

KECK-130

GERALDINE COZZA

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INTERVIEWER: DANA GUMB

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SICILY, 1920

AGE 10

GUMB: Uh, this is Dana Gumb and I'm speaking with Mrs. Geraldine

Cozza. Cozza?

COZZA: Cozza.

GUMB: Cozza. On the twenty-fourth day of January, 1986. We're beginning this interview at, uh, 2:20. And we're about to interview Mrs. Cozza about her immigration experience from Sicily, in the year 1920. Okay, uh, Mrs. Cozza if we could begin with, where and when were you born?

COZZA: I was born in 1910 in Sicily.

GUMB: Okay. What was the name of the town or city?

COZZA: Uh, Vizzini Provichi Catatina, that's the way call it.

V-I-Z-Z-I-N-I, Vizzini Provichi Catatina.

GUMB: Okay. Could you spell the last part of that. The Provichi--

COZZA: Provichi? P-R-O-V-I-C-H-I, I think. And Catatina, I imagine
is, C-A-T-A-T-I-N-A.

GUMB: Okay, was this a small place?

COZZA: Very small town. Very poor. We had, you had some acres of
land, you know. And they grow things, you know. Fruits and things
like that. Grapes, all that. And that's where my father worked in.

GUMB: Uh, what did he do?

COZZA: Well, we had, uh, it was like, uh, a farm, you know, a small little
farm. And they raised their own fruits and olives and grapes and things. And they would
sell it to other people. If anybody got sick in the family, or something, we had no money
so we paid them with the oil, grapes, wine and all that.

GUMB: So you didn't have very much money.

COZZA: No. It was a very poor town.

GUMB: Did you go to school there?

COZZA: No. I didn't go to school. Now, they didn't force you to go to school out there. Like I had an aunt, she didn't go to school at all, and her sister went to school and, and I was ten years old and I didn't go to school at all. I didn't know how to write or read. So when I came here to America, they had to put me in the first grade at ten years old. Didn't know a word of English, didn't know how to read or write. Didn't know how to write numbers, one, two, and, and I had a hard time with the teachers teaching me the things. My mother and father didn't know, speak English, I had no friends. But gradually, I picked it up pretty well in school. You know, teacher gave me so much homework and she would say, "Don't answer me in Italian, answer me in English." I said, "How could I answer you in English, when I don't know English?" So, finally, a little bit at a time, I learned how to write my numbers and write my letters because I didn't know anything in Italy either. They didn't force you out there to do it. So when, uh, I went to school here, and, uh, and when I, I left school at the age of fourteen. I had only four years of school. Because my father passed away. He had a ruptured appendix and he died. So, I was the oldest of my sisters. And, uh, so I, I had an uncle and he found me a job in the paper company like, you know, folding papers and doing something like that. You know, to keep going. But, thank God, that we lived with my aunt and uncle, you know, we didn't

have no expense. So, what happened when my father passed away, then I was the oldest, so I had that job. And then after, uh, a year or so, I think, my mother asked me, "What would you like to do in life?", you know? Because I was getting older at the age of fourteen. I, I said, "Well I like to sew." See in Italy, what they teach you more is sewing. Sewing by hand, doing a lot of things. I said, "Sewing." So, she says, "There must be a school someplace." You know, to teach you to sew. So, I happened to find it. It was nearby my house in New York City. Where I lived. And finally I got into that and they taught me how to cut and sew. So it's like, uh, you know, a dress-making life, you know? So when I learned that, within a years time, then I applied for a job in the factory. You know, where they make clothes, dresses. Then, of course, it was hard on me, being the first one in the family. Didn't have no friends or anybody. But I had a lot of spirit in me and I just went up to a factory one day, and I said, "Well, do you need an operator on dresses?" They said, "Do you have any experience?" I said, "I never worked in a factory, but, you know, I went to school for it." And they, uh, said, "Okay, well you could try." So finally, I did that. And then through me, then I, when my sister got a little older, then I took her in the factory and I helped, I taught her how to sew on the machine in the factory. I took her and then I had an uncle, too, that I helped him out. and then, uh, what happened then, after I, uh--

GUMB: All right. We can go back. Why don't we go back to Italy.

What do you remember, you didn't go to school as a child?

COZZA: Not in Italy. And only went to four years of school here.

