



LEVINE: That's okay.

AGOSTINO: At Grotto Teria[ph], province of Reggio[ph], Calabria, Italy.

LEVINE: And did you live in Grotto Teria[ph] up until the time you left for the United States?

AGOSTINO: Yes, I did.

LEVINE: You did. Okay. Well, let's, maybe, can you recall your house, the house you lived in when you lived there?

AGOSTINO: Oh, yes. It was a very tiny little home. In one room we all slept, we had a little kitchen. That's about it. My mother did have like kind of a cellar that she used to store all the things from the farm, because we owned a huge farm there.

LEVINE: What kind of farm was it?

AGOSTINO: Uh, fruits and olives, and vegetables. All kind, everything that you could possibly imagine we grew there, even to the point of nuts. We had some almonds, you know, walnuts. You name it, we had it.

LEVINE: Did your mother work on the farm as well as your father?

AGOSTINO: She did what she could, but she had to have hired hands, because my dad was here all the time.

LEVINE: Now, when did your father come here?

AGOSTINO: I don't know the year, but all I know that my mother used to say he was here when he was eighteen. He was born 1883, so give or take, in the '90s.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So he started coming here when he was eighteen?

AGOSTINO: He was here, yes.

LEVINE: He was here when he was eighteen. So he was already married when he first came?

AGOSTINO: No, he was not. My mother was an orphan, and she lived in, uh, this home. And the woman took to my mother very much, and she had my father, who was her brother, in the States, and she wrote him a letter and said, "I have a gorgeous girl here. I would like you to come and see her before I accept suitors." Because that's the way they did it in those days.

Suitors would send, would like you to come. So my father did go. They ended up getting married. That was the beginning of the Carella family, I guess.

LEVINE: Now, how old was your father then, do you know, when he came back and met . . .

AGOSTINO: I think twenty-three.

LEVINE: And your mother?

AGOSTINO: Uh, she was fifteen.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

AGOSTINO: Or fourteen.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So, so, um, he, he came back, married your mother, but then he came back to the United States and your mother stayed there?

AGOSTINO: Yes. And he would come back and see her every two years or so, give or take, because in those days the weather was so brutal here that they didn't work the winters. You know, everything kind of almost went still. So he would spend the winters, the winters here over there, and come back then in the summer and proceed to earn a little more money and come back.

And every time there was a child.

LEVINE: What was your father's name?

AGOSTINO: Rosario.

LEVINE: Rosario. And when he, what was he doing when he was here in the United States?

AGOSTINO: Well, he was a general laborer. He worked for construction. He worked for a florist in greenhouses. A general laborer.

LEVINE: And where, was he in Massachusetts?

AGOSTINO: Ah, he was pretty much in Massachusetts, but he was up Berlin, New Hampshire, Hangham[ph], I used to remember him. But for the most part, Massachusetts was his base.

LEVINE: Did he have friends or countrymen who were settled around where he was?

AGOSTINO: Oh, yes. Many people from the same area came, and they would travel at the same time, like they'd go back to Italy and come back at the same time. They did the, you know, and he also had relatives. He had an uncle and, uh, aunts.

LEVINE: You mean, who traveled back and forth?

AGOSTINO: By this time they had come to stay for good.

LEVINE: I see.

AGOSTINO: In other words, the husbands were not of the same thinking as my father. They called for their family. Like my mother's brother was here, and he right away sent over for his wife. My father was not a bad, his plans were to come back to Italy once he got everybody settled, and where we owned the land, there was a piece of land that was on the main drag, and a lot of people that came from way, way up north, he wanted to build what you would call like a combination hotel and, uh, restaurant, so that they could eat and sleep, and then the next morning get up and proceed to go. His idea was good, but it never worked.

LEVINE: I see. So he really planned to return.

AGOSTINO: Oh, he planned to, that's why we were all born there, because otherwise we could have all been born here.

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

AGOSTINO: Maria.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

AGOSTINO: Belcastro. You want that spelled? B-E-L-C-A-S-T-R-O.

LEVINE: And is it all one word, or . . .

AGOSTINO: Yes, Belcastro's all one word.

LEVINE: And so how many children were there by the time, when you came to America how many children . . .

AGOSTINO: Seven.

LEVINE: Seven, uh-huh.

AGOSTINO: But only five of us are living. She lost two during World War One with the epidemic that they had at that time.

LEVINE: Do you remember that?

AGOSTINO: That was before my time.

LEVINE: Oh, World War One. Of course, yeah.

AGOSTINO: I wasn't born.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

AGOSTINO: As a matter of fact, not even Michael. We're all, the only one that was born would be my sister who is in Australia. She's the oldest of all of us. And then there was two came. It was a boy and a girl.

LEVINE: So, um, so when your father was here, your mother was really running this farm? With help.

AGOSTINO: Yes, like I said, with hired hands. Oh, yes.

LEVINE: So what would be her role. I mean, what would she have to do as far as the farm was concerned, or did she just have . . .

AGOSTINO: Oh, she worked hard. She was a hard working woman. She got up every morning and went and attended to whatever she could do. There's a lot more work than meets the eye to running a place. And she had to do all the raising of us children. She had to be mother, father, everything. But in those days they didn't, I mean, we didn't suffer. We didn't feel any loss. We knew Dad was alive. We knew he was there making the money for us to live. We accepted it. We didn't feel slighted. We didn't feel, I don't know.

Today it's a different world. We were very happy at all times. I mean, I never felt that I, uh, the loss, you know, not having my dad there.

LEVINE: Did you have grandparents that you spent any time with?

AGOSTINO: Oh, my mother was orphaned when she was four, so I didn't have any, the father when she was eight, so she was really an orphan. My dad was orphaned when he, from a father when he was three, but his mother was living.

LEVINE: And do you remember that?

AGOSTINO: Oh, I remember her well.

LEVINE: What do you think of when you think of her? What kinds of things do you remember?

