

EI-787

LILLIAN (CALOGERA) COSTANZA BUTTAGGI
BIRTH DATE: MARCH 28, 1920
INTERVIEW DATE: MARCH 28, 1920
RUNNING TIME: 1:11:00
INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PhD
RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME
INTERVIEW LOCATION: ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 2/1998
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: IRV SILBERG

SICILY, 1930
AGE 10

SHIP: "THE SATURNIA"
PORT: NAPLES
RESIDENCES:

- **ITALY: TERMINI IMERESE, SICILY**
- **US: ROCHESTER, NY**

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, 8/14/1997.

LEVINE: Today is August 16, 1996. I'm here in Rochester, New York with Lillian Buttaggi, who came from Sicily at the age of ten in 1930. Today

Mrs. Buttaggi is a very young seventy-six.

BUTTAGGI: Nicely put. (They laugh)

LEVINE: And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'll be conducting the interview. Let's start at the beginning, Mrs. Buttaggi. If you would say again, for the tape, where you were born . . .

BUTTAGGI: Yes.

LEVINE: The town, and your birth date.

BUTTAGGI: Yes. I was born in a town about thirty miles away from Palermo, Sicily in 1920, as I stated. And I grew up there until I was --- my father came back from America when I was nine, so I never knew my dad until then. And it was a very hard life on my poor mom. Because she lived in a small town where,- you know, you couldn't go anywheres because you hadn't ---- didn't have your husband with you, you know? And we were very restricted where we could go and what we could do. But it's a lovely town, that Termini. It's located on a hill, more or less, I would say, maybe even a mountain. And they have a park up there. And I can just see it where we would go on Sunday afternoons to listen to concerts. And the ocean would be on the left, and you could see it all in the panoramic view and the mountain on the right side --- lovely place.

LEVINE: Did you spell the name of this town for the tape? I don't think you did.

BUTTAGGI: Yeah. The name, the name of the town is Termini Imerese. And it is spelled T-E-R-M-I-N-I, and then capital I-M-E-R-E-S-E. Lovely, lovely panoramic place.

LEVINE: Okay. And perhaps you could say your name when you were born and your birth date.

BUTTAGGI: Yes. I was baptized as Calogera after my grandmother, which means actually the female for Charles, Charlene. And, um, I was born in March 15, no March 28th, [Laughs] 1920.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And your last name at that time?

BUTTAGGI: My last name was Costanza. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: And, uh, so did you, well, why don't you give me your mother's name?

BUTTAGGI: Oh yes. My mother's name was Vincenza, and they called her Vincenzina, you know, which meant little Vincenza. And when she came to this country, though, she changed that to Jenny, and she wanted to be Americanized. Oh, mom was a big flag waver. She was so happy to be in America, and she wanted to become Americanized, and she changed her name to Jenny. [Laughs]

LEVINE: And how about her maiden name?

BUTTAGGI: Her maiden name was, in Italian you would pronounce it Dentice, which

is D-E-N-T-I-C-E, Dentice. And my mom often would talk about her, that she lost brothers. And that when she went, there went the family name -- because there was nobody else, you know, surviving. And she felt very sad about that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And how about your father? What was his name?

BUTTAGGI: Oh, my father's name was Marco, and his father, my grandfather, came to America, but he landed in Pennsylvania, and he didn't like working in the coal mines. So he went back. And he never come back, because he didn't like that.

LEVINE: Now, whose father was that?

BUTTAGGI: My father's father. Yeah. And, uh, he, uh, went back to Sicily and he, he came from the southern part of Sicily, a place called Agrigento. And, uh, he had salt mines there. So he went back to the salt mines. [Laughs] Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you, when you think about those first ten years --

BUTTAGGI: Yes.

LEVINE: what are the highlights in your mind?

BUTTAGGI: Well, those first ten years, I missed my dad, because I was two when he left. And he came to America through an uncle who prepared affidavits

and, uh, you know, assured the government that he was going to be taken care of and get a job, which my father did. And he lived with this aunt and uncle in Connecticut, Ansonia, to be exact. And he worked for the American Brass Company. And Dad went to night school.

He got his own papers, became a citizen, and he saved some money and came back to Italy to pick us up. And I was nine at the time. I didn't know my dad. The only thing I knew was that, well, my mom used to have his pictures around, "That's Dad." And, uh, I remember when I was around six and seven, you know, you lose your teeth when you're at that age. I used to mail them to him and write him little notes, and he would send me some American money. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Do you remember anything he ever told you in his letters?

BUTTAGGI: Uh, no, because he would just write long letters to Mom and I, you know, I was just treated as a child. But, uh, Dad missed us so much. And when he came back he thought he was going to stay in Italy for a while, but he didn't like anything like that. And after having been in America he says, "Uh-uh, we're getting out of here." So he started to make, you know, make our papers and all that, you know, that goes with it, to come to America with the whole family --- which was myself, my mom and my sister.

LEVINE: What was your sister's name?

BUTTAGGI: My sister's name was Mary, Maria. And, uh, she was younger than I.

She was an infant when Dad left, and she didn't know Dad any more than I did, naturally. And the -- we all came to America. And, of course, we went through a lot of procedures in Palermo and Naples, even though my dad was a citizen. And, uh, my sister and I, in those days, of course, became citizens, derivative citizens. Uh, because that's the way the law was. But not Mom, you know? Well, we went through a lot of procedures in Palermo, and then in Naples more health examinations, and we left from, from Naples on the Saturnia ship. It was in June there. It took us about ten days to get to New York.

LEVINE: Okay. Before we talk about going to New York, what about, um, did you go to school at all while you were still . . .

BUTTAGGI: When I was in Italy, yes. I, uh, I completed the third grade, and I also had part of the fourth grade, you know. But when we --- I didn't finish that, because we left. So I, uh, I had a, you might say a background of Italian. But you know what? When we got to America, and I started to learn English and go to school here, I wanted to be American. And, you know, my sister practically forgot her Italian. She just wanted to concentrate on that. So did I, really. In fact, um, many of my friends today, when I tell them I was born in Italy and came to America when I was just about ten, they don't believe it. They says, "Well, you speak pretty well." I says, "That's because I wanted to learn. I wanted to be American." And, as a matter of fact, being ten years old, I started with grammar school, and I, uh, graduated from high school with my, you know, everybody else who was practically my age. So I graduated from East High School here. I did.

LEVINE: What about your family and religion when you were still in . . .

