

EI-712

MICHAEL CARELLA

BIRTHDATE: JANUARY 3, 1920

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RESIDENCES:

- **ITALY: GROTTERIA**
- **THE US: ARLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS**

LEVINE: Today is November 7th, 1995, and I'm here in West Newton, Massachusetts, with Michael Carella, who came from southern Italy in 1935 when he was fifteen years of age. So I just want to say that I'm looking forward to whatever you can remember, and we'll see how far we get today. Why don't you say, at the very beginning, your birth date, and where you were born?

CARELLA: I was born in Grotteria, Italy, southern Italy, on January 3rd, 1920.

LEVINE: And you say Grotteria?

CARELLA: Yes, G-R-O-double T-E-R-I-A.

LEVINE: And is that, was that a small town?

CARELLA: Yes, about seven thousand.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. Now, were you in Grotteria up until you left?

CARELLA: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay, did you have grandparents who lived near you?

CARELLA: I had a grandmother, my father's mother. I don't remember the others; they died before I was born.

LEVINE: I see, but did you spend some time with your father's mother, with your grandmother?

CARELLA: Not that much. We'd go over and see her, like my mother used to send—like, she used to cook and send food, but I didn't spend very much time.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you have any memories of times with your grandmother?

CARELLA: Not really. Not really. She was a sickly woman, you know, and I'd go over there, and I'd do what I was supposed to doing. I wasn't too anxious to stay there, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay, and what was your mother's name?

CARELLA: My mother? Maria.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

CARELLA: Bellcastro.

LEVINE: B-E-L-L--?

CARELLA: Yes.

LEVINE: C—?

CARELLA: C-A-S-T-R-O.

LEVINE: Okay, Bellcastro. And did she have brothers and sisters that were around you?

CARELLA: She had [pause] three brothers. The youngest one was here. One got killed in World War One, in the Italian Army. And the other one—I don't know which one was the oldest—I know, and the other one was here and

over there. He used to travel, like, back and forth, like my father did for a while. And no sisters.

LEVINE: And how about your father? What was his name?

CARELLA: Rosario.

LEVINE: Rosario. And did he have brothers and sisters that were around, that you had contact with?

CARELLA: He had two sisters and one brother, but I never met the brother; he was in South America.

LEVINE: And the two sisters you knew?

CARELLA: They were over there, yes.

LEVINE: Yeah, okay. Well, when you think back to your time there, how do you remember your mother? I mean, what were the kinds of things she would be doing in a typical day?

CARELLA: Well, my mother had seven children, and I'm the fourth one. The oldest one is in Australia now; she was in Italy. And the next two died during the epidemic they had after World War Two. And being the only son, I used to—she spoiled me. Like, she used to make bread, and when we had the last loaf, she'd hide a little piece for me. She didn't want me to go hungry. You know, I was sort of a special one, you know.

LEVINE: Because you were the boy?

CARELLA: Well, because, for one thing, because I was a boy. Another thing, girls in that day didn't go out to play or do anything like that. They went to school; they came from school, they'd stay in the house and do housework, help the mother, help with the cooking. Boys went out to play. And she didn't want me to get in trouble, like if I was hungry, go out stealing, you know? I think that's the main reason, not because I was special.

LEVINE: Yeah, well, like, what would you play? What kinds of things do you remember playing when you were a little boy?

CARELLA: Well, we'd run. We'd play, like, we'd go for hikes with friends, you know. We'd do different things, not any organized games, you know. We'd just get five or six kids, and we'd decide to do—for hike, to go for here, for there, things like that.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you remember your mother and father, like, did they do anything that you would consider like a social life?

CARELLA: Well, my father was never over there, because he used to come over here and stay two or three years. And then right around Christmas—in them days, you couldn't work in the winter time, due to the cold. Now they've got all—and he used to come over there just before Christmas, and early March they used to leave to come back here. So I don't remember much of my father. I know that when he come back, for instance, one time he took me to a tailor and made three suits for me, and got new shoes, things like that. But my mother, you know—I was Mommy's boy.

LEVINE: You were the man of the family, I suppose, when your father was gone?

CARELLA: Well no, my mother, she was a very good mother. She knew how to bring up kids. She did the part of the mother and the father; she did a very good job.

LEVINE: Did she discipline you?

CARELLA: She did, yeah, but she had a way of doing it.

LEVINE: What was her way?

