

EI-838

SANDY (SANTA) LORETTA LOCOCO MAZZA  
BIRTH DATE: AUGUST 24, 1931  
INTERVIEW DATE: DECEMBER 28, 1996  
RUNNING TIME: 50:58  
INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PhD  
RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME  
INTERVIEW LOCATION: BROOKFIELD, WISCONSIN  
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 3/1999

SICILY, 1937  
AGE 6  
PASSAGE ON "LA SAVOIE"

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Mrs. Mazza is the sister of Joseph Lococo, Interview EI-839. 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., Oral Historian, 1/28/1999.

LEVINE: Today is December 28, 1996, and I'm here with Santa Loretta, called Sandy, Mazza, who came from Sicily in 1937, when she was practically seven years of age, about to turn seven, and she was six years of age at that time. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I want to start at the beginning, if you would say your birth date for the tape.

MAZZA: I was born August 24, 1931.

LEVINE: Okay. And, uh, where in Sicily were you born?

MAZZA: I was born in, uh, Porticello, Sicily.

LEVINE: And did you remain in Porticello up until the time you left for the United States?

MAZZA: Yes, we did. Yes, I did.

LEVINE: Now, do you have memories of those six years?

MAZZA: Lots of them. We lived with my grandfather and grandmother, and my father worked in America. And, uh, so they were like our parents to us. My mother lived with us and, um . . .

LEVINE: Were these your mother's father and mother?

MAZZA: No, this was my mother's parents, uh, were deceased, so, uh, we lived with my grandparents as a family. We lived upstairs from them, and they lived downstairs in the same quarters, the same complex.

LEVINE: And do you remember, was it a village, a city?

MAZZA: No, Porticello is a little fishing town, and, uh, my grandfather was a fisherman, and so would my father have been if he had stayed there.

So my dad really wanted to better himself, although my, my grandfather came here at a certain time, with my dad, and, um, I don't think it worked out for him, so, uh, he stayed in Italy and still was a fisherman, and, um, my dad continued, as a young man, came here, very, very young. I think he must have been maybe in his early twenties, and he continued to stay here. But he would go back, come back and forth. And, um, in fact, um, he knew my mother, my mother, being an orphan, I think he fell in love with her at the age of ten, so they were just ten years apart, and he always thought that he was going to come back to Sicily to marry her, and he did. He did marry her. And, um . . .

LEVINE: Now, your grandfather. What do you remember about him? Do you remember any experiences as a little girl with your grandfather?

MAZZA: My grandfather was a very gentle and, just a beautiful man. He looked like Gepetto, with the gray hair and twinkling eyes, and, um, he, he was just a marvelous, marvelous man. And, uh, I know that, um,

I remember him baby-sitting, you know, where my grandmother, my grandmother was a milk mother of some baroness at the time, and she would go to Palermo to breast-feed this child. And, so, and they would her royally because, you know, a milk mother in Europe is a highly, you know . . .

LEVINE: Yeah. Say whatever you can think of about a milk mother.

MAZZA: Okay. Well, she was a milk mother for a, some very wealthy people, and they would pick her up and take her to Palermo, and she was just like their grandmother, or, uh, some relative of theirs, so they would treat her just beautifully. And she was in place of, of the child's mother who didn't, couldn't be breast fed by its own mother. And, um, my grandfather, um, was very dear to us. He took the place of my father, and he was very special in my heart, anyway. And, um, when my grandmother would go away, he would get all the candy that she probably had stored underneath the bed ( she laughs ) and he would give it to us, and then she would raise a fit. So he would always say, "Well, you know, I ate it, so don't bother the children." You know, "Because I was the one that took it, and I'm the one that's responsible for it." But there were many things that he would do. You know, um, he loved me dearly that he could do, I could do no wrong, and when my mother would try to spank me he would stand in front of her and say, "Well, before you hit this child, you've got to hit me." You know, all these different things. But, um, like I said, he looked like Gepetto. A small man, you know, not so tall, gray hair, and the cutest moustache. And I think that if you would see the Walt Disney Gepetto, you would see my grandfather. He would be like that. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: And, um, so you were there with your mother.

MAZZA: We were there with my mother, and my brother, Joe, and my sister, Anne, who came later. So it was the three of us children. My sister, Mary, who's downstairs, was born here.

