

EI-450

JEAN CASALE STANZIALE

BIRTH DATE: SEPTEMBER 17, 1915

INTERVIEW DATE: MARCH 31, 1994

RUNNING TIME: 42:40

INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

RECORDING ENGINEER: KEVIN DALEY

INTERVIEW LOCATION: BROOKLYN, NY

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 3/1996

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: CHARLES MITCHELL, 11/2009

ITALY, 1922

AGE 6

SHIP NAME NOT RECALLED

PORT OF EMBARCATION: NAPLES

RESIDENCES: ALTAVILLA IRPINA

121 ST., NYC; HART ST, BROOKLYN, NY

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday, March 31st, 1994. It's Maundy Thursday, during Holy Week. I'm in Brooklyn at the Shore Hill Senior Citizens Apartment Complex with Jean Stanziale. Mrs. Stanziale came from Italy in 1922. She was six years old at that time. Anyway, thank you for having us in. And, Mrs. Stanziale, can we begin with you giving me your birth date, please?

STANZIALE: September 17, 1915.

SIGRIST: And what was your maiden name?

STANZIALE: Casale.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

STANZIALE: C-A-S-A-L-E.

SIGRIST: And what town were you born in in Italy?

STANZIALE: Uh, Altavilla Irpina.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that for me?

STANZIALE: Uh, let me see.

SIGRIST: Mrs. Stanziale's just writing down the name of the town.

STANZIALE: It's, uh, A-L-T-V-E, uh, I-L-L-O, and then it's Capital E-R-R-P-I-N-O [sic].

SIGRIST: Whereabouts in Italy is that?

STANZIALE: It's in Italy. It's, like you say, a borough of Naples, you know. Over there they call them, uh, what do they call them there? Providence, provincias.

SIGRIST: I see.

STANZIALE: Provincia, they call it. And that's one of the

little towns around there. Provincia Benevento.
That's actually where it comes from, the (?).

SIGRIST: And so that's right near Naples.

STANZIALE: Yeah. It's in Naples, yes.

SIGRIST: What, as a small child, because you were quite young, what do you remember about the town, if anything?

STANZIALE: Oh, I remember we had a macaroni place that we used to make homemade macaroni. And, uh, then I remember a big, big wall in front of our store, and I went back to see it. And, uh, the macaroni place wasn't there any more, but the town was still there, nice little town. They have a Feast of Saint Pelligrino every year, and I happened to be there at the time when I went to visit.

SIGRIST: During a later visit.

STANZIALE: And it impressed me very much when I went there, because as I got off the bus, they started to shoot fireworks, and to me it felt like you're welcome to your town. That's the way I felt. (she laughs)
And I started to cry.

SIGRIST: But, as a child, what you remember, the making of the macaroni.

STANZIALE: Yes. And I was in the store, and there was a big wall in front of the store like, you know, how can I say, like a wall, you know, something, the people living on the top, whatever it was, say.

SIGRIST: Was the macaroni store something your family owned, or was this . . .

STANZIALE: Yes, we owned. We used to make the macaroni for the town.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me how you used to make macaroni in Italy? What is the process of making macaroni?

STANZIALE: Well, uh, you mix the flour and the water, and then they have a big thing where there's handles, like, you know, and it keeps kneading and kneading the flour in the thing. When it's ready, then they put it into process with a dish, and the macaroni goes right down, whatever type you want. Linguini, spaghetti, every plate has its own design. And then you used to hang it on a stick, hang it on a stick and make it dry.

SIGRIST: So it's very flexible when it comes out.

STANZIALE: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did most people buy the macaroni at that time?

STANZIALE: Yes, yes, they did, buy homemade macaroni, yes.

SIGRIST: So is, was this business, was this something your father owned, or did he work for?

STANZIALE: My grandparents owned it.

SIGRIST: On which side? Your mother's side or your father's side.

STANZIALE: My father's side. The Casale's.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about your grandparents in Italy, if anything?

STANZIALE: Uh, they were warm, you know. They, uh, they respected me a lot. And when it was my grandmother's mother's day, I used to bring her flowers, and my grandma used to buy me a dress to give her, you know, it's, what you say, a thank you for bringing her the flowers. That's what I remember. I remember I went to, uh, private

schooling, the nuns, to learn embroidery. My mother sent me to private school.

SIGRIST: You were quite young at that time.

STANZIALE: Well, they had these little pre-kindergartens, like you say, where they'd teach you how to sew and everything, and I was taught to make embroidery. And I also remember there was a man living in our apartment, and he was, something in the royal family. And then he got old, and he had to retire, and he came to live in this complex where I was living. And he took such a liking to me that every night, every morning I had to go down and have breakfast with him. He liked me so much, and he told my parents that when he died he would give me the treasure of his son, because his son turned out bad, see? Well, what happened, he died. But before he died, he didn't get me, because when I get better I'll take you to Naples to get the treasure. So when he died he called his wife over, and he says, "Get my wallet." So the wife got the wallet. He just put his fingers in the wallet, and guess what he pulled, picked out? Ten liras. He couldn't pick a thousand of them, he picked just ten liras, and

that was given to me. See? That I remember, I remember the words. He says he would take me, and I used to remember going to this man's house and sitting on his lap, you know, and all that.

SIGRIST: Sure was something to look forward to?

STANZIALE: Yes, but I didn't get the treasure, though. I didn't get the inheritance of his son. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Let me just put the pencil down, because it will pick up on the recording. Um, did your mother or father ever tell you any stories associated with your birth, like when your mother was carrying you, or a story about when she gave birth to you?

