

**EI-1348**

**CHARLES LACUGNA**

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DALEY: --Do a little introduction, and we'll start.

LACUGNA: Okay.

DALEY: This is Kevin Daley for the National Park Service, and the Ellis Island Oral History Program. Today is October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2004, Columbus, and I'm in Seattle, Washington state, in the Capitol—

LACUGNA: Hill.

DALEY: Capitol Hill section, with Mr.—

LACUGNA: Charles.

DALEY: Charles Lacugna.

LACUGNA: Yeah.

DALEY: Who was born in Italy in 1914, and came to the United States in 1920. morning. For the sake of the tape, Mrs. Lacugna, Katherine, is also sitting in with the tape.

LACUGNA: Okay, so.

DALEY: Good morning. Thank you for letting us have this interview.

LACUGNA: Okay.

DALEY: So, can you give me the name that you were born with?

LACUGNA: My real name is Sebastiano; it is not Charles. Charles is my legal name. We were of a very poor family in Italy, in a little hill town called Mistretta. And it's right near San Stefano di Camastro, which is the main rail line which serves the whole area.

DALEY: And which province?

LACUGNA: This is Provincia di Messina, Province of Messina. And the little town, Mistretta, is right on the hill, and it is the watershed between going into the Mediterranean, and going north of the Mediterranean.

DALEY: So this is on the western side of Italy?

LACUGNA: It's on the western side. It is a very poor town, and the whole town is dedicated to San Sebastian, who is a martyr of the Catholic Church. And recently they have re-established the church, and renovated it. The— most of the people in the area are either shepherds, or people that do a lot of service work. But the area is very poor, and they get electricity only recently, which is a great step for them. They're very grateful for it.

DALEY: Can you spell the name of the town, please?

LACUGNA: The name of the town is Mistretta, M-I-S-T-R-E-T-T-A.

DALEY: Thank you.

LACUGNA: And it is near Nicosia, which is the big town.

DALEY: And what was your date of birth?

LACUGNA: My date of birth was January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1914, so when I came to the United States I was six years old. My memory, as a child, of the trip is of no great consequence; I remember nothing of it. But I do remember what I was told about it.

DALEY: Okay, can we just start with what you remember about your town, and your life in Italy? Do you remember what kind of house you lived in?

LACUGNA: No, I don't, but on one of our visits to Mistretta, they took us to the little—to the place where I was born. So we looked, of course, and it meant very little to me, as a boy, and much less as an adult. But we did know that compared to the United States, it was very, very poor. So that, in 1920, the way I understand it and remember it from the stories I heard, was that my birth father, whose name is Liborio, L-I-B-O-R-I-O—my birth father first came to the United States. And he came, and he worked as a—we call it a helper, of all sorts. And he died, and I have something in writing here, as part of my biography, that I'm going to read, so that it all is accurate. [Reads] "Civil records from Mistretta confirm that Liborio Lacugna, my father, married Maria Giuseppa Camillo, daughter of Sebastiano Camillo, on January 21, 1909. Their daughter, Sebastiana, was born March 8, 1911. Maria Giuseppa Camillo died September 27, 1911, and then Liborio married Giuseppa Mozzarella, daughter of Lucio Filippo Mozzarella, and Francisca Azzoline in Mistretta on November 22, 1911. And I am a child there for Liborio and Maria Mozzarella. Now, Liborio, who is my birth father, was thirty years old when he married. And when he departed from Palermo—now Palermo is the capital city of the whole island of Sicily. It is a gorgeous island filled, of course, with all the beauty of Italian architecture and history. The ship on which he arrived in the United States was the Stampalia, S-T-A-M-P-A-L-I-A. He arrived at Ellis Island, Port of New York, on fifteenth of April, 1914. And according to the ship manifest, he paid for his own ticket, arrived with twenty-five dollars, and stated that he would join his brother, Vincenzo. Now, Vincenzo had run a grocery store, and he had preceded Liborio, and later on he was going to try to take care of my step-father, Giuseppe, who came to the United States. He worked as a laborer, eventually reaching New Haven, where he died of an infected foot. And in recent years, we were given a handsome though undated formal photograph of him. And I have that photograph upstairs. Now, Liborio was really ignored by everybody in the family, but my daughter Margaret, who was a very enterprising young lady, went up to New Haven and looked for the grave. At first she was rejected, but eventually they gave her permission to look. And after she looked, she found, in the records, that he had been buried in a pauper's grave. Now buried in a pauper's grave, they could not locate the actual place where he was buried, so eventually she took a general area, put a stone there in remembrance, and said some prayers. So now we have kind of a record where he is. Now, the whole episode of Margaret's visit to

