

KM-73/MOLLI

KM-73:

MARIA MADDALENA TERESA BURLANDO MOLLI
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ITALY (BORN U.S.), 1922
AGE 12

PASSAGE ON "THE DANTE ALIGHIERI"

MOORE: Good afternoon. This is Kate Moore for the National Park Service and today is the 20th of July, 1994 and I'm in Arnold, Pennsylvania at the home of Mary Molli who was born in the United States, went back to Italy at three years old and returned to the U.S. from Italy in 1922 when she was twelve years old. Why don't you begin by giving us your full name and date of birth, please.

MOLLI: All right. Maria Maddalena Teresa Burlando Molli. I was born March 15, 1910. In Salina, United States. Salina, Pennsylvania.

MOORE: Salina, Pennsylvania. Now, your name is Maria Maddalena, M-A-D-D-A-L-E-N-A. Teresa, T-E-R-E-S-

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A. Burlando, B-U-R-L-A-N-D-O, is that correct?

MOLLI: Yes.

MOORE: And Molli, M-O-L-L-I...

MOLLI: That's right.

MOORE: Alright, Now, you were born here and what was your what was the address where you were born here?

MOLLI: The only town that I knew was Salina. That's where my dad was a miner. And my mother, in those days they kept boarders and that's how they made their living. But when I was three years old usually in those days they saved, well, when they had a little bit of money saved they took it to Italy so that they could buy a piece of land for their family. So my dad took me and Mom over and that was in, when I was three. Well, when we got to Italy World War One was just coming out and my dad wasn't, he wasn't a citizen in the United States so he had to go to war for Italy.

MOORE: Ok, let's back up a bit. What was your father's name?

MOLLI: John Burlando.

MOORE: Burlando. And what was his profession?

MOLLI: Coal miner.

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MOORE: A coal miner.

MOLLI: Sure.

MOORE: And how would describe how he looked, your father?

MOLLI: Well, I don't know how. He wasn't too fat; he wasn't too thin. Just ordinary.

MOORE: And how tall was he about, would you say? Guess.

MOLLI: (addressing someone in the room) 5'7" something. He wasn't short but he wasn't too tall.

MOORE: How about eyes and hair?

MOLLI: Oh, gee, when he died he was old he had grey hair but before it probably was brownish.

MOORE: And how would you describe his personality and temperament?

MOLLI: Oh, very nice, very nice. He used to sing. He used to go and play cards. He used to like to drink wine. And he was happy all the time.

MOORE: (She laughs.) Okay, and how would, what was your mother's name?

MOLLI: Oh, my mother was more stern.

MOORE: And what was her name?

MOLLI: Margherita.

MOORE: Margherita.

MOLLI: That would be like Margaret. Well, in Italian it

would be M-A-R-G-H-E-R-I-T-A, yeah, Margherita.

MOORE: And what was her, what did she look like?

MOLLI: Well, she was probably, not really fat. She was tall. Big, but a little bit husky-like, you know. Like, oh, she was tough. She was tough.

MOORE: And Do you have a story about you father or mother that you associate with your childhood?

MOLLI: Well, my dad was more of a joker. My mother couldn't take it very much, you know. (they laugh) But, but somehow they got along pretty good.

MOORE: Okay, now, describe your house, before we get to what happened in Italy, what was your house like here?

MOLLI: Well, I don't remember it because I was only three years old.

MOORE: All right. Have you ever been back to that house?

MOLLI: No. I'm sorry. We're close by here and I never, well, it wouldn't be there now.

MOORE: And so when you went to Italy your father went in the army, you said. Where did you go...

MOLLI: World War One. Oh, well, we went to the home of, that was near Torino and the town is Levone

Canavese.

MOORE: Could you spell that?

MOLLI: L-E-V-O-N-E and Canavese is C-A-N-A-V-E-S-E.

MOORE: And just whose home was that?

MOLLI: That was my dad's home where his parents were, where his sisters were. And at that time, I think, his dad was still living, no, yeah, his dad was still living but his mother was dead.

MOORE: And what was the, what was that house like that you talked about, your grandparents'?

MOLLI: Well, it was made like, it had a balcony upstairs and then the kitchen places were downstairs and then the balcony upstairs where the bedrooms were. And then there was a courtyard and I remember across from the courtyard there was a stall where the cows were. You see, in those days they had cows. They brought them up to pasture in the daytime, you know, and they had a lot of grapes, a lot of wine grapes.

MOORE: What was your grandfather's or grandmother's profession? What were they...

MOLLI: They were farmers. They were just farmers. They just worked out in the fields.

MOORE: And were those fields nearby?

MOLLI: Oh, walking distance. No car in those days. The only thing they had, they had cows and the cows would go down the main street just like we do today.

MOORE: And the house was made of what? What was it constructed of?

MOLLI: Well, (addressing another person in the room) you remember, Louis?

LOUIS: They were mostly stucco.

MOORE: Stucco.

MOLLI: Stuccos, yes, they were mostly stucco.

MOORE: And how many rooms was in the house, do you remember?

MOLLI: Oh, well, there was three rooms upstairs and then at the end of those three rooms there was a kitchen there and that's where my mother had the kitchen and one of the bedrooms was ours and a kitchen and bedroom downstairs. There was another kitchen and a place where they all got to, dining rooms. Because they didn't have living rooms in those days but they had dining rooms because the dining rooms, they were always in the dining rooms drinking wine and celebrating . They were happy people. That's all.

MOORE: And how about, how was the house heated at that time, do you remember? You were a small child but...

