

**EI-597**

**ANGELA MARCANTONIO CORSALE**

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**INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.**

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**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 11/1995**

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**ITALY, 1912**

**AGE 11**

**PASSAGE ON "THE AMERICA"**

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Monday, April 24, 1994. I'm in Saratoga Springs at the home of Angela Corsale. Mrs. Corsale—

CORSALE: You need, you need a middle name?

SIGRIST: Uh, we'll get to that.

CORSALE: Because I got a—

SIGRIST: Well, what's your maiden name?

CORSALE: Oh, I see, I got a granddaughter named after me.

SIGRIST: She's named Angela.

CORSALE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was your name before you were married?

CORSALE: Voam, or something.

SIGRIST: What was your last name?

CORSALE: Uh, Corsale. She married my son.

SIGRIST: No, no, your, your maiden name, before you were married. Yes.

CORSALE: My maiden name? Oh, God, you need a whole page to put it down.  
Marcantonio.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

CORSALE: Yes, I can, if you put it on rough paper.

SIGRIST: Well, I think, I'll tell you what. Is it M?

CORSALE: M-A-R-C-A-N-T-O-N-I-O. (Mr. Sigrist spells along with her)

SIGRIST: Very good.

CORSALE: When I came to this country, the teacher had to chop some of those  
letters off at the end, or she couldn't pronounce it.

SIGRIST: But it's pronounced Marcantonio.

CORSALE: Marcantonio. And my people were all [unclear] people.

SIGRIST: Now, you came from Italy, not Sicily, right, Italy?

CORSALE: Oh, God, no.

SIGRIST: Italy.

CORSALE: The Sicily people are dark people.

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SIGRIST: Right. You came from Italy in 1912, correct?

CORSALE: Yes, something like that.

SIGRIST: And you were eleven when you came to this country.

CORSALE: Yeah, roughly. I can remember that much, yeah. But I don't, I'll tell you, all these things where, I wouldn't know my, uh—really hard thing, I never went into it, because we never had no trouble or nothing to do with anything, see.

SIGRIST: What town were you born in in Italy?

CORSALE: Sulmona.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

CORSALE: S-U-L-M-O-N-A. Sulmona. N.

SIGRIST: And what was your birth date? What's your birthday?

CORSALE: Oh, December the 16th.

SIGRIST: What year?

CORSALE: 1901.

SIGRIST: Okay. Where in Italy is Sulmona. Where is it?

CORSALE: Well, which way I can describe it now, you know where Rome is in the Italian peninsula? Well, we're about a few miles coming down south to the boot.

SIGRIST: Oh, so you're farther down.

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CORSALE: Yeah, down. Her name, the name of the city was Sulmona.

SIGRIST: Sulmona.

CORSALE: Provincia de Aguilar. Now, if you can spell all those, put them down.

SIGRIST: I'll look it up on the map when I get back.

CORSALE: Oh, all right.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what the town looked like when you were a little girl?

CORSALE: It's a city with beautiful churches and everything. I came from a big city. Well, I wouldn't say it was, uh, New York. But, you know, to an—I came from a city, I didn't come from the countryside or anything.

SIGRIST: Did you live right in the city?

CORSALE: I, we did, because my father was here working, making money to send back to us to bring us over here.

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

CORSALE: We owned our own home.

SIGRIST: Can you describe it for me?

CORSALE: And the houses were all made—the streets were very narrow, because nobody had cars years ago. You were lucky if you had enough to eat. And, uh—oh, I don't know. The streets were, and the houses were built like they're building here in America today, condominiums.

SIGRIST: They were all attached?

CORSALE: Uh—s—sand, sand homes, not sand homes.

SIGRIST: But the houses were all next to each other?

CORSALE: Ah, uh—like they build them here now. Today you can go to the streets in Saratoga where these condominiums are built one next door to each other. Now, in Italy, they're all built on not too wide streets, because there were no automobiles or nothing, this is antique. And people was lucky if they had enough to eat. And, uh, so, uh—

SIGRIST: What did your house look like? What—

CORSALE: Stucco house, painted pink. Every house that was owned used to have the, the, the color of their choice painted that portion, you know. These are all cement houses, see. Not brick houses, cement. And every—now, you bought that much, you own that much, so many feet. That was your—niche—your property. And I bought the next property. But they're all painted differently. My house was painted pink trim with blue and one of the walls, there was no walls, everything was all one—you know.

SIGRIST: One room inside, or? You're talking about outside.

CORSALE: No, out. We're talking about outside now.

SIGRIST: There were no fences or anything.

CORSALE: Yeah, right. But they were all different colors, whichever you owned, a color that you want. Well, my mother's, my mother and father's house is pink, and on the wall, in the front of the house, she had a great big picture of the blessed, are you Catholic?

SIGRIST: No, I'm not.

CORSALE: Yeah, of the Blessed Mother.

SIGRIST: That was on the outside of the house?

CORSALE: On the outside. Beautiful picture with the baby Jesus in her arms, painted.

SIGRIST: Right on the—

CORSALE: On the wall! On the wall, the—

SIGRIST: Who did that? Who painted that?

CORSALE: Oh, they done, the people, the Italian people there, because Italy is known for painters. You want to know beauty, flowers and stuff like that, you go to Italy. You see all the beautiful things. But that was painted.

SIGRIST: What about on the inside of the house, did you have any religious pictures anywhere?

CORSALE: No, no, no. My mother was the only one on the street with a religious picture, because my mother and father come from very religious family. My father's first cousin was the big, like you say, of the church, of the Catholic church of Sulmona. Sulmona's the name of the city and it's, we got a lot of churches. Every neighborhood's got a church, almost.

SIGRIST: Was everybody Catholic who lived in that town?