CARELLA: Well, one time we had a farm over there with trees, fruit trees and stuff like that. And we were raising a pig on the farm, and we would stay in the village, which was about, I don't know, twenty minutes' walk, you know. And my mother used to send me and one of my sisters to bring stuff for the pig over there. It was during the—it was in the summer time, during the grape season. And I went over there, and one time I went by this farm, before our farm, and I stole some grapes. And I don't know to this day, but I'm assuming my sister told my mother. So my mother called me on the side, and she said, she mentioned the name of the lady that owned the farm. "She came over to me," she said, "And she told me she's going to write to your father saying that you stole the grapes on her farm." And that got me scared. And that's the—she used to do, she didn't whip me, but she had a way of doing it, disciplining you, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah.

CARELLA: So that scared me that I never done that any more, see? That was a good lesson!

LEVINE: Yeah. Was the town of Grotteria in the mountains?

CARELLA: Yes. The city hangs right on the mountain like that.

LEVINE: And so it was a farming area?

CARELLA: It was nothing: hills and rocks. You don't, you don't make a living over there. When I was over there, the town had seven thousand population; I don't think it's got a thousand now, because everybody goes up north to work. And we were over there with one of my sons three years ago, and—in the month of August—and I couldn't believe all the cars that were there, because people go up north to work, they come south to spend their vacation in August.

LEVINE: When you were growing up there, were there any cars?

CARELLA: One car!

LEVINE: Who had that one?

CARELLA: Yeah, some guy that—he came over here in this country, and he made some money, and he went over there, and he bought himself a car.

LEVINE: How did people get around generally, when you were growing up?

CARELLA: Walk. Not any more. Walk.

LEVINE: Were there animals? Did people have livestock?

CARELLA: No, not over there. Well, not in—further up, yes, but not in our town. In the town, somebody—you find a few sheeps, and a few goats, that's all. Life was very, very bad! People didn't have enough to eat. We did, thank God, because my father was over here. Otherwise, we'd be like—and people get up in the morning in the summer time, and sit outside the door, and by nightfall, they never went in, to drink or eat, because they didn't have nothing to eat. And my mother used to cook. We'd have meat—we only had that once or twice a year. But the macaroni, beans, potatoes, figs, chestnuts, walnuts—those things we never—in my house we never went hungry, thanks to America, because my father used to money over there to support us. And my mother used to feel sorry for people, and she used to put something on a plate, say, "Take it to So-and-so next door," you know. It's a very tough life over there. It used to be; not any more.

LEVINE: Was there any kind of industry at all?

CARELLA: Nothing whatsoever! Just those hills, they'd go over there and try to cultivate. We didn't get any rain or anything like that. And that was bad, it was really!

LEVINE: So your mother would buy the things that you did have to eat from people right around who had them, who grew them?

CARELLA: Yeah. Well, we used to raise our own things in our farm. But she used to buy the spaghetti; she had the money to buy the spaghetti. She used to buy the potatoes; you don't buy by the pound over there. She used to buy the bushels. Whatever she thought we'd need for the winter, she used to. The same way with chestnuts. She'd buy by the ton. Not by the ton—by whatever, by two or three hundred pounds, you know? And we had those things for the winter. And figs, we used to have those. And she used to bake those in the oven, and—she used to dry them in the sun first, and then she used to bake them. And we had figs all winter.

LEVINE: Did you ever go to a—was there a market day? Like, when people came with whatever they had to sell?

CARELLA: Well, we used to take—I used to go with my mother to the market. We had surplus stuff from our farm, like cherries. Because we had all kinds of fruit in my farm.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well now, were there other men, then, from the same town, that were going and coming to and from America?

CARELLA: Oh, yes! Yes, yeah.

LEVINE: So there were a lot of men who were doing that at the time?

CARELLA: Yes, oh yes, yes!

LEVINE: Did your father ever tell you anything about America, before you got here, that you can recall?

CARELLA: Not really, because I wasn't—the last time he came over was in 1930. And then he came over here, and the Depression came. And he never came back. He sent for me, but he had no plans bringing me over here. Because being the only son, he was going to give me an education. "Some day you'll be a lawyer," he used to say. Then Depression came, and everything fell. And [laughs] I didn't get the education. Then Ethiopian war started, and my father figured, well, God knows how long this is going to last. And that's the reason why he sent for me over here. Now when I got here, the seventeenth of October, 1935, I was never away from home. I missed my family; I missed my mother and father—my mother and my sisters. And I told my father, "I don't want to stay here unless you bring the rest of the family." And then he was determined, you know, that either send me back, or bring the family over here. And he

decide that bring the family over here. And my mother and my sisters got here in 1936, in August, ten months after.

LEVINE: So when it was decided that you were going to leave, how did you feel before you left? Were you interested in coming?