GUMB: What did you do, before you left for America in the town?
Were you helping your father work on the farm, or what?

COZZA: No. My father had served four years in war. So my mother,
she was just home. You know, taking care of us.

GUMB: Actually you, what did you do?

COZZA: Me. I didn't do, no, I think I remember, she must have sent me to a
school to take up sewing. Sewing to make different things, you know, like, uh, little
designs on pillow cases or something like that. To take sewing. And that's what they
were more, you know, in Italy, to do. And then when it was time for us to come to America,
my aunt and uncle, you know, they wrote to us. They said, "Why don't you come? It's more
of a place here, you can make a nice living. It's better than to be out there." And so we
had a hard time getting here. We had to be real examined, real well, you know? Your body,
your eyes and everything. And finally we happened to pass the, uh, everything was fine.
So we got on the boat, uh, the name of the boat was Pasero. I still remember it. And this
boat was one of the largest ships you could think of. And it made so many stops. And, and
it took us thirty days to come to America. And it was in the winter. Snow and storms and
all that. And one day, it was so stormy, so bad that what happened it, the ship just
moved. One side to another. It was shaking like so they told us to take care of ourselves
and put life preservers on. So we did that. But nothing happened, thank God. And, uh, so

we were in the third class. Way, way down. We were so seasick. My mother and my sister and my father was the only one that wasn't so bad. So he would take us everyday up on the deck, you know, for us to get some fresh air and feel relief from being seasick and all that.

GUMB: So, the whole family was traveling together?

COZZA: Yeah. The whole family. Mother, father, my sister and I.

GUMB: How did you get enough money, how did your parents get enough money together to send the whole family?

COZZA: My aunt, probably, my uncle must have sent us the money to pay for the ship. See, because we didn't have too much money out there. So, uh, so when we got out, uh, my aunt and uncle come to meet us. At, uh, Ellis Island. And we so happy to see the Statue of Liberty and it was so surprise and all that. And then when we got out, it was snowing, it was so cold. And they gave us, they even brought for us, coat, I mean they had brought some coats. Which they had, you know, and they brought it to us and we were all covered up with their coats and then we traveled on the subway going home and see, see we didn't have no car at that time, my aunt and uncle. So we traveled on the, on the subway and oh, that was astonishing to see, the subway. And then going out before going to the, uhm, to the subway, it was to see the lights and to see the tall buildings and the trains and the, and the buses and all that, it was something different to us, because we didn't

have that in Italy, in Sicily, where we were. And then from there we stayed at my uncle and aunt's house for four years. And my father passed away at that time, you know, after four years, and, uh.

GUMB: Going back to Italy for a second, you mentioned that, uh, uh, uh, you had to have medical exams?

COZZA: Yeah, we had to have a medical examination, very good.

GUMB: That was before you got on the boat?

COZZA: Before we got on the boat. And I remember, I think, my daddy, they must have found something but they weren't sure, they said, "No, you're going to go back home and get one of your eyes treated and make sure it's fine." They give you a very thorough examination. So, after one month he went back and his eye was fine. I don't know, probably that day, probably he had something, but, uh. So what happened then he passed the test and we're all fine to go, you know, to come to America.

GUMB: Who was giving these tests, do you have any idea?

COZZA: Oh, I have no idea.

GUMB: Was it the American government, or--

COZZA: I don't know where it come from, but--

GUMB: Do you remember where the tests were done? What city they were done in?

COZZA: Well, it must be where we come from. Uh, in, uh, from sicily I don't know if we traveled to a bigger town for them tests. I was so small, I don't know too much at ten years old. But, I, I knew before we got into the ship, we had to be very well, uh, I don't know where they tested us. But it was from sicily, everything was done, I think, from Sicily.

GUMB: While you were living in Sicily, uh, uh, you mentioned, well, do you remember, uh, any people coming, uh, uh, from America and telling stories about America?

COZZA: No. We didn't have nothing like that. What happened one time, one rich, uh, uh, American must have come down to our town in Sicily and he came down with a car. And I, and we were always riding on a horse to go any place we wanted to go, so when, and we were going on, on a field one time, when the crops were ready to pick out the, uh, fruits and all that. My grandmother and I got on to the, uh, on a horse and my mother into the other one. We were going in the open space, And then all of a sudden you see a car coming. And that horse, when he seen that car, he got so frightened because they never seen a car. He jumped and threw us over the, small little, uh, mountain or ledge or

something like that. He got so scared, that horse, that he ran out and he ran back home where he come from. From our own place, our home. But, uh, it shows you how small that town was. At that time they didn't have no cars either.

