

EI-96

LILLIAN GALLETTA (MAIDEN AND MARRIED NAME IS "GALLETTA")

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AGE 4

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RESIDENCES:

- **ITALY: RIBERA, PROVENCE AGRIGENTO**
- **US: ASTORIA, NY**

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine with the National Park Service, and I'm here today with Lillian Galletta who came through Ellis Island from Sicily in 1928 at the age of four, four and a half. Today is September 25, 1991, and it's one o'clock in the afternoon. It's very nice to have you here.

GALLETTA: Thank you.

LEVINE: And we'll begin by asking you your birth date and the town you were born in.

GALLETTA: Well, I was born in October 20th, 1923, and I was born in Ribera, Sicily.

LEVINE: Would you spell the name of the town?

GALLETTA: R-I-B-E-R-A. That's the province of Agrigento.

LEVINE: Could you spell that one?

GALLETTA: A-G-R-I-G-E-N-T-O, Sicily.

LEVINE: Okay. And now, you left there at four, so your memory is probably not that clear yourself, but I'm sure you've been told things, so could you describe the town you lived in, the house you lived in, anything that you remember or have been told about your family living in Italy?

GALLETTA: Well, the town was a typical Italian town. Family members all lived very close together. There was a lot of activity that went on among the family. My uncle Lawrence was there with his children, and we would spend all the holidays together.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember...?

GALLETTA: And it was a very loving, loving kind of childhood that we grew up in.

LEVINE: Do you remember holidays? What kinds of holidays and how they were celebrated at all?

GALLETTA: Well, at Christmas time, I remember, I think before twelve, you couldn't eat meat. And we had fish. And after 12 o'clock, and then they brought out the

sausages and everything that went with it. We'd have big celebrations. Easter time, they would have the beautiful Passion parade where they would have the Crucifixion, real live characters. They would just go through the whole passion with the saints, but they were live people. And then they would have these St. Gennaro feasts, all these feast days. I remember my father being a carpenter and he built the platforms where they put the statues and even the band used to be on the platform.

LEVINE: Now, do you yourself have memories of that time at all?

GALLETTA: I remember slightly. I think I had a flashback once when I went to one of the feasts over here in America. And where I saw the band and the platform and people. And I, I had a feeling of deja vu. I thought, "I've been here before," but it was Italy that I was remembering.

LEVINE: Now, can you remember your older brother or sisters and what they told you about anything else about life in Italy before the family left there?

GALLETTA: Well, we all had a very good life there. Like I say, there was always family. And my father spent most of his time coming back and forth to and from America because there wasn't enough work there for a carpenter because practically all of the Galletta family were carpenters, and they were master carpenters. And he'd come back and forth every couple of years. That's why we're all spaced two years apart. My mother became pregnant every time he came. (she laughs) And that's what I remember. And then when he'd come from America to Italy, he would bring my mother a little gift. She has a beautiful cameo pin that he brought her from America, which now is being passed on to all her daughters. As each daughter passes on and then the next, the oldest daughter gets the pin. It's like an heirloom that we'll

have that going on through the family.

LEVINE: Now what was your mother's maiden name?

GALLETTA: Um, Vignieri. Alfansa Vignieri.

LEVINE: Could you spell that?

GALLETTA: V-I-G-N-I-E-R-I.

LEVINE: And, all together now, you had how many brothers and sisters?

GALLETTA: We, when my mother came to this country she had another two children. So all together there were nine children, and Mom and Dad made eleven.

LEVINE: And there were seven of you who came...

GALLETTA: From Italy.

LEVINE: From Italy.

GALLETTA: Right. Two came with my mother and father the first time, and then about a year later the five children followed, the other five.

LEVINE: Okay. Maybe you could give me the names of your brothers and sisters from the oldest on down.

GALLETTA: The oldest is Mary. Do you want her last name also?

LEVINE: Yeah, sure.

GALLETTA: Mary Comunali. And she just passed away in June. And then I have my brother Jim, who is about 81. And then my sister Anna. My brother Jim Galletta, naturally. My sister Anna Pazino. Then Josie Palonio. Then Camella Taglieri. Peter Galletta. Lillian Galletta. Fannie de Robertis. And Thomas Galletta.

