

**EI-176**

**EVELYN CIOFFI MANELLA**

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**INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.**

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**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 7/1993**

**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 8/1993**

**ITALY, 1929**

**AGE 7**

**PORT: NAPLES**

**RESIDENCES: Italy: CERVINIA (VILLAGE)**

**US: TROY, NY**

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Friday, June 19, 1992. I am in Troy, New York, at the home of Evelyn Manella who came from Italy in 1929 when she was seven years old. There is a refrigerator in the room, and also a small dog named Mickey, so we may be picking some of that up.

MANELLA: ( she laughs ) Okay.

SIGRIST: Let me start off, Mrs. Manella, by asking you your maiden name.

MANELLA: Cioffi.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

MANELLA: C-I-O-F-F-I.

SIGRIST: And what is your date of birth, please.

MANELLA: December 6th, 1921.

SIGRIST: And where were you born?

MANELLA: In Italy.

SIGRIST: Where in Italy?

MANELLA: A small town off site of, oh, God, Naples. Cervinia, Italy.

SIGRIST: Can you spell the name of the town for me?

MANELLA: C-E-R-V-I-N, Cervinia, -I-A, I guess is the closest.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the town for me, what it was like, what you remember about it?

MANELLA: Well, it was just a small little village. People did mostly farm work. There wasn't any factories or anything. And that's about it, you know. There was no, and my father left there after he came out of the service because he couldn't find work. I mean, there wasn't anything to do, so he came back to this country, to America, because he had been here in the 1800's. So he went back, he came back here. He came back and forth about three or four times, and finally in 1929 he brought the family over here.

SIGRIST: Let's talk a little more about the town. Describe the center of town, what

the . . .

MANELLA: Well, it was, it had like a big, a fountain, you know, like water. And that's where the people used to come, and they'd do their wash. And we were surrounded by mountains. It was like in a valley, and there was mountains all around.

SIGRIST: Was there a church in town?

MANELLA: Yeah. There was a church, St. Nicholas, and that's where, you know, the people went to church. And, I mean, they didn't go much of any place because at that time there wasn't that much transportation, you know. So people stayed close to home.

SIGRIST: You said most people were farmers. What kind of farming did they do?

MANELLA: Well, they grew produce, you know. And some people, they had land, and they grew, they raised olives, they had olive trees. They had walnuts. They had chestnuts, and they used to send and people used to come in and buy the stuff, you know, and take it away, and that's where people made their money from, you know, either farming or from that.

SIGRIST: What was your favorite place in town? Do you remember, did you have a favorite spot that you liked?

MANELLA: Well, we used to go to visit my grandparents a lot, you know, and there

was nothing where you could go. It was church or that's it, you know. You didn't have any place where you, theaters or anything. It was just family.

SIGRIST: Church or work.

MANELLA: It was church or work, yeah.

SIGRIST: Let's start off by talking about your dad. What was his name?

MANELLA: His name was Carmen.

SIGRIST: And tell me a little bit about what he did in Italy and why he was going back and forth to America.

MANELLA: Well, he came here when he was, in America when he was, oh, I don't know, seven or eight probably. And he was here until he was about fifteen years old, and he got sick with rheumatism. So my grandmother took him back to Italy thinking that the weather over there would agree with him better. So while he was over there they got him in the service over there. He had to serve four years. And then the war broke out, and so he had to serve another four, so he ended up with eight years, eight years of service.

SIGRIST: Mr. Manella is entering the kitchen.

MANELLA: ( she laughs ) So, I forgot what I was saying. ( she laughs ) So then

when he came out of the service he got married, and he was there a short time, and they couldn't make a living. I mean, because he knew what it was like over here, so he decided to come back here. So then every so many years he'd come back, and he'd come back to America.

SIGRIST: What did he do when he came here? What kinds of jobs would he do?

MANELLA: He did carpentry work, and he worked mostly down in New York when they made roads, you know, the forms for the roads and all that, and that's what he worked at, and that's the last job he had, you know, before he came back to Italy and got us. And then when we came here he settled in Troy because my uncle lived here.