LEVINE: Now, um, did you actually start school before you came?

MAZZA: Yes, I was in school, because, um, I was in the convent school, I remember. And, um, I had dear cousins of mine that we would go to school, and I could remember riding back on little, um, wagons, you know, run by horses. Not horses, like the donkeys, you know? Like the Sicilian cart would be only unpainted, that's for more festive things. And I could remember that, and I could remember running through orchards. All my cousins had lemon orchards and orange orchards. And, um, every, so I remember all of that, you know. And, uh, I recently went to Italy about, uh, seven or eight years ago, and my cousin Santa who lives there and her mother is my godmother, we used resumed like we had never lost our friendship. I mean, we started to talk, and, like, we never left. It was a wonderful friendship, and we missed them.

LEVINE: Now, when you say you went to a convent school, does that mean you were preparing to enter a convent?

MAZZA: No, no, no, no.

LEVINE: It was school.

MAZZA: It was like a Catholic school run by the nuns, and it was kind of a private school.

LEVINE: Were your family religious? Was your mother religious?

MAZZA: My mother was very religious, yes. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: So did you, did you participate in any particular religious festivities?

MAZZA: Oh, sure. You know, uh, well, in Sicily they always have these processions. Especially in our town October is, uh, the month of the Madonna Lumi[ph], it's the madonna of light, and there's great ceremonies that go on in October. And, um, she's really kind of the patron of fisherman. And, um, Porticello means either the port of birds, or, uh, or port of heaven, because cello . . .

LEVINE: Cello, uh-huh.

MAZZA: Meaning bird, is one thing, and cello meaning sky is another. So I don't know what the meaning of Porticello, if it's the skies, it could be both, port of birds, or port of heaven.

LEVINE: What would happen in the light ceremony?

MAZZA: Well, it's a very beautiful ceremony where, um, all the fishermen, before they go to sea, will always pray to the Madonna of Light, which is the Madonna Lumi[ph], and, um, in these, there's a great, big procession that goes on, and there's a, like a festival that lasts for three days. And, um, this is the big event of the year, and what the fishermen do is that they go out to sea, and this madonna, the story goes that the madonna, now, how does it, I really don't remember it clearly, but the madonna, it was a very rough time, and, um, and these fishermen were having great difficulties in the sea, and when they came to land they found this grotto, and this madonna had appeared. So now what they do is they'd have a regular ceremony out at sea where this madonna is passed from one boat to another and never touches land or anything until it gets to the grotto. It's always handed by hand, you know, just, on and on to the other, even to the

grotto. And, um, that's what I know about that one, but I remember.

I also remember as a child we lived in a court setting. Our house is in a court, not a, not a cul-de-sac, but it's, it's a court. The houses go like this, and there's entrances to this court.

LEVINE: So it's like a courtyard.

MAZZA: Yeah, like a courtyard, with many houses around it, you know? And, uh, from our terrace we could see this mountain all the time, and they would graze, um, sheep on it, you know, and goats. And, um, it wasn't until 1972 that somebody discovered that by going beyond, um, they discovered an ancient city there. It was a Greek city. And so when we went back, when I went back maybe about eight, before this, was it the last time I went back? Yes. They, uh, they discovered, it must have been an ancient city that, with all the ruins, and it was beautiful, because, you know, you could just look into this little town, and here you could see the theater that they had, and to think that all this, because the foliage was so thick, and so dense, that nobody, all these years nobody had gone, until 1972, I mean, that's a recent discovery. And now, of course, they're excavating it, and really, you know, looking into it. They have a little museum now of all the things that they have found, all the artifacts. So it's quite interesting. I mean, that really appealed to me because, my gosh, I used to look at this all the time and never thought there was anything but perhaps a mountain.

LEVINE: It will be interesting to you what they discover about it.

MAZZA: Sure. And I remember the goats coming down to the, the town, because they used to make what they call asatu[ph], which means, like, dried sun tomatoes. They used to put them on, uh, great, big tables in front of their houses, and they used to take these tomatoes, and then

they used to lay it out, and that was called asatu[ph]. And, um, and then the goats used to come down and, of course, they kind of sniff around, and everybody used to get so excited. That I remember real distinctly. But what I remember, um, about these goats coming down is that, and the sheep coming down, was that the last time I was in Italy, here was a little Volkswagon hearing the sheep instead of . . . ( she laughs ) That was so different, you know? ( they laugh ) That was quite interesting that they have upgraded the way of taking care of, you know, the sheep, and so forth.

