

**EI-1397**

**LORENZO LAMONICA**

**BIRTHDATE: AUGUST 20, 1935**

**INTERVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 21, 2005**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 70**

**RUNNING TIME:**

**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.**

**RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME**

**INTERVIEW LOCATION: NEW YORK, NY**

**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: KAREN ECKHAUS**

**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: IRV SILBERG**

**Nota bene!!!! This is a *review partial* since transcription is partial. IS**

**ITALY**

**AGE: 14**

**AIRLINE: ALITALIA**

**PORT:**

**RESIDENCES:**

- **ITALY: CASTELDACCIA, SICILY**
- **US: NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

LEVINE: Today is September the 21<sup>st</sup> ,the year 2005. I'm here in New York City on Greenwich Street with Lorenzo (sometimes called Lawrence) LaMonica who came here from Sicily at the age of 14. He was born in a little town outside of Palermo. And came here on Alitalia.

LAMONICA: True.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Parks Service. If you would say again, please, your birth date and where you were born.

LAMONICA: Yeah, my birthday is August 20, 1935 and I was born in a little town outside of Palermo called Casteldaccia. It's spelled C-A-S-T-E-L-D-A-C-C-I-A

LEVINE: And did you live in Casteldaccia up until the time you left?

LAMONICA: Yes, I was there for fourteen years.

LEVINE: Ok, and, what was your father's name?

LAMONICA: My father's name was Augustine LaMonica

LEVINE: Augustine LaMonica. And your mother's name?

LAMONICA: My mother's name was Josephine Maria LaMonica

LEVINE: And do you happen to know her maiden name?

LAMONICA: Yes, her maiden name was Moreci – Morechi.

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

LAMONICA: M-O-R-E-C-I.

LEVINE: And, uh, and do you know -- on your mother's side or your father's side -- do you know if their family lived around Palermo, going back generations?

LAMONICA: No, my mother originally lived in -- well, my mother was born in Chicago. But my grandfather came here in the -- in the early nineteen hundred -- early, uh, no, I should say late eighteen hundred. My mother was born in

eighteen, eh, eighteen-ninety-nine. And she went back to Italy -- when she was six -- where she lived in a small community about two miles from my town called Altavilla Milicia , which was the name of the town. But she was originally born in Chicago

LEVINE: I see

LAMONICA: Yeah

LEVINE: What did your mother ever tell you, did she have memories of Chicago?

LAMONICA: Yes, she did, because when she went back to Italy, uh, she got married at the age of fifteen and her husband wanted to move back to Chicago. So they moved back to Chicago (I think she was from -- sixteen) with her new.-- with her husband. And my mother had two kids --

LEVINE: In Chicago?

LAMONICA: In Chicago, my brother Augustine and my sister Rose. They both p-- both passed away and she, uh, opened up a business -- a little market, corner market. And they lived there until around 1928, '30's -- '28 or something around there. Then they went back to Italy again

LEVINE: She went with her children and her husband?

LAMONICA: Yeah, but. She had two kids at the time and they all back to --went back. 'Cause there was -- that time, I know, there was a lot of problem in Chicago. They had it with the Mafia and stuff like that, so she wasn't too happy and she wanted to go back to Ital. So she went back to my town this time, she went back to Castel Daccia where my grandfather and the rest of the family lived. She married my uncle. Her first husband was my

uncle, and she married two brothers, actually. So this -- I'm from the second father, from the second husband. So -- so she went back to Italy and they bought a farm. You know.

LEVINE: Did she re-marry back there?

LAMONICA: Yes, her husband got killed, unfortunately. She bought a piece of property that used to belong to a count. And somehow the -- the family, of the -- the heirs of the count, they didn't want my mother to buy the property. And they got into, kinda -- back those days they called feud -- and my uncle got shot. He was kill and so--. And then my mother remain by herself for a few years. And then my Dad (which was the brother of the -- my original -- from the first husband was the brother) -- they marry. They got married. And then they had six more kids. We were eight all together. Yeah, it was a big family. They were all raised on this -- the farm, we were all raised on the farm. You know.

LEVINE: What kind of farm was it?

LAMONICA: Well, we -- we grew lemons and olives, we had lemons and olive trees, and that's what we had. We live right on the outskirts of the town. Were -- we were on the outskirts of town and that's where we lived.

LEVINE: Did your mother, did she ever talk about, you know, life in this country compared with life in Sicily?

