

**EI-226**

**CARMELA GENEVA ROSATO**

**BIRTH DATE: AUGUST 28, 1895**

**AGE AT INTERVIEW: 97**

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**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.**

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**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 3/1996**

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**ITALY, 1907**

**AGE 12**

**SHIP: SAN GIOVANNI**

**PORT: NAPLES**

**RESIDENCES:**

- **ITALY: STURNO, AVELLINO**
- **US: GLEN COVE, ROSLYN, WESTBURY, NY**

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today in Westbury, Long Island, New York, with Carmela Genova Rosato, who came from Italy in 1907 when she was twelve years old. And today is October 15, 1992, and here with us are three of Mrs. Rosato's daughters: Angelina Rosato Avatello, --

ROSATO: And Tami's outside.

LEVINE: -- Joan Rosato Mastriani and Gloria Rosato dePaolo. Well, I'm very happy to be here, and I look forward to hearing your story.

ROSATO: It's very nice. Thank you very much. Thank you.

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LEVINE: Okay. Why don't we start with the town you were born? What was the name of the town?

ROSATO: Sturno. Sturno, provincia Avellino. Like province, you know, the city's Avellino . Like over here, they – and -- New York State of -- Albany the capital, you know, that's how they have over there. They have the province. Like every town belongs to the pina --*conte* , the [not understood] and then they go at the province, you know, bigger city, in other words.

LEVINE Okay. Now, can you spell these, there are going to be some words that are going to be difficult for me to spell.

Daughter: Sturno. S-T-U-R-N-O.

LEVINE: And the province?

Daughter: Province? Avellino

Daughter: : A-V-E-L-I-N-A.

Daughter: Double L.

Daughter: Double O?

Daughter: Double L, and O.

Daughter: A-V-E-L-L-I-N-O. Avellino.

LEVINE: Okay. You know, I think, wait, we're going to pause here for a second.  
( break in tape) Okay. We're resuming again, uh, and we'll be writing the

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words that might be difficult to spell. Okay. Now, what's your birth date?

ROSATO: August 28th, 1895.

LEVINE: And did you live in the same town in Italy until you came to America? Did you always live in the same town?

ROSATO: Uh, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Tell me about that town. What do you remember when you think about that place?

ROSATO: Well, the – the –the place was, for me seems was good place, you know, nice. We had a place, the houses right on the main road. And it was the [not understood] they were – was the -- the butch [sic] man and he used to make, butch -- he used to sell the wine, and then used to be all the people stoppin' over there to -- you know -- to drink, to eat. And we had the market, the big market up at the -- they call Sant [not understood] uh, St. Michael, a church. And over there was a big, big, place.

Daughter: Piazza -- a square.

ROSATO: And they had a big square, and they had the fair over there and then, you know, the people used to come to the street where I was, you know, and used to be some, they had to dig it, (?), and look at those things. Some, they had a (?), they used to call it. Now they have it -- the necklace -- those big ball like this. They were gold they had, all around. Those big rock, Jenny, you have one, the black one, big thing? That's what they used to have, a lot of woman, like a big thing, they used to call (Italian), means like a bell.

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LEVINE: A bell?

ROSATO: A little bell. That's what I mean. And that's all – I mean, you know -- thing that I seen. And then, to do the -- whatever I was doin'. My father -- I was starting to say before -- he come over here. I don't know what -- when he come, but he stood three years and then he come back. He come back in Italy and I stood a while -- about seven months, I think -- and he come back. He come over here, and then after a while he send for us. So my mother -- before, you know, they were poor, too. My mother, the -- the father-in-law, he had a little house -- a little place, a little, you know. So they didn't had enoughts to take care of themselves. And, uh, and they had to go to work, you know. So my mother -- when my father was over here -- she used to go to work herself, and I had to take care of my sister.

LEVINE: Ah. What did your mother do for work when she was over there?

ROSATO: Oh, anything. Like they have the wheat. They put the wheat, and then when the wheat is like this, they got to go with their little rake like, and they got to dig it out.

LEVINE: Take the --

ROSATO: The little grass and everything. And then when it gets a little big, they go -- the women -- to pull the grass, wherever it grows in between the wheat. And, any -- oh, anything like that. And that's -- the heaviest they didn't. That was, the men, they used to do that.

LEVINE: Was this a farming town? Did most of the people farm?

ROSATO: Well, no, not the town. But they had the out -- like -- over there. They have the town over here, and then the -- the land. It's about four -- three, four,

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five – no, I –depend, you know -- where they got it. It's out. But then there's a piece -- place like sometime they have a gathering four or five – own – own and they have a -- calling *masseria* [farm house], a big house. I could go to your mother-in-law, they had a bigger house – big --and they called 'em (Italian). They used to have the man to go help when they had to help. And another thing, too, my mother used to -- because we were living in the town -- they used to come over there and ask my mother could you come me to help the ladies pick the (?), depending on how much they need. So my mother and another lady that wanted to go to work, she used to go and used to help the people what they would do.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ROSATO: And me, I only went two time. My mother put my kerchief on the heads because it was hot, I lost 'em to d--. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: It was hot, and she put a kerchief on your head and what? ( she laughs )

ROSATO: Yeah.

Daughter: She lost it.

ROSATO: I lost 'em.

LEVINE: Your lost the kerchief.

ROSATO: And I -- because I wasn't used to – and the thing fell off. And Mama tell me, "Where's the kerchief?" "I don't know." ( they laugh )

LEVINE: And do you remember the house you lived in?

ROSATO: Yes.

LEVINE: What was it? Was it big? Was it small?

