

EI-320

AMELIA PRETE DE CICCO

BIRTH DATE: APRIL 4, 1901

INTERVIEW DATE: 5/20/1993

RUNNING TIME: 56:03

INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

RECORDING ENGINEER: PETER HOM

INTERVIEW LOCATION: ELLIS ISLAND RECORDING STUDIO

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 6/1994

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 7/1994

ITALY, 1924

BORN: CALABRIA, LAURIGNIANO, ITALY

AGE AT IMMIGRATION: 23

PASSAGE ON: DUILIO

PORT OF EMBARKATION: NAPLES

RESIDENCES: LAURIGNIANO, LITTLE ITALY

US: NEW YORK CITY

SIGRIST: Good morning. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday, May 20, 1993. I'm at the Ellis Island Recording Studio with Amelia De Cicco.

DE CICCO: De Cicco, that's right.

SIGRIST: Who came from Italy in 1924.

DE CICCO: That's right.

SIGRIST: When she was either twenty-three or twenty-four, well . . .

DE CICCO: That's right.

SIGRIST: We'll figure that out. Anyway, good morning, Mrs. De Cicco.

DE CICCO: Good morning.

SIGRIST: I hear you had quite a ride getting here. (he laughs)

DE CICCO: It's all right, that's all right.

SIGRIST: Let me begin by asking you your birth date, please. When were you born?

DE CICCO: When I was born?

SIGRIST: Yes.

DE CICCO: 1901.

SIGRIST: And what month . . .

DE CICCO: April 4th.

SIGRIST: And where were you born?

DE CICCO: In Italy.

SIGRIST: Where in Italy?

DE CICCO: Calabria.

SIGRIST: Is that the province, or is that the . . .

DE CICCO: That's right, Calabria.

SIGRIST: Then what town were you born in in Calabria?

DE CICCO: My town, where I lived, they call it Laurignano.

SIGRIST: Do you know how to spell that? No?

DE CICCO: Yeah. Laurignano.

SIGRIST: Laurignano. Well . . .

DE CICCO: And the city, they call it Cozensa.

SIGRIST: Cozensa.

DE CICCO: Cozensa. The city, it's Cozensa. But the town, they call Laurignano.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what the town looked like when you were growing up?

DE CICCO: Oh, yeah. It was like an, it was country. It was in the town, in the mountain. That's how we was, yeah. It's when you go in the country, you know, when you go in the country you see the house in the country and everything. That's how it is, my town.

SIGRIST: So it was kind of spread out.

DE CICCO: Spread out, yeah. It was spread out, yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me the house that you lived in?

DE CICCO: Oh, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: What did it look like?

DE CICCO: Oh, the house where we lived was very nice. It was a very nice house, yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what it looked like?

DE CICCO: It looked like a ranch house.

SIGRIST: Kind of low?

DE CICCO: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: What was the house made out of?

DE CICCO: What the house was made out of?

SIGRIST: What did they make the houses out of?

DE CICCO: They make the house in stone and bricks. Yeah.

SIGRIST: So a stone house.

DE CICCO: Yeah, a stone house.

SIGRIST: How many rooms did you have?

DE CICCO: Two rooms.

SIGRIST: And what kind of a . . .

DE CICCO: A big room and a kitchen. That's all.

SIGRIST: Is that where everyone slept, in the big room?

DE CICCO: Sure.

SIGRIST: What kind of a roof did you have on the house?

DE CICCO: What kind of what?

SIGRIST: A roof, the roof. What kind of a roof did you have?

DE CICCO: A roof? Uh, well, I don't know what they call over here,
but over there they call it geramille.

SIGRIST: And what is it?

DE CICCO: Covered. It was covered, like a, they'd make some kind
of sand. They cover the house. I see sometimes in the
television over here. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you have a lot of land around your house?

DE CICCO: No, no. Not much. No.

SIGRIST: Did you have a garden with your house?

DE CICCO: No, no. No garden.

SIGRIST: Can you describe how you cooked in this house? Can you describe the kitchen?

DE CICCO: We used to cook inside. We used to cook in the house. We had like a fireplace in the house. That's where we used to cook, and we used to stay in the winter, you know, when it's cold. We used to have the chair, everybody, my mother, my father, my brother, me, my grandmother, and we would stay near the fireplace.

SIGRIST: So it gets cold in this part of Italy.

DE CICCO: Sure.

SIGRIST: Did you get . . .

DE CICCO: And you go in the other room, it was cold. But in the kitchen it was nice and warm.

SIGRIST: So that's where everybody . . .

DE CICCO: That's where everybody would stay, yeah.

SIGRIST: You said your mother, your father . . .

DE CICCO: My mother, my father, my brother and my grandmother and me.

SIGRIST: Whose mother was your grandmother?

DE CICCO: My mother.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about your grandmother when you think about her?

DE CICCO: Oh, she was nice, yeah. She was very nice. She used to love me a lot. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things did she do for you?

DE CICCO: I sleep with my grandmother, until I get married, yeah.

SIGRIST: What did she look like?

DE CICCO: Well, she's, ah, she looked nice. She was a good woman, very nice, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember a story about your grandmother, something that sticks out in your mind when you think back to your grandmother?

DE CICCO: Oh, yes. A lot of things I remember, my grandmother.

My grandmother, she'd teach me to make the homemade macaroni. My grandmother, she'd teach me to make the socks. We used to make the socks by hands. She used to teach me, yeah. She used to teach me how you hold the needle and when you sew, everything.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me how your grandmother used to make homemade macaroni?

DE CICCÒ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How, tell me how she did that?

DE CICCÒ: (she laughs) I'm going to try myself to make over here some day. She used to take the flour, put it in a big dish. She put the flour in a big dish, and then she put a couple eggs. And then she mixed, you know, she mixed the dough. She made it stay for a little while, about ten, fifteen minutes. And then she stretch. She stretch with a, how they call over here? A big stick, like that, (she gestures) my mother, she used to stretch the macaroni. And then she used to roll it like that, then with a knife she used to cut it this way.

SIGRIST: And how would she cook it?

DE CICCÒ: She cook, like we cook over here.

SIGRIST: It would be boiled? You would boil the macaroni?

DE CICCO: Boil, sure. She used to boil it. She used to put it in the pot. When the water boils, she used to put macaroni in, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you eat a lot of pasta in those days?

