

EI-792

MARY (MARIA) GABRIELE LORINI  
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INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.  
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ITALY, 1915  
AGE 4  
PASSAGE ON "THE STAMPALIA"

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.

SIGRIST: Good morning. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Wednesday, August 21, 1996. I'm in the town of Colony, sort of the bigger area would be Albany, and I'm here with Mary Lorini. Mrs. Lorini came from Italy in 1915. She was almost five years old when she arrived. Present also in the room is . . . We're going to pause just . . . (break in tape) Okay. We're resuming again after Mrs. Lorini's oldest daughter just arrived with her two sons.

LORINI: Grandsons.

SIGRIST: Two, your two, her two grandsons.

LORINI: Yes.

SIGRIST: Her two grandsons.

PLACITO: ( she whispers ) A granddaughter and a grandson.

SIGRIST: Granddaughter and grandson. Thank you, Debbie. I was saying, Mrs. Lorini came from Italy in 1915. She was almost five when

they arrived. Present also in the room is Mrs. Lorini's niece, Debbie Placito[ph], Placito[ph], excuse me, emphasis on the "I", and that is spelled P-L-A-C-I-T-O. And, for the sake of the tape, we may hear a clock ticking in the background.

Mrs. Lorini, can we begin by you giving me your birth date?

LORINI: June 20, 1910.

SIGRIST: And what was your name when you were born in Italy?

LORINI: Maria Gabriele.

SIGRIST: Can you spell Gabriele, please?

LORINI: Gabriele.

SIGRIST: And that would be your maiden name.

LORINI: Yes.

SIGRIST: Before you were married.

LORINI: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: Where in Italy were you born?

LORINI: Castelliri.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

LORINI: C-A-S-T-E-L-L-I-R-I.

SIGRIST: Thank you. Whereabouts in the country is that?

LORINI: It could be between Naples and Rome.

SIGRIST: So it's north of Naples.

LORINI: And south of Rome.

SIGRIST: And south of Rome. Do you know anything about your birth? Did anyone ever tell you a story about the day you were born?

LORINI: No.

SIGRIST: No. Do you remember anything about the town that you lived in before you came to the United States?

LORINI: Yes.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the town?

LORINI: Well, I remember that, uh, while my father came here three years before us, we lived with my uncle, which was his brother, for the remaining time, until we came here. And, uh, I do remember that they were very good to me because my father was here in America.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what they did for you? When you say they were good to you, what do you mean?

LORINI: Well, uh, they took care of us, and saw that we had proper care, proper food, in their best way.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the house that you lived in in any way?

LORINI: I remember the looks of it, yes.

SIGRIST: Can you describe it for me, please?

LORINI: Well, it was like a two-family house. It was more like a square, built out of, uh, I don't know if you'd call it marble or stone, at that time. I know that now everything is made out of marble.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how many rooms the house had?

LORINI: No, I don't.

SIGRIST: Are there any other details about the house that stick out in your mind?

LORINI: Oh, yes. We lived downstairs, and it was like an open room with a, a dirt floor, and like a fireplace where they used to cook. And their way of cooking at that time, they would have a chain hanging down where you would hang kettles to boil water or whatever they cooked.

SIGRIST: A chain hung next to the fire where the kettles hung?

LORINI: It hung in the middle of the fire, with the chain hanging down. And I also remembered that when they cooked anything, they cooked it in a skillet on the floor where the, where the live ashes were, right on top of those live ashes, and that's how they cooked their food, in skillets.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what kind of foods you ate?

LORINI: Well, it was mostly homemade bread, and at that time it wasn't, it wasn't even white bread. It was, they called it cornbread, because flour was more expensive, white flour was more expensive. And, uh, it was the kind of food that they raised, like potatoes and, uh, leafy vegetables. They had chickens, they had their own pig that they would raise, rabbits, and things like that.

SIGRIST: Do you have any stories about the animals that you remember, or something that happened with the animals?

LORINI: No, I don't. No.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, you said they, it was a cornbread kind of thing.

Do you know where the cornmeal came from?

LORINI: Oh, they, they raised it themselves on their land, and then they would take it, it must have been a mill where they would have it made into flour.

SIGRIST: What about, uh, did you eat any fish at that time?

LORINI: Plenty of fish.

SIGRIST: Yes? Do you remember what kind?

LORINI: The kind of fish was mostly baccala. That's what they called.

SIGRIST: Do you know how to spell that?

LORINI: B-A-C-C-A-L-A.

SIGRIST: Thank you.

LORINI: It's codfish, in English.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how it was prepared?

LORINI: Uh, they would boil it, cut it in pieces, and cover it with olive oil and garlic.

SIGRIST: Who did the cooking in the house?

