

EI-1452

RALPH ARLOTTI

BIRTH DATE: 4/29/1927

INTERVIEW DATE: 6/20/2007

RUNNING TIME: 96:07

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, Ph.D.

RECORDING ENGINEER: JANET LEVINE, Ph.D.

INTERVIEW LOCATION: PITTSBURGH

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: ERICA LESSER

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:

ITALY, 1937

AGE 10

SHIP: REX

PORT:

RESIDENCES:

- **ITALY: SAVUTO**
- **USA: PITTSBURGH, PA**

LEVINE: Okay. So today is June 20th the year 2007. I'm here in Pittsburgh with Ralph Arlotti, who came from Italy when he was 10 years old, in 1937. And ah this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. If we could start at the beginning please -- give your birth date.

ARLOTTI: April 29, 1927.

LEVINE: And ah where were you born in Italy?

ARLOTTI: I was born in Cleto-Savuto.

LEVINE: Okay. And we've we've already established that it's C-L-E-T-O-S-A-V-U-T-O.

ARLOTTI: Right right. They're two small villages, one next to the other and the post office in Cleto. I was born in Savuto.

LEVINE: (laughs)

ARLOTTI: Very very primitive, small little village. You don't mind if I just go –

LEVINE: No, I like It --

ARLOTTI: -- elaborate. Okay –

LEVINE: --that's wonderful

ARLOTTI: This little village was ah was ah -- I have no idea how old it is. But I know I did a little bit of research with my relatives when I visited there and it goes it goes back from what they assume was (they're only guessing, but it's probably a good guess) the village was established during the nor-- during the crusades. There was a -- there's a remains of a ruins of a castle on top of this mountain. It's not a mountain, but on top of this rocky --

LEVINE: Hill. Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: -- hill and this -- this castle was -- was supposedly ah assumably [sic] built by the Normans. Because it -- it's on, it's on a -- a river -- the hill of a river -- a deep river valley that looking down to the sea -- looking down the river you could actually see the ocean.

LEVINE: Woah.

ARLOTTI: So, it's on -- was about maybe four, five miles but they had a -- a great view of the surrounding area and they used it I assume for supplies or whatever

the Normans did in those days. And ah the – the the –the town was so old that I -- when I was born (naturally I don't remember it exactly) but I do remember when I came over that it was -- there was nothing there as can be -- you know, modern conveniences. There was there was no gas, no running water, no sewers, no no gas. Ah Mussolini had just put in electricity -- so we had when I -- as I was growing up there was that was the only thing we had. There was no cars. There was a dead-end street there there because it was ah the castle was built on this big cliff side. The road just came to the castle and it stopped

LEVINE: [superimposed] Stopped.

ARLOTTI: And then there was maybe a couple hundred houses around there. The houses had no -- no modern convenience. We had no bathrooms -- not even bath -- not even outhouses.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: The women used a bedpan and the men used bushes (laughs).

LEVINE: Well, ah ha.

ARLOTTI: It was very, very, very primitive.

LEVINE: So um -- so you -- were you -- do you remember when electricity came in?

ARLOTTI: No, no I don't. It must have -- it must have come in --

LEVINE: [superimposed] probably when you were little.

ARLOTTI: Either when I was born, or on --

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: The time I was born, but I know we had electricity -- was the only convenience. To get water my mother had to walk down this cliff side -- lane about two, three miles and they carried the water on top of their heads in -- in uh -- in urns. And it was -- I remember that very clearly because they -- I remember this like it was in that dream but I -- but I know it was real. That she used to walk and she had three -- you know, well my younger bother. He was seven, Eugene was seven year younger than me. And she would walk -- go to the well -- she would carry one jug on top of her head and one jug in her arm and she had holding Gino by the hand. And she had to walk this unbelievable -- unbelievable how how life -- how rough life was. But -- but that's all they knew so for them it was (laughs) they had nothing to complain about. But -- but ah -- it was compared to what we have today, for me it's a dream. I mean for me it's a --

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: -- It's a great great dream where I'm at now and where I started.

LEVINE: Yeah uh. Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: And I really really ah really ah --

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: --And ah I always -- when I would -- visited there -- you know. (Well I visited there three times since the first time) and uh --I as I -- when I went back -- (you don't mind if I ramble right now.)

LEVINE: No, go ahead.

ARLOTTI: Okay. When I went back -- before I went -- well first of all I was very anxious because I never -- I never went to school. I went to school one year in Italy. And as you know -- they -- that that there's dialects. And we had a very dis - - very dis -- very odd dialect. Quite different even from the other -- there's a sma -- the other town which is Cleto. Our dialect was lot different than theirs. And it was in -- within -- it was almost the same -- uh huh maybe it was two miles apart. And ah so -- I only knew my dialect, which had very little -- true Italian in it. You know -- uh for example -- this is a good example that I like -- I like to joke around about. We pronounced the -- the letter F as an H. So *caffè* [coffee] came out *cahe* (laughs). And a -- a friend of mine jokes -- an American friend of mine -- he's Italian American. He joke me cause he says --- he says uh -- when he -- his father, he used to have a -- a little grocery store in the -- in the -- in the area here in Pittsburgh. And a -- a lady -- he was a little boy and he was helping his dad in the grocery store. And this lady came in and she says *Figlio mio vulesse nu' poco caffè lo voglio un fatto fino fino* (both laugh). And he went to his dad and he says he say, *Papa c'e' una donna a casa che non capisco* (laughs) [dad there is a women in the house I don't understand.] So the father he knew the dialect -- he knew the lady. So it -- she wanted -- she wanted -- she said, *Figlio mio* My son I would like a little bit of coffee and I want it ground real fine. (Both laugh)

LEVINE: Wow. So how --

ARLOTTI: So so when I went back --

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: I was apprehensive. I says my gosh -- I says I don't know. First of all I had forgotten-- (I'm ashamed to say) -- I'd forgotten most of even my dialect and

Italian -- very little did I pick up in the United States talking to other Italians. I was very worried about going over there. I says, I won't be able to communicate there when I get there and what will I find there. And I wasn't sure if I remem if -- what I remembered was a -- like a dream or if it was for real. You know what I mean.

LEVINE: Yeah. Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: You -- you look back in your childhood and you have a lot of things that you're not sure if they were really dreams. And when I got there my first impression -- it was a big impression, was the fact that -- the buildings were so much smaller than I had imagined. When you're a child you looked at a building and it's large but when you see it as an adult --you know-- and you -- there's a a span between that --then it is a big difference. When I went there I remember my house. I thought it was a big house and it was no bigger than a garage (laughs).

LEVINE: Oh my goodness.

ARLOTTI: And the distances also really made -- I -- I used to have a cousin that lived down the street and it seemed like I had to walk a long time to get from my house to his house.

LEVINE: Um hum.

ARLOTTI: But I was only seven, eight, nine years old. As an adult I could probably throw a stone from one house (laughs) to the other. It was so strange that --

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: -- that everything was -- was tr -- was I -- as I remembered but a different scale. (laughs)

LEVINE: Yeah. Well now how do you account for the dialect being that way?

ARLOTTI: Well I think I -- (I'm only guessing) -- that perhaps we were influenced by -- I think the Spanish. How they pronounced -- they pronounced -- ah well like a Y.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah.

ARLOTTI: So -- so maybe something similar to that. The F -- and I I -- I really don't know. I-- There's a little bit of Sicilian I heard of. -- I mean I've been I've been to Sicily and our dialect is -- there's -- a lot -- it -- it's similar -- not the same-- it's similar. And at the same time -- there a I -- I find um -- Marita, my wife, she comes from Br -- *Bruzzi Molise* which used to be part of *Abruzzi*. Now it's only -- now It's a separate -- province. It's south of of -- *Molise* is south of *Abruzzi* and even though I cannot understand her dialect very well because they speak in a different manner to to -- they deliver their the-- words -- thats. *Calabrese*, where I come from, we have a tenancy to to speak slow, very slow, we do everything slow.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: Because it's very hot and and ...and when we talk, we talk rather slow. In *Abruzzi* they speak a little faster and they don't -- they they just just sort of mumble their words like this. (mumbles) I went to um --I went um I went to -- (mumble) squirrel hill -- (mumble) I went couldn't find a parking place -- I can't understand it. But whenever she speaks slow a lot of the words -- dialect words that she has are similar to ours.

LEVINE: Oh. Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: But the -- we-- I found found that I did a -- I've been interested in this for a long time --

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: -- and I read a book called Under the Southern Sun. I don't know if you have ever heard of it or not. I forgot who wrote it. It's -- it's a a book about southern Italy from Naples down to Sicily. And and and it explains how how these dialects developed and how they speak a lot with their hands.

LEVINE: [superimposed] Hands.

ARLOTTI: They communicate -- and it didn't explain exactly the difference but it's -- it basic was a fact that these -- these communities were so isolated in those days. It's all rocky mountains down in *Calabria*.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: There's very -- There's no strait road. While Mussolini did build the *autostrada*, which is relatively strait. But to get form from one town to another town -- which is only three or four miles away -- you had to just twist and turn. And so they -- in the olden days they just didn't communicate. So, they -- each community sort of developed their own -- their own way of speaking. I don't know about it.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well that's interesting.

ARLOTTI: I don't understand how -- what you know.

LEVINE: Yeah yeah. Okay. So -- so anyway -- *Calabria* what -- how does *Calabria* fit with *Cozenza*?

ARLOTTI: *Cozenza* is a province. The states -- each state -- a *Calabria* is like a state.

LEVINE: [superimposed] *Calabria* is like a state and and and and then --

ARLOTTI: And *Cozenza* is like -- and and *Cozenza* is like a like a like a county.

LEVINE: Right. Yeah right. Okay. Now um--

ARLOTTI: (coughs)

LEVINE: Did you live in the same town -- of Savuto ah up until you left?

ARLOTTI: Yes yes.

LEVINE: So and -- your mother, your father?

ARLOTTI: They they well -- ah my father -- as it -- it happened in those days -- you're probably familiar with this -- is the fact that families came over a little bit at a time. My father and mother married when he was seventeen -- she was eighteen, my mother. And she had she had three children within a within -- si -- five or six years. She had three children, three boys. And then my father came to United States. This was after -- this was probably in the early twenties. Because he was in the Italian army in the -- during the war. Just a short period of time. (coughs). And then after the war he came to this country.

ARLOTTI: And then my dad travelled back. My mother and dad were only together in their lives -- a for about --less then ten years. And then he would travel -- come to Italy when he could. Cause that was that was in tw --were in the twenties now -- in the thirties rather now. And in the thirties ah he wasn't working steady but when he could save a little bit of money to come -- to come back -- he would come back. And leave my mother pregnant.

