

EI-1158

JOSEPH MAFFUCCI

BIRTHDATE: MAY 21, 1921

INTERVIEW DATE: JULY 31, 2000

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 79

RUNNING TIME: 1:02:12

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

RECORDING ENGINEER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

INTERVIEW LOCATION: ELLIS ISLAND

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:

ITALY, 1928

AGE: 7

SHIP: PRESIDENT WILSON

PORT: NAPLES

RESIDENCES:

LEVINE: Today is July 31st, the year 2000. And I'm here at Ellis Island with Joseph Ma—Maffucci, who came from Italy when he was seven years old in 1928. At the time of this interview, Mr. Maffucci is 79 years old. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. At the same time that we're conducting this interview, Mr. Maffucci's son, Joe, is also videotaping part of the interview. Okay. If we could start at the beginning and you would say your birth date again, please.

MAFFUCCI: Okay. May 25th, 1921.

LEVINE: And where were you born?

MAFFUCCI: [clears throat] A little town in Italy by the name of Monte Forte Chilanto [PH], providence of Salerno.

LEVINE: Okay. And did you live in Monte Forte up until the time you left when you were seven?

MAFFUCCI: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, do you have many memories?

MAFFUCCI: From the little town? I do. It's a mountainous town and it—that whole town is built on a side of a mountain. And I remember as a child at seven years old, I'd [chuckles] run up the sides of those mountains. And, you know, I do remember now I used to get in a lot of trouble. At that age, you—[chuckles] at that age [laughs]—

LEVINE: What kind of a little boy were you? Can you—how would you describe yourself as a seven-year-old when you were—were leaving Monte Forte?

MAFFUCCI: Oh, I guess I was a little wild kid. I was very wild. I—you—because [chuckles] I projected to him and his daughter now is the wild-eyed kid. [laughs]

LEVINE: Can you remember some of the things you did as a—

MAFFUCCI: Oh, I remember we used to—in our hometown, we used to have a—we didn't like stray dogs. And as a—as a child, I remember we used to have slingshots. We used to put a stone in it, just like David and Goliath, you know. [laughs]

LEVINE: And you'd [unclear]—

MAFFUCCI: And we used to fling those things and I got hit right over the eye here when my buddy—on my lip. I think he split my lip. I remember that. That's one of the things I remember.

LEVINE: Did you ever go to school when you were in—

MAFFUCCI: I went—I went for about maybe six months. But it wasn't enough.

LEVINE: What do you remember—

MAFFUCCI: It wasn't enough for me to learn to speak and—I mean to write and read.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about school? The teacher, the schoolhouse, the—anything?

MAFFUCCI: It was like a—just a plain room. It wasn't like a regular school, like we have here. It was like a house where they had so many—the town that I come from was very small. We must have had a—only about

maybe a thousand people in the whole town. So that's what I remember from school, was a very little school.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. And you were an only child?

MAFFUCCI: At that time, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And your mother's name? What was her maiden name, her first name and maiden name?

MAFFUCCI: Her name was—oh, her maiden name was Theresa—Maria Theresa—Maria Theresa San Giovanni [PH]. St. John. Mary Theresa San Giovanni.

LEVINE: And how about your mother's mother and father? Were they around? Did you know them?

MAFFUCCI: Oh, yes. Yes. My mother's mother and father. Sure.

LEVINE: You knew them in—in Italy?

MAFFUCCI: Yes.

LEVINE: And do you remember any experiences with your grandparents?

MAFFUCCI: Well, yes. My—my grandfather's name was Dan, Danalto [PH]. Danalto. And my grandmother was Denise. So that's what I remember.

LEVINE: Did you—how did they treat you? Do you remember, like, spending time with them?

MAFFUCCI: Oh, they used to treat me—they used to treat me very well. I was the only grandson at the time. Right? So they—they treated me nice, you know, good.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MAFFUCCI: But my—my grandfather used to live on the bottom of the—the town, which was—we used to have to go down. I think it was a lot—390 steps and platforms and steps and platforms to my grandfather. And my mother always used to visit him down—I used to live up a—towards the top of the mountain. It would be like a—a plaza. Piazza, they called it, right? And by the time I got home, you know, to climb up those steps, I would cry up—all the way up to the top. And everybody knew me from crying [chuckles] because I was tired and

cranky. [laughter] I remember that. So that's—that's—that's what I remember.

LEVINE: What do you remember about life in the town? In other words, do you remember, like, your mother doing the wash or the cooking or—

MAFFUCCI: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: —things like that?

MAFFUCCI: I remember that. They used to have [clears throat] a place where the women used to bring their clothes. It was like—like a fountain. And the women used to bring the clothes there and they used to have, like—something like washboards, the old fashioned washboards. But it was stone. And they used to wash on those stones and then they used to put the clothes on a—on a—on a—a shrubbery, like. Not—nobody had a—had a clothesline over there. Or their balconies by their houses, that they used to hang the clothes on that. I remember that.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MAFFUCCI: And my mother used to carry the clothes on her head without—holding me in her arms and carrying the clothes, balancing on her head.

LEVINE: In a basket?

MAFFUCCI: Basket. That's right. And then the—there—there was no oil heat or nothing in those days, right, over there. We used to go looking for— for wood in the mountains. And the women used to carry the—a load of wood on—on top of their head without—holding it by hand. Walk like that with a load on their head. And the women used to do all the—the heavy work.

LEVINE: Now, how about your father? What did he do work when he was in Italy?

MAFFUCCI: He was a—a farmer. He was just a farmer. [clears throat] Yeah.

LEVINE: What was his name? His first name?

MAFFUCCI: Vincent.

LEVINE: Vincent.

MAFFUCCI: Vincent.

LEVINE: Vincenzo. [PH]

MAFFUCCI: Vincenzo, yeah. [unclear]

LEVINE: Right, and—and [clears throat] when did he leave for the United States?

MAFFUCCI: Let's see. I was—

LEVINE: Oh, well, we have his passport.

MAFFUCCI: 19—yeah, right there. 1921, I—'22 or '23.

LEVINE: [unclear].

MAFFUCCI: Something like that. Is it there, the—the time he left?

LEVINE: Ah, I guess it's September—I don't know if it's 1922. It couldn't be 1922. No. It's got to be earlier than that. Well, anyway, do you remember—

MAFFUCCI: Wh—I don't remember when he left.

LEVINE: When he—

MAFFUCCI: No, I was only—

LEVINE: Oh, '18—

MAFFUCCI: I was only a baby when he left.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay.

MAFFUCCI: Might have been 1922.

LEVINE: Okay. So in other words, you don't remember your father?

MAFFUCCI: No, I—

LEVINE: In Italy?

MAFFUCCI: No, I didn't know him until I came to this country. Yeah.

LEVINE: Do—do you know why he came to this country when he came?