LAMONICA: Well, she, she -- well, her -- she never really liked Sicily, I mean she didn't like because she always wanted to go back to Chicago and that was her dream to always come back, you know. And, but when -- when she went back there to make my -- my uncle happy that time -- was to make her husband happy.—And she went back there. And -- but she was never

happy there. You Know. She always says, "United States my -- my country. It's my place, where I want to live and die." Well, she died here too

LEVINE: She died in Sicily?

LAMONICA: No, she died here.

LEVINE: Oh, she did.

LAMONICA: She came back.

LEVINE: Oh, I'm sorry, so when did she come back here?

LAMONICA: Well, that's another-- Well, when she came back here in -- when she came back here in '53. 1953, she came back

LEVINE: So, she came back here af-- when did you?--

LAMONICA: Four years after I co—I come here. Yeah, because she wa—she --well, she realized that being away from the (because that time another -- another one of my brothers came to the United States, also) she realized that she didn't want the family to be split up. She realized that she wanted her family back together. So after, in around '54 -- '53, '54 -- she decided come back to the United State. You know. So she came back with all -- all my brothers and everybody came back

LEVINE: Oh, they all came back?

LAMONICA: Yeah, they all

LEVINE: Your whole family came over here?

LAMONICA: Yes, except my two older sister. By that time my two older sisters were married. And – and she – they stay back then in my town, where I lived.

LEVINE: I see. Your two older sisters were your mother's first

LAMONICA: First two, yeah, yeah

LEVINE: And they stayed back

LAMONICA: They stayed back, yeah

LEVINE: And you guys came here

LAMONICA: No. It was – actually, it was one brother and one sister. They – they stayed back

LEVINE: So, now you came here in 1949

LAMONICA: Right. In '49, right. December --

LEVINE: Did you fly out in December or did you get here

LAMONICA: The second. I left the second of December 1949 and we arrived on the fourteenth

LEVINE: And, so, what was your mother like? How would...

LAMONICA: She was a -- she was very happy person. She was always a positive person. Hard working woman because those days she had eight kids at

home. We actually, were nine kids because my brother – he got married and then he decided come to United States. He left – left his wife. So my mother was supporting, where was -- supporting my brother's kid plus eight of her own kids, you know. So she was -- in those days we didn't have no washing machine or dishwashers. And we were – were really, you know, not doing that well. You know. We were poor, and we're sup-- -- she was – we ,actually, we were like ten people living in one house, you know. And so, it was kinda rough, you know. But my father managed, you know, he was always wheeling and dealing, you know, working the farms and stuff like that

LEVINE: Uh-ha, what was his first name?

LAMONICA: Augustine

LEVINE: Augustine

LAMONICA: Yeah

LEVINE: Yeah, so did you, as children, did you like work on the farm?

LAMONICA: Yes we did. Yeah. Matter of fact in – in -- when it was olive time, when we pick olives (those day, we'd pick olives by hand) that was one of my jobs. And you know, sometimes your fingers be bleeding from -- `cause you pick olives from six o'clock in the morning till four, five o'clock at night

LEVINE: Did you climb the trees?

LAMONICA: Yeah, I climb the tree and you shake the tree down. Then you pick them from the ground so when -- sometimes the ground would be so rough that you all – your tip your fingers were bleeding. You know. That's – that's

one of the big jobs we had to do, that I used to hate to do that, you know  
(laugh)

LEVINE: (laughs) Did you get to go to school? Or were you --

LAMONICA: Yeah, I went to school. Yeah, I went to school. I went through grammar school and I did the -- one thing I went -- one, two years of high school. Yeah, that's one thing. I -- I did go to school. My father was really, he wants you to go to school. He was really, because he -- he didn't want us to be farmers like he did. He didn't want us to work the farms from five in the morning to ten o'clock at night. You know. So he want us to get -- get some kind of school and that's one of the reasons I came here -- because I didn't want to go to school (laughs), you know. So he gave me a choice, he says, "I'll pay for your trip to United States or you have to go to -- keep going to school. So I -- I didn't want to go to school, so I decided to come to the United States, you know. Which my mother was against, everybody was against 'cause I was so young

LEVINE: Were you the first, in your family?

LAMONICA: Yeah, I was first one to come here, yeah

LEVINE: So, uh, why did you want to come -- you didn't want to go to school

LAMONICA: I didn't want to go to school and I was tired, you know, digging ditches and picking olives and doing all the hard --, you know, it's not easy, you know. We live on a farm, you know, and -- and not only that, but we were so many, you know, in one family, you know. We're a big family, so you know, we used to eat meat like once a month, you know. We used to -- most time if we killed something, you know, chicken or something like that. But I felt that I was kind of aggressive. You know, I felt that I could -

- my dad could trust me. He says, "I know you – you gonna turn out to be a good boy." He had a lot of confidence, you know

LEVINE: You were the oldest of your --

LAMONICA: No, no I wasn't. Matter of fact, I'm a -- all my family is two years apart except me. When -- when -- my -- I was born in 1935 and there was a period when my -- my dad went in the army there. And I'm seven years apart from all my family, seven years apart from my youngest (my mom had a kid when she was forty-seven) my -- my youngest brother. She had him when she was forty-seven. So I'm seven years apart from my -- my next oldest brother and I'm seven years apart from my youngest brother.