MOLLI: I was, I don't remember the heating. Well, we didn't have much heating. I remember going to the place where the cow was and that, they had three or four cows, and they call it a 'stalla'. And there's where you, they used to have little lights over there and they crocheted or did things. There's where they went to, that's where they went when I was little in Italy. And maybe that's how the heat came.

MOORE: So, what about the lighting? Do you remember how they lit the house?

MOLLI: Candles.

MOORE: Candles?

MOLLI: Yes.

MOORE: And what about water? What was your water source?

MOLLI: Oh, they had, right in the middle of the garden there, they had one of these wells. And you just put your bucket in and the water came out and you'd have your little, what you sort of, you know, the little handle thing, that you sort of

got the water out of the bucket and fill your jugs.

MOORE: Was it a wooden handle or... How...

LOUIS: She's talking about a ladle.

MOLLI: The ladle.

MOORE: A ladle.

MOLLI: The ladle, yeah, the ladle.

MOORE: And what about plumbing? Where were the toilet facilities in that house?

MOLLI: Oh, gee, I don't imagine much for plumbing. I don't remember, they just...

MOORE: You were very tiny. What about, tell me about the kitchen. What do you remember about the kitchen?

MOLLI: The kitchen was a big stove, not electric or not gas, but wood or coal, did they have coal, Louis?

No, I don't think, all wood it was. Big pieces of wood.

LOUIS: Could be.

MOLLI: Yeah, big pieces of wood.

MOORE: So in the kitchen there was a big oven and did you have, where did you eat your meals?

MOLLI: Oh, they always had big dining rooms. Like they cooked in the kitchen, sometimes the kitchen was big enough they also had a big table. Otherwise

they had another room that would be the dining area.

MOORE: And who did the cooking in your family?

MOLLI: Oh, the family did, Probably my grandmother did.

MOORE: Did you help cook at all?

MOLLI: No, I was too little.

MOORE: And what was your favorite food in Italy, do you remember?

MOLLI: Risotto. That would be the Italian, oh, another food that was very good, this came as a celebration to everybody whenever New Year's or anything, was vagna cauda.

MOORE: How do you spell that?

MOLLI: Well, the right way to spell it, and it's in the northern part of Italy V-A-G-N-A, vagna. Cauda, C-A-U-D-A. And that's made with butter and oil and garlic, anchovies and then you dip vegetables in like green peppers, mushroom marinated, and different, don't you know what vagna cauda is? Oh, it's a celebration over there when it's New Year's Eve or something. You get around the table and you have, and you all dig in the same thing, you know. That's good because the garlic's going to fix you up, there's no

infection or anything in there. The garlic is going to clean you all up.

MOORE: (She laughs) And ah, okay, so what about religious life at that time?

MOLLI: Oh, we had a church. We always had a church and we went to church every Sunday.

MOORE: And how far was that...

MOLLI: In fact, my dad used to tell me when he was a young boy they used to get up at six o'clock to be the first one so he could serve Mass. Because, you know, the one who was there first gets to serve Mass. But when I went back, when I went back there wasn't, fewer people was going to church.

MOORE: Well, where was your house, your father's parents' house in relation to the town?

MOLLI: Was right in the middle of the town.

MOORE: Middle of town...

MOLLI: Oh, yes.

MOORE: And where was the church in relation to the house...

MOLLI: Right there, about maybe, half a block. It was right in the middle, you know they had the piazza. They have piazzas in Italy. And they

had the piazza there and whenever, once a year we used to celebrate San Giuliano. That was a, the name of the church was St. Julian. And of course they had, there was always a big celebration. They used to, they used to put out the dance floor; they used to come in from out of town and the orchestra and everything and everybody celebrated and made the best food. Another food that they made then in Northern Italy that was good was frutura dolce. That's made with farina and eggs and sugar and then you bread it and fry it.

MOORE: How do you spell that?

MOLLI: Oh, gosh, frutura, F-R-U-T-U-R-A, frutura. Dolce, dolce it would be, D-O-L-C-E. And that's one of the foods that they celebrated at the time of a, celebration of the town.

MOORE: And you said that, who was religious in your family? Who was, were you all religious?

MOLLI: Well, I went to a, when I was little first you went to, because I was there from three until twelve, first you went to the sister and there's where you learn you doctrine and there's where you learn your prayers and you learn the every,

and then from there you go to first grade, second grade. But first grade there is like fourth grade here because fifth grade was just like high school here when I went to school there.

MOORE: So...

MOLLI: And all my prayers there at that time was all in Latin. We didn't learn in Italian like now they have Italian but there it was all in Latin. And I can say my prayer in Latin like anything.

MOORE: Now, did your family, back to your house a little bit. Well, we'll talk about the religious things. Did you say grace before meals?

MOLLI: Sometimes. Right next door to our house there was a, what they call a zilo. A zilo is where the children go before they go to school when they're little. And there was nuns there. And I remember, you go in the morning and you're there for lunch and then by two o'clock you're out, two or three o'clock. They always made soup. That's the only thing you got but that soup was delicious. The nuns made you a big dish of soup for lunch, sure.

MOORE: Now, when you ate your meals at home did you, how did you eat them and how did you organize the

meals. Would you eat together or apart.

MOLLI: Oh, they always ate together, yes.

MOORE: And when did...

MOLLI: Around the table, a big pot would be in the middle of the table and then they dished up from that big pot to everybody in their dishes.

MOORE: And what was the main meal of the day, then, was there?

