

EI-633

CARMELLA ALFIA LANZAFAME MESSINA
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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PhD
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ITALY, 1918
AGE 15
PASSAGE ON "THE GIUSEPPE VERDI"

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LEVINE: Today is July 5, 1995, and I'm here with Carmella Alfia Messina, and she is ninety-three years old at this time of the interview, and was fifteen years old in 1917 when she left Italy to come to the United States and arrived here early in January of 1918. Also with us is Mary Mascola, who is Mrs. Messina's daughter. Well, I can't wait to hear what you remember about your life in Italy and coming to this country and getting settled here. So I'll start at the beginning asking questions, and then whatever you remember, okay?

MESSINA: All right.

LEVINE: Will you give your birth date again for the tape? Your birth date.

MESSINA: Uh, nine . . . I forget, 1992.

LEVINE: 1902.

MESSINA: 1902. Uh, 24th April.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And where in Italy were you born?

MESSINA: Catania, provincia. Provincia Catania.

LEVINE: And did you live in the same place up until the time when you left to be in the United States?

MESSINA: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Yes. Do you remember that town that you lived in?

MESSINA: Oh, si, I remember it. I remember Aborno[ph], that little city is in (?). And after my mother say, my mother say come by his mother, all together, my father. And after my father come in United States.

LEVINE: How old were you when your father came?

MESSINA: My father, when he come, how old you?

LEVINE: How old were you when your father left Italy and came to the United States?

MESSINA: Oh, World War.

LEVINE: World War One?

MESSINA: World War One.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. He came before that?

MESSINA: Yeah. When he got a, my father, he left Italy when he got a, wait a minute. Tripoli, Tripoli, war, in Tripoli.

LEVINE: Oh, Tripoli.

MESSINA: War. And, uh, and, uh, after my father, he come here, and, uh, he stay most of two years, and after come back there, come in Italy. And, uh, and I stay with my mother. My mother stay with his mother in the house. And after my father, the time come my father, uh, the time come my father is, uh, is home, the two years, it started the war, World War One.

LEVINE: One, uh-huh.

MESSINA: And, uh, is, uh, World War One. And after my father, he come and, he come in, he come in the place down there, he, uh, he take everybody. Because he got a lot of damage, a lot of people were killed at that time. A lot of people, soldiers, killed. And he started calling everybody, kids, father they got (?), kids. My father, he still got a, the (?), I told my mother say I'm going Italy, I'm going America, I don't want to go to war. And he come here. All right, he's coming here. When he come over here, it's, it's known, my father, my mother stayed for six years. And nobody support, nobody, government to support, no. And my father, when he come, he could send something, he send it to us, you know? He send it to us. And that's the time I got myself visa, um, I hold it myself. I'm (?) twelve, twelve years old, no, more thirteen, must have thirteen, thirteen years old. And, uh, my sister, two years older than me, all right?

LEVINE: What was her name?

MESSINA: Rota[ph], Rota[ph]. And, it's there.

LEVINE: Oh.

MESSINA: And it, uh, my mother say, kids, you need to go to work. And we

go to work. I work. I work, I no think of myself as fourteen years old.

LEVINE: What kind of work did you do?

MESSINA: On the farm.

LEVINE: What kind of farm?

MESSINA: I carried water for, I carried water a few days, (?). Some, some people you want, people, you take, clean the vine, you take all the bad leaf from the vine. I work on the farm. (?) on the farm. No shovel. No. I work for the, easy things for the woman, you know. Um, you've got to, in Italy you've got to plant, you plant so much stuff, and after you pull them up. You make a big hole, the vine here, and the vine here. You make a hole here, and you throw a lot of that stuff in there, see, to feed the vine, make the good grapes. You understand what I mean? And this, I do it.

LEVINE: What do you remember about your grandmother, who you were staying with when your father was in this country?

MESSINA: Oh, my grandmother, (?).

LEVINE: Tell me some things about your grandmother that you remember.

MESSINA: My grandmother? Ah, what I want to tell you of my grandmother. Well, my mother, all the time he call in my sister. My sister got a big place. The people, the sister, living on this property, and this property the people, rich people, they want somebody (?), to clean, and my mother go over there, and do this. And my grandmother take care to us.

LEVINE: Ah, so your grandmother was taking care of you while your mother worked.

MESSINA: Take care to us. And, uh, never, never, my grandmother, never my grandmother hit us, never.

LEVINE: No.

MESSINA: And is, all the time, uh, all the time give some things to us, all the time.

LEVINE: Like what?

MESSINA: Just like a nut, fig, some kind of, no, no sweet, no sweet. Something that come from the farm, you know, something. Is, um, is no, uh, what do you want to say? My grandmother, no (?), we learn to knit, crochet, my grandmother. And when you started to knit, you started to pass the time with knitting, me and my sister. And my grandmother make, um, make the dress, the dress. Oh, all that, work. You started to do one yard, two yard, two yard, and after you tie it off, and make a knot. When you make a knot, you reach over here. I'll demonstrate it for you. I go in one corner, my sister go in another corner, and I work, I work. And I (?). After (?), you'll be all right. It's a nice, (?). My Nana was nice. When my Nana died, (?). I see my Nana die.

LEVINE: You saw her die? What was that like?

MESSINA: I'm over there. I'm sitting there, my Nana here. My, uh, my mother no want me here. My, my sister stayed all (?), you got pneumonia. My sister (?) the last few days, I don't know, she say, I don't feel, I feel tired, I want to go to bed. And that night I stay myself, and I stay, I stay myself. My mother say,

"No, you're too young, Rosa, (Italian)." My, my mother's sister is Lola, and she say, "Leave your daughter here." You know, together. And then my grandmother, I see her, I start (?), and she die at four o'clock in the morning. She had pneumonia.

LEVINE: Do you remember the funeral? What was it like?

MESSINA: Yeah.

LEVINE: What was it like in Italy for the funeral?

MESSINA: The funeral is (?), the funeral is (?), when he died, the person.

Um, no, wait a minute, I need to say it right. Um, it's, uh, before you die, I know my Nana died, my mother, my sister, my aunt, you know, you got this girl, young girl, thirteen years old, and you say I dress myself, I dress myself her. And, uh, and when you die you dress her, that girl, my grandmother. And eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock, you take my grandmother. He die at four o'clock in the morning, and somebody come, (?) in no time, and he take it. He's got a Mass, he's got everything for my grandmother. He's good. He's good.

LEVINE: Was your grandfather alive at that time?

MESSINA: No, no, no, no.

LEVINE: He was gone, too.

MESSINA: I don't know my grandfather. I don't know my grandfather.

LEVINE: And, and how about your mother? Do you remember any experiences with your mother, any things that you did with your mother when you were still in Italy?

