

EI-507
ANNA VAZZANO MACERA
BIRTH DATE: APRIL 24, 1902
INTERVIEW DATE: JULY 29, 1994
RUNNING TIME: 34:16
INTERVIEWER: ELYSA MATSEN
RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME
INTERVIEW LOCATION: MORRISTOWN, NEW JERSEY
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 5/1996
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: CHARLES MITCHELL, 11/2010

SICILY, 1912
AGE 10

SHIP:
PORT: PALERMO

RESIDENCES:
ITALY: IN SICILY
US: NEW YORK, NY; BELLEVILLE, NJ

HISTORIAN'S NOTE: There are other persons present (daughter Mary and a granddaughter).

MATSEN: Good afternoon. This is Elysa Matsen for the National Park Service. Today is July 29th. It's a Friday afternoon, in 1994, and I'm in the home of Mrs. Anna Macera, who came through Ellis Island in 1912 when she was ten years old. Mrs. Macera, why don't you begin by giving me your full name and your date of birth.

MACERA: (she laughs) It seems funny. That's why I laugh.

MATSEN: Okay.

MACERA: My name is Anna Macera.

MATSEN: Okay.

MACERA: Do you want me to spell it?

MATSEN: And your date of birth.

MACERA: And I was born April the 24th, 1902.

MATSEN: Great. Where were you born?

MACERA: Oh, that is, that is a question that's pretty hard for me. I don't remember the name of the town. .

MATSEN: You don't remember the name of the town.

MACERA: No.

MATSEN: But where was this town? In Sicily.

MACERA: Yeah, in -- in Si-- Sicily, but . . .

MATSEN: So it was in Sicily. Okay. Do you remember what the town looked like?

MACERA: (laughs) I know there is mountains, because my grandmother lived up by Mount Etna years ago. I remember going there once with my, one of my brothers.

MATSEN: Okay.

MACERA: That's all I had.

MATSEN: Okay. So you remember mountains. Do you remember what the town's major industry, what did most of the men or women do for a living in that town?

MACERA: Most of them are farmers.

MATSEN: Farmers.

MACERA: The woman sew, and c--and all that. Cook, and all that,

MATSEN: What was your father's name?

MACERA: My father's name was Dominick.

MATSEN: Dominick Macera.

MACERA: And no. His name was not - was -- his name was Vazzano.

MATSEN: Vazzano?

MACERA: Yeah.

MATSEN: Now, how do you spell that?

MACERA: V-A-Z-Z-A-N-O.

MATSEN: What did your father look like?

MACERA: Oh, (laughs) I can't -- he's short, a little on the stocky side, and balding. I think that answers the question pretty good.

MATSEN: Yes, it does, yes, it does. Um, can you describe what his personality was like?

MACERA: Well, he was okay. He was all right, as long as somebody didn't instigate him. You know what I mean by that? I think that answers it pretty well.

MATSEN: And what did your father do for a living?

MACERA: In Italy, he was what they call -- a sharecropper?

MATSEN: Okay. So he did farming as well?

MACERA: Right.

MATSEN: Do you remember what crops?

MACERA: No. That I couldn't tell you.

MATSEN: Is there any story that you remember about your father, about, something that you remember from your childhood with your father that you could tell me?

MACERA: Not too much, not too much. See, already I had two brothers, and I remember it going to where my father worked, at the boss where he worked. And when I got with my old, my brother next to be born after I was, and when we get there we were so tired. The woman made us sit down. She poured milk, gave us milk. She gave us that -- a piece of Sicilian bread, a real white bread. I don't know, I haven't seen it any more, and a nice piece of cheese, which I hadn't seen it in my life, and I thought that was so good. And that's about the only thing I could really remember.

MATSEN: And your mother's name, what was your mother's name?

MACERA: Carmela[ph].

MATSEN: And her maiden name?

MACERA: There again, I got to look at the passport now.

MATSEN: Okay. Well, we can come back to that if you want to look. I'll ask you, um . . .

MACERA: Oh, I think about it here. Uh, here.

MATSEN: It looks like Belvedere [ph].

MACERA: Yeah.

MATSEN: Is that how you pronounce it?

MACERA: Carmella Belvedere.