New Haven is recorded in my life, and she has written up the whole story. Giuseppe, who married my mother, he was a soldier, as you saw in the picture, in the elite army unit called Il Bursaliere [PH]. Now he, as an Italian soldier, had certain privileges, and one of them was to be able to go to the United States as an immigrant. So he took my mother, his nephew, me, Sebastiano, and his brother's daughter, Sebastiana, who was the daughter of Liborio. She was really his niece. So the four of us came to the United States after a trip of about twenty-eight to twenty-nine days. We were on a ship which was really doing merchant work, called the Argentina. The Argentina was a banana boat, and the boat stopped at the Azores to pick up bananas. And I understand that we were in the steerage class, which is the poorest of all the classes on these ships that did all the merchant work. Now Liborio had died, Giuseppe takes over the family, and we come to the United States in 1920. One of the stories that my sister and others tell is that as a little boy, in order for us to eat at the Captain's table and get some decent food, would take me and parade me up to the Captain's nest, and there recite some poetry. [Laughs] Which I did!

DALEY: Do remember what you recited?

LUCAGNA: Yes, I do.

DALEY: Can you recite it for the tape?

LUCAGNA: Yeah, I have the Italian. I know the Italian, and in my life I put a little translation of it. And it amounts to this: I am a little sweet boy. I will do everything my father says. However, if I spoil, and dirty my clothes, my father will slap me! Something like that. So that was the story.

DALEY: Oh, could you say it in Italian, because we like to hear people speak in their native tongue.

LUCAGNA: Yeah. Let's see. [Italian]. And it's Italian poetic style.

DALEY: Thank you. I also wanted to say that Giuseppe's photograph, his passport photograph, is on display at Ellis Island.

LUCAGNA: Yes, it is, and we were fortunate enough to see it. We looked for it, and that's why we got that, and he was so proud of that! And while we're at it, he was so proud of his medals! He had a little case in which he gloried in his little medals about the war.

DALEY: Can I just see the cover of that? Because I also want to put down, for the sake of the tape—

LUCAGNA: It's 1990.

DALEY: --it also appears in the *Life Magazine* of September, 1990, on page twenty-eight, which has an article about Ellis Island.

LUCAGNA: Twenty-eight?

DALEY: Yes.

LUCAGNA: By the way, he was so proud of being an American! It's really unbelievable! He would take the American flag, and fold it with a kind of reverence that you'd have either at mass or in church or something like that. And after a series of works, he got a job at the ferries, as a government servant, and you would think that the whole world was his, just to work for the United States government.

DALEY: Do you know why he decided to come to the United States?

LUCAGNA: Yes.

KATHERINE: There's a picture, [unclear].

LUCAGNA: The reason he came to the United States with my family is because they were desperately poor, and they had heard, of course, the illusion that the American streets were paved with gold. That was very clear, because later on I once asked my mother, "Why don't you do back and visit Sicily, Mistretta?" She said, "Oh, why would I want to go back there?" She said, "It's all hunger and cold weather." So it was really to drive for a better life, to get away from the poverty. He was a shepherd, and he was--finished very, very low schooling, had very little schooling. But when he was in the United States, he taught himself how to read and write. And surprisingly, he wrote his life in Italian. And my daughter Margaret, the one I mentioned previously, translated it all, because I translated it, too, and looked at it, and read it. So he's what I would call an enterprising person without any skills. And one of his great pleasures was to tell everybody that not only was he an American citizen, but he helped build the Empire State Building! He was very proud of that.