MESSINA: My mother (?), especially in the War, you know? You know, over

there in Italy, for work, you know, you needed to go to work, that's all. And I remember myself, I remember myself and my grandmother, we had to go wash clothes for the people. Not that they're stranger, but the rich people (?), that's all, see. Because they've got to, my grandmother take care of the kids. My grandmother take care of the kids. Now, after, after that my mother no go because, and after, when my father come in this country, when the World War One, it started World War One, my mother got a little girl, and they, when they bring in this country, she's eighteen months old. She was young. And my mother is, uh, she started, when she started this country, my mother don't want us to tell nobody we're coming this country, because it's dangerous, the people, they come, World War One, dangerous. And after, uh, we started, when we started coming here, we started staying in my aunt for one night, my sister, my mother's sister, my aunt. All the people, all of my family, came to my aunt. And after we go, take the train, Catania. In Catania we take a, now, this, I can no, I'm lost, because I'm too young. Two night, two night in the (?), to hotel. I remember. One in Naples, another one I don't remember.

LEVINE: What was the other one?

MESSINA: I don't remember the other one.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MESSINA: And, um, it's, um, I stopped two nights in the hotel. And, uh, and after go, uh, Genoa.

LEVINE: That's where you left from on the ship?

MESSINA: Yeah, Genoa. There's no want to come, when we go to Genoa, stay

three days there. The boat come right away. Nobody know. And when the boat is on the way, everybody is coming. I think it's six, seven people on the little boat. And after, at sea. Everybody know what it is. Why everybody (?) because little people come. (?)

LEVINE: Well, um, well, first let's back up a little. Tell me about life in your town when you were growing up. Was there, did you have, were you a religious family?

MESSINA: Oh, sure, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah? Do you remember any, like, holidays, or religious occasions, how you celebrated them?

MESSINA: Oh, all the time. All the time we got a feast in my country. You got a feast day the Virgin Mother Mary, you got a feast A Madonna (Italian), A Madonna (Italian), A Madonna (Italian), St. Antonio, St. Gennaro. Every feast is all on us, not too far. You can walk.

LEVINE: What would you do, like, on a feast day?

MESSINA: You go, go (?), go to church, (?).

LEVINE: And what did you do for fun? What was, what was enjoyment?

MESSINA: No, no, no.

LEVINE: No?

MESSINA: No, pray. Pray.

LEVINE: No, I mean, when you, did you have, like, different times when there was music, and dancing?

MESSINA: No dancing, I never know dancing.

LEVINE: No? You never knew dancing?

MESSINA: No, no, no, no.

LEVINE: So it was, it was very strict, your family.

MESSINA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MESSINA: No.

LEVINE: How about, now, you had how many brothers and sisters?

MESSINA: I got six all together.

LEVINE: And, uh, could you say their names in their order, from the oldest down to the youngest?

MESSINA: Yeah. Shota[ph] . . .

LEVINE: Was the oldest?

MESSINA: Yeah.

LEVINE: And then you?

MESSINA: After me. And, uh, after my brother, Joe.

LEVINE: Joe.

MESSINA: After, Egamus[ph]. After, Freddy.

LEVINE: Freddy?

MESSINA: Freddy.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MESSINA: Afeu[ph], Afeu[ph]. In Italy, over here in America they call him Freddy. And, uh, the little one.

LEVINE: What was . . .

MESSINA: Grace.

LEVINE: Grace?

MESSINA: Yeah, Grace.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So, um, so, it was hard for your family, during the First World War, your father was over here, and . . .

MESSINA: Yeah.

LEVINE: And your grandmother . . .

MESSINA: I can't tell you, you've got a feast, you've got a feast they call, wait a minute. (?) over here. (?) over here. Over there call a carnivale, carnivale.

LEVINE: Carnivale.

MESSINA: Now, that's, when it started, over there . . . (she addresses her daughter in Italian)

MASCOLA: Lent.

MESSINA: Lent. Uh, now, the poor man over there, he got a big, big feast. Now, my father here in the United States, my mother forget the Lent. Now, in Italy, uh, my mother is supposed to make, my mother is supposed to make pasta, uh, a little meat, you know? One (?) don't know, he tell her, "Do you know what is today,

Mary?" He say, "Today is carnivale." "You're kidding me? I'm not making nothing to my kids." We go to, we go in the city. (?) Uh, we go in the city, and, uh, and they, we go to the butcher store, the butcher store, and he tell her pick out a little meat, because she make a little pasta for us. The man, he say, "Senora, that's true what I say." And my mother cried. He says, "Senora, I don't got any." Every, actually everything. Now, listen to this. The wife, she hear, in the back. "No, no, we'll get something for the senora." The wife, she take it, from his whole family, he give my mother. And, uh, and my mother right away make some pasta, make something, make eat it to us. I'll never forget that day, before coming this country. My mother forget everything over here. Because, you know, you don't got a, you don't got a, the mother die, and no longer go, and no got nobody, she's the baby of the family, and no got nobody. She's the baby of the family, my mother, you know what I mean? And enough to go, when my mother died, I go different country, a different city, I go to Cassania. Another, another little city. It's far away, if you want to walk more than an hour walk. You understand what I mean?

LEVINE: Wait, say that again?

MESSINA: More than an hour, an hour walk, but it's hard for my mother. It's a long day of good people, not got too much. You got some people, you know what I mean? (?)

LEVINE: Well, the little town where you lived, were there stores in the town? Was there a market day in the town? How did you, did you have little shops in the town?

MESSINA: Yeah, you can shop in the town.

LEVINE: Yeah?

MESSINA: But depending what kind. If you want to shop for (?) or something like that I think, just like, you've got to want to (?), one store. No, because a small town. Where I born myself, it's a little, little town. A (Italian), a little town. And it got a church, a beautiful little church. It don't got a store, no store.

LEVINE: No store.

MESSINA: No store. The people that need to go buy something. That's all the kind of town.

LEVINE: Okay, wait. I'm going to pause here for a minute. (break in tape) Okay, we're resuming now after we put the bird in the other room. Okay. Now, uh, do you remember the house you lived in when you were in Italy? You remember your house? Can you describe it? Could you describe what your house was like?

MESSINA: My house?

LEVINE: What was it made out of?

MESSINA: One of, when we come in this country, (?), you've got a two-room, kitchen, that's all. Everybody over there, not just like here. Over there I got a two room, or, one kitchen, sleep in the one room, another people sleep in, mother, father, if you've got small kids they sleep with the mother and father in the room. And the kitchen, that's all. And my mother's house I got a one, two, I got three bedrooms, no, one is big, one is big more, over here, and over there. Big, bigger room. And, um, and got another little room, and got a kitchen. That's all.

LEVINE: What did your mother or your grandmother cook on? Do you remember the stove?

MESSINA: No, you don't cook on the stove. You cook over the, you've got it, just like the country, just like the country. My father make brick, brick, like that, brick. And my mother put something (?) there, and my mother feed it over here, here she feed it.

