

KECK-48/ZAMBERNARDI

KECK-48

EDITH ZAMBERNARDI

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INTERVIEWER: DANA GUMB

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ITALY, 1925

AGE 13

PASSAGE ON "THE GIUSEPPE VERDI"

GUMB: This is Dana Gumb and I'm speaking with Mrs. Edith Zambernardi on the 11th day of October, 1985. We're beginning this interview at 4:25 and we're about to interview Mrs. Zambernardi about her immigration experience from Italy in the year 1925. Okay, Mrs. Zambernardi, if we could start with where and when you were born?

ZAMBERNARDI: I was born in Italy.

GUMB: Where in Italy?

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, the Province, you want me to say the

province?

GUMB: Sure.

ZAMBERNARDI: Provincia, Province of, uh, Piacesa. It's up, up north, near Florence, Milan.

GUMB: Okay. Could you spell the name of the province?

ZAMBERNARDI: P-I-A-C-E-S-A, Piacesa.

GUMB: Okay. Uh, did you, were you living in a, uh, small town?

ZAMBERNARDI: Yes, very small. We were way up near the Alps, near Switzerland.

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

ZAMBERNARDI: Uh, the name of the town?

GUMB: Vedlaca, V-E-D-L-A-C-A.

ZAMBERNARDI: Okay.

GUMB: Well, what was life like in . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: What was what?

GUMB: What was life like in that town, what was life

like?

ZAMBERNARDI: What was it like?

GUMB: Well, it was nice, you know. We all, we were all happy. My grandmother was very nice, and I had an uncle, and we just used to play, like anybody else. But I was happy there, very happy.

GUMB: What did your father do?

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, my father was in Germany. He had a business there, he had an ice cream business. And then he went to Italy. Then, in Italy, it wasn't really that much because it was the World War One. So then he came over here and left, left us over there, with my grandmother. And what I can recall, mostly, is the things that happened when I lived with my grandmother. And I was very happy.

But there was, I'll say that there was an instance where we have to go and get water, you know, from, like the well, it's something, not a well, but the horses drink there and everything. And it was in the wintertime, and I was trying to lift, I don't know if it was a bucket, or what, but that was so heavy that it pulled me underneath

inside of that ice. And when I woke up I was in somebody's house, wrapped up in a blanket. But there were happy days. I didn't, uh, I didn't feel any different. We didn't know any different. And we used to have all nice fresh vegetables and fruit.

GUMB: What happened to your mother?

ZAMBERNARDI: My mother was here. They left me over there.

GUMB: Okay.

ZAMBERNARDI: My mother and my father left me in Italy.

GUMB: How old were you when they left you?

ZAMBERNARDI: No more than about three, and my brother was about eleven months, there was eleven months apart.

GUMB: Hmm. Uh, do you, so do you, let's see, so how long were you, how long was it before you were able to go to America?

ZAMBERNARDI: To come here?

GUMB: Yeah.

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, see, he left us there, then he came back to

get us. That's when you saw the picture. I remember going in this pretty place and, see, that's the picture. They must have, he must have got that to get the passport, but I never, I don't have it. That's how many years ago.

GUMB: Right. Okay. So, um, did you go to school in Italy?

ZAMBERNARDI: Yes, I did. In other words, the school over there, it was like grammar school here, then you stopped. And if you want to go, like, further, you'd have to go downtown somewhere. About the ninth grade, but I was, see, the language was always a barrier here for me but not, not anything else. Just spelling. But they taught pretty good.

GUMB: Okay. So, um, how old were you when you came here?

ZAMBERNARDI: Came here?

GUMB: Right.

ZAMBERNARDI: Thirteen.

GUMB: Thirteen. Okay. So between age three and age thirteen, you were, uh, living with your grandmother.

ZAMBERNARDI: Yes. And my uncle. But mostly my grandmother.

GUMB: Why so long? I mean, it's . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: Honey, I don't now. You know what, they had a, I'd better not say any more. They had a habit of, uh, not only my father and my mother, but other people. they would leave them, like, if there was, like a grandmother or what, and then come and get you when it was time to help them.

GUMB: In America.

ZAMBERNARDI: Yep. Oh, I never forgot that. So I didn't care until lately, it's starting to hit me.

GUMB: What were, what was your father doing here all that time, your father and mother?

ZAMBERNARDI: What were they doing here? I ain't gonna tell you.

GUMB: Okay. Can you give us a hint, or . . . (Mrs. Zambernardi whispers inaudibly to Mr. Gumb) Oh,

I see. Okay, so, uh, did you get any letters from them while you were . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: Maybe. I don't remember. I don't remember.

GUMB: Or from your mother, any letters from . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: No. Well, my mother, my mother, my father did very well. He never went to school. See, I'm talking about years ago. And he learned to read and write. He was an intelligent man, because he had his own business in Germany, you know. My mother, no, she never, she never went to school, she never bothered to better herself or something.