DE CICCO: Oh, yeah, sure.

SIGRIST: What else, what other kinds of foods did you eat?

DE CICCO: Pasta, bread, you know. Cheese, we used to have, salami. A lot of legume, legume, like beans and everything like that. That's what we, that's what we raised over there. That's not like over here. Over here they got, we got everything. But over there that's how we live, pasta, bread, potatoes, legumes, rice.

SIGRIST: Did you make your own cheese?

DE CICCO: No, no. We used to buy it. My father used to buy the cheese.

SIGRIST: Where would you go to buy the cheese?

DE CICCO: They used to go to the, to the town, Cozensa, they had the store over there, the grocery store, and he used to

buy. He used to buy meat, my father. He used to go Sunday morning and used to go to the town. They used to buy the meat, and my mother, she used to make some gravy.

Always something, you know, during the week. During the week we'd make pasta, potatoes.

SIGRIST: Hearty food.

DE CICCO: That's right!

SIGRIST: Tell me, I want to talk a little more about your grandmother, because she was very important to you growing up, wasn't she? She taught you a lot of things.

DE CICCO: Oh, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: You said that she taught you how to make socks.

DE CICCO: That's right.

SIGRIST: How? How did you make socks?

DE CICCO: With the tool they got over here, too, you know, when you make the crochet.

SIGRIST: A knitting needle, or . . .

DE CICCO: Yeah, yeah. She used to teach me, yeah.

SIGRIST: Where did you get the wool?

DE CICCO: She used to get it in the city when she used to go in the city, yeah.

SIGRIST: But you didn't have animals yourself, or did you have animals?

DE CICCO: No.

SIGRIST: What was your dad's name?

DE CICCO: My daddy's name? Carmine.

SIGRIST: Carmine.

DE CICCO: In Italian they call it Carmino.

SIGRIST: Carmino.

DE CICCO: Carmino. In English they call it Carmine.

SIGRIST: What did your dad do for a living?

DE CICCO: He was, how they say? When they make a house.

SIGRIST: Like a construction worker?

DE CICCO: Construction, that's right. Construction worker. My mother, she used to do nothing. She would stay home.

She would stay home all the time, Mom.

SIGRIST: What was her name?

DE CICCO: Rosaria.

SIGRIST: And what was her maiden name?

DE CICCO: Her maiden name? (she pauses) Before she get married,
she was named Grisolia.

SIGRIST: Grisolia.

DE CICCO: A funny name, Grisolia. But after she get married to
Papa, she was the name Prete, Prete. Rosaria Prete.

SIGRIST: Is that your maiden name?

DE CICCO: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

DE CICCO: Before I get married.

SIGRIST: Before you got married.

DE CICCO: I was Amelia Prete.

SIGRIST: And how do you spell Prete?

DE CICCO: I don't know. I don't know how to spell Prete.

SIGRIST: Well, actually, I probably have it right here. (he looks through his papers) Let's see. P-R-E-T-E. Prete.

DE CICCO: Prete. That's right.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what your dad looked like for me?

DE CICCO: Who?

SIGRIST: Your father. What did your father look like?

DE CICCO: My father? My father, what he looked like? I don't know. I can't, he was a little taller than my son, and he was on the husky side, too. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was his personality like?

DE CICCO: It was good, he was a good father.

SIGRIST: Was he strict?

DE CICCO: He was a little strict with me, especially with me.

SIGRIST: What did you do that he would be strict about?

DE CICCO: Because he was afraid. Because me, I used to work. I used to work in the farm. I used to work in the country a lot, you know. And he was afraid, my father. Maybe I fall in love with somebody or something. Oh, he was

a little strict with me, yeah.

SIGRIST: How would, if your father got mad at you how would he punish you?

DE CICCIO: How he punished me, my father?

SIGRIST: Yes, if your father got mad at you how would he punish you?

DE CICCIO: Oh, he would punish me. He didn't want me to go to church on Sunday morning. I have to go to church in the town. He no want me to go in the big church. In the town they had a small church. And all of the old ladies, they used to go over there. I want to go to the big church where all my friends, they used to go, and all the younger people. My father, he don't want me to go. I used to go with my mother to church. Yeah. And he, he was a little strict with me. He was a little tough.

SIGRIST: Was your father around a lot, or was he off working a lot?

DE CICCIO: He was working a lot, he was working.

SIGRIST: Did he come home every night?

DE CICCIO: Oh, yes, yeah. He come home every night, my father.

Yeah. He come home every night. He was a good father, but he was a little strict with me.

SIGRIST: Is there another story that you remember . . .

DE CICCO: When I come over here, he don't want me, he don't want my husband to take me over here. He says, "Why you got to take her with you?" So my husband, he says, "I get married," he says, "and she got to come with me. I'm not going to leave her over here." So, but he don't like the idea, you know.

SIGRIST: Well, you were his, you were his little girl, I guess.

DE CICCO: Sure.

SIGRIST: And you said you had a brother.

DE CICCO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was your brother's name?

DE CICCO: Two brothers.

SIGRIST: Two brothers.

DE CICCO: Paul and Peter.

SIGRIST: Paul and Peter.

DE CICCO: They died, the two of them.

SIGRIST: And tell me a little bit about your brothers. What do you remember about your brothers when you were growing up?

DE CICCO: I don't remember much, because when I come over here they were smaller, they were ten to twelve years old, you know.

SIGRIST: So there was a big difference in your ages.

DE CICCO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Are you the oldest?

DE CICCO: I'm the oldest one.

SIGRIST: You're the oldest.

DE CICCO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you know how your parents met?

DE CICCO: My parents what?

SIGRIST: Do you know how your parents met?

DE CICCO: I don't know.

SIGRIST: You don't know.

DE CICCO: I don't know how they met.

SIGRIST: Did your mother ever tell you a story about your birth, about when she had you as a baby?

DE CICCO: No.

SIGRIST: Nothing like that.

DE CICCO: No, no. She never told me, no.

SIGRIST: We started talking about church. Were you a religious family?

DE CICCO: Yes.

SIGRIST: Catholics?

DE CICCO: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me about how you practiced your religion at home? How would you, how would you observe your religion at home?

DE CICCO: I used to go to church, you know. I used to go to Mass. And then, in the night, with my grandmother, we used to say the rosary every night. And my grandmother, she

teach me a lot, you know, the prayers and everything.