LEVINE: Okay.

GALLETTA: That's nine of us, all married with children of our own.

LEVINE: Okay. How about, did your brothers and sisters go to school when they were in Italy or not?

GALLETTA: Well, the older ones did. They went to school. And I know the girls used to go to the convent where they were taught how to embroider and sew. And I was about two years old when they did that. And they would take me with them. And I'd be sitting on the grass and the nuns would be playing with me because that's the kind of a convent it was, you know. They'd be sewing out in the outdoors.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, so do you remember your father coming back at all when he would make visits, or you were too young then?

GALLETTA: No, (she clears her throat) I don't remember that at all.

LEVINE: What were the circumstances under which your father decided to stay in the United States and the rest of the family came to join him?

GALLETTA: Well, mainly because it became too burdensome for him to keep coming back every few years. You know, that boat trip was no joke. (she laughs) And monetarily, it wasn't feasible for him to be spending all this money. And then my uncle Lawrence told him one day that he should take the whole family back with him, because my mother had gotten very sick at one time that someone told her that he wasn't coming back, that he was going to remain in America, that he had found a woman. (she clears her throat) Excuse me. And that wasn't true. This person made up the story. But my uncle says, "This time it's just a rumor." He says, "Go back with him with the children and make your life over there because maybe the next time it might come true." This was my uncle Lawrence who told my mother to go back with him. And that's how it happened. She did go back with him and she thought she would return. She left her jewelry and a lot of beautiful clothes that she thought she'd back one day. And she never did get back. They died in this country.

LEVINE: Now, would you say your family in Italy were, as far as the rest of the town was concerned, were you well off or were you sort of middle of the line?

GALLETTA: Yes. We would say middle, middle class. We had a governess when my mother was pregnant with me. My uncle Lawrence, because her mother-in-law actually had a stroke, and she, it was actually her house and we were living in her house to take care of her. And then when it got to be too much, she was pregnant with me, they hired a governess to help my mother with the children and to do the laundry and whatever had to be done and help with my grandmother.

LEVINE: So your grandmother lived with you?

GALLETTA: Yes. In the end, you know, when she had her stroke. She owned the house and then the house was passed down to my father.

LEVINE: I see, I see. So the reason for coming to America was a better life, I mean...

GALLETTA: That's right. And my mother told me later on, she says, "You know, there wasn't that much work in Italy for men." And women didn't go to work. They stayed home and raised families. And she was afraid that she wouldn't be able to give her daughters a decent dowry, you know, because she had five girls. And then the sixth girl was born in America. So that would have cost quite a bit to get five dowries together if they were to get married.

LEVINE: I see, yeah. And I guess a good dowry was very important.

GALLETTA: Oh, that was important, sure. Um-hmm.

LEVINE: So then your mother came with the five youngest?

GALLETTA: No. My mother and father came with the two oldest first, like about a year prior to the rest of us joining them. And the reason for that was because the two oldest could work and get money together so that they could send for the rest of the five children.

LEVINE: I see. So now what did you five children do after your mother and father had left? Where were you staying?

GALLETTA: Well, we slept in our house which was just down the block from my uncle

Lawrence's house, because he had seven children of his own and didn't have enough sleeping quarters for all of us. And he would come every morning and pick us all up. My sister said he used to wear a big cape and if it was raining or if it was cold, he would wrap this cape all around us, he says, like little chicks under his cape to keep us from the cold or from getting wet. And we'd go to his house and spend the day with him, have breakfast, lunch and dinner together. He would serve us before he'd serve his own children and, uh...

LEVINE: And his wife was there, and she...

GALLETTA: Yes, he had a wife and seven children of his own.

LEVINE: And was he a carpenter as well, your uncle Lawrence?

GALLETTA: Yes. Yes. It was just in the blood line, you know. Everybody was carpenters, were carpenters there.

LEVINE: I see. So then that's how, what you did for the two years between...

GALLETTA: Yes, we stayed mainly with my uncle Lawrence and his family. And they said I cried everyday for my mother and my mother was crying everyday for us. And so we had a get together soon.

LEVINE: Were letters being sent at that time?