MATSEN: Okay. And how do you spell that?

MACERA: I think you'd better, I can't - I can't see too well.

MATSEN: B-E-L-V-E-D-E-R-E.

MATSEN: Okay. Did she have a job outside of the house?

MACERA: No.

MATSEN: Okay. What did she look like?

MACERA: Uh, well, I have one of my brothers that looks like her.

MATSEN: Well, what is, what does she look like, for the tape. Describe what color hair she has. Was she tall, or . . .

MACERA: She na-- well, she was taller than my father. I think sh-- he looks more like her.

MATSEN: Okay. And her hair? Was her hair dark?

MACERA: Her hair was dark, but she didn't have much. She had very little hair. Between my father and my mother, I'm lucky I have what I (laughs) have on my head.

MATSEN: And what would, how would you describe her personality?

MACERA: She liked to run out.

MATSEN: She liked to run out.

MACERA: She liked to, she didn't want no part of housework.

MATSEN: Oh, she didn't like the housework.

OTHERS: (laugh)

MACERA: Hey, I'm sorry this is going to come out, it's going to make people -

OTHERS: (laugh)

MACERA: If my brothers hear this, they're going to say, "What?"

OTHERS: (laugh) We'll go to see it and hear it up--.

MACERA: Now, well, it's, I'm saying it the way it was.

MATSEN: Do you, is there . . .

MACERA: How do you think I got this bad thing here?

MATSEN: Is there a story that you can remember about your mom that you'd like to tell?

MACERA: Not too much, no. As I said, she liked to go out -- out. She'd get up in the morning, do a few things here and there, and then she'd be out.

MATSEN: Now, what would she do? Where would she go?

MACERA: Her friends.

MATSEN: To visit her friends.

OTHERS: Did you go with her, Grandma? Did you go with her?

MACERA: You must be kidding.

OTHERS: (laugh)

MATSEN: Well, let's keep the conversation between the two of us for the tape, okay?

OTHERS: Sorry

MACERA: Right.

MATSEN: That's okay. Um, what kind of house did you live in in Italy? Do you remember the house? Could you describe it for me? What was it made out of?

MACERA: I couldn't. That's one thing that I can't remember at all.

MATSEN: No? Okay.

MACERA: I know, just about remember this one great big room with a bed.

MATSEN: Okay.

MACERA: That's - that's about it.

MATSEN: It was just one large room.

MACERA: Right. Now, whether we all slept in the one bed or what; I don't -- I couldn't tell you.

MATSEN: Did you have any pets, any animals that you kept, do you remember, as a child?

MACERA: I don't remember.

MATSEN: Who did all the cooking in the family?

MACERA: The cooking? That - that is a -- my father did a lot of the cooking.

MATSEN: Your father did?

MACERA: When he was home. On Sunday. He cooked a meal, every Sunday.

MATSEN: So there was a big family meal on Sundays.

MACERA: Well, we were what - there it's -- four, five, six, seven. There were nine of us.

MATSEN: Well, tell me how many brothers and sisters you had, too. I didn't ask that question.

MACERA: Well, I have four brothers now.

MATSEN: Four brothers.

MACERA: Right.

MATSEN: Go in order all the way down. Start with your oldest -

MACERA: Well -

MATSEN: -- and tell me the names of them, and maybe a little bit about them.

MACERA: The sec-- the first one after me was . . .

MATSEN: You're the oldest ?

MACERA: Huh?

MATSEN: Are you the oldest in the family, firstborn?

MACERA: Yes. The one right after me is, passed away twenty years ago.

MATSEN: Okay. Now, what was his or her name?

MACERA: Oh, I know his name. Uh, but it's hard for me to pronounce. They had pretty funny names. So-Socorso[ph].

MATSEN: Socorso?

MACERA: Yeah.

MATSEN: Okay. And the next?

MACERA: And the next was Cataldo[ph].

MATSEN: Cataldo. Can you tell me anything about those two?

MACERA: Well, I know there were -- that when we first came here I remember we had to sleep in a cot, the three of us in one cot.

MATSEN: Wow. That must have been difficult.

MACERA: Yeah. That must have been fun, huh?

MATSEN: Okay. And then who was next?