She teach me how to make all the rosary and all,
everything.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of the prayers in Italian?

DE CICCO: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Could you say a prayer for us in Italian on tape, just
a little prayer?

DE CICCO: Nah.

SIGRIST: No?

DE CICCO: I can't.

SIGRIST: No.

DE CICCO: I read a lot in the book. I got the book. I told you,
I don't know how to write and read.

SIGRIST: Do you know maybe the Lord's Prayer in Italian?

DE CICCO: I know just a little bit. That's all, because my father,
he don't want me to go to school. There was the teacher
in the town, but my father, he don't want me to go to
school. He was the teacher in the town, but my father,
he don't want me to go to school. He said because I was

a woman I don't needed to be writing and reading. The boys, yeah. He used to push the boys to go to school, but not me.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about that?

DE CICCO: I feel bad, I feel bad. Yeah. Then when I started to get big, you know, I told my mother that I like to know how to read and write. I says, "But Papa, he don't want me to go to school." I says, "What you want me to do?" And she says, "He don't want you to go to school." So what I used to do, when I go to work, I used to take the book with me in my pocket. And then I ask my friend, you know, like, "Do you know how to read?" The other one, she know how to read, and I used to say, "How do you say this? How do you say that?" I could read more than I write, that's all.

SIGRIST: So you did learn a little bit?

DE CICCO: I learned a little bit, sure.

SIGRIST: Could your mother read and write?

DE CICCO: No. Not my mother, not my father. No.

SIGRIST: What about your grandmother?

DE CICCO: My grandmother, no. They don't know.

SIGRIST: So this was, this was accepted in this town. A lot of people weren't educated.

DE CICCO: And I used to, I used to sleep with my grandmother, and I used to take the book in my pocket, and I used to go upstairs over my aunt. She know how to write and read. And she used to teach me a little bit. Yeah. Because I like very much to read, you know, write and all. And she says, "Come and see me." She says, "I'll learn you, I'll teach you." And after she teach me a little bit. That's why I know how to read. I take the book. I got a lot of Catholic book, and I read my prayer in the morning and at night. All the time when I feel like it.

SIGRIST: Did your father ever find out that you could read a little bit?

DE CICCO: No.

SIGRIST: No. You kept that from him.

DE CICCO: He never find out. He never find out.

SIGRIST: How old were you when you went to work in the fields?

DE CICCO: Twelve.

SIGRIST: And what kind of work were you doing in the fields? What kind of work?

DE CICCO: We used to pick olives, grape. We used to do a lot of work, what they do in the farm. That's what I used to do.

SIGRIST: Did a lot of young ladies do that?

DE CICCO: Sure, sure.

SIGRIST: Did you get paid for this work?

DE CICCO: Yeah. We used to get paid.

SIGRIST: Did you have to, did you keep your money, or did you have to turn it over to your . . .

DE CICCO: No, no. I give it to my mother. (she laughs) And my mother, I don't keep the money myself. What I used to make, I used to give it to my mother and my father. That's all. But we don't make much. We didn't used to make much. But I used to work. I went to work, I was twelve years old. And I (?).

SIGRIST: How often would you have to go to work?

DE CICCO: Every day we used to go to work.

SIGRIST: The fields were nearby?

DE CICCO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Whose fields were they? Who owned those fields?

DE CICCO: Ah, there was a lot of people there on the fields. A lot of people, yeah. That's all.

SIGRIST: Do you, did you used to take your lunch with you to the fields?

DE CICCO: Yes, I used to take my lunch.

SIGRIST: What would you take for lunch?

DE CICCO: Bread. (she laughs) I used to take bread, and sometimes my mother, she used to give me two cents, and she used to say, "You buy a bunch," you know the scallions they sell over here? They got over there, too. She said, "You buy bunches." She say, "You eat it with the bread." And my grandma, she used to say, "All right, take the money, and you buy the onions." She says (she whispers), "I got a little piece of cheese for you, I give it to you." Yeah, it was really bad, very bad, very bad.

SIGRIST: And your mother doesn't work, right? She stays home all

day.

DE CICCO: No, my mother, she was home all the time. She never worked. She used to take care of the house and she used to cook and wash.

SIGRIST: How did your mother do the wash in those days? How would you wash clothes?

DE CICCO: We used to go in the fields and wash the clothes, and sometimes she used to wash at home. She had a big bucket, you know, with a washboard. She used to wash home, when it was, just a little bit clothes. And when she had a lot, she used to go in the fields, me and my mother, my grandmother. We used to go wash. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What kind of clothes did you wear in Italy in those days?

DE CICCO: What kind of . . .

SIGRIST: Yeah, what did you dress in?

DE CICCO: A dress. A blouse, a skirt, a dress, like that. That's all.

SIGRIST: Were they long, short?

DE CICCO: They, they used to sell them, like, over here. Sometimes

they use a long, sometimes it was short.

SIGRIST: And how about your hair? How did you wear your hair?

DE CICCO: My hair was long. My hair was long. I cut my hair when I come over here.

SIGRIST: That was the fashion in 1924, sure.

DE CICCO: Yeah, I had a lot of hair when I was young.

SIGRIST: How would you wash your hair in Italy? How would you wash your hair?

DE CICCO: We used to put the water in a bucket, a bit bucket, and we used to wash our hair.

SIGRIST: Can you talk to me, can you remember an instance where someone in the family was sick, someone was ill in your family. Do you remember anything like that?

DE CICCO: No, no, no, thank God.

SIGRIST: Did you have doctors in the town?

DE CICCO: No. There was a different town with a doctor. When we needed a doctor we got to go in another town.

SIGRIST: Was there ever an instance where you needed a doctor?

DE CICCO: When they needed a doctor, I told you. They used to go in another town, and they bring the doctor home.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when your brothers were born?

DE CICCO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me what you remember about that?

DE CICCO: I remember that there was, over there they used a midwife, a midwife. And somebody, the midwife, she was living in another town. They used to go and pick her up and bring her over there. Of course, Mama, she had the baby. And me, I was staying with some lady next door. They don't make me stay there. Yeah, Mama, she get the baby.

SIGRIST: Were they trying to protect you from that?

DE CICCO: Oh, sure.

SIGRIST: They didn't want you to be around during that?

DE CICCO: Sure, sure.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, how did you feel when your brother was born? Was that exciting for you?