GUMB: So what sort of image did you have of America? Before you came here, what did you, what did you think you'd find?

COZZA: Well we would find what they say, "Well here's a place to make money and get more, uh, educated and get more, uh, to make an honest living." Because we didn't have anything out there.

GUMB: Okay. All right. Do you remember any kind of, just wondering how a family would make a decision like this? To, yo, you know, uproot themselves and move.

COZZA: Well if it wasn't for my aunt and uncle, they were here first. See, and then, of course, they would correspond with us and write to us and they said, "Why don't you come and we'll--." I mean, because in them days you didn't get any help from the, from no place. When my father passed away, we didn't get no help from the government or anything, to help us. "Well, we'll take care of you, we'll send you the money and you could come and stay with us." And that's what we did. We stayed at their house for four years. And that was in New York City. Them tall, tall buildings they have, four flights up. I think I remember the name of the street. Christie Street, they used to call it, Christie Street in New York City. Now that building is torn down.

GUMB: Well, I'm wondering how, uh, a family would make a decision like, you know, such a major decision like that. Do you remember any kind of family conference, or, how your parents, you know, any kind of--

COZZA: Well they took a chance, you know, they took a chance. Now, now we, uh, we had our own home in Sicily, you know, that's the only thing we had. So my dada and my mother, they didn't want to sell it right away because we didn't know how things were going to be in America. So they held on to that home. And then after, uh, they saw, uh, two, three years, they still had it, and, uh, and they didn't do nothing about it. They didn't sell it yet because they weren't sure. And my father then when we arrived here in America, he had no skills or anything because he was like a farm, a farm boy, you know, a farm man working out there. And, uh, he had no skills. So it happened to be during that during the winter we had a lot of snow and the only job he would get that he used to go out every day if they needed somebody to shovel the snow off the sidewalk or off the, uh, the street. Because the cars had to go, in them days they didn't have the things they have now, you know they have these machines, right away they clean the streets and things like that. Out there, in them days, in 1920, what they had was more everybody have a job shoveling snow for the city. So that's the job he had. But then, then later on in, in a year or so I think he got himself into some other job, you know, doing outside work, you know, something, you know, I didn't know too much about it.

GUMB: Do you remember what kind of possessions the family brought into this country?

COZZA: Well we just brought only our clothes. (She laughs.)

GUMB: Weren't any special things.

COZZA: No, nothing special, no. We just had our whatever we had in clothes out there so we took them here with us.

GUMB: When you left, did you expect to come back?

COZZA: Well my father, I don't know, he had intention of coming. going back and yet he was undecided. Because then, the fourth year he passed away, so I don't know, he still held that house. And then my mother, when my father passed away and then she had a brother out there, so she told him to sell the house because we were better off here than going back to Italy.

GUMB: Okay, uh, you described a little bit about the, uh, the voyage, and you were in steerage, right? You were in third class?

COZZA: In the third class, yeah, because we didn't have so much money to go in the first or second class, you know? And it was, it wasn't too bad, you know, they made

you sleep in, uh, not regular beds, I think they had like those bunk beds or something like that. And, of course, we managed, you know, even though things weren't luxury like they are now days, you know.

GUMB: How many people were in one room? In third class?

COZZA: It was pretty crowded. I seen a lot of people. Yeah, it was pretty crowded.

GUMB: What were the other people like, do you have any recollection?
What the other people looked like?

COZZA: Well, just majority were Italians, Sicilian like us, you know.
Traveling, then it made a lot of different stops, you know. Probably to pick up others. I don't know, on the way coming here.

GUMB: What was the port that you left from? The port in Sicily
that you left from?

COZZA: Sicily. Oh, the name of the port, no, I don't. That I don't
know.

GUMB: You don't remember?

COZZA: But the name of the boat stuck in my head because it took us thirty days. That Pesaro really, really was one of the slowest boats. I thought we would never see land. What would land look like after thirty says. (She laughs.)

GUMB: It was just slow?

COZZA: Very slow going, it was in the winter, that's why.

GUMB: There weren't any problems along the way?