MOLLI: Well, well, different things, I guess. Like risotto would be more Sunday meal in the northern part of Italy and, of course, pasta. They used pasta, too. And soups of any kind. And, of course, veal, at that time, I don't know why, they served so much veal over there. Over here it seems to be so expensive but over there they had veal all the time.

MOORE: Now, did you say prayers before you went to bed?

MOLLI: Well, we were told to say prayers, I don't know if anybody said them or not but we were told.

(They laugh)

MOORE: And what was your favorite holiday, then?

MOLLI: Well, there's the big feast of the town, that's the favorite. Well, Christmas and New Year, probably, Christmas and New Year. New Year was

also, we used to go around, all the children especially, they made you a little bag and you went around to everybody and they gave you maybe ten cents or whatever money was, maybe ten cents or twenty cents. Not much money, but that was rich at that time. And that's how you celebrated the first of the year. And, of course, Christmas was the with the, they used to give you a little, and we thought it was wonderful, little wee sugar babies of the infant, made out of sugar, you know. That's what I got when I was little. It was wonderful.

MOORE: And did you give gifts at Christmas?

MOLLI: No. I can't remember ever.

MOORE: Did you decorate the house at all?

MOLLI: They just celebrated with a big dinner and a Mass and that was their celebration for them. But the other thing that they really enjoyed was the festival of San Giuliano, the town's, of course, in my mother's, now, this is my dad's town that I'm talking about. In my mother's town they celebrated, now wait a minute, in my mother's town they celebrated San Giuliano but in my dad's town they celebrated Saint Mary Magdalen. And

they come in two different times of the year. I think one came in August and the other came in July and that was the big thing and from town to town they would both go to the celebration because that was a big thing, a dance and you got new clothes for the time, you know, and there was accordion playing and everything. And they used to have like a, used to pick maybe two, two or four couples. Now the two couples would, they had special dressing and everything and special dresses and then the next year the two couples would draw up another and two couples would come there. A young girl, maybe she'd have to be about eighteen years old. Seventeen, eighteen years old. And they were called (?). Now, I don't even know how to spell that.

MOORE: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

MOLLI: No. I had one brother. Well, one brother was born before me and died and that was because whenever, I had an uncle that was killed in a mine here in Salina and worked also with dad. And when my mother had heard that the name Burlando was killed, she was eight months pregnant and she thought it was my Dad so she

lost the child. So I had one brother buried here in America before I was born. And, uh, then, then I was next then the other brother that died before we came to America. And he was about, oh maybe eighteen months.

MOORE: What was the cause of his death?

MOLLI: Pneumonia. Pneumonia.

MOORE: So basically you were the only child?

MOLLI: I'm the only child, yeah.

MOORE: And were you close particularly to any other, what about your mother's family? Where did they live?

MOLLI: In Barbania. Barbania Canavese That would be walking distance from Levone Canavese where my dad's town was. And I went to school in Levone but in Barbania my aunts were. In fact, that's where we go now more when we visit Italy. I still like...

MOORE: How do you spell Barbania?

MOLLI: B-A-R-B-A-N-I-A.

MOORE: And so were you close to your mother's family at all?

MOLLI: Oh, very close. Very close.

MOORE: Who would you say you were closest to in the

family as a child? I mean who was your closest...

MOLLI: I had two aunts. I had one, two aunts in my mother's side. They were always the closest to me. Well, my mother was the type that didn't get along too much with my dad's people so I couldn't get very close to them. But one of my aunts, my dad's sister, worked in Torino at Costo Lango all her life and when she retired and I was here already in America and she had never got married and this Costo Lango in Torino is all the donation, it's for the poor. And it seemed that they always got money. They had a box outside and everybody put money in and they sort of, that's how the, I even heard, we had our monsignor here in our church and he knew about Costo Lango in Torino and this aunt of mine worked there all her life. So when she died, when she split the money that she had, even though I was in America and they think you're in America you're loaded that you don't need anything, she had my share of the money and was, it was sent in Rome and I got it from the Italian consul in Pittsburgh and I think it was three

thousand dollars. Oh, I thought I was rich.
That was my, one of my dad's sisters. The one
that worked...

MOORE: That remembered you.

MOLLI: Yeah, remembered me.

MOORE: And so, um, now you went to school, you said.

MOLLI: Yes.

MOORE: And what do you remember of school as a child
there?

MOLLI: Well, school, you don't have a recess there. You
have to study. And you really have to study
because every member of the people, like
especially some of the boys wouldn't study, they
would make them kneel in walnut shells because
they didn't learn their lesson. You had to learn
when you went to school there.

MOORE: And were you ever punished?

MOLLI: No. I don't think. Well, I guess I could always
talk a lot, you know. So I was always given
things to do or something. Honest.

MOORE: All right, so, what was your favorite subject in
school?

MOLLI: Arithmetic.

MOORE: Arithmetic?

MOLLI: Yeah. When I come over here in this country and I was twelve and I went to the first grade. So, in the first grade, ABC, I knew them and I wrote all the letters and everything and all the numbers and everything, division, subtract. They just put it on the blackboard, and I just did all of it so I was in first grade three days. Then I went to second grade and I must have been there two weeks. Then third grade I was there probably three months. And then I went to fourth grade. So in one year I went from first to fourth.

MOORE: Let's go back to Italy, though. What was school like there? How many, where was the school in relation to your house?

MOLLI: Oh, just about, like I would say less than a block here. Everything was together. Everything in the town was all close to each other, close to everything.

MOORE: So, you um, now, you went through what grades there in Italy?

MOLLI: I started the fifth grade.