MACERA: Well, To-- Anthony was next. He's there. Char-- uh, Charlie, and then Frank. Frank is a las-- the last one.

MACERA: So all brothers.

MATSEN: All brothers.

MACERA: You're the only sister. What was it like to grow up in a house having that many brothers?

MACERA: I wouldn't want to live it over again.

MATSEN: Yes. Would you rather have had a sister or two?

MACERA: When it came to ironing shorts, I used to say, "Oh, why do I have to do it?"

MATSEN: So you had a lot of the chores to pick up then.

MACERA: Sure.

MATSEN: Well, back to the food, what was your favorite food? If you could think back to the favorite thing, maybe on Sunday when your father would cook dinner?

MACERA: Well, my father would cook the sauce and meatballs or other, whatever he felt like putting in, and spaghetti or some kind of pasta -- a nice salad, especially in the summer when he'd have it in the backyard. And that was great. That's when we came to Jersey. That's the --

MATSEN: Oh, that's after, when you were in New Jersey.

MACERA: Yes. But before we were in New York for three years, and things - things were tough there.

MATSEN: What was mealtime like with everyone at the table?

MACERA: Uh, well, I -- I don't remember too much of that. Even though I should, but I don't. I guess I blocked 'em out.

MATSEN: That's okay. How about your grandparents? Can you tell me anything about your grandparents?

MACERA: As I said, I only remember my grandmother, and my grandfather, but they both passed away not long after we came here. So, for maybe five or six months imagine me, ten year old, trying to write a letter to her.

MATSEN: So you would write to them?

MACERA: But I did. For a while I tried writing to it, explaining to her what things were like here. So . . .

MATSEN: Okay. Well, I guess the next thing that we can talk about is your voyage to America, coming to America. What do you remember about that? Where did you leave?

MACERA: Huh?

MATSEN: Where did you leave when you were coming to America.

MACERA: Oh, that's another thing I got --.

MATSEN: Well, no, it's right here. I can tell you, it looks like Palermo. Does that sound familiar?

MACERA: Yes. And I remember vaguely being --getting on the train. This was a -- must have been at night, because everything was pitch dark.

MATSEN: Dark, everything dark.

MACERA: And we were on the train quite a while, and first thing you know we were on a boat coming.

MATSEN: Do you remember the boat? Can you describe what it looked like -

MACERA: NO.

MATSEN: -- or you just remember getting on a boat?

MACERA: That's right. And I remember the tough situation. It was bad. The weather was bad, and December, it's not easy. And this Christmas Eve, everybody was trying to celebrate Christmas Eve, because we're supposed to be here long before Christmas -- and we did.

MATSEN: Now, tell me that story. Why didn't you come earlier?

MACERA: Well, that's when we - they booked the passage for us, and - but we were supposed to get there before Christmas. But because of the, uh, the weather and all, the -- the ship didn't, couldn't go fast enough.

MATSEN: So you left very early in December, the first week in December, would you say?

MACERA: I think so. And we didn't get here, believe it or not, till New Year's Eve.

MATSEN: Oh, so you were on the ship for a very long time.

MACERA: Yes. And Christmas Eve we had such a storm that everybody was crying, who was screaming, who was hugging one another. They didn't know what to do. They thought we'd never make it.

MATSEN: Do you remember where you stayed on the boat? Do you remember what your room looked like? Were you in a room? Were you in a room with lots of people?

MACERA: Well, there was, you know bunk beds? Well, these more or less like bunk beds?

MATSEN: And were there lots of people in the room? Was it in steerage?

MACERA: I -- I don't remember the people, but I do remember the bunk beds. I think that we had two. My mother was on the first, and she was always up-chucking. She had a bad time of it.

MATSEN: She was very sick.

MACERA: And I don't remember whether I was on the second or third deck, that - that -- not deck, you know what I mean, the third. That's ri-that third class wasn't the best way to travel.

MATSEN: Right.

MACERA: If I were to do it over again, I'd say, "You go. I'm staying here." So that's . . .

MATSEN: Do you remember what you brought with you? Was there anything that you were able to take with you, or did your parents do the packing?

MACERA: My mother did the packing.

MATSEN: Maybe-- a toy, a favorite toy, did you take?