CORSALE: Oh, mostly all. Oh, yeah. And they used to have these parade, which we all a (Italian). But it's a parade, a holy parade, like Good Friday when Christ dies. Well, they had a black parade, like the Blessed Mother, the father, they, they had, a lot of churches would get together and come to

our city, and they all had this, uh, Friday night, after it got dark, with all the lights off but the—really the flashlights that they used at that time or something beautiful, I used to be a little girl. My mother used to dress me up as an angel. Of course, and then two girls that had made their First Communion, all in white, would walk with me, they—to take my hand, because I was a little, little thing about five years old. Well, anyway, that night they would have a beautiful procession with the Blessed Mother dressed in black following the coffin of her son. Because there was nobody in the coffin. It was an imitation of the coffin, borne by six men on their shoulders, regular funeral affair.

SIGRIST: Was it a statue of the Blessed Mother, or did someone pretend to be here?

CORSALE: No, no, no. The statue. No, no, no. No pictures, the statue. The Blessed Mother was all in black, like a regular human being of the day. Oh, no. Then they had all the little girls, whoever parents could afford it to make the right clothes for them, march in that parade, in that Catholic parade. And you had to be dressed like an angel. So a dressmaker would come to the house and bring the material and do the fancy angel. Everybody had to be dressed with wings and all that stuff. And I used to put tights on and then put the material on top to sew and all that. Beautiful, beautiful remembrance.

SIGRIST: Was that something as a child that you looked forward to being—

CORSALE: Oh, I loved it.

SIGRIST: Being in the parade.

CORSALE: I loved it.

SIGRIST: How did you celebrate Christmas?

CORSALE: Oh, you couldn't eat this and, you know, meat on Friday, on Good Friday, like that. Well, we just get together by the families. I had no family because my father was in America with my two brothers.

SIGRIST: What year did your father come to America?

CORSALE: Oh, my God, he was on the, on the Atlantic Ocean about a couple of weeks before he struck the Liberty Statue.

SIGRIST: Were you born when he came to America?

CORSALE: Oh, yeah. When I came to America was about eight or nine years old.

SIGRIST: He came to America when you were eight? How old were you when your father came to America?

CORSALE: I don't think I was born. He used to come back and forth. He used to come and work and make the money to pay for the trip. And little odd money, because he lived with his sister here in America, in Smith Basin , New York, a little place, Smith Basin. They used to, it's right here in New York State. So, uh—he used to live with his sister, and it wasn't bad because she used to give him a lot of free food and all that stuff.

SIGRIST: What kind of work did he get in America?

CORSALE: What's that?

SIGRIST: What kind of work was he doing when he came here?

CORSALE: He worked for the city. He worked here for the reservation, the water

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works that they got right here around in Ballston, some place, what the heck.

SIGRIST: But before, before, when he was coming here by himself—

CORSALE: That's where he worked.

SIGRIST: That's what he was doing.

CORSALE: Yes. And he boarded with his sister.

SIGRIST: She was already here.

CORSALE: Oh, she was here. His sister was married, and she was already here, and she was on a farm in South Glens Falls. She owned the farm.

SIGRIST: What was your father's name?

CORSALE: Lorenzo.

SIGRIST: Lorenzo.

CORSALE: L-O-R-E-N-Z-O. Lorenzo.

SIGRIST: And tell me what his personality was like?

CORSALE: His personality?

SIGRIST: Yeah.

CORSALE: A man that wouldn't say one word. A man that would never lift his finger to slap a child or anything. The best mother, father, anybody could ever have.

SIGRIST: Can you describe your father, what he looked like, in words?

CORSALE: There's my father.

SIGRIST: No. Just describe it in words.

CORSALE: In words?

SIGRIST: Yes. How would you describe your father using only words, not looking at the photograph?

CORSALE: We never heard him talk too much. He was not the talkative type. He was the man that went to work and minded his business. And my mother ruled the roof, the, uh, whatever you call it.

SIGRIST: What color hair did he have?

CORSALE: He was a blonde from the north of Italy.

SIGRIST: Oh, is that true?

CORSALE: Usually down the south, very dark skin, big noses, black hair, black eyes. He was a blonde. He was from the northern part. And he was young, and he wanted to get married. So he went to the southern part of the boot where he got married, and he had friends there. He met my mother. He got married and stayed there and never went back home any more. I don't know whether his mother, his mother was not dead because I remember her.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about your father's mother?

CORSALE: She was a beautiful, stately looking person. Not fat, not skinny. Beautiful girl. And she had a beautiful name—Narduca. I don't know if, I think I can spell it if I put it down.

SIGRIST: Narduca.

CORSALE: You don't need that, though, do you?

SIGRIST: Narduca.

CORSALE: Narduca.

SIGRIST: Narduca.

CORSALE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did she come to visit you when you were a child?

CORSALE: Oh, we lived in the same place.

SIGRIST: Oh, she lived down there.

CORSALE: We all lived in the same Sulmona. The Provincia de Aguilar, like you say, Saratoga, New York, you know?

SIGRIST: So your father's mother moved down to Italy also, down to the southern part?

CORSALE: No, we were all there. We were all there. It was my father that originally came from the north as a kid, like. He grew up towards, from the north, he came down, further down from Rome. And he got married there, and raised his children there and everything, then he came to America. Then eventually we made enough money working here. He sent the money for my mother, and, and, my mother and my sister had, see, there's two boys and two girls in my family. But the two boys were already in America to live with his sister, my father's sister. But my father boarded with his

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sister. That's why he took the boys and brought them up there to raise them in a, in America.

SIGRIST: What were your brothers' names? What were the names of the two brothers who lived there?

CORSALE: My two brothers. Walter was a, you understand the name even today if you lived in Saratoga. One of them was Peter Marcantonio. And it was they both—both dead, and the other one was Antonio, Anthony Marcantonio.