CARELLA: Oh, yes, very much! I was happy, you know, coming to America. My God, in them days, if somebody gave you that opportunity and said, "Look, I have to cut your arm off," you'd go to America, willingly! Not one arm—one arm and one leg! They thought they'd come over here and pick up gold in the streets!

LEVINE: So do you remember anything that you brought with you when you left?

CARELLA: [Pause] Well, in them days, I don't—cheese, like I brought some cheese, I brought some olive oil. In them days, I don't think you could buy it here. And if you could, it would never be like what you raise yourself, what you make yourself. So that, I brought some cheese and some olive oil.

LEVINE: And do you remember leaving your town and traveling to the port to get the boat?

CARELLA: Well, I had to travel—I took a taxi from the town to the next town, to get the train. And then we took the train to Naples.

LEVINE: And did you arrive right before the ship was about to leave, or did you spend some time in Naples?

CARELLA: Well, a few hours. We got there in the morning, and we got on the ship, well, around, two or three hours after we got there.

LEVINE: And who were your traveling with?

CARELLA: I was traveling with this gentleman who's been here before, and he had sons over here. And then he had the whole family over here, but then he decided that he wanted to go back to Italy, but the oldest son stayed here. When he went back over there, it was all right while he had money. Once the money—so he thought he'd come over here. But he didn't get through because there was some kind of an illness, and he had to go back.

LEVINE: Oh, so you were examined before you ever got on the ship?

CARELLA: Oh yes, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about that, anything about the procedure or, anything about your examination?

CARELLA: Vaguely. You know, they have you take your clothes off. They ask you questions. But very vaguely.

LEVINE: And so this man was rejected?

CARELLA: He was rejected.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah. Do you remember him talking about that? I mean, did he tell you, or you were right there when it happened?

CARELLA: Well, you stand in one room, and you go to another room for examination. And I don't remember whether I went in first, or he went in first. And when he came out he was disappointed, and he said he's got to go back to Grotteria.

LEVINE: Did he ever get to the United States, do you know?

CARELLA: After that, no, no.

LEVINE: So you said that you took the Rex? The name of the ship was the Rex?

CARELLA: Yes, R-E-X.

LEVINE: Yeah, and do you remember anything about the voyage? Anything stand out in your mind?

CARELLA: Well, very rough sea! I know I got sick, and what saved me was bringing some of those figs. I couldn't go to eat, but it seemed I managed to eat those, and they did me some good.

LEVINE: And were you in steerage? Were you in sort of a dormitory-like arrangement in the bottom of the ship?

CARELLA: No, no, we had a cabin with, I don't know how many people, four or five people maybe.

LEVINE: And was there anything going on on the ship? I mean, were people dancing, singing? Was there any kind of a social--? You were just too ill.

CARELLA: Well, no, I wasn't ill all the time. I don't know, maybe in first class or second class. We came third class, the lowest on the ship, and I don't remember anything like that.

LEVINE: And do you remember how long it took you, the ship?

CARELLA: Five or six days, because it was one of the newest, if not the newest, at that time. Five or six days.

LEVINE: Do you remember when the Rex came into the New York Harbor?

CARELLA: Yes, yeah.

LEVINE: What was it like?

CARELLA: I couldn't believe it! You know, to see New York City, you know! It's unbelievable! Something I'd never seen before! Where I come from, that's all I could see: trees and mountains, nothing else!

LEVINE: Did you know what the Statue of Liberty was when you first came here?

CARELLA: No, no.

LEVINE: Often true. And how about Ellis Island? What are your memories of that? What was your impression?

CARELLA: Really, not much. The only thing I can remember was—well, we all went in there, through Customs. That's the only thing I can remember. I don't, you know, I don't remember looking outside, and to see anything like that.

LEVINE: Were you re-examined at Ellis Island?

CARELLA: I don't believe so; I don't think so.

LEVINE: And do you remember if you had to stay overnight there?

CARELLA: Oh, no, no, no. We docked in the morning, and by afternoon we got off the boat, because I was in Arlington that same day, that night.

LEVINE: Oh! Now, did someone meet you?

CARELLA: My father, and some friend of his that came by car. And we got here by car.

LEVINE: And what was it like to be reunited with your father, who you didn't really know that well, but to be in America?

CARELLA: I was never too close to my father, because as I said, I used to see him—the last time he came over I was ten. So before that, I might have been six, seven, three, two, you know. And I—in fact, when my mother came over here, I was jealous of my father, because I thought my mother

belonged to me. I didn't want to share my mother with my father! And I gave him a little hard time, too, you know!