MOORE: Fifth grade. Um, now, at home, did your parents ever explain to you that you were in the States before? Did you remember that at all? Being in

the United States?

MOLLI: No.

MOORE: The original reason they went was what? Your father went to the United States...

MOLLI: To work. When he first came, well, he had um, someone who, you have to have someone who has to send for you. So, someone sent for him and there was no money there and I guess they came and then my mother, that's how she came, because she had a brother that was here working with my dad and that's how.

MOORE: OK, where's here, Pittsburgh?

MOLLI: No. Salina.

MOORE: Salina?

MOLLI: That's right.

MOORE: Salina is how, where is Salina?

MOLLI: Pennsylvania.

MOORE: Where?

MOLLI: It's close to here, isn't it?

LOUIS: About twenty minutes...

MOLLI: Twenty minutes from here...

MOORE: Twenty minutes drive from...

MOLLI: From Arnold.

MOORE: From Arnold where you are now. Okay, so your

father came with the intent of getting work.

MOLLI: That's right.

MOORE: But with the intent of going back?

MOLLI: No, then he met my mother through, my mother was here because she had a brother here working and there was no work in Italy so they thought, and over here all the work that they ever did, they cooked. Because they wanted borders, that's about the only thing. There was a lot of young fellows. They wasn't all married and they worked in a mine so they had borders and that's how they made their money.

MOORE: And so he went, why did he go back to Italy?

MOLLI: Well, because when they had a little bit of money they wanted to buy maybe a piece of land or something, wanted to see their family.

MOORE: Was he not to inherit any land from the family or anything?

MOLLI: I guess, but they didn't have much. His family didn't have much. That's why he was trying to help them out because they were still um, they were still at home with mother and dad and maybe sisters or cousins that needed help.

MOORE: And so he went back and he went, and then you

didn't see him for some years, is that it?

MOLLI: I didn't see him when he went to war for Italy, the First World War. He also, my dad also got medals from the First World War in Italy because he always told us a story about the war...

MOORE: And how was your life affected by the war?

MOLLI: Oh, I was little.

MOORE: Did you ever suffer any hunger at all?

MOLLI: No. Oh, in our town, like the people from down, that's World War One, Veneto, that would be down in, ah, what part of Italy would that be, Louis?

They were pilgrims, you know they didn't, the war was down there. Everybody went up toward the north. We were way up in the northern part of Italy and they all came up there and they would make shoes like out of cloth. They had a lot of cloth, they always had cloth. They would get this cloth and make soles and make shoes for the kids to wear and everything. And people would buy them. They were, they knew what to do and they had a lot of experience in doing things and work but they couldn't stay in their own town because of the war. So they all came up north and I remember them working and us buying things

from them. We were learned a lot of things from them because they were good seamstress.

MOORE: Now, you mentioned you had two cows, did you say?

MOLLI: Oh, they had three or four cows.

MOORE: Three or four cows. What other animals did you have?

MOLLI: No, just cows. And they went right down, when they took them up to pasture they went right down the middle of the street, the main street.

MOORE: And waht about no, no other chickens or anything?

MOLLI: Oh, yeah, they had chickens, yeah. They had chickens.

MOORE: Any other fowl?

MOLLI: No.

MOORE: How about any other animals?

MOLLI: No, just...

MOORE: Any horses?

MOLLI: No, just...

MOORE: Just cows...

MOLLI: Cows and chickens.

MOORE: Okay, um, okay, so you stayed in Italy for nine years, actually?

MOLLI: Yes.

MOORE: And why did you come back? Tell me what led up

to you coming back.

MOLLI: All right. Then, here's what happened. After the war, my dad was in a war four years. After the war he came back to America, got a job, started to work and while he got the job and was working, then he also had to buy furniture for us and find a house for us to live in. So after he found all that, then he sent for us. And that's why in 1922 we came to America and then I was twelve years old.

MOORE: Now, do you remember getting ready to go to America?

MOLLI: Oh, yeah, we thought, "Gee, we're going to America," and then we heard so much about America and everything, you know, like you say the land of milk and honey and everything, you know. We were all excited.

MOORE: Well, your mother had been here before. Did she speak any English?

MOLLI: Not very much. Not very much.

MOORE: And did you...

MOLLI: Because they were all Italian, the people that she cooked for and everything. The people in the house were all Italian. So...

MOORE: And um, did, um, you learn any Italian, any English before you came here?

MOLLI: No. I went to to first grade and I didn't know anything. I went first, second, well, the only thing they could recognized that I knew were all the letters of the alphabet and all the numbers and everything. And they would put problems on, and I would make them, write them up right away.

MOORE: Was your mother born in the United States or in Italy?

MOLLI: No, no, in Italy.

MOORE: In Italy, okay. Um, okay, so let's, you remember getting ready and you thought that the United States was a great place to go...

MOLLI: Oh, yes. The only thing, I had a brother and then he was, got sick just before we left and we had to leave him in Italy and he was still in our passport. His picture was in our passport, too, because...

MOORE: But you left him behind?

MOLLI: Yeah, we had to. We had the funeral and everything we had to leave behind, you know, because otherwise we'd lose out by coming and our

tickets were paid and my dad was waiting for us.

MOORE: So, were you able to attend his funeral?

MOLLI: Oh, yes. Yes, we did everything over there. It was two weeks before we were to leave. And we left from Genoa.

MOORE: Do you remember your grandparents' reaction to you going to the Untied States?

MOLLI: Well, their reaction was pretty good because they thought we were coming with my dad, you know, my dad was over here already so they were happy.