LEVINE: Um. Um hum.

ARLOTTI: And I was conceived by my mother -- my father was in the United States, so I was born an American citizen.

LEVINE: Oh. Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: See because -- because when your father -- father is -- was a he was he was marr --

LEVINE: American Citizen.

ARLOTTI: -- he he .. he became an American citizen before I was born. So when I was born, I was born to an American citizen. So when I came over I came over with an American passport -- and so did so did my younger brother Gino. So this --and then one time -- another time my fa-- my mother was was pregnant and she had a miscarriage -- so actually three children -- Three children were conceived when my father lived in United States.

LEVINE: Um hum.

ARLOTTI: And then we came -- then a -- my older brother came by himself before I was born. My second older brother came ah -- about five years before we came over. He came over with my grandmother and grandfather.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: Because my brother -- my father had a brother who was relatively well off in those days. So he was able to his mother and father back over here and my father paid for my brother. They came together. That's my third brother. Then in 1937, I don't know -- I think the good lord was looking over us. Or my father had the wisdom to --what -- see what was coming. He decided to bring us all over. By that time there was a third brother, me and then Gino and my mother. We all came over in 1937.

LEVINE: And you had two brothers?

ARLOTTI: They already were here.

LEVINE: Were here your father and your grandparents.

ARLOTTI: My grandparents they came --

LEVINE: [superimposed] Right. They were all here.

ARLOTTI: -- with my second brother, right. And I had an uncle that lived here. And I also had an aunt. that lived here. They all lived in and around the Pittsburgh area.

LEVINE: Do you know why they went to Pittsburgh in the beginning. Your father, your uncle?

ARLOTTI: I think they they -- work was. They went where work was. I know my -- my uncle he came to Pittsburgh and then he went all over. He was all over the

United States working for -- they were building the railroad going to California.

LEVINE: Woah.

ARLOTTI: And he -- I remember him telling me that he worked on that railroad until it went to California. My father happen to -- I I guess he came here because his brother was here obviously. Cause my uncle was here for a long long time. I don't know exactly when he came over -- ah ah turn of the century, he came over. And so he came here obviously because (I never thought of that) but he probably came here because his brother was here. And in and in those days -- the only way these fam -- we could survive is to be among family members.

LEVINE: Um hum. Yeah. Good point.

ARLOTTI: Yeah and and and a I and and --- we were brought into this. Then my father died two years after we came over, at forty-four. So my mother had very little time to spend with her husband. And uh when he died --that was a 19 -- 1939. Right before United States got in the war.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: We were des-- I mean we had absolutely nothing. I had a brother -- the one who had already been here before -- I had both -- two brothers. One was was he had nothing. He had been very successful as a young man but he drank and he -- he just spend all. So he was out of work he had nothing when we came over. Absolutely not a penny. My other brother he was working one day a week getting twenty dollars, twenty dollars a week. And and in those days they only worked when they knew somebody. You didn't

get a job for a company. My father happened to have a friend of his who he had meet (I don't know when) who was a a boss. He was a foreman --

LEVINE: Um hum.

ARLOTTI: -- in a in a in a mill in in this Traftord, which is not far from from where we live now. Part in -- ya know-- Pittsburgh suburbs. That his boss got transfered to another town so that's that's were we came -- that was about two or three months before we came over. My father got transferred because his boss got transferred. And they on -- he only went to work when this boss says hey Tony he says I need you tomorrow and he would go tot work. And he never worked more than two days a week.

LEVINE Um hum.

ARLOTTI: So when he died we had absolutely nothing. I mean penniless. There wasn't no social security, no welfare, no nothing. And how my mother -- and my mother never spo -- learned to speak English. We -- we well I started school immediately -- I started school and ah mother ah later on Gino, who was younger than me, he sta -- he went to school. My older brother he went to school just for a year or so and then he started work. When my father died I sta --I was twelve so I started work when I was twelve. And at the same time I went sch -- I went to school. And I. I went as far as the eighth grade. By that time I was sixteen or seventeen years -- sixteen years old. And then I -- then the war started and I joined the Navy.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: And here's a interesting thing that happened. I tell this story to everybody cause I think it's really really -- it's I remember that -- when I -- when I was in

Italy as a boy I belonged to the *Balillas*. You ever hear of that, that word.
Balilla.

LEVINE: *Balilla*.

ARLOTTI: I think its -- I think I'm saying that right. There was like a boy scout. It was fascist -- boys -- uh

LEVINE: Club.

ARLOTTI: Club

LEVINE: Order.

ARLOTTI: Organization.

LEVINE: Organization.

ARLOTTI: And we use to dress like Mussolini with black shirt and little tassel. If you ever seen pictures of Mussolini he wore this tassel with the things hang here. And we had this little uniform and we would march down the street singing fascist song. So at age ten --I was a fascist. Seven years later I was in the United States Navy (laughs). So during the Second World War I was in the United States Navy, as well was my older brother -- the one that that came over --this -- his name was Joe. He was five or six years older than me. He was I the Army and my other brother he was in the army. There was three of us in the army. One -- the older one didn't in there very long because he got sick. But as far as my mother was concerned, we were -- I don't -- we only survived by friends and family giving us a handout.

LEVINE: Um hum.

ARLOTTI: That was the only thing we had. I mean my mother made a little garden. She would buy a chicken and she would -- you know what what little we had. We had a *compare* [friend/ buddy] who gave me a job as a twelve years old. He had a tailor shop and taught me a little bit about tailoring. And I helped him and I mean and he feed me. Which was the best part. I got paid actually a quarter a week. I worked -- I went there after school and on Saturdays. And uh uh -- I remember we were so poor my mother would ask me -- we had a little store near by -- was known by a lady her --a Polish lady --her name was Sophie. And she was very very nice lady. And by this time I could speak a little bit of English. So she asked me if I would go talk to Sophie and whenever -- she she -- heyhad a little butcher shop and she -- she ask you know she says go over there and talk to Sophie. Ask her after she cleaned the bones to throwaway if she would save them for us. Which she was happy to do so a matter of fact she was so nice enough she left the extra meat on them. And my mother would put that in -- in spaghetti sauce. My mother made her own spaghetti, her own bread, her own sauce. So we we didn't have money to go to the store but she managed to to to -- to --

LEVINE: [superimposed] Make probably very tasty meals. (laughs)

ARLOTTI: Exactly exactly exactly .Now to think that I came from that background town I had, you know -- the beginning here with my -- loosing my dad, being so poor. And to where I am today, I think it's fulfillment of a beautiful American dream. My children have gone to college, I had a successful business, and now I'm independent. I'm retired and I'm able to pay my bills and and ah I thank God. I think that it's it's it's a --

LEVINE:Yeah.

ARLOTTI: -- it's an unbelievable dream come true for me.

LEVINE: Wow. Yeah.

ARLOTTI: So so that's were I'm at today.

LEVINE: Beautiful. Alright, well lets backtrack a little bit --

ARLOTTI:Yes. Yes.

LEVINE: -- before -- before you came were you a catholic family? Were you religious?

ARLOTTI: My mother went to church. She walked about, she walked about ten blocks almost every day to go to church. And it was so cute because I remember she used to walk to church with two or three -- (you see I'm going to use all your tape).(laughs)

LEVINE: No. No, this is great. I'm just checking to make sure it's on.

ARLOTTI: She used to walk to church with a couple Polish ladies. Cause-- down where we lived, we lived we lived-- in this --along the alongainua river [ph]. I don't know if you're familiar with it, Pittsburgh area. You got alongainua river [ph] and the manongala river [ph]. We lived around -- we lived right along the river, real close between the tracks and the river. And there was a lot of foreigners there. And we was all immigrants because they were poor and the housing wasn't expen -- wasn't you know was affordable.

ARLOTTI: And she used go to church with two or three Polish -- two other Polish ladies and it was amazing. I remember this as clear as -- she would talk Italian and the ladies would talk Polish and they --

LEVINE: (laughs)

ARLOTTI: -- while they were walking to church and they went to church everyday. So yes we were brought up Catholic. I was an altar boy -- ah as you know-- when I was ten. I went out about eleven years old I was an altar boy. And we've been Catholics ever since. And ah I wish my kids were though.

LEVINE: (laughs)

ARLOTTI: I lost them somehow. Not in -- I didn't lose them that much but they don't have the faith that we have. Today, young people -- they go -- they do what they want to do. They go to church when they want to go. Which to me a a lot of hard breaks but but--

LEVINE: You brought them up in the Catholic Church?

ARLOTTI: Oh, Absolutely. They were all baptized. They were all confirmed. They went to catholic school. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. But they went on their own.

LEVINE: And how about getting back to Italy before you left. Do you remember --lets see -- that you were building up for the -- for World War Two and how -- how was Mussolini perceived in in your little village.

ARLOTTI: Mussolini was a savior. Mussolini did so much for Italy in those days. Ah I can't go into detail, but I know he, like I said, he brought electricity to our little town. He brought a highway there. That -- we were isolated like we were [not understood]. Communities were isolated. We were isolated then right across the river there was a highway that could take us to Milan. It's still there today.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: He built bridges -- (did you ever go to Italy? I'm sure).

LEVINE: I've been there

ARLOTTI: But you ever go to *Calabria*?

LEVINE: No.

ARLOTTI: Ok. You should go there. You go to Sicily? -- Oh my god Sicily.

LEVINE: I got -- I'm going to Florence in September. (laughs)

ARLOTTI: No no. You have to go to Sicily. And if you go there -- if you want to -- you go and you can go through *Calabria*. Because you'll see things that Mussolini was responsible for. Like I said before, *Calabria* is all mountains. I mean there's no no no -- It's all rocky mountains. It's it's pretty much like the like the west here -- like Colorado. Pretty much. And He built these highways over -- and I rode the highways several times. -- I still can't see how they did it. You would go from one mountain top to another with a big high bridge. Then there would be a tunnel through that mountain. On the other side there'd be another bridge and -- it's so --Mussolini Mussolini did a lot for Italy. We -- everybody loved him.