DALEY: Was he an iron worker?

LUCAGNA: He was a hod carrier, putting concrete on their shoulders, moving up the steps, all the way up. So these are the typical Italian workers, at that age and period, willing to do everything, to work. And he would—he worked at a cemetery, he worked in construction. He worked any place where there's a job. There was no such thing as this job is not good enough for me. There's always a sense of appreciation for being in the United States.

DALEY: From your town, and from your section of Italy, did a lot of people immigrate to the United States?

LUCAGNA: Yes, many, many people, we understand. So much so that the whole block on Thirteenth Street, where we lived in New York City—Thirteenth Street between Avenue A and B—was really people from Mistretta. And we knew everybody. And that street was dedicated to San Sebastiano, the patron saint of Mistretta. Their little town—it was a little ghetto, a true Italian ghetto. And as a ghetto, I knew everybody. I knew the pharmacist; I worked for him. I knew the butcher; I worked with them. And actually, we have these feasts of Saint Sebastian, and a huge statue. And then we'd have, of course, a lot of food outside, and parades, and everything that they had in Mistretta.

DALEY: Would they carry the statue through the streets?

LUCAGNA: They had every—yeah.

DALEY: What's that called? Is that a special name, when they--?

LUCAGNA: The statue? The only word there was statua, you know, the English word statua, statue. And we call it—of course, it's an icon, the icon of Saint Sebastian. All truly as if they had brought it from Mistretta there. It's a replica, and it was in one of the storefronts, so it was there all year long. So we could walk around, and there it was. So Saint Sebastian took over; he was a soldier in the Roman Army, and he professed his faith, and they shot him with arrows. And he's well-known, of course, in Catholic history, and Catholic liturgy. So, my mother, Maria Mozzarella, was a poor country girl, uneducated. Never learned English—couldn't care! She didn't believe in all the rules, either. She'd make her own wine. My father'd make his own wine. She would make whiskey, cordials. And if you told her, "You know, the law forbids this," she'd say, "Oh, law, law, law!" She couldn't care less! She was a good woman, feisty, strong, and of course, watching every penny, coming back from the poor background, feeling it all. But we prevailed on her to become a citizen. The first question was, from the judge [laughs], he asked her, "Lady, who's the President?" She looked at him, she says, "Ah," she says, "My husband!" [Laughs] "My husband is the President!" She couldn't care less! Nevertheless, the judge says, "Okay, lady, you're a citizen!" But anyway, she was a citizen.

DALEY: Could you describe Giuseppe's personality?

LUCAGNA: Well, Giuseppe was, in a way, a devoted worker, but he had the usual tendencies to play pool, cards, and of course, I learned all about cards. I

learned all about this, and of course, we lived in a neighborhood where there was crime. One of our cousins was a criminal, offered for a hundred dollars to kill people. He wound up in the reformatory. And Giuseppe was kind of a pleasure-loving man. He would work, you know, but—when it was necessary, he'd work, but he obviously ignored the family, meaning in today's ambience, you know, lovey-dovey, touchy-feely stuff, we had none of that stuff. But we did have huge parties for the holidays, and my mother was an expert cook. What you see today in Italian restaurants for us was the daily food, homemade, every bit. Giuseppe and Maria, every fall, would make their own wine, in the kitchen. And I would go down and get coal, and the usual stuff, [unclear]. So we had two strong-minded people, willing to work hard for their family.

DALEY: I'm interested in how you celebrated the holidays. How would you celebrate Christmas?

LUCAGNA: Well, Christmas was a very important day. We would always have it the night before, which was a fish night. And we had the famous cioppino, which is an Italian, like bouillabaisse in French. We still have preserved that in our family. Our son Joe has it every Christmas as a remembrance, and I make it every so often. Katherine, though Irish, also is becoming an Italian cook! [Laughs] So we would have, really, everything, from soup to nuts. The dinners would last at least three hours, so that the dinners were always the high point in family get-togethers. And of course, you had the usual inter-family arguments and discussions, which was normal. And they never thought much of just yelling and screaming, which was part and parcel of the way they lived. So they would yell at each other, and I'd say, "Mom, why are you arguing with, Ma?" "Oh, I know, I know Joe," she said. "I know him. He's okay. He's okay." So that's Giuseppe and Maria. Any other questions? There's a lot! [Laughs]

DALEY: Well, I was interested—did you have the large meal on Christmas Eve, or Christmas day?