MAFFUCCI: Well, in those days they had a—they had a—a quota. You know, f—from Italy, quota. And he was one of the guys that made the quota because I had an uncle over here. And he called for—for his brother to come over. But—

LEVINE: And where was your uncle? Do you know where in this country?

MAFFUCCI: It—same—Sterling where—where we—where I come from. Sterling. Sterling, New Jersey.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And so your father came to join your uncle. And did—and what did your father do when he got here?

MAFFUCCI: He worked in the silk mills.

LEVINE: Oh.

MAFFUCCI: Years ago, there was a—our town was a silk mill town. There was a few factories there. They used to weave silk and he was a silk weaver.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: Until the Japanese took over. [chuckles] And they lost the—the job, you know, and then he started working in the—in a factory that worked with asbestos.

LEVINE: Mmm.

MAFFUCCI: And he become—but he—he lived to 82 years old. He had asbestosis when he died.

LEVINE: Really? Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: From working in there 25 years.

LEVINE: Oh.

MAFFUCCI: In the asbestos factory.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MAFFUCCI: That's what he did.

LEVINE: Now, how about back in—how about your—your father's mother and father? Did you know them?

MAFFUCCI: No.

LEVINE: In a—

MAFFUCCI: They were all dead.

LEVINE: But—

MAFFUCCI: My—my father's mother was in this country. She died in this country.

LEVINE: Oh. Were your mother and father's families from the same—

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: —region, even going back to their parents? Do you know?

MAFFUCCI: They—same town because they didn't have no—no—no place to— you know, like we have today—

LEVINE: To go to—

MAFFUCCI: —in the automobile. You go could go from here to China and back.
[chuckles]

LEVINE: Right. Yeah, they just—

MAFFUCCI: They used to walk or they'd have a—a donkey or something to go to a different town. But they used to walk.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: So they—they—most of the people, they intermarried. They—my mother and father were related so they had to be—you know, they had to be—the—they—to get rid of the relation by—you had to go to church. And they had to be—you know, discontinued your—your relation the—to get married.

LEVINE: Huh.

MAFFUCCI: So that's—

LEVINE: So how—what part did the church play in your life as a little boy?

MAFFUCCI: We used to have to go to church every Sunday, you know. It was a ritual you had to do. Every Sunday, you had to go. You get wet. It's—and in other words, the priests had a lot of power. They—they were the ones that had the education, really. In fact, when we come over here they—they helped us with the papers and everything because they—you know, the priests, instead of going to a lawyer like we do here, the priest used to help you out with papers.

LEVINE: Can you remember any particular priests and anything that, you know, they did that you—that affected you?

MAFFUCCI: I can't remember that, no.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: Can't remember.

LEVINE: How about festivals or—

MAFFUCCI: Oh, yes. They used to—every year, they—they had the festival in town. It was called Santa Danaro [PH]. That's Saint Dan. And they'd have a big, big display of fireworks when it's—when the—they didn't celebrate your birthday in—in Italy. They celebrated your birthday. So Santa Danaro was a big thing. My grandfather was named Danaro. That—that was a big thing, you know, in our family. It was [unclear] thing. Right?

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you say they didn't celebrate your birthday. They celebrated—

MAFFUCCI: Your saint day.

LEVINE: Your saint day. And—

MAFFUCCI: Mine would be St. Joseph.

LEVINE: I see.

MAFFUCCI: [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. What happened at St. Joseph? Did they—did they do anything special, like—

MAFFUCCI: Well, they used to have, like, a little—little cake they used to make, you know, and they celebrate your saint day. The whole family used

to get together, my aunts and my uncle. I had only one uncle that I—
that I had there at the time.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: That's—that's the way you were.

LEVINE: Yeah. And can you remember things your mother cooked?

MAFFUCCI: Oh, she cooked everything. [laughs]

LEVINE: Like what—[chuckles] what are the things you remember?

MAFFUCCI: Everything. Everything. A lot of greens. A lot—we used to eat a lot of
green stuff, a lot, you know, broccoli, cabbage. And I used to hate
cabbage. [laughs]

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. And this is—was this—were these vegetables things that
you'd grow?

MAFFUCCI: We used to grow 'em ourselves.

LEVINE: Uh-huh?

MAFFUCCI: Oh, yes. Yes. Everything, we grew ourself. We even grew wheat to
make the flour. We used to have to bring the—the wheat to the—to
the mill and grind it to m—and then the government used to take so
much. And—and we would take, like a—I think it was one-third or
maybe a little over a half or something like that.

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

MAFFUCCI: And then the government used to take the rest and the mill used to
take so much because you had to pay. You didn't have any money to
pay, so they—they'd take so much. So they used to bring the—the—
the flour home and then my—my mother used to bake the bread and
everything. When I came to this country, a seven-year-old boy, the
bread that was over here, I couldn't—I couldn't eat it. I was so used to
that bread [chuckles] over there.

LEVINE: Wow.

MAFFUCCI: It was terrific.

LEVINE: Huh.

MAFFUCCI: I couldn't get used to eating this bread over here. [laughs]

LEVINE: Now, were there—were there days, like, that were like market days? Can you remember?

MAFFUCCI: Oh, yeah. They used to have—most of the people there, they had a little—a little money. Or they—they had a little job. They used to work on farms for different people. They used to get—they used to pay each other with—with whatever they harvested or eggs or milk or something like that. That's how they used to pay.

LEVINE: Oh.

MAFFUCCI: They used to give you milk.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: If you worked with somebody that had a cow you could—pay you with milk and, chickens, with eggs and stuff like that. And what else? What was we talking about—about the—how they used to pay?

LEVINE: The market—

MAFFUCCI: Oh, the market. Then they—if you—if you raised, like, a—a pig or—or—or cattle, whatever—whatever you raised that you had a calf, you used to take it to market to sell for money.

LEVINE: Oh.

MAFFUCCI: See?

LEVINE: Did you and your mother ever raise a pig or a [unclear]?

MAFFUCCI: Oh, we—every year. Every year, we used to kill a pig. Every year.

LEVINE: And then you—did you take it to market or you used it?

MAFFUCCI: Oh, no. We used to butcher ourselves and used to make our cured ham and sausage and bacon. Everything.

LEVINE: Oh.

MAFFUCCI: And the—the Crisco—Crisco-type fat, we used to cook it and squeeze it. [chuckles] Even the remainder of that, we—they—my mother used to put it in bread and it tasted so good.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MAFFUCCI: [chuckles] Yep.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MAFFUCCI: I remember that.

LEVINE: Wow.

MAFFUCCI: It's a funny thing. I—some of the things that—that I did years ago, I remember. My wife complains, like, "H—how can you remember so many things years ago? You can't remember your name." I says, "Well, Ma, your—your memory goes." [chuckles]

LEVINE: Right, right.

MAFFUCCI: So—

LEVINE: Well, do you remember the house you lived in?