LEVINE: Do you remember when you and your father were driving to Arlington? Do you remember any things about this country, in particular—I guess everything was new and different. But were there any things that stand out in your memory?

CARELLA: Well, I used to get out—look outside the car, and look at the signs. And of course, I didn't know what they meant. The only thing that: For Sale. Sale in Italian is salt, and I'd say, "Sale, sale!" You know, but other than that, I didn't—

LEVINE: Did you encounter any new and different foods that you recall?

CARELLA: Well, on the boat we had Italian food, and it was good—better than I used to have at home! I mean, because my mother was a good cook, but we didn't—she didn't cook any meat, maybe once or twice a year, you know. But those things that they used to give us on the boat was something that I never had before, and it was wonderful!

LEVINE: So, when you got to Arlington, what did you find here?

CARELLA: Well, when I got to Arlington—we didn't have a palace in Italy, we had a very—no convenience in the house in Italy. When I got over here, my father had a—he was staying on the piece of land—he used to cultivate a piece of land that belonged to the state. And he built himself a little shed there. And when I got there, I was surprised. I said, "Is this America?" Because I was there for a couple of weeks, and then we moved in with my father's uncle's house, and we stayed there. But still, I was disappointed! Well, anybody that comes from over there to over here, at first they get disappointed, you know.

LEVINE: Why is that?

CARELLA: Well, you have the impression over here that, as I said, you don't think that you have to work hard, you know. The opportunity's here, but you have to work very hard. But you have the impression: come over here, and as I said, pick up gold in the street! Now, it's different with modern communications. You know, they know. As I said before, ask anybody if they want to come over here, they say yes. Ask anybody now, they don't want to come over here!

LEVINE: So this plot of land in Arlington, where you father had the shed—he had been working that land and living there before you came over?

CARELLA: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: I see, and then you moved in with him.

CARELLA: I moved in with him.

LEVINE: And was that his job, working the land?

CARELLA: Oh, no, no! He used to work for contractors, you know. And he stayed there, and he had a little piece, four by four, a small piece, and he used to raise his own vegetables, for his own consumption, that's all.

LEVINE: I see. So was he a carpenter?

CARELLA: No, no, he was a laborer.

LEVINE: A laborer, uh-huh. And then you and your father moved in with your uncle?

CARELLA: Yes, his uncle, yeah.

LEVINE: And what was that like? Was that a little bit more conveniences?

CARELLA: Oh, yew, yeah. At least they had a bathroom, you know. Yeah, it was more convenient. Well, it was a short while, because after ten months, my mother and my sisters came here.

LEVINE: Can you remember any discussions with your father before your mother and your sisters came about that?

CARELLA: Oh yes, that I—I never complain about the place that he brought me in, because he did the best that he could. And yet, I wasn't used to have—I didn't come from a palace, you know. We had no convenience in the house, so that didn't bother me so much. What bothered me most was being away from my mother.

LEVINE: So when your mother—were your corresponding?

CARELLA: Oh yes, yeah!

LEVINE: Was your mother interested in coming? Did she want to come?

CARELLA: For me, yes.

LEVINE: How about your sisters?

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CARELLA: Oh yes, they were younger, they didn't more or less understand, you know. But they go any place the mother go.

LEVINE: So when they arrived, did they arrive in Ellis Island?

CARELLA: Yes.

LEVINE: And how—did you meet them?

CARELLA: Yes.

LEVINE: What was that like?

CARELLA: Oh, it was wonderful! I'd never been away, even for one day, from my mother, and to stay away ten months, away from them was terrible!

LEVINE: So did you and your father drive down, is that how you--?

CARELLA: No, this time we came by bus.

LEVINE: And then you brought them back to Arlington?

CARELLA: Yes.

LEVINE: And then did you have your own house?

CARELLA: Oh yes, yeah.

LEVINE: So did your mother adjust to being here? Did she like it? Did she feel homesick?

CARELLA: Oh yes, yeah, she did. Well, for one thing, she had the family, although my oldest sister was married, and she was left behind in Italy. But she had the rest of the family—but, you know, she didn't worry so much for her, because she had a husband, and she had kids. She was here with my father, which she used to see him for two or three months every three or four years, you know.

LEVINE: Now, was there a large Italian immigrant population in Arlington at that time?

CARELLA: Yes, yeah.

LEVINE: I see, so people could get along speaking Italian?

CARELLA: Oh yes. And we knew them. Most of them came from the same town.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Was there a social club of any kind there, where people would get together?