ARLOTTI: I remember -- I do remember very clearly going to school -- I went to school that one year. We had the picture -- we all -- we had one room school. And we only went to school half a day and it was one -- half a day was the first grade and half a day was a a -- was a second grade. And I don't know what they did before I was born because this was very primitive. Very -- just one little room. And we had -- there was a pictures on the wall behind the teachers desk, the pope, the king, and Mussolini. And and there was one

time that I remember Mussolini need -- he appealed to all the people popul-- all the people, specially the women. If they had any gold to tu -- turn it in for the cause.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: Almost all the women, they took their wedding ring and they gave it to -- donated. That how he was -- now they could of hid it but they didn't because he he was highly respected. And and and --you know I've done a little -- I'm interested in history. And Mussolini was a great man he did a lot for Italy he could have done a lot more for Italy he just made that one mistake of of getting together with Hitler. And I read a couple books and I think and I-- I read a little about Mussolini -- I think the reason Mussolini got together with Hitler was because Mussolini had -- he had a big ego. I mean all these great leaders, dictators they have egos. He thought he was smarter than Hitler. And he thought by me getting together with Hitler, I'm gonna be the chief dog and I'm going to control all of Europe.

ARLOTTI: United -- America with the -- with the people and think Mussolini probably felt the same way. We thought that -- we looked at when we talked about Americas like one step one step away from heaven. I mean for us that was a dream to go to America.

LEVINE: You remember think that when you were a little boy?

ARLOTTI: Oh absolut -- absolutely absolutely. Defiantly.

LEVINE: What did you -- how did you -- what did you base this on? Why did you--

ARLOTTI: Because we would see these people -- these men come over. Like my father, he'd come over and they would tell us about it. And the fact that our

father were able to make a living, we knew that. And the fact that everybody was going to go there. You know, if everybody -- if everybody is going to the ball game -- you know what I mean.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: It it -- you want to go to because everybody's going there. Everybody was going to America. It's -- probably -- there was more than fifty, sixty percent of the people from my home town came to America. So we heard about these guys coming and coming back.

ARLOTTI: I remember one time when I was a little boy --my fa --Gino musta, musta been a little umf a little tiny many one -- a year or two. But he brought -- come over he brought me a football -- a football. And I looked at it and I says, those Americans are nice nice but they're stupid. Why do they make a ball that's not round? (laughs) I didn't know what to do with this football. (laughs) And that's why we heard stories about America. And we knew that everybody wanted to go to America because they got jobs there, they could make money, they could -- there was no opp -- were we come there was no opportunity at all.

ARLOTTI: There was nothing nothing. Ah -- there was no str-- we had no stores. We had -- if a guy could afford to buy a couple --have a couple pigs he would slaughter them and and sell the meat. If everybody had a goat -- almost every family had a goat, and it was my job when I was nine-ten years old, as soon as I was big enough to walk. My job was when I didn't go to school I would have to walk with this little goat. Because there was no pastures, there was nothing to fed them so what we would have to do is to -- a goat will eat anything, a goat will eat anything at all -- so we would just walk with a goat along these mountain roads. And we would have to walk, because

there wasn't enough in one spot -- and it --I would walk all afternoon with my goat. Her name was *Regina*. I remember that.

LEVINE: Was what?

ARLOTTI: *Regina*, queen. (laughs) And I use to walk Regina every afternoon all over those little hills and mount -- and little-- just so that she could get something to eat. And --how -- most families --that's how we got our milk. From from -- the only way to get our milk was from the goats. And uh once and a while they would -- families would get together and buy a pig. You know maybe four - five families would get together. They would buy a pig, slaughter it, butcher it, make sausage, whatever and then they would share. Ya know -- that was a big thing. I think we did it one one time that I remember we did that. But otherwise there was nothing. I mean that -- Whatever somebody -- if you went to a doctor -- we didn't a doctor in my town we had to walk about a mile or two. The only time I saw the ocean -- although I could see the ocean --

LEVINE: Uh hum.

ARLOTTI: I never went there because it was too far to walk. And my doctor lived on the ocean and when --I broke one -- I broke an arm when I was must have been about years old and they took me to the ocean to see the doctor. And they never paid the doctor with money -- nobody had any money. They paid him in what they had. Lot of women sowed, they made little little clothing and stuff like that. Then there was a guy who was a shoemaker and a tailor and a barber. But there was nothing as far as a job where you --

LEVINE: Got money.

ARLOTTI: No. no no. Money -- the only money that was available was what came from America. No money was to be earned there.

LEVINE: Wow.

ARLOTTI: And that's why everybody looked at America because that was the place that was the place where.

LEVINE: So how did you get to the ocean to the doctor? What mode of transportation?

ARLOTTI: There was -- the little carts. Somebody in the town had a little cart with a donkey and they took me to the ocean to. And I stayed there for a couple days. I don't remember. And that was the only time I actually was at the ocean. Even though I could get up in the morning -- I could see the ocean.

LEVINE: Wow. Can you remember your father coming back?

ARLOTTI: Yes. Yes.

LEVINE: For trips?

ARLOTTI: Not not distinctly but I remember -- I I for example him

LEVINE: [superimposed] The football.

ARLOTTI: Come over and give me this football.

LEVINE: Right.

ARLOTTI: And he would come over. Yeah yeah. Vaguely I remember. Uh and uh--

LEVINE: Did he tell you stories about America? Do you remember?

ARLOTTI: No no no. I don't know. I don't think, I don't recall anything like that. And I remember him playing with us. He was a he was a -- a very joyful man. As a matter of fact -- my mother -- I remember my mother telling me before she passed away -- she di -- she lived to be ninety-seven years old. She would tell me that my father never grew up he was always a little boy. And he was. When he played with us -- when he was with us he would just play. Tease us and I remember I use to --he use to love to -- he had a heavy beard and he use to love to come and rub his bread on my face (laughs).

LEVINE: (laughs) Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: And he use to like to drink and dance. He used to get together with a man. In those days men used to have party. Women didn't party. Women didn't do anything. Men partied. And they use to get drunk and dance with each other. You know -- and he did a lot of that with his friends in Italy and the United States as well. But it was a different -- a different society all together. The women just had babies and took care of the babies and cooked and whatever. And the father, the man provided. And I I --

LEVINE: Wow.

ARLOTTI: And I wonder if it was better than it is today.

LEVINE: Huh.

ARLOTTI: As a as a eighty year old man I think back about it now. I I I feel so bad for today's society. I see my --

LEVINE: [superimposed] What do you think--

ARLOTTI: -- own kids they they have to struggle and she has to work, he has to work. We have Rita as a daughter who is -- she works and her husband works. But they're separated cause they don't get along. And they have a little boy and from day to day they don't know. They can't afford child care and this little boy goes from one place to another during the day while the -- while the mother and dad work. And and a -- everybody has to work. Oh my. Married, children, mother, husband. And I think when I talk about that like this some people miss under -- they think I'm a chauvinist --you know. I'm not a chauv -- I feel sorry for women today. I feel sorry, so so sorry because I know when women -- when my mother was with my dad -- he worked, he came home; she took care of the kids. They loved each other. And he respected my mother for what she did and he and she respected him for what he did. Today you you -- today there's no respect between husband and mother -- both competing with each other. And that's the whole problem, that's the whole problem. But that's another story.

LEVINE: Yeah that's another interview (both laugh). So ah -- lets see when you left why did you leave -- your father came back and --

ARLOTTI: No he he he just --he sent for us.

LEVINE: [superimposed] He sent

ARLOTTI: He didn't come back. He sent. --We cam --came over by ourselves. My mother, my brother Joe, who at the time must have been seventeen, -- yeah he was seventeen. I was ten and Gino three or four.

LEVINE: And so you travelled together?

ARLOTTI: We travelled together and --

LEVINE: And did your mother -- what happened -- I mean did your mother sell a house, or how?

ARLOTTI: No, we left the house there. They had build the house in.. -- it was a very nice house according to their standards. Like now to me it was just like a garage. There were only two rooms in it. But it was very -- my mother and dad they built it themselves. They built it -- that was he -- he built it before he came over. After he built the house he came to United States. They built the house their own -- they had to get their own water; they mixed their own concrete and the whole --. My mother told me this cause I wasn't around. The whole family pitched in. She had three sisters -- my mother did and they helped. My father had two sisters and they all helped. They use to walk to get the water and they use to help mix the whole -- four, five family got together and helped -- helped build this house.

LEVINE: And was a -- do you think that that was -- on purpose that your built a house before he --

ARLOTTI: I have no idea.

LEVINE: You have --

ARLOTTI: I have no idea what was going and and and so he -- we stayed there and he came over here. And then after that they just visited back and forth. What -- you know --- when they were first married they lived in a -- a real old house. They lived with her -- with my fathers parents.

LEVINE: And that was pretty typical, wasn't it?

ARLOTTI: Oh defiantly. Oh defiantly. Well even -- even when we came over -- whenever we came over --. Two of my brothers got married and we went to live -- and lived with one and we lived in another. We lived with three -- because my -- there was you know me, Gino, and Joe. Well Joe and I after the war -- after we both in the service -- we came out, we started a business together. But until we were able to take care of themselves we lived with one brother, then another brother, then another brother. And they -- they took care of us.

LEVINE: ah ha. Well you were saying that -- that's how you started.

ARLOTTI: [superimposed] In Italy, in Italy it was -- and there -- and there it was the same way. Italy was the same way. And when -- so um --

LEVINE: But I was wondering cause I've heard this before that when a couple got married it was traditional that the wife -- well the couple -- would move in with the moth -- with the husbands mother.

ARLOTTI: Yeah. I guess I never thought about it. But now that you mention it, yes. Yes that's the way it was. I I never heard of anybody -- when moving in with a with the wife's -- with the wife's parents. No

LEVINE: [superimposed] No it was the other way around.

ARLOTTI: No. No -- the other way around. And a and a -- I do remember that ah -- my grandmother -- even till the day she died -- cause she was here then -- she treated my mother just like a daughter. She taught her how to cook and she taught her how to take care of things. She was like a mother.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: To the -- to -- In other words a dau -- the the daughter-in-law became another daughter of that family.

LEVINE: Ah ha. Yeah.

ARLOTTI: And the ma -- and the ma -- and the and the daughter-in-law s respected the mother-in-law like a mother. Maybe sometime in the -- in most cases more so.

LEVINE: Right.

ARLOTTI: More so.

LEVINE: Cause they were under their roofs.

ARLOTTI: Exactly exactly. They had no choice. But a --Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: Yes.

LEVINE: Wow. Now what was your mother's name and maiden name?

ARLOTTI: Her name was Lesina. --L--Le -- L-E-S-I-N-A Furano F-U-R-N-O-N -- no -- fu --F-U -- F-U-R-A -- fu --ran --o -- F-U-R-A-N-O.

LEVINE: And ah -- and how would you describe her personality?