LORINI: My mother and my aunt.

SIGRIST: Um, what other chores did women have to do at that time around the house?

LORINI: Oh, they used to go out and spade the ground so they could raise their vegetables. The women also did that.

SIGRIST: And what about inside the house? What kinds of chores did they

have to do?

LORINI: Well, inside the house there was hardly nothing. I don't remember what upstairs looked like. I know the beds were up there, and I know the mattresses were made out of, uh, when they used to, let me see. You know, the corn, they would take the, what you call, off.

SIGRIST: The husks?

LORINI: The husks.

SIGRIST: The husks.

LORINI: Right. And that's what the mattresses were made out of.

SIGRIST: It kind of probably crunched when you slept on them.

LORINI: Right. I do remember that.

SIGRIST: Is there a piece of furniture that sticks out in your mind in the house at all?

LORINI: Uh, most of the times, like little kids, we would sit on the floor, and it was a dirt floor. And, uh, I don't remember any furniture.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how they maintained the dirt floor?

LORINI: Well, I think, there was nothing to it. It was, it was dirt. Maybe they used to let a little off now and then. But that's about all. And I do remember other things that they did. They used to kill the pig once a year, and then they would divide it into whatever parts that they used to divide it into, and they used to make Italian sausage, cut up all the meats and make their

own sausage, and they would have sticks up, on the ceiling, and they would hang it so the smoke, so it would be smoked by the fire that they would make in the room, in the room. And then they would make their own ham, which they call here Italian prosciutto, and it really was delicious.

SIGRIST: Did you ever witness them killing a pig?

LORINI: Oh, yeah, I watched them. I remember. They used to save the blood.

SIGRIST: Why?

LORINI: And they used to make stuff out of the blood. I really don't remember what, but they used to use the blood for something.

SIGRIST: Um, did your, did your uncle, you were living with your uncle. Correct?

LORINI: Yes. My father's brother.

SIGRIST: Were these animals his, or, whose animals were these that were being killed?

LORINI: Well, they were both, because that uncle of mine, he was the oldest of the family, and my father was the baby, so I do remember that. My father and his mother lived with this older son. That's how come, when my father got married, he lived with his brother.

SIGRIST: And what was your father's name?

LORINI: Biagio.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

LORINI: B-I-A-G-I-O.

SIGRIST: Thank you. What do you know about your father's family background?

LORINI: Well, uh, I think there were a family of five, five boys.

SIGRIST: Your uncle being the oldest.

LORINI: Yes.

SIGRIST: Your dad being the youngest.

LORINI: Right.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. And do you know anything about your father, his growing up, and anything like that, any stories he used to tell about his own childhood?

LORINI: Well, uh, we came from a very poor place, and we were very poor. But, uh, the only entertainment that they had, they used to go into the city and play cards, or bocci, and, uh, it would cost them maybe a cent or two, but that meant a lot to them.

SIGRIST: What was your father's personality like?

LORINI: Well, um, his education was only three years of the Italian school, and I think he was a very smart man. Don't you think so? Then at a certain age they go into the service. They have to do that. That was, uh, that was one of the things that they had to do, when they got to a certain age. And he talked a lot about what he learned in the Italian army, because coming from a poor family, and very little education, he said that he learned more in those three years than he did all his life.

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the things that he used to say that he learned from that experience?

LORINI: He learned how to speak better Italian, and he learned, he learned how to respect, to have good manners and respect. He says the officers, whatever they were, used to train them for things like that, which he didn't have at home because they were not educated.

SIGRIST: What was your father's father's profession?

LORINI: Oh, I remember that his name was Luigi, which is Louie, and, uh, the same. They were just farmers. They were farmers that whatever they grew in the fall of the year, whenever it was, they had to keep half, and half would go to their proprietor, whatever you would call him.

SIGRIST: So they were renting their land, then?

LORINI: Yeah, yes. And, uh, that was very hard.

SIGRIST: What would they do with their half? If they had to give half to the man who owned the land, then what would they do with their half?

LORINI: Well, they would, they would eat on it. That was their food. And what they used to buy was mainly maybe a little sugar and salt, and the rest of the stuff they used to raise. Because they had their own chickens, they used to sell the eggs.

SIGRIST: That's what I was getting at. I was wondering if they sold any of their half.

LORINI: They sold their eggs. And if they had, their half, if they had

enough for them, and they had an abundance, they would sell some to buy maybe their clothes. Their clothes were mostly handmade.

They used to make it themselves.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, and I know you were quite young, is there a dress or a little outfit that you remember having when you were that young?

LORINI: Yes, I do. I don't remember what I played in (?). We used to wear long dresses, and I do remember when we come over to America, I had a long dress and some kind of a corset over the dress. That's the way they dressed then, that, I mean, I didn't know the difference, but it must have been really funny.