MACERA: [superposed] My father, my father was here already.

MATSEN: Oh, your father was here already.

MACERA: Yeah, my father came.

MACERA: So who went when you went on the trip?

MACERA: My father came about a year before.

MATSEN: Okay. So it was your mom, you and your brothers?

MACERA: And two brothers.

MATSEN: Two brothers. Were the other brothers born here?

MACERA: The other brothers are born here.

MATSEN: Okay. So your two oldest brothers and you came over with your mother.

MACERA: Right.

MATSEN: And your father was here already.

MACERA: Yes. His sisters sent for him.

MATSEN: Now, what was he doing in America? Did he have a job here?

MACERA: He had a job digging ditches.

MATSEN: Oh, not an easy job.

MACERA: That wasn't - that wasn't the best thing, but that's all. You know, when you can't read and write, you're pushed aside.

MATSEN: So language was a problem.

MACERA: That was a problem. Oh, we had a lot of problems there. We lived on the fourth floor, the top floor of a tenement house.

MATSEN: Well, let's get you into the tenement house first. Now, do you remember coming to Ellis Island? Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

MACERA: No, it was dark.

MATSEN: It was dark. You came at night.

MACERA: Pretty dark, I think. I don't remember.

MATSEN: Do you remember Ellis Island?

MACERA: What - what I remember is very little, but I do remember my father in the distance, and seeing him coming closer, and then he finally got to us, and we went home by train. I don't know whether it was the subway, or a train above the ground or what, I couldn't tell you.

MATSEN: Okay.

MACERA: And I remember my . . .

MATSEN: And where did you go from Ellis Island? Where were you staying?

MACERA: Well, we came where my father was staying.

MATSEN: And where was that?

MACERA: 106th Street in Manhattan, right near Second Avenue.

MATSEN: Do you remember what that looked like?

MACERA: To me they're all tenements, especially when I see, you know, I say to myself, "Oh, my God, is this where -- the type of living, you know, people live?" That's the way it was.

MATSEN: How many rooms were in the apartment?

MACERA: Well, there was three rooms, and talk about bath, there was just a toilet, and the two families had to share. People, you tell that story to people, they don't believe you.

MATSEN: So was that in the, in between the two apartments?

MACERA: Yes.

MATSEN: Okay. Not very easy living.

MACERA: No. I tell you, the people say, "Would you want to live your life over again?" And I say, "No way."

MATSEN: So when your mom came to America, did she get a job here?

MACERA: No.

MATSEN: No.

MACERA: She became pregnant right away, and there was another brother come -- came. (she laughs) No, she never did go to work.

MATSEN: What did you hear about America before you came? Do you remember hearing any stories about America?

MACERA: Well, I can, I can tell you one story. My father believed, not me, I didn't, I didn't know. I was, like, in the dark about the whole situation. But after my father came to this country a couple of months and said to his sister, "They tell me that America, the streets were paved with gold, but I haven't seen any gold." My aunt looked at him, and she said, "My dear brother, you won't see any gold in the street, on the sidewalk. You have to go to work. Regardless what kind of work, you have to go to work. That's the only way you get something. If not, don't expect to find anything in the street." And he says, "Ah. I left Italy, I thought I was getting better, something better. Here I'll be worse off now digging ditches, which I didn't have to do there." So . . .

MATSEN: So it was a hard life when you first came here.

MACERA: Sure.

MATSEN: Do you remember any language difficulties when you first came to America?

MACERA: Well, you know, I'm sorry, I hope you're not Irish, but the Irish are -- they used to call us all kinds of names. We didn't know the language, and I'm pretty sure they didn't know the language either when they came here. But they had a way of getting, making people feel uncomfortable.

MATSEN: What did they say? Do you remember?

MACERA: I don't quite remember, but it wasn't nice. We didn't understand, so we couldn't answer them back. But years after, after I moved here, there was a lady -- Scottish. She went into one of the apartments, and she was bragging. "My grandmother came on the Mayflower." So this friend of mine says, "Yeah? So what does that make you? You're no different than me. If you didn't come here, a relative of yours did, so don't make yourself so smart."

