

KECK-21

CESARE DI MARZIO

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INTERVIEWER: NANCY DALLETT

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ITALY, 1913

AGE 12

SHIP RECALLED AS THE "VENICE"

DALLETT: My name is Nancy Dallett and I'm speaking with Cesare DiMarzio, on Tuesday, August 20, 1985. We are beginning this interview at 10:20 A.M. and we are about to interview Mr. DiMarzio about his immigration experience from Italy in 1913. This is the beginning of side one of interview number 021. Can you take me back to the beginning of your story and tell me where you were born, and when?

DI MARZIO: Well, I was born July 31, 1901 in a small town where my father was born. And the name of the town is Capellae, C-A-P-E-L-L-A-E. Sul, S-U-L Tavo, T-A-V-O. July 31, 1901. I, my father emigrated to America, I think it was about April of 1901.

DALLETT: Just before you were born then.

DI MARZIO: I was three months old. I was three months old.

DALLETT: Oh, okay.

DI MARZIO: When he emigrated.

DALLETT: Uh-huh. So, wait, already I'm a little confused.  
You were born in July 1901.

DALLETT: Uh, and your father . . .

DI MARZIO: Emigrated three month later after I was born.

DALLETT: Okay, okay, yeah. Maybe October of 1901. Okay.

DI MARZIO: And he left me, at that time we were living with her  
people, with my father's people.

DALLETT: With your mother's family?

DI MARZIO: No, my family's family. When he emigrated, because  
that's the Italian style over there, when a boy in  
the family gets married, why, they move right in  
with the family, with his husband's family, and  
that's what my mother did, because she lived in a  
different town. She came from a different town than  
my father lived. They met by more or less accident.

He was a huckster in the old, in those days. He was an onion farmer, my father, and garlic.

DALLETT: Garlic and onion.

DI MARZIO: And during the, and during the, after the season was over he would travel through the countryside, probably miles away from hometown, selling these onions and garlic from house to house. And that's how he met my mother, by accident, he came into this house where my mother was living. And they met and the romance started. ( he laughs ) But different, there were different, from one, different provinces, actually. I presume it was about twenty-five miles apart originally. That's how they met.

DALLETT: Did you have brothers and sisters?

DI MARZIO: Yes, but I was the only one born in Italy. All the rest were born in this country. So they decided, after they got married, I was born. I think it was another one, child born before me, but it lived very short time if at all, as far as I can remember. And they, he decided to emigrate to America and find his fortune over here. And he came.

DALLETT: Were there a lot of people emigrating from that area at that time?

DI MARZIO: Yeah, yeah. Not many at that time. Then my father, I think was one of the first ones to emigrate from that town. One of the first ones. There could have been maybe a couple other ones, but I wouldn't say there was many, very many. He was one of the first ones. In that town, DiMarzio name was quite common. Actually today the Mayor of that town is a DiMarzio, a second cousin of mine. So there were a quite a few of them. In West Chester he was the only one. But anyway, now where was I?

DI MARZIO: Your father was deciding that he would emigrate.

DI MARZIO: He started to emigrate to America, I think he had some friends over here from the same town, neighboring town. But originally he landed in Philadelphia, lived in Philadelphia for a while, found work there. Then they heard through friends . . .

DALLETT: So you stayed with your mother then? Oh, sorry, you're talking about your father. Sorry.