STANZIALE: Hmm, not really. No, not really, because then she had other children, but then they died. One died of the Spanish flu, see. And, uh . . .

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

STANZIALE: M-E-O, Meo. And her maiden name.

SIGRIST: That was her maiden name.

STANZIALE: Mathilda, Mathilda Meo.

SIGRIST: And tell me a little bit about your mother's personality, and what it was like.

STANZIALE: Mmm, she's a woman that suffered a lot and had, gave you very good ideas in life. She was a wonderful person.

SIGRIST: What did she look like, if you had to describe her?

STANZIALE: Uh, a very pleasant person, very pleasant. She was very wise, you know. No schooling, but very wise in her experience that she had in life.

SIGRIST: Did she ever try to teach you certain things, to live by certain . . .

STANZIALE: Well, that's why I am where I am today, which I know so much by her telling me a lot of things.

SIGRIST: What were some of the things that she really wanted you to understand as you grew up?

STANZIALE: Oh, one thing, uh, sacrifice. Uh, we had, we used to have beans and macaroni once a week, and my mother would save it for the next day for me for lunch. Tell you the truth, you know, after a while I got tired of having the beans and macaroni left

over from the next day. And, uh, my dad come home, and I says, "Dad," I says, "you know, Mom would say, always the beans, and I'm sick and tired of eating that." So my father says, "My gosh, she's an only child. Why make her eat that? Give her something else." So she turned around, and she says, "No," she says. "Gaby taught the bad. The good is very easily swallowed, but the good is very bad to swallow. So let her learn the bad things to eat, and then, who knows, she might get a nice man, and she won't have to eat (?)." That's the experience, it's part of the teaching that she gave me.

SIGRIST: So that was important to your mother, to just go . . .

STANZIALE: Yes, and also in rags. I had one dress, and if it was torn, my mother would put a patch on it, and my father used to get angry. He says, "What are you doing this to her for? You only got one child. You can dress her the best." And she says, "No," she says, "she has to be brought up with the bad, because you never know who she's gonna marry." And, uh, so that's what happened, you know. She figured maybe the man can't afford it, she can get used to

rags, you know. So she taught me the worst things in life, so in order to enjoy the better things when I got them, you know.

SIGRIST: Did your mother have a difficult childhood herself?

STANZIALE: Yes, she did.

SIGRIST: What do you know about her background?

STANZIALE: Well, uh, the father got married very young. The mother was, I think she was six when the mother died, and he got married, and, of course, she was in front of a stepmother, and the stepmother was very mean to her, and that's it. So from her teaching of the bare life she had, she brought it on to me to learn the bad, and then the good you could easily adapt to.

SIGRIST: Sure. Huh. What about your dad? Did he ever try to teach you anything?

STANZIALE: My father was a captain of a big ship in Europe during the war, and he loved the best of life. He loved everything, you know. But God didn't give him the grace to enjoy everything. He died when he was thirty-one.

SIGRIST: What was his name?

STANZIALE: Onofrio.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

STANZIALE: O-N-O-F-R-I-O.

SIGRIST: And, uh, he was the captain of the ship during World War One, but was he involved in the macaroni making business as (?)?

STANZIALE: Well, yes. When you, that's their trade, that was their trade, macaroni.

SIGRIST: Did he ever talk about his experience during World War One?

STANZIALE: Yes, he did.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about him . . .

STANZIALE: Oh, um . . .

SIGRIST: Were there any stories that he would tell that you remember?

STANZIALE: Well, he taught me a lot about geography. And when I went to school, he had died, the teachers told me,

"How do you know all these things?" I says, "Well, my father taught me." Things about geography, you know. And that's about the only thing. But he was a very good man.

SIGRIST: Was he a father that liked to spend time with his children?

STANZIALE: Oh, yes, definitely, definitely.

SIGRIST: Was there some activity that you remember in Italy?

STANZIALE: He used to sing. He loved to sing. He used to love to sing. And he tried to sing in America, but my mother didn't want him, because he was a good-looking man. She was jealous. (she laughs) So she wouldn't allow him to sing. But he had a lovely voice.

SIGRIST: That's interesting.

STANZIALE: Yes, a lovely voice.

SIGRIST: Was your mother musical also?

STANZIALE: No. My mother's a little tomgirl. She knew nothing of the outside world. And, in fact, my father used to tell her, "Let me cut your hair." And she says,

"Oh, no, don't you dare." He was very modern, my father, but my mother wasn't. She was an old type, just a hillybilly type, you know, country type.
(she laughs) I don't know how to say it.

SIGRIST: More the peasant, perhaps.

STANZIALE: Yes, yes. More the peasant type, yes.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the house or the apartment that you lived in in Italy for me, what you remember about the actual place where you lived?

STANZIALE: No. I know that my mother kept a nice clean home. And, uh, I don't remember. I know there was a big, big door, and we had big key to open the door, and then there was like apartments inside this, uh, you know, like you see here, sometimes you go in an apartment, first you open the big door, and then you go in and there's another door, and it takes you into the apartments. Something like that.

SIGRIST: And that's what sticks in your mind about that.

STANZIALE: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Um, tell me a little bit about religious life. Now, you said that the nuns, you were sent to school to

the nuns.

STANZIALE: Yes.

SIGRIST: What else about religious life? You were Catholics,
I assume.

STANZIALE: Yes.

SIGRIST: Was there a church in town?

