

EI-644

ROSE PIROZZI CANCELMO
BIRTH DATE: FEBRUARY 3, 1913
INTERVIEW DATE: JULY 21, 1995
RUNNING TIME: 56:00
INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PhD
RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME
INTERVIEW LOCATION: WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 11/1997
TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

ITALY, 1920
AGE 7
PASSAGE ON "THE PROVIDENCE"

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Funding for this transcript, one of many interviews conducted with Italian and Sicilian women, was generously provided by interviewee Elda Del Bino Willitts, EI-8. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of Oral History, 10/7/1997.

LEVINE: . . . and I'm here in Worcester, Massachusetts at the home of
Mrs. Rose Cancelmo.

CANCELMO: Cancelmo.

LEVINE: Cancelmo. Who came from Italy in 1920 when she was seven-and-a-
half years of age.

CANCELMO: Right, right. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Well, I want to say I'm delighted I finally got to see you.

CANCELMO: Nice to meet you, too.

LEVINE: And I'm looking forward to this.

CANCELMO: Good. Thank you.

LEVINE: Now, tell me, uh, your birth date, first.

CANCELMO: Uh, February 3rd, 1913.

LEVINE: And where in Italy were you born?

CANCELMO: Right in the same place, in Torino de Sanno[ph], that's up in,
it was in a house there, I don't remember.

LEVINE: Okay.

CANCELMO: I was at a farm, with my grandparents. We lived with my
grandparents, my father's parents.

LEVINE: Your father's parents. And what was the province of, uh, Torino
de Sanno[ph].

CANCELMO: The province of Ciati[ph].

LEVINE: Ciati[ph].

CANCELMO: As far as I remember.

LEVINE: Okay. Uh, what do you remember about the farm?

CANCELMO: Oh, God, there was a big farm there. There was a big, my
grandparents, it wasn't their farm. They used to, they used to
live there, but it was known, it was one of the doctors in the

town, and he was a big businessman, and they used to grow a lot of wheat, we used to have a lot of trees, and all kind of nut trees and pears and fruits. And then during the year when they used to, when the wheat was ripe, you know, the grain, they used to have horses come all around there and trample all the wheat, you know, so they can get the grain to make the bread, and all that stuff. Yeah. It was really a big, big project. It was really beautiful. That I remember very clearly. My grandmother used to have a lot of chickens, you know, and eggs and everything like that. We used to go pick up the eggs in the morning. We used to have all kind of animals. Yeah.

LEVINE: So, in other words, somebody else owned the land.

CANCELMO: Oh, yes. It wasn't theirs, no. They were just . . .

LEVINE: And you worked, your family worked . . .

CANCELMO: Yeah, well, see, my father was an old child, and my mother was an old child, but my mother lost her mother when she was a baby and, uh, she was brought up with a stepmother and all that. So she was married when she was fifteen years old and my father was sixteen. He was an only child also. They were almost like from the same territory, the same town, you know? And, uh, but then he came to this country. He had a cousin living out here, and had to come back and forth. So he come back and forth to make a

better life, you know? So my sister was born, my older sister.

I think she was born in 1907 or '06. Then he come here, then he came back to Italy. He was here for a year or so, come back, and my mother got pregnant again with my other sister. So we were three girls. And she was born in 19, um, 1910, and I was born in 1913, and then he come back. When I came here to America at my age, I didn't even know my father, because he had left me when I was about seven months old, and my mother lived with, then he was in the service, like I said, he was called to the service. But once the war was over the First World War, then he sent for us, you know? So then my mother, you know, she left her in-laws, you know. My father had been sending some money for us to come out here.

LEVINE: Well, now, when your father was in the United States, was he a citizen? When he got called into the service?

CANCELMO: Well, I guess, at that time, I guess you had to be a citizen, or whatever. I really don't know. But we automatically became citizens. When we were out there, at that time. Then the law changed in 1923. But in 1920, after the First World War, if the husband, who was in the service here, if they had families in Italy and they wanted to come, we were automatically American citizens, yeah. So that's how we came, in a hurry, you know. My father said we have no problems coming here, you know. But

then we all, we all just got our own naturalization papers anyway, you know. But in 1923, 'cause my sister, when my older sister got married, she got married in '23, and she married her husband, he wasn't a citizen, an Italian fellow. She lost it, then she had to get another one. Yeah. That was the law in those days, you know.

LEVINE: In other words, she was a citizen when she came over.

CANCELMO: From, through my father.

LEVINE: Because of your father.

CANCELMO: Right, yeah.

LEVINE: And then she married here?

CANCELMO: Yeah. She got married here, yeah, in 1923. And, uh, and the fellow she married, I guess, he was an Italian, too, but he probably hadn't gotten his American citizen papers, so she automatically lost her citizenship. That was rather crazy.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CANCELMO: It was really queer, you know?

LEVINE: Yeah. So your mother, meanwhile, while your father was over here, and then he was serving in the, in the First World War.

CANCELMO: Yeah. Then he got discharged. He was lucky. He wasn't in, he wasn't in there more than six or seven months, evidently, you know. And, uh, but then the war was declared, was over. In other words, and they all got their discharge, you know? So that was in 1917, 1918. So we came in 1920, so as soon as he was able to get us, get some money together and get us passage for us to come, you know?

LEVINE: Yeah.

CANCELMO: Actually we weren't supposed to be coming then, because my mother had gotten a letter from him that he was doing all he could, but they wrote to us from Naples, or wherever, and they says, "Well, there's no passage on the boat," and this and that, "you've got to wait ten months to go." Then all of a sudden my mother gets a letter that within three days we had to get ready. That there was a vacancy on the ship, and if you can get ready in three days, you can come. So in three days my poor mother, she just packed up everything. Half the clothes we didn't have, I remember borrowing my cousin's shoes and things like that, you know. We didn't have anything out there. So my mother says, "I'm going. I don't care what's what." So in three days, with sack back and all, we went to, yeah.

LEVINE: Wow.

CANCELMO: It was really an experience, yeah.

LEVINE: Now, was this typical that your mother and you children lived with your father's parents.

CANCELMO: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. Well, he was an only child. And my mother was doing the work of her husband, of her husband and her, you know. She was doing, she lived fourteen years with her in-laws, till we came here from when they were married, fourteen years.

LEVINE: Wow.

CANCELMO: Because my oldest sister was over thirteen years old when we got here, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, do you remember your grandmother and grandfather.

CANCELMO: Yes, yeah. Always wearing black, little women, you know. Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything else about them?

CANCELMO: Yeah. Well, I remember playing around there and living in the house, and neighbors down the road, you know? We used to run down, too, and I used to have a great, beautiful big cat. I wanted, oh, I cried when I had to leave it. I wanted to take it with me. I was going to put it in a bag and take it with me to America.

LEVINE: What was it?

CANCELMO: A big cat, a beautiful . . .

LEVINE: A cat.

CANCELMO: A beautiful cat, yeah. And my sister used to play tricks on these poor little, oh, they had no children. They were a couple down the road. And my sister used to put the big cat. They'd put it in a carriage and they'd roll it down the hill, and they would tell her that it was me in the carriage. Oh, we used to have a lot of fun, you know. There was a lot of happy days, those days we recall, you know.

LEVINE: It sounds like you remember it fondly.

CANCELMO: Yeah. There was three of us. We always got along, my two sisters, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. What were your sisters' names?

CANCELMO: One was Filomena, the one that's in the picture there, and the other one was my sister Antoinette. She had her fiftieth anniversary, we had our fiftieth anniversary there, too. She was married fifty years. She died twelve years ago.

LEVINE: So Antoinette was your . . .

CANCELMO: My oldest was Filomena, and Antoinette and me, Rose, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

CANCELMO: Just three girls.

LEVINE: And how about your mother? What was her name?

CANCELMO: Maria.