DI MARZIO: Well, to go to my mother. As soon as he emigrated my mother decided to leave my father's people and go back to her people to live. Because she felt more at home with her people, with her mother and father and brothers and sisters. My mother's family came from a family that ran a flour mill, run by water. All the farmers, they came there with their wheat, corn and fava beans. They'd ground it up, they took the flour home. And they got paid by percentage of the flour that was milled. No money, no transaction of money. So when they had a good supply of flour they sold the flour and then they got some cash. So after when I was three months old my father wrote to my mother. At that time, over here, in West Chester, at that time he had moved to West Chester. They said it was a lot of single men over here in West Chester. But no married, it was only two or three married couples that had homes, rented homes. He says if they come over here they could open a boarding house. And so when I was, I think I was two years old then, my mother emigrated to America. Left me with her people, my grandparents. Said I was too small to make the long voyage. In those days it took about twenty days to come over here by

boat. Because it took me eighteen days in 1913. So they left me with the grandparents. And I lived there, started with, then they did open a boarding house over here in America, and there was my two sisters were born here, and my youngest brother was born in America. So years went by, I went to school in Italy. I went to public high school. In those days a public high school system was three grades, third grade. If you want to continue after the third grade you had to either go to a tutor or pay. There was no free education after the third grade. So I was lucky enough when I passed the third grade and my father at that time had meant to come over, but in the meantime he had an accident over here. He developed blood poisoning in his foot. He stepped on a rusty nail, laid him in the hospital for three months. And then they operated on him to save his foot. The doctors wanted to amputate his leg but their own family doctor at the time, brother, was a contractor and my father worked for them, for this contractor. And they said, "We're not gonna cut that man's leg." So after different operations they saved his leg but he walked with a limp for the rest of his life. Left his toe here

stiff. ( he gestures ) He had to walk with a limp.  
So where was I now. So that postponed his trip to  
Italy to pick me up. Two more, two years passed by.  
Finally he decided to come back to Italy to pick me  
up. In 1913 he arrived, he stayed in Italy, I think  
about a month. Visiting friends, relations. And  
then he took me where the town where I was born.  
And that's where I met my grandparents on his, on my  
father's side. In the meantime I had never visited  
them. And, ah, we stayed there, had dinners there.  
Then finally we came back to America. We went by  
train to Naples.

DALLETT: Now what year was this that your father came back?

DI MARZIO: 1913.

DALLETT: 1913, okay.

DI MARZIO: We went to Naples.

DALLETT: And you're already twelve years old now.

DI MARZIO: I was twelve years old then. I passed. I went  
through school to the fourth grade. As the teacher  
that taught me the third grade taught me the fourth  
grade by payment. It was about a dozen of the kids

in the neighborhood that decided to go to the fourth grade and my father sent the money back. We paid in those days one hundred and twenty liras. He taught each student for one year, the fourth grade. One hundred and twenty liras in those days was one hundred and twenty, twenty-four dollars. One dollar was five liras. That's normal rate of exchange that was then. One dollar is five liras. Now one dollar is two thousand liras.

DALLETT: Do you remember getting letters from your parents while you lived with your grandparents?

DI MARZIO: Yeah, yeah.

DALLETT: Did they tell you what life in America was like for them and did you have any idea what it would be like?

DI MARZIO: Yeah, I had some idea, but the idea what America was, and what America was when I came over here was altogether, i was disillusioned. I'll tell you that a little later. So he came back and we had, and, when my father, so we arrived. No.

DALLETT: You took a train then to, uh . . .

DI MARZIO: As I said, he took me to where I, the town where I was born. I met all the relations there. The cousins, the grandparents, the uncles and aunts. But finally after we made the rounds we decided we had to come back. And as I remember right, I wasn't too, uh, I didn't show too much respect for my father, because I didn't know him. He was a stranger to me. I, though more of my uncles there who raised me and aunts, than him, but i went through it. And sometime he called me to come over here or do this. I wasn't too enthused about obeying him. But I remember he said, "Oh, wait, we go to America," I'll be different then. I found out. So we finally came to America. We arrived, during the ship we came steerage class.

DALLETT: And where did you leave from? What was the port?

DI MARZIO: Naples, from Naples. And the ship, the name of the ship was Venice. Which was sunk by German submarines later, in 1914, during the First World War. And . . .

DALLETT: So you were travelling with your father . . .

DI MARZIO: With my father. It took us eighteen days to come

over. And the way the steerage class was fed, I wouldn't say we were fed like pigs, but there was really hardly any tables to put your plates on. They had some benches there, some rough tables. I, and I just couldn't eat that food.

