

EI-1127

EVA (VINCENZA) ACCARDI LOMONOCO

BIRTHDATE: DECEMBER 5, 1907

INTERVIEW DATE: FEBRUARY 28, 2000

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 92

RUNNING TIME: 50:24

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:

SICILY, 1919

AGE: 11

SHIP: DANTE ALLEGHERI

PORT:

RESIDENCES:

LEVINE: Okay. Well—

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: —I want to say that I'm here today, February 28th, 19—the year 2000.

LOMONOCO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And I'm here in Deerfield Beach, Florida with Mrs. Lomonoco.

LOMONOCO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Eva Accardi Lomonoco.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Who came at the age of 11—

LOMONOCO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: —from Sicily.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And that was in 1919.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: At the time of this interview Mrs. Lomonoco is 92.

LOMONOCO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service.

LOMONOCO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Well, I'm glad to have found you. [laughs]

LOMONOCO: Oh, thank you. [chuckles] And I'm glad to talk to you [unclear].

LEVINE: And I'm glad that—I—

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: —look forward to—

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: —whatever you can remember. Or if you don't remember, it's fine.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: But I think you have a good memory.

LOMONOCO: I remember, yes. I remember quite a few thing.

LEVINE: Great. Okay. Let's start. If you'd say for this tape again, please, your birth date and where you were born.

LOMONOCO: Well, my birthday is December 5th, 1907. And I was born in Palermo, Italy.

LEVINE: Okay.

LOMONOCO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And [clears throat] did you live in Palermo up until you left for the United States?

LOMONOCO: Yes, [unclear]. Always.

LEVINE: And what was your name when you were born?

LOMONOCO: My name? Vincenza.

LEVINE: Vincenza?

LOMONOCO: Yes.

LEVINE: Accardi, right?

LOMONOCO: Yes.

LEVINE: And your mother's name?

LOMONOCO: My mother, also Vincenza.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

LOMONOCO: Her maiden name was Cardella. Cardella—C-A-R-D-E-L-L-A. Cardella, my mother's name. And these are my grandparents over here. Would you believe?

LEVINE: Oh, wow!

LOMONOCO: Her mother and dad, my mother's parents.

LEVINE: Did you know them?

LOMONOCO: Yes, over in Italy.

LEVINE: You did?

LOMONOCO: But when I left, I never saw them anymore. Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember any experiences—

LOMONOCO: Yes, I do.

LEVINE: —with them?

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: How—how do you remember them?

LOMONOCO: Oh, well—

LEVINE: What do you think when you—

LOMONOCO: I remember—well, I remember that they were very good to me and my mother. My mother used to take us over there many times. I mean, we'd go see my grandparents. We were very close. She used to take me to the park over there sometime, my mother, you know. Yeah. It was very nice there too.

LEVINE: What kind of a lady was she?

LOMONOCO: A nice country.

LEVINE: Your—your grandmother?

LOMONOCO: She was a very nice lady. Yeah, very nice. She was so good to us. Very good to us.

LEVINE: And—

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And she would take you places and—

LOMONOCO: No, no. My—no, not my grandmother.

LEVINE: Your mother.

LOMONOCO: My mother would. My mother, yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: What—what did you—

LOMONOCO: At that—at that time, you know, they used to get, oh, so fat. Like 50 years old, they felt they were very, very old. [unclear].

LEVINE: True.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, that's true.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, what kinds of things did your grandmother do that you liked [unclear]?

LOMONOCO: Well, we used to go there and play all the time with my brothers and sisters. That was our good time, you know. And then my dad sometimes used to take us bathing. We went to the—we went to the shore there bathing. And there, you know, I—we enjoyed that too. We used to take lunch and we'd go bathing. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: And that was our good time then. Today, they have toy—I had my toys, not very much but good toys and nice toys, you know.

LEVINE: Well, can you remember any of the toys you had as a little girl?

LOMONOCO: N—well, I remember I—well, no. I played ball and, you know, like a—with a rope, jump rope. That—that was very—and hopscotch. [laughs]

LEVINE: Oh, so the same things as [unclear] from here, right?

LOMONOCO: Yeah. [laughs] I never skated. I never had a bicycle. My—did—my children, of course, did but not me. I never—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: And now they talk about ice skates, all that stuff. [laughs] No, I didn't do anything.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: But I was happy, maybe happier than what they are today.

LEVINE: Maybe, uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Very innocent girl, very good, you know, upbringing. Yes, yes.

LEVINE: And how about your father? What was his name?

LOMONOCO: My dad was Sebastian Accardi. Sebastian.

LEVINE: Sebastian? And how about your brother and sisters?

LOMONOCO: My brother—I had a brother by the name of Johnny (I had two brothers) and a brother by the name of Frank with—it's—oh, what do you say in Italian? Wait a minute now. Frank is Francesco.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: Francesco, yeah.

LEVINE: And how about Vincenzo? Did you have a—a brother?

LOMONOCO: Vincenzo, my brother. Yeah, we were three in the family because my—my grandparents, their both names were Vincenza and Vincenzo. So that's what [chuckles]—they named it after that.

LEVINE: I see.

LOMONOCO: That's my dad's family.

LEVINE: And you had one sister?

LOMONOCO: No, I had two sis—two sisters beside myself. We were three sisters and three brothers.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: Yeah. One was Margaret and the other one was Ann, my sister, Ann.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: They were born in—no, Margaret was born here.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: Oh, my—oh, yeah. That's right. One sister—no—yeah. One sister I had when I came here. Her name was Ann.

LEVINE: I see.

LOMONOCO: That's right.

LEVINE: And—

LOMONOCO: And then she was born here, my other—Margaret was born here.

LEVINE: I see.

LOMONOCO: But my dad was here for a year and a half before we came here. He came during the war.

LEVINE: Why did he come at the time he came?

LOMONOCO: He came at the time he came because we had—he had a business there. He was—he had—he was a baker. He had a business there and he used to make, like, these sweet rolls. And they used to—and a lot of tourists came in there, you know, from—from the north. And they used to buy these rolls and have them with ice cream.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: And when the war broke up—broke up—you know, broke—broke on—on, they—we didn't have any—any of the people coming in anymore. And this business went down and down and down and that was it. So then he wrote to his sister over here and he sent us the—the—a ticket, which he paid for—for it after. And we came and—and he came here himself. And he came during the war—

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: —because he wasn't working and he felt terrible because he always—he always made a good living. But since he lost his business he was really very—he was devastated, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: So that's why he came here.