DE CICCO: Oh, I was so excited, yeah. I was excited. When they called me, they says, "Come on, come on." She says, "You

can come in now. Mama, she got the baby. She got a little boy." So then I went in and I see my mother in the bed, you know, with the little boy on the side. And I started to cry, you know. I was happy.

SIGRIST: How old were you when your first brother was born?

DE CICCO: I don't know how old I was when my brother was born. I was about, about ten.

SIGRIST: Did you get to help her take care of him?

DE CICCO: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: What was your favorite thing to do with your brother?
What was the thing you liked most about taking care of your brother?

DE CICCO: Uh, I used to, because I used to take him in the arm. I used to hold him myself, but my mother, she used to change him and everything. She didn't want me to change him. She used to do everything. When he was clean and nice she used to give him to me. She says, "Here. You hold your brother now, and be careful, don't drop."

SIGRIST: At least you didn't have to do the dirty work, you know.
(he laughs) Your mother did that.

DE CICCO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What did you do for fun in this town growing up? What was there to do for entertainment?

DE CICCO: Nothing, nothing. They had some entertainers some time, but my father, he no want me to go.

SIGRIST: Your father wanted you under lock and key.

DE CICCO: Sometimes they used to get together someplace, you know. And a young boy, a young girl, you know. And she'd say, "Come on, come on, we'll go over there." And I used to tell my father, I used to tell my mother, "Mama, I told Papa if he sent me over there." Mama says, "Are you kidding?" She says, "He don't make you go." So I said, "You ask anyway, ask." So Mama, she asked. He says, "Oh, no. What are you going to do over there?" You know, he was a little tough. "What are you going to do over there?" "Well, they're all together, you know." "No, no." He don't make me go. Then my grandmother one time she says, "Oh," she says, "I got to say something." She said, "She's good to go to work," she says, "here and there, and she's no good to go over there just for a little while to enjoy herself." He say, "You mind your business. She's my daughter."

SIGRIST: How did your father get along with your grandmother?

DE CICCO: She used to get along good.

SIGRIST: They got along.

DE CICCO: Oh, yeah. They used to get along very good. Even the ones that started to eat before my grandmother come, because we were eating together. But my grandma, she used to live alone. But she says, "And Mama, when she come, Mama, when she come." She says, "We're going to eat." And Mama, she used to say, "Go ahead and eat." "No, no. Mama got to come first." She used to like Mama.

SIGRIST: Tell me, your father's very strict. How did you meet your husband-to-be? (they laugh) You were never let out of the house. How did you meet the man you met?

DE CICCO: My husband, he was here seven years before. And then he come over the other side.

SIGRIST: He was born in Italy?

DE CICCO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And then he was in America for seven years.

DE CICCO: That's right. We was almost grow up together.

SIGRIST: Oh, you knew him when you were a kid.

DE CICCO: I know him, yeah. So, and then he come over here when he was nineteen, my father, (correcting herself) my husband. So, and then after seventy years he come over the other side again. And he know me, he know my mother, my father, and everybody. So, and he ask his mother.

So he says, "Mama, where Rosaria live?" She says, "She move from here." Mama, she says, "Yes, she moved." She says, "She live on Cozensa, in the city." "Oh," he says, "yeah? I like to see her." So one day they pass by.

He went to the city shopping with his mother. So they stop at my house. So, and I see my mother, I see this man and a woman come. I call my mother. I says, "Mama, somebody come." I said, "I don't know who it is." So Mama, she looked to the window, she says, "Oh, yeah, yeah.

That's Regenza." Her name was Regenza. She says, "This man, with the . . ." She says, "Oh, I bet you it's her son, he come from America." Anyway, they come, and come in. "Hello, how are you?" this and that. You know.

"Gee," he says, "you get big." He look at me, he says, "Gee," he says, "you get big. I thought maybe you was married." I says, "No." I says, "I'm still here." That's

all, yeah. Then he went home with the mother. "Goodbye, goodbye." And he went home. Then he see my father, my father, he went to the town, because they used to play boccia, and they used to go in the saloon and drink, and he used to meet his friends. So, and he see my husband.

He says, "Oh, how are you?" This and that. So he says, "I see your daughter." He says, "She get big." He says, "I thought she was married." So he says, "No." My father says, "No." So then he talked to somebody, my husband, and he says, "You better tell Carmino," he says, "I'm going to go for the daughter." He says, "I like her.

She's very nice." So when he come I thought maybe he come just to see my mother, just to see us, you know.

So, and then he talked to my mother. And my mother says, "Well, I don't know." Over there, years ago, I got to tell you the truth, the parents, they marry you, okay.

It's not like over here. So my mother, she says, "Well, I don't know." She says, "I got to ask my husband. So, and then we going to ask her, see what she says." Then somebody asked, asked my father. So my father, he ask me. I says, "No." So he says, "No? Why?" I said, "I don't know." I says, "He no come over here to marry me."

I says, "He come over here to marry so-and-so." He come over to marry somebody else. They told him to go for

this woman. But my husband, he says, "I'm here now. I marry who I want. I'm not going to marry no cousin." They pushed some cousin. So anyway, and my father, he says, "Why?" He says, "Well, you say no?" I said, "Yeah." "And I don't want nobody pass by from over here the front door." He says, "If you don't marry him," he says, "forget about it." He says, "Make believe there's no man for you." All right?

SIGRIST: It's a horrible thing to say!

DE CICCO: I was crying. I feel bad. So then my grandmother, she says, "No, Amelia." She says, "Say yes." She says, "He's a nice man. He's a nice fellow." And she says, "We know how he is. We know the family and all." So I says, "Well, I don't know." I tell you, my husband, he's calm, you know, he was working, because he want to come back here again. So then he used to come all the time, you know. I see him. I think he's got something on his mind. Then he ask me. I says, "But you come to marry so-and-so." You know, I told the name. He says, "Oh, no." He says, "I'm here now. I marry who I want to get married." So that's why I say yes. That's all.

SIGRIST: So you didn't, didn't really want to get married,

initially, at all, right? You really didn't want to marry him.

DE CICCO: Yeah. Because my grandmother, she says, "If you say no," she says, "your father is not going to make you get married. Because, you know, he don't like nobody. See what he says, he don't want nobody passing by the front door." So she says, "Why you got to stay like that?" She says, "You a nice girl." She says, "You could get married like everybody else."