MATSEN: Do you remember what it was like to go to school? When you first went to school, was that difficult because you didn't know the language? Do you remember anything about school?

MACERA: Well, we, we were taken to school. I don't remember who took us the first time, because you had to register and all. But I remember with my brothers, I had one that didn't want to go to school, the youngest one. And I actually had to take him by the arm and hold him so he wouldn't get away. It wasn't easy with him, but we made it.

MATSEN: And how about learning the language? Was that . . .

MACERA: Well, you know, when you know a little bit, you sort of learn it faster. But if you don't know how to read and write, it's very difficult.

MATSEN: Did you know any English before you came to this country?

MACERA: When I came, I knew how to read and write.

MATSEN: Oh, you did. Now, is that something that you learned in school?

MACERA: Like I said, I went to sh-- I used to write to my grandmother when we came here.

MATSEN: In English, or Italian?

MACERA: In Italian, of course.

MATSEN: Did you know any English when you were living in Italy? Any English at all?

MACERA: No.

MATSEN: No.

MACERA: At that time there was no such thing.

MATSEN: There was no English before you came to America. Can you remember any childhood friends that you had? No?

MACERA: No.

MATSEN: How about teachers? Do you remember any of your teachers when you were growing up?

MACERA: Not any, not in New York.

MATSEN: Another question. Do you remember a garden? Do you remember your parents gardening at all in Italy, or maybe in America? Did you have a garden?

MACERA: Well, in Italy, as I said, my father was a sharecropper. He worked, and he used to, like, when he came home at night, there was something that my mother needed during the, like next day he would bring it home the night before.

MATSEN: So he did grow vegetables as well.

MACERA: Right, right. And then they killed their own animals, and he had a share of that, too. So, in that respect, that's when my father said, "I was better off there than I am here."

MATSEN: And then in America, did he have a garden?

MACERA: No. [superposed] There was no place to.

MACERA: We didn't have a we didn't have a garden until we, we bought it -- my father had a small, a four-room house built. You know, like the bungalows they have down the shore. There was no hot water, just plain cold water. And there he dug a well.

MATSEN: Now, this was after you moved out of New York City?

MACERA: Yes.

MATSEN: And where was the house?

MACERA: Oh, that was in Belleville.

MATSEN: In Belleville? Is that . . .

MACERA: Belleville.

MATSEN: Belleville. Okay. And that's in New Jersey?

MACERA: Yes.

MATSEN: Okay.

MACERA: There he - he dug a well, and he made a nice garden. The vegetables that grew the first few years, you wouldn't believe, they're gorgeous.

MATSEN: I can imagine.

MACERA: You - you don't see them any more. So we had fresh vegetables.

MATSEN: So that was one of your favorites, I bet.

MACERA: Yes.

MATSEN: Okay. Um, what about religion? Can you tell me, first of all, what is your religious background?

MACERA: Catholic.

MATSEN: Catholic. And what can you tell me about religious holidays in your household, either in Italy or America?

MACERA: In Italy, I don't remember a thing.

MATSEN: Okay. In America, then?

MACERA: In America there was some holidays, they sort of went to a little more out like - celebrating by cooking special foods or . . .

MACERA: What foods? Do you remember? Christmas. Tell me about Christmas in your house.

MATSEN: Well, I don't, that's one thing, my mother baked. She had the . . .

MACERA: What did she make?

MACERA: Well, she made the, it wasn't tasty, though. Just plain, I always used to tease her, plain flour and water. And she used to add nuts and figs and all that, and she used to make, like, roll it up, and then when it was cooked she'd sort of slice it into pieces like that. That's one of the things I remember, but I never made it. I used to watch her, and I used to go, "Oh."

MATSEN: So you didn't help her make those at Christmas time.

MACERA: No.

MATSEN: What else did you have in your house? Did you decorate your house at Christmas time, or decorations of any kind?

MACERA: I didn't know what a Christmas tree look like until after I was married.

MATSEN: So you didn't have a Christmas tree growing up in your house.

MACERA: No.

MATSEN: Did you celebrate Thanksgiving when you came to this country?

MACERA: No, no. I didn't know, as I said, when we were in New York, we didn't know from nothing. And when we came to Jersey, things got a little better, because it was during the First World War. He got a steady job, and things started getting a little better. But up until then, things were rough.

