

EI-281

MARIA FRANCESCA CACCIAPAGLIA TORINO

BIRTHDATE: AUGUST 4, 1908

INTERVIEW DATE: 4/17/1993

RUNNING TIME: 1:58:22, PH.D.

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ITALY, 1916

AGE 8

PASSAGE ON "THE CASERTA"

PORT OF EMBARCATION: NAPLES

RESIDENCES: SANTEREMO

26 ST. NEW YORK CITY

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service,
and I'm here today in Pinellas Park, Florida with
Maria Cacciapa, Ca, sorry...

TORINO: Maria, Maria Frances.

LEVINE: Maria Frances Cacciapaglia Torino. Mrs. Torino came
on the Caserta. That was the name of the ship. And
came from Italy through Ellis Island in 1916 when she
was eight years old. Today is April 17th, 1993, and I
just want to say that I'm very happy to be here.
Let's start by you saying your birthdate.

TORINO: My birthday is August 4th, 1908. But the little story

behind this, my birthday, generally I celebrate on July 25th.

LEVINE: Oh, why is that?

TORINO: (they laugh) Because when I came to this country my mother brought me to school, Twenty-seventh Street, public school, and they brought me to first grade. And the teacher asked NE what was my birthday. And I said, in Italy they don't go by your name years ago, by your birthday, date. They just go by a name. That's the day you were born, and they give you a name and you go by that. Well, so, I said to my mother, "What was my birthday?" She says, "I don't remember." I said, "You don't remember my name? Weren't you there?" She says, "Of course, I was there." I says, well I said, she said, "I don't remember what your name was. All I know it was in the summertimes and it was in the morning." Early morning, so that, and I said, "Mom," I says, "Give me a date," the teacher said. My mother said "July 25th." So I was going by that date all my life till I was about fifty-six years old. And everybody knew me by Frances, because when I was born my mother wanted my name to be after her mother Marie, and my father wanted me named Frances

like his mother. So when they brought me to church, I happen to be a Catholic, they brought me to church, and the priest said, "That's no problem." They wanted to be baptized. And he said, "Well, we'll call her Marie Frances." My father says, "Wait. She must be called Frances. Always." Well, all my life, and then my grandmother, they have called me Frances. In Italian it's called Francesca. And so, when I came, well, anyways, I went to school in Europe till, till the second grade. And I went to church religiously with my grandmother. She'd wake me up five thirty in the morning to take me to church. And I said, "But Grandma, it's so cold." And we lived in the southern part of Italy which wasn't too cold. Maybe, our winters weren't severe. It's similar to the temperature that I have here in Florida. Well, so, I grew up. I was eight years old, and then my father was here in America, since, and I knew my father very little 'cause he only came to Europe once to visit. And so my mother said, "This is your father." I said, "My father? I don't know him." She says, "He's your father. He always said that children used to say to you that you don't have a father. You have a father. Here's your father." Well, my father came, my mother said, he, my father was very generous, very nice man,

and he would give all the children money. Nickels and whatever. Of course he was a visitor. And, and I was kind of shy, and I was in the corner, and he didn't even know who I was. So, my mother said, "Did you see your father?" I says, "Did he give you money?" "He didn't give me nothing." So she said to my father, she said, "Did you give this, it's Frances. It's your daughter. Didn't you give her anything?" He says, "I didn't know who she was, which one was it. She didn't come to me." So I felt bad. I said, he says, "That's okay." So he hugged me around and he kissed me. He said, "I'm sorry." He said, "I'll give you more." So he gave me a dollar bill. To me it was just paper. I didn't think anything of it. (she laughs) Well, anyway, from then on he visited us, I think for a few weeks, and I became very accustomed to him. And he wanted to hug me around. I said I wouldn't dare let anybody touch me, because I was taught that way. My grandmother said, "Don't let any man touch you." Don't, don't let, so my mother said, so they had property. And about three miles out of town, which we, I used to walk with my mother during the summer.

LEVINE: Who had the property?

TORINO: My parents. My mother ran about while my hus, my father was here. So she had a brother, and they used to raise, they had grapefruit, they had, not grapefruit. They had walnuts and almond trees. And then they used to also raise on another piece of property, they used to raise wheat. And so my mother said, "Let's go to the farm." Because they wanted to see the other farm. My mother used to go early in the morning. That's how my grandmother during the day because my mother used to go to work, and she had her brother helped her with the property. And that was their living. You know, they were farmers. And so, she said, "I love blackberries so much." And my father said, "Do you want to win your daughter. She'll give you a kiss." He said, "Go get her some, better pick some blackberries for her." So we walked along a little bit. And I remember so distinctly I was holding his hand, and they had some beautiful grapefruit, blackberries. And some were that size. (she indicates) They were so delicious. So he gave me quite a few, and I ate them up, and, and suddenly he come over to me, said, "Do you like them?" I says, "Oh, yeah. I like them." I said, "I like them very much." So I ate them all, and finally he got around me. He said, "See, now." He says, "I like you." He

says, "I love you." And I wonder, he says, "I want you to like me." I says, "But I don't know you." He says, "Well, you will." Well, anyway, so, I finally gave him a kiss on the cheek, and, oh, he must have been thrilled to heaven. (she laughs) Well, anyway, time went by, and he left, and I was crying, and I said to my mother, "When is he gonna come back?" And she was so nice, and all they said was, I tell them, I said, "See." Now I went to school, and I told the child, my friend, I said, "I have a father. See, not only you," because their parents used to come home in the evening, and I had to, you know, stay with my mother. And my mother used to get home at sundown, and she used to leave in the morning before I even, you know, knew about it, because she has to be on the property. Well, that was as far as I remember. And then I, then I used to go back, finally, one day during the summer, my mother was on the field plowing the harvest. And so, we got a letter. And I opened the letter. So since I was in the same, second grade, I was able slowly to read. But there weren't, what struck me, it said, "If you like to come to America, I will provide for you." And she said, "If not, then I'll stay here a couple more years and raise a few more dollars, and then I'll come back." So I was all

excited. So I said to my grandmother, I says, "Grandma," I said, "Look, a letter from Papa, a letter from Papa." She, "Oh." She said, she said, "I'm gonna go to, to see Mama and tell her." I walked myself. It was about, this property was about a mile and a half. Well I walked it there, and this was between July and August. I walked in. I get, it was on, going on a hill. And I'm waving to my mother. So finally I walked down the hill where they have, it was like in a valley. And they were having the harv, they had the horse going around, having, harvest the wheat, you know. And there used to be a well there. And, so I went to my mother, and here the horse had gone, I'm so anxious to tell her, show her the letter. I wasn't worried about the horse. She says, "Get out of my way." She says, "What are you doing here." She says, "Don't bother me." She says, I says, "I have your letter from Papa." She took the letter and put in her pocket. She said, "Go sit down there. Don't bother me." Okay. That was that. And about two weeks later my mother brought to see a man, which was a friend of the family. And he was a representative of the ship my father used to, and anything important papers, he would write them and my mother used to go to a very close friend. So my mother went over to me. She says

to me, let's go and see Mr. So-and-so, which I don't remember his name. I really don't. And she said, "Good morning. How are you?" He says, "Oh, I'm fine." He says, "Oh, I was just coming to your house," he said. My mother said, "You did?" He says, "Yeah." He says, "Because I got a notice from your husband. He's making a reservation for you to come to America." My mother says, "What?" He says, "Yeah." He says, she says, "I just got a letter?" He says, "Well," he says, "You must have got it before when," "Well," she says, "I've been busy on the farm with the harvest." And He said, "Well," he said, "you have two weeks time to get ready and leave for America." He says, "There's been a cancellation." I, in turn, didn't tell my mother that I scribbled in the address down on the envelope. And I said to father, I, we want to come. (they laugh) And he says, "Well," he says, "I have a letter here saying that you want to come." She said, "But I didn't write to him." She, he says, "Well, somebody wrote." And with that beginning, my mother went home. She couldn't, she couldn't believe it. And she told her mother. And she had a sister. The two were very, very close. But they had three other brothers, but these two sisters were very close. My aunt, you know. And so she said,

"Guess what?" My grandma said, "What?" She says, "Ralph wants me to come." My father's name was Raphael. She says, "My, he wants us to come to America. Within two weeks that there's a cancellation, and I have to give him the answer." My mother says, "I'm not going." My aunt said, "Don't worry about it." She said, "She's not going away. Let her go. She'll be back. She'll go as far as Naples, she'll come back because she got cataracts in her eyes." Well, we got together. My mother started making prepare. Said, "Don't take anything. Just a suitcase because you have everything here. Don't take too much of anything." Well, of course, my mother had to take a trunk. And she had a little suit made for me, dress clothes, you know, to go at least. You know. And sure enough we got on this, this man came to meet us, and we came to, on the train, and my mother was waving to her nephew, was a little shepherd boy. And from the window of the train she had a wrist, she had a pocket watch that belonged to my father. And she threw it out the window to him, and he caught it. And so, it was twenty-four hours on the train to Naples. And the representative, this gentleman's with us, you know? And we stayed twenty-four hours overnight in the hotel. And then the man, he said to me, "Are you

comfortable?" He said, "Tomorrow morning I'll be here, here at about seven-thirty." And he was. And we went to this great big ship. It looked like a mountain. And I was all excited. Nothing bothered me. I just wanted to go. I just wanted to go. I says, "I want to go to America." So, and so then, I had a brother, which was, came to see, and, oh, I raised him, and I remembered him. And he came to America. And he had, when he came to visit us one time he said, "You know, someday you're gonna come to America." He said, "And I'm gonna take you on a train that goes up in the air." And I wanted to see that train that was going up in the air, which was the Ninth Avenue elevator...

LEVINE: Oh.

TORINO: ...train.

LEVINE: Well, now did he go with you?

TORINO: My brother?

LEVINE: Yes.

TORINO: I have a brother, yes. But an old, the one I'm talking about is an older brother. But I had, when I came with my mother, and a younger brother and him. My brother was eleven and I was eight. This brother that came with me, his name was Peter. And, so I, he didn't, he didn't want to come. He was, he was with his friends. He didn't want to bother. So my mother said, "Well, you have to go." And my grandmother said, "Look." She says, "You have to go where your husband is. And you belong with your husband and your children belong with him." My aunt says, "Don't worry about it. Don't worry about it. Let her go." Well, we and, here we are. Decem, and November 19th, November 16th we left from Naples on board this here ship. And...

LEVINE: Okay. Before we talk about the voyage...

TORINO: Yeah.

LEVINE: ...let me ask you a few questions about...

TORINO: Sure.

LEVINE: What was the town that you were coming from?

TORINO: Santeramo.

LEVINE: Could you spell it?

TORINO: S-A-N-T-E-R-A-M-O. Santeramo in Colle, C-O-L-L-E.
Colle means the collar of mountains. And this here
little town was set in the, in the circle, circle of
mountains. Very, very picturesque. Beautiful.

LEVINE: Can you tell me anything else about the town?

TORINO: About the what?

LEVINE: The town?

TORINO: The town was very pretty. And sixth, I used to go to
school with a little cousin, who was same age as I
was. And we used to go to nursery school during the
day. And then the, what else could I say about that?
We used to go to, which was about, I did a lot of
walking. I walked a lot. My grandmother taught me.
I walked with her all over the town. And I used to
visit my grandmother, live with her actually, you
know. And I used to go to the st, to buy bread or

whatever we needed, or whatever. And I played with my friend. We used to play hop scotch. And we used to play running, or something like play tag. You know, hide and seek, games like that, you know.

LEVINE: What...

TORINO: And...