LEVINE: Wood?

MESSINA: For cook, that's all, and put the wood here, he light it, and it cook. It cook a long time.

LEVINE: Do you remember any dishes that you particularly liked, any food that you really liked that your grandmother made or your mother made?

MESSINA: I like all kind of food, but one food I no like. I'm not going to like it, it's called, uh, uh, long squash, long squash. (?) Long squash. And my mother, she cook it with the tomatoes, onion, and after put pasta. Now, when you put the tomato, no squeeze the tomato take the seeds out. You cook everything. All right? And myself that's one food I no can eat. At this time, uh, every time my mother got the food, I eat and throw up, every time. I told her. The, the . . .

LEVINE: Seeds?

MESSINA: The seeds of the tomato, I got it in my tongue, good-bye. I don't know why.

LEVINE: Do you remember what, what was done when people got sick in your little town? Do you, was there a doctor, or what kind of

medicine, or what did people do when they were sick?

MESSINA: No, the doctor come, the doctor come.

LEVINE: The doctor came?

MESSINA: And the medicine, the doctor give it to you. That's one thing, and (?), same thing. The doctor got the medicine in his own (?), his own, uh . . .

LEVINE: Bag.

MESSINA: Bag. It's, uh, my, no, what I want to say? People really sick, just like my grandmother sick, he come, he give a (?).

LEVINE: The doctor?

MESSINA: No.

LEVINE: The priest.

MESSINA: The priest. And the priest that bring, is, sacramento, sacramento. You know?

LEVINE: Sacrament, uh-huh.

MESSINA: Sacrament. And when he bring the sacrament, (?). And he got a, like four people holding, (?), and he got something on the top, the top, just like an umbrella.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Like an awning, or a canopy.

MESSINA: Yeah. And, uh, he put it, and he put it, uh, he put the sacramento, and, there, the priest, carry the sacramento there, and they got two little kids near the priest, and he got, to give people that thing. And everybody, he bring the sacramento my

Nana before she died.

LEVINE: And you saw that?

MESSINA: Yes, I saw that. Um, um, you know, when he come and he give the sacramento, he like now, people, he, (?), over there, I don't care if you die, you need to wait till the priest got to come when I got (?). No little water, nothing, nothing. I remember a girl, a little woman, (?), they live near us, you want a little water, just on the lip. "No," he said, "Because (?)." He no give it to her. The (?). That's it. You know, the way, I like it like that, because you, you need to go, (?). Nothing. You know what I mean? When I go communion, two, three hours before communion I no eat. I don't want to eat. Because, you know, that's the law, and that's my law. Somebody else, you got a different, a different law.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

LEVINE: Can you remember any other things that your mother or your grandmother taught you that they were strict about, that they wanted you to know and to, how you should live, or what you should do, or what was right, or what was wrong? Can you remember any of those other things?

MESSINA: Myself, I am a woman, a girl, that suffered (?). The first day I born, I got a, oh, what do you call that now? We call it the worm, the worm. Over here you call a seizure, the people who got to, seizure. Seizure? Now, what do you say? Seizure? (Italian)

MASCOLA: Epileptic.

MESSINA: Epileptic. Yeah. And myself and all, I got a, the worm. A worm in my stomach, that make me sick. And (?) my father, myself young, young, really, really young. I think five, I don't think so, four, five years old. And I played all in my yard all alone. My father, he's just like over there talking with another man, my father, in the shade, a hot day. And, uh, and myself, I got a, somebody, they choke me, choke. And, uh, I feel something in my mouth. And myself, I go to the father, my father started to say, and my father is interested in that man who talked, you know, put attention on me, and that man, he say, "Carmello, Carmello!" Call my father, and he find me with a big mouth, worm coming out over here. And my father say, my father excited, you know, and the man, he say, "Don't worry, come on. Open the mouth, and I take it out myself." And Tony, the man, I remember, and he take it. And I'm ahhh, ahhh, to myself, because I choke, and the big man. Worm, like? A big worm. (?) myself. I got this. I remember this. I remember another time I passed one, I passed another worm, a bigger one. And my mother pass a lot of worm, you know what I mean? Because I got all the time, for somebody talk, and he say, "Ah!" myself, scared, I got a, I got this. I need to watch (?). One time, four years old, I got this worm. And my mother, my father, nothing, my mother, my father, everybody sit down here from the house. My (?) from my father. He say, "Peter, you bring the horse, you give some food." (?) of the horse. He make me do, my father. And I answer my father. I say, "Peter, I tell you," that when he told her two times, my . . . (a doorbell rings) My father (?). Now I no think so no more. All right.

LEVINE: Okay, your physical therapist left. So, so, all these, these

physical things that you just sort of, they took care of themselves. You didn't actually have treatment or anything.

MESSINA: No, no, no.

LEVINE: You just passed the worms, and . . .

MESSINA: No.

LEVINE: Okay.

MESSINA: No. My mother teaches me this, I know what to do. I got all the time, all the time, all the time. Big, no small, bigger, bigger.

LEVINE: Um, so, how was it that it was decided that you would come to America when the war was still going on? It was 1917, right? The war was still going on. How come you left Italy then, even though the war was going on?

MESSINA: Yeah, because my mother wanted to go see my father. (they laugh) That's all it is. No me. No, not my trouble. It's my mother. This (?), and want to come and see this country. And everybody, "No, it's dangerous." My mother take a big, big, uh . . . (?)

LEVINE: Responsibility.

MESSINA: Yeah. Because it's, you know, you die in the middle of the ocean. And my boat, they shoot it, my boat.

LEVINE: The Giuseppe Verde?

MESSINA: Yeah. My boat, in the middle of the ocean, they shoot it two times.

LEVINE: Well, tell me where you left from. What was the port where you

took the boat from?

MESSINA: I told you, in Genoa.

LEVINE: Genoa. Okay. And did you have any examinations or anything like that before you left?

MESSINA: Oh, yeah. Before you go on the boat you've go to doctors. You go to two doctors, examination. You know? He look you, you got a bug. Everything he look at. If you got something in your head, a bug or something, he say, "Don't worry." And you do it.

LEVINE: Before you left, did you have any idea what America was like? Do you remember what you thought you would find here, or anything?

MESSINA: No.

LEVINE: No idea.

MESSINA: No.

LEVINE: No. And, um, do you remember anything your mother brought, or you took with you when you came to this country?

MESSINA: Not taking nothing, honey.

LEVINE: Nothing.

MESSINA: If you just a little (?), you can't take nothing.

LEVINE: Okay. So, uh, when you got on board the ship, what do you remember about that, about the voyage across the ocean?

MESSINA: Across the ocean? Well, I got on the boat. When I got the on boat, they want to get, I not going to get over, I got three big thing, the orange, and you throw all the big thing to us, some in

the boat, and some go in the water. Orange.

