

EI-455

ANNA DI GREGORIO PASQUALE

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SICILY VIA ITALY, 1916

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NEW YORK, LOWER EAST SIDE

LEVINE: This is April 9, 1994. I'm here in Staten Island with Anna Di Gregorio Pasquale. She came from Italy in 1916 when she was twelve years old. Today Mrs. Pasquale is eighty-nine and will be ninety on August 11th. Okay. Well, I'm very happy to be here, and I'm sorry you have a cold, but we'll try to . . .

PASQUALE: I didn't want to disappoint you.

LEVINE: That's very sweet.

PASQUALE: I know how jobs are very important.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, tell me at the beginning, your birth date and where you were born.

PASQUALE: I was born. My father had a job in a different city, so for a while my mother went there and was going to get a baby, the first baby. The first baby was me, I. Then my mother's mother came also there because it was her daughter giving birth, didn't want that she would have some trouble. And, uh, well, I was born there.

LEVINE: What's the name of the town?

PASQUALE: Caltagirone.

LEVINE: Could you spell it?

PASQUALE: C-A-L-T-A-G-I-R-O-N-E. Caltagirone. My father was a builder. Oh, by the way, my father worked on the tallest building in Manhattan, also, in this country, and he went back again. The Woolworth Building. He was a builder.

LEVINE: Oh. What was your father's name?

PASQUALE: Carmelo. C-A-R-M-E-L-O.

LEVINE: And your mother's name?

PASQUALE: Vincenza. They call her short, Vincy.

LEVINE: Vincenza. And do you remember her . . .

PASQUALE: Prussia. Her name is Prussia.

LEVINE: Her maiden name?

PASQUALE: Yeah. P-R-U-S-S-I-A.

LEVINE: And your grandmother? Do you remember her name?

PASQUALE: Leboria [ph].

LEVINE: And this is the grandmother that you came to America with?

PASQUALE: Yes. Here it is on the passport.

LEVINE: And your grandmother was your mother's mother?

PASQUALE: Yes. She came with me, we came and joined my mother.

LEVINE: Okay. So your father was a builder in Italy?

PASQUALE: Yes. And he came back and forth in United States so easily. Once this was awful. He came here for a job, for a job, anxious, and he, it didn't suit him. So he, after he arrived, they went around after work. But being he was a very good builder, it was strange that he couldn't get a job that fitted him. So he came back in Italy. He was back in Italy where my mother lived. At that time my mother lived Caltanissetta. And my mother had two, had I and another baby. So he knocked at the door, in the middle, late, late at night, in a small city. You can imagine how that sounds, having the door knocked in those days. Look how many years. So, uh, my mother said, "Who's there?" He said, "I'm your husband." She say, "Get out of here. My husband is in United States. He only left about six weeks ago." She said, "What are you doing here?" She said, "Go away. You're not my husband." So she wouldn't open the door. Then he went and get, his sister lived nearby. He had to walk several blocks. And then the sister came and knocked the door. She said, "Vincenza, it's me. I'm your sister-in-law." She

say, "Open the door." All right. She opened the door. When suddenly she saw my husband, my father was very, very tall, and she was short, so my aunt always told us that she jumped like a cricket on his . . . (she laughs) to hug him, because she's short. I never forget, just like a cricket, she jumped on top of him and hugged him. (she laughs)

Now, this is one instance, that's all. He used to go back and forth and try to get a bigger job. And he came back and forth in United States. When I was two years old, then we went back and forth.

LEVINE: Did you remember your father from when you were in Italy? Do you remember him?

PASQUALE: Sure. I have the picture upstairs. Yes, why not?

LEVINE: Do you remember any things you did with him, any experiences you had with your father when you were in Italy?

PASQUALE: Well, he was a hardworking man. He liked the meal be ready. And, uh, of course, the same every family once in a while, they argue. That's all. But the

only thing is, he left my mother too many times. Another time he went in France, tried to get a job. He was a very good builder. I don't know. They, oh, I'll tell you this. Uh, he went, when he was in Italy, this is Sicily they were. This is Sicily. Caltanissetta is Sicily. And where I was born belongs to Sicily, too, but it's a good, but it's a very good, clean little city where I was born. The cleanest, it's well-known as the cleanest in all Sicily. Now, so, uh, he, he used to build houses for the farmers. They used to buy a big piece of land, and they wanted a house. So the house they built, of course, wasn't fancy, rough. Any stone made big rocks in the neighborhood, they gather, and they put on top of the other and made rooms. So he, he used to go, of course, it wasn't near his home, so he used to leave on Monday, early, early, early before it got daylight, to reach on the premises, wherever he had to build those homes on farms where they asked, at daylight. Anyway, once he forgot (she laughs). Once he forgot the food he was supposed to cook and eat. (a door opens)

: Hello.

PASQUALE: So he ate the whole week, plenty of boiled macaroni, with no oil, no salt, nothing. He forgot his vegetable, his legume, beans and lentils, you call it legume over there, and he had to eat the whole week.

In the end of the week, then on Saturday afternoon, he used to go back to his home, a regular house, and to the wife. So he ate the whole week plain boiled macaroni, no salt and no olive oil, no vegetable, no legume. (she laughs) That, oh, he never forgot it. What a terrible week, and he had to work hard. And he used to complete the little house, the smaller houses for the farmers. You know, old style, nothing fancy. Whatever they could do, as long as they had a little place to sleep, and they started the farm and they went ahead.

LEVINE: Do you remember the house you lived in?

PASQUALE: Uh, yes. I, we lived, when I got married, my relatives lived there, and my husband, my husband came in Italy for a visit? I was there in Italy. So, and we went to this relative, and this house, a

huge, huge room with a big alcove. In the alcove there's the kitchen.

LEVINE: And what kind of a stove did your mother use?

PASQUALE: And, uh, they had those, uh, brick, like a brick, uh, like a table or desk. What would you call it? With, uh, instead of gas, metal that you burn wood. Not wood, coal, charcoal. Charcoal. You take a piece of rag, you dunk it in a special, in an oil or kerosene, very little, and you light it, and then you put the charcoal on top, and that burns. And when the charcoal is nice and more hot, starting to get red, you put your pot, you can cook the whole day, yes. And there's one or two of those, I don't know how you call it in English. In Italian you call it fornelli [ph].

LEVINE: It's like an iron stove?

PASQUALE: No, only the top.

LEVINE: Oh.

PASQUALE: Like we got our gas stove with the metal top?

LEVINE: Oh, yeah.

PASQUALE: Only that metal is rough and bigger, and there's a whole arm that, where you put, right arm. Instead of being in the gas, a groove.

LEVINE: Where the pot goes in?

PASQUALE: No, a groove to put the coal.

LEVINE: Oh, the coal. Uh-huh.

PASQUALE: The charcoal. Then the charcoal, then you put the pot, and there's the metal, like we got on gas stoves, you know, with those prongs on it. They're large and they're rough. That's how they cook.

LEVINE: Do you remember any foods that your mother cooked, that you liked?

PASQUALE: Well, oh, lentils every week. Lentils are very healthy. I had an aunt, they said that she had tuberculosis. The doctor said, "My dear girl, you can't, you can't afford meat. Eat lentils every day." And that aunt that was supposed to have tuberculosis, she lived till ninety-seven. (she

laughs) The doctor must have made a mistake. After six months he examined her, he turned around, she was in the street with her mother. They were going someplace. And the doctor kept on turning around from far away, looking at her that she was still alive. Six months, after six months. He couldn't get over. He kept on turning around and looking at my aunt as if to say, "You're still living?" She lived till ninety-seven, and she happened to be in France, that my father encouraged the husband and him to go in France and find a good work. (she laughs) He encouraged the brother-in-law. He was all the time going someplace, wanting a better job. Imagine? Then he left France, but my, uh, brother-in-law, that's my uncle, he stayed there with the wife in France. He made the best of it. Whatever job he could get, he made a living. Then he died very young. My aunt had got married a second time to a widow with children. And, uh, and after quite a long time, I respond. I still write to those people in Europe. Oh, yes. Their children, their grandchildren. I stay. And, uh, where we was. Oh.

LEVINE: We were talking about the lentils.

PASQUALE: Yeah. Lentils, vegetable. Oh, vegetable every day. Picked fresh, full of flavor. Lentils, beans, potatoes. They make like a stew, even if they haven't got no meat, and tomatoes. They fix it very good. But every day they cook some kind of macaroni to throw with that stuff, all the time. It's, uh, it's a system they had in Italy. One of these days when I write I'm going to ask do you people have the habit of cooking macaroni every day. Either chop the macaroni small, elbows, or the shells, or the thin linguine, or the heavy ones. Every day.

LEVINE: How about cheese?

PASQUALE: And olive oil, put olive oil, don't forget. The cheese, yes. They grate the cheese, give it a beautiful flavor. Now, at the same time, it's nourishment. But I didn't know it was nourishing when I was eating it. I just ate it because it was there. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about health care, anything

about how people were treated when they were sick?

PASQUALE: Well, when they're sick, I remember, over there the doctor comes home all the time. Even in this country used to come the doctor home when you was sick. I remember, way, way back. Now they can't. They're afraid they'll get robbed with the drugs they carry. And, let's see . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember any folk medicine?