LEVINE: What was your grandmother's name?

TORINO: Mary Angela.

LEVINE: And her, her, her last name?

TORINO: Her name was Gatti. G-A-T-T-I.

LEVINE: And that was your mother maiden name.

TORINO: Right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And was your grandfather alive?

TORINO: Yes.

LEVINE: And what was his name?

TORINO: His name was Gius, Giuseppe.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TORINO: Yeah. Very tall, fine man. You know. He used to be, he was a coachman for, for wealthy people. And, and he was very slim. So when he used to come home, not every night because he had to stay there, because they never just when they needed him, you know. He had to work on the, on the estate, you know. And so...

LEVINE: What were his duties as a, as a coachman? What did he...

TORINO: Well, he also, I think, as far as I remember their talking about it, you know, he'd do things around the estate there, I guess. A little gardening or take care of the horses that they had, and go take errands, and take the, the mistress to, or the family or their children wherever they had to go. And that's what, every two weeks he would have like a, a weekend off. And he would come home, and that's when I would see him, you know. But then, I, I didn't, it was shortly

after that my grandfather passed away, you know. And, and then my mother;s father, my father's father passed away also. And then I met his mother, that my mother used to take her to come and visit us. So I knew the woman I was named after, Frances. Francesca, you know. So, and she was pleased that they, that decided to call my name Frances. And they always did call me Frances. So my grandmother that I lived with was my mother's mother. And she used to call me Franceschella, which is Little Frances, you know. And I was always very tiny and, and petite, you know. Now I couldn't be what, but at that time I just went along. She said, she used to call me Butterfly. She, "Oh, like a butterfly. You don't sit still. You're always on the go." So I was a very happy little girl, you know, and, with my friends. And, and during the summertime I would go, during the day my grandmother would walk with me and we'd go to the farm, because I wanted to see where my mother was, you know. I used to see very little of her, see. Since she come home about four-thirty, five o'clock, and my grandmother would have the beans ready, and they, they cooked them in a, in a crock pot. And, and boiled with the condiments that was in the ingredients, and everything. It was just so delicious, you know.

LEVINE: What kind of a stove did she have?

TORINO: What, darling?

LEVINE: What kind of a stove did she have?

TORINO: Well, they had a, a great, big fireplace, with one great, big room. And in that room we had a great, big bed where my grandmother and my mother and, and me slept. And my brother had like a little cot, you know. So I slept this way with my grandmother, and my mother slept this way. (she indicates) You know.

LEVINE: So, you mean head to foot? Is that...

TORINO: Yeah. Right. Yeah. So we used to warm each other's feet. Before we went to bed at night in the wintertime, my mother used to put some hot coals in a pot and she would warm up the bed inside, you know, before I got in it, because I was always, I'm still always very cold, you know. And so, it was nice and cozy. And my mother, my grandmother used to cook the beans on this here fireplace, you see. They, she used to make a nice fire. And all the neighbors used to

bring their, their beans also the crock-pot, and she would, you know, tend to them. And then the inn, then they had a, this, I'm talking about the winter. They had a big pot, a fireplace in the middle of the room, and a nice fire going. And they had like a little place around it where we used to sit around. My mother used to, religious woman, was always very religious, would say the rosary in the evening. And all the neighbors used to gather together about seventy-three, and we would, my mother would lead the rosary.

And soon, I used to, from all day, I would fall asleep. So my mother said, she let me go, I said, "One of any day you're going to fall into that fire, you don't hold your head up." (she laughs) I said, "I'm tired. I can't keep my eyes open. I want to go to bed." Says, "When you've finished your rosary." My grandmother would take my hand and hold me tight. She'd say, "A few more minutes." I didn't even know what they were saying. I never could remember the prayers. I just could not learn the prayers in Italian. So my grandmother took me to church, because I had, had to make my first holy communion, you know. And I just couldn't. So I went to church a few times, and this here nun, I had to kneel down on the stone floor. She said, "Say it." If she would say

it, I'd repeat it after, but after that was it. And so she said to me, I just didn't go anymore, because she was mean, you know. She wants you, put my head down, she'd say, "You've got to learn it." I thought that was terrible. So I didn't go anymore. When the time came that they were supposed to go and find out the date and the time and the clothes we were supposed to wear and everything, so my, my mother brought me to church, and she said, "I want to know what I have to do for my daughter, to, for holy communion." She says, "Who's your daughter?" My mother says, "Frances. Francesca." She says, "I have never seen her. I don't even know who she is." She says, "What do you mean?" My mother, she says, "She's been here every day." She says, "I haven't seen her." My mother looked at me, she says, "Where have you been? Didn't you come?" I says, "No, I only came for a little while. Then I didn't come no more." She said, "Why?" I, "Because she hit me." I said, "She pushed my head to the ground." I said, "I, I was afraid." That was the truth. So my mother turned around, she said, "Well," she said, "I don't blame her." She said, "Had I, that did to me, I wouldn't like it either." So, that was that. I didn't make my communion. When I came here to this country, we, my

father was, had rented an apartment for us on 26th Street in New York City. And they were building a new church. So I went there, and immediately that spring, and made my communion. I learned the prayers, prayers in English. And my mother was said, "Well, how come you couldn't learn them in Italian." I said, "I just couldn't learn them." I said, "Too hard." And I picked up the American language immediately. You know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TORINO: And I went up to the eighth grade in school. I had no, no problem. I made lots of nice friends. And I was happy all these years, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

TORINO: So...

LEVINE: Well, let's talk more about, about Italy first, okay...

TORINO: Yeah.

LEVINE: ...because you remember so much. It's wonderful...

TORINO: Yeah. Right.

LEVINE: ...to talk about it all.

TORINO: Yeah. And then, I don't know, talk about, my brother was eleven years old. And like I said, he was always out with his friends, like boys do, they climb trees, and whatever they do. My, but he was always, wanted to help, and do, and make money. And he used to bring it home to my mother. And he was very good that way, you know.

LEVINE: What might he do to make money? What, what, what...

TORINO: Run errands for people. Run errands for people. To go to the store, to get, buy something, because it was always in the better section. My, and, as of today, my brother, see, he lives up here in Brooklyn, New York. And he's eighty-seven years old. I'm gonna be eighty-five this August. And he's a very good, he's very well liked with his, he's retired, you know. And he used to be, go to the, he's on his own. See, I have my own little home and he does, too, in Brooklyn.

And we did very, he never had children, though he was married to a very fine woman. But I had five sons. And...

LEVINE: Well, tell me more about the town, and what did your, your father, when he was in Italy, what did he do for work?

TORINO: Well he, he worked also. Working for people, wealthy people as a gardener, and then, you know, part time, whatever, errands, whatever he did. But then they were able to buy a little property, see, by working for the people. And then, they started to working together. And then my mother's brother didn't have children. So he had to work. So they were a very close knit family. And then my, my father had this opportun, because when I was first born I was very sick. And they didn't think I was going to survive. So my father used to go, (unintelligible) out of town, to, had to get milk for me that agreed with me, enough to agree with me. So I understand they had an, me in an incubator for about three months. And, my mother told me this later when I was older. And she said, they even went to the next town or other towns to finish, I would do anything, you know. Because I was

the last one, and my father wanted me, he loved children. And my mother, they had twenty children between them. My mother had a set of twins three times. And then in between that, when, but they had the Spanish influenza. They lost ten children within two weeks. And so what happened. After that bereavement and all that my mother became pregnant, because he, he was home, see. But my father came, this was way before. But my father came in, in 1909, see. And years later they said he was so, he was so devastated, he said, "I've got to do something." So the men on the Sunday morning always would get to get to go to the cafe. The cafe is a place men get together, like we have a stationery store here. But they have coffee in the morning. And they get together and find men work, or they need, or something like that. It's, it's a meeting place, like, you know. And they have, in the piazza, they call it. And we lived in a very, in a very, town, which was very convenient, where we, where had our little house. Well, we rented. My mother didn't own a house there. She, they just rented to a very dear friend. And so, my father said, he was talking to these people, and he said to the owner, he said, "You know." They were talking about something. He says, "Anybody wants to

go to America, it's cost a hundred lire," he said, and they could go. My father said, "What did I hear?" Boss said, "That's right." He says, "They have some men going. Some people are going." Men and women and children. They want to go to America and help themselves. My father said, "If I had a hundred lires," he says, "I would go." So, the owner of the store said to my father, he says, "Raphael, you mean to say you would, you would go?" He says, he said, "Sure, I would." He says, "You would leave your wife and childrens and go?" I said, "Why not?" He says, "If I'm going to get bread and butter for my family, sure I would," he said. "My mo, my wife," he says, "and her brother run the little farm that we have." So he says, "Here's a hundred lires." He says, "I dare you." My father took the hundred lires, and he went to the travel, this friend that he met, that he knew, and he came. And he had also about two weeks time to go. He went home. He told my mother, he said, "I'm tired of being here." She says, "How could you leave the baby? Where am I going to get the food?" My father says, "You carried her for nine months. You did well. Now," he says, "you carry on. If she's going to live, she's going to live, and if she's going to die, she's going to die." He says, "I

can't go on anymore living like this." He says, "If I can do well," he says, "I'll go for a little while, just for about a year or two, and then I'll come back." So my father came to America. And he, he got a, he was (unintelligible), and he met a very good friend in a bank, could, people, introduced him to people, you know. This, he represent, he said, "I'm going to introduce you," he said, "to this bank." And this is a very fine man. And his name was Mr. Bernard, Bernardino. I don't remember his first name, because you always used to address the person by their, their surname. And so, my father came in, he went to this bank, and he introduced himself. And this man came out. He said, "Are you Raphael Cacciapaglia?" He said, "Yes." He says, "I'm Mr. Bernardino." He says, "I know you," he said, through Mr., represent that sent you. And they became very good friends. He says, "I have work." He said, "Well," he says, "I have to work," he said. "Well," he said, "I have work for you." He says, "You can go to wealthy people." Said, "You, you don't have to worry about food. You don't have to worry about paying rent, or anything." Said, "Whatever they give you once a month will be yours. And you can come here," he says, "and I will put it in the bank for

you. And if you want to send money to your family, I will take care of things for you." And so he did, and they went on that way, you know. And so my father came to America.

LEVINE: So was he working for an estate or something like that?

TORINO: Yeah. Yeah. He worked, he came, he worked on the estate in Ardsley, New York. It's on the, along the Hudson River, you know where that is. Ardsley, and he worked in Ossining, and some other town up here. All this he did walking, unless he had a chance to get a ride, you know, with a horse and wagon, or whatever. And this was years ago, you know. And so he did. And my mother went, and she was, what happened with me, was that, prie, doctor came to the house. He said, "I don't know what's wrong with her." I said, "Do what you's want. So my grandmother said, "Well," you know what she did? One of the neighbors had a little boy. A baby boy. And she said, she had so much milk. She says, "I will nurse, if you want." So she took a chance and she was nursing me, this woman. My grandmother would take fava beans, did you ever see the fava beans? It's size of your...

LEVINE: Hm-hmm.

TORINO: And she would take those, and she would grind them.
Whatever it was. She would shell them and grind them.
You know with the, with the copper, very fine, yeah.
You know, what the phar...

LEVINE: Yeah. Mortar and pestle.

TORINO: ...what, what, yeah, what the pharmacist used...

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TORINO: ...into powder form. And then she takes some of this
milk and mix it in there. And then she would feed it
to me. And so it happened, it stayed in my stomach,
and all of a sudden there was see? There I was
starting to look better. You know. And so time went,
one day my grandmother said to me, of course she used
to tell me a lot of stories. You know, we had time to
be together because she had me so much. And this
doctor passed by. He says, "Hmm." He says, "What are
you doing to her?" He says, "I didn't think she was
still around."