LEVINE: So, where do you fall in the order of children?

LAMONICA: Well, I have -- if we count my step brother and sister, it would fall that like I have a -- let me see -- one, two, three, four. I'd be like the fifth

LEVINE: So, you're kind of right in the middle there.

LAMONICA: Yeah, the fifth. And then I have, yeah I was --. They said . They al-- my mother says I was special because it took seven years to have me (laugh). `Cause all the other kids were like two years apart except me, you know, that's why it's [not understood] yeah

LEVINE: It would seem, more uh, more usual that there would be the oldest son who came.

LAMONICA: Right.

LEVINE: Right?

LAMONICA: Right, true, true. It would – it would have been. By that time, my – my oldest brother was going to college, and he didn't want to finish college. And, uh, my other young -- my older brother was working the farm, so my dad didn't want him to go. And I was really against working the farm, you know, so he gave me a choice. And at that time there happened to be a local person that was coming to the United States and he says, "Oh, I'll take your son with me, no problem. I'll watch over him," That's -- you know -- he starts, one thing lead to another thing. And my mother always said, "No, no, he's not going, he's too young." but anyway, uh, I was – I was willing to take a chance

LEVINE: Did you have any idea what to expect?

LAMONICA: No, no. My mom always told me -- always told me that, you know -- she says, " You're going to like it, it's different." She was always talking about the big streets and all the stuff that we had here. Yeah, back then we didn't have -- I don't think we had a bathroom till later on in the years, you know. She said they had bathroom in the house, they had running water and all that stuff, you know. So it sound interesting, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah

LAMONICA: Yeah, so

LEVINE: Do you think you were predisposed to come here because your mother had been?

LAMONICA: I think so too, I – I – I think so. She always – she always talk good about it and I always used to listen to her, you know. And her dream was to

come back. I think – I think maybe in the back of her mind she was saying to herself, “Well, if my son goes there -- is successful, she [sic] will bring me -- take me there, you know, take me to the United States. I think that’s where her dreams were too.

LEVINE: Well, maybe that was in her mind , too

LAMONICA: [superposed]I think it was like a steppin’ stone, yeah

LEVINE: You know, that you could do that

LAMONICA: [superposed] Right, right.

LEVINE: if you [not understood] got there, yeah

LAMONICA: I think so. I think so because like I say, she always says, “I want I want to be there.” you know

LEVINE: But it had to do, it had to have something to do with your personality. Well, how would you describe your personality?

LAMONICA: Well, but I was always outgoing, you know. I have a little granddaughter, she’s nine years old. And she’s Leo -- like she was born on the tenth, I was born on the twentieth. We’re both Leos. And one daugh-- my granddaughter she said to me, “You know, Grandpa,” she says, “we’re special.” (laughs). And I said “What are you saying that for?” She says, “Well, you know,” she says, “I’m like you.” she says, “I always stand out everywhere I go -- everybody loves me.” she says. I said “Well, you’re right. ” She says, you know ---

LEVINE: That’s cute.

LAMONICA: -- maybe, you know -- coming from a little -- from a little nine years old. You have to think at the time she was only eight, kind of, you know

LEVINE: Well, I think that's, I mean I don't know astrology, but it seems to me that's with the Leo sign -- (laughs)

LAMONICA: Right, right (laughs). Yeah, you know, that's true, you know. Well, yeah, according to the sciences we're suppose to be leaders, we're suppose to be aggressive. And you know, so maybe some of it true. I don't know. I mean, I know I've done well, I mean, with the help of God. If somebody, -- I always -- my mother said, I guess, she said she took me to the priest before I left. She had me blessed, you know, and she said that somebody always up there going to watch over me. , I guess she was right, because there was somebody up there watching over me, and I have to say that, you know

LEVINE: Did you grow up religious?

LAMONICA: In a sense, we did. My mother's a very religious person. She would say a rosary almost every day, and you know, her father was very religious. Yes, I would -- I would say I was, yeah. I don't -- I don't say I'm that religious now, but I grew up as a religious person, yes, yeah

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you remember any events in, uh, how do you say? Castel Adaccia?