SIGRIST: Tell me, um, how your father got to America. Why did he want to come to America?

LORINI: Well, because they barely had enough food to eat, and his brother had, let me see now, one, two, three, four, five, five boys and a girl. Now, two of the boys were here to America before my father, because they're the ones that called him to come over.

SIGRIST: Where did they go to live in America?

LORINI: Uh, they came here to Albany, Schenectady, and maybe other places where they could find a job.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what kind of jobs they were doing?

LORINI: Well, it was, they worked on the railroad putting in ties, taking them out and putting them in. And I remember my father saying that he also went to Vermont for a job. They, and there they worked in a quarry where they made slate, I think it was slate.

SIGRIST: Like slate shingles, perhaps, for houses.

LORINI: Yes.

SIGRIST: A lot of Welsh people did that when they came to the United States, too.

LORINI: Yes. But then they got sick of that, so they come back to Albany, and my father decided to rent a farm, which they did. And this farm was located at Stop 29, Albany-Schenectady Road.

SIGRIST: Stop 29?

LORINI: At the time they went by stops, from Schenectady to Albany.

SIGRIST: Is that a train stop that you're referring to, a train?

LORINI: No, trolley car.

SIGRIST: Oh, trolley cars.

LORINI: Trolley car stop.

SIGRIST: Oh, that's interesting.

LORINI: Central Avenue had trolley tracks, and we used to travel by trolley.

SIGRIST: What year did your father come to the United States?

LORINI: Well, uh, it had to be 1912, because he came here three years before us.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollection of him leaving Italy?

LORINI: No.

SIGRIST: No. Did your mother ever tell you anything about what it was

like when he left to go to the United States?

LORINI: Well, she said it was sad, and she was left with two children, and she was living with her brother-in-law and sister-in-law.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

LORINI: Her real name was Annunziata.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

LORINI: A-N-N-U-N-Z-I-A-T-A.

SIGRIST: Thank you. And her maiden name?

LORINI: Ruzza. R-U-Z-Z-A.

SIGRIST: R-U-Z-Z-A.

LORINI: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about what your mother's personality was like.

LORINI: Well, she was a very kind woman, a very good mother. I mean, I don't know. In those days, they didn't go to school. The women did not go to school. So she had no education. But she was a wonderful person.

SIGRIST: Is there a story that you can tell about your mother from when you were in Italy, maybe some kind of an experience that the two of you shared, or something you did together with your mother when you were in Italy?

LORINI: Oh, yes. Uh, she used to go out in the fields and work, and I used to go there and do things with her. I mean, one of the

chores, I guess, we had to pull some kind of grass and wash it and feed it to the animals. That's one of the things I remember.

And another thing that I remember, and it's something that I never forgot, my uncle, my father's brother that we lived with, he smoked a pipe, of course, and, uh, they had no matches there, and he used to light his pipe by, well, when we made the fire, you know, the red ashes?

SIGRIST: The hot ashes?

LORINI: Yes. He used to send me, he could be out in the fields, and maybe I'd go walking around, and he would send me home with two sticks to get him some ashes so he could light his pipe. I do remember that. That's something I never forgot. And when we were leaving for America, he said to me, he says, "Well, Maria," in Italian, he said, he says, "Now you're going to America." He says, "In America, you won't have to do this. They have matches. And that's something we don't have here." We did have it, but it was very scarce. They used to buy them and hide them so nobody would touch them, only use them when they, when it was really necessary. So I never forgot that.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about what you know about your mother's family background. ( he clears his throat ) Excuse me. Your mother's family background.

LORINI: Well, I don't know too much about them. I know it was a big family. My mother, there was seven in my mother's family. And her mother died when she was ten, eleven years old. And she had to raise all her brothers and sisters. She was like a mother to them. She had it very hard. She always told us about that. And, uh, she had three sisters, that I remember of, and two

brothers.

SIGRIST: Did she have any family here in America prior to when she came?

LORINI: She didn't have any, no. But one of them did come over a long time after.

SIGRIST: I see. So it was really only your father who had the brothers who were here.

LORINI: He had, uh, two nephews here.

SIGRIST: Two nephews, excuse me.

LORINI: That's when they brought the, when they rented the farm.

SIGRIST: That's right. Those were the sons of his brother.

LORINI: That's right. That's right.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about, um, your religious life in Italy? What religion were you?

LORINI: Catholic.

SIGRIST: And what sticks out in your mind about . . .

LORINI: Oh, they were very religious. They used to go to church often, very often. Not every day, but almost. Very religious.

SIGRIST: And how about at home? How did you practice your religion at home?

LORINI: Well, uh, they used to pray a lot. They even taught me how to say the Hail Mary in Italian.