STANZIALE: Oh, yes, definitely.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of the church?

STANZIALE: The San Bellegrina [ph]. That was the name of the
saint.

SIGRIST: That was the patron saint.

STANZIALE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And what do you remember about the church building
itself, if anything?

STANZIALE: Well, on his day, there would be a lot of people
coming to ask for grace, you know, or, uh, what do
you call it? favors, or whatever. And some of them,
which impressed me very much, they would walk with
their tongue on the floor until they got to the

saint to ask for whatever they wanted, and then they would donate whatever they wanted, if they would get the miracle. That I remember. Like I say, "Ma, that's very bad. How could they?" She used to tell me, "Well, my darling daughter, that's the tradition." Yeah. Some of them used to go with their tongues, all the way down to the altar, but they did it.

SIGRIST: Was that a big day for the town?

STANZIALE: Oh, yes. A very big day. They would put out all their best laundries on the balconies to show what they had, the best blankets, you know. They would show off there whatever precious things they had.

SIGRIST: What about, what about Christmas? How did you celebrate Christmas in Italy, if you celebrated it?

STANZIALE: Well, uh, that I don't remember too much about Christmas. It was usually a tradition, macaroni and fish, you know. And, uh . . .

SIGRIST: Is there a traditional Christmas food that you would serve?

STANZIALE: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

SIGRIST: What is that?

STANZIALE: I hate to tell you but it's eels. (she laughs)
In my town, the big eels. We roasted them, and put
them in vinegar, and then we had the little ones, we
used to fry them. In fact, my father used to, my
grandfather used to make like a, put water, like a
little lake, and he would buy the fish live and keep
it in that water under the Christmas ornament, you
know, the Christmas tree, the pageant, you know, and
he would put it in there, and then for Christmas he
would kill the eel, Christmas Eve.

SIGRIST: Like a little ritual sort of.

STANZIALE: Yeah, yes. That's the tradition, of our town.
Other towns have different things, you know.

SIGRIST: Do you . . .

STANZIALE: And then what else do we cook? The struffeds, I
don't know if you ever heard, the little balls?

SIGRIST: What were they called?

STANZIALE: Struffeds.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

STANZIALE: Let me see.

SIGRIST: Mrs. Stanziale is using her pencil again.

STANZIALE: Uh, S-T-R-U-F-F-E-D.

SIGRIST: And these are little balls made out of . . .

STANZIALE: Yeah, little balls, yeah, you fry them, and you put honey on them. You know, that's a great tradition, and also fried dough and bows. Those were really the traditional Christmas things.

SIGRIST: And then was there a church service that was involved in the way you celebrated?

STANZIALE: Oh, yes, definitely, yes, sure there was. You know, Good Friday and all that. There was also that, too.

SIGRIST: Would you say that Christmas was a more important holiday than Easter, or the other way around?

STANZIALE: No. I would say that, no, I think they both have individual, uh, meaning.

SIGRIST: And for these holidays, like the saints day and these Christmas and Easter, would the entire town turn out for the celebration. I assume that perhaps

it was just one church in town, or . . .

STANZIALE: There was nowhere else to go, but these were big holidays for them.

SIGRIST: Was the church also the center of all social activity in that town?

STANZIALE: Yes, yes, yes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Pretty much everyone knew each other?

STANZIALE: Oh, yes. A small town, you know, everyone knew each other.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any games that you played as a child?

STANZIALE: No, no. My mother kept me very strict.

SIGRIST: How so?

STANZIALE: I wasn't allowed to play outside. I was only allowed to go to school, and that's it.

SIGRIST: You said that you were born, and then she had a couple of other children that died in the epidemic after World War One.

STANZIALE: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: So what you're remembering is your only, you're an only child then.

STANZIALE: Yes, I am an only child.

SIGRIST: Do you think that some of that strictness stems from the fact that she lost her children?

STANZIALE: I don't know. I really don't know.

SIGRIST: Did she ever talk about the children dying?

STANZIALE: Oh, yeah, she did.

SIGRIST: What did she know about that?

STANZIALE: Oh, yeah. She, you know, she felt very bad about it. But I don't think it had anything to do with me, no. It's just that she had suffered when she was young, and she knew that the better things in life don't always come, but the worst do come, so she thought, "Teach me the worst," you know, in food, and things like that. And then if I was lucky enough, I got money, everything would come very easy. (she laughs) I don't have to sacrifice. (she laughs) That was her theory.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Do you remember, uh, when you were in

Italy, any kind of tragedy happening, any family tragedy within your own memory, the death of a grandparent or something like that.

STANZIALE: No. My grand, my brother, I don't remember. But I have pictures of him that Mother took.

SIGRIST: These were the, that was one of the . . .

STANZIALE: My oldest brother.

SIGRIST: And he died.

STANZIALE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Were you the youngest? Well, you were the . . .

STANZIALE: No. I think I was the first. My brother was second, I believe, yes.

SIGRIST: So he was just a child when he died.

STANZIALE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. In fact, I had the picture. Finally I threw it away. You know, they had the crib all dressed up, you know, like a coffin, everything. That was the, every time I saw it in person, finally I threw it away.

SIGRIST: But that was the custom at the time.

STANZIALE: Yeah, that was the custom, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you have any relatives in America at this time before your father went over?

STANZIALE: Yes.

SIGRIST: Who was he?

STANZIALE: An uncle of ours. My father's sister's husband.

SIGRIST: And what was he doing here in America?