LEVINE: And do you remember her maiden name?

CANCELMO: Maria Scardapane.

LEVINE: Can you spell that?

CANCELMO: S-C-A-R-D-A-P-A-N-E.

LEVINE: And your father's name?

CANCELMO: Nicola, Nicola.

LEVINE: Nicola.

CANCELMO: Nicola Pirozzi, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And, uh, let's see, Pirozzi is P-I-R-O-Z-Z-I.

CANCELMO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And, uh, let's see. So you, did you have aunts and

uncles? No, you didn't because they didn't have any . . .

CANCELMO: No, no, I didn't. No, my husband was an only child. My mother was an only child. My mother, she always used to say, you know, the older people, they didn't talk too much about, you know, but she was the last of eight children. They all had died. Either premature, or, but she was the only one that lived. And then her mother died when she was about, uh, six years old. And then she was, then her father remarried and had a stepmother, and she really had a hard life, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

CANCELMO: So that's why they married so young, you know? Yeah. And she died when, she was only fifty-four when I lost her.

LEVINE: Yeah. So, um, do you remember, were you a religious family?

CANCELMO: Oh, yes, very religious. Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: Can you remember . . .

CANCELMO: Oh, I remember all the processions, like now sometimes my town has these processions. I remember, with little candles going around. In fact, that's one thing I went, when I went to Italy, we went to the town that I was born in. There was nobody in the house that we lived in. It was just like an old hut, you know?

My sister had gone there three years before me, so she kind of had given me pictures and kind of remembered, my mother had an uncle there, and, you know, people from the town. So my sister had told me where to go, you know? And the first thing I did, I wanted to go to the church, yeah, where we used to go. Because my father, a priest christened my father, and my father was a beautiful religious man, a beautiful writer. He used to write letters for all the people, you know, the immigrants. A lot of men were here, you know, their wives were in the old country, they didn't know how to write it and everything, you know, way back in those days. So he used to write letters for everybody. He had a beautiful handwriting, my father, yeah.

LEVINE: So you both, your mother and father were religious?

CANCELMO: Oh, yes, absolutely, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. So, uh, do you remember anything else about the religious observances?

CANCELMO: Well, there were all these feasts there, like they have here, you know. In fact, the other night I was watching on Channel 13 that, they have pictures from Italy from, uh, that they had this feast in Italy, you know, going through all the towns with the people walking. It was reminding me, I was watching it, you know, it reminded me, you know, of those little days, because I

was only a little girl, you know?

LEVINE: What would, what would it be like, I mean, uh, people would walk through the towns?

CANCELMO: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah.

LEVINE: With, holding statues?

CANCELMO: No, they would hold candles, the candles. Then they would carry the, uh, the statue on their shoulders, you know, like they do here in Worcester, yeah. Yeah, they used to do that years ago. Father Bufara[ph] is trying to make it come back now, too, they do that, you know?

LEVINE: And what did the people . . .

CANCELMO: They just walk around and just walk into the church and say a mass and go, then they would put the statue in the place, you know, where it stayed there, yeah.

LEVINE: How about, uh, music and dancing? Do you remember anything like that from your early years?

CANCELMO: No, not really, because I was too young, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CANCELMO: But there was always, you know, everything was in the houses,

you know. Everything was in the houses. When I went back in '68, this old lady that, uh, my mother's aunt, and, uh, and she remembered me, you know. And, oh, my gosh, because I introduced her to my husband. We had rented a room, and we hired a cab to take us up there. Oh, my gosh, she was so surprised. I got pictures of them and everything, yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, wow.

CANCELMO: My mother's, and I wrote to them quite a while after that. My mother's old uncle, you know? Because they were only in their twenties at the time, you know? Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the town from when you were, like, seven?

CANCELMO: A little bit. I remember when I was a little kid where we went, because my sister had gone before me. I says, "Oh, my God," I says to my sister. "It's just the place I remember when I was a little kid." I used to go there and pick up, you know, flowers and things like that, the same place where they lived when we went back in '68, it was the same place, yeah. Like, you know, but it was just a small town. Over mountains, you know?

LEVINE: Was there a market day? Do you remember . . .

CANCELMO: I don't remember there, no. I don't remember there.

LEVINE: Were there any stores in town?

CANCELMO: Oh, there must have been little stores, absolutely. There must have been little stores. But, see, when we lived in this farm, we didn't have to go to, because we had everything right there. We had animals. We had everything, you know, chickens and eggs, everything we wanted, you know?

LEVINE: Yeah.

CANCELMO: So my grandmother would take care of all of that.

LEVINE: Wow.

CANCELMO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And did you go to school there?

CANCELMO: Not, not really. I don't even remember whether I did or not, to be honest with you. But we used to go to church. Well, my grandmother taught us, I think I knew how to say our prayers before I even know how to talk. Yeah, yeah. I knew all the prayers and everything like that, you know? But then when I come here, because they said, I received confirmation there. They says when you're first born you're christened or something. But when I came here I received my first Holy Communion here, when I was about ten years old, yeah. When I went to catechism

here, you know. They used to call it Sunday school then, you know?

LEVINE: Yeah. You, so you obviously learned the prayers in Italian.

CANCELMO: Oh, yeah. All in Italian. But then I come here, it seems I picked it up fast, you know?

LEVINE: Yeah.

CANCELMO: In the first grade I really didn't have to stay back at all. I just picked it right up.

LEVINE: Yeah. Can you still today remember those prayers in Italian?

CANCELMO: Some I do. I, when I hear them I can say it, but I can't always say the words, you know. But I can understand them. Yeah.

LEVINE: What else did your grandmother teach you? Anything else?

CANCELMO: Well, we used to, we used to tell a lot of stories, you know, because when my father was in America here we'd sit around the fireplace, you know, at night, and talk, you know. And (?) they used to just talk about where my father happened to be, or where he was, and all that, all, the three of us, you know, my mother, the two kids and my mother and my grandmother and grandfather, you know. Yeah, there was always something to do, you know? Just sitting around and chat and cook and eat, you know? Always

fresh vegetables.

LEVINE: Yeah. Now, do you remember the house at all?

CANCELMO: It was just like a little, a very small house. I remember just, they had that one room downstairs, and I remember my sisters and I, we'd go upstairs. Like when you see House on the Prairie, that, when I'd see, used to see that on there, I says, oh, my God! I remember myself going up on the ladder, going upstairs and sleeping. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Like on a loft.

CANCELMO: Yeah, right, on a loft.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And what was the, what was the cooking like. What kind of a stove did your grandmother and mother use?

CANCELMO: Well, they had, you know, like a fireplace. Not a fireplace. They used to have these big, what you see, you know, hanging up these, uh . . .

LEVINE: Pots?

CANCELMO: Cauldrons, cauldrons there over the fire, you know. And they were just, with, with the heat, like burning, just maybe coal or something. And they'd have these big pots hanging over there, and cooking, you know?

LEVINE: And they cooked over that?

CANCELMO: Yeah, they did.

LEVINE: Do you remember any of the things that they cooked that you remember some of?

CANCELMO: We used to make most anything, you know? I used to make them make the fat pies, like cornmeal and all that stuff, you know, cornbread and all that.

LEVINE: Did they have like an oven for the bread?

CANCELMO: I don't even know where they had an oven or not. I don't think they even had an oven, to be honest with you. I don't even (?) that, I don't remember very well.

LEVINE: Yeah. How was . . .

CANCELMO: I wish my sister was here, because they would remember much more, you know.

LEVINE: How about your, um, like the washing of the clothes? Do you remember how that was . . .

CANCELMO: Well, they would just, we'd go down to, that I remember. We used to go down to the river and wash the clothes, okay? There was a river there. And especially my mother, they used to have

linens. They used to make those beautiful linens, you know?

LEVINE: Like embroidered, you mean?