LEVINE: Well, now, do you remember any, um, stories that you learned as a little girl? I mean, were there certain, um, I don't know, parables, or just fairy tales, or stories that you can recall from childhood?

MAZZA: There are some. Now, um, I have to jog my memory. Um . . .

LEVINE: I mean, who would have told you . . .

MAZZA: Oh, my mother. My mother was a great philosopher. I mean, there's so many phrases that she had.

LEVINE: Oh, that would be good.

MAZZA: And to the, to this day I, I, sometimes even say them.

LEVINE: Well, can you think of any of those?

MAZZA: Um, like what? ( she pauses ) I think there's a lot of cliches that even the Americans use that are translated into Italian. And, um, I don't know exactly how to, what I would say to you. Um . . .

LEVINE: Well, maybe not specifics, but how about, like, attitudes? Can you think of any attitudes that your mother tried to instill in you as a little girl?

MAZZA: Well, I'll tell you. I think as a foreign child, or a European child, perhaps I grew up much faster than some of these children that are here.

LEVINE: How do you mean that?

MAZZA: Uh, because at the age of nine I could cook and clean and take care, and I was very caring, and, I don't think this is demanded of the children of, well, of Americans. So, in other words, um, I was a little old lady before I grew up, and very responsible, you know, very, um, uh, too serious, in a way, you know? Although I have a tremendous sense of humor, I was very, very serious about things, and family. In fact, I don't think my mother thought I would survive motherhood because I was just too, too worried about children, and siblings, and so forth. So, uh, you know, but, um, I knew how to clean, I knew how to, you know, wash. I knew how to, which, this is characteristic of, uh, of girls of that generation that were born in a foreign country, or perhaps maybe Italy alone, I don't know about other countries.

LEVINE: How about the difference between you growing up as a little girl compared with someone your age growing up as a little boy? Was there a big difference there?

MAZZA: Well, I think that boys were catered to more, you know? Um, I only had a brother, but I think he was given preference, you know? Um, he didn't have the responsibilities that I might have, or maybe, maybe I took on the responsibilities on my own, you know, because I was a girl. Um, my mom, uh, do you want some background as to my mother's family and so forth?

LEVINE: Um, if it's relevant. Did it affect, uh, you in some ways?

MAZZA: Maybe not.

LEVINE: Well, were both sides of the family, were their families from Sicily?

MAZZA: Yes, uh-huh. Um, my mother, um, you know, living with my grandmother wasn't the easiest thing in the world, you know, especially that she was a daughter. My mother was very, very creative, and she wanted to do, uh, she wanted to be a pattern maker, but my grandmother just wouldn't allow it because, you know, a woman whose husband was in the United States couldn't do those things, so she really held my mother down. And, um . . .

LEVINE: She couldn't, because her husband was in the United States, she couldn't . . .

MAZZA: She couldn't be seen, you know, maybe enjoying something, or doing something like that. That just was improper. So she kind of held my mother down. And it was kind of difficult for my mother, you know, living in the same household with my grandmother. Maybe if it had been her paternal mother, it might have been just a little different, but, uh, being a daughter-in-law, she had to have her place. So the reason I'm telling you this is ( she laughs ) because when my mother said, saw the Statue of Liberty, she said, "At last I'm free!" ( they laugh )

LEVINE: I suppose if you'd have a (?). ( they laugh )

MAZZA: Well, in this case I think my mother would say yes, I think I'm free.

LEVINE: How about, you said you knew how to cook and everything. Can you think of things that you actually cooked in Sicily before you came?

MAZZA: Um, I could almost do anything. I mean, pasta, fish, whatever was

available. Um, I could remember our house.

LEVINE: Good, describe that.