STANZIALE: I don't know. I don't know. It's too far back for me to know.

SIGRIST: Why do you think that your father wanted to come to this country?

STANZIALE: Well, uh, for money-wise, a better living over here.

SIGRIST: And do you know what year he came?

STANZIALE: Uh, 19, let me see, what does it say here? Well, I was six months when he called me. See, it was only about six months here.

SIGRIST: So he was, he came six months before he brought everyone else.

STANZIALE: Yes. And then he got the papers, and we came right away, which everybody was so new, they think how could it be that you come? But my father missed his family, but the first thing he came, as soon as he got here, got a job, he made papers to make us come here. And we came within six months.

SIGRIST: Tell me where he, when he came to America, where did he go?

STANZIALE: Well, he went to stay with his brother-in-law, and then he went to stay with an aunt until we came from Europe, and then we reside there for a while up in, uh, 121st Street, where they call Harlem now.

SIGRIST: So when he came to America, he was in Manhattan. He was in New York City.

STANZIALE: Yes, yes, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: And what job did he get?

STANZIALE: Macaroni. He went into the same old macaroni thing.

SIGRIST: Was there a large Italian population up in Harlem at that time?

STANZIALE: I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Do you know where he was making the macaroni?

STANZIALE: In Brooklyn. He came to Brooklyn to make the macaroni, and then he worked for the Caruso macaroni plant many, many years ago, and it closed down now.

SIGRIST: Well, this is interesting, because so often times people went and came to America and got jobs that they knew nothing about. And in his case . . .

STANZIALE: No, no. He went back, yeah, he went back to his own trade.

SIGRIST: Yeah. He went right back to his trade. That's interesting.

STANZIALE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, in the six months after your father was in America and you were still in Italy, how did your mother support the family?

STANZIALE: Well, he used to send money over, you know.

SIGRIST: And did he write you letters?

STANZIALE: Yes, he did.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what he was telling about America?

STANZIALE: No, no. He liked it, and he couldn't wait that we got here.

SIGRIST: What did you know about America before you got here?

STANZIALE: Nothing.

SIGRIST: Did you have any ideas or expectations of what . . .

STANZIALE: No, nothing at all. Nothing at all. I knew that my father went to America to better himself. That's all I know. And, uh, when I arrived, like I told you over the phone, he came with a little boat. They came to see the people on the big ship, because we had to stay overnight. It was closed already. And I remember him coming, and I says, "Hello, Dad." We were just talking, you know. And then he says, "You got a rope there?" I says, "Yes, I do." So he says, "Bring, let it down." So I let it down, and he tied a Hershey bar of chocolate. That I'll never forget. And I took it up, and I opened it up, and he says, "Now, don't lick it, eat it, because you've got a lot of chocolates here in America." I always used to lick them to make it last, you know, and that was it. That I remember very clearly.

SIGRIST: Did you leave from Naples?

STANZIALE: I guess so. I must have.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollections of that process?

STANZIALE: My mother threw everything away. That's why I, you know, hesitate.

SIGRIST: Why do you think she did that?

STANZIALE: Well, she had a lot of problems when she came here, and I guess moving, this and that. She was disgusted, and everything was gone.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollections of the boat trip, the ride on the ship?

STANZIALE: Yes. I remember that everybody was sick on the boat, and I, as a little girl, went around giving people this and giving people that, and you go, "Oh, look at that girl, how she, you know." I had a good stomach. That's the only thing I remember.

SIGRIST: Do you know the name of the ship?

STANZIALE: No, no. I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Do you remember where you slept on the ship at all?

Does that stick out in your mind?

STANZIALE: No. It really was a little hole, like, you know, and then there was the bed there. You know, just like a regular ship. And, uh, I slept there with my mother and my sister, the sister that she lost to a year with the whooping cough.

SIGRIST: Oh, so there was actually another sister who was traveling. What was her name?

STANZIALE: Uh, Asuna. Suzy, Suzy. Suzy was her name.

SIGRIST: Suzy. Uh, and, uh, she's older than you or younger?

STANZIALE: No, younger. I was the oldest there.

SIGRIST: So your mother's got two little kids on the boat, kind of.

STANZIALE: No. The one boy had already died.

SIGRIST: Well, but you're little, and this . . .

STANZIALE: Then I was there, yeah.

SIGRIST: And the sister, so, you know, she's got her hands full with two kids. Do you know how long the ride took, the ship?

STANZIALE: No. I'm sure about two weeks, maybe more.

SIGRIST: But what time of the year is it that you came over?
Do you remember?

STANZIALE: I'm trying to think. I don't think it was winter.
Let's see. He came in, I don't think it was really
winter. Maybe in the autumn or the spring,
something like that. Because I remember having no
things on.

SIGRIST: So the boat comes into New York Harbor. Do you
remember as a little girl what your impressions of
what New York City looked like, or the Statue of
Liberty?

STANZIALE: Yeah, I saw the Statue of Liberty, but I didn't know
too much what it meant, you know. But it was a
pretty sight. And a lot of confusion, you know.
"Hold my hand," you know, come here and come there.
Then we got out, and my father was waiting for us.

SIGRIST: Now, did your father come to Ellis Island to get
you?

STANZIALE: Yes, he did.

SIGRIST: So you were brought . . .

STANZIALE: I remember him waiting outside, and we passed the rail, you know, and they were all outside waiting, and he called my mother and me, you know.

SIGRIST: And, of course, you were old enough, you remembered your father certainly, so.