CANCELMO: Not embroidered. They used to sew them, like, linen cloths and everything. They used to go down there and wash them and clean them up, beautiful linen sheets, you know, and things like that.

Then I remember when they used to, um, oh, I see them on television once in a while. They make the weave, not the weave, the woolen, you know. They would make it into threads, yarn, the yarn, you know? I could remember them doing that, the old people in the town.

LEVINE: You mean making, uh . . .

CANCELMO: You know, like, uh, how would you call it? Like a spinning wheel, you know?

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CANCELMO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And where would they get it? Where would they get it from? From the sheep?

CANCELMO: From the sheep, I guess the wool and things like that, and they would just put it all together and make threads out of, and make yarn out of it and all that.

LEVINE: And then what did they do with that?

CANCELMO: Well, they would sew it, sew it or sell it or whatever, you know. They would make garments or whatever with it, you know?

LEVINE: Do you remember the clothing that you and your sisters wore?

CANCELMO: We didn't have much, to tell you the truth. It wasn't too much, because we were always on the farm, just little dresses and things like that, you know. There was nothing.

LEVINE: And . . .

CANCELMO: Because, like I say, they didn't have anything. You know, they were elderly, you know. Those days you were just on the farm, you didn't have nothing. And the farm, whatever, the money they would make, the man that owned the farm, he would take all the profit. The only thing, the profit they would have is what they would gather, you know what I'm saying, from the farm, what they would gather, what they would get, that's what they would live on, you know?

LEVINE: So you would have your needs met as far as living . . .

CANCELMO: Oh, absolutely.

LEVINE: And as far as food.

CANCELMO: Yeah, yeah, food, oh, yeah.

LEVINE: But as far as any other money . . .

CANCELMO: Well, they didn't . . .

LEVINE: You didn't get.

CANCELMO: I really don't know.

LEVINE: You don't know, because you were young.

CANCELMO: I really don't know, because my father used to maybe send a dollar or something, because those days, you know, there was hardly no money. A dollar or something to my grandfather, he would keep it, so when we came, we were coming to America, my mother had a heck of a time getting him to give her the money for the fares, you know? He really didn't want her to go because she was doing a lot of work there, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, was that, was that a compatible situation, your mother with your . . .

CANCELMO: Oh, yeah. Well, they had no choice. They had no one else, you know? There was no one else. And her father, her father, he was married. He could care less, you know? He married a, he met another woman with three of her own children, you know, they could care less.

LEVINE: Oh, so it wasn't really your father's mother, it was another . . .

CANCELMO: No, no. This was, my mother's mother died, and then my father, her father remarried, so she had stepsisters and all that, a stepmother. So that's why she, you know, went with my husband's family. And she was very, they got along very well.

LEVINE: Now, did your mother's father live in town?

CANCELMO: Oh, yeah. They lived in town also, yeah.

LEVINE: So you knew him?

CANCELMO: Uh, I kind of remember him, a tall man, but I don't remember much of him, you know, because I probably didn't see him that much, you know, because he probably lived in another town, you know. Everything was walking in those days. And we'd walk to a feast, if they had a feast in the next town, I, we'd have a horse, and, uh, and I was, I was fresh. I was awful. My sister, she was kind of sick, she wanted to ride the horse, and I says, no, then I'd pretend I was sick, and I wanted to ride the horse. It was a riot. But we had a jackass. You know, we used to go to the feasts, and they were tired, you know? We used to walk, take food with us, and all that. Whenever there was a feast day in the towns, you know? And when we went to

Italy, my husband and I, we hired a cab from Rome, and we went through all the old place. We didn't go on the highway, you know. We took all these old roads going up, all through the towns, so my father used to talk about, you know. It was all up through the mountain. It was a riot. I enjoyed it. My husband was so sick. (she laughs) But I enjoyed every bit of it, just like reliving it over again, you know?

LEVINE: Yeah. When you think about that little town and living there, do you think you have retained some characteristics that kind of come from that town?

CANCELMO: I think so. It was a lot of friendship, a lot of love and a lot of, you know, get-togethers, like, you know, as young as I was, you know. And my mother was always very good to the people. I remember this lady that I, one of the women that was on the bottom of the hill from our house, like, you know, because there was just houses scattered here and there. I remember the woman died, and my mother went down and washed her all up and got her all dressed up, because the funerals would be, you wouldn't have a mourning, you know, we'd bury them at nightfall like the Jewish people do, you know.

LEVINE: Oh, yeah. Tell about that. Tell about what you did when somebody died then.

CANCELMO: Yeah. Well, the buried them right off at night, because they wouldn't embalm them or anything, you know? They were buried. So they would go and they would clean them all up. My mother would go wash them all up. And, of course, I was nosy. I was awful nosy. I'd go everyplace with my mother. And I would see her, you know, she'd wash all the women all up, dress her all up for her funeral and everything.

LEVINE: She did that for many people?

CANCELMO: Whoever she knew, you know, whoever needed her, you know what I mean, around. She'd just happen to be there, because we were right, we were neighbors, like, you know?

LEVINE: So they, what would happen? Would there be a viewing of the body?

CANCELMO: No. I don't even, I don't even remember, to tell you the truth. I don't know, you know. But I guess she just, like you probably see in old movies sometimes, you know, they go there, they mourn them and all that, but then they bury them, and they have a big procession, and they bury them, you know, they go bury them somewhere, all this procession, you know.

LEVINE: How about, um, giving birth? Was your mother ever involved in, like, being a midwife?

CANCELMO: Oh, yeah. (she laughs) She was there when my daughter was born, my oldest daughter was born, and the doctor wasn't even there.

LEVINE: Really.

CANCELMO: Yep. Her and my husband was there. I had three of my children at home in the 1930's, '31. Yeah, because the doctor, my mother called him, he never came right away. He says, "Oh, she's not going to have it till tomorrow." Forget it. During the night, one o'clock in the morning, my mother runs downstairs, called the landlord downstairs to call up the doctor, but she delivered my oldest. She delivered my sister's children, too.

LEVINE: Wow.

CANCELMO: She was there, yeah. She took care of us.

LEVINE: Do you remember seeing any births, or . . .

CANCELMO: Yes. I was, twice. I was, two of my friends that gave birth, yeah.

LEVINE: When you were, but not when you were in Italy. When you were a little girl here?

CANCELMO: No, no. I was here, no, that's when I was here. I helped my friends, yeah.

LEVINE: How about medical care in general in your town in Italy. Do you remember any kind of, um, uh, either folk remedies, or ways that people . . .

CANCELMO: Well, there was a lot of folk, oh, yeah, there was a lot of folk remedies there. They used to put these little, um, they talked about it the other day, I think.

LEVINE: Cups?

CANCELMO: What they call these little worm, not . . .

LEVINE: Leeches.

CANCELMO: Leeches.

LEVINE: Oh, you remember that?

CANCELMO: I remember that, yeah.

LEVINE: Tell me anything you remember.

CANCELMO: Yeah, I kind of remember that, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CANCELMO: And I think they did that out here, when we came here. I think my mother, somebody was sick, and they had those. Now, this was way back in 1920, '21. Yeah. They used to probably use those,

too. They used to draw the blood out, you know, for poisonous blood or something. I remember that vaguely, you know.

LEVINE: Anything else you remember?

CANCELMO: That's about it I guess, you know. I really don't remember. Like I say, we weren't involved in too many things, you know. We were just surrounding our own town and, you know, doing our own little thing, you know?

LEVINE: Yeah.

CANCELMO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And how about, like, were there policemen in your town, do you remember anything like that?

CANCELMO: There were police. But, see, where we were, we were like in a farm, more or less.

LEVINE: So you were out of town.