SIGRIST: Close your eyes, and as a little girl describe your father to me, what he looked like.

MANELLA: Oh, he was a, he wasn't a tall man, and he was slim. And I always remember him with grey hair, you know. He always had grey hair, and blue eyes.

SIGRIST: What was his personality like?

MANELLA: He was quiet. He was a quiet man and he just loved his family, that's it. You know, he worked to keep the family going.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

MANELLA: My mother's name was Bernadine.

SIGRIST: And what was her maiden name?

MANELLA: Marro. M-A-R-R-O.

SIGRIST: And describe your mother to me in the same sort of way. ( dog barks )

MANELLA: Well, she was easygoing, and when my father came here, because she stayed over there with my grandmother, with my father's mother. She lived with my father's mother. And so every time he come back and forth. And then, like I say, finally in 1929 he brought the whole family over.

SIGRIST: What did your mother look like?

MANELLA: Well, my mother was kind of on the stocky side a little bit. ( Mr. Manella comments off mike. )

SIGRIST: We're recording right now, so . . . ( they laugh ) So she was on the stocky side. And what was her personality like?

MANELLA: Oh, she was quite easygoing, very easygoing. A very nice person.

SIGRIST: When you think back to your childhood in Italy and you think about your mother, what memory do you associate with your mother the most?

MANELLA: Well . . .

SIGRIST: Was there something she did around the house that you remember?

MANELLA: Well, she used to work out. My grandmother actually took care of us mostly over there, because my mother used to work, go out and work in the fields, you know, for other people. Planting and harvesting and all that stuff, and that's what she did mostly.

SIGRIST: Well, let's talk about your grandparents, they're both alive at this point.

MANELLA: That was my father's mother.

SIGRIST: Now, they lived in this town?

MANELLA: Yeah. Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: Can you describe their house for me?

MANELLA: Well, it was just a small, well, it was like up and down. One big room downstairs, one room upstairs, that's it. And they had, like, a big round thing in the center where they used to burn coal for heat, and they just had one big room upstairs. That was it.

SIGRIST: Do you know what the house was made out of?

MANELLA: Probably like a stone, cement, or, you know, that's all. Something like that.

SIGRIST: What did your grandfather do for a living? What had he done?

MANELLA: When, he was more like a lumberjack, my father's, that was my father's father. And then they came to, when they came to this country he worked in Vermont as a lumberjack, and they worked, he went to Pennsylvania and worked in the coal mines down there, and that's it.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about your grandparents in Italy? For instance, did you have holidays with them?

MANELLA: Well, we did mostly, because my father was here a lot. So, you know, so my mother had sisters over there, and so it was more like a, you know, family. We did things, you know, with family, because my father wasn't there.

SIGRIST: Were you closer to your grandmother or your grandfather?

MANELLA: Closer to my grandmother, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did she make a certain dish that you particularly like?

MANELLA: Ahh, well, no, not so much a dish, but she used to tell us stories about

different things that happened in the old country. Scary things, you know, stories, like. And we used to a lot of times after, when we moved over here, and she came here with us, she moved here, and she lived with us here, and a lot of times used to, if my mother and father had to go out, we'd get everything done and we'd sit her down so she could tell us all these stories about the old country, you know. And that's what we used to like to do.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of the stories?

MANELLA: Well, different scary things, you know. And then where my mother owned, and my father owned land, it used to be like an old castle over there, and they had like a moat around it. And they used to tell us that they used to see ghosts and things, you know. ( she laughs ) So we used to kind of, we kept wanting to hear it all the time because it was exciting, you know.

SIGRIST: Would you stay with your grandparents for extended periods of time?

MANELLA: I would go and stay with my grandmother and grandfather, because they didn't, they only lived a short ways from where we lived, so, you know, we used to, I used to go there a lot.

SIGRIST: Was your house similar to their house?

MANELLA: Yeah, about the same. They were all small, you know, small. There was

no big houses over there.

SIGRIST: Do you know how your parents met?