SIGRIST: Can you say it for us right now?

LORINI: Let me see. I'll try, as much as I can remember.

SIGRIST: That would be great.

LORINI: ( she prays in Italian ) That's about, I don't know if it's right or wrong.

SIGRIST: Thank you. Um, who was the most religious in your family?

LORINI: They all were.

SIGRIST: That was an important part of their life.

LORINI: Yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any kind of religious object in the house in Italy?

LORINI: No, I don't.

SIGRIST: A crucifix, or a statue, or something like that.

LORINI: No, I don't.

SIGRIST: How did your mother feel about coming to America? Did she want to go?

LORINI: Yes, she did. She was very happy when she heard that we were going to come over. But that was on account of the earthquake that we come over then, because maybe it would have been later on when my father would call for us, because he had to, he had to earn enough money for the trip.

SIGRIST: Now, it's, after your father went, you're with your mother, and then, are there any other children?

LORINI: In my family?

SIGRIST: Yes, before you came.

LORINI: Yes. One boy, Sylvio.

SIGRIST: Sylvio. And how old is he, at that time?

LORINI: Well, he could have been, if I was almost five, he could have been over three.

SIGRIST: So he's a little bit younger than you.

LORINI: Yes, he was.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollection of when Sylvio was born?

LORINI: Not when he was born, but I remember him as a child, you know, both kids. He had the most beautiful red hair, just like my brother Ed.

SIGRIST: Which would have been unusual in that part of Italy at that time, I should think.

LORINI: Oh, yeah. I have another brother that lives across the street. He's a redhead.

SIGRIST: Was he born in the United States?

LORINI: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Um, tell me about the earthquake.

LORINI: Well, all I remember is that, uh, our house shook, and we all ran out, and they looked at the house and, uh, I suppose it was made out of stones, whatever it was. They started to cave in, you know. And, uh, my brother was sleeping upstairs, and I know we

were all crying because we all made it to get out, and he didn't.

So every now and then the ground would shake up again, and the house would move again, you know, and all the fallings of the stones and this and that. So they had to wait a long time for it to stop, and maybe after it did stop, one of my cousins got a ladder and he put the ladder up and he went up to see my brother, if he was alive, or this or that. And, uh, I do remember when he got at the tippity top, he hollered down to my mother, he called her Ziona[ph], that means aunt, "Ziona[ph]," he said, in Italian, he says, "don't cry. He's alive. He's got a few stones on him."

Because he was right in the corner. That was a good spot. Then everything fell in the middle, you know. He was, nothing. He was still there. So he took him down, and he was all right.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me about what your life was like directly after the earthquake?

LORINI: Well, it was very bad, because my cousins, they made a, a hut out of straw, where we'd go and sleep at night, until they repaired the house, or this or that, I don't remember how exactly, they did it, but they had to rebuild it, whatever was left of it. And, uh, but it seemed to me that the earthquake kept going on, because every now and then I remember going out of that hut to see what else was going on. And, uh, and that's how we lived.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what it looked like, what the area looked like after the earthquake?

LORINI: Well, uh, a lot of houses had, uh, really all broken down. But ours didn't, not to the ground. It had caved in, the middle. The sides were still sticking up, maybe all scattered with stones, this and that. And that's what it looked like.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

SIGRIST: Do you remember anything else about being in that experience of the earthquake, or maybe what your mother was doing at that time. Anything else stick out in your mind about that experience?

LORINI: Well, they used to cook in that hut. I don't know with what, though. I don't remember what they had. And, uh, that's about it.

SIGRIST: How soon did this happen before you left for the United States?

LORINI: Well, the earthquake happened in January.

SIGRIST: Of what year?

LORINI: 1915. And, uh, that's how my father got whiff of it, through the Italian paper here in America. And that's when he wrote a letter to his brother and said, "If my family is alive, I want you to start processing the papers so they could come here to America." And that's what he did do.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the process of getting ready to leave your village?

LORINI: Well, I remember when they took us to Rome there for our physical. I remember that.

SIGRIST: What do you, what sticks out in your mind about Rome, the big city?

LORINI: Uh, at that time nothing. I did go back and see it twice, but at that time I don't remember nothing.

SIGRIST: Do you remember getting the physical?

LORINI: No, no. I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what other things had to be done prior to your leaving?

LORINI: Oh, uh, well, we had to just sit and wait until we got our orders to come here and I remember when we left.

SIGRIST: Were you still living in the grass hut by the time you left, or had things been rebuilt by then?

LORINI: Well, they were starting to rebuild the house, but I don't think we were back into it by the time we left. I don't think so.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you took with you?

LORINI: Oh, yes. ( she laughs ) I took something like a flour bag, with . . .