ARLOTTI: Her personality was ah -- very sad. She -- I think she was natural -- a a a a sad person. And ah -- ah -- the fact that -- as she -- life went on she had nothing to make her happy except us. And she was obsessed with taking

care of her five boys. And that was it. I mean that's all -- we were her whole world. That's all she knew. And ah -- you know she lost her husband -- she lost --you know -- she lost -- she lost two sons later on. Two of my brothers died. But all -- she never had a really -- a happy life. Nothing to be happy about except her sons and she took care of us.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: We wouldn't be were we are today if she brought us prop -- up properly. She used to say, go to church, work hard, save your money, and never do anything that would shame your name. That was her her her rules and she would repeat them over and over again.

LEVINE: And did --

ARLOTTI: [superimposed] Go to church.

LEVINE: --did all the sons do --

ARLOTTI: [superimposed] Oh yes.

LEVINE: --what she asked?

ARLOTTI: Yeah yes we did. Oh oh I -- we did we did. I mean -- I I I mean -- she molded my life. I mean a -- even even -- not today but -- you now I remember I remember as a young man I would meet a girl and if I said my mother wouldn't like her --I wouldn't I wouldn't go out with her. Or if she wasn't Catholic -- I wouldn't go out with her.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: But I did want an American girl. I didn't want a want a marry a Italian girl.

LEVINE: But --just--

ARLOTTI: I did not to marry -- I --I had opportunities to marry an Italian girl. Um -- a being Italian I didn't have to much -- I mean I I communicated we we were -- you know -- we were within Italians all the time but I didn't get married till I was thirty fou -- thirty-four years old. And then I married an -- English, German, American Girl. I did not wan to marry -- and now I ended up with a with a --

LEVINE: [superimposed] Italian.

ARLOTTI: -- Italian girl (both laugh).

LEVINE: Well um -- did your mother care that you didn't --

ARLOTTI: Yes.

LEVINE: She wanted you marry an Italian.

ARLOTTI: She --Oh yes. Oh yes. I could tell you a little story about that too. [not understood] (laughs)

LEVINE: Yeah. This is great. I love it. Go ahead.

ARLOTTI: When I first tell -- when I first decided -- When I was thirty-four and ah ah I went talk to mother I says ma ma mom I says I I -- I think I'm going to get married. I say um I think I met a nice girl and I'm going to get married . And she says an an Italiana [ph] -- she's an a Italian. I says ah -- I says, No mama -- I says I says -- she's not an Italian but I says I love her and I think

she loves me. She said least she's not stupid. (both laugh) Because her sons were (both laugh) But she -- and she -- and but she excepted --she excepted. Ah she didn't get along with a with both of -- well actually three of us married German, English girl for for whatever reason -- I don't know. Three of us brother married -- she didn't get along with any of them. The primary -- main reason was because she never learned how to speak English. She just could not speak this a -- so she couldn't communicate with my wife and my brothers wives. She couldn't communicate. And she had this way about her which started all the big trouble that every time she would see us -- me my brother --the ones who were married -- all of us even the ones who were married to Italian girl (I assume I don't know). But she would say did --(Italian words 41:27) She'd see us and -- you know (Italian words 41:28). She just ah -- and my -- I remember my wife -- my first wife she used to [not understood] that she say, dose your mother think that I don't feed you? But my mother would still do it every time. I would tell my mother, mom you don't have to ask me. I says I got a wife right -- she feeds me. Every --[not understood] this happened --every time she says ohh (Italian words 41:45) (laughs)

LEVINE: So she wanted to feed you.

ARLOTTI: She -- yeah. She was always worried that I wasn't getting feed by my wife -- by by the wives. And and and.. and they couldn't communicate and what happen was that ah that the the daughter-in -laws they all sort of had the same complaint about my mother. And they reinforced each other and they - - they just didn't like my mother but she was she was -- well I mean as far as I'm -- she was strong. She was --she she was strong but and and and overprotective of us. That got her into a lot trouble --overprotective of us.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah.

ARLOTTI: Ah and -- ah she was a good woman.

LEVINE: Did she -- were your wife -- your wife and your brothers wives catholic?

ARLOTTI: They were all catholic.

LEVINE: Oh. So that was alright.

ARLOTTI: Yeah yeah. No, we all we all stayed within the catholic faith.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: Yes.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: Only the -- only this next generation strayed. But a yeah --

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: A definitely.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: Yeah we all went to church. I went to -- like I said I went -- a alter boy. And Gino went to church. I think I was probably the most religious of the -- of of all of us. Then later on in life uh most of my brothers didn't even go to church. But they were very good men. I mean -- I had --

LEVINE: Um hum.

ARLOTTI: -- My hero was my second brother who I loved dearly. He was the most patient --the most wonderful man I've ever met. But he never went to church.

LEVINE: Um hum.

ARLOTTI: He never talked much. He had a wife -- German wife --who was very very domineering. But he would say a word because he -- and and I had problems with my first wife too later on in life. And the same thing happened. Ah -- but ah family came first.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: I still went to church. I still had faith in God and I was married, I had children. And and a --

LEVINE: [superimposed] So you just couldn't put up with it

ARLOTTI: I remem I remem-- I remember telling my wife --you can throw anything you want at me but you'll never give into me because we have five children together. I told her cause she wanted to get a divorce. I says, if you want to get a divorce --I says you go ahead -- go ahead and leave but I says I don't care what you say or do to me you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: That was hard times. But we had --we had good times too.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: But -- I'm just saying this to show you that --

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: -- to tell you -- express to you that we had that -- my mother had instilled in us this faith in God and faith commitment in what you're doing in life.

LEVINE: um hum.

ARLOTTI: And you never quit once you make a decision. If it's a right decision no matter what happens you stick by it.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: And that the way she taught us. And and --

LEVINE: Now do you think your mother was sad even in Italy, when you were like a little boy?

ARLOTTI: She was sad. She often took -- her mother died when she was a little girl. And she had sibling girl -- she must have been -- my mother must have been maybe -- I don't know but -- she wasn't that old maybe ten -- maybe ten years old. And she -- when her mother died she was the oldest and she had three other little sisters. And she became the mother.

LEVINE: [superimposed] Mother.

ARLOTTI: And she had a hard time. Then father later on -- my grandfather, her father later on remarried -- and my mother still had to take care of her and I think her whole life she was she was struggling. And in and in and and she was she di -- she didn't trust people. She was so overprotective of everything, of her family, that she just ju -- be careful all the time be careful -- watch what

you say, watch what you do. You know she was a -- and and and and ...and she must have had a -- a sort of a a negative attitude to start with. Plus her life from when she was little girl didn't do anything to to change it. Because she had a sister who was a a [not understood] -- but her sister was was wasn't didn't have the responsibility that that my mother went through. So it's hard to say.

LEVINE: But because she married your father who was the opposite, right? The --

ARLOTTI: [superimposed] Oh yeah oh oh oh oh they lo --they loved each other. She -- even whenever he wa --in this country when he party come home drunk and then my mother oh she'd -- I remember he was he was rather fat, ch -- chubby, short and fat. And she used to take his shoes off, put his socks on, put his shoes on. When he came -- she would ah get him anything -- any time he wanted something to dr -- eat or drink she would go get it. He didn't have to ask. I mean she she was dedicated -- she was a dedicated women --

LEVINE: Um hum.

ARLOTTI: -- to her husband. And he he was and he was nice -- I mean from what I remember he was he was a good father to -- he was very -- he was playing around all the time. My mother was struggling (both laugh).

LEVINE: Yeah yeah yeah.

ARLOTTI: Yeah.

LEVINE: So um -- how bout the trip over on the Rex?

ARLOTTI: The trip over --

LEVINE: [superimposed] Do you remember anything?

ARLOTTI: -- in the Rex. Yes. Ah -- and I this is --I do know for sure that we were all sea sick. I was so sea sick that they put me in the hospital infirmary for for one or two days -- I don't remember.

LEVINE: On the ship?

ARLOTTI: On the ship. Yes.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: And Gino was the only one that wasn't sick. And uh I do remember (although it could have been a dream) that we were in a cabin. My mother was on the bunk -- on one bunk. My brother Joe was in the other bunk and my --I was in another bunk. And little Gino -- my mother saying to Gino to go to the sink, get a little wash cloth, put cold water and bring it to us. And we would put it on our heads because we were we were really sick. I remember that.

LEVINE: Ha.

ARLOTTI: And I remember one little thing again. It could -- it's possible that it was a dram but I'm pretty sure but I'm pretty sure it happened. I remember when we got th -- I guess what I know now was I didn't know then both -- Ellis I -- EI Ellis Island. Where the train comes in to pick up -- would that -- would be the Ellis Island or --

LEVINE: Well that would be Ellis Island. But um -- It depends you could have gone back --

ARLOTTI: Well it was a place where there was a lot of space and there was benches and a train came in.

LEVINE: Oh it was a big train station.

ARLOTTI: Right right. It was like a train station. And I was sit --we were sitting there and all -- and then my ma -- my fa --my father got off. I guess we didn't see him -- I don't see him get off the train but he's walking toward us from where the trains were. And my mother got up to greet him. As I got to -- then we all got up -- I wa -- we were sitting on this bench and it had dark floor. I told this story in in the in in -- when they interviewed -- a -- cause it's so --. And I looked down and there was a grape on the ground. And I remember I was in short pants (this I remember) and I looked at that grape sitting there in dirt -- there was dust from the train -- it was pretty dusty. I just uh wanted that grape and I says, if I pick it up my mother is going to holler at me because it's filthy. So I remember that I got up -- I went like this -- I went like this this -. My father was coming down -- I went like this and picked up the grape and I wiped it on my pants and I threw it in my mouth before they saw me (both laugh). I --for me it was it was a big -- a treat -- I mean a a a -- it was it was -

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: Yes.

LEVINE: And what was the reunion with your father like --then when you actually were actually here?

ARLOTTI: Well I remember he -- well -- he oh a -- I remember he came over and oh -- he was -- he worked. When he didn't work he he spend a lot of time like he like to Weddle, he did gardening and he was very nice to us -- always always

having fun us. That's only I remember. He only got angry at me one time -- one time when he was having a party with his b -- with his a friends and a they were they were pulling jokes on each other. And I must have been eleven by that time. And I thought I'd join in the party and my fa -- my dad went to sit down and I pulled the chair from under him.

LEVINE: (gasps)

ARLOTTI: And he fell down. And he said -- oh he was so angry --he he get me he started beating me. And my mother came over she's pulling hair. That's that's what they do in Calabria in those days. When there when there -- women they pull their hair and they scratch them face when their morning is tough. And my mother's pulling hair she says, oh god leave him alone (Italian word?) And I remember that's the only time that my dad ever was was stern with me. Otherwise -- my recollections he was always playing little games with us always goofing around and playing with us.

LEVINE: Yeah. Wow. That's --

ARLOTTI: [superimposed] For two years .

LEVINE: -- that's interesting about the -- pulling the hair and scratching the face.

