

EI-816
MARY GRECH ATTARD
BIRTHDATE: APRIL 13, 1917
INTERVIEW DATE: OCTOBER 4, 1996
AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 79
RUNNING TIME: 38:06
INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, Ph.D
RECORDING ENGINEER: JANET LEVINE, Ph.D
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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: IRV SILBERG

MALTA, 1951
AGE: 34

SHIP: A GREEK SHIP
PORT:
RESIDENCES:
- MALTA: COSPIQUA
- US: New York, NY

LEVINE: --October 4th, 1996.

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: I'm here on Staten Island at the Swedish Home with Mary Attard.

ATTARD: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Mrs. Attard came from Malta.

ATTARD: Yes.

LEVINE: When she was, we think seventeen years old.

ATTARD: Right. I was married.

LEVINE: And she was married when she came, and she is seventy-nine years old today, and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. Mrs. Attard, if you would start by saying your birth date for the tape and where you were born in Malta.

ATTARD: Right, right. Yes, I born in Malta it's 19-19-I am-[unclear] mixed up.

LEVINE: You're mixed up a little bit. Okay, well, we-we maybe can check that out.

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: Why don't you just talk about where in Malta you were born.

ATTARD: In Cospiqua.

LEVINE: Can you spell that one?

ATTARD: Yes.

LEVINE: Go ahead.

ATTARD: C, C-O-S-P-I-Q-U-A, Cospiqua.

LEVINE: Cospiqua.

ATTARD: Cospiqua, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay, did you live in Cospiqua up until the time you left Malta? Were you always living in Cospiqua?

ATTARD: No, no. No, no. No, because I get married and my-I went with my husband.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, let's first talk about the time up until you got married.

ATTARD: Right. Right.

LEVINE: Okay.

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: You were-where you in Cospiqua up until then?

MA Right.

LEVINE: Up until you got married. [knocking in background] Wait, we're pausing here.

ATTARD: Okay. [tape on/off]

LEVINE: Pardon?

ATTARD: Why am I always thirsty?

LEVINE: Always thirsty, huh. Are you thirsty now? Do you want a drink before we continue?

ATTARD: Uh-hmm. Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay, we're going to stop here. [tape off/on] We're going to resume again here. We were talking about Cospiqua where you lived up until the time you were married.

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: What was your father's name?

ATTARD: Sam.

LEVINE: Sam, and his-his occupation? What did he do?

ATTARD: He work in the dockyard.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: Like loading ships?

ATTARD: Ships, right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: And your mother's name?

ATTARD: Amelia.

LEVINE: Amelia.

ATTARD: Amelia, but she put Amelia. Amelia. She hate Amelia, and I have the granddaughter name for her, Emily.

LEVINE: Oh.

ATTARD: She don't like it.

LEVINE: But your mother, how did she spell her name?

ATTARD: Amedia, A-D-E-M-E-A. [sic]

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and your mother's maiden name?

ATTARD: Bazzena.

LEVINE: Benzino?

ATTARD: No. Bazzina

LEVINE: Spell that one, would you?

ATTARD: B-A-Z-Z-E-B-E. A, cross E the last one. Bazzeba.

LEVINE: Ah.

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: Okay, and-

ATTARD: She's a devil, my mother.

LEVINE: Tell me about your mother. What-

ATTARD: Ohhhhhh, she have a stomach to kill a horse. Vindictive.

LEVINE: Oh.

ATTARD: I don't want to gate-- stay near my mother. My mother, good-bye for good.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. Now, what was your father like?

ATTARD: Oh, my father was a good man. Quiet. He died with cancer, but he was quiet, you know. He never, never fight, but my mother was always fight, fight, fight, fight.

LEVINE: When you were a little girl-

ATTARD: Yes.

LEVINE: Do you remember, did you ever do anything, go places with your father?

ATTARD: Oh, yes, we go-we have the orchestra. He take us. No, he was good, my father, yeah, but she was a devil. The devil. I hated her and I hate her until today. When they told me she died, it's not true. She don't die.

LEVINE: Why?