PASQUALE: Every day I had to drink cod liver oil, squeezed fresh from the tree. Cod liver oil is so thick. And I had to rub my tongue with lemon in order to swallow that cod liver oil. And when I was through, with lemon again to clean my tongue. But evidently it made me strong. I survived so many operations. Sixty-three years ago I had three major operations in three months. They removed my kidney, full of stones, and the other kidney danger stones in. And before those two operations they didn't know what I had. They cut my stomach for nothing. That's sixty-three years ago.

LEVINE: Wow. So, um, let's see. We were talking about food and, um, what, were you religious? Were you a religious family?

PASQUALE: Oh, yes. Every Sunday we go to church, yes. Then in the streets, in the streets they have poles with a lamp at the top. And the lamp was oil, or kerosene. I'm not sure if it was oil or kerosene. And they light every night, the man goes around, they used to light it, with a long stick, a long pole with a little wick lit, and you used to stick it through that, the top part was about fifteen inches high, the globe on the top. And they stick it through a little hole and light it.

LEVINE: And, uh, did you have, you didn't have electricity in your house at that time?

PASQUALE: No.

LEVINE: No. You used kerosene?

PASQUALE: Kerosene lamp. Boy, it was a job to clean the funnel, because the funnels used to get black, clear glass funnel. You still see them around. Now they

make a little miniature, small, I've seen them, identical, like those funnels, miniature. Some people like to have it in the house.

LEVINE: Did you clean the funnels? Was that a job you had to do?

PASQUALE: No. No, nobody ever asked me, because they wouldn't trust a child. You're liable to break, or get hurt, or cost money, too. Everything is money. Very scarce, money.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Did, uh, did people come in from, like, the surrounding towns on a market day? Did you have like a market day, or how did you . . .

PASQUALE: Well, uh, they always been like a market. Like, how they call when they get together. They put their way, they always been, even if it was in a rough way, in a small way, in a cheaper way. They always was, way, way, back. I remember. Then when I got older, when I was thirteen, I was there. Oh, yes, certainly. And, uh, around Christmas I was in Rome. Then I grew up in Rome, you know. I came from Rome

when I came in this country. And I went to school in one of the buildings in Vatican City.

LEVINE: When did you go to Rome?

PASQUALE: Uh, I was in Rome, uh, let's see. (she laughs) I tell you the story now. Nobody, it's peculiar. My father was, came in United States. This is another time, the very beginning. And, uh, he sent for my mother. And first he was living, my aunt in Rome sent for him and my mother, and I, and another little girl, to live in Rome so he could get a good job. "Of course, he's a good mechanic," my aunt used to say. "Why shouldn't you get a good job in Rome and make a good living?" When they went there, it didn't please him. So he came in United States and left my mother with, with the other little girl named Leboria and I. And meanwhile she was pregnant. While he was here, then a little baby was born, Elvira. My little sister Elvira. Very, very beautiful little girl. She was born, I always heard how the baby was born hungry. She wanted to eat all the time and pulling my mother's breast, and she never had enough. And

they didn't have no baby food in those days. So what happened, my aunt had a husband that worked for the government. Did a very good job, worked for the government. And they needed him to find out, in the city of Naples. Now, we're living in Rome, he was living in Rome, had a good job. For a while he had to go to Naples to see how the law, they were, they were, uh, managing it all the laws. He was a very brilliant man. I have the picture, the medal of honor, that the king of Italy gave him. I got it. I'm very proud of it. And, uh, this medal, I'm going to leave it to the Museum of Garibaldi. Here on Staten Island, near us, there's a museum, Garibaldi and Munici. When Garibaldi came to Munici and lived with him, because he lost the battle in Italy, so he escaped and came in this country. But after a while he went back. He had his own Garibaldi soldiers. I know the Garibaldi song, anthem, too. And, uh, he went with his soldiers back over there, and he made a big winning war. So glorified that he's in history now, Garibaldi. And I want to leave it to the museum here, because this was something given to another

honorable man for, uh, the, the foresee of the country, what was to come, what they were going to do. And I have his autographic, how you call it?

LEVINE: Autograph, uh-huh.

PASQUALE: No, the, uh, written down. The written down, that the children could read it. His history, anyway.

LEVINE: Biography?

PASQUALE: Biography, his biography. I have it upstairs with his picture. And the same picture, I got one picture from the photograph, photographer, the same as the one they put in this biography, and I have it on the wall. I have in my apartment all, over two hundred pictures all over, that's my hobby. So meanwhile this, uh, this, uh, uncle of mine had to go in Naples for the laws. While he was there, they took me, the wife liked me very much, and they figured my mother had another little girl about three years old, and the little baby that just was born. So she took me, I was five years old, when he went to check up the laws in the next city called Naples. While we were

there (she laughs) my mother got the ticket to come in this country from my father, paid. So, anyway, I was there peaceful with my uncle and aunt. I got the whooping cough for a while. Oh, was I sick with the whooping cough while I was in Naples! And, so my mother got this ticket, and I don't know, she managed the passport so quick, for a woman with two little babies. The relatives must have helped her. So she went, she went in a port and got the ship to come in United States. So when you went any ship, the captain those days, I know because I was there twice, I went back and forth, I did the same thing. They put all the passengers in line, and one of the leaders, I don't know if it was the captain or somebody else, ask your name, and looks at your passport. When they reach my mother, they looked at the passport. On the passport, there was three children. So he looked, and my mother had on it, too. So she sent, they said, "Signora, are you Vincenza di Gregorio?" "Si, Signor. Sono Vincenza." They say, "Are these your children?" in Italian. She says, "Yes, my children." "How many?" She said,

"My two children. One is Elvira, one is Leboria."
She said, "Where's the third one." Said, "(?) she's
with her husband in another city." (she laughs)
"Oh, so then you can't leave. You can't sail. You
have to go back where you lived in Rome." This was
in Naples. Oh, by the way, my aunt and uncle was,
they were living in a place attached to Naples, very
near. But my mother got the ship in Naples. So you
go to go away. He said, "Why?" She said, "My uncle
is a very important man. Why should I leave here?
You," there was no telephone. What was there those
days? A telegram. "You send a telegram and verify
that he had my daughter." So they sent the telegram,
"Your excellency, Pietro Cogne [ph], you have the
daughter of Vincenza Prussia named Anna. Are you
willing to hold this daughter and rear her, live with
you and rear her the best you could, yes or no?
Answer our telegram immediately, because the ship has
to sail." So right away (she laughs) they write
the telegram, they answer quick. All I heard them
mumble, the husband and wife was saying, "My
goodness, what are we going to do? We can't say no,

she won't sail, and she'll be stuck with two babies.

Then we got to take care of the other two babies and her in Rome, when we go back in Rome." So they agreed to hold me and take care of me. So the ship sailed, and my mother with the two children, and then when we went back from Naples, we went back to Rome.

Mean while, I was five years old. Then I went, was six, and was eligible for the first grade. So there was a building near the colonnade of St. Peter's Square. You're looking at St. Peter's Square. They colonnade that there's two, one on each side. On the left side, colonnade, there is a building belonging to the Vatican City. The name, Collegio de Maria Bambina. Maria Bambina is Mary, Holy Mary. And I went to school there, and the uniform, oh, my God.

LEVINE: What was the uniform?

PASQUALE: They were strict. Same as here, pretty near, only more fancy. I had the jumper, navy blue, with a white blouse. And the collar had to be stitched, it's stiff, starched, rolled, a Peter Pan collar, but rolled in a certain way that the starch had to hold

it up in the air. She had to iron it a certain way, my aunt, with starch, and a red bow, a huge, red bow on the blouse with the navy blue jumper. That was our outfit. Now, you know, as I know all these things, because I'm always inquisitive in a quiet way. I could tell you any story. I remember anything. Way back where I lived all the time the furniture, where it was placed at the windows, everything. I happen to have a photogenic mind. (she laughs) So, uh, so when they, a girl wanted to talk to me, and this is in the school, in the Catholic school that belonged to the Vatican City building, a small building, was a school, Catholic. So when they talked to me, I liked to answer back, and I was talking with the girl. So I, they had a, a ruler so heavy that when you do something wrong, that was wrong, I spoke. I'm not supposed to answer, I'm not supposed to look. I'm not supposed to turn around. "Put your hand out," and they hit you with the ruler very hard. I heard that they did that system years ago even in this country. After the Catholic religion stopped that. They did over here,

too, the people tell me. So I didn't like that hitting, I didn't like that scolding. So I didn't want to go no more to that school. I only went there one year. Up the block there was a public school, a huge, big building, public school. So I went to the public school there. And I, I reached up to, let's see, the fourth or fifth grade, yes. And then I had to come in United States.

LEVINE: Well, now, so you were, you were twelve years old when you came.

PASQUALE: Yeah.

LEVINE: So you stayed in that school till that time?

PASQUALE: Yes, till, six until, uh, six till, uh, twelve.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PASQUALE: Yeah. But, uh, I didn't graduate, I didn't reach to graduate, no.

LEVINE: How was the public school different from the Catholic school?

PASQUALE: Well, there was the period of praying, pray. In the Catholic, in the public school they open the window, they let us breathe in and out. Stand up, the whole class, breathe in and out, for exercise. Then they close the windows again, we sit down, and we continue with our study. That's how it is. In the Catholic school, more religion. You've got to stand in line. The nuns are following you, this and that. I couldn't take it.

LEVINE: Well, what was your aunt and uncle's name that you stayed with?