CANCELMO: Yes, you really wouldn't know, you know. And the town was a small, they were all up on a hill, there were little towns all around, you know? Yeah. Because when we went there, the one, my mother's aunt, she took us to the town, we met some of the friends that knew my mother, you know. We took pictures of them, you know, walking through the town, but I really don't

remember.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Is there anything else that you do remember about the farm, or the town . . .

CANCELMO: Yeah, well, the farm was nice. Now, when I see East Park I see a park and I can remember that big farm there, you know, and running around there, and playing around there, and watch when these horses go around for the wheat and, you know, everything like that. It was a lot of fun, you know.

LEVINE: Now, how about your older sisters? Do you remember if they went to school?

CANCELMO: I don't even know if they even went to school or not, if we had a school. Probably we did. I really don't know.

LEVINE: It wasn't a compulsory thing.

CANCELMO: No, I don't think so. But they probably had, I think there was a school, but we had to go about two miles, we had to walk, maybe, to go into the city where, you know, that little, that police was, you know. And they used to walk through there. They probably didn't go there, I don't remember.

LEVINE: Well, do you remember what the girls, like, learned, and what the boys learned as far as what they needed for when they were

going to be grown up?

CANCELMO: I don't know, you know, because we come here, and they went to school here, my two sisters, you know? Because they didn't, then they were here three years, then she met this fellow. And, of course, my mother, they believed in letting people get married young. Well, she got married so young herself, you know? And they went to school here, and then they got married, you know. So, uh . . .

LEVINE: Now, uh, so your father was over here, and then he, was he, could he have been drafted, or did he sign up to be in the army?

CANCELMO: Oh, I guess they were all drafted at the time. Oh, yeah. Because he was, a friend of his, in fact, uh, a good friend of, they're buried side by side at St. John's Cemetery. A good friend of his, they were drafted at about the same time, a good friend of theirs, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CANCELMO: And his wife was in Italy also, too, and she came back, she came over later. Yeah.

LEVINE: So when you, so when you were given the three days' notice about when you had to leave . . .

CANCELMO: Oh, God, in no time. Like I say, I don't even remember, she says, "Oh, my God." She says, "We have to go." So that's why I say, my father didn't even know they were coming, because it was such a short notice. When my mother sent him the letter that we were coming . . .

LEVINE: You were already on your way.

CANCELMO: He couldn't believe, because he had just gotten a letter that we couldn't come, that there was no place for us. Then the next letter, they told him that we were on, my mother had written that we were on, he says, "Somebody's pulling my leg." Then when we get to New York, when I had to go to the hospital . . .

LEVINE: Well, wait. Before you tell that part, tell anything more about leaving. Do you remember saying goodbye to people . . .

CANCELMO: No, not really. We just took off. Just my grandparents, and then my grandfather took us down to Naples.

LEVINE: How was it saying goodbye to them?

CANCELMO: It didn't bother me, I don't think, you know. I was just coming to America, and I didn't care.

LEVINE: Did they think that the family would come back again, or did they think you would . . .

CANCELMO: We never went back, you know. Oh, they'd think we were all leaving for good, absolutely. Because my mother was just dying to get out of there and come here, you know. Yeah, she was just dying, you know, to get here, and that was it. Because when she come here, she tore up her passport, that was it. Never went back.

LEVINE: She didn't want to go back.

CANCELMO: Well, of course, those days you couldn't get back. And she probably, if she was still alive, maybe, you know, in the '50s or '60s . . .

LEVINE: In her old age.

CANCELMO: Right, she probably wanted to, but then she'd have no, then her father-in-law died, her mother-in-law died, you know, her father died, you know. So, she hadn't, she had no interest at all going back there. Because she didn't have anyone else. She didn't have no sisters, no brothers, or no family. And my father was the same way, so they didn't have no interest.

LEVINE: Yes.

CANCELMO: You know, once he came here, this was it, you know. He never went back. And, of course, it was, it was depression, then, of course, she died, she was only fifty-four when she passed away,

you know, and my father was only sixty-one. They really didn't even enjoy their old age, you know? Because when we got here, the '20s, it was a depression, and it was really rough, you know.

LEVINE: Well, tell me what ship you went on.

CANCELMO: The Providence, and that was the last trip that that ship made.

LEVINE: Do you remember that ship?

CANCELMO: Yes.

LEVINE: What was it like?

CANCELMO: Oh, it was, it was a ship. Like I say, we were way down in the hold there sleeping, oh, my God, with a bunch of bunk beds, you know, they had, my sister and us. And, oh, it was very, very rough. It was really the rough sea, you know?

LEVINE: And what was it like in the steerage with all those people down there?

CANCELMO: Oh, an awful lot of people. But you just, you know, we didn't seem to mind it, yeah. And then we'd go up, they'd have, I remember their black coffee. But it seemed to taste good, you know. We'd try to go up there. And it's funny because the fellow that, uh, my sister married, he was on the same boat with

us.

LEVINE: Oh. Did she know him?

CANCELMO: Nope.

LEVINE: Did she meet him on the boat?

CANCELMO: Nope.

LEVINE: Isn't that interesting.

CANCELMO: He was only fifteen years old, and my sister was only nine, nine or ten, yeah, my sister, and she was about ten. Anyway, no. And it was funny because my mother, she was so sick, you know. So she wants to, and this man says to my mother, he said, "Gee, would you like a cup of coffee?" My mother said yes, you know, because they were in, the ship was so crowded, you know, and I remember sitting at long tables, we'd go and have our coffee or our meal, whatever, you know? Anyway, years later in about '20, 1926, this man came in from California, from, uh, Colorado. Well, this fellow was in Worcester here, and he lived, from there he went to live on Shusbury[ph] Street, on Lyons[ph] Street, on Plum Street with his aunt, and he fell in love with my sister. My sister came to get married. He fell in love. He wouldn't leave her alone. Oh, he was crazy about her. Well, anyway, she started going out with him. Then his, he says his

father's coming, and, uh, when his father came, my mother looked at him, and he looked at my mother, he says, "Oh, my God, you were the woman on the boat that I give, I got the coffee." My mother recognized him. And he says, "Oh, my God," and he had his son, they both came across with his son.

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness.

CANCELMO: Yeah, and that was really such a riot, you know? Yeah. He was a nice, nice man, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. So now your sister has died.

CANCELMO: Yeah, she's died. I got the picture up there.

LEVINE: And her husband?

CANCELMO: He died about two years ago. My brother-in-law, yeah. Yeah. They were married, fifty, they had a fiftieth anniversary picture like we had ours, yeah, they had been married fifty-three years, yeah.

LEVINE: That's something.

CANCELMO: It was really a riot though, you know, when he recognized my mother and my mother recognized him, you know. It was only about a few years, four or five years, you know?

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: So this was the last trip of The Providence?

CANCELMO: Yes.

LEVINE: Was it a, did it look like a . . .

CANCELMO: It was an old, it was an old boat. It was really an old ship. That's why it had these fountains, that's how I got (?), it had these old fountains, you know, like if you've ever gone to Tripoli[ph] in Italy, the Tripoli[ph], you know, those were on the boat, you know? Because now they don't have, they have all these little spigots, you know. You get up on a bench, then you get your water. Well, I went and put my cup under the spigot, and this girl went, actually it must have been just accidentally, she was about my age, too, she probably made, with her wrist she probably just touched my eye, "Well, this is my cup," "No, this is my cup," you know. Well, anyway, and it hit my eye. My eye got red. So when we went through Ellis, now, this was the day before, because, see, when we got there it was Columbus Day, and it was a holiday in America, and the ship would not land.

LEVINE: So you stayed on board ship for a whole day?