ROSATO: No, it was a little room. A kitchen downstairs, and they had a little room upstairs -- like one room, you know. Then we had to get out of there because this lady was -- the daughter she baptize me and they had three sons. One was a tailor, another was a shoemaker, another was a music teacher. So this music teacher, he was a good music teacher -- a good man I like, and they had the musician. Then they didn't have the room. A foreign musician from other town they had to come to practice with him. And she said they need the room for the musician. We had to get out. So we was another three years. When my father was over here we were in one house, another place, and then another. One year -- they will -- the last house that I was stayin' in them before. They all went very well -- the house were.

LEVINE: Now, so, it was your mother, your father, then there was you, and you had two --

ROSATO: Sisters.

LEVINE: Sisters, uh-huh. What was your father's name?

ROSATO: Thomas.

LEVINE: Thomas.

ROSATO: Tomas.

LEVINE: And your mother's?

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ROSATO: Arcantula [ph].

LEVINE: Oh. And her maiden name?

ROSATO: Ruso.

LEVINE: L-U?

ROSATO: Ruso.

Daughter: R-U-S-O.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did you have, like, grandparents that lived near you?

ROSATO: I – I – I only had my father father for a while. I remember when he died, too.

LEVINE: How old were you when he died?

ROSATO: Me? Oh, maybe that, maybe the nine or ten -- somewhere like that.

LEVINE: Oh, so you--

ROSATO: Because I remember where we were livin', and the some house, and that's how I know, because I was eight years when we get out from where we're born.

LEVINE: Do you remember any times that you spent with your grandfather?

ROSATO: Well, we used to go, like. And he used to come, you know, just to talk. I

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remember one thing he said to me, that's the only thing. They were fixing the church, St. Michael Church, you know. When was I – we had the end of the town big place the one I said had the fair over there. So, and they were renew, like, once in a while. You know, they make, how you say?

Daughter: Remodel.

ROSATO: Remodel. And make new things, new. And so I says, "Gee, this changed room." The people, they were there long time, and I said, "What they have to [not understood]." So my grandfather, you know what he says? I will see -- would see when this finish. I don't think I can see. I will see when that finish." It means that he know that they would stay long, and he wouldn't see any then. He died before the church finished, and that's how I remember, you know. ( disturbance to the microphone )

LEVINE: Could I take, (referring to the microphone ) because it's going to interfere with the sound. ( they laugh )

ROSATO: Oh, [not understood].

LEVINE: Let's see. Uh, so what were your sisters' names?

ROSATO: Uh, Lebiabescualine [ph], Mary, Pat, and they used to call Mary Lescaline [ph]. And the other friend's [sic] is Francesca.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, um, let's see. Did you have aunts and uncles? Did you have other extended family around the town?

ROSATO: Well, yeah. We – I -- I had my mother's sister. The half-sister, they were. But she had one brother regular, you know. Because the mother, I think, she marry again. And she had two daughter, and they were very nice -- one especially. We used to be -- know -- close like. And---

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LEVINE: What would you, do you remember any times you spent with that, that was your aunt?

ROSATO: Yeah. Some time. That's the one I -- they used to live in the country, they recall --like over here. Like over here you get farm way far away, and that's how they were over there. The land it's out, out of the town. Maybe somebody, they got some to -- close. But most of them, they don't. And they have the field, they have. So, and, uh, that's what she was livin'. And sometime we used to go, and sometime we used to spend overnight. Like me -- because I was the first one -- I used to go with my mother.

LEVINE: And what was that aunt's name?

ROSATO: Catherine.

LEVINE: Catherine. Do you remember any times that you spent with Catherine, what you did, that you think of sometimes?

ROSATO: Oh, nah. I remember once, she had the son. She was fifty, my mother says she was fifty-two years old when she got her son. His name was Joseph Michael, Giuseppe Miguel. So when we were in, I don't know he was about six or seven. Because when we went again thirteen aft-- thirteen years after we went. And -- believe me -- and my family, my husband, he was ready to go in the army. So he was, when I was there, maybe he was seven, eight, something like that. So we were eating; he had the fork in hand, he pinched my face. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: With the fork?

ROSATO: The fork pinch my hands. He was mischievous boy, he was.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did you like it in the country when you would go to the country?

ROSATO: Well, when you there, when you young -- you know -- you don't know nothing better. So --

LEVINE: What would you do for fun? What kinds of things did you do?

ROSATO: Oh. Fun. I didn't have no fun. I had a my sister. No, what happened was, uh, when I through the (?), my mother was work, like I said. My father come over here. We didn't have no money and somebody loaned to them -- to him to pay the trip -- you know, to pay the fare. So, and then my mother was going to work, and these people that loaned the money, they were (?), you know. So, and they had a little deal -- they had everything. So my mother used to go and help them, you know. And reduce the pay, maybe, I don't know. But I know that she used to work.

And so, and I had to get my sister. So one day, I -- I --some time I says the kids, they do things. Because I remember, I've been. So I put the kids down, and she wouldn't even walk. So they're still in the diaper, I put her down, and I fix (?) instead of [not understood] ..-- how the kids do sometimes, they pick stone and they throw. I don't know, because maybe I couldn't do. I—I -- I felt like the (?). I put the kids down, and I started throw the stone. I threw the stone, and one went right close to my sister. She was sitting over there. I said, "Oh, my God, look what I did." Then -- then what do you think I did? I take another stone and I do the same thing. [not understood] I look down there into the hole -- oh, then I was cry. I say," My mother know, she gonna kill me." ( she laughs ) Oh. And then, you know, that's all, I had the kids, to take care and ---

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LEVINE: Now, I just want to tell you something. Wait, we're gonna pause for a minute here. ( break in tape)

ROSATO: She had to be in January, I think.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, we're going to resume now. Let's talk about, how long was your father in America before you and your mother and sisters came?

