EI-194

RENATA NIERI MACCARONE
BIRTH DATE: NOVEMBER 14, 1919
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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.
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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 7/1993
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 9/1993

ITALY, 1929 **PORT: GENOA**
AGE 9 **RESIDENCES: ITALY; RENAZZO:**
US: GLEN COVE, NY

Oral Historian's Note: Although Mrs. Maccarone's age at arrival is given as ten in the interview, she actually arrived three months prior to her tenth birthday. Cars and chriping birds can be heard in the background of this recording. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of the Oral History Project, 9/5/1993.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today with Rena Maccarone. Her maiden name was Nieri, and she came from Italy in 1929 when she was ten years old. I'm very happy to be here, and I'm looking forward to hearing your story, which I expect to be very full and colorful.

MACCARONE: I'm very proud to be interviewed by you, and I'm very happy you came here, and I would like to dedicate this in loving memory of my mother and father, Albano

and Argia Ardizzoni Nieri, for the sacrifice that they made to give us a better life in the United States.

LEVINE: That's very nice. Okay. That's wonderful. Now, why don't we start at the beginning by your saying your maiden name, your married name and your birth date.

MACCARONE: All right. My name is Rena Nieri Maccarone. I was born in Renazzo, Italy on November 14th, 1919.

LEVINE: Okay. Could you spell the town where you were born?

MACCARONE: Yes. R-E-N-A-Z-Z-O. We come from the region of the (?) valley, the region of Emilia, which is now Emilia-Romagna. They make two little provinces, not provinces, but regions together. And from the province of Ferrara, we're about twenty-five, thirty miles north of Verona, and about sixty-five miles east of Florence on the Adriatic side of Italy.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, okay, the name of the town again?

MACCARONE: Renazzo.

LEVINE: Lenazzo?

MACCARONE: Renazzo. R-E-N-A-Z-Z-O.

LEVINE: Renazzo. Well, can you describe Renazzo when you were there as a little girl?

MACCARONE: Well, it's a little thing way out in the sticks. And we lived in a courtyard on a farm. My father had come here in 1923. I remember when he came it was very, very sad. My mother was very sad, we were all crying. She was left there, twenty-six years old, with three small children. One at ten months old, I was four and my other brother Sylvio was three. So we lived on this farm, and you can imagine my mother being very sad because they had no money, Pop had to borrow the money from my mother's father to come here. It was October, just the beginning of the winter setting in. Fortunately all the supplies had been already bought and provisions made for the winter. They had to do that because we had no form of transportation whatsoever. Mom had my father's bicycle. We had a lot of snow. Our little area there where we come from is about the same latitude as New York and Long Island, so we had very severe winters sometimes with a lot of snow. We went to school. We went to school from eight in the morning till two in the afternoon, and then from two to five we'd go to the nuns, the Catholic school, to learn religion, and to learn our prayers, which were taught to us all in Latin, and the masses. And during the summer vacations my mother kept us in the Catholic school. We lived right near the church. And the nuns would teach the girls mending, crocheting, knitting, a little bit about cooking. The boys were

taught, besides religion, to do with farming and a little carpentry, which came very handy later on in life. And that's about it. They were very strict with us. Our teachers and the nuns were very strict with us. And, but we loved it.

LEVINE: What would they do? In other words, if you didn't do something or you did something wrong, what would be the . . .

MACCARONE: Well, I'll just tell you. There was a boy sitting behind me in class and he was pulling my hair, so I turned around to tell him to stop and the teacher came, the nun came and she gave me a whack across the face from this one. But it's okay. It was all part of growing up. Everybody else got treated the same way. And the first year that I went to school I had never been apart from my mother and my brothers, and I just didn't want to go to school. So I didn't pay any attention to the teacher, and I would be put in the corner. There was two of us that would be put in corners. Every day I wanted to be home with my baby brother and my other brother. I was a little mommy to them, because Mom used to work on the farm whenever she could to earn a little extra money, and I had to watch my little brothers. And I just missed them, and I just didn't want to go to school, but the following year when my brother came, it was wonderful. I loved school, and we were always together. Even when we came to this country we were all put in the first grade. It was terrible, because no one understood us, being northerns. And around in this area they were all southerners. They all spoke a dialect.

So we tried to speak to them in the grammatical Italian, nobody understood us. In our dialect, forget it, no one would understand that either.

LEVINE: Let's not jump ahead to here. Let's first talk more about when you were in Ren . . .

MACCARONE: Renazzo.

LEVINE: Renazzo.

MACCARONE: (she laughs) Okay.

LEVINE: How far away was the school?

MACCARONE: Um, I would say about a mile. And we walked. We had no way of getting, no buses, no nothing. All, the streets were all muddy when it rained and everything. But anyhow, in the winter, just before winter would set in, a shoemaker would come and make us all shoes. They would be high shoes with big tacks underneath, which were wonderful for sliding on the ice and everything. And . . .

LEVINE: This was a traveling person who would go . . .

MACCARONE: Yes. This was a shoemaker that would come every year in that area and usually lived with the farmer and would stay there and make all the shoes for us,

right, for everybody in the neighborhood. And then go on to the next town, or whatever. And we had one pair of shoes a year. Came March, March 3rd, St. John the Baptist, I believe, we all started to go barefooted, and we had to go out, everybody did that. And we had to go out and walk in the grass and get the dew on our feet so we wouldn't get any diseases on our feet. In the meantime, it would save the shoes (she laughs) to see us through the whole year. So that was that.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you were told about why your father went to America and what was going to happen?

MACCARONE: Yes. My father, perhaps he would have made out very good there, too, but it was right after World War II, and he was a foreman . . .

LEVINE: World War I, right?

MACCARONE: World War I, yes, I'm sorry. And he was a foreman in the brick-making factory or whatever you would call it. And a friend of his had come to the United States and kept after my father to come there, and my father's brother-in-law, that there was a lot of work here in this country and he should come, so finally he made up his mind and came here in 1923, some time in October, I don't remember the exact date.

LEVINE: Do you remember saying goodbye to him?

MACCARONE: Yes. He left at night and, like I said, everybody was crying. My mother was very sad. I couldn't quite grasp the reason. I knew that he was coming to America, but somehow we were all very sad because, although my grandparents on both sides of the family didn't live very far. We were very isolated. Fortunately the other tenant family that lived in the same courtyard with us were very friendly with Mom and they kept her company and so on, because we just couldn't do any traveling. And my grandparents were tenant farmers and you just couldn't take off any time you wanted. And they had a horse and buggy, and once in a blue moon they'd come to visit. So in the four years, in the next five years if I saw my grandparents three or four times it was a lot. And we enjoyed those visits. We used to love to go on the farm.

LEVINE: What were your grandparents names?

MACCARONE: Enrico and Rosa Ardizzoni, my mother's parents, and my father was . . .

LEVINE: Spell Ardizzoni.

MACCARONE: A-R-D-I-Z-Z-O-N-I. And my grand, and my mother, my father's mother and father were Sebastiano and Mathilde Volta, V-O-L-T-A.

LEVINE: Do you remember any experiences with them when you were little?