DALLETT: Do you remember what it was they were serving you?

DI MARZIO: Oh, mostly spaghetti, soup. More or less very, very seldom we got any meat. So I existed on apples. The whole, and they didn't give you apples, you had to buy them. You had a store on ship. And the people that wanted to eat a little bit better they go to the store and buy it. And that's where I existed through the whole thing.

DALLETT: Did you have rough weather on the journey?

DI MARZIO: Yeah, yeah, but I didn't get seasick. They had couple of days of bad weather. They had a couple of days of bad weather. We made a stop at the Azores Island for pick up some passenger and let some off. Then we stopped in another island. I don't remember that. But then I remember the ship went into Providence, Rhode Island to let off passengers.

DALLETT: As far as you remember, was there first, second and third class as well as steerage?

DI MARZIO: Oh, yeah, first, second and third.

DALLETT: And they had better accommodations.

DI MARZIO: Oh, definitely. I, we used to, we weren't even allowed to go where the second and third, but I snuck up there. I was a kid, you know. Very newsy. To where they ate. Like from daylight to dark. You could compare that. Because for forty dollars, that's what the third class, I don't remember what the second class cost but my father paid forty dollars to come over and forty dollars to me and forty dollars for him.

DALLETT: Was there any kind of examination that you had to go through in Italy before you came?

DI MARZIO: Before we left, before we left the port, not much leaving Naples. The examination is when you arrived in New York.

DALLETT: Okay, so nothing before you got on the ship.

DI MARZIO: Very little, unless you really fell sick, you know.

DALLETT: Right, and did your father have to prepare any special papers for you? Did he have to get a document?

DI MARZIO: Passport.

DALLETT: Passport, yeah.

DI MARZIO: I had to get an Italian passport. But he had, he was still an Italian citizen at that time. He became naturalized later on in life after I was over here.

DALLETT: Do you remember the baggage you might have had with you? What you would have brought with you on the boat, any special things from home?

DI MARZIO: I had a baggage. I had a suitcase, some clothes. We brought some cheese over, homemade cheese. Limited, no fruit. You could have brought it with you, you could leave Italy with it and eat it, but when you got to New York if they found any fruit when they examined your suitcases they had to throw it away. No fruit allowed to be imported.

DALLETT: But you could bring cheese through.

DI MARZIO: Oh, yeah, all you wanted. Cheese, no meats. No dried meats or anything of that sort, but you could bring cheese. And so the trip was uneventful. When we arrived in New York we disembarked. First and second class got off first, third class was last while they get off. And we went through Ellis Island. We got on the boat to Ellis Island. What I remember about Ellis Island, something like it is today, I don't think they changed it. One great big hall. And they had different lines as we walked through, single file, to certain people that, somebody looked at one thing and somebody else looked at your eyes, somebody looked at your hair. See if you had any bugs. Your hair, and . . .

DALLETT: Were you separated from your father?

DI MARZIO: We were one in back of the other. We were together. We went through. Of course, he had a special permit to be readmitted, because he was living over here. HE didn't have to, but I remember somebody that was in back, in front of me. They looked in his eyes. They found something that wasn't right, put him aside. Right away the poor man started crying, because that was a bad sign. He might be

sent back to Italy, which they did. Some got sent back to Italy, after arriving at Ellis Island in America ( he laughs ) they had to go back. But we were fortunate, we passed through.

DALLETT: Do you remember, when you first came in, the old pictures show there are a big, a set of big stairway that people walked up.

DI MARZIO: See, I haven't been to Ellis Island since. I remember one big, long hall.

DALLETT: Big long hall.