ATTARD: She's still alive, and she's still bothering me. "You, you going to go --six o'clock-- you going to go out because you go --because --uh--uh-- uh -- you want in there ---- in there with them. How to -- this could be -- a young girl like you?" I said, "Ma, get out of here. It's not your business, it's my business." I said. I said, "Over here I eat free. I- I. They buy me things like anybody else." I said, "I love it, but you get out of here. Don't disturb my-I want raise up over here."

LEVINE: This is when you were in this country?

ATTARD: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Well, was your mother--was your mother not nice to you the whole time you were growing up?

ATTARD: She hate because we are girls. She hate girls. She want--she have seven boys, but she--- she all killed them with the- with the, you know, that -- that she don't raise them good. She don't know how to do this to them and this and that and one after another they all die.

LEVINE: Did they die as babies?

ATTARD: Babies, yes. Once she was at wash one on the table, give a bath to the other one, the little one, and the oldest one from the table and die. Ah, she was careless, my mother. My mother -- give her money. Believe me, what I'm saying to you. Treat her good. Prepare her nice dinner, but not me because I live over here. Over here.

LEVINE: Tell me, now she had seven boys? They all died. Then did she have--did you have sisters?

ATTARD: I have sisters, yes.

LEVINE: The girls lived and the boys died?

ATTARD: Oh, you mean the boys?

LEVINE: Of your mother.

ATTARD: No. No.

LEVINE: Of your mother? How--did you--how many children did she have?

ATTARD: Oh, seven boys and they have after Connie, Vincent girl, and another girl. Concetta, the girl. Yeah, those. And one -- Cencina, they called it, she died, too. See, I don't know. My mother, she was--

LEVINE: So you only had two sisters and you who were alive?

ATTARD: Yeah, right. Right.

LEVINE: In the family. Uh-huh. Did you have grandparents?

ATTARD: Yes.

LEVINE: Did you see them in Malta?

ATTARD: Oh, yes, yes.

LEVINE: When you were growing up?

ATTARD: Yes, it was my Grandma Costansina [PH] and Grandpa Joseph, English. My grandfather was English, from England. Yes, I know them well and he used to welcome and granfa-- my grandfather. And my mother live upstairs and grandpa downstairs and when you come, he said, "Maria." I said, "Hi, Grandpa." "Come over. Come over. See what I brought you." And he'd bring the clothes, what he brought me, shoes or something more special. Yeah, and I always was happy with them. I sleep with Grandma all the time in the big bed, but my mother not never. Never. Because if you go upstairs, you know where she put you? A lot of blankets on the floor and sleep.

LEVINE: Now, was this your mother and father--your mother's mother and father?

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: That-with the English grandfather?

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: That was your mother's father.

ATTARD: Right. Right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ATTARD: Oh, I used to hate her. I said to her, I said to her, "My goodness, if I wish- if I wish-- take revenge --and, you know, how I kill you." He was tough, Grandpa Joseph.

LEVINE: So nobody liked your mother?

ATTARD: No, nobody.

LEVINE: How about your father?

ATTARD: No, my father was quiet. He was very good man, my father.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ATTARD: My father used to bring the crackers, you know what, cookies to my grandma. Every Friday when he get paid, he bring her cookies, you know, [unclear] and things like that. Yeah, and the grandma loved him. Said, "Sam, you don't have to spend this on me. You give me enough." He said, "So what. I could do it, I do it." Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

ATTARD: He was quiet.

LEVINE: Now, were you-was your family religious?

ATTARD: My-my-yes. Yes, and no. Was my mother to appear religious, but in the meantime she make trouble. She was not really religious.

LEVINE: Yeah, what religion was it?

ATTARD: I don't know. Was Catholic.

LEVINE: Catholic.

ATTARD: But she come to the church to disturb the whole people over there. When I see her, I drop dead, believe me. And I used to go and I don't go the -- with, with the group. , You know, I keep away because I afraid to embarrass me, and that's it. Now she's in California.

LEVINE: Your mother?

ATTARD: Yeah, in California with her boyfriend.

LEVINE: Oh.

ATTARD: Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, did you go to school in Malta?

ATTARD: Oh, yes, I went to school.

LEVINE: What do you remember about that?

ATTARD: Well, I stay until the eighth grades.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ATTARD: I stay over there in the eighth grade and the--they promote me. You know, they make a lot of test and the -- they was good.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ATTARD: And when--when I went back to school, I went over--like over here -- in the morning and, you know, they write to me. They write everything, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ATTARD: Like you did and they--I begin here.

