed for me. But seeing that I wasn't interested in school, they signed for me and they figured that's the best place to go.

LEVINE: I see. So you went in what year?

ALFRED: 1940.

LEVINE: So you were seventeen?

ALFRED: Mm. Was underage as far as it goes. But I lied. And he come in with me.

GUS: 1941.

ALFRED: 1940.

GUS: No. '41.

LEVINE: Did you go in at the same time, or no?

PHYLLIS: Yes.

ALFRED: Yes. We did. We were with the 109th Infantry.

GUS: Yeah.

ALFRED: That's 1940. That was the year the war broke out.

GUS: Yeah. But I went in February.

ALFRED: No. Not the year that it was broke out. The National Guard.

GUS: Yeah. Japan. I can remember down in the Carolinas on maneuvers. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor.

ALFRED: Right. Right.

GUS: Might have been in the National Guard there, actually. Couple of months. So, but...

ALFRED: That's right.

GUS: We're gonna go to Japan. So then I wound up in a paratrooper. And wound up in Europe. I had joined them because they paid fifty dollars a month more.

LEVINE: Where did you wind up?

ALFRED: And I stayed in the infantry. And I went over to Europe. I was fortunate to go over there instead of South Pacific.

PHYLLIS: Battle of the Bulge.

ALFRED: Mm?

PHYLLIS: You were in the Battle of the Bulge.

ALFRED: Battle of the Bulge. Yeah.

GUS: Yeah.

LEVINE: So you both saw first hand action.

PHYLLIS: Oh, yeah.

GUS: Started in Sicily, North Africa, actually. Then in Sicily. Italy. Anzio. D-day.

ALFRED: In fact...

GUS: In Holland. And in Germany. Seen them all. And in between went to visit too.

LEVINE: And what?

GUS: In between, went anyway.

ALFRED: In fact, the outfit from the home town of Carbondale, had eighteen sets of brothers. Eighteen sets of brothers. And I think the biggest majority of the rest of 'em were either first cousin, second cousin or what.

LEVINE: Wow.

ALFRED: And then they got us down to Louisiana. And they start breaking us up because the officer says, he asked me, he says, Al, he says, would you like to see your older brother get ah, killed? I says, no. Okay. You go this way here. And he told him the same thing and he went to, he volunteered for the paratroopers.

LEVINE: Wow. Had your father become a citizen?

GUS: Yes.

ALFRED: Yeah.

LEVINE: Actually, before you came over, probably. And that's how you got in.

ALFRED: Yeah.

LEVINE: I see. So you were in Sicily. How did you feel about being an American ah, military person in an Italian country.

GUS: Most of the people, they were glad you know, when they seen the Americans. Because I guess life under the Germans wasn't that great. So they were usually glad. And at that time, I could

still speak a little bit of it, you know, Italian. And, because my mother and father, you know, they spoke it a lot.

LEVINE: Did they speak it at home?

GUS: Yeah.

ALFRED: Yeah.

LEVINE: Your mother and father continued to speak it at home.

GUS: Yes. Yeah. So, but now, don't know any.

ALFRED: We started losing it when we were in the service. The language. The Italian language.

LEVINE: What was it like being in the service, with all, people from all over the country and, when you look back on that phase of your life how do you think about it now?

ALFRED: When we first went in, like I say, we were all one, like one family. But afterwards, then they start get replacements and we start getting them from all over the wor-, all over the country. And you fell in with wit 'em. That's about the way it worked. They were there for the same purpose you were.

GUS: When I joined the paratrooper, most of them were from Pennsylvania, the company I was in. From around different little towns and all there.

LEVINE: How do you feel about that now, your military time?

ALFRED: Well, as far as I'm concerned, I'm proud to be, that I went in there and did what I was supposed to do. I said, this was our country at the time, so we got to do what they tell you. Like everybody else, hey, Italy is still where I was born. But this is where my life is, where my family is. My kids.

GUS: I don't think the younger generation has the same passion, I would call it passion, you know, for the, for the, you know, willin' to die for their country. I seen that in Vietnam. I and ah, people demonstrating, and I seen it when they went that, Mogadishu and someplace in Africa there, when they killed the soldier and they were draggin' him in the street. You know, ah, and to me, I got sick in the stomach. I said, well, why, there's got to be soldiers there. Why are they letting them do this? I'd burn the whole town down. But politics change, I guess. They try to please everybody and they please nobody.

LEVINE: Yeah. How do you feel about Italy, your Italian side and your American side. How do you think about that?

GUS: Well, it's (clears throat) your heritage and everything else, but if anything ever came up, I'd still be an American.