MOORE: And what happened? What did you pack in order to come to the Untied States? Do you remember packing and getting ready?

MOLLI: I don't remember, my mother did the packing. But we had two big trunks.

MOORE: What was in those trunks?

MOLLI: The, sometimes they even take utensils, like cooking utensils some. They think they don't have any or something, you know, something special for them. Of course, a lot of sheets and pillow cases, embroidered stuff, all cutwork because that's what they did over there. I learned to do cutwork when I was twelve years old. The nuns showed us that when we went to

school, you know, we always have to go to the nuns, oh, once a week or so.

MOORE: And what did you take special?

MOLLI: You mean in school?

MOORE: No, over here to the United States. Did you pack anything yourself?

MOLLI: Well, I don't remember. I do remember I had a big hat with a bunch of cherries on it and when I left there everyone was kidding me and said that by the time I get to the United States the cherries are going to be ripe because they were green. (Miss Moore laughs) I remember the hat. That's all I remember, you know.

MOORE: Did you bring any special photos or...

MOLLI: Oh, yeah, of the family. All the pictures of the family. And prayer books, I still have prayer books from Italy from when I had my stuff. I still have some books from school.

MOORE: How about any of the family, any silver, any silverware, anything like that, candlesticks or anything like that?

MOLLI: No, no, no, they wouldn't have anything rich like that at that time.

MOORE: Okay, so, you came over with two big trunks. How

did you get to the United States. Tell me the trip. Walk me through it.

MOLLI: Okay, first we went to Genoa.

MOORE: And how did you get there?

MOLLI: Oh, let me see. They had a bus, I think from Torino. We went to Torino and from Torino they took us to Genoa.

MOORE: How did you get to Torino?

MOLLI: From our town there was a bus. It wasn't a big bus. It was just like a big automobile. Let's put it that way. And we got to Torino and from there to Genoa. And then we went to the ship and...

MOORE: What did you, did you have to stay overnight in the, in Genoa?

MOLLI: No, we went right to the ship and then the ship...

MOORE: And what did the ship look like?

MOLLI: Well, I had never seen a ship before so I guess it looked pretty big.

MOORE: Had you seen the ocean before?

MOLLI: Nope, no. Twelve years old, you're excited, you know...

MOORE: But you came over before at three, you just

didn't remember.

MOLLI: I didn't remember, no, no. I was too little then.

MOORE: Okay, so, now, anything happen on the train trip at all?

MOLLI: No.

MOORE: And so you got in the boat. Now, what was the name of the boat?

MOLLI: Dante Alighieri.

MOORE: Dante Alighieri. Okay. And that's spelled um...
D-A-N-T-E A-L-L-I-G-H-I-E-R-I [sic], you have here.

MOLLI: That's right.

MOORE: All right. Now, that left...

MOLLI: It left Genoa on the 29th of April, 1922.

MOORE: And what kind of accomodations did you have?

MOLLI: Well, see, here's another thing. There was first, second and third. But then we didn't have much money, like I said my dad had to come to over here and find work and get a house for us and furniture and everything for us, so we came third class. And I remember that they gave us a bag with the dishes and the dishes were like, uh, tin like, you know. And you wash your own dishes

put them back in the bag and you got the bag the next time, you know. But the food was good. We were in third class. And then in the daytime you could travel all over the ship and I had a good time because there was even boys like me, maybe fourteen years old or something, and there was music. There was always somebody playing. Italian people are real happy people, so the accordion or something, so we even did some dancing on the ship. I remember on night I put my hair up because I wanted to show off. Twelve years old, I wanted to look nice for these boys, you know. And the next morning my mother saw me. She took, she made me take them all out and wet my hair. She didn't want me to, because she didn't want me to go after the boys. I was twelve years old. (?) But I just liked to dance, that's all! (Miss Moore laughs)

MOORE: Okay, so...

MOLLI: And I danced 'til... until I got married.

MOORE: And then you stopped?

MOLLI: I went to all the big band dances and everything three and four times a week. The big band sound, sure.

MOORE: And so on the boat, um, you...

MOLLI: The food was pretty good.

MOORE: Did you ever eat anything you had never seen before?

MOLLI: No, I don't remember. Oh, we ate everything.

MOORE: And how were you, your bed situation. You said you were in third class but what does that mean?

MOLLI: They were like first and second, one on top of the other, you know?

MOORE: Bunk beds?

MOLLI: Yes. And I was on the top. My mother was on the bottom.

MOORE: Did you have your own cabin?

MOLLI: No. There was about, maybe there was four bunkbeds in it like two and two in each one and then, ah, we couldn't see the other one because there was a something in between there, like a wall or something but that's the way they were in third class, in third class.

MOORE: And so who was in your room?

MOLLI: My mother was sleeping down and I was up and then my aunt was there and another lady that we met on the boat. I don't remember her name.

MOORE: So your aunt was traveling with you?

KM-73/MOLLI

MOLLI: My aunt and uncle. My uncle had come to Italy to get married and so, but they wasn't able to come to the United States right away so they were going to Canada.

MOORE: I see.

MOLLI: And then from Canada, a couple years after working in Canada they came over to the United States. So she was with us and another lady...

MOORE: What was her name, your aunt?

MOLLI: Ahm, Rose Bossetto.

MOORE: Bossetto is spelled...

MOLLI: B-O-S-S-E-T-T-O. That was my mother's maiden name. Because she was married to my uncle.

MOORE: Okay, so your mother's maiden name was Bossetto?

MOLLI: Okay.