STANZIALE: Yeah, sure, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollections of Ellis Island and what that experience was like?

STANZIALE: I was too happy to see my father come here that I didn't, you know, you don't think of these things when you're a child.

SIGRIST: Did your mother want to come to America?

STANZIALE: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: She did want to.

STANZIALE: And she swore that she would never go back. She had too many heartaches. She says, "I'll never go back to America, uh, to Italy."

SIGRIST: To Italy.

STANZIALE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Um, did your father like America?

STANZIALE: Oh, yes, he loved it.

SIGRIST: Before you got here, I mean, did he, did he decide that this really was a great place?

STANZIALE: Oh, yes. He loved this land. He did. He did, very much.

SIGRIST: So Dad . . .

STANZIALE: That's why he made us come here as soon as possible. He made the papers right away.

SIGRIST: Well, you said he missed you.

STANZIALE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: So Dad comes, gets you at Ellis Island. Where does he take you?

STANZIALE: To these people in Manhattan.

SIGRIST: Up in Harlem.

STANZIALE: Where he was living. And when I went there, the surprise was to open the drawer and I found an

enormous doll, just as big as the drawer. And I was so taken back, I said, "Oh, my God!" So he says, "Well, you always had little dolls in Italy, so now we got you a big one." So that's the part I remember.

SIGRIST: Welcome to America.

STANZIALE: Yes. Welcome to America was right.

SIGRIST: Now, how long, this was an aunt that you were staying with, or . . .

STANZIALE: Well, there's really a cousin of my grandmother's, really.

SIGRIST: I see. And how long did you stay with her?

STANZIALE: About six months. Then we got our own apartment.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that six months when you were up in her apartment, like about New York and discovering new things?

STANZIALE: We were always closed in. We didn't go anywhere. We didn't know the language or nothing. So we started, I remember they had the gas tank where they used to put the quarter in, and the old-fashioned

bathrooms. You had to pull the water. But we were always happy. We were a happy family there.

SIGRIST: Did you all stay in one room in this apartment?

STANZIALE: Oh, no. She had about five, six rooms. You know, the railroad type rooms, yeah.

SIGRIST: I see. It was big. Then where, what was the first apartment you moved into as a family?

STANZIALE: Uh, I'll never forget it. On Hemrod [ph] Street was our first apartment, and I think it was 680 Hemrod Street. No, uh . . . Hemrod Street? Yes, Hemrod Street.

SIGRIST: Hemrod?

STANZIALE: Yes, I think so.

SIGRIST: H, H-I . . .

STANZIALE: Let me think a minute.

SIGRIST: All right.

STANZIALE: Hart Street. Excuse me. Hart Street.

SIGRIST: And that's in Manhattan?

STANZIALE: No, that was in Brooklyn.

SIGRIST: Oh, in Brooklyn. Hard Street.

STANZIALE: Hart Street.

SIGRIST: H-A-R-T.

STANZIALE: H-A-R-T, yeah.

SIGRIST: And what do you remember about that apartment?

STANZIALE: Oh, that had a lot of memories, that apartment. That did. Uh, we happened to get into a nice family, and they were Sicilian, we were Neapolitan, so the language is a little bit different, so mother had a hard time trying to explain to them what do you mean, you know. Like they say the needle, and my mother took a needle, but the needle wasn't, it was a pot. "Oh, yeah, a little misunderstanding." And then they had a son that became a doctor. And when he became a doctor I still called him his first name. And he says, "Oh, no." He says, "My name is Doctor-so-and-so now." I says, "Wow, we dropped a step, you know." And that was it. I went to Catholic school there, St. Joseph's school. And, of course, I didn't know the language, and they, these

people taught me. One of the sisters taught me the language, and I went to school there, and things like that.

SIGRIST: Was it hard for you to learn English, because I assume you're all talking Italian at home probably.

STANZIALE: Yes. No, it wasn't too bad. I didn't find it that hard. I don't remember anyway. I went right away to the school, and I used to bring the homework home, and this girl used to teach me, this doctor's sister. She used to teach me, you know. And it wasn't bad at all.

SIGRIST: Did your father speak English?

STANZIALE: No, but he learned the language. Broken English, but he learned it.

SIGRIST: What about your mom? How did she learn English?

STANZIALE: My mother, no, she understood part of it. She couldn't speak it.

SIGRIST: Was it that . . .

STANZIALE: We spoke Italian, and the children spoke English to her, but it just didn't penetrate her.

SIGRIST: Is it that she didn't want to learn it, or she didn't need to learn it?

STANZIALE: No. I guess she thought she didn't need it. But then again she tried, you know, when she was older, tried to get it, but it was too late in the game to really learn.

SIGRIST: Did your father, um, you moved to Brooklyn, your father continued working in the macaroni business.

STANZIALE: Yes, the same one.

SIGRIST: What about your mom? Did she get a job?

STANZIALE: Well, she got a job when my father took sick.

SIGRIST: This was later on.

STANZIALE: Yeah. My father got sick, and then my mother had to make her means, so she went to work in the same company. And then my father passed away, and she continued working there. So it was a struggle from then on.

SIGRIST: And your father was young when he died, was he not?

STANZIALE: Yeah, thirty-three.

SIGRIST: So how long had you been in America before he died?

STANZIALE: Well, I was six years old.

SIGRIST: You came to America, you were six.

STANZIALE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And he died when, how old?

STANZIALE: He was, '33.

SIGRIST: He was thirty-three. So how old were you when he died?

