

KM-019

JOSEPH CHARLES CAVALIERI

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SICILY, 1921

AGE CIRCA 9 MONTHS

PASSAGE ON "THE DANTE ALIGHIERI"

SHIP NAME TAKEN FROM HIS BROTHER'S INTERVIEW

Oral Historian's Note: Joseph Cavalieri is the brother of Charles Cavalieri, Interview KM-18. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of Oral History, 2/28/1995.

MOORE: Good afternoon. This is Kate Moore for the National Park Service. Today is the 11th of January 1994, and I'm in Malibu, California at the home of Charles Cavalieri, Cavalieri, with his brother Joseph, who came to this country from Italy when he was about ten, eight months, eleven months old.

CAVALIERI: Eleven, ten, eleven months old. ( a telephone rings ) Ten, eleven months old.

MOORE: And why don't you begin by giving me your full name and date of birth, please?

CAVALIERI: Do you want it in English or Italian?

MOORE: Um, in English, please.

CAVALIERI: In English. Joseph Charles Cavalieri, and I was born March 3, 1921.

MOORE: And where were you born?

CAVALIERI: I was born in Lentini, Sicily.

MOORE: Could you spell that, please?

CAVALIERI: Lentini is L-E-N-T-I-N-I, and it's near, I guess it's near Catania or Syracuse. ( an airplane can be heard in the background ) I'm not quite sure. It's a few miles away from there.

MOORE: In?

CAVALIERI: In Sicily, on the, I'd say the east, southeast section of Sicily.

MOORE: And what size town was Lentini?

CAVALIERI: Well, I don't remember too much, except what my parents told me, and that was that it was a small little rural town, farming more or less. And I don't think there was more than, I don't

know, fifteen hundred people in it, if that many.

MOORE: And were you told what that town look like? Have you ever seen it?

CAVALIERI: I have never seen it. My brother told me about it when he went back there once on a visit some years back. And the center of town has built up a little bit, but most of it has remained more or less the same, I hear.

MOORE: And what about, what's the major industry there?

CAVALIERI: ( he laughs ) Ah, good question. I would, I guess it's growing olives and cheese and citrus fruit. I don't think there is any particular exporting business.

MOORE: What was your father's name?

CAVALIERI: My father's name, my father's name was Sebastiano, which is now translated into English as Sam, or Samuel, but his name was Sebastiano Cavalieri.

MOORE: And what was his occupation?

CAVALIERI: Pop was a shoemaker. Actually, I understand from what they told me that he had started as an apprentice when he was about six or seven years old helping, you know, cobblers in those days, and that was his profession from then on until he died.

MOORE: Okay. And is there, describe your father, what he looked like.

CAVALIERI: My father, God bless him, he was a very good looking man, actually, and he was involved, from what I understand, in politics. He was on, I think he was on a kind of a council, a city council, like, in Lentini. The funny part of his coming to the U.S. from what I heard was that my mother only agreed to marry him if he took us to the United States. So he had to give up his lucrative career of a dollar a year probably, being a councilman.

MOORE: How did he look? What did his appearance look like?

CAVALIERI: His parents were . . .

MOORE: No, his appearance.

CAVALIERI: Oh, his appearance. His appearance was, he was a well-dressed man. He had a great sense of humor. A dry sense of humor, but a great sense of humor, and he was interested in photography, which was wonderful, because he took pictures on the boat coming over, on the stereopticon, which is the glass plate pictures. I have some someplace. I don't know where they are at the moment, but I had some pictures that I had made, copied, on, pictures he took on the boat coming over from Italy. But

he was a wonderful guy.

MOORE: Is there a story about your father that you associate with him from your childhood?

CAVALIERI: Only that he insisted that I play the violin, which I hated. And when I wouldn't practice, he broke two violins over my head.

MOORE: Is that true?

CAVALIERI: It's true. He, uh . . .

MOORE: He broke them over your head?

CAVALIERI: My dad was a strict individual when it came to being obeyed, you might say. He never hit us, but he always made the movement, and we paid attention. But, uh . . .

MOORE: Why the violin?

CAVALIERI: I have no idea. He loved the violin, and he wanted me to play the violin. I wanted to play the piano. My brother wanted to play something else, and he, he made him, he wanted him to play the saxophone or something like that, and Charles never, Charles couldn't count to three, you know, in beat. He's the only one I know who can take a picture out of focus in infinite.

MOORE: ( she laughs ) Let's go back. Your father didn't hit your brother over the head with a saxophone.

CAVALIERI: No, no. I don't know if he even got one for him, because Charles just gave up. He wanted to be a doctor, at that time. Even then he was, he always wanted to get into medicine. I always wanted to be in show business. I was a ham from way back.

MOORE: What is your mother's name?

CAVALIERI: Oh, my mother, and I loved her. She was named Giovanina.

MOORE: How do you spell that?

CAVALIERI: Which is G-I-O-V-A-N-N-A, I believe. Which is, in English she ended up being called Jenny. And Mom was very creative with her hands and her, let's say her artistic work. She was a, she ended up being a dress designer. But she used to sew all the clothes when she was just a little girl for her mother and her sisters and everything else so that, she was very good, she was excellent. She was a living doll.

MOORE: And what did she look like?

CAVALIERI: Oh, she was beautiful. When she was young and even middle-aged she was, even when she passed away she was still a beautiful

woman. She was, she had a very narrow face. I don't know how to describe it, almost Mona Lisa like. She was a very strong woman, though, in her ideas. But she was tremendous with the family, with my brother and myself.

MOORE: And what about, is there a story about your mother that you associate with her, anything about her?

CAVALIERI: In my early days, I'm trying to remember, when I was in Coney Island with the so-called long bathing suits we used to wear as a child. I think they were made in 1890 or something. But I guess my mother used to cater to me quite a bit. My father was, you know, was loving, but very strict, you might say. Not strict, but he was rigid in his ideas. But my mother always gave into whatever I wanted, so I became like a spoiled child, they say, only I don't believe it. I think it's just hearsay.

MOORE: Unreliable narrator, I can see.

CAVALIERI: He is.

MOORE: Now, name your brothers and your sisters, if there were brothers.

CAVALIERI: I only have one brother. Actually the other ones were all, from what I understand, my mother had other children, but they were all stillborn. And Charles is the only brother. He's, I

think, seven years older than I am, depending on the birthdays, when they fall.

MOORE: Now, do you remember any, what do you know about the house? You obviously couldn't remember, you were so small, but what do you know about your house in Italy? What have you heard?

CAVALIERI: I only heard that it was, well, it wasn't much of a house, from what I heard. It was very small and very crowded. But my mother's father and my grandma apparently were, they grew citrus. And their house, of course, when she lived with them, was quite substantial. It was, you know, a larger house but the one that, the house that my father and my mother and I and Charles lived in just for the few months that I remember, or rather I was there, was just a small little rural, a stone house.

MOORE: And do you, when you were a child, what favorite food did you have? Of course, that's when you came to this country.

CAVALIERI: In Italy?

MOORE: Yeah, milk.