DI MARZIO: Long hall. Wide, where they had different lines. People, immigrants, long lines. Because ships used to come in every day in New York and the immigrants were really coming in fast. There was no restriction then on immigrants. Later on they put a quota system. So many from each country. IN those days as many could come if they had forty dollars passage to pay ( he laughs ) to get over here. They passed through and that was all there was to it. No restrictions whatsoever. Because over here they took them, they put them to work, a dollar a day, which was considered good money. Over there in

Italy in those days, what I remember, the farmers, you know, they used to hire hands. Ten cents a day, work ten hours, ten cents, twelve cents. So you got on lira, twenty cents, that was considered good pay.

Over here they got a dollar a day. Fir lira, you know, nobody in Italy, I remember when I was christened. We were Catholic, see, and I was christened and my uncle, my mother's brother, the day of the christening they took me to church and I was christened by the Bishop, outside he gave me five liras. Present. I thought I was a millionaire. Five lira. ( he laughs ) If I got one lira, that was considered luck. But I always had some change because my mother used to send a few bucks to my grandparents over there to, to help. Not a whole lot. But there, in the flour mill where I lived there was plenty to eat all the time. I lived good. In, in those days the common people, the poor farmers, they never saw white bread. Cornbread, that was cheaper. But macaroni with white, made of white flour. They used to use macaroni used out of corn, corn flour. The poor people. We ate while bread all the time. Plenty of spaghetti, two, three times a week. Homemade. We

ate good. We lived good. They lived good. They lived good too, because they had, they had a business running the flour mill. So to get back to my story.

DALLETT: Before we leave Ellis Island, do you remember when you came into the harbor, and you were about to dock, did you see the Statue of Liberty before you came in?

DI MARZIO: Yeah.

DALLETT: And did you know . . .

DI MARZIO: It was in the daytime then. Yeah, La Statua dela Liberta. Statua dela Liberta. Liberta, liberty. Yeah, they showed it to us. They, some of the people, of course, you couldn't help seeing it.

DALLETT: So you knew that was the end of the journey. and the beginning of another journey.

DI MARZIO: Yeah, the end of the journey to New York. And then we got on, got on the train, came to Philadelphia.

DALLETT: Before we leave Ellis Island, uh, tell me anything you can remember about, did the doctor look into

your eyes?

DI MARZIO: Yeah, yeah.

DALLETT: And there was no problem?

DI MARZIO: No problem there, no problem.

DALLETT: And were you examined by any other doctors?

DI MARZIO: Well, the heart. No problem. Passed there with flying colors.

DALLETT: And were you, let's see, what language were the doctors speaking?

DI MARZIO: Italian.

DALLETT: Italian. So you didn't have any trouble understanding.

DI MARZIO: I know some English words. Bad words mostly.  
( he laughs ) No problem there. You know, you didn't waste too much time there either. The line was moving all the time. The ones that looked, didn't look good, they just put them aside, then they looked back to them and then they got a real physical examination. Those that were taken out of

the line. See whether they finally passed when they got a real physical or they were sent back to Italy.

You either went through or you were sent back.

They didn't hold them in Ellis Island very long, the next boat going back to Italy. Could have went back the same boat that we came on.

DALLETT: But you were a healthy young boy and there was no problem.

DI MARZIO: No problem. It was an adventure to me at that time.

I had never left my hometown. Maybe a neighboring town I used to go. I used, we lived in the country, the flour mill was actually, was the lowlands.

There was very little lowland in Italy, especially where we lived. Mountainous, you could see the mountain. The Appenine range runs right through the middle of Italy and through central Italy. The only part of Italy that's level is northern Italy.

Lombardy and up that way there's a lot of level ground up there. But Italy is small. It's only two-and-a-half times the size of Pennsylvania. So you can imagine, forty million people lived there.

There's not much room. But a farmer over there, they had a ten acre farm, was considered a big farm.

Big, huge farm. An average farm was two or three acres. He had to make a living off of that. So that's why a lot of immigrants. They had large families, they multiplied and they just couldn't live.

DALLETT: So, I'm not sure if I asked you this, on the boat, on the Venice, were most of the people coming over like yourself, were they coming through Ellis Island and planning to live here?