SIGRIST: Did he ever bring you any presents before you got married?

DE CICCO: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what he brought you?

DE CICCO: The first thing he come with an engagement ring. Yeah, not even a month we go together. Then he used to come every day, and my father, he don't like the idea, because he used to come too much. He told my mother, he says, "Why you got to come over here every day?" And he says, "Why you got to come over here?" So Mama says, "Carmino," she says, "they get engaged." She says, "They're going to get married soon." She says, "Why you, you can't stop him to come over here." So, and I told Mama, I says,

"If you stop him to come over here now," I says, "you better forget about it. Here, the ring, give it back."

He was bad. It was tough for me when I was younger.

SIGRIST: He was a tough man, yeah. So how long, when did you get married? Do you remember the year you got married?

DE CICCO: Hmm . . .

SIGRIST: What year it was?

DE CICCO: 1924.

SIGRIST: You got married in '24.

DE CICCO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And . . .

DE CICCO: In '24 I get married, and '24 I come over here.

SIGRIST: Oh, the same year. And this all happened very quickly.

DE CICCO: We stay a couple of months after we get married.

SIGRIST: Can you, can you describe your wedding for me a little bit? What do you remember about your wedding?

DE CICCO: Oh, I remember my wedding. My husband, he wanted me to wear a veil and the white dress and everything, you know. So my father, he don't want it. He says, "Why? Why? You don't need it, why?" So I says, "Well, it's different." And I get married with a velvet dress, a green velvet dress I had, I remember. A green velvet dress.

SIGRIST: Did you make that dress? Did you make that dress?

DE CICCO: No, somebody make for me, yeah. It was nice but, you know, it was like . . .

SIGRIST: Where was the wedding? Where was it?

DE CICCO: In the house. We no have no hall. In the house it was, so.

SIGRIST: Can you remember how your grandmother felt at the wedding?

DE CICCO: Oh, yeah. Everybody, they were happy, my mother and my father. My grandmother, she was happy, my aunt. They come over, everybody, you know, for my wedding.

SIGRIST: Did they have a big dinner or something at the wedding?

DE CICCO: Oh, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember that?

DE CICCO: Yeah, a big dinner, yeah. My, somebody, some, my grand, my mother-in-law, my mother-in-law's cousin, he do all the cooking, cook nice, yeah. It's hard.

SIGRIST: We're going to pause just for a moment so that Peter can flip all the tapes and we'll get you to America.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

SIGRIST: We're now resuming the interview with Amelia De Cicco.
(they laugh) I don't know why I have trouble saying that.

DE CICCO: In Italiano, in Italian they say "De Cicco."

SIGRIST: De Cicco.

DE CICCO: That's right. English they say, "De Cicco."

SIGRIST: Let me ask you, how long was it after you married before you came to America?

DE CICCO: Two months.

SIGRIST: Two months.

DE CICCO: Two months.

SIGRIST: Where did you live with your husband in those two months?

DE CICCO: We used to live at my mother-in-law's house. We were one room.

SIGRIST: The whole house was one room, or you had one room.

DE CICCO: We have one room, that's all.

SIGRIST: Tell me what it was like to be newly-wed? How did you feel being away from your house and . . .

DE CICCO: My mother, my mother-in-law, she would sleep in the same room where I was. But my mother, my mother, she make like a canopy, they call it. And my bed was all closed with a canopy, all right? So she says, "Because your mother-in-law, she's over there in your room." I said, "No. Mama, she's going to sleep with the, with the cousin." "No, she's going to stay there." So, and my mother-in-law, she stayed there.

SIGRIST: So you had a little privacy. (he laughs)

DE CICCO: A little privacy, that's all.

SIGRIST: Did you like being married at first?

DE CICCO: No.

SIGRIST: It was very different for you. What was different about it? What didn't you like about being married when you first got married?

DE CICCO: Well, I don't know. I liked it at the beginning, but then everybody there was disappointed when he says that he would take me over here, he would take me to this country, yeah. So, and me, I feel, I feel a little bad because I feel bad for my mother and my grandmother and my father and my brother, you know. I'm going to leave everybody and I don't got nobody there. My husband used to say, "But you got me." Yeah. So, and . . .

SIGRIST: What did you know about America?

DE CICCO: And I come.

SIGRIST: What did you know about America when you were growing up in Italy?

DE CICCO: I know because a lot of people, they go, years ago, everybody, they go back and forth, you know. They stay here three, four years, and they come back, you know. And they would stay in America. My father was here. But he don't stay too long, then he come back because

he was sick, and he come back. So, but they were all right. And I hear the people talk, "America, America, America." My father, he says, "You want to go with Mike in America?" I says, "Well, he's my husband. I got to go with him. I can't stay here by myself." So he says, "Well," he says, "you're going to feel sorry if you go over there." I says, "Why?" "Because you get used to stay outside in the field." He says, "Over there you got to stay in the house all day. You never see the sun."

He says, "You're not going to like it." And I tell you the truth, the beginning I don't like it. The beginning when I come over here, I says, "Oh, my gosh. You're taking me in the jail." I miss everybody. I was crying every day, you know. And then I get used to it, then I get used to it.

SIGRIST: Your husband's name was Michael?

DE CICCO: Michael.

SIGRIST: Michael De Cicco.

DE CICCO: De Cicco.

SIGRIST: And tell me about, tell me about saying goodbye to your family before you left for America.

DE CICCO: Oh, it was bad.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you remember about that.

DE CICCO: It was bad to say goodbye to everybody. You know, they're coming to take me to the train. We take the train in Cozensa, you know, in the city. And everybody, they come. It looked like it was, somebody die, you know. Everybody, they were crying. They feel bad, you know.

SIGRIST: Did anyone give you a little present to remember Italy by? Did anyone give you anything before you left for America?

DE CICCO: No, no, no.

SIGRIST: What did you take with you?

DE CICCO: I take with me, we take a trunk, you know. We put some clothes of mine and my husband's. We take a trunk, and we take a suitcase, that's all.

SIGRIST: And what kinds of things did you put in the trunk? What did you have?

DE CICCO: All the clothes that we had over there. And my husband, he had a lot of clothes because he was here before, and he had a lot of clothes from here, suits and everything.

And me, what I had over there, I bring. But then I don't use it when I come over here, I don't use it because they dressed different.