LEVINE: They were transporting oranges.

MESSINA: That is good luck, good luck.

LEVINE: Oh, good luck.

MESSINA: Good luck. And, uh, after, uh, it's gone, after three, three days in Genoa, three, four days, and after you go, after you go coast, coast, coast and coast. You know what I mean? Um, I see bird all the time, bird. When you see bird all the time, you see, you not see in the middle of the ocean. You see coast and coast. Myself, I see, I see, flower, flower, violet, violet, the kind that is, uh, the violet is in the, in the water, the tree, violet tree. The violet. Grow, grow underwater.

LEVINE: In the water . . .

MESSINA: In the water.

LEVINE: A plant.

MESSINA: It grows in the water. I don't think this is too clean. (?) That's the way I say coast and coast, see? Deep enough that the boat can go, I think. And I see, uh, I see flower, and I see tree. Uh, you know tree?

LEVINE: Yeah, tree.

MESSINA: Big, like, long, a long tree, and big, like, uh, a long tree. And the end you've got to, you've got the fruit, on the end, you've got a leaf, everything. (?) all of the trees so long, nothing, nothing. I see it. I see the roots.

LEVINE: Is this in . . .

MESSINA: Nobody came and looked, nobody came and looked, because too much.

You know why? Because you've got to, people got to look us, to go near the boat. You need to stay just like here, you've got to go. See, you cannot look on the side what's happening on the boat, on the ocean. Because they've got a big, big animal. Fish, they're going to get us. After, when he come, after he come, too dangerous, too dangerous.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So did you, did you have any experience on the boat that was dangerous?

MESSINA: Yeah.

LEVINE: What happened?

MESSINA: It's a, one in the middle of the ocean, uh, I think he make, I don't know. I stay a month-and-a-half on the ocean.

LEVINE: A month-and-a-half?

MESSINA: A month-and-a-half.

LEVINE: Oh.

MESSINA: Now, remember the ocean, uh, one time stop because he got a lot of fog, a lot of fog in the boat, the boat. He needed to make noise, because he didn't want another boat to bang into the boat, because you no can see it. And, uh, he stays, oh, I think he stayed three or four days in there. (?) Another time we stay, uh, (?), I, uh, I wanted to right this, whatever. Before Christmas, before Christmas is, um, everybody, they make novena for the baby Jesus. Now, all of the, was my, was, you go all

together, one young girl bring a lot of stuff, a lot of pictures, a lot of that. They make a little altar, they make a little altar. Every night, he fix it, and he make the novena to the baby Jesus. After, lucky I remember a little bit, after, um, come Christmas, all right. The (?), he say, "What do you want to give God for Christmas?" (?) I no got (?), I no got nothing, you know? And over there he said to us, the bag, the bag. He give a bag. Anyway, my bag, my mother bag, you've got five fork, five knife, five spoon. You understand what I mean? A little spoon, and I got five dishes, and I got the little bowl of soup.

Now, he say, you know what should do everybody? Take the bag, and shake it, and (?), he started (?) and go all around like that, come the baby Jesus, and sing. The last day, the Christmas is (?), the captain, he come up the stairs, and, uh, he take, he take everything, and got a hold of us, he got a hold of us, and say, "I no do nothing wrong." (?) You don't need to broke everything. He broke everything, three days after.

LEVINE: Why did he break everything?

MESSINA: Because he's scared that the noise he hear the people (?), the enemy, the (?). You understand what I mean? And he say, "You know," he says, "You're not supposed to do that." Three days after, in the middle of the night, everybody say, uh, now, my, (?) there, up here got a spear, (?) spears, and I hear, I see everything, all the water come down, all the water. (?) And the water, everybody here.

LEVINE: Up to the sides?

MESSINA: (?) And, uh, and after I heard, they told us, no, they told (?) reach (?) in America. And they say, shooting four, six times out

there, in (?) they shoot three times. But when he shoot the other man, the other people, he shoot, make a big hole on the boat, and all the water come out. Now, in the middle of the night somebody, somebody go and cover the boat, cover the thing, (?). (?) Everybody think we're dead that day, that day, that night, because the water come on, over.

LEVINE: What were people doing when they thought that the, when the water was coming in?

MESSINA: Scream. What you want to do?

LEVINE: Yeah.

MESSINA: And nobody can eat, and we don't got enough food. The food that they give to us is, uh, scrap, scrap table, what you say?

LEVINE: Scraps.

MESSINA: Cheap. You've got beans, uh, pasta. Pasta once in a while, no pasta. Pasta too good. No. Some things, cheap. My mother don't want to pay too much. My mother no go first class. My mother go second class. The one (?) to me.

LEVINE: So were you in, like, a big room with a lot of beds?

MESSINA: Yes.

LEVINE: Yeah?

MESSINA: A lot of beds. A big room, a lot of beds. Everybody sleep his own. And my mother got a, six kids. She got a . . .

LEVINE: Bunk beds?

MESSINA: Two floor, two floor, yeah. Three beds, three beds.

LEVINE: Three, uh-huh. Uh-huh. And where were you? Were you on the top bunk, or . . .

MESSINA: No, the middle one.

LEVINE: The middle.

MESSINA: The middle one. My brother, my brother, he's the last one, (?).

LEVINE: Uh-huh. But you were all together.

MESSINA: All together, yes. All the ones.

LEVINE: And what was the crew like on the ship, the captain and the crew? What were they like? Were they nice to you?

MESSINA: Sometimes. They just (?). And after it happened, my sister (?). Um, (?). He'd reaching the United States. Not too far away the United States. When he reach the United States, three days before we reach the United States, uh, a couple of fellow that work on the boat, they say, "Come out here." They make him look out the window, and he see a yellow light, yellow light. And he say, "You know what it is, that?" "No." "That's the United States." I say, "You kidding me." I'm looking out. And (?) stay quiet. Now, he's got a girl, who's a mother. The girl is not hardly eighteen, twenty, something, and you've got a (?), got a brother, had a mother, but a boy want to go to serve. Now, we say, pretend that my son is in the service, I stay in Italy. When my son come back, myself I go to the United States. It's no like that. Only the boy go in the serve, the first line, they kill the boy, the boy died. Now, he's coming home (?), and the woman is smart, smart. (?) everything (?). And after is, uh, after, uh, two days before we reach New York, two days, it's

cold, January. I am here 8 January, in New York. He make all the blankets take out of the bed.

LEVINE: (?) back?