MACCARONE: Not really, because they only lived about a mile away, but we rarely saw each other because during the summer Mama would be busy working on the farm. On the farm that we lived on they raised corn and wheat and hemp. But that was a big job. It was quite a business during the time that I was there. They used to make ropes in cloth, and there was a lot of work connected with it. When it came time to harvest it, would you like me to say that?

LEVINE: Yes, I'd like you to talk all about that.

MACCARONE: This, the hemp was about, I'd say, seven or eight feet tall. When it was ready to harvest, it would be cut in bundles and then brought down to a pond where they would let it soak about two weeks, I believe. The reason I know this is because I used to go with my mother and my little babies and I had to watch them and stay on the side there and keep an eye on the children so they wouldn't jump into the pond. And then after they had soaked, that was to loosen the fibers and to get it started to bleach. Then they would take these bundles out of the water, and it was a smelly thing. They would put them up on the bank, like a tepee, like an Indian tepee, so they would dry. When they were dried they would be brought back to the farm, and this is something. On the farm they had to get the canes, separate the canes from the fiber. So they had something like a carpenter's horse, but it was wide on the top with a slit in the middle

into which fell a blade, a wooden blade. There were all handmade tools that they had made. And the first operator would take these bundles and chop them up, go through the thing and chop them up. I don't know if I can make myself understood. Then it was like an assembly line. It went to the next operator, who had a much smaller slit in the, on top of the horse, and from there it went on to the next one. So the last one just removed all the splinters from it and all you had left was the fibers. Then the fibers would be sent, I don't know where, they would be sent away to be processed to come back and to be spun by hand and the woman, the farmer would hire other women also to do this work, would all go in the barn during the winter and spin. And the reason they went into the barn was because of the cows there and it was warmer there than in our own homes. So they would spin all winter. And his wife had a spinning wheel. She did the finer thread for finer material, lighter weight material.

LEVINE: This is your, whose wife was this?

MACCARONE: The farmer's wife, where we lived, the farmer's wife had a spinning wheel, but the rest of the women did it by hand. The spinning wheels were just coming into being, as I remember. We had no stoves in our homes, we just had a little fireplace and with that we had, that was our heat. Once that went out at night we had no more heat.

LEVINE: Can you describe your home?

MACCARONE: Oh, yes. It was, I went to see it in 1973. It's still there, but now it's a little store because we were on a main, right on the corner of, the driveway coming into the farm, and the main road that led into town. We had four rooms, the downstairs rooms, the kitchen with two windows on either side of the fireplace facing south, and the north room had a dirt floor where we kept our supplies in. And the second floor we had one big bedroom and another small room on the north side where we put our winter supplies, the corn and wheat and everything, because we'd have to get all that stuff in before winter set in. Then, this you're going to get a big kick out of. When we, in the wintertime we had no glass, just shutters, wooden shutters, and you could put your finger through the cracks in them. So upstairs Mom would have to put rags in the cracks so we wouldn't get the snow or the rain in. Downstairs, came wintertime, you'd have to try to keep the house warm, there was a certain kind of brown paper that you used to buy for that purpose. Glue it on to the windows, and then put oil on the paper so it would be somewhat translucent to let some light in. (she laughs) And if you forgot, if you didn't get to the windows on time to close it before a rainstorm or before a very heavy wind, because the glue that they used was only made with flour and water, the whole thing would tear up and we'd have to make them all over again. For the chickens, we had chickens. The chickens would come in and we'd shoo them out, and

they'd get excited and they'd go out of a window, we'd have to do that all over again. Now, the windows, the chickens, being we lived on the corner, the bedroom was on the corner, we had a corner window. So outside the corner window, around the corner of the house, was a little box which held about six chickens. And the reason they were up there, we had no property at all, just this little house that we rented from the farmer, and the reason we also put them there, so that our chickens or eggs wouldn't be stolen. This baby had fresh eggs all the time. And the chickens went up a little rickety stairs, about six inches, you can picture this going up to the second floor. Little rickety stairs about six inches wide, and to train them to go up there, when you first got a whole batch of new chickens, you would put your corn and feed them and they'd learn to go up the steps. And then to make them come down Mama would call them in the morning and put the corn on the ground and they would come. After three or four days they did it automatically. It was wonderful to see how you can train any kind of an animal really. So, and now I don't know, I should go back and finish telling you the story about the hemp, I guess. After they rolled it in the spring, no, after they spun it in the spring they would set up these big looms. The farmer had a great, big hallway, I guess you would call it. There was this great big looms and three or four women would set up the looms, and then they would weave this into different patterns, different widths, different weights. For tablecloths it was, and some towels, some fancy towels, it would be a waffle weave, and then we'd, that was made for sheets and pillowcases and hand

towels, diapers. And the heavier cloth was used to make, it would be dyed then and used for men's working clothes. After that was finished, then all that stuff would have to be washed again and bleached. They would set up a great big kettle, a real great big kettle, set up on stones, and it would fire for about twenty-four hours before it would come to a boil. And they would use the ashes, we all saved the ashes for this purpose also, the ashes, to bleach this cloth white. And they would have to get up on a ladder up against this great big tub and put everything in there and let it boil. Then when it was done, you have to remember, I was nine years old. I don't remember exactly all the little things, but a man with this big pole would take all this white cloth out and put it on a flat wagon, a horse-drawn wagon, and it would be taken down to the river to be beaten on rocks that they had down there, and to rinse, and then back home. While that was being done, we all saved our big laundry, because we had no laundry facilities, we had no running water, no plumbing of any kind. So they have, we had to save all our linens, our sheets and pillowcases and towels and all that. Mom would just wash the little things, our clothes and underwear, but everything else would be piled up and then all washed in the spring. After that laundry was done, and the cloth that was made during the winter, everybody's laundry would be done and boiled and taken down to the river. And it's funny, they tried to pick on days that the weather would be nice, because all this procedure would take about a week or ten days to do all of this. And when it was brought back it would be laid out on the lawn and on the hedges. It looked like we had

snow, but it was beautiful. So now what was I going to say, I forgot.

LEVINE: Let me just ask you, how wide across was this pot with the boiling water?

MACCARONE: I don't know. All I know was that it was . . .

LEVINE: About six feet? Was it that big?

MACCARONE: A man had to go up there on a ladder to stir and to put the clothes in. I mean, I was a nine-year-old, I was a big girl for my age, but I can remember it being an enormous pot. It took about twenty-four hours to make it come to a boil, okay. And then to keep feeding it and putting wood underneath and all. And incidentally all the canes that were from the hemp that were broken up, all that was saved for our fireplaces. Nothing was wasted. Every little piece of paper, you never saw any paper outdoors or anything. Everything was saved to start our fires. And for, in the wintertime when it was really cold sometimes the well would freeze. We had a water pail in the kitchen for our drinking water. That would freeze. So we used to melt snow, because that would melt much quicker, and use that for cooking and for drinking. It wasn't polluted like it is today.

LEVINE: Where would you get the water?

MACCARONE: We had a well.

LEVINE: Did you have a pump?