SIGRIST: Flour, F-L-O-U-R.

LORINI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: A flour sack, yeah.

LORINI: A flour sack, and my mother put some clothes into it, and that's what I carried on my back. And my mother had a trunk. We still have it upstairs. I remember the trunk. And that's where she put all her belongings in there that she took here to America, whatever she had, whatever little she had.

SIGRIST: Do you remember saying goodbye to your family before you left your town?

LORINI: Yes, I do. I really remember that. And one incident that I remember clearly, my father had another brother that came with us, my uncle that I lived with, and my other uncle, they both came with us, they accompanied us to Rome. I think that's where we went, you know, to come here. And, uh, I remember when we got into the ship. Now, the brother, the uncle that we lived with, they allowed him to come in with us for a short time. But my other uncle couldn't come. Only one was allowed. So I remember saying goodbye to him, and then my other uncle come in with us, and he came right to, he must have come right to where we were allowed to go. And, uh, then when he was saying goodbye to us I got hysterical, when he was going to leave us. So I threw myself on the ground, on the floor there, whatever it was, and I started to kick and this and that, and cry, and act like a maniac, I guess. I was really hysterical when my uncle left us. So that's what I remember from that.

SIGRIST: Did you have any idea what America was?

LORINI: No.

SIGRIST: Did you have any idea of what was happening to you?

LORINI: No, because there was no pictures like here. I mean, there's books that the kids start reading when they're a month old. Not over there. I had no idea where I was going and what I was going into.

SIGRIST: I have on your oral history form actually that you left from Naples, not from Rome.

LORINI: Oh, well, yeah, that's right. Well.

SIGRIST: That was the major port at that time.

LORINI: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, I made a mistake. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of the ship that you came on?

LORINI: No, I don't.

SIGRIST: Debbie, actually, I have it in front of me. I was just, uh . . .

LORINI: No, I don.

SIGRIST: You don't remember. But Debbie, you've done research and found out. Do you want to say it aloud for us on tape?

DEBBIE: I don't have it.

SIGRIST: Oh, all right. Then I'll say it. You came on the Stampalia. And that's spelled S-T-A-M-P-A-L-I-A. And I can say that you are the only person we've ever interviewed who came on the Stampalia.

LORINI: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: But I did look it up. I had never heard of that ship. And when I saw your oral history form I looked it up, and indeed it was a ship.

LORINI: I didn't either. I never heard of it.

SIGRIST: ( he laughs ) But it really did exist. I saw a photograph of it, so. What else, can you describe for me how you felt about being on this ship?

LORINI: Yes. Uh, what I could remember, I know we came third class, you know, the lowest. It seems to me that every morning they used to have us get on the, whatever they called it, the cot or the bed,

and they used to wash the floor with a hose or something. I mean, that's the picture I have. I could be wrong. But that's what it seemed like to me.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, um, do you remember the room that you slept in?

LORINI: Oh, uh, to me it looked like a great, big room. And it had all bunks all along the wall, maybe this side and that side, all over.

SIGRIST: So there were a lot of people in this room.

LORINI: Oh, definitely. It wasn't a room. It was really a, like any ship, I guess.

SIGRIST: Just a big, open . . .

LORINI: To me, yeah, to me it seemed like a great, big room.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me what sticks out in your mind about the ocean voyage going over, and what impressions it made on you as a young girl.

LORINI: Well, I didn't see much of the ocean. I didn't, I don't think I saw that at all. No, I don't think I did. The only experience, I know we were with some good friends and my mother made friends while we were there, and I do remember when Sylvio got sick.

SIGRIST: Can you talk about that, please?

LORINI: Yes. I remember somebody, a nurse, whatever she was, somebody came to my mother and they said, "Signora," they says, "you have to come to your son." Oh, it must be that he got sick, and it had to be contagious. I don't know what it was.

SIGRIST: So this isn't seasickness. This is something else.

LORINI: Something else. And they took him away from my mother. They brought him someplace else. Because maybe they isolated him. It had to be that way. Because they came and called her, and says your son is very sick. You have to go to him. So I remember my mother leaving, and I cried and cried, because Sylvio wasn't there. And then she leaves, and she told her friends to watch me until she come back. I do remember that, 'cause I was cryin', threw myself on the floor again. And I don't know if she stayed away a day or two. I don't remember exactly. But she was away a while. And then all of a sudden . . . ( she pauses )  
( she is moved )

SIGRIST: Take your time.

LORINI: All of a sudden the lady said to me, she says, "Maria, here comes your mother." I looked down, and I saw my mother walking towards me. And I ran to meet her. So she grabs me and puts me in her arms and she says, "I lost Sylvio." That I remember. And then from there on, I really don't remember nothin'.