LEVINE: Ah, I see.

ATTARD: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay, well, now when you were in Malta, do you remember things that you did for enjoyment? What kinds of things did you do as a little girl?

ATTARD: Well, again we go away play in the square or in--or in the garden. We have garden, big garden in the school. Not in the school -- belongs to the school. We play, you know, like that. And when she see me, she come, like a mouse "Come out from your hole." [stuttering and sputtering] I said, "Ma, please shut up. You come over here, too, you going to do that to me. You going to ruin me." She said to me, "Of course." "What, what, what I have to do to you -- to lock you in." Yeah, that's what she said.

LEVINE: And when you think about Cospequa--

ATTARD: Yes.

LEVINE: What do you remember about the town itself?

ATTARD: It's a-a nice. Good people. One help each other. Was very nice.

LEVINE: Was it on the water?

ATTARD: Yeah, it is touch the water, yes. Because the [unclear] was like that, Malta, and after that, she put me in. She don't want to put me with the people --that they are no good those people. She -- she is good.

LEVINE: So when you-were there certain customs that people did in Malta?

ATTARD: Yes.

LEVINE: Certain ways of doing things.

ATTARD: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Or certain celebrations that you remember?

ATTARD: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: What do you remember that was particularly of that place.

ATTARD: We have a lot of each year, a-what they call them? Each well -- we-ah, let me see -- remember it good. Each ma-- each year, we make the-the feast for bless the water. We bless the ships like that, and those every year. Every year.

LEVINE: And what would happen during that feast day?

ATTARD: Oh, everybody happy. We go to the ship. We go on the-they take us around the playa free. They make us-come the English people, men, you know. They do a-they make the party for us. Yeah, it was good. We loved it, but you can't-you can't stay all the time in one place, you know, because the English men, they all over there. And there was my uncle over there. He was a-he was work, you know, they cut his foot. He-there was a Kilkardy [ph.] -- from Kilkardy and the ship was hit -- hit. And my uncle cut his leg and after, you know, they make him the wooden one. Like that and he come and grandma was crying when she saw him like that, one leg, you know. And the-she said to him, "You do the leg. That, and after that when it is good, you got to stay without it. To tree-- to try to have your -- your normal leg," and he did it. He did it. Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay, when-how did you meet your husband?

ATTARD: My husband. It was a lottery in Cospequa.

LEVINE: A lottery?

ATTARD: Yeah, lottery and there was a lot of games and I-I met him. Oh-

LEVINE: That's okay.

ATTARD: Oh, this on me.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ATTARD: They was making the lottery and that was how when they put us, you know, because they find my grandma. I went with her and that's it.

LEVINE: Ah-I don't-I-see if you can make me understand. In other words, there was a lottery and how did-how did you get matched up with your husband?

ATTARD: Well, I was before that with my husband.

LEVINE: Oh.

ATTARD: And I said, "Oh, my God, this is his mother," because he says, "I take you to my --near my mother." Oh, gosh, I scared. I said, "How do you do?" I said, "How do you do." That's, you know, and she said to me, "Yeah, you are engaged to Alfred." She said. She said, "How come an engage so fast?" I said, "I don't know. They did that to me." Because him, you know, [unclear] You know, [unclear] to me. And I said, "Because your son, he wants to be with-with-for --in -- in-- in good hand. That's why." I was not even seventeen yet, but you know, I tried to do -- do the best. [coughs] And-and she said, "The priest, the priest." He said, "Come on Alfred. Come on. Don't be afraid. You don't do nothing to be afraid or ashamed. Come on," he said, and he make us to married. Married us.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

ATTARD: Yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: So now had Alfred been in the United States?

ATTARD: Oh, yes. Yes, that's where he died. Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, wait a minute. When-when you met Alfred-

ATTARD: Yes.

LEVINE: Had he already been to the United States?

ATTARD: Yes. No. Wait.

LEVINE: He came back.

ATTARD: No, wait. He come out, yes, and he-they make him the affidavit, his uncle. Uncle Paul make him the affidavit and he was real now good. The affidavit is good, and he kept with us, Uncle Paul. Treat

us, give him money, you know, and Uncle Angelo the same thing. They gave us money.