MAFFUCCI: Oh, I remember. Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, could you describe that?

MAFFUCCI: Was nothing but a stone place and it had a fireplace that we cooked on and kept warm with, because where we come from the—the—it never used to get any colder than 45 degrees in the wintertime. And if we used to get a little snow, we used to collect it and make sherbet out of it with the sweet wine. [laughter] I remember that.

LEVINE: Wow, wow.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, did you have little tasks or duties, jobs that you had to do, even though you were—

MAFFUCCI: Oh, yeah. We all—

LEVINE: Yeah?

MAFFUCCI: Everybody had a little job to do.

LEVINE: Well, can you remember any of the jobs that you—

MAFFUCCI: I used to go with my aunts, you know. The women—the old men and—and the—and—and the—and the—not the old men. The women used to do most of the work in town. The—the old men, the—the—all they did was hang around the la piazza [PH] and talk, you know, politics and this or that. They used to argue and fight. But the women used to do most of the—most of the work.

LEVINE: You mean, like, farm work?

MAFFUCCI: Farm work. They used to go and cultivate and dig and plant.

LEVINE: Your mother too?

MAFFUCCI: Oh, yes. My mother. And she used to bring—they used to have to cook big meals and had—they used to have big platters. And they used to have the macar—mostly—most of them, macaroni, you know. A lot of macaroni, a lot of pasta. And th—they used to have to take it to the fields, which was way down into the valley, because our town's on the side of the mountain. You couldn't grow nothing there, all solid rock.

LEVINE: Oh.

MAFFUCCI: So you went down into the valley where there was soil where you could raise stuff. And we used to have a little piece of property there, was called St. Lawrence, in fact. [chuckles] So—and—

LEVINE: So your mother—

MAFFUCCI: My mother used to bring the food and used—used to bring me, you know, as a young child, and carry the food on her head too down the steps into the valley and feed the—the workers. They used to help 'em, my aunts and my uncles. Everybody used to work and they—they—that—that was their pay, the food to eat.

LEVINE: So in other words, you—really, the money wasn't that much used.

MAFFUCCI: No, because—

LEVINE: It was really barter.

MAFFUCCI: —there wasn't any. You know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: Nobody had any, only the ones that—if you were—if you had a—if you was rich, say, you h—you owned a lot of property.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: Then you were rich because you had the land to grow things and you would sell it. And you, you know, pay—pay the workers that worked for you. Then you—you—then you had money.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: But that's all.

LEVINE: So is that how you and your mother got along while your father was here?

MAFFUCCI: Oh, yeah. Well, my father used to send money over there. So we had some money.

LEVINE: Yeah. Did—did you know—when you were a little boy before you came, did you know of people who had come to the United States? Did you hear stories? Do you—you know, what did you think about America?

MAFFUCCI: [clears throat] I—I used to—well, most of the stories I used to hear that my mother used to tell me what my father used to write to tell her.

LEVINE: Oh, like, can you remember anything that he would write?

MAFFUCCI: Well, I can remember that he used to bring some [unclear] and clothing for me. And he used to send silk to my mother, material to make dresses. And there—that was, oh—oh, if you—if you had a silk dress, that was great. Right? My father used to be the weaver, right? He used to get the stuff at the factory where he used to work to send it to my mother. And, oh, they—they—they really adored that. The women, you know.

LEVINE: Mmm, uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: And my aunts and everybody that was out there, they all wanted that silk.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, wow.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: So do you have any other memories of—of the town or your life, the early years? Anything else that sticks in your mind when you think back of the—that time?

MAFFUCCI: All I remember, that I was wild and I was running around the town and me and my buddy, we used to get in a lot of trouble. That's all I remember. [laughs]

LEVINE: Wh—what would happen if you—if you got in trouble? What would happen to you?

MAFFUCCI: Oh, this—oh, wait a minute. You know—you know, I just remembered something.

LEVINE: Oh, good.

MAFFUCCI: My grandfather used to live, like I told you, on the bottom of the town. Right? And we used to live up. And my mother, when she used to go down—and they used to have a—a sow, a—a pig or a female pig that had little ones. Right? And I—my mother went in and they used to keep the animals right with—with the house, you know, right around the house, even in a—in a separate room, right next to the house because there's no—like a farm like we have here. So my mother went inside and I—I started playing with one of the little piglets and the sow grabbed me, and grabbed me on my back. And I got a scar on my back yet. They thought I was going to die.

LEVINE: You mean it bit you on the back?

MAFFUCCI: It bit me on the back because I was playing with her piglets.

LEVINE: Oh.

MAFFUCCI: That's—now, that's something that come to me now, right.

LEVINE: Wow.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah. So—

LEVINE: What—what did you get for medical h—attention when that happened to you?

MAFFUCCI: Right there for—I don't know. I remember that the—we had a doctor in town. My mother brought me to the doctor. They didn't stitch it or anything. That's why I still got a—a scar on my back. They—they just—

LEVINE: So were you very sick then for a while after you got bit?

MAFFUCCI: Well, yeah, because I was sore from that—from the bite. [clears throat] That was ripped open, you know. [clears throat] So I guess I held—I—the—I cured—cured by itself instead of, you know, medication like we have here. [clears throat]

LEVINE: Now, what—h—how was it that you and your mother came to this country at the time that you did? Why then?

MAFFUCCI: Because my father became a citizen—citizenship paper here. And this, he had to have this, to send for his wife [clears throat] and child. And then he wanted us over here. This was the citizenship paper with my name on it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: [clears throat]

LEVINE: I see. So do you—did your mother want to come?

MAFFUCCI: Oh, yeah. Sure. Her husband was over here. Sure.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MAFFUCCI: But, you know, my grandparents at the time, they—they—they didn't want to lose their daughter, you know, so they—they—there was a lot of, you know, sorrow there because they were—she was leaving with me, the grandson, you know. Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember saying goodbye to your grandparents?

MAFFUCCI: I don't remember that. Isn't that funny?

LEVINE: Hmm.

MAFFUCCI: I don't remember that.

LEVINE: Do you remember going from Monte Forte to—

MAFFUCCI: To—

LEVINE: To the port?

MAFFUCCI: To Naples.

LEVINE: Do you remember that trip?

MAFFUCCI: To get on the ship.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MAFFUCCI: Oh, there's another thing I remember. When we got to Naples and we were supposed to board Conte Grande [PH]—Conte Grande was the name of the ship we were supposed to board—somehow, our papers—our papers got mixed up and we missed it. That's why they put us on the President Wilson ship, which I think was American ship.

LEVINE: I would think so.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: And that's—that's how we got—and then we had to—I think we had to stay in Naples for a day or two to catch the next ship. And my—the people that were helping us—I think it was my uncle in Italy that brought us to Naples, you know. And they were—you know, they—that was something that they—they couldn't put up with. You know, they—they didn't realize. You know, "What—what are we going to do?" You know, we missed the ship. So we had to stay over and my uncle went back to Monte Forte and then we got on that ship. And it took us two weeks to get here.