CAVALIERI: Milk. And you know where from. ( Ms. Moore laughs ) Now, actually, I'll tell you what I was told, that I drank a lot of goat's milk. In fact, the very first picture I ever had with

the band on my head was with a little lamb, because I was always playing around, I understand, with the lamb. I don't know what it was with animals, but I was always around them. And they took my very first picture with a little lamb there, and that was in Italy.

MOORE: You don't remember any of that.

CAVALIERI: No, I don't.

MOORE: And did your family ever tell you why they came to the United States, what life was like in Italy in comparison?

CAVALIERI: Well, only from, well, actually my father came to the United States earlier, of course. And then when he came back, then he didn't tell, you know, my mother and everybody else around, he didn't say the streets were paved with gold by any means, because it was during World War One that he was there. But he thought there was an opportunity for the family. And, of course, my mother was dead set on coming here. She had nowhere to go in Sicily with her abilities. So when she came to the States the first thing she did is, from what I understand, is that she went to work as a seamstress, and before you know it she was working for New York's Saks Fifth Avenue designing dresses.

MOORE: What about the things that you did in your family that were actually sort of vestiges left over from your life in Italy? Were you taught Italian, for example? Did you do Italian things? What did you do that was an indication that you were born in Italy?

CAVALIERI: Well, we did, naturally I spoke Italian, because I had to learn to speak English later on in grade school, but we spoke Italian at home all the time. But my mother was insistent on learning English, and she insisted that whatever we learned we had to teach her. So we talked, we talked half and half, you might say. My mother was quite adamant it on learning the language, you know, speaking English. That's one of the reasons that I understand that we moved from New York, which was a ghetto, at that time, to Nebraska, which was, Lincoln, Nebraska, which was all, you know, farmers and, you might say, English speaking people. And the only native that I know of that was different was a Chinese laundryman who lived next door to us, and he used to feed me Chinese food and give me, talk to me in Chinese. I understand I, from what they told me, that I spoke Chinese better than I spoke Italian. I've forgotten it by now, of course. I wish I could have remembered it when I went to Hong Kong.

MOORE: Well, what about, so the first years of your life you spent in

Nebraska, after you came through Ellis Island.

CAVALIERI: After we came to Ellis Island, we didn't stay there too long. I don't recall how long we were in New York. I don't think we were there more than a year or so, and then we went to Nebraska.

MOORE: Let's back up a bit. Your brother made a joke about that you were one of the reasons why at Ellis Island the family was detained.

CAVALIERI: Yes.

MOORE: What do you know about the Ellis Island experience with your family? Have they told you anything?

CAVALIERI: ( he laughs ) Yeah. They told me that when we arrived at Ellis Island that I had, they had given me a vaccination, and from what I hear is that my arm had swollen, you know, double its size as a baby, and they wouldn't let, they wouldn't let me off the island. So I had to stay there with my mother while my brother and my father were on shore, you might say. From what I hear, I was there about a month. And then finally they let us go back to shore. Of course, my uncle insisted in his little ways that talking to some of the Ellis Island people that he wouldn't dare let them go, let us go back to Italy

because of that. So we finally made it, but I was the one that detained everybody.

MOORE: You don't think it was your father? Did your father have an illness as well?

CAVALIERI: No, not that I recall.

MOORE: So they blame everything on you?

CAVALIERI: Yeah. Well, everything's on me, even to this day.

MOORE: ( she laughs ) Okay. So back, going to Nebraska, what do you remember about life in Nebraska?

CAVALIERI: I don't really remember that much. As I say, the only thing I recall is the relationship I had with this Chinese laundryman, which my mother says I was always over there. Don't ask me why, I just loved the Orient, and I guess it's been that way my whole life, because I ended up marrying an Oriental girl.

MOORE: What about, did your parents ever explain to you anything about your background, or why they came here? Did they talk much about Italy?

CAVALIERI: No, except the poverty, naturally, and the living conditions and the having nowhere to go with what their abilities were. And it was my mother who insisted that we come, because she

wanted to utilize her talent, and there was no way of doing it in Sicily. So, and then, of course, the education, and my father was very patriotic, naturally, and he wanted to, he became an American citizen, and we became citizens on his papers, and then we got our own. But it was basically my mother who insisted on coming from Italy.

MOORE: Do you remember back in Nebraska any persecution or bigotry or teasing that you underwent because you were Italian?

CAVALIERI: Not in Nebraska. I got that in New York.

MOORE: And how old were you when you moved to New York, then?

CAVALIERI: I was about six or seven, I believe.

MOORE: And you spoke still, until you went to kindergarten did you speak . . .

CAVALIERI: Well, from what I hear is I spoke English, but at home I spoke Italian only because we were just, we were into it once in a while, but Mom insisted that English was first.

MOORE: At home, too.

CAVALIERI: At home.

MOORE: So when you went to kindergarten, you knew both languages?

CAVALIERI: I knew both language, yeah.

MOORE: You had no problems learning English.

CAVALIERI: No, I was a quick study, you might say.

MOORE: So describe to me what you know about, when you went to New York at five or six, what were you teased about then? If you spoke English well . . .

CAVALIERI: Well, I wasn't, it wasn't the speaking of English that, it was because you lived in a certain area which were all Italians or Jewish people or Polish people, whatever it is. And we only got, I wouldn't say ostracized, I wouldn't say picked on, from, let's say, some of the Irish people, for example, who were living close by, so we didn't wander too far. But that was . . .

MOORE: You lived in an Italian neighborhood?

CAVALIERI: Yes, we lived . . .

MOORE: But you didn't in Nebraska. There was no Italian neighborhood.

CAVALIERI: No, there was no Italian. Everything was all white and American. Everybody spoke English in their little funny accents.

MOORE: Do you remember any attitude about moving to New York? Did you regret going to New York?

CAVALIERI: No. I didn't, I didn't. Mom enjoyed New York, because that's where she got her opportunity of going into, utilizing her talent as a designer.

MOORE: Did you ever speak Italian to other children in New York?

CAVALIERI: Oh, sure, because most of the kids that I went around with were Italian, but we didn't, we didn't speak Italian that much because all the kids were growing up. We all spoke English. It's funny that, unlike today we're, like Spanish people or Vietnamese or Chinese or Japanese, and they go into their little Tokyo area in Chinatown, and they speak their language. We didn't. We spoke English.

MOORE: And do you think that had to do with any of the attitude at that time about learning a second language?

CAVALIERI: I would think, the attitude in those days, because everybody wanted to become an American. That's what they left the other countries for, to become an American, and to learn English and to advance themselves.

MOORE: So the attitude at that time, would you say, was generally to sort of, a melting pot?

CAVALIERI: It was a melting pot of people who wanted to be American citizens, yes.

MOORE: Do you remember going to school for the first time back in Nebraska?

CAVALIERI: Not in Nebraska. I remember going to school in New York.

MOORE: And what grade was that?

CAVALIERI: It was, I would say it's about third, fourth grade or something like that, maybe. But I went to a Catholic school, and the reason I went to a Catholic school was because there was no babysitter, so I stayed there till my mother and father picked me up, and that was, in those days, a very strict Catholic upbringing.