PASQUALE: Uh, Cagni. His name is Peter Cagni.

LEVINE: C-A-N? How do you spell his last name?

PASQUALE: Uh, C-A, C-A-G-N-A, Cagni. C-A-G-N-I. That's gni, Cagni.

LEVINE: And your aunt's name? What was her first name?

PASQUALE: Addolorata. A-D-D-O-L-R-A-T-A. Addolorata. That's the Blessed Mother that's hurt because her son had to be crucified. And at that time, the Mother of Jesus,

they call her, hurt means Addolorata, when you're hurt.

LEVINE: And how did you like living with your aunt and uncle?

PASQUALE: Oh, of course. When they had to give me medicine or castor oil, they had a dish of sweets. (she laughs)
They bribe me in order to drink the castor oil.
(she laughs)

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

PASQUALW: They were the leaders in giving me more castor oil than ever. One time I needed a physic, and they gave me castor oil. Oh, you see, I had to smell it. I was curious from a little girl. So, see what you got, and they had a dish, they put some cookies, so I could drink the castor oil and then eat the cookies.
That's the physic. Castor oil was terrible. Oh, my God, the cramps I used to get. I grew up. And, uh, while I was in Rome, in Rome there's a Tiber River, the Tiber, like the Mississippi here. So we lived on the side of St. Peter's Church, not in the center

Rome, the other side of the Tiber River. So there was a lot of rain, and all the rain from the mountains all over, they inundated, inundated the side of St. Peter's where we were living. The water came over from the Tiber River, overflowed, and it came to the side of St. Peter's. Not the other side, but the church was built uphill, like. It's higher.

It didn't injure the church. And where I was living, we looked down, the flood reached almost to the first floor, and all the stores, grocery stores, that had the sacks of beans, lentils, barrels of olive oil, they all broke and got mixed up. They were flooding all over the street with the flood. And they brought some little boats, plain, just a rowboat, nothing. Just a piece of wood, a rowboat, and the people had to go there. Now, when, uh, when we, then when we back, when the water came down, got cleared and all, of course I went back to school. When I'm back to school, we all wrote like a poem. How do you call it?

LEVINE: An essay?

PASQUALE: Yeah. We wrote about the flood. My flood, my essay, the whole classroom had to copy. It was the best. I was so proud of it.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about it, what you wrote?

PASQUALE: Sure. I wrote about the flood, how the stores ruined the cellar with all the sacks of food and the barrels of olive oil. You could see the oil flooding over there. Then how a rich woman donated the money to supply, make all the people recuperate for the expense what they went through. And then I wrote, "Let's hope this woman, she did it with the bottom of her heart, and not to be mentioned that she gave away so much money to the poor." That must have been the hit. The whole classroom had to write my poem.
(she laughs) All right? Am I talking too much here.

LEVINE: No, you're great.

PASQUALE: How long is it going to last, this?

LEVINE: A little bit more.

PASQUALE: How about, this is important, now?

LEVINE: Okay. Let's say, now, uh, when you, let me just ask you a question about the school in Rome. How, how was it different from the school where you went first? You didn't go to school in the other place, in your little village?

PASQUALE: No.

LEVINE: You started in Rome.

PASQUALE: I started in Rome.

LEVINE: How about where you lived? How was that different, in Rome, compared with the village where you used to live?

PASQUALE: Well, in Sicily is, all the houses were ground floor. Very seldom you see a house one floor, two floors. The rich people lived there. The ground floor. You walk in. But they all were dry, very dry. And for the toilet they had a hole. Last night, on the television, the four girls there, on the television, one of them that comes from Sicily said the toilet a

hole like in Sicily, and it reminded me when I was a little girl. They got a hole, and then if they built about two feet, a little wall, then, and then they got the pots with the handle. You dump there, you put some water rinse, never smell, and never flooded.

It seems when they built it, they built it that runs away down freely, because we never, no matter which house I went, was always clean, and a good smell, and then that, that, uh, toilet, they cover with a wood cover, a square wood cover, they put it on.

LEVINE: And what was the place you lived in Rome, with your aunt and uncle? What was that like?

PASQUALE: Oh, that had a regular toilet. Oh, no. That was a modern, like not as fancy as now, the bathrooms. Oh, we had it regular. Oh, that was, he could afford it, he could afford it. We lived, we lived, oh, after the flood, you know, we were in a flood. We were on the top floor. We couldn't get out. We were on the third floor. And the name of the street was Via Porta Castello. Imagine, I remember. Oh, I remember my places I lived in my life. So, uh, as soon as the

flood went away, we all moved in the other side of the Tiber River where the flood never, when it overflows of the Tiber River wouldn't run on that place. They call the center of Rome. But I had to finish my class, otherwise I wouldn't be promoted. We moved over there, but every morning I had to walk three quarters of an hour to pass from that place. Now, in this Tiber River, there's the bridges. There's the old-fashioned bridges, then it's (?) came on, years that came, they built a newer bridge with all the beautiful, tall statues, marble statues, now. Way, way, after. So I had to get up in the morning. Of course, earlier they had to, I brought my lunch, my lunch. One little girl must have been poor. She had in her lunch a little lard, fat, and two slices of bread, the fat from the pork. My family used to chop it up and, uh, fry it with garlic and onion and put it in the vegetables. She ate that for lunch. And that impressed me so much, I never forgot that little girl eating that sandwich with the pork fat. Then one day they put salt to preserve it, that fat. And so we moved over there, and I had to

go to school until the class finished.

LEVINE: Well, then, how was it decided that you would come to America?

PASQUALE: Because my grandmother didn't live with us. I only lived with my aunt. My mother-in-law, my mother's mother lived, stayed in Sicily with her husband. And, uh, and the husband died, so my aunt said to my, uh, to the sister, that's my grandmother, said, "Come in Rome." Said, "Don't stay there. I'll put you in business." And the business, so she did. And when she came and lived with us in the huge apartment over my aunt that the husband had the good government job, and then, then and there my grandmother took charge of me. She used to clean my clothes, iron it, starch them. My bows for my hair, I had braids. And, uh, and, uh, put me to sleep. I slept in her room. So, and in the morning she got up early, and there was a market. In Rome there's a market up till twelve o'clock. One side of the huge, huge market there's vegetables. Another side of the huge market there's the vegetable stands. Another side there's the fish

stands. Another side there is, of course, Rome don't stay without flowers, there's a section with flowers.

And my grandmother, then there's a section where they sell stockings and handkerchiefs, pins, all those things, dried goods store. (voices off mike)

Dry goods store. She sold all dry goods stuff. Twelve o'clock the market has to be cleaned.

Everybody goes home. If they have a stand, if there's a store that's got a little hole, they'll put the stand in the hole, and the next morning they pull out the stand and they're in business. And my grandmother had the dry goods, a stand about, I'll tell you how many feet. About two yards, almost two yards. Oh, I remember very well. When it was Sunday it was open also. On Sunday I went there. Me being there, no boys could steal anything from her, because I was there watching, helping, even though I was, what was I? About eight, nine years, keep on growing, going to school. So, uh, and my grandmother took care of me. Then my father and my mother wanted me. So told my mother, here, her mother, that's my grandmother, "Come in United States over here. Bring

my daughter." So we went.

LEVINE: So, uh . . .

PASQUALE: That's when I came. I was twelve years old, a little over twelve.

LEVINE: How did you feel about coming to the United States?

PASQUALE: Well, I tell you the truth, I didn't like it.

LEVINE: Why so?

PASQUALE: Because my mother lived in a section where was the Italian gangsters. Beautiful street, Cherry Street, Monroe Street, Division Street. Those are still, and there was, my school number was P.S. 177, and it was close to the waterfront in the lower part of Manhattan.

LEVINE: Well, when you were leaving with your grandmother, were you looking forward to it, or did you not want to leave Rome, or . . .

PASQUALE: No, it hurt me very much. I was so attached to those people, and I had been in Sicily a short time, I know

how poor, my family wasn't prosperous. Of course, I wasn't the poorest, because my father was a builder, but it wasn't like where I lived, up on the top floor, with the beautiful view. And I saw a historic place from my window, and I, we wrote a composition. That's what I meant before.

LEVINE: The composition.

PASQUALE: The composition. I wrote a composition, what I could see from my window. When I enter the, the hall, there is two marble, uh, stands with a huge, that's what I wrote, with two huge marble pots. I walk up the steps, a hundred ten steps, to reach the sixth floor of the apartment where my aunt and uncle lived, the sixth floor. And from there we had a rail on the edge all around. We lived on top of the, on the edge of the building was a rail all in front of our apartment. And from the rail I saw the, the historic church named Pantheon, where some of the famous royal people was buried. One of the painters, I don't remember the painter, with his sweetheart, was buried there also. Then I wrote down what else I could see.

When I brought that composition in, the whole class had to copy it, the second composition that the class had to copy. Imagine?

LEVINE: That's wonderful.

PASQUALE: Because I, I lived in a good place. Of course, I moved a short time there, and I kept on going to school, traveling over three quarters of an hour walking to the nearest, Vatican City, St. Peter's. The public school, though, not Catholic. I didn't want Catholic. (she laughs) Too strict.

LEVINE: So what did you and your grandmother take with you? Do you remember what you brought?

