

EI-774/STIGLIANO

EI-774

SABINA DI MIO STIGLIANO

BIRTH DATE: FEBRUARY 9, 1904

INTERVIEW DATE: JULY 29, 1996

RUNNING TIME: 1:01:04

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PhD

RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME

INTERVIEW LOCATION: WELLINGTON HALL CARE CENTER  
HACKENSACK, NEW JERSEY

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 2/1998

TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

ITALY, 1920

AGE 16

SHIP NAME NOT RECORDED

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Funding for this transcript, one of many interviews conducted with Italian and Sicilian women, was generously provided by interviewee Elda Del Bino Willitts, EI-8. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of Oral History, 10/7/1998.

STIGLIANO: I know, I remember a little chair, like this. I was, and the (?) used to take my two aunts knitting.

LEVINE: Knitting, okay. We're going to come to that. Let me introduce you first.

STIGLIANO: Yes.

LEVINE: I'm here with Sabina . . .

STIGLIANO: Stigliano.

LEVINE: Stigliano.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, with a G.

LEVINE: Stigliano, with a G, right. And she came here in 1920 when she was sixteen years of age.

STIGLIANO: Atta girl.

LEVINE: From Italy.

STIGLIANO: Yes.

LEVINE: She's ninety-two today, and full of energy.

STIGLIANO: My God, I can't believe it.

LEVINE: So we're going to start by talking about life in Italy up until the time you were sixteen.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. Tell, for the tape, your birth date, and where in Italy you were born.

STIGLIANO: Yes. (Italian)?

LEVINE: Yeah, now.

STIGLIANO: Oh, yeah. Adribada Avalina[ph], la provincia de Delvino[ph]. Adribada[ph], it's a small pais, a small city, you know?

LEVINE: Near Naples.

STIGLIANO: Near Naples, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay.

STIGLIANO: But it takes an hour with the carriage, you know.

LEVINE: An hour with the carriage.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, with the carriage.

LEVINE: I see. And what, tell your birth date again, for the tape.

STIGLIANO: Well, I was born in 1904, February the 9th.

LEVINE: Okay. And, uh, you always lived in the same town.

STIGLIANO: Yes.

LEVINE: Up until you were sixteen.

STIGLIANO: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: And you came to America.

STIGLIANO: Yes, yes, yes, my dear. I never went any place.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, when you say . . .

STIGLIANO: Maybe my father, may he rest in peace, used to take us some, you know, in Naples. Yeah, we used to have a good time there. We used to eat pizza. Ah, delicious things.

LEVINE: Can you remember the food you had when you were a little girl?

STIGLIANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: What were the things you remember most that you ate when you were little?

STIGLIANO: I tell you, we used to, my mother used to cook everything and anything. And we had to eat anything, and I'm glad. Because (?) you eat things that it's very good for you, not like here. You know? There you used to make a pasta fagiole, lentils with macaroni, you know, and then you kept the macaroni (Italian), even, and you boiled them and you put them together, and they taste better. You feel like eating them all. See, you even make the lentils just like that. In the dish they only give you a few, but you used to have a plate of lentils, and the lentils takes the place of steak, it's so good for you, see? We used to eat all that

thing that I'm (?). Me, I don't know how long. I never want to stay there one day in bed, never.

LEVINE: Really? You've always been so healthy.

STIGLIANO: Thank God, thank the Lord, yes.

LEVINE: Even as a child you were full of energy and . . .

STIGLIANO: Fine. We didn't call the doctor. You think we call the doctor? One time my brother fell down. He made a hole in the back of the head, my mother said you could put a fist in it. They didn't bother with the doctor, we took him in, and it take care of itself.

LEVINE: What kinds of things did they do instead of a doctor? Do you remember any, like, remedies?

STIGLIANO: Remedies, like a plaster, you know, if you had pneumonia, they used to make the plaster. They're very good. They take all the inflammation out.

LEVINE: What would the plaster be made out of?

STIGLIANO: I don't know. I was too young to, yeah. I know they put on some kind of material, gauze, it's like a knitted thing.

LEVINE: Like a gauze?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, uh, yeah. They used to put it there, and then the clothes, I mean, and put another piece, and they used to put it on you. And let her know, they know the time, to take it off. He had the pneumonia. Here they make you dead already. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: Do you remember any other kind of remedies? Herbs, or . . .

STIGLIANO: Yeah, always. You got, you know, like a tea. They have a different kind of tea. Not here, not like here.

LEVINE: And they made tea from what?

STIGLIANO: Over there they made (?) doctors they call every minute, what for? We were five of us, three boys and two girls, and you are busy with the doctors?

LEVINE: Did you have, like, midwives, if somebody was giving birth?

STIGLIANO: Oh, yeah, yeah. That, yeah. But now they had a professional. The doctors, you know, when I was the last time in Italy, I met up, just a few people,

when I was young, she was a (?), like a doctor.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

STIGLIANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: So what was your mother's name?

STIGLIANO: Rose.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

STIGLIANO: Parziale.

LEVINE: Can you spell it?

STIGLIANO: Parziale. Give me, I'll write it down for you.  
( she writes ) L. Parziale. I don't know if you  
can read what I'm writing.

LEVINE: Okay. It's P-A-R-Z-I-A-L-E.

STIGLIANO: Parziale.

LEVINE: Right, okay. And your father, what was his name?

STIGLIANO: Antonio.

LEVINE: Antonio. And . . .

STIGLIANO: And, you know, we were five of us, three boys.

Their children, everybody had to be Antonio.

LEVINE: Oh!

STIGLIANO: They follow, you know, for respect.

LEVINE: So in other words your three brothers were named Antonio.

STIGLIANO: Antonio.

LEVINE: And they have . . .

STIGLIANO: But, no, only one was, that time, things will change. We had Oresta[ph] and Gaillano[ph] and Antonio, my father's name.

LEVINE: Was Antonio the oldest?

STIGLIANO: The older, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

STIGLIANO: I had a picture there if you want to see.

LEVINE: Oh, yeah. We'll see it later. Let's see it later after we finish. And what about the girls? What were their names?

STIGLIANO: Josephina. Josephine.

LEVINE: Josephine. And then you?

STIGLIANO: She was the older.

LEVINE: Yeah.

STIGLIANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you were the baby?

STIGLIANO: No, not, it's not the boy, Gaillano[ph].

LEVINE: Oh.

STIGLIANO: It was a, it was a baby. He's still living, thank God. He's in Italy. He's got three boys, I think. He's got an engineer, a doctor, all professional people, wonderful. I was there the last time, oh. He took me, put me on the arm of my sister, my sister, he was so proud of her.