LEVINE: And so it must have—

LOMONOCO: And I think the best thing that happened. [laughs]

LEVINE: Yeah. It must have been difficult for him to get here during the war.

LOMONOCO: Yes, it was. At least, I heard that he had some trip over here. He said he suffered so much because they couldn't e—couldn't e—like, he smoked a cigar. They weren't even allowed to light a match. They were afraid of submarines. He—he had a terrible—15 days, he was on board on the boat.

LEVINE: And where was his sister? Where did she settle?

LOMONOCO: Oh, she lived on 14th Street in New York.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: Fourteenth Street in New York. And we had an apartment over there because we lived across the street from my—my aunt. And we—we—because we didn't know anybody here. So we went—after a year and a half, we came here and my dad was here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, did—

LOMONOCO: Because we waited till the war was over.

LEVINE: I see.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: So did your dad stay with his sister until you came?

LOMONOCO: Yes, yes. Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: He stayed with her.

LEVINE: I see. And was she the only relative that he had in this country?

LOMONOCO: Yes, over here. Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Yes. And I had cousins. She had a daughter—she had two daughters and a—a son.

LEVINE: I see.

LOMONOCO: My aunt, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Yeah. Now, when your father—

LOMONOCO: That was my father's sister. Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, my—

LEVINE: When your father came here, what did he do for work that year and—

LOMONOCO: Well, he was a baker.

LEVINE: Oh, he—he stayed—

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: —being a baker?

LOMONOCO: Yes. He—but he learned how to make the—the bread over here. Regular bread, which he didn't know but he learned how. And that's how he worked.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: And he was only—only making at that time \$16 a week. [laughs]

LEVINE: Well, that—actually, at that time that wasn't so bad.

LOMONOCO: I—I think we—we—we were—yes. We—and we rent an apartment. I think the apartment was about \$16 a month.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: At that time.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

LOMONOCO: And we had the gas. We did—we didn't have—you had to put a quarter in for the gas. You know, the little light there? That's all we had. And if we didn't have a quarter, forget it. [laughs] We would be in the dark.

LEVINE: Wow, wow.

LOMONOCO: It was tough. [laughs]

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, tell me a little bit about your childhood in Palermo.

LOMONOCO: Yeah. In Palermo.

LEVINE: What do you remember about Palermo?

LOMONOCO: Well, I—I had a very good childhood. I went to a nice school. It's a very good school. And I was very happy, was a very happy child. And I was pretty smart. As a matter of fact, when I came here I got the—the honor—I got on the honor roll.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: When I came here. Yes.

LEVINE: Wow.

LOMONOCO: Yes.

LEVINE: Wow.

LOMONOCO: I had been promoted from—I got promoted from the fourth grade because over there you go to elementary school until the fourth grade. It's not like eighth grade, like here. So—and I—I went to the fifth—I finished my fifth grade with a first year high.

LEVINE: Wow.

LOMONOCO: Yeah. And I was going to go to the first year high but, being I was coming here, my mother thought I wouldn't finish, you know, the whole year. So I went to the fifth grade. And that's the first year high, anyway. Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, that was a lot for—

LOMONOCO: And I finished it. Yeah.

LEVINE: Wasn't that a lot of schooling for a girl?

LOMONOCO: Oh, yes. Yeah. Oh, yeah. It was a good—I have—I was pretty—I got my—my education mostly from Italy than here. Well, over here, I think I went to the eighth grade or something like that. But I had enough because I had my background. I had a good background and I was very smart here too. The only thing, of course, I—oh, it was tough when I came here though. I felt like I was blind. I looked at the signs. I couldn't read anything. I didn't know the language. Oh, it's terrible. And everybody at that time used to knock you down, you know, like they used to say, "Oh, you—you're"—what'd they call? They called us, "You're a wop," the wop or it was something, another word too for—and you know, it was very embarrassing. And I—I had a lot of pride. I had a lot of pride. [chuckles] Because I dressed well. I mean, we were brought up nicely. We were really—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: —brought up very nicely.

LEVINE: Yeah. So when you were in Italy, did you—was religion a big part of your life?

LOMONOCO: Yes, it was too. Yeah, we were—we were—what do you call them? Roman Catholics. You know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, yeah. Well, we went—well, my mother, she had—she had six children and she couldn't go too much because she was always busy, you know, taking care of us and everything.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: But—but we were—were religious people. Yeah.

LEVINE: Did you celebrate any particular religious occasions that you—

LOMONOCO: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: —can remember?

LOMONOCO: Oh, yes. All of them. [unclear] St. Rosalie and—

LEVINE: Like, what would happen when it was—when you would—when you were—when you were honoring St. Rosalie? What—what would you do?

LOMONOCO: St. Rosalie. Well, what did we do? You know, they—they used to go out the day of St. Rosalie because that's—that's supposed to be a very good, well-known saint in Palermo.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: And they used to—they used to put, like, St. Rosalie on a big, like a, oh, what would you call them? You know, when they have these feasts that they put—you know, the saint, a big saint. And they used to go around with the saint of the streets, you know. And, yeah.

LEVINE: What is Saint—what is Saint Rosalie [unclear]?

LOMONOCO: St. Rosalie was saint—they were—they were a few—a few—the Saint Theresa and, you know, yeah.

LEVINE: So when they put the—the statue of the saint—

LOMONOCO: Yeah. The statue, yeah. And everybody used to put money in when they were going around, like, you know, and they were going to collect money.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Was there any singing or dancing or any of that?

LOMONOCO: No.

LEVINE: No.

LOMONOCO: Oh, yes. They had dancing there too, like, oh, we would go to the dance. It wasn't very—like over here. It's much—but, you know, like if there's a party, like a wedding or so—if you belong to some organization. My mother didn't, so she was a very strict boss, very strict. [laughs]

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-huh. Did you—did you ever see a wedding over there or did you ever go to a wedding over there [unclear]?

LOMONOCO: Did I ever go? I don't think—I don't remember going to a wedding there.

LEVINE: No?

LOMONOCO: No.