AGOSTINO: It's the strangest thing. I used to remember that I would go, like we lived down here and she lived up on a little, I don't know if you'd call it a hill, but up. And I used to go and visit her only for little things she used to give me.

LEVINE: Like what?

AGOSTINO: Well, she used to buy the fresh lettuce from the vendors that go by, because they had vendors that came around the, around, selling things. Of all things, could you believe, just the end of the lettuce or something. Like a rabbit, I guess.

LEVINE: Well, what about the vendors. What did they go around with? What did they have, like, carts? Or did they have horses?

AGOSTINO: No, on foot. Everything was on foot.

LEVINE: And they'd sell lettuce, and what other kinds of things, do you remember?

AGOSTINO: Oh, uh, I remember one other thing, snails. Uh, then down the avenue, like, the main street, the vendors would come with fresh fish every day, and they would announce it. Anybody that wants fish come down to the main street, they call it, like, the center of our town here, come down the center.

LEVINE: The square.

AGOSTINO: The square, right.

LEVINE: Now, was this, um, was Grotto Teria[ph] on the sea?

Was it a fishing town?

AGOSTINO: Uh, no, no, no. It wasn't on the sea, but it was a very hilly and rocky place. It's, you can't go up on any vehicle.

LEVINE: Oh.

AGOSTINO: There is a road, but the people that live up on the thing, the hill, you have to go on foot. So, but they even used to come with material, clothing, because most of the people made their own clothing. I remember they used to come and sell domestics like sheets and bedspreads.

LEVINE: And how would they come? On foot?

AGOSTINO: On foot.

LEVINE: Huh. Well, where did they get the fish from, the fresh fish?

AGOSTINO: We do have an ocean pretty close. Uh, it's, that I, I'm not familiar with what you would call it.

ARTHUR: I can tell you.

LEVINE: Go ahead.

ARTHUR: Grotto Teria[ph] started from the ocean to the mountain. So that's a part, goes eleven kilometer from the ocean to the center of the village.

LEVINE: I see. Now, was Grotto Teria[ph] a big town?

AGOSTINO: No.

LEVINE: How do you remember it as a town?

AGOSTINO: I remember every nook and cranny.

LEVINE: Oh, tell me about any nooks and any crannies that you remember.

AGOSTINO: It's a very rocky place, but everybody knew everybody by name. No matter where you lived, everybody knew each other. And the most common meeting place was the church. The activities of the church were great. They did so much, uh, festivities, for all the . . .

AGOSTINO: Can you talk about some of the festivities from the church?

LEVINE: I remember two, uh, mostly that I really would linger for the rest of my life. The Easter one, only because when Jesus rises they used to send like a messenger, Saint, uh . . .

ARTHUR: Giovanni. Saint Giovanni.

AGOSTINO: St. John, and would say, "He has risen." You know, he would give the mother this traditional thing. They would reenact it. And all the little kids would have their sweets, which is, I make them to this day for my grandchildren. It's a sweet dough. You can make it even as a bread, and put an egg on it. But you were not to touch that until you went to the parade, and St. John would bless it for you. Then you could eat it. It was a great day for us, because we'd all be dressed in our best clothes, and we would go, and then we could eat that sweet. Because over there the sweets were not common. If you had a piece of chocolate, that was unheard of.

LEVINE: Did you learn how to make this from your mother?

AGOSTINO: Yes.

LEVINE: Could you describe for the tape how you make it?

AGOSTINO: Well, uh, what I do is get, let's say, the basic, six eggs, and I beat them up real, real, real well, and I keep on adding six teaspoons of baking powder, one cup of sugar, one cup of oil, and a little bottle of

Anisette, or whatever flavor you want, for that matter. Just put as much flour as it takes so that you can make a rope out of it, then mold it into whatever shape you want it, stick an egg, and then crisscross the egg with the same dough, put it in the oven, and bake it. And then when it comes out, see, make it, you get more sophisticated as the years go by. My mother never did this, but I put an icing on it, and then on top of the icing I put these colored jimmies, so the grandchildren go crazy. ( Dr. Levine laughs ) It's a lot of history. But, I mean, then the other one is, that I remember mostly, is Easter is the most outstanding that I can really recall. But then they had a lot of others, and the people in the village, they would parade the saints, whatever saints happened to be at the time. Different days, he would know this. See, I mean, I didn't pay my, how much are you going to, I knew that they, and they would put their best bedspreads out the window, and decorate the whole thing, and make it very festive, because they paraded the saints.

LEVINE: What were the saints made out of? What kinds of . . .

AGOSTINO: They were life-size.

ARTHUR: Corpus Cristi, that's a festival. It was last week, two weeks ago, Corpus Cristi.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So they were life. And what would they be made out of?

AGOSTINO: The men would have a platform, and they would put it, they'd be on a stick. Say, this table would have a piece of wood coming out from either side, and four men would carry it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

AGOSTINO: It was very fascinating. I wish we had some of those traditions here. The North End tries over here.

LEVINE: Right.

AGOSTINO: You know, they do. They have the feast, but it wouldn't compare. I mean, when they have the Novena, just before God is crucified, they have Him in a coffin and, uh, the blood's trickling down. You know, it looks so real. It looks so . . .

AGOSTINO: So they really reenacted the whole thing.

AGOSTINO: Oh, they do that, yes. In fact, they do a show called The Passion, and he used to be in it all the time. He used to play the part of either Jesus or Judas.

ARTHUR: Any one.

LEVINE: And he has the book with the thing which he brought it here thinking that he would get all the pisans and some day put the show here. But over here we work too hard. You can't get everybody to do it, you know. Everybody's working. Over there they had more time on their hands. You did work, but not like over here.

LEVINE: Right. What did you do, like, as a child, like, you know, when you were five, six, seven, when it was Easter time. What did you personally, uh, I mean, you probably had the sweets.