SIGRIST: Did you bring your wedding gown to America?

DE CICCO: Yeah. My wedding gown (she laughs), I make, somebody make me a dress for my daughter when she was, she was about six years old. She make a dress.

SIGRIST: Oh, so you got some use out of it. (he laughs)

DE CICCO: That's right.

SIGRIST: You take the train from . . .

DE CICCO: We get the train from Cozensa, and we go in Naples.

SIGRIST: To Naples. Had you ever been to Naples before?

DE CICCO: In Naples, no. I never was in any place. In Naples, then we take the boat.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about Naples?

DE CICCO: We don't stay long. We stayed, about half a day, we stayed in Naples, that's all.

SIGRIST: It was very fast.

DE CICCO: It was dirty, Naples. I don't like. And then we take the boat.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the boat?

DE CICCO: Duilio.

SIGRIST: And how long was the boat trip from Naples to America?

DE CICCO: Nine days.

SIGRIST: Tell me where you slept on the boat.

DE CICCO: How I sleep?

SIGRIST: Where? Where on the boat did you sleep?

DE CICCO: In a cabin. Each one, we have a little cabin. But I was right on the bottom.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what it was like being on the boat?

DE CICCO: Oh, it was terrible. Nine days I was sick. Nine days I don't eat nothing. I was sick every single day. My husband, he feel so bad. He says, "You better eat something." He says, "If you don't eat, God forbid, you die, they throw you in the water." I was so sick. Nine days. It was good. They had everything, everything good, you know. You go to the, to the table over there and

eat. They had everything, everything. But I no eat it, because I was sick.

SIGRIST: Had you ever seen a big boat before?

DE CICCO: No.

SIGRIST: What did you think when you saw this thing that you had to get on?

DE CICCO: I was surprised, I was surprised. I was shocked.

SIGRIST: Was it scary a little bit?

DE CICCO: Not too much. A little bit. The only thing, I was in second, third class. And I was all the way down, and the boat was bad. The weather was bad. And it used to, the boat used to go (she gestures) this way, that way, this way, that way, this way, that. That's why every, a lot of people, they were sick.

SIGRIST: Did your husband get sick?

DE CICCO: My husband no got sick, no. He was all right.

SIGRIST: So what did he do all day while you were sick? What did he do while he was on the boat while you were sick?

DE CICCO: They used to come with the milk. They used to come with

big containers of milk, and a little cup like that.

"Anybody want some milk?" You know, and take it, some juice and everything. But soon I take it, I throw up right away.

SIGRIST: Did they try to give you any medicine?

DE CICCO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What did they give you?

DE CICCO: They take them to the, they give me an injection. They give me some pills, but they no help me. They no do me nothing.

SIGRIST: Was there like a little hospital on the boat somewhere?

DE CICCO: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you have to stay in that hospital?

DE CICCO: No, I don't stay there, no, no. I don't stay. But they don't make you stay in the cabin. Every morning they used to come, and they says, "Come on, come on, out, out. Out, go outside, get fresh air." Everyone got out. Otherwise the people, they sit down over there, they sit down on the floor, sit down in the chair, something, you know, a little stool. It was bad.

SIGRIST: It wasn't very pleasant. Do you, do you remember being up on deck at all on the boat? Did you go up on deck and sit during the day?

DE CICCO: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: What did you see? Did you see anything that you had never seen before up on deck?

DE CICCO: Sure. I don't see, I see all the water. It's all, right, front and back and side, I see water. That's all you see, that's all, yeah.

SIGRIST: So you're on the boat for nine days.

DE CICCO: Nine days, nine days.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when you came into New York Harbor?

DE CICCO: Yeah, sure.

SIGRIST: What do you remember?

DE CICCO: When we reach over here then everybody, there was some friend with us when we come. When we reach over here they would say, "Hey, Amelia, Amelia. Look, look who's here, look. You see this? You know what it mean? The

woman, they could do everything in America."

(she laughs) They were teasing me, you know. Yeah.

When I see that. "Oh," I says, "my God. That's the Statue of Liberty." They say, "Statua Liberta," in Italian. I says, "Yeah, yeah, Statua Liberta." I said, "Oh, it's beautiful." Because when the boat stop then I was all right. I was fine. Yeah. When we get off over here I told my husband, I says, "Mike, I'm hungry."

So he say, "Oh, it's about time you told me you're hungry." Yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, you'd hardly eaten in nine days.

DE CICCO: No, no. Nine days I don't eat nothing.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me what happened at Ellis Island, when you were let off at Ellis Island.

DE CICCO: Then we're going to get off over here. They got the, we don't have the trunk, the trunk, it was in the top of the boat. They no make you open it. They make you open the suitcase. I had a suitcase. They opened the suitcase, just a little bit, to see what's what. Then they put, everybody they put in line, they make you stand on line. I says, "What are we going to do over here now?" There was a woman, I never forget. They call towel,

big towel. They used to give the towel. They says, "Here, take this towel. Put over here." She says, "Take off your clothes. Take everything off. Socks, everything."

She says, "You got to take a shower." I go take a shower.

And the clothes, they fumigated. They fumigated the clothes. They says, "When you come out, when you finish," she said, "you find your clothes over here." "What are you going to do with my clothes?" I says, "You going to throw it away?" "No, no. We're not going to throw it away." She says, "We give you back." But they were fumigating. They look in the ear, they look in the eye, they look on the head, everything.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about having to take your clothes off in front of people?

DE CICCO: I feel ashamed. I feel bad. But we was all women, all women. Each one, we have a little cabin over there, you know, two. We were two in one cabin, so.

SIGRIST: Was it scary to be separated from your husband?

DE CICCO: Sure.

SIGRIST: Did that bother you?

DE CICCO: My husband, he was in one part, and I was another, where

all the women was. I didn't sleep with my husband in the boat.

SIGRIST: Oh, the boat you were separated, too?

DE CICCIO: Yeah, oh, yeah, sure, yeah.

SIGRIST: I see. Can you describe what the inside of Ellis Island looked like? What do you remember about what the inside looked like?

DE CICCIO: Well, now it's different. Before it was . . .

SIGRIST: But then, what do you remember it looking like then?

DE CICCIO: It was, it no was dirty. It was clean, but there was, everything look old, you know. It's different, it was different. What I see now, look from upstairs, downstairs. That's where I was. But there was a difference.