LAMONICA: Castel Adaccia

LEVINE: Caste Daccia, that had to with religion?

LAMONICA: Yeah well a lot of things in my town. We -- we celebrated Saint Joseph, we celebrated a lot of the Saints. And we lived real close to the church -- maybe one of the thing, you know -- real close. And since -- see, we had a farm right on the outskirts of town and my farm, my house was always open. The Chief of Police would come over. He would say, "Don Augustino, I need some vegetables." The priest would come over, he says "I need lemons, I'm out of lemons," you know. So it used to be like a—I say an open house, where every -- all the people in town that you know, they were like bank manager, stuff like that -- always, because we lived so close to everything and so close to town. Yet we had the farm, you know. You need lemons, you go see -- you go see Augustino, he'll give you some lemons. You need some vegetables, you need tomatoes, all -- you go, I guess. So I guess that -- from the priest coming over my house all the time and everybody being so close -- I guess it made me more or less, like how you say, go to church more often. 'Cause you always expect us to be there on Sunday, you know what I mean, it was like a tradition and that's what's part of it, you know. And we ha--

LEVINE: They would notice if you didn't come

LAMONICA: Right, that's exac--. And the tradition on Sunday was that we'd go to church and then either my father would cook a big dinner or my mother. So Sunday was the dinne—the day that we'd have to eat all together, you know. We have to be all at the table, have a dinner. So, so, so, it meant a lot to us. So the -- the -- I guess the church and the home was combined together in the sense that the Sunday was a special day, you know. So that's the way we looked at it.

LEVINE: I see, yeah, I see, so, even though you say you had to work hard and you didn't have a lot of -- of money, you were still pretty prominent --

LAMONICA: Yeah

LEVINE: -- in your town.

LAMONICA: Yeah. We were because my father was fortunately a very likeable person and he had a big family. I mean, he came from a family of twelve, my dad. And so most the – most of brothers lived around town, so our – so our name was very common in town. Every -- everybody, almost every where you look I had an uncle or I had a cousin. So there wasn't -- I don't think there was a street where they weren't related -- (both laugh) someone related -- you know -- living there. And, you know, it was really rough to say, "Well, I don't know anybody." because you knew everybody. Either – either somebody was you cousin, or third cousin or you uncle or you aunt or somebody you know --

LEVINE: Yea.

LAMONICA: So it was being that -- like I say, my Grandfather having twelve kids, and all living there

LEVINE: Do you remember your grandparents?

LAMONICA: Only met one

LEVINE: Which one

LAMONICA: My father's side

LEVINE: Grandmother or...

LAMONICA: Grandfather, my grandmother died when she was fifty-five and she had twelve kids. She died of a heart attack, I can see why probably. On my mother's side they die younger, so I never got to see them. They died before I was born

LEVINE: Do you remember any experiences with your grandfather?

LAMONICA: Oh, yeah, my grandfather was -- because I was the,-- that time I was the youngest of the family -- because like I said seven years apart. So he would, I would have to walk him home. Because at that time (when I was born he was already -- he died when he was eighty-five -- he died nineteen-forty-five) so that time, you know, when he was already around seventy-eight, eighty years old. So he lived, he had a farm a little bit -- about a mile from town. That's what he had his house at. Then he had a house in town.. So I would, you know, I would have to walk him back and forth sometimes. Or I would have to go pick him up because he didn't want to walk by himself, you know

LEVINE: Where would you pick him up from?

LAMONICA: From the farm, he had a farm. He lived right on the -- by -- lived right on the -- he had a house right on the water. He had a farm there, lemon farm. And then to walk to the town there was about a mile -- to the main part of town, and sometimes I'd go there and pick him up. And my dad said, "Well go se—go -- go check grandpa, make sure he's OK". And I'd go pick him up, or on Sunday I would take him to church, you know, if he wanted to go to church, I'll take him

LEVINE: Did you drive a car?

LAMONICA: No, no. Where he was walking, everything was walking. I would just make sure he was ok. No, no, cars. Those days were no cars, a horse, we had a horse (laughs)

LEVINE: A horse.

LAMONICA: Yeah, that's it. No, no, cars no. Nothing really. I mean, I don't think there was anything. I mean, we had a carriage, you know, to carry stuff for the horse and stuff like that. And – but -- my -- my Grandfather was not wealthy. He had – he had the -- he had a lot of land right by the water area, which was valuable one-- before he died, you know. But, uh, he was an orphan, and I guess, being an orphan, he wanted to have so many kids, that's why he had so many, he had twelve kids. You know – he loved – he had a big family..

[reviewed up to this point] [where is rest of transcription?] IS