CANCELMO: We stayed on board ship until the next day, we had to get on the other little boat, you know, to take us into Ellis Island. So when they got there you went into these little cubby holes like they had in those days, you know. You see them on television. I laugh, I tell my grandchildren, you know, that's how it was. And, and there was doctors, and examined the eye, and my eye was red. So they took me, and they says, pulled me on one side. And my mother's going bananas, you know? What's going on? She don't know how to speak, you know, and my two sisters, we were all, three of us just hanging onto her, you know. So they says, no. So they got to go in the hospital. She says, "Oh, my gosh, my husband's waiting for me," because she told my father, you know, we were supposed to be coming in that day. So, um, she told, there was an interpreter there. So she says to the interpreter, she says, "Look, you write to my husband," you know, send a telegram. "Tell him I need money to come to Worcester." Because we ran out of money. We just had enough for, you know. "To send me some money to come to, you know, to Worcester, and that Rosie's in the hospital. When she gets out of the hospital, we'll come," you know. Well, the man never put down that I was in the hospital. He just wrote to my father, "Your wife is in Providence." Now, the boat's name was Providence.

LEVINE: Oh, no.

CANCELMO: But, they, so he says, "Your wife is in Providence. She wants the money to come." So my father right away, he went to the bank, you know, and he sent the money to where we were supposed to come. Anyway, so he waited one day, two days, he was at Union Station, Worcester, here, waiting, nobody's coming. He sent a, he was working, he had to send his friends to go, you know, to watch for him. He says, "My wife is coming over." Well, after four or five days he had it, okay. After five days he said, "This is going (?)." He went to the bank, he says, "Give me the money." He says, "I'm going." She says, "Where you going?" The woman, Mrs., uh, DeMara[ph], there, that used to be at the bank. She says, "Where are you going?" He's, "I'm going to get my wife." She says, "Your wife ain't in Providence. Your wife is in New York. The name of the ship is Providence," she says. But, she says, "Well, give me the money." He says, "I went out there," he said, "somebody's pulling my leg, you know? First she wasn't coming, then all of a sudden she's coming, you know." And he says, "Now what the heck is going on?" Well, he was going . . . (she laughs) He was, after five days, he says, "I've had it. I'm going out looking for myself." So when we get in Union Station, because once they let us off, then, see, my mother never got the money,

never got nothing, while she was waiting. But once I got out of the hospital, and it was Columbus Day and they had a big parade, they had me in a wheelchair, they brought me out, and I could see, when I was in the hospital there was nuns there coming to talk to me. I don't know what the heck they were talking about, you know, but it was pleasant. My mother would come in crying, I was happy. I didn't care, you know. And they took, there had been a big parade out there or something, it was like a circus or whatever, they had a band, (?). Then after that they put us on the train, you know, to come. But when I get out they gave my mother the money that my father had sent, they gave her everything. See, they held on to everything until I get out. They think, my mother was probably going to take the money and skip and leave me there, you know. Who knows, you know?

LEVINE: How long were you in the hospital?

CANCELMO: Five days.

LEVINE: Wow. Now, do you, did you go to the other part of Ellis Island where the hospital buildings were?

CANCELMO: Evidently I must have been. They must have taken me someplace. They must have put my mother, my parents and my mother up someplace, you know. They put her up in a hotel or something. I don't know.

LEVINE: Well, was your mother and your sisters at Ellis Island the whole time?

CANCELMO: Well, evidently, evidently. They were some . . .

LEVINE: They weren't with you.

CANCELMO: No, they weren't with me, no, because I was like in the hospital, different beds there, you know.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the treatment you got in the hospital?

CANCELMO: No, it was fine. Everything was fine, you know. I wasn't mistreated or anything. It was very nice, you know. It was new to me.

LEVINE: Could any, could you speak to anybody? Was there anybody there who . . .

CANCELMO: I don't even know, to tell you the truth. I don't remember. I don't remember. (she laughs) It was really an experience, I remember myself being in bed there, and they were checking my eye and everything. Once that healed up, I suppose they bathed it, or whatever they did, you know. It was nothing serious. In those days they were really so strict about everything, you know, infections and all that. Yes, then they gave my mother

the money and everything. So they put us on the train, and we came here. So my father, of course, he was ready to take the next train, the eleven o'clock train to go to New York, at night. And, um . . . (she addresses someone in the room) Joe, stay there, honey. And, uh, so, uh, and this, all of a sudden we got the cab, we went right to the house where he was living at, you know. My mother said, "This is the address I'm going." The guys says, "Oh, my God, your husband's been waiting for you for five days, he says. "We've all been alerted. We've been waiting."

LEVINE: This is the cab driver?

CANCELMO: The cab driver, yeah. He says, "My God, everybody's been alerted, we've been waiting for you. What happened?" So when we get to the house, because he was boarding at this woman's house, you know, she had children there, we went, the man went upstairs, he says, "Nick's wife is here." "Oh, my God," he says, "Nick is ready to take the next train to New York." So he ran down to Union Station, the poor guy, to stop my father, because he was ready to get on the train to go. (she laughs)

It was really a riot. So, and I used to always say to my mother, "I don't know who my father is. You can tell me anything, he's my father, you know." Because I didn't know him, because I was seven months when he left, you know. Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember any things that you saw those first few days that just struck you as really new and different?

CANCELMO: No, it was funny, coming in on the train I had, that's the first banana I had. When I came on the train, we were just sitting there, and this lady, she says, "Do you want this?" And I didn't even know what it was, but it was a banana, and I eat it on the train. I said, "That's the first banana I ever had." (she laughs) That was really something, you know. But then once we got here, you know, it was fine, you know. Yeah.

LEVINE: And, um, let's see. Just going back a minute, do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty that was (?).

CANCELMO: Oh, yes, it was beautiful, yes. Yeah. But I never went back there, though. It's funny, we went all over New York, because we have cousins in New York, we've always been there, in the Bronx and all over, but we never went back to Ellis Island. We didn't get a chance to go there.

LEVINE: Well, maybe one day.

CANCELMO: It's kind of too late now. (she laughs) Now I'll see it in the pictures.

LEVINE: Well, um, so, okay. So you got to Worcester. And then did you

and your sisters start school right away?

CANCELMO: Oh, yeah, yeah. We enrolled in school, yeah. Like I said, I enrolled in, it must have been in kindergarten or first grade, whatever, you know. And they enrolled in, later. Well, they, had, like, they used to have special classes in those days for older children, you know.

LEVINE: You mean, children, were they the ungraded classrooms?

CANCELMO: Yeah, like an ungraded, yeah. They used to have special. They learned quite a bit. In fact, my mother, because there was quite a few people that had come from Italy, my mother even had a class in her house. My mother was really something, God love her. She used to have a, the teacher would say, "Gee, do you know anybody . . ." My mother says, "Sure." She used to love to learn English, you know? So she used to have the teacher come to the house some afternoons, maybe a couple of afternoons a week, with some of the ladies there, you know, and teach them English. Yeah.

LEVINE: Was this the teacher from the grade school where you were?

CANCELMO: From Gate, yeah, from the Gate Street, where we were, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CANCELMO: Yeah, where my sisters had, yeah. Yeah. She was very nice. We lived right up on Shamrock Street. We were right near the school, you know, we weren't far from it, you know.

LEVINE: Well, now, Shamrock Street, was that an Irish area?

CANCELMO: That's right off of, no, right after Shoesbury[ph] Street where there used to be a lot of Italians there at the time.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CANCELMO: Yeah.

LEVINE: So that, so when, when you first came to Worcester, were there sections all over the city of different groups . . .

CANCELMO: Oh, yeah, well, oh, yeah, yeah. Well, most all the Italians were right on Shoesbury[ph] Street, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what other ethnic groups do you remember?

CANCELMO: Well, there was like, Irish used to be up by St. Ann's Hill at the time, you know, and some Irish was on Shamrock Street, one Irish family was there. And, uh, a lot of Italians. Then there was, like, different parts. But what I know is all, you know, mostly the Shoesbury Street section, you know. And a lot of the people, everybody gathered, they all came around around the same time after the war, two or three years after, you know?