LUCAGNA: No, Christmas day. Christmas day. There was, the evening before, there was something, and my sister Antoinette--later on was born of Maria and Giuseppe, Antoinette—would keep that tradition, of having fish as a very important part of Christmas. Another, the other sister, Lucy, couldn't care less about any of it!

DALEY: Oh, okay, let's talk about your family. How many brothers and sisters?

LUCAGNA: Okay, you've got the background. Now we're in Giuseppe and Maria, my uncle and my mother. My uncle and my mother then had two children. One was named Antoinetta; we call her Nina, Antoinina, Antoinetta. And the other one: Lucia. And Lucia is the mother of—

?: Mary Jo.

LUCAGNA: Mary Jo Yackowenko [PH], okay? So that's where they fit. So we had one boy, Sebastiano. Sebastiana, who was the daughter of Liborio. And then Antoinetta and Lucia, and that was the unit. And we lived in a tenement, and the number was 510 East Thirteenth Street. So that's where we lived, and it was a typical Italian ghetto, filled with crime, prostitution, and the rest.

DALEY: Which floor did you live on?

LUCAGNA: Pardon?

DALEY: Which floor?

LUCAGNA: We lived on the fifth floor, because at that time the apartments were scarce, I would think. So that was available. And then of course, the whole life was dedicated to beautifying the four rooms that they had. And we did not have electricity. And it's hard for the children to understand today, of course! But we did have one of those incandescent lamps, so that eventually we got electricity. And there was one telephone for the whole block, and we'd all go to the carriage house [laughs], to the telephone!

DALEY: That must have been difficult.

LUCAGNA: Oh, yeah. And then of course, we got introduced little by little to the TV, radio, TV, and so on.

DALEY: Can you walk me through the apartment, what it looked like?

LUCAGNA: Yes, the apartment, as you walked in, was the kitchen. There was a wood stove with a coal—coal stove. There was coal downstairs, and I'd go down and get it, and pail it, and bring it up. And the stove became very, very hot—red, really. So the kitchen, the first as you walked in. Beyond that was "the living room", so-called living room. To the left of that was my mother and father's bedroom. Behind that one was my bedroom, Antoinetta's, and Lucia's—same place. So that was the configuration. And a little, very small toilet area.

DALEY: You had the toilet inside the apartment?

LUCAGNA: There was a toilet inside, which is a big step forward at that time.

DALEY: And did you bathe, take your baths in the kitchen?

LUCAGNA: Did I what?

DALEY: Where did you bathe?

LUCAGNA: Bathe? Not really, not well. No, no bathing, really, no provision.

DALEY: And did you face the street, or the back of the building?

LUCAGNA: Yes, we faced the street, and it was a great—what do I call that—amenity, to look out to the street. And Giuseppe was afraid that one of us would fall out, so he erected a metal barrier there to protect these children from falling out. And of course, I would just love to sit there, and look at the scene below me, because you could look way down. So that was the configuration of the apartment. Now, how they paid for it, I don't know. Right below us was a pharmacy, and I worked for the pharmacist, as what they call one of these bright little boys. So, you worked for the pharmacist. I worked for a butcher shop. And of course, at that time, the butcher shop would give all sorts of extra meat to us, for food upstairs. Okay, any other parts?

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE ONE, SIDE B

DALEY: Oh, going back to holidays and religion, were you a very religious family?