ARLOTTI: Oh.

LEVINE: Were there other things?

ARLOTTI: Oh my mother -- they oh they did that there was a thing and (coughs) well (coughs). Funerals were so different in those -- over there. They use to scream and and yell. I mean when they use to -- when there was a funeral --

oh my -- well naturally the funeral -- they would have -- lay out the body in in in in the in the house.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: There was no [not understood]. And the women would just sit there and wail.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: Ohhhhhhhhhh (wails) (Italian sentence). And they would scra-- literally scratch the blood came out of their out of their uh --

LEVINE: Face.

ARLOTTI:-- face And they would pull their hair. That would -- make -- suffer. It was a sign of -- and if you didn't do that people would talk about you because they figured you weren't -- you weren't really sorry. So that was something that was ingrained -- ingrained in that society that they did that. I read somewhere that in some cases when they didn't have relatives they actually hired women to come in and wail. Do that so that people -- so that they wouldn't be sc -- wouldn't be scandalized. You know. You had to have -- that had to be going -- I remember when dad died (this I remember real clear) I felt so bad that I lost my dad and my mother was sitting there but a -- she must have sat there all day and all night her -- they guarded him -- I don't know how many days it was and she just sat there wailing and screaming and crying and pulling her hair. And and she did that till the day she died. Even when sh -- after many many years when she used to get depressed real bad she used to scratch herself. Whenever she was in a -- we had her in a home when she was a ninety years old -- we had to put her

in a home. And every once and a while she use to get real depressed and she would go through this --

LEVINE: Hum.

ARLOTTI: -- this thing. It's something that's ingrained in them. I don't know what it's the --

LEVINE: Wow.

ARLOTTI: Yeah yeah.

LEVINE: Interesting.

ARLOTTI: Um hum.

LEVINE: Is there anything else you can think of like that? That's an Italian ah way of of of dealing with either -- sorrow or joy or -- you know.

ARLOTTI: Na Nothing specific. Ah nothing specific. I know you probably just like you see in the movies when there's a wedding ah -- how they dance and drink. And the men dance with themself -- but but with men they did in those days. And ah -- the only ha -- the only major celebrations we had was religious celebra --religious. There was no birthdays.

LEVINE: Um hum.

ARLOTTI: No no new years eve. All religious holidays.

LEVINE: Did -- did you have name days

ARLOTTI: Um hum. Yeah we had name days but in our wor -- where we come from was -- that if there was a if there was any ca -- any celebration would be very little. Ah we would like ah ah if sa Saint Raphael [ph] day or Saint Saint Joseph day --

LEVINE: [superimposed] And now we like [not understood]--

ARLOTTI: Maybe my mother would say we had to go to church today because it's Saint Joseph's day and she has a son --my son my son. So she would take all of us to church. There was no celebration per say.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: Ah ah the only big -- the only celebrations were Easter -- Easter and ah --

LEVINE: Christmas.

ARLOTTI: Christmas and and the patron saint of your church.

LEVINE: Oh. What was your --

ARLOTTI: [superimposed] After.

LEVINE: --church's patron saint? You remember?

ARLOTTI: Saint Maria [ph] Santa Maria la Mazzarello I don't know why they got the Mazzarello. Mazzarello means little club.

LEVINE: I thought it was a cheese when you first said it.

ARLOTTI: No. Mazzarel -- Mazzarello --yeah mo moz mo that mozzarella. Mazzarello -- ma M -- A is a little club and it's a statue of Saint Mary holding -- holding baby Jesus in one hand and a little club --- like a billy club --[not understood] in her hand. I don't know just don't ask for the story of a this.

LEVINE: Yeah. Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: And that -- and so whenever it was a feast day of that particular -- so whenever it was a um ah so probably in May sometime. I don't know maybe exactly how [not understood] it was. But those those holidays then we'd celebrate our [not understood]. Easter was the biggest the biggest day of we use to --

LEVINE: [superimposed] What would you do?

ARLOTTI: -- go to Palm Sunday. We -- they used to make -- we used to --wa we used to get olive branches and we and we used to reenact -- reenacted the the ah ah in in in --- even in a small little primitive community there was a church was down here. And on this little hill there was three crosses -- one the opposite side of this town. And on these -- on Good Friday they used to have reenactment of the crucifixion. I remember that because my old -- be before my a -- the brother that I loved so much --would pr -- right before he came over he played the part of Jesus. And I was so proud -- my si -- my brother I loved him and he's going to be Jesus. And they have the --the do the the stages of the cross from the church to to the to the -- walk across town and than than they they do whatever. Um I forget now exactly but they say prays and stuff in front of the -- the three crosses.

ARLOTTI: And the Palm Sunday was -- what they did they used to make these biscuits ah you -- they probably have them in New York. There there a biscut about like a like big donut like this. They make em I know with eggs. Then they

boil the egg --the when they make the eggs and flour and they they make these these rolls like that. Then they boil them. Then after they boil them they deep fry them.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: It's like a bagel. Very much like a bagel only they were hard. And we used to make them and and and put -- get an olive branch and we use to put them -- decorate a -- the branch with these biscuits and sometimes we even used paper -- with paper if we had paper. We didn't have much paper. But I do recall some people used to make little decorative things. They decorated the palm just like we do a Christmas tree.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: And we use to walk. We use to have a precession. You know how at Palm Sunday you have a precession.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: And then -- well only their precession was much bigger then we do today -- today. And we used to walk to the church and the priest would -- would would bless bless it. And then we also use to have a a thing like a like we use to ah -- I think this -- or for Easter for Easter Sunday we use to make this thing I -- there's a word -- they still do it now in in some catholic schools -- were they they they did a dish and then they put a cheese cloth -- they put a a cheese cloth than they put some ah wheat wheat ah seeds in it. And then it grows.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: It grows. And and they use to bring those dishes -- with real pretty you know with a you know their finest finest dishes. The nicest dishes they could have. Take it to church then the priest would bless that. Because that was a holy -- that was resurrection.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: You see the plant there with the seed --

LEVINE: Yeah

ARLOTTI: -- coming through. So that -- everything everything all the celebrations they centered around the church.

LEVINE: I see. So the religion was so important, right? I mean that was like -- the biggest event s of the year?

ARLOTTI: [superimposed] Oh oh yeah oh oh yeah oh deffinatly oh oh deffinatly. I mean praying al the time. I mean my mother she'd spend most of waking time sitting and sitting and praying. The rosaries and ra -- [not understood] this -- oh yes religion was very very important. And a lot of superstition through too.

LEVINE: What kind of superstition?

ARLOTTI: I know another another oh well for example you you couldn't -- you it it was it was uh bad to praise somebody. That's that's why my mother was sad too because -- people were not -- they st -- they had this superstitious belief that if you were overjoyess -- you weren't humble enough for God. God made you to be humble. God says you are the and -- [not understood] I can't quote but it says we are just nothing.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: And and it if if you were over jubilant you were -- you just weren't hum
humble enough to be a a good catholic -- good chris -- Christian.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: So what that led to (and then and I read this in a book too). Ah another book
that I bought at least [not understood] the way that I read but I can't
remember that. But anyhow -- they -- if you would see that somebody,
especially children that were exceptionally beautiful, you would never never
say oh how pretty you look. You didn't say that. And if it slipped you
immediately had to say a prayer.

LEVINE: Because then the child --

ARLOTTI:[superimposed] Because you would ha -- you would hex him. You would put
the (Italian word).

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: So you would never never say something -- nice to somebody because if you
did then you had to say this because you would cha -- you would bring them
bad luck. If I say you're beautiful the then would be -- and if I didn't says
these prays afterwards something gonna happen that's gonna you ugly.

LEVINE: Because God --

ARLOTTI: It's --

LEVINE: -- would want me to think I was beautiful. If you told me that.

ARLOTTI: Ah -- I don't think they really tied it to God. It just was a superstition --

LEVINE: Oh ah ha.

ARLOTTI: -- a superstition that if you praise something if you, if you brag about something, If you acknowledge something nice, something might happen -- that will will would change that.

LEVINE: Ah ha. Wow.

ARLOTTI: And I I I would (I'm only assuming myself that its from originally it started because God wanted us to be humble and and if you think about it and if you know you -- I'm sure you saw like your -- you understand your catholic faith -- and I do um and I I I I go to bible studies and I'm very um --

LEVINE: Wow,

ARLOTTI: -- I am very involved in. And the only way that you can truly be a child of God is to eliminate your ego. You have to surrender to God. You have to make yourself nothing. And then God -- be in you. And so --

LEVINE: But your mother must have felt she had God in her. That god would make her happy or --

ARLOTTI: [superimposed] Oh oh.

LEVINE: --God would make her --

ARLOTTI: Oh yeah but it was her job to be to show God -- to show God that that that she would sacrifice for him, she would she would do anything ever -- everything anything anything for God. And Saint Anthony, Saint Antonio and Saint Francesco she --they were -- well look at Saint Francis. I don't know [not understood]. Saint Francis what kind of life did he live? Humble, sadness and everything about him he was he was suffering.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: I understand that when he ah read a bo -- in another book. (I don't know how true it was). That when he was dying they wanted to bring him in the house Saint ah Saint Friar [ph] wanted to bring him and his mother (who later on became she -- and I don't know how true this is but I read it in a book. It was --- book I can I I'll tell you later what the book.) They wanted to put him in the house and he says I'm not I'm not worthy to be there. I I and he went outside the house as sick as he was he build himself a little shed. And that's where he died in this little shed outside made out of out of out of ah weeds. Now this -- were this thing may st st similar kind of thought that you have to -- you surrender everything to God.

LEVINE: Um hum.

ARLOTTI: You know it's hard. I mean I I I I don't understand this so naturally I can't explain it. But I think that's where it was. So you had to make yourself humble and sad and -- nothing be nothing. So to have a beautiful child -- you would never say that's beautiful.

LEVINE: Ah huh.

ARLOTTI: You know.

LEVINE: And the superstition?

ARLOTTI: Came in at a --

LEVINE: Came in.

ARLOTTI: If you didn't say these prays something bad would happen to you. He would lose -- they would lose what they had. You know their beauty whatever what. And that was very very very strict. Oh my mother oh oh God -- anytime -- you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: Oh yeah.

LEVINE: Wow. Boy that's a hard (laughs) burden to carry, isn't it?

ARLOTTI: Ye Yeah but then that's -- and a lot of women from --especially from southern Italy. Now if I don't know if you -- you know you might meets a lot of -- maybe you have maybe you will. A lot of women did -- or that -- have that kind of personality. You si meet si you meet women form Calabria and even after they come to this country -- if they were raised, born and raised over there, and it doesn't -- you know to adulthood. They just have a a sad disposition. They always look -- always look sad. Always always.