LEVINE: How old were you then?

TORINO: Well, my grandmother told me this. I don't know what, well, it must have been about a month went by, you know till she, I knew I was getting better. And about six months or something like that, you know. And so, I did get better.

LEVINE: Wow. Can you remember any other stories that your grandmother told you?

TORINO: (she pauses) About the people, my son, about my, I really don't. Because at that time, then I started to playing, (unintelligible) to be with friends. In school, you know, because she used to take me, you know, to school. And with my cousin, then I when I, (unintelligible) I used to learn directions. I loved to travel. So I think I was very good in directions, and remembering things and places. So I never got lost. (unintelligible) I says, "Grandma, you don't have to take me. I know where to go. I won't get lost. Don't worry, I won't get lost." And then, of course, she walked, stepped behind me to see if I was going the right direction, you know? And...

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

LEVINE: How did people get around in the town?

TORINO: Walking.

LEVINE: Walking.

TORINO: Mostly walking, yeah. Mostly walking. That's where I got all my walking from. And then, during the Easter time we would go, like at this time of the year, we would go to the, before Easter, we would go to the cemeteries, and say prayers and see the beloved deceased and all that. And then we'd go, in the evening we'd go to the church. It was, well, you practiced your religion. That was your life, that, you know, what you did. And you looked forward to Sunday, you know, when they had, a religious feast was going on. So my grandmother en, enrolled me in the different societies that they have, like a club, you

know. And then when they had certain name day, they would have this here services. And the children all used to walk ahead of them, you know, the procession. And they had the statue of the saint that was being honored, you know. And so one day as we got to church, so, we weren't allowed to have no breakfast, you know. And we had, had to go. And I went, and then, well, I was on the altar, and, and all of a sudden I felt myself going over. I fainted because I was hungry. I didn't eat, see. So my mother was upset, and she took me out, brought me outside, she says, oh. My grandmother had a piece of bread for me, and a little wa, they gave me some holy water, blessed me. (she laughs) She says, "What's the matter?" Said, "Why didn't you tell me?" I said, "I didn't know." I says, "I don't remember what happened to me." I didn't know, you know. And it was very festive. And then, like on a Monday, the day after Easter, they always would have, everybody got all their collecting, whatever they had left over from the Easter Sunday, and they, we would walk about two and half miles outside of the town, and have one great big picnic, like a fair. And it was just beautiful. I remember that so distinctly. And the children always played, and they had a good time. And they had all

little chapels there of the different saints. If the people would take care of them. They, you know, they would place them there, in, in their honor, or in honor of a family. And they would go and have service. A priest would come from their parish and have services. And everybody would join and bring the foods and, and whatever they had, meat and chicken and fruit and everything, whatever they, and they would have a good time the whole day long. And the children would just prance around and enjoy each other. And the boys, of course, always pick on one another, you know. And my brother was no exception. Because he was a very lively young boy, too, you know. And that's all I could remember of that, because like I say time goes so fast, and to think that you start remember these things, you know, and all of a sudden you're going. Then I didn't bother me all to face that I was leaving, because I had that happy feeling that I was going. I wanted to go, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TORINO: And, so I said to my grandmother, "I'm going to come back. Don't, I'm going to come back and see you." And of course my mother and my, my grandmother hugged

each other, which we nev, my mother never went back. When we came to this country she was a very unhappy woman, because she never got to go visit her parents, her, her family again, you know. But my mother's brother and sister took over to take of the property.

And my father said to them, father said, "You take care of it," and he says, "You, that's your bread and butter, like I was doing." And he says, "You don't have to send me any money." So my mother worked, you know. And she got a job in the laundry...

LEVINE: In this country?

TORINO: In this country.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TORINO: And, well, she, she wasn't, my mother wasn't, was an outdoor woman. She didn't have any domestic way to do in the house, or needle, crochet, or anything like that. She was an outside woman. She says, "I'm an out, I'm an outdoor horse. I'm a working woman." She says...

LEVINE: She really plowed the fields, and harvested the

fields, and worked...

TORINO: Well, the brother helped, yes. She, yes. My mother was the main one told them what to do, you know. And they survived, and they still have the property yet, these people. My cousins. You see, and I came, and I kept corresponding with my cousins. And there's one in particular, there are two of them. They lived in a different town. We grew up together from, I was eight and she was ten. And then they kept writing back. First my, my aunt used to write to me, and made her daughter write, because they, my mother was illiterate. They couldn't read and write. Neither could my father. But I think they did wonders, you know, for what they did, and raising the family, and teaching us to work, you know. And...

LEVINE: What about the influenza? When did that hit? When did...

TORINO: Oh, that was before I was born...

LEVINE: I see.

TORINO: ...so I really don't remember. I just, I really don't

know.

LEVINE: I see.

TORINO: All I know, yeah. Because my father came home, he used to, he used to come home every two weeks, and once a month, and this was when he stayed in Italy, you know, and working before he came to this country.

And he came home one evening, and he said, and the house is clean. Generally it would have all these beds, the cots all over the, because they lived in a very, one big, huge room. You know. The room was bigger than my house put together. So it was very spacious. And he came home, he said, "Where's the children?" My mother said, "Don't ask me." Said, "Ask God." And there was no way, a telephone to let them know. You just had to wait till he, till they came home, you know. And of course he was very upset.

And then my brother came, and then I came, and that was it. You know. Then my brother, my father decided to come to this country, and my mother didn't have any more children. But when she came here then they tried. They wanted, he says, "I want to get a little American baby." But it didn't work. My mother said, "Lost cause." (they laugh)

LEVINE: Okay, so tell, do you remember packing to leave? Do you remember anything about saying good-bye, or, before you came to this country?

TORINO: Yeah. Well, I said good-bye to my little friends, going to door to door, and I hugged them, and, I said, "See? Now I'm going to see my father. You said I don't have a father." (unintelligible)...because I was so depressed about it. They, you know, they used to tease me about it, you know. I says, "I'm going to America," I said. And, let me see, and saying good-bye to my, my grandmother, and some, my other cous, these other girls, my cousin named Rosa, which they, they moved to the northern part of Italy which is Vercelli. And once you became a young girl there was no work in the town. So she was a seamstress, and she used to crochet, arts and crafts, and she was a very talented woman, very, very talented. And, so she went to, a friend recommended her, and they went to Vercelli, this town. And she got a job. She worked and then she got married there. You know, met a gentleman, and then she had her children. In the meantime we always kept corresponding together, you know. And she would write me, and I'd say that she

would love to come here to America. And my father said, "Well, I wouldn't understand them." But my, my aunt, you know, in the meantime, well my grandmother died. And my mother, that depressed my mother. She said, you promised me that (unintelligible) would let me go, and I didn't see my mother, I didn't see my sister. But then at one time, the, the, the immigrants were forbidden, were closed. No more. Nobody else could come. So that held them back. So in the meantime their children grew up. When they were able to come they said, "No." They said, "Too late now." They said, they have boyfriend. They don't want to leave their boyfriends, they were going steady. And all that. So they were never able to come. And my mother said, she wasn;t able to go either because money was tight, you know. And so my father was working. He came back to the city. Then, when he came this country he gave up that work with the, with the, with, you know, wealthy people. And he came into town, and my brother, the older one, got my brother, father a job in water meter works in Long Island City. And so my father worked there for a while. And then my mother worked in the laundry shop. And my brother Pete used to go to school with me, you know. But he made a wagon, and he used to go and

deliver things to people during the summertime. He would go to the docks and get ice. When the big chunks of ice used to fall off, so I used to go with him. And I would hold the wagon. And he would take the ice and bring it, and we would bring it to the neighbors. And some of the neighbors gave us, you know, money. And my mother said, "Don't do that. That's not right. You shouldn't take money." My mother always held us back from taking money from people, should do it willingly. He says, "Ma," he says, "Why should I do that for nothing. If they can, I don't say I want fifteen cents, I want five cents. They should give me something." And he was glad about that. He was always a go-getter. You know. And, and I went with him. So he, we used come home and give the money to my mother. He said, "See, now if they didn't give me the money," he says, "You work. You get paid. Why shouldn't I. I work." Then he had a job early in the morning to go and put the lights on, for the streetlights, you know, put the switch on? He would get up according to the time of the year. He would go like early in the morning, in the summertime it would be daylight earlier, you know. So he would go and put the switch on. And my brother was short, like I am, you know, we, we were too small. So were

my parents. And so I, it happened the way we were. But we did okay. And so that's the way time went on. And I went to school, you know, mainly. And then I got a job, and I met my husband...

LEVINE: Well, before we get to that, let's just jump back for a minute. Tell me about the voyage.

TORINO: The voyage is from, from Naples. One morning, it was November 16th. We got on the trip, on the ship. And it was a very old one. It was a very old ship. And we came like a bunch of cattle. They had, it's like the navy had, you know, the, the, the beds, like in three layers.

LEVINE: Bunk beds.

TORINO: They, bunk beds. And they told my mother, they said, "Don't dare take the bottom bunk bed. Take the top. Because if anybody gets seasick," he says, "you gonna get it." So we had three, three bunk beds like that, you know. (she indicates) Well, anyway my brother didn't, the ocean didn't agree with him. I was a wild one. Nothing bothered me. The whole, I'd get up in the morning and go and, go and had a walk up on deck

and get the coffee. And my mother would go and get the bread. I mean that's all you got. They didn't give you anything. And so my brother got taken sick. He wouldn't eat nothing. Whatever was put down his stomach would come up again.

LEVINE: So you had to go and get in line...

TORINO: Yeah.

LEVINE: ...and get the bread...

TORINO: Yeah. Right.

LEVINE: ...and the coffee and come back to the bunk.

TORINO: Right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TORINO: Well, I gotta tell you one story on board ship that you wouldn't believe. One morning I was going up, and I had a pony tail. My mother used to make a braid. I had nice long hair. It was beautiful. And my mother sent me up to get coffee. And this one morning, the

ocean, and here's this great, big fish. I see his mouth and I could see myself in there. This gentleman got a hold of my pony tail, and held me back for sure that I was going over. Because they don't have like today, there's more safety, and everything, and there was, there was just one piece of board like that.

(she gestures) He says, "Where was your mother," he said. "She let you come out." He said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm supposed to go and get the coffee." "You're supposed to get the coffee?" He said, "You come with me." So he took me by my hand, and he really saved me. You know, I never forgot that vision all my life, really and truly till today.

Because I, really, I was a goner, I said. Well, I guess God didn't want me to come. (she laughs) And, but it must have been a shark, because the mouth was so big, and the waves that washing over the ship, you know. And he saved my life, that man, you know. And then he saw my mother. He gave her, and scolded her.

And on our way what happened was, we were hit. This was during the first world war. And we were hit. And the captain said to us, he said, "Everybody," he says, "We have to balance the ship." He, everybody go all onto the other side, because the ship was this way.

(she indicates) "Everybody," he said. So he came to

my mother, and he said, "Signora," mean Mrs., you know, Madame. He said "If you pray," he said, "if we get to save, we'll be very, very lucky," he said. "You must pray, because we are hit, and I don't guarantee." So my mother prayed real hard. She was, like I, she was relig, she used to knit, make stockings, you know. She made twelve pairs of stockings. She brought twine with her, you know. But we, on the ship we were comfort, it took us a whole month, that was a long time. They had to go around way. So finally, what I remember was my mother put me under her shawl. She had a great big shawl, you know, and she hugged me underneath. And they were, the next I know I woke up we were in the cot. I said, "How did I get here?" You know. My mother said, "Don't worry. We're safe, we're safe." And my brother stayed downstairs in the cot. Well, we were safe. So finally we went. And this man, while I was, while I was going back a little bit. Well, I was with my mother, and my mother was hiding me because it was winter. Let's face it, you know. And this man was going back and forth, walking on the, on the gangplank, you know, the whole ship. He was using such foul language. It was just awful. He said, "I'll never go again. I'll never go back to go

again." Evidently we had taken his wife's place on the ship, because there was a cancellation, remember?