MOORE: And what did that mean?

CAVALIERI: You got your hands beat with a ruler, and your ears pinched. And a few little . . .

MOORE: Frequently?

CAVALIERI: If you didn't adhere to their rules and regulations, yes.

MOORE: Now, why did your parents put you in the Catholic school?

CAVALIERI: For that reason, because there was no babysitter, and I had to, whatever school I went to I couldn't come home and be by myself or even walk home, so I stayed there until they came and got me.

MOORE: And you were taught by nuns at that school?

CAVALIERI: Oh, yes, strictly.

MOORE: What about the religious life of your family?

CAVALIERI: Not too much. My dad was more or less a practitioner of world universe, you might say. He didn't believe in just one thing. He believed that, let's say God is international. It makes no difference of color, creeds or anything. It was just one. And Mom was religious but, and we used to go to church, naturally.

MOORE: Uh, each week?

CAVALIERI: Each week, with, my mother insisted. My dad sometimes didn't go. But we'd go, and even when I came to California I was still going until I was about thirteen. Then I stopped.

MOORE: Did you have a First Communion here?

CAVALIERI: I had my First Communion there.

MOORE: Where's there?

CAVALIERI: In New York.

MOORE: In the States.

CAVALIERI: Yeah, in the States.

MOORE: And was that, do you remember that?

CAVALIERI: Not very much, no. That was quite early in my life. I don't know. There's a lot of things that I have put out of my mind almost, kind of forgotten. I don't know why. I have no idea way.

MOORE: Was it particularly traumatic at those times?

CAVALIERI: Well, I had, you see, when I was young, about eight or nine years old, I had spinal meningitis, and I was, I guess the odds were like one in nine million to be alive, and I was very lucky to be that one. And I was out, oh, for almost a year, you know, six months in a wheelchair, no exercise, no nothing. And the only reason I became as strong as I was was because my brother insisted that I go, you know, and exercise in a gymnasium, and that helped me. But I wasn't very well, you know, in my younger days, for whatever reason.

MOORE: And so, all right. So you did do your First Communion around seven or so.

CAVALIERI: I guess, around.

MOORE: And then what was your, what was mealtime like at your house?

CAVALIERI: ( he laughs ) Mealtime was typically Italian where Mom, which we called sugo, which was tomato sauce, which is the thing that you cook for three hours, and you have veal and pork and beef, and then you have chicken, and then you have veal cutlets, and then you have spaghetti, and then you have, you have everything, enough for ninety people, and there's only four people there. And the favorite word from my mother was always "Mangia, mangia," which means go ahead and eat, please eat. So we had that. And my dad used to make wine in those days, too. And he would give me the root beer, and everybody else drank wine, because I wasn't allowed to drink wine in those days. I was too young. Not until I came to California, and then he mixed it with water.

MOORE: What was your favorite holiday?

CAVALIERI: My favorite holiday? Any day I got out of school.  
( he laughs )

MOORE: All right. But I mean in terms of family?

CAVALIERI: Family, I guess, I would say, besides birthdays, I would say Christmas.

MOORE: And why?

CAVALIERI: Well, it was festive. It was, Thanksgiving and that was all the relatives that we had that were in New York, because we didn't have, we only had one relative, I think, if I recall, in Omaha, and that was my, I call him uncle, and he was a cousin of my father's, actually. But it was family. It was, you know, ten, twelve, maybe at least twelve people sitting around the table gorging themselves, you know, eat for five, six hours, and that was it.

MOORE: Did you eat, how many meals a day did you eat together with your family, in a normal . . .

CAVALIERI: Normal, it was just dinner. Lunchtime, you know, Mom and Pop were out. I was in school.

MOORE: What about breakfast?

CAVALIERI: Breakfast, Mom used to make me, which was like an egg nog. You just crack two eggs and you put some milk in it or a little cocoa or a little flavoring, and beat it up, and that was my breakfast, that and Italian bread toasted. I do remember one thing, and that was when I used to go to school in New York, she used to make my lunch, which was the Italian subs that they call them now. In those days that was it. That was the meager

food. It was stuffed with salami and prosciutto or cheese or whatever, and every time I went to school I had to divide it with everybody else, because their sandwiches weren't as good.

And that was, that was breakfast and lunch.

MOORE: What about, so dinner you ate together?

CAVALIERI: We ate together at dinner. And mom, we, most of the time I would say we had some form of spaghetti of some sort, rice and things like that.

MOORE: In the Italian neighborhood, was there boys that were the same background that you had, or similar, what games did you play in New York?

CAVALIERI: We played stickball, which is like baseball, only you use a broomstick handle, and, of course, you played a hide n' seek game, and throwing the ball against the stoop with a tennis ball, and another game was there was a game, but only you could do it at school, and that was about three feet up there was a ledge, and then there was about, a foot in was a wall, and either one of us would get on either side and try to push the other off. It was like king of the mountain type of thing. And you fell down enough you finally give up playing the game.

MOORE: And how did, did you in any way identify yourself as an

Italian-American at that time, or just living in an Italian neighborhood?

CAVALIERI: No, I identified myself as a typical American kid.

MOORE: And what about, did they tell you anything about, were you ever told anything about the boat trip you came over here on? Did anybody give you any . . .

CAVALIERI: Oh, yeah. Only that I think my dad, of course, well, we talked about it, my dad and my brother and myself. They only told me that we came in steerage, which was the bottom of the boat. We didn't have enough money to go second class. ( a telephone rings ) And it wasn't, it was crowded. We didn't have any privileges. We just couldn't wait to get to Ellis Island, you might say. But I don't, they didn't talk too much about it. They didn't want me to feel like we had come, as poor as church mice.

MOORE: All right. Just going back now, I didn't ask you about that boat trip. But we're back now in New York and you're at school. What was your school life like there in New York? You talked about the nuns, you talked about the discipline. What about schoolmates and teachers that you cared for?

CAVALIERI: I don't remember any teachers, to be honest with you. And

schoolmates, I don't recall even one name any more, actually. My schoolmates I remembered when I first came to California, because for some unknown reason that brought recollection of a lot of things, whereas I think I just tried to put New York out of my mind, to be honest.

MOORE: And you, do you remember, what was your favorite subject?

CAVALIERI: My favorite subject was entertainment.

MOORE: Even as a young man.

CAVALIERI: As a young man. Charles told me that we used to go to the theater, but I'd always run up the aisle and start dancing on the stage. ( Ms. Moore laughs ) Because I was going to be a dancer, and I was going to be, you know, I don't want to say a movie star, because I never got that far, but I was an entertainer, you might say. I had to sing, and I had to dance, and I had to make funny faces, and I'd tell jokes, or whatever I could dream up. But I was always doing that, even in the house. I was the character that made everybody laugh.

MOORE: What about one of your, what's one of your favorite childhood stories you have about yourself?

CAVALIERI: Myself. Well, that, of course, being that, going to the theater, which my brother hated, so when I'd escape from him,

having to go to the bathroom about ninety times, and, let's see. Actually, stories about myself weren't too many, except more or less I remember, I remember the entertainment part more than I do anything else, as far as school goes.