MAZZA: It was with a great, big hearth. The first level had this great, big hearth that we used to, uh, burn wood. We did have, um, we did have bathroom facilities but, you know, a lot of the people go their water from a well at that point. We had running water, for some reason. Um, but a lot of people used to go to the wells to get their water. To this day that, that town for some reason has some problem with water because, you know, they cater to the tourists, they tell you in the morning to gather your water in your tubs for cleaning and so forth because in the afternoon, or in, I think it's either the afternoon or the morning you have to gather your water because in the afternoon it's shut down, and they cater to the hotels were the tourists are. So there was a problem with the water there.

LEVINE: Was your family rather comfortable there, or, would you say?

MAZZA: I think that my father being here, I think we were comfortable.

LEVINE: Because you were spending . . .

MAZZA: Yes, uh-huh. And my father would always send money to my grandmother and grandfather, and support them. Uh, I think we were comfortable. I mean, I don't think we had any wants. Um, I remember whenever I see the candy corn, um, I think of my father, because I think that's about the only candy he knew, and he would always send it to us, you know? I don't know what time of the year, it must have been maybe October, because that's when I see it. But any time I see that candy corn I remember my father.

LEVINE: What was your father doing in the United States?

MAZZA: He worked for a coal company loading the coals on the trucks.

LEVINE: Was he . . .

MAZZA: Very hard work.

LEVINE: . . . in this area of the country?

MAZZA: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAZZA: Milwaukee.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAZZA: And he lived with his sister that had come to America when she was eighteen, and it's so sad, she never got back to, to see her mother again. And, um, it's pretty sad. I mean, there's a lot of sad tales, uh, of people coming to this country and never going back.

LEVINE: Was it your father's idea to come here, make money, and eventually go back?

MAZZA: Well, I think it was my grandfather's idea to have my father better himself, and so this is why he exposed him to come here, um, when he was rather young, and then by, by a certain time my aunt had married, and she came to the States, this aunt that I told you, that was about eighteen years old. She came to the States, and then he was able to have a place to stay. Because it was a rough time in those days where they took in boarders. My aunt had nine children, and still she took in boarders, and they all lived together, you know? And I don't know how they ever survived, but they managed.

LEVINE: Did she cook for her boarders?

MAZZA: She cooked and cleaned, and did all kinds of things, and it wasn't with these automatic washers either. So it was a rough time.

LEVINE: Yeah. Now, um, are there any recipes that you remember from Sicily that you have continued to make?

MAZZA: Um, the pizza that you ate tonight.

LEVINE: Oh, how about saying that?

MAZZA: Yeah. It was called spincuni[ph].

LEVINE: Can you spell it, or just make a stab at it?

MAZZA: Spincuni. I hope I'm pronouncing it right. But it's a form of pizza where they used to take the bread and, um, after, you know, it rose, and they would just flatten it out, and put onions, and the base of that is anchovies, which I don't tell everyone, because ( she laughs ) not everybody loves anchovies until they taste it, and they might think it's very delicious after they've eaten it, and then you tell them it's anchovies, but not everyone loves it. And, um, we used to make that, I used to make bread. Um, I remember an incident where, but this is in the United States, you might not want to hear about that.

LEVINE: Well, we can get to it . . .

MAZZA: Later on. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Okay.

MAZZA: But, um, bread, I used to help with the bread, um, I can remember doing a lot of fish because, you know, that was a fishing town. And my grandfather spoiled me by giving the first fish that he caught

always to me, you know. ( she laughs ) I was kind of spoiled. And, um, we used to have that, and we used to have seashells. I love sea urchins, because we used to get a lot of those in Italy, which a lot of people don't even know about sea urchins. But, um, I went back last time, a cousin of mine took me to, Mondela[ph], Mondela[ph] used to be a sea resort town in which we spent a lot of our summers with my, my other grandfather, and his, the D'Acquisto side, which is my mother's side of the family. And we used to spend a lot of time in the sea town. And, uh, I don't know, but . . .

LEVINE: I neglected to ask you your mother's name and maiden name.

MAZZA: My mother's name was, uh, Francesca, uh, D'Acquisto.

LEVINE: And spell the last name?

MAZZA: D'A-C-Q-U-I-S-T-O.

LEVINE: And your father's name?

MAZZA: Uh, Donato Lococo. Which, Donato means, um, uh, Donald in Italian, and when he got to Ellis Island apparently they changed his name and it turned out to be Dan. Okay, so he went by Dan. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Um, how did you feel about leaving? Can you remember that?