SIGRIST: And that all happened on the ship.

LORINI: Uh-huh. That happened on the ship.

SIGRIST: Do you remember if your mother tried to explain in any way what had happened to him?

LORINI: My mother didn't understand, and I didn't either. We don't know, we don't know what became. ( she addresses her niece ) Give me a Kleenex. They're on there. We don't know what sickness he got. I was too young. And my mother, she didn't understand what sickness. We yet today, I yet today don't know what he picked up

on the ship. I mean, he had to be all right in order to pass his physical, because or else you can't come here. But what he picked up on the ship, we don't know.

SIGRIST: But it must have come fast.

LORINI: Maybe it was scarlet fever or diphtheria, things like that. It had to be bad in order for him to die.

SIGRIST: Were there a lot of people in this one area where you were?

LORINI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You said there were lots of bunks, but was it filled with people?

LORINI: Yes, it was a lot of people. It seemed like the bunks were on this side, and then on this side, too, and there was always people.

SIGRIST: Were there other children that you remember?

LORINI: Yeah, there were, but they all kept to themselves. Yes, there were other, they, I mean, the mothers kept them to themselves. They didn't let us mix too much. And it was a long journey. I mean, I don't know how many days, but it was very long. And then I remember another incident that happened on the ship that my mother said, I don't remember it. My mother said, I think it was wartime, it had to be wartime.

SIGRIST: Yes, 1915. Sure.

LORINI: It was wartime. She said that the ship, they stopped the ship in the middle of the sea there, and everybody was cryin' and carryin' on terrible. They all got scared. And they were told not to be scared, because they were stopped for something, but

all they were going to do was come in and inspect. Whatever they had to do, they did their job, and then they would leave. But they told them, they told them not to get, you know, excited or anything, because nothing was going to happen. And my mother thinks, she says they were dressed like soldiers, so they must have come in to inspect something. Maybe everything was all right, so they went away, and the ship went on. I do remember that.

SIGRIST: Um, you're not sure how long the ship took to get to New York?

LORINI: No, I really don't. But it did take a long time. In those days, it would take a long time.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, um, uh, the ship coming into New York?

LORINI: No.

SIGRIST: Seeing the Statue of Liberty, or . . .

LORINI: No, no.

SIGRIST: You said before that you sort of don't remember, after you found out that your brother had died.

LORINI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Your memory sort of fades out.

LORINI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Um, well, what's the next thing that you remember? Do you remember being at Ellis Island at all?

LORINI: ( she pauses ) I don't think so. I don't think so.

SIGRIST: Well, where does your memory come back in?

LORINI: Well, because I was so surprised when I went there to visit and saw all these little rooms, and what I could remember a great big room on the ship that we were in, and people around. But all these little rooms, I was surprised to see them. 'Cause I, I have no memory of them at all.

SIGRIST: Um, you mentioned, I think, before we started, that you're not sure what happened to Sylvio, you know, what happened to the body.

LORINI: Right.

SIGRIST: Um, and that exists to this day. Correct?

LORINI: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: So your mother didn't know then what, what they were going to do with . . .

LORINI: Well, uh, they did something, because my father did come to visit him. I don't know who he came with. He came with somebody else, but I don't know who the other person was. My father come over and visited us.

SIGRIST: May I suggest that perhaps if your father came to visit you, were you still on the ship, or could you have been at Ellis Island at that time? Did Sylvio die on the ship, or did he die at Ellis Island?

LORINI: That I really don't know either.

SIGRIST: But your father was around.

LORINI: Yes, he saw him. My father even asked how much it would cost to take him here to Albany, but the price was so big. ( disturbance to the microphone ) The price was so, it was so much that he couldn't afford it. Because he even had, he even had to pay, he didn't have enough money to pay for his own trip when he come over, and then he was trying to get some money for us, and then he had to borrow again for us, that he couldn't afford to take him here to Albany. So he had to be at Ellis Island, I would say.

SIGRIST: Well, Debbie just produced some documents. And, Debbie, if you could speak full voice and tell us what these documents are.

DEBBIE: This is a copy of the registry from the ship, and what it says next to Sylvio's name is it's actually stamped that he died in the hospital.

LORINI: In New York?

DEBBIE: Yeah.

LORINI: Oh, that's . . .

DEBBIE: Sylvio's body, he was alive when he got off the ship, and then died in the hospital on Ellis Island.

LORINI: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: Which would make sense that if your father were to visit . . .

LORINI: Yeah. My mother, I remember her saying that my father did come over to visit, so he had to see him, he had to be there.

SIGRIST: He must have been at the hospital at Ellis Island.

LORINI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me what, do you remember when you saw your father for the first time?

LORINI: No.