LEVINE: How about a funeral or any kind of—

LOMONOCO: Funeral, yes. My—my aunt, but I don't—I mean, I wasn't—I wasn't quite 10 then. I must have been about eight years old.

LEVINE: Hmm.

LOMONOCO: I remember my aunt died because that's why my grandmother was all dressed in black.

LEVINE: Ah.

LOMONOCO: Since that daughter that died, she never—always black, she wore.

LEVINE: From th—from then on?

LOMONOCO: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: That's how they did it?

LOMONOCO: Yes, yes. You're—yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: Oh, hmm.

LOMONOCO: So—

LEVINE: And let's see. What else about—about life in Palermo that you could mention?

LOMONOCO: Well, I went to school and I—I mean, that—the place, the name of where I went was we had a [unclear] like [unclear]. That was a beautiful street, was a very nice school there. It was like a convent. But they were—see, but, I mean, I had my parents and I just went to days. But there were—the convent was for people that were orphaned there. There were staying there too. And nuns were there too. It was beautiful. And I went back after I was 75.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: And when I saw that school—ah, that place—I was so amazed. I went—I didn't go in but I just saw it from my side. And it brought me back so many memories, good memories too.

LEVINE: Yeah.

LOMONOCO: They only had an aunt at that time when I went back, you know. She died too, my mother's sister.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: So you feel lucky that you got to go to that particular school, it sounds like.

LOMONOCO: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Yes, I got a good education there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: I really did.

LEVINE: Yeah.

LOMONOCO: Then over here I went to school twice. They started me on the third grade. I went to school. And I was very smart. And arithmetic, there's no change; it's the same.

LEVINE: Right.

LOMONOCO: But like, you know, the language is very difficult and the writing and, you know—but you learn when you're young. You know, it's not very—

LEVINE: Right.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did you have any particular problems learning English? Any—

LOMONOCO: No, it was—yeah, we—we had a nice teacher. She was—the teacher wasn't even Italian. She was American. She—her name—I—I still remember her name. Mrs. Brown. [laughs]

LEVINE: Uh-huh. [chuckles] But she was nice—

LOMONOCO: Yeah. [chuckles]

LEVINE: —and she helped you?

LOMONOCO: Nice, yeah. They used to draw pictures and tell the, you know, the name of them and, no, the beginning's very difficult. But you're—when you're young you learn, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. How would you compare the school here with the school that you went to in Palermo?

LOMONOCO: Well, I don't know. I know—well, especially today, I could never compare them because we were so afraid of the teachers then, because, you know, you had to be very nice to the teacher. Now, the teachers being nice to you. The teacher—had nice teacher. They tr—treated me good. But, well, I mean, I really didn't have any trouble because a few people that were like me were in the same class, you know.

LEVINE: Hmm.

LOMONOCO: Like they were aliens and they came to the same class. And it wasn't too bad.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And were they also coming from Italy?

LOMONOCO: No, no, no. No, the teachers were American.

LEVINE: No, I mean the ones that had come from someplace else.

LOMONOCO: Oh, yeah. They are from the different places, yes.

LEVINE: Oh, different places?

LOMONOCO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Not just Italy?

LOMONOCO: No, no. Not just Italy.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: Yeah. But mostly was Italy. Most of them were Italian. Yeah.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, most of them were.

LEVINE: Most.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: At the time, we didn't have so many different people here. Not like now, like Chinese and all that stuff.

LEVINE: Yeah.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

LOMONOCO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Okay. So do you remember leaving Palermo?

LOMONOCO: Yes, because my aunt came with us, my mother's sister and her husband. They came and they—we left from—we—coming here to get the boat, we had to go to Naples. We went to Naples and we stayed there about three days. And then we left. The boat left to come here. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Do you remember those three days in Naples?

LOMONOCO: A little. I still—

LEVINE: Was that the first time you had been—

LOMONOCO: Yes, yes, yes. Yeah. It's a—it's a very—it's a—a gay country [laughs]—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: —in—by Naples. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: Everybody was so happy there and everything, you know. It was a nice—it was a nice place. It must—my aunt stayed with us. And then when they both left, I mean, she left too. She went back to Palermo.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: I see. So—so then what about the voyage? Is there anything about the voyage that [unclear]?

LOMONOCO: The voyage was good but, you know, they used to give us, you know, dinner. And my brother—my brother was 15 years old and he used to go for the dinners to get the dinners and bring them to us, like—

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: —on the boat. You know, he always helped like that. And it was good, yeah. Good.

LEVINE: Do you remember the accommodation—

LOMONOCO: But of cour—

LEVINE: —where you were sleeping and what it was like there?

LOMONOCO: Yeah, we had the bunk beds. And [chuckles] I could tell you. You're not black. [laughs] And I was sleeping—and I was there and there was a woman above me, and she was colored, you know. And, you know, in Italy you never see colored people. At that time, none. Even now. Even now. If there are any colored people—not that I have anything against them because now, I mean, they're all, you know, like—but they're all just domestic. They do domestic work, like clean the house and things like that. But outside of that, they won't give them a job, like in the office, because they don't want them.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: Yes. Yeah. Like my—like, I went to Italy af—when I was 75. And my—my—my—the people I went to, my cou—they were my husband's cousins, actually. And they were pretty rich because he was a—he was a—a sup—a director in the bank in Milan. And they were pretty—and they had a maid. They had a—you know, a sleep-in maid. And she used to take care of everything. She used to cook and clean and everything there. And I thought it was so beautiful. [laughs]

LEVINE: So when you were on the ship you were in the bunk beds and it was—

LOMONOCO: Yeah, on the bunk beds and then—oh, this is what I was going to say, the [unclear]. And this—this woman, you know, she wanted to be friendly with me. She didn't mean anything by it. But I was a child and I never saw one. And my mother said, "Oh, my—my God. If she ever sees her," and you know, she'd like—because she wanted to I—look at me from the—and she says, "If she sees her, she'll get scared," and because I was very shy. You know. And she—she [chuckles] she said, "Don't leave her"—she said, "Leave her alone. She's an Italian." [laughs]

LEVINE: Your mother said that to [unclear]?