LEVINE: Do you remember Naples? D—was t—

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Had you ever been to Naples?

MAFFUCCI: No, no. Not prior to that. No.

LEVINE: So what—how did that strike you?

MAFFUCCI: Oh, that was—I remember as a little kid—see, there's a lot of—a lot of crooks in Naples with—[chuckles] I'm sorry to say. But they grabbed me. They put me on one of those chairs to give me a shoeshine, you

know. And my mother tried to pull me we because she didn't want [chuckles]—she didn't have no money to pay for a shoeshine and all that. They grabbed me. They put me on a chair. And finally, my mother grabbed me and took me away from there. That's—I remember that. That happened.

LEVINE: Huh.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Huh. And—and the ship, was—were—were there a lot of people immigrating to New York—

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: —from around there?

MAFFUCCI: Yeah, there was a lot. Yeah.

LEVINE: Were they from other countries or was it mostly Italian?

MAFFUCCI: No, mostly from Italy.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: Mostly from Italy.

LEVINE: What do you remember about the voyage?

MAFFUCCI: Oh. I was seasick all the way. [laughter] Two weeks. I was sick all the way. That's what I remember. Then when we got close to here, to the Statue of Liberty, and it was foggy, cloudy and misty, dreary day. Right? And everybody was going, "Ooh, Statue de Liberte." [PH] "Statue"—everybody was pointing to the Statue of Liberty. [chuckles] And I couldn't see it. I—I couldn't see it. It was so foggy [unclear]. [laughs] And I thought they were crazy. [laughter]

LEVINE: What do you remember? Do you remember seeing New York City or do you remember anything about Ellis Island?

MAFFUCCI: All I remember, that they—we anchored out and they quarantined the ship. The whole ship was quarantined.

LEVINE: Do you know what—what the sickness was that they were quarantined—

MAFFUCCI: I think it was—I don't know what it was at that time, whether—whether it was measles or mumps or—I don't know what it was. But they quarantined the whole ship. And if I remember vividly, that they sent somebody back. They wouldn't—they wouldn't let him off. You know, they wouldn't—and then when—after the quarantine was over, then we docked. I don't know what pier it was. I forgot what pier it was. I think it was 51 or—I don't know. Well, anyway, my father—[clears throat] my—my father and uncle were here to pick us up.

LEVINE: At Ellis Island?

MAFFUCCI: Ellis Island. Because a friend of theirs had a car and they—they—they pick—they picked—not Ellis Island. Wherever we docked in New York—

LEVINE: Oh.

MAFFUCCI: —harbor.

LEVINE: So in other words, did you actually go through this building? Or did you just—

MAFFUCCI: I—no. I didn't really go through this building. I don't remember that.

LEVINE: So in other words, you—

MAFFUCCI: We just anchored out.

LEVINE: Anchored out and then you docked to the pier.

MAFFUCCI: And then after we—

LEVINE: And then you went.

MAFFUCCI: After we were cleared from the—from the quarantine, then we docked and then everybody, you know, had their relatives. And some of the people, you know, that—it's—what a weird feeling that is when you leave your country and you come to a strange country. And a lot of people, you could see, they were crying. They didn't know—they were all, you know, discomboberated. They didn't know whether they—their people were waiting for 'em. That's the same with the people that were stranded here, you know. A lot of people that, you know, left their baggage and everything. They—they were just—they didn't know. They were lost. The—their relatives wasn't here to pick 'em up.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: So you could imagine the feeling.

LEVINE: Oh.

MAFFUCCI: Oh.

LEVINE: So you must have had a—a number of examinations aboard ship while you were being—

MAFFUCCI: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: —quar—quarantined.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah. It really went—and I remember. I hated that because, as a kid, you don't like that, you know.

LEVINE: Right.

MAFFUCCI: And if I re—I don't know if they gave us shots or something. I don't know. [clears throat]

LEVINE: Huh.

MAFFUCCI: I forgot that. I don't know wh—what we went through.

LEVINE: Wow. So what was it like seeing your father, who you didn't even know?

MAFFUCCI: It was a strange feeling for me as a young boy, you know. It—and my grandmother, my father's mother, was in this country, was here, were living with my father. I remember my grandmother had a gift for me. Right? [chuckles] And guess what it was? It was a little ball. [laughs]

LEVINE: A ball?

MAFFUCCI: A little ball. [laughs]

LEVINE: Oh.

MAFFUCCI: If I give my grandson a little ball, [chuckles] he'll throw it at me. [laughter]

LEVINE: Ah—

- MAFFUCCI: But that—that's—so what? That was something I—you know, that was—she—she kept for me. I don't know where she got the ball.
[chuckles]
- LEVINE: Uh-huh. So d—d—what—did you get used to being with your father and what was that like? Did your mother, like, say, "This is your father," or—
- MAFFUCCI: Oh, yeah. Sure, naturally. And my uncle and then we had a lot a—a lot a friends from—from our hometown that was already here. They all came to visit, you know, by my—my father and uncle. And I remember all of that. But then, as I was growing up, you know, I got used to the idea of eating the bread [laughs] and made friends, because [clears throat] my friend was ab—about my own age. I remember when I first went to school, you know. And he brought me and he could translate a little bit. I—I didn't speak a word of English at that time.
- LEVINE: Now, was your friend someone who had come from—
- MAFFUCCI: No, no. He was born here. But some of his brothers and sisters had come from Italy. But he was born here. So—
- LEVINE: So he could speak Italian, as well?
- MAFFUCCI: Yeah, a little bit. Yeah.
- LEVINE: Yeah.
- MAFFUCCI: Because the parents had spoke it at home, you know. And he brought me to school and I couldn't understand a word of English. Right? And the kids were making fun of me. And I got a—I—I beat most of the kids up. And one kid was too big. I couldn't beat him up. So what I did, I picked up a rock and I hit him right here. And I remember the principal had me in his [chuckles]—they brought me in the [unclear] trying—trying to explain to me what I did and everything. I didn't understand a word. So that's what I remember.
- LEVINE: Wow. How about those first hours, days, when you landed and you were in this country?
- MAFFUCCI: [clears throat]
- LEVINE: Were there things that struck you as new and different that—that, you know, you saw or anything that you remember, like, that hit you as—

MAFFUCCI: All I can remember, when—when we're pulling in with the ship here, about the Statue of Liberty. Everybody's hollering about the Statue of Liberty. But I don't remember seeing it.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MAFFUCCI: Because it was too foggy or whatever. But they seen it. I don't know how they seen it.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MAFFUCCI: And then—but I remember it was a—in December. It must have been a couple of weeks before Christmas. And I remember a Christmas tree, you know, at my friend's house. They brought me to the house and they showed me this Christmas tree. See, we didn't—we didn't decorate Christmas trees from the—from Italy. They—they had the Nativity set up. That's—that was their Christmas decoration. So—and that—I remember the beautiful lights in there and the balls that—on the Christmas tree. That was something. Oh, boy! That—something different, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah, I remember that.