LEVINE: Hum. And they wear black a lot, right because --

ARLOTTI: [superimposed] Oh oh oh if you die -- if you're husband dies. My mother my mother wore black until she was ninety years old. No she was about eighty-five years old. She would not -- I mean black socks, stockings, everything shoes, everything it would have been black. And don't -- and you couldn't

change her mind. If I would try to, if we tried to change her mind she would get very angry at us. You let me alone, she says.

LEVINE: Um hum.

ARLOTTI: This is the way I want to this is the way I want to dress. I think she chan --I think she changed the -- when when one of -- either me either me or Gino got married. Was the first time that she didn't -- she took when she took that was when she was in her eighties. Whenever that happened.

LEVINE: Wow.

ARLOTTI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Wow.

ARLOTTI: Then they all they all they all were that way.

LEVINE: And that was because they were in perpetual morning? Would that be more right?

ARLOTTI: Exactly, Yeas oh yes oh yes. You had to show -- you know that you lost and lost your loved one.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: Mostly husbands you know and ah sons. And ah you know corner funerals everybody wore -- they used to wear a ve veil if they could have one. They use to cover their faces and between (both laughs) scratching themselves and pulling their hair oh was a --

LEVINE: Yeah they were hard on themselves.

ARLOTTI: Oh very very very hard. Very hard.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah yeah. Wow how interesting. Um let me -- I'm just going to pause.
Thinking back on your life --

ARLOTTI: Um hum.

LEVINE: Okay. Um so when you think of being Italian and being American how do
you put the two together for yourself?

ARLOTTI: (pauses) Well -- when I first acme over from Italy I like everything that was
American. I didn't like Italian.

LEVINE: Even though you didn't want to come?

ARLOTTI: Um. No no I wanted oh I wanted to come.

LEVINE: [superimposed] You want you want you were con -- you were very anxious to
get here?

ARLOTTI: Oh definitely --

LEVINE: [superimposed] Yeah Okay,

ARLOTTI: --definitely definitely. And when I got here ah -- I I ah -- well -- we didn't know maybe because of my mother -- and but I see my ma my aunts were the same way. We didn't really have -- as little kids we didn't have fun as a family. Like and I remember I went I I I became aquanited with a friend of mine, who is still a friend of mine, who was Irish -- an Irish-Italian. But they were more -- but they were Italian form long time ago. I other words they were Americanized. I mean now maybe their great grandfather on one side was Italian the other was Irish. And I use to go to their house and they use to all -- they had a piano in the house and they use to all sing. And ah and just every time I got together use to have -- I use to do that. The my hou-- In my home we never did that. My father did that but but it was him.

LEVINE: With his friends.

ARLOTTI: With his friends. You know and we were -- we were out of the way. And -- we --was no such ting as -- be because I guess life was hard we never had time to to really enjoy life. You know what I mean. And I and I put it that as being Italian thing -- an Italian thing. It was always always serious. Going to church all the time, always praying and there there was no fun in life. Was not -- and and and [not understood] was just you -- um I told you this --she made her laugh. I says Italian women don't don't keep themselves clean. You know in those days you know they had they they they didn't bathe that often. You know where where we come from we had no water. So how did they bathe? They needed a little bit of water and wash a little bit. But they had a -- as a ch -- as a little boy I use to you know get next to the type. They had an odor about them -- you know. But when I sta -- Upon American they sm -- their purfume they smelled so clean and pretty you know. But I was I was lwas ah I was enamored with the Ital -- with the Americans. You know.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: But I was still proud. I've always been proud of being an Italian --Ah ah even when I was young. But the older I got you know the more actually I got closer to the a -- to the a -- more interested in the Italian heritage.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: You know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: As a as a boy ah I -- I I even when I couldn't -- when I first came over when I couldn't speak very well I hung out with a couple little boys who could understand a little bit Italian. But later on I started hanging out with American boys. And I and my family use to always say oh you -- I'm Americanized. You know.

LEVINE: And you were gla -- you were glad to be Americanized.

ARLOTTI: Oh yeah, I was glad, Oh definitely definitely.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: oh definitely. But I never I never felt any ah less Italian. I was always proud. I mean if anybody made fun of me -- I mean one time a guy -- little -- a young kid as -- I must have been twelve -- thirteen years old. He made fun of me beca -- he called me a daigo [ph] and I ended up in a big -- in a fight. Because because I I wasn't --I didn't want to be insulted. I was proud to be an Italian and I still am. I always will be. More so right now I believe.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: Because I've learned a lot. I didn't know anything about Italy before.

LEVINE: Right.

ARLOTTI: I -- what know about Italy I've learned --since

LEVINE: [superimposed] Since.

ARLOTTI: And and most of it actually I've learned since I retired --

LEVINE: (laughs)

ARLOTTI: -- since I was sixty-five because I've had time to read.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: And ah -- so I'm very proud of being Italian and ah. But I can see things about Italians and Southern Italians that were a little repulsive. I mean even the crying, the sadness ah -- you know. I'm a I'm a -- I like to have fun myself. I like to enjoy life.

LEVINE: Right.

ARLOTTI: And ah I know ah -- and and every time they got together my family -- every time got together they use to drink a lot.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: And then argue. Italians like to argue. God gosh and me I'm I'm a I tell -- I'm a lover not a fighter. And and they use to get together and I swear they went out of their way to start an argument.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: That was a a a a form of recreation for them you know. And and I say oh (both laugh).

LEVINE: So what about the service?

ARLOTTI: Uh.

LEVINE: What what -- how did you --

ARLOTTI: [superimposed] Well fortunatly it was wasn't very long. It was less than two years.

LEVINE: And what years were you there -- in there?

ARLOTTI: Whats that?

LEVINE: What years were they that you --

ARLOTTI: 1944 -- 1945.

LEVINE: So did you see any action?

ARLOTTI: No no actually ah ah one of the happiest moment of life was whenever I -- I was going be -- be sent -- I was going to be sent to the pacific ocean to ah to prepare -- they had told us for the invasion of Japan. And I was in the navy

and naturally the navy was going to very involved. And ah I was eighteen at the time and ah we were we were scheduled to go over there. And ah at the time I had pretty -- I had got away from the church.

ARLOTTI: Let me -- since we've talked about so much about the church. When my father died -- my father was sick in his life. He got sick and ah he would -- and I went to school -- I was going to school at the time. So I left in the home he was sick and I went to school. On the way on the way -- no he was sick the night before he was sick. Okay [not understood] He got sick that night he called a -- my mother called in his room. He was pretty si -- had a fever and stuff -- called me and Gino in his room. We were both little boys and and my fa -- I remember my father he put his arms around me -- around us. And and he was in his bedsi -- bedside on his bed and he said -- he said to us he says, *Buona notte I miei piccoli angeli* my -- he says, good night my little angels.

LEVINE: Awh.

ARLOTTI: So the next day I got up -- he was sleeping so I didn't see him so I went to chur -- I went to school. And I was very very religious. That's when I was the alter boy and were they -- and me and god really had it together. I went I went to school all the way. And I use to have to -- I had to walk about ten -- twelve blocks to got to school. All the way to school and all the way home I was crying. I was praying.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: When I got to the house they told me that my father had been taken to the hospital -- he had died. I got angry at God. I didn't go to church. From then I must have been ah twelve. I would on holidays just to make my mother

happy. But I I didn't have it -- Got did -- me and God didn't. So I went to the -- I went to the navy.

LEVINE: You were still angry at God?

ARLOTTI: I was still angry at God until until -- I remember a pre --a chaplain gave us a talk before we were --we were going to come home for a week's furlough and then oh leave.

LEVINE: [superimposed] And then go to the Pacific.

ARLOTTI: Leave and then got to the Pacific. I came before and before we -- we came home -- were there was a big big hall and he was -- he preached. And he says, You all you men are being prepared or you -- you know he called us men even though we were kids -- are going to be prepar -- were going to go to the pa -- ah ah pacific. They estimate that before the invasion of Japan ends fifty per -- there'll be fifty percent casualties. Meaning that fifty percent of you will be dead a year from now. That hit me boy. That hit me like a ton. So after that I went to confession.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: And and and then -- then I up in uh close to God -- but how -- but for a while I was I was very very -- and then you know -- and then oh. And when I came home then on leave the last day we were eating supper with my family -- we were eating supper. My mother oh she was -- as we were eating supper we had a radio on they announced that Japan surrendered (laughs).

LEVINE: Oh boy.

ARLOTTI: And talk about celebration. We -- we got on the train I I got on the train because then every -- everybody travelled in trains. They didn't have airplanes -- no for transportation. And we had to from on a train from ah Pittsburgh to Bainbridge, Maryland which is near in Virginia someplace. Not Bainbridge but -- it was a it was a camp in Virginia. So we had to -- the train it was a continuous celebration. I got on the train in Pittsburgh and I had made a couple good friends from near by here in the navy they were with me and we were together. People would get on the train -- women, girls, everybody was celebrating, hugging and kissing. They go from station to station they was -- bunch would get off and more would get on. And we were going till we got to our destination -- that all the serviceman got to their destination. I was an unbelievable -- I can't describe the celebration.

LEVINE: Yeah

ARLOTTI: It was so --

LEVINE: Wow.

ARLOTTI: Unbelievable. And then from from there then we got a train and took us to San Francisco and from sa --from San Francisco I went to Guam. And I was stationed there for nine nine to --I think ten months. And it wa -- it was after the war was over though.

LEVINE: Yeah yeah. Wow. So when you when you where told that fifty percent of you would not live through an invasion wa wa what did you think? Did -- did you think like I', gonna -- I might die and therefore I I want to be in Gods good graces.

ARLOTTI: [superimposed] Yeah oh definitely oh definitely oh definitely oh def -- oh definitely that's why I went to confession --

LEVINE: Yeah

ARLOTTI: --and I made peace with God. Oh I was going to be dead.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: I was going to be dead. And then the war was still on you see.

LEVINE: Yeah right.

ARLOTTI: And when I was home - came home on leave for a week --I mean I had this -
-hanging over me. This is the last time I going to be with my mother and my
brothers this is this is the end. So you can imagine how I felt when I heard
that the Japan -- Japan had surrendered cause there would be no in --there
would --

LEVINE: Right

ARLOTTI: -- not be any invasions.

LEVINE: Right.

ARLOTTI: So that changed the whole ballgame (laughs).

LEVINE: Oh my gosh.

ARLOTTI: It was wonderful.

LEVINE: You know that famous photo in Time Square of the of a sailor kissing --

ARLOTTI: [superimposed] Kiss --Oh.