LOMONOCO: [unclear] a couple nights we had very bad nights and we prayed so much. You know, the—you know, the weather was—it was very windy and the—the ocean was very rough. And that was tough. [laughs]

LEVINE: So people were praying—

LOMONOCO: We prayed, yeah. Oh, yes. We all prayed. Everybody prayed there, yeah. Yeah. But we had a pretty good—there's a—the street—the—the—everybody has trouble and you passed, like, the Strait of Gibraltar.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, the Strait of Gibraltar.

LEVINE: Right.

LOMONOCO: Then it was—yeah, that's where we had the trouble. Almost everybody had it very rough there.

LEVINE: Right.

LOMONOCO: But outside of that, it was pretty good.

LEVINE: And what conditions—

LOMONOCO: And then when we came—huh?

LEVINE: Yeah. Were the conditions on the ship difficult? I mean, as far as, you know—

LOMONOCO: No.

LEVINE: —bathrooms and—

LOMONOCO: Oh. I don't remember that. I really don't. But I mean, there must have been a place [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: You know, I—I—we didn't feel—feel that.

LEVINE: You don't—you don't remember that—

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: —as being terrible or anything?

LOMONOCO: We didn't—no, no, no, no. And my—when we came and we went to—and we—and then we—we saw my dad, my dad was—you

know, he was downstairs and we were on the boat. And he waved and [laughs]—and we—

LEVINE: Now, where was your father?

LOMONOCO: My—

LEVINE: Was he in another boat?

LOMONOCO: My dad was in a—huh?

LEVINE: Was he in a little boat?

LOMONOCO: Yeah, in a little boat. Yeah, that's how we saw him. And—and he brought us some—some fruitcake. I never forgot that. I thought it was so delicious and he put it someplace and he gave—you know, we got it there. I think they used to get—get it from—for us. And—and then, you know, we went to my—and we were so happy to see my dad.

LEVINE: Did you—

LOMONOCO: And we had to wait three—three days because there was somebody sick on the boat. And it was contagious, a contagious disease. I don't remember what it was. And I don't know if it was like a—the—you know what the children get?

LEVINE: Measles?

LOMONOCO: Measles. Yeah, something like that. Measles, something like that. And we had to stay three days on the boat. And my dad came everyday.

LEVINE: So you were in the harbor on the boat?

LOMONOCO: Yeah, right there.

LEVINE: [unclear]?

LOMONOCO: Yeah, right there. And—and then we went home. And when we saw the—from the boat and we saw the Statue of Liberty, that's very exciting. We found that very exciting. Yes, that was beautiful. It was beautiful. And then we got to my aunt's—when we got to my aunt's [chuckles], she—she gave us bananas and we never had bananas in Italy. [laughs] We got—you know, those small bananas. But at the time we didn't even have any. We didn't even know what

a banana was. And she gave us a banana each. [chuckles] And then what else? And she gave us something else that I—but we—we didn't know what it was to come through that. I don't even remember what it was anyway. But, yeah, it—it was nice to see my aunt and my cousins. I mean, she had cousins here too because she had—my cousin had just been married, one of them a girl. She had been married three months before. And—and then my—what—another cousin, a la—a girl cousin, she was about my age, about two years younger—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: —than myself.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: And I used to go out with her all the time. Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Now, would you remember anything about Ellis Island when you were in the—

LOMONOCO: Not too much. Not too much, really.

LEVINE: Not too much?

LOMONOCO: Yeah, not too much.

LEVINE: So—so you had—you had family and you felt—

LOMONOCO: Yeah, I had a good life. I really had.

LEVINE: —that you had friends and family.

LOMONOCO: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: So then what was 14th Street like at that time?

LOMONOCO: Fourteenth Street. Well, at the time it was—it's a street. I mean, every—every country has its beauty and has—you know, like when I went to—back to Italy they—they asked me, "How is America? Is it better than here? How—how is it?" I said, "Look, every country has its beauty. [knocking sound] Hello.

LEVINE: Just a minute. [tape off/on] Continuing here after going to a neighbor's birthday party.

LOMONOCO: Yeah. [laughter]

LEVINE: Okay.

LOMONOCO: [unclear].

LEVINE: Let's see. Now, you—you said something at the party, which I would like for you to say on tape. And that is, tell how you were dressed when you—when you arrived in this country.

LOMONOCO: Oh, yes. Oh, I had a beautiful dress. It was a—a very small print, very small print. Like a organdy sort of, you know. And then I had a big straw hat. And everybody picked up—you know, because I was—I had nice rosy cheeks always. Of—of course, 11 years old, I wasn't using any rouge or anything—now, any blush. [laughter] But anyway—and they thought I—they thought I had rouge. You know, my daughter's the same way as I am.

LEVINE: Ah.

LOMONOCO: I have a daughter, she's—she's 55. That's my younger—younger daughter.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: And when she went to school, teacher told her once—she said, "Are you using rouge?" She says, "Oh, no." [laughs]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: She got a piece of cloth and she—and she—it was clean because she had no rouge on. [chuckles] That's the one, the one over there next to me. That's my whole family there.

LEVINE: Oh, very nice.

LOMONOCO: You see?

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: That's the one with the curly hair.

LEVINE: Right.

LOMONOCO: That's the younger one. Then the other one's my older one.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: And those are my two boys. That's my whole family there.

LEVINE: Wow.

LOMONOCO: Two girls and two boys and that's myself.

LEVINE: Well, very nice. Okay, so—so—

LOMONOCO: Okay, now—

LEVINE: You were on 14th Street. And I think when we stopped I was saying—

LOMONOCO: And then—

LEVINE: Can you talk about what was 14th Street like when you were there after you came to this country?

LOMONOCO: Well, I was—what can I say?

LEVINE: It certainly wasn't the way it is today.

LOMONOCO: No.

LEVINE: But—

LOMONOCO: Of course.

LEVINE: Were—were there a lot of immigrant families?

LOMONOCO: Black people, a lot of people there, a lot of Italian people. Definitely, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Yes.

LEVINE: Yeah.

LOMONOCO: But I couldn't speak a—a word in English. It was terrible. [laughs]

LEVINE: And how did you learn it?

LOMONOCO: In school, of cour—in school. Then I learned fast. Yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And how did the school compare with the school in Italy?