LEVINE: So—

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

LEVINE: —your mother like it when she first got here? Do you remember her—how—

MAFFUCCI: Well—

LEVINE: Was it hard for her or—

MAFFUCCI: Well—well, she liked it because she had to like it, you know. She did—came to see her husband and she finally was with her husband, you know. [clears throat]

LEVINE: Yeah.

MAFFUCCI: Oh.

LEVINE: And how about the neighborhood? Can you say anything about the neighborhood that you went to in New Jersey?

MAFFUCCI: I remember we would—I—I used to play with some of the kids that—from the Italian parents. And—but they couldn't speak English.

LEVINE: [clears throat]

MAFFUCCI: But the parents could so the parents would stand by when we used to play a game. They'd teach me how to play certain games, like we—I—we used to call it pegging. We used to hit this little thing that was a—shaped—I don't know, like a—I don't know, was sha—was pointy on both ends and it was about this long. And you hit in and then you hit it with a stick. It was called pegging. We called it pegging. Then we used to get that thing and we used to have to try to hit the stick. And if you hit the stick, then you would get up and hit yourself, right. So that's—that's—I remember that, playing that kind of a game.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MAFFUCCI: But the kids that couldn't speak Italian but—but the parents would translate, watching us play, you know.

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

MAFFUCCI: Yeah. [clears throat]

LEVINE: So w—was it the kind of neighborhood where you'd go into a friend's house or you'd have your door open to other people?

MAFFUCCI: Ev—every—we used to know everybody in town. Everybody. They were mostly all Italian, you know. They had to be Italian to—[clears throat] we had a few Polish people that lived—of course, I didn't know that at the time—the—that lived on the same block. A few Polish people and in the town there was a—a couple Armenian people, because Armenian people were—were good in the silk mills. They were—they—they were the people that understood how to make silk, you know. And that's—that's it. Most of the people were Italian. All the holidays and all the—[clears throat] the Christmas and New Years and all that, they—we used to go to house to house and celebrate. You know?

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: And my father used to make wine every year.

LEVINE: Could—

MAFFUCCI: You know, then—

LEVINE: —you describe that, what he did and everything?

MAFFUCCI: Well, he used to have to go to—to the market over here in—well, not over here. In Newark. He used to go to Newark at a—at a yards, in a sh—in a railroad yards. That's where—years ago, they didn't have a refrigerated car. And they used to have to bring the grapes from California, because they wouldn't make wine with other grape, other than California. The grapes that grows around here isn't good enough, right? So he used to have to go pick out the grapes and have somebody haul it back home. And we used to crush the grapes and then they used to have to ferment. Then he used to cover, rise up. Then he used to draw the bottom part, which was called the—the flower of the wine. Right. And—and then the—we—then he used to get all of the—the—the skins and the pits that were—used to squeeze 'em down. [chuckles] So dry. He used to add a little water to make it stretch out. All that [laughs]—

LEVINE: Now, did he make red and white?

MAFFUCCI: Yeah, he used to make white wine too and he used to make red wine. Oh, [clears throat] you know?

LEVINE: And was there any kind of a—a—a—an event or a happening when he actually got the wine—

MAFFUCCI: Oh, he used to have—yeah.

LEVINE: —ready?

MAFFUCCI: He used to have the—some of his friends come over and help because that was a lot of work. He used to have to grind it. We used to grind it by hand, you know.

LEVINE: You'd turn a crank?

MAFFUCCI: Turn a crank by hand. I used to squeeze it. There used to be, like, two rollers, used to come together like that to squeeze it. And they used to fall in the barrels, were open top. And then that—that used to rise up. And the—the best wine was from the bottom that you drew. And then it used to ferment in the barrels that they used to put the liquid in. That used to ferment too.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: A lot of people used to make a mistake. They used to cover the barrels and the fermenting used to create a—a lot of pressure in the barrels. They used to explode.

LEVINE: Wow.

MAFFUCCI: And the wine used to go all over their cellars because they didn't know. My father had contraptions, like a—like a lab with—[chuckles] with the—with the thing to release the air, you know, from the fermenting. [laughs]

LEVINE: Wow.

MAFFUCCI: He had all kind of contrap—he used to make 2 or 300 gallons a year.

LEVINE: Wow!

MAFFUCCI: He used to drink a bottle of wine every time he ate. Then he had his friends. They used to play cards, used to do a lot of fighting. [laughs]

LEVINE: Now, did he make the wine in his own basement?

MAFFUCCI: Oh, what do you mean? When—while he was alive, yeah.

LEVINE: He made it in his basement?

MAFFUCCI: He always had—he always had enough that would last until the next year. He made sure of that. He had to have that wine out at the table. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Wow.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Were there any other things, activities from the Old Country that people—people kept? Well, first of all, did your father make wine in—in Italy, do you think?

MAFFUCCI: Well, see, I don't remember that because I wasn't there.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MAFFUCCI: Oh, he was—he was in the Italian Army in World War I.

LEVINE: Ah.

MAFFUCCI: So I was, you know—I was only a little baby when he was in.

LEVINE: I see.

MAFFUCCI: [clears throat] I was born in '21 and the war started in 1918, I think, or '17. 19—

LEVINE: Well, '14 over there and—yeah.

MAFFUCCI: No, no. The—the World War I started in 1917, didn't it?

LEVINE: I think it got over in—I think it started in 1914 in Europe and it got over in 1918.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah, so he was—I think he was in the—he was in the service, in the Ital—because, you know, everybody was drafted in—in Italy. And they had to serve four years in the army or whatever service they went in, the navy or the army. They didn't have no Air Corps in those days.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: World War I, the—

LEVINE: Right.

MAFFUCCI: There was only a few—one of those airplanes like Wright made [chuckles]—

LEVINE: Right. [chuckles]

MAFFUCCI: —around. You know? World War I.

LEVINE: So how about your mother? Did she carry on any of the—any of the traditions?

MAFFUCCI: Traditions? She used to make her own macaroni, her own—for a while there, she baked her own bread. But—but she'd have to buy the flour. You know, in—in Italy, we didn't have to—go to the mill and m—make it with the grain that we grew. And [clears throat] she did everything, almost everything her—herself. Made everything.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MAFFUCCI: You know? Macaroni. She used to make the macaroni and she used to have a—like a little square wires. They used to put in a—in a—in a—in a—in a dough that they used to be rolled out, you know, like a finger?

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: And then they used to put the wire in there and then they—she used to roll it and then pull the wire out a little at a time and—and set the things up.

LEVINE: The wire was to make sure it had a hole in the middle?