AGOSTINO: No, we didn't have the sweets that we have here. We had a lot more, there was cookies my mother would make for Easter, but as far as the Easter eggs and things like that, no. I didn't, anyways. You know, don't forget, my mom was always time without my father, and that's another thing. When the woman

over there doesn't have the husband, she's very limited as to what she can do, because if she did anything, if she made any move, they'd call her kind of a flighty woman, you know? You had to, and my mother was very, very, very reserved.

LEVINE: I see.

AGOSTINO: And she kept us like this over here.

LEVINE: So she, so she, she really couldn't, like, go out, is that it? She couldn't, uh . . .

AGOSTINO: Oh, no. She could go out but, like, for instance, at night she wouldn't visit a friend late at night. You had to watch your step. This is her now. I mean, most people wouldn't have done it. She was sick with gallbladder, wouldn't even see a doctor, because the husband wasn't there, see? She was extremely, but she raised us the same way, and I have no regrets.

LEVINE: Can you remember any kinds of things, translated into English, but things that you can remember her telling you, that have to do with what you should do, shouldn't do, anything about, you know, who she wanted you to be, or what life was like, or any of

those kinds of, uh . . .

AGOSTINO: Well, the main thing that they really did to the, especially a girl, was to raise them to be a good mother and wife. That was the main thing. There wasn't, uh, all this, uh, like now, for instance. Now it's career versus, it didn't used to even come into play. You just were a good mother, and that was the most important thing you could possibly do. And, uh, you were raised to, from Day One, for that matter, you learned to do this, because some day you need it, and it's true. Because when I did get married even though I didn't participate in the housework too much, I was able to take care of my home without any, you know, some people get all flustered and, "Oh, I can't do it." It didn't phase me. I had seen it. I was raised with it.

LEVINE: Can you remember things that you learned to do even like up until the time you were eight and you left that had to do with that?

AGOSTINO: Oh, for the most part I was, there again, going to school every day. I remember playing house like they do over here. We'd lie down on the, in somebody's

porch and play husband and wife. Playing house was the most, then go picking flowers, wildflowers. Go to the farm with my mother. She would wait sometimes for me to get out school, and we'd go and visit my aunt. This is the aunt that my mother used to have when she was, before married, my father's sister. And we'd go visit her, because she was a little ways from us. It was, but still all in walking, and we didn't, no transportation. And . . .

LEVINE: Did you have any chores or duties around the house or the farm or anything?

AGOSTINO: Uh, I don't really recall chores. My chore was mostly really going to school and learning. And, see, I don't even remember, I mean, I didn't learn this until the day I was ready to come over here. Uh, when I went to say goodbye to my teacher. Over there you don't have to change classes. If you like the class you have you can keep them, and teach that same class year after year. So first grade, second grade, I had the same teacher, and she was going to keep that same class for the third year, and when I went to tell her that I was leaving, she just went into tears and she says to me, "This is the year that

I'm going to change my class. I was keeping it for you." And, of course, eight years old, I didn't know. You know, it didn't phase me. It didn't do, and my mother was naturally thrilled, and she reinforced it by telling me later on in life how the teacher was so much in love with me. Then I went back, with him, and I went to see her.

LEVINE: What was her name? Do you remember?

ARTHUR: Uh, I tell you.

AGOSTINO: Oh, my God.

ARTHUR: Ida Machalino[ph].

AGOSTINO: Ida.

ARTHUR: Ida Machalino[ph].

LEVINE: Ida Machalino[ph].

AGOSTINO: She was, oh, she was a very young, beautiful teacher, and she got, at the time I didn't know what was wrong with her, she got sick, and I remember that all I did was go pick daisies. "She'll live, she'll die, she'll live . . ." I wanted her to live so bad. She did, she did. She died not too long ago, as a matter

of fact.

LEVINE: Wow. So you must have been a good student then.

AGOSTINO: I, I don't know.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

AGOSTINO: But I, I had a good life. You know, I have no complaints. Both when I was single and married, beautiful kids. What can I say?

LEVINE: Well, now, just getting back to when you were a little girl in Italy, do you remember anything about medical practices in your town? Do you remember what people did as far as . . .

AGOSTINO: If I tell you about my medical practices, you'll die.

LEVINE: What's that?

AGOSTINO: I would not have my mother take me to the doctor. I was too shy for a man, so to speak, to see me. I had a cyst in my leg, on the groin, really. And my mother had me in her arms. I was only about four. It was before I even went to school, to take me to the doctor, and I just would not go. I says, "I'm not going, I'm not going." And I kicked and yelled

and screamed so much she had to take me back home. And some lady was coming from the country, from up north, got a jackknife, cut it open, that's how. Now, some other girl had the same thing that I had, and she went to the doctor, and she remained limping. It was quite a thing. She limps. Me, no limp. So how do you? That's life.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you remember any like folk, like herbs, or any kinds of treatments that were other than, you know, strictly medical?

AGOSTINO: Oh, that I, no. I remember little herbs that I used to go and pick that we could eat. Uh, like one was, I don't know how you call it, because I have not seen them here.

ARTHUR: No, they wasn't this size.

AGOSTINO: They were little things that looked like, almost like a haun[ph]-like type of a thing, but it's, and it was edible. We'd go pick them up and eat them, and berries. I used to go picking berries. I had strawberries right in my own garden. Uh, and then there was another herb, dandelions. We used to use them in salad, or even cook them. Those still

remain. You can even buy them. They're not from the, we used to pick our own, and then anise, the end of the anise, there was a shrub that you could go pick and eat it. It was, I remember things like that. I remember my mother going to, uh, everybody bought the wheat. You didn't go buy the flour. You'd go to the mill and have it ground. And I used to go with my mother when she used to grind. First they would get it and sort it out and clean it, make sure that there was no little stones, or, and then they would go grind the flour. Then she'd come home, make the bread. That was a weekly thing. They wouldn't make it for one day. They would make, because they have these big, big ovens. Every house, for the most part. My house had it, anyway.