MANELLA: I really don't know. I know, of course, it was a small town. Everybody knew everybody else. So, like I said, when he came out of the service they just, you know, they just started going together and they got married.

SIGRIST: As a small girl in this town, what did you do for fun? Were there games that you played, or . . .

MANELLA: Well, when we first came here it was hard because . . .

SIGRIST: In Italy.

MANELLA: Oh. Well, yeah, we played, you know, with other kids, you know. I really don't remember it that much. But I remember my father, when he used to come back he'd bring us clothes, he'd bring us new shoes. He'd bring us records. He always used to bring a record player that used to wind. He used to bring records. And he used to, people all around there used to, it was something different, you know, so they all used to come to the house to listen to the music and, you know, stuff like that.

SIGRIST: Was that kind of your first introduction to America?

MANELLA: Yeah, yeah. Getting the American clothes and things like that, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did your father, when he came back to Italy, ever tell you stories about America?

MANELLA: Well, he used to say how everybody used to have short hair, their hair cut short. And people worked in factories and, you know, so stuff like that. And I had long hair. When I came aboard ship coming over here, that's when I got it cut. First, and in fact, I still have it to this day.

SIGRIST: To be more stylish.

MANELLA: Yeah. ( she laughs ) Well, you know, my father says over there, you know, everybody wears short hair. They don't wear long hair. So I got it cut aboard ship. And he kept it all the years until he died. And then just before he died he handed it to me, and I still have my hair. ( she laughs )

SIGRIST: Do you remember school at all? Did you go to school at all in Italy?

MANELLA: I went for a very short time. It was more like a private school, you know, at home.

SIGRIST: Can you describe it a little bit?

MANELLA: Well, it's just the person's home, you know, and the kids would just sit around the table and he'd, you know, he'd teach us whatever it was. But I remember

one time he had a pet rabbit and I wanted to sit at the table, and somehow or other the chair went back and it fell on the rabbit and the poor rabbit died, it killed him. ( she laughs ) And he used to make us, he used to say, "You wear your hair like a little Frenchman." Because I used to wear my hair in a bun, you know. He says, "And then you don't know your lesson." It was, you don't get the same meaning, you know, when you switch from Italian to English. It doesn't just sound, but he used to say, "You wear your hair like a little Frenchman, but you don't know your lesson." ( she laughs )

SIGRIST: What were you like as a little girl in Italy? How would you describe yourself as a little girl?

MANELLA: Well, I really don't, like I say, I really don't remember that much because I remember mostly coming over here and starting school. And . . .

SIGRIST: But were you, as a little girl, were you, did you, were you playful, were you quiet?

MANELLA: Well, I had friends, you know, a lot of friends. In fact, I have a scar to show from playing, you know. We were playing, boys and girls, you know. And this kid threw a stone and it hit me here. In fact, I still carry the scar from it. ( she laughs ) So, you know, it was just kid stuff, and then another time we were visiting my grandmother and this little boy that lived a few doors away called my brother and me, and he says to us, "Come here. I want to show you something." So we started going up the stairs. It

was a steep stairway. And when we got to the top, a shot went out, and the kid had a gun. He had picked up his father's gun off the wall. And so there was three of us. There was my brother, I was third last, my brother and this other young boy. And it killed the first one. It just, I remember him tumbling down the stairs. And that was it. So I remember, you know, stuff like that. And that was just before we came over here that that happened.

SIGRIST: Can you describe church life at all for me?

MANELLA: Well, I remember making my first communion, and I remember my mother, everybody used to dress up. They had little processions and they had, I remember my mother dressing me in white, and then they even had wings like a little angel and all that. You know, stuff like that that they used to have every year, and stuff like that, you know.

SIGRIST: Did you do anything special for Christmas or for Easter that sticks out in your mind? Perhaps a feast day for one of the saints that you might remember?

MANELLA: They used to have like the Feast of St. Francis, and they used to have the blessing of the little things that they used to make out of clay, little jugs and all that stuff. And on different days that were religious days they used to have different things in the church, processions and stuff like that.