SIGRIST: No?

LORINI: No.

SIGRIST: No.

LORINI: To me he was a stranger. I didn't call him Pa until maybe two or three years after. ( she laughs ) He was not my father.

SIGRIST: Well, that's understandable under the circumstances. Do you remember anything else about that period right there after you were there, your brother died, that whole period right there before you came to Albany. Is there anything else that you can tell us about? ( disturbance to the microphone )

LORINI: I must have pulled it. ( referring to the microphone ) No, I don't remember anything else. I do remember that . . . ( a telephone rings )

SIGRIST: We're going to pause for a moment. (break in tape)

LORINI: I forgot where I was at.

SIGRIST: I was asking if there was anything else about that time period where you were there and Sylvio had died and your father was visiting, your mother was, understandably, upset, that sticks out in your mind about that.

LORINI: Well, I remember that my mother said we were quarantined for 40

days. And then when the time came that we had to leave, I do remember leaving. I picked up my sack and put it on my back. And I think, I'm quite sure we got on a train, and we came to Albany, and that's where my father and other friends met us.

SIGRIST: Well, your father was down in New York, yes, if he was visiting?

LORINI: Oh, he come right home.

SIGRIST: Oh, he went back up.

LORINI: Oh, yeah. Oh, he didn't stay long at all, because we still had to stay there.

SIGRIST: Do you remember eating there at all, or anything like that?

LORINI: No.

SIGRIST: No?

LORINI: No.

SIGRIST: So you arrived in Albany by train.

LORINI: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: This was very close to your fifth birthday. Correct?

LORINI: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollection of your fifth birthday?

LORINI: No, I don't. No, I don't.

SIGRIST: Tell me what some of the impressions were when you were going up to Albany or when you first got here. How did, what did things look like?

LORINI: Oh, I didn't remember anything on the train or anything, or even Albany. I remember, I remember the house we went in.

SIGRIST: This was the first house.

LORINI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yes, can you describe it for me?

LORINI: See, this was the farm that my father and his two nephews rented.

Oh, I remember it was a house, downstairs it was two big rooms, and upstairs must have been about two or three rooms with a staircase going up. And all my father had was a table and maybe three or four chairs, and a bed, a couple of beds. I think it was one bed for the two brothers, his nephews, and maybe his bed, and maybe a bed, then, for me, and that's it. And my mother said, "Is this what you call America?" I remember, and she'd always repeat it. "Is this America?"

SIGRIST: Could your father speak any English?

LORINI: Well, yes. My father could. I mean, it wasn't the best, but, uh, he, he, uh, he knew how to get around and, uh, I mean, he knew what he was doing.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when you were learning English?

LORINI: Oh, yes. I remember. I didn't go to school the first year, because I think we arrived in May/June, and the first September I didn't go, they didn't have me go to school. I went the next year. And, uh, I do remember that, the girls that took me to school, and they used to try to make me feel good. They'd say, "You're going to learn the English language, and you're going to

be smarter than us, because you're going to know two language, but we only know one." They were the Miller girls, yeah. And, uh, I learned fast, though. I'm not trying to brag or anything, but I learned very fast. My mind was on learning, that the teachers were so surprised that when they, whoever come, in school to pick me up, they'd say, "Wait a minute, I want you to hear her spell or read." They were very proud of me that I learned fast.

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the first words that you learned in English?

LORINI: Well, it was like yes, or no, or this or that, or hello, or stuff like that.

SIGRIST: Did your mother attempt to learn English?

LORINI: Uh, she could just about make out, but she didn't. I don't know. In those days, I don't know why, but they, it's not that they didn't want to learn, but she wasn't a, she never got out to work. They usually learned more, the women that went out to work. They learned more than my mother ever did. But if anybody come out the door, she was able to express herself and this and that.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about how your mother adapted to being in this country. You already mentioned that she was none too impressed when she arrived.

LORINI: Oh, she wasn't, no. But things, after a while . . . ( a telephone rings ) Oh, that phone.

SIGRIST: We're going to pause again. ( break in tape ) Were there any

things, things about America that your mother said that she really didn't like?

LORINI: No. Oh, no. After a while, no. She liked it very much. She liked it very much, and she adapted to everything, you know, how, the different cooking and this and that.

SIGRIST: You said she didn't go out to work. What did she do during the day?

LORINI: Well, there was, uh, let me see, we arrived, what was it, May or June?

DEBBIE: It should be May.

LORINI: May, and the next year in March, uh, my sister was born.

SIGRIST: And what was her name?

LORINI: Virginia.

SIGRIST: And what do you remember about your mother giving birth to your sister?