GUMB: Did they send money to your grandmother?

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, they did what they could from that end, because they had, let me see, I think they had about three or four, yes, they had about four other children here.

GUMB: Your brothers, four other children?

ZAMBERNARDI: Yes.

GUMB: What do you mean, your brothers and other brothers . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: I had two brothers and two sisters here and one of them, a little girl, died, and my brother died, too, got killed, when I was here.

GUMB: They were also living with you and your grandmother?

ZAMBERNARDI: No, no, not my grandmother. They were all in this country. My father came to this country and had four children.

GUMB: Oh, in this country.

ZAMBERNARDI: Yes, in America.

GUMB: Oh.

ZAMBERNARDI: And he left us in Italy. We had been to Germany, too, because my father had a business and he kept going back and forth.

GUMB: Uh, between Germany and . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: Italy.

GUMB: And Italy. Okay. And then he left Europe. Completely.

ZAMBERNARDI: That's right. He left Italy, and he came here, and left me with my grandmother.

GUMB: And meanwhile they were having children here.

ZAMBERNARDI: Oh, yeah.

GUMB: Did they ever come back to visit? Did your parents ever come back to visit?

ZAMBERNARDI: I think he did come back once, I think he did. He did come back once, and that was about it. But we still stayed there, because we were small. He might have tried to get us here. I don't remember. Don't remember.

GUMB: Yeah. Okay. So, that period when you were living with your grandmother, uh, was life hard at that time, or . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: Was what?

GUMB: Was there any economic hardship at that time, your grandmother?

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, listen, see, years ago, especially during the World War One, we always lived. Now, I heard it's beautiful there, but when we were brought up,

you lived on wildlife. My uncle used to have a, you know, a gun, shotgun. Wildlife, you know, like pheasants, or whatever. And then we had some chickens. We had a, a pig. Don't call her a pig.

And we had, uh, chickens, all that, plenty of vegetables and fruit, beautiful fruit. So we didn't starve.

GUMB: Hmm. But it sounds like there was some hardship.

ZAMBERNARDI: Of course. It was. You know. You were lucky if you, well, you baked your own bread, but you were lucky if you had the flour, because it was during the war.

GUMB: Right. Okay. All right. Um, so, how did you, uh, finally, when you got to be thirteen, there was, uh, how did you get the word that you were to come here?

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, like that picture you saw, my father, let me think now, he came over there, see, and I guess he became a citizen. I have the citizenship papers.

I should have taken them out and shown them to you, but it doesn't matter.

GUMB: For your father"

ZAMBERNARDI: Yes. My father, see, I became a citizen through his papers. He was a citizen. That is why he was able to come to Italy to bring me back. But what I don't understand is if we had the papers all clear he, now, his, wait a minute, my stepmother, that would be his wife, she said that he had told her once that there was something the matter. When they were, when we were getting on the boat, or whatever. You know, and that's why we happened to land where we did. But then, whatever happened, my mother, she knew that much, she got a lawyer to look into it, because they were gonna ship us back. So she got a lawyer to look into it, and then we came through. But it was hell on earth with the people that were there at Ellis Island. They wanted to know how we were able to get out.

GUMB: You mean your father was married to another woman, and your mother . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: Not then.

GUMB: Not then, okay. You spoke of a stepmother and

then your mother.

ZAMBERNARDI: Oh, I spoke about my stepmother because she was telling us some stories that I didn't even know now, my father used to tell her. Like he said, "I was in jail for almost thirty days." You know, he talked to her because, now, naturally, he was older than I was and he knew more, so he said, "I was in jail, believe me."

GUMB: But when you were on Ellis Island, waiting on Ellis Island, uh, did your, was your father, your father was still married to your mother, right?

ZAMBERNARDI: Oh, yes.

GUMB: Yeah, right. Okay. It was only later tha . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: That's right.

GUMB: All right. So, um, your father came back to Italy, and that was when he, uh, he took you home to this country.

ZAMBERNARDI: Me and my brother.

GUMB: Right. Okay. Um, all right. Well, before you had left, had you heard anything about this

country, do you remember . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: Yes, we used to hear that, uh, oh, we're gonna, you know. My poor grandmother, she prepared me, I could tell, that some day I was gonna leave her. And I'd, we'd always say no, because we loved her so much. We didn't know anything about America. We never wanted to come, but she always prepared. But we were gonna see my mother and, you know.

GUMB: How did she prepare you?

ZAMBERNARDI: Hmm?

GUMB: How did she prepare you?

ZAMBERNARDI: I don't know. I don't know.

GUMB: Just kind of hints, or . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: I wasn't that happy about it. Started off that way. That I, when you don't know anybody, how would you feel? There was no feeling for my mother or my father. Now, my sisters and brothers, you know, I got to feel more for them than I ever did my mother and father.