LEVINE: -- When the war was over.

ARLOTTI: That was all over -- I wished I had some pictures from -- it was -- I just cannot describe it. I can't even -- everybody you saw everybody and it was lot of girls lot of girls. Cause in those days I mean all -- most of the service men -- most of the men were in the service. I mean it was a -- it was a a shortage of men so it and and and and but but in those days though. It It wasn't like today there wasn't that sex thing you know.

LEVINE: Right.

ARLOTTI: Everybody hugged and kissed you now that was their -- You know when we went out -- we went out as a teenager make out. We made out when we got to kiss a girl. You know.

LEVINE: Yeah right.

ARLOTTI: So so nothing vulgarity happen you understand. But these girl would come in the train they just -- just --

LEVINE: Wow.

ARLOTTI: --hug and kiss everybody and just -- there wasn't much drinking. You couldn't -- there was just an on going party it was no -- and it lasted all the way from there to to Virginia. Every station there would -- train would stop girls would get off and they would get back on (laughs).

LEVINE: Right

ARLOTTI: New ones would get back and we just had a oh a wonderful wonder.

LEVINE: Wow.

ARLOTTI: I'll never forget that.

LEVINE: Yeah that must have been ah --

ARLOTTI: And during the war -- I might mention this--

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: During the war the you -- I I just just came to me.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: I was very pissed off at Mussolini.

LEVINE: I was just going to ask you that.

ARLOTTI: Because I loved him.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: I I respected him.

LEVINE: Right.

ARLOTTI: I loved him.

LEVINE: Right.

ARLOTTI: And when he got with with with Hitler -- when he got with Hitler and then the Americans were fighting against the Italians I blamed it on him. I just hated him. I just --I thought he -- I thought he betrayed the Italian people.

LEVINE: Yeah -- Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: And I had nothing --it just changed from from admiration.

LEVINE:: Huh.

ARLOTTI: And later on I got older I sort of a got -- you know I realized that he he did a lot of good things for Italy. But I was very very angry. I was a that that it made us Ital -- you know Italians. And and a I just read recently -- Did you know that in the Italian in in -- during the American war -- during the Second World War of all ethnic men fighting in the service the Italians had twice as many as any other nationality. Including Irish, Germans, whatever. The It -- there was more Italian soldiers fought in the Second World War in United States army and navy then there was any other nationality except Americans and --people who were born in America. I thought that was that was interesting.

LEVINE: Yeah ah ha. Yeah. Wow. I mean I've interviewed people who came -- immigrated from Italy and were sent back to Italy to fight.

ARLOTTI: Is that right?

LEVINE: From the United States.

ARLOTTI: Is that right? Gee.

LEVINE: So that really --

ARLOTTI: [superimposed] That that might have happened to me if my father wouldn't have been in the si -- an American citizen. That could have happened to me. Do you know it.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: Oh boy.

LEVINE: Um. So um so what would you say has given you a lot of satisfaction in your life -- over your life?

ARLOTTI: Oh well the -- first of all--

LEVINE: [superimposed] What what's been a source of?

ARLOTTI: (laughs) A source of satisfaction -- the fact that I'm alive today (laughs). I lost three brothers -- three brother died before they were sixty-five. So the fact that I've reached this state in life and Gino's -- Gino's seventy-three that that that my my my -- and my family. The fact that a that I I know apart [not understood] five beautiful -- five beautiful children. Even thought they're not what I would want them to be. But a -- but they're still good people.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: They're all good people.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: Oh my kids they they they they've disappointed me in ways because -- well like my oldest son to me -- my oldest son when he was going to college he said to me, dad, he says -- and and I I admire him he did this but the time it hurt. He says, dad he say, I now you're always talking to me -- you're always preaching. He says, I want you to know that most of the things you tell me are a bunch of bullshit. But he says, be reassured that the valuable things that you've given -- teaching me will stay with me forever.

ARLOTTI: And I thought that was very very very profound. And that's where my kids are. They do their thing.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: Because I spoil them. I made them that way. I spoiled my kids -- I loved them too much. I let them do their own thing and that's what doing today. They're doing their own thing.

LEVINE: They're good people -- then why --

ARLOTTI: But they're good people and that's that's what gave me the great sat -- and the great satisfaction -- I'm proud of myself. I mean lets -- I mean I'm not --

LEVINE: Now what --

ARLOTTI: -- Boasting.

LEVINE: -- did you do? What did you do that you said you had your own business.

ARLOTTI: Yeah with my brother.

LEVINE: [superimposed] What was that?

ARLOTTI: Then my -- dry cleaning and tailoring.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: Ah and my older brother Joe Joe he was responsible -- and I given him ah he he was -- I give him a lot of credit because I wouldn't be what I am because I was been -- basically I didn't have much ambition as a person -- never did. I just lov -- I was happy the way I am. A always -- I am today, I way when I was twenty. My father -- my brother Joe he was very -- a doer -- a dare taker, you know. And that we were partners so we complemented each other because I I I -- I lacked -- I had what he lacked and he had what I lacked. So we complemented each other. Although we we got along for forty years we worked together.

LEVINE: This is the one you idolized?

ARLOTTI: No no.

LEVINE: The one who played Jesus.

ARLOTTI: No no no. I didn't idolize Joe. (laughs)

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: Joe was very very demanding. He very -- he was like the father. When my father came to United States he was the oldest.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: And he was like a father. And he and he ruled like -- worse than my father. With very stern -- he and he would -- he was only seven years older than me but he was -- told me what to do. Told me what -- ah -- I mean when we got a business -- when we got the business together everything was his because I was the little brother and stuff like that. And he didn't treat me -- he didn't show much respect for me. Ah ah but I respected him because I know he helped me out. Because I I just wasn't a -- I know --

LEVINE: A pusher. You weren't going to --

ARLOTTI: No no I wasn't like a a risk taker and he was. And we had a successful business then he died. And ah he died about ten years before I sold I I I sold the business. Ah -- there was a a traumatic experience that I wouldn't go into between him and me because he was dying and he demanded so many --. I mean he he was a a a a obsessed with his -- his family and didn't realize that I had a family. And he didn't -- ended everything when he died -- before he died. He wasn't dead -- he was dying for over a year and he knew he was dying. So we had a -- you know a very heartbreaking [not understood] go on. And ah being what I am -- and I'm proud the way I am. (Like I said without sounding boastful). But if you want to take it that I'm boasting.) I I I prayed a lot and I said I said I finally after we come close to having a some very serious problem. I didn't want to fight over money with my brother. Cause I respected im and even if I didn't respect him -- my mother didn't raise me to be that way. So I said to him you do what you want to do and I'll live with that. So he did what he wanted to do. I ended up with the business. I had to pay a lot of money to pay him out -- his family out. But -- and this I tell it because I I tell it as a a a as a witness to God. That I made a decision -- I made that decision not to fight him and gave a lot away. But God looked down on me and he says, don't worry Ralph. He says, I'll -- I'll take care of you. Within ten years that business grew more than a

hundred percent. And when I sold it -- it was worth way more than I ever dreamed of. Not millions but way more than I dreamed of.

LEVINE: Do you think you changed at all after your brother died when you were in charge of the whole thing? I mean the way you did it?

ARLOTTI: Well I hate to say it but I was happier because for the first time I was my own -- I could do what I wanted to do. Before that I I I -- Before I got married I couldn't buy a car. I couldn't do anything. He use to give me what I needed.

LEVINE: Oh hum.

ARLOTTI: You know he he was like the father.

LEVINE: Right.

ARLOTTI: So so yes. When I would -- whenever after -- well I I would -- that was the happy -- one of the hap -- I was really happy. Especially when I see that things were working.

LEVINE: Um hum.

ARLOTTI: Because I got along well with people and people respected me. I had I had a business in a in a very a exclusive area in Pittsburgh, Falls Chapel -- near Falls Chapel which is-- and there's only two or three other place in Pittsburgh were all the rich people live. And I made friends with with a heads of corporations and and and they use to give presents ad take me to ballgame, And one even offered me -- one time I remember one guy offered to take me to Hawaii. I was a -- Pitt was playing in a -- Pitt basket -- football team was playing a a game in Hawaii. He offered to take me there on his

plane. I mean and and for me [not understood] And I'm proud of -- I mean I'm I I -- that's why I was so happy.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: I was so happy cause I was good at what I was going.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: I was getting response. I was getting rewards right and left.

LEVINE: Right right.

ARLOTTI: You know. So yes you know after being put down for so long by my brother. Although don't get the wrong impression. I still loved him. I still respected him but he never showed any -- I was like a -- nothing.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: So when I was on my own I was successful.

LEVINE: And you were successful.

ARLOTTI: And I was good at it. And then then my kids were growing up and ah so that's that's what I'm most proud of.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah yeah.

ARLOTTI: And and I have a lot of friends. I alwa -- I have always said that that only I want to accomplish in life is that when I go sometime they'll say, oh Ralph was a good guy. And I'm proud -- and I think I've accom -- accomplished that. I could go tomorrow and I think I would think that I would have a few people say that. That's what makes me happy.

LEVINE: Oh that that's great.

ARLOTTI: Um hum.

LEVINE: That's great. Well I don't know. I was going to ask you something else but that sounds so perfect.

ARLOTTI: Um hum.

LEVINE: Maybe we should end on that note.

ARLOTTI: That's okay.

LEVINE: Well thank you so much.

ARLOTTI: Ah ha.

LEVINE: I I I enjoyed this interview very much and that you.

ARLOTTI: I wish I was educated sometime that enough to to do -- to write book because I could write a book. A but a --

LEVINE: You know you could write a book right now.

ARLOTTI: Well I did right my memoir. I I wrote some -- I I wrote something for my kids to read. They don't want to read them now. But a a --

LEVINE: They will.

ARLOTTI: -- I wrote things down like that because I I I preach this I preach this to all my Italian friends.

LEVINE: Wait I want to ask you something else.

ARLOTTI: Yeah go ahead. Okay ah --

LEVINE: Go ahead.

ARLOTTI: Ah I tell this to all my friends. We all came over from where we came from in Italy. Some worse than others but we were --- but we we've come a long way. Um if you read if you read a statistics, Italian Americans are one of the very very successful. We' re we -- we earn more money then Americans do, we're more successful in every -- just about everything you can count measure. So I say people that came over form Italy write it down. Or or record it because your kids may not be interested today -- interested today but a hundred years from now -- they should know. They should know the story. They should hear it from us.

LEVINE: Right.

ARLOTTI: Not from some historian who who who --

LEVINE: You're right. And that's what this is all about really. I mean we're trying to get it down.