LUCAGNA: I would say inside they were very religious. My mother couldn't care less. Giuseppe once told a story that as he was in the war, Saint Philip when to him and said, "Giuseppe, you're okay. You won't be killed." And he had great devotion that way. I'd ask him, "Dad, why don't you go to mass?" "Ah, you know, I take care of my family," he said, "That's enough." You know, and that was real understanding of his faith. If you take care of your family, you're doing what God wants, and that's enough! He wouldn't go to mass, wouldn't do anything like that, any externals, but when he was on his death bed, he wanted the priest. Of course, he got the priest [laughs]. So I'd say, yes, he had faith.

DALEY: Did the children attend church?

LUCAGNA: Yes. Lucy is the one that maintained it all the way. Antoinetta, somewhat. Me, completely.

DALEY: And what was the name of your church?

LUCAGNA: The name of the church was Our Lady Help of Christians. It was on Twelfth Avenue. We lived on Thirteenth—Twelfth. The name of the priest was Father Zolan [PH]. And we have a little recording of his, in his writing. And he says, “The Lacugna family is entitled to go to the nursery,” which meant that the sisters at that time—these were the Silesian sisters, and Silesian priests—which at that time would take these children into their nursery. And I would pick up the two children after school, while my mother and father went to work. I’d pick them up, take them home, take care of them. And Zolan, being the pastor, of course always kept an eye on all these Italian families. And the Our Lady Help of Christians Church was a typical Italian church, a duplicate, really, of—statues everywhere! The church always was kind of a center, for quite a while, so that he, Zolan, was what I would call one of these usual, typical Italian priests, taking care of his people.

DALEY: And did you go to school, did this church have a school attached to it?

LACUGNA: No, the church did not have a school. Obviously, it was very poor. But we did have Sunday school. And a little story there is—because my mother would insist that I go to Sunday school. I couldn’t understand why, but I did. And sister there gave me a penny catechism. So I took it, read it through. The next Sunday when I said I read it all, she couldn’t believe it! I was a student by nature. And immediately, it opened up certain things, so that today I can remember most of it, even. So we had this Sunday school, which was really the work of the church, to try to educate these immigrants. And the English language for me was typically foreign. I had difficulties for a while, even in high school. I would use words like, instead of electricity, I would say electrical, not knowing the differences. And even in college, I was kind of weak, because until I wrote a doctoral dissertation, I knew the English! So that, the penny catechism was for me the beginning, the opening up of my intellect.

DALEY: And, well you mentioned that you would pick your sisters up?

LACUGNA: Yes.

DALEY: Your mother worked outside of the house?

LACUGNA: Yes, she was an expert seamstress, so she would work in the sweatshops, run by Jews. And she would always tell us, “I love those Jews. They treat us well; they give us work.” And she would come home, even, and do some of the work, because it was piece work. You get paid by the amount that you did. And that skill went down to Betty, no,

Sebastiana, Antoinetta, and Lucia. They learned it, too, so they were all expert seamstresses, so they could sew anything, and do all the work. And they're whole life was that.

DALEY: And did you start school in the first grade?

LACUGNA: Yeah—I went to a public school.

DALEY: Do you remember which number it was?

LACUGNA: Yes! P.S. 19. P.S. 19, and later on I went to Wingate Junior High. And the stories there are quite interesting. As a little immigrant boy, you know, you look around, and didn't know what was going on. Of course, little by little I learned the language, and began to see that there were many, many things here that—one of which was that Italians were disregarded, or were regarded as Wops, Guineas, Dagos, people unworthy like the Irish were. The Irish need not apply stuff. And that accounted, I think, in part, for changing my name from Sebastiano to Charles, which I regret. And now I'm in the process of changing it. So when I was fifteen, however—how much time we got? Okay, when I was fifteen, my father Giuseppe, really my uncle, and my mother decided that I should get an education, because both of them valued an education. And here was a bright little kid—what do we do with him? So presumably, with good intentions, they contacted the Christian Brothers. It's called the French Order of the Christian Brothers. And when I was fifteen, a Brother Felix came from the Christian Brothers, and took me up to their novitiate. And when I got to the novitiate, a completely new world opened up.

DALEY: Where was it located?