DI MARZIO: Most, most of the people who came through third class, they were all immigrants looking for work. They didn't. The only one that travelled second class was somebody that was, had come over earlier, made some money, and could afford to travel a little better condition.

DALLETT: Now, the one think I had asked before and you told me you'd tell me later, maybe you'll tell me now. And that is, what were your expectations at that time? What did you, had you heard about Americ? What did you think you would find here?

DI MARZIO: Well, I'll give you my thoughts when I arrived, when we arrived in West Chester. You want met to tell

you now?

DI MARZIO: Sure.

DALLETT: So we came. From New York we took the train to Philadelphia. Then from Philadelphia we took another train to West Chester.

DALLETT: This is all in the same day, right?

DI MARZIO: Yes, same day. WE came at night, though. When we got to West Chester it was midnight. WE left Ellis Island in the evening. I think probably it was just getting dark when we left because I don't remember how long we had to wait in Philadelphia for the train to West Chester.

DALLETT: Do you remember, okay, you were admitted into the country and you came off of Ellis Island. Uh, do you remember how you got to the train station from there? to take the train to Philly? Do you remember if you took a taxi or a subway at that time?

DI MARZIO: I doubt it. To tell you the truth, from Ellis Island to the railroad station, I, I just do not remember definitely how we got to the railroad

station. I remember in the railroad station and getting on the train, but how we got there, whether we got a bus or trolley car, I don't want to make up a story.

DALLETT: Okay. So you took, so then you took the train from New York to Philadelphia.

DALLETT: From New York we arrived in Philadelphia. And we had to wait in Philadelphia for the last, we got the last train out of Philadelphia to West Chester. We arrived in West Chester one o'clock in the morning. We had a railroad station here in West Chester. Tore down now. Not there now. We got a little shack there now. But this was a huge train, a huge railroad station we had in West Chester. Really big. Pretentious. All brick. Like a mansion it was. So, there's no one there to wait for us. Very few people got off there that night, that late in the morning. So we got off. And I thought somebody would be waiting for us at the railroad station. But nobody there. Everybody disappeared. The few people there was left on the train got off. So I asked my father where we lived. "Oh," he said, "a little while, a little piece, a little while from

here." So we started walking. I was lugging a suitcase and he was carrying one large and one little one. And he was limping, too. So, you know anything about West Chester? The streets? We got off at Market Street, started walking up Market Street. The lights in those days were oil lamps. Dark, dreary, dark. Didn't look good to me. I was kind of disillusioned if this was West Chester. Dark. New York was a little more better, more brighter, what I saw of it. And we keep on walking and walking. And, see, I was, East Market Street, we lived in West Chestnut Street, you know? Right in back of the Catholic Church, our . Not there now, they tore it down. In the alley. So we finally, we stopped once to rest b with that heavy suitcase was getting heavy. So we finally got down on Gay Street, and when we came to Darlington Street we turned right and then down Darlington Street, went in in the alley. That was really dark. So we finally got to the house. Little house. It was a twin house. Double house. And nobody there. Knocked on the door. Somebody opened it. At that time they had nine boarders, my mother and father. Nine boarders. So some, one of the boarders was

sleeping on the second floor. Opened the window and my father hollered up there, "Hey, we're home." ( he says it in Italian and laughs )

DALLETT: That's the end of side one of interview number 021.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DALLETT: This is the beginning of side two of interview number 021. Okay. So we're at the point where you're knocking on the door and your father . . .

DI MARZIO: So finally they opened the door, let us in.

DALLETT: Who came down to open the door?

DALLETT: I think one of the borders. Of course, my mother was living on the first floor where the parlor should have been. They had a bedroom there. That's where my mother and father slept. The boarders slept upstairs. Three bedrooms upstairs. The outhouse. There was no bathroom. The outhouse was in the back of the house. If you had to get up at night you had to go out in the cold. You know what an outhouse is, I don't have to tell you. Cold. But when we arrived it was warm weather.