GALLETTA: No, there were no letters, except like for anything that was really important as far as us, you know, our papers or whatever had to be done before we came to America. They didn't write. My mother was illiterate and my father

had schooling up to about the fifth grade in Italy, so he could read and write Italian, but not English. And when we came to this country, we weren't allowed to speak English at the home because he was afraid we'd forget the language. And I thank him to this day because I can still speak Italian.

LEVINE: Okay. So then when it became known that you were actually coming to America, do you remember at all packing up or going...?

GALLETTA: No, I don't. But my sisters did all the packing or whatever had to be done and, of course, my uncle Lawrence helped us, too.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything that was brought to the new country?

GALLETTA: Just the clothes that we needed, you know. Nothing really, because we had to go on this ship and you couldn't carry much with you. We left practically everything behind. My mother even left her jewelry behind. She never went back for it, and they never sent it either. (she laughs)

LEVINE: The house...

GALLETTA: We owned some olive groves in Italy, you know.

LEVINE: And what happened to those?

GALLETTA: Well, the cousins took over. Everything was just left to the cousins. Nothing was ever, you know, no money exchanges or anything like that, except when my mother sold the house which was after my father's death, and that was sold to the cousins for a very little amount.

LEVINE: So you left the small town where you lived and you went to Palermo?

GALLETTA: Yes.

LEVINE: And do you remember that trip at all?

GALLETTA: No. I was told that my uncle Lawrence escorted us all the way to Palermo, and then we came to America from there.

LEVINE: Do you know if you had to wait very long in Palermo?

GALLETTA: I guess you had to wait for the ship and until everybody docked and everything, and boarded.

LEVINE: But it wasn't a matter of days or weeks.

GALLETTA: No, no, it was the same day. I mean, you knew when you were leaving, departing Italy, and just took off like that.

LEVINE: And let's see, were there older brothers or sisters that were accompanying you?

GALLETTA: Oh, yes. Yes. There was my sister Anna, Josie, Peter, Camella and I. I was the youngest. The oldest was 12, and down the scale thirteen months or two years apart. That was when my father used to make his visits. (they laugh)

LEVINE: So do you remember stories they told about the trip?

GALLETTA: Well, just about that terrible storm. When we hit the Strait of Gibraltar, there was this terrible storm that broke out. It was about three days. It lasted three days. And the water was so rough that the waves, my sister tells me, almost capsized the ship. And she said that it went over the ship, actually. And then she said they saw the whales. First they thought they were sharks, and then they said no, it was whales because everybody was screaming in Italian whatever the name for the whale is, I don't know. But she said that these old women were throwing their medals in the water and getting down on their knees and crying, just praying to God to calm the waters. See, that I don't remember but they tell me about it and four of them said the same thing, so it must have been a horrendous thing because I blocked it out completely. I don't remember that.

LEVINE: Did you remember the accommodations? How were you sleeping on the ship?

GALLETTA: Well, my sister said we had bunk beds. We were all in one room and they had bunk beds, one on top of the other.

LEVINE: I see, so you weren't in steerage, so you weren't down in the hold.

GALLETTA: No, no. We weren't in the hold. We were in a cabin. And the captain and the people in the next cabin used to look out for us because we were five children by ourselves, you know. So my uncle must have spoken to the captain and told him to keep an eye on us or whatever, because we were treated royally. My sister said the captain used to take us into the dining room and he used to tell my brother Pete, "Eat, eat," he says, "Because if you don't eat you'll die." He was, you know, throwing up all the time and he couldn't stand to eat anything. That I remember distinctly my sister telling

me. They remember all this.

LEVINE: Is there anything else about that trip that you can remember? Were there people in steerage on that boat? Do you remember that?

GALLETTA: Well, there were a lot of people, all class of people. Some just came with what they had on their backs. They didn't even have baggage, you know, any baggage. And like they said, they were throwing up and, if you wanted to faint, there wasn't room for them to faint. They couldn't lie down on the floor. There was no space.

LEVINE: So then, coming into New York harbor. Do you remember that or do you remember what you were told about that?