BUTTAGGI: In Italy? Oh, well, religion was always the most important thing. I used to go to religi---, religion instructions in a local church. I received First Communion there. As a matter of fact, I have a picture of the church. It's a postcard, you know? And, uh, and I remember my mom, oh, my gosh, did she fuss. We went to Palermo to pick out the material to have my dress made, and I have a big picture. My daughter keeps it at her house as something to talk about. [Laughs] And, uh, it was lovely, you know, the way I was dressed. I think comparable to any of the kids here.

LEVINE: Can you think of any church ceremonies or festivities . . .

BUTTAGGI: Oh, yes!

LEVINE: In Italy, before you left?

BUTTAGGI: Yes. There was one feast day that I don't remember too much but, uh, you know, in Europe it's so common when they have a feast day like St. Agnes, St. Augustine, and they, uh, or the, uh, the Feast of the Blessed Mother, you know, in December 8th. They have processions, and then fireworks and stuff like that. And I remember my mom and my uncle taking me to those affairs, 'cause my dad wasn't there.

And I do remember when I was very, very young I was in one of the processions for the Feast of St. Agnes, and I was dressed in a blue

dress with wings, and --- and --and they were -- wings were then, you know, somebody had glued the feathers, white feathers on it, and it was so pretty. And sandals, you know, and we were a group of children just, uh, you know, uh, parading, you know, going to the church, like that. I remember that part. And, uh, I remember receiving First Communion, and the big fuss over that, you know. And, um, I think that's about all about, you know, the church, but going to instructions, you know, religious instructions.

LEVINE: Did you, do you remember any ceremonies or rituals around either birth or death or marriage or, uh, anything, any kinds of ceremonies?

BUTTAGGI: Well, I remember somebody -- I was so young. We went to a wedding, and I was chosen by this, it was typical in those days. I had to learn a poem and recite it at the church, to the bride and groom. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Oh. It would be typical for a little girl . . .

BUTTAGGI: Yeah, a little girl would do that. Yes, yes. I remember that --- that one, one wedding that I was in, and this was the purpose of it all. And I had a little friend who lived across the street from us, and her grandfather was the director or, you might say, the, help me. Uh, of education, you know?

LEVINE: Principal?

BUTTAGGI: More than that. He was . . .

LEVINE: Superintendent?

BUTTAGGI: Superintendent of the schools. And the father was a professor, and, you know, over there in Europe, in Italy, is no different. There's always a distinction between poor people, the class, you know? And, uh, these people then --- wouldn't let their granddaughter, uh, play around with anybody, you know? They were very fussy. But I was one of the chosen. And, uh, they were wealthy people because they had a maid, they had a housekeeper, and I was allowed to play with this child. And her father was a professor, which was a big thing. And, uh, and when they used to go to the mountains in summer, I used to go with them too. And I -- I remember that. And, uh, unfortunately, uh, we came to America, and I never corresponded with this child. I wished I had.

And, uh, when we were, my husband and I were married twenty-five years; we celebrated by taking a trip to Europe. And, uh, we, uh, went back to, uh, the town where I was born. I wanted him to see it. So we were there a couple of days. And, uh, I inquired about this family, and they all had moved to Palermo after the war, and we stopped in Palermo overnight, and I, uh, was able to locate the mother of this young, uh, you know, friend -- old friend of mine. And she said that she had married and was living in Verona, way up in North Italy. And, uh, I was so sorry that I didn't know about it, because I had stopped in Verona before I was down--went down south, and it would have been nice to have seen her again.

And, uh, and then I was able to contact my mother's godmother, who she

was really on in years, and I called her on the phone and I told her who I was, and she says, "I am so delighted that you called me." She said, "How is my godchild?" I says, "I'm sorry to tell you, she passed away." And she says, "Oh, I feel bad, but I am so pleased that you called me." She was just thrilled. And, of course, she wanted me to visit her, and I says, "I can't. We're leaving in the morning." And if I had stayed in Palermo longer I would have, you know, gone to visit her. And it was fun, you know? And . . .

LEVINE: Is a godparent, was a godparent in Italy at that time the same thing as it is here?

BUTTAGGI: Yes.

LEVINE: Was there anything more or less about it?

BUTTAGGI: No. They were very interesting in the child, you know, and as the child grew. And she was my mother's.

LEVINE: How about the little girl that you were friends with? What kinds of things would you do when you were just playing when you were little?

BUTTAGGI: We used to play with dolls. As a matter of fact, she had an uncle who came from Milan, northern Italy, and he came to visit her because he knew of me, he brought me a doll. I still have it.

LEVINE: Really!

BUTTAGGI: I still have that doll, because I never had a doll in my life. In fact, I . . .

LEVINE: What kind of a doll? Could you describe the doll?

BUTTAGGI: Well, she is dressed with red, white and blue. No, red, white and green, that's what it is, like the Italian flag. And she has blonde hair, and a bisque face, and bisque hands, you know, arms.

LEVINE: Bisque is like . . .

BUTTAGGI: It's breakable, it's breakable. And I still have that. [Laughs] That little thing. I have to laugh, because I just held onto it all these years.

LEVINE: Oh, that's wonderful.

BUTTAGGI: Yeah, uh-huh. It was very nice. And I remember going to a wedding with this wealthy family and, um, and we took a picture on, uh, oh, my God, with those --- a lot of the guests, you know? And, of course, my girl friend, myself and my sister, we were all in the front, being little children, little tykes. I must have been probably about seven, you know, very young, really. It was fun. And, uh, the fun things that we did were, like, uh, after Easter Sunday, you know, on Easter Monday, it was a big thing, you know, like going on a big picnic. And we used to go to the farms, and we would bring food, and have lots of fun.

And, uh, I recall one time, too, we, they used to have auto races on the

outskirts of our, of our city. Uh, in fact, it was near Cefalu. Cefalu was a city between Termini and, uh, oh, well. I'll think about that other city. But, anyway, it was near Cefalu, and they had the roadways all trimmed with gorgeous, uh, oranges and lemons. Because, you see, Sicily in that area is known for the lemons and oranges. And, uh, the, uh, the stage was all set up in these beautiful orange and lemons, and some of them were huge like that. And I remember we watched the races and, uh, I like to talk about my mom. We had --- we slept overnight in this farmhouse, and there wasn't room enough for everybody, and in those days whoever heard of a sleeping bag. And my mom was so afraid of bugs and things getting to my sister and I that she wrapped us in a blanket, and then she stuck a burlap bag and tied it around our necks. [Laughs] Well, she had ingenuity. You've got to; you've got to admit that. My mom was quite, uh, a gal when it came to ingenuity.