LEVINE: A big oven.

AGOSTINO: A big oven. And they'd just have this long, uh, wooden, uh, paddle, so to speak. They would put the bread on the paddle, and then shove it in there. I remember all that.

LEVINE: What kind of an oven was it?

AGOSTINO: Wood.

LEVINE: Was it built into the house?

AGOSTINO: Yes. And on the bottom was the, on the top was the oven, on the bottom was the place where you cooked, because in those days we had no stove. We cooked on the open fire with a little tripod there. It was . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember any other dishes that your mother made that you particularly liked?

AGOSTINO: I really, it was a lot of, mostly vegetarian type, peas, which we grew. The favi beans, which we grew. Uh, very little meat. Maybe you ate meat two or three times a year at the most.

LEVINE: Oh.

AGOSTINO: Just on holidays. Meat was not on the diet. And then in the, in the summer it was the green vegetables. In the winter would be the . . .

LEVINE: Root vegetables.

AGOSTINO: Like lentils.

LEVINE: Oh.

AGOSTINO: Dried peas, what have you, and they'd mix them with the potatoes, rice. It was very, very, not all this cholesterol type of foods that we have today. Today we eat too rich.

LEVINE: What about animals? Did you have like any animals for milk, or . . .

AGOSTINO: We had a pig all the time, a few chickens, and, uh, that's about it. And what they did, most of the families, who could afford it, would grow a pig, get it fat enough, kill it, and do the meat for the, for the year, because they would make it into all different things. The capicole, the sausages. But my mother never did kill our pig. She would raise one and sell it, because, there again, my dad wasn't home, so she didn't feel she wanted to do the luxury.

LEVINE: Huh.

AGOSTINO: But my aunt supplied us . . .

LEVINE: So it wasn't a financial thing. It was a matter of he wasn't there, so she wasn't going to do it?

AGOSTINO: She wasn't going to do it because he wasn't there.

In fact, from the gardens, like, we used to have these cherries that were so big, and she used to put them in liquor to save them for him when he came in the winter. Whatever she could, to save for him. It was an unconditional love in those days. I'm sick of today. I mean, nobody, really, love was love. You married somebody, it wasn't somebody that you just took for a business. Today they made it a business.

I don't like him, I'll throw him out. I don't like her, I'll throw her out. You've got to stick with, good and bad. There is no such thing that everybody's good and everybody's bad. We all got our good points and bad points. It's, not everybody thinks that way.

LEVINE: Right. Is there anything else that you can think of that has to do with your life up until you left for America in Italy? Any other things that stick in your mind about that period of time up to age eight-and-a-half?

AGOSTINO: The most thing, a very joyful, playful girl, just to all the time want to read and write. I had that embedded in me. I wanted, but, see, at eight, you really don't. I had an older sister, she did most

of, I had two of them. The married one just, so I was kind of down. I'm next to the youngest in the family, so I only remember the good stuff, good times.

LEVINE: Now, would you name your brothers and sisters for me, all this on down?

AGOSTINO: You don't want the ones that are deceased?

LEVINE: Yes.

AGOSTINO: You do?

LEVINE: Yeah.

AGOSTINO: Well, the first one was Rose. She's living in Australia right now. Then I think that I had Vincenzo, a brother, and then Mary Jane. They both deceased. And then came Michael. Now, my mother was so crazy about that Mary Jane she lost, she renamed my sister here Mary Jane. Then I came, and then, uh, my sister Elizabeth. That's the whole thing.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, why was it decided that you would come to this country at the time when you did?

AGOSTINO: It was a very trying time. The war was being talked

about, and my brother Mike was just getting to the age. And, of course, the United States had never been in a war, so my dad's thoughts turned, "Well, I'm getting my son over here to spare him from the war that I fought." Because he fought, and remembered some brutal things. So my brother came, and, of course, we were knit so closely, my mother was not at peace. She had no husband and no son. She had us three girls. So when my brother came to the States, he made an ultimatum to my dad, because my dad was going to settle him here and come back for good and carry on his dream in Italy, build this restaurant I was telling you about, and, of course, my dad, my brother Mike says, "You're not leaving me here alone." He says, "I can't stay without my mother either." He was only fourteen or fifteen at the most. So, uh, he begged my father. He says, "Either I come back with you, or you have my whole family back here." So they decided, and we all came here. It must have been the right time, I guess.

LEVINE: And did your mother want to come here?

AGOSTINO: Oh, anything to see her husband and son. I mean, she had been, by now, he always went back in two years,

but this was the longest time he had been, seven years that she hadn't seen him. It was a long, she had a long, hard life, my mother.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: Do you remember getting ready to leave?

AGOSTINO: Oh, yes. We all went for new wardrobes.

LEVINE: Do you remember what kind of, what kind of clothing?  
Anything about the clothing?

AGOSTINO: I just remember my mother's, maybe because I'm so partial to it. It was a beautiful royal velvet dress. And I don't remember what I had. ( she laughs ) I really, but I do remember one thing. We had to stay a day in Naples.

ARTHUR: Naples.

LEVINE: When you left the town, was there any kind of fanfare, and . . .

AGOSTINO: Oh, God, the whole village was over there to see us. And, of course, you cry your heart out, you don't want to leave. And my sister and I, I went to

Australia two years ago, and she says to me, "You were the one crying that you didn't want to leave me." I don't remember that I did that. I know I was crying, but I didn't remember that I was saying, "I don't want to leave you, I don't want to leave you."

My older sister. She had, uh, three little girls herself. She got married at sixteen, too, see, very young. And, uh, she told me that, but I know I was crying that I didn't want to leave, and when we left and we stayed, I had never seen a big city, Naples. I saw these gorgeous dolls. Being a girl, I wanted a doll. I cried my heart out. My mother said, "I can't afford it. I can't afford it." And I ended up having to get it. ( they laugh ) I was such a stinker. ( they laugh ) To this day, to this day I do the same thing. I see a doll, and I melt. I'm an old lady, and I, I love dolls.