LACUGNA: It was located in New York State, Pocantico Hills, now owned by Rockefeller; he bought it. There, for the first time, I could get a baseball glove, touch a football, and do what boys who were rich could do! And then of course, then became a routine life, a life of study. And as a life of study, of course, I opened up! I began to realize, you know, [laughs] there's more to this! And eventually, of course, I recaptured my love for Italian culture, history, music, painting, everything. That came later on. But there it started to open up.

DALEY: So in Pocantico Hills, that was like your high school?

LACUGNA: That was a high school, and I finished the school, high school, after two years. Then I had the novitiate for one year, and then college after that.

DALEY: Where did you go to college?

LACUGNA: College we went down to Washington D.C. It was called the Christian Brothers College of Washington D.C. And there I was studying for about a year and a half. After a year and a half, they assigned me to teach up in Albany. There's an orphanage, and I taught there for about a year and a half, taking care of these poor children. Their stories were sad. Like one boy told me, "If I ever meet my parents, I'll kill them." You know, that kind of story was just heart-breaking. Nowadays—then it wasn't. So after that time, I was assigned to various schools, and in the meantime I was pursuing my B.A. degree. I finished my B.A. degree, became an American citizen, finished my M.A. degree, and then I realized that this was not the life for me. So in 1945, right at the end of World War Two, I left, and went, by a series of mysterious circumstances, to Notre Dame, as a graduate student. And as a graduate student, for the first year, second year, teaching fellow in English. I taught there, worked on my doctorate, didn't finish for a series of circumstances, then got a job at Seattle College, which is right here, now. And then from Seattle College, got my doctorate, and so did my professional work as a professor, arbitrator for the Federal Government, and the rest—state government.

DALEY: What did you get your doctorate in?

LACUGNA: University of Washington in International Law. So that's my profession. So that's the general—

DALEY: That's a long trip from East Thirteenth Street!

LACUGNA: Yes, it is, and that's why it's worth recording. Because we were able, Katherine and I were able to buy this house, raise six children, you know, and get along, and send them all to college. And happily, two of them have doctors' degrees, and all the others went through graduate school, various graduate school. So in a real, true way, the descendant of the Irish people coming to the United States, the Italians coming to the United States, is a fulfillment some kind of an American dream for these immigrants. And I think that's worth recording, that.

DALEY: Yes it is, very much.

LACUGNA: Hm?

DALEY: It is, very much.

LACUGNA: Yeah, because America has made it possible for people to develop whatever talents they have. She's got an M.A., too. So that we took advantage of what was available. And the Jesuits who ran Seattle College, now Seattle University, these Jesuits made it possible for Italian, Irish, Polish, and other people to get an education.

DALEY: Did your parents ever finish getting their citizenship papers?

LACUGNA: Yes, my Dad, my father got his, of course. And my mother, I told you the story, that her husband was the President of the United States! She was going through the citizenship stuff. I went through it in New York when I was doing the teaching, and I went through it.

DALEY: And how long were you a teacher?

LACUGNA: About, let's see—I started in '29—'29, '31, '33, '33. Twelve and a half years in grammar school. No, six and a half in grammar school, six and a half in high school, and that's twelve, '48, and the rest in colleges. About, let's say, the total would be about fifty-five years.

DALEY: Wow! That's amazing.

LACUGNA: Yeah, I started when I was twenty-one.

DALEY: And where did you meet Katherine?

LACUGNA: Hm?

DALEY: Where did you meet Katherine?

LACUGNA: She was a student at Seattle College, then Seattle University. And one of our mutual friends invited us, and that was the story, at Seattle College. And then her parents lived in Montana, and every summer we'd go to Montana with the whole family, six, in a big car, making a lot of noise, you know! [Laughs] So that's generally where I met her, and what we did.

DALEY: And how long have you been married?

LACUGNA: [Laughs]

KATHERINE: Fifty-six years.

DALEY: Wow! Congratulations.

LACUGNA: Fifty-six years.

DALEY: And you have six children?

LACUGNA: Six children.

DALEY: Can you give me their names?