CARELLA: Well, the Sons of Italy, but we didn't belong, no. You didn't have time to do it; you had to work! But the Depression, you know, even today [laughs]! No, but we used, on weekends we used to visit friends, you know. Somebody got sick, and you didn't hear about it. And I heard about it, I call you, and you call your next friend, and before you know it, you know, everybody knows! The same when somebody dies. Them days, when somebody died, the line of cars, you'd never see the end of it! Now, you see a few, not that many. Because every—as long as you came from a particular town, as long as you knew them, you go to the funeral, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

END OF SIDE A
BEGIN SIDE B

LEVINE: Now, were you a religious family?

CARELLA: Well, yes. Not overly religious, but yes, religious.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did you observe kind of the same ways that you did when you were in Calabria? Did you observe those kinds of—what do I want to say—festivals, events, rituals?

CARELLA: Well, in the North End of Boston—you come from over here?

LEVINE: I used to live in the North End, yeah.

CARELLA: Yeah, the North End, they still have them but not as—like before. In the summer time they used to have feasts of different saints, and we used to go over there. That's about it.

LEVINE: Let's see. So, did your father want to become a citizen?

CARELLA: Oh, he was a citizen—yes, yes!

LEVINE: Do you remember when he became one, or had he become--?

CARELLA: Well, that's the only reason I came over here, because I couldn't come over if he wasn't a citizen, yeah.

LEVINE: I see. So then were you a citizen under his papers?

CARELLA: Yes.

LEVINE: Now, did you ever go to school here?

CARELLA: I went to night school for a while. Then my mother and sisters came over here, and my father never made much money. We didn't have nothing. And I had to go out and work, you know, to help out. And my first job, I was getting fifteen cents an hour.

LEVINE: What was the job?

CARELLA: I was working in greenhouse raising flowers. They were raising flowers, and I worked there for about five years. And then I left, because what I was doing, me and there was another guy doing the same thing that I was doing, and he was getting five cents an hour more than I was getting. From fifteen cents at that time, we went up to thirty-five cents. And this other guy was getting forty cents, so I asked for forty cents, and the owner of the greenhouses said, "No, because I give you forty cents, you'll be making more than your father." So I left. I said, "Well, if you don't give me the forty cents, I quit." And I quit, and I was walking the streets for a little while, you know. And then, I had a 1936 Chevrolet that my father bought me. And I was taking him to work one morning, and this man was running, and you could tell that he was late to go to work. So I stopped, I picked him up, and I left him off at the car stop, street car. And that's it. And I took my father to work, and I came home. Two weeks later, the same guy was late for work. I picked him, and then I started the conversation, you know, where do you work? This and that, are they hiring? And he said, "Why, you looking for a job?" "Oh," I said, "Yeah." He said, "I can hire you, but I won't give you much." I said, "Sure, I'd take anything." Well, he hired me, and he paid me seventy-five cents an hour! From thirty-five, that was big money! And I stayed there a little while, I don't know, maybe eighteen months or so. And then I was called to go in the service.

LEVINE: So would you say that—well actually, because you came here when you did, it was already in the Depression?

CARELLA: yes.

LEVINE: So you didn't have the sense of how the Depression made a big difference, because you kind of came in in the middle?

CARELLA: No, I didn't know how things used to be before that, no.

LEVINE: Right. Well tell me, how did you feel about—you were drafted into the Army?

CARELLA: Yes, yeah. Oh, I felt wonderful! I didn't want to go; I didn't want to volunteer, but once they called me, willingly. Because I could have—if I wanted to get out, I could have got out. Because this friend of mine, they called him to go, and they asked him if he was sent to Italy, would he shoot his brother? And he said, "No," and they rejected him! At least, that's the story that he gave me. They never asked me that question, and if they did, I would have said, "Yes," because I came over here, I adopted this country, and this country come first. And I mean, I'm not trying to say this to try to build myself as a—but I do love this country! My God, my family, and country's third. And I really mean that from the bottom of my heart!

LEVINE: Do you know why you feel so strongly as you do?

CARELLA: Well, I—this country gave me everything that I have, not only here, but over there. If my father wasn't over here when I was over there, I'd be one of those that go out and sit in the sun all day long, nothing to eat. It isn't those people that didn't have nothing to eat because they were lazy! There was nothing to do! There was nothing to do. And in them days, you never—you were born in this particular town, and then you died there. You don't go, like, up north, like they do now, see. And this country gave me everything that I have! And I'm thankful for that.

LEVINE: So what happened then? You were inducted into the Army?

CARELLA: Yes.

LEVINE: And where did you go?

CARELLA: I went to Europe. I went to—I was in the Anti-Aircraft Artillery. And when the Germans were sending those buzz bombs you read about—I don't think you remember that, no.