LEVINE: Were they in the United States?

ATTARD: They was, yes. Yes.

LEVINE: Yeah, well, when-when you got married then-

ATTARD: Yes.

LEVINE: You left Cospiqua.

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: And where did you go?

ATTARD: In A-in America.

LEVINE: Didn't you live with your husband's mother?

ATTARD: Ewww, wait, yes, but I get away from her because she was a devil. She'd go have the chickens, the rabbits, the things like that. I cleaned. I was pregnant with the ba-the second baby. I cleaned the floor, the four rooms. She go to the chicken coop, just like that, all dirt in the -- from the chicken coop [unclear] vindictive because I have big belly like that and she see me. I go on the floor and I wash the floor. She don't care. She don't care. Not my mother, 'cause my mother she was not with me. His mother.

LEVINE: That you had two bad mothers, your mother and his mother.

ATTARD: Right. When I told her, "Why you [unclear] with that shoes. Look what you did. I just cleaned the -- those two rooms already." I said, "I am pregnant." I said, "I can't go down, up and down." I said, "But you make me do that because look, look, look at the foot steps, how you make me. That vindictive. I wash two rooms already." Son of a bitch. You know why she did that? Because she want to cut me from her son. When he come, I let him know. I said, "I can't stay over here with your mother." I said to him. He said, "Why?" I said, "Why?" I said, "You know, when I -- I am pregnant." I said, "I am five months mo-- pregnant." I said, "When I watch -- wash the floor, your mother with the dirty shoes from the chicken coops, she want to walk in with the shoes that she have the dirt of the -- of the coop." Phew.

LEVINE: So you told him you wanted to leave there.

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: And what did he say?

ATTARD: He said, "What can I do? I have to have my mother with me." I said, "I don't care what you do. With your mother or with me-or me," and I fight. I said, "I don't want to stay alone with her because she

always treat me bad." She was vindictive. She hated me. She don't want him to marry me.

LEVINE: So then what happened? Did you leave her?

ATTARD: Of course I left her.

LEVINE: Is that when you came to America?

ATTARD: Right. I left her and I was happy.

LEVINE: Okay, can you talk about your plans? When you knew you were coming to America-

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: What did you do? What did you pack? What did you do to get ready to go?

ATTARD: No, he was already here, my husband.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ATTARD: Because Uncle Paul fix everything for him. The papers, everything, and he want, he said enough that he was going to make in us, the four kids and me. Yeah.

LEVINE: So-so you had four babies by the time you left Malta?

ATTARD: Right, right.

LEVINE: Okay, and-

ATTARD: I have two boys, two girls.

LEVINE: Okay.

ATTARD: Yeah.

LEVINE: And where-where-where did you leave from for the United States?

ATTARD: From Cospequa.

LEVINE: Cospequa and then did you go to a port and get a big ship?

ATTARD: Okay, yes. Big ship, yes. And a Greek sheep -- ship. Greek-Greek ship, yeah. I have the kids. Mercedes-Mercedes was-no, Spiro was the oldest.

LEVINE: What were all of their names?

ATTARD: Yes.

LEVINE: Spiro.

ATTARD: Spiro is the first one. There was an-what they call her? Greek family and she make play with the kids, with their kids. That's Spiro. Mercedes, the second, and Mary and the other one is-Mary best one.

LEVINE: The boy?

ATTARD: No. No, Mary.

LEVINE: Oh, Mary's the best one.

ATTARD: Yeah, the best kid. Yeah. I had four. Four, but I was steady, you know, and they-we go together, you know, and, "Uncle Paul, you come and see me." He gave me money. "You have money? Here, I [unclear] twenty dollars." "Oh, no, Uncle Paul, that's too much." You know. Says, "Shut up."

LEVINE: When you were in this country.

ATTARD: Yeah, "Take it." I ashamed to take it, but I have to, you know. They was good to me and they after that, I said, "Uncle Paul," I said, "You work hard for this money." I said, "And I ashamed to take it." He said, "Don't be ashamed." He said, "I -- my paycheck is very good." He said, "I give you twenty dollar each pay check." I said, "My husband, he don't let me take it." He said, "Shut his mouth. Tell him nothing. Shut up," and he give me the twenty dollar. Yeah, he was good to me. Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about what happened on the ship coming over here or what the ship was like? Or what-

ATTARD: No, it was Greek.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And were you-

ATTARD: Greek ship.