LACUGNA: Oh, sure. The first one is Margaret. She got finished at Seattle College, and then got an M.B.A. at University of Puget Sound. Katherine is number two, named after her. Katherine Morrill Lacugna, exactly her name. She finished at Seattle College, went to Fordham University, got her M.A., and got a doctorate at Fordham. After a year and a half or so, after her doctorate, she was invited at Notre Dame, and at Notre Dame she spent sixteen years becoming—various steps; she went all the way up--and ultimately became not only professor of theology, but she also was Chair of Theology, which is very unusual, to be awarded a Chair. But she died when she was forty-four. She had written a great book called God For Us. And the book has been translated into Italian. We think there's somebody trying to translate it into French. Part of it is being translated into Chinese. And one of her former students is going to translate it into Spanish. So she's buried at Notre Dame, and she's one of the, what I would call, woman highlights of the modern church today. And next spring, April 15<sup>th</sup>, is it? We're going to have a lecture at Seattle University on her book. There was established at Holy Names Academy, where she went to school, a fund to celebrate her life. And there's a scholarship at Saint Joseph's School here, our parish, remembering her and her life. And that scholarship goes to poor children who cannot afford the tuition. That's Katherine. Mary, B.A., M.A., and Mary had two children, one of which now is at Notre Dame.

DALEY: A lot of connection to Notre Dame.

LACUGNA: [Laughs] Continuing! Mary, okay. Barbara. Barbara now is a fundamentalist, got her what they call the B.A., and so-called doctorate, from a Bible college—you know, diploma mill stuff? So that's where she got her. We went down to Alabama [laughs]. We don't know why we went, but we did! Down Alabama, see her graduate. Then Barbara—Joseph. Joseph was one of these very brilliant—still is very brilliant—students. He graduated first in his class at Seattle College, went on to Columbia, had a year in Europe as a [unclear] fellow. Decided to go into business, didn't like it, finally did what his professors told him to do, did something intellectual. He went down for his doctorate at the University of Texas, finished his doctorate, and now he's employed in business as Director of Information. And Theresa is named after Saint Theresa of Lisieux. She is one of the loveliest little children you could ever have. And she also went out for a B.A. and M.A. And now she's married, and one of the highlights of her life is to adopt two boys. So that's the names of the children, what they're doing.

DALEY: What are the names of the children, and what are they doing?

LACUGNA: Hm?

DALEY: What are the names of—oh, the names of the children?

LACUGNA: Margaret, Katherine, then Mary, Barbara, Joseph, and Theresa.

DALEY: Okay, and where are your sisters?

LACUGNA: My sister Antoinetta died in an accident, car accident. My sister Lucia is in Brooklyn, mother of Mary Jo Yackowenko. And I talk to her regularly. Her husband died.

DALEY: And where did your parents—where did Giuseppe and Maria—did they remain in New York for the rest of their lives?

LACUGNA: They remained in New York. New York had everything; nothing else in the world existed. They're typical New Yorkers. My sister's worse—typical Brooklynite. Don't want to travel, don't want to do, except, this is the world. They've got everything. So they stayed in New York, and they were really happy being in New York. Typically New Yorkers.

DALEY: And how did you feel growing up, being from Italy, in your neighborhood? Did you feel uncomfortable, or comfortable?

LACUGNA: For a while, certainly uncomfortable, meaning we were unwelcome. And that was just a mental attitude, because as I looked around, all the people about me were not professional people. They were either laborers, half—not even mechanics, not even skilled mechanics. But there were a few, like the pharmacist, and a couple of others, like a doctor here and there. And then of course, living in that ambience, it didn't help. But as soon as I left it, left the street conversation and stickball, and kicking the can, and hide, and all that kind of game—as soon as I went into high school up in Pocantico Hills there, a completely new world. And I still remember reading the history of civilization, and there it was!