PASQUALE: So we, we got, now, here's where we come. We had two valise, grips, same as now that the people, you buy a grip. Of course, stiff, not those soft ones, stiff. In between there's cardboard. One was about less than two feet, and the other one was over three feet, two of them. So, uh, we went for the, before, while we were making the passport, and we, before we got the ship, it came, approved and everything. Of

course, my mother sent the paper that I'm taking. My family sent the paper that I'm bringing in. My daughter and my mother, my mother wrote, my daughter and my mother. So, as you saw the passport there, that they put on the newspaper in Ellis Island, my passport picture on the newspaper. So when we were about to go on the ship, they made us go to a huge, huge room with petitioned showers, one next to the other. No doors. Me, a little over thirteen, I had to be naked. We all were naked there. So they gave us a sheet to, to dry ourself in the hand, and we marched in, and each one, in one of the shower, with a partition on each side. But the front, they all were open. So I took that sheet, I put it over my body to cross, to go in the shower. One woman working there, she got a hold by the neck the sheet and pull it out of my body. She said, "This is not to protect you. This is to dry yourself." (she laughs) And she embarrassed me so much. Then we went on the ship.

LEVINE: And what was the name of it?

PASQUALE: Ah, that's one thing I don't know. I could tell you the name of the ship when I came the next time, but not that.

LEVINE: Do you remember where you left from?

PASQUALE: From Naples again, Naples. And then you could leave from Genoa, too. Genoa's in the northern part of Italy, near the Alps. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: So did you have any experiences aboard the ship? Do you remember anything?

PASQUALE: Oh, experience, I threw up a lot. I get seasick very easy. I used to get, I used to get seasick traveling on a train.

LEVINE: Well, now, you were going across during World War One.

PASQUALE: Yes. Oh, that's where it comes in. Now comes the story of my traveling. (she pauses) That there were open show I did mention. We traveled over a week on the ship, on the ocean. We had the beds like the navy, you know.

LEVINE: Bunk beds, bunk.

PASQUALE: Bunk beds, one next to the other. In Ellis Island I saw two, one next to the other, two. But we had six or eight, and under another six or eight in line, all in line, in rows. Luckily, my grandmother and I, we were up. No sheets, just blankets. And in between from one, uh, one bunk to another, there was a rail, like a tube. That's all. Hollow, just a tube on top to, to use as a divider. And we, we traveled, water, water, water, over a week. Oh, my goodness, sickening. Water, water, no land. Then, and the ship, the water used to hit the porthole - they were round. They were locked, because we were not in first or second class. We were down below. So, and oh, my goodness, all that water, splashing on that round porthole, that round porthole about fifteen inches wide, diameter, round. This much is fifteen. And, uh, then we reached the Strait of Gibraltar. That was a dangerous place, where the submarine from the First World War used to sink the ships. Luckily our ship didn't sink, but they gave us the life preservers, all of us, except the children. The

mothers started to shout, "What about my little girl? What about my son? What about my baby? So you're giving me the life savers?" There was a big confusion there, everybody shouting. "You mean to tell me if I sink I'm gonna let my children die? I'm gonna be saved with the lifesaver and not my children?" And that was very sad. I'll never forget it. (she is moved)

LEVINE: So your grandmother had a life preserver.

PASQUALE: And the ship before us sank, one ship before us. And we kept on going and going and going. Now, when we passed the Strait of Gibraltar, for a while there was a little land, but then no more. Then we had to reach. And it took us almost three weeks, three weeks. Then when we reached . . .

LEVINE: New York?

PASQUALE: When we reached New York, everybody say, "Oh, look at the Statue of Liberty, the (?) of Liberty." I didn't care the Statue of Liberty. I had all that ocean on my mind, my eyes. I didn't understand, I didn't want

to understand. So we went in . . .

LEVINE: To Ellis Island.

PASQUALE: We could see Manhattan from far away. There you are, we go on this isle, this island. The building still exists. And, uh, oh, my goodness, we enter a huge, huge hall. And in this hall there was a separated like rooms, with boards, just the boards, not a gate and not a metal. In this huge room you look way up high, and there's, the windows still exist, all the eye on the rail. They had remodeled Ellis Island, I saw it, but the rail is still there. I was so amazed. I was on Ellis Island. So when we reached there, I could point out, when my granddaughter, when my granddaughter took me again for the third time I went there, I just liked to go there. I says, somehow I feel that that's a part of my home. So I told my granddaughter, "You see this spot, honey? This is where I grips my valise, two valise, here, standing, and they took my grandmother away to examine her eyes." Because she was about fifty-five or fifty-six. You read it on the passport there I

got. So I didn't realize the population that she was going to delay. So it took her two hours, and me standing, (she is moved) and halfway crying. I couldn't cry fully, because there was a big public, all different nationality people, to enter in Manhattan after, if Ellis Island would approve to go in. And I was so crying. And the people told me, the one that could speak Italian. He say, "You know, little girl," in Italian. She said, "If your grandmother, they find the eyes sick, you got to go back in Italy." That made me more sad. Well, after two hours it came. Luckily a little cataract she had wasn't bad at all, was able that if she had to work she could earn a living. Now, so then they fed us, rough wooden table. I don't know, they fed us. What I was impressed, which I wrote on the news, Staten Island Event, the square bread, big, long, bread. They were about two feet long, a foot-and-a-half or two feet, something like that. And they sliced it. Well, even years ago here we had to slice the bread that we bought. And it impressed me so much, that bread, that, uh, when they asked me about Ellis

Island where I live, in the senior center, they say, "What impressed you most?" I say, "The square bread, a hot blanket, and a cot without a mattress." They gave a hot blanket because it came from the sterilizer. They pull from the sterilizer, "Here, lay down." I was glad to lay down. I was, I stood two hours. Then we ate the meal, and I laid down, and the next, and my mother didn't know about we arrived. Because the letter we mailed her traveled with the ship I came. How could she have the letter?

But there was something, there was other Italian people from the Italian section where my mother lived that came and get their relatives in Ellis Island the same night, the same afternoon. When they went home, the word started to spread around. "Do you know who was there? Vincenza's daughter and mother, and they're gonna sleep in Ellis Island." So the word that passed around, when my mother found out the next morning, she got up and she came, she got up first of anybody else in the family. She didn't come, she left everybody, she came and fetch us. Here was my mother all dressed up nice. She bought her best

outfit, purple. (she laughs) That shocked me.
(she laughs) She made it herself. She didn't pay
for it. A purple, excuse me. I have to . . . (she
coughs) So, a purple, and it had a purple hat with
a feather. (she laughs) "Ooh," I said, "my God,
that is not my mother. What is she dressing so fancy
for?" I was feeling so miserable from what I went
through the day before, and she came all spiffed up.
So we went home, and they had a party.

LEVINE: What was the party like?

PASQUALE: The neighbors. And she got cookies, and she got the
Italian confetti, the Italian almonds, almonds.
Jordan almonds, they still sell it, and cookies and,
uh, oh, it was great. And what happened, I was used
to solid colored dresses, made to order, fitted. Oh,
she wouldn't let me wear that. She had to buy a
dress for me. And before we enter the house, they
were selling on the sidewalk. (she laughs) She
bought me a plaid dress. I hate plaid. I never wear
plaid in my life. She made me wear that dress. I
was so hurt. I felt so like a pauper. I really

don't like plaid. I never, I'm ninety years old, I never buy a dress plaid, or a blouse. And, uh, I had beautiful clothes made to order, pretty colors, with the little lace trimming of bows, and she gave me that plaid dress. The bottom was huge, wide, and the top was puffy, and puffy sleeves. Ooh, I hated it. I was used to everything fitted. (a door opens and someone enters the room) Well, anyway . . .

LEVINE: We'll pause here for a second. (break in tape) Go ahead, we're resuming now.

PASQUALE: I was I was called one day from our director, her name is Laura. She send Mrs. . . .

LEVINE: No, wait, before you say that, when you first came here, uh, what street were you living on? Do you remember where you lived when you first came to this country?

PASQUALE: I lived on Monroe Street. And nearby there was Pike. Another time we moved to Pike Street.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, how did where, the place where you lived, the apartment. How was that different from where you

lived in Rome?

PASQUALE: Oh, because there was a lot of pushcarts, and evidently Rome, being the capital of Italy, they keep it very clean and neat. When the market of shopping closes at twelve o'clock, everybody takes their ware, their pushcarts or their stand, from the big plaza. The city sends the working people with a huge rubber hose, and they wash it. But on Monroe Street, where there was all the pushcarts and stands, with the food, they didn't do that. Not only that, there was all time the rumor of the gangsters. Many, many years after I was married, I had a neighbor that they kidnapped her son. Way, way back, her son was the same age as mine when I was married with a couple of children. She had a son the same age as mine. And, uh, and she said, "See, my son was kidnapped by the gangsters in the neighborhood." Because she lived in the same neighborhood. And she went all over the saloons. Those days the women, you know, good women didn't go in the saloon. But she made herself brave, and she shouted in every saloon, "You'd better return my son." See, being the husband of this lady had a

tailor shop and making a little bit money, they were after them for the money, the racketeer.

LEVINE: So did she get her son back?

PASQUALE: Yeah. The son then grew up and, where I lived with my children, he wasn't married yet, but after he got married later than I. I had three children. And she lived in this country, way, way, back. That's, uh, six, sixty-seven years ago.

LEVINE: Were there Italian clubs in the Lower East Side when you were there?