LEVINE: Were you down in the bottom of the ship in the steerage?

ATTARD: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Do you remember what that was like for you?

ATTARD: Oh, yes, but it was light. Not-not hard, you know. Always were on the top of the ship.

LEVINE: Oh, you were on the deck?

ATTARD: Yes, on the deck. Yes.

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

ATTARD: I remember.

LEVINE: What was that like?

ATTARD: No, I liked it. I-

LEVINE: The Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island.

ATTARD: The Statues of Liberty, yes. Oh, when I saw that, I was so happy. I said to him, "Oh, my God, everybody clap his hands. Statues of Liberty. We have liberty." We was crying.

LEVINE: You said that to your children, "Clap your hands"?

ATTARD: [unclear - crying]

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and can you talk about what kind of liberty you were looking for when you came to this country?

ATTARD: Oh, yes. Liberty that nobody interfere in our family like that. Yeah.

LEVINE: And when you got to Ellis Island, what do you remember about Ellis Island?

ATTARD: Nothing, because they don't put us there.

LEVINE: Oh, they didn't put you there?

ATTARD: No, no.

LEVINE: We-did you-you-you just went there and they looked at you and examined you.

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: And they said you were all right.

ATTARD: Right, right.

LEVINE: But did you actually go there to be examined?

ATTARD: It was light. Light.

LEVINE: A light examination.

ATTARD: Light, light, yes.

LEVINE: Okay, and then do you remember meeting your husband then?

ATTARD: No, my husband was already here.

LEVINE: Yeah, where did you-where did you see him, once you got here?

ATTARD: Under the Statues of Liberty, yeah.

LEVINE: So he came to Ellis Island to meet you probably.

ATTARD: Right, right. Right, yes. Yeah.

LEVINE: And how did you feel when you saw him?

ATTARD: Oh, I was happy. I saw my husband.

LEVINE: And then where did he take you?

ATTARD: Now he take me to Uncle Spir-Paul house because Uncle Paul, he want us to be there. He was make us like little party, you know. I have four kids and we did that and after that they went to look for rooms, my husband and Uncle Paul. He find it for us, yeah. He find it for us.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, Uncle Paul was-how was he related to you?

ATTARD: Nothing. Is what my husband-my husband is the uncle-his uncle. He brought us over here.

LEVINE: Right, right. So Uncle Paul found you an apartment.

ATTARD: Yes.

LEVINE: You and your husband and children.

ATTARD: Right, right.

LEVINE: And where was that?

ATTARD: That was in New York.

LEVINE: In New York City?

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: Manhattan?

ATTARD: Right. He make paint, Uncle Paul, in our place. He gave us furniture. He make us carpets, you know. The best, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm.

ATTARD: And I was happy. We was happy.

LEVINE: Did Uncle Paul have a wife and family?

ATTARD: Oh, yes. Yes. Have a nice wife. English his wife. She's a nice English woman and she make a big dinner for us, you know, for everybody. She is very good. I liked her.

LEVINE: Do you remember any of your first impressions when you first came to this country, things that you noticed that were different?

ATTARD: Right, right, yes.

LEVINE: What kind of things were different when you first came?

ATTARD: Well, you see things that you never see them before. You know what-

LEVINE: Do you remember any that you saw for the first time?

ATTARD: Yes, yes, I saw like furniture, you know. I go for it-a lot of things that I forgot, of course. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, and-and how about any foods? Did you notice different kinds of food?

ATTARD: The food is good. Yes, the food is good. Look over here. We eat free over here. Oh, this is pulling me.

LEVINE: That's the microphone.

ATTARD: Yeah, I do that. [unclear]. Yeah.

LEVINE: And so did your children start school right away?

ATTARD: Right away. My husband took them the first day that we stop in our room. He put the kids for school, Mercedes, all of them. Spiro, Mary. Mary was younger. They all marked them for school and Mercedes, she's very intelligent. He pu-- they put her from one when first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seven, eight. In the eighth grade right away.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ATTARD: They found her very intelligent. She is.