LEVINE: Would you remember that particular doll?

AGOSTINO: I was stupid that I didn't save any of them. I, and another thing, I used to have braids way down to here, and everybody said to my mother in the boat, cut her hair. She's going to look very bad over there with those braids. And I remember that my

mother hated to see my hair cut, because it's nothing like now. It was thick. And, uh, I had a little wicker basket that opened up in a lid, and when I had it finally cut, after they all persuaded my mother to cut it, my mother put it in this nice little wicker basket. She didn't want to part with it. And I don't know what my father did, he threw it out or what. My mother could have, you know, but I never, I never saw them again. So . . .

LEVINE: Wait, mention the name of the ship for the tape.

AGOSTINO: Okay. We came with the Vulcania, and it took us twelve days. It was a long, long ride. A lot of the people really got sick. I was one of the lucky ones.

LEVINE: Do you remember the accommodations on the Vulcania?

AGOSTINO: Oh, God. We were all, well, we were a family, so I didn't, but other people would have to, we were on bunk beds. We shared one, because my mother had three girls and herself, so we had two bunks beds in our cabin, but we were kind of low, you know, way down. That's where they put the big, so that every noise from the thing, engine, was really very annoying, and when it comes to, the meals were out of

this world. You could have anything you wanted. They really had good food. But you don't want to eat. The ocean makes you sick. We could see all the fish hopping up from the ocean. And then when we came closer to, more closer to land, we would see the natives come in with their little canoes trying to sell things to us. It was exciting, if you didn't really get sick. My . . .

LEVINE: Did you have any idea what America would be like when you came?

AGOSTINO: I just, I just thought that you'd go over, you'd see all the trees hanging with gold. I didn't think. But it was beautiful enough compared to my little hicky town.

LEVINE: Do you remember coming into the New York Harbor?

AGOSTINO: Oh, yes. We were exhausted. My mother kept on saying, it took a while, because when you get into the harbor, you have to do certain legalities, so you have to wait and go. And my mother kept on going, my father was, like, across the way, and my mother would go, "That's your dad! That's your dad!" He didn't know my kid sister, Elizabeth. He had never seen

her. He left her pregnant and never came back, so he saw her for the first time. And my mother, I remember, got very upset, because when he came, he was allowed to come in to the boat and pick us up, instead of going to the little one that he had never seen, he came and kissed me. And he goes, "How could you do this? How could you do this?"

LEVINE: Well, now, but you couldn't have remembered him either, because you must have just been like a year old or something.

AGOSTINO: I was a couple.

LEVINE: A couple years.

AGOSTINO: A couple.

LEVINE: Yeah. So what did you think when you saw your father? I mean . . .

AGOSTINO: I didn't remember what he looked like. But, uh, you know, but I, my mother used to say that, I used to gibber a lot, you probably get it from me now that I talk a lot, right? I used to do a lot of talking and singing, and I guess I annoyed my father at one point, and he gave me a swat. And I bleed very

easily from the nose, and I, this is where I bled. I would go to my mother, "My father hit me here."  
( she laughs ) Oh, a lot of . . .

LEVINE: So, um, where did you, well, first of all, do you remember anything about Ellis Island?

AGOSTINO: We came in and it was very dark very late, and I remember that once my dad took us off the boat, he had a car that, he came in a car to pick us up. And the thing that I remember most was we were so crowded in one car. There was the four of us, the driver and my dad. So there were six people, and we were squished and tired, so most of the time I came in, we didn't pull in until two in the morning. I remember just sleeping on the floor of the car. The next morning I remember when we first got to the home, my home was fully furnished. It was something that, most people never came to a furnished home.

LEVINE: Where was that?

AGOSTINO: In Arlington.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

AGOSTINO: And, uh, everything was, you know, curtains,

everything, the furniture, everything. And it looked so beautiful! You know . . .

LEVINE: And was your brother there, then?

AGOSTINO: My brother was waiting for us at home, and I remember when we got out of the car my mother starts yelling, "Michael, Michael!" And my father was, "Oh, shhh, you're waking up the neighbors." You know? Then the next morning I remember my brother handed me a little book, and that's all I remember now. I don't remember ever that I did not speak the language. The only thing I remember is that the next morning he gave me this little book and it was in English and in Italian, and then I had very, very good teachers. The first grade teacher was named Miss Fettridge[ph]. And she would say "table, table, chair, chair." And I guess when you're young you pick up quick, because I don't remember ever not speaking the language. "Pillow," she'd go. She was very fascinating. And then I did crochet at that age, and when she found out that I did it, she made me take it to school and then she made me take it to the principal, because it was such a novelty. Now today everybody does crafts. In those days, not too much.

LEVINE: Did you feel proud of that, being asked to bring it in and show it?

AGOSTINO: No, no. I was more or less intimidated. I didn't want to show it, because I didn't think it was good enough. I thought it was not the best, you know. I said, "What can a little kid do?" It's not very good stuff here.

LEVINE: So, uh, so you started school, and who else was going to school then?

AGOSTINO: The three of us.

LEVINE: The three girls.

AGOSTINO: My brother was going nights.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. And, uh, do you remember any things that struck you when you first got there, like, you know, the first few weeks or months or so, that you'd never saw before, that . . .

AGOSTINO: Oh, yes. In Italy you have big, long benches, whereas over here I had my own little desk. And the classroom was so much nicer. But I loved my teacher, so I didn't care. But I started, the luxury of

living over here in comparison to, but I've got to say that I only knew my little village. I didn't know beyond. I had never traveled. Now that I'm older and I have gone into the cities, you know, it's a different story. But when you come from a limited, don't forget, sixty years. Come August 18th, it's sixty years that I've been here. It's a long time.