LEVINE: Hm-hmm.

TORINO: And we, my mother, my brother and I was three people. And he had his wife and two children. And his wife wouldn't come. So he came alone. He says, "I'll never go back again. I made three trips, and this is the last one," he said. Going back and forth, talking like his mind, and he was cursing, he said. So my mother said, well, she said, the captain said, "Why do you use such foul language in front of people. That's not nice," he said. He said, "You don't know how I feel." And my mother says, "Don't mind him. That's the only word, words he knows to pray to the Lord let him know how he feels." Says, "That's the only word. God doesn't hear the other words. He only hears the prayer. That's his prayer." And I thought that was beautiful, you know. I remember that, lots of things. And, so then, we were coming close to New York. And one morning the captain said, "Rise." He said, "We have seen the Statue of Liberty. We are coming to New York." And everybody rejoiced, they were so happy.

And I said to my mother, my brother wouldn't get up. I said, "You know what, Mama, maybe Pete wants a piece of pizza." "Pizza?" She says, "That would stay in his stomach." So she said, "Don't ask him." I says, "Go get it." So we went up with her, and we all had, I had two piece of pizza. They were delicious. And my mother had some, and she brought him two pieces.

LEVINE: Where did you get the pizza?

TORINO: Well, they had them on board ship. They used to make it. To the cook, we had to go to where they cook, you know. And this was during the day, like for lunch, you know. And so everybody was rejoicing. And my brother gobbled up that pizza. And he sat up. My mother said, and she would go to the, my mother had a suitcase, she had a big picture of the, of the, of this here religious, this saint. It was Saint, the patron of the town. Sant'Irasmo. That was the name of the saint. And my...

LEVINE: Could you spell that?

TORINO: Irasmo. My brother's name is Peter. But this was the name of this saint that my mother was devoted to. And

she had the big picture on the, on the back of the, of the suitcase. Showed him the suitcase, and on this, she said, "Don't you, don't you, you're sleeping? Are you sleeping like my son? Are you sleeping like his son? Pray. Pray. We have to. We have to. We have to. We have to get there." And so, she hit the suitcase like that. (she gestures) She said to my brother, she said, "Pete, eat." She said, "Eat pizza. We got to see you father. We got to see you brother." Because my other brother was here with my father. His name was Frank. Said, "You want to see your brother?" He says, "Yes." She says, "Eat, eat, eat." And he ate the pizza. My mother went up and got him another piece. And with that he started to feel better, would you believe it? And we came, and the, the Governor's Island, you know, or the Governor's Isl, all around New York Bay. It was all ice, ice. They had, I don't know how, the, the ship had to anchor at 42nd Street. Dock. And, so finally they took it, you know, at Ellis Island, and then the ferry took us over across, later. You know. Later in the day. But...

LEVINE: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

TORINO: Oh, yes. Oh, I was so happy. Oh, yes. Yes, I certainly do. And I remember so distinctly. And I said, I says, "Thank you. Thank you." Kept saying, "Grazie. Grazie. Grazie. Molto grazie." My mother used to say to me, "Say thank you to God." And I, whatever my mother said to pray I repeat it, you know. And then, you know, 1969 I lost, '67 I lost my husband. And I, I was very bereaved. I just get over that, you know. Because we were just a devoted family, devoted couple to our children. Our children was, was so good, the five boys that I had. And so, when I went back, my cousins kept corresponding with me from Italy. They said, now why can't you come and see us. And that was, he says, you have no ties to hold you back. You're free. You could travel. And, so the hus, the doctor took care of my husband, he said to my children, he said, "Why don't you let your mother go to Europe and see her friend, her relatives. I think that would help her a lot." You know, because I was just down. I felt the sky fell down on me, you know. And they did. You know, they gave me a nice surprise birthday party. And they bought a ticket for me to fly to Europe. And I went 1969. I had written to my cousin. I says to Bob, I said I'm planning to come. And they were so overjoyed. And

they said, please come so that you'll be a couple days to rest. And my son is going on vacation. He works on a newspaper, Progresso Paper. He says, we have, we don't see anything of our country, either. He says, if you come, we will travel by car down to the, to Italy, the east coast, down around to the town where I was born. Because she used to go and visit them, the cousins, you know. And my, my aunts and my mother, but my grandmother was gone. But my aunt with her two daughters and other relatives that I didn't even know I met, you know. All I remember was my aunt and my cousins, you know. The grown up people, like me. And so, I said, gee, and I told my children that. Says, "Well, that sounds good." So they went and they got me a ticket to go from July 25th to September the 30th. This was all a dream to me. I couldn't believe this would ever be, you know. And so I went, we got on, they bought me an orchid, you know. My children all came to the airport, you know. And they're seeing me off. And I says, "Well," got to the plane, "Here goes nothing." I says, "I came with nothing, I'm going with nothing." Well, we went, and on, I got on the plane, and the captain says to me, he says, "Welcome, welcome." I said, "Thank you." He says, "You have an orchid. Is that your sweetheart that

you're gonna meet?" I says, "No." I says, "This is from my grandchildren." I says, "I haven't back to Italy since 1916." I says, "It's the first time that I'm going back." He says, "Oh, beautiful." So overnight on the plane, and you could see the sunrise come up as we left the gate. There was dinner which we left here about nine o'clock. And (unintelligible), the next thing you know you see the sun was set and then the sun's coming up. It was just beautiful. I didn't want to miss a thing. And they gave us, how could we eat so much. You know. You just had something to eat, you had supper, and all of a sudden you had breakfast. So you could see, and they kept announcing to us when we were going over the Alps, mountains, and then we came into Milan, the northern part of Italy. And my cousin was there with her son and her little daughter, little granddaughter. She was (unintelligible) Rose, Rosemary. And so my cousin said to me, "Now, please tell us what are you going to wear so we can tell who you are?" So my, my daughter-in-law made an outfit, navy blue with boxers, something like, you know, very pretty. And she said, "Wave a white handkerchief, so we know you." I said, my, my, my daughter said to me, she said, "Mother, if everybody waves a white handkerchief, how would she

know it's you." (she laughs) So we came into the airport and then captain said to me, "You have a good time," he said. And he kissed me. He says, "Hope you meet a nice man." I said, "No." I said, "No. I'm not looking for a man. I just want to come and see my cousin, my relatives and do everything that I would like to do, to see." Well, he says, "I'll see you on the way back," he said. Okay. So we went and walking, I saw them waving the handkerchief, and I had my handkerchief. They knew who I was. They got off the plane, it was an open field those days, you know.

And they're walking to the waiting room, and I'm getting on line, and I said, "Gee, how, how should I know." From the distance, the plane, I couldn't see their faces. And I'm going by, and they were all standing on the line waiting for their people, and my cousin grabs my hand, she says, "Frances, it's me." Oh, I said, "Don't you recognize?" I says, "No, I didn't know it was you." And then she says, that's my son, and, and the grand, grand, granddaughter. And we went out and they had to go to check out. And they said to me, they open my suitcase. I says, "I can't open it." I says, "I'm not strong enough." I says, "If you want to open it, you gotta close it." So they said, "You can't open it." I says, "What did you come

for?" I says, "Well, I came for vacation to see my child, my family, because I want to feel better." And they opened it up. They said, "Do you smoke?" I said, "Yes, I do." "Well, that's why. You should stop smoking." I says, "Well, maybe I will. But now I have to." But I didn't smoke. So my neighbors told me, they said, I says, "What can I bring them?" I says, "I don't know what to bring them." "Well, you're gonna see their husband." She said, "You better bring some pack of cigarettes, you know." So I was going buy five, said, (unintelligible) "five cartons of cigarettes," she said. "You gonna be there two months, you tell them that you smoke." So that's what I said. And they said, "Hmm. You're good smoking." I bought them Camel cigarettes. And so I showed them, and of course closed the suitcase, got outside, my cousins took the suitcase, the son, we got in the car. We're sitting there. I don't know what to say. I'm sitting in the front with her, and my cousin's sitting in the back with her granddaughter. She says, "Frances, talk to us." She says, "You have so much to say." She says, "We're so many years, we didn't see, we grew up." I says, "You ask me anything you want and I'll tell you." I says, "I don't just don't know what to say." I says, "This is a dream," I

said, "that I can't believe would come true." I says, "I'm so choked up that I can't find words what to say." She says, "Well, we're here now, we're going to have a good time." So then her son said, they call me Zia, which is Aunt, you know, for respect. When, actually we're really cousins, we'd be, he would be my second cousin, see. But for respect the older person they call you Zia, see, which is Aunt. So, he said, "You don't mind if I call you Zia?" I says, "No." I says, "I feel honored." You know. And so he said, "We're gonna go home." He says, "We're gonna rest a couple of days, and then we're gonna take a trip." We'll go all the way down the east coast, past the Adriatic Sea. Then around into Cartinasect [PH], which is a town all the way down below. And...

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

TORINO: Let me think. I'll come back to it. Not Cartinasect, Pul, Pul, Pulgrano? Pulgrano, P-U-L-G-R-A-N-O. It was a town that my cousin's daughter-in-law par, relatives were there visiting, and we came down to, on the way down. We took us, eighteen hours, because it was the northern part all way down to, to, to the foot of Italy, to the heel. You know?

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TORINO: And we went to see her cousin. We stayed there overnight. They made a nice dinner. Oh, incidentally, when I came, from the, the day that I landed, we went to my, my cousin's daughter's house. And they had a very big feast ready for me.

LEVINE: What?

TORINO: They had a whole full course dinner. And the husband cooked the dinner. They had soup. And, the northern part of Italy well you know is, they raise rice. And the southern part of Italy raises mostly wheat, because they have a warmer climate, see. And they had, they had rice and they had meat, and they had all kinds of fruits, and all kinds of sweets, you know the pastries and all that. And he had set up a tape. And I didn't know this. They had decide. And after the dinner we were talking. It was very hard for me, my cousin had to make all the translation to them. They wanted to know what is she saying, some things in American, you know. And then I heard, they put it on. They said, "Frances, listen." Marcello, her son-in-

law's name was Marcello. He says, want to, want to say something. So he says, "Zia, aspetta, aspetta." He said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute." Because then I was all wineded [sic] up, and they gave me a nice glass of wine, they had the best wines in all, and I like wine, you know, I drank wine. And I said, (unintelligible) and we had figs which I love so much, and I had a whole bowl of figs. And they said, "Oh, they'll be plenty more, because now they're just coming into season. You came at the right time." I says, "Well, that good." And so, they played the tape back. And I'm listening. I said, "That sounds like me." He says, "Well, it is you." They applauded, they. (they laugh) they were so happy, that, you know, I said, it was just beautiful that I spoke Italian so well. You see, I kept up my religion, my language, you know. Now here I'm losing my, because I have nobody to talk to, you know. And I'm just using the American language all the time, you know. But I do like to keep it up. And then, and most of my friends that I have here, they're all born here. And they don't, they don't even know how to say a word in Italian. I can't believe it. I got a neighbor down the street here. I says, "May, how come you don't speak Italian?" "Well," she says, "I understand, but

I don't speak it," you know. And, but we went down back to Italy again, and around and to, we stayed there overnight. And we went to, up along the, to the west coast then, facing along the Mediterranean Sea. And we went to Caserta, and then we went into Naples, and then we went into Florence, and then we went to Bologna, and we stopped in Rome for a whole day. And I went to the Vatican City that they took me. And my ambition was to go and get a horse ride in the carriage, horse and carriage, around the, the city of Rome, and, which I did. And my cousin said to me, "No," she says, "You'll get lost." I says, "I won't get lost. You're always fear for me getting lost." I says, "I won't get lost. Don't worry." So I gave the man five dollars. He says, "Well, come on, everybody." "Everybody," he says." I says, "Well, come on." So we all got into the carriage and we went for a ride. And Rome is really beautiful, beautiful, and very historic. And I seen the great, big...

