

EI-209

MARY MARINI LANGOLIS

BIRTH DATE: NOVEMBER 23, 1911

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 8/1994

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: LYDIA HANHARDT, 8/1995

ITALY, 1912 AND 1926

AGE 7 MONTHS (first trip)

SHIP NAME NOT RECALLED

RESIDENCES: ITALY: RIPBELLA; PISA: US: HAVERHILL, MA

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today in Haverhill, Massachusetts with Mary Langolis, who came from Italy to the United States through Ellis Island in June 1912 when she was seven months old. And today is September 2, 1992, and here in Haverhill we are here with Marcy Wright, Mrs. Langolis' daughter. I'm very happy to be here, and . . .

LANGOLIS: Happy to have you.

LEVINE: You're a first, in a way, because this is the first time I've spoken with someone who was not even a year old, so the questions will be more or less what you have been told about the experience.

LANGOLIS: Right, yes.

LEVINE: Okay. Why don't we start by you telling me where you were born.

LANGOLIS: I was born in a little village that not even on the map, under the province of Pisa, the leaning tower of Pisa. And they came over here, my father, mother migrated because things were going as well in those days. And they thought, my mother had been to America years before with her parents, and they thought, "Well, we'll take a trip and come and see what we can do in America. If we do well, all right. If not, we'll come back gladly." And they did well. They came to work in the shoe factories here.

LEVINE: Well, what's the name of the little village?

LANGOLIS: Ripbella.

LEVINE: Could you spell it?

LANGOLIS: Yes. R-I-P-B-E-L-L-A.

LEVINE: Okay. And what is your birth date?

LANGOLIS: November the 23rd, 1911.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, how was it that your mother happened to come with her parents even before that?

LANGOLIS: Because my maternal parents had been to North America in the 1800's. I don't remember what, when they came. And, as a matter of fact, I have an aunt who lives in Italy now who's eighty-five, eighty-five going to be eighty-six years old, was born in Providence, and left America when she was three years old. So her parents came over a couple of times, and went back and came. And then the last time they came, well, they went back. My mother got married in Italy, and of course, I was born after a short period of time, nine months, of course. And they decided, "We're not doing too well in the village. There's no industries and stuff like that." It was farmers, and my father was a cobbler fixing shoes. And they came to, well, we were about five families all from the same village. And, as I said, three of them came over, my father and his two brothers, and one of them rejected. And my father's older brother, he stayed in Rhode Island, in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. And we came to Haverhill because it was a shoe town. And he was a cobbler, and got a job in a shoe factory. And my mother also worked in the shoe town, in the shoe factory. And she did buttonholes for the high buttoned, button holes for the high shoes, whatever.

And blind eyelets, too, like that. And they worked all their lives in the shoe factory. And that we got separated. The uncle stayed in Rhode Island and we, but because we saw each other, you know.

LEVINE: Do you know, um, when you, what do you remember about your, what your mother and father talked about, life in Italy, before?

LANGOLIS: Before coming here?

LEVINE: Yeah.

LANGOLIS: Well, as I said, the village is so small, it's like just one street, you know, and those were mostly farmers. And, because some of the ladies would be, uh, tailors and some would be dressmakers, and some would be the cobblers, like my father did that. But most of them were farmers there who just lived, and there was no money exchanged. I can, I know my grandfather would go to Pisa and he would, they order some leather for his shoes, for whatever he was doing. And they would come to the village and deliver, and they would get a big bundle of oil, or wine, or grain. And when my grandfather sold the shoes, they in turn would give him the wine. It was

no money exchanged, very little money exchanged. And that, that's how they lived, and primitive, primitively. And outdoor bathrooms, no indoor plumbing. They do have now, but not now. In my village, I mean.

LEVINE: And were your mother and father from the same village?

LANGOLIS: Yes.

LEVINE: And did you have grandparents there?

LANGOLIS: Yes, indeed. We had, my mother had a sister and a brother, mother and father, sister and a brother. And she had never seen her brother until ten years later she went back to Italy to visit her people, after she came in 1912. She went back. In 1923, she went back to see her mother and father and her sister, because she knew her sister, but she was young. And her brother, she had never seen. And, well, we got acquainted that way. And my father had also brothers and sisters and parents. We got re-acquainted again. That's when we met them.

LEVINE: See, you went back . . .

LANGOLIS: Yes, in 19 . . .

LEVINE: At what age?

LANGOLIS: I was eleven, eleven.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So what is your mother's name and her maiden name?

LANGOLIS: My mother's name was Pirina Franquini Marini.

LEVINE: And your father's?

LANGOLIS: And my father was Marcello Milano Marini.

LEVINE: Now, when you went back you were eleven.

LANGOLIS: 1923.

LEVINE: Well, wait a minute. Let's try this follow in the chronology. Okay. So you came here with your mother, father and two uncles.

LANGOLIS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, what do you remember about either the decision to come, or the voyage?

LANGOLIS: The decision to come, because there was no industry there, and the village was so small they couldn't

make a living, and they thought, "Let's venture to America." How they got the money, I don't know. And how the man, how much it cost, I don't know. But they thought, "Well, let's all take a trip and see what happens." And, as I said, one uncle was rejected and the other two stayed. My father and his brothers stayed. They were accepted.

LEVINE: And what do you know about the uncle who was rejected?

LANGOLIS: That he had eye trouble. They had sent him back because of his eyes, but I don't know what the eye was, what the sickness was.