GALLETTA: Well, what I wrote, it was the most beautiful sight in the world because, first, we didn't die in that storm. We were alive. (she is moved)

LEVINE: Just take your time.

GALLETTA: Excuse me.

LEVINE: That's okay. I guess it was frightening. I mean, here you're coming to a strange place and the storm. So then you saw the statue.

GALLETTA: Um-hmm. Yeah, that was the most beautiful sight because we knew we made it. We were in America, a free country. We would be reunited with our parents. (she continues to be moved)

LEVINE: Wow, let's see, and you mentioned the water. The water color was different

than it had been in Sicily.

GALLETTA: That's right. We were used to the blue Mediterranean and here we see this monkey green, dirty water, you know. We were ready to, "Where are we?" you know. It looked so dirty compared to the beautiful blue waters of Italy.

LEVINE: And then, let's see can you remember Ellis? Do you remember seeing Ellis Island?

GALLETTA: No, my memory doesn't go back that far.

LEVINE: Did your brothers and sisters say anything about Ellis Island, the experience that you had there?

GALLETTA: Well, like she said, there were hoards of people and then this doctor and the nurses. They were standing on the steps. And they would watch people because, I guess, there were such hoards of people that they didn't have time to examine each and every one. Just by the looks of them, they would pull people out from the crowd and then they would examine them. But we came through without any problem at all. The only thing they said they examined our heads to look for nits, and we were clean so we were sent right through. And we were healthy-looking. You know, we all had nice rosy cheeks. (she laughs) We were lucky. There were many that were sent back. And my sister said some of them were jumping off the boats because they were told to go back and they were committing suicide. Just the thought of that voyage going back and not being able to stay in this country. We were the lucky ones.

LEVINE: So then your father came to Ellis Island?

GALLETTA: Yes, my father came to meet us at Ellis Island.

LEVINE: And can you describe that reunion?

GALLETTA: Oh, my goodness. I'm all choked up now as it is. I hope I can describe it because I can see that almost vividly, the way my sisters tell it, that we were in this big, big room, very large room. And they call your name out. And when they called "Galletta", (she continues to be moved)

LEVINE: Take your time.

GALLETTA: My father came running through the turnstile, and he squatted on his knees with his arms outstretched, and the five of us ran into his arms and we were kissing and hugging. We were so happy to be together. And he said, "We're all together now. We'll never be apart again." And that was it.

LEVINE: Wow, quite a reunion, huh?

GALLETTA: Yeah. Mom didn't come because she was home cooking for the celebration that she had been waiting all this time for her family to be together, and if it wasn't for this couple that had befriended my mother, we probably might still be in Italy, because it took a long time to save up the fare to send for five more people. And they loaned my mother and father the money to send for the rest of us because they couldn't stand to see my mother crying every day. And when we came to this country, my oldest sisters worked and they brought home work, and even I used to help with the hats because they did the millinery work at home. They used to bring home work. And this is how we got the money together to pay this woman back.

LEVINE: Wow. Can you remember from your sisters' and brothers' report, coming then from Ellis to New York?

GALLETTA: Well, I know that we went to an apartment in Astoria. I think we had a three-room apartment, and nine people, eleven people--no, nine people, because the other two came later on--were going to live in this three-room apartment, but we were so happy. Everybody went about their business and we were never lonely. There was always family and friends and relatives, you know. It was a wonderful life.

LEVINE: And did you stay in that neighborhood?

GALLETTA: Yes. We all, in fact, I still have some sisters living in Astoria. We all lived in Astoria until some of them got married. My sister, Camella, I think was the first one to move to Long Island. She went to Brentwood, Long Island. But it was only an hour away so we still have practically every weekend. All the holidays, you know, with the whole family would get together at Mom's house, right up until the day they died. This was a ritual with us. All the holidays we spent with them: New Year's, Christmas, Thanksgiving. And that's what I miss today because now, since Mom and Dad are gone, the family seems to have just split, you know? Everybody is busy with their own offspring and we don't get together as often any more.

LEVINE: Now, were you a religious family, would you say?

GALLETTA: Well, we were Catholic. It's not that we went to church every Sunday, but religious in our own sense. We believed in God and doing good for others. And I would say we were good Christians.