MESSINA: No, take it out. No. (?) blanket, no more. Somebody (?). Now, he calls it (?). (?) kind of go down, this. But he told him this, you've got to, just enough (?), going to go down. Now, he keep it there, and keep it there, and my mother, he make my brother go there and go (?). See? And, uh, oh, the last (?), and after come, when we reach New York, uh, he come and inspect, inspect. The people, they look at the boat, they look at everything. And, uh, this little girl, they say, "I want to talk to you people." They talk beautiful American. And they say, uh, they say, "I want to talk to you." Because the girl told to us, everybody. They say, "Don't worry, I defend you, don't worry." (?) And he talk, and he talk, and then he say, he say, "Middle of the people, they talk all (?), the captain." And he tell us, he say, "If I go the bathroom, the (?) in there, they want to grab us." He say, everything, everything. We cannot go alone in the bathroom, in the bathroom, because my mother say, "Don't go alone, take your sister." (?)

LEVINE: Do you remember the captain's name?

MESSINA: No, no, no. And after when he hear us, when he hear the name of all of this thing, the people, he say, "No, you don't see no more. Just the men on the boat." (?)

LEVINE: So did you see the Statue of Liberty when the boat came in?

MESSINA: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Did you know what it was then?

MESSINA: Yeah, because he told them. I didn't know it. And after my father saw (?). I stayed four days the Battery in New York. And, um, I say right it? And, and, um, now . . .

LEVINE: Was this on Ellis Island where you stayed?

MASCOLA: At the Battery.

LEVINE: At the Battery, you stayed.

MESSINA: At the Battery, stayed. I stayed four days. You got people, all kind of people, black people, white, every kind. Any kind you could see. And when we go Battery, he got a board, and the board, (?) on the wall. The board is no, no more together. The board is (?). You see my finger? The (?). Like that. Now, that's the side of the board, the side. (?) I cannot go to bed. My mother, they take her, they (?), and take my mother, he (?) in the dark and put them in the back, because too dangerous, only the soldier (?). And after is, I stayed four days, four days in there, my father was supposed to come right away. I got a, what do you call it? Yellow jaundice.

LEVINE: Allergy?

MASCOLA: Yellow jaundice.

LEVINE: Yellow jaundice.

MESSINA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Were you sleeping at Ellis Island then?

MESSINA: Yes. I come and my father take us. He say I want to take the

train to come home, because the New York . . .

LEVINE: Well, before we talk about the train, tell about Ellis Island when (?).

MESSINA: What's that?

LEVINE: Ellis Island? What do you remember about those days when you were there? Can you tell about that?

MESSINA: Well, you know, when you're there, everybody, it's hard to remember, look how long it took.

LEVINE: I know. But what did it look like? What did you see there, and what was it like for you?

MESSINA: Everybody say to us, go took the boat, the (?) boat, go there, and ask your father name, what you want, mother, sister, brother, everybody, do like that, and talk, and somebody is there, he lifted the hand. And myself, I call for my mother, my father, my father not there. My mother, oh, so worried, oh. Oh, my mother so worried. That's why we stayed four days over there, because my father no answer. And after a little, little bit better, my father take the train, and he come get to us. And . . .

LEVINE: Wait, we're going to pause here for a second. (break in tape)
Okay, we're resuming now. So about Ellis Island. What, what did they put you through there? What did you have to do? What did they ask you? What . . .

MESSINA: When we reach, when we reach, when we reach there, New York, the Battery, he put just a place to sleep, right? Now, I need to remember. They put to sleep and, uh, in the morning everybody, they get up, go to the bathroom, they (?). (?) big table, long,

long, long table, and they got people, they give to us the chairs, (?). Tell my mother, six kids? Yeah, that's yours. And they sit there, and they feed to us, more (?), they give (?), and they give (?) food, every one, they give the (?). And after, (?) dinner. Now I got, my mother started talking with somebody, and he say, "How long you're here?" Somebody two years, somebody three years. (?) I say, "Why you're here?" I say, "Because my, my boyfriend, he go first, he say he call me, he call me when I reach here, he say, 'I don't know her.' Now myself is so shame, see, (?), and so shame, myself no come back." One because of that, another one because the mother and father separate (?), and they stay there, and all of this people they got to (?), everything, somebody two years, somebody one year, somebody, somebody six months. A lot of people, my mother said. And what you stay? You got (?), you got everything in there, (?), and the chair there, they stay (?). In the night, (?) and go to bed, just to give a bed to sleep. And after my mother think, think a lot. (?) No stay too long, stay just four days. Now, when reach (?), the boss, two times or three times, he's, he say, "What do you, why do you come in the United States? For what? What are you waiting for?" I said, "My father." My mother said (?). They say, "This kid belong (?)" I say, "Yeah." Now, he ask a lot of questions, he say, "I don't think you see your father." I said, "Why?" And I started crying. I wanted my father. Now, lots of times they call us, three times they call. The last time they call, he say, "Come on, I want to . . ." he say, my mother say, "Pray to the Virgin Mother to find your father," and (?), we stay here, no come back. I want to come back (?). Now, it's, uh, (?) there, and the (?), the man, he say, "Tell me . . ." tough, tough. He say, "Tell me what you,

what you wait for." I said, "For my father." He say, "That's a picture of your father?" Say, "Yes, it is my father." Now, when he started to ask to us, I think my father coming.

LEVINE: What did he look like?

MESSINA: Taller this time. (?) I don't care for that man (?) my father. And the man, my sister, my brother, the two big one, you know, they go, they say, "Now you go."

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: What was it like seeing your father?

MESSINA: Oh, my goodness. My father, when I see my father, he's like, uh, yellow, totally yellow, because he got yellow jaundice. My father also had, and he's, (?) my father, and, oh, everybody, the man, he say, "Now you know he's your father." All right? You know? There's a lot of people, I think a lot of people, they go United States, you go the lawyer, you go (?) off the boat, and when they reach over there, you're not going to fool around. You (?) the examination, you know? And, uh, my mother need a, the people, they talk, my mother talk, and got (?). (?) I go, I am here, you know what I mean? After my father, when he got to, get out of there, he take us and say, "I want to take the train. The better thing I take a train.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay, we're going to pause here for a minute, because we're at the end of this tape. I want to just switch the tape.
(break in tape)

MESSINA: (Ms. Mascola and Ms. Messina speak in Italian) You want to (?)

to Italy, because you come in this country, you come this country with (?), you understand? Somebody don't want to see her, somebody don't want to see him. (?) can be boy, it's going to be girl, woman. (?) (?), and when I tell you (?), everybody say, they say, "Why do you stay here? What do you eat? We don't got enough food. We don't got . . ." "No, he feed me here. He feed me here, (?)." And when they say, "What do you do?" I crochet, uh, I (?) do some stuff with the hands. And he say, a fellow, the people they come, the people they come in this country he's like bring some person, the people, and myself, he say, (?). I make different food, for one. You understand what I mean? I cannot buy grocery, I cannot buy anything. You living, you living the life.

LEVINE: When you were on Ellis Island, do you remember the examinations that you were given?

MESSINA: Well, examination, honey, over there, (?).

LEVINE: And you were given tests? Were you given tests?