SIGRIST: Did you have to go to Sunday school of any sort?

MANELLA: No, I don't remember going to Sunday school there. When I came here we did, you know.

SIGRIST: Would you say that your . . . ( sound of door opening and closing ) That's Mr. Manella leaving the kitchen. Would you say that your parents were religious people?

MANELLA: Very. Very religious.

SIGRIST: Grandparents too?

MANELLA: Yes, uh-huh.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things would they do in the home to practice their religion?

MANELLA: Well, they used to say the rosary every night. We used to go to church every Sunday. If there was anything during the week they'd go. And then after we moved here, my father used to collect money and send for orphans in Italy all the time, he had one place he used to send every year, and, like I say, for the orphans, around Vesuvius there, around Vesuvius. When I was a kid I remember going there to Vesuvius and seeing all the ruins.

SIGRIST: When you were still living in Italy.

MANELLA: When I was still living in Italy.

SIGRIST: Talk a little bit, why would you have gone there? Was that a vacation?

MANELLA: Yeah. Well, my father had been there during, when he was in the service. He had been to Rome, St. Peters, and he had been to Vesuvius there and, to Pompeii, rather. And so he took us. When he came home one time he took us to see Pompeii. And I remember people turned to stone and all that, and it kind of stuck with me. And my brother had gone once before, and the second time he went he wouldn't go. He says, "No, I don't want to see the dead people." And he stayed, I remember going by bus, and he stayed on the bus. He wouldn't get off the bus.

SIGRIST: That leads me to a good question. I didn't ask about the other members of your family. Do you have brothers and sisters?

MANELLA: I have a sister that was seventeen months when we came here. She lives in Ohio.

SIGRIST: And what is her name?

MANELLA: Jenny. Jenny White.

SIGRIST: And you have a brother?

MANELLA: I have a brother that lives up in Sickaway.

SIGRIST: And what was his name?

MANELLA: Louis Cioffi.

SIGRIST: And he's older than you.

MANELLA: He was nine, yeah. I was seven, he was nine, when we came here.

SIGRIST: I see. Did you ever travel anywhere else in Italy as a kid?

MANELLA: No. The biggest was when we came to Naples to get the ship, you know.  
That was the biggest thing.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about, your father has gone back and forth several times. Now, how did your mother feel about coming to America. Did she . . .

MANELLA: Well, she was scared and she didn't want to leave her family because she still had her mother and father there. And she had a couple of sisters and a brother. But she figured that's when my father, he was trying to make a better life over here, so that's why she decided to come. But it was hard on her, because she had no one here, you know. No family over here of her own.

SIGRIST: When your father would be in America, would he send money back to

you?

MANELLA: Yeah, he'd send us money, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did your mother, you said your mother worked in the field. Did she get paid for that?

MANELLA: Oh, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you kids ever have to work for money?

MANELLA: No. I don't remember going to work over there, no.

SIGRIST: Well, talk to me a little bit about the process of getting ready to go.

MANELLA: Well, I remember my mother and father, they sold everything, and then my grandmother, my mother's mother and father, of course, they hated to see us, you know, leave. But we kept in touch, you know, all, over the years. We always wrote back and forth.

SIGRIST: How did your parents sell everything? Do you remember? Did they, how, what was that process like?

MANELLA: Well, a lot of stuff they gave away to friends. Stuff that they couldn't bring, you know. They brought back mostly clothing, whatever they had in clothing. A few

things that they had accumulated over the years that was sentimental for them, but that's about it.

SIGRIST: Do you remember specifically what you took? Do you remember . . .

MANELLA: Well, I remember my mother, they had a lot of, like, she had a bedspread that she had as wedding gift, and she brought it to this country. And, in fact, I have it today. I still have it. And mostly clothing, that's about it, because they couldn't bring anything else.

SIGRIST: Now, you said that the trip from your town to Naples stuck out in your mind. Why? Why does that stick out in your mind?

MANELLA: Well, because we had never been on a train before, you know.