GUMB: Um, so had you ever, had anybody ever talked to

you about America, or . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: No, there was nobody, nobody that we could talk to. Because the people that came to America just stayed here. And the others all wanted to come to America because, well, they thought it was much better. It was, I guess.

GUMB: You didn't get letters that described . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: Yes, he would write. My father would write, you know.

GUMB: So, uh, okay, so, uh, how about in school, did you, uh . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: I didn't do good. That's still a nightmare. Not in Italy. I was beautiful.

GUMB: Well, actually, I mean in Italy.

ZAMBERNARDI: In Italy, was fine. The school was beautiful. I graduated with nice honors, but when I came here, I went through hell on earth because now they have all kinds of school for all the, anybody, any country, they have nice schools. When I came, there was only two people, two of us, in one

class, we didn't understand no English at all. And it was terrible. They used to call us names. You know, children are cruel. They'd say "greaseball," you know, and all that stuff. I still feel it. They couldn't help it, I guess. You know, children, I told you. The teachers were nice, the teachers were good. But then, all right, I only went about the most, two years, all right. I was fourteen, that I came here, about, to sixteen. I don't even want to put that on the tape. But my mother said, "You're sixteen. It's time to go to work."

GUMB: Okay. But as far as school in Italy, when you were in school in Italy, did you hear anything about America, did they teach you anything about America?

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, we knew, we knew history a lot. Oh, yes. You know, felt so good about it. We learned history. And math and everything. The only thing that I missed here was the language. That was a terrible barrier on me. But I did pretty good. The spelling was still a little, but my grandchildren say, "Grandma, you spell better than

I do." But if you don't spell one hundred percent, I think it's no good.

GUMB: Okay. So, um, when your father, uh, came here, came to Italy to pick you up, do you remember anything about what kind of procedures, or what sort of things he had to do to get you to America?

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, I think he had to do a lot because, see, now, as I remember, that picture I showed you, I remember going to new buildings like, not like where we were. You know, it looked nice and everything, and he must have gone through a lot, but I never paid that much attention to it, because I was about thirteen.

GUMB: Right. Okay. Uh, so, uh, what port did you leave from?

ZAMBERNARDI: Port? You know, I don't even remember, honey. Might have been Genoa. But, you know what? I'm getting old and I'm a little forgetful, but I remember the name of the boat, Giuseppe Verdi.

GUMB: Okay.

ZAMBERNARDI: And when we were on the boat, a lot of people were

very sick, they were very, very sick, you know, throwing? And I recall, just like yesterday, they would say, "Here's a penny, go and buy me." they were like little anchovies, that used to help them. Then they'd eat some bread with it, you know. There was food. But that there seemed to help them to keep the food down. We didn't, we weren't sick, but a lot of people were.

GUMB: Uh, uh, well, how did, when you left, uh, how did you feel about leaving?

ZAMBERNARDI: I still miss my grandmother. I still missed her bad. It just shows you that you can do without, nobody, not in that country, either, nobody really starves. Because when you have all the fruit, nice and fresh, and whatever we didn't have we'd steal. They wouldn't say anything. All right, so fruit and vegetables and, uh, my uncle used to, you know, he'd kill wildlife, you know. So we didn't, look at, well, I was a scrawny little thing, wasn't I, thirteen?

GUMB: Who did you steal from?

ZAMBERNARDI: Huh?

GUMB: Who did you steal from?

ZAMBERNARDI: Oh, they didn't care. The neighbors. The neighbors had, no, we didn't steal, in anybody's house. There would be, what we wouldn't have, maybe pear trees, or cherry trees or something, and they knew we lived with my grandmother, they'd give us everything. Half of the neighbors always fed us.

GUMB: It was more of a gift than not.

ZAMBERNARDI: Yes, they just took over, because my grandmother was a sick woman. She used to have epilepsy. We had an uncle, though, but he was, well, he was a little, uh, because I remember they used to talk about us. He had a club foot. He was crippled. Like you say, he could not come in America. And once in a while I used to hear him say, "Too bad I wasn't like the other, the other sons," because that would be my father and, uh, and his brother, that would be the uncle, you know, the, the brother. And he's say, I'm left here. My grandmother used to cry, because there was no way of getting him here because, see, he had a club

foot.

GUMB: This is your uncle.

ZAMBERNARDI: Yeah.

GUMB: Um, just, as far as your father and everybody who came here, why America? Why was it America that everybody was . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: Everybody. They all wanted America. But we were on the borderline, you know, like Switzerland. We had a lot of cousins, they wouldn't stay in Italy, but they would go in, uh, Germany, mostly Germany and Switzerland. My father had a big business in Germany, he had an ice cream place, and he was doing fine. Then the war started, and they took away his, uh, they used to have ponies that they used to hire boys, you know, fellows? And he was doing great. But then they took everything away from him. And he went to Italy, that's when he scrambled from Italy and left me, my grandmother and my brother.