STANZIALE: Hmm, let's see. '33, six years prior to that would be what? '33, six years prior to that was how many years?

SIGRIST: Well, um, twenty, um . . .

STANZIALE: '33.

SIGRIST: Thirty-three, twenty-seven.

STANZIALE: He died in 19, 19, '33. Yes, he died 1933.

SIGRIST: He died in 1933. So you'd been here just about ten years before he died.

STANZIALE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: So he was a young man, actually, with a young family when he died.

STANZIALE: But I don't get this here. Now, why, how does this come about that I'm thirteen years old here?

SIGRIST: Well, why don't you explain on tape about, about his citizenship papers. He took his citizenship papers out after you all arrived.

STANZIALE: Yeah. But he had to expend the five years of waiting.

SIGRIST: Pretend we didn't have the conversation before the tape was going, and explain to us on tape about his citizenship paper, and what you thought, and what you discovered today.

STANZIALE: well, I always thought that, uh, I was age six when he got the papers.

SIGRIST: Assuming he got them when you first arrived.

STANZIALE: Right. But according to this, I guess he had to wait five years. So, uh, he came in '33, five would be '38. So when did he get these papers here?

SIGRIST: He got those papers in 1928. It says right on the bottom.

STANZIALE: 1928.

SIGRIST: For the sake of the tape, we're looking at a xerox copy of Mrs. Stanziale's father's citizenship papers.

STANZIALE: The '28. So he, he came here the '22, then. He must have come here the '22.

SIGRIST: Well, he came in '22. You came in '22. But the papers were taken out in '28.

STANZIALE: That's sixty years.

SIGRIST: Yeah, six years. So, tell me what your parents liked to do for fun in New York at that time?

STANZIALE: Oh, my father used to love everything. Operas, movies, everything. And, uh, he loved entertainment, and he used to like to have parties, you know, good times. And that's about all. He was a good-time Charlie.

SIGRIST: How would, um, how would you have fun at home? What was it like to . . .

STANZIALE: Oh, he used to put the Victrola, the pianola, and he would sing, you know, and people would chime in and a little wine and a little cheese, and that's it.

SIGRIST: Did your mother continue, uh, preparing food in an Italian way?

STANZIALE: Oh, yes, yeah, she did, always did, you know. But after he died, she died with him. She didn't want to know nothing any more.

SIGRIST: That was a real shock to her.

STANZIALE: She says this is too much. I can't take it.

SIGRIST: Well, she had lost a couple of kids.

STANZIALE: Yeah. And, uh, we happened to move that day, and, uh, that's when he took sick, so they called the ambulance, and he was fixing the gas stove, you know, the gas stove, it used to be poisonous, and he fell while he was fixing the stove, and they took him to the hospital, and it seemed to affect his memory. So my mother, heartache, she didn't want to. So we had, at that time they used to use barrels to move, and I says to Mother, "Gee, Ma, how can we live like this with the barrels away, just

pick a spoon or a dish from there. We can't live like this." So she says, "I'm too heartbroken. My life has been too hard on me." And she says, "I don't care for anything any more. You want it, you fix it." So I says, "All right." So that's how I did my owns learning how to straighten out a house, and putting things in, you know, and my mother would watch me. IF she saw something she didn't like, she would tell me, you know. But she just let me go and do things, and learn on my own. And that's how we started out.

SIGRIST: So after your father died did your mother ever want to go back to Italy?

STANZIALE: No. She never wanted to go back. My mother never wanted to go back. She had too many hardships there. She didn't want to go back.

SIGRIST: Was she in contact with her parents after she came to this country?

STANZIALE: Well, the parents were all dead.

SIGRIST: They had all died by then.

STANZIALE: Uh-huh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about school in this country.
You said you went to a Catholic school here.

STANZIALE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And that one of the nuns helped you learn English.

STANZIALE: Not the nuns, where I was living.

SIGRIST: Oh, the doctor's sister.

STANZIALE: That's right.

SIGRIST: I got my sisters mixed up.

STANZIALE: Yeah, the doctor's sister.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me a little bit about going to Catholic school in Brooklyn, and being, you know, an immigrant child in that situation.

STANZIALE: Well, we went to Catholic school, and the Catholic school was very strict. I don't know what I did. Maybe I talked too much or what, so the nun punished me, and she says, "You're going to stay in the backyard all night long, and the devil's going to come." Well, I got so frightened. When she told me that I got so frightened, they let me out, I ran to

my mother, "I don't want to go back to school." She says, "Why?" "This, this, this happened." She says, "Well," she says, "you were bad." I says, "I know I was bad, but I don't want to speak to the devil, you know." I got so frightened I didn't want to go to school no more, and then I went to public school after that. And then years later I met that same nun, relatives of some friend that I picked up, and I told the story, she says, "Oh, yes, I remember." (she laughs) Many years later I come across the same nun.

SIGRIST: It was a mean thing to do to a child.

STANZIALE: Well, they were very strict that time, you know.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

SIGRIST: Now, did you have, was religious life important here in America?

STANZIALE: Always. Religion was always important.

SIGRIST: What church did you attend?

STANZIALE: St. Joseph's, right there, on Sadam [ph] Street.

SIGRIST: Did the way you worshipped change at all, like the way you celebrated holidays? Was it different in America?