DALLETT: I'm sorry, I'm not sure if I asked you what the date was then, if you remember. What time of year is it, what's the day that you've arrived?

DI MARZIO: I think we arrived in the spring of that year.

DALLETT: Okay.

DI MARZIO: Yeah. We arrived. So we went in, my mother, my father. He says, "Here's your mother."  
( he laughs ) And then, I think, Gloria . . .

GLORIA: No, I wasn't born yet.

DI MARZIO: Mary, my sister Mary, Connie and Frankie, they were born here. Mary, they were small. My two sisters were small, but they were, I think one must have been seven or eight, five or six years old, and the other was a little older.

DALLETT: So you're being introduced to your mother and your two sisters and brother.

DI MARZIO: Yeah, but I wasn't, I didn't go near them.  
( he laughs ) My mother and the two sisters. I think the youngest, my brother, he was about three years old then. I don't think, he slept, he must

have slept throughout. I don't remember seeing him.

He must have been sleeping. And, "Well, he said, "You gonna kiss your M? And your sisters?" I just sit in the corner near him. ( he shakes his head )

After a while, I think a couple of the boarders woke up, too. They were friends, close friends. Some relations, I don't know, no, my uncle wasn't living there then. He came later from Italy. So I remember my sister, one of my sisters told something to my other sister and she ran upstairs. After a while she came down. She was holding something.

Something round. And they told us, she says, "While you were in Italy we had this bank." It was a silver plated bank, round, that you put coins in it.

"And we saved this, we bought this bank for you and while, and we're waiting, and we put money in it while you were in Italy to give it to you now that you have arrived." So they hand me this bank. I jiggled it. ( he laughs ) Oh, boy, that kind of warmed me up a little bit. So I kissed them.

Kissed my mother, kissed my two sisters. And, and that was the beginning. So, that was the end of that. It began my life in America. Then I went to school over here.

DALLETT: Did they help to teach you English then, your sisters who were brought up speaking English?

DI MARZIO: What happened was this. My older sister was in the third grade over here. And I think my younger sister, she was in the first grade. They put me, the school was right in the back, in the front, in front of our house. That's where the, it still is, for that matter, the school is. So they put me in the third grade with my sister so she was my interpreter. If I wanted to go out and go to the bathroom I told her first because I didn't know how to tell the teacher. We had sisters then. I went to Catholic school. All sisters that were teachers there. And they started me in the third grade. So if I wanted something I would tell her. But I didn't, I didn't understand. But then when they showed me the arithmetic and the problems I had them in the first grade in Italy. It was easy for me, but I couldn't, the language was the barrier. As soon as I learned the language a little bit they put me in the fourth grade, which is more, a little. So I passed two classes in one year. And I left my sister. Then I could talk a little bit and I got

along okay. So, what happened then. Well, then, then 19, then the war came, 1918. I was seventeen then, still going to school. I was first year at high. I had quit, I had quit the, the parochial school. I went to high, I went to public school. Got smart, you know. And then the war started. Every, my father was working at Eddystone where they made rifles. He was making forty, fifty dollars a week. From a dollar a day, two dollars. Of course, they were making, at that time I think they were making about a dollar-and-a-half a day, the laborers. And, uh, making big money. So me, like fool, quit school in 1917. No, 1918, I was seventeen years old, quit school and went to work at Eddystone, where they made rifles, night shift with my father. They used to have trains run from West Chester to Eddystone. Special trains for the people that worked at the ship yard there in Chester, at Eddystone where they made rifles. There were all defense factories there. So I worked there, I was making about forty dollars a week, too. I was, I was rich. Then, so November came, I started to work during the spring of the year 1918. November came, they signed the Armistice. The day after the

Armistice was signed the plant shut down. So I was unemployed. So I didn't go back to school. I found other work and made a living through. Later on I took a civil service examination, when I was about twenty-six, got a job as a letter carrier. Substitute letter carrier in West Chester post office. I was the first Italian to get a job at the post office. Which in Italy, where anybody worked in the post office, you were a lucky man. And they thought, most of the other young Italian boys in West Chester, when they heard I got a job in the post office, it was a feather in my cap.  
( he laughs ) Now there's . . .