LEVINE: And the holidays would be observed with food and, were there particular kind of things that you did?

GALLETTA: Well, banquets, you know, like whenever there was a big holiday, we'd have a banquet. The whole family get-together, you know. There's like nine children with their husbands and wives, that was eighteen, and then the grandchildren came around. Today I don't think we could fit in one room. We're over a hundred. So there was always a celebration going on, you know. Pop was a good cook.

LEVINE: Your father was a good cook?

GALLETTA: Oh, yes. He was fantastic. He'd make his own homemade sausage, you know, his own spaghetti sauce.

LEVINE: Are there any particular foods or dishes that your mother or father made that you think of when...

GALLETTA: Well, around the holidays, you know, like St. Lucy's Day, my father would make la cuccia. And we would make like vinegoto, which is like cooked wine which was very sweet that you put it over, she was supposed to be the saint of the blind. Anyone with trouble, you know, trouble with their eyes, you'd pray to St. Lucy. So my father had a piece of steel in one eye, and then when he worked on the WPA in this country during the Depression, between the snow and the sun he kept rubbing his eye because his eye would be tearing and he actually moved this piece of steel right in the cornea, so he lost the vision of one eye from that. So he'd always pray to St. Lucy so he'd make this special dish on her day that we would all eat.

LEVINE: And the name of that was what?

GALLETTA: La cuccia.

LEVINE: Can you spell it?

GALLETTA: I don't know. C-U-C-C-I-A? And it was made with the homemade wine. He made his own homemade wine every October. That's one thing I can still remember. In October, we'd get the smell of the grapes. He'd have crates of grapes in the hallway because we lived in a five-family house and he had his own cellar with the coal bin. And that's where he had his barrels and my brothers and he would make the homemade wine in October when the grapes were out. He'd make the white wine and the red wine, and to this day when I smell grapes and look at the crates, I think of my father.

LEVINE: Okay, why don't we pause here and then we'll turn the tape.

END SIDE A. BEGINNING OF SIDE B

LEVINE: Okay now, as far as your family unit, were you closest in particular to any members of your family? Would you say?

GALLETTA: Closest? We were all close. We were nine brothers and sisters and we loved each other dearly.

LEVINE: Um-hmm.

GALLETTA: Since everybody got married, you know what happens. Everybody moves

away. Then they get involved with their own families. But we're still very, very close.

LEVINE: Now, was this an Italian community that you moved into in Astoria?

GALLETTA: No.

LEVINE: Were there other immigrants in that community from other places?

GALLETTA: Well, I wouldn't know about immigrants, but we had Bohemian, German, Jewish in the same building and we got along beautifully. My best girlfriend was Jewish. And there was no racial problem at all. We were neighbors. I mean, if anybody got sick, my goodness, you know, Mom would be over there with a pot of chicken soup or a dish of spaghetti. We'd keep our doors open. We were neighbors, really. It was really wonderful growing up in those days. There was no you know, prejudice at all.

LEVINE: Great. And how about your father, now. Was he able to find work as a carpenter or did he do other kinds of work?

GALLETTA: Yes. Yes. My father actually worked on that Riis Park Boardwalk. He took my father and the family there one Sunday and wanted to show us the boardwalk he built, (she laughs) with his pot of spaghetti and a gallon of wine and a loaf of Italian bread. This was the way we went to Riis Park and spent the day.

LEVINE: Nice.

GALLETTA: But he was able to, except during the Depression time, then he was on

WPA, you know, and that's how his vision got so bad.

LEVINE: Now what did he do in the WPA?

GALLETTA: He shoveled snow, which was so degrading.

LEVINE: He felt degraded.

GALLETTA: He felt so degraded by doing that, but he was too proud to go on home relief.

LEVINE: Now how about you? You must have started school around a year or so after you got here?

GALLETTA: Right. I couldn't speak one word of English when they enrolled me in school.

LEVINE: What was that like? Can you remember that?

GALLETTA: I remember that, because I couldn't speak one word of English and I couldn't read. And whenever we were supposed to read, the kids would all start laughing because I couldn't, you know, read the words. But instead of getting angry and becoming an introvert, I said to myself, "I'll show you." And before I knew it, I was speaking and reading better than anyone in the class. And then the teacher would call on me to read the chapters. That was within a very short term that I learned how to speak and read and write English because I was determined that I wasn't going to let anyone laugh at me.