PASQUALE: What they got is a little cafe that you walk down the steps. And in those cafe, the gangsters used to make arrangements.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

PASQUALE: . . . in the summer months, what I did.

LEVINE: Tell me also about where you lived. How was your apartment in the Lower East Side different from your . . .

PASQUALE: No. My apartment was very nicely. My mother had the apartment, uh, two bedrooms, a kitchen, and she managed to have a little living room, not with a big sofa. Nice chairs and, uh, and a round table. And the chairs are, one of the chairs, I remember, was the size of a small loveseat, not big sofa. And then she had a big, a china closet, not too large, with, uh, with the souvenirs inside, you know, from a gift shop. I have that china closet today.

LEVINE: Really!

PASQUALE: I still have that china closet today. All my grandchildren, when they go on a trip, they bring a souvenir, and it's so full, so huge, that the church had a china auction. I collected a few bags out of my china closet, things that weren't so extra good, so extra fancy, and I brought it to the church to get rid of it, it's so full. It's so full. It's in the same china closet when I came from Italy when I was thirteen years ago. Evidently every time we moved it never broke. And I moved it several times, and it's not broken.

LEVINE: Did you go to school in the Lower East Side? You went to 177.

PASQUALE: P.S. 177.

LEVINE: And how was the school there?

PASQUALE: And my vacation I was (she laughs) (she coughs) I was thirteen-and-a-half. My vacation, my mother took him in her shop. She worked, my mother.

LEVINE: What did your mother do?

PASQUALE: She brought a silk waist. Not a machinist. The machine people were up the floor above. The first floor what they wanted, that iron it, examine if there's anything wrong. I made a doll dress. So my mother said, "You're talented, my dear girl." She said, "I'm going to give you, bring you with Anita." We had Anita that used to work, when they repair the embroidery in the silk waist. Because the real embroidery and the beading work was done in a factory. Then the operator, they put the blouses together. And sometimes the embroidery used to get a

little damaged, or the beads used to rip a little. So my place, I got the job with Anita. And there was another girl, another girl named Anita, another work Anna, and me little Anna. We were three Annas, almost. I'll never forget it. And I got along fine. We checked, there was, they examine us. All the damage, they put all in one, uh, basket. Then they bring it to us. Each blouse we go over, whatever there is a silk embroidery, I repair, or, or the beads. And I was thirteen, I didn't have the working permission. How you call it?

LEVINE: The permit.

PASQUALE: Permit. So when, when the inspector used to come to inspect it, the children, if there were children underage, we used to go in the bathroom, in the toilet (she laughs) not to get caught. So I worked . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember where you worked?

PASQUALE: Share Brothers.

LEVINE: S-H-A-Y? Shay Brother?

PASQUALE: Share.

LEVINE: Oh, Share.

PASQUALE: Share Brothers. Mr. Share Brother was a big, tough, tall man. Now, Anita, she was a little (?) to repair those blouses. It was during the war, so we made the stars, and a sailor collar shirts, we were the first ones, Share Brother, to make a sailor collar. I still got the collar. I made myself a blouse. It's all deteriorated, but I have it, with the stripes and the collar white and the navy blue. I didn't have the heart to throw away that (?). It's all (?). And in the corner, the white stars. There's a certain way you got to embroider those stars to give the shape perfect. So she gave it to me, and I was doing a sample blouse. Share Brother, the boss, about, uh, how much distance is here?

LEVINE: The room? Oh, about, uh, twenty feet.

PASQUALE: Well, twenty feet, there was a stairway coming down from upstairs. He was coming down from the operator machines upstairs, coming down to, there was the

pressers and the examiners and, if there was a spot, the examiner remove a spot with benzene, and they embroider it. He spotted from far away that I had in my hands on a frame the red, the blue blouse, navy blue blouse, with the collar the stripes. And he shouted the name of my little foldery, the little foldery, the little group, we were three, or four, maybe sometimes. He shouted, "Anita," in a loud voice, "what is that your girl doing?" When I heard that shout yelling, and said a young girl, I got so scared. I don't know why, I wasn't used to it. He was a big bully, so big built, and good-looking, too. And he will, he walked forward, came down the steps. He spotted me while he was on top of the steps. He walked down the steps. Then when he came close to me, he looked at me working. I kept on working. He didn't say a word. You know why? Because with the cheap pay I was getting, I was working on a sample blouse, so it was profitable to him. Because I said, "How come he didn't shout when he was here? He was pleased. He was pleased because you were doing good work for a small money." I earned twelve dollars a

week.

LEVINE: Were you going to school at the same time?

PASQUALE: No. This was summer months.

LEVINE: Oh, summer months. Uh-huh.

PASQUALE: The summer vacation. And I got appendix operation.
I got appendix operation.

LEVINE: What was that like, going to the hospital?

PASQUALE: The hospital, same as now. The only thing is that they give you gas that chokes you. Uh, what was the name? Believe it or not, I have the name of that surgeon written down, my first surgeon. I have all my operation and doctors' names. Right now I don't remember, but I have it written down, if I find the sheet upstairs. I remember the name of all my doctors. What was the name? I can't remember now.

LEVINE: So was it your mother, your father, your grandmother, you and your two sisters?

PASQUALE: Two sisters.

LEVINE: And that was the whole family?

PASQUALE: Yeah, yeah. Well, that's it.

LEVINE: How did your grandmother like living here? How did she like being in America, your grandmother?

PASQUALE: My grandmother got pneumonia and died.

LEVINE: Oh. Soon after you came?

PASQUALE: Yeah. I cried so much, rubbing my eyes. I had under my eyes two sores, red sores, from scraping and scraping with the handkerchief, how much I cried, because I was brought up with her in Italy, in her aunt, in her sister's house. I cried so much that believe it or not I went back in Italy.

LEVINE: After she died?

PASQUALE: Yeah.

LEVINE: Why did you go back?

PASQUALE: Because I was a very, very depressed, very depressed. And, uh, I never was healthy. I didn't feel like eating. So my aunt from Rome sent for me, you know,

sent for me.

LEVINE: What kind of a person was your grandmother? How would you describe your grandmother?

PASQUALE: Oh, very generous. I remember once there was a little, a young girl, a servant, when we were in Italy, that she had her hair full of, full of . . .

LEVINE: Lice?

PASQUALE: Lice, and all the eggs, and from that then she got a lot of sores. It was terrible. And she was taking care of children of somebody that had a fancy bakery store. The Italian pastry, very fancy pastry store. So, uh, this was the apartment they lived in. They lived in a nice apartment. And this girl, this servant, she was about, she must have been about nineteen or twenty. I remember well. Oh, my grandmother said, "My God, my dear girl, how you living? How could you live?" So she said, "I'll take care of you." She took a sheet, she prepared everything. She wrapped herself, my grandmother, with a huge sheet, white sheet from our bed, and she

wrapped her, too. Then she, she took the snuff, the aristocrat people used to, she bought snuff. She bought, uh, vinegar, a little vinegar, and something else she mixed. And she saturated all that pink paste, all the sore on her head. She wrapped the head. She said, "Go home, work, and go to bed." After so many days, I don't know if it was a week or not, but I remember well, because I kept away from those two, they were cleaning lice, big lice that looked like they had tails, you know, the edge. So big. So after, I don't know if it was about a week or so, well, she took a comb, a fine, you know, the fine comb you scrape dandruff? She, she weaved it with a thread, the regular sewing thread. The one you would mend a hole or make a hem, cotton thread. She weaved into the teeth of the comb, all the way to the edge, deep, leave the front free. And with that comb she spread the first all that sores with that paste of snuff. Then with the comb she kept on digging. All the lice, you see, was stuck in the comb. I don't know how that woman learned what she knew. In Sicily, maybe. Who knows? No, this was in

Sicily, this girl. And, uh, and then she said, "Go home and wash your hair." She scraped all that snuff, all the sores got stuck to the snuff and healed, imagine. Then she washed her hair and with that comb combed all the nits, they were white, a lot of them, like when you scrape the fish. My stomach is upset thinking about. And, uh, oh, she was the happiest young lady in the block. She cried with joy. Then the owner sent us, the owner, where she worked for, a big, huge box, new box, from the store, full of pastry. She sent about a dozen-and-a-half of pastry. For me, said, "Bring it to the lady that fixed your head." And I ate with my heart's content all the pastries, all the best. What pastry! More than a dozen. I remember so well. And the girl was so happy. Every time she passed she says hello, in Italian way she greets us, and all that. And that was the benefit, the type of woman my grandmother was. And if somebody needs a food, starving, she share it. I did it, too. During the depression, my husband and I fed the neighborhood from my small grocery store. And then we couldn't pay the bills.

Three, three wholesalers sent us the letter that we're supposed to pay the bill. So my husband took the books, the credit we gave the people. And he brought it to the three lawyers. Imagine, three different house. That's after we went my, my grandmother was the same type. And he said, "When these people, I know these people are honest. As long as they come along their pay, then I'll pay you back." The Depression, then they started to get jobs, those customers of ours. They got their good jobs back again, they paid us. And when, after several years my husband got old. He had to retire.

All the wholesale houses told us, "Mrs. Pasquale wrote a letter. If you ever want to open the store again we give you the stuff, the grocery, anything you need for the store, on credit for thirty days, no money. After thirty days you pay." Well, my grandmother was the same type as my husband and I, and the people who meet him in the street, even today, they say, Mrs. Pasquale, when we came with no money in our hands, I came for food for the children, and me and my husband," he said, "you never made a

sour face."