LEVINE: Now, how is it for you learning English?

ATTARD: Yes. Oh, I learn because I went to school.

LEVINE: You went to night school?

ATTARD: No, I study my books

LEVINE: Oh, you study your book.

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: Did you go to a class with a teacher?

ATTARD: Oh, yes, and we taught her everything. My husband taught her everything. That's how we got --.I believe a little bit my lips. [takes a drink]

LEVINE: So your children learned English.

ATTARD: Oh, very well.

LEVINE: And you-were you-what language were you speaking at home?

ATTARD: Maltese.

LEVINE: You were speaking Maltese?

ATTARD: No, not Maltese over here. Not Maltese. Maltese in Malta.

LEVINE: But here?

ATTARD: English.

LEVINE: You-you started school-

ATTARD: Oh, my fa--my husband, English. "Why you talk Maltese? English! I want to hear you talk English. Stupid!" He did, he get mad. They said, "Dad, we talk, we playing with the kids." He said, "I don't care what you doing. I said I want you to talk English because you are in America. You are not in Malta." They-they afraid of him.

LEVINE: Did you have any contact with other people from Malta once you came to this country?

ATTARD: Well, they-they bother you. They want money because I'm in America. They want a-they have no money. From this I hear, from this I put out. My sister, oh, gosh. My sister, I sent her twenty dollars a month. It doesn't come three days. After she receive the check to -- to ask me to re-send her another check and I cut that out. I said, "Sister, what do you think I am? Because I'm in America, I am a millionaire." I said, "I work for my money." I said, "We all work." Spiro work. My husband work and I work, too.

LEVINE: Did you work in the home or did you work outside the home?

ATTARD: No, outside the home.

LEVINE: What did-

ATTARD: No, no, there was a place like this. The place, and you go over there, you know, they gave you two rooms with people, with young kids. Not young kids. You know, like ten, twelve and they-I teach them the English. They have English, but sometimes they don't know. I take care of that.

[END OF SIDE A]

[BEGIN SIDE B]

LEVINE: Was it like a home for children?

ATTARD: No, like a small school.

LEVINE: Like a school.

ATTARD: School, yes. Like kindergarten, you know. Small like school. Yeah.

LEVINE: And so you like assisted the teachers?

ATTARD: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

ATTARD: I liked with the teachers, yes, when it [unclear].

LEVINE: So you worked for the school.

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: And did your life-what would you say were the high points of your life? What makes-when you think back on your life, what were some of the really good times?

ATTARD: Excited. Was excited.

LEVINE: What were you excited about?

ATTARD: Well, the pleasure that's I am one of them now. You know what I mean?

LEVINE: An American, you mean?

ATTARD: Yes, right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. You wanted to be an American?

ATTARD: I wanted to be the American. I make the Rockefeller. I -- the -- I-- I--I collect the money for the-a kidney disease. And you know something, he send me a big paper like that. He want me to be, what they call it? Oh, he want me to be like-like them because I help the people that they have had kidney trouble and he gave me certificate and to make me right away --- he put me right-

LEVINE: An honorary person.

ATTARD: Right, gave me that thing -- big --.

LEVINE: Very nice.

ATTARD: He say, "You -- you deserve this because you collect for kidney disease and you just come over here."

LEVINE: So that was a high point in your life, too.

ATTARD: Right, right.

LEVINE: And that was soon after you came over to this country.

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: That's very nice.

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh, and what were the-what were the hard times in your life? Can you think of what was the hardest times?

ATTARD: Was, was hard-- the hardest time it was when I began have the children. You know what I mean? Because Mercedes was already born. No, Spiro was already born. Born, yes, and he-we went to Califor-no, not to California -- Florida. He take us Florida, Spiro because we going -- we going to get bigger. You know, become a man, Spiro, and he was taking care of us. Look at till today, she send me clothes, beautiful clothes, his wife.

LEVINE: Spiro's wife?

ATTARD: Yeah. Coats, you know. A lot of things she send me. "When you going to come? When you going to come?" I said to her, "Don't forget I have four kids." I said to her, I said, "I have to do the kids, first. When the kids, they disappear, you know," I said, "we could come."

LEVINE: Who was saying should you come?

ATTARD: Eh?

LEVINE: Who-who kept asking you to come?