ROSATO: Three years, three years.

LEVINE: But then didn't he come back? He came back.

ROSATO: Then he come back.

LEVINE: And how long did he stay?

ROSATO: I think seven months.

LEVINE: And then he went back?

ROSATO: And then he come back.

LEVINE: And then how long after that did you go?

ROSATO: Uh, I think we come the same year, because after he got here he sent for us. And over here, my uncle -- his brother -- and the family, and they -- you know -- he was staying with them. So my aunt must have tell, "Why didn't you call? Why didn't you let him come over here if you come back?" You know, I don't know this, but that's what I imagine. And, then my father, Sandino, didn't, everything. And we got here November 1st.

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LEVINE: Okay. Well, what, tell me what your father was like. What kind of a man was your father?

ROSATO: Oh, he was a good man. He was God-- he was, you know, just a very nice man.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

Daughter: Good worker.

ROSATO: He was working.

Daughter: Working hard.

ROSATO: Didn't have no teeth done, none at all. They had to pull, he lost them all when he was young.

LEVINE: And before he left Italy, what did he do for work?

ROSATO: Oh, him? Oh, he went work -- dig the -- the ground

LEVINE: In the fields, as a farmer?

ROSATO: Yeah, yeah, yeah. He went and worked to, you know, for the -- produce the stuff. And, but over there they used to use the -- the hoe, a big hoe, long -- that they lifted that thing, and -- and dig the ground, you know. They -- [not understood] they used the spade, like the shovel they used over here. That they was growin 'different, they had to use the -- the hoe, dig a thing. And, uh, they was working. And then he take the -- over here it's --. You know. It's poor. And over here used to make some money. You know. And he come back. And he want us to come back, and he come here.

LEVINE: When, uh, you left your town, were you sorry to leave?

ROSATO: Yeah, I left two cents on the -- ( Mrs. Rosato and her daughters laugh )

LEVINE: What did you leave?

ROSATO: I had a (?). You know they used to -- they -- like, now they have a nickel over here. Over here they have five -- four cents, they used to call a nickel. And again it was four cents. And then they had the penny double, it was like fifty cents over here, [not understood] so I had one of those and I forgot. When I was going to the--, I said, "Gee, I left my two cents." ( they laugh )

LEVINE: Do you remember, do you remember what you wore when you left?

ROSATO: ( she clears her throat ) What do you mean?

LEVINE: Do you remember what your clothing was?

ROSATO: Oh, My mother, she made it -- at noon. Yes. Over there before it used to be fit, fit clothes. Because they used to make -- the tailor, the dressmaker. Not -- not over here, you did yourself, you know. And you -- over there they had the regular tailor, that's where you go. And I we—I mean, my mother buy the stuff, and we went to the tailor and made a dress for everybody. They have the long sleeves. They say -- I don't know just why they have all those pieces now. That they got to make a fit on the person. It isn't loose. And that's -- and then when we come over here, my aunt, she made me a blouse -- like they used to use (?), the sleeves.

LEVINE: Bell sleeves?

ROSATO: Yeah. And I felt like-- ( she laughs ) I found funny to use that big --

LEVINE: So you all had, you and your sisters and your mother had new dresses for the trip?

ROSATO: Oh, yes, yes, sure.

LEVINE: And do you remember what you brought with you?

ROSATO: Oh, my mother brought, you know, thing that she had.

LEVINE: Like what did your mother bring? Do you remember any of the things that she took with her?

ROSATO: No.

Daughter: Like linens.

ROSATO: Well, you mean the thing that she had? I don't -- I don't know. I didn't think about that, didn't see anything. I didn't remember.

LEVINE: Okay. So when you left your village, how did you leave? What was your transportation?

ROSATO: Uh, with the coach.

LEVINE: With a coach.

ROSATO: House, the coach. To go to the station, and then after, they took the train, and we go Naples.

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LEVINE: And then how long was it between when you left your town and when you got on the ship?

ROSATO: I think we left the town the fourteenth of 'tember, and we got here on November 1st.

Daughter: No, on the ship on Naples, how long did it take you by train to Naples?

ROSATO: What do you mean?

LEVINE: You went on the train.

ROSATO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And did you stay in Naples before you went on the boat?

ROSATO: Yes. Yeah, you stood day or two, I think we stood, yeah.

LEVINE: And did you, did you, were you examined? Did a doctor come and look everybody over?

ROSATO: No, not, not -- yes. The first time, yes, to examine, yes. Examine the eyes, most of all -- they say .

Daughter: Vaccination.

ROSATO: Yeah. (Daughters commenting) I was thinking, the second time. then I was citizen, and we didn't at --

Daughter: You were in [break in tape]

LEVINE: We're resuming now. Okay. So you got, what was the name of the ship?

ROSATO: *San Giovanni, Sicula Americana* [Sicula Americana Line]. That's, my mother was sayin'. And -- that's all I remember, that she was sayin'. *Linea* [liner] *San Giovanni*. Linea means the ship, by boat and they call all -- you know, different name. Like, we either call the ship and they call them -- the thing, too. So that's what they call --.

LEVINE: And do you remember that ship? What was it like, the voyage?