MOORE: Back to this thing about your illness, that's a contagious disease that you . . .

CAVALIERI: I don't know how I caught it, to be honest with you. All I know is one day I ended up in the hospital, and the doctor said to say goodbye.

MOORE: Said to whom to say goodbye?

CAVALIERI: For my family to say goodbye to me, because that was it, there was no cure.

MOORE: Did you have a priest come in?

CAVALIERI: Yeah. I understand there was a priest there. But what happened is, I understand a Jewish doctor who was, I don't know whether he was doing research on spinal meningitis or not, but he was the one who decided to, from what I hear, drain fluid out of my back, of some sort, to do something like that. And whatever he did saved my life, because at that time there was, they didn't have knowledge of spinal meningitis more or less. So this wonderful man, who I don't even know his name to this

day, saved my life, I guess you might say.

MOORE: And do you remember anything about that time?

CAVALIERI: All I remember is that I was in a wheelchair, and Charles kept taking me out to do exercise.

MOORE: And did Charles always take care of you?

CAVALIERI: Yes. He was my big brother. I admired him.

MOORE: And you maintained that relationship your whole life?

CAVALIERI: My whole life, except now that I'm just as old as, almost as old as he, now I tell him what to do. ( Ms. Moore laughs ) I tell him to exercise. So . . .

MOORE: But do you think that your inability to remember things might have to do with difficulty at that time?

CAVALIERI: I think the spinal meningitis had something to do with it. The whole atmosphere of New York at that time, which was detrimental to me at that time, you know, made me want to forget it all.

MOORE: So when did you move to California?

CAVALIERI: In about '29, I understand, from what I was told, somewhere around the '29 period.

MOORE: And you were, how old were you?

CAVALIERI: I was only about eight.

MOORE: So actually after the meningitis you went to California.

CAVALIERI: We came to California.

MOORE: And that's when most of your memory starts?

CAVALIERI: Yes.

MOORE: And what do you remember coming to California?

CAVALIERI: I remember we were traveling in an old car halfway to, I can't remember exactly where we stopped. And then my mother and I came on a train, and Charles and my dad I think drove the rest of the way on those dirt roads, but I can't tell you where it was or where they stopped, but we came on the train.

MOORE: And were you in a wheelchair then?

CAVALIERI: No, no. I was walking.

MOORE: You had recovered.

CAVALIERI: Yeah, I recovered.

MOORE: So Charles helped you to recover, too?

CAVALIERI: Oh, definitely. If it wasn't for him I would have been, they say the ninety-seven pound weakling? I would have been about the thirty-seven pound weakling.

MOORE: And so Charles then, your older brother, took a lot of responsibility in the family, being the older brother.

CAVALIERI: Yes.

MOORE: You came on train then to California.

CAVALIERI: I came on a train, yeah.

MOORE: Where did you guys come to?

CAVALIERI: I think the train stopped in Pasadena at that time. And then we moved to, with some friends of ours, which we called cousins, even though they're not. We moved in with them on 42nd and Broadway, somewhere down on that area.

MOORE: In which town?

CAVALIERI: In Los Angeles, down near Figueroa, Broadway, Figueroa, 42nd Street, which is, I think, by Slossen, or something like that. And that's where we lived for a while until we found our own place, you might say. Then my dad, from what I hear, opened up a shoe store, a shoe repair store, and we lived in the back of the store for a while.

MOORE: Do you remember that very much?

CAVALIERI: I remember the curtain which divided the shoe shop from the bedroom, and I remember that Charles used to shine shoes there. My dad would make them and he would shine them. And I recall later on there, when we were living down there, down in that area, that I got an old pushcart, not a pushcart, or a rollercoaster, a broken-down rollercoaster, and we used to pick up rags and bottles and newspapers and take them to this little place where you sold them for a nickel, and things like that. That's all I remember in that period. I went to school down there on 60th Street. It's called 60th Street school at that time, by Figueroa, and we had a house across the street from the school. And I remember quite a few things about growing up there. I had a wonderful relationship with the neighbors and the kids in school. It was quite nice, until, I used to sneak away and make my way up to Hollywood at that time. And my mother, I guess, figured out that the best thing to do was to move to Hollywood. Otherwise it was about ten miles away, and I was always hitchhiking or stealing rides on the red car.

MOORE: What's the red car?

CAVALIERI: The red car used to be the old electric cars that they used to have in Los Angeles.

MOORE: Oh, I see. And how old were you then?

CAVALIERI: I was about nine or ten.

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BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

MOORE: Who were you closest to you in your family?

CAVALIERI: I think we were, I was close to both, everybody. I never really categorized, you know, Mom was the best, or Pop was the best, or Charles. I just thought they were all a hundred and ten percent. We had no friction in our family.

MOORE: How about, how, did you view your childhood as particularly poor, or did you notice it?

CAVALIERI: I didn't notice it, no. Charles may have, but I didn't because I didn't know what was going to be, what was better or worse. I just, we, I know we just made do with what we had. To me it was fine, and I didn't know any better. So I don't remember living in poverty because my mother and father did work, even though they made, you know, fifteen dollars a week, or something like that. You know, I never knew, you know, precisely that kind of, whether I was in poverty or whether I was rich. I don't know. I don't recall it.

MOORE: Did your parents ever speak to you about patriotic things, about being in America, when you were a child?

CAVALIERI: My dad used to.

MOORE: And what did he say?

CAVALIERI: Well, he would say, you know, that you were here in America, and you are an American citizen, and this is your country, and this is where you live, and this is where you're going to make your career, and accept it, and do the best you can. And . . .

MOORE: How does he define your being Italian then?

CAVALIERI: Only because I was born in Italy and he was an Italian, and we spoke Italian sometimes around the house, but, and I think that was, the only reason we spoke Italian around the house was just to keep me from forgetting it. Because Charles spoke more Italian than I did. Naturally he grew up with it for a longer, went to school and, he had a longer period of time. I didn't, because I started English school when I was, what, three or four years old in kindergarten, you might say.

MOORE: Did your mother ever talk about these patriotic themes?

CAVALIERI: Not really. My dad was predominantly the one who did most of the talking of citizenship and the U.S. and all of that.

MOORE: Both your parents became citizens?

CAVALIERI: Yes.

MOORE: And were they, did they feel strongly about that?

CAVALIERI: Oh, yes, very much so. My mother insisted that she get her own papers, in fact. She didn't want to be on my dad's papers, and so we got ours, too.

MOORE: And so you got your own papers.

CAVALIERI: We got our own papers as well.

MOORE: Whose idea was that?

CAVALIERI: I think it was Charles' idea mostly, and Mom, probably. Because she was the one who instigated the first group of papers.

MOORE: I'm trying to get down what I want to ask you. Did you have any, were you close with your aunt and uncle who came over?

CAVALIERI: Yes. My aunt was a saint, actually, and her name was Santa, which was so strange. She was the most lovable woman, rather bulky, and you could just be enveloped in her folds, you might say. But she was a, she couldn't speak English. She never spoke English in all of her years.