LEVINE: [Laughs]

CARELLA: They sent us over there, and we'd set up there in Dover, and we'd try to shoot them down before they went to London to do the damage. And from there we went to France, Belgium, Germany.

LEVINE: So you were on active duty for a few years?

CARELLA: Thirty-eight months.

LEVINE: How, just looking back on that period in your life, when you were in the service, how do you think about that now?

CARELLA: I don't regret anything! I—when I was in Italy, I never got out of Grotteria. When I came over here, I never got out of Arlington. So my going into the Army, I did some traveling. When you travel, you learn something. I don't regret it; it was moments that you get scared, you know. But I don't regret anything.

LEVINE: So when you came home from the Army, then how did you resume your life? What did you do then?

CARELLA: Well, before I was discharged we used to talk among buddies, and say, "When I go home, I'm going to take six months off and do nothing." And I was home for a couple of weeks, and I was itchy to go to work, and I started looking for work. And we were collecting twenty dollars a week. They called it the Nine Twenty Club, because you had to be down there and sign up, and I did that for a few weeks. And then I went to work.

LEVINE: The Nine Twenty Club—was that connected with the service?

CARELLA: Yes, yeah. It gave you twenty dollars a week for so many months in order for you, to give you time to get a job and adjust to civilian life.

LEVINE: Just stepping back a minute—did you meet men, young men, from all over the country when you were in the service?

CARELLA: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: What was that like?

CARELLA: That was a good experience. In fact, it was—sitting in the barracks one night, and this guy from Chicago talking about Bunker Hill Monument! And he was asking me, say if I ever been over there. And I said, "I heard of it, but I never been over there." I said, "No," and he was shocked! "What's the matter with you?" So the first thing that I did after I got here, I made sure that I go and see there! [Laughs] To this day, I've never been up to Concord Bridge, believe it or not! And when we go someplace, and we take a trip, you know, you—but over here, you think, "It's right here; I can see it any time," and you never go!

LEVINE: So you got itchy wanting to work?

CARELLA: Yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: So what did you do?

CARELLA: Oh, I went to work—I had no skills, because my father never sent me to learn a skill, because he was going to send me to college. And when that [laughs] didn't pan out, I had no skills! So I went to work for the Town of Arlington Public Works, digging ditches, do whatever's involved in public works.

LEVINE: And did you stay working for them?

CARELLA: I stayed there for thirty-six years.

LEVINE: Oh! And did you retire from there?

CARELLA: Yes.

LEVINE: So, when you look back now on the fact that you were fifteen years old when you immigrated to this country, do you think that had a—or, what kind of an impact do you think that had on the kind of person you became, and the ways that you are?

CARELLA: Oh, I don't think they had—in my particular, I don't think it had any. The impact was my mother. She taught me everything! My father was a wonderful man, a wonderful man. And in fact, when I first got the job, the fifteen cents an hour, he used to work over there. And we had to work from seven to six. And it was six o'clock; it was my first day there, and I didn't know what time it was, for one thing, and I kept on working. So my father came over, and he got me, and he said, "Well, it's time to go home." So that Saturday, he went out and he bought me a pocket watch for a dollar—big thing! Oh, no, he was a wonderful man. As I said, he bought me the car, and he was the one that—he said to get your license. And I said, "Well, if I get the license, I said, "Then I want the car." He said, "Get your license first, don't worry." And he bought me a car. So he was a good man. I remember my mother, she was the disciplinarian. My father—I never knew him until I came over here, really.

LEVINE: Can you think of any attitudes that either of them had that were sort of, you know, rules to live by, ways of thinking about things, ideas they tried to instill in you, growing up?

CARELLA: Well, my mother, for instance, when we were over there, and we had these holidays, and my mother used to prepare special meals, or for that matter, any day. Like for instance, in the winter time I used to fill my pocket full of figs and go outside, and she used to say to me, "Look, if you go outside, you have to share these with your friends. If you don't want to share with your friends, eat them here first, and then you go outside."

LEVINE: And how about the strong work ethic? Where do you think you got that from?

CARELLA: My father. My father. My father used to tell us kids, when he was over there in Italy—you know that they make smoking pipes, the wood that they make smoking pipes, it's briar. And briar—I don't know if you—it's a bush, and it grows like a head, instead of roots, in the ground. And you'd go over there, and you'd dig them out, and then you sell them to the people who make the pipes. And my father was so fast—and my father was a small guy, just like me—that three men used to go, and they used to split in half. My father used take half, and the other two used to split the other half. My father was—I could never tie his shoes. He was—

LEVINE: And how about the satisfactions that you have had in your life. What would you say has made you feel very satisfied, that you've done?