ATTARD: My daughter-in-law.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you see-so that's after Spiro was grown up.

ATTARD: Right, right.

LEVINE: Right.

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: Okay, let's see. So when you look back on your life, when you look back on coming to this country-

ATTARD: Right, right.

LEVINE: As a young woman with your children-

ATTARD: Right, right.

LEVINE: What do you think about that? What do you think about the fact that you gave up your life in Malta.

ATTARD: It doesn't matter.

LEVINE: And you came-

ATTARD: I get rid of my mother.

LEVINE: You got rid of your mother, right.

ATTARD: Right away, that's right. She did-she don't do that to me anymore and that's I pass it by. [Laughs] Yes, right. Yes, Spiro come a man after. He married to -- to Vera. That she is the wonderful women and I make a bedroom for her when a-when a-when a --I bought a bedroom, but mine, it was double, you know. I put another -- the room [unclear] and the-they come.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ATTARD: They come. They stay two days with me.

LEVINE: Oh, that's nice.

ATTARD: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, let's see. What about your-your life now? Now that your children are grown-

ATTARD: Yes.

LEVINE: And your husband has died.

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: How is life for you now here in the Swedish home?

ATTARD: Right. Right.

LEVINE: How is it here?

ATTARD: I tell you the truth. I don't like it because they are domineering.

LEVINE: Because what?

ATTARD: Domineering.

LEVINE: Oh, domineering.

ATTARD: Right.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Okay.

ATTARD: I, after all, I don't know the language.

LEVINE: Well, you do very well.

ATTARD: How they talk. You know what I mean?

LEVINE: Oh, you mean Swedish?

ATTARD: Swedish, yes. It's hard for me.

LEVINE: I see.

ATTARD: And-yeah. Mercedes already begin learn Swedish. Yes, she's very intelligent.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ATTARD: Mercedes, yeah. She said cheese. She said cheese. Yeah, big pieces of cheese.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ATTARD: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ATTARD: She break it-she bring to where I am when I-she bring them cheese.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay, now, is there anything else you can think of about coming to this country?

ATTARD: I was happy.

LEVINE: You were happy, and do you have now grandchildren, too?

ATTARD: Yes. Oh, I have seven.

LEVINE: Seven grandchildren.

ATTARD: Yeah. I have the little one-eh, what's her name? Emily. "Emily, what's your name, honey?" "Grandma, don't you know everything?" [Laughs]

LEVINE: Oh, that's great.

ATTARD: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay, and is there anything else that you would say, looking back on your life now-

ATTARD: Right. Right.

LEVINE: That-that you think you've learned.

ATTARD: I learn a lot.

LEVINE: What kinds of things do you think you learned going through life?

ATTARD: I learned that I-I-like [unclear] mother. Like I teach the kids the English that I know, right, and the-how I put them. I give them money to put them [unclear] and that's it. And I have Spiro always give me money. He always give me money. He send me a big box like that with fifty dollars each. I said, "Spiro, why you sent me that?" He said, "Ma, I send it to you to take it when you-when you have no money, cash it. Don't worry, I have a lot of those. But don't stay without money." I said, "Okay, I don't stay without money."

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ATTARD: But he showed, you know.

LEVINE: And-and so you're life in the United States has been overall pretty good?

ATTARD: Pretty good, yes. Everybody like me. Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ATTARD: Yeah, it was good.

LEVINE: You had a lot of friends?

ATTARD: Oh, yes. But friends is friends, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay. Well, maybe this is a good place to stop. I want to thank you so much.

ATTARD: Yes, anytime.

LEVINE: For talking with me.

ATTARD: I-anytime.

LEVINE: It's been a pleasure.

ATTARD: I'm sorry because I have no food to present you.

LEVINE: I'm fine. I'm fine.

ATTARD: Because we eat what they cook. You know what I mean?

LEVINE: Yes. Yes. Okay, I've been speaking with Mary Attard, who came from Malta when she was, it seems like seventeen, and she is

seventy-nine at the time of this interview. But we're going to check the dates on that.

ATTARD: Okay.

LEVINE: Okay, well, thank you very much. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service.

ATTARD: Oh, oh, I see.

LEVINE: And I'm signing off.

ATTARD: Yes. Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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