ROSATO: Oh, was no good to you. At first it was too much rough, and then three days after you see lot of fish -- big fish, they jump. That time maybe, were a lot of them than now. Now they fishing. But before, there were a lot of fish you used to see in the middle -- in the mild [sic] of the ocean. You know, a lot of--. And we gotta go get the lunch like and the coffee in the morning. And. Like, we had the (?),. I -- I -- [not understood] like the -- the pots, the cup, the little dish brought in. Everybody, so used to get the food, and -- what do you mean? -- where they had the kitchen, and they used to, and we used to eat.

LEVINE: Did you eat in the dining room?

ROSATO: No. They -- they s—they used to say that they had a table somewhere but my mother, you know, she had the kids. And we used to eat like that, on the floor, wherever we used to be.

LEVINE: And, um --

ROSATO: Then after they had more, after they come. You know. When we went back to Italy there, had a different. But that time was rough. Was in --

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LEVINE: And you slept in bunk beds?

ROSATO: Yes.

LEVINE: Like a dormitory, a great, big place?

ROSATO: Yes. Yes. On the top and the bottom. They used to call 'em *cuccetta* [berth] (laughs). Yeah, I had one, my mother had one, and one for my sister, [not understood], one at one..

LEVINE: Do you remember any experiences aboard the ship?

ROSATO: What?

LEVINE: Do you remember anything that happened aboard the ship?

ROSATO: No, not that time.

LEVINE: Do you remember coming into New York?

ROSATO: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: What did you see when you first came in on the ship?

ROSATO: Well, when -- when we come, was kind of late in the afternoon. It was late, you know. And then when you come and you go, and they [not understood] that they -- one, [not understood] they examine and they look for one thing and look for another. Then they give some food like that -- like they givin' the soup. They give all of that, too. Because it was after. And we got from the ship, and then we went over there to the big, big hall, and then after --

LEVINE: Well, tell me about the big hall. What do you remember about Ellis Island?

ROSATO: Oh, nothing. Just a big – big hall, lot of people. And then we went out. So, and before we went out, they took all the paper, I mean, all the name and everything. So, and, uh, from there they pick a man stay with us. So, and he brought us to the station and we got the train. We got the train, and then we change. And an-- another man change. And then we had to go on a – on a train for Long Island. But it's [not understood]. But then I didn't know. We change, so the guy say, "Come on," at me. "Get off." And he used to tell somebody else, and the other guy used to come with us.

So till we reach Glen Cove. I guess maybe in Jamaica they changed, and we had to go Glen Cove. And then, when we got in Glen Cove, we get off. They say had to get off. Me and my mother -- they had to check over here like the name, where – where are we going, and this and that. So when we got over there and the – the one used to – to carry us in the train. Not to carry. Just to come with us, to lead where we had to go. So he get out, and he went in the station and he told. And then another guy took us, and we brought him up the town where my father was. So my father didn't come, because he was waiting till the next day the ship had arrived. So [not understood] arrived before, and that's why he didn't know about that. We got there. When we got there he brought us the big bar. The bar was Italian people, too. So when they hear the name, They thought there was -- you know – to us were Italian right away. It wasn't too far from where my uncle was, in the – in the bar. So, that here -- that's all.

LEVINE: And what did, wait, we're stopping for a minute here. ( break in tape)  
We're resuming here. So when you got to Glen Cove, then, and you met your father, what was it like to see your father in America?

ROSATO: Well, you know, he still glad you ca-- that you got there. Now he wouldn't be worry any more, you know. And he was with, I guess, before my uncle and my aunt. So my aunt, she had two -- two kids, too. And they both dead now. And, course, they made a fast ride -- you know -- everybody was happy. And then after my father, when he had -- we find our own house. We had one room over there, you know. And my father used to sleep with the men. Whether they didn't -- I don't know what -- oh so much [not understood]. So, and after we move another place, and then my father was working. You want to know this, too?

My father was working in Locust Valley, and when somebody--. And then the boss was over there, he says he was going work for somebody else. Was another [not understood] man, was Mecky [ph]. I don't know if you ever heard Mecky. So, and he told my father, and he told my husband. My husband left, he was working with him, too. And he says that, "Over there," he says, "I going to be superintendent over there. If you want to come work with me," he says, "over there they a dollar seventy-five." Over there was a dollar-and-a-half a day. So, and that's where we move for Roslyn. And then we were there for a while. That's where I got marry.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay. I'm pausing here. ( break in tape) Okay. So we're resuming now. Tell me the things that struck you as different, like your first few days or weeks in America, were there things that you saw that were different from anything you had seen before?

ROSATO: Well, when you're young, you know, there wasn't much to see in Glen Cove, too. Where we were -- where we were there were such an --all the Italian people, they call it (Italian). Like over here they call it Greasy Hill, and, you know, all the Italian people, so there wasn't much to see. And then from there, like I say, only we stood a few months over there, and then we moved on Roslyn.

LEVINE: Now, did you go to school?

ROSATO: No.

LEVINE: Did you, how did you learn English? Was it hard for you?

ROSATO: Well, I got -- pick it up from my daughter-- most of all from the kids. Sometime I used to tells thing, and they don't understand me. And I had to talk English, because they were talking English. The way they understand it. And I learn from them, too, a little dig-- a little -- little here, a little there. You know, I heard. And then I started get a little bit of the Italian. I was twenty-five years old. Was a man goes to us, and he used to be a good friend, and he used to know how to read in Italian. And he had to talk somebody else to -- with my sister-in-law. So and I tell him, I says, "Why didn't you tea-- taught me a little bit?" So he did, and then he had to go, he went in Italy. I only had him -- I did that a couple of months, not even. And then I start to read a little bit. I read a lot -- but to write, not too much. Now I just about can make my name and make a most printing. ( she laughs ) But before I used to write a little bit. And then I had the family, the kids were left in [not understood]. I went after about two years.