CARELLA: Well, the satisfaction in my life—I wanted an education in a bad way, and I never had the opportunity due to the Depression. I would have had the opportunity when I came out of the service, but I also was twenty-six years old, and I wanted to get married. And I knew that I had to go to school and get my high school education first, and then go to college. And I had to decide whether I wanted to go to school or get married. And I decided to get married, but I was determined that my kids get themselves an education. Thank God, every one of them have a college education.

LEVINE: And how did you meet your wife?

CARELLA: Oh [laughs]! After the war was over, they were giving furloughs to the soldiers, some of them to the Riviera in France, some of them to Holland, different, you know. And they used to go by the more time you had, you had preference. My name came up several times, and I turned it down because I made a request that I wanted to go to Italy to visit my sister. And I wait and wait and wait, and nothing came through. So finally I got disgusted, I'd never go, so I went over to see my first Sergeant, and I said, I'd like to go to one of those furloughs. So that next weekend he sent—I went to Nice, France, for seven days. So when I got back to the barracks after the vacation, this other soldier came over, and he said, "The first Sergeant wants to see you." So I said, "Oh, God, now I know, he's going to put me on KP or guard duty." So I went over there, and said, "You want to see me, Sergeant?" He said, "Yes." He said, "I'm going to give you a pass to go away this weekend, and then I'm going to give you the papers to go to Italy and see your sister. Monday morning, you take the plane or the train, whatever means of transportation you can get, and go over there." So that's what I did. Monday morning I took the train, and I went to Frankfurt. From Frankfurt we flew to, I believe it's Nice, I don't

remember, in France. And then from there to Rome, and then when we got to Rome, I went to find out if I could get a train to go to where I was going. And they said, "Well, there won't be another train here until tomorrow night." In the meantime, I met this Lieutenant, American Lieutenant, and he was going to Naples. And we got to talk, and I told him, I said, "I have to wait 'til tomorrow." "No," he said, "Get on with me." And I flew with him to Naples, and then from Naples I took the train, and we went to the town I was going in. And it was right after the war, and the train would start here, go to the next town, and then they stopped there for the whole day. And so I kept doing that, so I got to the point where I was within a few miles from the town. And we got there early in the morning, and I had to wait until the next night for another train. I tried to get a cab, and the guy said to me, "Where you going?" "Oh, I wouldn't drive over there," but I wanted to take a chance. There was no government, nothing, and I said, "What am I going to do?" I was disgusted and I started swearing in Italian. I said, "I'm going to go back to Germany." And this guy, Italian guy, was in the station there, and he heard my—he recognized my accent. And he said, "Are you from Grotteria?" I said, "Yes." And I told him, I said, "I'm going to go back. I'm disgusted." "Well, I'm going over there, too," he said. "Why don't you wait? We'll go together." So I went over there, and one of my—I stayed in my sister's house.

LEVINE: What was it like seeing her? It had been many years.

CARELLA: Ten years. I went over there, and one of my father's sisters came over, and she started talking to my sister. "We should fix him up with some girl over here. Like that, we see him. Otherwise if he gets married over there, we'll never see him again!" Now, it so happened that I had a girl in Germany, which I was kind of—I was pretty serious, you know. But I got curious, and I said, "Who were you going to fix me up with?" And she mentioned, not my wife, one of the—there were seven girls in her family—one of them. So I—then I made it a point that I wanted to meet my wife, you know. And I met my wife, and I liked her very much. Yet, I wasn't sure, you know. I knew I had that other girl over there. So I came home; I took my discharge, and I start thinking and thinking and thinking. So finally I wrote to my sister to go to her parents and ask, you know. So I got discharged in February in '46, and I was back there in August, either the end of July or the first part of August, in '46. And August 29th we got married, and we came back here in January. I think we got here January 7th, in '47, because transportation—you couldn't get transportation. Otherwise, I would have been here in [laughs] right after I got married.

LEVINE: So do you know why you decided the way you did? What led you to--?

CARELLA: Well, I wanted to make sure, you know. I don't want to make sure, but when I come back over here, every day I start thinking more about her,

you know. And then, but when I met her over there, it isn't that I met her formally, you know. She was walking, and they pointed out to me. It wasn't—and then, because if I decided to get married while I was over there, she would have come here, and the government would have paid for her, her trip, you know? And this way, I had to pay myself.

LEVINE: So, did you have—could you describe your wedding that you had in Italy?