MOORE: This aunt and uncle were who? They were related . . .

CAVALIERI: That was my dad's brother and his wife, and they're the one that, I guess they're the ones that helped my father come over here the first time, and he stayed with his brother, which was Vincent, Vincenzo, in those days. And they had three girls at that time, three baby girls. And then later on they had a boy, which they named Charles, right after this Charles. But that's, yeah, we were very close with them.

MOORE: And she, and she never learned English. Do you know why?

CAVALIERI: Never got out of the ghetto. For whatever known reason, she only walked to the Italian market and back. I don't think she left Brooklyn in that ghetto area for, I hate to say this, but forty years whence finally the daughters insisted that she go into Manhattan. She didn't know what Manhattan was.

MOORE: And why were you so fond of her?

CAVALIERI: Oh, she was just wonderful. I mean, there wasn't a bad thing about her. She was just, she cared. And she did everything possible to make you happy.

MOORE: And what about Italian? You spoke Italian with her?

CAVALIERI: I spoke Italian with her, yeah. That's one of the reasons I

kept my Italian up, because she wouldn't speak English. Or not wouldn't, she couldn't.

MOORE: And how do you think that she felt American, not having the language and such?

CAVALIERI: She just changed one place to another place. That's about all. Everything remained the same for her. You could have said that that one block that she lived on was Little Italy in Italy. She, the location meant no difference to her.

MOORE: What did mean something to her?

CAVALIERI: Children, family. As long as she had family, and she could feed you, she was perfectly content.

MOORE: And your uncle?

CAVALIERI: My uncle was a stevedore. He worked on the docks. And he was the typical hardworking immigrant that came here and went to work on the docks.

MOORE: And were they in any way, you were close to those, too?

CAVALIERI: We were close to them, yes.

MOORE: And were they like your surrogate . . .

CAVALIERI: Parents, in a way, yeah. Because that was the only relative we

had, actually, was my father's brother.

MOORE: And did they live their whole life in Brooklyn?

CAVALIERI: Yes.

MOORE: Did they ever consider going back, did your aunt ever consider going back?

CAVALIERI: No, they never. And my father wanted my mother to go back even for a visit. She wouldn't go. She says, "This is it. I don't want to go back."

MOORE: And did she ever say that to you?

CAVALIERI: Oh, yeah.

MOORE: Did she give reasons why?

CAVALIERI: She just didn't want to go back to Italy. She said, "I left it, and this is my country, and this is my home, and I don't particularly care about going back there any more."

MOORE: What about her parents being there?

CAVALIERI: She loved her parents, and she would correspond with them, and her sisters, but she finally lost contact with them when they moved away from where they were. They never did write after that. I don't even know where they are.

MOORE: So her family moved and didn't give her the address?

CAVALIERI: More or less.

MOORE: And what about, did your parents ever consider bringing their parents over here?

CAVALIERI: No. My grandmother and grandfather, no. They wouldn't leave.

MOORE: Which grandmother?

CAVALIERI: My mother's mother and father. My dad's mother and father passed away. Rather, I think they may have passed away even when I was, first got here in the States. He had one sister, and she passed away a few years later, but that's about all.

MOORE: Did you somehow feel closer to children, so-called typical American children who happened to be born in Italy? Did you ever feel closer to them than you did to other nationalities?

CAVALIERI: No. I tell you, my upbringing, which is very strange, because I started analyzing it when I was in junior high school, that all of my friends were different. I had a black friend, I had a Japanese friend. Very close people, now. I had a Russian friend, I had a German friend, I had a Spanish friend, I had an Irish friend. And we were all playing basketball or football or games together, we went out together, we did everything

together, and it was almost an international group. It wasn't all whites or all Hispanics or all of this or that, or Italians. There was no other Italian except me. And whenever they'd get angry, they'd call me "Giuseppe." You know, they'd say, "Giuseppe!" And I'd say, "Oh, boy, now what have I done." In fact, my mother used to do that, too.

MOORE: The same thing?

CAVALIERI: The same thing. I think that's where they got it.

MOORE: Oh, from your mother. But, so you felt, you lived in an immigrant neighborhood.

CAVALIERI: I lived in an immigrant neighborhood, grew up with them, accepted them, didn't know any difference.

MOORE: So the children that you lived with, did they speak their own native languages with their parents that were immigrants?

CAVALIERI: The only ones that I recall was a Russian kid, Boris, and Minau, who was the Japanese boy, because his mother and father had a Japanese restaurant, so they spoke Japanese at home. But he was, he was an honor student. He and his sister were both like 4.0 scholastically. But . . .

MOORE: Boris spoke Russian?

CAVALIERI: Boris spoke Russian to his mother and father, but that's the only one that I recall hearing speaking another language other than English.

MOORE: So would you say it was customary for children not to learn the language, to maintain the language?

CAVALIERI: The only ones that maintained it, as I say, were those two, but they spoke mostly English whenever they could, even in the house. I know that Minau in Japanese used to speak to his father in English all the time. They understood it. It's just that once in a while they would get into it on a personal basis, maybe. Which my mother did, with us.

MOORE: So you never remember learning English as a hardship, or anything that was difficult about learning English.

CAVALIERI: No, I never did. I just . . .

MOORE: Tell me about your house here in California when you moved here.

CAVALIERI: Well, the house, the first house that I recall was, when we were on 60th Street, was typical, you know, 1927 bungalow house type. And it wasn't big, it was very small, but it was clean and neat and had a yard, and it wasn't any different than the typical houses that used to be all around Hollywood, you might

say, built in the '20s. I, the neighborhood was great. You could walk any place you wanted with anybody you wanted, you know, there was no gangs in those days. You could do whatever you want. You could travel all over the city and no one would bother you, especially when you were going with somebody who was Japanese and black and Irish and green, purple. It was, you know, you were universal. I don't recall any problems. And the neighborhoods were all alike in those days.

MOORE: How would you describe your parents' careers and how they, could you describe what happened to your parents here in this country?

CAVALIERI: Well, God bless my father. He was a brilliant shoemaker. In fact, he got so good that he was, he was hired by the studios and by Western Costume Company at that time to make special shoes for movie stars, you know, when they were hunchback, or beautiful, or boots and things like that. So he had these handmade things that he used to do lovingly, and he was brilliant at that. When he had his own shoe store all he did was repair shoes, of course. But he did them so well that people, you know, they used to just line up for blocks, you might say, to get their shoes done by him. My mother, she, as I said, was a seamstress when she first started, and then she became a dress designer, and she worked at Paramount designing

clothes for people. And when she had to leave, she left because she was having problems, two problems. One, she was getting very bad migraines, and the other thing was that she couldn't write English too well. So when she left Paramount and retired, you might say, from the business, as far as working for other people, she worked for herself. That's when this illustrious Edith Head came into Paramount and became the academy award winner for designing clothes. But Mom had her same job before that. But Mom had her own little, at home. She used to make and design clothes for some stars that she knew that used to come to her that knew her.

MOORE: For whom?