COZZA: No. only just the one time that, uh, it was storm and boat was shaking back and forth and they told us to wear the life preservers.

GUMB: Okay, uh, uh, you mentioned seeing the Statue of Liberty.

COZZA: Uh-huh. That was like a thrill. Oh look at this, the Statue of Liberty, it looks so good.

GUMB: You had heard of it before. You had heard of the Statue of Liberty?

COZZA: No, when I was Italy I didn't hear of it, but then while we were on

the boat, then my mother and dad says we're going to see the Statue of Liberty. And, uh, and that boat was pretty late coming in. Because my aunt and uncle had told us that, uh, they used to come down almost every day for about, over a week, and that boat was never in. And they, it was very late coming in. They would come every week to go every day for about a week to go down when that ship is coming in. Till we, till we got there.

GUMB: Did you remember anything about, uh, where the, where the boat docked? Where the vessel docked? And, and the procedure in getting to Ellis Island? Do you have any recollection of that?

COZZA: It must have been right there in Ellis Island where all the boats get off. You know, I didn't know too much.

GUMB: Well, as far as Ellis Island itself, do you have a recollection of what the first thing that happened on Ellis Island? You know, what they did to you?

COZZA: Oh yeah. Well, they, uh, well I don't know, I was taken on to my mom and dad, I didn't know too much and when they, gradually a little bit at a time, they let you out of the boat, and all that. Then we saw my aunt and uncle and that's all I could remember.

GUMB: Do you remember anything about the medical exams on Ellis Island?

COZZA: Medical exams.

GUMB: Yeah, whether they did any kind of medical tests there too?

COZZA: That I don't remember. I really don't remember if we had any because we took it from, I mean, from Italy, you know, to come here. But not, when we were here they practically, you know, let us out. and that's all they did. Because I suppose they must have word that everything was okay, you know.

GUMB: Do you remember how much time you spent on Ellis Island?

How, how long the whole process took?

COZZA: I think it must have, I, we arrived, I think it was kind of, uh, almost towards evening more. And it was kind of dark. So probably it took us a few hours by the time we got out of the boat.

GUMB: Okay. Do you remember where your uncle met, where--

COZZA: Yeah, right at the, uh, where the ship was coming in. That's where they were waiting.

GUMB: On Ellis Island or on the, uh, at the dock, in New York, do

you remember, New York City?

COZZA: There are two places, Ellis Island and, uh, and, uh, oh.

GUMB: Yeah, well there's, uh, you know, where they dock, and where
the vessel came in and--

COZZA: Yeah. Well that there I can't tell you. I know we got off
the ship and I was glad to get off that ship. I don't know if it
was in, uh, in New York or Ellis Island. It's got to be one or the
other. I don't remember the name, where I got off, you know.

GUMB: Uh, do you remember if you had anything to eat on Ellis Island?

COZZA: When we got off, no, we didn't go to anyplace to eat. We took the
subway. My uncle knew the way with the subway to take us to his house and that's where we
got.

GUMB: Okay. Uh, do you remember what language was used on Ellis
Island? How--

COZZA: Italian. Communicate, yeah.

GUMB: How they communicated, how the officials communicated?

COZZA: Italian that's how we understood. I'm sure they had a few Italian people, I mean, talking to each other.

GUMB: Yeah, okay. All right, well we'll, uh, so you started, I think you said before, once you had settled in, was it in Brooklyn, where--

COZZA: New York City. That's where. New York City we land.

GUMB: You spent four years in your uncle's house?

COZZA: Four years in New York City.

GUMB: Right. In your uncle's house.

COZZA: My uncle's house. Uncle and aunt. Yeah. We didn't have no way of getting on our own. We didn't have nothing.

GUMB: Right. Was that, I can imagine two families living together.

COZZA: Together, well there were, yeah, in them days there were two, three

families living sometimes, all in one place, you know. But there were only two, they didn't have children. So it was just us living with them.

GUMB: How did that new, uh, home compare to the home in Sicily?
What were the differences?

COZZA: Different, yeah. Well, it's, uh, see we, we never seen these here tall apartments and to live you had to climb five stories high. They had no elevators in them days. So we had to climb stories up. By the time we reached there, and rooms were cooped up like, you know. Small rooms, like four rooms, all railroad rooms. And then we were surprised to see we had electric and all that. Which we didn't have in Italy, in Sicily. And, uh, so that was something to us. And then going out after we, uh, establish, went out, you know, we're so surprised to see trolleys and trains and subways and all that which we didn't have there. Everything was so new to us.