MESSINA: We were given tests. And want to know if these people nuts, you know what I mean? They want to know, uh, if you've got a sickness. People were sick. And you want to ask them for, I told you. They ask them, they look at the hair. They look, um . . .

LEVINE: How were you treated there? Were people nice to you?

MESSINA: Nice? Over here . . .

LEVINE: On Ellis Island?

MESSINA: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Were you treated nicely?

MESSINA: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MESSINA: Used to no can stand, used to no can stand in the, uh, in the night, you need to go to bed, because all the soldier, uh, people say, "I no can (?)." He can put this people for us, can put it.

And, uh, he's, uh, somebody put a cloth, somebody put his own cloth. Yeah. Somebody put, yeah.

LEVINE: So the soldiers were staying there?

MESSINA: They were living there, the other side.

LEVINE: They were living on the other side.

MESSINA: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you . . .

MESSINA: Living all the time on the other side. (?) used to be a (?), that's why. I don't got a big (?), I got a , what you call it, (Italian).

MASCOLA: A cot?

MESSINA: Yeah. A little thing.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. How about the food? Do you remember that?

MESSINA: Yeah, they give nice food. Some (?), come and (?), the first time it's hard (?). You know what I mean? (?) (?) The guy, uh, because I see (?).

LEVINE: Did you see any other things that were new to you that you never saw before? Do you remember anything that you never saw before?

MESSINA: I see a lot of people, too much for me. Too long ago.

MASCOLA: Doughnuts? (Italian)

MESSINA: Doughnuts.

MASCOLA: (Italian)

MESSINA: Doughnuts, yeah, doughnuts. And they give, you know, you give, you give cereal, uh, wait a minute. What do you call it?

LEVINE: Oatmeal?

MESSINA: No, cornmeal. They give cornmeal.

LEVINE: Oh, cornmeal.

MESSINA: With a little fruit on the top. And two prune on another dish. That's (?). (?) All the dish wash, the color, drop the dishes, no color, no (?). Everybody, everybody (?) the dish. (?) Some of the fruit I like, some of the fruit I no like.

LEVINE: So how did, do you remember what your mother said when you, when your father didn't show up, and you were waiting there for, for four days.

MESSINA: I answered, my mother used to, "Pray the Virgin Mother of God. Pray your father come and get us." That's all. Pray the Virgin Mother of God. See, when my father, something happened, myself, I need to go back in Italy, because the United States not take. You understand what I mean? That's all.

LEVINE: Okay. So, so when you, your father did come, and you took the

train, then, to Lawrence.

MESSINA: I take a train to Lawrence.

LEVINE: Do you remember that? Do you remember leaving Ellis Island with your mother and father and your sisters and brothers?

MESSINA: No, my (?), I'm on the train, with four bed, I think. Some beds, some (?). And now my father say, "You, you kids go to sleep. Your bed is nice and clean, nice and warm." He say, "You go sleep there." And me and my mother in the big, the big, because the big is more, see? My mother hold the bed, and my father stay here, and we say, "No, no, no want to go to bed." And he look us ten minutes, myself, I started calling me and my sister, "Pa, Pa, Pa, Ma." "What's the matter? What's the matter?" I say, "Come again, somebody eating me up." And he open, he open the (?), and I see the full, full of bugs, full of bugs. My father, my father is pulling me down, shaking. He say, "Everybody, sit here. Sleep here." When we reach here, my, we stay with my aunt, two days, four, five days, until my father got a board, buy a board. And, uh, he sleep on (?). Oh, everybody want a room. My aunt thank to God, because my aunt give the place.

LEVINE: Just say your father's name and your mother's name. What were their names?

MESSINA: Carmello was the father.

LEVINE: What was your mother's maiden name?

MESSINA: DeMavaro[ph], DeMavaro[ph]. Maria DeMavaro[ph].

LEVINE: And your father's first name?

MESSINA: Lanzafame.

MASCOLA: Carmello.

MESSINA: Carmello Lanzafame.

LEVINE: And what was your aunt's name, when you went to stay, when you first came here?

MESSINA: Carmello Lanzafame.

MASCOLA: No.

LEVINE: Your aunt.

MASCOLA: (Italian)

MESSINA: Oh, Maria, Maria. (Italian) Maria. (Italian)

LEVINE: Now, do you remember some of the things you saw for the first time, in other words, when you were at your aunt's house, and you were in Lawrence? Do you remember some things that were different?

MESSINA: My (?), he say, "(?) out of work here." From the (?). And (?). And he say, "That's the main street, the best street in this city." I started crying because that (?). Not in the (?), tree. That (?). When I come in this country, I find the tree, he pull them out, all (?). And I look, I look (?). I started crying. I say, (?). I no like it here, I no like it here. I cry all the time, all the time.

LEVINE: Were you homesick? Did you want to go back?

MESSINA: Yeah, I want to go back.

LEVINE: What did you miss? Why did you want to go back?

MESSINA: To my food, my fruit, see, because Sicily, Sicily got the best fruit, the best fruit. I suffer, I miss my food, I miss everything.

LEVINE: How did your brothers and sisters feel? Did they want to stay, or they wanted to go back, too?

MESSINA: Sometimes, sometimes he say yes, (?). Me, me.

LEVINE: You were the one who wanted to go back.

MESSINA: I want to go back.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how about your mother and father?

MESSINA: He's crying, my father, my father, God bless his soul. My father is, uh, going to buy fruit, he won't buy dollars, or two dollars. He buy grapes, he buy (?). He buy cherry, (?) cherry, (?) cherry. He buy (?) the banana, he buy a dozen, two dozen, he bring it back. The rest, everything he buy (?), my father, because he want to (?) to us. When I saw the fruit, I started crying. I want to pick it myself.

LEVINE: Were some of the foods different than what you were used to?

MESSINA: That's right, they were different, a lot of different, a lot of, lot of different.

LEVINE: So did you start school, or you didn't go to school here.

MESSINA: I no go to school.

LEVINE: No. Did you go to work?

MESSINA: I go to work right away.

LEVINE: Right away?

MESSINA: Yes. I am, uh, I am myself, uh, I come here fifteen, and fifteen-and-a-half. I tell the man I'm twenty-one. I told him, the (?) here I'm twenty-one years old. I am fifteen-and-a-half.

LEVINE: So you said you were twenty-one.

MESSINA: I am twenty-one.

LEVINE: And then what did you do there?

MESSINA: I work.

LEVINE: What kind of work?

MESSINA: Uh, twist. I was a twister. It's a hard job.

LEVINE: Twister. Twist.

MESSINA: Twist. You've got to, you know, you've got to hold the machine, and you've got a bobbin, you call (?).

LEVINE: Bobbin.

MESSINA: Yeah. And the, you've got the yarn, it go all around. You know? And when it (?) you've got to grab it. Going to run, and you grab it. If you don't grab it in time, you burn your hands. Now, I need to go to work, the work, and after I work there, better this, sixteen dollars and sixteen cents.