CAVALIERI: Well, in those days, Spring Byington, I recall, gosh, let me see, I haven't thought of those names in forty years. Golly sakes. I can't, I can't recall some of the names, but she used to . . .

MOORE: That's all right.

CAVALIERI: She used to have them.

MOORE: Now, do you think the fact that, do you think that her lack of English skills may have limited her jobs, do you think?

CAVALIERI: Yes, it did.

MOORE: Or made it a headache, let's say.

CAVALIERI: It caused a problem, and it limited her facilities to write down and give orders to others and things like that, yes. She could sketch, but she couldn't write in English to tell other people, you know, what she wanted.

MOORE: Your father was a very skilled and talented shoemaker, and they have this saying that shoemaker's children never have shoes. Was that true?

CAVALIERI: No, we always had shoes.

MOORE: ( she laughs ) By him?

CAVALIERI: Open toes. Oh, yeah. He made some shoes. In fact, I think he made some for Charles. But I used to buy, I used to just buy shoes, and he would just fix them. That's about all. My mother was a dress designer. I never had a dress, though.

MOORE: ( she laughs ) That's good. All right. So . . .

CAVALIERI: But we used to make other things. She made me a Tarzan outfit. She made me a Russian shirt, you know, with the big sleeves and all that, for my dancing class. She made me shorts. She made me pants. She made me all of these things for my, let's say, the plays I was in in school. The entertainment part of

my whole life when I was growing up. She made most of my wardrobe.

MOORE: Lovingly.

CAVALIERI: Lovingly.

MOORE: And what about, now, you went on to Hollywood and worked in Hollywood, too. Was that because of your interest in being an entertainer, or just because your parents happened to be there?

CAVALIERI: No, I was in it before they were, to be honest. The story goes that Mom, of course, was working as a seamstress, and Pop was a shoemaker at that time, and I used to sneak into the studios. And I recall . . .

MOORE: Wait a minute. What do you mean "sneak into the studios?"

CAVALIERI: I literally snuck into the studios. When the gate was there I got to know the doorman, the policeman, and I would say, "I can I go see what they're shooting?" And he's say, "Sure, but don't let anybody tell you what you're doing there. Just look, and then be quiet and then come on back." So I got to know a lot of these people. So I got in one day, and I went into a line of kids, and they were auditioning. So I didn't know what the heck I was doing there. I just stood in line. I thought they were getting a free lunch, to be honest. So when they got

to this director, which was Harry Joe Brown, I'll never forget, and there was a picture with stars, with Edmund Lowe and Nancy Carroll. Those were old time actors, big movie actors in those days. I got in this line. The guy said, "Here's what you've got to read." And I said, "Okay." They were looking for a typical New York juvenile delinquent, and I was perfect. So I read these few words. He says, "Okay, stand over there." And I stood over there, and then they had about three of us, and then we read it again, and he says, "Okay, you two can go, and you stay, and you're going to do the part." And it was me. ( Ms. Moore laughs ) So I got a part in the picture playing this juvenile delinquent from New York. And then I joined the Screen Actors Guild after that. But that was my . . .

MOORE: How old were you?

CAVALIERI: I was only about, I guess about eleven years old, eleven or twelve.

MOORE: Wait, wait, so you went home and you told your parents you were in a film?

CAVALIERI: That's right.

MOORE: And how did . . .

CAVALIERI: They didn't believe me. ( Ms. Moore laughs ) They didn't

believe me. So I did that, and then I used to, you know, watch them shoot movies all over town. I'd go, wherever they were on location I used to go and watch them. And they used shoot a lot of them on Slosser because there was a train there all the time. They were always using trains going by and the cars chasing them and crossing the road and all that. And I would get in there and start talking to whoever, the assistant director, the director, the wardrobe and everything. Just getting acquainted, what they do.

MOORE: So you were a groupie?

CAVALIERI: Oh, I was a groupie all right. I remember Warner Baxter was in a picture. I went up and introduced myself to him, and he patted me on the head, and that was it. I felt elated.

MOORE: Now, where does school fit into all this?

CAVALIERI: Uh, yeah. It fitted in, actually. I used to do this, I used to get out in the afternoon once in a while and sneak away.

MOORE: Now, so, you were there, that was your first part. What were you paid for that first part?

CAVALIERI: I think it was only about twelve dollars, in those days. Extras were only about two or three dollars, and speaking parts were eight to ten dollars, something like that. I don't

recall. All I know is that any money I ever made in business, in the picture business, I always gave three quarters of that to my mother, and she always saved it. Sometimes I made more money than anybody.

MOORE: Whose idea was that?

CAVALIERI: Mine.

MOORE: So, okay. So you were the first in the family to be in Hollywood.

CAVALIERI: Oh, yes, very much so.

MOORE: We just established that, okay.

CAVALIERI: Definitely.

MOORE: So when did you join the Screen Actors Guild?

CAVALIERI: When I was about twelve years old, I guess.

MOORE: And then what other parts did you start doing? What happened?

CAVALIERI: I didn't really do parts after that. What happened is that I got in, like an extra. I worked in the Dead End Kids pictures as a background, you know, one of those little toughies from New York, they were shot here. And then when I got older, when I was dancing, I took tap dancing, and I worked in the old Andy

Hardy movies as a tap dancer. I worked with Donald O'Connor in Universal as a tap dancer in the background with all the kids.

Just, you know, streets and just groups.

MOORE: Were your parents, how did your parents think about that?

CAVALIERI: Oh, they were elated, you know. They were fine, because they knew what I wanted to do. And I knew what I wanted to do as soon as I got out of high school. Exactly I knew what I was going to do.

MOORE: What did you want to do?

CAVALIERI: I wanted to be in the movies. I wanted to be a director, to be honest. I couldn't be an actor any more because I was too short. My voice was a little high at that time. So, see, I went around, in those days, when I was in high school I used to go around with Mickey Rooney all the time. We used to pal around together.

MOORE: How?

CAVALIERI: Because I knew him. Oh, go to the movies, and go on joy rides.

MOORE: How did you know him?

CAVALIERI: I worked in the movies.

MOORE: Oh, I see.

CAVALIERI: I knew Mickey. And then I played on the football team that he had. He started a football team of so-called stars. And, not stars, but people that worked in the business. So I was playing football in that team, and all of these kids, friends of mine, played football on the same team.

MOORE: You mean this was a gang of kids you'd hang around with?

CAVALIERI: I got them all in.

MOORE: ( she laughs ) Okay. So describe your life after high school. So you decided to be a director, and what happened?

CAVALIERI: Actually it started in junior high school. I was in the band, and I was in the orchestra. And I played drums, and then on the band, I led the band. I used to, and then I got a band made up myself which I called, excuse the expression, The Gay Cavaliers, in those days. And we used to play dances in school. And when I got to Hollywood High School I was in the drama class, well, in the glee club, you might say.

MOORE: You went to Hollywood High School.

CAVALIERI: I went to Hollywood High School. I went to LaConte Junior High School. I went to grammar school, which was Grant Grammar

School, and then I went to Hollywood High School. But I was in all the operettas. I had the lead in a couple of them. I directed a lot of the plays myself in those days.