LOMONOCO: Well, I think over there the schools are more up—on the upper class, sort of. Yeah. We—of course, over there we—it's not like today, you know. Today, the teachers would be afraid of the pupil. Oh, at that time we had a lot of respect for the teachers. The teacher meant to us—a lot to us and we respected her, you know. Well, over here—well, at that time when I went—when I went to school over here was pretty good too. Now, of course it's different, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: But—

LEVINE: But the teachers were helpful to you?

LOMONOCO: Hmm?

LEVINE: The teachers were helpful to you?

LOMONOCO: Oh, yes. Very nice. Yeah.

LEVINE: In—in learning English—

LOMONOCO: Yes, yes. Yeah. This—this—this teacher, she was American. She—I told you. Her name was Miss Brown.

LEVINE: Right.

LOMONOCO: And she—she'd understand Italian but she managed to let us understand everything. She was very good. I mean, she was just for the aliens. You know, she was very good.

LEVINE: Oh, she was a special teacher for—

LOMONOCO: Yeah, definite—yeah.

LEVINE: —the children who were coming in?

LOMONOCO: Yeah. They—that—yes. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: That's why they put me on the third class, on the third grade.

LEVINE: I see.

LOMONOCO: They put me, yeah.

LEVINE: So was everyone in your class coming in from—

LOMONOCO: Huh?

LEVINE: —someplace? All the children in your class were coming from somewhere else, or not?

LOMONOCO: I think all of them were.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, we were all from alien. They had the special class on the third grade.

LEVINE: Ah, I see.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: And did you go to any clubs or—

LOMONOCO: No, no.

LEVINE: —any organizations after school? Did you—

LOMONOCO: No, no, no. They didn't have any—

LEVINE: No.

LOMONOCO: —then.

LEVINE: Yeah.

LOMONOCO: We didn't go anyplace. I just went home.

LEVINE: Yeah.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Now, was it your mother and father's idea that you should become Americanized?

LOMONOCO: Oh, definitely. Of course. Yeah, of course.

LEVINE: Yeah. Did they—

LOMONOCO: But they couldn't speak English for—they couldn't—my mother never spoke English.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: She—it's very difficult for an older person. But—and then they have a lot of pride. They had a lot of pride because she was afraid if she'd say something she would—she wouldn't say it right. She'd say it wrong, you know, and she was embarrassed. [chuckles] She [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, were you—did you—

LOMONOCO: It was tough. Excuse me. That's one thing, before I forget. It was tough growing up with Italian parents and they cannot help you at all with your schoolwork or anything. That was a little tough—

LEVINE: Yeah.

LOMONOCO: —too. Today, they help you, you know, when you're in the first grade and all that too, you know. But I had no help like that at all.

LEVINE: And that's what—

LOMONOCO: But I was smart enough. I enjoyed it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: It was—you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, that's an interesting—

LOMONOCO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: —point.

LOMONOCO: Yes. Yeah, that is an interesting point.

LEVINE: Right.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And did you experience any prejudice against you for coming from another country or for coming from Italy?

LOMONOCO: Oh, yes. They were—oh, they knocked you. Really, they—it was terrible. Not—not now. It's not that anymore because we have so many different kind of people here. But that time, they used to call you wop. They used to—guinea, you know. All those names that were terrible and I was so embarrassed. It was awful.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: And, well, I had a pretty good life after I became—well, before I—after many years. Well, I—my—my husband divorced me or I divorced him. Both of us, anyway, because he had somebody else. He found another woman after I had four children.

LEVINE: Hmm.

LOMONOCO: And that—I had a tough life then. I did. Because I always—you know, I always had a good life with him. And he was a professional man. You know, he was a—he was a—he was a manager in a furniture factory place.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, why don't we fill in? When you—you left school. You went—

LOMONOCO: [coughs]

LEVINE: You went through eighth grade. And then did you marry soon after?

LOMONOCO: Third grade.

LEVINE: Eighth grade—

LOMONOCO: No, no.

LEVINE: Right?

LOMONOCO: Yeah, about. And then, no—oh, no. I got nine—I was 28 years old.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. So you worked then, did you?

LOMONOCO: I got engaged when I was 23. I got engaged. And then when I was 28, I m—we got married. We were engaged for five years.

LEVINE: Hmm.

LOMONOCO: And that was the only man in my life. I never went out with anybody else. My mother wouldn't allow me. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Wow. So you had a strict mother.

LOMONOCO: The first—the first man I kissed, I ever kissed. [laughs]

LEVINE: Was your husband?

LOMONOCO: Yes, that's right. That's right.

LEVINE: Wow.

LOMONOCO: And then he really—we were very, very much in love. We had a very happy family. But then, you know, after all, I told you, until this woman came along and that was the end of that.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: And now you know what?

LEVINE: What?

LOMONOCO: He died last—in May.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: He died in May and I'm getting his pension, widow's pension.

LEVINE: Oh, good.

LOMONOCO: Which I'm very, very good. Now—

LEVINE: Wow, that's good.

LOMONOCO: Now I'm living comfortable.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: I was always comfortable in my life, you know, like—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Because my husband did very well. He had a furniture factory himself afterward, before we broke up, you know.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

LEVINE: What did—

LOMONOCO: [unclear]

LEVINE: What did you do in between, from the time you left school—

LOMONOCO: Well, I used to go out with my cousin—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: —when I was single. I was—you know, we used to go out with my cousin. And all—all we had—you know what our good time was? Like a Saturday or Sunday?

LEVINE: Right.

LOMONOCO: Saturday night or Sunday we used to go to movies and then to the ice cream parlor next door to the—next to the movies. And that was our good time. And we came home. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: That was my [unclear], my girl cousin and I.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. This is the same girl cousin that you—

LOMONOCO: N—n—no.

LEVINE: —you moved in with first?

LOMONOCO: She died a long time ago. She died a long time ago. Sh—she died from an auto accident.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: That cousin of mine. Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: So did you work at all in—before you married?

LOMONOCO: Yeah, after—I worked. Yeah. After I worked—no. After I got married, I didn't work any—I never worked.

LEVINE: How about before you got married?

LOMONOCO: Well, before, I worked on ladies underwear.

LEVINE: Oh, in a factory?

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Or at home?

LOMONOCO: No, in a factory. Ladies underwear.

LEVINE: And what—where—where was that? Where was the factory?

LOMONOCO: It was a Madison, New York—he had a nice—yeah, Madison, New York.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: It was a beautiful—Madison St—that's a street. Ma—Ma—isn't it?