LEVINE: Well, tell me how you met your husband. How did you meet your husband?

ROSATO: I told you they were working it together --

LEVINE: Your father.

ROSATO: -- unti-- Rocks [sic] Valley, yeah, with my father. So before, when we come here, before we move, they were friend. My father told the guard that it's, "What do -- did you want to come see my family?" And he come see us in

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Glen Cove. Then when they move, when we move from Glen Cove, we went in Roslyn. Then he come with us, and stood with my mother. Before they used to call the boardin' -- boarders. They like to have -- you know, the woman, they had two, three, four man. They [not understood] got money, they had it boardin'. Because they -- they come over here, they didn't have a family, and they got to go someplace. That's why they used to have.

LEVINE: Now did, but your husband didn't, wasn't a border?

ROSATO: Yes.

LEVINE: He was a border, but --

ROSATO: Well, yes. When he moved to Roslyn, sure, because he didn't have no place. Over there was Locust Valley, used to come from Oyster Bay. Oyster Bay had all his citizen people, you know, like *paesano*, they used to call, from the same town. And then when he moved over there, he had to go somebody. So my father says, "You come over my house."

LEVINE: So he was a boarder in your house, in Roslyn.

ROSATO: Yes, yeah. Yeah. So, and he got barely -- got -- so young and so stupid.  
(laughs)

LEVINE: (laughs) Now did, what did you do? Like, if you would go out on dates. Where would you go? ( Ms. Rosato and her daughters laugh )

ROSATO: What about dates? ( she and daughters laugh )

LEVINE: No dates.

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ROSATO: No date. Nothing, that's all. They think, sometimes, because he was over there, you know, he had to marry. No, my -- before they used to have a funny idea. The kids, they had to marry. And they -- they used to think that live in the house was old maid, I don't know. That I remember my daughter, I says, "When they reach of age," I says, "Then I give them the permiss [sic] to get married, not have to do like me.

END SIDE ONE

BEGIN SIDE TWO

LEVINE: How old were you when you got married?

ROSATO: (laughs) Fourteen.

LEVINE: Fourteen?

ROSATO: Fourteen I had to be in August, and I got married in April before. My mother was pregnant. When we come from Italy, I -- I told you my father was over there. So when she -- he come, left -- she left pregnant. So when we come here, she got the baby in January. She got the baby in January. First she had the stomach, and then she had the baby, and I had to take care of everything. I had to get up in the morning, make Papa lunch, get him --, do the thing, wash the clothes with the washing board, everything. Because I was the first. And my moth—my mother, even with the other one, when he was big. She says If I went ahead of her, she die in my hands. Because she was fragile -- my sister, you know. And me she says, because I was stronger, could take it. And I used to get it. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So did your --- ( voice off mike ) What about your sisters?

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ROSATO: Huh?

LEVINE: Did they, what did your sisters do after they came here? Did they go to school?

ROSATO: Yes, they did go to school, yeah.

LEVINE: But you stayed home to help your mother do everything in the house.

ROSATO: Yeah. Do you know, they come 'round like before, it wasn't like over here now. They come around, they take my name, because I was only twelve. But then when I didn't go, my mother didn't send me; he shows up to -- to, you know, to force to go. So my mother says -- you know, like I says -- she had the baby. She had, you know. So, and I had to be home to help her.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What was your, was it a brother or a sister that you --

ROSATO: I had a little brother. He die, he was year-and-a-half. And then when she - - when I got married, she was pregnant. And my sister, she got -- she's living. And that's the only sister, the young sister, she born over here.

LEVINE: And what's her name?

ROSATO: Anna. Anna Gretsky [ph]. Her husband just died, too, five months.

LEVINE: So, um, so then, let's see. Well, what did your, your husband continued to work with your father in Oyster Bay?

ROSATO: No. Roslyn.

LEVINE: In Roslyn.

ROSATO: Yeah. Yeah, he was working over there, and then, uh, I don't know what happened. Then Mackey [ph], they did sell the place. I don't know what happened. That they -- they -- they take the p—the place they take it down. In the place, I don't know what happened -- that they didn't had so much people any more. So my husband went work for another man. And this man was work -- like I say before, the Mr. Crock [ph] was the name ,Mr. Frank Crock -- and he was --. When it was the First World War, and they had the just the name. Like somebody was going around. If you didn't have that name, they used to think you'd be the (?), against, you know, they used to ( voice off mike ) So they had his name.

So meanwhile, it's the president of that thing there -- this man, Frankie Crock. So and then after, he had three daughter. One daughter, my husband fixed it, you said he'd come out. So what do, "Fix the horse. I'm gonna take a ride." So then he take the ride, the first daughter and then the other daughter , was eight years old. He put 'em on the horse. Since he put on the horse, and the horse started to go. I don't know what happened. They says nobody know, because they were all right before all the time. They used to --. And the horse took over, and the kids fall on a side, and left -- left with putting the --

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

ROSATO: And she got killed. She got killed, and then the wife and them, they couldn't get over the pain. They move away. And they gave thing -- was such a good man. He come over the house. I had my son Frankie that time, the first baby, and then he ask my husband [not understood] , "Could she give me the boy? For me?" So my husband, "You make me [not understood] -- no." And [not understood]. So, then after him, he went away, and then come Feigo [ph], William Feigo, president of the company.

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LEVINE: And then he worked for him then?