MOORE: Where?

CAVALIERI: In Hollywood High School. We had, for example, in our class. We had, I wish I could remember them all, it was Jason Robards, Lana Turner, which was Judy at that time, was there. Susan, Susan, gosh, Peters. Uh, Jack Crushan, who's still alive. The girl that passed away, she was married to Peter Gunn. What was her name? Gosh, I can't think of her name. Anyway, there was about six to ten kids that were all, became, you know, entertainers, you might say, in the business. And we were all in the same classes, all in the same operettas, in the same, Lois Kibby, who recently passed away, she was the niece of Guy Kibby at that time. She was on the soap operas in New York for years. And we all, we did plays and things like that, and I knew right then and there, as soon as I got out of there I was going to the studio, and that was it. And it just so happened that Charles, when he married Lillian, her father was a director, and . . .

MOORE: What was her maiden name?

CAVALIERI: Uh, Peyton. His name was Stuart Peyton. He did the first

Tarzan picture. He came from England and they did, because, you know, Tarzan was Greystoke, the old lord. And he did the first 20 Thousand Leagues Under The Sea. So he was quite well known in those days. But I kind of grew up in the atmosphere that I was going to do exactly what he was going to do, and that was it. I started, actually I started as a messenger boy at Columbia, under Harry Cohen up there. That's where I started. And that was a fluke, because I put in an application there, and I put one in for a talent agency just to get a job.

I ended up pressing sweaters down at the Catalina Knitting Mills down in Los Angeles, and I got this call from Columbia if I wanted to come for a vacation, people were taking vacations, and could I come in and fill in. And I was there for two weeks, and he asked me to stay. So when I stayed, because I was taking everybody else's route. They'd sit there, and I'd just take their route and deliver it all, and they'd say, "What are you doing again?" And I'd say, "I've got more to deliver."

So I got to meet an awful lot of people, the department heads and so-called stars and the executives and the directors and writers and everything else. So I, I went from there into editing, and then I went from editing into production, and that's where I first started as an assistant director. And then I worked on pictures. Oh, gosh, I did the, I worked as an assistant director on The Three Stooges, on the old Blondies,

on The Boston Blackies, on some pictures with, Cornell Wilde's first picture which was Chopin.

MOORE: The Three Stooges, that's what I grew up on. ( she laughs )

CAVALIERI: Yeah. And I did the, I did the last serial that was done out of Columbia with Gilbert Roland. I can't remember who the actress was at the moment, which was the last fifteen chapter serial, which I worked on. And what happened is that after I left Columbia I went to Sam Goldwyn's studio with a friend of mine who became the executive in charge of production, and that's when he gave me chances to direct second units, and I was only, let's see, nineteen, twenty years old. So I started doing second units and chases and things like that, you know.

MOORE: What are second units?

CAVALIERI: Second units is where a camera, a director goes out and shoots the background stuff, the chases and the stunts and background shots which were to be put on a process screen that you can put the actor in front of and photograph them both together. Street shots, travel shots, anything like that. So I got a chance to start directing even when I was only twenty-one, twenty-two. And I did, oh, half a dozen Danny Kaye pictures. I worked on The Best Years of Our Lives. I worked on Red River with John Wayne and I did Paul Muni's Angel On My Shoulder. I

did, oh, gosh, Bishop's Wife with Carey Grant and Loretta Young. I did a lot of big pictures in those days as an assistant director and a second unit director. And then the strange thing happened is that a friend of the director I was working with, which was The Secret Life of Walter Mitty with Danny Kaye, who was very close with me, was visiting the set, and he was a VP at NBC, and they were just starting television in New York, and he came and talking to Norman McCloud, who was the director of the picture, and he said, "Jerry, you ought to talk to Mr. Blackman. He wants to get some people back to New York to direct." And so I said, "I'd love to." So, as soon as I finished the picture I had a meeting with him downtown in the hotel, and he says, "You're hired. Come to New York this weekend, and you've got a job as a director." So I went to work in 1947, I believe it was, to direct television shows, and my first picture was Howdy Doody to direct, because it was a learning, one camera, two cameras at the most. Because in those days, you know, it's different. You had to worry about cameras. You had to worry about television sets. You had to worry about fill-ins. You had more than one screen, unlike a motion picture camera. So I learned that, and then I went on to do shows like Show of Shows with Sid Cesar and Texaco with Milton Berle, and Philco Playhouse, and I did the old Arthur Murray. I started that show. I started Believe It Or Not show

with Robert Ripley. I did, I did school shows. I did cooking shows. I did art shows. I did, you name it, I did it. I had the Perry Como Show I did, the one hour musical show. I did . . .

MOORE: How old were you when you were doing this?

CAVALIERI: I was, uh, twenty-five and -six. And then I went and I did, I did the first show, The Admiral Show which was a revue show. I put Martin and Lewis on it. And I did, I created, with another friend of mine I created a show called Broadway Open House, which was at midnight, an ad lib variety show which became The Today Show, The Tonight Show and all the other shows, but that was the first one that went on. That was with Jerry Lester. We had Marge and Gower Champion. We had a band, Milton DeLugue is still playing around. He was the band leader. We had various guests, all names in those days. We had Jackie Gleason as a guest. We had everybody. In those days we were just starting out. So I did a lot of shows. I must have directed five hundred shows in those days. Then in '52 I came back to Hollywood. I wanted to get back into the picture business. But I had a problem, and that was they wanted people who had directed film shows and not live shows. What their reasoning was I couldn't understand, because what, I had a scene, for example, I directed the Arthur Murray show where I had a

fifteen minute drama show, and I had Helen Hayes in it, and I'm directing Helen Hayes, okay? I don't tell her what to do, naturally, but I, I'm directing the show, and I'm having conversations with her, and I get to Hollywood, I can't direct some unknown who doesn't know his beans from apples. They wouldn't give me a job. So I did second unit again for Universal, and then I said, "I have to get to work." So then I became what they call the unit manager and a second unit director. The unit manager is in charge of production for that particular show. So I did a lot of television shows, and I don't know how many, I can't begin to tell you. Chryslers, and Benny Gazzara's and, you know, you name it. John Forsythe, in those days, My Bachelor Father, and all of those things. And I worked on Kojak and I worked on Perry Mason's thing that we did, Ironside. I did a lot of, but then I would go between that and the features, and on the features I would go with this director who I admired who was Don Segal, and he used to put me on as a, he wanted me as his assistant beside me in charge of production, so we did the Clint Eastwood pictures like Cogan's Bluff, and Gauntlet and, oh, gosh, I can't tell you how many pictures I made. I made a half a dozen pictures with Clint. Then I made the last picture that John Wayne did, which was The Shootist.

MOORE: I'm trying to think of the name of, so . . .

CAVALIERI: But, anyway, that's where it all started.

MOORE: How old were you when your parents went to Hollywood, then?

CAVALIERI: We were in Hollywood when I was about sixteen, fifteen years old, I guess.

MOORE: And your parents went to work in Hollywood?

CAVALIERI: Yes. They were working at Paramount and at Western Costume at that time, too.