GUMB: Okay. Okay, let's see, uh, when you left home in Sicily did you feel any sadness, or were there any friendships, or relationships with relatives that made it difficult to leave?

COZZA: Well, my mother left a brother out there. Probably she must have felt it, you know, to leave him alone up there. I mean, he was married, had a family of his own. So she left a brother and, and, uh, her children, but, uh, we didn't know anybody else but, you know, just

friends that lived far away from us, you know. The homes weren't attached to each other, they were all, you know, here and there.

GUMB: Uh, were there any, uh, do you remember any customs that you brought, your family brought from Italy, uh, to the new country that you continued to practice in this country? You know, like during Christmas time, or, you know, special food or anything like that?

COZZA: Oh, something like that, and food, yeah. Must have been, uh, I don't know, Italian food. That's all we ate, you know, Italian food. Yeah, lot of pasta and, uh, beans and pasta with peas. Everything was pasta with something, you know, them days, you know, we didn't have too much of the, uh, meat and all that. They were making a lot of different kind of soups and pasta with that. And, uh--

GUMB: How about during Christmas, were there--

COZZA: Oh during Christmas time, they would do, make, different, uh, variety of pies and Italian pies, cream cheese, you know, Italian sciccotta they would call it. They would make them kind of pies and, uh, a lot of different things they would make. I, I don't know. I was too young to remember, what kind.

GUMB: Okay. This is the end of side one.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

GUMB: This is the beginning of side two. Okay, uh, Mrs. Cozza, when did you become a citizen?

COZZA: I became a citizen, uh, I had my citizen paper, but I forgot exactly when it , oh, I think I know. I was, uh, I think about twenty-two or twenty-three years old. I was still, uh, when I met my husband at the age of twenty he said, "Well you don't have to take out your papers because you'll become a citizen under me." Because he was born here. But anyway I took out my own citizen papers, I wanted to make sure that I don't go back to Italy again.

GUMB: Well why did you do that instead of just waiting to be married? Instead of doing it under your, with your husband?

COZZA: Well, I, I had a, my uncle said, "It's best for you take out," see my mother took out her citizen paper and then I took out mine too when I was the age, I think, the age of twenty, I must have been. So I took mine out too. To make sure that, you know. But I, uh, as long as my mother had it I think I was under her so I was alright too, you know, as long as she had taken it.

GUMB: What did you have to do to become a citizen?

COZZA: Well I had to study a little bit of the laws and then when I went to, uh, now where did I go? Someplace in the, uh, in the court office or someplace and they, they ask you a lot of questions, your president, this and that, and all that, so I gave them all the answers, and then I got the paper.

GUMB: Did it feel different to be a citizen?

COZZA: No, I really loved it. I, I love to be here in America. I never went back to Italy again. After sixty-five years old, a lot of people want to go back to Italy. I have no interest at all, going back there. I figure, once I'm out of there, I don't want to go back anymore to, even I had aunts and uncles out there living. And I said, "No, this is my country and I just love this country."

GUMB: Well, when you became a citizen, did you feel any different?

COZZA: Well I figure, well, than God, I'm safe here. Nobody be able to take me that I'd have to go back to Italy again. I felt safe, you know.

GUMB: Okay. When did you begin to feel like an American? Or when

did you feel like you were like an American?

COZZA: Like, a, yeah. Well, when I, when I started to work. But the age of, uh, when I left school for, fourteen years old, then I went to work and I said, "Gee, it feels so good, you know, you're free and you go to work, and you come back." And, and I felt like I, I was free, you know, of a lot of things and I felt so good to be in America. Even in school, I felt so good to be in school. The teachers, I had real good teachers, they helped me and I did a lot of homework and that was a hard time for me at ten years old. Not to know my reading and writing and learning my English. The teachers thought I picked up my English very well and learned a lot of things.

GUMB: You said you felt free from a lot of things, you know, when you were working. Free from what?

COZZA: Free, that, uh, not of anything, free from that, uh, I didn't have to go back to the other side. That's what I was worried about. Because you could hear so much like, if you don't, if you're not a citizen, they're going to ship you back. And I didn't want to go back there. So I felt that I'm free, that I'm safe here. In other words.