SIGRIST: Do you know how old they were when your father took them to America?

CORSALE: Yes. I think between, like, uh, ten years old and twelve, like.

SIGRIST: Oh, so they were quite young.

CORSALE: Oh, they went to, you know, they went to school and everything else here. So—

SIGRIST: So your father's sister really kind of—

CORSALE: Oh, well, she owned a farm. She had bought a farm, South Glens Falls, right over the bridge of the Hudson River in Glens Falls.

SIGRIST: Now, did she come over when she got married? When did your sister come over?

CORSALE: My sister?

SIGRIST: His sister, your father's sister?

CORSALE: Oh, his sister. When she come over, if you want to get married at that

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time, you had a mother and father in Italy, they pick out a nice girl, and send the man you marry there. Fixed marriages, they called them, at that time. That's the way it happened, see.

SIGRIST: I see. So she got married and then—

CORSALE: Right there. That's right.

SIGRIST: Right here. What was your mother's name?

CORSALE: Donata. D-O-N-A-T-A.

SIGRIST: Donata.

CORSALE: Donata.

SIGRIST: Do you know what her maiden name was before she was married?

CORSALE: I know, but I used to think about that many times. Sometimes it comes to me, sometimes it don't, you know. Oh, wait a minute—not too long a name.

SIGRIST: Maybe it will come to you as we're talking.

CORSALE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe her personality for me?

CORSALE: Beautiful, beautiful looking lady, very beautiful.

SIGRIST: Was she—

CORSALE: There she is.

SIGRIST: Was she dark when she was young? Was she from the south of Italy?

CORSALE: My father was a blonde.

SIGRIST: He was blonde, but what about your mother?

CORSALE: Blonde was the—she was darker. She was like a walnut or chestnut, or whatever you want to call it.

SIGRIST: Her hair was that color.

CORSALE: Yeah. My father was a blonde, blonde moustache. Light, very light skin. You never think he was an Italian because they were a little bit homely at that time. They refined themselves.

SIGRIST: Tell me how your mother took care of the children while your father was in America? How did she support you?

CORSALE: My father used to send her a check every month. Whatever he got, he paid for his room and board and like that, but he lived with his sister, so he really didn't pay much of anything. But my mother, we got good money from my father at the time, which were, we were the best, best dressed and fed kids in Italy. It was me and my sister. My two brothers, my father came back. He made seven trips back and forth in the Atlantic, and it took a week every time in a boat to go back and forth and pick up one of the kids and bring them home to his sister. Because she couldn't have children, see.

SIGRIST: So she had no children of her own then?

CORSALE: No. She never had, she couldn't have children. His sister couldn't have children. And it was just her husband and they were, you know, pretty well into the money.

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SIGRIST: Tell me what kind of food you ate in Italy when you were a child? What kind of food did you eat?

CORSALE: Anything we wanted.

SIGRIST: But what was that?

CORSALE: Well, we had chicken, a lot of, you get a lot of pork in Italy. Usually it's a big pork stuff there, up there. More than cows. Because the cows, they're saved to give milk. Because, you know, a lot of people had babies, and they can't nurse them because they don't carry milk. I only gave milk to five children out of my body, so I got a good workout. My mother used to call it, "That's animal's milk. Don't you ever dare to put any milk from a cow in a bottle for the baby." My kids never had a bottle in their mouth.

SIGRIST: Oh, that's interesting.

CORSALE: I never gave them a bottle. There was a nurse, and I was the bottle of milk. All five of them.

SIGRIST: In Italy, now, you said you ate pork— You, you—and chicken. You didn't eat much meat.

CORSALE: I wouldn't say that we always ate pork.

SIGRIST: But sometimes.

CORSALE: We had veal, a lot of veal. And we had lot—pork chops a lot. That was like the steak or something, you ate that. But we had variety. And we used to have a lot of, like you, here you buy sausage, and we substitute for the meat.

SIGRIST: Now, because you lived in a city, did your mother buy all the food?

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CORSALE: Oh, she just went to the, we had a big place where the, what do they call it? Like they have here in it to sell vegetables in the summertime.

SIGRIST: Like a big market.

CORSALE: Yeah. Piazza, they used to call them, piazza. And they used to, all the people they had. See, Italy is known a lot for fruits, like our Florida here. I don't know about oranges, but you get apples and melons and watermelons, all that stuff. And, uh, but they all came to this big piazza. We lived on the side street towards the piazza. Great big piazza. It was just like all of these piazzas that they go and sell food, and like that. And people come in and import what we didn't raise ourselves, you know. So everything was always fresh, home grown. Because everybody worked their land, and made everything out of it.

SIGRIST: Now, did you grow anything yourself at your house? Did you have a garden as part of your house?

CORSALE: Oh, nothing.

SIGRIST: No.

CORSALE: Oh, my God, no.

SIGRIST: Because you were in the city, you didn't.

CORSALE: We were in a big city. No, nothing. We had big churches. My father's first cousin was one of the high ranking, I don't know what you call it today, even in Italian I forget.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any prayers in Italian?

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CORSALE: Oh, I remember the Lord's prayer.

SIGRIST: Could you say it for us on tape in Italian?

CORSALE: Let me think. Aida Maria would be the shortest one. But there was one prayer after, my mother always made us kneel before jumping in bed. You had to get on your knees and say your prayers, or you don't get in bed. And she taught me a little prayer. After I say the little prayer, I'd ask God to make me a good girl. If I'm grow up to be a big girl, make me a good girl always. I don't want to be the one to disappoint ma. And, uh— but if that is, and she'd always say add to that little prayer, if I can't be a good girl please, God, take me back home with you. It was beautiful.