MACCARONE: No, with a pail. We'd drop a pail down and bring the water up. And that was our refrigerator in the wintertime, in the summer time. We'd have watermelon sometimes, we had delicious brown watermelon, something like our sugar melons here, but they were much sweeter. And sometimes that would be our supper. Our meals there were very simple. We had, being that we had our own eggs we would have eggs all the time. In the wintertime when we needed wheat we'd take a sack of wheat and go down to the mill and have it ground into flour. And we had cornmeal, which we made polenta. Now polenta is known around here. It's just a, it's a hard corn mush. And we made it in many different ways. Our staples for the winter were beans and rice. We never had any vegetables. We had a nanny goat for milk. We had very little milk. We didn't drink milk like they do here. I can remember when the nanny goat had her kids they would go on my mother's back and stomp on her back while she was milking the goat. So in the summertime we had a few vegetables, but not, vegetables weren't pushed on us like it is, and yet we had, the only vegetables that were raised for us to eat were peppers, which we ate very young and just dunked in oil, and celery and lettuce. That's all I could remember. Once in the while we'd have some peas, and that's about it.

LEVINE: Did your mother make any particular dish that you remember liking?

MACCARONE: Well, on the holidays, our specialty on the holidays were tortellini or cappaletti. But now, which were little dumplings filled with meat. Now here they make them with all kinds of fillings, but we made them filled with meat and then cooked in chicken broth. Those were our specialties. And that was a family affair. We'd all get, and help Mom to make it. As young as I was, I was taught. I remember standing on the little stool trying to make the homemade noodles and I couldn't reach the table. And then I had to stand on the stool, and then Mom making fun of me because it wouldn't come really around. (she laughs) But anyhow, it was all part of growing up.

LEVINE: What was your mother like? Could you describe her personality?

MACCARONE: My mother was a very loving mother, a very stern mother. If my babies, if my baby brothers got into a problem I got a spanking because it was up to me to keep them out of trouble. But that's how she was brought up. She was the oldest in her family, a family of seven. She had to help with her children, so that's the way she brought me up. So I have nothing but praise for my mother. She was a very nice mother. Never left us alone. Our home, being on the corner, all the neighbors, the young ladies, in the fall there would be a lot of festivals, and the young ladies would have their dates. And we had two of them living in the next door tenant house with us.

And they used to come in and wait for their boyfriends, and they would meet at our house and then change to go to, change into better shoes. They'd come with their old working shoes through the small streets all full of mud, and then they'd come there. They'd meet there. That was their meeting place. And they used to play with us children. I have very pleasant memories.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What were the festivals like?

MACCARONE: Oh, I don't know if you've ever been to some of the festivals around here, but they'd have the fireworks at night and games and, games of chance, and loads of food. And some of the things that I remember, where we come from we have chestnuts, but a sweeter chestnut than we can get here, and we get the flour of that and make sweets out of it. Mom had three or four thimbles. And in the wintertime to keep us amused we'd pack this flour in her thimble and throw them in the fireplace to cook, and then bring them out, and those were our candies. (she laughs) We had no candies. When we wanted candy Mom would say, "Ooh, what do you want this candy? This is no good. When we get to America, Dad has a big bag of candy for you." We were so disappointed when we got here. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Okay. So the festivals would be a lot of people from, or whoever was around?

MACCARONE: Oh, yeah. They all would gather around, yes. And then . . .

LEVINE: From several towns, or from your town?

MACCARONE: When I went there in 1973, this hasn't changed much. The first time I went back was 1973. Every day there's a flea market in one little town, and they go to the markets and buy from the markets, right? And every little hamlet has a patron saint, and they're all different dates. And they have these feasts in honor of the patron saints. And so they go, because they have no movies, and they would just pile in wagons or walk to these festivals. And there would seem to be an awful lot of people there all the time. People selling an awful lot of stuff. People would come down from, they used to call them the mountaineers. We'd live in the valley and come down and sell a lot of homemade goods, sweaters and beautiful embroidered shirts and things like that. Something like we have here. Not very much different.

LEVINE: Now, were you, was your mother, when your father left for America, was your mother considered a tenant farmer, or how did that work?

MACCARONE: I really don't know. We rented. I know we rented then to augment her income, because Pop had to support himself here, he had to pay for his trip. He built the house. In five years he had a mortgage on it. I mean, he did an awful lot

considering the short time that he was here. He went to school at nights. Because up till the time he came here, they could send for their families as soon as they could, and they were allowed to come here. But the law changed, I believe, that year in 1923 or 1924 that he had to become a citizen first. So he went to school and both of them in Europe went to school for two years. When they were growing up, they were required to go to school for two years. Then their parents were tenant farmers that ran the farm, okay. But our farmer, he ran it himself and we just rented. Perhaps before that there were tenant farmers, I don't know. But there was two little bungalows or little houses, whatever you want to call them, that there was two families living there. And to augment their income, they worked on the farm. Okay?

LEVINE: I see. Now, what was, both of your grandparents were tenant farmers?

MACCARONE: Yes.

LEVINE: Now, what did that involve, to be a tenant farmer?

MACCARONE: I really don't know what that contract was. From what I understand, they worked and they got very little money but they got food. Okay?

LEVINE: And housing, I guess.

MACCARONE: And housing. Another thing that was done there, I can remember

having these big racks with trays of silkworms. And you think a worm is quiet, you should hear when everything is quiet when they're feeding what a humming sound they made. And Mom would have to go up, climb the mulberry trees early in the spring when the leaves were nice and tender, to feed these worms. And we would have them until they went into the cocoon stage. Then the farmer would take them and send them to be processed to be silk. Whatever they did, I don't know.

LEVINE: So would you buy the silkworms from some place?

MACCARONE: Oh, he would. And then we would raise them in our homes. I presume my mother got paid for taking care of them. I really don't know. But there were trays. There must have been about five shelves, and trays on there of these worms where she would just bring. And they made such a humming sound when everything is so quiet, and they're all eating. If you had one of them in your hand eating, you wouldn't hear a thing, but the whole mess of them, there must have been eight or nine hundred, I guess, maybe more. I really don't know.

LEVINE: So in other words they were at a stage in their development that they were eating these leaves.

MACCARONE: Constantly.

LEVINE: And then they would go into the cocoon.

MACCARONE: Yes. It would take several weeks. I don't remember all the specifics, but it would take several weeks of that, and then they would be sent away to be processed and made into silk, I guess, or whatever.

LEVINE: So you didn't see the tail end of it, what happened after they left.

MACCARONE: No.

LEVINE: Wow. So that was like a separate job, a separate source of income.

MACCARONE: They must have had a contract or something, but I'm sure she got paid for it, or maybe bartered with food or something, I really don't know. And another thing I got to tell you. It was so cold that year, 1929. We had a terrible snowstorm, and everything was, the snow was piled up against our house. We couldn't get out of the house. They had to come and shovel us out. And, like I said, you had to get all your provisions in for the whole winter. And between, around November, so Mom had a great big jug of wine, because in Europe everybody drinks wine, the children too. Although our wine was watered, about three-quarters water and one-quarter wine. She had this great big jug and she had to have somebody help her bring it into the kitchen so it wouldn't break from the back room. She brought it in, and the ice came up on the

neck of the bottle, and it was about six inches up. Right next to the fireplace, so you could imagine how cold it was. Sitting next to the fireplace, and the ice rising about six inches above the opening. But it didn't break anyhow.