MAZZA: Um, I think I had, um, I think I was very, very thrilled because I was finally, um, I could be with my father, you know, and that's what I was happy about. We missed our dad terribly, and he would come every three years, and you could see by the pattern of my siblings that it was every three years. ( she laughs ) My mother used to say, "He comes, he blows up the balloon, and he goes away." ( they laugh ) So, um, he used to come, every three years he used to come, so we were kind of lonely, you know? And, um, I was happy in that

sense that I was coming to the States. Um, I was sad to leave my, my grandparents. And, like, I could still treatment the day we left, you know? We got on a carriage, and we drove to Palermo, and then we boarded the ship, and so forth. And, you know, it was hard. And it was even harder when we got to the States, because I didn't know a word of English.

LEVINE: Well, um, first, do you remember the voyage at all? Do you remember anything about the . . .

MAZZA: Yes, the ship was lovely. Um, everyone, um, we came with, uh, an aunt of ours with her, her daughters, and, um, with one of her daughters. No, there were three daughters. Her son was here, so it was my aunt, my mother's aunt. So we traveled with them. And it was, um, my sister Anne who was just a baby, my brother, and I. And, um, like I said, it was a luxury liner, so it offered good meals and good accommodations, so we didn't suffer too much. And, um, I remember going, my mother taking us to a theater one night, and I happened to sit next to an American woman.

LEVINE: On the ship?

MAZZA: On the ship, and I got seasick, and I threw up right in her lap. ( she laughs ) She was, she wasn't too happy about that, but I can remember my mother grabbing one child from this arm and another, and just taking us back to our stateroom. Um, but we had the run of the ship. My brother and I lost a lot of ping-pong balls and, you know, and it was wonderful as far as the voyage goes.

LEVINE: Do you remember when the ship came into the New York Harbor?

MAZZA: Uh-huh. Like I said, my mother said, "I'm free at last." ( she laughs ) But I still remember. And I just, um, last year took a trip to,

um, New York, and it was very emotional to see the Statue of Liberty.

It was wonderful. It really was truly wonderful. I could remember that, and I could remember getting off, uh, somebody met us, my uncle met us, uh, and we boarded a train, and I think we stayed in Buffalo for a couple of days.

LEVINE: Do you remember Ellis Island at all?

MAZZA: I remember these great, big rooms. Um, and a lot of standing in line and people speaking for us and, um, but I, it's not real, real vivid in my imagination. It was a lot of confusion. Um, tired, you know.

LEVINE: Did you stay there overnight, do you remember?

MAZZA: No, I don't think so. I think that, um, my uncle came and picked us up and brought us home. I made accommodations in Buffalo, like I said, somebody in Buffalo kept us overnight.

LEVINE: Do you remember any of your first impressions in the first few days when you . . .

MAZZA: Oh, I remember our Christmas, our first Christmas, uh, I got a little stove, which was darling, and I could remember, um, seeing, um, you know, one of these, um, these balls that the snow comes down, and I thought it was just fascinating. Um, we spent New Year's Eve with my uncle that picked us up, in New York. Um, and, of course, my cousins, um, you know, these people that my father had stayed with, um, they were all there, you know, all two, three of us, and we stayed with my aunt once we came here, for just a couple of weeks, and then my father managed to get a house across the street from them, and so we, we lived nearby. And, um, but it was trying after a while. It was very, very trying. It was a very difficult time in my life, I think.

LEVINE: What were your difficulties at that time?

MAZZA: Well, the difficulties were that, um, the language barrier. I knew nothing of English, and there was no one to really help me out. I was placed in a school where the nuns, um, come from Italy themselves, so I don't think my education was as good as it should have been in my formative years.

LEVINE: Let me just pause here. I want to turn the tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: So when you went to school, were there a lot of other immigrant children in the school?