GUMB: Well, I'm wondering, the, your memories of back there, of the old country. Were they that bad, I mean, do--

COZZA: No, no. It was a real quiet town. Real good. A lot of honest people. And doctors and friends we had and neighbors near by. They were all real good people. We paid our bills, all with wine and olive oil, and things like that, and, and everybody was satisfied. And we were really, uh, like here, everything is all money, out there we didn't have that, so we paid our bills all with that.

GUMB: Yeah. Why the great fear of having to go back, you know.
You said you felt--

COZZA: Yeah, the fear that I didn't want to, if my mother wasn't a citizen, and, and, they would ship me, I had that fear to go back. I didn't want that. So, I became a citizen too.

GUMB: Well, I'm wondering why was there this great fear in going back if your memories weren't so bad of the old country.

COZZA: No, the fear is, that there isn't much to live on out there, see. But maybe now, I don't know what it is, I would never gone back, but they say it's different. The fear that you can't make a living out there. And I didn't want to be in that, uh, spot, you know, that I had to be in Italy, like if my mother or one of us had to go back, we wouldn't have nothing to, because my father passed away, and we would have nothing out there to work the land and all that, see. See, they worked on a farm, land and things like that. So, I would fear that, I, I'd be lost out there. I'd rather be here and work in

America.

GUMB: Right. So, what do you think would have happened to you if you had stayed in Italy/ What would have happened? What would your life had been like, do you think?

COZZA: Well, it would be just like when I left, you know. Have some on the farm, working in the farm, or you can't work, I mean, it's more of man's job to work out there. It's not for a woman. See my father used to do all that farm work. So we wouldn't, I mean, we would be lost. They, if we had to go back ourselves, out there. We wouldn't have nobody to take care of us.

GUMB: Yeah, Mrs. Cozza, you were telling us about what your aunt and uncle would send you.

COZZA: Would send us, yeah, they would send us, uh, shoes and some, uh, dresses or something like that. Not often, but, so one time they sent me the shoes and I just held it in my hand and that smell of that shoe felt so good until I come to America I still have this smell of a new shoe that it smells so good because we didn't have too many things out there. So it felt so good to smell the shoe. And every time I smell a shoe I always think of Italy, how wonderful it was to, to receive a pair of shoes that smell so good.

GUMB: You didn't get new shoes very often in Sicily?

COZZA: No. It was a very poor country. But we managed to eat, you know. We didn't have no lights or nothing. When it was five, six o'clock, we all had to go to bed early because we had no lights. We had those, uh, you know, candles and them kerosene lamps. And, uh, and then in the home we had no stove to cook. We, we had no water, running water in the, in there. We had wells. We had to go out in the wells and get the water. And if it didn't rain, we had no water. And, uh, and to cook, I remember my mother, she used to stay like, like an outside place she had. And to cook, she had to take some sticks and something and put it on the bottom to boil pasta and all that. And she would blow her brains out trying to light it first. And then put a pot over it. You know, to cook. You know, things weren't like here. Everything you got is so beautiful here. And, uh, and we had no bathrooms either. No bathroom. What we had was like a deep cellar that the horses used to stay. Underneath the house. The horses used to stay there. And we, if we had to do anything it would be underneath where the horses were, you know.

GUMB: The bathroom was down there?

COZZA: The bathroom, I mean, we didn't have a regular bathroom or anything like that. And I don't know, we just, uh, it wasn't sanitary.

GUMB: Oh, it was kind of an out house or something.

COZZA: Yeah. Something. It wasn't sanitary.

GUMB: Did the apartment in New York have flush toilets?

COZZA: Oh yes. In New York, now we didn't have it in our own house. We had it in the hallway. Four people had to use, they two, two bathrooms in the hallway. And, and there were four apartments in the, on the fifth floor. We had to use the two bathrooms. And then, in the house, we didn't have a regular bathroom or nothing, we had just a wash tub, to wash clothes. And to take a bath you just had to get everybody out of the room for you to go and take a bath. (She laughs.) It was a problem. And that was in the city. That was in 1920. In New York City. That was the apartment, yeah. But it was better than what we had in Sicily. In Sicily we didn't have no tub or nothing, we used to have, I remember mother bathed me, one of these round tubs, and she would put it in the floor and she'd put us in there to wash, yeah. And to heat, to heat, they didn't have no stove. They had another, like a wash tub, and they would put charcoal coal in there and burn it, right in the room.