LEVINE: Oh, good. (she laughs)

MACCARONE: And we made our, we had homemade pasta twice a day. In the morning for breakfast we would have coffee with boiled milk and either break up our bread into a soup, or if we had extra eggs we would, Mom would fry an egg and divide it four ways. We never ate a whole egg. Oh, her brother used to be a butcher. In the fall he would butcher pigs. And then he would dress them and make sausages and delicious prosciutto and salami. So he always saw to it that we had a supply of that stuff, and dry sausage for the winter. So sometimes that would be our breakfast, a few slices of salami, and a piece of bread and coffee. And when we went to school Mom would make me, I was in charge of the food. So I had a basket and she'd have three pieces of bread in it, and three pieces of cheese, or three pieces of salami. At lunch time I'd go gather my little brothers and dole out their food. And when we came to this country they got me a big lunchbox and I had to do the same thing, and the teachers were so impressed the way I was a little mother to these children. And my other brother, the little one was in another class so I'd go look for him and bring him with me. (she laughs) And they would just look and shake their heads.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

LEVINE: Tell me about your brothers. How old were they in relation to you?

MACCARONE: Uh, my brother Sylvio that we lost in World War II was a year younger than I was. And he was born December 1920. And my little brother was three years younger than I, 1921. At the time my father came he was ten months old, and my middle brother was four, no, was three, and I was four.

LEVINE: Now, your younger brother, what was his name?

MACCARONE: Dante.

LEVINE: Dante.

MACCARONE: Dante Nieri. He lives here in Glen Cove also.

LEVINE: Oh. What was he like as a child?

MACCARONE: Oh, he was a sickly baby. He had gotten rickets for the simple reason that the doctor said it was because my mother was so sad that the milk soured and, she was nursing him, and that made him sick. So she took him to a clinic in Bologna.

Someone took her there. It was well-known for babies, and he told her to make him bean soup every day for the protein, okay, but to remove the skin of the beans, and that would help him. And that's what she did. And to this day I still make the bean soup that way, and my grandchildren love it. I have one coming here next month, and on the phone she says, "Nana, when I come there please make me some bean soup and teach me how to make it." So look how long that's been going on in the family.

LEVINE: Now, did it help your brother?

MACCARONE: I guess so. He was very, the year that we came here the doctor, she used to take him once a year to the doctor, and he was so glad that, she was afraid to come here with this baby so sick all the time. And she said, "Don't worry." She said, "If you weren't going to America, I would tell you to go to the seashore for the summer months at least and change the air for this boy." After we came to this country he was never sick. Never sick in his life. I think he had tonsillitis when he was about eleven, and that was that. He went into the service, served four years in the service, the Second World War, and he's fine. Today he's retired, he's got three boys.

LEVINE: And how about your other brother?

MACCARONE: We lost him. He, we both graduated with honors in Locust Valley Junior High School. We had no one to interpret for us, so we had to learn the language,

right? He was valedictorian, I was salutatorian of that class. Our principal was so proud of us that in six years we went from the first grade to the seventh grade, and we graduated with children in the same ages, in our bracket, okay. And he made such a speech for us. And my mom couldn't come to the graduation. She was sick. We left her home with a box of cookies and a glass of milk and we went off to the graduation. And then I quit school because my parents needed help. We had been on welfare. My father was working every other week on the W.P.A. for twelve dollars a week, and we just couldn't make ends meet. And anyhow we lost our home in 1939, and that year my brother graduated high school with honors, couldn't get a job, went into the service and became a radio operator. Oh, I forgot the name of it. (she calls to her husband) Georgie, do you remember the name of the, on the bombers?

MR. MACCARONE: B-14, oh, B-17.

MACCARONE: The B-17. I believe they were bombers. I don't know.

MR. MACCARONE: He was a radio operator.

MACCARONE: He was a radio operator. And he didn't have, he didn't take any days off so that he could come home. We were married in 1940, in October, and he didn't take any days off, any leave, so he could come home and stay home a whole month with us when we were getting married. This was in 1940, and they canceled all leaves

because technically we were at war already, and he died June 9, 1941. Never did get home, in Panama. And he was considered a war casualty because he was supposed to have been in the States. He was supposed to have finished his tour of duty in 1940. And then he finished his tour here, one year in the States, and they canceled all leaves. So then the government recognized all those that were killed six months prior to December 7, 1941, to be war casualties. And he was killed in Panama, and they didn't send his body home until the war was over. In 1948 they sent his body home. Because they didn't find them. One boy was saved from that tragic accident and, but they didn't get to their bodies till three days later, and they started to decompose and they couldn't send them home. They had gone out four times that day on a mercy mission looking for another plane that had been lost, and they hit a mountain, and that was that.

LEVINE: How about as a child? What kind of child, how was he in relation to you?

MACCARONE: Oh, we got along beautifully. He, oh, he used to drive me crazy because we were in the same class. All the time he kept up with me, okay? He was a little bit smarter than me in science, all right. But he would never take a book home. He always had to take my books. I had to carry all the books home from school, and to do his homework he had to borrow my books all the time. But he was a very nice fellow. Both of them. We had a very nice childhood. We didn't have much, but anyhow, no one else had anything either, so we were all in the same boat. We had enough to eat,

we had loving parents, they kept a roof over our heads. My mom found it very hard with the speaking, trying to understand. And we found it very hard because everybody looked down on you that you were Italian, they'd call you names, Guinea and Wop and so on. So we tried to become American as quickly as possible. My mom used to make me write all her letters, answer her letters, although she knew how to read and write. And I'm glad to this day because I still correspond with my aunts and uncles in Europe and my cousins. I speak our dialect, I speak the Italian fluently, so I'm glad that she did that. But it was hard. After, when I had three children I told her, I said, "Mom, it's time you do it yourself." She says, "Well, it takes me a long time to write a letter and I make a lot of mistakes." I said, "Well, your sisters do the same thing, so when you make a mistake you scratch it out. And I'll tell you how to outsmart them. You start writing today, don't put the date on. And then when you're tired you let it go and you write next week and you write the following week, and then in the end you put the date, and I won't tell your sisters." (they laugh) (phone rings) I wouldn't tell your sisters that you did that. (break in tape)

LEVINE: Now we're resuming after a phone call, and I wanted to ask, when you and your mother and your brothers did finally leave for America, how did that happen? What brought that about, and what was the circumstance?

MACCARONE: I have to tell you something that was very funny in regard to our trip

here. It was brought about because when my father left he told us that, he told my mother that as soon as he could he would send for her. However, after he got here, up to that point they were able to send for their family as soon as they could. But the law was changed in 1924 that they had to become citizens. So he went to night school and learned the history of the United States, and in 1929 he got his citizenship paper and he sent for us. And we came here August 13, 1929. But to go to Genoa, we had to go to Genoa. From our little town, we had to go to Ferrara to the railroad station to take the train to Genoa. My grandfather came with his wagon where we put our trunks in. Mom had to carry, Pop had told Mom to bring her feather mattresses because here they only had mattresses with the corn husks and they were uncomfortable. So you can imagine bringing two big feather mattresses. The beds in Italy are much bigger than here.