SIGRIST: Can we pause just for a moment, please? ( break in tape ) Okay. We had to pause for a moment. We are now resuming with Evelyn Manella. Yes, tell me about the trip to Naples.

MANELLA: Well, all I remember is taking the train, and I don't think we stayed overnight in Naples, and then we boarded the ship the next day.

SIGRIST: Was this the first time you'd ever been in a big city?

MANELLA: Yes.

SIGRIST: What kind of an impression did that make on you?

MANELLA: Well, I had never seen a lot of cars and a lot of people moving around, you know. And it was really, it was something that I had never seen before, you know.

SIGRIST: What month is this? Do you remember?

MANELLA: Well, we came here in the month of March.

SIGRIST: So this is probably the month before, or . . .

MANELLA: Well, it took us eight days to get here.

SIGRIST: Oh, so it wasn't long. March of 1929. What was the name of the boat?

MANELLA: The Roma.

SIGRIST: And tell me a little bit about your impressions of the boat.

MANELLA: Well, it was such a huge thing, and all the people on board. And I remember we used to go to dinner every day with a big table. And it was like you would go in a banquet hall. You know, big round tables and a lot of chairs. And just our whole family, and then there was room, and if there was anybody that was traveling alone they sat with us. And I remember getting sick, seasick, Easter, and I was sick as a dog.  
( she laughs ) And the first time I had ice cream, I had never seen ice cream before,

and huge oranges and apples, you know, that were served. I had never seen anything like that before.

SIGRIST: Were there lots of other people traveling?

MANELLA: Oh, yes. The ship was loaded to capacity.

SIGRIST: So who's traveling from your family? You . . .

MANELLA: My father, my mother, my grandmother. That was my father's mother. My brother, my sister, myself.

SIGRIST: Now, was your grandfather alive at that time, or . . .

MANELLA: Uh, he was living, I think he was living in Pennsylvania at the time.

SIGRIST: So he was in America already.

MANELLA: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: What about other people from this, from your town? Did anybody else go?

SIGRIST: No. They were, as far as I know we were the only one that came at that time, yeah. Other people came later, you know, but at that time we were the only ones that left at that time.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about going to America?

MANELLA: Well, I really didn't care because I was so happy to be with my whole family I really didn't care. I did miss my grandparents, but I was happy to be with, we didn't have to leave my grandmother behind, you know, because at first they weren't going to let her come. And then, so my mother said, "Well, if she can't come, then I won't leave her here." So we weren't going to come until they straightened things out, and then she could come, and that's when we decided to all come.

SIGRIST: Why wouldn't they let her come?

MANELLA: I don't know just what the problem was. I don't know. I really don't know.

SIGRIST: When you were in Naples, did you have to undergo any kind of examinations before you got on the boat?

MANELLA: That I don't remember then, but I remember when we got here at Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: Okay. The boat lasted eight days.

MANELLA: Eight days.

SIGRIST: Can you describe where you slept on the boat for me?

MANELLA: It's so far back. It's, what, sixty some-odd years. You know, I really can't remember.

SIGRIST: Did you stay with your family?

MANELLA: Oh, yeah. The whole family, yeah. We all stayed together, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember being up on deck?

MANELLA: Yeah. I remember walking around up there, you know, but I really, all I remember was a lot of lot of people.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when you came into New York Harbor, or New York, for that matter?

MANELLA: No, I don't remember that. But I remember coming, when we came in to Ellis Island I remember going from one person to another person to another person. You know, we got vaccinated, which I had been vaccinated before. I had, in fact, in Italy they used to vaccinate us twice, because I have a double vaccination. When we got to Ellis Island they vaccinated us again. And I remember being, I remember some people that didn't pass the exam, they would send them back. They wouldn't let them come through. So that's all, that's about what I remember coming through there and seeing so many people.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what it looked like, sort of?

MANELLA: Like a big, huge hall. A big, huge room, you know. And just looking around and seeing all these people. You know, it was, like, mobbed, like.

SIGRIST: What do you think your mother is thinking?