LEVINE: Did you ever see him later? Did he ever tell you what happened?

LANGOLIS: No, he never did, no. He never did. Yes, I saw him later, yes. 1923, when I went, when we went back to visit, I met them all.

LEVINE: And he just didn't . . .

LANGOLIS: No, we never discussed it. He says, "They sent me back. I couldn't make it." That's about it.

LEVINE: Do you remember hearing anything about the voyage?

LANGOLIS: Well, my mother was saying it took almost a month to come over, and that they were in steerage. The ladies were on one side, and the men on the other, and they couldn't put their foot over the threshold, and a lot of the mothers were pregnant and some of them, my mother was also pregnant with my brother, and had me. And they had to wash diapers and stuff like that, you know. And it was very difficult. Some women were seasick, and some women were sick with flu, and the men couldn't help them at all until they just had to crawl over to the door and pass the child over, or anything like that, or the dirty linen, whatever. That's all, that's about it. And I don't know anything about the food. I can't remember, I wish I did. Too late now. You just take everything for granted, you know.

LEVINE: So when you and your uncles and your father got to Ellis Island, what, did someone meet you there?

LANGOLIS: That I don't know. I can't remember anybody, being met. All I know is that they did come, I don't know how they got here, I don't.

LEVINE: Did they come directly here from . . .

LANGOLIS: They went directly to Providence, because there was other Italian people there, and they met there and they kind of got acquainted. But they, my father and mother lived in Providence for a while and decided, that there was a textile, and they decided that they didn't want that kind of work, and they said, "Come to Haverhill." It was a thriving shoe town then, many, many. Everybody was making shoes. Now they're making them all across.

LEVINE: Did your father, was he trained in Italy to make shoes?

LANGOLIS: Yeah. Well, in a coarse sort of way, yes.

LEVINE: I an apprenticeship or something.

LANGOLIS: He was making shoes because they were all farmers, and when they made shoes they used to put nails, thumbnails, like, thumbtacks, like, on the, like football players, because it was gravel, and they would wear the shoes out too fast, and they had made shoes only once a year. Every year they had a new pair of shoes. That was very primitive those days. Yeah. Eighty years ago, that's almost a hundred years.

LEVINE: Um, let's see. So you came, first you were in Providence, then you came to Haverhill.

LANGOLIS: Haverhill. Right. Yeah.

LEVINE: And do you remember starting school?

LANGOLIS: Uh, yes. I remember start going kindergarten and the first grade and the second grade here, in Haverhill. All in Haverhill.

LEVINE: And were there children who had come from Italy, in other places?

LANGOLIS: Oh, yes. A lot of places, yes. Yes, indeed. We were quite a mixture of immigrants, all different nationalities.

LEVINE: And what was that like, being among the . . .

LANGOLIS: It didn't bother us at all. Some of us only spoke Italian, on account that our parents spoke Italian all the time, and the others spoke in Polish, or whatever the nationality. But we seemed to get along all right. I don't know whether we did hand gestures or what, but we were kids.

LEVINE: So did you learn English more quickly than your

parents?

LANGOLIS: Yes, yes, because we went to school. Now, my mother spoke better English than my father, because as she had come over. She came, when she stayed in America, in Providence, my grandparents stayed in Providence, she went to school till the third grade. Then they shipped them back again to Italy. And then, between times, my maternal grandparents, went to South America to work, in Brazil. I don't know how they got the money. I don't know how they did it. That, I don't know. And then back to Italy, and that's, I think that's when my mother got, no, she was too young, then. She had to come back to, my grandfather had wandering feet.

LEVINE: Did he then stay in Italy, your mother's mother and father?

LANGOLIS: Oh, yeah, yes. After the last trip they stayed there. After the boy was born, you know, the young one was born, they stayed there with their families. But my father and mother thought, "We'll go to America and make some money, and then we'll go back to Italy and live." But as the years went by and we kids grew up, I had a brother who has, who passed

away just a couple of years ago, we were just two of us. And as the years went by before you knew it I got married and I had children, and my mother says, "I'm not going back to Italy and leave my grandchildren." And it hurt her to leave her parents and her sister. That's what she had, just parents and a sister. And it bothered them, but she had a family, and she had other things, you know. And they would correspond. Now it's easy. We just dial, call up.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, now, how is it, what was the basis for the decision to go back when you were eleven?

LANGOLIS: To see the parents. She had been gone ten years, and she wanted to go see her parents and meet her brother.

LEVINE: And were your father's parents alive as well?

LANGOLIS: Yes, yes. We met all of them, yes.

LEVINE: Now, do you remember them?

LANGOLIS: Oh, yes, indeed, in 1923, yes. And we spent three years in Italy in 1926. My brother and I came back home. My mother took us over, and my father came

over to bring us back it was his turn to meet his, to see his parents, and his sisters and brothers.

LEVINE: You went over, you and your brother went over with your mother.

LANGOLIS: Right, in 1923.

LEVINE: And then you stayed there three years.

LANGOLIS: Three years.

LEVINE: Then did your father come over?

LANGOLIS: They came to America, and then my father, from America, went to pick us up, in Italy to pick us up. It was his turn to see his father and mother.

LEVINE: Did your mother come back then, too?

LANGOLIS: She stayed here. I see.

LEVINE: Oh, she stayed here.

LANGOLIS: She stayed, yes. And he stayed here. When we went in in 1923, he stayed in Haverhill, and my mother went over. She spent six months in Italy with her people, and then she came over. In 1926 they decided that she wanted us kids to go back, come back home.