MAFFUCCI: Yeah, that's for the hole. Sure.

LEVINE: Huh.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah. And then she used to make the garvadalties [PH]. Did you ever hear of garvadalties?

LEVINE: No.

MAFFUCCI: The—the—little pieces of dough this big and then about as big as a—as a finger. And she'd dig 'em out like this and the—then set 'em up. That was called garvadaly.

LEVINE: That's a pasta?

MAFFUCCI: Pasta, yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: Oh.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Huh.

MAFFUCCI: Ravioli, lasagna, everything. She'd make everything.

LEVINE: Yeah. How about attitudes? Did—did your mother or your father have certain attitudes they tried to pass on to you, the ways they wanted you to think or be or ideas they wanted?

MAFFUCCI: I don't know. In those days, I don't know. I don't remember. All it was, like to survive, I think was the—the attitude, try to survive. And we used to grow all our vegetables and everything, even in this country, in this country. Survive. That—that was the attitude. [sniffs]

LEVINE: Can you—can you think of any ways that maybe they treated you that you also passed on to your children? Any ideas that you wanted—

MAFFUCCI: Not—not really.

LEVINE: —to learn or—

MAFFUCCI: I don't remember that. I just remember that when I—they—they sent me to school, you know. They—I had to go to school. That's the law. So—and—but—

LEVINE: Can you remember any of their sayings? Any, like—

MAFFUCCI: In Italian?

LEVINE: Either. Any—

MAFFUCCI: Ah—

LEVINE: —things that you can remember them saying?

MAFFUCCI: I remember my grandmother used to have a rhyme.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

MAFFUCCI: It was—it was—let's see if I can remember. It was a number rhyme. It used to—"[speaking Italian]." That means—

LEVINE: [chuckles]

MAFFUCCI: You know, you—you say that and then you wind up with number 16. You're supposed—everything [chuckles] [unclear] to the number 16. [laughs] My grandmother used to tell me that one in this country.

LEVINE: Now, which grandmother was it?

MAFFUCCI: On my father's side.

LEVINE: Oh, because she was here before? No, wait. Did she come after you or before?

MAFFUCCI: No, she came here before us.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: Before me and my mother.

LEVINE: Oh, because your father was living with your—his mother?

MAFFUCCI: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. She's still—she was buried in this country, anyway. She was here when she died.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: So you went to school and then when did you stop school? What did you do?

MAFFUCCI: Oh, I—I—I went to—all the way to the eighth grade.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: And then my father was—during Depression it was so bad that he lost his house, because my uncle built a house and he was living with my—my uncle. And then during Depression, my uncle turned the house over to my father because he couldn't pay the mortgages that was on it, right. And then my father took it over. And while he was working in the silk mills, that was all right. He could pay the—the mortgages and whatnot. But then—then with—the big Depression came in the early '30s. Right? And then he—my father lost his house. And then I—I had to quit school. See, I started school late in this country and I was old enough—I was 17 when I—in the eighth grade. That was kind of old, right? I should have been through high school by that time, right. Well, anyway, I had to quit school and I got a little job. I got—I worked in a—we used to have a factory there. It was called the Piston Ring Company in—in Sterling where I lived. And I got a little job there, 25 cents an hour.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: And [chuckles]—and I was making \$15 a week and I was bringing it home and I was giving it to my mother. She used to buy food and everything. And my father then—I think it was the WPA days.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: And my father was working on WPA. And my mother used to give me a dollar for my pay for spending money a week.

LEVINE: Hmm. What did your father do on the WPA?

MAFFUCCI: He worked as a laborer.

LEVINE: Oh. Like doing—

MAFFUCCI: A laborer, you know.

LEVINE: —like, roads or—

MAFFUCCI: Well, working on roads or—or chopping ice in the river to clean the river. [chuckles] Stuff in the wintertime—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: —I'm talking about.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah. Well, just labor work, that's all.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: So—so how did—how did—did you manage with you working to kind of get through the Depression?

MAFFUCCI: Well, we managed—the—the building loan was—was willing for us to just pay a little rent. We were paying \$25 a month and we couldn't pay that. Most of the time, we were behind the—paying the rent. That's how—how rough it was in those days. That's how it was.

LEVINE: Can you say anything else about the Depression? How it affected the people that you saw around you?

MAFFUCCI: I remember we used to have [clears throat]—we used to call the relief. It wasn't the—they call it—what do they call it now? Welfare?

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: Used to call it relief in those days, right? And we used to have—we used to have, like, an office where you would go. And they used to give you flour and different canned stuff. You know, they—they used to give you food because you couldn't afford to buy it. They used to give you clothing. And we were on relief. They were so ashamed of that.

LEVINE: Mmm.

MAFFUCCI: Would be ashamed to be—be—cer—certain families that were working that were—had a job that they could support them, the family and themselves, you know, they used to make fun of you because you was on relief. I remember that. That was a bad time. Bad, bad years, all those there. Oh, boy!

LEVINE: So, did—did you continue to work in the—what was it, Piston and—

MAFFUCCI: Piston Ring Company.

LEVINE: Piston Ring Company.

MAFFUCCI: I worked there until—till I was drafted in the service and World War II came.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: And I got two—two six-month deferments because I was a war plant. We were making pistol rings for airplanes.

LEVINE: Oh.

MAFFUCCI: Okay, and I—I got two six-month deferments. I was one of the first one called from my town to be drafted. But I got two six-month deferments so that I was a year. After the year was up, my boss came to me and says, “Joe, I can’t defer you anymore.” The government wouldn’t—wouldn’t allow it anymore. So I—I went in the service.

LEVINE: And where did you—

MAFFUCCI: And I was in the Navy.

LEVINE: Navy.

MAFFUCCI: I went in the Navy. And I served almost three years in the Navy during the war. [clears throat]

LEVINE: Where were you?

MAFFUCCI: I was on two different warships, two different destroyers during World War II. The first one was an old converted four—four stack converted destroyer. And we operated with two other destroyers and this small

carrier. In a—in the Atlantic Ocean, they were hunting the German U-boats in those days when the German U-boats were sinking all the convoys going to England. And we—we—we were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for sinking so many German U-boats. Then I got transferred to a new construction training in Norfolk, Virginia. And I was there for a couple of months training. And we put a—a—a ship—another destroyer that was built in Brooklyn, New York. And we put it—I put it in commission with the rest of the crew in—in Brooklyn. And we went on a shakedown cruise. And we come back to Brooklyn and they had to make some repairs that were wrong with the ship.

LEVINE: And that's what a shakedown cruise is about?

MAFFUCCI: Yeah—

LEVINE: To find out what's wrong?