MOORE: Um. Okay, um...

MOLLI: And we were two weeks. Two weeks on Dante Alighieri coming over. And we prayed and we prayed so that we could see land, you know.

MOORE: Right, we'll take a little break. Hold on here for a second for the tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

MOORE: Um, now you said that you prayed and prayed on the boat. Why?

MOLLI: So we could see land. It was all that water and, and you know two weeks is a long time. One week and after the one week we just waited and waited and some of the ladies, elderly [sic] ladies especially, they would cry and everything, you know, wondering if we were ever going to get to America.

MOORE: Did you ever see anyone sick? Was there anyone sick on the...

MOLLI: Oh, some of them got seasick.

MOORE: Did you or your mother?

MOLLI: No, I didn't.

MOORE: Your aunt?

MOLLI: My mother got sick a little bit but she had to stay inside, you know, in bed or something.

MOORE: And did, any other anecdotes about the voyage that you remember?

MOLLI: I know I remember I had a nice time.

MOORE: What were you wearing at that time? What did you take with you?

MOLLI: Dresses, dresses. Just dresses. We wore no pants

in those days.

MOORE: Um, now you mentioned that there was dancing on the boat.

MOLLI: Yes. There was people playing accordion and, you know, Italy is a place where music is everything. Even if you don't know how to sing, they sing in Italy, you know. Everybody's joyful and everything and they go out in the fields and you hear them singing early in the morning, especially when they're going out to the grapes, you know, the vineyards. And everybody was singing and dancing and they, I guess people took accordion with them because there was a lot of accordion on...

MOORE: Do you remember any songs from that time? You said that when you were twelve you remembered a song with chimneys.

MOLLI: Oh, there was a lot. How about "Spazzacamino."

MOORE: Yeah, can you remember that song?

MOLLI: For sure.

MOORE: You want to sing a little bit for us?

MOLLI: You sure?

MOORE: Yeah.

MOLLI: Okay. (She sings in Italian)

MOORE: (She laughs) And what do the words say?

MOLLI: It says up and down a street. A spazzacamino is a chimney cleaner and I guess he came once in a while to clean the chimneys. So, up and down the street the spazzacamino would go to clean the chimney and that's it. But there's, it's really long. You wouldn't really want to hear the end of it.

MOORE: (She laughs) And, and they sang songs on the boat, too?

MOLLI: Oh, yeah, they sang like "O Sole Mio" and and they sang "Dona Sorrento" and all those Italian songs. Everybody was singing. That's one thing about the Italians, whether they know how to sing or not, everybody sings. Sure.

MOORE: Now, do you remember about the, seeing land for the first time?

MOLLI: Oh, when we saw land. That morning everybody, everybody just hollered. We all got on board. Some were crying. And when we saw the Statue of Liberty, ahh, everybody was so happy. Some were crying and some were thanking God. Really.

MOORE: Did you know what the Statue of Liberty was at that time?

MOLLI: Well, they made you study it in school, you know.

La Statua della Liberta, that's what they call it in Italian. And you study all this in school.

MOORE: And what was it like? What was the atmosphere on the boat then?

MOLLI: Oh, everybody was happy, everybody was happy, sure. And then, and then we got to Ellis Island. Well, my aunt and my uncle said to them, "We're going to Canada." They were let through right away. But here were, my mother and I got there and it seems that my bap-, my baptism was written in Italian instead of America and my mother's marriage certificate was written in Italian instead of America and my birth certificate was written in Italian. So they thought that maybe we were trying to put something over and so they wouldn't let us through. So the, we were there three days and that's when...

MOORE: How did you get from the boat to Ellis Island, do you remember?

MOLLI: They transferred us, you know, in two aisles, like this, you know. From the boat...

MOORE: Did you go on another little boat?

MOLLI: Did we go on a, I think so, yeah. They made two

or three trips in little boats.

MOORE: Yeah. And so what was it like on Ellis Island at that time? How would you describe coming in? What was it like?

MOLLI: Well, we didn't know. We didn't know. And it, we just went in through a passage and then we went to this big office but it was, Ellis Island was like a great big room. Ah, where we went to bed, there's one thing I remember. In the evening they give you crackers and milk and I never had crackers in Italy. They give you, I was like, 'How about that!' And then they show you the movies. I never saw movies in Italy! And the movies were Mickey Mouse. I never saw Mickey Mouse in Italy. So that was really nice, you know. But then when, well when we wasn't let, when my aunt and uncle had left and we were still there then we started to worry and praying. We was afraid maybe they were going to send us back to Italy because they thought the papers wasn't right. So my dad had to come from Pennsylvania here to Ellis Island with the right papers so we could come. We were let go. And in the night they would give you, this was in Ellis Island.

In the night they would give you two big blankets, one for the bottom and one for the top to cover you. And, ah, you were like in cages when you went to sleep there, you know. The bed was there and you had one blanket for the bottom and you were locked in. You know, that's the way it was at that time...

MOORE: And you were, you said you were frightened.

MOLLI: Yeah, we were frightened, maybe they were going to send us back to Italy.

MOORE: Did anyone interp, did you speak any English here...

MOLLI: Oh, no.

MOORE: Did anyone interpret for you in Italian what was going on?

MOLLI: Well, I guess there was interpreter. My mother would talk all, most of the time, you know, because a twelve year old girl, you know.

MOORE: And did she, did they understand what the problem was? Did she understand?

MOLLI: I, I guess because that's how they sent for my dad.

MOORE: Did they give you a physical examination at all?
A medical examination?