LEVINE: Talk more about your mom.

BUTTAGGI: Oh, my mom, oh, gosh. She was something. She was a super person, so intelligent. Uh, she had such a, a knack for cooking. She could cook fish in so many ways it wasn't even funny.

LEVINE: Can you remember any of her dishes, any of the . . .

BUTTAGGI: Oh, the -- the -- her specialty, her specialty was, uh, you know, living on the Mediterranean, she used to make sar-- the fresh sardines which were, you know, about the size of whiting. And she would debone them and make a bread stuffing, and then she would have the fish on the

bottom and the fish on the top, and --- and she -- that she would fix those up -- it -- they were just out of this world. Another dish she used to make was that pasta Milanese, which is fennel with sardines, anchovies in there. And then to put on top, she would toast plain breadcrumbs, you know, and it would be put on top. And those were two of her real specialties. And she used to cook whiting that was always so delicious, too. But she used to cook a lot of fish, yeah.

LEVINE: And, now, she was strictly a homemaker?

BUTTAGGI: Yes.

LEVINE: Or did she do anything outside of the home?

BUTTAGGI: Mom was strictly a homemaker because, uh, of her background. That's what they were—they were raised to—to --- you know, do and to be. Uh, but, uh, I tell you, when Mom came to America --- oh, I tell you --- she had a lot of business-minded ideas. I remember when, uh, when --- she often talked about going into business, because she would have loved it. She loved people, and she had a way with people. But, uh, unfortunately we, we just didn't have the money to get started in anything. But, um, for a while, uh, she did help my dad. In fact, she pushed him into it, to have a fruit, uh, stand at our public market here in the city, and they used to sell fruit, bananas, oranges and all kinds of things like that.

LEVINE: And so that, was that what your father did?

BUTTAGGI: No. My father, actually, was a mason, a mason helper, and he did a lot of that kind of labor, you know, work. As a matter of fact, the church I belong to now, he was working for the, uh, builder when they were constructing that church. And I'd often sit there in church, and I'd wonder, "I wonder which of the cement blocks he carried up there and put up there." And St. Cecelia's is on Culver Road, and I just happen to be a member there, because I live in the area. And, but I know my dad worked, my dad worked, when they were building that top layer of the Eastman Kodak building. He worked at the State Hospital when they were building that, and, uh, but he, this was the kind of work that he was trained, from a young child.

LEVINE: When he was in Italy, before he came to this country, what was he doing? Was he doing that kind of work?

BUTTAGGI: Well, I think so. But he was, he did serve after, right at the end of World War One, he did serve in the army. And, uh, in fact, right after he got out of there, that's when he really says, "I'm not staying over here. There's nothing much to give my family a better life." So he wrote to his uncle in Connecticut and told him, he says, "Can you help me? I want to come to America?" See, Sicily is a very, it's an agricultural area. Although I understand now that there is a Fiat factory here and there, and they've changed it some. Uh, I haven't been back there in the last twenty, twenty-six, twenty-seven years.

In fact, since I've been in this country, I've only been back once, when

my husband and I celebrated our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. And I saw things in Italy that I had never even imagined that I never saw before in my life, because we just couldn't go out, couldn't go away anywhere. And, uh, it was a tour that we took, and we started from the northern part of Italy to the southern part, and I saw things that really made me proud to be of Italian heritage, because of the arts and the background, and, you know, even with Sicily, it's such an ancient land. And when we saw those Greek buildings and Greek temples and, uh, the background, and the beauty, you know? I says, "What a misnomer to call the people that come from here mafia." I can't stand that word. It irritates me. I hate it. Because there's a lot of good people. Why give this misnomer to the whole bunch?

LEVINE: Right.

BUTTAGGI: But, uh, Sicily is lovely. In fact, a lot of times I always joke and tell everybody that there are only two kinds of people, the ones who are Sicilians, and the ones who wish they were. (They laugh)

LEVINE: That's great.

BUTTAGGI: I love to tell them that.

LEVINE: What about Termini? What else do you remember about it?

BUTTAGGI: Well, Termini, the only thing I can really recall is going to school and, uh . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about school compared with maybe when you came here, what school was like here?

BUTTAGGI: Well, they were very rigid, you know? Oh, yes. I remember the, it's like some of the, uh, old, you know, country schools. That's what it was like, really. And, you know, the bathrooms were horrible where you had to jump and make sure you hit the hole. [Laughs] You know? Like the --- those that they used to have in back of the house?

LEVINE: Yes.

BUTTAGGI: Are you aware of the fact that a lot of the people who came from the southern part and south of Naples, which is the area called Abruzzi, that these people came mostly from that area because it was such a depressed area. And they're the ones who really have, came to New York and lived in, you know, around the Battery and all those places. And, uh, they went, they did a lot of sewing in the sewing factories. These poor souls, they wanted to better their lives.

LEVINE: What did your father do while he was here before the family came over in order to send money to you to come over?

BUTTAGGI: He lived with his aunt and uncle, and he, uh, went to night school, as I said before, and he sent Mom some money, and he saved money to come and get us.

LEVINE: And was he . . .

BUTTAGGI: And that took him seven years.

LEVINE: Was he working as a helper, as a . . .

BUTTAGGI: No, no. He was working for the American brass company. He got a job there.

LEVINE: Here, in Rochester?

BUTTAGGI: No, not in Rochester, in Connecticut, in Ansonia, Connecticut. That's where my father lived.

LEVINE: Oh.

BUTTAGGI: That's where he went to school.

LEVINE: We were going to live there, too. But, uh, after we arrived, and my mom was expecting my brother and, uh, his, the aunt we were staying with waiting to find an apartment passed away suddenly. So my father's sister, who lived in Rochester, uh, you know, kind of convinced my father to come and live here, which was a great mistake.

LEVINE: Why do you say that?

BUTTAGGI: Because my father had a job up there, and we came here, we had hard

times.

LEVINE: Oh, what was . . . ?

BUTTAGGI: Very . . .

LEVINE: You said the Brice] Company?

BUTTAGGI: No, American Brass.

LEVINE: Oh, American Brass. So what kind of a, what kind of work did he do?

BUTTAGGI: Well, it was probably, you know, line work. I . . .

LEVINE: Like a brass factory.

BUTTAGGI: A brass factory, yes. And, you know, they made the wires, you know, for electrical work.

LEVINE: I see.