LEVINE: Madison Avenue?

LOMONOCO: It isn't Madison Avenue? Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: And there's a Madison Street.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: You—

LOMONOCO: Madison Avenue Street. Yeah, I—working there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah. Oh. Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Oh, and then after—when I—when I married my husband, I never—I didn't work anymore. No. I had four children, you know.

LEVINE: Right.

LOMONOCO: After, so I—I didn't work. And when we divorced then I had to look. I had to start from scratch. Well, I ended up being a beauty consultant. [laughs]

LEVINE: Really?

LOMONOCO: I worked in the department store, Maya [PH] Brothers.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: And I was a beauty consultant there.

LEVINE: Wonderful.

LOMONOCO: So that was nice, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. So you must have always been interested in beauty products and things? Or no?

LOMONOCO: No, I didn't even use any makeup at all.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: I—how to use it and all I use was a little rouge, maybe, and a lipstick. That's all I used and my eyes were nothing. But then, you know, I worked on—on dresses and I was having trouble because, you know, selling dresses. And I had trouble because everybody used to argue with me and all that. "This is my customer. You took my customer." I couldn't stand that. I didn't like to argue with anybody. So I told my buyer. I said, "Look. Either you change my department or," I said, "I have to leave because I have a more—I don't like to work here." So she says, "You'll be perfect for the beauty, the Cosmetic Department." And they put me there. They sent me to school and that was—yeah.

LEVINE: And so you were happy working there?

LOMONOCO: Yes. Yes, I was very happy.

LEVINE: Very nice.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, very happy.

LEVINE: Yeah, very nice. So do you remember hearing about the Triangle Shirt—

LOMONOCO: No.

LEVINE: The—the Triangle Shirtwaist fire, was in a factory, downtown Manhattan?

LOMONOCO: No, I don't—

LEVINE: No.

LOMONOCO: —remember. No.

LEVINE: Can you describe the factory where you worked on the underwear? What was it like? You go in—

LOMONOCO: Oh, it was a beautiful, very big place. It was beautiful. Yeah. It was very nice. Just ladies underwear.

LEVINE: The working conditions were good?

LOMONOCO: Yes, yes. They were good. Yeah. I made pretty good money too. I used to get \$30 a week.

LEVINE: W—did you work on piecework or did you work on—

LOMONOCO: No, no, no. No.

LEVINE: A salary.

LOMONOCO: Week work, a salary. Yeah, yeah. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And so how many years did you work at that? About?

LOMONOCO: Well, how long did I work? I worked until I was—I think I started to work, must have been about 18—17, 18. And I worked until I got married. I got married when I was 28.

LEVINE: Oh, so you worked for 10 years.

LOMONOCO: Oh, sure. I worked for a while.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Wow.

LOMONOCO: That's it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Now, did you know how to sew before you went to work there?

LOMONOCO: No, my mother-in-law was a very good sewer, my husband's mother. She was a very good sewer and she taught me a lot when I was engaged to my husband. She taught me a lot. But I never worked that—I didn't enjoy that. That wasn't my type of work. [chuckles]

LEVINE: But when you worked on the underwear—

LOMONOCO: I worked there. I worked on the machine.

LEVINE: On the machines.

LOMONOCO: On the machine. Yeah, the Maro [PH] machine. The Maro machine, you know?

LEVINE: Oh, tell me what that is.

LOMONOCO: You know? The Maro machine is when they put things together like a scene—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: —on the—on the—on underwear. You know, you got a little like—wait a minute. Like—no, wait. See, like this here. This is the Maro machine, like this here. See?

LEVINE: Oh, I see. It's like finishing off the—

LOMONOCO: This kind of stitch. Yeah. Stitch. No, you put the things together.

LEVINE: Yeah. Oh, okay.

LOMONOCO: Yeah. You see?

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: It was a special machine, yeah.

LEVINE: So that was your specialty?

LOMONOCO: Yeah, that's what I did.

LEVINE: That's what you did.

LOMONOCO: That's what I did, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Now, did you have friends who worked in the factory with you?

LOMONOCO: Friends?

LEVINE: Yeah.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, a few friends. I made friends over there too.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: But I was very close with my cousin. We went out together with my cousin most of the time. But the friends over there, like a—we were—we were very good friends in there. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, uh-huh.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Good. Anything else about New York City during the time when you—

LOMONOCO: I—I didn't like New York City as a whole. I couldn't wait till I got out of it.

LEVINE: Really?

LOMONOCO: Because that wasn't my cup of tea.

LEVINE: What—what didn't you like about it?

LOMONOCO: Huh?

LEVINE: What was it that you didn't like?

LOMONOCO: It was loud. It was n—it wasn't a fine environment. You know what I mean? I don't like that. I like a nice, fine environment. But then after we moved to Brooklyn, which was a ni—nicer place than New York, we got a big home in Brooklyn. I was taking piano lessons and all.

LEVINE: Now, your family, or you and your husband moved to Brooklyn?

LOMONOCO: No, no. My family.

LEVINE: Your family.

LOMONOCO: That's where I met my husband.

LEVINE: I see.

LOMONOCO: We were friends with this family. That's how we met. We were very good friends with this family.

LEVINE: Had his family come from—from Italy also?

LOMONOCO: Oh, yeah. There—yeah. Oh, they were Italian too. Yeah, yeah. Uh-hmm. As a matter of fact, from Palermo too. [chuckles] Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: So did—did they—anybody know each other before?

LOMONOCO: No, we didn't know each other. No, no.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: We met here. It happened to be my—my—my brother's wife's relatives—

LEVINE: Ah.

LOMONOCO: That's why, yeah.

LEVINE: I see.

LOMONOCO: That's why.

LEVINE: I see.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: I see.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And how did your brothers make out in this country?

LOMONOCO: My brother made very well. Well, pretty well. One of them had a business of his own. He had a—a electrical supplies, like washing machines and all that stuff in—in Borough—was it Borough?

LEVINE: Borough Hall?

LOMONOCO: B—

LEVINE: Borough Park?

LOMONOCO: Park. Borough Park.