GUMB: Right. Okay. Um, as far as the voyage, do you remember what class you were traveling?

ZAMBERNARDI: Oh, honey, it must have been the cheapest one, I don't remember. I had no money. There's three classes, isn't there? We were down at the bottom. But we were all, my brother and I were always upstairs with the high muk-a-muks.

GUMB: What were you doing up there?

ZAMBERNARDI: Oh, just browsing and they'd give us a penny to go buy that, even them was sick, you know, with the anchovies.

GUMB: So what was, what were the accommodations like on the boat?

ZAMBERNARDI: I don't remember too much. Wait till you come to Ellis Island.

GUMB: Okay. We're getting there.

ZAMBERNARDI: You're getting there? All right.

GUMB: Do you remember anything about the food on the boat?

ZAMBERNARDI: Where, in Italy?

GUMB: On the boat.

ZAMBERNARDI: Oh, on the boat. Gee, I don't recall. I don't remember too much. But it couldn't have been too bad.

GUMB: Do you remember how long the trip took?

ZAMBERNARDI: Fourteen days, fourteen days. I can always remember, they used to, fourteen days. Maybe sixteen. I don't know.

GUMB: So your, the vessel is, uh, approaching land. Do you remember your first impressions?

ZAMBERNARDI: First impression was that I saw a woman sitting down, you know, like a bench. It was my mother. Now, I felt like she's my mother, but I didn't, you know, I had no feeling because I hadn't seen her, I'd never seen her. My father did come back once, but I don't know whether he tried to get us here, I really don't remember.

GUMB: How did you know she was your mother?

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, my father, you know, he's got us by the hand, he says, "This is your mother."

GUMB: What did she say? Do you remember?

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, she kissed me and, you know.

GUMB: She acted like it was a normal thing.

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, you know, you know, she might have felt bad, you know. I should forget it and forgive them, you know, but it's just something, I don't know. She might have cried.

GUMB: Well, when the, as the vessel was coming into New York Harbor, do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

ZAMBERNARDI: No, I don't. I don't remember.

GUMB: Okay, so the, the vessel, the ship docked, and do you remember what happened after it docked, what was?

ZAMBERNARDI: No, I guess we all ran like, just like sheep, cows, or whatever, but, uh, it wasn't that much of a pretty sight because the, I don't know if you've ever been, if you been in Ellis Island, do you recall those big, big huge rooms, like, would you call it a dormitory, or what? They were big, and I think they used to put them there about three or four hundred at a time. And we used to sleep,

they were like bunk beds, you know. And the only thing I can remember was that I was alone and, uh, there was, well, I don't know if they were all brothers and sisters or what, but they used to pull my hair, 'cause I had long hair, and they'd beat the hell out of me. But I couldn't defend myself.

GUMB: Why did they do that?

ZAMBERNARDI: Huh?

GUMB: Why did they do that?

ZAMBERNARDI: They're just, horsing around. I don't know if they meant to hurt me. They'd laugh and do that.

GUMB: So how long did you spend on Ellis Island?

ZAMBERNARDI: I, I really, I swear it, I couldn't tell, I thought it was more like thirty days. But my stepmother is saying that it was more like twenty to twenty-five days, see. Because my father knew more, naturally, than I did. He was older.

GUMB: Do you remember what day you landed?

ZAMBERNARDI: No.

GUMB: 1925, though. Okay, um, let's see, you landed at Ellis, on the Island. When did you see your mother?

ZAMBERNARDI: When I went, when I left, you know, Ellis Island, then, I don't know how I got home, you know. They called it, I don't know if she came to New York either to get me. I don't remember. No, maybe not. She wouldn't know. She wouldn't know how to get there. We must have got to Boston, must have got to Boston, and then that's when I saw her.

GUMB: So you, uh, so you saw her after Ellis Island.

ZAMBERNARDI: After it was all over.

GUMB: Right. I see. Okay. Uh, so you think you spent something like twenty or thirty days there.

ZAMBERNARDI: That's what I think. I couldn't swear to it, but it was a long, it was the longest time that I ever spent a place. I was sick a lot in there, honey.

GUMB: Why were you, why were you detained, do you know?

ZAMBERNARDI: What?

GUMB: Why were you detained?

ZAMBERNARDI: Detained? Oh, I don't know. They were saying something about that the law changed, whatever it was, after we were in the middle of the ocean. I don't know what that meant. See, do you know how there's a quota and this, but he was an American citizen. I don't know. Now, I'm beginning to wonder, I got to look at that paper, whether he became a citizen after we got here or before, but it was right around then.