LEVINE: So you kept going in school. You must have been a good student.

AGOSTINO: I graduated from high school. And in those days it was very hard, because most of them went up until they were sixteen, and I remember that all the pisans, people that came from the same town as us, would say, "Send her out to work, send her out." But I was, I guess, very determined, and I said to my mother, "I'm not going to quit. I'm going to graduate. I want that diploma. And I'll work summers, and get my stuff that I need. We didn't come from, you know, a rich background. We had enough. We were comfortable. But no lux--. You know, so when I was fifteen I went out to look for a job, and they said to me, "When is your birthday?" "December." "Uh-uh. Come back next year." So I

says, "Okay, I'll be back." So I went back, got a job. I bought my first typewriter, my desk and my chair, and I used to sit in the room for hours just practicing to learn how to type myself. I loved school all the time, and that was. Now, my kid sister, I wanted to be a teacher, because I loved my original teacher so much. But when we came over here I was intimidated because I was two years behind. Although not that much, because they gave me a double promotion. They kept me in the first for a couple of months, and then they put me in the second. I don't know, they gave me a reading test. I don't know how I read. It's something you don't remember that you didn't do it, you know. You just remember the incident, but, and my kid sister and I, we were cleaning house one day and I said, "You know, Elizabeth." I says, "I wanted to be a teacher all my life, but I don't think I can hack being with younger kids in school. I think I'll be a stenographer or a bookkeeper, but why don't you think of being a teacher?" I says, "You can do it." She started at the right age. She came when, she was going to be six in September. So, I says, "You can still have your family, teach. Whereas if you have another job

that you go nine to five, it's not so easy." Well, she paid, she ended up being a teacher. And now she teaches and I go and aid a couple of days a week. The world is . . .

LEVINE: Well, now, so what did you do? Did you become a stenographer after you graduated?

AGOSTINO: Yes, oh, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

AGOSTINO: I took bookkeeping, shorthand, the works. But, uh, the school was very upset with me because the guidance department had me down the office every day. They wanted me to go to college, because with the courses that I took, even though it was business, I had enough to enter college in those days. I could have went, like, Salem State. Uh, and they said, "I think you should." And I never told them why I wouldn't. I just said, "No, I don't want to." "Is it money? We'll pay for the school?" "No, I don't want to. I want to go to work." It wasn't meant to be, I guess.

LEVINE: How do you feel about it now?

AGOSTINO: I don't have no regrets, because I've had a good life. But what God gave me was just as nice.

LEVINE: Now, how did you meet your husband?

AGOSTINO: I didn't meet him.

LEVINE: You didn't meet him? He's here. Well, how did you get to know each other?

AGOSTINO: Well, we got to go back to say how timid I was. I would never, I was, I'm not what I, he made me what I am today. Ba-ba-ba-ba-ba. I would, I was so shy that I wouldn't speak or do anything. I wouldn't date, I wouldn't look at a boy or anything. And, uh, my mom and dad, my mom was very sick all the time. For some reason she always took the, she always wanted me to care for her. By this time when she really got really ill that they told her that she wasn't going to live, my older sister was married, my younger one, who's the teacher, was going with somebody, and I had nobody. So my brother Mike got me aside and I stayed, I gave up my job to stay home and take care of Mom. So my brother took me aside one day and he says, "Angie, Jenny's married, Betty will be getting married, Dad will die, and Mom,

you're going to be left alone." He tried to really frighten me. He did. He did. He succeeded. He says, "What I'm going to do," he says, "I don't want you living with me. You're going to be all alone." That got my wheels thinking. So my brother-in-law had a friend of theirs, my, Jenny's, the older sister's husband had, we all come from the same little village. Even my kid sister's husband comes from, we're all from the same place. So my brother-in-law made me write to this kid that he liked, but for some reason there was something about the way he wrote or whatever, I didn't want it. I knew I didn't. But I couldn't say nothing to nobody, because they, I mean, I felt, oh, my God, he's gone through all this to make arrangements for him to write to me, I write to him. So I got ready after maybe a year of writing or two, and I was going to go and marry him. But my mother . . .

LEVINE: You were going back to Italy to get married.

AGOSTINO: Going back. That's why he speaks the way he speaks, broken. So my mother, God love her, I think a mother can read more than, she, before I left she says to me, "Look, you have a sister there." I had, my older

sister was there that time. She wasn't in Australia.

"You have a sister there. If when you go you don't want this guy, don't marry him." That's all I had to here. I says, "Oooh, hoo, how nice! I don't have to." But then I decided, "Gee, I don't know anybody here." You know? So I decided that I would wait the summer, because my sister had the land at the time, the farm. I'll eat all the fruit I want, and then go back single. Because I wasn't too much, this mother, God love her, started coming. His mother baptized my sister Elizabeth, and my mother baptized his younger sister. That's how close we were. Because we all, it was just a little village.

LEVINE: When you say baptized, what does that mean that they did?

ARTHUR: The Christening. The godmother.

AGOSTINO: The Christening.

LEVINE: The godmother.

AGOSTINO: The godmother. So, uh, so pretty soon when they knew that I wasn't going to go for the guy that I had gone for, everybody, well, you know, they all wanted to

come to America, and that's not what I wanted. I didn't want somebody that wanted to come here. I wanted a true love. Because I had to make the sacrifice that he, if he didn't pass his physical or whatever, I would have to stay there. And I certainly wasn't . . .

LEVINE: You didn't want to stay there.

AGOSTINO: No. i had everybody here. I've only had one sister there, plus that I was raised over here, really. The first eight years, yes, but, you know, I had most of it here. And, uh, his mother, God love her, used to come to me every day. "Did you make up your mind who you want?"

ARTHUR: I never sent her, never.

AGOSTINO: No, he used to sit by the window and sing, though.

ARTHUR: Yeah, but it was my window.