MAZZA: Not too many. Not too many at that time. Then I know that others followed, uh, but I, I happened to go to St. Rita's school where there were, um, there weren't too many. In fact, I was the only one in the class. There was a nun, Sister Mary Benson[ph], that really took a liking to me, and she was the one that really, I think had she been around she would have taken a special interest in me. But, unfortunately, she was transferred. And so, um, I think that as a child I was a very extrovert. I mean, I could sing and, you know, drop a red hat. And then all of a sudden I really withdrew because children would laugh at me, at the way I pronounced words and, um, you know, children are children all over and, uh, they would laugh at the way I spoke, or how I read, and it was a difficult time. And there was nobody to really turn to because I would go home and then speak Italian. So I think I had an attitude about being foreign. I took off the earrings, which I don't know if this is of any interest. I took off the earrings, I never wore earrings until I was maybe

like twenty-five, because I wanted no one to know I was foreign. If my mother was with me I absolutely told her don't speak Italian in front of me. If we're with someone, you know, please hold it down, you know? And I wanted no trace of foreign element. I don't know if that's common or not, or if I was being silly. I don't think it was very fashionable in those days to be foreign.

LEVINE: No. Children were often embarrassed about their parents, you know?

MAZZA: Different. And I was embarrassed for myself, and so I was trying to kind of erase that part of my life, of which, you know, now, uh, and I think it took me a real, real long time to, um, appreciate it, and my appreciation was, uh, that when I was married twenty-five years ago I went back to Italy. And, you know, knowing the language you just go, walk into a situation and you're comfortable because, you know, the language, you know, there's nothing. And I thought to myself, "Why am I so ashamed of this?" I mean, I have a gift that maybe the next person next to me wished they had because, you know, I speak another language. I understand. And so I thought, "This is silly." You know, and I think I, I really got an appreciation for it then.

LEVINE: Do you remember what it was like when you were sort of learning English and your parents weren't, and, I mean, did that, was that a whole phenomenon that happened with you and your family where you kind of outpaced your parents and . . .

MAZZA: Oh, sure, sure.

LEVINE: And you knew more in many ways than they did.

MAZZA: Oh, sure. In fact, I was, uh, I was the caregiver. See, that's another thing, when you say, well, as a child how different I was from other

children, I was a caregiver, because I was the translator. I went to all the doctor appointments. I went to all the marketing with them. Although my mother caught on pretty well as far as, um, um, you know, shopping and so forth, things that she could help herself.

But when it came to translation of doctors, talking to doctors, of course, I had to go with her, and this is where I came in and had to do things, a chore that children aren't exposed to. I was taking her place instead of her taking mine. And that's where it was difficult, you know? And, of course, um, my father didn't speak, I mean, he might have been in this country a long time, but he didn't speak very good English at all. He couldn't help me out with words or, or whatever.

LEVINE: Was it, were your mother and father mostly involved with other people who also spoke Italian?

MAZZA: Yes, uh-huh, of course. Although my mother and dad tried to go to night school, but it didn't last too long. It, um, my mother, I think, tried more than my father. I think my father was too busy earning money and supporting the family and making a, just making a living.

LEVINE: Did they have the idea to become Americanized?

MAZZA: Oh, absolutely. That . . . ( disturbance to the microphone )

LEVINE: That's okay.

MAZZA: No, my parents always had a love for America and, uh, they were very, very grateful that they were here. And I think in when you, when I look at my mother and I look at her peers, she was a very progressive woman. She took to America like you would not believe. Wonderful, you would have been very, very proud of my mother, knowing my mother, because she was a very contemporary person.

LEVINE: And, um, so when you, so how long did you stay in school?

MAZZA: Um, in the States?

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MAZZA: Um, I graduated high school, and went on to a trade school.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did you work then, before you married, or . . .

MAZZA: Um, yes, uh-huh.

LEVINE: And did, how did you meet your husband?

MAZZA: I met my husband on a blind date. I never thought I would marry an Italian, but he happened to be Italian, and it was a blind date, and it was, uh, that he had called my sister and, uh, she said, "No, I wouldn't go out with you because you're too old for me," but she ended up marrying someone older than him. And he met me, I wasn't going to go out with him because I just didn't want to go on a blind date, but I did. And, um, got married. It's been a happy marriage.

LEVINE: And, uh, so you, so then did you work after you were married, or did you . . .

MAZZA: After, I was married, um, and I had the baby, I think I only worked for a year, and then, um, I stayed home with my children. I was fortunate enough to be able to stay home. And then after, um, my last child was a little bit old enough to, you know, stay, go to school and so forth and take care of himself, then I started to work again.