SIGRIST: Do you, do you still speak any Italian now? Do you still speak any Italian now?

CORSALE: I read and write.

SIGRIST: A little bit.

CORSALE: I went to school.

SIGRIST: How long, did you go to school in Italy before you came to America?

CORSALE: I was in the sixth grade when I left.

SIGRIST: Oh, so you had gone for a while.

CORSALE: And then my examination to pass again in June.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me what you remember about school in Italy?

CORSALE: Well, we had uniforms to wear. You had to wear a uniform, and school

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was not, if you want to, the school was not like they have here. They're all men and women, girls and boys. You have your school, I'm a woman. We go to a woman's school.

SIGRIST: Oh, so they were separate then. The boys went to one school, the girls went to another.

CORSALE: The boys separated. That's why there was no abortions and no baby killing and all that stuff. Because the boys went to one building and I, you went to another building. They called it girls auditorium, whatever. Big buildings. Everything was made out of stone and cement and bricks and like that.

SIGRIST: Was this run by the church?

CORSALE: No wooden home.

SIGRIST: Was it, was the school run by the church?

CORSALE: No, by the city.

SIGRIST: It was by the city.

CORSALE: No, no. Everything was run by the city. And you obeyed. The girls had to have uniforms.

SIGRIST: Can you describe your uniform for me?

CORSALE: The uniform?

SIGRIST: Yeah. What was it like?

CORSALE: I got a picture of me with a uniform on. But, you had to give me time.

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SIGRIST: No, just describe it. Do you remember what it looked like?

CORSALE: Yeah. The uniform, every grade they choose, it was a navy uniform, navy blue pleated skirt, a white jumper like the navy boys, with a collar like the navy wore on their dock with the stripes, what grade you was it. You was in the first grade, one blue stripe like the skirt. Second grade, two stripes all the way around your collar. Blue stripe, two, you were in the second grade, and so forth, until you graduated to go in the higher grade. Beautiful. Kids all one, not like here. Anything here you don't go to the, we got school down here, if you got a hole on your pants you go to school just the same with the knee sticking out.

SIGRIST: What was your favorite subject in school?

CORSALE: In school, geography. I loved geography. I go back to the red shirts. What was their nickname? Oh, God, you must have read something somewhere.

SIGRIST: But that's what you enjoyed was geography in school.

CORSALE: I love geography. I love geography.

SIGRIST: Could your mother and father read and write? No.

CORSALE: Nothing. But her four children were well educated.

SIGRIST: You said you had a sister, too, correct?

CORSALE: I had a sister, but she married and came to America with us, her and her husband.

SIGRIST: What was her name?

CORSALE: Her name would be Marcantonio before marriage.

SIGRIST: What was her first name?

CORSALE: First, Anna.

SIGRIST: Anna.

CORSALE: Anna, and her last name when she got married was George, G-E-O-R-G-E. Anna George. And, of course, the man she married came from Pennsylvania where he lived to look for a bride in Sulmona, where we lived, to pick out whatever you want to call them. So we got married before we came to America. He was a leader till me and my mother got married my sister. He knew when we got out of here in New York Harbor, he had been in America for six, seven years before he went back home to look for a wife, see. And when you saw my sister, she was only sixteen and he was twenty-eight, or twenty-seven. Well matured.

SIGRIST: But that's interesting that he would go back to Italy to find a wife after having been in America.

CORSALE: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did men do that a lot?

CORSALE: Oh, that's how they build their families, yeah. Of course, if there was another good family where you lived around here. And I know another good family that my daughter, once they get married, you look for that good family's boys. You know what I mean? It was very particular.

SIGRIST: And all very controlled.

CORSALE: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Marriages were all very controlled.

CORSALE: All the honesty and love and obey. Nothing like we do here.

SIGRIST: Tell me. When you were in Italy, before you left for America, what did you know about America?

CORSALE: About America? Nothing. Only that my father, the kids bothered me, you know. And they say, "Oh, she's the one that's got a father way out and they called it America." Neighborhood kids, when I went to the school or something like that, you know. But everybody was nice.

SIGRIST: When, when, do you remember getting ready to leave for America?

CORSALE: What's that, dear?

SIGRIST: Do you remember getting ready to leave for America?

CORSALE: For America? Oh, I remember Naples.

SIGRIST: Before Naples, before, like, you were packing to go.

CORSALE: Well, I was going to tell you about Naples, what I remember about Naples.

I won't tell you now till I come to it. We lived from Naples, which was the deportation, whatever they call it again, and our steamship's name was America, beautiful name. Can't forget that. So, uh, when we got word that we had, my father wrote and said that his sister had room for us to come, me and my mother and my sister and her husband, to come to America, we can send it, because what, who are we? My mother had two boys and two girls. Now, the two boys that were here with my father, which he took into his sister's home and brought them up, sent them to school and all that stuff. So we had good luck, which I call good luck. But my mother,

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my sister got married, but she came back to America with us. And she married a man twenty-eight, and she was only sixteen.

SIGRIST: Do you remember packing before you left, packing your luggage? What did you take with you?

CORSALE: Oh, well, I told my mother, if I liked a pretty dress, I'd say, "Don't forget to put that pretty dress in that thing." Because I used to love clothes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember a specific dress that was yours when you were a little girl before you came to America that you remember very well?

CORSALE: Well, before we came to America, mostly it was the school uniform that you wore most of the time. You come home from school, you didn't bother changing. You wanted to go outside and play or something like that. But mostly that was the favorite outfit that you favor.

SIGRIST: So that's what you wore most of the time?