CARELLA: Very simple. It was right after the war, and we went to church. We got married. Then we came home, and one of my wife's mother's friends, she made some cookies, and that's it. And then we left that night, and we went on a honeymoon. We went to Naples, because I had to see the American Consul. We stayed there a week, and then we came home. And then we waited until we could get passage to come over here.

LEVINE: And let's see. Well, how is this time in your life, now that you've retired? How is this time?

CARELLA: Boring.

LEVINE: Boring?

CARELLA: Well, when we were young, and the kids were growing up, I had to have more than one job. I couldn't support six kids on what I was making from the town. The pay was small, but it was steady. Thirty-six years I was there, and never lost one hour of work. Well, [unclear] work [laughs]. So I had to get more than one job. Two jobs, I had them all my life, but I had as many as five jobs, you know. They say, "How do you have five jobs?" Well, I used to come home from work, and go to this job, which used to take me two hours, and then go to that other job. And then on weekends, if you needed something around the house done, you know, I'd work for you Saturday, and work for your neighbor, for instance, on Sunday. But two jobs, I had them all the time.

LEVINE: What was your wife's maiden name.

CARELLA: Galuzzo.

LEVINE: G-A-L-L?

CARELLA: L-U-Z-Z-O.

LEVINE: And her first name?

CARELLA: Carmella.

LEVINE: And you have all sons?

CARELLA: Four boys and two girls.

LEVINE: And what are your children's names, from the oldest on down?

CARELLA: The oldest one is Charlie. No, the oldest one is my daughter Maria, after my mother. And the second one is Charlie, after my father. The first one is Mike, after me. The fourth one is Robert, after I don't know who! Nobody, I guess [laughs]. And then comes my other girl, Joanne. My wife picked that name because she had an aunt by that name. And then my youngest boy, Joe. Joe is my wife's father's name, Joseph.

LEVINE: Well, how do you feel about Joe doing this work with [unclear] other people?

CARELLA: Wonderful, wonderful. He's sincere, he's a hard worker, you know. No, that's all he—when he was going to high school, he used to talk about it. In fact, while he was going to school, he used to work in nursing home, you know, to get some extra money. And there used to be a friend of his working there also. And one night Joe was supposed to come home a certain hour, and he wasn't home, and we got scared. So I called his friend's house, Billy—I forget his last name. I said, "Bill, what happened to Joe? He's not home yet." "Don't worry, Mr. Carella," he said. "One of the patients died, and he took a walk, because he was very close to him." He's very good with old people.

LEVINE: Well, is there anything else that you can think of? Did you visit Ellis Island since it's been [unclear]?

CARELLA: Yes, when my sister, who's in Australia, came over here to see my parents, twenty-five years ago, I guess, I don't know, I took them over there. I took them to New York, and then we took a guided tour, and one of the stops was the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island.

LEVINE: And how did that feel to you, going back?

CARELLA: It was—well, I didn't remember that. I just remember coming to New York. But it felt good. The only thing, the weather was lousy, raining, you know. But it felt good.

LEVINE: Well, you know, the reason I'm interviewing you, and the reason I interview people, is that this is really an honoring of people like you who came to Ellis Island, and who contributed to this country. So that's really the purpose. Well, is there anything else that you can think of to say before we close?

CARELLA: Well, you ask me, and then—ask me whatever you think.

LEVINE: Do you think that you have instilled values in your children that are like the values that you received from your mother and father, or are different in some way?

CARELLA: Yes, yes. No, no, yes. No, I think I did.

LEVINE: What was it that you were most interested in--?

CARELLA: Well, for one thing, thank God, their names were never in the newspapers that they did something wrong, always for something they achieved. Another thing, I don't mind if I have bills, but I like to have the money to pay for them when I get it. And I instilled that to them, too, because I got—my youngest daughter lives in New Jersey, and we went over to see her one time. And on top of the table there, she had checks and stuff like that. This was the beginning of the month, maybe around the eighth or the tenth of the month. And she already had the check made out for the first of next month for her mortgage. I said, "Joanne, today's the tenth!" "Well, I had a good teacher," she told me. No, they're all like that; they're all like that.

LEVINE: Well let's see. I think we're just about at the end of the time now, so I wanted to say thank you so much for this wonderful interview.

CARELLA: Oh, you're very welcome.

LEVINE: It's just a gem. I thank you, and it's been a real pleasure.

CARELLA: Good, good.

LEVINE: Okay, this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and it's November 7th, 1995. And I've been speaking with Michael Carella, who came from Calabria, in Italy, in 1935, when he was fifteen years of age. And I am signing off.

END OF INTERVIEW