LEVINE: These were inside the trunks?

MACCARONE: Yeah. Or whatever, but anyhow, she had the trunk with whatever few possessions she took and our clothes and everything, because we were fourteen days on the boat, and some suitcases. Those all went into his wagon. And we all came on bicycles. I had just learned to ride my father's bike, a man's bicycle, and I was riding in between the bar, so that I could reach the pedals, right. So my mother had my little brother on the bar of the man's bicycle. Her brother, my uncle, had my other brother on the bar, and I was on the bicycle by myself underneath. I don't know how else to

explain it, but anyhow I reached the handles, with my shoulder underneath the bar of the man's bicycle, pedaling, and my mother's brother-in-law behind me, I fell four or five times. We had about fifteen, eighteen miles to go. I fell three or four times. We reached Ferrara, I was all scraped and tired, we were all tired. We left about four o'clock in the morning. And then we took the train to Genoa. That took eight or nine hours. And we were exhausted. We went to the hotel. We had a guide with us, because Mom was afraid to do it by herself. She'd never been away from the area. So we had a tour, a guide from the travel agency, accompanied us to Genoa. The next day we had, wherever we had to go to the office to have our papers checked. They told my mother that she'd have to bathe us, and told us to go into the next room to bathe us all. So we went there. Now, we only had little tubs in our home for baths. First my brother would take a, my little one would take a bath, then the next one would take a bath, and I would be given the bath. Each time we added a little bit more water to it. And then mom finally put us all to bed, and she would take a bath as best she could. It would be a sponge bath. But anyhow, it was a shower. We'd never seen a shower in our life. We fiddled with the faucets. We didn't really know what the faucets were for, only that we saw this thing dripping and leaking and we realized that there was water coming from there. So we fiddled, and the water came out. We all got wet. And she says, "How am I going to give him a bath? The water's going down in the hole down there?" Anyhow, she stooped down and scooped a little bit of water and wet us all up and dried

us, and this was the bath, the last bath we took in Italy. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Now, do you remember anything else that she took with her, or that you took?

MACCARONE: I didn't, no, my mother did all the packing, whatever. We had no toys. I had, I can remember someone gave me one toy. My little brother was the one with the little toys, little trains and little cars, or whatever. Not even that, because, well, maybe, yes. But we had, no, a horse and wagon. Not, the trains hadn't come in yet. A horse and wagon, he had. And I was given a little doll, maybe about four inches high, and it had a crooked foot, but I loved that darn thing. And I don't know what happened to it. When we came into this country, the people that my father boarded with, they got me a beautiful little doll for Christmas. Oh, my God, it was gorgeous. Mom let me play with it for two years, and then she sent it to Europe because my little cousins needed it more than I did. I was so heartbroken. She made a whole mess of clothes. And the clothes that she made, she had a long jacket, a lightweight jacket. I can still see it. When she got married, part of her trousseau. Then she had that made for me for my communion dress. It was white with a little tiny line in lavender. Then she made this for my communion dress, a very lightweight wool. Then she made a little dress out of it and she put a pin between the legs. That was for my baby brother. Then from that she made a coat for my doll and sent it back to Italy again. (they laugh)

LEVINE: How about religion when you were in Italy? How did you observe, and to what extent?

MACCARONE: Well, like I said, Mom kept us in the Catholic school. But it was a law that we had to go to public school until the sixth grade, all right, at that time. So after school, we'd go from eight o'clock in the morning till two o'clock in the afternoon, then we'd go to religious instruction from two to five. And there we were taught all our prayers and to follow the mass, and the responses to the mass, all in Latin. I've forgotten them since then, but, and then in the summertime they ran like a nursery school or a day center, whatever, for children, and Mom kept us there all summer long. We were home Saturdays and Sundays, or if there was any holidays during the week, then we would be home. But the nuns fed us and they taught us. They taught the girls a little something about housekeeping and sewing, like I said, and embroidery. In fact, I have a towel that I made. I've never used it, but I was six years old when they taught me the Italian hemstitching. It took me a whole year to do it, but at six years old what can you expect. And the boys, like I said, were taught about gardening, and something about farming and how to use carpenter tools and things like that.

LEVINE: How would you describe yourself now, looking back at you when you were ten years old, when you were leaving for America? How did, what sort of a little

girl were you?

MACCARONE: I had such visions. We were happy, we were very happy children, because everybody else, we very rarely got together with our friends after school because we all lived quite a distance away from one another. So with the young ladies that lived next door and we really didn't have anything to play with. My mother used to make balls out of paper, out of stiff paper, cutting. I was going to make one, and then I forgot all about it. We had a death and, you know, Saturday we had a funeral and then in the afternoon two wakes, and we should have gone to one yesterday, but I wanted to clean the house a little bit. So anyhow . . .

LEVINE: She made these balls out of paper.

MACCARONE: Out of paper. She would cut a circle, and then divide it by four and cut slits, and then make another one to fit into that one, then make another. I had made that, I made it for my own grandchildren. They love to do it. And she'd make things made with folded paper, and when they were torn we didn't throw those out. We kept those for the fireplace, so there was never any litter around, all right. And now I forgot what else I was going to say. Gosh, darn, this head of mine. Oh, but I had such visions of coming to America. We were, when Pop wrote to us that the papers were all ready and he sent the papers over for us to fill out and all, we were very excited about coming

here. And our friends started to make fun of us, now we're going to be Americans, and we're going to have to learn how to eat raw tomatoes (she laughs) because we didn't eat raw tomatoes, and we would try to eat them, but they just wouldn't go down. And I had such visions of always being dressed in very frilly dresses and having patent leather shoes, and the streets would be paved with gold. We were so disappointed when we got here. Three days after we arrived here in Glen Cove, right, Pop was living here because our house had been rented out to a family. They were having their house built next door to our house in Locust Valley, so we had to wait. We didn't get there till November. But anyhow, my little brother says to Mom, "When are we getting to America?" She says, "We are in America." We couldn't, it was hard for us to get used to mustard. The people that he boarded with, the daughter introduced us to all these things. Oh, we didn't like any of that stuff. Mayonnaise, mustard, um, ketchup. The toothpaste, we never brushed our teeth in Europe. And yet we have very strong teeth. Every time they looked at our teeth in school they were amazed at how strong our teeth were. My first cavity I got when I was thirty-nine years old. I only have, I'm seventy-two and I only have three cavities in my mouth. So we had very little milk, but we had home-grown food and no chemicals used on it, okay. But we were so disappointed. It was like Europe, really, where we came. The houses were a little bit better. The toothpaste, we had a ball squeezing it out and seeing it (she laughs) wiggle out of the tube. And putting the lights on and off. They had the strings, at that time, to pull, and

we'd put those things on and off. It was unbelievable. But anyhow . . .

LEVINE: Well, how about when you got to Genoa and then you were examined. You got to take the shower, and then you were examined.