BUTTAGGI: Yeah. So Dad worked there all those years.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And it's really interesting that he wanted to come here when his own father had come and gone back.

BUTTAGGI: Yeah. Well, you see, the trouble with that was, as I stated before,

Grandpa ended up in Pennsylvania with some of his other cronies and family, you know, people that he knew. And, uh, he didn't like working in the mines. In those days it was real bad.

LEVINE: So your father just probably decided it was the place.

BUTTAGGI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Rather than . . .

BUTTAGGI: Right.

LEVINE: [Laughs]

BUTTAGGI: Well, of course, you know, his uncle and aunt from, uh, who lived in Connecticut, in Ansonia, he's the one who really prepared all the affidavits and paperwork and helped him to come. So, naturally, he went that -- that direction. See, this is the way that it was in those days. It all depends who helped you to get here. And they had to be on quota, you know. And it was very difficult, very difficult. Uh, my father's sister and husband ended up in Pennsylvania, and they -- I have a sister-in-law, her father was from the same area, and they were living up in the ----you know, in Pennsylvania, too. In fact, she often talks about the fact that she was born in Punxsutawny where they have every year the groundhog comes out to see if it sees its shadow. So every year, you know, I tell her, "Well, are you going to go to Pinxsutawny?" [Laughs] They, uh, they had a hard life there. My aunt used to talk about the fact

that she used to hang up clothes in the morning after she washed, and by evening when they were dry they were just full of soot. It was awful, Pittsburgh, around that area, was terrible. And eventually, I don't know how they came to Rochester, but they came to Rochester. See what it is, they used to follow each other wherever there were jobs to be had, so they just traveled. Like my kid brother often says to me, "How come Sicilians ended up in a place like this where we get snow and cold weather when they were so used to the sunshine?" I says, "Well, I wonder, too." I says, "But it's simple. The answer is this is where the jobs used to be." And that's where they went.

LEVINE: Talking about, uh, before you left Italy. Is there anything else that, um, comes to your mind about that period, that first ten years?

BUTTAGGI: That first ten years it was, uh . . .

LEVINE: Any effects of it, maybe?

BUTTAGGI: Well, it was a lonesome life. My mother was very restricted because it was customary that if her husband wasn't there she shouldn't be running around. As a matter of fact, my mother used me to go to the store for her. Go to the store for this, and go to the store for that. Do you know that I remember ---- I bet a lot of people don't even know this, ---but my mom used to buy the wheat and clean it, you know, pick out the stones and everything. And then she would give me a sack full, and I had to go to the miller. And I had to watch the miller put it in the bin there and turn it into flour and take it home so Mom could make bread.

LEVINE: Wow.

BUTTAGGI: I used to do that.

LEVINE: Your mother really didn't, couldn't even like go to the store?

BUTTAGGI: She couldn't do anything.

LEVINE: Because . . .

BUTTAGGI: Because it was restricted because she was, uh, you know, she didn't have a husband and, you know, like the old-timers, they'd say, oh, she might go out and have a friend, you know? And they were very, very strict about stuff like that.

END SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGIN SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

LEVINE: Who did she see?

BUTTAGGI: Oh, she had her girlfriends around. In fact, many years later when we came to Rochester she had one girl friend who lived two streets up, and I used to get the biggest bang out of it when, uh, she would come over and she would call her, you know, the old name. She'd say, "Vincenzina[, ay," in Italian. She'd say, "How long I haven't seen you!" You know? She would start from the side door and come into the house, you know? And, uh, she was so cute. As a matter of fact, yesterday I

was at a card party, and I met the daughter of this lady. And this daughter, when we arrived from Italy, she was a baby. And we used to, my cousins and I, we used to fight who was going to give her a bath. We used to love to mother her, you know, and play with her. And then again, too, this is at the time that I, uh, started to be around the neighborhood, and kids would call us wops because we had earrings on. And I forbid my mother to let me wear earrings. And it used to irritate me so bad. I used to cry. I used to cry so much. You know, the first class that I went to after I arrived here in Rochester, we didn't speak English, not a word. And, uh, we went to Number Nine school, and this class, uh, was, uh, just chuck full of Jewish children, German, Italian, Polish, and we couldn't talk to each other because we didn't, we didn't have a common language. And the teacher didn't speak any of our language either. But she taught us English. She would teach us. And I'll never forget her.

LEVINE: What was her name?

BUTTAGGI: Um, I recall her name at times, Ambrose. Mrs. Ambrose. And she was a lovely teacher. Every morning she would start off the class with, "Good morning, good morning to you," you know? and she was so sweet. And she would teach us, you know, how to --- I st-- you know, like if you got up from your seat, she'd say, "I stand up, well, I stand up." And this is how we learned our English. "I walk to the door. I walk to the window. I open the window." And we learned our English that way.

LEVINE: Now, is this class a regular public school class?

BUTTAGGI: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: It wasn't a special class.?

BUTTAGGI: No special class. And now a days you take the Spanish, the Spanish-speaking people there, what do they do? They want everything in Spanish, and the kids aren't learning the English. Now, I was working part-time for the city school district about ten, twelve years ago, they were even requesting from the school district funny books in Spanish. Now, these kids grow up, they're concentrated on Spanish, they don't know their English. You in America, you speak English. English is the language. Why should we speak German and – and --- and Vietnamese and all that? This is America, and you want to be American. I don't know ---I don't know of anybody who wanted to be more American than my mom. She was great.

LEVINE: Now, when you were leaving Italy, you say you had examinations . . .

BUTTAGGI: Oh, yes. We went through examinations in Palermo. We went through lots of examinations, even in Naples.

LEVINE: What kind of examinations? Do you recall that?

BUTTAGGI: Health, your ears, your eyes, especially. And I remember I even had to go through a written exam, and I don't recall what kind of questions they asked, but, you know, at that time Mussolini was in power, and he, uh, requested that all young schoolchildren had to be what they called, an

organization which meant like juniors, you know? And, uh, they asked questions, political questions, you know? And they wanted to know if you were a subversive or something like that. But mostly I do recall that we had to really strip, and --- and --- and the thing that bothered me most was the --- how many times they turned our eyelids in and out. And, um, you know, I' got to tell you this.