We were comfortable. You know, we were all right in that one-street village.

LEVINE: Where, who did you stay with?

LANGOLIS: I stayed with my paternal grandparents, and my brother stayed with my maternal, because they had a son that was the same age.

LEVINE: I see. And what were your paternal grandparents like?

LANGOLIS: Oh, they were older people. And one, more or less, didn't mean anything. You know, if you sit at the table there's always something, there's always a mouthful for somebody else. It didn't matter. Of course, my parents sent them money, because they were both here at that time. Between the three years, they were here. And we just, as I said, I lived with my paternal grandparents, he lived with my maternal grandparents.

LEVINE: When you think about your paternal grandparents, are there any anecdotes or experiences that you remember about them?

LANGOLIS: They were easygoing people. They were easy, you

know. As a child I'd used to get up at ten, eleven, twelve o'clock, and I'd have, whatever, whether it was dinner or breakfast, and then I just played around with the girls, or took walks. And then back to bed again, you know. Nothing, no, just he did his work.

LEVINE: What was his work?

LANGOLIS: My grandfather, he was a cobbler. He made the shoes. My maternal grandparents, they had a store, a variety store. They sold flour, and semolina, and candy. What else, well, there is pasta, stuff like that. It would be in sacks, you know, and you just dug out as much as you wanted with the scoop.

LEVINE: So what do you remember about them, the maternal grandparents?

LANGOLIS: Well, my grandmother, maternal grandmother was more jovial than the other. The others were older, but she was more jovial, she was more fun. And those, her husband, my grandfather, he was stern. And when he walked in the house, we all stood at attention, because he didn't want no nonsense. And if he catches nonsense, it didn't take us too long to

straighten out. ( she laughs ) He never hit us or anything, but he was the law. ( she laughs ) And he wasn't a, even a big man. He was a small man. The other one was a big man, and he didn't bother nobody.  
( she laughs )

LEVINE: And did, so did you spend much time with your brother when you were over there?

LANGOLIS: Well, we lived just two houses away, two houses, you know, the same street. I could holler to him, and he could holler to me, you know. Oh, yes. We saw him every day.

LEVINE: Do you remember any stories that either grandparents, any of the grandparents told you when you were in Italy?

LANGOLIS: No, no. My paternal grandparents said that his family came from northern Italy, and they migrated down to Tuscana, down where they were staying in Tuscana. And he says he can't remember once. And once I asked him, "Have you got any brothers and sisters?" He says, "I've got a sister, Amelia, but I don't know where she is. They got lost, lost, like everybody else." That's all I know. My maternal

grandmother, she had a slew of sisters and brothers in the village, but where they came from northern Italy, it was, they got lost.

LEVINE: So you had a lot of relatives in that village, huh?

LANGOLIS: We're all related one way or the other. We were all sort of, you know.

LEVINE: Well, when you think of those three years when you were there, um, what are the things you remember most about being there?

LANGOLIS: I had a happy time. I miss my folks. But afterwards the first six months I missed them, and after that I got in with them, they were my parents. My grandparents were my parents. If I needed anything or anything. Of course, as I said, they would send money to them, and they felt that, if I wanted anything I should have it, because they got the money. Of course, they spend it for food or for electricity, what little electricity we had. We didn't have much, but it's all right. It was a good experience. It made me appreciate America, to have all this. I feel as though I lived in a palace. It's a house, only a four-room house. It's only a

house, but to me it's a palace. And I think that more people should live in Europe to find out what they have to go through. Now, I don't mean in the big cities. What goes on in Milano and Rome and Bologna is one thing. That's another thing. But in the little village when you have to do without this and without that, you know. We lived so far up into the mountains that all we ate was salted fish, because it had to be dried because the sea was too far away. Then, in later years, they would take a horse and buggy, and I don't know where they got the ice, and they would bring the fish up and it would be gone in a few minutes. Also, if a farmer killed a pig, slaughtered a pig, everybody he'd know that he was going to be slaughtered. They would say, "Well, I want the pork chops." That was more expensive. And, "I want this and I want . . ." whatever part they wanted. And they went down, as the cheaper meat, cheaper parts. The pig was gone all day, and it was eaten the next day because they, or a cow, too, same thing. That's the way they did, that's the way they lived. And whatever was in season, when the tomatoes were in season, they ate tomatoes. And they didn't eat any more tomatoes till the next season.

And the same with the cucumbers and, you know, all the rest of the stuff that came out. But it was in season.

LEVINE: Do you remember any dishes that your, either, any of your grandmothers or anybody else made while you were over there?

LANGOLIS: Oh, yeah. We ate a lot of beans, a lot of beans, boiled beans. And pasta fagioli, bean soup. And, of course, macaroni. Pasta every day. Pasta every day, and a lot of vegetable soups. Roast, I never ate a roast there. Oh, yes, yeah. And, of course, we made a lot of cornmeal. With cornmeal we made polenta and made sauce and poured it over that, and, of course, my grandmother baked bread. Every eight days, she had this long piece of wood and had these loaves in there and she had to wait her turn, because the ovens were few, and we had to go in the woods and get the wood, stick it on our heads, go down and then after tie it up, of course, you know, in bundles, and then heat up the ovens. So in the late afternoon the bricks would be red hot. It would sweep all the ashes to one corner, and shove the bread in, and the hot bricks would bake the bread.