Um, my profession is a hairdresser, so I went back to that. I would have loved to have been a teacher of some kind, elementary teacher, but I wasn't fortunate enough to do that.

LEVINE: Did your husband, was your husband born here?

MAZZA: Yes. Born and educated here. His father is from Santa Stefano, which is a town, um, it's, it's not really close to Palermo, um . . .

LEVINE: In Sicily?

MAZZA: About an hour-and-a-half. It is in Sicily, though. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: And your husband's name?

MAZZA: My husband's name is Nick, Nick Anthony Mazza.

LEVINE: Mazza. And your children's names?

MAZZA: Um, my son is, uh, my son, Dan, is my oldest, and then there's Michael, and then Pam is my daughter, and I have another, Nick. I have four children.

LEVINE: And when you look back on the whole immigration experience that you had, do you think it made a difference, I mean, it did affect you in your family unit. What differences can you think of that having come here as a child, uh, made to you later in your life?

MAZZA: Well, coming as a child I think I'm very fortunate that I came here. I have gone back and, uh, I always tell the story about, uh, Nick and I being in Sicily and I don't know how, you might not think it's funny, but, uh, at the time we came here, I don't know if you remember, there used to be a show on television with G. Carroll Mash, and it was about all these immigrants going to, uh, night school, and, uh, the theme song used to be, ( she sings ) "America, I like you, you're like a mama to me." Okay. So we're walking, walking down at the pier, you know, where all the boats are in. He said to me, "Sandy," he says, "do you realize that you could have been living here?" He

says, "Would you have liked this? Would you have liked to have lived here?" And I turned to him and I says, ( she sings ) "America, I like you . . ." ( she laughs ) "You're like a mama to me." I really feel America is my home town, my homeland, and I, I get very emotional about it.

LEVINE: How do you put the Italian or Sicilian side of yourself in juxtaposition with the American side?

MAZZA: I still think Italian.

LEVINE: In what sense?

MAZZA: Um, expressions, um, sometimes attitudes, um, I'm still Italian. ( voice off mike ) Um, I still think a lot in Italian, because I think I had it so much, you know, even, um, with my, talking with my mother or being with my mother, I was very close to my mother.

LEVINE: If you verbalize internally, do you do it in actual Italian?

MAZZA: Some things, yes, you know?

LEVINE: And how about your dreams?

MAZZA: Dreams, no, English. But, you know, expressions, or, um, you know, I could sing better in Italian than I can in English, you know? If something happens, you know, I'll just, it's kind of funny, because sometimes my children will say the same thing, you know? ( she laughs )  
So, um . . .

LEVINE: Did you try to pass along to your children some ways of being in the world that were passed along to you, or did you try to make some real differences between what you received?

MAZZA: What do you mean, as far as attitudes and . . .

LEVINE: Yeah.

MAZZA: I tried to Americanize them more. Um, I really, I tried to, not to make them, well, we were Italian because, you know, my mother and father were such a part of their lives, uh, although they're, they're very angry with me that we didn't teach them Italian, you know? And they themselves, uh, like Dan studied in Italy and, uh, after he graduated he was stationed in Italy for three years. Dan's a dentist, and, so he was a dentist for the Air Force, and, with the intention of being transferred to Italy because he loved it so. And Michael has taken Berlitz courses, and he speaks good Italian. And so even if I didn't teach them Italian, they have their own love for it, and have learned it on their own.

LEVINE: You were kind of the transitional generation.

MAZZA: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: You know?

MAZZA: Yes.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MAZZA: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Interesting. Um, how about satisfactions in your life? What, when you look back over your life thus far, what makes you feel really most satisfied that you've done?

MAZZA: That my children, um, I don't know if it would have been the same in Italy. Surely I wouldn't have met Nick. And, um, the satisfaction from my children, my husband, who has, um, I think Nick has given me all the confidence in the world, has built me up just tremendously.