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: This is tape two, now. And I'm talking with Maria Torino. And we're going to jump back now to Ellis Island.

TORINO: Right.

LEVINE: Will you tell me when you first arrived, what happened and your experience there.

TORINO: Well, my experience was I was so overjoyed when we came into New York Harbor to see the Statue of Liberty. And I didn't know what that building was there. All this (unintelligible) I didn't know anything about that. But we got off the ship and we went in, and all of the great, big, big room, they told us to sit down. They had all benches, you know. And they told me mother, sit here. And we sat down, and they said, wait till we get called. And this was in the morning, about eight o'clock in the morning. And finally people were getting called to go up to the desk, now to be checked out. So they call my mother. They said, "Vita Maria Cacciapaglia." My mother's name was Vita Maria. What a beautiful name. Vita means life, and Marie was for the Blessed Mother, you

know. I don't know if you're a Catholic or not, but you're familiar enough with religious, and now we're getting together, and that. And so he said, yes. So we went up to the desk. My brother was there with my father. My brother was tall, my father was short. So my father had a big mustache, you know. And so they said, "Who is here to receive you?" Said to my mother, the judge. My mother said, "My husband, Raphael Cacciapaglia, and my son, Frank Cacciapaglia."

"And, and who are you?" "My name is Marie, Vita Maria Cacciapaglia." "And who did you come with?" "With two children. Pietro Cacciapaglia, and Maria Francesca Cacciapaglia." Says, how old I am. And he said to me, he says, "Who is this lady?" I says, "My mother." "Mia mamma. Mia mamma." And he said also to my brother, said, "Pietro, chi e questa donna?" "Mia mamma." (unintelligible) "Cognosciete tu padre?" "Si." He said, "Do you know your father," he said, do you know. Said...

LEVINE: "Do you know your father?"

TORINO: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TORINO: Oh, yeah. He was always, well, I knew him then, too, because I had seen him a couple of years before. You know. Not, not too, not too much. Because if I remembered him coming to, to Italy and I seen, probably about a year and half or so, you know, at the most. You know. And he said, but I didn't remember my brother. Vision, you know. I just knew of him, you know. But I didn't recognize him, you know. And then he, "Your brother?" I said, "Yes." And so he said, "Si? Sigura?" "Are you sure?" And take an oath, and my mother had to take oath, and my parents had to take an oath. He said, "It's really that you want to come to America and you want to live here. You want to, you gonna be a good citizen." My mother said, "Yes. I'll do what my husband does." And so we followed out, each other out. And, of course, the Italian people are warmer inside, but they don't show their emotion. You know, they don't hug and kiss and all that. They just shake hands, you know? But my brother, my brother, my brother hugged me around, you know. He just kissed my head, you know. I said, "You kissed my head. What's the matter?" I told him in Italian, "Perche mi hai bacciata la testa?" "Perche io ti voglio bene." "Because I love you." And, of

course, my brother and Peter, they shook hands together. And we walked out to the door, before you go right outside, they called the, what do they call when that's the, on the doorstep? The reunion. The reunion doorway into happiness. And we were standing there and my, my father held me around. He said, "Oh," he said, "you gonna be happy." He said, "You don't want to go back to Italy." He says, "I'm glad you came." I said, "I wanted to come. I wanted to come." I says, "Mamma didn't want to come, but I wanted to come." And we went, went out, and we got into a ferry boat, and we went to South Ferry. And I said to my brother, Frank, I said, "You know, Frank, you said we're going to go on the air, on the train that goes up in the air, and that's what I want to go on." "We are, we are. That's where we're going." So we came on, and going on to the Ninth Avenue elevator train, and they had an escalator. And I said, "Look at this." So we got on the train, and we wanted to get of at Twenty-third Street. And so we, then we went to, my father had an appointment, an apartment on Twenty-eighth Street. And I don't remember the number, you know, because we only stayed there two days. And then my father found another apartment which is nearer to where friends that knew him real

well, and were going to help my mother get acquainted, and, you know, to live here. And that was on Twenty-sixth Street between First and Second Avenue. And I believe the number was Three Twenty-one, because I lived there nine years and that's how I remember, so. (she laughs) And then...

LEVINE: Tell me about the things that struck you as different, like your first few days here.

TORINO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Can you remember things that were different for you besides the elevated...

TORINO: Well, the night that we came here the people, my father brought us to these friends of his on Twenty-sixth Street. And they lived on the third floor in the apartment. And they also had a very nice dinner for us. (unintelligible) And then the, one of the ladies said, oh, the clothes that I was wearing. And I had a lot of nice jewelry, everybody gave you gifts when you leave. My grandmother gave me a new pair of earrings, and my mother had, was all dressed up real nice, and see, my mother liked jewelry. So, she had a

wrist watch here, well, and I have pictures. And so, they said, they started stripping me after dinner. I says, "What are you's doing?" Said, "Well, you don't want these clothes. You got to be an American, now. You can't be in Italy. You can't wear these clothes.

It doesn't look right." "But they're mine. They're brand new. My mother just had this dress made for me," you know, and I didn't like that, that they took, changed my clothes, you know. But they did anyway. And we stayed till about nine-thirty that night. And we had a very nice, but I cried. I said, "I don't like these clothes." And it was wintertime, I didn't like what they. I said, "I want my own clothes back."

You know?

LEVINE: Can you remember what your clothes were like...

TORINO: My...

LEVINE: ...compared to the clothes they gave you?

TORINO: Well, they gave me a little dress, but I had, like, it was a little jacket and this skirt, you see? Like the girl, wear them down, more or less. But it was very, very plaid jumper, Peter Pan collar, you know, long

sleeves. It was very pretty and it was very, it was warm, you know. And, and a little dress, and a skirt, you know. But, of course, it went down to almost your ankles, you know.

LEVINE: That's what you came with.

TORINO: Yeah. Right. And then they, "Oh, this is too long."

So they gave me a dress, and it was, not white, it was, I would say a lot of color, and just, just below my knees. And I thought that was terrible. And my mother says, "Oh, she's not going to be dressed like that." So days went by, and my, during the week my mother brought me to school, like I said. She registered me and I'd going to school. And my mother became friends with these people and then she met some other people. And my mother used to, they loved her so much because my mother knew how to make bread. Homemade bread, which they loved it, and homemade macaroni. My mother made that, and different style macaroni, pasta, different style pasta. You know. The one that you do with your fingers. Some that you, this way, you know. (she gestures) And my mother used to work the dough. Oh, believe me, the pasta would melt in your mouth, you know. And make the

sauce and the meat and all that, and that was, lots of big friends. And so like I said, and these people moved away, and my mother was kind of disappointed.

But she got a job down the street in the laundry shop.

And my mother used to fold the sheets and clothes and whatever it was, you know. Because they, they did that for the Bellevue Hospital, it's on Twenty-sixth Street. Near, near the East River. And, so that's why she wanted to work near the house, so she could watch me, you know. And while I was in school. So she would go to work early and then be home at three o'clock when I was home, you see. But then as I got older, my mother got another job downtown on Thompson Street in the olive place, and vegetables. They used to can, put the olives in jars, you know. And somebody said she was making more money, and it was, it was better, it was cleaner work than, when she was doing the laundry, it was very hard work. Demanding and all that. The people weren't nice, you know. They rejected people that couldn't speak English, you know. But these people, so my mother got this job down on Thompson. And she used to walk there. My mother was so religious, and she used to go to church in the morning before she went, she would get up five o'clock in the morning, she would go to church at six

o'clock, come back six-thirty. And then she'd make her lunch, she'd wake me up so I would go to school, and then she would walk to Thompson Street from Twenty-sixth Street. And then she'd be home by five o'clock. And then I had to come, when I come home from school, I would start the fire, you know the coal fire, and put up, my mother had beans soaking from overnight, you know. I would do that, and sometimes I got interested with my friends and play and forget, you know. She come home one night, she said to me, "How come the stove isn't." "Oh," I said, "it's cooking. It's cooking." She put a, she put a hand on the stove. The stove was cold. She said, "What are you saying." She said, "The stove is cold. What's cooking? Nothing's cooking? Why don't you make the fire? Where were you?" I says, "Oh," I says, "I was, I was talking to my friends." Which I really was, you know, I was talking to my friend. "Don't you know you're supposed to come right home." I says, "Well, they were talking to me." She says, "What were you talking about?" My mother was a very strict mother. Very, very strict. And, of course, she always, she never spared the rod.

LEVINE: Oh.

TORINO: I says, "Well, why you always hit me." "Because you don't listen," she said. "Your father's coming home, and I, (she laughs). But we had a cas, a gas stove, too. But the, the coal stove would heat up the house, you see. And so, by the time they come home, she put, started the fire and everything worked out fine. And...

LEVINE: Well, how was school different in New York compared with the school you'd been in in Italy?

TORINO: Well, some of the girls, the pupils, there were boys and girls in the class. And they didn't like, no. The boys, we went on Twenty-sixth, Twenty-seventh Street, and the boys used to go on Twenty-eighth Street, the entrance in school. And it was all girls in my class. And some of the girls resented me, you know, because I couldn't speak they'd make fun of me. So I got older, you know. I, my brother got along better with the boys, but he had, I guess he had his, his little spiffs, you know, with the chords, you got on. And so I said to the girls, when I got my report card, they could read it better. I didn't know the difference, which was good and which wasn't good. But

I knew A was good. And then I said, "Which is good."
I asked the teacher after class. I said, "Which is good." I said, "Am I bad?" She said, "No." She, "You gonna learn." She said, "You gonna learn." I said, "When they gonna get an Italian teacher to explain to me." And that made me feel good. I says, "I'm sorry," I, you know, "Mi dispiace che io non posso parlare. Non posso spiegare." "I can't explain," you know. Didn't know what I wanted to say. She said, "You will. You listen." She said, "Listen a lot. I know. And read. Go to the library." I went to the library and I got some books. But I didn't have anybody to help me, you know, to tutor me, see, when I was home. So it all seemed like Chinese to me, you know. And so then my mother, like I said they were illiterate. She couldn't help me, you know. So, of course, life went on like that, and I picked myself up better and better and better, with my friends, talking to them and all. And the, the parents, when I, mothers, when I, they'd say, "Frances, come over." After school they'd make me go up to their house. And the mother would always have like a snacks, she would make coffee. I used to like the way she'd make coffee. And she would heat up the milk and the coffee together, which made it delicious,

you know. And she would always have some bread for us, or something. I always liked her so much, you know. So then when I became fourteen years old, I said to Ma, I didn't like the house where we were living, the apartments. You see, in those days they used to have the gas light. They put out the light during the day. And you come into the hall, the big, long hall, and had to up to the first floor. But it was dark. You had to feel your way. You know. During the wintertime they couldn't keep the doors open. They also had an outhouse in the back. So we lived in the front of the house. They had to go up one flight of stairs, which was long, you know. And they didn't keep no lights on at all, you know. So made it hard for, and I said someday I'm going to move out of here. So finally one day, I want, these people moved out across the street where I became very good friends with my friend from school. And I said to her, she said there's, I said, "Oh people moved out." She says, "Yes." I says, "How much is the rent?" So she told me, it was twenty-five dollars. But we had hot water, and we had lights. You know, we had electric lights, which, oh, it was beautiful, you know. But there on the other half there was just the gas light, you know, and it had a meter, and you had

to put a quarter in the, in the meter all the time. And I learned, like, I was standing on the washtub, you know. And I could put the quarter in there and turn it because I was strong, but there was no gas. (unintelligible) you was supposed to light the stove.