DALLETT: Had you become a citizen then?

DI MARZIO: No, oh, I was a, then my father became a citizen. In the meantime, while I was growing up and I automatically became a citizen. But then later on I got my own citizenship papers so there would be no doubts about it.

DALLETT: Had anyone else from Italy come over after that? Any uncle or any other people in your family?

DI MARZIO: Yeah, my uncle came over from Italy later on. He

stayed a couple of years. He didn't like it. Over there in Italy he was his own boss. Over here he had to take orders, see. Couple, he lasted, he lived with us.

DALLETT: Did he come through Ellis Island then?

DI MARZIO: Oh, yeah. They all came through Ellis Island.

DALLETT: Did you go and pick him up at Ellis Island?

DI MARZIO: No. He came on his own. He came on his own. Yeah, he came on his own. We didn't have no car then. I bought my first car in 1923. I was twenty-two years old then. I was, there was three Italian families in West Chester had cars in those days. I was one of them.

DALLETT: So there was a very small Italian community at that point in West Chester?

DI MARZIO: Well, West Chester must have been ten thousand, eleven thousand, twelve thousand. This is the county seat, see, West Chester. It's a good-sized town. Court House.

DALLETT: Right. So then you started working at the post

office in 19 . . .

DI MARZIO: Yeah. I was a substitute there. Then, uh, whatchacallit, got elected. Roosevelt. And right away it was a depression and he cut our pay fifteen percent, after we were there. I was a substitute making sixty-five cents an hour. He cut our pay fifteen percent, as an economy move. We got in the depression in the early '30s. And, uh, I worked when somebody was sick. Or when they're on vacation I worked in the summertime. Or they used to take up a collection through the mailboxes every morning with the trucks. The truck, old GMC trucks left over from the war. I had to get up in the morning at five o'clock, go to the post office, get the truck, go to all the boxes in West Chester, all the letter, mailboxes, street boxes, make the collection, work two hours, go home for the day. I worked two hours, I made one dollar and thirty cents, unless somebody was sick. In the meantime I didn't have no work, except when somebody took vacation day. During the summer we worked steady. That continued for ten years. It wasn't easy. And I was married then. I got married, still a

substitute. But, thank God, I lived through it.

DALLETT: So then in 19, it was in 19, early '40s . . .

DI MARZIO: It was in 1940, in 1948. I was supposed, then I decided to go back to Italy and visit Italy. 1942. But the war came and I had to postpone it. I didn't go back to Italy till 1948, alone. I had married then, and I had three kids. But I enjoyed the trip very much. everybody was glad to see me over there. Went all, went from one cousin to another. Had a ball.

DALLETT: Now, your wife came through in 19 . . .

DI MARZIO: 1930, 1929. WE met, we met through a mutual friend that came from her home, same town.

DALLETT: In this country you met.

DI MARZIO: In this country. Oh, I think about two year before, two or three, two years before, or a year before she came over he went back to Italy to visit to his relations. And when he came back I was still single. He told me, he says, "You're lucky." He says, "I got, found a girl for you." ( he laughs ) "Why, where'd you find her?" I said. "In Italy.