LEVINE: Was, this was a communal oven?

LANGOLIS: Well, there was only two or three in the village. They built their own. If I had a place in the basement I would build, and then I would do you a favor, and you could use the oven.

LEVINE: I see.

LANGOLIS: There was no money involved. Washing clothes. Washing clothes, fifteen or twenty of us went in a big swimming pool, like a swimming pool with granite slabs. And, let me tell you, we washed and we banged and slapped those clothes, you know, and washed. And then we'd go out in the field and spread them over the bushes. And nobody made a mistake. We all knew what our, which one of our clothes was. And sometimes one, I can remember one time one lady, she was pregnant, was due to have a baby. She said, "I don't feel too well. Who's got a small wash and do my wash for me?" And, of course, you're all there anyway, and she went home and had her baby. Yeah. She didn't feel well, and she went home and a baby. ( she pauses, she is prompted by a note passed to her from her daughter ) Oh, yes, how we bleached the

clothes, yes. Good thing she remember. We had a huge flowerpot affair, made out of terra cotta, like flowerpots, a spigot down there. And the ashes, we saved all the ashes, and you put burlap bags here and clothes, and burlap bags and ashes, and layers and layers of that. Every time there's a layer of burlap bag there was saved a sheet a layer, and the ashes. Poured hot water, it took us all day long to heat that water and pour the hot water and pour the hot water, and they would bleach. You'd open the spigot, it was just like bleach water came out. When that water came out, it would bleach anything you wanted.

Primitive. It was just so nice and soft. But then you had to wash the clothes again to take out the ashes that had gone through, but they were white as snow, white as snow. They don't do that any more. They have washing machines now. They got dish washers now. They got everything we got. And I said to my aunt, the last time I was over there I said to my aunt, "To think how we worked so hard (Italian), to do the washing, and to wash the clothes we had to go to the fountain with those rocks." The bronze, fill them up and carry them in the house, no running water. Carrying, and in the winter the men, when it

froze we didn't have any snow, even though we were up in the mountains the wind, the ocean, we could see the ocean from the top. And they would blow away. It wouldn't be too much snow. But the pipes would froze in the village, and they would heat up the hot water, whatever hot water, or they would, I don't know how they did it, but they would thaw out the pipes. Because the water came from a mountain and came in through there, and they had it piped in that way, and everybody in the village got water from that one faucet. Winter wasn't easy. We didn't mind, used to it. I'm glad I lived in these things, because everything is fine for me. I don't care whether it's faded. It's okay, it covers me.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LANGOLIS: It doesn't make any difference to me. So I enjoy everything there is, I enjoy everything there is to be enjoyed. And if you are unhappy about, well, today it's snowing, well, it's good, snow is good, purifies the air. Tomorrow it's raining, good, it'll make the grass grow greener, make the crops grow.

LEVINE: So you became an optimist.

LANGOLIS: Maybe that's it, yeah, yeah. Nothing bothers me at all for that. Just, of course, when you have little illnesses and stuff like that, that does. Little disturbance, that does bother me a great deal.

LEVINE: So did you, you had playmates.

LANGOLIS: Oh, yes. My playmates are kind of dying now.  
( she laughs ) I'm over eighty years old, and I don't have too many left that we went to school, I went to school with. And some have gone, and during fascism, I was there with, the fascist was in its full swing, a lot of them went that way because they know, they want you to vote, it's a small village, they knew that you didn't want to vote for Mussolini, and they knew that you were going to vote for the other party, and they watched you. And if they, and you thought, "Hey, I'm going to be the one, put the marker where they didn't want." They'd beat you up!

LEVINE: Really? You remember seeing . . .

LANGOLIS: Oh, I didn't see it, but I knew that this guy was beat up by the fascists. Brother to brothers, one was fascist and one wasn't, they would beat up. So some went to France, some went to Argentina. And I

don't know where the others went, but I know they, those two countries, they took some of the young folks with (?). My, like my aunt's husband, he went to France because he opposed, and they knew how you felt, you know. Like how we feel. Either we're Democrats or we're Republicans, independent. But it was a good time of my life. But I had a good life.

LEVINE: So when you, what was the, what were the differences between like the school that you went to before you went over, and the school you went to when you were there?

LANGOLIS: That I don't know, but when I went to school there in 1923, one teacher taught the third, fourth, fifth, sixth class, going up to the sixth grade. And then they went to the city. They took the bus and they went to the city, who could further their education. And those who didn't, why, they took up sewing or embroidering or tailoring, the ladies did the tailoring, and we never had any stamped goods. You know, we couldn't, transfers, to transfer on the material if you want to embroider something? We had a gentleman that do, did a lot of drawing. He was good at it. And we'd tell him we'd want to make a

couple of pillowcases, and we want the figures to be four inches, and he would copy the flowers that we would do, because that's the only way we could do it, and we did it.

LEVINE: So did you go ever to the city when you were staying back there . . .

LANGOLIS: I went a couple of times, my grandfather had to buy some luggage, so he would take me to Pisa.

LEVINE: And what, how do you remember that, what do you remember?

LANGOLIS: That was an adventure. And he had a sister-in-law that lived there. My grandmother had a sister that lived in Pisa. And we would go visit her and a cousin. I don't know, I lost track of them because I'd been away too long. But we would go visit them, and then he would do his purchasing and then back again the same day.

LEVINE: What would you travel on?

LANGOLIS: Train.

LEVINE: Train.