When we went back to Italy, my husband and I, for, uh, you know, our twenty-fifth anniversary, we --- one of our stops was in Naples. And, uh, they were having a strike, so we couldn't stay at the hotel we were scheduled to stay at. However, we, our guide provided us with a --- sort of a second-rate hotel. And, uh, when we got to this hotel, it was right near the port, the port of Naples. And I, I almost could swear it brought back memories. I thought that it was the same place that we stayed when we were going to leave for America. And it just brought back such nostalgia. I ---- I --- like I could bring it all back, all by memory. And, uh, and then when we were going to include it in our tour was a trip from the port of Naples to Palermo. This, uh, take up one of these smaller ships.

So what happened was, uh, as we walked through the port -- during World War Two, I had read where it was devastated, you know, bombed, and it was just leveled. And, of course, you do recall about Monte Casino, where the Germans were throwing everything but the kitchen sink from the monastery to the American soldiers, so the whole place was devastated. But they rebuilt it exactly the way it was. And when I walked down through the port to get to the area where we were going to get on this little ship to go to Palermo, it was exactly like when I was

there as a young child. And, I mean, all the little stores, you know, boutiques, places to stop for a bite to eat, and I closed my eyes and I says, "Oh, my God. I almost can feel my Mom and my Dad right here at my side." It was such an experience, just beautiful, beautiful. So that's one of the memories I have on going back. It was lovely.

LEVINE: How about on the ship? Do you have memories of the ship?

BUTTAGGI: Oh, yes. We traveled second class, which was really pretty luxurious. And, oh, I remember the, uh, we had our own table and our own waiter, and, uh, of course, you see, now, my mom was pregnant, and my dad wanted her to have better accommodations. And I remember they had movies, and they had, uh, oh, gosh, they had so much going on. But as a child I remembered, oh, I remember going to church, and everything was in velvet, the seats and the drapery, red velvet. It was beautiful.

LEVINE: Do you remember if there were steerage passengers on your ship?

BUTTAGGI: Well, there were people who were traveling third class, and that was way down, you know? They didn't have the luxuries we did on the second, yeah. As a matter of fact, the people from first class and second class were able to walk back and forth, you know? Go to each other's facilities. But the third class people couldn't. See? They were traveling at a cheaper rate, and they were down below, yeah. But it was a luxury liner. It was a lovely, lovely ship. It was huge. Oh, my. When I saw it in the Port of Naples, you just couldn't believe it.

Oh, you know, when we were leaving the, when we were on the tour and we got aboard a ship to go to Palermo, it was in the evening, and as the ship started to leave the port, uh, it suddenly, you know, got dark, and the city lights went on. And as we went down out of the port, we met American naval ships out there, and they lit up all the outline of the ship with the American flag, and we all went up on deck and we started singing America the Beautiful and clapping, and it was so beautiful. And then as the ship kept on going out, you could see the Vesuvius, just like a picture, you know, a postcard picture, just beautiful.

LEVINE: Do you remember when the ship, when the, uh . . .

BUTTAGGI: Saturnia.

LEVINE: . . . Saturnia came into the New York Harbor?

BUTTAGGI: Oh, yes. OH, yes, because my dad took me up on deck, and he says, "You've got to see this," and we, we went up there and, uh, as we were approaching it, we were, the ship was on this side. Supposedly it was going towards the Battery. And, uh, the Statue of Liberty was right here on the left, and I could see it. And Dad says, "You see that statue?" He says, "You know what that means?" He says, "People live here, not like in Italy. We're more free here." And as a child I couldn't understand this freedom, what was it all about? And my dad was so excited. You know, he says, "Look at it." And we stayed there, you know, to watch it was we went past it, and that was very exciting, yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember New York City, anything initially that stuck you?

BUTTAGGI: Well, you know, the only thing I remember was this big city and as we went from --- we got our luggage and stuff, and we went to the railroad to go to Connecticut. And, of course, I had been in Palermo, but this, was awesome. [Laughs] And we, uh, we were just awed, you know, looking around. And, uh, and every time, when we got to my father's aunt, and there was all these trees around, and it was such a beautiful, you know, area. And we would say to --- we would ask, "Does this tree bear any fruit?" "Oh, no, it's just for shade." "Does this tree bear anything?" "No." See, now, we were used to, in Italy a tree has got to be there for a reason. It's got to have certain things. I remember my grandfather, he, uh, my mother's father, he had an olive orchard. And he didn't raise any lemons or oranges, but he did raise the lemons, I mean the olives, there. And he, uh, would supply the family too with, you know, other essentials. But, uh, you know, like celery and things, and he would plant. And I remember going to the farm with my grandfather and, uh, picking the olives. Yeah. It was really cute. I remember going, too, with my grandmother. [Laughs]

LEVINE: To the olive . . .

BUTTAGGI: To the olive orchards, yeah.

LEVINE: Wow. Did they make their own oil, or how was it done?

BUTTAGGI: Oh, well, they would sell some of the olives when they had a good crop.

And some of it they would ask for the oil. And I know my, my grandmother used to keep a barrel full of oil in her closet where she kept, you know, all the different things you know that she saved, you know, to eat in winter. And whenever she wanted oil, she just went up there and filled up the jug full and brought it down to the kitchen. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Oh, wow.

BUTTAGGI: Yeah. She used to dry her own tomatoes. You know, there would be dried tomatoes, and she would have dried figs. And whenever she wasn't looking, the children would-- we would be going to get them in. You know, it was a big treat to eat the dried figs or anything else that she had up there that was dry. [Laughs] Yeah. That was cute.

LEVINE: So let's see. So when you got to Connecticut . . .

BUTTAGGI: Yeah. Well, we . . .

LEVINE: What happened? Your aunt and uncle . . .

BUTTAGGI: My father started working, and we were, you know, he was waiting for an apartment so we could move there, and we were staying with his aunt when she died suddenly, and that's what started the, uh, everything rolling differently. And my aunt who was in Rochester came there for the job and talked my father into coming here, and we just stuck here since. [Laughs]

LEVINE: So you came really during the Depression.

BUTTAGGI: Oh, don't tell me about that Depression. Because I remember my dear mother, she didn't have two nickels to rub together. And, unfortunately when my father got to Rochester, he couldn't find work. He did get something seasonal, but he was out of work, and it was a rough time for my mom. A new baby, two children, and we went through a very bad hardship. And I remember the Depression real well.

LEVINE: What do you remember about it?