ALFRED: At the time...

GUS: Italy wouldn't sway me any way at all. I'd still hope the people do well.

ALFRED: At the time, I thought that Italy was wrong when they went, when they sided in with Hitler, with Germany. But I always admired the country of Italy because I was born there, because, but the

army, I condemned it. Cause they, Hitler, not Hitler, but Mussolini, went with Hitler. After what we'd done for Italy and they turned around and went with them. That was my way of thinkin'.

LEVINE: So what did each of you do after you got out of the service?

GUS: Well the first thing, it was still in that time, it was hard to get a job.

ALFRED: Yeah.

GUS: They gave you that...

ALFRED: Twenty dollars for 52 weeks. You know... You only collected that.

GUS: And I worked in a restaurant for a little while. And my brother came to Connecticut.

ALFRED: The only, the only industry that was in Carbondale at the time, that was doin' a lot of hiring, was a dress factory. Or either a, a garment factory for women. And a lot of work for the men -- in fact I went in and worked in the, the factory with the women. Sewin'. Usin' the sewing machine. And then ah, got serious about getting' married and what not and we had to, we had to move out of there because there was no work for me. And she was a forelady in the factory.

LEVINE: Why don't you say how you met your wife.

ALFRED: (snorts) Well, met her workin' in the factory, as far as it goes.

PHYLLIS: When we first came over, we were going the same school.

ALFRED: Oh, we went to same school. And we lived in the same neighborhood and we went to the same school. And she used to take, more take care of me because I speak in broken English. And she's... It went on for, well, I wrote to her when I was in the service. And when I got out of the service, well, we broke up as far as it goes, because I, what I said to her and ah, so finally I was going to a baseball game, a night game, and she happened to be in the sweet shop there, coffee shop. And I was there, she come in and I was there ah, having a coffee before the ball game. And she'd come in for the purpose of getting' back with me. And that's when it all started. And we kept it up. Eh? There you are.

LEVINE: Why don't you say your wife's name and her maiden name.

ALFRED: Her maiden name is Suriani. Concetta Suriani. No. That's what's on her, Kathryn, with a K-A-T-H-R-Y-N. And we have four kids. Two boys and two girls. And the boys are James and Allen. And the girls are Phyllis and Rosemary.

GUS: That's Phyllis.

ALFRED: And we have seven grandchildren. Seven grandchildren.

GUS: Four great grand.

ALFRED: Four great grand.

LEVINE: Wonderful. And how about you Gus? What did you do after you got out of the Army?

GUS: Well, like I says, I ah, well, they had a school, automotive school that the government paid. And they gave you twenty dollars a week. So I went to that for a while.

LEVINE: And they paid your tuition?

GUS: Well, the government paid the guy that ran the school, whatever. And then I got a job for a few months in construction. And I was, they put me on a jackhammer. Well, I was pretty strong but jeeppers, I never done anything like that. All day with that jackhammer, you know. And I'd got home at night, ohhh, my arms are achin'. And then they were building a church.

LEVINE: This is in Carbondale?

GUS: In Carbondale, right. And ah, I knew the guy that was hiring, like he was a union boss I guess. So I asked him. He says, oh, yeah, he said. Come on down. You got a job. So that was another hard time. They didn't have all this modern equipment to take stuff up to different levels. So they'd build a ramp and you, the masons, they'd tell you, I want a stone this big, or that long, that wide. And ah, get me a couple. So you had to go down with the wheelbarrow, you know, get the stone, make sure you got the right stone, get these things, they weigh a couple hundred pounds and go up this ramp where they were workin'. And the thing, they'd say, well, I need some mortar. You know, the cement. So you had to go down with the wheel barrow, fill it up, go up this ramp. It was hard. And ah, and then I worked in a restaurant for a little while. That was nights. Then, you were in Connecticut. So, I don't know, it's... Come one up. So I said anything is better than these jobs that I've been doing.

LEVINE: Why did you happen to move to Connecticut?

ALFRED: Well, there was no work. We were comin' up here, her aunt and uncle was up, ah here. And we were on our way to, more to go to Niagara Falls for our honeymoon. But we stayed, we stayed with her aunt and uncle and they, they says, Al, why don't you go look for a job while you're

here? Good idea, you know. There was a lot of work at the time. So I went there, I went around different places. Nothing, and then we happened to go down the next, just about oh, three miles down the road then. Another little town. And ah, so she came with me. So the ah, employment manager says, I haven't got a job for your, he says, but I have a job for a woman. So he says, I'll give her the job, let her work and when there's an opening, I'll let her know. So about a week, two weeks later, she come home. She says, go in tomorrow morning with me and you got a job. And I went in there and I got a job there. So then I...