ROSATO: Yeah. And then he worked for him, and then he went away, too. Oh, when Tommy born, he had so much liquor, so much. So my husband brought it all home, because he said, "You take everything." -- whatever they had. And I had all kind of liquor. That's with my sister, and we got drunk. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: Your sister got drunk?

ROSATO: She was the only kid, my sister Anne, she's only year-and-a-half older than my son, Frankie. So when my other son born. One was here today. Did you see Tommy? That's the --

Daughter: No.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ROSATO: So when he, Tommy, born was 1916. So, and I was in bed, and they had all the bar, like before when somebody had a baby, and they used to come, they used to give a drink. It was especially, you know. So, and I had the bar over there. Then what I don't know one --Frankie or-- they took one of the bottle. It was a peach brandy, and they -- they went outside, and the grapevine, and they were drink. This we know from another lady, a neighbor, she was by the window. And she was looking at the kids. After we know this, because after she come.

So all of a sudden, my sister Anne, she faint. Because she was smaller too, you know, and she faint (might be two-and-a-half). She was crying, and they don't know what to do. Then the lady over there, she come, and

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she says, "Yes, I saw them. They were drinking something before. I saw them by the window." So she says, "I don't know what they drink." And then they put the bottle on the front there by the grape. So they went see, and they found the bottle, a peach brandy. So that the ground --that's what they drink. It isn't anything that's poison, but she was drunk. (laughs) And she was only three years, that's all. She very – she born 1910, this was in 1916. That's all.

LEVINE: Now, besides Frankie and Tommy and your daughters who are here, did you have other children, too?

ROSATO: Nicky was -- he die after -- before Jenny, after Tommy.

LEVINE: And two more girls?

ROSATO: 1918, he born 1918.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And then you had two more daughters?

ROSATO: I had five more. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: Five more.

Daughter: No.

ROSATO: Yeah, Jenny. Jenny, Gloria, Maline, Nancy and Irene.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, what would you say you're proudest of that you've done in your life?

ROSATO: Proud?

LEVINE: What makes you proud, yeah?

ROSATO: Oh, I'm not proud of anything. That, I -- I think --- I -- well, my children, with the care, and to make them understand that there right and wrong. And my daughter Nancy, she used to tell me sometimes, "Ma, now I understand, now I know why you used to say, 'Watch over there. When you walk over there, don't go by the fence' " You know, all these thing. She says, "Now I know what you mean, but that time," she says, "no." Because when they're young, you know, "Oh, I know how to take care of myself." So, and that's all. And -- and 'nother thing, too. I said before, we didn't have baby food. You had to make yourself. And I used to nurse 'em. I -- until they were ten, twelve months old, more. (laughs) I gave more because I want, this when we were in Italy. I want to keep, because they used to -- I used to breast baby. And I used to be clean, you know what I mean clean, without the menstruation. But then I used to get it. And then when I'd get it, I'd get it once and then no more. Because before you don't take care, you have them. ( she laughs ) So, and the kids, they used to come like two years, a little bit less, a little bit more, every three years.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Were you a religious family when you were in Italy?

ROSATO: Oh, yeah. Well, go to Mass every Mo—every Sunday, yeah.

LEVINE: And did you keep, did you stay, did you continue that when you came to America?

ROSATO: Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah, my so-- my daughter there was churchgoing, and even my sons. Frankie, he never go to Communion. But he goes, he never misses Mass. But the wife, she's not a Catholic. But she makes sure that Frankie gets right away -- gets the things that she-- he needs and

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– and make him understand that today's a holiday, an obligation, you know.  
She watch.

LEVINE: How about food and cooking? Did you, do you still carry on some of the same kinds of dishes that you remember from Italy?

ROSATO: Well, when I think I like to do, but when – I'll get a [not understood] . ( she laughs ) Have something to eat. ( voice off mike )

LEVINE: Well, tell me, are there any other ways that you keep that were ways you did things in Italy that you still do today, that you kept up with?

ROSATO: Well, first of all, in Italy, I was young kid. I was young, and my mother, whatever she told me, that's what I had to do – do. When she used to go out working, like I said before, she used to tell me, "Cook this, cook that," and I had to cook. So one day she said I had to make the potato – a soup, like. You know, potato, stew like -- potato with the little tomatoes and everything. So, and it was late, and I forgot about. Was late and I see the people, they were coming from the (?), they call. So I said, "Oh, my mother told me to cook the potatoes and I--." So I made everything, I washed the potatoes and I cut them, skin and all. ( she laughs ) So my mother come, "What you do over here?" I says, "I don't know." "Di—di-- I told you you had to peel the tomatoes, potatoes." ( she laughs ) I don't know whether I saved it. And I used to get broomed. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: Was it your mother who disciplined you? Did your mother have to discipline you when your father ?

ROSATO: Well, most of the time. Because when -- like I say, when my father was there -- I was young, too. I was, you know, very young. And then when he was over here, she was by herself. And she was mad that she had to do

everything. Not mad but, you know how it is, frustrate, like. And then when I used to do something wrong, I used to get hit. So I -- when my -- threw my -- my sister the stone on her head, my other little sister (the one who was bigger and every--) she said, "I'm gonna tell Mama tonight." I said, "No tell her that I threw." "No, I gonna tell." ( she laughs ) So, another time, another time we was like in the fall, like. And she was working for these people that I say, and they had the grape out in the country. And then they used to bring to the town, and they used to have the *asino* -- you know -- the donkeys.