CORSALE: The best one, yeah. Well, that was navy blue and white, the pleated skirt, navy blue, and the material was not this importated, importation that they have like here down on these islands, they come here half made or anything like that, beautiful material to make clothes and everything. But the navy blue skirt and the white, white blouse. But the blouse was, uh, made like a, made in the navy with a big, white collar. And whatever grade you was in was all marked around the collar. I think I told you that before. First grade, one stripe. The collars were like the navy people wore. They were big. You know how big they are. So they put that navy piece. About a, about an inch.

SIGRIST: About an inch stripe.

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CORSALE: You pass the second grade, another half an inch would go up. And they knew, by reading your collar, what grade you was in. And that was a fad, maybe, at that time, you know.

SIGRIST: How did you and your family get from Sulmona to Naples?

CORSALE: Oh, by train. Oh, they had special trains.

SIGRIST: Did that take a long time?

CORSALE: Uh, no. Maybe about a whole afternoon, which would be four or five hours, or maybe a little less. When you're that age, it was only about nine. When you're that age you don't pay too much to those, really.

SIGRIST: Those kind of details.

CORSALE: Yeah, right, to go about it like that.

SIGRIST: How long were you in Naples before you got on the ship?

CORSALE: Well, it was hours. I couldn't say whether it was four or five hours or something like that before you took a trip.

SIGRIST: Did you have to, were you examined in Naples?

CORSALE: What's that?

SIGRIST: Were you examined medically in Naples?

CORSALE: Oh, yeah. You have to pass the physical. And when you get here, if you didn't pass the physical, back home you go, and with all your tribe with you. Your mother, your sister, your brother, whoever, the whole family, down. Keep your ailments where they belong, not the way they do here.

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They open up New York, they open up Los Angeles out west, and they trash in every Tom, Dick and Harry with all kinds of disease.

SIGRIST: But when you were in Naples you did have to undergo some kind of examination before you got on the ship, do you think?

CORSALE: No, because we were all vaccinated and that was the most important thing. You had to go through a certain examination, vaccination. Maybe they put some kind of stuff in it to keep up, whatever. But there was nobody sick. Anybody was sick on the ship, the whole family went back, turned them right back.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me on the ship where you slept?

CORSALE: Well, they were all, you know, like you see in the movies now. You get in two or three at a time.

SIGRIST: Like a bunk bed.

CORSALE: Yeah, it's like a prison. Don't they have like a prison? Besides, you know, because what could you do with a ship, unless you went. Then you'd pay thousands of dollars or something.

SIGRIST: What did you think as a little girl when you saw this ship?

CORSALE: I didn't want to come. I wanted to play back here. And the neighborhood kids, all little sized, you know. I didn't want to go. And I always wished that I could have went back for this. I could have, but then we had five children, and all my husband made was five dollars a day, although he was a foreman on the railroad and had about seventy-five people under him. Five dollars a day, not five dollars an hour like now. A day, eight hours.

SIGRIST: So you really didn't want to leave your friends in Italy?

CORSALE: Neighborhood gang. And my mother, I don't know if I told you that one of my mother's wall, she had a picture of the Madonna with a baby as big as that, painted in colors, beautiful. And every time it was the mother of, Our Lady of the Snow was her name. And I heard that name after I came and was here all my life before I heard that there was a lady, a blessed lady by that time, Our Lady of the Snow in New York City someplace.

SIGRIST: Did your mother want to come to America?

CORSALE: Did she want to?

SIGRIST: Did your mother want to come to America?

CORSALE: Well, I'll tell you, at that time her mother-in-law, her mother-in-law lived with her, see. When my father came, the mother was a widow. So he got married and bought this house and put my mother and his mother in, see, put his wife in, and that's where they raised the kids and everything, see. It's where he got started. But we had everything. We never lacked nothing.

SIGRIST: Tell me about, tell me about the voyage on the ship. What sticks out in your mind about being on the America?

CORSALE: Well, it was exciting that I started to cry when we left. When we left Naples. I wanted to stand over the railing to watch the ship, you know, go. My mother had me by the collar, she was so afraid that I'd fall or something, you know. But I felt terrible when I lost the last light of Naples. After we got to the Strait of Gibraltar, you lose, you were in Africa and all that stuff, you're going into the big water, you're going into the Atlantic.

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The Strait of Gibraltar, when you leave Naples, you go through the Strait of Gibraltar and you strike the Atlantic Ocean. And then you strike the, our lady here.

SIGRIST: How long was the voyage?

CORSALE: Oh, good Lord, honey, I couldn't tell you that. No, kind of, I was a little bit too young.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, you said you slept in bunk beds. Were you in a big room with other people, or just your family?

CORSALE: Oh, no, no, no. That was a big room, and a lot of the bunk beds. Because, God only knows how many thousands of people they carry. No.

SIGRIST: Do you remember if there were only women in the big room, or were there men and women?

CORSALE: No, everything was equal. Everything, of course, they do have first class, what you read, second class, they're apart, and all like that. We think the middle, the middle one which was not bad, which was not too good, you know what I mean? Interesting.

SIGRIST: Do you remember eating on the ship? How did you eat on the ship?

CORSALE: Well, they gave you all kinds of food which, if you didn't like it you didn't have to eat it, and if you asked for more they give you more, different. No, very, very good. No [unclear].

SIGRIST: Were there other children on the ship?

CORSALE: No.

SIGRIST: That you remember?

CORSALE: I had nobody, and I was very lonely. Of course, I was with my people, but to, to me it was pulling me out of something that I loved so much. And I often think about it because some of our friends, they made the trip back to Italy. But as I grew up, then I got married, then my husband got transferred for, I'm a Glens Falls girl. I keep a log on Glens Falls people.

SIGRIST: And so by then it wasn't possible for you to go back to visit. Your life was here.

CORSALE: Oh, no, it was all, we were stuck here. But I would have loved to go back, which I had one son that lives with me now, my last son. I had four boys, four beautiful boys.