STANZIALE: No, no, no, no, no. The same way, traditional things, you know. Like my daughter was telling me, "Ma, there's one thing about, you always have the traditional meal." Now they combine everything, Easter, Christmas all that stuff. I always think the same thing. Christmas is Christmas and Easter is Easter. I always, and Thanksgiving is Thanksgiving.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any prayers in Italian that you learned, maybe as a child, or, um . . .

STANZIALE: Well, we used to say the Hail Mary Mother and I in Italian.

SIGRIST: Can you do it for us on tape?

STANZIALE: Oh, I don't know. I can't think, Santa Maria (Italian). Yeah. I can't go further than that. I can't remember no more. Then my grandma taught me a prayer for Saint Anthony. That I don't forget.

SIGRIST: Can you say that for us on tape?

STANZIALE: Yes. (she recites prayer in Italian)

SIGRIST: And what did you just say?

STANZIALE: Saint Anthony, you wanted a favor from Christ. You are allowed thirteen graces, so please give me one from the thirteen, the thirteen, what, I can't explain it in English. No, the five, uh, the five wounds of Christ, give me one. Right? It's in that order. You know, maybe I made a mistake of where they were, too, but in that order. And I remember that very good.

SIGRIST: Thanks.

STANZIALE: Yeah. When I'm in trouble, I say those prayers.

SIGRIST: Well, and that would really come from your distant childhood, wouldn't it, if your grandmother taught you how to say that?

STANZIALE: Yes, yes. Yeah. St. Anthony, you came from Padua. You asked for Christ for thirteen miracles, so please give me one, on the five, uh . . .

SIGRIST: Stigmata?

STANZIALE: Yeah, something like that. I can't think of that,

how you explain it in English. It's just a shame. Maybe if I, you know, sit down and analyze, maybe I would get it, you know, but right now . . .

STANZIALE: When you were growing up, when you were maybe, uh, in your teens, and, of course, you're thoroughly Americanized at that point, more so than your parents, certainly. Was it ever difficult for you, or embarrassing for you to have immigrant parents?

STANZIALE: No.

SIGRIST: When you were a young woman.

STANZIALE: No, no. Never was embarrassed, no.

SIGRIST: Did you find that at that time most of your peers also had immigrant parents? Was that the kind of neighborhood that it was, where you lived?

STANZIALE: No, I don't remember that. I remember there was any others, because we didn't bother much with people. My mother was always to herself. In fact, when I went for my passport, uh, I would think let me get a passport to make sure, although with my father I was allowed, I went crazy. Nobody had records of us. You know, when they go with that, so many years they

go around to find out the people? What they call that?

SIGRIST: The census.

STANZIALE: The census. They couldn't find out where we lived. Evidently my mother never opened the doors to them. Well, I had a heck of a time to go through. Finally I gave up, and I don't know what happened, then they found her. Because I figure I don't want to bring the citizen paper. I have my own passport, from my father, see? And, uh, they couldn't find it. So evidently my mother never opened the doors to these, you know, to these people that came around.

SIGRIST: And, as you said, she also got rid of all the, the immigrations papers, and . . .

STANZIALE: Well, not that she got rid of, I think she was heartbroken all the tragedy she had, that when she moved from one place to another, she didn't know where she put them. That's what must have happened.

SIGRIST: Tell me the first job that you ever got that paid money.

STANZIALE: The first job? I worked cleaning threads from dresses.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me what you had to do, and how much you got paid?

STANZIALE: You had to cut threads, you know.

SIGRIST: Was this in a factory?

STANZIALE: Yeah, in a factory. And, because I, uh, I wanted to go to school, and my mother says, "No. You can't go to school, because I need the money. We need the money to survive." I says, "All right." So I went to work. I went to work, and I went in a dress shop, cutting threads. Okay. I got three, four dollars a day, whatever. And I used to give it all to my mother, because that was the tradition years ago. When you worked, you gave the salary to your parents.

SIGRIST: And then would she give you a couple of dollars spending money out of what you'd give her, or . . .

STANZIALE: Yeah, if I needed it, yeah, she would, she would. And then, before you know, it, I met my husband, I

got married. That was the end of my career.

SIGRIST: How did you meet your husband?

STANZIALE: Oh, wow. How did I meet my husband? Uh, I had some girlfriends that went to the theater where they had their boyfriends. They had broken up. So they took me with them to tell them what was happening, you know, if they were there. So I went there and, uh, we were sitting up in the lobby, and they were sitting in the orchestra, and the girl says to me, "Are they there?" I says, "Yes, they are, but they have another fellow with them." She says, "Oh, yeah? Who's the other fellow?" I said, "Well, I don't know. You should know. You go out with the fellows." She says, "I don't know." Well, anyway, we got out and went to the ladies room, and I was waiting for my girlfriends outside, and these fellows come over and says, "Are you Casale's granddaughter?" I says, "Yes." He says, "Oh, we're so-and-so, with the girls that live upstairs in my uncle's house. So, well, then they didn't come out, and they start talking, he says, "Well, let's talk a walk." So I says, "No, I'm going home." Because my mother kept me very strict, and she used to tell me,

"You better be home, while my spit dries, or otherwise you're getting a beating." Now, I didn't know if the spit ever dried or what, but I had to make sure I was home before the spit dried. So I says, "No." I said, "I got to go home. You know my mother." He says, "No, no, no." I says, "I don't want . . ." "No, we have a fellow for you." And that fellow was my husband.

SIGRIST: What was his name?

STANZIALE: Thomas.

SIGRIST: And Stanziale must be his last name.

STANZIALE: Yeah. And from there we started to go out, and that was it.

SIGRIST: And he was from Italy also?