They had two big thing like that -- a big thing on each side. And they used to fill that with the grapes, a little chopped like so they fit more, and they used to bring it to the town. So my mother used to bring that. So when she come back, she went to the house because we wasn't too far. And, uh, and she didn't find me in the house. It was wide open. And I had the key with me. Sometime that door used to fool you. Like you used to close with big keys like this, you used to close and wouldn't close the lock, I don't know. So, and that's what happened that time. So when my mother comes, she had the pig -- everything, you know, *salsiccia* [sausage] and ham and everything. She says, "Why you leave the house open?"

But when I -- this after she told me that. So when she come and she find the house open, and she was looking for me. And a little girl, young kid like me, she said, "Oh. She went up there to—". I was looking for, for [not understood] that's my sister, for the -- how you call? *Virginale* -- like the -- the saint like, when they have that kind of saint was a woman saint San Filomena. They make the virgin kids, like dressed in white. And I see. So, and me, I was only eleven years old that time, and I wanted to do that.

So I -- and this girl, she come up in the town, like, and she saw me. "Say, gotta be—you better come down. Your mother's home." I said, "Well, let's

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see, what's there?" She says, "You left the *casa aperta*. You left the house open." I said, "No, that's the key. I been here, got the key." I say, "That close." When I went over my mother, she was mad. She was mad when I got there. She started hitting me. I says, "But I closed the door. I don't know how it didn't close." But she says she find wide open. Somebody must have been there open, and then, I don't know, didn't close any more. So, and she was hitting me. So, uh, all the neighbors, they were hollering. What can you do?

She started, you know, cursing, giving me a little talking like, and she used to get mad more. Then all of a sudden -- all of a sudden, when all this commotion -- was a little corn-- like that. (laughs)

Male Voice Hi?

ROSATO: That's my son Tommy.

LEVINE: Yeah, Huh?

ROSATO: There's a little corner, they turned the corner, and we were not too far away. He says, "What's the matter? What's going on over here? What's going on?" So when I -- a younger girl, the one was across the street -- the daughter, her name was Nanine [ph]. So she had another thing. Sometime years ago [not understood]. And this girl, she says, "Yeah, she -- look -- look what she did. She by the daughter. Look what if she killed the daughter. She want you to give it some [not understood] " So they got the *'biniere* -- you know -- the police. So they went to my mother, "What's the matter with you? That's your daughter. Why you want to do that? You betrayin' yourself, but 'wise we going to jail." So she said, If I tell them, that means -- that means the jail. But she says she got so mad. (laughs)

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LEVINE: (laughs) So she had a temper, your mother?

ROSATO: Yes, she was.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, now, what do you think your life would have been like if you had stayed in Italy? Can you imagine what?

ROSATO: I don't know. Well, understand that we went -- my husband, after the First World War was in (?) over there, and he come over here. He used to be here. Before he got marry over here, and then they went in Italy -- maybe just before the war started, with the First World War. And then he was -- then he had to go to the war. So then after when the war stop, he come back over here with the free pass, like, you know, during the. So, and he was staying with us. And he was saying, "Oh, in Italy now you got a little money, you can make a -- I get a [*not understood*] -- because the -- the change of the money. Five dollars you get, you know, fifty dollars. There wasn't much that fifty dollars, you get a thousand dollars even, not too much, not to have it too much. But that time I remember fifty dollars, a hundred -- a thousand liras. So it was not too much like now.

So, anyhow, he -- my husband, he was in, you know. So any-- he run the gr--. Then he went first, then probably he take and he went home. And then my bro--, my husband, he started say to go Italy. I said, "What we go there for? You ain't got nothing, no property. Nothing. Why wanna go there?" "Oh, over there, you see my brother did -- say we could make, buy some property," and this and that. So, anyhow, I say," No." He say," Yes, you no New York." And he bought the tickets without me. So after that he says I had to go New York again. Because they had, I don't know, some paper. I don't know why, I forgot why. But I went New York, where they had the tickets.

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So when he got the tickets, so, the – the guy says, the passport -- passport, he said, "If you get an Italian passport, a regular passport, it cost ten dollars. If you take the citizen passport, it cost twenty dollars." And he was telling me. So I say, "What's the difference from the Italian passport -- I mean, the regular passport -- with the citizen?" He says, "Well, it's difference. You go over there. But if you go with the Italian -- with the regular passport -- if you want to come back that time, nobody could come just like that. They had to go with the court." "So," he says, "if you want to come back, you have a job lookin'." I say, "What about the American passport?" "Oh, with that you can--." I says, "Give me the American passport." So I says to my husband, I say, "If it costs twenty dollars, I don't give it to me."

So when we come again, in the seven days he come himself, because he figured everybody ask over here what are you doing in Italy, over there it's poor and, you know, none of us have been over here. So he says, "Oh, I wouldn't come back over here. I wouldn't come back." So he was over there, and he never think to come back again, because the people, I mean, they would say, ah, you did say you wouldn't come back. So, anyhow, it was Saint Anthony's sometime, we remember the thing, the day of Saint Anthony, June 13th, and every day they have to come then to his home town. This was another town, not mine. So they had a good time then. They have the saint, Saint Anthony, they have a big feast. So and we went to the procession, you know, see the feast and everything.

So then when he comes back he told me, he says, "You know, there's six citizen, six *paesan*, that they go America, June 20." I says, "Yeah?" I says, "And the people, they don't know what they would do." I said, "To go America." I said, "We come from America. What do we do over here, the dumbbell?" I say. That's all, spending money -- the little bit of money, buy this, buy that, buy -- you know, they used to go like nothing. Because we

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had to buy everything. Didn't had it, you know, like didn't -- like over here. And I says, "What do we over here, just to spend the money." So, and he says, "Well, what would you say if I have a pass-- if I could go. I would like to go with these people, you know, started to drive myself." I says, and then he says, "After I send for you." I said, "All right. If you go -- can go, go ahead." So he went to the osh--, the one that was going with the Naple consul. So he went there and he got it, he was by the consul, and same day he come here. Then after we come, I get, -- we got over here, too, at the same time, and he come the second time.