I think he's my best friend. And he's a very good support system in my life. Um, my children, I'm happy that they're accomplishments and they're very happy that they're Italian, and I don't think they'd want to be any other nationality but that, and, uh, they, they in their own right have accomplished a lot. One is a dentist. One is a very accomplished advertising executive. And Pam is wonderful, and so is Nick. Nick is in merchandising and so forth. So I have four wonderful children, which education, and I think you probably find, you know, interviewing a lot of these Europeans, education is the utmost thing in the world for, for their children. I have a big ball of steel for my children to have a good education. That's the ultimate in thinking, for the Europeans, it seems.

LEVINE: Well, now, um, you mentioned earlier that you, you've seen the Statue of Liberty again. What, what sort of special, um, connection do you think that, as an immigrant, coming here, you think differently about America and what it stands for than somebody who was born here?

MAZZA: Oh, I think so. I think that the Americans take a lot for granted, but, you know, it'll go back to the, these little towns, or you go back. I love, I love Italy, uh, but I wouldn't want to live there. It's so different. Uh, there's such a classdom. There's such a, what should I say? Um, people are naive. They live in their little towns, and they're narrow-minded and petty and, you know, I can't see, uh, what I love about America is that everybody's on one level, you know, a doctor could associate with a worker, and nobody, you know, the class system isn't there. Everybody is equal, it seems, you know, and everybody could be friends with everybody else. Ever color, and every, uh, profession. If you're an interesting person, nobody cares, you know? Uh, but there I think there's such a class system. I don't know if you've found that in other . . .

LEVINE: I think that's very well put.

MAZZA: Yeah, there's such a class system, and they haven't got tolerance for a lot of things that you find here. You know, uh, this is what I've found, and I'm taken back by that. I just can't stand it, you know? I could never stand this, you know, like, if they might see a cripple, they look down on people with deformities and, you know, that's not for me, you know? And in the States, I mean, people are, people that are handicapped are helped and cared for and, which I don't think in some of these areas in the world it's the same, you know? And I can't stand that. I really can't stand that. And that's one of the things I, I just dislike about, you know, because I see this, you know. If they see a, somebody who isn't real bright, you know, they label her, and didn't want to have anything to do with her, you know? And that's not right, you know, you just care for them and . . .

LEVINE: Well, you started out as a caregiver, and those attitudes run deep, I guess.

MAZZA: Well, um, I hope I'm not boring you.

LEVINE: No, this is fascinating. No, it's wonderful. I, I'm trying to think if there's anything that we haven't talked about related to your, to your coming here, or, um . . .

MAZZA: I'm a very lucky person. ( she laughs ) In fact, um, in January we're going back to Sicily.

LEVINE: Oh.

MAZZA: Okay. Um, and it should be fun. For the first time I will see Sicily, um, you know, how you lived, how you live in Wisconsin and never see

Wisconsin? I lived in Porticello, I stopped there, and in a few of the other towns, but I haven't toured Sicily, and it's very beautiful.

So unfortunately I'm going to be ( she laughs ) glad to be here.

I probably, my relatives will probably act out.

LEVINE: Oh, is it cold?

MAZZA: It's, um, it doesn't get as cold as here, but it will be chilly. I will have to wear a coat. But it was such a, it was like a trip to, that you can't confess out, so I'm taking advantage of it. We're taking advantage.

LEVINE: Well, I want to thank you for a most exciting recounting. It was really very, very interesting.

MAZZA: I hope so. I hope I didn't bore you.

LEVINE: Not at all. You know, I thought of earlier, when you said when you were little you were such an extrovert.

MAZZA: I was.

LEVINE: And you, can you remember any childhood songs from Sicily?

MAZZA: Not too, yeah, I used to sing, um . . . ( she sings in Italian )  
Which means, "Girls, don't look at those sailors, because you'll have trouble." ( she laughs ) And I remember we used to go to pick up my grandmother at, um, uh, this, she was a baroness, I guess, and we used to go and it used to be a great, big mansion, you know, with the typical great, big trunk table in the foyer, and they used to put me up there, and I used to sing all my songs. ( she laughs )  
But, you know, after a while, once I came to this country then, you know, all these things evolved, and I got kind of shy, you know?  
So . . .

LEVINE: Well, thank you again.

MAZZA: Thank you, and I hope I didn't bore you.

LEVINE: Not at all. It was fascinating. I've been speaking with Sandy Mazza, who came from, uh, Sicily in 1937, just practically, uh, turned seven when she arrived. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm signing off.