MACCARONE: Yes, a doctor examined us all, although we had been examined at home and we were all okay, and then we were re-examined there. And then we were told we all had to take a bath, and that's it. We boarded it, and we had a terrible time coming across the straits of Gibraltar. They, I was the only one that didn't get seasick. It's very rough there. And trying to eat all the fancy foods, because we were used to very plain fare. Now all this food is very expensive in these restaurants. When I see polenta advertised for twelve dollars for lunch, my God. My mother would turn over in her grave, she was so tired of eating polenta. And we love it, we love it. We have it in the wintertime. My children love it, and I make it for my friends. I say, "If you want to have lunch and you only have one slice, it will cost you $12.50. Here you can have all you want." (she laughs)

LEVINE: So what, were you in steerage, or were you in a cabin?

MACCARONE: We were in a cabin, the four of us.

LEVINE: Just the four of you. No other people.

MACCARONE: No other people.

LEVINE: And then you went to a dining room?

MACCARONE: And then we went to a dining room, yeah. We were several floors down. I don't quite remember. But anyhow, trying to make ourselves understood, I can remember one person asking my mother, "What kind of an Italian are you? You don't understand Italian."

LEVINE: Were there any other experiences aboard ship that you remember?

MACCARONE: Oh, trying to drink, they used to come around with milk every night. It was evaporated milk, you know, watered down.

LEVINE: Canned, uh-huh.

MACCARONE: And, oh, we didn't like it at all. We just couldn't drink it. And the woman that used to bring is, "But you must drink it, this is good for you." The only ones that we understood, really, were the stewards on the ship, they spoke the grammatical Italian, and this woman, we'd understand her. And different people would try to draw my mother into a conversation. She was always so afraid that we would fall overboard. We always had to stay by her skirt. We really didn't explore the ship at all. We'd go up

on deck, and she'd hang on to us for dear life. First of all, she was a very shy person, and she found it difficult to speak to total strangers. But even so, when she found she couldn't understand it made her even more shy. But anyhow when we got here . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember coming into the harbor?

MACCARONE: Oh, yes. My goodness. On August 12 they told us if we wanted to see the Statue, we'd have to get up early in the morning. We were up at four o'clock, okay. We went up on deck, and everybody was up. And, oh, my God, when she came into sight I got such gooseflesh, and to this day, we've been there about six or seven times. We went years ago. We took friends of our there. And the last time that we went was a year-and-a-half ago, we took some cousins of mine that came from Italy. We went to Ellis Island and we went there. And, oh, I still get gooseflesh. I love that lady. She's beautiful. At the time, for a few times we went you could go up to the crown and look out. It's a beautiful view. So then when we docked we saw my father down on the docks. We recognized him and saw him. And then we were, then we went into the big hall, right. That room is, oh, my God. When you went, it was so enormous, we never seen anything so high. And it was all brown and dreary, and everybody was crying. And my mother started to cry, and we were like sheep in there, we were so crowded. She started to cry because she was sure my father wouldn't find us. But, sure enough, he found us, and home we went.

LEVINE: Now, were you examined at Ellis Island as well?

MACCARONE: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about that?

MACCARONE: Yes, it wasn't, I read where some people had a terrible experience with that. We weren't. They just looked in our hair and looked in our teeth and looked in our eyes, and that was it. But, I mean, we were clean, because my mother scrubbed us before we left, and we were scrubbed when we got there. And then, of course, then we learned how to use the tub (she laughs) on the boat. I mean, the shower, okay. That was funny. She says, "How am I going to give you a bath?" She says, "The water keeps going down that hole." (she laughs)

LEVINE: Well, is there anything else you remember about Ellis Island? Could you describe how it was to you at that time?

MACCARONE: Well, at that time, we only went into that room and that's it. We didn't go around anywheres because we came, you know, we docked around eleven o' clock in the morning, and it took about four or five hours before they got us out of there. We had nothing to eat. Then finally my father got us, and he got us something to eat, and we came home to Glen Cove. We were exhausted from the whole day, being up so

early. I don't recall anything there. We went to Ellis Island twice, but I must go back again because I want to, my father and mother's name should be on there now, on the Wall of Honor. But the first time we went with the seniors, so you have an hour here and an hour there. You can't see anything. And when my cousins came, because they wanted to see the Statue, and then we went. I said, "We want to show you where we came when we first came here, where we, you know, the first place that we came in. So they wanted to see that. Then we wanted to take them up to the twin towers and along the Bowery to see some of that, so the whole day went. And we didn't, you know, we didn't have much time to stay, but we must have gone there and spent a whole day just looking at it. It's very, very interesting.

LEVINE: Do you remember if the personnel, the guards or inspectors, or adults, were helpful to you, or were . . .

MACCARONE: That I don't remember because my mom took care of that. All I know, it must have been all right. The only thing that she was afraid that my father wouldn't find us among all those people.

LEVINE: So he met you at Ellis Island?

MACCARONE: Yes. He came to Ellis Island to pick us up.

LEVINE: Do you remember the reunion with him?

MACCARONE: Oh, we were (she laughs). He tried to grab all of us. He was a big man, all right, and hug us and kiss us, and he was so happy that we were here. And it was very nice.

LEVINE: And what was it like getting used to being around him again after all that time?

MACCARONE: The next day he had to go to work. So, to us, I mean, he was home for supper, but, he spoke the dialect, you know. Then he had us go to night school here. They were teaching Italian at night school to keep up with our language. He had the Italian newspaper at home for us to read. But, like I said, the minute we started to talk fluently in English, it only took us a year, not even, we started to speak in English at home so that my mother would learn the language, because then she had to, years ago they automatically became citizens if their husband became a citizen, but then that was changed. So then she had to go to school. So then we were helping her to learn the language to go school and become a citizen. She became a citizen in 1936 or '37.

LEVINE: So you went to night school?

MACCARONE: Here, to learn the Italian language.

LEVINE: To learn Italian?

MACCARONE: To keep up our Italian language.

LEVINE: Oh, that's interesting.

MACCARONE: Yeah. There was an organization here, the order of The Sons of Italy, which my brother and my husband and I still belong to. We joined in the forties. And they sponsored this, so we used to go.

LEVINE: Now, were most, were the people who lived in your immediate community here, were they mostly Italian as well?

MACCARONE: Oh, yes. Here in Glen Cove I would say seventy-five to eighty percent are Italians. But there's very few northern Italians. But now I understand all the southerners. In fact, about fifteen, sixteen years ago I went to the hospital and volunteered my time to be an interpreter for the Italian community. And they'd have these women come in one day a week. I was working at the time, part-time, so they'd have them all come in one day so I could help them, and I did beautifully. I carried my dictionary with me, but we got along very well. And I thought, well, when we retire, oh, going back about twenty years, when we retire this is what I'll do. But then I had my parents here for ten years, then my husband, my mom died on my fortieth anniversary

in 1980, then in September they're telling me he can't drive any more because of the diabetes, he's considered legally blind. He can only see just in front of him. So there goes, now I'm doing volunteer work at home. It's twenty-two years, I'm watching babies and sick people depending on me continuously.

LEVINE: Well, can you think of any other things when you first got here that struck you as odd or different or strange? Any . . .

MACCARONE: Not really. The homes were better than what we were accustomed to. However, they had plumbing here and the sinks and you don't have to go outside and do your laundry. And we had a tub to take a nice leisure bath. My father's house was very nice, but he lost that in 1939. And, um . . .

LEVINE: What was he doing for work here, your father?