LEVINE: So how long did he stay there?

ROSATO: Who? Oh, my husband. For ten months. We got there in August, and he come in June. And we stood about thirteen months, because we come in ( she laughs ) October. October, we got here November first.

LEVINE: And what year was that? Do you remember around what year it was?

ROSATO: '22. '23, '23. '23.

Daughter: The year I was born, '22.

ROSATO: '22. God, you born.

Daughter: '22.

Daughter: I was born a month later.

ROSATO: Yeah, that's right, '22. Oh, you know what I was thinking of now? Oh, what a dum-dum. I was thinking when we move here, the '23. From there we moved over here was the '23. ( voice off mike ) Yeah, '22, because she

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born. ( she laughs ) A month-and-a-half after we got here. I was pregnant myself. When I come here, I was in eight months when I was in the ship.

LEVINE: Oh, wow. So did you, what did you, what was your reaction to being there, to going back over? What . . .

ROSATO: Oh, I was glad.

LEVINE: Yeah?

ROSATO: ( she laughs ) I want to give you just a little example. My son, my son, Frankie, the first one--. I had the baby, I had a girl, and sometime I didn't feel good. We find -- after, at first we stood with somebody, friend of ours. We stood a few months. And then we had to find a house not too far away from here. And it was a small house, and floor was birch, wasn't linoleum like now, we (?) find linoleum. So, and I had to wash the floor with the brush. So, and I was doing. And then I was tired, I couldn't do it. So I tell my son Frankie, he was only eleven years old that time. So I says, "Frankie, would you wash, help scrub the floor for me?" I says, "I'm tired -- you know -- my back." I forgot what I say. So I says, "Would you do?" He says, "All right." So he take the brush and he started brush.

I says, "Well?" Because we used to be over there in Italy, and sometimes they used to play with other boy, you know, the one they were there. And they used to do the bad thing, they used to blame him. And he used to say, "I don't even was there. I didn't even do this thing." And they see -- they were already gone. The son of American, they used to call me American. I was another (?). ( she laughs ) And they used to say, my mother-in-law, she was there, too, sometimes she used to come and tell me, "You see, your son, they said they did this, he went there." And Frankie used to say, "I don't even went this place. I don't even know." So,

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anyhow, when we, he was scrubbing the floor, I says, "Well," I says, "you see, when we come to America, we -- we got to scrub the floor every day. (?) no floor to scrub. I'd rather scrub the floor over here than stay over there." ( they laugh )

LEVINE: Is that how you felt, that you would rather be here?

ROSATO: Of course, yes. Over here, they grow up, like grew up, because I was only twelve, and then I was twenty-six when I went in Italy.

LEVINE: We only have a little time left. Is there anything else that you would like to say about coming here when you were twelve and spending most of your life here?

ROSATO: True It's -- be eighty years, because I be -- I was twelve in August, and we got in November first. It's just eighty years be, first of November, that I'm here.

LEVINE: And are you glad that you did come?

ROSATO: Oh, sure.

LEVINE: Why do you say that?

ROSATO: Well, because it's a different. Because the person go to work, and you only got a little bit of money, and you spend just the same, but you got it to spend. But over there they had to wait, when they come the season. When they come, like, when they got to plant, they got to dig the ground. When they got to, like I said before, the wheat. It's big, and they call the woman and the men, whatever to pull the grass -- to scratch them a little bit. And a season, a season that's all. They have the best [not

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understood] and do my thing --go look for a piece of wood. ( she laughs )  
They used to go in the forest to find a little stick here, a little stick there to  
make a bunch of, uh, woods to the fire. Over there they had 'em out on the  
floor -- fireplace, like. And then some, they had a big thing. They had on  
the side, like, with the big, you know, like, I don't know how they call them  
over here.

Daughter: Like a barbecue --.

ROSATO: Fireplace, like. But they had it, and in – work in'. Like in—in a mo-- I don't  
know. ( voice off mike ) Like a stove, you put 'em in, and (?) in, like. They  
had a *fornello*, they used to call, like. Put the coal, then they, you had the  
coal, you know, the sub coal. Not sub coal. How you call, the coal with the  
woods?

Daughter: Charcoal.

ROSATO: The charcoal, yeah. They used to put the charcoal in that thing, like, and  
they, they used to make the *ragú* . You know what's *ragú* ? When you has  
to eat lunch. They had it in the fire in the parade, the Columbus parade,  
they have the *ragú* . And there was a *ragú*. You know anybody what's a  
*ragú*?

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

ROSATO: I don't know. What could I say?

Daughter: Are you proud to be an American?

ROSATO: Eh?

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Daughter: Are you proud to be an American?

Daughter: [not understood] ?

Daughter: Of course. She didn't want to go back.

Daughter: We did. We went back and we saw the home town, saw where we lived.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, why don't we close here, and I want to thank you very much.  
You have wonderful stories to tell.

ROSATO: ( she laughs ) I forget. After--

LEVINE: And I thank you. I'm sure there's a lot more.

ROSATO: I remember nights sometimes.

LEVINE: You remember them vividly, yeah, I should say. Okay. Well, this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I've been here today, it's October 15, 1992, and I've been talking with Carmela Rosato at her home here in Westbury, Long Island, New York.