ARLOTTI: Well and that's why -- that's why I I enjoy doing it.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: Because I would like a hundred years from now or two hundred years from now -- and that could very well be. Somebody might read it and say, is that the way it was?

LEVINE: That's right.

ARLOTTI: The way that Ralph Arlotti explained it. That the way it was? Yes, this is the way it was.

LEVINE: And it's better than a scholarly approach. It's having lived it and --

ARLOTTI: [superimposed] Definitely definitely.

LEVINE: Yeah

ARLOTTI: So I tell all my friends -- do that write it down write it down. Don't just talk about it. Cause kids today they don't they -- just goes in and out the other. And ah and but I -- you know what taught me about that what [not understood]. Right now I wished I I try to do a little study on my family name. You know.

LEVINE: Um hum.

ARLOTTI: And I couldn't get any information in all Italy. The only thing I got was a was through the Mormons. I found out that my name was originated in Southern France.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: And a in the city of Arlis. And a lot of Arlotti's are in northern in in a in northern Italy.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: Now how my grandparent -- my grandfather got to si -- Calabria I have no idea. But beyond my grandfather I don't know anything about my family -- and I would love to know. What happened between -- you know in the past.

LEVINE: Yeah yeah.

ARLOTTI: Who -- where do I come from. You know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: But I have nothing -- nothing to go by. So it so if we could do that maybe -- not maybe -- maybe not I know. I know my sons or my children today maybe not -- might not interested. But maybe my grandchildren or --

LEVINE: Your great --

ARLOTTI: Great grand children.

LEVINE: Great great grandchildren (laughs).

ARLOTTI: You know they might take an interest in -- I would love to know more about what it was -- where my family growing up.

LEVINE: So good.

ARLOTTI: But it's -- there's no no place you can find any information. The the was -- the records weren't kept. You know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: So.

LEVINE: Well let me ask you -- you were interviewed ah for the Heinz ah um --

ARLOTTI: Yeah.

LEVINE: -- museum. Wa What kind -- how does what you talked about in that interview compare with this one. Or is it pretty much cover the same --

ARLOTTI: Well --

LEVINE: -- territory or not?

ARLOTTI: Ah it it probably probably covers some of the territory but this this interview was a little longer I think.

LEVINE: And way the--

ARLOTTI: And ah.

LEVINE: -- other one ah about Pittsburgh a lot more?

ARLOTTI: No no they basicly want to ask me the same question you asked me --

LEVINE: [superimposed] Oh I see.

ARLOTTI:-- it was it was almost the same thing.

LEVINE: Oh really.

ARLOTTI: Yeah yeah,

LEVINE: Cause they -- cause it's interesting to know because ah you' re the second person in Pittsburgh that I've interviewed who was also interviewed for that.

ARLOTTI: Yeah and a --

LEVINE: it would be just nice for any researcher who get interested in you're story they know that there's something in the Heinz Library.

ARLOTTI: Yeah yeah it's it -- what I've told you I think I went into a little more detail about family life. With him I just talked about myself and and --

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: -- and my experiences. But here we went into my mothers and we--

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: cover a more of --

LEVINE: More.

ARLOTTI: a bigger scope. But it was similar very similar.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: Nice young man -- very nice young man--

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: -- Interview me.

LEVINE: Yeah yeah. Okay well um okay well is there anything else before we [not understood].

ARLOTTI: No that's it that's it.

LEVINE: Do you think coming here as a as a young man -- a young -- a child really. Do you think your personality -- is somehow -- that that experience is reflected in your personality? And then --

ARLOTTI: I think so.

LEVINE: -- That immigration experience--

ARLOTTI: [superimposed] oh oh --oh my oh def --

LEVINE: How do you think that --

ARLOTTI: Well becau --

LEVINE: -- had it's affect on you as a person.

ARLOTTI: Well be because because I can see where I was and I can see where I'm at. And it's such a such a stretch.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: I find it hard to believe.

LEVINE: (laughs)

ARLOTTI: I find -- find it very hard to believe because I see today -- today people that are born in this country and they don't appreciate what they got. They don't work -- they don't grasp for the opportunity to do -- to work hard. And I I I can I can see -- I mean we didn't we didn't -- we just grabbed a ja -- where we could make a a a penny we went and did it. Today kids they have to like what they gonna do. They have to have fulfillment and all that crap and they have to be -- live in a certain climate. And all the -- we just had the opportunity and we grasped it. When I first started for tw -- for for for -- I said -- twenty-five cents a week. When I went to the -- When I was seventeen he gave me a bonus of two dollars and I was grateful for that. I don't say that because he was cheap -- I was grateful because he feed me for one thing. And I learned how to work -- learned how to work and he made me enjoy -- I enjoy when I work.

ARLOTTI: Even today as old as I am when I'm doing something I enjoy it. It's not a -- my kids them -- they complain about their work all the time. I hate this -- I hate that. They just never learned to appreciate the good things in life. Having a job is a good thing. You know. Raising a family -- it's a good thing. Having a relationship with a wife and a husband even if you -- even when you do --don't get along -- it's a good thing because you you can improve and you can work on it. You know what I mean -- you can make everything better and you can at the same -- at the same time if you say I hate this I hate that you make a good thing bad.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: You know with negativism you ruin --so that's were I think I'm I'm I um -- made me the way I am because I enjoyed -- I appreciate everything that God has given me. And I also believe it's my my in my faith as far as great faith concerned. I believe that --and I sometimes I get in trouble with priests about this because I discuss things like this. I've got to enjoy life even if it means sometime maybe I might tell a dirty joke. I I like to laugh, I like to be joyful -- God created me to be happy. I often say -- the reason we call today the present is because today is a present from God.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ARLOTTI: And if we don't enjoy it we are insulting God. If I give you a gift and you don't enjoy that gift, you hurt my feelings.

LEVINE: Right.

ARLOTTI: Isn't that true?

LEVINE: Um hum.

ARLOTTI: So I think it's how you live that you -- your spirituality comes come comes to for. Not not not reading the -- although I do that -- nothing wrong with going to church -- nothing wrong with reading the Bible. I do all that -- you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: But if I don't live a happy life -- a joyful life that God has given me and look it with optimism and happiness and gratitude all the Bible, all the praying, and all the church going it doesn't mean shit. Excuse the expression.

LEVINE: Now do you think it --

ARLOTTI: (laughs)

LEVINE: -Do you think you --I mean that's the opposite of your mother's idea.

ARLOTTI: Yeah yes yes yes yes yeah yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: Maybe I'm like my dad. I don't know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: Maybe I'm like my dad. Cause he --

LEVINE: Or maybe because saw your mother with the opposite --

ARLOTTI: Oh.

LEVINE: --ah ah attitude --

ARLOTTI: Well well --

LEVINE: -- you went the other.

ARLOTTI: I imag -- I imagine that family that I start hang -- hanging out -- that Irish family that would sing all. That was fo for me was a was a wonderful experience. It taught me something.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: You know. You can get together even when -- and -- whenever you don't agree with each other. You don't have to all argue about it. If you are Dem-- I'm a Dem -- I'm a Republican you're a Democrat or a I don't like this -- I don't like the New York Yankees or whatever. We don't have to argue about it. We can still have fun together.

LEVINE: Um hum.

ARLOTTI: And that's -- that's what I learned. But in in in -- with my my family you know if if we start talking about religion or start -- an issue came up that I don't agree with -- one didn't agree with the other it ended up in a big argument.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: And that that that -- when I saw that and I saw that with my brother -- ah when I was that I says, well I don't want to be that way. You know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: And and and I I just -- God has blessed me with with a with a outlook -- outlook and --

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: -- I hope he keeps me smiling all time.

ARLOTTI: Wow.

ARLOTTI: And I and I'm and ah and I and I believe in evangelizing too. I mean -- like I said I I'm a -- like you've noticed I'm pretty spiritual. But I'm not that

religious. I go -- although I go to church almost daily. I -- until the recent -- I got a little lazy. Ah --

LEVINE: Well let --why don't you say on the tape that you married -- remarried at a later age. I think you said that earlier.

ARLOTTI: Thirty-four thirty-four. Yes. Will I I -- I just ah ah --

LEVINE: No I mean the second.

ARLOTTI: Oh the second time.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: Ah well --it was only about five since my wife died then I met Rita and we married. And I I I liked her a lot but I didn't want to get married cause she -- I was seventy-seven year old and I was too old to get married.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: And she -- and she told me she says, you can [not understood] up -- cause I wanted to go out just to have somebody to be with and stuff like that -- companion.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: And she says, well you're going to lose this companion if you don't put a ring on my finger.

LEVINE: (laughs)

ARLOTTI: So -- so we got married and she's wonderful oh she's she just wonderful.
And her and I are like two little ah high school kids. We go to -- we we kiss
and hug and pinches asses together (both laugh).

LEVINE: Well you look -- you look very happy. I can say that.

ARLOTTI: I am I am I am I am - but a you know I got things to worry about too. I have a
daughter in California whose whose in bad shape and. But I try not to -- not
to worry about it. I try not to let it get me down.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: Ah um ah you know I I do worry about my kids more than I should. I I laugh
a lot but I always have that -- you know when things go go wround with my
kids --

LEVINE: Well you're responsible.

ARLOTTI: I I you know I worry about it. But a I try to -- I try to say Lord take it away
take it away. It's your job. You know it doesn't always work but I say hey I
brought them forth you take care of them now. And did -- I'm done I can't do
anymore.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ARLOTTI: That that's my outlet.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well --

ARLOTTI: Do you have children?

LEVINE: No I don't.

ARLOTTI: No no.

LEVINE: No no.

ARLOTTI: Ah well let me say this some some -- you know Gino didn't have any children.

LEVINE: Oh.

ARLOTTI: Well he got married -- he's married now.

LEVINE: He's on his honeymoon (laughs).

ARLOTTI: And he's on the honeymoon and and his wife has a daughter but -- there's many times where I envy Gino. I mean most of the time I felt sorry for him cause he have -- haven't any --

LEVINE: Children.

ARLOTTI: -- ah ah didn't have any children. And he was sad. And and his wife -- passed away. They it it it they were bitter people and they were unhappy. I felt sorry for them. But there was many times when I envied them too because --ah ah ah ah children give you a lot of joy but none of it is cheap. None of them is free -- you have to pay for it. Sooner or later you're doing to pay. Priest told me that once he says, remember this Ralph he says, everything you get in life is good but you got to pay for it one way or another.

LEVINE: Another.

ARLOTTI: (laughs)

LEVINE: He's probably right.

ARLOTTI: (laughs)

LEVINE: Okay. Well let's end --