MACCARONE: He worked in New York City building the subways, and then he worked, the tunnels of the subways. And then he worked on the Northern State Parkway here, on the bridges. He was a stone mason. And then the bottom fell out, and no more work. We had to go on welfare, which was very degrading to us. This is one reason why I decided not to go on to school and go out to work. I worked in a sweatshop, piece work. And . . .

LEVINE: Out here?

MACCARONE: Yeah, in Glen Cove. So I would call it a sweatshop. Anyhow, you got a penny, we got, what? Three-and-a-half cents for putting twenty-four sleeves on a blouse. So you can imagine how much we had to do to make a couple of dollars a day. I worked in another shop. But listen, the owners of these shops were just as poor. One owner, their son was a doctor studying in Austria. He came back, they couldn't set up a business for him, they didn't have the money. We were making doll dresses, if you can imagine us making, and he was a big, strapping fellow, their son. And he couldn't start his own business, so he used to help his father out. If you can imagine a big six-footer with a little three or four inch doll dress in his hands. If anybody made a mistake he'd rip it apart, you know, helping them to make a living too. But no complaints, I was very happy to have a job, because some of my girlfriends that went on to school and finished school. When they finished high school they couldn't find jobs either. So I took them into our, if you can imagine me taking some of them into work with me. So we were happy to have a job, regardless. And we worked, we were making the doll dresses, five dollars a week.

LEVINE: What year was that?

MACCARONE: Nineteen . . . Wait a minute. 1938, okay?

LEVINE: Now, do you think your mother and father were happy that they had come to this country, because they had a rough time, it sounds like.

MACCARONE: Well, they were having just as rough a time in Europe. It was all over. The Depression hit all over. So we had a few more comforts here. But she went back in 1948 after my brother's body was brought back from Panama, and she wrote me a letter, she says, "I'm here three days. I'm ready to come home." She says, "Italy hasn't changed at all from when I was here." But she and my aunt stayed there for three months and came back. And my first, the first time I went back I had never thought about going back. But my father's sister came here in 1973, '72, and, with her daughter. And it was such a beautiful experience to get to know these people again that we went there for our twenty, twenty-fifth anniversary, I believe, or whatever it was, 1973. And, oh my God, what they didn't do for us. Now they all, they all had beautiful homes then. My father's sister, they didn't have a thing after the war. Her husband had been in the war, and they came home from the war, they made their bricks, brick by brick themselves, her and her four boys, and then they built their own home. They have a gorgeous home, all. They love my floors here. They call this my beautiful villa. They love this. The way we live here is much softer to walk on. They have all marble floors.

LEVINE: Oh, my God.

MACCARONE: They have gorgeous homes.

LEVINE: Well, tell me how you met your husband?

MACCARONE: Oh, going to night school. The Italian night school was near where his mother lived, and I was very friendly with his cousins. They lived near where I lived in Locust Valley. And they were coming to night school with me. My father would, they didn't have a car, so the youngest, his youngest cousin, the father wanted to learn Italian, so she wanted to come. And his mother had a little store here, a little grocery store, and she wanted to, and so we'd go there to leave a list for groceries and he would deliver it over there, and I met him there. I knew his brother and I knew his sister. I used to work with his sister in the shop. And his brother used to come, I used to work as a waitress in Babel in the summertime because I could make more money, and then in the wintertime I'd work in the shops, okay. And one day I went over there and I met him one night. And he would ask me to go out with him, and I didn't want to go out with him. (she laughs) I was seventeen. He was so thin. He was so cute. When we got around to each other's, he thought I was older and he thought I was younger. There's almost ten years' difference between us. But by the time we got serious that didn't matter. So we went together for three-and-a-half years so we could save some money to get married. We each saved three hundred dollars. And on the strength of that we

got married. He didn't have a job. I had a job where I was making anywheres from twelve to eighteen dollars a week, piece work. But anyhow we're here, we survived, we're happy. We'll been married fifty-two years October 20th. Two years ago we gave each other a gift. We went to Hawaii for our fiftieth anniversary. We went in July. Not Hawaii, Alaska. It was beautiful. Oh, what a, it was wonderful. And then in October we flew out to California and had our dinner with her, our fiftieth anniversary dinner. Our son and his wife came, and we went there.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: Were your parents involved in the decision about that you could get married?

MACCARONE: No.

LEVINE: No. It was, you were more Americanized by then.

MACCARONE: No. Where we come from, the northern part, they don't do that.

LEVINE: Oh, they don't. Uh-huh.

MACCARONE: They might do it, but it's not really widespread. I mean, they meet, you

know, the children, they have dances there. When we went there, you should see the dance halls that they have. When we went in 1973, downstairs would be for the youngsters, and they'd have all the, oh, the popular music that they play today, the rap music or whatever, right. And upstairs they have for the parents, for the older generation, with the music of the forties and everything. And it's beautiful. We were sitting there with my cousins, they have these little tables, and we're sitting there, and she says to me, "Rena," she says, "Somebody's asking you to dance." I'm not paying any attention. I don't know anybody in there, right? And I look over my shoulder and there's a big man, and he had just gone up on the balcony like to look over everybody dancing in there, and sure enough this gentleman is asking me to dance. The men would go there without their wives, or their wives, if they want to go, but married men would go without their wives to go to the dance hall to dance. Can you imagine?

LEVINE: And do married women go without their husbands?

MACCARONE: Yeah. Or they go with their husbands, or a group of women would go, a group of men would go down to the dance hall if the woman don't want, if their wives or husbands don't want to go. Whatever the case may be. So it's, he ran right down. He says, "What did he want?" I says, "He asked me to dance." He says, "How come?" "I have no idea. I don't know their customs here." (she laughs)

LEVINE: So how many children do you have?

MACCARONE: I have three. I have a daughter who will be fifty in November. My son, who's, let me see, he was born 1945. (she sighs) No, 1945? Yeah. Fifty-five, oh, whatever he is. And my youngest daughter is thirty-nine years old. He's forty-eight.

LEVINE: And I don't think you mentioned your husband's name.

MACCARONE: George Maccarone.

LEVINE: And your children's names?

MACCARONE: Well, he's George Michael Aloysius Maccarone. My oldest daughter is Sylvia Carmella, after her grandma, Maccarone, Maccarone-Barton. My son is George Michael Aloysius Maccarone, Junior. And my youngest daughter is Anne Argia, after my mother, Maccarone-Prince. So we have the Prince Macaroni in the family. We'll never go hungry in this family. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Now, how many grandchildren?

MACCARONE: Five. Clyde and Karen Barton. And we have Diana and Meredith Prince, and the little one, Daniel Clinton Maccarone, who is carrying on his mother's family name.

LEVINE: Well, now . . .

MACCARONE: George is married to Valerie. And Anne, my youngest daughter is married, Anne Maccarone is married to Keith Prince, and my daughter was married to Clyde Barton.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, now, is there anything that you would say, looking back on the fact that, you know, you started out in Italy, a whole different way of life, and then you came here, and have been living here, and have reached this point in your life with your grandchildren and all that. Is there anything that you think of when you think back on your whole life?

