

EI-161/SCARANTINO

EI-161

ARCANGELA SCARANTINO

BIRTH DATE: JULY, 1895

INTERVIEW DATE: 5/26/1992

RUNNING TIME: 26:40

INTERVIEWER: DEBRA HEID

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INTERVIEW LOCATION: PITTSTON, PA

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 10/1993

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., /1993

SICILY, 1919

PORT: PALERMO

AGE 24

RESIDENCES: US: PITTSTON, PA

Oral Historian's Note: Mrs. Scarantino is the mother of Ross Scarantino, EI-160. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of the Oral History Project, 1/21/1994.

HEID: This is Debra Heid for the National Park Service. Today is Tuesday, May 26, 1992. I'm in the home of Arcangela Scarantino, who lives in Pittston, Pennsylvania. Good afternoon, Mrs. Scarantino. (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak Italian to each other.)

MRS. SCARANTINO: (she laughs) No talk Inglese.

MR. SCARANTINO: She can't talk so good in English, she said.

HEID: Mrs. Scarantino doesn't speak English very well, so her son also is here to help.

MRS. SCARANTINO: I'm ninety-six years.

HEID: You're ninety-six years old.

MR. SCARANTINO: Two more months she'll be ninety-six.

HEID: Oh, wonderful! Now, do you remember what life was like in Italy? (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

MR. SCARANTINO: She had farms in the old country. They raised wheat and olives and walnuts. She had all kinds of fruits and vegetables and big room, they had a big farm. Nobody was there. Oh, the chickens, oh. Oh, yeah.

HEID: She had chickens?

MR. SCARANTINO: Yeah, yeah. Goats. Goats to make milk, cheese.

HEID: So how was life in Italy when you were a little girl? When you were growing up, how was life for you?

MR. SCARANTINO: (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.) It was good. We got along, she says.

MRS. SCARANTINO: No water, no water, hot water, no cold.

MR. SCARANTINO: She says in Italy it was nicer because it was warm. Here, she got here in December, it was cold. (they

laugh)

MRS. SCARANTINO: In Italia, no snow, no snow. Just (?).

HEID: When you were growing up did you go to school at all? (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

MRS. SCARANTINO: No, no school.

MR. SCARANTINO: No school, no.

MRS. SCARANTINO: My father, (Italian). No, no. No school, no school.

MR. SCARANTINO: We lived far away from school and my dad wouldn't let them go to school. They had to go to work.

HEID: So you had to work to help out the family? (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

MR. SCARANTINO: Her father was a pruner, pruned trees. Her father was. (Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.) Sulphur mines. Oh, baskets, baskets. Her father did woven wheat baskets.

HEID: So her father pruned and then made baskets.

MR. SCARANTINO: Yeah, yeah. He'd make them, and send them to

market. Sell them, go to market and sell them. That's what he used to do. (Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.) Sulphur, yeah. He worked in the sulphur mines, too.

HEID: So he had to work in the sulphur mines also, to make ends meet.

MRS. SCARANTINO: That was about the only thing he did down there in those days. (Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.) She had nine brothers and sisters.

HEID: Big family.

MRS. SCARANTINO: Big family.

HEID: A big family. So that's why . . .

MR. SCARANTINO: (?) in them days out there.

HEID: So you had to work hard to help the family, then? (Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.)

MR. SCARANTINO: Oh, when they used to cook they used to burn logs. And they had, the oven. You stoke the oven, the logs in the oven, and then heat the, that's how we used to.

(Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.) When they made bread, they used to stick them in the oven, and the heat from that.

HEID: And what type of food did you eat?

MR. SCARANTINO: (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.) Bread, macaroni.

MRS. SCARANTINO: Vino. (she laughs)

MR. SCARANTINO: Wine. (Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.)
In the country, you know, you live off the land. Now, my grandmother was, her mother was eighty. (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

MRS. SCARANTINO: Eighty-nine, my mother.

HEID: Now, then, you met, then you met your husband?
Then you met your husband? (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.) How old were you when you got married? (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

MRS. SCARANTINO: Fifteen.

HEID: Fifteen?

MRS. SCARANTINO: This the first, first. (she laughs)

HEID: That's your first child. Ross is your first child. So you got married very young.

MRS. SCARANTINO: And Joe, Joe is second. Two years, and a boy.

HEID: So how old were you when Ross was born? How old were you when Rosario was born? (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

MR. SCARANTINO: Sixteen years old.

HEID: She was sixteen years old. So life was hard.

MRS. SCARANTINO: Yeah. (she laughs)

HEID: It wasn't easy.

MRS. SCARANTINO: A boy, (?), and a girl, one girl.

MR. SCARANTINO: My sister that died, like I told you.

(Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

'18, 1918 she died. (Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.) My dad was a prisoner in Germany, like I said.

HEID: And this is, during the time your sister died, he was away in the service? (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

MRS. SCARANTINO: No.

MR. SCARANTINO: No, he was away, he was in the service.

(Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.) He was still in the

service when she died.

HEID: So life was very hard for you. You were alone when this happened.

MRS. SCARANTINO: And my father fight with my mother, and my grandfather, everywhere (?). My son, Joe.

MR. SCARANTINO: He used to watch you do the work.

MRS. SCARANTINO: And cry and cry.

HEID: That's hard, yeah. You never forget, I know.

MRS. SCARANTINO: Five months. (Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.)

MR. SCARANTINO: He was a prisoner for six months. She didn't know if he was alive or not. (Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.)