LEVINE: Well, tell me now, when you were working in the summer, your first job, with the sewing.

PASQUALE: Yes.

LEVINE: Then you went back to school.

PASQUALE: Yeah.

LEVINE: And how long did you stay in school?

PASQUALE: Well, in school, uh, I was, uh, 5-A.

LEVINE: And then . . .

PASQUALE: I went to school three years, but I reached, they skip me, because I had the education from Italy. Now, when we reached, from Italy, I started the school, my first, my teacher was Miss Ligale [ph]. I'll never forget Miss Ligale [ph] taught us how to twist our tongue so we could pronounce. And the children that, some children that came from Europe that twisting theirs to make fun of her. They, because I twist the tongue, they didn't like. That

was awful, to make fun of her. She was one of those, uh, foreign English with the pointy nose and all that. But I didn't. We had to (she demonstrates) you see, this way we had to exercise our tongue. Ms. Ligale, I'll never forget her.

LEVINE: And . . .

PASQUALE: And the little girl that brought the sandwich with the lard. That was in, in, uh . . .

LEVINE: 177.

PASQUALE: In Italy.

LEVINE: Oh, in Italy.

PASQUALE: In Italy, in Italy. Over here we had lunch, we had exercise. They opened the window, we do exercise. Breathe in, breathe out. Then during the war we sang patriotic songs. Then one day the teacher said we got to go in Times Square to sell Thrifty Stamps, because that's the stamps for the war. Do you know Thrifty Stamp? War bonds and fifty cents. First comes the Thrifty Stamp, the little stamp, a quarter

each. And then when you got so many stamps it becomes a bond. You paste it up, and it's a Thrifty bond. That money is loaned to the government. We went on 42nd Street to sell Thrifty Stamps for the war, the schoolchildren. I remember very well. But I didn't . . .

LEVINE: Did a lot of people buy them?

PASQUALE: I didn't sell, no, I didn't sell much. Maybe I sold two or three.

LEVINE: Well, tell me, was there anything else about the Depression. In other words, when you dropped out of, when you stopped going to school, was that the Depression time? No. It was before the depression.

PASQUALE: The Depression is when I got married.

LEVINE: Okay. How did you meet your husband?

PASQUALE: I told you I didn't like it here, I went back in Italy? So my husband's family, my husband's family, and my family, got friends, became friends. So I used to write letters to my sisters, were a low-grade

school age. So, uh, the children, usually, from the top floor where we lived, you go downstairs on the sidewalk and play. And, uh, I remember before I left Italy, the United States to go back in Italy, I wanted to go in a movie house. It was only a nickel.

My mother won't let me go, because there was boys going there, neighborhood boys. So when I was in Italy I wrote letters to my sisters. "Listen," I said, "watch out. Watch out for the boys. Don't go in the street. Stay in the house. Don't talk with the fellow. If you go outside, when you go to school." Still all the particulars I went through that would happen, you know, to be a tease or something. So, uh, this fellow, son of a family that became friends with my family, he said, "What kind of daughter you got there? My goodness, what a sensible letters." He got very, very impressed with my letters. Then time pass by, he came from the war. He came back from the war. He was a sailor. And I got, I got the pictures of him on 42nd Street when the sailors came, marched, they marched, before they went to the war. He got the picture on 42nd Street,

and I have them. And I have the picture when he was on a ship boxing. I have three pictures. The mother gave it to me when I got married.

LEVINE: How long did you stay in Italy?

PASQUALE: And the ship he was on, he went in the war, was named Wyoming. I remember, I got it written down. So he came from the war, and he worked a few years. He saved the money. Then he said, "See, you know, I'd like to see Italy. I hear so much about Italy, a small country with so much art, so much, you know, beauty of it, all the art and painting, Michelangelo, Da Vinci, everybody." So he turns around, he said to my mother, "I'm gonna come visit your daughter." "Ah," my mother said, "now you're mistaken. They won't let you in. Who are you? A stranger? They won't let you in. First you got to go to my aunt, another aunt." I was living, at that time, with my grandmother my father's side. On my mother's side died, my father's side, in Sicily. When I went back in Italy I didn't wind up in Rome, because in Rome I was already a nice young lady. What was I? About

fifteen-and-a-half about, fifteen, sixteen. In Rome, it's a fast country. You never know which fellow may be wrong to this young lady. So when I reach, went away from this country to go in Italy, instead of going in Rome, the family that took me was a family traveling, going in Italy, and I went with them. They told me, bring the. Instead of going in Rome I wound up in Sicily. My heart broke. I didn't go in Italy to wind up in Sicily. My heart broke. So in Sicily I was too old to go to school. Go to the dressmaker. And I went to a private dressmaker. Used to sew, in general, to the rich people that traveled, buy the material so many part of the world, and we used to make beautiful gowns that, when there's the exhibit of the show here of the actors and actress, you cannot compare our work. One of my dresses, I wore, I wore forty years ago. I won't give it away. I gave it today to one of my granddaughters that she's a beautician. She wore that dress for mine, forty years ago, in a hairstyle show. She went to a hairstyle. She's a beautician, the owner.

LEVINE: What did it look like? What does it look like?

PASQUALE: You know the new drapes they use on the side? Just you drape on the side. But my drapes wasn't just a straight material, it was a material with curls, and a column, one by one, that drape. That's number one that you don't see it. Then I had black. The top black, and it has a silk chiffon yoke about three-and-a-half inches wide, the yoke on top. The yoke has to be attached with the heavy black material. Now, where attached, very fine bead black, beads, beads black, see the beads, very fine. I made three different sketches with the pencil. I picked one, the finest gentle, that covers the seam that attaches to the heavy dress.

LEVINE: What kind of material is a heavy dress?

PASQUALE: Well, a heavy dress is a heavy, heavy black drape, huge. But that yoke is a silk chiffon transparent, and on the edge the piping, the kind of piping so fine that where I, where I used to sew, nobody could make it that fine. It's so fine about an eighth of an inch, less, very fine, here. It's unbelievable.

It looks like a thin cord pasted onto the yoke. Instead it's a (?) of piping to hold the yoke, it has to be. But it looks like a thin cord, here on the neckline. She wore in a show. I said, when we went for Christmas they invited me in New Jersey, they come and pick me up. That's another family. My youngest daughter, she's sixty-six.

LEVINE: Tell me what you used the dress for when you first made it. What did you wear it to?

PASQUALE: In this country I made it.

LEVINE: Yeah. What did you, what was the occasion?

PASQUALE: Oh, for a wedding. For a wedding I wore it. And my mother, I was already, I was old enough, married with the third child. My children were working. My children were working. And my mother bought for a gift, because I was a good daughter I used to go in Manhattan. When she was older, my mother alone, now lately, she died four years ago, my mother, a hundred three years-and-a-half. And my aunt that's supposed to have tuberculosis, I mentioned before, when she

was about nineteen or twenty, she died in France, ninety-seven. My mother said, "I'm going to beat them all." Every time she received a letter somebody died of her relations, "I'm gonna." She did, a hundred three-and-a-half. She would have lived more, but she fell and broke her hip and got complications.

And they put, we put her in a good nursing home because we couldn't lift her up. She couldn't walk no more. And when she got up, when they make her get up every morning and put her in the wheelchair, they brought my mother in the dining room, and she knitted, nine months of her life in a nursing home, she made three blankets for the nurses to take home.

(she laughs) Yeah, she did. One of them was hard, the one that goes up and down like that. Oh, my goodness. And every morning over there, when they brought the wool free, the (?) Nursing Home. It's one of the best nursing homes. Four, five years ago my mother paid, they took my mother's money, four thousand five hundred dollars a month. All her money went for the nursing home. So they brought the wool to make the blanket. She said, "I don't work with

that wool. I don't like the colors." So they wheeled her wheelchair, her in the wheelchair, in the basement, where the stockroom of the wool was. She said, "Now, pick your colors." And she picked all the beautiful colors, and she kept on using those colors.

LEVINE: Well, tell me what happened when your, before you were married to him, when your husband went to Italy.

PASQUALE: So my husband, my mother told, "You got to go and pick a friend of mine and bring her to where my daughter lives, so they enter you." That, you're right, we didn't do that. So he came over, he went over my aunt, and my aunt, I don't know if she sent a telegram or what, she says, "Here we come." He came, he was one of the happiest fellow I ever saw, with a nice face, but he had a round face. I usually will go with the fellows with the oblong face. But he was so attractive, and he had big eyes, a nice boy, straight body. He didn't have no belly. I found out that he reduce before I came. He went on a reducing diet. (they laugh) I found out after. So, and he

had a heavy chain, gold, with the watch, you know, in the pants. You put the watch in a little pocket in the front in slacks, men's slacks. And, like a medal, you know, (?), hanging there, rich looking, and a beautiful ring he had. And, uh, smiling happy.

They had, my mother had sent, my mother in the family had sent me a picture of him, but the picture didn't do no justice. So who, me, marry him? I had other fellows there, three other fellows wanted to marry me in Sicily. I happened to be in Sicily. Sicily, Caltanissetta is the military place where the military maneuver for the, get ready for war, because they have a lot of land outside the city. They would walk. And, uh, and I lived there. And there was plenty of men, see? So three, but all of those three men want to marry me. They all were short. I wouldn't marry a short fellow. (she laughs) I lived with my grandmother. She had a single daughter, and her single daughter was wishing one of those fellows would go for us. Instead of they didn't.