GUMB: For what, I mean, what was this for?

COZZA: I mean to heat the house.

GUMB: Oh, to heat the house.

COZZA: House. We didn't have no stove or anything. That I remember. And one time I remember it was real cold that night. And going to bed, my mother, uh, would take, uh, it wasn't that big, that thing. And she would put it in the bed to warm up our bed just to, and then take it off right away for us to lay in the bed so it would be nice and warm. She used to do so many things, you know, but, uh. They had to live their way, you know, they really had a hard time living out there. That's why I wasn't so anxious to go back. They didn't have all the facilities they have here. See, now, I, I remember those things. And, uh--

GUMB: What happened to your father? You said he died.

COZZA: He had a ruptured appendix. We had the wrong doctor. One doctor come in at the house, he had, uh, his stomach hurt him, he said, "Place an ice pack." Another doctor the next day, uh, a hot pad, this and that. The third day we took him to the hospital and he had ruptured appendix. But he was such a healthy man all through life. He served four years in the war.

GUMB: And how did your mother manage to support the family after the death of your father?

COZZA: When he died, he died here in America. Well then, I, I started to work and my mother took some homework at home. You know, she would go to the factory and take some coats in the house because she didn't want to leave us alone. And she would sew,

you know. And then I used to help her too. You know, I used to go sometimes, uh, when I had a Saturday, I used to take the coats, and take them in the factory, the ones that were done, and take them all, and bring them back to her. And we used to sit in the fire escape, in New York City, sewing early in the morning in them hot days and sewing by hand, you know, the sleeves of the jacket, you know that? But we were happy, you know, we were contented. We were happy to be here because we had more to look forward to than what we had out there.

GUMB: I would think that, it would take some getting used to. The big cit, after a little town.

COZZA: Yeah, it did. It took us, you know, we were so, so happy to be here, I mean you had all the transportation. (Telephone rings.) Oh, dear Lord, Alish, Alish.

GUMB: Mrs. Cozza, you were talking about the problems of adjusting, uh, to a big city after living in a small town.

COZZA: Yeah, well we really loved it. Because there was so much going on, you know, the traveling, the trains, the buses, the subway. It was something, that, and when we got older, I think, my mother traveled on the train, going to work, in the factory. See, so we made it a go, because I helped my mother out until I was the age of twenty-five. I got married the age of twenty-five. And I brought every penny to my mother

because I was afraid that we wouldn't have enough, you know, to keep up with the rent, and the food, and all that. And what we made, in them days, was very little. But, we made it. Then my other sister worked too, so we gave every penny to my mother. We never held one penny back because she was so good to us.

GUMB: What neighborhood in New York, were you living in at that time?

COZZA: The name of the neighborhood was, uh, Christie Street, New York City, you know.

GUMB: Would that be little Italy?

COZZA: Little Italy, around there, yeah, that's where a lot of Italian people were. But then from there, we moved to Brooklyn. See my aunt and uncle moved to Brooklyn so we followed them. And then when I was twenty years old I met my husband and then we, twenty, twenty-one, then we got married, the age of twenty-five, and, uh, and then I had two children and they both now have two children each. Two are grown up, you know, one is twenty-three, the other one is twenty. One of them graduated college already. And the other one is in her second year of college. And my children graduated, the both of them, high school, the both of them. So they did well. Even though I didn't have much schooling, but I taught them a few things, you know, whatever I knew. And then, then from there, uh, oh no, I forgot, I had a sick boy and he died in Florida. That's how we came to

Florida because he had a rheumatic heart. So from there we, uh, we moved from New York and we came to Florida. On account of my boy. And, and my husband got a little job doing something. Then he opened up his own business. It was a small little store. He had a grocery store. In the town of Sebring. That town was just about coming up. There was very little, you know, few people there, living. And then, uh, the town was getting bigger and bigger and big chain stores come up and, uh, so you had to sell the store and go to work. That's part of our life, and then my husband just passed away in 1945. And, uh, I'm left alone here. My children want me up north, but I don't like the weather up north, it's so cold.

GUMB: This is the end of the interview with Geraldine Cozza.