SIGRIST: Was it crowded at that time?

DE CICCIO: Sure, sure, it was crowded.

SIGRIST: Now, did you . . .

DE CICCIO: It was very crowded.

SIGRIST: When did you get back with your husband? When did you see him next?

DE CICCO: Oh, after they give me, after I take a shower, wash my hair, and everything, they give me the clothes, I get dressed. I went out, and I find my husband. He was waiting for me with the suitcase on the side. He was waiting for me. So he says, "What did you do?" "I had to take all of my clothes." I said, "They fumigated. They told me they fumigated." So I says, "I got to get dressed and all, I washed my hair, you know." I had long hair. My husband says, "Your hair's still wet." I says, "Yeah. My hair's still wet."

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you were wearing at that time? What were you wearing?

DE CICCO: Yeah. I had a dress, a full-length dress, yeah.

SIGRIST: What color was it, do you remember?

DE CICCO: Oh, I don't know the color. (they laugh) I don't remember the color. It's been so many years.

SIGRIST: Sixty-nine years. Did you have to stay overnight for any reason at Ellis Island?

DE CICCO: Yeah, because see, when we reach over here, they can't find my name in the list. I don't know why. But then my husband, he was a citizen, so, and they make me go. But then they told my husband, he says, "You could go. You could go out where you're going to go." He says, "But no her, you got to stay here tonight. We'll see you tomorrow morning." So my husband says, "I'm not going to leave I stay here." He says, "We leave together tomorrow morning." He stay over there. He go and he sleep, and I stayed where I was. That's all.

SIGRIST: Where did, where did you sleep on Ellis Island?

DE CICCO: We were a little cot over there. I don't know how they call . . .

SIGRIST: Like a bunk bed?

DE CICCO: Yeah, just a little bed. They open and close.

SIGRIST: Like a cot, you're right.

DE CICCO: Cot, cot. Yeah, cot.

SIGRIST: Were you in a room with lots of other people?

DE CICCO: Yeah, yeah. All women. It was all women.

SIGRIST: Did anyone else speak Italian, do you remember?

DE CICCO: Everybody. They were speaking Italian. Nobody speak English.

SIGRIST: Could your husband speak any English, because he had been here before?

DE CICCO: Yeah, yeah, yeah. He was here seven years before, and he learned a little bit.

SIGRIST: Did he try to teach you any English before you came to America?

DE CICCO: No, no.

SIGRIST: So you had to stay overnight, and what happened the next morning?

DE CICCO: The next morning, we have a breakfast over here. They give something, and then we take a cab and we go.

SIGRIST: Where did they, where did they feed you breakfast?

DE CICCO: It was like a little diner, something, I don't know. They was a place. In the same place downstairs there was someplace where you take a cup of coffee or something, that's all. What a difference, what a difference, before

and now. It's beautiful now. But before . . .

SIGRIST: So you were released in the morning.

DE CICCO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: After. And where did your husband take you?

DE CICCO: We go some cousin's house. My husband, he was for seven years when he was here. So when he come home over on the other side, his cousin, he says, "When you come back," he said, "don't forget you got to come over here. Married or single," he say, "you got to come over here." And that's where we stayed. We stayed for three or four months, then we find an apartment and we move.

SIGRIST: Was this in New York City?

DE CICCO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the address?

DE CICCO: It was, uh, 349, it was 349 First Avenue.

SIGRIST: First Avenue. Was that an Italian neighborhood?

DE CICCO: Yeah, yeah. Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me what seeing New York for the first time

was like? You're a little girl from the country in Italy.

DE CICCO: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: What was it like to be in New York City?

DE CICCO: I was surprised. I was surprised when I see, you know.

I said, "That's New York," I said, "Oh, my God." Then we used to go shopping over there on First Avenue. There was all the pushcarts. There was all the Italian people, and we used to do shopping and everything. But some friends used to come with me, you know. They were afraid, maybe, I don't know, to go back in the house or something.

I was afraid. At the beginning I was afraid, you know.

But then I get used to it.

SIGRIST: Did you see anything in New York that you had never seen before?

DE CICCO: Oh, sure. I see all those beautiful stores and those beautiful buildings I never see before.

SIGRIST: Did you ride on the subway?

DE CICCO: Over there? No, no.

SIGRIST: No, here in New York. Did you ride . . .

DE CICCO: Oh, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: But you had never been on a subway before, had you?

DE CICCO: No, no. Never. I was in the train the first time when we go from Cozensa to go to Naples.

SIGRIST: That was the first time you'd been on a train.

DE CICCO: That was the first time I see the train. Otherwise I never was in the train before. Then over here, sure, I take the subway, because I was working.

SIGRIST: What was the first job you got?

DE CICCO: I was working where they make men's pants.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you had to do.

DE CICCO: Ah, when they come from the machine, the pants, jacket, they come all full of thread, all right. So, and we have to clean. We have to take all of this thread, we have to clean. We're going to examine. They call examine. Maybe there's a button missing. Maybe's there's a couple stitches missing someplace. We have a piece of chalk, we used to mark where was the damage. That's what we used to do. And I worked. One shop I worked for three years. Another shop in the city I worked for ten years.

SIGRIST: How did you get your first job?

DE CICCIO: Some friend of mine, they find me the job. Because I tell you the truth, when my husband, he get sick. I was with the relief for five years, okay, because I had two kids. So I don't know nobody here, I was by myself, and I don't want to go over the other side again. No. My mother, she used to write me, "Come back over here, come back over here." When my husband died, I don't want to go. I don't want to bring up my kids over there. I said, "Then what I got to do? I got to support my children," I says, "and I got to go work in the field again?" I don't know how to work in the field. I'm twenty, twenty-five now. So, and I went to work in this shop. That's, but five years I was with the relief. Then one morning the investigator come and he told me, he says, "Ms. De Cicco," he says, "you better find a job and go to work." He says, "Because you're not going to receive no more checks." He says, "Because this country is in a war." So he says, "There's a lot of jobs for the women, because the boys, they go all in the army." So he says, "Find a job and go to work." He says, "Don't expect a check. You're not going to get it."

SIGRIST: This is during World War II.

DE CICCO: Huh?

SIGRIST: This is during the Second World War.