AGOSTINO: And I, but the thing that triggered me was when we had a picnic in my father's garden. And we were eating down my father's garden. And up, way, way, up in the mountain, we could hear singing, and, of course, I was very naive. I was naive at, even

twenty-five. I was stupid. So, uh, the other people that were with me at the picnic, they kept on going, "You hear anything?" "Yeah, that's . . ."  
Maestroturo[ph]. That's the way they called anybody that had a trade. Maestro, like, artura[ph], "Singing for you." I says, "Not for me." And I, I didn't know him. I hadn't seen him or anything. So, when they said, "Yes, he is for you." Then I says, "Oh, my God, I'm embarrassed. I'm going in the house." Because my father had a house there." So I went in the house and I says, "Let's go home." You know, I was so embarrassed. Well, we had to come on foot. He was on a bike, so he had to go by the street. We were coming on foot on the hilly roads, and who do I see there? I planted my feet on the ground, and I says, "I'm not going to move." Oh, my Lord, I says. So he recognized that I was embarrassed or whatever, and he flew with the bike. He took my heart. I says, "He understands me."

ARTHUR: I was right to the point.

AGOSTINO: I says, "He understands me." I says, "I think I'll . . ." But I wouldn't reveal who I had decided on. The mother kept on coming every day. I knew it

was him, but I wouldn't until a whole month went by.

I had to sort out my head. I had to feel. Because I didn't care if I came back single. That's forty-four years pretty soon. ( Dr. Levine laughs )

ARTHUR: Forty-four tomorrow.

AGOSTINO: Tomorrow.

LEVINE: Do you remember why you kept going on the bike?

ARTHUR: That was the only transportation you can get, bike. And it was a very deep hill. And over there everybody use a bike. So when I went over there and I saw her, I saw her eyes and the face turned, I said, "That's the right girl." And I proceed. Even if the rest over there know me very well, we grow up together, I knew, I said, "Hi, goodbye." Just like this. Because I respected where she was, and the way she felt. I said, "The worst thing I want to do, embarrass this (Italian) come from the United States." No way. Then I'm going to go back home (?) good memory. They're my brains. But I knew I loved her the day I saw her. That's the gospel truth. Matter of fact, I was thinking about her before she came to meet somebody else.

LEVINE: You were thinking about here before?

ARTHUR: Yes, I sent a picture to her, they never give it to her. Oh, that's a long story.

AGOSTINO: It's a very fairy tale type of a story.

LEVINE: So, in other words, there were a lot of men in your town, young men who were interested in marrying you. Is that right?

AGOSTINO: Well, what happened was a friend of ours, his and mine, came to America, and they were friends with the family, and they invited the family to go and eat there when the family finally came, because my mother came, one of the first ones, and this man used to come to my house every Sunday and visit, and my mother was on his back all the time. If you don't send for your wife, don't come here any more. Don't come. So finally he did. And he sent for the wife, and when the wife came here in thanks or whatever, invited the whole family to dinner there, and she started taking out all these pictures. Thank God I have a very good memory. And she gave me a picture of her brother. And I says, "Is this the brother

that they went to prison when he was fifteen?" She says to me, "Oh, my God. How do you remember?" I says, "I remember because it was the talk of the town." But she was trying to push me for her brother. And he had sent me a picture with her of him. And the reason we discovered it is because after I was married I was at the grandmother's house, and the grandmother had all pictures on the wall, and I said, "And who is that?" And he says to me, "You have that picture." I says, "No, why would I have that picture?" And then he told me that she never gave it to me. But it was meant, see? There is a destiny.

ARTHUR: God work too many strange way. I could be, if I wanted to marry in Italy, I could be a very rich man. I said, "No. Money doesn't buy my heart." I don't care if I got to buy shoes some day to my wife, or stockings. But let me work for. I don't want anybody say, "Well, with a wife, money." There was one, my brother-in-law was pushing me for his cousin. I said, "Forget it. Close the book. I'm in already." And I was already, soon as I saw her. Then I was all ready right away.

AGOSTINO: We spilled our guts.

LEVINE: That's wonderful, a wonderful story. Okay. Well, okay. So then you, um, you turned your head, you kept going on the bicycle. And then what did you do? Did you, did you . . .

AGOSTINO: I felt a flutter in my heart, and I said, he knew that I was embarrassed. He took off. Like some people, you know, would say, "I'm bold, I want you to take a look at me." And I said, "Oh, maybe I should bow down and get married. I think he might be my type. I think he is the right one." It was my heart.

LEVINE: So then what, did you get married there?

AGOSTINO: Within a few months. Oh, yeah.

ARTHUR: One month.

LEVINE: Well, how did you, did you then . . .

AGOSTINO: I waited for him.

LEVINE: Did you get to see, he came to visit, or how did you get together?

AGOSTINO: Oh, he would come at night over my sister's house, and he would sit, but he had to go home by seven o'clock, eight o'clock. We couldn't go out on dates or anything, you know. Are you kidding?

ARTHUR: You never can go, cut the head off.

AGOSTINO: The day he came with the engagement ring he brought out a whole mess of rings to try after I had finally said yes. Then we got married as quickly as we could because I was dying to come back. But I ended up staying seven months there.

LEVINE: Did you . . .

AGOSTINO: I could have come back, but he would have had to stay behind and come later on. But I didn't want to come back alone again.

LEVINE: Did you have a big, uh, traditional kind of wedding over there?

AGOSTINO: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

LEVINE: What was different about it compared with, say, a wedding over here?

AGOSTINO: Oh, my God. Number one, you have it at your home,

and you do invite as many guests as you can. And you have a big, big meal. I don't know, sweets, the ice cream, the macaroni. Only I didn't go in the limousine, I walked to church. My legs were trembling, but I walked. And my brother, my sister's son-in-law walked me to church, who, incidentally, is in Australia now. And we were reminiscing all this stuff, and, but I had the white dress, the veil. In fact, he didn't do the white dress. He said, "Take it off," because the mother thought it would be bad luck.