MOLLI: I think they did. I think they did to see if you had any disease or something.

MOORE: Now, do you remember that at all?

MOLLI: Just vaguely.

MOORE: Yeah.

MOLLI: Just vaguely.

MOORE: And, um, do you remember waiting?

MOLLI: Ahh, all the time waiting and praying...

MOORE: Where did you wait?

MOLLI: In this big room. It, it was a big...

MOORE: In the big room and how did you wait? Were there places to sit?

MOLLI: Yeah, there was benches. There was benches to sit and they had like the, um, the ladies rooms were just great big ones. No private ones, just big ones.

MOORE: And did you, in this room, how many people were in that room? The big room.

MOLLI: Oh, from all countries. Not only from Italy, from different countries. They all had to wait there to see whether they were going to be able to leave and go to their destination.

MOORE: Did you at any time see anyone or hear of anyone rejected?

MOLLI: Well, it seemed that, ah, my mother used to say that so and so, because we saw people crying at different times. They were sent back for one reason or another. That's why we were afraid. And after, you know, my, when my aunt and uncle left and we were left there there was only a couple of other people that we knew that had come with us with the boat that were still there. All the others had gone through. They had gone on.
(Off-mike cough)

MOORE: So, um, were the, were the officials... How were they, how did they treat you? How did the people treat you there?

MOLLI: Oh, I guess they treated you pretty good, you know. Of course, I didn't know how to talk. I couldn't...

MOORE: Okay, so you stayed there all...

MOLLI: And some of them talked in Italian but not too many. You know, now they have more people speaking different languages than they had in those times, in those days.

MOORE: Now, um, you stayed there how many days?

MOLLI: Three days.

MOORE: Three days. And you father came from Salina?

MOLLI: From yes, no. Um, when I was born we was in Salina but when he came back the second time he got work in near Altoona, in Morrisdale, Pennsylvania near Barnesboro, Spangler, that's where he was working in the mine and that's where he got a house for us from people that were leaving and were going to Italy and staying there. And he got furniture for us to use.

MOORE: So he came all the way. How did he get there, to Ellis Island?

MOLLI: Train.

MOORE: Train.

MOLLI: Train.

MOORE: And he, he sorted it all out?

MOLLI: He took a bit, he talked a little bit of English but he brought the right papers. Because there was a lawyer that he went to and gave him the right papers so when they saw that, and I remember when he, like the place where you first came in it was like a judge that you see in courtrooms. They're elevated up, you know, they were up there and he first came in and I recognized him, you know, I knew him because I was with him until he came to America after the

war and I hollered his name. I called his name, "Papa, Papa," you know, and I remember that he put his hand in his pocket and he gave me a Lifesaver. A package of Lifesavers, you know. And even, I guess even the judges and everybody that was up there they could see that he was my dad, you know. I ran to him, because I was a kid, you know, they couldn't stop me. I just ran to him. And after that they told me to get back and I'd get back where my mother was. And then after that I guess we were ready to leave.

MOORE: Now going, what do you remember going through Pennsylv-, the trip through Pennsylvania and train? Do you remember anything?

MOLLI: No, just by train and, and this was a mining camp that we went to. All the houses there are already all gone. That was in 1922. The houses aren't there.

MOORE: And what are...

MOLLI: The school that I went to there isn't there no more.

MOORE: Well, what was the mining camp like, then, that you went to? Describe a mining camp in the 20's.

MOLLI: Well, there were houses. There was people in

houses and everybody had boarders. My mother, she first came, we wasn't there maybe a month or so that she already had three boarders because that's how you made a little extra money. And those boarders, they had no place to go because they weren't married. They were all young fellas maybe in their thirties or fourties but they were all working in the mines.

MOORE: And what nationalities were these people?

MOLLI: All Italians.

MOORE: All Italian.

MOLLI: All Italians, yes.

MOORE: And so what about the house? What type of house did you live in?

MOLLI: It was wood, wooden house, wasn't it Louis?
Wood.

LOUIS: All wood.

MOLLI: All wood. And all they had was a, a kitchen and a big dining room. And then they had a, a big stove, what do you call the belly stove the big ones, and that gave you heat for the dining area, the kitchen where you cooked but no other heat in there at all. I remember sleeping where the snow was in your windowsill. Even though your windows

were down the snow was still there because they wasn't sealed that good, those houses. But you put a lot of clothes on. My mother brought me the first coat that I ever got and I was twelve years old. The only thing you could shop was from Sears and Roebuck. So she brought me a coat and she thought well, I'd have to wear it quite a few times. I was only twelve. She got me size eighteen and so, but it made a big hem and the, there was that little bit of fur on the bottom here, not that it was so nice. My mother was a seamstress, she could, you know, the hem was about that big and she rolled up the sleeves and I wore that coat for two or three years. It kept me warm because all the extra material was there and you need it, you know. I was only twelve. But that's how they did things those days. They order from the catalog. They didn't really know what size to take. They didn't know the sizes. They just came from Italy, they didn't know, you know, what it meant.

MOORE: (Addressing louis who is alos present,) That's where you met...

LOUIS: I was born there.

MOLLI: He was born there in that same town.

MOORE: So, that's where your husband was born. So, now wait a minute, you're twelve years old and you got to this house. Did it have indoor toilets or outdoor toilets?

MOLLI: Out, outside. Outside.

MOORE: Outside?

MOLLI: Oh, yes.

MOORE: How was it lit?