LANGOLIS: Yes, the train. There was a buggy that would take us down to the railroad station at the foot of the, and we would wait for the train and the train come back, and there would be a buggy there waiting. Because, no, the train, they'd know that we'd have to go. Now there's a bus once a day, goes down to this small cities if they want to make any purchases, and at night comes back. And be there, and if you miss the bus, well, you're stranded.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything that your, that any of, either of your grandparents told you, like sort of lessons, things they wanted you to know about life or how you should act?

LANGOLIS: Do you know, with four grandparents I only had one that could read and write, and that was my mother's father. And what he could write is, "Dear Daughter, We are all fine. So-and-so had a baby, so-and-so died. Regards, saluti, your father and mother." That's it. So we don't, they never read the papers. We had no radios."

LEVINE: Were they strict with you in any way?

LANGOLIS: Oh, no, no. We just grew up like topsy. Well, they

were very good. All the children. They just run around and play, chase a dog or something like that, you know.

LEVINE: So life was pretty comfortable.

LANGOLIS: Ah, yes, yes, yes. It was. The only hardship there was that some of them didn't have quite enough to eat, you know. They had large families. They don't have large families now. They have one child, that's enough.

LEVINE: Was your family religious? Were your grandparents religious?

LANGOLIS: No, no. They weren't that religious. I was very surprised for Italy being, having the Pope there and all that, and my village was not very religious, because in the 16th Century the priests ran Italy, and they weren't very nice. And they did a lot of things that they weren't supposed to do, and they have no use. It's all right for the church, it's okay, they respect the church. They do not respect the priests that run it because of them, of 16th Century.

LEVINE: They hold grudges, I guess.

LANGOLIS: Uh-huh. But, no. I don't think they were religious, no. They believed in God, and they said their prayers, but the church is poor. It's an awful lot of churches. I told them. When I would, when my husband was alive we went, I says, "There's an awful lot of sinners in Italy, because all I see is nuns and monks and priests and churches." That's ancient history, that's ancient country. The churches are beautiful. They're not, the tourists keep the churches well-shaped. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: So then what, why was it decided that you would go back to the United States?

LANGOLIS: Because my mother was here, and my father would stay over there to take us, and they wanted us to come back. See, I was fourteen.

LEVINE: And did they have any other children?

LANGOLIS: No, just the two of us.

LEVINE: What was your brother like?

LANGOLIS: My brother, he, a carefree guy, and nothing bothered him. And he lived from day to day. If he ate today, fine. If he didn't eat, it's okay . . .

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BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: And did they have any other children? ( recording has echo for this question.

LANGOLIS: No, just the two of us.

LEVINE: What was your brother like?

LANGOLIS: My brother, he, a carefree guy, and nothing bothered him. And he lived from day to day. If he ate today, fine. If he didn't eat, it's okay, the next day he'll eat. And he liked to gamble. He liked to gamble a little bit, and he was a poor man. When a poor man gambles, he should never gamble, because you can't win a lot because you have a little bit to put on, you know that. But he has a family, he has three children. And, as I said, he died at the age of seventy-seven, smoked like the devil, had lung cancer, but too many of them do.

LEVINE: What was his name?

LANGOLIS: My brother's name, Marino Marini.

LEVINE: Now, was there gambling in the little village?

LANGOLIS: No. Drinking, yes.

LEVINE: Wine.

LANGOLIS: Yeah. After the day's work they all met at the cafe, and they chit-chatted and they drank their glass of wine, then home again.

LEVINE: Was it just the men?

LANGOLIS: Oh, yes. Ladies stayed at home. Oh, yes, only men.

LEVINE: And what other social, ways of being social, were there in the village?

LANGOLIS: No, nothing social. Once in a while a few of them would get together and they would put on a play, once in a while. And the village went to see them, laugh, you know, to make laugh and entertain us, but otherwise, no movies.

LEVINE: Do you remember any of the plays?

LANGOLIS: No, no.

LEVINE: Do you remember any stories, like fairy tales or stories that you were told as a kid?

LANGOLIS: The only stories we kept repeating were Pinocchio and

Cinderella, Cinderella, and, yeah.

LEVINE: In Italy, Cinderella was popular.

LANGOLIS: Yes, for the kids. We would tell The Seven Dwarfs. As a matter of fact, even in the nursing homes, the nurseries, they had the dwarfs, the statues of dwarfs, yeah.

MRS. LANGOLIS' DAUGHTER: Cinderella is one story. Snow White is another. The seven dwarfs are with Snow White.

LANGOLIS: Ah, not Cinderella.

LEVINE: Snow White, Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs.

LANGOLIS: Dwarfs, yeah, the dwarfs.

LEVINE: And Pinnochio.

LANGOLIS: Pinnochio, yes, that's Italian, mostly. And Pinnochio, we did go to the city in Toscana there, a city called Lucca, where they're supposed to, where they were supposed to, you know, you're supposed to be bought, manufactured. Yeah, there's a spring up from somewhere.

LEVINE: Yeah. So your father came, and he stayed a few

months in Italy before he brought you back.

LANGOLIS: In 1923, he stayed here, but in 1926 he came to pick us up and he stayed, he stayed nine months.

LEVINE: Oh. So what was it like being with your father back in Italy?