LEVINE: What's the name of the town? Could you spell it?

PASQUALE: It's the center of Sicily. Sicily is a triangle island, and, sure I could spell it. C-A-L-T-A-N-I-S-S-E-T-T-A. It's in a center in geography, the triangle at the foot, the boot of Italy. Italy is a boot. Then there's the water there.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO

PASQUALE: There's a canal there that you pass. You pass the Strait of the Messina. They call it Messina. That's the strait. They call it strait, because it's water. I don't know they call it strait. How they call it in United States? A canal of water. Strait, over there. Like the Strait of Gibraltar. That's all right, that's right. So, um . . .

LEVINE: So what happened when you met him?

PASQUALE: Wait a minute. He came in. Everybody looking at him, the whole family. My aunt, my aunt refused to go. All happy. In other words, I approve. That's the aunt that I lived when I went to school. When I came back I was about sixteen and they didn't want me

because some fellow may trick me and do something wrong. Rome is a big city. We can't watch her no more. Oh! So, um, so, uh, then we had to go out to a cafe. No, that's a place with chairs outside on the sidewalk, like in France.

LEVINE: A piazza.

PASQUALE: In France, a piazza, bravo. So let's go. So on our way down, I don't know how was the coincidence, as strict as we were, and he wiggled or what, we were walking side by side, and the rest of the family in the back, following. So he said to me, he was a fast man, fast all his life. Everything got to be do quick, which was no good. I didn't like that while I was married, everything quick. So he couldn't hold it no more. He say, "You know, I came here to see you." He say, "I been reading your letters you're sending your sister. I'm very familiar with you through the letters." He said, "Would you consider marrying me?" Right away. So I gave a shy smile, and I wiggled my head easy low, went down, yes.
(she laughs) You couldn't help it. He was so

bright and gay and beautiful eyes. He, I didn't know he had a stomach, he was in United, he didn't know to come here. He only wanted to see me. And I had high heels. I always wore high heels. And my heels never got crooked. Always straight heels. And now I wear the opposite. So, anyway, we were, I didn't go to the dressmaker no more to sew. I was sewing under the dressmaker. She gave me a little money a week. It didn't amount to much. It was nice, all gay. The girls, we used to sew, sing and all, and everybody, "Sing, Anna, sing, Anna." And, uh, the family lived in, it was a huge apartment, exclusive building. We had, she made good money, sewing for all the millionaires. And when they came, she sent me, wise woman, she sent me to open the door when they knocked, the millionaires, come in to fit the dresses. And, uh, so, and, uh, they used to say to her, "Miss, would you do me a favor?" A few of them said, "Could you please give my dress to sew to that little miss?" Right away they wanted me to sew their dress. I don't know. They liked me, because I was the only one fitting clothes with her. Because if

the other girls would fit their dresses, they would steal the pattern and sew the dresses to their lower class people. With me, the design and the pattern was private. I wouldn't reveal it. They trusted me.

Their brother was wiggling, trying to marry me. Their brother was one of mine. He had a dry goods, fancy store, huge. All fancy shawls, everything fancy. Veils for weddings and all. But I wouldn't pay attention to him. I didn't care for him. He was too much of a braggart for nothing. And not only that, he knew my mother and father was in America. My mother, for me, marrying him, he would send me a lot of money. The mother is in America. This way I'll marry her with money. Say one word only, I heard. Half and half. That's enough for me. I don't care if the family was one, two sisters, one teacher. One became engineer, one became a doctor. I didn't care at all. I said, "You're nothing to me."

LEVINE: What about the other two men who wanted to marry you.
Why didn't you . . .

PASQUALE: One was a builder working with my uncle. Oh, what that builder did. He brought the serenade under my window, where I lived. I didn't know, I slept through. I didn't hear it. The neighbors told me. The neighbors, in Sicily they used to call me Annette, not Anna, Annette. "Annette, last night there was a serenade. There's no young people in this neighborhood. This neighborhood there's only you." I didn't pay attention. So that fellow, I didn't care. He was short. My aunt and uncle, he grew up with my uncle. My uncle was an orphan, and the father of, the big brothers of this fellow taught my uncle how to be a builder. So my uncle was like a family to him. He was an orphan, and they taught him the trade, and they happened to have the same name, and my uncle had the same name as his, Nicholas, Nicola. Nicola my uncle, and Nicola him. That's my aunt. He married the one that was supposed to have tuberculosis and died, she lived till ninety-seven. They went in France, and my father made them go in France for a better job. (she laughs) He came in my father, and they stuck it out there. Then

he died, quick, he died after a few years, (?), Uncle (?).

LEVINE: And what about the third . . .

PASQUALE: So, anyway, listen to this, what happened to me. Oh, my God, what heartbreak. So we went, I didn't go to see no more because I was engaged. He brought a diamond ring, still is this stone. Still is this stone, almost a karat, only it's dirty because washing dishes and all. And, uh, he brought this ring. Imagine? He figured finally right away engaged. And they had a little party. Who came in the little party? The friend, the builder of my uncle. And the party was done in my uncle house, and Billy, the builder family that they all wanted me very bad. They came to the engagement party. And my husband told me, he told me before he died, my husband told me, that this fellow in the party, spoke to him and said, "Well, congratulations. You win." In all those years, my husband never told me. Before he died, he told me. I used to call that fellow flat footed. So my husband said, "You know flat footed,

in Italian it means (Italian). Flat footed, congratulated me because I won, so you won." Because I used to like that little fellow, you know. Little flat footed, I liked him very much. (she laughs) Before he died in the house, but when he stayed four months in the house. I used to go, almost every day I went. So anyway, now, then we had the wedding.

LEVINE: In Italy? In Sicily?

PASQUALE: In Sicily. Him without his family. I had my family.

Ah, what trouble we went. The City Hall of Caltanissetta is the city where all the soldiers do the maneuver outside that city, a little outside, won't permit an American fellow to marry an Italian unless you got the paper from the City Hall here that he's not married. Say we need the paper that you are not married. He said, "The paper that I'm not married?" "From where you lived." That's one. Then the church. "Were you baptized? How do we know you were baptized?" They wanted the baptism on paper. He say yes, but by the time the letter goes over there, back and forth, those days the letter, he say

it will be a month-and-a-half or two. He said, "I got business in the United States. I can't wait that long." "Well, my boy, that's all I got to do." He say, "We can't, the Catholic church where he was baptized, to get the paper, burned down. How could I get the paper when the church that I lived burned down, burned everything, all the records?" So my uncle in Rome, the one that had the good job, I told you, that lived in a good place, that sent me to the (?) school and so forth, he was a well-known man. So from Rome, he wrote to a friend of his lawyer that lived in Caltanissetta that they went to school together. He happened to be the head lawyer of Caltanissetta. His name was Maniscalco [ph]. Imagine, Maniscalco [ph] like over here. They want that rent for something. So, uh, Maniscalco, we went. Right away we had to pay good money to hire him. So the City Hall, to prove that I couldn't marry him unless I had the documents that he never was married in United States, they said, "You can't. That's the law." Maniscalco [ph] went and get a book. How you call those antique book that keeps all

the records, the laws? There's a name for it. So the people in the Boro Hall that he, we went there. We said, "We're getting Maniscalco [ph]." "Huh. Maniscalco [ph]? No Maniscalco [ph]. Who do you think he is? You think he's going to change the law?" That's all. Stopped. Instead of Maniscalco [ph], went and get one of those old, old books, records, way back when he was a little boy he started and everything. He goes and finds the way that I could get married. He found it. He brought the book to the Borough Hall, said, "Here is this page, so you, you think you're a city good employee? Read this page." And, oh, the funny record book, huge. It must have been five inches high. So when they read, they were shocked. They say, "We apologize." With the apology, I got married in a Boro Hall. But the church, I wasn't married in a church. I got married in a Boro Hall with the Boro Hall dress I made for the City Hall, a special dress, a beautiful cape with lace I made, all dressed up, Boro Hall outfit. I made myself, and I made a gray suit to travel in United States while we were waiting for all

these papers. They made us wait three months! So, anyway, we went to the church. He said, "No. The only thing is if you happen, if somebody, they had the men of the church agreed with us and believed us. Now we went to the bishop. The bishop canceled. He can't. So then the bishop said, "Well, in case somebody would have saw you get married, that knew you as a baby, of course." So one of the relatives of mine said, "I'll tell that I saw you get christened in a church. They want a lie, they'll get it." So we told the truth, the head man in the church, a regular man, a priest in the church, he wrote the paper, he agreed under the condition, the honesty and all. They didn't believe him. Now they want, they want a lie. So as I came. They said, "Why?" I said, "I was in New York City. I saw the little boy." So they made us get married. They got married, and I was, I had a beautiful dress. Listen to this! Now, my husband, peculiar man. Say you mean to tell me everybody, when he walked in the streets, the big street, except in a small city, there's the American father that's marrying the sewer