LEVINE: Good for you.

GALLETTA: And I became a secretary later on in life.

LEVINE: Now, uh, I just had a question, you said your family maintained Italian in the home.

GALLETTA: Yes.

LEVINE: Did your mother and father ever learn English?

GALLETTA: They spoke broken English. Like my father would tell everybody he was very proud: "I gotta nina chuey." This was the kind of English he spoke. My mother understood everything but she couldn't speak it. Just certain words, you know. She could make herself understood if she wanted to. But when we came home from school, you know, everybody would be speaking English and my father would stop it. He'd say, "In this house, we speak Italian because if you don't, you'll forget the language." And that's it, and that's what we did. We spoke Italian in the home, and outside we spoke English. And then if we wanted to try to teach them English, we'd have special nights set apart. My mother became a citizen. I had to teach her how to write her name. I mean, this took hours every night before she wrote her name, she could sign her name, and that was the proudest day of her life when she was able to sign her name that she went and got her citizen papers.

LEVINE: And how about your father?

GALLETTA: My father was a citizen before we all came to this country, and then we

were all naturalized under his papers.

LEVINE: I see, I see. (she pauses) So how about after you finished school, then you went on to high school...

GALLETTA: Yes.

LEVINE: And you went on to become a secretary after that?

GALLETTA: Right. Right. I graduated one of the top in my class.

LEVINE: Do you know where...

GALLETTA: And then I went to Kathryn Gibbs Secretarial School after the high school. And I was a secretary. This is what I did.

LEVINE: Do you know where you got that drive from, that you were going to make sure that you became a good reader...

GALLETTA: Where I got the drive from? I can't tell you. I can't tell you where I got it from. All I know is that it, it's in me. To this day I still have it. I don't take "no" for an answer. You know, I'll try every which way, you know, to try to find a way to solve something.

LEVINE: Do you remember things that your mother told you, maybe, that were kind of how shall I say, homilies or ideas about living that she had that she brought from the old country that she tried to instill in you?

GALLETTA: Well, I know once she said, "If you want something to be a secret, don't

ever tell one person because that person will use it against you if you ever have an argument." Another thing she told me one day, there was this woman next door and she kept bragging about her niece, how beautiful her niece was, and one day she said, "I want you to meet my niece. She is so gorgeous." Well, I met the niece one day and then she says to me later on, "Well, what did you think of my niece?" And I've lost a lot of friends because I'm so open and honest and sincere. I can't lie or be a hypocrite. I said, "I didn't think she was so beautiful." I said, "She's overly made up." I said, "She looked like she was, you know, in the chorus line." Well, she got so mad at me, she says, "You're so ugly," she said, "that you're ugly with makeup on. I can imagine what you look like without any makeup." And I was so hurt when she said this. And it bothered me for days. I thought to myself, "Am I really that ugly?" And one day I told my mother. I couldn't get this out of my mind. I said, "You know, Mom, this woman..." I told her the whole story. "She said I was ugly. Am I really that ugly, Mom?" So she looks at me and she says, "You?" She says, "You will never be ugly because you have beauty within." And she said, "That nobody can ever take away from you." She said, "The beauty disappears with age, but what you have inside will never disappear. So you will be beautiful 'til the day you die, and don't let anyone ever tell you you're ugly. Beauty is from within." And I think about that every now and then when I see a couple of wrinkles coming down. (they laugh)

LEVINE: And how about your father? Was your father a strict father?

GALLETTA: Oh, strict? You can't believe. He had six daughters. They all had to be virgins before they got married. (she laughs) And we were not allowed to go anyplace on our own. Ten o'clock we had to be home. The first boy we brought in the house was the one we married. Is that strict enough? Oh, he

was really, he was something else. He was a typical Sicilian father. Very, very protective over his daughters and always looking out for them, you know?

LEVINE: How about him? Were there any sort of rules that he gave you to live by that you remember?