They call, because their husbands had been here, and they all came after then. Because my mother got very friendly with all of them. She used to go wash clothes and do everything for people, you know, try to make a dollar. Because my father, then he was working at Norton's[ph], and then he had gotten laid off, you know? Because right after the war then a couple of years you have a good, then there was a depression, too, you know?

LEVINE: Where was he working first?

CANCELMO: Well, he first used to work at Norton's[ph] first of all, but then he went to work at the U.S. Steel. He went to work there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, I can't, I didn't . . .

CANCELMO: Norton[ph], Norton[ph].

LEVINE: Oh, Norton[ph].

CANCELMO: Norton's[ph], yeah. I think it was Norton's[ph], yeah.

LEVINE: It seems like a lot of people worked there.

CANCELMO: Yeah, yeah. But then he worked at the U.S. Steel. He worked there till he died, he was working there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And so, um, did your mother learn English?

CANCELMO: Yes. Oh, yeah, a little bit. She, much more than a lot of

people that had been here for tons of years that they haven't learned, you know? No, she was just pretty good. She managed very well. She'd go down shopping herself. She'd go downtown. She'd buy whatever, she used to knit a lot, crochet a lot. Oh, yeah, go buy her yarn. She used to do everything. She'd have charge accounts. Oh, yeah. She did very well for herself, yeah.

LEVINE: Now, in the home, would you speak Italian, or would you speak English?

CANCELMO: Eh, well, we'd speak English and Italian both. We'd speak Italian to her, naturally, you know, we would speak Italian, but we would speak English, too, mostly, you know.

LEVINE: Now, do you think, was your mother kind of intent on keeping, keeping the Italian heritage alive, or was she . . .

CANCELMO: She didn't care one way or the other, to be honest with you, you know? Yeah, I mean, she could speak Italian. All our friends were Italian and all that. But she could have time to speak English, she would speak English, too, you know? (a clock chimes in the background on the tape) She would speak Italian to her friends, you know. They would speak Italian and all that. But, like I say, she would just, come to this county, and that was it, you know. Like, she had such a bad childhood out

there, you know, she just was ready to come.

LEVINE: So she was always happy that she had come?

CANCELMO: Oh, absolutely. Oh, yeah, yeah. Absolutely.

LEVINE: Yeah. And so, let's see. So then it was your older sister who got married quite young here.

CANCELMO: Yeah, she was sixteen. Yeah. That's the one that's in the picture there, my oldest sister, yeah. And the other one, she was, um, she was seventeen-and-a-half, eighteen. Then I got married three years after that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what was your first job.

CANCELMO: Uh, I worked at the, uh, where did I worked? I worked at the slipper shop. My sister went to work, she was working at Wiley Dinkins[ph], a slipper shop we had way up on Chandler Street, a slipper shop, and I went to work there with her. And the summer . . .

LEVINE: Like, doing sales?

CANCELMO: No.

LEVINE: Or you're making them.

CANCELMO: Making slippers. Well, there used to be slippers, you just put

the ribbons around them, you know. So my sister got me a job there for the summer. Then when I went back to school, see, then when you was fourteen years old and you was in the seventh grade, you could quit school and go to work in those days.

LEVINE: Oh. Is that what a lot of people did?

CANCELMO: Oh, yeah, absolutely. Because my mother was sickly then, you know. She always had like heart trouble and all that. So she couldn't go, what, she used to do a lot of work. We used to go get pants when we came. We used to have a lot of pants shop, you know, mens pants. My mother used to go get bundles and dozens at a time and bring them. We used to sew bundles, she used to sew the linings. Everything was handwork, you know?

LEVINE: So in other words she'd go get a bundle of pants and bring them home?

CANCELMO: Oh, yeah. We'd do them at home, yeah, and bring them back the next day.

LEVINE: All of you?

CANCELMO: All of us, we all worked. Oh, yeah. We all pitched in, always worked, yeah. Yeah, we had to pitch in, you know, to make a buck, to try to live. Things were cheap, but there was nothing to be had, you know. '20, '21, '22 was very bad.

LEVINE: Now, would you be working on the pants while you were still in school, after school?

CANCELMO: Oh, yeah. No, after school and before school, even in the morning, she had to bring them back. My job was to put the, these, now they got zippers. They used to have the fly buttons. We used to put the fly, my job was to sew the buttons. My mother's job was to sew all the other lines. My sister's job was to do something else, yeah. It's really, you know, something, yeah.

LEVINE: What was your, was your family life, how could you describe your family life?

CANCELMO: We were always happy, a happy life, yeah. We had, we had a happy childhood, you know. Even out there and even out here, my father was a wonderful person.

LEVINE: What was it like getting used to being with a father?

CANCELMO: I don't know. He was very kind and gentle. He didn't bother us, you know. He was very strict but, I mean, in those days, you know. But we'd go to school, we'd work, everything was fine, never complained, never slapped us, you know, never was mean to us or nothing, always very good. We always had parties that we'd get our friends in the house, we'd have dancing, you

know, have friends come in. My sisters, too, their, you know, friends at work or wherever, yeah.

LEVINE: So your father was strict, but he never hit you.

CANCELMO: No. No, no.

LEVINE: How did he discipline you?

CANCELMO: No, never, never did, you know, never really disciplined. They didn't have to, because my mother, too, she never hit us. We were always just, you know.

LEVINE: You were good kids.

CANCELMO: Always good kids. (they laugh) Well, we never had, because, I suppose with the upbringing from out there, you know, and the gentleness and all that, I think of family togetherness, you know. Yeah.

LEVINE: Was everybody as warm and friendly as you were?

CANCELMO: I think so, I think so. My sisters, we always got along great, yeah. Yeah. And even, I had my husband's two sisters live with us, too, because he lost his mother when he was fourteen years old, because my mother and father knew him. We, all of us went to school together, you know?

LEVINE: You went to school with your husband?

CANCELMO: Well, he was a couple of years older than me, yes.

LEVINE: So he was . . .

CANCELMO: And my mother knew, and my father, we lived across the street from where his mother and father lived on Lyon[ph] Street, and my father knew them very well anyway before, you know. My mother, my father knew his mother, my mother, too, and I went to the wake when his mother died and everything. We were very friendly. My mother christened his older sister's child, because where she come from, see, they had come from Italy before us, so when, we were friendly, and his sister, his older sister was the one that took my mother up to City Hall to register us and all things like that, yeah. We were very friendly. But I really loved him. Because he went to (?) after his mother died. He lived in Kentucky for two years. Then he went back to live in South--, because his father remarried, he lived in Southbridge. But then he came back in '29, and then I met him, you know. And, uh, just for a little, I feel in love with anyway, yeah.

LEVINE: Now, was his family from the same area in Italy?

CANCELMO: Well, not quite the same area. A little further down. They

were from Popoli[ph], from the town of Popoli[ph], around the central part, you know, of Italy, from Popoli[ph], but they were all, you know, mostly the same old Italians, yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: So, um, let's see. So you were working in the slipper, uh, place.

CANCELMO: I was in the slipper shop.

LEVINE: Is that when you, right before you got married, or?

CANCELMO: Oh, yeah, before, then when I was fourteen. Then from there after that closed down then I went to work at the Worcester Knitting, they had a Worcester Knitting here on Salem Street where the library is now. They used to have Worcester Knitting there. And this friend of mine was a floor lady there, and I went to work there. See, there was seasonal works, you know. Then if there was no work there then I would go back in the slipper shop, you know.

LEVINE: So it was Worcester Knitting?

CANCELMO: There was Worcester Knitting. Now it's, there's a Worcester, it's still there, but it's on another street now. It's not where the library was, it used to be a big, big factory there, Worcester Knitting, yeah.

LEVINE: And what, and what was your job . . .