GUMB: So it wasn't a, you didn't have a physical problem, you weren't, it wasn't because you were sick, or something?

ZAMBERNARDI: About, oh, no, no, no. But there was a lot of people there, they used to pick them and things. If they thought one, you know, wasn't just right, they'd, they'd discard him, like they'd say, number one, two or three. If you weren't healthy, if they thought there was anything wrong with you, there was always somebody checking you. You know, they'd just send you back, I guess. I don't know.

GUMB: How did you find out that your problem was the

quota, that there was a problem with the quota?

ZAMBERNARDI: My father always talked about quotas. They'd just let so many go over, and then they'd stop. So maybe that's what, why we went there. Now, does everybody have to go to Ellis Island to come through at that time?

GUMB: Uh, well, they, see, in 1924, they just started the quota, so it fits in with the story.

ZAMBERNARDI: Oh, that's right, 1924. Maybe that's why there was all this business.

GUMB: So, uh, you landed. First of all, on the voyage, you were traveling with your brother . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: And my father.

GUMB: And your father. Okay. so the three of you landed on Ellis Island. Uh, was your father detained on Ellis Island, too?

ZAMBERNARDI: Yes, the three of us.

GUMB: Were you together?

ZAMBERNARDI: Not all the time. It seemed that they used to

keep, like, the men, you know, all on one side, and the women on another. But we'd be together pretty good, you know. The best they could. Excuse me, there was this man, he was a German fellow. Well, my father could speak German fluently, so he would say to him, "When I go," see, because maybe he was ready to leave, he says, "When I go out, you can have my room, you and the children." So, I think, because my stepmother told me, maybe that, and that's maybe what he did. See, then, maybe we were together. I don't know.

GUMB: Oh, you think you were together after a while.

GUMB: Not, after that man. I didn't even know about him. And I don't remember even being in the room with the three of us. But I know that I was very, very sick.

GUMB: This is the end of side one.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

GUMB: This is side two. Okay, so, Mrs. Zambernardi, um, you were talking about your time on, your time on

Ellis Island. Uh, and you said that your, you were separated form your brother . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: Yes, and my father.

GUMB: . . . and your father. When did you come together? When did you see them?

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, we'd see them, then we wouldn't see them. You know, because I think that the men and the women, you know, weren't supposed to be, you know, all together.

GUMB: Or families. Families?

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, I don't know. But I, we used to eat together, you know, and then I'd see him go somewhere else, and then I was sick a long time. They found me, on the floor, I remember, and they, they took me to the hospital, okay. And, uh, it must have been diphtheria because they kept coming in about every ten minutes or half an hour and swab, swab my throat, you know. So, I was sick, they kept me there a long time. And I didn't see my father or my brother.

GUMB: This was the hospital on Ellis Island?

ZAMBERNARDI: The hospital. Because I asked the nurse, see, I'd say, "I want my father." I used to cry. And they said, "You will, bye-n-bye, bye-n-bye." They speak Italian.

GUMB: So you were in the hospital for, how, do you remember how long you were in the hospital?

ZAMBERNARDI: No, but it seemed a long time, it seemed. Because, excuse me, I was so frail, you know, that, uh, the food wasn't much to eat.

GUMB: How about, yeah, before you'd gone into the hospital, what was the food like?

ZAMBERNARDI: No, not too much, honey. Whatever they gave you. It wasn't too much, I don't know. Well, it was, was given to you, anyway, and you didn't starve, I guess, but it wasn't that, that good.

GUMB: Was it cafeteria-style?

ZAMBERNARDI: Yes, yes, yes.

GUMB: You went through a line?

ZAMBERNARDI: Yes, yes. I can remember an awful lot of prunes.

It was a, well, it was like a dessert or something, but I didn't remember too much about meat or anything. I don't know.

GUMB: Uh, okay, uh . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: And everything was like a, like as if you were in a, oh, they call it concentration camp, I wouldn't want to really say that, but everything was, you know, like a, like if there were guards, guards, guards, you know, all the time.

GUMB: You remember guards around in the dining room?

ZAMBERNARDI: What?

GUMB: You remember guards in the dining room?

ZAMBERNARDI: Yes. All that stuff.

GUMB: Did they, were they carrying guns?

ZAMBERNARDI: No. I never noticed that.

GUMB: How about uniforms?

ZAMBERNARDI: I think they had a uniform like something, I don't know, something. But I remember, a lot of people, I used to hear them say, "One of these nights I'm

gonna jump out, off the, you know, and try to swim the, swim across. It's better than being in here." And a lot of places, I think, from where they come came from, must have been pretty bad, because they didn't want to go back. So they wanted to, they wanted to jump, jump and try to get on land.

GUMB: Um, okay, um, let's see, as far as the, um, uh, the, do you remember anything else about the food? Any other, what they served?