LEVINE: Ah. Okay, so, you lived with your mother, father, three brothers . . .

STIGLIANO: Three, and two sisters.

LEVINE: . . . and two sisters.

STIGLIANO: We were five.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did you have grandparents who were living around you?

STIGLIANO: Yes. I remembered, but we used to go once in a while, you know? They used to give us maybe a penny, they think I was (?), you know? And we used to go kiss them and things, you know.

LEVINE: Can you describe your grandparents? What were they like?

STIGLIANO: No, you know, nice people, human, you know. They were by themselves, there was not such a thing they go living with the, with the son, with, you know, they all had their own apartment. They had, my family had always a property, you know, they used to rent. And they used to, everybody had their own little home. They don't go living with anybody.

LEVINE: Did you have, was that your mother's mother and father, or your father's?

STIGLIANO: My father's, my father died.

LEVINE: Mother and father. And how about your mother's mother and father? Did you know them?

STIGLIANO: No, I don't remember even seeing them at all.

LEVINE: How about religion? Was religion important in your family?

STIGLIANO: Catholic, oh, yes, sure. When I was a kid I used to go visiting church. You know, you hear the bell ring, so you got to go to church. It gives you the creeps, you know. Jesus and the saints, you know, you got to go to church, yeah.

LEVINE: And do you remember any religious occasions, things that happened around the church? Festivals, or . . .

STIGLIANO: No. We used to go to, every hour was a different time, you know? They had a Pentecostal mass, the nine o'clock mass. Then they had the saints up in the, like up in the mountains. They used to go there more for religion, you know? The people, maybe they made a, they want grace from God, and they ask, if they have a son who's sick or something, and they go there. It's a beautiful, the mountains. It's beautiful.

LEVINE: Oh. In other words people go there, kind of like a

pilgrimage.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, yeah. There are steps like this, and you go up. Oh.

LEVINE: Did you ever go?

STIGLIANO: Oh, yeah. It was nice. You, you know.

LEVINE: What was it like?

STIGLIANO: You feel like you're with God, it's beautiful. Then they used to go demitasse, you know, when you go to church, after you have a demitasse. If you want to have a little liquor or something, you have it. They have a place in the thing, they have, only they sell demitasse, just for the people who goes up in the, you know, the church.

LEVINE: This is outside the church?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, outside the church, yeah. Very nice.

LEVINE: And, um, so did you receive your communion and . . .

STIGLIANO: Oh, yeah. There is a, made the Eucharist to receive the communion on seven years old. You get dressed with the veil, in white. You receive it, then you,

from there on you could receive all the time, you know. Comes the . . .

LEVINE: Yeah. So, um, let's see. And how about school? Did you go to school?

STIGLIANO: Half a day. They have half a day school. Half a day you go to school. I used to go in the convent to school. It's a pay, you pay for nothing. And in the afternoon they used to give you sewing, all kinds of stitches. A backstitch, a running stitch. I know how to do all kinds of stitching.

LEVINE: The nuns would teach you?

STIGLIANO: Yes, yes, yes. It was wonderful. The girl comes out, she knows what to do. I know my husband used to buy shirts. Before I used to put it on, and I used to go all the buttons to, the shirt used to get torn, but the buttons, they were still there. Finally use, finally they use it for rags, you know, wash the woodwork and all. I used to cut with a scissor, because (?) on a stretcher.

LEVINE: Right. Because the buttons would never come off.

STIGLIANO: Never! Like the buttons for the men. My son-in-

law, he's a lawyer. He went to have five buttons put on a coat. Guess how much they charged? Five dollars. Not even the same thread they use! You want to know? I says to him, "David, why don't you do the whole . . . Well, if I know that you were coming, you . . ." Oh, after you make the buttons, I used to make a stamp underneath it like this, but that's, the button doesn't touch the material.

LEVINE: You wrap the thread around so . . .

STIGLIANO: On the (?), like a little stamp it comes. So the thing never touches the material. It lasts for years and years. Like me, you find out everything gets all over again.

LEVINE: So you became a good seamstress from the convent, huh?

STIGLIANO: Oh, yeah, and I used to love it, yeah. Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Is that what you wanted to do? Did you have any ideas what you wanted?

STIGLIANO: I wanted to do, it was in my mind, I used to dream always the frame. You know, the frame, when you're embroidery, huh? Two sticks this way, and one this

way and this way. I used to have always dream that I used to sit down and I used to do this way, like a fanatic. And that's what I did.

LEVINE: What was the embroidery usually?

STIGLIANO: In white, you know, embroidery in white, it's so white, they used to, everything, they used to, if you get married, you have a trousseau, and all your sheets, they all have monogram in it, and embroidery with white silk.

LEVINE: So that's what you made?

STIGLIANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you had a big trousseau full of things that you . . .

STIGLIANO: No, I was in this country then. I brought the, you know, that much sheets, that much, uh, tablecloths, that much, uh, all that business.

LEVINE: Yeah. Wait, let's pause here. ( break in tape )  
Okay. We're resuming after an interruption here.  
Um, uh, so you, you were married when you were here, but when you were in Italy you started making these

embroideries?

STIGLIANO: Oh, yeah. You know, a little tub. I used to knit, then they used to make a crochet, uh, what do you call it, crochet, you know, cross, like, you know, some kind of material buy. Then they used to, how they make your name, you used to have to learn, you know? And you make all the switches, they teach you. You, you don't have idea? Running stitches and backstitches. All the kind of stitches. And then there's another stitch, lange[ph]. You pull it, then you put the thread around. Now, if you cut all with scissor, it never comes out. You see? This thing has a stitch. That no matter what the material becomes, you cut, but it remains always the same thing.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh.

STIGLIANO: See? It's the main thing that, when I used to go to work in this country, you know anybody else? I say, "No, I don't know nobody else." But they wanted me to recommend somebody else, because I was so good.

LEVINE: Now, what did you do with the things . . .

STIGLIANO: Joseph Flasher[ph], I used to work.

LEVINE: Where?

STIGLIANO: Joseph Flasher[ph] was one, the biggest in the United States.

LEVINE: Oh. Joseph . . .

STIGLIANO: Flasher[ph].

LEVINE: Flasher[ph]. Where . . .

STIGLIANO: They used to work all for this, uh, you know, Joan Crawford, all these big cheeses, you know, these big people.

LEVINE: And what, what was the company? What did the company make?

STIGLIANO: Oh, I used to work in the hair goods, too. Hair goods, the hair comes from Europe.

LEVINE: Oh, like making wigs?

STIGLIANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STIGLIANO: You work it here, but, you know, that much times you

used to wash all the soap or the ammonia. The men, they used to be mushing their hands, you know, there was a lot of work. You don't think they had it the way they'd sell it to you. It's got to be washed, it's go to be, you know, and then the measurements.

If you want a wig, long, we used to work for a president's wife, Jacqueline Kennedy, Rose. She used to use Kissime[ph] curls. All those things, you know.

LEVINE: This is Joseph Fleisch[ph]?

STIGLIANO: Joseph Flasher[ph].

LEVINE: Flasher[ph].

STIGLIANO: Flasher[ph].

LEVINE: Where was he? Where was he?

STIGLIANO: Oh, in New York.

LEVINE: In New York.

STIGLIANO: In New York.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And so you came, so you worked in New York . . .

STIGLIANO: Yeah, I went to New York. You see, I would know one thing, but for you, eye, my eyes, there was always an alarm, see what they're doing, after they did it.

I was always like that. I wanted to know. If you was better than me, I had to know what to do.

LEVINE: Because you always wanted to be good at what you do?

STIGLIANO: Yeah. I want to be . . .

LEVINE: Were you like that as a little girl? Were you the same way?

STIGLIANO: Yeah. Nice friends, I used to like it. I was a fanatic. If ever there was a company, they used to have boys and girls together, it was like it was exciting. You know? I belonged there because I wanted to learn. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: You were full of life?

STIGLIANO: Yeah. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. Now, what would you do with your friends, for fun, when you were a little girl?

STIGLIANO: Nice.

LEVINE: What kinds of things?

STIGLIANO: You know, you, one day you come my house, another day I come to your house. Well, the (?), we used to sing it and dance. We used to sing, you know, the melody, the song.

LEVINE: Can you remember any songs from when you were a little girl?

STIGLIANO: Oh, yes, yes.

LEVINE: Would you sing one? ( Mrs. Stigliano laughs ) On tape, it would be very nice.

STIGLIANO: (Italian) I can't. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: It would be nice to have it for the tape.

STIGLIANO: ( she sings in Italian ) The water. It will give you ideas that you love, you know, especially if you have a boyfriend. Romantic, you know? Everything was romantic, wonderful. You don't think another way he came to you. We used to have it in the street. We used to walk at night, back and forth, a group of girls, young girls, and a group of boys. And we used to go back and forth, and we used to,

they used to watch, they used to write me a letter.

Why your eyes doesn't look on me, and I look at you and you don't care for me? And all that kind of things, you know? And you want to go there, because you knew that he was looking for you. ( they laugh ) You wanted to be . . . ( she laughs )

LEVINE: Well, where were you? What town, what was the city where you were walking back and forth with your friends?

STIGLIANO: Avalina[ph]. You know, it's near Naples, I told you, yes.

LEVINE: Avalina[ph]. Okay.

STIGLIANO: Yes, Avalina[ph]. It's not a big city.

LEVINE: No.

STIGLIANO: You know, it's a class of people. You, they know who you are.

LEVINE: Everybody knows everyone.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, that's it.

LEVINE: Did you have a boyfriend before you came to America?

STIGLIANO: I tell you, I had a love for my father, you have no idea. I love my father. And he used to speech to us. And God forbid I'll meet you with anybody, with a boy. Because after supper we used to go for a walk, you know, and he used to go in the place which was solitary, you know, that he'd be in peace and walk, and he used to find these girls with the boyfriend. He used to say, "If it was my girl, I'm gonna kill her." I knew that he was against that. I used to respect him. Never boys, never. I want to keep my head up all the time. Because my father used to speech that. I wanted to keep my head up.

LEVINE: What was it about your father that you liked so much?

STIGLIANO: I don't know. A lot in, because he understood me.

LEVINE: How did . . .

STIGLIANO: More than my mother.

LEVINE: Really?

STIGLIANO: When I used to do a prayer, a thing, embroidery, I used to go to my father and says, "Oh, Sabina, you did a beautiful job." Oh, you see, he used to brag

more. He used to make me feel good.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what was your mother like? What kind of relationship with your mother?

STIGLIANO: It was more, a little cold, like, you know? It was a different, real different in this world, you know. She didn't make such a big thing. My father was different. Even when I went there the last time he was not well, and they wrote to me. I went to see him. He was in bed. "Oh, Sabina, you're still beautiful." ( she is moved )

LEVINE: Oh, that's lovely.

STIGLIANO: He was really . . . I gave him this (?).

LEVINE: Well, what did your father look like? Here, let me . . .

STIGLIANO: See, I have at home a big thing, what do you call it, pictures. Where is my bag?

LEVINE: I don't know where your bag is. Oh, I see, here. ( they laugh ) Let me get it. ( break in tape )

STIGLIANO: Thank you.

LEVINE: You're welcome. So, um, did you go to school at all while you were there?

STIGLIANO: I went to the nuns.

LEVINE: You went to the convent. But how many . . .

STIGLIANO: But you got to pay. You don't go there just for . . .

LEVINE: How many years did you go?

STIGLIANO: How many? Not a lot. Because after, I told you, they had school. They used to teach you, and after that, after lunch, they used to teach you school, you know, embroidery, knitting. I know, and they knitted like a machine, like this. I could do a sweater in two days, yeah.

LEVINE: Wow. And how old were you when you started school?

STIGLIANO: Young. I don't know what time you started.

LEVINE: Five, six years?

STIGLIANO: Yeah. You go teacher to the province school, you know, not to let you stay in the street.

LEVINE: And did you, were you still in school when you were

sixteen, or you had stopped by then?

STIGLIANO: So she had, yeah. Sure, because I came in this country.

LEVINE: Yeah. But, I mean, had you been out of school before you came to this country?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. When you want to be somebody, when you're, you know, want to be, you want to grow in (?), then they come to you. But if you want to stop, what you know, (?) an awful person.

LEVINE: What did you want to be when you grew up. Did you have an idea?

STIGLIANO: I did, big ideas.

LEVINE: What was your big idea?

STIGLIANO: I know, furthermore, I was very romantic, you know, romance. I liked to love, to be brave, you know, to make, to tell you beautiful things.

LEVINE: So you had it in your mind you were going to meet somebody and get married and have a family.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yeah. Like I came over here, I got married.

When I wrote the (?), I married an angel.

LEVINE: You married an angel? Oh, that's nice.

STIGLIANO: Because his name was Angelo.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. ( she laughs ) Well, I want to talk more about Italy before we talk about when you came here, because we haven't covered everything. Uh, did your father come to America before your mother?

STIGLIANO: Oh, your father. He was here, two wives in America. Two or three times he wanted to come. He came first, and my mother, may she rest in peace, she used to cry all the time, cry. I didn't marry you to have you far away. So, that poor guy, may she rest in peace, she went back in Italy. And then he wanted again. He wanted to take all the family in America. She wouldn't let him. Otherwise I would have had all my family here.

LEVINE: What did your father do for work?

STIGLIANO: Business.

LEVINE: What kind of business?

STIGLIANO: You know, perfume, all that stuff. Uh, you know, in

Italy, in case you haven't got too much, they used to that crisp, that's crisp, comes very tight, and when you open up it's so crisp, you put it under, and you cover your head up.

LEVINE: Oh.

STIGLIANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And he, he was always in that business?

STIGLIANO: For beauty, all for beauty, yeah.

LEVINE: So your father was in that business?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, he was in that business.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STIGLIANO: Perfume, you know.

LEVINE: And these twists, what do you call it?

STIGLIANO: Crisp, it's a crisp. It's like, make it out like a braid.

LEVINE: A braid, I see. Just a second please. ( break in tape ) Now, if you can tell me. Your father came, your father wanted to come to this country.

STIGLIANO: He came twice in here.

LEVINE: He came twice. Now, how was it that you happened to come to this country when you did. Why did you come at that time?

STIGLIANO: Why? Because my mother, she had a sister, now she's dead. She had a sister in this country. And my mother, being that she had two girls and three boys, she used to bother all that time, send him one of your daughter, send, he only have one boy. He was going to get married, and she had nobody. So my mother says, "Oh, she goes in America, in America."

When I came over here I used to argue with my aunt all the time. "(?), if you was a millionaire, if you was, you keep me nice and put in the house, you know, like a girl, la signorina." I had a little work.

LEVINE: When you came here?

STIGLIANO: Sure.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, before we talk about that, can you remember leaving?

STIGLIANO: Leaving in Italy?

LEVINE: Yeah.

STIGLIANO: Sure. In Naples. Oh, cry . . .

LEVINE: What was it like saying goodbye?

STIGLIANO: It was awful.

LEVINE: What was in your mind about going to America? When you came?

STIGLIANO: The way you see America, always America, you mostly think it was, uh, find money on the street. And guess what? I came over here one week. My aunt, she took him to see somebody else that he know, I find five dollars on the floor. ( they laugh )

LEVINE: So you did find money in the United States.

STIGLIANO: I said, "You see?" (?) But how it's a pain if you got to work, you've got to, if you want to progress, you know?

LEVINE: Did you work, well, first, you, you remember that you came on a French ship.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, a French ship.

LEVINE: And you left from Naples.

STIGLIANO: Damn, I can't remember . . . Yeah, I left from there, sure. We all were leaving from there.

LEVINE: Okay. What do you remember about the voyage, coming across the Atlantic Ocean?

STIGLIANO: Oh, I used to be very sick to my stomach, crying. They used to give me lemon, they used to give me this, and from crying I used to get a headache, a terrible headaches, you know, those headaches. I couldn't open my eyes. I had to be in the dark. Yeah.

LEVINE: Did you get those headaches before that, before, when you were in Italy?

STIGLIANO: I got older, they disappeared. Uh-huh. It's unbelievable.

LEVINE: Yeah. But did you have them as a child, those migraine headaches?

STIGLIANO: Well, I remember one time I went to, you know that merry-go-round?

LEVINE: Yeah?

STIGLIANO: I went to one merry-go-round one night. They had to take me off there, wow, I was so sick.

LEVINE: Okay. And then you came back on the boat, on the ship.

STIGLIANO: Oh, the ship, yeah, when I came in this country.

LEVINE: Were you in steerage on the ship? Were you in the bottom of the ship, like a big dormitory?

STIGLIANO: No, no, no.

LEVINE: You were in a cabin?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, in a cabin, with lots of people. Not yourself.

LEVINE: Not just your family.

STIGLIANO: Not yourself. Sure.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And, do you remember when the ship came into the New York harbor?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, but I was too young to notice all these things, you know?

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you remember Ellis Island?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yeah, yeah. They used to take you there first, and then they used to make you free. Yeah.

LEVINE: What, what do you remember? Anything you remember about Ellis Island?

STIGLIANO: No, no, no.

LEVINE: No. Were you examined?

STIGLIANO: Huh?

LEVINE: Do you remember being examined there? Your hair, your eyes?

STIGLIANO: Well, I think they had to do that.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you remember . . .

STIGLIANO: No, I don't remember at all. But I come and stand there, they got to do that, because they can't just send you there like that.

LEVINE: Yeah. Then did you . . .

STIGLIANO: Suppose you have, God forbid, a sickness over there, and it's catching or something.

LEVINE: That's right. Did, did someone meet you at Ellis

Island?

STIGLIANO: In this country? Sure, my aunt, you know, my mother sister. She came and picked me up. Sure. She's got to show that she's calling me. Because if you're underage it's a different story. If I were (?), I was young. I needed somebody, you know, representative.

LEVINE: Who did you travel with?

STIGLIANO: Huh?

LEVINE: When you came to this country, who was with you?

STIGLIANO: My aunt, my mother's sister.

LEVINE: She picked you up.

STIGLIANO: And then I lived with her.

LEVINE: NO, but when you were on the ship, was your whole family on the ship?

STIGLIANO: No. Strangers.

LEVINE: Just you.

STIGLIANO: Not me. There were a lot of . . .

LEVINE: Were there any, from your family?

STIGLIANO: Just me.

LEVINE: Just you.

STIGLIANO: Oh, yeah. We have friends that we came in the same time. And I was too young. She was in charge of me. You understand?

LEVINE: But essentially . . .

STIGLIANO: Not just for me like that.

LEVINE: She was to look out for you.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: On the ship.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: And then your aunt met you?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Well, why were you the one that got to go to America instead of the other family members?

STIGLIANO: No, I told you, my father, he was here twice, in

America. He used to, "America, America, America."  
So, (?) throwing money on the floor, which I find  
five dollars. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: So did you want to go to America?

STIGLIANO: I was very anxious, you know. You're young, you  
want to see, you know?

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. But you, but you were brave to go  
by yourself?

STIGLIANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: As a young sixteen-year-old.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, but I had somebody to take care, you know,  
recommend, that she, you know, she recommended that  
she was taking charge of me.

LEVINE: And, uh, was that person helpful to you coming over  
here?

STIGLIANO: Oh, sure. In case I didn't feel good or something  
like that, sure.

LEVINE: And . . .

STIGLIANO: 'Cause I got to fix it when I go home.

LEVINE: So when you met your aunt at Ellis Island . . .

STIGLIANO: My daughter, she used to go to high school.

LEVINE: When you met your, uh, aunt at Ellis Island.

STIGLIANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Then she took you where?

STIGLIANO: Over her house.

LEVINE: Where was that?

STIGLIANO: My, you know New York?

LEVINE: Yeah.

STIGLIANO: In New York.

LEVINE: In . . .

STIGLIANO: Carmine Street.

LEVINE: What street?

STIGLIANO: It's, not Mulberry Street over there, it's, they call it Carmine Street. I don't know if it's the right . . .

LEVINE: It's maybe the Lower East Side?

STIGLIANO: No, no. I don't know if I'd call it that.

LEVINE: Well, what kind of house did your aunt have?

STIGLIANO: Huh?

LEVINE: What kind of a house?

STIGLIANO: Who?

LEVINE: Or apartment, did your aunt have?

STIGLIANO: It was an apartment.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STIGLIANO: I don't know how many flights, five or what. She only had one son. When I came in this country he was, he came back from the honeymoon. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So was it, what was it like compared to where you lived in Italy? What was it like when . . .

STIGLIANO: Oh, it was altogether different.

LEVINE: What was different?

STIGLIANO: Sure.

LEVINE: What was different?

STIGLIANO: The rooms are small. Then my aunt there, she was too fussy. She used to have a stove, you know, she used to light the, the stove for them, in the night.

And she was so fussy, she would light only, oh, this is giving me a headache. Oh, this is giving me, because she didn't want to light the stove.

( she laughs ) I was young, but I was foxy. You don't fool me. I used to say close altogether, don't bother me, you know, with the rude bit. I knew that she didn't want to bother.

LEVINE: So did you go to work soon after you got to this country?

STIGLIANO: Sure I went to work. I went to work at 23rd Street and Broadway, in Broadway. I told you, I used to sit down there and give the sample, because they don't take you just like that.

LEVINE: You had to give a sample of how you could stitch.

STIGLIANO: You worked, you wanted a job. So there, they were

advertised for the job, and I used to go. My aunt, they used to take me. And we used to sit down and give the, as soon as they saw me, the way I handled myself, that's enough. See? No, for that I had . . .

LEVINE: Did you have, how did you learn English? Do you remember learning English?

STIGLIANO: Oh, I wanted to go to night school. My English, they used to do so much (Italian), how you say, the farmer night, (?) the school. (?) the farmers were boys, (?). I says what the hell he is? It's not to me they go to school in here. So I didn't go.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: So how, did you have trouble learning English, or how did you learn?

STIGLIANO: No, just to practice. I don't know.

LEVINE: You just picked it up as you went along.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And did you ever become a citizen?

STIGLIANO: Oh, yeah. Well, I married somebody, he was born in this country. You saw the picture? So you become (?), you become a citizen, too. Now it's separate, no? Now they say that you've got to be separate. See? That time it was a different law. When you marry a citizen fellow, you become, too, the same time. Now the thing, the law, they changed the law, I don't know. I don't know.

LEVINE: Do you remember when you first came to this country, do you remember any things that you saw that struck you as different here, things you had never seen before?

STIGLIANO: No, because here they didn't have such beautiful homes, you know? They rooms, they were small. They didn't have any rooms. You know, the hot, they had no hot water. In the morning, gosh, he was so good to me, I used to, I had, fanatic, I had to wash my hands. So he'd say, "What are you washing?" I used to put my nightgown down. I used to wash them with cold water. All my body. Thank God I never got sick.

LEVINE: Did you have hot water in Italy?

STIGLIANO: No.

LEVINE: No.

STIGLIANO: No.

LEVINE: It was still . . .

STIGLIANO: The truth, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: And how about, like, the toilets, and . . .

STIGLIANO: Oh, toilets, yeah, thank God, toilets.

LEVINE: You had them here.

STIGLIANO: No, in Italy.

LEVINE: In Italy, the toilets.

STIGLIANO: And then in the building, they had a place that's built. Excuse me, the doody goes in there when you are upstairs in your bathroom. And you pay that much a year, then they got the, they got to clean, remove that, you understand? And that's the way.

LEVINE: I see.

STIGLIANO: But thank the Lord, we had always a bathroom in the

house.

LEVINE: And how about when you got to your aunt's?

STIGLIANO: Huh?

LEVINE: When you got to your aunt's house in New York?  
Where were the bathrooms . . .

STIGLIANO: She had a, she had a small, it was a small, but it  
was there.

LEVINE: It was in the house.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, it was in the house, thank God, no. She was  
very fanatical, too. She was clean, oh!  
Everything, God forbid, dusted. Everything passes,  
everything goes.

LEVINE: Now, um, you mentioned that you met your husband,  
then, here. How did you meet him?

STIGLIANO: Oh, because, you know, I made friends. I was young.  
Where we used to live, there was a girlfriend,  
Christina. She was my best girl when I got married.  
So we started being friends, so she loves me, every  
place that she went she took me. Every, they had a  
pianola. You remember the pianola? They used to

play, you know, maybe, I used to sing. ( she  
laughs )

LEVINE: Oh!

STIGLIANO: I was always, I used to always sing about myself.  
We had a lot, we used to have a lot of fun.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So did you go to dances?

STIGLIANO: No.

LEVINE: No.

STIGLIANO: No dances. In the house, you know. If you remind  
us, we come to you. And we used to spend the night  
or something together, a nice dinner. Then they had  
the pianola. We used to play the, we used to sing  
and all that, it was nice.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how did you like your job?

STIGLIANO: It was good.

LEVINE: You liked it.

STIGLIANO: You know, we got these friends, the DeMayo[ph]  
brothers. We got to be friends with these people.  
We used to go there every single night, playing and

joking. They always used to, they'd have a little something in the night, you know, mozzarella, you know, when someone's in there, he used to come out, so in the kitchen we used to have always a little something in the night. So it used to be a feast. We'd go over there every night. ( she laughs ) The DeMayo[ph] brothers, they were business people. They had the money, you know. And then we went to the pool house.

LEVINE: The DeMayo[ph] brothers.

STIGLIANO: DeMayo[ph] brothers.

LEVINE: That, well, now, that was your maiden name, wasn't it?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, Di Maio. See, instead of Di Maio, mine was DeMaio[ph].

LEVINE: Oh, but they were not related to you.

STIGLIANO: No, no, no.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. I see.

STIGLIANO: You understand?

LEVINE: Yeah. I see. So you had a nice little social group that you spent a lot of time with.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, because I was friendly, you know. You used to have a nice, years ago they didn't have to make a, we used to be together, we used to have a lot of fun, you know? If you have that pianola, we used to sing, and the parents, they were happy.

LEVINE: Were these people from the same part of Italy that you were from?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, Di Maio[ph] brothers. Our name was Di Mio, and their name was Di Maio[ph], Di Maio[ph]. So they, we're almost the same. Very nice, nice.

LEVINE: So how did you meet your husband?

STIGLIANO: Because I had a friend, you know, I had a friend, she used to take me all over. So we went to this house, it was there by my husband, that was his aunt, his mother's sister. She, he met me there. So he must have liked me when I used to, he must have liked me. And I went another time, he was there, too. So by seeing me all the time, he introduced me.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did you like him?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, I liked him. He was serious, you know. It's not that he was fifi fellows, he was very serious. Did I show you the picture?

LEVINE: Yes, you did.

STIGLIANO: He was a different type.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So he was serious, and you were full of life, and . . .

STIGLIANO: Yeah, but in a different way. In, you know, not a crazy way that you bother with everybody. In the house, if you had a group, you used to sing, you used to, we used to sing, then we used to dance, too. Well, the melody, the song, we used to sing. That was it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So then did you stay at the same job?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, I stayed many years, because I told you I was always looking around. Twelve o'clock, instead of having my lunch, what do you think I used to do? I used to look at the work. So when I told that I can start to do that, they give it to me to do, you

know. Every one of them, I made it.

LEVINE: So you were very good at it.

STIGLIANO: The hands, yeah.

LEVINE: So did you get increases in salary because you were so good?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, they used to give it to me. They used to give it to me.

LEVINE: So you were satisfied with your life.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, it was so, yeah. And then I had, every place I went, I had a job.

LEVINE: So then, uh, when you started, did you have children?

STIGLIANO: I had two girls.

LEVINE: Right. And their names?

STIGLIANO: Rosemarie and Irene, Irina. That was my husband's favorite, Irina. He picked the name. ( she laughs ) Rosemarie, when I was in the hospital, I was in the Shore Road Hospital. You remember? Do you know that? Shore Road Hospital. It's near the

water.

LEVINE: Oh, I don't know it.

STIGLIANO: No? When you get the baby, after you find that you're not sick. So we used to sing, because I have another roommate. We used to sing. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: What would you sing?

STIGLIANO: I mean, songs. We used to sing songs. Because I was fond, you know. And the nurse, she says, "Ah, what you gonna name your daughter?" She says, "My mother-in-law was Rose." I says, "Rose." "Oh," she says, "why don't you finish it, make it Rosemarie?" And that's why I named her Rosemarie. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: So when, after you had, started having your daughters, did you continue to work?

STIGLIANO: Huh? No. It's no good. I can't raise a child, you got to leave them. No.

LEVINE: So did you stay in New York City?

STIGLIANO: Yes, in New York, in Flatbush. You know Flatbush?

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

STIGLIANO: It's a nice, a nice place, there, to live. You know Sheepshead Bay? You know, we used to go there on Sunday. Long Beach. They used to sell, uh, what you call it? Nuts. You know, we used to eat them with a . . . Oh, gosh, I . . .

LEVINE: Pistachio nuts?

STIGLIANO: You know, we used to eat it in the shell.

LEVINE: Oh, um, those seeds, those pumpkin seeds? No.

STIGLIANO: No, that's a fish.

LEVINE: Oh, clams?

STIGLIANO: Ah! That's right. You know, they used to eat it there, standing up, they used to open it, and you used to eat it fresh. So we used to go there because it was near. That was down, you enjoy, that's all.

LEVINE: So were you ever a member of a social club, or did you . . .

STIGLIANO: No.

LEVINE: You just were, you went to people you knew.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's it, yes. In the night they used to make a little something, you know? Reunion, glass of wine. And I was used to wine, because in Italy, you know, since I was a kid, we used to have wine at the table. And it's good that way, you're strong, and you get used to.

LEVINE: And how . . .

STIGLIANO: We used to make our own wine, though.

LEVINE: Oh, you did?

STIGLIANO: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: In this country, or in Italy?

STIGLIANO: In Italy, too. You know, you come in, it's a building, though, right? In that building, there used to be rooms, like you have the storage or something. We used to make a, oh, lots of things. Peppers in the vinegar and all that stuff, the wine with a barrel. We used to open the thing, we used to get their own wine, you know. We had a different life.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. It sounds like it was a happy life.

STIGLIANO: Yes. Now, I get a lot of, sometimes I don't expect anything. My daughters, what you want.

LEVINE: So what did your husband do for work?

STIGLIANO: In the bank.

LEVINE: In the bank?

STIGLIANO: In the National City bank, he used to work.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STIGLIANO: He used to work, on Monday night they used to be open at ten o'clock. So what happened I used to do, I was lonesome. I used to meet him. ( she laughs )  
And the president of the bank, they liked me so much, they used to take me home, they used to take my daughter. So we had the piano, and my husband used to play the piano, and I used to sing. And we'd play so loud. ( she laughs ) It was nice. You know, when you're good people love you, they like to have you for a friend.

LEVINE: Yes, uh-huh.

STIGLIANO: They know that you're not the wild kind.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember when you were, when you were a parent, when you were a mother . . .

STIGLIANO: Yes.

LEVINE: Did you, did you try to instill any kinds of attitudes or values, things that your mother or father told you? Did you pass them along to your . . .

STIGLIANO: Please, that was too fussy.

LEVINE: Why? What? How?

STIGLIANO: For them all. God forbid they used to get a spot on themselves, I'd kill them. They had to be, when used to come home from school, they know, they didn't ask me, I didn't tell them. Open the door, the closet, change the clothes, because they used to wear uniform. Navy blue skirt with a blue skirt and the white blouse, or the big bow blue, navy blue.

LEVINE: So they went to Catholic school, too?

STIGLIANO: Oh, yeah, Catholic school. Because I, I was brought up like that, and I liked it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And so, so, uh, you made sure everything was clean and neat.

STIGLIANO: Nice, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STIGLIANO: I showed the picture (?).

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, um, well, do you think you have any ways about you that are Italian, that you keep today, even though you've been in this country for, uh . . .

STIGLIANO: Well, if you, if I see you too wild, you know, if you see, I don't see it to be, a lady's supposed to do. I don't like it.

LEVINE: Oh, like what?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, like, you throw yourself at the men, like, you see, I don't like that. They come near, if he wanted it, let them come near, don't go. Like now they go near, kiss, kiss me. Kiss? What, kiss?

LEVINE: Yeah.

STIGLIANO: We were very strict. Because, all right, I like the

same thing. I'm not (?). I used to, that's the way I was, because I was brought up like that. My father used to tell me, he says, "I want to keep my head up, you know, to go always straight. I don't want anything that should make me down." You know, because we were all girls. So here they don't look at those things. They send the girl with the fellow out for the weekend. Whoever heard of such a thing. Are you made out of iron? What do you expect? Then they have the babies, then, the morale is very low. Send the little young girl out the boy. And, you know, some, they want a baby. Twelve years old and you're having a baby? You understand? The morale is very low, very . . .

LEVINE: What, what makes you feel proud, or what do you feel very satisfied about that you did in your lifetime? What makes you feel good?

STIGLIANO: My person.

LEVINE: Your person.

STIGLIANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: What about your person makes you feel satisfied or

good? What?

LEVINE: If I see a man, I don't low myself for, you know, all that business. I expect we talk and all that business, goodbye, goodbye. That's all. And now they take somebody else's husband, and how many cases are like that, the sisters? You dream, and you watch television. Wife, they keep complaining about the sister with the, what the hell? Some of them they had the babies, he has a baby, so does his wife, and he has a baby with the sister-in-law. The morale is very low.

LEVINE: Well, now, considering that you came to this country when you were sixteen years old . . .

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: And you've been here now seventy-six years.

STIGLIANO: Sure.

LEVINE: How do you think about that? How do you think about the fact that you were born in Italy, and you came here as a young woman . . .

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: You lived your life here, had your family here, did everything. How do you think about immigrating to this country.

STIGLIANO: I don't know.

LEVINE: Are you, do you think you would be very different if you had stayed in Italy?

STIGLIANO: Yeah. I would have lived a different life, because they, you have help all the time, you have a, here if you got to pay a helper, it costs a lot of money, you know?

LEVINE: Before you said something like maybe you shouldn't have come to this country. Are you . . .

STIGLIANO: Oh, because I had to work.

LEVINE: Yeah.

STIGLIANO: Because I used to argue with my mother's sister. If you was a rich woman, common sense, you want to have your daughter here, it's nice, I'm all alone, I want to have it. But you was not rich, and it wasn't, so what the hell difference, you come in this country?

LEVINE: I see. So you regretted coming at first, because

you were working . . .

STIGLIANO: Yeah, sometimes I do, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And then did that change? Was there any time when you decided you were happy to be here, and you didn't want to go back?

STIGLIANO: No. I didn't want to go back because I was afraid that I won't like it.

LEVINE: You were afraid you wouldn't like it. Why?

STIGLIANO: Maybe, you know, you're still here, I go over there, maybe I don't like it. Then I was not here, and I was not there. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: Did you feel that way?

STIGLIANO: Sure, in case, sure.

LEVINE: And how do you feel now?

STIGLIANO: Now I'm, you know how many years I'm here now?

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

STIGLIANO: Sure.

LEVINE: And how is this time in your life, now that you're

not working, your children are grown . . .

STIGLIANO: Yeah, that's a good point.

LEVINE: How is your life now?

STIGLIANO: Not too good. I get very depressed. That's between you and me, yeah. Because my daughters, they're busy for their own business, you know? And I can't have them with me all the time. I've got to realize I'm being selfish. So, it makes you feel depressed.

LEVINE: Well, do you have friends here?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, I have friends here. But I don't know. Not like years ago the friends.

LEVINE: Do you sing here?

STIGLIANO: Huh?

LEVINE: Do you get together and sing around here?

STIGLIANO: No.

LEVINE: No, huh?

STIGLIANO: Over here a few things sometimes there's a bad guy that, sometimes they give those things, yeah,

sometimes.

LEVINE: Yeah. You have activities.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, okay. Let's see . . .

STIGLIANO: You look to be a very nice person.

LEVINE: Oh, thank you!

STIGLIANO: Take care, you know?

LEVINE: Thank you. Well, you did, too. It's a pleasure to talk with you.

STIGLIANO: Thank you.

LEVINE: So, tell me, now, is there anything else you can think of about life in the old country, in Italy, coming here, Ellis Island . . .

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Meeting your husband and living here.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: And then, um . . .

STIGLIANO: Here I had a lot of proposals, because I want to break, I used to go to work every day on the train, you know. You know Sea Beach, the train that used to go to New York? I used to meet a fellow, and this fellow, they used to, you don't find a seat, at that time you don't find no, all the things there. I used to meet this fellow day in and day out. I used to, I couldn't stand it. The more I see him, the more I used to hate his guts. I couldn't stand him. So one time I says, "Please, I don't want to see you here at this station. They think you're my boyfriend." Which is true. They see you, not because I want it. He used to be there. He knew the train, at the time I used to go to work. He used to be there. And when I used to see already my head, he used to get on my nerve. He used to talk to me more, I couldn't stand him. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: So did you have other boys who were interested in you when you were coming into New York back then?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, but I was a little too fussy. I had a good opportunity. Now I think how foolish I was. One was, they knows this way, the other one ain't so much for, and I had a fellow, he says, "Sabina,

you'll never, ever find anybody who loves you like I do." Which is true.

LEVINE: This was one of these boys said that to you?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, because I know he was, he's a professor. His sister married somebody who had a factory for men's clothes. So, you know, the sister calls the brother. Now they're all in business. I can't even understand. And he says, "Fine." So I think, but it's too late. What do you? And the mother, they were so nice. They saw that the, her son, you know, he used to talk to me, he used to be, because they used to love me. Me, they still in (?). You do a lot of mistakes when you're young.

LEVINE: Do you remember the Depression in this country, the Depression in the '30s?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Did that, did that affect you personally, when it was the Depression time, was it a very hard time for you?

STIGLIANO: No. We used to have friends, you know, that they used to get this, the sugar, all the things like

that, or they had a business, you know? And they used to put on the, they used to go and get it, yeah.

LEVINE: So you had food and . . .

STIGLIANO: Oh, yeah, thank God, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, you were married by then, I suppose.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yeah, also. Surely.

LEVINE: Yeah. And are there any other things that you remember, uh, events that influenced you or changed your life in any way, anything that happened during the time . . .

STIGLIANO: We always think to get ahead, you know?

LEVINE: You had that idea.

STIGLIANO: Idea, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: So you were hardworking, and you were . . .

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yes. Even when, when I was married, I had children. I had, I went, my way, I work in the house.

LEVINE: Oh, what did you do?

STIGLIANO: Embroidery.

LEVINE: Oh. What . . .

STIGLIANO: My girl, Rosemarie, she used to go, that girl, in New York, at 23rd Street to Broadway. She used to get the work. Come and bring, come and home.

LEVINE: So what was . . .

STIGLIANO: To bring, that she had it, she was like an old lady.

LEVINE: So it was called homework.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, homework, yeah.

LEVINE: And what would, like, how much would you do in a week? How much would you . . .

STIGLIANO: Well, I used to do, because, you see, in the nighttime, when everybody used to go to sleep, I used to be all by myself. I used to say, "Come on, make another piece." I make that much. I make, you see, I was a, I was not so much fast, no. I make another piece, see? They used to sleep, my family, my husband, but I used to do.

LEVINE: I see. Ahh. Now, what happened, did you have a trousseau?

STIGLIANO: Huh?

LEVINE: Did you have a trousseau of all those embroidered things . . .

STIGLIANO: Oh, yeah, when I got married, yeah. You know, you've got to have that much tablecloths and that much sheets, that much, yeah.

LEVINE: And what else . . .

STIGLIANO: Otherwise you're poor, you haven't got no trousseau. That means you are a poor girl.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So what did you have? You had sheets, tablecloths . . .

STIGLIANO: Towels.

LEVINE: Towels.

STIGLIANO: All that, uh, dishtowels. All those things, yeah.

LEVINE: And so you had a nice big trousseau.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, nice. Yeah, very nice, very nice. We didn't

have to buy that stuff for a long, long time. Sure.

But now they don't do in this country. They do?

( she laughs )

LEVINE: No.

STIGLIANO: They get away with everything.

LEVINE: Yeah.

STIGLIANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Are there any other things you can think of that we don't do in this country that they do in Italy.

STIGLIANO: In Italy.

LEVINE: Or did in Italy when you were a young girl?

STIGLIANO: You see, you've got to have a trousseau when you get married. If you're too poor, they know. You understand. They don't bother. You're too poor then. They don't let you bring all that stuff in.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything you wanted to take with you? When you came from Italy, when you came to America, was there anything you wanted to bring here?

STIGLIANO: No. You know what I, things to eat, because the food is so different, you know? When you go there, if you buy a piece of cheese, it's so delicious. Or the glass of wine. You don't want a piece of steak. You understand? Those things.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STIGLIANO: Now, you can get stuff like this. You go to Mulberry Street, you know? You heard of Mulberry Street?

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STIGLIANO: They have all imported stuff over there, provolone and all. My daughter, she still buys for me.

LEVINE: Oh, good, good, yeah. I bet you enjoy that, huh?

STIGLIANO: I enjoy, sure, yeah. They have all imported stuff.

LEVINE: Do you have anything . . .

STIGLIANO: Olio, the oil, too. Because the oil here is just for fried.

LEVINE: Right.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, the imported oil. Salso[ph], Bertolli, all

these, they are imported oils, and they're fine, you know. They're, they're not greasy.

LEVINE: Right. Do you have any recipes that you remember from the old country that you . . .

STIGLIANO: Do you want a recipe for meatballs?

LEVINE: Yeah.

STIGLIANO: You never, you never stop to make them.

LEVINE: Oh, okay, why don't you tell us?

STIGLIANO: Well, you take a pound of meat, chopped meat. Furthermore, you go to the butcher. They give you, don't let them give you ready-made. You make it. So you put it in the bowl. And you get, I take four eggs, pepper and salt, cheese, parley chopped very fine. I beat it up very well. No, first I make the bread. I take the skin off the bread, and I put it in the bowl, and I make small pieces. Then I put the milk in, and I make it soft. Almost, soft, you don't know. And then I squeeze it, I let all the milk go out, and I have the meat. I take it, I make holes like this, and I put it in. And I mix it together. Then I put a piece of wax paper. I take

it long, my hands, like this. I make meatballs, one here, one here. I make them all, in a pound, I make it, all of them, you know, and they come, they come plenty, you understand? So I have the frying pan on the fire, already going very low. Then I make a, then when I have the meatballs finished, because I don't want to burn them, so, and I fry them. And then I make the gravy. If I got them, I got a nice piece of meat, you know, beef. If I get a, if I make the brigiolo. You know what it is? A piece of meat, it's, you make it fine. In the meat you put parsley, garlic, and very, very fine cheese, pepper and salt, you put it there, and then you roll it. You make a brigiolo. Tasty! You make the gravy, and you fry that, and then you put that in the gravy, and you let it cook in there. What you eat, you make macaroni, delicious.

LEVINE: Do you make tomato, you use canned tomatoes?

STIGLIANO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And, uh . . .

STIGLIANO: Canned tomatoes, you know, they have all kinds of tomato. Contadina, you know, the small tomatoes,

not the big tomatoes. Tomatoes, they're all full of water, the other tomatoes. These are small ones. I used to pass them on the thing, you know. What is it?

LEVINE: On the cutting board? On the rolling board?

STIGLIANO: Then the juice goes out of the, what do you call it?  
The way you strain the macaroni.

LEVINE: Oh, like a colander?

STIGLIANO: Yeah, a colander, yeah. They go out of there, and you make it. You know, when the meat is fried and everything, and then you put it in, and you let it cook. All the juice, delicious. Oh! Then you make extra ones, and then put them away. Put it in the Frigidare, and let it freeze. So any time you want to have, you take a piece, and tell your husband you don't have to cook that night. Put it in the freezer, no? You take a nice portion to be divided, you and your husband eat it, and you make it and you eat it, delicious.

LEVINE: Well, I'm going to try that. I'll think of you when I make it.

STIGLIANO: Oh, make the meatballs. They're so tender. Everybody I give it, they can't get over it. I got a girl, she says, that's all, "My mother, she's been around, so want some meatballs?" Because they come so tender, you know, a lot of eggs, and the bread I cook, blend it in the milk, so it's soft. It comes so soft and juicy. You know, one time I was to my grandson's house. I made meatballs like that. I was a fool. They want me to cook when I go there, because they know. Always some girlfriend came. Ooh, what an honor, to lead my granddaughter to marriage. Ooh, my grandmother, oh, my God, what an odor! She don't want to leave. Please, give us a few. ( Dr. Levine laughs ) He says, "Yeah, all right, Grandma." When we went over there, she said, "Lee, did you give her the meatballs?" "Meatballs? I give her those that my mother sent them to me yesterday? They're not yours." ( she laughs )

LEVINE: Okay, well, that's . . .

STIGLIANO: Honest to God! ( they laugh ) I don't see one thing, a lie. She says, "Your meatballs?" "I get from my mother, she give me yesterday."

LEVINE: Well, that's a good place to end. I've been speaking with Sabina Stigliano.

STIGLIANO: Stigliano, yeah.

LEVINE: Stigliano. And she came from Italy in 1920 when she was sixteen. And today she's ninety-two.

STIGLIANO: Thank God.

LEVINE: And full of energy. And, um, this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service on July 29, 1996. We're here in Wellington Center in Hackensack, New Jersey.

STIGLIANO: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: And I'm signing off. Thank you very much.

STIGLIANO: I enjoyed talking. You was a nice person.