GALLETTA: Oh, yes. Don't ever let a man touch you. You become pregnant I'll kill you and him. Those were the rules and regulations. Watch where you put your feet. I mean, we were good, I'm telling you. Compared to what's going on today we were real angels. And we had his standards to live up to. We had to be virgins when we got married. (she laughs) And just one look from him, we knew better than to even open our mouths. He was the disciplinarian. He was too strict.

LEVINE: What would he do like for a punishment if you did something that he didn't approve of?

GALLETTA: He wouldn't think twice of beating the hell out of you, and there was no child abuse in those days, either. Yep. We knew what we couldn't get away with. Yeah, he was always threatening us. (she laughs) I think that's why we all turned out pretty good. The fear of death. That was the only alternative.

LEVINE: Okay, now is there anything else? How did you meet your husband?

GALLETTA: I met my husband--this is a very funny thing if you want to hear a really strange story. My name is Lillian Galletta, and I was married and I was divorced after 25 years of marriage. After about seven years that I was alone, I get a telephone call from this very dear, old, old friend of mine. In

fact, my first job was with her when I was eighteen years old. And I'd hear from her on and off like every five years, every three years, Christmas cards, that sort of thing. This one day, she says, "Lil, are you going with anyone?" And I said, "Not really. No one, I mean, I'm not serious." She says, "Is it all right if I give this man your telephone number?" I said, "Yes. It's okay." But I have to backtrack a little bit. Before this telephone call from her, we had a blizzard in 1978, and three days it snowed. The place of business was closed. I got no telephone calls. No one came to see me. And I was looking out one night and I thought, "It's no good to be alone." Up to this point I was seven years on my own after my divorce. I thought, "Well, you know, it's no good because if you get sick and as you get older, you need someone by your side." And I'm looking out at this beautiful blizzard, and the snow was practically, almost, the snow almost buried the statue of the Blessed Mother that I had in my garden. Only the eyes of the Blessed Mother were showing, and this was a statue that my mother and my two sisters had given me when I bought the house because I had made a novena to the Blessed Mother for a house. And when I got this house, they bought me the statue. So this one night as I'm looking out at the storm and I'm looking at this Blessed Mother, my mother came to mind. And I thought to myself, because she always told us that whenever you're in trouble or you're unhappy, pray to someone who is near and dear to you, because they are like saints in heaven and they'll hear your prayer. My mother had been dead about seven years, and that night I prayed to her, and I says, "Mom, make something happen to change my life. It's no good this way." And with that I cried myself to sleep. Two weeks later I get this call from my girlfriend, Ann, and she asked me if I was going with anyone. And she said, "This man's name is Peter Galletta. And then she said, "Lil, isn't that your father's name?" I said, "That's right. My father's name was Peter Galletta". And I meet this man that I'm married to now, whose name is Peter Galletta.

Well, to me, I don't know if it was coincidence or if it was my mother's, my mother answering my prayer, but I'm married now thirteen years it will be in October.

LEVINE: Wow. That's a great story. That's wonderful.

GALLETTA: Yeah, and I feel my mother did have something to do with it. There must be something that goes on after death. I don't know. This certainly is some proof of it. I don't think it could be a coincidence. And this man did change my life, let me tell you.

LEVINE: Wow. Okay, now, do you have children?

GALLETTA: Yes. I have a son.

LEVINE: And what is his name?

GALLETTA: His name is Lawrence Demarzio. He's the president of Demarzio Pickups, and he was president of his own company at the age of twenty-five.

LEVINE: Great.

GALLETTA: You can tell I'm real proud.

LEVINE: Does he have children?

GALLETTA: Yes. He has one little girl and his wife is pregnant now with another child.

LEVINE: What's the little girl's name?

GALLETTA: Her name is Christiana Demarzio. She's four and a half.

LEVINE: Okay. In closing, is there anything else that you can think of that you'd like to say regarding your own and your family's move from Sicily to America and your life here since?

GALLETTA: Well, I'm very happy that they did make this, that they had enough foresight to get us into this wonderful country. (she is moved) And we have a full, good life here. And we're very grateful to our gutsy parents.

LEVINE: Okay. Thank you very much. I've been talking with Lillian Galletta and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service signing off.