MANELLA: Well, she probably was scared. She probably didn't know, you know. I mean, with us kids, we didn't know the difference because we were young. But with her, it must have been awful scary for her, because to see something, coming from a small place and seeing this, you know, a lot of cars, people. It must have been overwhelming for her, you know.

SIGRIST: You said you were vaccinated at Ellis Island. What else happened that you can remember?

MANELLA: Oh, I remember being, you know, taking you in the room and, you know, examining you. I was supposed to remember your eyes and like that to see, I suppose they took chest x-rays. I don't even remember. They must have, because at that time if you had TB or anything naturally they'd send you back. They wouldn't let you come through.

SIGRIST: How long were you on the island?

MANELLA: I don't know whether it was a day or what it was.

SIGRIST: But a short amount of time.

MANELLA: Yeah, yeah. Just to get through, I suppose.

SIGRIST: Where'd you go?

MANELLA: We came right to Troy, here.

SIGRIST: Was someone at Ellis waiting for you?

MANELLA: Uh, well, my father knew his way around because he had been here, you know. So we just got the train and came up here to Troy.

SIGRIST: And tell me again why you came to Troy?

MANELLA: Well, my uncle. My father, my father had lived here in Troy, too, you know. So, and then my uncle had settled here. And, uh . . .

SIGRIST: Your father's brother?

MANELLA: And then, of course, my father had gotten a job in the Ford Motor Plant in Green Island, so that's where, when we got here that's where he went to work, in Ford Motor Company.

SIGRIST: Where's the first place you went in Troy? Where did you spend the first night?

MANELLA: ( she sighs ) Gee, I, well, we went to my, uh, my uncle's house, and there they had a flat which we rented from them, and we lived there, I don't know just how many, a few years, and then my father bought a home right across the street from where they lived.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the address where the first . . .

MANELLA: I think it was 43, 43 Oakwood Avenue.

SIGRIST: Oakwood. And can you describe that flat for me?

MANELLA: Well, it was small. It was the first floor, and it had, I think it had just a kitchen and a parlor and a couple of bedrooms, and that's about it. And then, of course, my father, after he bought the house across the street, you know, a couple of doors up from there on the other side of the road. And we lived there until, well, until I got married in 1946.

SIGRIST: Tell me about, like, those first couple of years when you were in this country, what it was like for you to get adjusted to this.

MANELLA: It was hard, it was hard. The kids made fun of us, the way we dressed.

SIGRIST: How was the way you dressed different?

MANELLA: Well, my father, we had like high shoes and the way we spoke, because we couldn't speak English, you know. I remember even my husband used to say, well, when we first came here of course it was in March. So my father enrolled us down in St. Patrick's School in Troy. So we went there from March until school closed, and it was a fight going to school. It was terrible.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about that.

MANELLA: Well, the kids used to make, call us names and make fun of us. So my brother gave a fight to protect me because he didn't like, you know. So going to school the nuns used to have to let us go into class first and let us out first so it would give us a head start to go home. ( she laughs ) So it was a fight going and coming from school. And then the following September he enrolled us in school, too. And that was right next door to us. And so the kids used to, they used to make a circle around us, because we couldn't speak English, and it was really hard. And even my husband used to say, he used to say, "I used to feel sorry for you because the kids used to, like you were a couple of freaks, you know." ( she laughs ) And it was hard, it was tough.

SIGRIST: Am I to believe that there were not a lot of immigrants in your neighborhood, that you were sort of unique?

MANELLA: Yeah. Not at that time no, no. Later probably more people came. Like today they come from all over, you know. It's nothing new to meet somebody that's been here a short time. But at that time there were not too many. ( chimes sound in the background )

SIGRIST: Tell me how you learned English?

MANELLA: Well, I remember when the radios first came out my father bought one of the first radios, and we used to listen to the radio all the time, and he used to take us to the movies. And he used to take us on a trolley car downtown, and that's how we, then, of course, going to school, started school, and that's how we started picking it up.

SIGRIST: Your father's working for General Motors.

MANELLA: No, he worked for the Ford Motor Company.

SIGRIST: Ford Motors. And what did your mother do during this time?