CANCELMO: We used to, they used to make, um, sweaters and baby suits and things. We'd take the strings off, you know, cut the strings off, or inspect them, and all that. Different kind of work, you know. You were in, those jobs you do everything. (she laughs)

LEVINE: So then, is that where you were, Worcester Knitting, when you . . .

CANCELMO: I worked at the Worcester Knitting, when I got married, I think, I was at the Worcester Knitting, yes.

LEVINE: Yeah. And then did you have a family right away, or did you . . .

CANCELMO: Well, about a year, a year-and-a-half after, because I was married in July, and my oldest daughter was born in October the following year, in '31.

LEVINE: Were you, did you continue to work . . .

CANCELMO: Oh, yeah. My mother was taking care, you had to, you know. Then I lived with my mother for twelve years, my husband and I, yeah. Because I was the youngest. I stayed with her. She was sickly, so, and if she got sick, I'd stay home, and I'd take

care of her, you know. We took care of each other. Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: So how many children did you have?

CANCELMO: Five.

LEVINE: And their names?

CANCELMO: Uh, Joseph, I got, the picture was in the, I'll bring it. My oldest daughter was Bernice. The picture's over there.

LEVINE: Maybe when we get finished we'll look at them.

CANCELMO: Yeah. My oldest daughter's Bernice. I call her Bea. My oldest son is Joseph Junior. And, uh, my next son, he was born thirteen months after, Richard. Richard John. And then I've got Ann, my daughter Ann. She lives in the house across the way. And Marie lives downstairs, my daughter Marie.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And, so now you have grandchildren.

CANCELMO: Yes, I had twelve, but one, my grandson, died. So, I've got eleven.

LEVINE: And great?

CANCELMO: Seven great grandchildren. My granddaughter just had a new baby, two months old. Yeah, a little baby boy.

LEVINE: And, uh, so, and how is this time of your life?

CANCELMO: Well, it's fine. We went all over, my husband and I. We traveled all over. See, he's got a slew of cousins, which I don't. I don't have any cousins at all. Like I said, my mother was alone, my father was alone, but my husband's got loads of cousins and relatives on his father's side.

LEVINE: In Italy, or here?

CANCELMO: Out here, out here. In Italy also. We went to Italy in '68. We went to look him up in Italy. His father's brother, we went to look him up, and we went there, and his father's, all his relatives were in there. But then his, he had an aunt in Kentucky where he went to live after his mother died at fourteen, so we went out there to see her a couple of times, and he, and she had twelve children, and they were in New York, Detroit. We went all over. We looked them all up. Now I write to all of them, every one. We correspond. In fact, I just got a letter today from his cousin's, uh, his first cousin's, her daughter-in-law, because she passed away two years ago, she was eighty-nine years old, she died. But the daughter-in-law writes, and I just got a letter today, and I didn't get a chance to read it yet.

LEVINE: Well, now, what do you feel proud of? What do you feel

satisfied about?

CANCELMO: Uh, I have a wonderful family, yeah. They've all been good, no problems. They're great. We all get along good, you know. And my husband's a wonderful man. Never had any problems with him. A very religious person. He belonged to the Knights. He belonged to all over, you know. And, uh, so we just had, we went all over. We went to visit all the relatives. He's got relatives in New York. That's why, you come from New York, right? We have cousins up in Pearl River, his cousins, Pearl River, New York, in the Bronx. We first looked him in there, he lived in the Bronx. Now they're up in Pearl River, they're all over. Yeah. So, like I says, and we looked them all up. He had twelve of them. They were all over. And we visit them, they come here, and it's been beautiful. So I think, you know, we just love to sit home now and just reminisce, look at pictures, I've got albums all over, so many and, you know, movies and things like that.

LEVINE: Wonderful. Now, can you remember Worcester in the old days?

CANCELMO: Oh, yes. I remember the trolley cars. I was reading in this morning's paper. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Oh?

CANCELMO: Yeah, yeah, this morning, they're tearing up, they found the tracks, you know, the old trolley cars and everything, yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember the old Union Station?

CANCELMO: Yeah, absolutely. That's, it was only new when we came there. It was only about ten, eleven years old when we came through in 1920. It was beautiful. When I look at it now I get sick. It was so, young and all, as it were, you know, it was really beautiful. And we come down the stairs from the trains, and it was really beautiful. Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you remember anything else about old Worcester that (??)?

CANCELMO: I remember the old Brockerman's[ph] that was on Front Street, the old Brockerman's[ph] market. Uh, right under, you know, across from Union Station, just on the other, there was a big, big market, Brockerman's[ph], they used to call it, a big market.

LEVINE: Was it produce?

CANCELMO: The produce. They had everything, meat, produce, they had everything, Brockerman's[ph]. Then they had two. The other one was way up on Main Street, but now that's the Salvation Army center where it is now, and they had two of them, this one. We

used to come up from work every night, and we'd stop there and pick up something, my friend and I, you know? It was really nice, yeah. Everything was walking, you could walk, you'd go anywheres, you know? Yeah. That's all we did was walk. It was really nice. And there was the (?). We used to walk, my mother and father and us kids, we used to walk down to White City from where we used to live, every Sunday take a walk down White City (?), you know? It was really pleasant. It's not any more now. Now it's not safe to walk any place.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you think you had any heroes, either people you knew, or people that were famous or something and you knew of, did you have any heroes, do you remember, growing up?

CANCELMO: I don't know, I really don't know, to tell you the truth.

LEVINE: People that you thought were, you know, someone who inspired you, or . . .

CANCELMO: Yeah. I don't know, to be honest with you.

LEVINE: Do you remember movies from when you were little?

CANCELMO: Oh, yeah, I remember a lot of the movies, yeah. Ginger Ross and (?), those old movies. God, we used to always go to the show, yeah. For a dime we used to go to the shows. (she laughs) Sometimes you wouldn't have any money, we'd dig up for pennies.

My mother would dig up a couple of pennies, and my sister or some, you know, we'd go to a show and everything. Yeah, we used to love the theater, because there was nothing else to do, you know. It was nice, on a Saturday, a Saturday night or something, my mother or something, we'd take them, you know, we'd go to a show. My brother-in-law, he just loved to go to a show. He'd buy tickets for me, and for my mother and my father. He wanted to go, he'd get the balcony seats, when he was going out with my sister, you know? Yeah. They'd go Palace Theater there, down on Main Street.

LEVINE: Is that there now?

CANCELMO: No, nothing's there now. No. There used to be the beautiful shows there, you know?

LEVINE: So, um, how about your mother? Did she continue to cook in the ways that she did in Italy?

CANCELMO: Yeah, yeah. She always cooked. She used to cook real good. I wish she lived long enough, because she used to cook, make all this homemade stuff and everything. Well, I still do, too. She used to always make homemade stuff. She used to cook for, sometimes for weddings, too, you know?

LEVINE: Really?

CANCELMO: Oh, yeah. Some of the neighbors or somebody would get married, because we used to have house weddings in those days, you know?

Yeah. And my sister, when she got married, with her house wedding, she'd do all the cooking and everything, yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember any particular dishes that were, like, her specialties, or . . .

CANCELMO: Well, her chickens and different, you know, chickens and macaroni and things like that, you know, homemade pastas and all.

LEVINE: Oh, she made her own pastas?

CANCELMO: Oh, yeah, she made her own pastas, yeah.

LEVINE: Wow.

CANCELMO: Yeah, I do, too, but it took me a long time to learn. After she died is when I learned. (she laughs) I had the children, you know, and she said to me, "I'll . . ." Because I lived with her, you know, she said, "Oh, I'll cook. Don't worry. You take care of the kids, you know." Yeah. So we always got along.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CANCELMO: That's why, I guess, it's too bad she didn't live long enough to, she loved my husband so much, and he was crazy about her.

She died right in bed, right with us, you know. Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, um, can you, do you think you have any attitudes or ways of thinking about things that, uh, stem back from your mother, or attitudes she tried to teach you that you carried on?