LEVINE: Ah, Brooklyn.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, in Brooklyn.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, it was a very nice place there. And my other brother was a barber. And that's all I had—no, three brothers. And what's the other brother? The other brother, he did anything. [laughs]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: He was Jack-of-all-trades and [laughs] professional, none. That was my big brother.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: My big brother was 15 years old and he didn't want to go to school here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: So that was terrible.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Sure.

LEVINE: And he stopped?

LOMONOCO: He didn't go to school.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: No. But—but he was pretty good.

LEVINE: Well, how about you—

LOMONOCO: He had a nice family.

LEVINE: —your father? Now, he was—he had back making the—baking.

LOMONOCO: He—he had—he had a good business over there in Palermo. Very good business [unclear]—

LEVINE: And in this country, he—

LOMONOCO: He had to start working himself.

LEVINE: —he had to work for someone.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: He had to work himself. Yeah. He worked very hard, very hard.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

LOMONOCO: But he was a good man. He really was a good man.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And w—did—was—do you think your mother and father were happy they had come here?

LOMONOCO: Oh, yes. They were. They were. Yes, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Did—did either of them become citizens?

LOMONOCO: Oh, yes. They were both—yeah. Yeah, they were citizens.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So when you look back on your life, what—what was the real high point of your life? What—when you think of it, what was a real good time in your life?

LOMONOCO: Real good time, I would say after—well, when I was young we—we had different—different—like, we used to get together with friends, like my mother's friends. Not the young friends, like—you know, like they do today? Like they just get together with young friends. But there was a—get together with other friends and their children too and, you know, like—and we used to just talk and watch the—not TV. We didn't have a TV then. And the radio or—well, there was a [unclear] that—one of the bunch, they used to play mandolin. And one used to play guitar. And they used to play and we used to sing all together. I mean, things like that, you know.

LEVINE: Hmm.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. Nice.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. How about coming to this country? Do you think that made a difference in—in your personality, that you—

LOMONOCO: Oh—

LEVINE: —came here as 11-year-old and—

LOMONOCO: Yes, it did—it did make a big difference at the beginning because I was—I was very shy, very embarrassed of everything, you know. And I couldn't speak and it was terrible. I went through a—a terrible period at that time. But—but after that—and it was okay. But then I had my friends, you know, and it was a little different. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: But then I was happy. I was a happy person. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Well, you seem to have stayed happy.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: A happy person.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, thank you.

LEVINE: Yeah.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Let's see. What else? Were there—did you ever have any heroes? Did you ever have people you looked up to that you wanted to be like?

LOMONOCO: [chuckles]

LEVINE: Either people you knew about or people you actually knew?

LOMONOCO: Yeah. Well, no. No. Not necessarily. I was happy the way—I really—my dad was very good to us. We had a very—a very nice family. And then I had my own family. I had four children and, you know, we were all together all the time. And my husband had a—I mean, he had his business and then he had his own interior decorator place. He had a place, interior decorating, you know and, well, we—you know, we were pretty—yeah, we had very nice friends.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: And then when I moved to New Jersey, then I had very nice friends there. We got—you know, like my two neighbors. They were both Jewish. And we got along so well. We—our children were all young, you know. One of them was a doctor and the other one was in the—in the carpeting business, you know. And we really got along beautiful. We—we enjoyed life there too.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: That was in B—and that was in New Jersey.

LEVINE: When did you move there, to New Jersey?

LOMONOCO: When—because my husband—they opened up a fa—a factory in—in New Jersey.

LEVINE: So you had been—

LOMONOCO: Because he worked in New York first.

LEVINE: I see.

LOMONOCO: Then—then his boss—he got so sick of the union. He said, “Look.” He says, “I’m going to go to New Jersey.” So he—he spoke to my—my husband. My husband used to work for him. And he said, “Look, Joe.” He said, “If you—if you promise to come with—with me,” he said, “I’ll open up a big place over in New Jersey.” And he did. And, do you know, well, Miss Mc—Mc—Mrs. Mc—it’s not McDonald. That’s—wait a minute. Mc something in—in New Jersey, that we—he had a place right there. Well, I lived in Fair Lawn. It was—it was right in Fair Lawn.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: And he used to come home for lunch. And it was—

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, my children were young. You know, it was nice. Yeah.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: We were very happy.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Used to go out with the other two couple, get together, have picnics. We had—we had fun. We had fun.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Did you go on vacations?

LOMONOCO: Yes, every year we used to go on vacation.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: Once, we went to—wait. What's the name of that place? Now, I'm starting to for—you know, forget things that I—the names. Lake George.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: We went to Lake George. And then my neighbors came to meet us over there and they stayed a few days too. Yeah, every—well, these [unclear]. There's a certain time of the year the furniture places close down—

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: —for two weeks, like the two weeks from the—the Fourth of July up to, you know, like a—and we used to—he used to take off then because the place were closed. And we used to go some—we always went someplace. We went to Catskills, you know, and—you know, we used to go on vacation.

LEVINE: Can you remember what the Catskills were like?

LOMONOCO: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: What was that like?

LOMONOCO: Oh, yeah. Oh, the children enjoyed it. We did enjoy it too. Yes, it was fun. It was fun.

LEVINE: Would you go, like, to a big hotel?

LOMONOCO: Of course, like—yeah, be—well, see. It was because we were family then. See, now, today it's more of a—a—what do you call? [clears throat]

LEVINE: Singles?

LOMONOCO: No, no. See, first, it was family. It was all families. Now, it's more of a—a—a—oh, I can't think—think of the—of the word. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Couples?

LOMONOCO: No, no. Not—couples, yes, too. But it's more of a social life. Social life.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: See? It's more like—they all have their friends, like. You know what I mean? Then it was all family, like my sister's, brother. They were all—we were together all the time.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: So that's it.

LEVINE: Yeah.

LOMONOCO: That was it.

LEVINE: I see.

LOMONOCO: That was the life. Yeah.

LEVINE: I see.

LOMONOCO: Like, every Sunday we would go to my mother's. We'd have dinner over there with the children. My uncle used to be there, like a brother and, you know, my—well, my family and we'd enjoy it together. See? That was the life. Yeah.

LEVINE: That was a different—yeah.

LOMONOCO: Right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Now, it's different.

LEVINE: Yeah.

LOMONOCO: Yeah. Sure.

LEVINE: So when did you move to Florida then? Did you move from New Jersey to Florida from Fair Lawn?