MACCARONE: We were so busy. I don't regret anything, okay. I love it here where I live. I went back to Italy, it was a beautiful experience. Then for three years in a row I made plans to go back again, and each year, first it was my father that passed away. Everything was paid for. He, they told me not to cancel my trip. We were going to leave October 11th, he died October 9th. The next year my mother landed in the hospital, and she, in 1980. The following year my husband landed in the hospital. This was '79, '80 and '81. So I don't want to go back again. Now I go to California to visit my daughter. My youngest daughter moved out to California. So I feel bad. They all want, in fact, several of them have come here to visit me. They all want to come back. So,

and they all think of coming to this house. They have relatives in Massachusetts and Connecticut, but they all write to me, they want to come here.

LEVINE: This is where they grew up, is it?

MACCARONE: No, this is my relatives in Europe.

LEVINE: Oh, your relatives in Europe. Uh-huh.

MACCARONE: No, but I'm very happy to be here. The only thing is that I wish that people, when foreigners come here, would be a little bit more understanding. Because if they look back, we're all the same. Because if our parents couldn't make a go wherever they came from, they would have stayed there. And they should realize that we're all the same. They're all here for the same purpose to try and make a better life either for ourselves or our children. And we shouldn't look down on anyone. We should be, we're all equal, okay. The children were very cruel. All right, children don't understand. But even today you hear when someone comes from Europe, the people that have been here, and perhaps they came from Europe themselves. Well, they look down on them. I don't know why, okay?

LEVINE: So you experienced people doing that, kids doing that when you were young.

MACCARONE: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

LEVINE: In what ways did they do it?

MACCARONE: Well, for instance, when I went, in that school that I showed you there. Those children would go out on the playground, right? They would teach us all the four letter words. And I would go in, I learned a word, I'm so happy. And my teacher was a little bit shorter than I was. Right, she was a little bit of a tiny thing. She'd look up at me. She was so sad. And she'd look at me and she'd shake her head not to say it, okay. And I understood that it wasn't the right thing to say. And over here, too, they took my brother Sylvio and they put him in a garbage pail and they rolled him down an embank in the school. And he got all shook up, the poor thing was crying. My father came to the school the next day, and the principal was very understanding. Took my brother from class to class until they find the boys that did it. They were punished for it. Because, you know, we were timid to push ourselves, because we didn't know them. And once we got to know them, I mean, we got along beautifully with all our schoolmates, okay. But in the beginning it was hard. I mean, you don't push yourself because you don't know what to say. You can't speak the language, you don't understand the customs, it's very hard.

LEVINE: Did you feel that change, then, as you were here?

MACCARONE: Oh, yes. Listen, I've got friends from 1929 when I first came here. His cousin, yes, is one of my first friends here. My other one passed away, the poor thing. But I went to the fiftieth anniversary of our high school graduation. That was the first one they had. Even though I didn't go to high school, I was invited to go. They was so beautiful. They were so happy to see me, and they come over and they hugged and they kissed me. Oh, I remember how smart you were, and all this, right. So even one of my teachers that I bowled with. We go bowling with the seniors, right. And one of them, she's way up in her eighties now. Lovely. And the teachers loved us. The teachers were very good and very helpful. But the children were cruel. Children are cruel anyhow, what can you do?

LEVINE: Okay. Well, before we close, is there anything else you can think of that maybe I didn't ask you, or that . . .

MACCARONE: I don't think so. I think I've said everything.

LEVINE: Maybe before we close then I just ask you, how do you think about this stage in your life now?

MACCARONE: I'm happy. I love Long Island. I wouldn't move out of here for love or money. My neighbors are beautiful. We've been in this house now since 1951, January

'51. And . . . (knock at door) Oh, Jenny. (break in tape)

LEVINE: We're resuming now after a neighbor stopped in. Okay, go ahead.

MACCARONE: Okay. I think I was saying that I love this part of the country. I love the weather, I love the change of scene, the seasons. The only thing that I'm sad about, I was always looking forward to when George would retire and we'd go across country by car, a leisure trip across the country, because this country is so big. And I wanted to see so many things. But, as it is, we've only been as far south as Florida and as far north as Massachusetts, as far west as Ohio. And, of course, we've flown over, this is by car. We go to California to visit our daughter, but I would have loved to see a lot more nooks and crannies of the United States. It's a beautiful country.

LEVINE: How do you feel about the . . .

MACCARONE: And we can't go because I don't drive out of the area, and he can't drive. He hasn't been able to drive for the past twelve years. I just feel bad about that that I haven't been able to make this trip across country leisurely, all right. And some friends of ours, they were thinking the same thing, and the husband also was sick and he can't do it. So we're stuck. Maybe some day we'll take a bus trip. I don't know. We'll see.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MACCARONE: But I would have liked to do it on our own, because the buses, it's like when we went to Europe and we went to Modena. The buses, the tour buses don't go in there. First of all, the bus wouldn't fit in the, you know. That was so interesting over there, too. But, one of my cousins lived there, and she took us there. You have room on the tape?

LEVINE: Yes, go ahead.

MACCARONE: They have the three towers in Modena, and that's where Pavarotti comes from, okay? In fact, her family knows him. My cousin, this woman that married my cousin knows the Pavarotti family there. And, oh, Michelangelo did a lot of paintings up there. And the walls around these three towers have frescos painted by Michelangelo. And when we went in 1972 there were several men with little, tiny tools chipping away the paint that had been painted over Michelangelo's frescos, and they were restoring these three towers for the tourist trade. And we went up on one, and on the wall, on the top floor was open windows, no glass, no nothing, no shutters. That's where they kept the prisoners chained to the walls. There was still the blood from the prisoners. God knows how long up there. And George had to use the bathroom, so I happened to push a door. And I said, "Well, here's a bathroom." He didn't want me to

tell my cousin. I says, "Here's a bathroom right here." So we opened the door, he said, "But there's no toilet." I said, "Yes, it is." I said, "You see, there's two imprints there, footprints. You put your footprints there, and there's a hole, and you squat and you aim for it." And there was a sink there. They were fixing this for the tourist trade, making bathrooms. That's the way they were making the bathrooms. So that was quite an experience for him. I knew about it because we had had it in school, okay. When I was going to school. But he had never seen that type of a toilet.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, it sounds as though you really consider yourself an American and, at the same time, very interested and proud of the Italian heritage.

MACCARONE: Oh, definitely. Oh, yes, I am. Sure, because that's where my roots are. This is my first love, this country. I've had many arguments about this because they'd say, "Who do you love better? America or Italy?" I says, "America." "Well, this is your step-mother but Italy is your mother." "Yeah, but my step-mother fed me and clothed me, and this is why we left my mother." All right. I think of my mother. Sure, I love my mother country, but this is first. This is where I was educated. This is where I, you know, grew up, and where my friends are, and where my children's roots are, so I love this country better. This country's been good to me.

LEVINE: Well, that sounds like a good place to end on that note. And I want to

thank you very much. It's really been a pleasure. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. And I've been here in Glen Cove, New York, Long Island.

MACCARONE: Long Island. Put Long Island.

LEVINE: Long Island, New York, with Renata Maccarone, who came from Italy when she was ten. Thank you very much.

MACCARONE: You're welcome. It's been my pleasure, I'm sure.