BUTTAGGI: What I remember? I remember my brother was born, and I was ten, and I used to come home from school, and I used to have to wash all the diapers by hand in the bathtub with a scrub board. I remember my mother, uh, she would make extra sheets, you know, for the beds, and she would buy the flour sacks from the miller, the bakery, you know, in the area, and she used to bleach the heck out of them, they were as white as snow, and she would make sheets out of them. She made nightgowns out of them. I remember having Pillsbury all the way across here or maybe down here at my feet. [Laughs] Oh, yes. Because no matter what you did, that name never came out. (They laugh) She couldn't remove it. Oh, the poor dear lady. She used to bake bread . . .

LEVINE: And how about food?

BUTTAGGI: She used to bake bread twice a week, and she did a lot of things herself. She used to make root beer and bottle it. Sometimes if it wasn't bottled

very good --- during the night you'd hear this pop. Pow! [Laughs]
What's that? [Laughs] But, uh, she did all that.

LEVINE: And what else? How about, like, food rationing? Do you remember . . . ?

BUTTAGGI: Oh, that's during the War. I remember the rationing, yes. Well, I, you know, I went through grammar --- through grammar school, and then I was in high school, and when World War Two started I was already graduated from high school, because I graduated in '39. I couldn't get a job. My name ended in a vowel. You couldn't get a job. And, uh, finally a wonderful Jewish man gave me a break, and I went in there cold turkey, working for this lawyer, and I had to learn, you know, all the headings, City Court, Supreme Court, County Court, you know?

LEVINE: Where was the, what was the, who was the, uh, person you worked for?

BUTTAGGI: Louie Byunis I worked for Mr. Louie Byunis right here at the Four Corners.

LEVINE: In the court? In the . . .

BUTTAGGI: No .He ---

LEVINE: In his office.

BUTTAGGI: In his office. I worked in his office. He had a private practice, yeah. I worked for him. He gave me a break. And this was --were-- you know,

just previous to, you know, World War Two. And then, uh, I was delivering some papers to an Italian lawyer, and he says, "What are you doing working for a Jewish man?" I says, "He's a wonderful person, he gave me a break, and there's nothing wrong with it." And he said, "Well, you know, I'm looking for a girl." I says, "You are?" I says, "What are you paying?" He says, so he asked me. He says, "Well, how much are you, how much are you making now?" I said, "I'm making ten a week." Typing --- typing err-- all day long, summons, complaints and everything, ten dollars a week. So he said, "Well, I'll pay you fifteen if you come and work for me." So I went to work for him.

And, uh, my boss was very nice. He says, "Okay, Lillian. I can't afford to give you fifteen right now." He says, "But if you want to go, you're free to go." He took me out to lunch one day, and we left very amicably. And, uh, I went to work for this other man. And it was at this time that there was a lot of talk about preparingness, Pre--- Mr. Roosevelt talking about preparingness, and things weren't ---didn't sound good, you know, in Europe. And, uh, and they were opening up, oh, a lot of offices in the city to take care of army contracts. So at this point I, uh, I wa—I want to apply for a Civil Service job, and I didn't have my own papers. So had to send in my papers 'cause I had to prove that I was a citizen. And at this time my mother was so worried that the papers were going to get lost. These were holy papers, you know? She didn't want anything to happen to them. So I applied for my own and I got my own because I was a derivative citizen. So, uh, I got my own papers. I went and passed my civil service test, and I got a job working for Uncle Sam, right here in the Civil Tower building.

LEVINE: What did you do there?

BUTTAGGI: That was the war department, and there I worked where they were taking care of contracts with all the different factories. And, uh, I, uh, I -- and I was there until I left to --- I got married, and I went to live in Texas with my husband, who was a soldier. And we got married, you know, he was a, he was a soldier. He had his army uniform on.

LEVINE: How did you meet him?

BUTTAGGI: I met him at a friend's house here in Rochester, yeah. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: Now, was he of Italian extraction?

BUTTAGGI: He was of Italian extraction, but he was born right here. And, uh, but I tell you, it was funny because when he went for his baptismal record, his name appeared one way, the last name was spelled another way, and this was so typical of those days, yeah. So when I got to Texas, in Abilene, I got a job there working for Uncle Sam, too. So I worked at, uh, at the camp, Camp, um, Barkeley.

LEVINE: That was the army camp?

BUTTAGGI: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

BUTTAGGI: Camp Barekley. Camp Barkeley, Texas. And my husband, previous to that, was in Camp Campbell, Kentucky. But, uh, he was with the 12th Armored Division. He was in the service for three-and-a-half years, three-and-a-half years. He was in Germany. He started in France. He was in Germany. And, uh, and, of course, he trained, you know.

LEVINE: What was that like for you, to know that he was . . . ?

BUTTAGGI: Over there? It was, it wasn't easy. It wasn't easy. But we were together about ten months in Texas and, uh, I enjoyed it.

LEVINE: What was the feeling then as far as you were concerned and the people you knew, about the war and the attitudes. that people expressed? . .

BUTTAGGI: We were, we were all American. Our hearts were bleeding for America. I know my sister went to work at a plant there where they did different things for the submarines. She went to learn how to solder. And, uh, she was making more money than I. She was working for Stromberg Carlson. I lost my sister to cancer some time ago. And, uh, we -- we were all American. We felt sorry for the -- for Italy because they were in cohoo--you know, in cohorts with, or together with the Germans. But, uh, we were, we felt very, very sorry for them because, you know, you had relatives there, just like the German people had relatives in Germany. And we felt very, very bad. I remember when I was in Texas and I was working in the office at the camp. There was a girl who was --- who had a boyfriend who was of Japanese ancestry. Oh, they made life

miserable for her and him. Oh, it was terrible, terrible.

LEVINE: You mean just . . .

BUTTAGGI: Because he was out, prejudice, the prejudice. Yes. Oh, that was awful.

LEVINE: Did you know of any Italian people who were rounded up for detention or even deportation during that Second World War?

BUTTAGGI: No, no. Not that. But, uh, anybody who wasn't --- didn't have papers and wasn't a citizen, they had a s-- they had to register as aliens...

LEVINE: Yes, uh-huh.

BUTTAGGI: And a lot of them had arrived in America. They had lived here many years, and all of a sudden, including my mother-in-law, and in her old age she went to ---- and got her own papers after. Yeah.

LEVINE: So what happened? If they didn't have papers . . .

BUTTAGGI: Well, they --- they were classified as aliens, and I think they had papers which, uh, you know, if they got into any kind of a problem. I mean --- they had to prove who they were and all that. But, uh, oh, my goodness, we had to have stamps to buy gasoline during the --- in the war. The sugar, the butter, all that kind of stuff was a luxury. And, uh, you know, in the meantime, you know, I did get pregnant. I came back home from Texas, I worked for the Army Air Forces in the office, and then I quit

when I was about eight months pregnant. I had my son. And my husband was never here during that time. And when he came back home from af-- the war ended, our son was about eleven months. Yeah. I went through all that by myself.