MAFFUCCI: They—they find out what's wrong with the ship. And they made a few changes and we went to the Pacific. From there—and my job on the ship—I was a—a seaman. And I was supposed to be a ship fitter. But what happened, we used to have inspections on this ship, on the second ship I was on, to check to see how your clothing—where are you, whether you needed a haircut or a shave or whatever it was. So I needed a haircut on one of the inspections. And [chuckles] my—I was on a report that I needed a haircut. So I had to go get a haircut. And I asked one of the sailors. I says, "Who gives you haircuts around here?" He says, "Go see the laundrymen. He's at aft on the ship." So I went over there and [unclear] T.J. T.J. I—I says to him—I says, "I need a haircut." He says, "Oh, you do?" He says, "Sit down on this air vent over here." So I sat down and he ga—he chopped me all up. Right? So I said, "Well, who gives you a haircut." He says, "Just anybody." I says, "Sit down."

LEVINE: [chuckles]

MAFFUCCI: Wouldn't you know that I got stuck with cutting everybody's hair after that? Everybody liked his haircut [chuckles] instead of his. And I got stuck. [laughs] So [clears throat] that was the first ship, by the way. That was the first ship that I had—

LEVINE: In the Pacific?

MAFFUCCI: No, no.

LEVINE: [unclear]?

MAFFUCCI: The first—the first ship was in the—I—we operated in the Atlantic and I got transferred off that ship, and I went to the Pacific with the second ship. But I was a barber—

LEVINE: On the first—

MAFFUCCI: On the first ship. That's when I got stuck with the job. So what—I got transferred and another—another sailor and our executive officer got transferred at the same time. There was three of us that got the new—new ship. So when made the crew up there was a barber that—that was on the ship. And I—I didn't—I hated that job because, you know, I had to get on my knees, that, sometimes a rough seas, to cut. And usually, the officers always called me in on the roughest days to give them a haircut, right? We had a captain on the first ship because we were—were a group, in charge of the group. We—we had the man. He was a captain. And he used to call me everyday, you know, when—whenever he needed a haircut—on the roughest days. So [clears throat]—so I says, "Oh, boy. This is good." On the second ship, we got a barber now." We go out [unclear]. The guy's got chronic seasickness. [chuckles] He got transferred off the ship. So my—the executive officer—we—became executive officer of our second ship. [clears throat] He calls me in his cabin and he says, "The [unclear] says you're stuck with the job." I—"Oh, no, sir. I don't want to be—I don't want to be a barber anymore." Right? He says, "You're stuck with it." Wouldn't you know? I got stuck with it. We're on the Pacific. It was out there 17 months and I was the barber of that ship. I had 375 guys I used to cut hair on. The only one, right? [chuckles]

LEVINE: Was that, like, your job on ship?

MAFFUCCI: Well, that was my special job. My—my—

LEVINE: [chuckles]

MAFFUCCI: My regular—my—my what do you call, duty, you know, military duty was my five-inch guns on—on the—on the second ship. On the first ship, I was on the [unclear] to drop the—on the submarines.

LEVINE: Oh.

MAFFUCCI: So that's—that's it.

LEVINE: Wow.

MAFFUCCI: That's the story of my [chuckles]—

LEVINE: Were you—were you in the service when the—when the war ended?

MAFFUCCI: We was right off the coast of Japan after they dropped the atomic bomb. For all I know, I might have some radiation from that bomb. [chuckles] To both bombs that they dropped.

LEVINE: Do you remember, like, when they—when you were told—

MAFFUCCI: Oh, yeah. We had—

LEVINE: —the war's over?

MAFFUCCI: We had Admiral Byrd [PH] that we had—we transferred from—from one of the ships. And he was on our ship because we had to pick him up. The destroyers had the duty to—to transfer people, take 'em off the big ship or whatever they wanted to go, to other ships. And Admiral Byrd was—he got on the PA system on our ship. And he says, you know, "They dropped this bomb and we don't know what it's going to do." Says, "There's a series of explosions and we don't know what's going to happen." We were—everybody didn't know what was—what's going on. We didn't know. And we were right off the coast of Japan when they dropped that.

LEVINE: Wow.

MAFFUCCI: Because of that—the second ship I was on, we started from Luzon of the Philippine Islands. We went to Iwo Jima, Okinawa and then, finally, the main empire of Japan, which was going to be the end, you know, that we were going to invade. But then they dropped the bomb and then the—the Japanese wanted a—a two-week extension. And General McArthur gave it to them, which everybody was mad about, gave them the extension. And one of the ships that was in my group got hit with one of those suicide planes and got split right in half, killed I don't know how many people on that—on that ship. And everybody was mad that—you know, General McArthur was considered a great admiral. You know, when—when Truman fired him and he come over here and made the—the big speech—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: —everybody—I says, "Yeah, you got to speak to me about—about him giving the Japs two weeks extension to come and sign the peace treaty on the Missouri."

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember when you and the other sailors were told that the war was over?

MAFFUCCI: Oh, sure.

LEVINE: What happened [unclear]?

MAFFUCCI: You know what? You know what? We got the—the—well, we were—we were anchored right off the starboard side of the Missouri, you know. We could see General McArthur and the rest of the dignitaries that were—that came to the Missouri to sign the—even the Japanese dignitaries. We could see 'em because we were anchored. We brought an admiral to the—to the Missouri for the signing. So we were anchored there and the—we remember that—what was it? The—

LEVINE: That—

MAFFUCCI: That we—

LEVINE: —the war was over?

MAFFUCCI: Yeah, well, this is what happened. August 18th, I think it was. August 18th, everybody was celebrating in the States that the Japs gave up. And we were still fighting. The suicide planes were still coming after us. And what's going on? Everybody's celebrating and we're still fighting here. The—the Japs are still coming after us, right? And we're shooting 'em. We're shooting 'em down. They didn't get us. But then comes September 2nd when the signing was that we went in. We went in to Tokyo Bay for the signing. And then we knew that it was over. Then everything stopped. And Admiral Halsey, the admiral that was in charge of the fleet at the time, he brought all the groups together. We had five groups with the—with the Navy, nine destroyers, one anti-aircraft cruiser, one bottle wagon and one big carrier. We had five groups all come together and all the planes were flying overhead. And the sky was dark from planes flying o—during the ceremony of the signing. So the—Admiral Halsey says, "We're going to show the Japs where we at. They thought they were going to lick us." That was the statement he made.

LEVINE: How do you think about your military experience, like now, when you look back on it?

MAFFUCCI: I tell you. While w—we were out there, we didn't think of dying at all. Never think of dying. But you know, it was scary because—especially the suicide planes. You know, they were coming after you. You didn't know whether you were going to get hit or not. You know, you're firing at 'em and they—and you don't know. So one of the suicide plane come close to our ship. And we was on a—in a gun turret. You know gun turret?

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: With dual five-inch guns. The—the projectile was five inch in diameter.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: About this big and it was cal—it was like 50 pounds—

LEVINE: Hmm.