LEVINE: Well now how did that work...

TORINO: Worked out...

LEVINE: ...with putting the quarter in the meter? You put it in every so often?

TORINO: Yes. It would run out and then you had no gas. It would go off.

LEVINE: Oh. And then when the gas went off you would put another quarter in?

TORINO: Another quarter in, right. My mother used to like to put, my father used to get paid, they'd put like more than one, maybe a dollar, (unintelligible) on how many hours would be. It was better, you know. But you'd try to conserve, you know. And, like we had the coal

stove, we didn't have to use the gas so much. We used to the gas for lighting also, see? But then we moved in the spring. I was determined. I said, "No," then I said. My mother, oh, incidentally, my mother used to give me money to go shopping after school to the grocery store to buy vegetables or pasta or whatever, bread, whatever we needed. And my father said, "Well," he said, "all the change that you get from shopping that you can save, you keep." And I used to have a jar, so I filled this jar up. And my father said, "Well," he said, "This money doesn't grow here in the jar." He said, "We have to do something with this money." I said, "No, no, no." I said, "I don't want to." I said, "I'm gonna put." He said, "Gonna put it in the bank, and when you want it you can have it." "A bank?" He said, "Yeah. They hold it for you." He said, "I put my money in the bank." So he taught me a lot, my father. And on it sat. So, lost my train of thought.

LEVINE: You were talking about it was twenty-five dollars for the apartment that you wanted...

TORINO: Rent. So I took money. I counted the money. It was twenty-five dollars. So I knew already, because I was

learning pretty good. And I went, I paid the rent. And I took some of the stuff, and I brought it. I was going back and forth. It was two flights up. And where we lived it was one flight, so it was three flights of stairs. And I said to the woman, I said, "Here," I says, my father will give you, he came home. I says, Ma. He says, "What happened here?" A lot of the stuff, all the heavy stuff I left, you know. Everything that I can carry I carried up. So, she said, "What did you do?" I said, "I rented the house across the street, and we're going to move there. I'm not coming here no more. If I have to sleep on the floor in the other house." So my father said, "What's the matter, Frances, why?" I says, "You think I don't like this." I says, "Coming into the hall, it's so dark here." I says, "And anybody can grab me." I says, this man came, a friend of somebody's, was their that they had met. And this man came to the house one day, you know, in the hall. And he took me. He said, "Don't be afraid, Frances. It's me." I says, "Who are you?" So he held me around, you know. And I told that my father, I said, just a man that we had met, and a friend of theirs on Long Island, and they were having a play that day in the house, you know. And so this man was there. So he took upon himself to come

to the, to see my, my parents. And I told that to my father, so he agreed with me. He said, so we moved across the street. Lo and behold, don't you think this man came across the street. So one day, I said, well, we were very happy there. My brother, my father, and moved the stuff there, and we were happy.

And my mother became friends with neighbor, because the apartment was right next door, and we had to share the bathroom. See, you had the same bathroom. And we...

LEVINE: It was, it was in the hallway?

TORINO: No. Between the apartments...

LEVINE: Outside?

TORINO: ...between the apartment. And also they other half was also in the apartments. We had to share the bathroom with the neighbors next door. But it was nice, because my mother, and we never had to lock the door, anybody who went to the bathroom. There was a separate door while you were in the bathroom, so they always kept the door closed a little bit. Not really locked, because we used to go, my friends and I, and

we used to, and very close. And so my mother was very happy, (unintelligible) she taught her a lot. And, and so we lived there, oh about five years. And...

LEVINE: Were you pay, was twenty-five dollars a lot more than you had been paying in the other apartment?

TORINO: Oh, sure. Yeah. Right. Yeah. Sure. But my mother was working, my father working. We also had a man living with my moth, my father's friend. He used to have a nice business, you know, selling ice and coalement [sic] and wood and all that. And he used to board with us, you know. So that helped. I guess whatever they planned the put the money together. And then finally this man came across the street. And my father was afraid that this man would follow us, you know. So one day he came with another friend, he got friend with one of tenants downstairs, which, they had a young daughter. She was my friend. We used to go to school together. And this friend of hers, of his, this man, he was a young man, you know, got to like the daugh, this girl's sister. She was an older person. And they like each other, so they got married. So this man said, "Well," he said, "You gonna be next." I says, "Who's gonna be next?" Says,

"Oh," says, "he's nice." And these were Spanish people. They're warm blooded people. He lived there.

So this man came one day, and he stood between the door. He wouldn't let me go out. I came down and just stood there. So my friend was behind me. I said, "Excuse me." He didn't hear. I said, "Excuse me." He didn't hear. I says, "Well, if you don't hear, then I'll have to push you." So I pushed him. And he fell flat face on the sidewalk. "Now," I says, "Don't tell me, or go around saying that you're gonna marry." I says, "I'll give you a kick where you don't belong." He got up. I said, "Don't you dare stop me again." They were looking, they heard noise, voices and everything. So my friend's mother, they're looking out the window, oh, Frances is, he never bothered me again. So my father made up my mind, he says, enough of this. So they went and they started looking for a house. And my father used to like make wine, you know? So they came up to a Hundred and Twenty-second Street, and they bought a brownstone house, which was nice, you know. Four stories. And we moved there. And in the meantime, I made a big mistake, that I went, my friends quit school, so I do a stupid thing. And I will regret it the rest of my life. Because I was in the eighth grade, finished.

High, you know, I wanted to, then I continued Washington Irving High School, and I would continue once a week going to school. And my father got me a job working his place. And I was so happy that you got money, you know.

LEVINE: Where was he working, then?

TORINO: Still worked this place in the water, Neptune [PH] meter works. Long Island City. And so, I got my brother a job. They worked, my brother worked there for years. He was a machinist, you know. And...

LEVINE: And what did you do there?

TORINO: I ran a machine, also. The die machine, just to make the little spindles, you know for wheels, for the. And I worked, I didn't work there too long, because I met this gentleman friend. Oh, I worked, before that I worked in San Chan Biscuit Company. I worked there two years. And this gentleman was working next door, which was the nick, what's that other chewing gum?

LEVINE: Wrigley's?

TORINO: Yeah. Wrigley's. He worked there. And on lunch time he used to go outside with the ladies, the girls together. And they, one, they took a picture. Now this gentleman, the young man met me once before, but I, I don't, I was never one to go after, because I always had a fear that my mother didn't want me to go with boys, or anyone (unintelligible). And one day, well, let's go take a picture. This girl worked with me on my floor. She took a picture with the whole group of girls, and he was in the back. I didn't know. I didn't see him. So about a week she gives me to picture. "Frances, here's the picture we took the other day. Last week, remember?" (unintelligible) I said, "Who's this guy here?" "Oh, he's just a fella." Thought nothing of it. Well, all right. So we went, my father, my mother went through my pocketbook, and she seen this picture. She says to me, "What's this?" I said, "Oh, nothing. Just a picture." I said, the girls, we went out to lunch, after lunch we went outside. And we just standing get some fresh air, because we stay in the building so many hours, you know. And I says, I don't know who this, I don't even know who he is, (unintelligible) she gave me the picture. That's it. Thought nothing of it. Oh, boy, she was raise Cain. "You know him." You this, you

that. I says, "Ma, I don't who he is, or what he had the picture for, or what do I want to throw it away for." I said, "They're my friends." The girls are my friends. Well, he had found the way to make me, this girl who works in my shop, where I, when I, she made quit the job there, and go work in the Neptune [PH] meter works to get me away.

LEVINE: Oh.

TORINO: See? And I didn't know this. I was so stupid. (unintelligible) I said, "Why do I have, that's my friend, I like the job." I said, "Why do I have to leave for?" It's better. You make more money. They give you a bonus. So whatever money you made, they'd give you five cents on a dollar. So I had to give, we got our salary, I had to give the whole envelope to my mother. I says, "Ma, I got two envelopes." I said, "One for you, one for me. This is for me. Whatever I get that bonus I'm going to keep for myself." She says, "What are you going to do with it," she said. She would give me twenty-five cents a day. Spend money. Ten cents for coffee, ten cents for cup of coffee, and maybe, maybe an ice cream. If I didn't want coffee, I could have an ice cream cone for lunch.

And that was the twenty-five cents a day. And I used to save that. I used to get a nickel and save it. I was such a, I was so thrifty. I'm still thrifty.

(she laughs) Well, so, I, I got to work there till, then what happened, one of the girls, he followed me, because I used to take the train, the same station. And he saw me get the train in the same time. And he got one of the girls where I was working to ask her to introduce me to him. So one night this girl said to me, "Frances, do you mind if I go, walk with you, go home with you?" I says, "Go home with me?" I says, you don't go. "Well," she says, "I just want to go on the train with you." I says, "You got feet to walk?"

She says, "Yeah." I says, "Well, good," I says, "Walk," I says. So I had to take off my uniform and everything, going, so we went, and she walked me. Got on the train, and that night it was raining. And so, I see this fella Compton, and I recognized him through the picture. I didn't pay no mind, you know. And she's standing with me, and he comes between the people. And he's looking at her, you know, and she said, "Hi, Helen." So he says, "Oh, hi, Bill." And we're standing there, and this is now Fifty-ninth Street, you know we're coming from Long Island, and we had to change at Fifty-ninth Street to get, this is on

the Second Avenue El. And we had to, I had to come up to a Hundred Twenty-second Street. See, that's where my father bought the house, see? I didn't meet him before. I met him when I moved there to the new house. And so I said, "Oh, hello." That's it. Didn't say nothing else, because I didn't know the fellow, you know. So, and she's playing with his tie. He put the tie inside of his jacket, and he kept taking it out, he kept going. I said, "What are you doing, Helen? That's not nice." I says, "What are you doing, there?" So he says, "That's okay," you know. And that was that. So she had to get off at Seventy-second Street. And he went, stayed on the train, because I didn't know. So I get off a Hundred Twenty-first Street was the station. He had to go to the next station which was a Hundred Twenty-fifth Street. Because he lived a Hundred Twenty-sixth Street, which I found out later. Well, and by the time the train come to the end of the line almost everybody is out.

LEVINE: Yeah.