ARTHUR: Bad luck. My mother couldn't do it, they don't let my mother do it. I was mad. But you know something? I don't believe this baloney. I went over there, who did the dress. It was the sister of the principal I worked for. Two years in the city over there. And when she was all ready to fit her, here I am. She called me up, she said, "Bring Angie." And I was there. We're still together forty-four years. I don't believe in bad luck. I believe in God, that's it.

LEVINE: So then you, you stayed for seven months so you could come back together.

AGOSTINO: Otherwise I could have come back any time.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ARTHUR: I wanted her to come back, she don't. She don't want to.

AGOSTINO: I became pregnant. I came four months pregnant. You should see the way they treated me on the boat. I had my own nurse, my doctor, everything.

LEVINE: What boat was that? Do you remember that one?

ARTHUR: Yes. U.S.S. Independence.

AGOSTINO: And that's the boat that I went over with.

ARTHUR: How I can forget?

AGOSTINO: I went over with that.

ARTHUR: I'll never forget that boat.

AGOSTINO: But I came with that, too.

ARTHUR: Yes. I don't forget that boat, because it was a funny story. The Statue of Liberty was the dream of my life. I say I'm not going to die if I don't see you. That's when I was a little kid in Italy. You

know, that morning when I get to there, a little cry, I say, "Here I am. I see you. Thank you, God, my dream is complete. My dream is fulfilled." That was January 26, something, 1953. It was an early morning. You know, call everybody up on the deck to see the Statue of Liberty.

LEVINE: Well, now, you didn't have to go through Ellis Island that time, did you? Did you go, in 1953, when you came back?

ARTHUR: Yes, you have to do it again.

LEVINE: So do you remember anything about Ellis Island that time when you came back with your husband?

AGOSTINO: Ah, not really.

ARTHUR: Well, I remember very well . . .

AGOSTINO: I was . . .

ARTHUR: She was already a United States citizen. She had no choice. She just get there and get out, but she wait for me, because I had to go through the immigration paper, through, I remembered, I don't make a mistake, and that time we bring the, the extra (?) for the

ones in that time for me, or they have them over there. But I remember all of these things. When I was two, with the United States customs, and then we was free, might take all day to get out of the boat, for me. You can't get out of there right away.

LEVINE: Right, right. Okay. Well, now we're getting close to the end of this, so let's just kind of, so then how many children did you have?

AGOSTINO: Four.

LEVINE: And their names?

AGOSTINO: Elizabeth, Virginia, Diane and Arthur, Junior.

LEVINE: And do you have grandchildren at this . . .

AGOSTINO: Twelve, gorgeous kids.

LEVINE: And when you think back about, you know, coming here when you were eight years old and starting a new life and then coming back again with your husband, how do you think about that, having immigrated to this country?

AGOSTINO: Like I said, I feel like I've lived here all my life. I don't really almost, don't get me wrong, I love my

Italy. I mean, it's where I was born. But United States is my life, my, this is what I know most, you know. This is where everything happened to me.

LEVINE: Do you feel like, if you could, which you can't really do this, but if you could think of yourself as American and Italian, can you think about what, what qualities or what, what it is that makes you American, or what it is that makes you Italian? Do you have a sense of, like, what that means?

AGOSTINO: Well, I don't really, I think that that's internal. You are a person whether you live here or there. You can't say because I'm an American I do this. The only thing I can say is I have more opportunities here than I would have had over there. But as far as, uh, being the same person, no matter what corner of the world you live in, you are what you are. You're born with these qualities. I don't believe that you can acquire them by environmental. I think most of what we are, yes, environment plays a lot of part, but a lot of it is your genes.

LEVINE: What do you think it is about you that has just been who you are, the way you are, no matter where you

were, you wouldn't . . .

AGOSTINO: My mother. My mother was, keep after, of molding to live by the Golden Rule, to always, always help the elderly no matter what. Uh, be kind to everyone, never put yourself first. Always think of the other person before you. And, and do good in the world. She embedded it in us. And that's, I mean, it hurts to see that somebody's going around stealing. Only take what is yours, what you can, what you can get with your own hands. I mean, don't, you don't want anything given to you. You want to know that I have this because I earned it, just like in school, if you, if you have your marks, because you copied, what good are they? You get out of there, you don't know anything. You have to do it yourself.

LEVINE: And what do you feel proud of that you feel, uh . . .

AGOSTINO: Just my children, my husband, and my family, my whole family. My mom, my dad, my brother, my sister.

ARTHUR: You forget somebody, the grandchildren you go crazy for. ( they laugh )

AGOSTINO: Oh, my family. They're my lifeline now. They're

everything. My oldest is in the third year of college, Christine. And one is going to enter, two are going to enter college this fall. They just graduated, Melissa and Maria. And then I have, uh, Lisa is first and, uh . . .

ARTHUR: Susan.

AGOSTINO: Susan next. And, uh, Cheryl.

ARTHUR: All three gonna be graduated at the same time.

AGOSTINO: Tommy.

ARTHUR: Then you've got to . . .

AGOSTINO: After Cheryl comes Tommy.

ARTHUR: Yes.

AGOSTINO: Then Michelle.

ARTHUR: Michelle. And then, uh, no, no, no. Yeah, Michelle.  
Carla.

AGOSTINO: Oh, no, no, no. Michelle.

ARTHUR: Then Michelle. Carla, Ada and Elaine. Twelve.  
You're not going to get more than that. I don't

know.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, the tape is just about over, and I just want to say it's been a real pleasure . . .

AGOSTINO: It's been a pleasure talking to you, but . . .

LEVINE: . . . talking to you, and I really think is a wonderful, wonderful interview. I've been speaking with Angie Agostino, who came in 1936 at eight years of age from Italy, and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm signing off.