STANZIALE: Yes.

SIGRIST: Where in Italy was he from?

STANZIALE: Uh, another town right near me, Gengadelle [ph], Gengadelle [ph]. It's a butcher, like, a little butcher shop, they call it. Gengadelle [ph]. That's another little town.

SIGRIST: So when did you marry? What was the date of the wedding?

STANZIALE: 1932.

SIGRIST: And the month, and the date?

STANZIALE: Uh, April 29th, 1932. I'm married sixty-one years.

SIGRIST: And what do you remember about your wedding? Do you remember what your wedding gown looked like?

STANZIALE: Oh, it rained, it poured. I remember that. And, of course, I was downhearted because my father wasn't there, and my uncle took me to the altar, and we had a little home wedding, you know. We took all the furniture out and made it very, you know, clear, so the few people we invited came, and that's it.

SIGRIST: Did you have children?

STANZIALE: Yes, five sons.

SIGRIST: Could you name them for us on tape?

STANZIALE: (she sighs) Oh, Anthony, Eugene, Henry, Thomas Junior, and Johnny.

SIGRIST: Thank you. And tell me the first time you went back

to Italy.

STANZIALE: Oh, 1970, I believe.

SIGRIST: That was the first time you went back? And did you . . .

STANZIALE: And then when I went back, I was seventy-one, something in the in the seventies, anyway.

SIGRIST: Did you go back to the town that you lived in?

STANZIALE: Yes, I did.

SIGRIST: Tell me what that felt like.

STANZIALE: Well, I told you, when I got off the bus they started shooting fireworks, and to me it felt like you're welcome to your town, but actually that was the process of the feast, you know. And I was very happy, and I cried and cried. And then I went to the church, and also the feast was going on, and I cried thinking that, you know, my mother used to be there and everything. And I bought a little token there, and I came back and I put it on my mother's grave. Because my mother says any time when you get me, I'm going to help you and give you money. And the funny part is this. We always planned on going

there, but we didn't know when. So I says to my mother, she had died, I says, "You know, Mom, if you want me to go to Italy, why don't you make me win something?" So we happened to go to the track, see?

So I told my husband, "You know what? Mama died, and she loved our home so much, play the address 1462." He says, "All right." He goes to the track, and he plays a different number, like sixteen, he changed the numbers around. He came back and I says, "Darn it, you never do what." I says, "I want that address." So he says, "All right. Here's a dollar. Go put the bet on." I go put the bet, and there I was talking with people and never thinking, all of a sudden they call out the numbers.

Well, everybody was saying, "You're gonna be rich, you're gonna be . . ." I says, "I don't know what I'm gonna get, but I won." I never won in my life.

So I won two thousand five hundred dollars. So I went there. I was crying like crazy. So my husband says, "Instead of being happy, you're crying. What are you crying about?" I was happy, but I also was thinking that I asked my mother to help me, and she did. So I says, "Well, this is the time I'm going to Europe." And that's when I went to Italy.

SIGRIST: Oh, what a great story. (she laughs)

STANZIALE: That's the story.

SIGRIST: How long did you stay in Italy?

STANZIALE: Six weeks. Oh, I enjoyed every bit of it.

SIGRIST: And did you visit your husband's town, too?

STANZIALE: Oh, yes. We visited everybody, all the relatives, everything. We wasted one week on looking at relatives, and then four weeks of traveling. And then we come back for two days, and we just said goodbye to everybody and we left.

SIGRIST: Do you still have relatives there?

STANZIALE: Yeah, my husband does. I had, but, uh, I don't keep in touch with them any more.

SIGRIST: What do you think is Italian about you? What is still Italian about you?

STANZIALE: The strictness, you know. My mother taught me, and I just don't change with the new ideas from the old school.

SIGRIST: So you have that sort of old-fashionedness that your

mother had?

STANZIALE: Yes, I do. yes, I do. I believe that's the best. I don't care what the modernization is, you can't beat the old traditions of strictness and going on the straight road. And this business of children living alone, I don't believe that. I told my children, "You get out of her here you get married, that's it. When you get married, then you go on your own." And we stuck to those rules. And, thank God, they worked out good for us. I don't say other people don't, other people do, but thank God I was thankful.

SIGRIST: Are you glad that your parents came to America?

STANZIALE: Oh, yes, definitely. But then they wouldn't know what the difference. I would not have known the difference. But, uh, we came to better ourself, and, uh, although my father was, the man was a very educated man, but he had problems in town with the macaroni factory with his people, so he thought, well, I'm gonna go on my own. And that's what happened.

SIGRIST: He made a whole new life for his whole . . .

STANZIALE: Yes, yes. But we had a lot of disappointment. My father went, you know, died very young, my mother had to struggle and, you know.

SIGRIST: It wasn't all easy.

STANZIALE: No, it wasn't easy at all, no. We had hard luck following us all the way.

SIGRIST: Well, Mrs. Stanziale, thank you so much for letting us come out and, uh . . .

STANZIALE: You're welcome. I hope it will help you in any way.

SIGRIST: Yeah, it was wonderful. Uh, wonderful. Especially the story about winning the money at the track to go to Italy. That's a great story.

STANZIALE: Oh, I tell you how I cried. My husband says, "What are you crying for? You won money." I says, "Please, you don't know what was in my heart." You know? So when I went to pick the money I says, "Thank you, Mom, you helped me." You know, and that was it.

SIGRIST: Oh. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Jean Stanziale on March 31, 1994.