LEVINE: A week?

MESSINA: A week.

LEVINE: Sixteen dollars and sixteen. And how long did you stay there?
Did you work there a long time?

MESSINA: I stayed (?) a long. After (?) I still work there, and after
(?). I reach here '18, uh, '27, '27, I got (?), I no work there
no more, in '27 I got a baby and I stay here. I no go to work no
more.

LEVINE: And how did you meet your husband?

MESSINA: Over here, in the shop.

LEVINE: Oh, he worked in the same shop?

MESSINA: Yeah. No, he worked a different (?).

LEVINE: And what was your husband's name?

MESSINA: Sensio[ph], Sensio[ph].

LEVINE: And, and, uh, what, what did you like about him?

MESSINA: What I like him? He like (?), he got beautiful hair, and I said
my mother, I don't say my mother, I elope.

LEVINE: You elope?

MESSINA: I elope, because it's, uh, I go now nine months, nine months to
myself, I know this man, and, uh, he ride (?) and a horse. Now,
one time we put the horse in front of my house, and myself is
happening, out the window, he say hi to me, and (?) say hi. My
husband say, my mother say. You understand (?) my mother. My
mother go get the broom, hit him in the head.

LEVINE: (she laughs) Hit him in the head?

MESSINA: And me!

LEVINE: You. (she laughs)

MESSINA: Hit him in the head. And after my mother (?) job, working, and make my head so sore, and after I told the woman I said, "Put the hand, the hands here." "What happened to you?" I told her the story. And I told her my boyfriend. My boyfriend, he go to my father, and he tell, "I'm sorry what your mother, the mother do your daughter." He say, "Don't feel bad. Don't worry. I do to her." And he take me. I say, "Come on, I don't want to stay no more." That's why. That's why. Because I've got a sister bigger than me, and my mother no (?) my boyfriend.

LEVINE: You were the second.

MESSINA: That's why, that's why.

LEVINE: I see. Uh-huh. Now, was your husband also from the old country?

MESSINA: Not too far away.

LEVINE: No, but he, he came to this country, too?

MESSINA: Yeah, yeah. I don't know my country, I don't know. I don't know my country.

MASCOLA: She didn't know him.

LEVINE: You didn't know him before.

MESSINA: No.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So then, uh, how many children did you have?

MESSINA: Five.

LEVINE: Five?

MESSINA: Two, three boys and two girls.

LEVINE: Do you want to say their names, from the oldest to the youngest?

MESSINA: Yeah. Santo, Santo, Carmello, Joe, uh, Laurencina[ph], Laura, and Mary.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, do you have grandchildren?

MESSINA: My God. (?) grandchildren. I'm lost, I have so many.

LEVINE: You have so many.

MESSINA: So many.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you have any great-grandchildren?

MESSINA: Yes. I got a, I think twelve. Uh-huh. How many?

MASCOLA: Great-grandchildren?

MESSINA: Yeah. I think twelve, thirteen?

LEVINE: In other words, your children's children, do they have any children?

MESSINA: Yeah, yes. Yes. Uh, (?).

MASCOLA: That's right, you have twelve.

MESSINA: Twelve great-grandchildren. (?)

MASCOLA: She does. She has twelve, about thirteen great-grandchildren.

MESSINA: Yeah, see?

LEVINE: Yeah. So how is this time of your life, this time when you're in your old age time? How is that for you?

MESSINA: It's good.

LEVINE: Good?

MESSINA: I (?), so much myself. Her call me, "Come on to my house." (?) because the pain, the pain in my body.

LEVINE: Oh, you have pain. Uh-huh.

MESSINA: And, uh, just like before, yesterday, living the people over there, (?) home, and (?). I'm younger, you know.

LEVINE: What makes you feel, uh, satisfied? I mean, what did you, what did you do in your lifetime that when you look back on it you feel, you feel good about, you feel happy about?

MESSINA: I feel happy, I've got to, just like Sunday. I (?) my granddaughter, she's got all the (?). Fine, (?). I feel fine. (?) sit in the chair, till one o'clock, seven o'clock.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how do you think coming to this country, do you think, um, what difference do you think it made in your life that you came here when you were fifteen years old, instead of staying in, uh, Sicily, and you came to this country . . .

MESSINA: Over here is different.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MESSINA: To me, I (?). Because I've got a, I stay, I stay home. The (?), seven o'clock, I need to be in the shop, and I (?). And, uh, when I come back, I got to work, wash the clothes, I need to help

my mother and father, and I cry, I tell you, two years I cry. I cry, "I want to go back, I want to go back." I like it better in my country.

LEVINE: Did you ever visit? Did you ever go back for a visit?

MESSINA: Yeah, I go.

LEVINE: And how did you feel when you went back there?

MESSINA: Um, what do you want to tell? Just like when I went there myself. Everything change.

LEVINE: Oh.

MESSINA: Everything, everything change. I'm going to my city where I'm born, the little city, and I go to my cousin, and my cousin, he say, "Alfia, you know this woman come?" I say, "No." (Italian) He say, "You know (?)." When he told me, I know it. And now he come and he say my cousin, her. I say, "I know her. How are you?" (Italian) And they say, (Italian). "What's you?" I say, "Fine." I say, "You know (?)" No. I say, "Come on. You don't know me." "No." And I told her, "What did you do her, (?) there? That way you know me." After 1963, 1963 is, uh, my cousin (?), I work for my cousin there, and, uh, I work there, and my cousin (?), I say, go in the house, tell my mother give the hat, my cap, and you go there. I say, "Whichever one of you going to get for my (?)." "You Alfia." I say, "Yes." And another one, I go see another one, um, what's her name? I said, Maria, her name is Maria. And, uh, I told the woman, I say, "You know, (?) is (?)." And she say, "Yeah." I say, "(?), I don't know." And I say, "(?)." I say, "When I come back there, I come back, you show me." I say, "All right." Next week I go there,

and she (?). I go over there, I (?) in the afternoon. The daughter-in-law will make you get up, make you sit on the chair, and myself, I say, "Hello, Ma, how are you?." They say, "Hello, daughter, how are you?" I said, "Fine." I said, "You know who I am?" The sixth (Italian). I said, (Italian). "Don't you remember when I open the gate all the time to you?" "My God, you're Alfia," say. Another one like that.

LEVINE: When you look back on it now, would you have preferred to have stayed there?

MESSINA: What do you mean?

LEVINE: Would you have preferred to stay in Sicily and not come here?

MESSINA: When I come in '63? No.

LEVINE: No, no, no. I mean, yeah, would, I mean, would you, do you wish that you had stayed in Italy and never came here?

MESSINA: No. No, because I got my kids here.

LEVINE: Because . . .

MESSINA: I got my kids here.