MATSEN: Now, when you were in New York, living in New York, were there other Italians living in that neighborhood where you were?

MACERA: There probably were, but I wouldn't know.

MATSEN: You wouldn't know. Do you remember who lived next door, or who lived in your area, or . . .

MACERA: No.

MATSEN: Who you talked to or anything? No?

MACERA: No. Like I said to the young man that called five, six months ago, what could I tell you? My parents kept me like in a cubicle. What can I tell you from that?

MACERA: They did? They kept you away from people?

MATSEN: I was always by myself.

MATSEN: So you were not allowed to go out and play or . . .

MACERA: No.

MATSEN: Well, what did you do then for entertainment? What did you do as a child?

MACERA: What did I do? Nothing. Read a book, or . . .

MATSEN: So you did a lot of reading.

MACERA: If I got . . .

MATSEN: Did you have books written in Italian that you brought with you to read?

MACERA: I don't remember whether I did or not. But we did have one book in Italian.

MATSEN: What was that?

MACERA: But, uh, I couldn't tell you too much about it. It was like a, what'd they call it, the primers, the primer.

MATSEN: So it was a grammar book.

MACERA: Like when you, well, that was it.

MATSEN: So you did bring some schoolbooks with you. So then you moved out of New York and into New Jersey. Where did you go to school when you were living in New Jersey?

MACERA: I went to Belleville School.

MATSEN: Now, did you go to high school in that area as well, or . . .

MACERA: No.

MATSEN: Okay.

MACERA: As I said, this was right after the First World War, my father was working nights, and my mother wanted, wouldn't dare let me out of the house. Let me tell you. Let me re track that.

MATSEN: Okay.

MACERA: I -- before I went to school, like I said, my mother had her way everyday. I had to make the beds, sweep the floor, do the dishes, before I went to school. Maybe I shouldn't say that, but I started. And my mother got mad at me because I was a little late, she gets the broom, hands it to me for me to sweep the floor, and hits me right in there.

MATSEN: So she's very strict in making sure that you did a lot of the chores in the household.

MACERA: So my eye was bloodshot for three months. So this one night I defy her which, I -- I admitted. I said, "I'm going for a walk." She started hollering, and I says, "Go ahead, keep hollering." And I took a walk. I went to see some girls that were going to school with me at the time, but they quit and got a job, and they were working in defense work. "Oh, Anne, what happened to your eye?" I told them the story. "I don't want to go to school any more," I said. "You want to come to work? We get a job for you. You've got a job. Tomorrow morning you come, meet us before we go to work. We'll take you with us, and you'll have a job." And I went to work.

MATSEN: What did you do? Where did you work?

MACERA: Well, defense work. It was G.E., but they were doing defense work.

MATSEN: General Electric?

MACERA: Yes.

MATSEN: And what would you do on an everyday . . .

MACERA: Well, I was more like errand girl). "Take this from here, bring it there, take it from there and bring it somewhere else." Because, in certain order. I'm getting (?) short and all this. They had to find a place for me first.

MATSEN: Right.

MACERA: So they had me going around. Well, it was a job. Oh, my mother was happy when I got my first pay. Well, I got to tell you a story that will make you laugh, I'm sure. Well, anyway, she used to give me ten cents. That was my allowance. (No, I don't want no water. Thank you.) She used to give me ten cents. That was allowance for the week. Well, we had that, the company had a bus for us ---.

MATSEN: [interposed] Now, how old were you when you were doing this?

MACERA: Well, fifteen, sixteen? I don't quite remember. Because when I got annoyed because of my eye, didn't care how old I was. I wasn't going to go to school any more. Well, anyway, a - a couple of weeks went by, and I was kind of late. I was the last one on the bus. We had to bring lunch. Well, anyway, I got stuck on the inside of the bus. My lunch got stuck on the outside. I was just holding it by the paper, the bag. (they laugh) Well, after holding it a little while, I let go, because I had to move, and no lunch. So I borrows money from one of the girls, and I got lunch. When I got home, I told my mother, I says this happened. So when payday came I figure, well, she gonna give me an extra dime so I could pay the girl back. So she gives me the dime, and she, I said to her, "Well, I got to pay the girl back." "Well, you got the dime, pay her back. It's your own fault." So I said to my . . .