MANELLA: Well, my mother was a housewife. She stayed mostly at home raising the kids. Then, of course, three came from the old country and three were born here. A set of twins, the youngest. So she really didn't have much time, you know, to take, she had enough to do just to take care of the family.

SIGRIST: Because she's really kind of isolated in the house, then, especial . . .

MANELLA: That's right.

SIGRIST: With the kids, how could she adapt to all of this, or didn't she?

MANELLA: Well, she really didn't learn to speak English because she was mostly home, you know. And when we, and of course being, my father spoke perfect English because he had gone to school here, but we only spoke Italian at home because of my mother and my grandmother.

SIGRIST: Did your grandmother ever make an attempt to learn English?

MANELLA: Not really, no. Because at that time they kind of stayed with mostly Italian people, you know, that had come here. And so they stayed with their own little groups, like, you know.

SIGRIST: As a kid, how quickly did you try to Americanize? Did you really want to be an American?

MANELLA: Well, I wanted to be like the rest of the kids. And, of course, like I said, my father tried to take us to the movies, and getting a radio so we could learn, you know, hear the people talking. And then, of course, going to school, the teachers were very nice, you know, with us.

SIGRIST: This was at St. Patricks?

MANELLA: No, this was at School 2. At St. Patrick's we were only there a couple of months, that's all.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

SIGRIST: Was it difficult for you to have immigrant parents, to be a young person in this country, but have parents or at least, you know, a mother and a grandmother who are really clinging to their old world ways?

MANELLA: Yeah. Well, it was hard because, uh, if we went any place we kind of stayed together, but we'd speak to my father in English all the time. We always spoke to my father in English. But when we were with my mother and grandmother we'd speak in Italian because that's what they, you know, that's what they understood. So even my younger brothers and the three youngest ones that were born here, they could speak Italian and they learned English when they went to school.

SIGRIST: Did your father encourage your mother to try to learn English, or did he pretty much just let her speak Italian?

MANELLA: Well, you know, it was up to her, you know, what she wanted to do. But of course he worked shift work a lot, and she really couldn't get out that much. You know, if we went any place we kids would take her, you know, we'd go with her all the time.

SIGRIST: Was coming to this country a positive experience for your mother?

MANELLA: I think it was, yeah.

SIGRIST: Because she really, she hesitated about coming in the first place, and yet she's sort of cloistered at home.

MANELLA: Yeah.

SIGRIST: I mean, was this, was she happy to be here?

MANELLA: Well, she was happy because she had her family around her, you know. And she was busy, so she didn't think about wanting to go here and there anyway. And at that time there really wasn't that much money to do anything with, you know. So it was hard.

SIGRIST: When did you buy the house? The house came . . .

MANELLA: Well, we came here in '29, so maybe, I don't know, maybe it must have been around 1930, I think, because my brother was born in 1930, I think, so it was about a year later that we bought the house.

SIGRIST: What about the old world, what about Italy did your parents, or maybe especially your mother, really cling to other than the language? Was there anything

else she did around the house that was very old world that you can remember?

MANELLA: No, she really got Americanized pretty good because she was really fussy with keeping her house up and she got, you know, we had the refrigerator, the stove, everything. And she got used to, you know, she dressed. She never did cut her hair. She was used to her, you know, kept it. Well, my father liked it long anyway. So she always used to wear it in a bun. But as far as dressing, she went with the American way, yeah.

SIGRIST: What memories do you have of your grandmother when you were here? When you think about your grandmother in America, what do you think of?

MANELLA: Well, she was like a second mother to us. In fact, if we did anything wrong, she didn't hesitate to slap us, you know. And I remember a lot of times my brother used to say, "Grandma, please don't hit us. Your hands are so bony you really hurt when you slap us." ( she laughs ) And I remember my mother and father used to go shopping on a Saturday night, or if they had to go visit friends, my grandmother took care of us.

SIGRIST: What did you do for fun in Troy in those days?