LEVINE: How about women during the Second World War? Did they come into their own at all because their help was so needed?

BUTTAGGI: Yes. That's when they did. As a matter of fact, that's when Kodak started to hire people with vowels on their names, because they needed them so bad. And women were hired for all kinds of job. That's when, you know ---- Rosie the Riveter? That was very, very true. I mean, women were working different shifts, and they were treated just like they were men.

LEVINE: Did you feel that difference –

BUTTAGGI: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: as a woman?

BUTTAGGI: And, you know what? When they say about women being liberated nowadays, I was liberated many years ago, because I did everything. Anything that I wanted to do, I did. And, uh, to me it seems silly when they talk about liberation, because I was a liberated woman from way back. I always did what I wanted to do. And I worked and --- like, even, like when we were in Texas, my husband says, "Well, gee." He says,

"Did you get a job in the city?" And I said, "No." I says, well, I did get a job in the city for a short time, but then I said, "I can make more money by going to camp." Oh, you know, that camp, you know, those soldiers. "Don't worry about it." And I went ahead and got myself a job. I got in. I went to work. Didn't bother me. Of course, you know, this was the hospital office where I was. And we had German prisoners there. And they were working in the linen --- in the linen area, you know, taking care of the sheets and stuff. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: This was in Texas.

BUTTAGGI: In Texas. Oh, yeah, we had, we had, uh, we had German prisoners here in Rochester. They had a place set up down by the reservoir.

END SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE BEGIN SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: And, what, they were detained there?

BUTTAGGI: Detained here, yes. Yes. Oh, we had, we had, uh, we had Sampson Air Naval Base near here. We, this city used to hum with sailors and soldiers in -- on a weekend. The city didn't look like this.

LEVINE: Yeah. Tell me about what the city looked like to you.

BUTTAGGI: Oh, my gosh. When I was growing up, right over the river, there were building, and you know ----you know? And nobody knew --- nobody knew that we were crossing and walking over the river, because there

were stores on both sides. They knocked them down. And, um, of course, it was hard to get anything. I married during the war. I couldn't find a slip to go under my wedding gown. I couldn't find sh-- white shoes. I traveled every day on my lunch hour up and down Main Street to --- there used to be a lot of shoe stores --- and to -- to find a pair of shoes. And, um, oh, and then to get married. Oh, golly. My husband was going to come home on furlough in June, and it was cancelled because he was on bivouac. Or they were practicing. And then he was coming home in September, and that was cancelled, and October, and November, and December. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Oh!

BUTTAGGI: And there I was trying to get ready for a wedding which I didn't know when it was going to take place. It was really, what a job. And finally he came home in, uh, January, and we immediately went for our blood test when he arrived, and we went to get our license. And then a week later we got married, yeah, right here in the city. And, uh, it was really hard, though. But I was no different than any other war bride, as they used to call us. We were war brides. We had to go through all this. I have a girlfriend who, in the beginning of the war ---- when a lot of our American soldiers were going to Africa --- my girlfriend went to a movie, and she saw her husband ---- no, he was her boyfriend at the time ----- uh, coming down on the news, you know, on the news that they used to show in the movies. And he was coming down the gangplank when they were going into, you know, arriving to go into Africa. And, um, and he died in Africa, and that girl never married until real late in life. I still see

her once in a while. I see a lot of my high school friends.

LEVINE: Oh.

BUTTAGGI: Yeah. I come back for the fiftieth anniversary, uh . . .

LEVINE: Reunion.

BUTTAGGI: The reunion from my high school about four years ago. A little more than four years ago, time passes, but we had a fiftieth reunion of my high school, and it was fun.

LEVINE: What was so nice about it?

BUTTAGGI: Well, I tell you. We wore pins on our clothes. They had a picture of when we graduated, from the yearbook, and with our name. And so lots of time, you know --- if you didn't recognize, somebody would say, "Oh, that's who you are!" It was so funny. And we had a wonderful time. I have a tape of it.

LEVINE: Really? What's on the tape?

BUTTAGGI: On the tape there's the, uh, Donnel Hart who is on our station, station 13 there, here in the city, TV. He was the Master of Ceremonies. And then we had, uh, myself and this other gentleman who came up from Pennsylvania and helped me to get this thing rolling. And I had a big committee, and, uh, you know, he got up there and ta---- reminisced

about then and now, and it was cute. And then we had dancing, and we had just the whole smash was wonderful.

LEVINE: Well, we're getting close to the end now. Let me ask you this. When you look back on your life and you . . .

BUTTAGGI: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you look back on the fact that you came here at ten and stayed here for the rest of your life, how do you look upon that ---the idea that you immigrated to this country and lived out your life here?

BUTTAGGI: Well, my mom always said to me, I was the oldest, you know? Everything was always on the ---- directed towards me. She would always say, "You know, your dad is not, and I, we're not accumulating any wealth. We don't have anything to give you children when we go. But you must remember one thing. Give your dad a lots of credit for bringing you to this country, and giving you the opportunities that are available to you in this country. He, who didn't even have, you know, any knowledge of English, and the language barrier was there. And she always used to say, "Give your dad, always, lots of credit that he brought you to this country to live, this wonderful country." And she loved America. And this was the thing she always reminded me of. And, of course, you know, my brother Charles, uh, he, uh, graduated from college. My other brother the --- in the banking business. I now have a niece who's an attorney. I have a nephew who's a professor at the University of Michigan. And, uh, he, uh, has received honors. Uh, he

got the McArthur award two years ago. And, uh, I have other nieces who are teachers.

LEVINE: Tell me, before this ends, your husband's name and your children.

BUTTAGGI: My husband's name is Joseph.

LEVINE: And your child . . .

BUTTAGGI: I have a son, Bill, William. He lives in Sarasota. And he went to R.I.T. here. I have a daughter, Charlene, and she works for Xerox. I have my daughter Vivian who is a dental assistant, and I have my daughter, Jo-Ann, who lives in Florida, too, with her husband, and she's got a nice little job down there, and these are my children.

LEVINE: Wow. Okay. Well, the tape is just about to end. I want to thank you so much for a really wonderful interview.

BUTTAGGI: Oh, thank you.

LEVINE: And I've been speaking with Lillian Buttaggi who came in 1930 at the age of ten from Sicily.