LOMONOCO: No, no. I would—I lived in New Jersey until just recently. I just came here and I'm staying here, you know, like a—because I was coming back and forth, you know, like for—I came in New Jersey—I mean, I came from New Jersey in—in—let's say in January and stay here for—for the winter months. I—we rented a place. First, I used to come to my brother. My brother lived in Florida. I used to come to him for a couple of weeks and then I would go to my daughter's. My daughter lived in Alabama and I used to go to her too to see her.

See? But then, I mean, we—I rented a place here and I come every—every winter I spent here. [clears throat] Excuse me. It's been quite a while that I come here. And now I'm staying here for good because I like it here. It's more convenient for me. No snow. It's—you know, over there it's very difficult for me.

LEVINE: And what's your life like now here?

LOMONOCO: I love it here. Well, I—my daughter's here every—she's staying for three months too. She has a—she bought a home here too. And—but she has another one up there in New Jersey too. Of course, her family is there. I have granddaughters, great grandchildren now. I have a big family. [laughs]

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: Yeah. So, you know, either they come here and see her and—and I see them too. They used to come to me over there at my house, you know. That—that's the way it is.

LEVINE: Hmm.

LOMONOCO: And now I have my own friends here. Since I was alone, I made friends with these people and these people from New Jersey, they live—they're living—living in Florida. So we get together here and enjoy ourselves here too. We're—

LEVINE: Good.

LOMONOCO: They took good care of me too. They're very good to me.

LEVINE: Wonderful.

LOMONOCO: They all drive because they're younger. You know? And we go places.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: It's a good life.

LEVINE: What—

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the Depression during the '30s?

LOMONOCO: Oh, yes. I do.

LEVINE: How did that affect you and your family?

LOMONOCO: Now, thank God. My husband wasn't called in the Army because I do—I had two children already.

LEVINE: Oh.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, had two children.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: And then he got a job and he worked for the government so he wouldn't be called. But he worked there and he [chuckles]—he used to do such hard work—he's, "I'm ashamed to come home." [laughs] But he was—was lucky that after the war was over and he wasn't called at all. But it was a—but I remember the—you know, that we had to have the—what do you call it again—Depression to get the gas and to get things.

LEVINE: You had to have—

LOMONOCO: You know, the food—even food.

LEVINE: Food stamps?

LOMONOCO: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: [unclear].

LOMONOCO: Stamps. That's right. The stamps. Yeah. There for the food, yeah. Right. We had to live like that then. It was terrible.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, that was quite a—a time.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LOMONOCO: I was married at the time.

LEVINE: I see. Uh-huh. Okay. Is there anything else you can think of—

LOMONOCO: That's all I can think of.

LEVINE: —relevant to your coming here?

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And—

LOMONOCO: Well, I'm glad to be here too. That's all I can say. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: But at least they asked me in Italy. You know, they say, "Well, how is America? Is it nicer than here?" I said, "Look." I said, "Every country has its beauty." Italy, they—they have their beauties too there. It's a beautiful place too. And I couldn't say any different; my country too. [laughs]

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: But, I mean, they have a good life there too. It's a different life than here though. They—and there wasn't much of the social life. It's usually they—they get together with some intimate friends, you know. But they don't go, like, dancing and things like that. No, it's just a quiet life.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: Over here, it's a different life. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: But I'm glad, happy to be here anytime.

LEVINE: When you think—

LOMONOCO: And there's no place like here. Excuse me. It's true. That's true.

LEVINE: When you think about your Italian side and your American side, how—

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: How do you think about the two?

LOMONOCO: It doesn't matter to me. A person's a person. That's all I say. You have bad and good in every country and every—I mean, every place.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

LOMONOCO: So it doesn't matter what they are, like, I got Jewish neighbors there. We got along beautifully.

LEVINE: Right.

LOMONOCO: And then we're still friends. One of them, unfortunately, died. The doctor's wife, she died a long time ago when I was living there. But outside of that, I mean, we—we loved each other so much. It was—it doesn't matter. We—I was always in a mixed neighborhood, not all Italian there because I don't like that either. You know, kind of people sometimes. [laughs]

LEVINE: Right, everybody knows what everybody else—

LOMONOCO: Yes. Right, right.

LEVINE: —is doing. Right?

LOMONOCO: But I wasn't that type. And I always got along with everybody because I was never the type that would go to somebody's house and be a—make a pest out of myself. I didn't like that, you know. But we were friendly, nicely and everything. [laughs]

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm, uh-hmm. So did you visit Ellis Island when—is that how I got this form? Or did you—

LOMONOCO: No, my daughter. My daughter did. I haven't been there. No, I haven't been there. I would love to see it but I—it gets very difficult [unclear].

LEVINE: Well, if you ever get to go—

LOMONOCO: Not easy.

LEVINE: —you got to let me know.

LOMONOCO: Yeah. [laughs]

LEVINE: Show you around.

LOMONOCO: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I think maybe we're at a good—

LOMONOCO: Yeah, very good.

LEVINE: —[unclear] point.

LOMONOCO: I think so.

LEVINE: I want to thank you—

LOMONOCO: Oh, it was very nice.

LEVINE: —for a lovely interview.

LOMONOCO: Yeah, yeah. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: And I'll be sending you the tape.

LOMONOCO: Thank you.

LEVINE: Your grandchildren—

LOMONOCO: I appreciate it.

LEVINE: —and great grandchildren can—

LOMONOCO: Yeah, yes.

LEVINE: —listen to it—

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: —here or at Ellis Island.

LOMONOCO: That would be nice. Yeah, that would be nice. I would appreciate that. Have a piece of cake before you go.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

LOMONOCO: How about that? Here, have some.

LEVINE: Okay. Let me just say that I've been speaking with Eva—

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: —Lomonoco—

LOMONOCO: Yes.

LEVINE: —who came at the age of 11—

LOMONOCO: Yes.

LEVINE: —from—from Sicily—

LOMONOCO: From Palermo.

LEVINE: Palermo.

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: On the Dante Alleghieri—

LOMONOCO: Yeah.

LEVINE: —in 1919.

LOMONOCO: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: And she is, at the time of this interview, 92.

LOMONOCO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm signing off.

LOMONOCO: Uh-hmm.

[END OF INTERVIEW]