SIGRIST: Well, we'll get to that later in the interview.

CORSALE: Yeah. But I could have went back. Because my last son that lives here with me, he would have sent me back. But you always need somebody to go with you. It's a different country.

SIGRIST: Sure.

CORSALE: Different language. Different exchange in money. Different everything, see. My son got couldn't lay off. He works in Canada.

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

CORSALE: Oh, at last. I see a picture in a book now.

SIGRIST: But do you remember when you were a little girl, being on the ship?

CORSALE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that? Did you know what that was?

CORSALE: Well, my mother wouldn't let go of me for fear she lose me. She had me by the, by—by the arm. Oh, no. I couldn't move away from her. She wouldn't trust my sisters or me to go with my sister or my brother-in-law or anything.

SIGRIST: Did you get seasick at all?

CORSALE: Huh?

SIGRIST: Did you get seasick?

CORSALE: No.

SIGRIST: Did anyone in your family get seasick?

CORSALE: No, no. And everybody passed in Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: What time of the year are you traveling? What time of the year is this? Do you remember?

CORSALE: In June.

SIGRIST: It was in June.

CORSALE: I took, I took my last, I used to go to the public school, and I took my last vacation after we had the last examination. We had the last examination of the year, and I graduated into the fifth grade. I was in the fourth. I graduated to the fifth grade. And, uh, so I remember quite a bit.

SIGRIST: So it was around June that you were traveling.

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CORSALE: Oh, in June, it was all June, yes. Because I'd already passed in school, so I remember that word June very, very good.

SIGRIST: So the boat arrives in New York. Your boat docks in New York, and you go to Ellis Island.

CORSALE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about being in Ellis Island?

CORSALE: Well, in Ellis Island they keep you going through so many doctors it isn't funny. The whole day is spent with examination. It isn't like now, you open up the traps in New York, the gates, you open up the gates in New York and in California, you open up on the Chinese and Japanese side there, and you get everybody in.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things did they do to you at Ellis Island? What kinds of examinations were you going through?

CORSALE: Oh, you get examination in the back, eyes, head, ears. The breast, the back, the legs, everything. A full examination, everybody. And whoever was sick, if you had a couple kids or if I was sick and I, and they would return me back, but my mother and sister would have to go with me. They return the whole family. Not like here.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what it looked like as a little girl?

CORSALE: Yes, sir. I remember all these places.

SIGRIST: What did it look like in your mind when you were in Ellis Island? What did it look like?

CORSALE: What's that, dear?

SIGRIST: What did it look like on the inside?

CORSALE: Oh, well, you know, you see the people rushing back and forth from one door to an office to another office and all that stuff. It's exciting for young kids, you know, they keep you going. But everybody had to pass. If you didn't pass, everybody in your family went back, not just you.

SIGRIST: How long were you there for?

CORSALE: How long I was there?

SIGRIST: On Ellis Island, how long were you there?

CORSALE: I don't think—I don't think we were there overnight before the train took us to come into New York.

SIGRIST: You stayed overnight?

CORSALE: We had to stay in New York overnight.

SIGRIST: You stayed in New York, but not on Ellis Island.

CORSALE: No.

SIGRIST: I see.

CORSALE: And then you took the train out of there, out of Ellis Island, out of New York.

SIGRIST: Out of New York, yeah.

CORSALE: And you come up north. (disturbance to the microphone) Oh, I didn't

know what I had. And then you come up north.

SIGRIST: (Laughs) It's the microphone.

CORSALE: And then you come up north, see.

SIGRIST: So no one met you at Ellis Island. You—

CORSALE: Oh, no. We didn't get out.

SIGRIST: Your father didn't come to New York to meet you?

CORSALE: Everything was done right in there. Examinations and your record. Everything was done there. Nothing was had to go out for this, had to go out for that, no way.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing something that you had never seen before?

CORSALE: No, because I'd never been no place, you know. My mother was not the kind that used to go visiting, and went on vacation. Well, who could go on vacation in those years?

SIGRIST: Right, right. Well, now, tell me about the, when you were reunited with your father.

CORSALE: Oh, that was a happy, a happy moment, happy moment. But I was lonely. I wanted to go back home. I missed my friends, although my father put up one of these homemade swings, you know, with a rope and a board and you make a swing out in the back for the kids to play with. And he made a swing for me to play, but I was alone, you know, nobody.

SIGRIST: Were—where did your father meet you? Where did you finally meet your father?

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CORSALE: Well, you see in the old country usually marriages are made by the elders, you know. It isn't like here. You go in a saloon, you pick up somebody, you bring her home. My marriage to my husband, this is this. Nothing like that. Then they're made, marriages are made. A good family with a good—another good family.

SIGRIST: Where did you, where did your father meet you when you came up on the train from New York? When you and your mother came up on the train from New York, where did your father meet you?

CORSALE: Well, when the New York left Ellis Island to come back up north here where did he meet us?

SIGRIST: Yes, where did he meet you?

CORSALE: Oh, we got off in Glens Falls. Glens Falls, New York.

SIGRIST: Was he at the train station?

CORSALE: Well, he had nephews on one of the streets in Glens Falls off the main street. Have you ever been up there in Glens Falls?

SIGRIST: Yes.

CORSALE: Yeah. Canal Street and all them places. That's where the Italians all used to live, on that end. And that's where we stayed overnight, because we got in at nighttime, see. And good thing we had cousins living there, Canal Street and all.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about your first night in America? What happened when you got to Glens Falls that first night?

CORSALE: Well, I tell you, he's exhausted and tired. He don't care to hear about nothing. And I was so little, about nine years old anyway. What can you get about that age? Not too much. It was good that I remember that much about it very vivid. But I always think about it often, because I don't want to lose track of it.

SIGRIST: It's important to remember.