ZAMBERNARDI: I don't know, I don't know. See, there was nothing to play with, you know, the children. You know, there wasn't, almost anything. Just walk around and you just had to tow the mark, or something.

GUMB: You were free to walk the grounds, walk around?

ZAMBERNARDI: Oh, I don't remember going on the grounds. Honestly. All I can remember is being inside of that place. That's all. Well, let me tell you this funny story. When I was in the hospital, the nurse came over, and she spoke Italian, so she said, "Do you like the food?" And I said, "Yes."

So she said, "What's the matter with this?" It was a banana. I didn't know what a banana was. And why I didn't eat it was because you had to peel it, and I didn't know what it was all about.

That there made me laugh. (she laughs) I still have to laugh about that. Then she peeled it and she said, "Taste this." So I said, "Okay." It was all right.

GUMB: Uh, about do you remember anything about the, uh, the dormitory, what kind of, uh, what sort of, whether it was a clean place or what kind of . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, let me say, tell you this, then, because I didn't want to forget this. I had never seen a colored person in my life. I hadn't, so, I guess I had to go and get a shower. Well, I never knew what a shower was either because when we came from Italy we used to go and wash but we didn't have a shower. So, this colored woman, she wanted me to go in there, and I was pulling away, so she goes, "Go." But that water was freezing. She might have taken a hot shower, and then she, for herself, she turned it on cold, but she left it

that way. And I was so cold that I don't remember whether I had that, and then I got sick. I don't remember, but I was awful sick. Sick enough to die.

GUMB: Why was she doing that? Why was she . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: I don't know. Well, maybe because that's the way she had it, and she thought maybe that I should have it, too. But it was not warm when I, she pushed me under it.

GUMB: This was, well, I'm wondering why, why did she push?

ZAMBERNARDI: Who knows? Because I didn't want to go in. See, I was pulling away and she's going, "Go, go." Well, maybe she thought she was doing good, but I was cold.

GUMB: Did you know it was a shower? Did you know that she was . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: I didn't know anything. But I did see the water run on her, but I just didn't want to go under it. And when I did go, it was freezing.

GUMB: Okay. Was it one big shower?

ZAMBERNARDI: Oh, oh, no. The shower, I'm talking of that big, big room, it gave you the willies. It looked like a big, big, well, well, at prison, at least they have gates that kind of, this is a big, big, huge room. You know if you've been in there. I think they had about three hundred, would you say, about that.

GUMB: And you were alone?

ZAMBERNARDI: All alone. See, like maybe if my mother was there, or a sister, you know, they'd leave them, I think, if I'm not mistaken, they used to, you know, separate them. Most of the time. We only would be with my father and my brother certain times.

GUMB: Did you talk to any of the other people in there?
Did you get to know anybody?

ZAMBERNARDI: I never remember, honey. Never. My own father and brother, I did.

GUMB: Do you remember anything about what the other people looked like, or where they came from?

ZAMBERNARDI: No, but I was only a kid. If I was, you know, I was only thirteen. If I was older, maybe I could have asked them, well, where did you come from, or this or that. But all I can remember was when they knew that we were gonna leave, all hell let loose. They wanted to know who we knew and, seeing, that the, but we were clear, see. I don't remember if we came with a quota, I don't remember if we came, that he was a, a citizen? I don't remember.

GUMB: How did they communicate with you? How did the other people ask you these questions about how you . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: I remember, they were saying like, they were talking with my father, how are you going? You're going through and we're gonna go back. They were so mad and I was so scared. They were mad.

GUMB: Were they speaking Italian?

ZAMBERNARDI: Yes. Well, I could understand.

GUMB: Right. You could understand.

ZAMBERNARDI: They were mad. They were very mad. Because anything was, I guess, better than go back. I don't know where they lived, or what. But it wasn't that for me. I didn't care if they sent me back, because I had nothing to come here for.

GUMB: Do you remember anything about what you were bringing, what kind of possessions you had at that time?

ZAMBERNARDI: The what?

GUMB: What kind of possessions you had, what sort of baggage and luggage?

ZAMBERNARDI: (she laughs) I don't remember, honey. Whatever we had, we had with us. There was no, no place to put clothes. We had no, well, we must have had a bag, my father must have had it. You know, a suitcase or something. But, uh, oh, God, I don't even remember if we ever changed clothes or anything.

GUMB: I wonder how you would keep things safe, you know, and secure.

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, you had them with you. You had to have them

with you, because I never remember having a locker, you know, or anything. Whatever you had, see, because my father remembered taking things out of the, the suitcase or something. Whatever you had, you had with you. That's all.

GUMB: Did you have any money? Were you carrying any money?

ZAMBERNARDI: No, no. Whatever money it was, he had it.

GUMB: Or documents, papers?