DALEY: So it was really going to Pocantico Hills which—

LACUGNA: Yeah, that did, open. Because there, I could still picture the history book. I can still see it! Meaning, I still remember things like [unclear] brothers, who revolted against the Roman rule! Same with the physics book, Toricelli's columns, and all that. There it was, just opened up! So I lost anything like being diffident, because as I went through high school and college, people that I thought were superior to me were not so! They did not know simple words, the meaning of words. And here I was. Then in chemistry, every one of them would say, "How can you remember those formulas?" And I said, "I don't know." I said, there it is! [Laughs] And I

rattled off KCl, KCl<sub>2</sub> plus one—hydrogen sulfate is this! So it opened up there, so I lost anything like being diffident.

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE B

BEGIN TAPE TWO, SIDE A

DALEY: And what are you most proud of in your life?

LACUGNA: [Laughs]

DALEY: He's pointing to Katherine.

LACUGNA: What I'm most proud of? Oh, let's see. Not the degrees! I guess it's a sense of appreciation. And I suppose in putting it in my terms, I'd call it religious terms, is gratitude to God for what we've been given, because as you look around, we need not have gotten it. Whatever gifts we have are not ours. They're gifts to be used for others. So I guess it would be a sense of appreciation and gratitude.

DALEY: And how do you feel about your Italian heritage? Do you feel more American, or part Italian, or all American?

LACUGNA: Oh, oh, I love my Italian heritage. That explains why I would prefer that everybody knew me was Sebastiano, not as Charles. The answer is yes, I appreciate. That's why we went back.

DALEY: Oh, you've been back?

LACUGNA: We went back four times? Four times, to visit Sicily, to see our relatives.

DALEY: And how did that make you feel?

LACUGNA: Oh, wonderful! And she was just dying to go back tomorrow! I'd love to go back, [laughs] but I'm too old to go! But no, for a while there, every Saturday we would listen to the operas, and I would just, of course, float as I'd listen. And I got that tradition from, really from this Giuseppe. He once took me to *Pagliacci*. Of course, as a boy, I couldn't understand it or appreciate it, but I could hear some of it. And then a friend of ours took me to the opera again. And then we had a friend who was from Italy. He was a student at Seattle University. And I said to him, "Why don't you come and live with us?" I said, "You don't want to be by yourself." So he

came, and he lived downstairs. And he and I would listen to operas all the time, morning, noon, and night, this glorious business—just to hear that music! And the Italian bel canto, the beautiful melodies that came out of Giuseppe Verdi, see? All those. So I guess it would be, to answer your question, a sense of appreciation and gratitude.

DALEY: Well that sounds like a very good place to end the interview.

LACUGNA: Is that it?

DALEY: Yes. I want to thank you very much for letting us interview you, and your remarkable story, of your travels and your education.

LACUGNA: Yeah. Well, she and I have been fortunate, after we raised the children, to be able to go to Europe. And all we did, really, was look at churches, [laughs] didn't we? Of course, some monuments, too. But it was as glorious to see the old churches, the new churches. And then we had also a fortunate experience, to be part of the Ambassadors Program; as an arbitrator for the government I could easily qualify. So we went to Asia. And then of course, we're going back to Sicily, to be able to see those lemon groves, olive groves, and the rest, and visit the city of Palermo.

DALEY: And I also just wanted to add that this interview was helped along by your niece, Mary Jo Yackowenko.

LACUGNA: Yackowenko.

DALEY: Yackowenko, sorry. I appreciate her help in arranging this interview.

LACUGNA: Yeah. I think you called at first, and I said, "No, I'm not interested."

DALEY: Yeah, but then I looked, and I found her number in Brooklyn. So luckily her name was on the form.

LACUGNA: Yeah, right, right. And the reason I said that, no, was: I get tired of people asking, "Do this, do this." And you never know who's on the other—

DALEY: Yeah, I can understand that. I can understand that.

LACUGNA: Yeah, so that's it.

DALEY: Okay, thank you. And this is Kevin Daley in Seattle, Washington, with Sebastiano Charles Lacugna.

LACUGNA: Lacugna. It's like canyon, cugna.

EI-1348/LACUGNA

DALEY: Canyon, cugna, okay. And it's October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2004. This is Kevin Daley, and I'm signing off. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW