

EI-779

ROSE (ROSARIA) D'AMATO DI GIORE
BIRTH DATE: SEPTEMBER 18, 1910
INTERVIEW DATE: AUGUST 13, 1996
RUNNING TIME: 30:08
INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.
RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME
INTERVIEW LOCATION: LONGMEADOW, MASSACHUSETTS
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 9/1997
TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

ITALY, 1919
AGE 9
PASSAGE ON "THE PATRIA"

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Mrs. DiGiore is the sister of Tom D'Amato, EI-780. 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, 8/14/1997.

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Tuesday, August 13, 1996. I'm in Longmeadow, Massachusetts, and I'm here with Mrs. Rose Di Giore. Correct? And Mrs. Di Giore came from Italy in 1919. She was nine years old at that time. Present also in the room are her two brothers, Sam D'Amato and Tommy D'Amato, and also David Molnar[ph], photographer for The Springfield Republican, and writer Adeel Hassan, also from The Springfield Republican, who are going to be writing a little article about this article, this interview. I should also spell Adeel for the sake of the tape, A-D-E-E-L and Hassan is H-A-S-S-A-N. Correct. Okay. And you may hear a little traffic in the background. May be begin

by you giving me your birthdate, please?

DI GIORE: September 18, 1910.

SIGRIST: And do you know anything about the day you were born? Did your mother ever tell you a story about the day you were born?

DI GIORE: No. She said I was a fat baby. That's all she remembered. That's all I could remember, yeah. I was a good baby, and I was a fat baby. That's all I remember.

SIGRIST: A healthy baby.

DI GIORE: Yeah, that's it.

SIGRIST: Um, what, what town in Italy were you born in?

DI GIORE: Atena Lucana, provincia Di Salerno.

SIGRIST: All right. Let's start with the town. Can you spell that, please?

DI GIORE: Atena, A-T-E-N-A. Lucana, L-U-C-A-N-A. And then D-I Salerno, S-A-L-E-R-N-O, Italy.

SIGRIST: Thank you. Where in Italy is that?

DI GIORE: Well, it's a southern part of Naples. It's about two hours or so from Naples, if I remember correctly. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the house that you grew up in?

DI GIORE: OH, yes.

SIGRIST: Can you describe that for me?

DI GIORE: Well, the houses there were built all around the town, and in the middle it was just the grass. (disturbance to the microphone) So the houses were, like I say, all around the town, and we were in the middle of a complex there. We were, we had two rooms, and two rooms downstairs. And I slept with my mother and, naturally, the two boys slept by themselves. It wasn't anything spectacular.

SIGRIST: What do they make the houses out of?

DI GIORE: Brick. We had concrete floors, concrete. But we did have an oven that my mother used to make bread, and we had a fireplace where we used to cook, my mother used to do the cooking, and that was it.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about the kinds of food that people ate in Italy at that time?

DI GIORE: Well, we had a lot of grains. Cabbage, Savoy cabbage, and a lot of beans that we grew, string beans, fava beans, cheche[ph] beans, any kind of beans.

SIGRIST: Cheche[ph] beans?

DI GIORE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How do you spell that?

DI GIORE: Chickpeas, chickpeas.

SIGRIST: Chickpeas.

DI GIORE: Chickpeas, yeah. And we made our own pasta. And then I had a grandmother, too, that would make the pasta, because my mother and my brother here had to go to work on the farm, because we were farmers. And him, he had to stay with my grandmother, because he was too small, and I went to school.

SIGRIST: Tell me about, your father was not in Italy when you were growing up.

DI GIORE: No. No, I didn't even know my dad.

SIGRIST: What was his name?

DI GIORE: Tony.

SIGRIST: Tony.

DI GIORE: Antonio.

SIGRIST: Antonio. And tell me what he did for a living in Italy before

he came to the United States?

DI GIORE: Well, he was a farmer. You know, they farmed the land, they cultivated. And we didn't have any money, so we'd exchange. Like if we had a lot of potatoes and you had a lot of grain, we would exchange. That was the money that we had. We didn't have much money, but that's what we did, and we all got along very nicely.

SIGRIST: Do you know how your parents met?

DI GIORE: Well, they met, my mother was born in Buenos Aires, and she came to Italy when she was about four years old, and, uh . . .

SIGRIST: Where was she born?

DI GIORE: Buenos Aires.

SIGRIST: Oh, in Buenos Aires. Well, that's interesting. How did she end up in Buenos Aires?

DI GIORE: Well, her parents went out there and she was born out there. That's all I can say. And, uh, so then to come back, and, see, they, everybody, they hired men, or boys, to help each other to farm the land, so my father, with his other brothers, went to my mother's place, because my mother was a little bit better off than my dad. So, and he went to help her father to cultivate

the land, and that's how they met. And then they were married.

SIGRIST: Do you know what year they were married?

DI GIORE: Uh, 19, well, he was born in 1903, so it could have been maybe 1902, maybe.

SIGRIST: And which brother are you pointing to?

DI GIORE: This one here.

SIGRIST: Is that Sam?

DI GIORE: This is the oldest, yeah.

SIGRIST: That's Sam.

DI GIORE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Okay.

DI GIORE: He was born in 1903, so it could have been a year before that. I really don't know. I don't remember.

SIGRIST: I see. Uh, so you actually don't remember your father in Italy.

DI GIORE: No.

SIGRIST: Why did he come to the United States?

DI GIORE: Well, he didn't want to work out there. There was a poor

living, no money involved. He was here, and he liked it here the way things were, because he said at the end of the week, even though he was, oh, what is it they call them, they build roads and everything. He was a . . .

SIGRIST: A laborer?

DI GIORE: Yeah, he was a laborer. And at the end of the week he got paid, and that's what he liked. So, and that's how, he was here for quite a while before he sent for us.

SIGRIST: What year did he come?

DI GIORE: Well, he came here, I think, in 1903, then he went back in 19 . . . Well, he was seven years old or so. I don't know. He went back in 19, oh, back in 19, uh, '10 because, after I was born, and then he was born in 1913.

SIGRIST: Um, let me say, if you're going to refer to your brothers, refer to them by name, not just by "he" or "him."

DI GIORE: Okay.

SIGRIST: Just don't forget we can't see, we're only going to be able hear.

DI GIORE: Oh, God, I'm thinking . . .

SIGRIST: That's all right. They won't know who you're talking about.

DI GIORE: My oldest brother Sam was born in 1903.

SIGRIST: Right.

DI GIORE: And my dad was there. And he stayed there, I think, three years or so, no, seven years, and then he left Italy and he came here, and then he come back, and after he came back to Italy I was born, in 1910, and he stayed only three years more, and in those three years Tommy was born. So after he was born he left Italy to come to America.

SIGRIST: So whenever Dad was visiting Italy, there was a new child in the family.

DI GIORE: That's it. But this time here, he said this was it. And I used to do the writing, because I went to school. I was in third grade when I left. So he wrote and said that he wanted us to come to America. And my mother did not want to come, because she didn't want to leave her mother, see? And her mother said, no, I took the letter and I read, and read it to my grandmother, and she says to her daughter no, my dear, her name was Frances, Francesca, you better go, you have three children, and I'm an elderly woman now. I will die, and you're going to be alone, and your husband won't bother with you any more. You better

write and tell him to come, that you want to go. So I wrote, I told my dad that we were all set to come, so he did all, whatever had to be done here in America, the passports, the money, and he sent for us, and then we came here.

SIGRIST: Where was your father living in the United States?

DI GIORE: He was living in Springfield.

SIGRIST: And is that where he was doing labor for work?

DI GIORE: Yes, yes. He was boarding, first he boarded with my uncle.

SIGRIST: Oh, so there were, there was other family here, too.

DI GIORE: Oh, yeah. There was a brother and a sister here. Yeah. And a lot of aunts and uncles at that time, you know. So we stayed with them, and then he, uh, like I say, he sent for us.

SIGRIST: Can you describe your father, what he looked like, in words for me?

DI GIORE: He was a handsome man, tall and dark with a moustache, when he picked us up. And my, 'cos none of, well, he, my big brother knew him, Sam knew him, but I didn't, and neither did he. So, uh . . .

SIGRIST: And what did your mother look like in words?

DI GIORE: She was nice looking.

SIGRIST: We'll look at the paperwork later.

DI GIORE: My mother was nice looking.

SIGRIST: But what, describe her. Use words to describe her.

DI GIORE: I don't know how I could describe her. She was very soft-spoken, very religious, and she would listen to us sometimes. My younger brother Tommy was a devil on wheels, but the two, him, my big brother always had to go to work with my mother. He was her husband. He was her partner. Because no matter where my mother went my big brother Sam went with her.

SIGRIST: He functioned as the man in the house.

DI GIORE: He did. Yeah, he did.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when Tommy was born?

DI GIORE: No, I don't, no. I was only, I was only three years old. What do you know at three years old?

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about your grandmother that lived with you? Whose mother was she?

DI GIORE: She was my mother's mother, but she did not live with us.

SIGRIST: Oh, she didn't live with you.

DI GIORE: No. She lived with my aunt. My mother had her husband's mother, which was my father's mother. That's how it was in the old country, in Italy, that you have to take care of your mother-in-law and your other sister-in-law takes care of her mother-in-law. So my grandmother lived with my aunt, and my other grandmother lived with us.

SIGRIST: Your mother's mother lived with your aunt . . .

DI GIORE: And my father's mother lived with us. Right.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit of what sticks out in your mind about having a grandmother in the house? What do you remember about it?

DI GIORE: Well, not too much. All I remember that she was very sick, and she didn't stay with us too long. That's all I remember. She was very, very sick.

SIGRIST: Did she die?

DI GIORE: Yes, she did.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about when your grandmother died?

DI GIORE: Nothing. No, I don't remember anything.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what she died of?

DI GIORE: I don't know. No, I don't know. Old age, maybe. Who knows. I know my other, my mother's mother died at seventy-five, but we were already here when she died. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What religion were you in Italy?

DI GIORE: Italians.

SIGRIST: What religion?

DI GIORE: Um, Catholics.

SIGRIST: Catholics.

DI GIORE: Catholics.

SIGRIST: And was there a church in the town?

DI GIORE: Oh, yes, there were two or three.

SIGRIST: Do you have memories of . . .

DI GIORE: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Of being in church? What do you remember about church?

DI GIORE: Well, we had to go up like a little steep mountain, and it was all cobblestones, like, you know. And, uh, that's how we went

to church. It was nice. We liked it. We made First Communion there. No, we made Confirmation only. First Communion, we made it in this country.

SIGRIST: What did you wear in Italy for your Confirmation?

DI GIORE: Oh, we were babies.

SIGRIST: Oh.

DI GIORE: See, the bishop comes once a year, and whatever baby is born he confirms them. See, no First Communion. You have to be about, you know, you have to be able to read the catechism, you know, to make your First Communion out there. So Confirmation I don't remember at all.

SIGRIST: How did you practice your religion at home?

DI GIORE: Well, by, uh, saying our prayers at night. Or, because I was the only one that could read, we'd be, I'd be, the catechism, or the Bible, whatever we had, you know, I would read that, because my mother could not write English either, could not speak or write in Italian, rather.

SIGRIST: Is there a prayer in Italian that you could say for us on tape that you said as a child?

DI GIORE: Oh, I wouldn't remember it. I wouldn't know how to say in

Italian. The Our Father and the Hail Mary is the same that it is in Italian, only I don't know how to, I don't know it.

SIGRIST: That's okay. Um, was your mother a religious woman?

DI GIORE: Very.

SIGRIST: Very. And, um, what, um, was she active in the church, uh, you know, was she like a member of the Altar Guild or, I mean, was she active that way in the church?

DI GIORE: No, she was not, no. She went to church just on Sundays, and that was it.

SIGRIST: What were some of the chores that your mother had to do around the house?

DI GIORE: Huh. Nothing much around the house. She was always farming, her and my big brother here.

SIGRIST: Whose land was she farming?

DI GIORE: It was her land. Her father willed it to her when she got married, yeah.

SIGRIST: And what kinds of things did she have to do working the land? I mean, what is she doing (??)?

DI GIORE: Well, they grew potatoes, they grew onions and, uh, all kinds of

vegetables they grew.

SIGRIST: So it's farm work.

DI GIORE: Yes. It's all farm work, yeah. We had a great big pear tree, and we had a little, uh, a little barn that we stayed there overnight in case my mother had to do something carefully. We, the four of us would sleep up in the hayloft. And my brother was the big, he was the policeman, he was always watching to see if anybody, because, you know . . .

SIGRIST: Your brother Sam you're referring to?

DI GIORE: My brother Sam, yeah. And, uh, because, you know, there was wolves and all kinds of bugs and animals out there, because it was out in the woods. And so he'd be the, my brother Sam would be on the watchout in case he heard a noise or something. We had a great big, big sheepdog. We had that for . . .

SIGRIST: Did the sheepdog have a name?

DI GIORE: No, I don't remember the name.

SIGRIST: Did you raise any other animals?

DI GIORE: Well, we had a small puppy at home, but we had chickens at home, we had a lot of chickens, and we had a cat.

SIGRIST: When you were a little girl, what did you know about America?

DI GIORE: Nothing. I didn't even know it existed.

SIGRIST: What, what did you know about your father when you were growing up?

DI GIORE: Well, I knew he was here, but that's all I knew. I didn't know there was, you know . . .

SIGRIST: It didn't really mean anything to you.

DI GIORE: No, no, it didn't mean anything. No.

SIGRIST: Why didn't your mother want to come to the United States?

DI GIORE: She didn't want to leave her mother. That was the main reason.
Yeah, so . . .

SIGRIST: That was . . .

DI GIORE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And why didn't she want to leave her mother? I mean, was her mother . . .

DI GIORE: Well, I don't know. Mother and daughters, you know, probably.

SIGRIST: Had your father tried to convince your mother to come to the United States before this?

DI GIORE: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

SIGRIST: HE liked it here.

DI GIORE: OH, yes, he liked it here, because he would get a week's pay. That was his, over there, see, you work hard, you don't get nothing. And that's it.

SIGRIST: Well, I mean, how do you think your mother felt when she got this letter saying, you know, either you come or that's it?

DI GIORE: Yeah, she didn't feel very good about it, no. She was upset. She started crying, and she went to her mother. And I went with her, because I had to read the letter, yeah. And her mother said, "No, my dear, you'd better go."

SIGRIST: Had, you said you were in the third grade when you left.

DI GIORE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: So you had actually attended school and everything like that.

DI GIORE: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Do you have any memories of that experience?

DI GIORE: Well, the school was, like, in a square. That's where the school was. It's up on the second floor, and that's where,

that's where the school was.

SIGRIST: Boys and girls.

DI GIORE: Yes, oh, yes. All together, yeah.

SIGRIST: And your brothers, could they read and write at that time?

DI GIORE: NO, no.

SIGRIST: No.

DI GIORE: No. He never, my brother Sam never went to school out there, because he always went with my mother.

SIGRIST: He was working in the fields.

DI GIORE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What do you . . . (a buzzing noise is heard in the background on the tape)

DI GIORE: That's my dryer. It's all right.

SIGRIST: Okay. (he laughs) What do you remember about the process of getting ready to leave Italy?

DI GIORE: Oh, my gosh. It was exciting.

SIGRIST: What did you have to do before you left Italy?

DI GIORE: Well, we had to take pictures. WE had to go get inspected to see if we were all right, and we had to get shots to make sure we were all right, and we had to form a line no matter where we went for inspection or whatever we had to do then, you know? Because it was all in Italian anyway, so, you know, my mother understood and so did my brother Sam understood. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, you said you had to be inspected. Do you remember what they were looking for? I mean, what did they inspect when you were . . .

DI GIORE: Well, first of all, they gave us a shot of, uh, oh, God, I can't think of the name. Like, like when you go to school they give you a . . .

SIGRIST: Like a tetanus shot or something.

DI GIORE: That's it. Yeah, yeah, to make sure that you're all right. Yeah. So we all, we all were fine. Yeah.

SIGRIST: And do you remember what your mother packed to take with her to America?

DI GIORE: Dear Lord, I still have the trunk down the cellar. She packed a trunk with linens. WE didn't have too many clothes to wear, the three of us here. She did have an outfit made for the three of us before we came here.

SIGRIST: Do you remember your outfit?

DI GIORE: OH, yes.

SIGRIST: Can you describe it for me?

DI GIORE: Yeah. Well, my brother has it in the picture, my brother . . .

SIGRIST: But can you describe it in words for me?

DI GIORE: Yeah. It was a white dress, and I had long hair, because my hair was way down here when I came here. It was a white dress, I think pleated, and that's all I remember.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how long the dress was?

DI GIORE: OH, yeah, it was long.

SIGRIST: It was a long white dress.

DI GIORE: Yeah, yeah. Mmm.

SIGRIST: Um, and she took linens and stuff. Did she take any other objects with her from Italy?

DI GIORE: Uh, not too much. Because my dad told her not to bring anything, because she would find everything here. The only thing we took was my aunts and my grandmother made cookies, and we put them in a pillowcase and we brought them along to eat on

the boat.

SIGRIST: Oh, well, that's interesting.

DI GIORE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what kind of cookies? Do you remember . . .

DI GIORE: They were Italian cookies. I made some here today, I'll show you.

SIGRIST: Oh, it'll be just like while you immigrated. Um, where did you have to go to get on the ship?

DI GIORE: Naples.

SIGRIST: Naples. Do you remember saying goodbye to your grandmother? Can you describe that for me, please?

DI GIORE: We did that the night before, my dear. The whole town of Atena came down to see us, see us off. And everybody was crying. And the fellow upstairs says, "What's going on down there? Is there a funeral?" Because it was about two or three o'clock in the morning. The whole town came to see us goodbye. It was very sad, I'll tell you. And my mother and her mother were inseparable. They didn't want to separate each other. They were really sad. Of course, I was crying, too, but, you know, I was coming to America. I used to tell all my girlfriends, "I'm

going to America." "Oh, where is it?" I said, "I don't know where it is, but I'll find it."

SIGRIST: Sir, could I ask you actually not to rustle the papers, because all that's being picked up on tape. That's okay. (he laughs)
So you had to go to Naples. How did you get from your town to Naples?

DI GIORE: Oh, we went by, by car. Somebody drove us out there to Naples.

SIGRIST: But automobile?

DI GIORE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Oh, yeah? Was that an unusual situation to be riding in . . .

DI GIORE: Either that or maybe it was the train, now I, either one of the two. I don't quite remember. It could have been the train, maybe.

SIGRIST: And, um, are you traveling with just your mother, or is there a group of people from town going . . .

DI GIORE: No, just my mother and my two brothers, yeah, Tommy and Sammy.

SIGRIST: Grandmother stayed in town?

DI GIORE: Oh, yeah. They stayed down at the, at the railroad station, yeah.

SIGRIST: I see. When you got to Naples, tell me your impressions of the city of Naples.

DI GIORE: Well, we were all stunned because we had never seen it. You see, we had, um, oh, what do you call those, uh, a guide, you know, that guide us. He came to pick us up to Atena, and then he took us to Naples, and he told us, he showed us different places there, and he took us someplace to have some coffee and pastry, whatever, before we got on the boat. Yeah.

SIGRIST: How long were you in Naples before you got on the ship?

DI GIORE: Oh, not too long, a couple of hours, maybe, I don't know.

SIGRIST: Oh, so not very long at all.

DI GIORE: No, not very long, no.

SIGRIST: What did you think when you saw this ship?

DI GIORE: Well, I was scared. I didn't know, you know. What do you know at nine years old? Not too much. Today they know everything, but not in my time.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the ship?

DI GIORE: Patria.

SIGRIST: The Patria.

DI GIORE: P-A-T-R-I-A.

SIGRIST: And, um, tell me about where you slept on the ship. Describe that for me.

DI GIORE: Oh, my mother got on deck, she got into a little bunk bed, and she stayed there for the whole twenty days that we left. And my big brother Sam, he had to go in another room because he was sixteen. He had to go with the men's department, and so my brother Tommy and I stayed with my mother. For twenty days we didn't, you know, we didn't move out of the, out of that little cabin there that we had, because the bunks beds were up and down, like, you know? And, I don't know, I slept next to my mother, or next to my brother Tommy.

SIGRIST: Were there other people that you didn't know in that room?

DI GIORE: Oh, no, we didn't know anybody in that room.

SIGRIST: How many were in that room, would you say?

DI GIORE: I don't remember. I don't remember.

SIGRIST: A lot? Just a few?

DI GIORE: OH, it was quite a few.

SIGRIST: Quite a few.

DI GIORE: Quite a few.

SIGRIST: Did anyone get seasick?

DI GIORE: Yes. Quite a few got seasick.

SIGRIST: What about in your family?

DI GIORE: My mother. My mother, she got on the boat, she stayed in bed for twenty days. She didn't get off that bed at all. And all she kept saying to my brother Sammy was, "If I go, take care of your sister and take care of your brother." That's all she said all the time.

SIGRIST: Meaning that if she died . . .

DI GIORE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: That's how miserable she must have felt.

DI GIORE: OH, yeah. She was deathly sick, yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, while Mom was sick in her bunk, what were you doing on the ship?

DI GIORE: Not much. We couldn't do much because we were afraid to move. WE hang on to dear life to my big brother Sam. We held with one

hand, and the other brother, Tommy held the other hand, and we were, the three of us like three little hermits. I don't know how you say it. We were really scared, the three of us.

SIGRIST: Do you remember doing, do you remember seeing anything that you had never seen before when you were on the ship?

DI GIORE: I don't. You know, because we didn't go too much aboard, you know, on deck.

SIGRIST: Just kind of stayed put.

DI GIORE: We stayed with my mother all the time. She wouldn't let us go.

SIGRIST: So the trip took twenty days. What do you remember about the ship coming into New York Harbor? Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

DI GIORE: Oh, yes. Everybody was on board, and everybody said, "Oh, (Italian)." And they all got down on their knees, and they were so happy that they seen the Statue of Liberty. Oh, that was so beautiful. I'll never forget that part. Yeah. That was so beautiful. Everybody. (Italian) Beautiful.

SIGRIST: Tell me what happened when the ship, the ship came into New York Harbor.

DI GIORE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And then what happened?

DI GIORE: Well, then everybody went their ways, and we had to go to Ellis Island, because my father wasn't there yet. So we went there, and we stayed there overnight at Ellis Island. And then the next morning we got up, and we were like sheep being led, you know. We had to go to the big, big long table for coffee and whatever they had on the table. I don't remember it. I remember the coffee. And I remember my mother, they had salt shakers on the table, but we didn't know it was salt, so she took the shaker and put it in her coffee, and it was salt. I thought that was a big thing. I'll never forget that as long as I live. WE didn't have shakers in Italy. We had sugar, yeah, but we didn't have any of the shakers, you know. And they served us whatever they served. I don't remember what we had, but it didn't appeal to us, because we ate some of those hard, hard cookies. We dunked them in the coffee. That's what we had. And we stayed there overnight.

SIGRIST: Do you remember where you slept on Ellis Island?

DI GIORE: Well, in one of the rooms there, I don't know. Yeah.

SIGRIST: But what did it look like? Do you have any impression of that?

DI GIORE: It looked so big and beautiful, because we had never seen

nothing like that, you know. We're farmers, so we never went much of anywhere. WE just stayed there. That's all. So naturally it was all oohs and aahs and looking around, you know?

It was just fantastic.

SIGRIST: So you stayed overnight, and then your dad came to get you. Tell me about what it was like to see your father for the first time?

DI GIORE: Oh, dear Lord. Well, we were secluded in another room, and the judge was in the chamber there. So all of a sudden he gave one kick to the door, my father, and my mother said, "That's your father." So, of course, my brother Sam knew him, but I didn't (?). Ah, that's my father. Okay. So he came out of the room, tall, dark and handsome, had a moustache on, had a blue suit on, and he went straight to the judge. And the judge says to him, "Do you recognize your family here?" He says, "Yes." "Where are they?" He says, "Over there." "Well, what are their names?" So he gave the four of us, the three, the four of us the names, and he said, "Are you able to support your family?" My father said, "Oh, yes." He took out a bankbook out of his pocket, and there was a thousand dollars in there, and he said, "Yes, I can well afford to take care of my family." So then we got off Ellis Island, we got on the little boat, so we had all the cookies. So my father said, "Here, throw them overboard."

You don't need these any more." So we threw them overboard, and we landed in New York, and he bought us bananas. He said, "This is the fruit of America." But the three of us, we didn't eat it, because we didn't know what they were, you know. So, and that's all. And then we took the train, and we came home, and we landed on Williams Street. That's where my father's brother lives.

SIGRIST: Williams Street in what . . .

DI GIORE: Springfield.

SIGRIST: Oh, in Springfield.

DI GIORE: In Springfield. My, his brother lived there, and so we stayed there overnight.

SIGRIST: What happened that night?

DI GIORE: OH, my gosh, what happened that night? All hugging and kissing and loving each other, and where you come from, and how's this one? They all wanted to know about their friends that we left when we came here. So then we got up the next morning and I saw all the fences around, you know, the houses. So I says to my aunt, "What are the fences there for? Are they because they have chickens or they have pigs, they don't want to go out in the street?" And they laughed at me because I said that. "No,"

she said, "we just, everybody has fences around their houses."
"Oh," I said, "it's different." Because we didn't have one. We
didn't even know what a fence was, because where we lived was
open, the whole town was open. There was no fences anywhere.
So . . .

SIGRIST: And so after you stayed overnight with, with this relative.

DI GIORE: My uncle.

SIGRIST: With your uncle, then where did you go?

DI GIORE: We, my father found a tenement on Howard Street.

SIGRIST: Howard?

DI GIORE: Howard Street in Springfield.

SIGRIST: Howard?

DI GIORE: Howard. H-O-W-A-R-D. Howard.

SIGRIST: Thank you. And was that an Italian neighborhood?

DI GIORE: Yes. All our friends were there that come from the same town.

SIGRIST: Can you walk me through that tenement just as if you were
walking through it and describe it for me?

DI GIORE: Well, we were on the second floor, and we just came down the

stairs. We had to be careful, because we knew the stairs. And then we'd go in the yard and then talk to the Italian people that were there, and then we had to go to school.

SIGRIST: Wait, wait, wait. I want to hear a description of the actual apartment itself. When you walked in, it was on the second floor.

DI GIORE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How many rooms did it have?

DI GIORE: Uh, well, three bedrooms, I guess, because I was the only girl, and the two boys, and my mother and dad in the kitchen. And then, of course, we never saw a stove, because we didn't have any stoves, so that was different. Table and chairs we had, so it was all right.

SIGRIST: What about lighting? What kind of lighting did you have?

DI GIORE: We had electric light.

SIGRIST: You had electric light.

DI GIORE: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: What did you have in Italy?

DI GIORE: Uh, we didn't have it. We did have electricity, but we didn't

have it. Some of the people had electricity, but we did not have it. WE had lamps.

SIGRIST: Oil lamps.

DI GIORE: Oil lamps, yeah. That's what we had.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me about what it was like going to school and learning English.

DI GIORE: Here, in America?

SIGRIST: Here in America, in Springfield.

DI GIORE: Well, we went to Howard Street school. We were enrolled there where my cousins or my aunt took us to school. Of course, he couldn't speak a word of English, neither could I. So they put the two of us in kindergarten. So then . . .

SIGRIST: Was it your brother Sam or your brother Tom?

DI GIORE: My brother Tommy.

SIGRIST: That they put in . . .

DI GIORE: OH, God, my brother Tommy. My brother Sam, he got a job. My uncle got him a job in Milton Bradley's. So he started to work in, not too far, too long. You know, he stayed a while, but then he got a job. And, uh, we went to school, because we came

in October, and the first snow fell in November. We didn't know how to walk on the snow, because we did not have snow where I come from. But my, uh, these friends of ours, see, the Howard Street has a little hill, like, going down from the church, so these friends of ours would pick him up and carry him down the hill, because if not he'd fall and get hurt, because we never have snow. Because the year before he was definitely sick. He came down with pneumonia, my brother Tommy. So we were very careful with him. So they'd pick him up, and I would hold onto the other fellow's hand, just enough to make that little hill coming down, and then we were all right. After a while we were all right. I learned. I learned a lot faster than he did, because I knew the, you know, all I had to do was translate the words, a lot of the words from Italian to English. So when they found out I could do that they put me in third grade. (voice off mike) What's the matter? They put me in third grade. But he stayed in kindergarten, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the first English word that you learned?

DI GIORE: No, but I remember the first song I learned.

SIGRIST: Oh? What was that?

DI GIORE: You're gonna die at this one.

SIGRIST: Sing it for us, please.

DI GIORE: It was a Christmas song. It was (she sings) "Gloria."
That's all I remembered. And then we had another one where we'd
have someone in front of you and they'd go (she sings) "I see
you, I see you, tra-la-la-la-la." That's all I learned. I
never forgot those two things. And at Christmas time when they
played that song, my grandchildren say, "Grandmother, there's
your song." We had a lot of fun.

SIGRIST: Is there an Italian song you could sing for us quickly?

DI GIORE: Oh . . .

SIGRIST: Before we end?

DI GIORE: No, I don't think so.

SIGRIST: No?

DI GIORE: I'd be all mixed up. No, no.

SIGRIST: Did your parents learn English?

DI GIORE: My father did pretty well, but not my mother, no. She did a few
words, but not too much.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about how your mother liked or didn't like
being here in America.

DI GIORE: None of us liked it here. We were going to go back the next day, but we still stayed there. Well, we didn't know how to cook on the stove, so my aunts had to come over and teach her. And, of course, my mother, we made bread in Italy, so she knew how to make the bread, but she didn't know how to use the oven, so my aunts all come over and taught her how to cook on the stove, because we didn't have a stove. But the food is, what we had there we had here, the same thing. So . . .

SIGRIST: But it was a hard adjustment to make.

DI GIORE: Yes. Because we had to have all kinds of pots and pans. Over there we only had one or two, and that's it.

SIGRIST: Your mother hardly saw your father for such a long time.

DI GIORE: I know.

SIGRIST: How did they live together at first? Was it difficult for her?

DI GIORE: I don't know. I don't remember that part, no.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Um, tell me a little bit about, have you ever been back to Italy?

DI GIORE: Yes. I've been back twice.

SIGRIST: What was the first time you went?

DI GIORE: I went back in '62 with my husband.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. And what did it look like to you to go back there?

DI GIORE: It looked the same as if I left it in 1919. No change whatsoever, in 1962 we went. In 1981 I went back with my daughter Carol, and it was altogether different. They had had the tornado, or whatever they, or hurricane, whatever, and everything was all toppled down, their homes. So we were sitting in a garage with my cousins. And so we drove up in a cab. And when I got up to the square, there was my cousin, and she looked just like my mother and one of my brothers, my other brother. So the minute I saw her, I called her. Her name was Antoinette. I said, "Dunay[ph]." I said, "Here we are!" "Madonna!" she says. (Italian) In Italian, she said. (Italian) I said, "No." So, and they took us in their house, in the garage, rather, and she was having macaroni with something. So we sat down, my daughter and I, and they greeted us with open arms, yeah.

SIGRIST: How do you think of yourself? Do you think of yourself as an American, or as an Italian, or how . . .

DI GIORE: I don't know. It's a hard question to answer. I'm happy here. I became a citizen, because I wasn't a citizen.

SIGRIST: What year did you become a citizen?

DI GIORE: In 1940 or '41, yeah. Because if not my husband said he was going to send me back to Italy if I didn't become a citizen. And my big brother had to get, and my brother Sam had to get his own citizen paper, and my brother Tommy did not, because my father got his citizen paper before he was twenty-one, so he was all set. But us two, we had to go to school. Because I knew the language anyway. By that time I knew very well what I was doing.

SIGRIST: Well, great. I think this is probably a good place to end. (he laughs) We made it through a history (?).

DI GIORE: I want to put down that I have two brothers here.

SIGRIST: Yes.

DI GIORE: Michael D'Amato, he's at Fort Charlotte, Florida, and my brother Matthew D'Amato in EAsT Longmeadow, Massachusetts.

SIGRIST: And they were both born here.

DI GIORE: They're born here. Those are the two that were born in America, yes.

SIGRIST: And, also, did you have children when you married?

DI GIORE: Yeah, I have three children.

SIGRIST: Can you name them, too, please?

DI GIORE: Yeah. I have one, Anthony DiGiore, my boy, and then I have Rosemary Lord, she lives in Philadelphia, and Carol lives in Nashville, Tennessee. The three children.

SIGRIST: Great.

DI GIORE: That one there's not married, yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, I want to thank you very much for letting me ask you these questions. And we'll move on to one of the D'Amato brothers. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Rose DiGiore on Tuesday, August 13, 1996, in Longmeadow, Massachusetts. Thank you.

DI GIORE: Okay, you're welcome.