She's, her mother just died, her father went back, was in America, he went back to pick up the mother and the three kids and they were coming over here as soon as they can make arrangements. I'll let you know when they come over, when they arrive." I says, "Okay, you let me know when they arrive. We'll go see her." ( he laughs ) So they finally came. He told me one day, i think it was around October, 1929. He says, "They have, my friend and their family have just arrived, they're in Phoenixville." He says, "You wanna take me over?" He didn't have no car. There was no public transportation to Phoenixville. "Okay." I had a car then. And I took her over. We went to this house where they were staying temporarily with an uncle. And we met. She introduced me to her, my wife didn't even raise her head. Says this is her daughter, Filomean. Shook hands, that's it. So later in the day we went home with my friend. They say, "What do you think of her?" I said, "Looks good to me." ( he laughs ) "Well," he says, "You want me to say anything to her father?" you know. Had to go through channel. So he must have said something to the father. The father must have said

something to her, if she could keep company. So we got the go ahead signal so I went to see her. I used to go there a couple times a week. I wasn't allowed to be alone with her, though. If I took her to the movies her brother had to come along.

DALLETT: She's shaking her head. ( referring to his wife )  
We'll get her story later on that. Let me take you back just a little bit to the point where you've just arrived in West Chester. And, uh, things look pretty dark and bleak and you're a little afraid of your mother and sister.

DI MARZIO: Yeah. I was very disillusioned, very disillusioned when I saw those dark streets. I had expected everything bright, you know. Like I'd heard from a lot of stories while I was in Italy, about how America was the land of honey, the land of bright lights. But, uh . . .

DALLETT: You didn't find that to be so, huh? ( Mr. DiMarzio shakes his head no ) Where did you hear those stories? Who would have told you that?

DI MARZIO: Well, a few people had emigrated and come back, come back for a visit. That's how I heard.

DALLETT: Do you have any of those papers that you might have, like your passport or any of the papers, the ship papers, any documents like that?

DI MARZIO: The only paper I have, get my graduation that I passed the third grade.

DALLETT: Sorry, this is from what year is it? Can we read a date on there? I see a 19 there. Would it be 1911?

DI MARZIO: 1911.

DALLETT: 1911. Certificate of graduation from third grade.

DI MARZIO: July 23, 1911.

DALLETT: And would you also maybe have any kind of documentation like the passport that you had when you came?

DI MARZIO: No, no. All mis-laid.

DALLETT: Or any letters that you might have received from your parents before you came to this country or anything like that?

DI MARZIO: No. Too bad.

DALLETT: Yeah, the National Park Service is interested because they would like to have that kind of thing in the Museum for people to see, so that's why I'm asking.

DI MARZIO: These is my grades. ( he reads ) Oto, that's eight. See, the grades run over there from one to ten. Here it goes to a hundred. It means eighty. Literatura means writing. Oto. This is a reading, after you made reading you're supposed to explain it. Understand? Arithmetic, seven. I wasn't so hot on that. This is civil laws (Italian) rights of the citizenship, about citizenship.

DALLETT: That's wonderful. Okay. Anything else you want to just add to this story? I think I've asked you everything I need to.

DI MARZIO: Well, well, the only thing I can add, I've been very lucky. Had good health. All these years. Hospitalized a couple of times, nothing serious.

DALLETT: You've had a couple of awards given to you recently, didn't you? That's what your daughter told me about West Chester.

DI MARZIO: From the Sons of Italy Lodge. It was held at the Italian Social Club.

DALLETT: So there was a dinner honoring you, right?

DI MARZIO: Yeah.

DALLETT: And she showed me some special cufflinks.

DI MARZIO: Yeah, that's right.

DALLETT: From, there's a place in the newspaper written about you on April 21, 1982.

DI MARZIO: Yeah, fiftieth anniversary.

DALLETT: Fiftieth anniversary. This says, "Saturday is DiMarzio Day in West Chester." Special celebration in your honor. And you had been a postman here for how many years?

DI MARZIO: Forty years, forty years. About, maybe closer to forty-one.

DALLETT: And, you got, didn't you get a special award from President Reagan at that point?

DI MARZIO: Yeah. I got special cufflinks.

DI MARZIO: Yeah. He gave you cufflinks in recognition of your volunteer spirit of America. Okay. I think that's the end of the interview and this is, that is the end of interview number 021, the end of the second side of the one and only cassette.