LEVINE: Yeah, your kids. Uh-huh.

MESSINA: No. No, no, no, no. I have to have my kids with me. No, no, no, no.

LEVINE: Is there anything else you can think of that has to do with, uh, your life in the old country, and coming here, and being, living your life out in America? Is there anything else you can think of that you didn't stay?

MESSINA: I don't (?) nothing, just I feel bad, I feel bad when I come in this country, I need to get up early in the morning. It's dark when I get up. Early in the morning, I look in the mirror, I need to go work. And, uh, (?) there, you know. It's funny, it's funny, really.

LEVINE: You miss the trees and the . . .

MESSINA: Me, I am, you don't know me. I got . . . (she laughs) And, uh, it's, uh, (?) now, when I come back to come in my country, too, when I work in the (?) everybody love them, everybody. Only myself, I started working there, the morning, the morning. I got some time ten, sometime eight, girl, all young girl. Now, one time one girl no show up, and myself (?). I say, "Where's Rosa?" Everybody look on this face. "Tell me where Rosa is." They say, "No, no come in because the mother hit her last night and give her a black eye." For what, "Because he say he's coming here for your friend, you're learning bad stuff here to us." Oh, I myself, I got up, I said, "All right, no work, no work." Myself, I got up, I take one, two, you look at my family, you make it, if I might work. You look at my family, and (?) mother, I talk the mother. I say, "Come on, now, I help her." I say, "Come on (?)." "(?) no want to talk to you. Over there too (?)." And I go over there, when I go over there, I grab her, (?) to work. (sirens in background on the tape) I say, "Lady, I no hurt you, no worry, but I want you to look at my face, in my eye. I looked what you think? Tell me the truth." And he say, "No." I say, "What you hit your daughter for?" (?) Say, "I don't know." Say that woman told me, that woman told me that you learn a lot of stuff not supposed to know. My daughter told me,

said you're nice, you no learn anything. They make the pray every before you started work. You say pray, say sign of the cross, after, go to work. I don't believe her. I believe that woman. Any (?).

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: Are there ways that you learned in Sicily that you kept up in this country? Ways of doing things, ways you think about things, that you learned when you were a little girl that you keep doing here?

MASCOLA: (Italian)

MESSINA: In my country, I not do too much, just like I do here, because here when I come my mother say, "You do this, you do that," (?) you need to washing, you need to, you need to iron, you need to do a lot of stuff. I don't do this in my country. My mother do. All right? And then Saturday, Monday, sometimes Friday night, my mother makes hot water, and we need to wash all the floor, all the floor, with the hands and knees. This I no got in my country. No. I wash, my mother wash because you've got to (?), and, uh, you wash with the, put the water, throw the water.

LEVINE: When you first came here, were people, um, were people, uh, prejudiced, or were they not nice to you because you had just come from the old country?

MESSINA: Oh, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember any things like that?

MESSINA: It's, uh, you know who no like, no like Italians? They no like

black, they no like Spanish. I see the Spanish myself, with my eyes. I see the Spanish, they walk on the street over here, and (?) no talk. (voice off mike) My (?), my (?) told my mother, my father, they say, and all (?). (?) He say, "I don't know. I don't know," he say. "That's (?)." (Ms. Mascola and Ms. Messina speak to each other in Italian) Yeah. Along with the black is a metal worker, the metal worker there. See, the metal worker there. You know, I no can understand. Sometimes (?), because people walk on the street, nobody cares. If, any time I think I see. But the police chase, chase (Italian) they chase, they chase with the stick. They chase like that, they chase with the stick.

MASCOLA: The policeman would chase them with the stick to get off the sidewalk, like if the streets weren't plowed or something, they would have to let them walk on the piece that wasn't plowed.

MESSINA: Myself, I no can, I don't understand it. I say, "You don't do nothing." You walk to yourself. My father say, "No talk. No talk." He say, "You better no talk."

LEVINE: How about in the mill? Were you treated, were you treated nicely there?

MESSINA: Sometimes, sometimes, I told you, you're treated different, you know? You're treated, um, specially training, oh, my God, because I've got all English, English boss, he no like Italian people. And, uh, one time I am, I told you this, I am in this country, what do you want to say, six months, I don't know. No long time. And I've got my family, my family, two family, to work. One day this girl (?), no want to work. I started the one in the corner, on the other corner, all (?). I only want to do

myself. Now, my mother give me (?) sandwich, and (?), you put a knife, you put a little towel there, and myself, I take it, I put on top of the (?), and every time I go work, I smell it. I go (?). I say, "What know?" Nine o'clock or eight o'clock, I don't know. And I see myself, (?). I take the sandwich, I take the little towel, I put it, I started. I take, I make the first bite, I see the boss come in, the boss. And, uh, and myself, in Italian, I say, "You want some?" He say, "No, no." And he told me, he say, "Look at your (?)." And myself a nice way, a nice way. After all, I say, uh, I tell him, I say, "Look, I have something to tell you." I said, "Look, for myself, I die. I go downstairs, no come up no more." I say my dear friend, if he die, everybody (?), he walk. The boss, he listen. Myself young, I no think, myself sixteen when I told that. And it is, when he listen to me, he say, "You, you call a decision in, you say, call (?) the woman, go fix the machine. Take all of the wire out, and put new wire. Put this number." He told the boss what he needed to put on the machine. God, I am in heaven. All the time, and after (?) go up myself, the machine, and after the boss come down. He (?), no broke the machine or nothing. He's still mad. He say, "Where's the machine?" I say, "Oh, (?) thank you, God." I told her (?). And, uh, and the boss say, "Go ahead, (?) yourself." The boss, everybody, all the people in the family, he say, "What do you (?) the boss? You know, like nobody. (?) give it to you, he give the satisfaction to you. I don't know (?). But this happen to me because (?) sandwich there (?). (she laughs) And the boss, the boss come just in time. Oh, my God, the boss (?), I say, "My God."

LEVINE: Okay. I think that's a good story to end on. I want to thank

you so much for very interesting stories about your life.

MESSINA: And my (?) all the time. The boat, he take the (?), the (?) take some of my story, the boat, the boat, when I come (?). And when I reach here . . .

LEVINE: You write it down?

MASCOLA: He did his essay for college, and he got into Harvard on that story.

LEVINE: Really?

MESSINA: Honest to God.

LEVINE: Wonderful, wonderful.

MESSINA: You want to know, you call, you call Bob. He'll tell you the story. (they laugh) And they say, uh, my grandmother.

MASCOLA: And he uses all the same intonations, like she did, he changed (?).

LEVINE: Oh, great. Okay. Well, I want to thank you. I've been speaking with Carmella Messina, who came at age fifteen from Sicily, and at the time of this interview, uh, July 5, 1995, you're ninety-three years old. Thank you.

MESSINA: Thank you so much.

LEVINE: Thank you.