ZAMBERNARDI: I don't remember.

GUMB: Okay. All right. Um, in the hospital, when you were in the hospital, uh, do you remember the, the attitude of the doctors, you know, how they treated you, whether . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: They weren't too, too bad. I don't remember that. No. I mean, all I, they kept going in my throat, you know, all the time. Because I think, see, I didn't know then, but I think I had diphtheria, because my father used to cry, they couldn't come. My brother couldn't come and see me. But, uh, no, the doctors weren't bad, the nurses weren't

bad. What can they do?

GUMB: Were you, were you in one big room in the hospital?

ZAMBERNARDI: Yeah, yeah. It wasn't as big as the room we were in all day, but it was a big room.

GUMB: Do you remember what some of the other problems were or what the other people were doing?

ZAMBERNARDI: No, no. I had enough of my own, I guess.

GUMB: You didn't talk to anybody else in there.

ZAMBERNARDI: The nurse. The nurse would come over and she would, uh, speak Italian. I would talk to her.

GUMB: Um, okay. Uh, so did you finally get better, and then . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: I guess so. I must have got better.

GUMB: I mean, when you were released, were you still in the hospital when you were released, or . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, I must have got better before I was released.

GUMB: Do you, do you recall how you got that message, how you got the word that you could go?

ZAMBERNARDI: Oh, we were happy. I don't know how we got it. See, it was all my father that did everything. I don't know, we were very happy, but we were very scared. We were so scared because they thought, you know, all those people, that we were doing something underhanded. And it wasn't. See, something got mixed up with the quota, you know. They said if they, that that happened while we were on the boat coming over. And then they did find out, and they let us go. Because I, he couldn't have, wait a minute, he couldn't have been an American citizen because I got the papers, and I think he became an American citizen 19, 1925, instead of '24, see. So I think I did come over with the quota, because if he was a citizen, they wouldn't try to put, send me back.

GUMB: Well, he was a citizen after you went through Ellis Island?

ZAMBERNARDI: I think so. I'm almost sure. I'm almost sure, b when I got the, I got the paper there, and it says

Edith. You know, in Italian it's Ida, Ida, my brother, you know, all of us. Now, how would he have that, you know, unless it was after he was here. I think it was 1925.

GUMB: How did your name get changed from . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: That, in Italian is Ida. This here, then they say Edith or Edie, that's like a nickname, or whatever. You can go by that, Edith, because they don't say Ida, see? Why they named me that, I guess, is, remember that opera, Aida, I think? I'm not sure. But, uh . . .

GUMB: Okay. So, um, how did, once you were released, do you remember how you got from Ellis Island to where you were going?

ZAMBERNARDI: No, I don't. Maybe, maybe we, I don't remember if we got on the train, there was no planes then. If we got on a train? I don't remember at all.

GUMB: Do you remember any first impressions of the new country? Do you remember what struck you first?

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, I saw my brothers and sisters, and I was happy, you know. Then, when we got to know, it

was much better, much better than knowing my mother or my father. My sisters. I had two sisters, two brothers but, that poor brother, I lost him, he got killed, after a year. So there went my life.

GUMB: But you had your sisters.

ZAMBERNARDI: Hmm?

GUMB: But you had your sister to help you.

ZAMBERNARDI: To me they were nothing. But let me say who was something. I had an aunt that came over here, she was about sixteen and she, she lived with us until she got married. Now, her I knew, and I used to go to her house a lot, a lot, because when I saw her, I saw, you know, the tie. Then she got married and I used to go see her all the time. And then I got so that, then I loved my sisters, you know, by that time, I was a little older, maybe sixteen. I loved my aunt, too, because, see, I was brought up with her in Italy. And then she came before me, see. She came with somebody, I don't remember who.

GUMB: So, um, uh, as far as the new country, the, uh, were there difficulties in adjusting to, uh, say, new food, was there a new food?

ZAMBERNARDI: Oh, no, my mother was, she was a good cook. No. And my father always cooked, so there was no adjustment there. I just didn't like going to school too much.

GUMB: Okay. Um, well, you did mention the problem with English, learning English.

ZAMBERNARDI: Oh, that there will always be a barrier behind me. It wasn't so much, it was going to school, how they used to heckle us, heckle, they'd heckle you. And that was a nightmare. And do you know that I brought that on, almost all my life? Because I couldn't, I'm a very, I'm a person that if I can't do something, if I can't do it because I can't, all right. But if there's a remedy, why, why didn't I continue school?

GUMB: Oh, you mean you always felt like you should have continued school?

ZAMBERNARDI: Hmm?

GUMB: You, you always . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: I was cheated. Because first those kids used to make fun of me all the time. And then, when I wanted to better myself, but I think I did pretty good. I was only here four years and I got my driver's license, so I think that's all right.

GUMB: So, so you went to school for a couple of years after you came, came here.