MAFFUCCI: —that we were shooting at the planes. And I was a loader, by the way, one of these [unclear]. [chuckles] We were loading those things every three seconds. One of them would go up—one—and we would—the thing would go up and down like this.

LEVINE: Oh.

MAFFUCCI: And we were firing at this suicide plane coming towards us because it was wounded and it couldn't reach the carriers. They were trying to knock the carriers out that were f—you know, dropping bombs on—on Tokyo and all the places in Japan. And our—our mount captain had a hatch that we—we would look out. And—and we had the mou—mou—the gun captain and gun captain and mount captain. And he was looking out while we were shooting. And we were shooting and we were elevating like this. We were going down with the guns like this. And all of a sudden, he closes the hatch and he says, "Ooh, they got that son of a gun." He was almost going to hit us but we—we knocked it down before he hit us. And he ducked down like this. [chuckles] He said, "Boy, they got the"—he said son of a bitch, in fact, instead of son of a gun. [laughs] Yeah, and then we got the suicide; otherwise, we would have been dead.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MAFFUCCI: Would a hit—

LEVINE: What was it like being on a ship with—with a bunch of men in the Pacific during wartime?

MAFFUCCI: Well, there was just like—like a [unclear]. You're like [unclear]. You know, you had the guys that you—you liked and you had the guys that you didn't like. [clears throat] I was a barber. I got stuck with the barbers. The—the tailors, the laundrymen and the barbers, we had—best—best cooks were all black. And they slept in their own quarters because in those days the blacks were, you know—

LEVINE: Segregated.

MAFFUCCI: —separated—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: —from the whites. And—but they all wanted haircuts. You know, their hair is like a rug, like this. [chuckles] They used to come once a week for a haircut, you know. And I—you know, I was rated as a barber, a second class petty officer.

LEVINE: Oh.

MAFFUCCI: Which is equal to a sergeant in the Army, right? So they used to come every—ev—once a week. I said, "What am I—what am I going to cut on your hair?" You know, there's nothing there. So they—they used to have—they used to eat the—the officer's mess. And the—the officers used to buy their—their own food, you know, during the war. And they used to have the best, naturally. And we used to have the general mess that they used to cook. The cooks used to cook. But the guys wanted haircuts so they al—always used to bring me stuff.

LEVINE: Oh.

MAFFUCCI: Like fruit and [unclear]—you know, we didn't have fruit on the Pacific. What fruit? The officers had it. So they used to—we used to eat good, the—the tailor, the barber and [chuckles] the laundrymen. [laughter]

LEVINE: Well, when you look back on, you know, coming here as a seven-year-old and living out your life here and everything, w—do you think being an immigrant to this country played a part in the kind of person you are and the kind of character you have? Do you think that made a big difference, had an effect on you?

MAFFUCCI: I—I think so. I think I was—I—I looked at it as if, boy, I—I was one of the lucky ones that come to this country, because I know a lot of my friends that were, you know, when I was a kid there, they went in Italian Army and a lot of 'em never come back in Italy. All—all my friends in It—don't forget. They were our enemies now.

LEVINE: Right.

MAFFUCCI: Here I am. I'm fighting against my own buddies.

LEVINE: How did you feel about that?

MAFFUCCI: I—I—

LEVINE: Was that something you were aware of at the time?

MAFFUCCI: But no, I—I never even thought of it and I don't think anybody ever thought of it. It was just our enemies and we didn't think as—as our friends or even our relatives. We were even fighting our own relatives, right? Because they were our enemies. And I—when I visited in Italy, which was, oh, I don't know, about 50 years later, I talked to some of those guys that survived the war, you know. And they used to say—they used to really, really say, you know, "Those Germans, we hated them. But what were we going to do? We—they—Mussolini went with 'em."

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MAFFUCCI: And a lot of those people didn't want to fight against their—America. Because they had their relatives over here, brothers and sisters [unclear], and they had to fight them, you know. That—that was it.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MAFFUCCI: That's—

LEVINE: Okay. Well, we're—we're getting close to the end but—

MAFFUCCI: Good.

LEVINE: Maybe you could say, when you came out—just briefly, when you came out of the service what you did.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: And then how you met your wife and, et cetera.

MAFFUCCI: Well, [clears throat] I went to work in my old place where I worked in the Pistol Ring before I went into the service. I went back to work there and—and my wife was only 17, 18 years old. And, you know, I—and I think I was 20—I was 23 and she was 18, I think—17 or 18.

LEVINE: How did you meet her?

MAFFUCCI: Well, she was the hometown girl, you know, and a daughter of one of our paizellas [PH] that came from Italy. Right? So I started—wanted to take her out and she didn't want to go out. She was too young and then later on, a year [chuckles]—after about 10 years later, then we—then we—we started going together again.

LEVINE: She wasn't too young then.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: And that—

LEVINE: What was her name? Her maiden name?

MAFFUCCI: Mary.

LEVINE: Mary.

MAFFUCCI: Mary and Joseph. That's a religious name, isn't it?

LEVINE: Mary and Joseph.

MAFFUCCI: [laughs]

LEVINE: Wow. And Mary—and [chuckles] what was her maiden name?

MAFFUCCI: Rossi.

LEVINE: R-O-S-S—

MAFFUCCI: There's a wine named Rossi, right? The Rossi Company, that wine company?

LEVINE: Yeah.

MAFFUCCI: Rossi.

LEVINE: With an I?

MAFFUCCI: R-O-S-S-I.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: And did you h—you had children?

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: More than one?

MAFFUCCI: Well—well, we—after we marry—

LEVINE: Yeah.

MAFFUCCI: —we had him.

LEVINE: That's it?

MAFFUCCI: We had him.

LEVINE: Just—

MAFFUCCI: No, no.

LEVINE: Oh.

MAFFUCCI: No. I got—

LEVINE: You got Joseph and who else?

MAFFUCCI: I had two, two boys, Bobby and Joseph. Joseph and Bobby, [unclear] way in order. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAFFUCCI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, we're just about out of time but maybe you could say something about how this time in your life is now that you're not working, your children are grown. H—how's life for you at this point?

MAFFUCCI: Well, the—at my age now I—I sort of look at it as if, you know, I had a—I had a good life outside of the Depression that we went through that I remember. I was only a young boy at the time but I still remember it. Other than that, I had—I—I had—I was blessed that I had good jobs and I made some money, bought a house and I paid for my house. I had two boys and now I got a couple of grandchildren and that's it.

LEVINE: Okay.

MAFFUCCI: That was it.

LEVINE: Well, I want to thank you for a wonderful interview.

MAFFUCCI: It was very nice. You did a very good—interviewer—

LEVINE: Well, you're—

MAFFUCCI: —and I really enjoyed it very much.

LEVINE: Oh, very nice.

MAFFUCCI: [chuckles]

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I'm speaking with Joseph Maffucci, who came here at seven years old in 1928 on the President Wilson. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm signing off.

[END OF INTERVIEW]