LANGOLIS: Very, very nice, but he, he had made acquaintance with his friends that he had known years and years ago. And, of course, he frequented the bars, the social whatever there was. And I didn't see too much of him. At lunchtime, you know, we ate dinner, and we had supper together, and then he was off. He couldn't go anywhere unless he went to the big city. You're stuck right there. And now there's automobiles and taxis and stuff like that. But, as I said, in the villages there's a bus. If you don't have a taxi or a car, or you don't hire a car, well, you're stuck there. In those days nobody had a car. One man had one automobile, and he came to spend the summer in the village, because he worked in Genoa.

LEVINE: How did people get along, besides walking? Get around, I mean?

LANGOLIS: We didn't get around, just stayed in the village.

LEVINE: You just stayed there, uh-huh.

LANGOLIS: Just stayed in the village. Sundays we'd put on our Sunday best. Some of us went to mass and some of us didn't. And then we walked down the village and up, and then go to the cemetery nearby, walk around the cemetery, every Sunday we did that. During the, yeah, big thrill. She was there. She knows what that is. I was going to say something, I forgot. Darn it, old age.

LEVINE: Well, it'll come.

MRS. LANGOLIS' DAUGHTER: Didn't you have fiestas? You know, special events?

LANGOLIS: No. I tell you what we did have. In the summer time the musicians would get together and get in the big piazza.

MRS. LANGOLIS' DAUGHTER: Plaza.

LANGOLIS: Square, the square. And they would play music, and they would play the Italian songs, "O Sole Mio," or them kind of songs. And sometimes they would strike up the band with an opera of some kind. And my uncle, who was a clarinet player, he would leave the

square and he would go up to another, and get up on the old church on top of the roof, and they would play down there. Now, this was all in the darkness because there's no street lights, and everybody sticks a plug outside the window so you can see where you're going, because some nights are dark. And he would go up there, and when they would play he would answer, he likely was the soprano part. And you could hear him in the stillness of the night. You could hear a pin drop. It's quiet. ( she laughs ) A few bats would fly around, ( she laughs ) but that's about it.

LEVINE: Was this the uncle, by any chance, that was sent back?

LANGOLIS: That's my Uncle Mario. He was sent back.  
( she laughs ) Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, what other instruments were being played down in the square.

LANGOLIS: Mostly brass, mostly brass. I don't remember the drums. I don't remember the drums. I can remember the clarinets and the slide trombones and the horns. It was all brass. Of course, when we had a funeral

in those days, a band went along. They played the death song, like. And we all marched to the cemetery. We'd no automobiles. You don't get in the car, you don't get in the car. ( she laughs ) You just walked up to the cemetery with your candles. You held your candles and you mumbled your prayers as you went along.

LEVINE: Each person had a candle?

LANGOLIS: Each person had a candle. They were passed around, and they were collected by that church, the priest who would, next time would use it again.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. And what about the cemeteries? How were they different from the ones here?

LANGOLIS: ( she laughs ) They're different. They're different because they, they look like tables. They're all marble.

MRS. LANGOLIS' DAUGHTER: Above ground.

LANGOLIS: Above ground, yes. One was buried there, and the other on top. And the marble slab would cover the graves, that's how they are. They also have some pictures, also the, of the deceased, some of them.

And for now the cemetery is getting old, and people are, the young folks are leaving. There was, a lot of them had left the village because they'd gone to Milano where they had the industries. And we don't, we don't have wineries in Italy in our neck of the woods. There is some wineries, but I can't think of anything else. I can't, what else. Oh, yeah, oh, walls around the cemetery seven feet tall, they're not going to get out. ( she laughs ) They're not going to get out. Even they uncover themselves though they can't go over the wall, terrible. And my uncle came over, one, the one that was as old as my brother. He says, "You know, these cemeteries are beautiful. They're nice and green and they're peaceful, and there's no walls around them. Over there they're all cemented, there's not a blade of grass." The only one that has a little bit of grass that sprouts out now and then, no perpetual care, you know. It's the one that they're buried in the dirt. And there's the poor that can't afford the, what do you, what do you . . .

LEVINE: The marble.

LANGOLIS: It's, and then the mausoleum, we have them. They put

them in there, if you can afford it.

LEVINE: Yeah. Why do you think there is such a tall wall around it?

LANGOLIS: Tradition. Why, there was a wall all around Rome once, all around the city of Rome. They just gave people work. Bricks over bricks and bricks over bricks. ( she laughs ) You'll see those buildings. Have you been to Italy?

LANGOLIS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Right. You've got an idea, then. You see, we have relatives, and they took us places where the tourists do not go. And how about the steam, where we went someplace where, (?) took us where those great big pipes like that, chrome, they shine in the sun. And what goes through there? Steam? Steam goes right through those, over the hills and the dales you see those great big, like that, pipes like that.

LEVINE: Steam for what? For heating . . .

LANGOLIS: I can't remember.

MRS. LANGOLIS'S DAUGHTER: I don't know where it goes. This is now.

LANGOLIS: Now. This is now, yeah.

LEVINE: All right. Well, so, okay. So your father came. You spent nine months. Now, how was your father in relation to you when you were a little girl, when you were, like, twelve, or . . .

LANGOLIS: Oh, he was, we weren't afraid of my father. He was a good guy, he was the good guy. It was my mother.

LEVINE: Oh, your mother was the strict one.

LANGOLIS: She said, "Sit down," we sat. We didn't give her no backtalk. My father was easy. He was all right. Of course, he had his own life. He drank a little bit, you know. He went to the clubs with his men folks and Ma stayed at home all the time with the kids. And she had to make them behave. We were only two of us, but just the same we can, an old lady would say, "You put one nut in a bag and do like this, it won't rattle. Put two nuts in there and you'll find out what a lot of noise it makes." So the same with us. We were only two, but we just bickered just back and forth. And so she made, she was with us.