ZAMBERNARDI: Not even. About a year-and-a-half.

GUMB: Year and half. And then you got your first job.

ZAMBERNARDI: Yep. She said, you go to work, so I went to work at sixteen.

GUMB: Where did you work?

ZAMBERNARDI: I worked in, in Boston, they called it the North End, and I used to pack bacon. Bacon and meat, we used to do that. I liked that. Once I went to work I was find.

GUMB: How did you get that job?

ZAMBERNARDI: Through a, a girlfriend, she was there first. And

then she took me in, and we got along beautifully.

And then I worked for a, a company, they called it the Bird's Eye Frosted [sic] Foods. They were the first people that froze meat. The first in the country that froze meat. It was never frozen.

And then they even used to freeze, uh, a cream, because I remember that they said we're gonna experiment on, uh, on this item. They were millionaires, they had a yacht tied to, there's a pier, you know, in Boston, and they said they're coming in. We're gonna experiment, they want a lot of meat, frozen, but they want to freeze the cream, and we haven't tried it yet, so they tried it and it worked. So that's how they called it Bird's Eye Frosted [sic] Foods.

GUMB: Is that the same Bird's Eye?

ZAMBERNARDI: The same Bird's Eye that has the, the vegetables. They don't have the meat any more. They have it out West now, because it was costing too much to do it here.

GUMB: All right. Okay. Um, all right, uh, well, the, uh, let's see. Your new, the, as far as your

expectations of what America would be like when you were in Italy, uh, how did those expectations compare to what you found here? Do you have any feelings about that?

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, it wasn't too bad, but I think, now, I could be wrong, but from what my father used to say, talk about, that I would have liked Germany better than any place. He always used to say, from when we were kids, see, I was just born there, because my mother had maids over there in Germany, and she didn't want to have me born in Germany because she couldn't understand German. See, it was only over the border. So she went to Italy, had me, and went back again, because my brother that died, he was born there. My father had a big ice cream factory there, and he had quite a business. So they'd always travel back and forth, you know. So he was used to, she was used to a lot of things. But then when the war came, I don't remember when, 1912, see, everything went . . .

GUMB: Were there any customs that you brought from, uh, you were, uh, from Italy, to this country? You know, anything that your family kept up, like at

Christmas time or anything?

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, I'll tell you. Now, this comes back to me.

We never had too much like, say, candy, or this or that. But every, I think it was once a week, or every two weeks, and my poor grandmother, she used to, uh, she used to go and do errands, you know, for the townspeople. And she'd make a few cents and somebody would come, from down another town, with a, with a, not a horse, I think it was a, well, whatever. It'd pull up a, like a big, well, a square thing, full of candy, and we used to look forward to that. She'd buy us, oh, everything. She'd stay without, but she'd always have, she'd go to work, you know, and save that money for us.

GUMB: What kind of candy?

ZAMBERNARDI: Well, any kind. Hard candy, I remember. They call it, and here they call it, they're hard candy, they still sell 'em. They're wrapped. They're hard candies.

GUMB: Did you do anything like that in this country, or was there any . . .

ZAMBERNARDI: They got 'em here, you know. They have a name for them. They call them "carmellies." but, yeah, they're in the same line.

GUMB: Okay. Um, when did you become a citizen?

ZAMBERNARDI: With my father. See, when he got the papers, I'm sure it was 1925 . . .

GUMB: Oh, I see. And you became a citizen when he did.

ZAMBERNARDI: Yeah. Through him. But that's funny because about that year, they stopped, the mother, the wife could not be a citizen. She never became a citizen. We were, but not the wife.

GUMB: Oh, your mother. Or the, your sister.

ZAMBERNARDI: My mother.

GUMB: Right.

ZAMBERNARDI: That would be my father's wife. She could not be a citizen.

GUMB: Why not?

ZAMBERNARDI: I don't know. And they had it right there, no.

The children, all citizen, but the wife, they passed a law. Before, it was. After, I don't remember what year . . .

GUMB: Okay. Do you have any idea what, uh, what would have happened if you hadn't come here, what you would have done in Italy if you'd stayed there?

ZAMBERNARDI: In Italy. Well, I don't know, but I don't think it would have been any worse, because they said, see, it started to get better and better over there. You know what they would do. They wouldn't stay in that town, they'd all go in the city. And they all had some cute little jobs, either a maid, and it was better than up there. Not now. Now, oh! But at that time, they'd all leave. The only people that stayed in the, in the town, would be the older people, or some that were married. But then, if you had, like girls growing up, of course, they were always with somebody that would watch over you. But they'd all go, they'd all take off, go in the city and work. There'd always be something there.

GUMB: This is the end of side two, the end of the

KECK-48/ZAMBERNARDI

interview with Mrs. Edith Zambernardi.