LEVINE: Was this also in the garment, a garment factory?

ALFRED: No. This is ball, a ball bearing factory here in Connecticut. So then ah, he was having a little trouble getting' jobs over there so I asked him to come over here. So he come here and we got him. We got her brother a job over here and they stayed with us for a few weeks until they, he brought his wife over here and they moved out. His, her brother got a job over here and he gets married and he moves out. And just give him a little...

LEVINE: Hm. So it was all in the ball bearing factory.

ALFRED: No. No.

LEVINE: Just in this area.

GUS: Yeah. I worked in New Britain, actually, the next town down. Trucking company. Carry freight all over the...

ALFRED: He was loading trucks to haul the different parts of the state or country.

LEVINE: So how about your wife? What is her name and her maiden name?

GUS: Her name is Francis Carlo.

LEVINE: And how did you happen to meet her?

GUS: Well, like I says. When I come out of the service, they had a like a pool. They played cards, pinochle, rummy or something. And across the street there was a, what would you call it, Kate?

KAY: It was a bakery shop.

GUS: No.

PHYLLIS: Café or...

ALFRED: Coffee shop?

GUS: Oh, like a coffee shop. There were a lot of girls running around there and boys and all.

PHYLLIS: Like Danchecks's you're talking about?

GUS: Dancheck's. Yeah.

ALFRED: It was a coffee shop.

GUS: And ah, you know, they go in there and come out and we'd let them get out and talk and all that. And, and you know, things worked up that you, and at that time I didn't dance at all. They'd go to

dances and, so one night I says, well, I might as well go and see what the hell's going on. Sorry. (they all laugh) What's goin' on. Went to the dance, you know. So they're dancing there. And I says, how about you know, takin' you home? Okay. I said, gee, that was easy.

ALFRED: She was waitin'.

GUS: Well, there was Annie Gallo there and Parma and Rose and ah, Al Tolerico. We all, you know, he had the car. So we all jumped in the car and we sat in the car talkin' there for a couple hours. And ah, it was ah, see you next week or a couple of days. Yeah.

LEVINE: And how about you? How many children did you have.

GUS: Well, we had three. We have my daughter Beverly. She works for the City of Bristol. My daughter Linda, she's a teacher in the City of Bristol. And my son Stephen, he's in Baltimore with his wife.

LEVINE: And you have grandchildren too?

GUS: Two grandchildren. Michael and Kristen. And Kristen called this morning that I'm goin' be a great grandparent.

LEVINE: That's wonderful. Well, we only have a couple of minutes left on the tape. Maybe you could each say, if you think coming here as young boys made a difference, or in what way maybe it made a difference in who you are. Or your personality or who you became. Do you think that starting out in a new country and starting over and coming here, do you think that had an impact on you?

ALFRED: Yes.

GUS: Yeah. Well, I thought there was more opportunity you know, to make a living you know, for a family and everything than there was over there. And we had it pretty good [in fact.]

LEVINE: Do you think so too?

ALFRED: Yes. It changed our lives around. I don't ever know how it would be there. But right now I say I got, my life is beautiful. With my family and all my kids here. And I think even right now I think it maybe at this stage, this year, I think here is better than what it is over there. Just look at all the people that's trying to get over here from all over the world. I think that shows that ah, you got a better life here than you do in other countries.

GUS: Of all the faults we have, you still can't beat it.

ALFRED: Yeah. You got sports.

GUS: We have faults, but you still can't beat it compared to... You know one of the things that, when we first got here, []the way people lived you know. It seemed like, you know, people went to work and they were happy. They went shopping, they had stores, you know, big stores you went. And I says, gee, this is all different from what we were used to. It's gotta be better. And it was much better.

ALFRED: Look at the, look at the homes. The homes alone is compared, to compare it over there is a hundred percent better. Look at the work, the work life is better here. And then you take ah, the biggest majority of the families. They got two, three cars in the... How easy it is to make it, to get this, all this stuff.

GUS: How it's a problem to have small children. How to try to keep 'em out of drugs.

ALFRED: Ah, but you probably have that in the other countries too. Drugs. Only here, you try and keep the kids, you're gonna keep trying to get your kids off of it. Over there they probably can't.

GUS: Try to keep the grownups out of them.

ALFRED: Yeah. That's right.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I want to thank you both. This has really been a wonderful interview. I'm so glad that I got to talk with both of you. And I want to say that I've been speaking with Alfred and Augustino Mascaro, who came with their mother Felicia to the United States in 1931. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. And I'm signing off.

END INTERVIEW