MOORE: Now, did your parents, as you look back on your life, what you've done, you came here, of course, under one years old, but do you think that your parents were satisfied or dissatisfied? What was their attitude about coming to this country?

CAVALIERI: Their attitude was very good, to be honest. They were grateful that they had the opportunity. My dad had told my mother that he was happy that she decided and insisted on that we come here because he would never have gotten anywhere in Italy, in this little small town, naturally, and neither would my mother. So they were quite grateful of coming here. They were happy with it, and they wanted to become Americans.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

MOORE: Your brother, in another interview, has mentioned that your father wanted to go back to Italy.

CAVALIERI: That's when he got his stroke. He was in an automobile accident, and my dad was a strange person in that he wanted to die where he was born.

MOORE: And why, do you know?

CAVALIERI: I don't know. It's kind of a strange thing. He insisted on going back to Italy to live the rest of his life there because, you know, he was crippled. He had to walk with a cane or a crutch. And he had this stroke, so his left side was kind of slightly paralyzed, and my mother wouldn't go. So he went back anyway. Well, what he found out was that it was noisy, it wasn't like it used to be, and he got disenchanted, so he came back again. But he went back again, and then came back again. So it didn't work out for him. We can't go back to what existed forty, fifty years ago. It's not the same any more. So that was his reasoning. He wanted to die where he was born.

MOORE: And did you keep in close contact with your mother, then, when she was . . .

CAVALIERI: Oh, yeah.

MOORE: Did she live with you?

CAVALIERI: I lived with her for a while there, and then my dad, we, he wanted the dry weather and dry heat, and he wanted the baths for his numbness, so he ended up in Lake Elsinore. We got a place for him down there to, you know, to have the heat and the baths for him. So he lived there, and we lived in Hollywood.

MOORE: What happened in the course of your life socially? Did you ever marry? Did you have children?

CAVALIERI: ( he sighs ) That's a good question. I was engaged to be married. I wanted to marry a girl in high school that I fell in love with, and what happened is that she was having a problem with her family. They separated, so she got married real quick, like, to somebody else, so that eliminated that. Then when I first started as an assistant director I had met a girl who I adored, and I wanted to marry her, and she was willing to get married.

MOORE: When was this?

CAVALIERI: '40, 1946. And what happened there is that for whatever known reason she changed her mind a couple of days before the wedding. That's when I decided to go back to New York for sure when I was working on this Danny Kaye picture. And I just had

to eliminate California for a while. I just didn't want to be around it any more. So that broke up, and that's when I went to New York definitely and decided. And then, I didn't get married until I was thirty-nine, and I met, through a blind date, this is my first wife, she was from Tennessee, and that didn't work out. We almost got a divorce the first year, and then I tried to keep it together, and we lived together for ten years, but it was very unhappy. And then I got a divorce, and then I went to Hong Kong to do a picture, and when I was in Hong Kong I was in need of somebody who spoke Chinese and spoke whatever, English, perfectly well. And so I auditioned a few people, and the production company that was furnishing all the equipment for us said they knew of a girl who was working for a film commercial company, so I interviewed her. Her name was Kiku, and she went to work for me, and she did everything. She just ran the whole place. I mean, she was just phenomenal. So I told her, when we got through with the picture, I said, "When you come to Hollywood, come to the States, I want you to work for me again. In fact," I says, "I want to marry you when you get there." And she said, "Well, I'll think about that," type of thing. So I came here, and I waited about a month, and I got a telegram one day saying she was coming here, wanted to stop over, and wanted to go to Canada, to Vancouver, to see her mother and father. I said, "Fine." She said, "But I have no

place to stay in California for the week I want to be there." So I rented her an apartment. I moved in the apartment, picked her up at the airport. She stayed one week, we talked about it, took her to LAX, she flew to Canada with her father and mother to go see for almost two months. I wrote and called every day. When we came back, I had to wait about a year before my divorce was final because I wasn't, it had taken me two-and-a-half years to get divorced. So we lived together for that year, and when it was final, the next day, we went and got married. We got married in a Buddhist temple, and we got married by proxy at Forest Lawn, you might say. We had our own vows, which we repeated in this little church. And then what happened was whenever we went to a location or a vacation, no matter where it was, whether it was Mexico, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, any place, we'd always go into some temple and get married again. So we kept on doing that till we, we'd do our vows. And we were married for almost eighteen years until she passed away. She was forty-three when she died. So I've been a bachelor now for five years now in April. Want to get married? ( they laugh )

MOORE: I'll have to think about it.

CAVALIERI: But, so that's about it, as far as the marriage goes. And we couldn't have any children. I couldn't have any children. I

didn't have any by my first wife. I was injured in the service, and so I couldn't have any children.

MOORE: But you're still working now.

CAVALIERI: Oh, yeah. Well, what I did, when she passed away I spent almost three years doing nothing, just traveling around getting bored to death, trying to figure out what to do with my life. I just missed her terribly. And so finally a friend of mine said, "Why don't I just get a picture for you to do and just represent me? Just, you don't do anything, just come." So I did that, and I did a picture for Rafaella DeLaurentis, which was Dino's daughter, and that got me back into the mood. So then I started, I met some other people, a writer, a casting director, an entertainment lawyer and a broker friend of mine. We decided to put a company together. So we worked on that for almost, it's been two years now. I finally just started the company. In fact, I'm waiting this winter to get a word. ( there is a background disturbance heard on the tape ) I'm waiting this weekend to get, it's not moving, is it? ( referring to the tape ) Does it go the other way?

MOORE: No, it's not moving. So you just started your own company.

CAVALIERI: I just started my own, okay?

MOORE: Yeah.

CAVALIERI: So I started it, and it's called Cavalier Films International, CFI, you might say, and we're just going to be completing our business deal I hope by this weekend where I get funds to make five pictures. I have a feature animation to make, which is supposed to start within a couple of weeks. I have another picture in Florida, which is a true story about a family in the Okefenokee swamps where he escapes to, and there is a, kind of a 1910 type of Western that we'll do in Spain. And then I have about thirty other scripts that we're talking about. So we formed this company, and I have some very good people with me, and as soon as I get the funds situated I'm going to set up offices, and all I'll do is produce. I won't be doing anything else.

MOORE: As you look back over your life now, I asked Charles, I know I've asked you a few times, do you have any regrets about being in this country?

CAVALIERI: No, gosh, no. No. I am so grateful to my parents for bringing us here, I can't begin to tell you. Charles would never be in the position he's in if he were still in Italy. I don't know what he would have done. I have no idea what I would have done. I might have been an Italian Mastriano, Mastricelli, or

whatever, but I probably would have escaped to Rome if that had been the case. Because I've always wanted, you know, I've always wanted to be in stage, motion pictures, television, whatever it is. Of course, there was no television in those days.

MOORE: I want to thank you on behalf of the Ellis Island Oral History Project, and we will give you a copy, actually, of this.

CAVALIERI: Okay. That would be fine.

MOORE: So this is Kate Moore signing off from Malibu, California on January 11, 1994.

CAVALIERI: Arrivederci.

MOORE: Arrivederci.