MANELLA: Well, my father used to take us, like I said, to the movies. If there was a parade or something he used to take us to the parade. We used to go up the park. He

used to take us up to the park. We didn't have a car, so any place we went we had to walk, you know. So it was, so we did those things. You know, he took a lot of time with us.

SIGRIST: What's the first job you ever got?

MANELLA: Well, let me see. The first job I was sixteen years old. Yeah, I was sixteen years old, and I left school, which I shouldn't have. My father, he didn't want me to. But I had friends that worked, and I figured they were making money, and that's what I wanted to do. So I started working in Cohoes there, in a clothing mill, a factory.

SIGRIST: Doing what?

MANELLA: Uh, cutting threads off of, you know, when the clothing came through, suits, they made suits and stuff. And like they used to call them like an inspector, you know, stuff like that.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much you got paid?

MANELLA: Yeah, the first pay, eight dollars a week. ( she laughs ) And I thought I was rich.

SIGRIST: Did you have to contribute that to the household?

MANELLA: Yes, I did. Yeah. Because at that time my father worked for Ford, but it

was never steady.

SIGRIST: Those were hard times in the '30s.

MANELLA: Yeah, yeah. It was never steady. And even in the later years, up until 19, in the '40s. He always had, out of a clear blue sky they'd have a layoff, and he'd be laid off, and that was it. And with six kids at home it was tough, you know. So we had to contribute, but if he was working he made us put our money in a bank.

SIGRIST: Well, that's progressive. I mean, that's very modern.

MANELLA: Yeah. Oh, yeah. If he needed it we'd help, but if he didn't need it . . .

SIGRIST: What about your brother? Do you remember what his first job was?

MANELLA: Well, like, he worked in a store stocking stuff, and then he went to school. He went to high school for two years, and then he graduated, and he worked as a carpenter. He went to work for Collins in North Troy. And he worked there all through the years. In fact, he's seventy-two years old now, and he still works part-time.

SIGRIST: Does he live in Troy?

MANELLA: Yeah, he lives in Troy.

SIGRIST: Tell me how you met your husband.

MANELLA: Well, he lived the street below us. He lived on Tenth Street. We lived up on Oakwood Avenue.

SIGRIST: What was, what is his name, first of all?

MANELLA: Patrick.

SIGRIST: Patrick Manella.

MANELLA: Yeah. And, well, he remembers me when the kids used to make fun of me. ( she laughs ) And then, of course, as the years went on, I didn't bother with him. I knew him, but I didn't bother with him. Then when he came out of service, he just happened to call me up one day, asked me if I wanted to go out, and nine months later we got married.

SIGRIST: And how long have you been married?

MANELLA: Forty, it will be forty-six years in September.

SIGRIST: And do you have any children?

MANELLA: We had five children, and one passed away when he was three-and-a-half. Sudden, pneumonia, sudden. So we had four children. We have three boys and one girl.

SIGRIST: Could you name them, please?

MANELLA: We have Patricia, she's the oldest. She lives in, right now she lives in North Carolina with her family. And I have Robert. He's thirty-nine and he lives in Troy. And we have Michael. He lives in Portland, Oregon. He's thirty, thirty-five. And Tommy, he's the youngest, thirty-three. He lives in Albany.

SIGRIST: How do you think your life would have been different if you'd stayed in Italy?

MANELLA: Well, we probably wouldn't have what we have here today. During the war I don't know, who knows what would have happened to us at that time. I don't know. I don't know. Maybe I'd be married and in this country anyway if I hadn't met somebody, you know, over there, during the war. I don't know.

SIGRIST: Are you glad that your parents decided to come here?

MANELLA: Yes, I am. I really am.

SIGRIST: Did they get their citizenship papers? I didn't ask you that.

MANELLA: Well, my father, my father was a citizen. My mother never became a citizen. She just passed away two years ago. She was ninety-six.

SIGRIST: Well, that brings us really to the end of the interview. I want to thank you very much for letting me come out here.

MANELLA: Okay. ( she laughs )

SIGRIST: And this is Paul Sigrist in Troy, signing off with Evelyn Manella.

MANELLA: Uh-huh.