of the dressmaker Alessi [ph]. Alessi [ph] was known because Alessi [ph] had the brother study lawyer, doctors, engineer, teachers. And they know, from a dressmaker, with all the profits she did on that, she gave education to whole family. She never got married. She got married after, when she was old. So, anyway, everybody walk in the street, he bought once chickens, you know, alive, and he was carrying in the street. So a couple of working people said, "Your Excellency, you're carrying the chickens? Let me carry for you." It's a disgrace, because he was a gentleman, you know, dress American way. So he was known, was known that the (?) wedding was going to take in the cathedral, the main cathedral, where there's the big, beautiful street, when on Sunday they used to play the band, with the sidewalk cafes. My uncle used to take me, too. So my husband said, my husband, you know, he was young, a young husband anyway, he said, "We got to get married early in the morning so there'll be no crowd in the church." So we set, we set the mass for eight o'clock. The coach came. I was in a coach. We went in a church. I had

two little girls. I made the white dresses for the little girls to march with me in the church, white, I did it. One was, there's a little sister for the dressmaker what I used to sew, which I taught a lot of things, I made for her, I learned in United States waist shop. So when we went there, you know what happened, because it was early? All the businesspeople, before they opened the store, they went to church to see the wedding. We found the church full of businesspeople. (she laughs) That the American fellow's getting married to the dressmaker Alessi [ph] lead worker. So they saw the wedding, and then they went and opened the businesses, the book shop, the dry goods stores, the millinery stores. Of course, I ordered, they made me a hat made to order, the millinery store. I'm telling you. And he said, and he was going, marching down the aisle with me. He was going, "These people had to be here." It made my stomach turn. His ways made the stomach turn from the day that I got married. He was very difficult, a difficult man. These people had to be here. Then he wanted to

wedding quick. Instead of my family did the wedding with the mass, you know, some weddings they just do the ceremony, no mass. Mine had to be a mass, because in the mass, when you get married with the mass, you get blessed. You get a special blessing. And the (?), they were, I'm kneeling on a marble step in the altar. Who ordered this mass? And my stomach turned in the church. I had a bad turning stomach wedding. Then he called, he pointed out to the, the one that they care the church, how you call the one that clean the church? He say, "Get two pillows in the sacristy and bring two pillows. I want to kneel on the pillows." We didn't have no pillows. He made the men bring the pillows. We kneeled there for the mass.

LEVINE: Well, now . . .

PASQUALE: Oh, and then, it's not finished. Meanwhile this here, I don't know if it was in 1927 or what. In United States they changed, they stopped the immigration of all the American-born or American citizens that marry outside the . . .

LEVINE: Outside the country?

PASQUALE: Outside the country, to come in. Washington, in Washington, there was the law. All the senators, they had to wait for a certain thing to change in order to allow. So we went on a honeymoon in a big, nice city, Palermo, a big city, we were married. Then we went to the American consulate for a passport for me. "My boy," the man said, "don't you know? You can't bring your wife in the United States." He said, "What do you mean? I went to the war. If I'm not an American citizen, who is? I fought for three years in the war, the First World War. "No," he said, "take it easy, young man. I can explain. For a while they changed the laws, and they stopped, all they want American citizen all American-born." He said, "But then when the Congress changed it, then . . ." But he said, "I got business to do." He says, "How my real estate business can go on? Things were going wrong." So then he ask me, he say, "You know, I have to leave without you." He said, "Where do you want to live, in Sicily or in Rome, over your aunt?" You know, where I lived, when I went to

school, a little girl, I went to Vatican religious school. I say, "I want to live in Rome." So we went in Rome. We told the situation. She say, "Yes, why not here? He left a certain amount of money." After all, I eat there, you know, and they provide clean clothes and all that. He left a certain amount of money. Meanwhile, there was the march on Rome, the Fascists. When we had to cross the street we couldn't cross, because the march on Rome, the

fascists. You know, it was during the war when the Germans fought. Oh!

LEVINE: What year was this? Do you remember what year you got married?

PASQUALE: You couldn't, the year, I got the paper upstairs, the

marriage paper and all. Well, I married, wait a minute. I married, my daughter's sixty-six, about, uh, sixty-eight years, sixty-eight, sixty-nine years ago. I have one daughter, sixty-seven. About sixty-eight years ago. What is that, 1927?

LEVINE: Sixty eight years ago. 1925. That can't be.

PASQUALE: Yes. 1920-something years. My daughter, the oldest one is sixty-seven. Then I had to wait a little while before, when I got pregnant, it takes a year. My daughter's sixty-seven, another one is sixty-six, the other one is sixty-five.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, we'll figure out what you mean.

PASQUALE: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay.

PASQUALE: So . . .

LEVINE: So the Fascists were marching on Rome.

PASQUALE: Yeah. The whole country revolution. And, uh, we couldn't get a hotel. We had to sleep in a cheap

furnished room. We couldn't get a hotel. All the hotels was full because there was the march on Rome from Fascists, all black shirts. And if you talk, the Romans they got, when they don't like something in Rome, they say, "Oh, how they stink." If they heard some, one of the Fascists heard somebody say that, they pick them up, they put in a carriage, they go to the druggist, they give a triple dose of castor oil, then they ride all over Rome until they move their bowels, and then they say, "Who stinks? Me or you?" And that's how they stopped the word "stink," because a lot of people didn't like them. And that went on in Rome.

LEVINE: So then how did you get out?

PASQUALE: What?

LEVINE: How did you get out?

PASQUALE: After three months, the law changed. So my, uh, my, where I was living, the senator, he became Italian senator, the most honorable senator. The king of Italy, I got the medal upstairs, and the picture, if

you want to take a quick look before you go, but, you know, I've been having a cold, that's why I didn't make you stay upstairs. My daughter told, she said, "The woman, you've been sneezing all over, coughing."

So, uh, he came to the Boro Hall where you make the passport, and the man that does the passport was in there. So he left the card, how you call the card that mentions your name, who you are? You know, anybody, "Here's my card."

LEVINE: Uh, identification card?

PASQUALE: Yeah, the identification. You got a card that you want, I give it to . . .

LEVINE: A business card?

PASQUALE: Call me, the card that over here . . .

LEVINE: A calling card?

PASQUALE: Calling card. His name, what he is and all that. He left it in the office, and we went in that office. Meanwhile, the man that we went for, you see, he arrived as soon as he saw that card. He got out of

the office and came looking for him, because he knew how important he was. And then he found us, we were looking in another place not to lose time. So, and then he said, my relative there said to him, said, "This young, you see this young, uh, girl, nineteen? Don't you think she belongs with the husband?" She said, "The husband is in United States. They told the condition." So, sure. Certainly, young girl. You want to go to your husband." (she laughs) They kid me. And they made a passport, I was the first one to live, leave Italy, go on a ship, and come in this country. When I came in this country, his brother bought a new suit. "Oh, we're going to see Dominick's wife." His brother's living, still. He's in Florida now, with the second wife. And everybody, my mother-in-law made a big, big feast, a big, oh, what is she cook. She invited some, her sister-in-law, another sister-in-law. Huge, two tables put together, and we had a beautiful feast.

LEVINE: Well, now, we've got about three minutes left.

PASQUALE: Yeah.

LEVINE: I think it would be nice if you sang something, if you could sing in Italian something.

PASQUALE: You want to?

LEVINE: Yeah. I think it would be very nice to have on the tape, whatever you want.

PASQUALE: I had a sore throat.

LEVINE: I know, I know.

PASQUALE: (she sings in Italian)

LEVINE: Bravo. Now, uh, how about just one last question. Uh, what do you feel most satisfied about? What do you feel proud of?

PASQUALE: I have the most honorable family that I wish the whole world would be like this. My youngest granddaughter is twenty-eight. She's in charge of thirty social workers that are looking for the children that have not the right father or mother, she's in charge. Another one is engineer of the (?) Way in New Jersey. Another fellow is engineer of the bridges of New Jersey. Another one is, uh, mental

capacity. She goes in the schools to analyze what capacity the mental is and why they don't want to study. She's got five college degrees. And one just bought a beauty salon, forty thousand dollars. The bank loan thirty thousand, and she pays two thousand dollars a month rent, and she's about thirty-nine. And all of them, all of them got big, big job, and so on and so forth. One of them was in the last war, he's a war man. When he come out, they send him in the FBI Academy.

LEVINE: What, uh . . .

PASQUALE: And another one is a teacher, and another one works for the second largest firm of lawyers in the night, in the nighttime, the second largest law firm in the United States, she works. They all available. Oh, so on and so forth, I could mention them all.

LEVINE: Wonderful.

PASQUALE: Eleven. Now, my youngest great, my oldest great-granddaughter is eighteen. The brother wants to be a music composer. He brought the keyboard, the piano,

from Maine. They live in Maine, Jefferson. That's the father that went to school for the FBI. And he was in the last war, and the war before that. He's a marine. And he's a fire, uh, marshall at the same time, and now, now he works, when the fire, when the police department need him, the consult him about FBI things.

LEVINE: Wonderful. We're going to have to stop here. I want to thank you. I've been talking with Anna Pasquale. It's April 9th, 1994. Mrs. Pasquale is, as of today, eighty-nine, will be ninety this year.

PASQUALE: This August.

LEVINE: August. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I want to thank you very much for a very, very interesting interview.

PASQUALE: Only my voice wasn't good. Tell her that I had a flu. I went to be examined in the hospital yesterday. They took me with the van and brought me back home. They gave me medication.

LEVINE: I thank you. It was very beautiful.