MRS. LANGOLIS'S DAUGHTER: In those days men went out more.

LEVINE: Okay. So do you remember the voyage then coming back to the United States?

LANGOLIS: In 1923? '26? Oh, yes. It was nice, it was nice. In 1923 we were young and we thought it was an adventure.

LEVINE: That's when you were going over.

LANGOLIS: Going over, in 1923, going over. That was an adventure, and we didn't pay too much attention to anything. But I do know that there was a lady that went berserk, and they had a straight jacket on her. And she would shout Michael, "Miguel, Miguel." And we kids would go over and try and keep her company. She was by herself, no, she couldn't. And then I do know that one man suffered a stroke as he was there, and the ship doctor took care of him, and he seemed to be all right. He got into New York fine. And coming over a lady had a baby, and the baby was stillborn, and so they buried it at sea.

LEVINE: You remember seeing that?

LANGOLIS: Yes, yeah. The captain was the godfather and the nurse was the godmother and they took him and blessed

him, whatever they did. Yeah. Those things do happen sometimes.

LEVINE: Yeah.

LANGOLIS: Then there was, when we disembarked they give you a little pep talk. "Now, you're going to a strange country. You must remember that your ways are different from theirs." ( addressing Dr. Levine ) Am I talking loud enough? "And you have to get adjusted to their ways." And he told you this all in English. I understood that, all right. I understood the English because I'd only been away three years, you know. And he said to my father, "Have you got enough money to go home?" And my father said, "Yes." He landed in New York Harbor there. He said, "You can stay here. Sit on the truck right here, and I'm going to see if I can find your mother." He had ten cents in his pocket! He had a dime in his pocket! He says to my mother, "You've got any money?" She said, "Why, haven't you got any?" He says, "I've got ten cents." ( she laughs ) So that's the kind of guy he was, he depended always on Ma. And, so he asked the other gentleman, he says, "Have you got enough money to go home?" And he said, "How much do

you want?" And my father said to him in Italian, "He doesn't want any money. He wants to know if you've got enough money to go home." "Oh, si, si. Yes, yes," he says, "I've got enough money to go home." See, it's hard to understand sometimes. But we got along all right, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah, so do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when you came into the Harbor?

LANGOLIS: Yes, that was quite a sight. It is really quite a sight to see. Yes, indeed. Now, once but twice. And it is very impressive, very impressive, it's so big.

LEVINE: Did you know what it was when you saw it there?

LANGOLIS: Yes, we had learned in school vaguely a little bit about the Statue of Liberty, you know. And, my mother, yes, she was that kind, well, she delayed at Ellis Island. She did. They had to spend a couple of days there, but I can't remember why.

MRS. LANGOLIS'S DAUGHTER: When they first came.

LANGOLIS: When they first came, in 1912, when they first came. And I can't remember why she, I can't . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember Ellis Island coming back in 1926?

LANGOLIS: We did not go there. We disembarked in New York.

LEVINE: Were you traveling steerage then, or were you traveling first or second class?

LANGOLIS: Second class.

LEVINE: I see. So that's why you didn't have to . . .

LANGOLIS: No, we didn't have to, no. We were American citizens.

LEVINE: I see. So then what? After you embarked, after you disembarked in New York, what?

LANGOLIS: My mother was there to greet us, then we got on the train and came to Haverhill.

LEVINE: And how did you feel? How did you feel coming back?

LANGOLIS: I, very good. It was home. I felt, I was visiting over there, and here was home. Because the first ten years of my life I spent here, and then the three years I spent in Italy. That was a vacation. And here it was good.

LEVINE: So when you were leaving your grandparents and other

relatives there . . .

LANGOLIS: Oh, well, that was, it was quite an affair. "You're going away tomorrow, tomorrow you're going to go. You've got to get up early." And aunt said that, "This little buggy will take you." It was like a stagecoach, like in the good old days, it's a covered, and the horse takes you down, you know. The night before all the villagers line up and they said, "Well, I hope you have a good time, and I hope you come back and visit us." And each and every one of them shakes your hand, who cries, who kisses and who doesn't, you know, and all that. A string of them, they come to say goodbye to you, and that's their farewell. There's no parties, there's no, you know, no cake or anything, no nothing. Just the good wishes, just the wishes. No food at all. That's the way it is.

LEVINE: So then you came back to Haverhill. Did you go to school again?

LANGOLIS: Yes. We went to school called The Tilton School up where all the, well, would you call that immigrants were there, because we were all kinds of people there. In 1926 we were such a mixture of

nationalities. Now we're kind of spread out a little bit, but I went to school, my brother and I went to school there.

LEVINE: And how long did you stay in school?

LANGOLIS: We stayed until the eighth grade.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And then?

LANGOLIS: No more schooling. I went to work in a shoe shop. Didn't make much money, but I went to work.

LEVINE: And when did you meet your husband?

LANGOLIS: In school. Yeah, in school I met my husband. We both went to the same school. And he was teaching my brother to drive, and got acquainted, better acquainted with him then.

LEVINE: And then, you got acquainted with him, and then did you marry soon, or after a long time?

LANGOLIS: Well, listen, after a couple of years, I think, we got married, because I was nineteen and he was twenty. I wasn't going to let an American guy get away. My mother could marry an Italian.