LORINI: Well, she was very happy because it took her mind off this whole deal a little bit, because she, see, for those nine, ten months, she was very sad, losing her child. And then when Virginia was born she kind of come out of it a little, you know, and she felt better. And then, we're all together of us. Then the next time she had twins, twin boys.

SIGRIST: And their names were?

LORINI: Oh, my father named those twins like Romulus and Remus, the twins? But it was Romolo and Ramo, see? But he named them

after . . .

SIGRIST: Romulus and Remus.

LORINI: Right. And Ramo died, had to be '19, '18, because remember when, oh, remember, there was an awful epidemic of, uh, of the flu. Many people died. And she lost Ramo, too.

SIGRIST: How old was he?

LORINI: He was eleven months.

SIGRIST: Eleven, oh, so just a baby.

LORINI: Eleven months. And, uh, yeah, because my mother was in bed, my father was in bed, and my, one of my cousins was in bed. But one of, the other cousin, he's the one that used to take care of us all. Then they had some friends from Schenectady come down and take care of us, someone from Italy, too, these guys were. And, uh, so, anyway . . .

SIGRIST: So the whole family got sick.

LORINI: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember being sick?

LORINI: I was sick for one day.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that one day of being sick with the flu?

LORINI: Well, I remember the doctor came and he examined me, too, and he gave me a bottle of medicine. So while my cousin was away, I drank the whole bottle. And ( she laughs ) I was better in no time. If that medicine was any good, I'd have been dead.

SIGRIST: The influenza epidemic . . .

LORINI: It was terrible.

SIGRIST: Was terrible, yeah.

LORINI: Then after that my mother had another child, and my father named him Ramo again, after the one that died. And then after that was, uh, your mother.

SIGRIST: Debbie's mother. And what is Debbie's mother's name?

LORINI: Anna.

SIGRIST: Anna.

LORINI: Uh-huh. And then after her she had another child, my brother Pat. His name was Pasquale. And . . .

SIGRIST: She had a lot of kids.

LORINI: Yes. And then after, that's why she never went to work, and then after that I know I was going to Albany High at the time. I started to go to Albany High in September. And in December the last child was born, Lillian. She died at the age of five.

SIGRIST: What did she die of?

LORINI: That's another thing that we, I don't remember. She got convulsions, but she must have had a very bad attack that she remained paralyzed, like. And she died at the age of five. But she was born in September when I was going to high school, in December. So then came, so then there was, there was me, Virginia, Romolo, Ramo, Anna, Pat, Pat, Pasquale, and Lillian. There was seven of us. And things were very bad, very, very bad.

I mean, and to support all those kids . . .

SIGRIST: Was Your father still just working on the farm, working . . .

LORINI: Yes. At the time he was still working at the farm.

SIGRIST: I only have about two minutes left, and there are a couple of questions I want to ask you specifically. Did your mother and father ever want to go back to Italy?

LORINI: They did, but they never had the money.

SIGRIST: But they did talk about this.

LORINI: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when they talked about this? Was it soon after the family arrived, or was it years later?

LORINI: Years later, years later.

SIGRIST: Of course, your dad still had family over there, right?

LORINI: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yes.

LORINI: Yes.

SIGRIST: And I assume your mother did, too?

LORINI: Yes, she did, too.

SIGRIST: Did you ever go back?

LORINI: I went back twice.

SIGRIST: What was the first time you went back?

LORINI: Uh, I think it was, it had to be '71. I think it was 1971, because I was, '70 or '71, because I was either sixty or sixty-one.

SIGRIST: A long time after you arrived in America.

LORINI: Right.

SIGRIST: Tell me what it felt like to be in Italy.

LORINI: Well, at that time things were almost the same. They were a little better, but they were almost the same, very poor yet. But then I went back, I'll make this fast, then I went back when I was seventy-five. My daughter took me over for my seventy-fifth birthday, and things were better. They, they had already built the house like this, and no more fireplace with the stuff hanging on the top.

SIGRIST: How did it make you feel emotionally the first time you were in Italy?

LORINI: Well, it brought back memories. It brought, they still had the fire, they still had the old kitchen with the fire with the chain. That's how they cooked their macaroni, and they used to fry stuff on the ashes.

SIGRIST: Did you feel a connection to what you were seeing, or did it seem just kind of like a dream or something?

LORINI: I felt, I really loved it. I felt a connection there.

SIGRIST: Do you think of yourself as being American, or as Italian? How do you think of yourself in terms of nationality?

LORINI: Well, I consider myself, I lived here so many years, American. But I still, I'm still proud of being an Italian and being born in Italy. I can't help it by me. That's how I feel.

SIGRIST: Great. Mrs. Lorini, thank you very much.

LORINI: You're welcome.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Mary Lorini on Wednesday, August 21, 1996, with her niece Debbie in attendance. Thank you.