CANCELMO: No. We just went right along with, you know, we just, I know people have so many attitudes, but we just went right along with everything, you know.

LEVINE: How about, like, your Italian heritage versus being American?

CANCELMO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: How do you see that?

CANCELMO: Well, I don't know. Like I say, when I was so young, you know, it's so hard to, to understand. But I think, I still think it's the same way, because I think I tried to bring up my children the same way, you know what I mean? Bringing them up, you know, easygoing and strict. I was never mean to them, my children, we always got along, you know? And, uh, I always gave them, uh, always made them do their own thing, you know what I mean? Their own, let them do. I never, and still then, you got to do this, you got to do that, you know? I gave them their own freedom, you know. As long as it was right we never argued about anything.

LEVINE: Now, was that the way your parents were with you?

CANCELMO: Yes, you know. Yeah, yeah. They tried to tell you what to do. Like, my children and I, my husband and I had to go out, my kids say, "Ma, you go ahead. We'll do the dishes, we'll clean up." And if they had to go out, I'd say, "Look, I'll do this, you get ready and go." You know what I say, we kind of worked it that way. I never says, "Whoa, you have to do this before you move, or you have to . . ." You know what I mean? Or, they always, whatever friends they had they used to always bring them in the house, you know, to meet us. My house was always open to everybody.

LEVINE: And that's the way you were, too, as a child.

LEVINE: Yes. And I had my husband's cousin, she came from Italy. I married three off besides my own five. My husband's, um, half sister, then my, when my father-in-law remarried, after he had two children. One died, and his wife went back to Italy, because she couldn't come back then. But then when she come back she was sixteen years old, the oldest daughter. The mother didn't, but the daughter, the uncle sent for her, but she wanted to come and live with me, so she was sixteen and she lived with me for two years, and she got married. And then my husband's other, uh, niece, from Minneapolis, she came here, she lived

with me, she got married here, because the father was very sick, she met a fellow from Worcester, she got married here. And then my husband's other girl, she was twenty-nine years old, his father's, uh, brother, and the mother always wants him to come to America, so I sent for her after the war in 19, when did she come? She came thirty-three years old. So she lived with me two years. She was twenty-nine years old. She lived with me until she was thirty-one and she got married. Yeah. She was here Sunday for a party. In fact, we're going with her tomorrow to the wedding, my grandson's wedding, in Salem Cross, yeah, in Quickfield[ph], so she's taking us, yeah. And we always got along. I always get along with everybody.

LEVINE: Now, how about, like, your children and grandchildren. Have they married Italian people, or not necessarily?

CANCELMO: No, my oldest daughter married a Polish fellow, and he died, too. August 1st will be four years. He was the best ever, best son-in-law I've ever had, you know, best son-in-law that a mother couldn't be any, I always pray to his mother, because you couldn't have given me a better son-in-law. He died at sixty-one years old with cancer. And, uh, my other daughter downstairs, her husband, she got a divorce from her first husband. She got the children, but she got a divorce. They were married thirteen years. She's been divorced. But they're

friendly. She just has a friend now, a friend, and she sees him now and then. But she's fifty-three years old. She was fifty-three years old two weeks ago. That's my baby. And, uh, with her husband, he was out, I think, with the pool in the back and everything. He helped her. They're friendly. He was here at my party last week, too. And my other daughter, she lives across the way, she got a divorce. And she was remarried ten years, and her husband, he was a gem, he died last year with cancer, fifty-nine years old, and he was one, he was a gem. And they lived across the way, so.

LEVINE: I don't think I asked you your husband's name?

CANCELMO: Joseph.

LEVINE: Joseph.

CANCELMO: Joseph Senior.

LEVINE: Let's see. Uh, is there anything else, do you think, do you think it made a difference in your life, the fact that you immigrated to this country, and . . .

CANCELMO: I think so.

LEVINE: How, in what ways that you can think of?

CANCELMO: Well, it seemed that I have some of, you know, the ways from out

there, you know? Brought up from out there. And we live in, that we all had to work and we all, you know, had to work together, work together, and eat together and, you know, and all that. It probably gave us that values, I guess, to be a family together. I think so.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CANCELMO: Maybe the ways, maybe are different, because now you can't tell the kids there to there, you know? (she laughs) But my children have been good, thank God. My grandchildren have been good. Like my daughter downstairs, now. She's working for U. Mass now, and she brought up two daughters, like I say. She sent them to college. This one downstairs went to college. She's a physical therapist, the young one, and she's twenty-eight years old, and the other one is thirty-one years old. She's got a good job. She works in the (?) in Marlboro. She sent them both to college. This one to (?). And my other daughter, too. She had sent her daughter to school. Now she got married. She married a nice fellow. Yeah. So they done well, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah. So you feel, uh . . .

CANCELMO: I feel I did the best I could considering what we both had, you know what I'm saying? You know, we come from, you start from

scratch. We don't come from anybody, with a silver spoon, you know? You know, we just worked our way and, you know, we just went right along and paid our bills and, you know . . .

LEVINE: Did you ever think of what it would have been like for you if you had stayed?

CANCELMO: No, no, because there was nothing there. After the war, things are different. After the war, because my nextdoor neighbor, she came after the war, but her husband was a baker out there and everything else, she's still crying she should have stayed there, I said, "Well, you should have." But she came here, and then she got pregnant, her husband, she got pregnant with a little girl, she never went back, you know? But they have, they had a sharp, they had a bakery, they were well off, you know what I mean? It was different for them. We didn't have nothing.

LEVINE: You didn't have anything to go back to.

CANCELMO: To go back to, right. And there wasn't a family there to go back to. Like we went back in '68 because I says, we had a beautiful trip that we took, and it was cheap, from Holliston[ph]. And, uh, so my husband felt, he knew he had to, he knew he had an uncle out there, you know, and my cousin that was here was her father and all that, that we had sent for, so

we went out there. And we stayed with them a week. We toured, like for two weeks we toured. We went to my town for a day. We stayed in Rome. We went, you know, we had a four-week tour, which was great, you know? And he saw his uncle, which he had, he remembered him, when he was only about five years old, his uncle had been to America. And he married a woman in America, see? But then, in New Haven. But then they went back, and he never wanted to keep another wife, so he stayed there. So they had eleven children, you know? So, uh . . .

LEVINE: Have you stayed a religious family?

CANCELMO: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, absolutely. Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. So that's something that carried over?

CANCELMO: Oh, absolutely. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. Was there anything else you can think of that maybe we haven't mentioned?

CANCELMO: Gee, I don't know. I . . .

LEVINE: That has to do with starting, starting out in Italy, and coming here, and coming to Worcester?

CANCELMO: Yeah, it was real, that's really an experience. That's about it. And we stayed in Worcester. We never went anywhere else,

yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CANCELMO: Yeah, we stayed here, yeah, and just worked and, you know, made our way through. Brought up our children, they went to school, and all right, you know. Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, thank you so much.

CANCELMO: It was so nice . . .

LEVINE: It was very interesting.

CANCELMO: Oh, thank you.

LEVINE: We got a lot in in an hour interview.

CANCELMO: Yeah. Well, there wasn't too much, but . . .

LEVINE: Well, okay. I'm speaking with Rose Cancelmo, who came from Italy at age seven-and-a-half in 1920.

CANCELMO: Right.

LEVINE: And today is, um, July 21, 1995. So, let's see, how old are you today?

CANCELMO: Eighty-two-and-a-half.

LEVINE: Eighty-two.

CANCELMO: I was eighty-two in February.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, you look great.

CANCELMO: And my husband's eighty-six, he was eighty-six in February.
We're both the same, yeah.

LEVINE: Well, I wish you all the best, and I want to thank you very
much.

CANCELMO: Well, thank you very much. Would you like a cold drink or
something, or can I give you some coffee?