LEVINE: Oh, you wanted to marry an American.

LANGOLIS: Sure! ( railroad crossing bells are heard in the background )

LEVINE: Why didn't you want to marry an Italian?

LANGOLIS: Oh, maybe my father was, he drank a little too much and I thought that he wasn't, he could have been a better husband to my mother. He was good to us, and to my children, and to my grandchildren. He was very good to them. But I thought he would make a better husband to my mother than he was. He wasn't, he wasn't that bad, he didn't go to jail or get arrested or anything like that. I don't know, you know. He never did that. But sometimes he would, the holidays, the shops had parties, we wouldn't see him for a couple of days, and we never knew where he was. We checked the hospitals, we checked the jails. My husband and my brother would go and make the rounds, and we couldn't find him.

LEVINE: Now, what was your husband's name?

LANGOLIS: Elphege, Elphege. E-L-P-H-E-G-E. Canadian, they were Canadians. His mother and father came over here with four children and he had three in America. So there were seven, she had three boys in America.

LEVINE: And what are the names of your children?

LANGOLIS: Maxine and Ronald.

LEVINE: And do you have grandchildren?

LANGOLIS: Oh, yes, yes, indeed, I got seven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. We reaped. ( they laugh )

LEVINE: This is getting near the end.

LANGOLIS: Sorry.

LEVINE: I just want to see if there's anything that you would say about the life you had.

LANGOLIS: Both, in Italy and in America, I had a good life. We went through the Depression like everybody else. We had our joys and sorrows just like everybody else. I was not like some mothers who lose their children and don't know where they are. I, my family's all around me. I got a grandson that lives here, a granddaughter that lives down there. And they're always here, they're coming and going all the time, and it's fine. Sometimes I get tired, but why not? Who don't get tired? Just sitting down doing nothing

you get tired, too. But I had a good life.

LEVINE: Good.

LANGOLIS: But I'm glad I came to America. And I feel bad for those people who are turned away from America, because I know what it is to live in those places. Some of them, even down the Pacific, down there, you know, they lived so, I feel bad for them. As an immigrant when I know. And then when we did come over a couple of our families lived together. We were three families living together. One lady stayed at home. My aunt and uncle and my mother and father, they went to work, and she took care of the kids. And she made the pasta fagioli and she's the one that washed the clothes, so we helped one another. Then little by little they went housekeeping and we went housekeeping and they went housekeeping. But we have to, because we, strange, my grandmother would say, "How many times I had to cross a street because I was afraid to be stoned." They'd throw stones at us because we had the babushkas and the long, we dressed European style, and they were afraid of us and we were afraid of them.

LEVINE: This was your grandmother that came here.

LANGOLIS: My maternal grandmother. The others never left this village. They were born and died there.

LEVINE: So, she was the one that was more, uh . . .

LANGOLIS: Yeah, she was lively. She was more fun. And my Concetta, my grandmother Concetta was fun, but she had been around a little bit. She had been to North and South America, and she was one of these that could give it to people. When my grandmother Carol, well, she was just plodding along. She had a lot of babies. Some died and some didn't and some lived. Well, I think, she said she had seventeen children. Our of seventeen she raised five. Who died at eleven, who died, some stillborn, you know, whatever the story was, I don't know. My maternal grandmother had seven, and she only raised three.

LEVINE: Well, are you enjoying your old age?

LANGOLIS: Yes, I am. I'm living The Life of Riley. You've heard The Life of Riley? I'm Mrs. Riley.  
( she laughs )

LEVINE: And what, and what is it that is so, is so pleasurable about this time of your life?

LANGOLIS: It's nice because I don't have, I have my daughter that does everything. I don't have nothing to worry about. I don't have to worry whether there's pasta in the house or whether there's a piece of butter in the house or a loaf of bread, you know. All the bills are taken care of by her. Thank God I've got her, and many of my friends say, "You're so lucky." They live alone. They have their own little apartment, see. "You're so lucky." And, of course, I have my joy, I have my two great-grandchildren that come. One's ten years old, Alexis is ten years old. She a little lady, and she's a nice help. And we have Eric. He is four years old, and he's a terror. Hmm. And then we have little Mary who is seventeen months old, seventeen months old, and she's a doll. She's a doll. They don't even look like me. Eric does, because he's got brown eyes and dark hair, but the others are blue eyes and blondes. My father used to say, if it was his birthday we would gather all the children, the Marine children, my brother has seven or eight great-grandchildren, because Richard, who has, yeah. And we would say, "It's Nano's birthday. Come, and we're going to have cake and ice cream." And he'd say, "What are the kids here for?"

And we'd say, "It's your birthday, Pa. We're celebrating your birthday." And he says, "Look, all these kids, and there's not an honest Italian among them." ( she laughs ) What made him think the Italians were honest. Does he know what Frank Sinatra does? ( she laughs ) Or what Al Capone did? ( she laughs )

LEVINE: Well, is there anything else you'd like to say before we close?

LANGOLIS: Well, it was nice meeting you, and I'm so glad that you came, and I let out all the stuff. God knows what you're going to do with it. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: Well, I'll give you a copy.

LANGOLIS: Oh, that would be lovely

LEVINE: And a copy will go in the library at Ellis Island.

LANGOLIS: Oh, great. Oh, that's wonderful.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

LANGOLIS: You're very welcome. It was my pleasure, too.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I've been talking with Mary Langolis, and I'm

signing off.