TORINO: So I sat down, when she got out there was room for me to sit. The other way I couldn't sit down because the

train was so crowded, because, you know, supertime. And I was, I had a chance to sit down, so I sat, and I took my magazine, I always had a magazine, and I was reading. So he sat down a distance away from, and there was nobody in between us. He said, "Do you always read?" He said. I says, "Who are you? Oh." "Just want to say hello." I says, "Oh. Hello." That's it. So a Hundred Twenty-first Street came, and I got off. The very next morning he was on the street on a Hundred Twenty-fifth Street. He can see when I come out of my house which is a block away, Hundred Twenty-second. Walk up a Hundred Twenty-first Street to get the train to go down. So he came on that train. He asked the conductor if he can open the gate for me to, those days they had the train, you know, you opened the gate, the summer trains, and it didn't enable the doors close, like they have later on, you know. So he did, he opened, he let me come in, and I get inside the train, I sat down, I'm reading a magazine, and he's desperately trying to say hello to me. (she laughs) And finally time went on and on and on, every morning the same thing went on. So we went together about a year. And in between time I got myself in trouble with my mother, because I just couldn't seem to get rid of him, you know. I said,

"Mamma," I said, "You know, there's, there's a nice young man." I said, "And he wants," I said, "he wants to talk to me." "Just talk to him." I said, "No. But he's always saying to me." I said, "So how, how does he know." I said, "When I get on the train in the morning, he's there." And she made me go by subway on Lexington Avenue. I had to walk up Lexington Avenue and get the subway to take, to go down to Forty-second and then shuttle across.

LEVINE: Were you actually afraid to talk to him because you weren't supposed to?

TORINO: No, I had, had my mother's fear in me all the time. Because she always threatened me. She says, "I'll kill you. I'll kill you. I'll kill you."

LEVINE: She didn't want you to talk to any men or boys?

TORINO: No. No. Then, first she had that episode, you know, with that man that I, that I hit him. You know, I threw him, boy, he landed on his face but good. (she laughs) He was, that taught him a lesson, I'm sure. You know. But after that, see, my mother didn't even trust me after that. So that was my story, and I met

my husband a year and a half later, and got married.

LEVINE: And so that was William...

TORINO: The beginning of my romance, William, yes.

LEVINE: Torino. And...

TORINO: Right. Well, and, Torino. William N. Torino. I have a son named William, too. I named him after his father.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: We need to draw this to a close, but I, tell me the names of your children.

TORINO: Well, my oldest son was Frank Torino. Frank John. And sadly just I lost him last year, which is very hard for me and I'm trying to fight with it. My second son's named Ralph Torino, named after my

father. And then the third one, Peter, I named him after my brother. And that's the one that brought me to Ellis Island. He had a glorious (unintelligible) stay with me. It's just beautiful. He brought me there, and you know they have the ship anchored on those, when you get onto the Ellis Island, where you get the boat on the Staten Island side? There's a boat on the side...

LEVINE: Yeah.

TORINO: ...big ship? And he said...

LEVINE: Let me fix, I think this fell off. (she adjusts Mrs. Torino's microphone)

TORINO: I'm moving around too much. You lost something.

LEVINE: No. No. We got it. Okay. So you, where you get off the boat at Ellis Island, you went with your son. Let me ask you this. What was it like to see Ellis Island now.

TORINO: Oh, it felt so good. You know, in the years by, before I used to pray, I said, why can't they restore

that building, because it's so historic. I prayed. I prayed a lot. I says, why should they let that deteriorate like that. It isn't right. All the millions of people that came. They made, made this country, they made this state what it is. And why should they do that, you know. And when I heard that Iacocca was doing this, I, I felt so happy. I said to my son, "I hope that I live that I'll be able to go back, and I want to retrack my, my steps," I said, "coming here." So he said, "Want, want to come, Mom, you'll have to stay over." I said, "Of course." So I travel very freely. Since I moved here I make trips back and forth to New York to visit my children, the different ones, I would stay a week or two weeks, according to the occasion, the summertime. Some of the grandchildren, when they have a baptism or there was an engagement or graduation or something. And I always went. I always traveled by myself. I never had a fear about traveling. It didn't bother me. I enjoyed it. I went last year also. And so then, I said, my son, my son that Peter. That's the one that took me, and I spent the day with him, you know. In New York and Ellis Island. And, and...

LEVINE: And what was it like to retrack, retrace your steps?

TORINO: It was beautiful, I was beautiful. I have pictures, I hope, I put them aside there, on ferry boat going over. And I see the Statue of Liberty. I said to my son, "If I don't talk," I said, "Don't mind me. Because," I said, "I'm so embraced," I said, "in my thoughts, bringing years back to myself. To think that I was able to do this," I said, "make my wish come true." I said, "Blessed Mother what gave me enlighten." And as I came off going into the ferry, there's this big ship on the right, left hand side, anchored. I said, "Gee, it looks like the ship I came on." I says, "It probably could be," he said, you know. I says, "Well, I don't know." Because the name of the ship that I came on was Caserta. And I said, it was pretty old, I said. And they told me that was the last trip that that ship made. The captain says no more, this ship can't make anymore, he says, because their anchor broke, and they were lucky. He says it was a miracle that we got here, you know. And so, it was, it felt so good. I couldn't, we went over to Ellis Island, we walked up the stairs. I says, "Oh, dear God, thank You." I'm, I'm always praying in my mind, see. I, we went in, and my son, he says, "Mom, you're not going to walk all this." He says,

"I'm going to get a wheelchair, and I'll take you around to see everything. I says, "Fine." So he went, he had to give his license for proof, you know, because he had to borrow the wheelchair. And he brought me around, upstairs, and I wanted to see the room where my parents met me. My father and my brother met me. And we went into that room and he said, this is the, like I said, then they...

LEVINE: The hearing room. Hearing room?

TORINO: Yeah.

LEVINE: It's like where a judge would sit on the...

TORINO: Yeah. Right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TORINO: Reunion room. And so we went in there, and I says to, and this guard came with us, and they sent him up. He was talking to my son. He says, he says, "My mother came in 1916, and she wanted to come so badly," he said. And so, she wanted, she was so happy, that this is a dream come true, that I prayed that they did

remodel the building, did it over, because it's such a beautiful monument, you know. Why should people that are coming today to this generation, they don't care.

They don't realize what beauty it is to have, to live here and work. You have to work regardless what you make. It isn't how much you make, it's the way you use it, the way you spend it. If you want to work you find work. Now I, I wasn't making very much. I mean, I was making about twenty-five dollars a week. And I thought, oh, that was great, you know. And I felt that I was helping my parents, because they bought this house, and they had a mortgage on it. They had to pay. I says, "Mom," I says, "If I continue to go school," and I said, "you don't have that money." I says, "Let me help you." So I went along through life and I took up sewing, and I was always very active. And we had a, my mother had a very beautiful tenant in the building, which we became very close friends, my mother, too. And she learned to talk a little bit. And walking through the building and through the whole, you can see all these replicas, and the different things that they had. The people, the customs, the clothes that they wear, and the pots and pans that we ate on. I said, "Oh my God," I said, "Look at that." I said, I probably, there's one of

the cups, I probably had a cup of coffee out of that, I said, you know. And the bread, and they showed all these, it's beautiful. I was just so beautiful. They may be junky looking, but there's a lot of stories, a lot of tears behind those, those ornaments that you see, the clothes and all. Some of the people donated some of the paraphernalia, as you know, from the different countries.

LEVINE: Yeah.

TORINO: But I was so overjoyed. I said, "Oh, I wish they could see." And there's a picture on one of the, that you have, that you give the brochure, you know. I, there's a little girl in there, and a boy. I said, that's my, me and my brother." I says, coming from Italy. I says, I could just picture myself, you know. And I, it so happened to have in Europe, I had a little dress just like that. No, ruffled, two layers, you know. And I just enjoyed so much every little thing that went into. And they showed you how to go into the computer, how to get, you can find your name, where you're going to be and all that. And some woman says, "Gee." She says, she came, she came from Florida and another one from California, people come

in flocks, you know, they do. And I said, "Gee." I said to my son, I says, "Ask her how does she do that." He says, "Mom, don't worry. Don't worry about it." I was always so concerned. I always liked to ask for help. All they can say is no, they can say yes. If they can help you, they'll help you, if they can't, they'll say no. Fine. So he held my hand. And these people got finished with the computer, and he just, right, quick, quick, quick, he says, "Here's your name right on there." "Oh," I says, "How did you know?" Well, this is, you have to do it. I says, "Well, that's one thing," I says, "I didn't get that far." I says, "Your mother stupid." He says, "You're not stupid," he says. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Well, how did you feel when you saw your name on the wall?

TORINO: Oh, really good. It felt so good, because one side of the wall, like I stay to the left, and went out. I said, let's go check the name. And my son said, Mom, you see here, let's look on, Cacciapa, a, b, c, d. He says, "Oh, there it is. Look at it. It's the Cacciapaglia family." You know. And oh, I felt, I felt so good, you know. And then we went, walked over

and took some pictures. And I asked one of the ladies. I said to my son, I says, "I want to take a picture of you and say that you were here. You were here with me. You brought me here." He says, I says, "Ask that woman, young woman." I says, "She'll take a picture." He says, "Mom, don't ask people." I says, "Look. All you could do is ask and she's says no. Okay." So I asked her. I says, "Honey, excuse me." I says, "Do you mind taking a picture of me with my son by the wall here." She said, "Sure." I said, "And then would you take a picture of me." He says, "Sure." So they did. So I says to my son, "You see? So what's so terrible about that?" You know. So he took a pic, she took a picture of us, and we became friendly. Then we went inside. They have this beautiful cafeteria there. And my son says, "Mom, you gotta have lunch." I says, "No, Peter. I am so happy. I am so full inside of joy." I said, "I'm not hungry. I can't eat. That's impossible." I says, "Don't give me anything, because I can go a whole day like this. I don't want anything." He said, "Mom, you can't." So he ordered me a sandwich anyway. I says, "Who's going to eat this?" I says, "I can't eat it." "Well take a little bit." And so okay, so I took a, just a bite. "Are you just going to take a

bite for me?" I says, "Sure, why not?" He says. Oh, he so, so good. I have beautiful children. I'm very grateful, very grateful for all the precious gifts that God bestows on me, you know. And so, we went...

LEVINE: I don't think you finished telling me your...

TORINO: My son? My third son?

LEVINE: Yeah.

TORINO: Bill. William, William Junior.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TORINO: My, and then the last one is Robert.

LEVINE: I see.

TORINO: And he lives in New Mexico.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TORINO: Where he's got, married with, with two children, married children.

LEVINE: And how many grandchildren do you have?

TORINO: I have sixteen, fourteen grandchildren. Sixteen great grandchildren.

LEVINE: Wow. Wonderful. Well, before we close I want to just ask you. You came from Italy. You lived there for the first years of your life and then you came here and kind of started fresh again. Do you, what does that mean to you that you, that you immigrated to this country and that you spent most of your life here?