MATSEN: So . . .

MACERA: So what'd I do? When I got the raise, I didn't gi-- I crossed the numbers.

MATSEN: So she didn't know that you got that raise, and then you kept that?

MACERA: And I got - I got a dollar. Then she wanted to know how come I had money?

MATSEN: So that's what my question was. [superposed] So any money that you made went into the house?

MACERA: I couldn't let - I couldn't let --Huh?

MATSEN: All the money you made went right back into the house?

MACERA: Sure.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

MATSEN: Um, I've got a question for you. I want to hear a little bit about your family, as well as about your past, and your grandparents, and

your parents, and your brothers and sisters. How did you meet your husband?

MACERA: How did I meet my husband? Well, I was working, I forget now, when I worked in G.E. or Westinghouse, which is more or less the same type of work.

MATSEN: And this is in New Jersey?

MACERA: Yes. And we were on, the company at that time used to shut down for the two weeks. So, and since I couldn't go anywhere, I'd go and I'd get a job. At that time there was a chocolate factory that they called Hooton's [ph] which was . . .

MATSEN: What was the name of it?

MACERA: Hooton's [ph].

MATSEN: Okay.

MACERA: I went there, because the girl next door to me worked there. She says, "Anne, you want to come?" I says, "Yeah, what I got to lose?" In August they got busy, so it was a good time. That's where I met my husband.

MATSEN: So you worked together.

MACERA: Yeah.

MATSEN: This is . . .

MACERA: I worked - I worked together for a week. (she laughs)

MATSEN: And his name?

MACERA: Huh?

MATSEN: His name?

MACERA: George.

MATSEN: Okay. And his last name was Macera. What . . .

MACERA: No, it wasn't.

MATSEN: Okay. His last name was?

MACERA: Oh, dear, Mary, you tell her.

MARY: Ciacciarelli.

MATSEN: Ciacciarelli.

MARY: You want me to spell it for you, or . . .

MATSEN: Yeah, that would be good.

MARY: C-I-A-C-C-I-A-R-E-L-L-I.

MATSEN: That's a long one. Okay. Ciacciarelli. And how many children do you have?

MACERA: Uh, I have five now.

MATSEN: Five? Can you tell me their names?

MACERA: (she coughs) Mary, which is right here.

MATSEN: Mary's here with us today.

MACERA: Georgia, the one from Florida.

MACERA: That's Georgia, okay.

MATSEN: That started all this. Uh, and then there's Katherine, Mildred and Anna.

MATSEN: All girls.

MACERA: All girls.

MATSEN: I would have had the sixth one, but passed away.

MATSEN: I'm sorry to hear that. And how many grandchildren do you have now?

MACERA: I have eleven grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

MATSEN: A big family. Okay. Well, just to conclude here, are you happy? If you had to look at the whole thing, and I know we talked a little bit about this, that you came to America?

MACERA: Well, I'm happy. I'm thankful. I have a nice family, and that means a lot. It means a lot to me. Maybe somebody else no, but to me it does mean a lot. So, I'm alone thirty-one years, so . . .

MATSEN: But you have a family.

MACERA: Thank God.

MATSEN: And how about your parents. If you had to think about your parents, do you think they were happy they came to America, or were they, when you think about it would they rather . . .

MACERA: They struggled for a long time. See, they had boys, which were harder to handle.

MATSEN: Do you think there would be a difference if they had stayed in Italy as opposed to America? Where do you think . . .

MACERA: Who knows?

MATSEN: What would you say, though, if you had to speculate?

MACERA: I'm - I'm not really at a point to know..

MATSEN: You just don't know. Okay. Well, I think this is probably a good stopping place. I just want to thank you very much for letting me come over here and interview you and talk about this experience so we could get this on tape for your family, and also for the project, and then just to close, this is Elysa Matsen, I'm signing off with Anna Macera and her granddaughter and her daughter, on July 29th, which is a Friday afternoon, 1994, for the Oral History Project of Ellis Island. Thank you very much.

MACERA: Oh, you're welcome.

EI-507/MACERA