HEID: But then your husband came home, though? Your husband came home. (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.) Then you decided, then you decided . . . (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

MR. SCARANTINO: That's when they knew, she knew that he was

alive.

HEID: How did she find out he was alive?

MR. SCARANTINO: The Red Cross wrote to her. (Mr. Scarantino speaks in Italian.) The Red Cross wrote to her that my dad was alive. (Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.)

HEID: November first?

MR. SCARANTINO: November the first. (Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.) November the first, that's when she got it, 1918.

HEID: Then he came home. (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.) He was very skinny.

MRS. SCARANTINO: (Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.) A cut on his head, a cut on his head.

MR. SCARANTINO: They brought him with a cut on his head after he got released. Then, 1919, that's when he got released. (Mr. Scarantino speaks in Italian.) You can ask her now, what made her decide, whatever.

HEID: Now, he came home, and then you decided to come to America. Why did you decide to come to America? (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

MR. SCARANTINO: My grandmother was here, I guess they come first. My grandmother and grandfather. (Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.) They kept writing to her to come here, come here, and it's better here, and everything. That's what she said. (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

HEID: Now, did they send money for the passage, or how did you get the money for the passage?

MR. SCARANTINO: (Mr. Scarantino speaks in Italian.) No, she had money put away.

HEID: Oh, so you saved money yourself.
(Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

MR. SCARANTINO: When he was in Italy he was saving his money, and his money, banked it in Rome because that gave him more money for interest. (they laugh) (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.) What she got here, now.

HEID: Okay. Do you remember taking the boat over, when you left Palermo? (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

MR. SCARANTINO: Palermo, that's where we got the boat, in Palermo.

HEID: Were you sick on the boat?

MRS. SCARANTINO: Yes! (they laugh)

HEID: Yes? You remember that, huh?

(Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.) Oh, so the boat was walking up and down?

MR. SCARANTINO: The weather was bad. The seas were rough. Like I tell you, we had all the dishes. (Mr. Scarantino speaks in Italian.)

HEID: It was going up and down. (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

MR. SCARANTINO: We stood on the boat twenty-six days. I guess because we had to go to different ports. (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.) We got there, and they held us, and they sent us back.

HEID: What did you think? Were you afraid that you would have to go back home? (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.) (Mrs. Scarantino laughs.)

MR. SCARANTINO: She was scared because she didn't, on account of what we had, if we were going to be sent back like my friend. He had that, he tried. That's it.

HEID: So from Ellis Island how did you get here?

MR. SCARANTINO: (Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian and her son does spontaneous translation.) (Mrs. Scarantino laughs.)
Cops on the train. The nurses put us on the train. We didn't know how to speak English. We told the conductor to leave us off in Pittston. When we got to Pittston, the conductor started hollering, "Pittston, Pittston." When we left Ellis Island to come here they put us on the train. My father sent them a telegram, my grandparents, to come, they were going to come here. And so they come to New York to pick us up, and we're coming to Pittston, they went to New York. And then we had nobody to meet us. We arrived in Pittston, we got off at Pittston. The conductor took us off. Eleven o'clock at night we arrived. The snow was that high.

HEID: You were seven years old.

MR. SCARANTINO: (Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian and her son does spontaneous translation.) Got off at the station, and it was dark and cold.

HEID: What were you thinking, then? Were you frightened? (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.) You were crying?

MRS. SCARANTINO: It was cold.

MR. SCARANTINO: Dark. (Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.)
We got off the train, we walked a little, and that's where we found the police station, so from there. (Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.) My dad saw the light, he walked in, it was the police station. It was cold. In Italy it wasn't cold. We just come with regular little jackets. We arrived there, we opened the door, and the police was there, greeted us. Two cops. My dad had the address where we were going to go. So the cop (?). (Mrs. Scarantino speaks in Italian.) Oh, yeah, the cop, yeah. He took us, and he was from Pine Street, too. (?) She started crying. She start to give (?). (they laugh) He start calling, and she thought that they were going to kill us, the cops in the police station. And then she said the people, and they asked those people if they knew us, and then they said yes, and that's it. And the police then, the cop walked us to Pine Street, to the address. She said the cops didn't know what address to take us. He was taking us to the home. They had flashlights. And she was wondering whether, they were looking for the address. They walked until they got the right address. When we got to Pine Street the cops started knocking at the door. Knocked on the door, and the people were waiting for us. They knew we were going to come there. They woke them up, and

they, come upstairs. The house is right up here. And they opened the door for us, and they let us in. They opened the door, and he said to them, "Do you recognize them? Do you know them?" "Yes, yes." And we went in, and that was it.

(Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

That's it.

HEID: One more question. How was your first Christmas here? Were you happy to be here for your first Christmas? (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

MRS. SCARANTINO: Yeah, yeah. (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

MR. SCARANTINO: She's thinking of home. It was warmer than here, the first Christmas. (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

HEID: One last question for you, okay? You've been here a long time. If you had to do it all over again, would you still come to America? (Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

MR. SCARANTINO: How do you say that, Dieter?

(Mrs. Scarantino and her son speak in Italian to each other.)

(they laugh)

HEID: What did she say?

MR. SCARANTINO: Yes and no. (Another party in room speaks in Italian.)

HEID: So she would stay in Italy?

 : One time is enough.

HEID: One time is enough. Okay. So let me just finish now. This is Debra Heid signing off for the National Park Service. Today is May 26, 1992 and I'm here in the home of Arcangela Scarantino who came to America in 1919 from Italy. Thank you very much for inviting me into your home.

MRS. SCARANTINO: Thank you.