BUTTAGGI: Yes.

LEVINE: And lived out here life here. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm signing off. (Break in tape)

LEVINE: Okay. This is Tape Two [Note: actually continuation of tape] now, and I'm talking with Lillian Buttaggi. I put in another tape [Note: actually restarted on tape 2] because you were saying something really interesting and important.

BUTTAGGI: We were talking about discrimination.

LEVINE: Okay.

BUTTAGGI: And, uh, what I was voicing is the fact that I went through a lot of discrimination in this city. You couldn't get a job. And previous to World War Two, if your name ended in a vowel, forget it. Don't even attempt it. Because they didn't even give you a chance any place you went, the factories or anywhere. Then it all changed when the war started. They were lacking --- you know, the soldiers, the boys, were all going away to the war ---- and they were lacking employees, you know. And that's when they started to give everybody a chance, so to speak, a break. And, uh, it was also, I know, I grew up where I was called a wop, I was called a guinea, I was called all kinds of names. And, uh, and nobody could have been any cleaner than my mom --- who used Clorox and boiled things, and what, everything was immaculate that we wore. But it -- it-- that's the kind of a thing that went on, and you just couldn't get away from it. And the Italian people were always given priorities in the factories to, after, you know, to do sewing and, uh, shoe factories, but, uh, it was after World War Two, though, that we really started to get breaks.

LEVINE: You were saying earlier that people actually changed their names.

BUTTAGGI: Yes, yes. Now, I was working in a law office, and I know first handed how many people would come in and change their names because they felt that's the only way they could get a break. And it was done repeatedly.

LEVINE: And it worked.

BUTTAGGI: And it worked, it worked. Yes, it did. But, uh . . .

LEVINE: Why do you think the Italians in particular got that, it seems like more than the other groups?

BUTTAGGI: Well, at the time that I was growing up, they were the ones who were the scapegoats, so to speak. They were being picked on. I told you before, I forbid my mother to let me wear earrings, which we used to, you know, wear at the time, because immediately they would say, "You're a wop." So I wouldn't wear an earring. And we tried to hide the fact, you know, that we were of Italian heritage. And it's --it's ---- that's terrible.

LEVINE: Do you know how your mother and father felt about that, that discrimination?

BUTTAGGI: Well, I think that my Mom and my Dad, they lived in an area where they had stores they were run by Italians, Little Italy, they used to call it. And,

uh, so they just avoided anything. They went to the stores there. They did their shopping in areas where they were comfortable, okay, and that was it. But, uh, we who were growing up and encountering all these, you know, trying to get jobs, or in school. That's where --- we were the ones who were the brunt of it, I mean, who felt the brunt of it, because we encountered these things face to face. And, uh, it was hard. It was hard.

LEVINE: And you were mentioning that now when people talk about being prejudice, how do you respond or react to that?

BUTTAGGI: Well, my reaction is ---- what are you telling me? I've already been hurt. I know I went home crying after I had interviews to --- for jobs you know, previous to World War Two. I used to go home with tears in my eyes that I couldn't, you know, I couldn't get a job. And, uh, when people talk about that they are being discriminated now, I say, "Just prove your worth. We tried to prove our worth. And the time will come where you're going to be accepted." You know, uh, you know, we lived in an area where originally there were German people, and they didn't like us because we were taking over their territory, and because we were Italians. And, uh, but eventually the area became very Italian. My mother used to shop in Italian stores, and we went to church where there was an Italian priest. And when we got married, it had to be somebody of Italian heritage. Otherwise, oh, my God, you should marry somebody outside of your class here, you know?

LEVINE: So you think the prejudice kept the Italians more together . . .

BUTTAGGI: Yes.

LEVINE: Than they might have been otherwise?

BUTTAGGI: Yes, yes. It kept them together. I see the same thing going on in Toronto. There's so many Italians. And they formed their own cliques, their own clubs, or their own areas. But I think up there they're accepted better than down here. Of course, now things have changed some, because we have now second, third and fourth generation Italians here. Our name will never be spelled any different, but they are third generation, and you take my brother, he's been in the banking business. He's -- he worked for First National. My other brother used to work for Chase, and then he went on with somebody else. But, uh, they're --- we're getting to be accepted a little more, so you don't see it as much. But, you know, it -- what bothers me is when everybody says, "Oh, we're being discriminated against." Well, just prove what you are, and you won't be. You know, do the right things and you won't be. But don't tell me about your problems. I've had my own. That's it.

LEVINE: When your family first came to this country and they encountered this kind of discrimination, although I suppose, like you say, it wasn't your parents, it was you and your brothers.

BUTTAGGI: We were encountering ---- the children, the people, you know, that we dealt with, yes.

LEVINE: Did you ever feel like you were sorry you came?

BUTTAGGI: Oh, yes, there were times, yes. There were times where I felt bad. Like I told you, I'd go for a job, and I -----and this was after I was out of high school, And I used to go home crying all the time. I'd develop terrible headache because I couldn't get a job. So, you know, I had good qualifications. I went to night school, besides graduating from high school, in order to get a job. I didn't tell you this, but I had good marks in high school, and I even had a, uh, I received a grant, but I couldn't go to college because my parents couldn't even give me a nickel. You see, in those days they had no --- you couldn't get a loan. But now it's easier. That's why I say now the second and third generation Italians, they're mingling right in there, they're going to college. We got ---they're into all kinds of things, politics and all kinds of professions, medical, whatever, you know.

LEVINE: Well, when you went to night school, what did you learn there?

BUTTAGGI: Well, I had taken courses to, uh, go to college. I took up French four years, and I excelled. My average was ninety-eight. I wanted to be a language teacher. But, so I didn't, I didn't have any knowledge of any office equipment, although I had taken up typing. So I went to night school and took up all the other office machines so that I could get a job in the business world, and that's why I went to night school.

LEVINE: And did that work?

BUTTAGGI: That worked. That's what I got. I couldn't go to college, so I had to do

the next best thing. I started my job at ten dollars a week. [Laughs]

LEVINE: And do you regret it when you look back on it? Do you regret that you missed . . . ?

BUTTAGGI: Um, I don't regret anything. But the only thing I can say is you've got to pull your boots by the straps and wear them, because nobody showed me the way. My parents couldn't show me the way, but I got around. I made something of myself, and I'm proud of it.

LEVINE: Okay, thank you very much. We're going to close here with Lillian Battaggi, and this is the end of Tape Two.