CORSALE: That's right, that's right.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Did you—

CORSALE: I remember everything.

SIGRIST: When you finally got together with your father, what was your relation like—your relationship like with your father at first?

CORSALE: Well, that was my father's sister.

SIGRIST: But, I mean, what was your relationship with your father at first, when you first came to America?

CORSALE: Yeah? We all lived together. She owned a great big farmhouse, South Glens Falls.

SIGRIST: But, but—you pretty much grew up with your father in America. You hadn't seen him a lot.

CORSALE: Well, then we went on our own. We didn't stay with my aunt all the time.

SIGRIST: No, but when you first came, I'm just wondering, were you frightened of your father, or were you happy to be with your father?

CORSALE: No, no. No, my father was an easy man. He never lifted a hand, and neither my mother. And neither did I.

SIGRIST: Tell me how you learned English.

CORSALE: I passed, I took my examination in June, and we took the train out of Sulmona to go to Naples in June. Well, that was, I was trained to pass the fifth grade. I passed the fifth grade, through the public school. When I came here, they put me way back in the school that I went to in Italy, I knew how to make the multiplication, the addition, dividing. I knew all that. When I got here, I got pushed back on everything. Because I couldn't talk, I couldn't spell. I couldn't do anything. So the teachers were very good. And usually they assign somebody that would understand your own language, the Italian language, and the English language. But every teacher, different grades that I went through, I used to have to spell the name, the last name was Marcantonio. And it was so long, and half of the teachers say, "Can you spell it?" How can I spell it? I didn't know no English, how to spell. Well, anyway, so that's how come we took the chunk off the end of it, O-N-I-O. The teacher chunked it right off. Marcanton, that's good enough.

SIGRIST: And how did you start learning the English language?

CORSALE: They started from the very beginning. They started me way back, A-B-C-D.

SIGRIST: Oh, so you were with younger children.

CORSALE: Huh?

SIGRIST: You were with children that were younger than you were.

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CORSALE: I was, sure, I was in the kids classes, yeah. But when I came here the teacher used to teach me separately, because I didn't know how to spell and she didn't understand me and I don't understand her. So it's kind of a little bit tight, you know.

SIGRIST: Do you remember your first English word?

CORSALE: Hello, hello, hello.

SIGRIST: Did your father speak English?

CORSALE: Very rare. Although he did—could speak very little, because he always worked with Irish people.

SIGRIST: Irish people.

CORSALE: The Irish people. The Irish-speaking people, you know. And he did pick up quite a bit. And he always, everybody used to talk both languages, games. Because he used to work for the city, and he used to work for the new reservation that we got here today. One of the hamlets, one of the waterways that we have right here through Saratoga. My father worked building a dam over there, wherever the people that took the job, public jobs, took the ink. That's where all these people that came from [unclear] got hired.

SIGRIST: Oh, so all the immigrants did this kind of work building the dams?

CORSALE: Do anything, yeah. Maintain. Maintain it. Maintain it, like, maintain.

SIGRIST: Did your mother learn to speak English?

CORSALE: No, no. She was a housewife. She never went out to work, no.

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SIGRIST: How did your mother like America? How did she adapt to America?

CORSALE: Well, I tell you, she used to do pretty good. She didn't know no English at all. But when she, they have a dollar sale, she'd go to the dollar sale and bring home the dollars, the one's it's worth, you know. She, and she always handled a five-dollar bill. She knew she'd get the change, you see what I mean?

SIGRIST: So she learned the money system.

CORSALE: She could hear. She couldn't hear. She'd didn't know what there is, this. Suppose this is five dollars. She didn't know what five dollars was. She did try to learn the numbers, five, ten, the big numbers, see. And she's learned the little ones, one dollars, first, like that. But she used to buy everything. She used to buy groceries and everything.

SIGRIST: Was there a large Italian community in Glens Falls?

CORSALE: What's that?

SIGRIST: Was there an Italian community in Glens Falls?

CORSALE: Oh, God, yes. They had society. Like we had here, we have an Italian society right here.

SIGRIST: So they had people they could talk to, your parents.

CORSALE: Yeah. But she, my mother and father were not the people to go out to places like that. They were homebodies. When they'd done their day's work right there, my mother for the house, my father for the outside. That was good enough. They weren't interested, and they had gardens. They raised all their vegetables. They brought home, my mother had, oh, quite

a few lots attached to the house. And they used to raise everything. Which she gave it away to people for nothing. She raised potatoes. You was visiting her house, she'd give you a bushel of potatoes free. (laughs) And my father used to say, "I work hard, and you give it away for nothing." Or she said, "Well, that's what I'd like to do." But it was good.

SIGRIST: What do you think the hardest thing for you to get adjusted to in this country?

CORSALE: Well, I tell you, we came to my father's sister's home, which it was a big farm in South Glens Falls, over the Hudson River way. And this other farm that was near my aunt had a little girl around my age, which was a blessing. If I could only find her today, she was so good to me. And the father had a wagon with a couple of horses on to bring her from the farm they lived to the South Glens Falls school. Have you ever been in South Glens Falls?

SIGRIST: It's been a long time but yes, I was there.

CORSALE: Right. Well, anyway, he used to come. Then he had to go past my aunt's farm, so he'd pick me up with his daughter. She was around my age. And bring us to South Glens Falls school, and that's where we started.

SIGRIST: Was she an Italian girl?

CORSALE: No!

SIGRIST: Or was she American?

CORSALE: No. She was either German, I wouldn't say German, French. Either French or some other nationality. At that time they were all from all nations.

SIGRIST: There were lots of immigrants. (clock chimes)

CORSALE: Yeah. So, her, he used to, he used to have to come through my aunt's farm road to bring us to the school. So he had the daughter my age that was going to the school, so he picked me up with the daughter, and he'd come and take us and bring us home, which is another God's blessing.