DE CICCO: Sure. So then there was my friend, she live in my building. She was doing the work I like to do. And she says, "Don't worry." She says, "I'm going to talk to my brother-in-law. Maybe he'll find you a place." And he find me a place, they find. And I worked twenty years over there, that's right. And I supported my children myself. Nobody help me. I raise my daughter and my son. The ones that are here.

SIGRIST: What job did your husband get when you first came in '24?

DE CICCO: He was shining shoes. (she laughs) That's the job my husband had. He used to shine shoes. Then he started working shoemaker. Yeah, he was fixing shoes.

SIGRIST: And in this neighborhood?

DE CICCO: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And we make a living, so.

SIGRIST: Tell me how you learned English.

DE CICCO: How I learned English?

SIGRIST: How did you learn English?

DE CICCO: I learned a little bit because when I was working somebody was talking Italian, somebody was talking English. Then my children, they get big, they go to school, they used to talk in English to me, and I pick up a little bit here, a little bit there. That's how I learned. I don't speak too good, but, you know.

SIGRIST: I think you speak very well. (they laugh) Was there something about living in New York or being in America that you really didn't like? Was there something you just didn't like about being in America?

DE CICCO: No. No, I liked it, I liked it.

SIGRIST: Did you miss your mom and your dad?

DE CICCO: Yeah. God, they passed away now, so I miss, sure.

SIGRIST: But they were living then.

DE CICCO: Sure. So, but I liked everything over here, it's very nice. It's the best, it's the best place to live, believe me.

SIGRIST: Did anyone else from your family ever come over to America to live? Your brothers, for instance?

DE CICCO: No, not my brother, no. Nobody. But a lot of relatives of mine, yeah. See, like the husband of this woman, she's here. My cousin? He was here. He was here for I don't know how many years. I think the name is downstairs, too.

SIGRIST: Did your husband like America?

DE CICCO: Yeah, yeah. He liked it.

SIGRIST: How old was he when he got sick?

DE CICCO: He was, uh, four, when he got sick he was, uh, hmm. Thirty-eight.

SIGRIST: Oh, so he was quite young.

DE CICCO: Yeah. He died when he was forty-four.

SIGRIST: How old were you when that happened? How old were you when your husband died?

DE CICCO: Thirty-eight.

SIGRIST: What did he die of?

DE CICCO: He had a stroke.

SIGRIST: At such a young age.

DE CICCO: He had a stroke.

SIGRIST: How old were your . . .

DE CICCO: He was in a government hospital for two years.

SIGRIST: That must have been very hard on you.

DE CICCO: Yeah. Because he was a veteran, and he was in a government hospital two years.

SIGRIST: He had . . .

DE CICCO: That's when I was in the relief, when my husband, he was sick, okay.

SIGRIST: He had fought in the First World War.

DE CICCO: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me how old your children were when he died?

DE CICCO: When my husband died? My son, he was nine-and-a-half. My daughter, she was twelve.

SIGRIST: So they were young. Was that, was that one of the most difficult times in your life?

DE CICCO: That's right.

SIGRIST: When your husband died. So, well, let me ask you this.
Did you ever try to bring your parents over? Did you ever try to get your mother and father to come?

DE CICCO: I was, after thirty-three years I went back over the other side. And I wanted to take my mother over here, but she don't want to come. She don't want to come.

SIGRIST: How did you feel being back in Italy?

DE CICCO: I don't like it.

SIGRIST: Was it different before you . . .

DE CICCO: I don't like it no more. Everything looked different to me, because I get used to over here. I don't like it no more.

SIGRIST: How long did you stay?

DE CICCO: I stayed about a month. I was glad to come back.

SIGRIST: Your parents were living at that time?

DE CICCO: My father was dead. My mother was still alive. (she clears her throat)

SIGRIST: I see. Um, well, Mrs. De Cicco . . .

DE CICCO: De Cicco.

SIGRIST: De Cicco. (he laughs) I'm sorry, I'm tongue-tied.

I have one final question for you. I think we've brought you through your immigration experience. Are you glad that you came to this country? Because you didn't really want to come initially.

DE CICCO: Right.

SIGRIST: Are you happy that you actually did come to America?

DE CICCO: Sure, sure.

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

DE CICCO: If I had stayed in Italy?

SIGRIST: Yes. How would your life be different if you had stayed there?

DE CICCO: No, it was different. Now they say it's like over here. That's what they told me. But Italy is Italy, that's all. When I went back after thirty-three years to see my mother, my son was in the navy, and he'd go to see my mother because the ship he's on stopped in Naples, and he wrote to me. He says, "Mom, I sent me the address

from Grandma." And he says, "Because my ship go to Naples." So he says, "Maybe I'll go see Grandma." So I sent the address and he go see my mother. And he promise my mother, he says, "Nana," he says, "I sent Mama over here." He says, "Don't worry about it. Mama, she gonna come." And I promised Mama, and then I go after thirty-three years, but I don't like it at all, no. Soon I reach over there. I says, then my family was very poor, very poor. When I reach over there, I says, "I wish I could take the boat and go back again." After I see my mother, all right? It was bad. So, but thank God I had a lot of help from the city, you know, because my husband, he was a veteran, and he belonged to the American Legion, and my husband, he was in a different hospital when he get sick. And the American Legion, they take, and they bring him to the government hospital. And he stayed there for two years.

SIGRIST: So you were lucky that way, that he had been a veteran.

DE CICCO: And then I was, that's why I had the relief, and I supported my children. And then I used to do a little work here and there, you know, housework and all. Because they don't give you much. And I get along still today.

SIGRIST: Do you consider yourself an American today?

DE CICCO: Sure. So, that's what I used to, I used to tell Mom, my Mama. She says, "Oh, why don't you come over here because . . ." And I used to tell Mama, I says, "They have (?) over here." I says, "I don't got if I come over there. I got to go to work in the field again, Mama?" I says, "I can't do it no more." You know?

SIGRIST: Well, Mrs. De Cicco, I want to thank you very much for, you've come quite a ways, actually, from Long Island, to be here today.

DE CICCO: Right.

SIGRIST: And I want to thank you very much. It's been a pleasure.

DE CICCO: Thank you to you.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist.

DE CICCO: You have a lot of patience with me.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Amelia . . .

DE CICCO: Amelia.

SIGRIST: De Cicco.

DE CICCO: De Cicco.

SIGRIST: De Cicco.

DE CICCO: D-E-C-I-C-C-O!

SIGRIST: On May 20th, 1993.