TORINO: Yeah. I feel very rewarded. I feel very happy. And because I never cared to be in Italy. I didn't like the conditions that they did in Italy, I said. When I came here I don't care how I and to strive, but we did, and that, you know. I could see the progress that remained as we came in the years, you know. And my parents, my father especially was such a wonderful, wonderful man. A honey of man, really. That my son, my oldest son was eleven years old when I lost my father. That was the saddest day of my life, because I got married so young, my son wanted to get, my husband, he didn't want to take no for an answer. He

kept asking. I says, "Please, let me be," because my, no matter which I used to go to work in the morning, it would be the Second Avenue, well he'd be there. If I would go to a Hundred Twenty-fifth Street and Lexington Avenue, take the subway he would be there. So one day I said to him, "Please, tell me. Do you work? What do you do? Are you a tramp? Everytime, no matter where I go, you're there." "Because I like you," he said. "Do you work?" He says, "Yes, I work." How come (unintelligible). "Well," he says, "I watch you." "I don't think you work." I says, "Do me a favor. Leave me alone. Five years from now, come back. When you get ten thousand dollars saved then you come to me." "Ten thousand dollars?" He says, "What are you, a millionaire?" He says, "I don't have that kind of money." I says, "Well, don't bother me then. Leave me alone." But it didn't work. He still kept meeting me. And finally one night my father said to me, we were sitting at the dinner table. He said, "Young lady, I found out that you have a boy friend." I said, "Boy friend?" Because in Italian they say "sposa." Sposa is a, what do you call it, a sweetheart, or, yeah. I don't know, sposa, I says, I'm not marrying nobody. "But why do you go with the young man?" I says, "Well, no matter where I

go, he's always there. I can't get rid of him." He says, "Do you like him?" I says, "Yeah." "Well, if you like him, you tell him I want to see him here. I don't want no outside. I want him to come to the house." I says, "You want him now. Go outside across the street, and you'll see him. He's right on the corner. He's afraid you're gonna beat me up." He, don't you know, he got up from the table, he went to the front door, and there he was standing there across the street. Because he saw me walking with him on the subway at a Hundred Twenty-fifth Street, and I look around. I says, "Oh, my God." I says, "Don't look now. Keep walking. My father's across the street." I says, "God help me. If you see me tomorrow, if you see me tomorrow morning going to work, you'll be lucky." He was worried. So my father went to the door, and so he came back. I said, "Did you, is he there?" He didn't answer. Didn't answer. He said, "Well, when I see him tonight I'll tell him that you want to see him." I said, "What night do you want to see him? He'll even come tomorrow night." No, no, no. My mother said no. She said tell him to come maybe Thursday when I make macaroni. "Oh, do you want to make macaroni?" I says, "Wow." You don't even know him, you gonna make him, maybe you don't like

pasta. She says, "He'll like my macaroni." So sure enough the next morning I come out, he was up on the Second Avenue El. He said to me, he says, "You okay?" I says, "I'm fine." He says, "Did your father hit you?" I says, "Do you see any black eyes?" You see I learned the language quickly, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

TORINO: And so, I says, so one day I says, "What do you want of me. I wasn't born here. I'm not an American like you." He says, "That doesn't, that doesn't bother me." He says, "My mother wants to meet you. My mother said you are the girl that he wants, she wants me to go with." And the mother was Italian, the father was a Sicilian. When I told, those days the Sicilian all belonged to the Mafia and all that stuff. So my mother said, my father says, and my mother said, "No, no. No way, no way, no way." "Ma, he's an American. He doesn't know where Sicily is. He doesn't know his relatives. He doesn't care. His parents are here. He was born here. He's got five bro, he's got brothers and sisters, and they were born here." And he was the youngest of five children. (unintelligible) He says, go with me. So his mother

must be a good woman. "No, no, no," she said. Oh, my mother got more hostile and more hostile. Didn't what to do with her. So when he came to the house, sure enough, I tell him my father wants to me you. He says, "Oh, good. Can I come tonight?" I says, "No. My mother said Thursday." "Okay," he said. He was supposed to come Thursday, and the very next night, about an hour, less than an hour later we were sitting at the table, and the doorbell rang. So my father goes to the door. My fa, my husband said, "Hello, Pop. How are you?" And that tickled my hus, my father. He took such a liking to him. He was a tall, handsome man. Really was. And he said, come on in. And my mother had bought a big, she used to buy, she used to buy a large, you know, bananas, big bunch of bananas. And he had some food with us, you know. Then we sat around and we were talking at the table, and my mother had bought coffee grinder, you know. She said, "Do you want a cup of coffee?" Oh, yeah, he loves coffee. I never drank coffee till I met him, and now I like coffee. (she laughs) And so, she made a cup of coffee, and my mother said, "Would you like some fruit?" So they had a banana. Next thing I knew he had about three or four of them. I says, oh my God, I says. My mother said, after he left she says,

"Doesn't eat. Thought he was going to eat the whole bunch of bananas." I says, "Why did you put them there for? That's what they were there for. You didn't put them down so he wouldn't eat them." And then the friendship went on stronger and stronger. And, into, this was the spring, the Easter. And after Easter morning, he said, "I want you to meet my father." So we went to church, I like to go, I leave here about eight-thirty, my mother likes to go nine o'clock mass. As I walking my mother, he says, "Well, I'll be on the corner with my father." So I walked with my mother, and I tell my mother he wears glasses, and my mother hated glasses. Oh, my God, she said, we got to the corner of First Avenue and Nineteenth Street. That's where, a Hundred and Nineteenth Street, because that's where our church was, Holy Rosary. And he said, I said, there's, across the street, the tall gentleman is, is Bill. I call him Willy. Willy is Welsh name. He said, "Willy, everybody called me Willy." He said, "My friends call me Bill." So, and his father was standing along side of him. This is interesting. They come up to, I said to him, I says, "Bill, this is my mother." So he says, "Oh," he says, "Signora." My husband didn't know a word of Italian. His mother understood

everything, but (unintelligible), and she understood English. But he couldn't, couldn't get the Italian language. He said this is my father, Frank Torino. So my mother said, "Huh. What a beautiful specimen. You gotta have four eyes to see? You can't see?" I thought that was terrible. So I said, "I don't have a son to marry," the father said. He said, "I don't know what this is all about, but I don't have a son to marry." My mother said, "You don't have a son to marry? I don't have a daughter to marry. Good-bye."

She went like this and she walked away. (she gestures) And it was a wrong foot, footing to start.

They never, they never liked each other. My father-in-law and my mother, they just didn't. He was, he was really a very hostile man, like my mother. That's why they used to clash. She wouldn't give in, you know. But my father was, oh, such a, a kind man. Beautiful.

LEVINE: So then, when did you get married?

TORINO: Well, then, we went together. My father said, well, for Easter, we went together another, almost a year, year and a half. And for Thanksgiving, he took me to meet his family, his mother and the rest of the

family. And the one day, and my mother says, my mother came with me, you know. She said, "Now, don't you bother anybody up there. (unintelligible) Who was Willy's girl friend?" I said, so I come in, I, I felt so small, you know. I'm not very tall. I was, I was about almost five, I was five feet, but I'm not five feet now. And they said, go right to the mother, my mother was pushing me to see where her, his mother was, I should greet her. And she wasn't well, and I didn't know it. And now she was just sitting down, and I understand that she had, I found out later that she had had a stroke, and I didn't know, see. And so I stayed with her, and I talked to her, Italian, you know. And the rest of the family, and I met his sisters, and they were so nice. They just embraced me, they were so happy. And the sister-in-laws, one of them was nice, the other one was envious, you know, because, I (unintelligible), well, you have a house, you know, your father has a house, and you got money, which we didn't have. We just was working people, you know. And anyways, so life went on that way. Then my father says, "Well, I don't like no loose strings hanging around. Let's tie the knot and get it over with." So on, the following, that was, that was Thanksgiving. March, March, February 28, 1924, March

28, 1925 we were engaged. We had a big party in my house. Big, big party. And all the people in the little brownstone house, and people were outside, (unintelligible) it didn't seem that way. The heat was on, everybody, the whole, friends, my friends and all. And then March 7th we got married in City Hall, because the Italian religion, you have to get married in City Hall and then you go to church. And you don't live together till you're marr, the blessing. Well, so that's what happened. So we had to go to City Hall together. His father, because he wasn't twenty-one. He was going to be twenty-one in September 25th. And I was going to be eighteen, seventeen in August the 4th. So the judge, he said, "Do you want to marry, do you want to marry this boy?" I said, "Yes." And he says, said to my father, he says, "Do you give permission to marry?" My father says, "Yes, I do." And his father said, went to him, he said, "Yes." He said, "Do you love this girl?" He said, "Yes, I do." And his father said, "Well, he wants to marry her," he...

LEVINE: Hmm?

TORINO: I remember those words so clear. He said, "Yes." He

said, "Well, he's not even twenty-one yet. He's not a man yet," he said. Well, he's gonna be. When are planning to get married. We didn't set the date yet.

But June 21st we got married, 1925. And it was a big, royal wedding. It was beautiful. Really. I got to show my picture, my wedding picture, and, it was really, it was a beautiful relationship. And it was hard. Life was very, very hard, because I worked for, I worked for six months after I was married, because I became pregnant. And my father-in-law used to come to the house. After three weeks he came. "Well, what's doing? Well, what's doing?" I said, "Why does your father say that all the time he come, what's doing?" He says, "Oh, nothing. Don't mind my father." He would come and look around and see. And then, I said, "I don't know. I don't understand him," I said. But he wanted to know if I was pregnant, if I was any good or not, you know. And I, I was so innocent, I was innocent, because I didn't understand people like that. I was brought in such a beautiful family with such love and respect, you know. And, and he was like that. Well, I said, "I don't know. Next time he comes and you're to home, I'm not going to let him in." He was like to come when, when my husband wasn't home. So I told my neighbor upstairs, the one we became very

close friends. She made my wedding gown, and all, assisted my wedding and everything. She was a beautiful friend. And I'm still friends with her grandchildren. It's a family affair. They call it the other side of the Torino family. And they are Jewish. Goldberg. Beautiful people. And so, I said, that's the day we got married. And when I went to get my citizenship papers, they said to me, if you would say that you, you made a set up house March 7th, you don't have these citizen papers. I says, no, I want to do it on my own. I says, I didn't live with my husband, I says, until we got married in June 21st, as, that's when I lived with my husband. And they said, they gave me a lot of credit. I said whatever I want to do, I want to do on my own. And then later on in the years, and I was fifty-six years old I got my license, the driver's license. And again, I wanted to do it on my own. My husband taught me to, I went to school, and then my husband taught me driving, and even (unintelligible) my children took me out driving. And I learned. And my husband got taken sick. And I used to bring, drive all over all Westchester county. To go Staten Island to see one of my sons, Peter. Because he lived, and he got married, and he moved to Staten Island with, his girlfriend was from Staten

Island. And then one of my sons lived out on the island, then another one lived in Whitestone, Ralph. And Pete lived in New Mexico. He moved to New Mexico, because his wife had asthma, and they told him, they said the climate would be good for her, and they moved there in 1972. And I, so I used to take my husband driving around. And I took up baby-sitting for people, you know, take care of for children, to make the money work, because it, he had to leave, he worked for the New York Central Railroad, Con Edison. He worked on a, then he worked for New York State, then he worked for American Express. He was never out of work. And then, but the last job he had was for the train, you know, the...

LEVINE: Transit Authority?

TORINO: Hmm?

LEVINE: The Transit Authority?

TORINO: Yeah. But it wasn't Transit, but that was the Park Avenue trains. Goes out of state, out of, out of town.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TORINO: He worked for them fifteen years. He was an air conditioning man. And then when my sons, my oldest son came out of the navy, my sons all served in the armed forces. My oldest son was the navy air corps during the war. Then Ralph, he was in the Berlin air lift. Then the third one was in the army also, Pete. And Bill was in the navy four years. And then my youngest son, Bob, was in the, in the, the army, also. So I'm a very devoted, when my son came to see me one day, this one time. He says, "Mom," he says, "You know, you have a, you run a very patriotic home." Because I had the American flag, and, and I said, "Well, why not?" I says, "I'm very proud," I says, "to be an American." People should be very proud. And I'm proud to have such beautiful children that I have, that are willing, you know life for their country. And when I went to Europe 1959, my chil, my cousins wanted me to come back. They said, "Frances, now that you're free, you could come back and stay here." I says, "Never." I says, my blood, I shed my blood in, in, in America, and that's where I belong, with my children.

LEVINE: Well, I think that's a perfect place to stop. And I want to thank you very much. You're most interesting.

TORINO: Thank you.

LEVINE: Lots of stories. (Mrs. Torino laughs) Thank you very much. This is Janet Levine, and I've been talking with Maria Torino in her home in Pinellas Park, in Florida, and it's April 17th, 1993, and I'm signing off.