SIGRIST: So she became your friend.

CORSALE: She became my friend, but I couldn't keep track of her. She lived in South Glens Falls. I moved to Saratoga. You lose—

SIGRIST: Do you know what her name was? Do you remember her name?

CORSALE: No. I know her first name was Gladys, but I don't remember her first name any more. And I never saw anybody any more. There was only one girl that I remember which, if I ever saw her today, I would kind of slap her face, she hurted me so bad.

SIGRIST: How did she hurt you?

CORSALE: Well, during the, South Glens Falls school, during the exercises, you know, they give you fifteen minutes to go out and play in the backyard or something, well, all, all the kids used to go out. So me and this little farmer girl, the father used to ride me, and she always kept to my side. So her and I, there was a, a girl that went to that school whose house was near the school, from maybe here to the corner, see. So we used to go, me and the girl that used to give me a ride with the horse and wagon, we used to go and play on her porch, because it was on the side of the school. So I sat on that, they were playing, the two or three girls were playing, and I was all alone by myself. Usually they wouldn't play with me,

because they used to call me Guinea, Guinea, WOP, Daygo. All those cute little names of years ago. So I was sitting on the railing of the porch. The porch was like that big, so I sat on the railing, there was no chairs or nothing, while they were playing, reading, or whatever they were doing, writing or something. So this, one of them, one of the kids, she was Irish, she pushed me over. I was sitting backwards, see, with my legs in. She gave me a push over, and I landed on the cement sidewalk. I was, I says, "If I ever see her when I grow old enough to know things, I would slap her face." But I never saw her, because we're not the going out people. We're the home people.

SIGRIST: Did you experience a lot of making fun because you were an immigrant? Did people make fun of you a lot?

CORSALE: Oh, they wouldn't play with you! The other, the Irish and the French and all them, they wouldn't play with you. I went to St. Mary's private school too, in Glens Falls. I got one year of that school, before we had to move into town. But, uh, there was a big difference. And I remember in this school, St. Mary's, today St. Mary's church is on Warren Street in Glens Falls. I don't think you know old Glens Falls too much. It's right off the main street there, right off Glen. And, uh—the school was attached to the church, in back of the church on Warren Street. Well, we go out to play, they give you fifteen minutes. Exercises, they used to call it. You know, you go up and down or something. And there was only me, I was Italian. Look how far back this is. And one boy was Italian that had to come over. And the only two Italians, there was no Italians. Everything was German, French, Irish, the most, they ruled. Irish and English ruled. So nobody wanted to play with a fellow and me, one boy in my class, and me. So when they say recess, when a nun who was our teacher, she used to say

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recess, we had to go out of the building and play out on the land that was on the school. Well, that kid, that boy would stand against the wall, and I stand next to him against the wall. We were the only two kids not playing, because nobody wanted to play with us. So that, that was touchy.

SIGRIST: So that happened a lot for you.

CORSALE: Huh?

SIGRIST: That people left you out because you were—

CORSALE: We were all out, out entirely. So we used to stay against the wall and say hello to each other and that's it.

SIGRIST: We only have about two minutes left, and I want to ask you, when did you get married?

CORSALE: August the 20<sup>th</sup>—1920. I got married in 1920.

SIGRIST: 1920. August the 20th, 1920. What was the name of the man that you married?

CORSALE: My husband's name? Joseph Nicholas Corsale.

SIGRIST: Corsale.

CORSALE: Senior.

SIGRIST: Senior.

CORSALE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And how many children did you have?

CORSALE: Five children.

SIGRIST: Can you name them, please?

CORSALE: Five boys, and one girl.

SIGRIST: Can you name the children?

CORSALE: Yes. One boy, Joey lives here now. One boy died. I had three boys in the service, this last war. I went through hell on earth. Three of my sons in service. Two in the navy and one in the airplane service.

SIGRIST: This is during World War II? During the Second World War?

CORSALE: Yeah, this latest war. This one, the last one.

SIGRIST: The Vietnam War?

CORSALE: Huh?

SIGRIST: Which war?

CORSALE: The last one we just had. Not with this president, that's too young. You know, what, what did they call it, the Second World War?

SIGRIST: The Second World War?

CORSALE: The Second World War, yeah, right.

SIGRIST: So you had, you had six children.

CORSALE: Five.

SIGRIST: Five children. Four boys and a girl?

CORSALE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Four boys and a girl.

CORSALE: One of them died.

SIGRIST: During the war?

CORSALE: When he came back and he lived a couple of years then he died.

SIGRIST: Do you, when you look back on your life, do you wish—

CORSALE: Do I look back?

SIGRIST: Yeah, do you look back?

CORSALE: Yeah. I remember from the time I was a little girl, and my mother, I told you, they have holy parades.

SIGRIST: Yes. But you like to remember. You like to look back on them.

CORSALE: I remember all that. And, of course, my mother was awful fussy. And then my father was in America. He always sent the monthly dues home. My father done as she want with it. And she had these little costumes for me to march in the holy parades and all like that, and it was a little tight.

SIGRIST: We need to end now. We're all out of time.

CORSALE: Oh, we're all done?

SIGRIST: Yup, our tape has run out now.

CORSALE: How do we close it?

SIGRIST: Well, I want to thank you—

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CORSALE: It was nice meeting you.

SIGRIST: Yeah. It was very nice meeting you. Thank you so much for letting me ask you questions. This is—

CORSALE: Well, if you print anything, let me know. Send me a copy.

SIGRIST: I'll send you a copy of this tape.

CORSALE: Oh, I'd love that.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Angela Corsale on Monday, April 24, 1995. Thank you very much.

CORSALE: I got the birth—