MOLLI: It was lit, nothing, nothing in the dark. And then whenever you hang clothes, when you washed, oh, this is another thing that they did in those days. You washed in this, no washing machine. You washed downstairs. They had two big tubs. Well, and you had a boiler. And on a stand there you boiled all your clothes because you, that was disinfecting the clothes. And you washed them first, boiled them, rinsed them and hang them out. And in the winter time they were just stiff as a board. Hanging up on the line, you know. But there was no other way to hang clothes. Sure...

MOORE: And what about taking a bath?

MOLLI: Oh, we had a tub, you know the round tubs, in the

basement. And then we'd take our time with a, go down with a kettle of hot water, you know, and some cold water and that's how you take a bath. And even those miners. I don't know how they would get clean just in a small tub like this that were always, you know, with coal dust and everything on them. That's the way they took a bath. Every day when they'd come home because they were always coal dust on them, you know, sure.

MOORE: And how was life for your father at that time? And did your mother...

MOLLI: Oh, oh they were, it was good. They used to play, they used to, that was the happy days for my mother... We were there and they drank wine and they played briscola, these Italian games and they sang Italian songs. They had accordion there. On Saturday and Sunday they would play the accordion. Everybody's happy. Sure. They had a dancehall where they danced all these Italian polkas and stuff, you know. Sure. They had a good time all the time.

MOORE: And what about the work conditions for your father?

MOLLI: Oh, they worked in the mines. They were pretty good until, well, when I went to school, like I went to school only two years, thirteen, fourteen. When I was fifteen, they believed in those days that when you're fifteen you have to go to work not go to school. And so my uncle, the one that came with us, was living down here in Pennsylvania, down here in what do you call it, it was a crossroad of Tarentum or something and he had bought a store. So he needed me to help in the store. So I got out of school and even the principal of the school had said that since I knew Italian and American so good I could probably work in a bank as an interpreter or something because at those times the Italian was good and the American, I was learning it good, but I couldn't do that because when you were fifteen you had to go to work and help, you know.

MOORE: But what, let me go back to your first year of school when you went there. Did anybody ever make fun of you for being Italian?

MOLLI: Oh, no. They were, most of them were Italian and Polish. And Polish, they were the same people

that like us they came from Poland over there,
you know. And Italians...

MOORE: Were the teachers nice to you?

MOLLI: Oh, yes, they were nice. In fact, when I was
fifteen and I was taken out of school the
principal come up and tried to talk to my mother
and dad to let me be in school. But they
couldn't hear that. They thought they needed the
money because my uncle needed me to work, you
know. And after working two years for my uncle,
then I was only sixteen years old and the A&P, I
worked thirteen years for the A&P. And they
wanted you to be eighteen but I was pretty big so
I lied and I said I was eighteen because you
couldn't get work in those days. That was about,
maybe 1925, 1926. And so then I, and then after
that when the mine was on strike my mother and
dad came down here. And we got a place down here
and I worked and then my dad worked in a mine in
Barkey here close by.

MOORE: When your parents look back on their life here
how did they, how did they view their original
decision to come here? Was it a good one?

MOLLI: You mean, to come to America?

MOORE: Yes.

MOLLI: Oh, yeah, because there was nothing in their town. And they had little...

MOORE: Did they ever want to go, go back?

MOLLI: They didn't have much land. That's why they came here and they wanted to help to go back and buy another piece of land so they, their family would be better with more land they could live better with vegetables and things that they could sell.

MOORE: Did your mother ever learn English properly?

MOLLI: A little bit.

MOORE: A little bit.

MOLLI: My dad knew more.

MOORE: Were they in essence...

MOLLI: Of course, my mother got her citizen papers, though. I don't know how she learned those questions but she did somehow. Yeah, she got her citizen papers. She was so happy. She went to, she went to a, there was an Italian girl that was speaking English, a teacher like, you know, she had just come from Italy. She was a teacher. And so she learned her a few things to say and she was so happy when she got her citizen papers.

MOORE: But basically, was their social life in an Italian community? Your parents'?

MOLLI: You mean it, where I went to school back in ah...

MOORE: Yeah, did your parents basically associate with other Italians?

MOLLI: Oh, yeah, sure. They all associated together. All the Italians in our town knew each other.

MOORE: So you heard Italian at home?

MOLLI: Yes. Nothing else.

MOORE: And how did you meet your husband?

MOLLI: Well, my husband was in the same town that I went to school but he was younger than me. I remember the family. I remember his mother and dad because I mostly remembered his mother because on Christmas she always had a Christmas tree. A lot of those people didn't have Christmas trees. But under the Christmas tree she always had baby Jesus. That's how I remember his mother, on every Christmas. And everybody knew each other, everybody, because all the Italians knew each other. They all talked to each other. They all went to each other's house maybe for coffee. Not coffee, glass of wine, more, you know.

MOORE: So when did you finally start getting interested in this (unclear)?

MOLLI: Well, after I worked in the A&P for about ten years, no more, twelve years. In 1938 one of my girlfriends and I went to school from the town there, her dad had died. And see, there was no way that I could get up there but a friend of ours had a car and he took me up. I wanted to spend a few days, we got a week's vacation from the A&P for every summer. So, I wanted to go up to visit my girlfriend because her dad had just passed away. So when I went up there my husband when he was fifteen years old he had to go to work, too. And he started out in New York washing dishes. And then come back, you know, and so then that's how he learned to be a cook. He cooked all his life. And so then he was home of vacation and I was home with my girlfriend we met. We met in 1938, he gave me the ring on Christmas in 1938 and we were married in '39.

MOORE: And how old were you then?

MOLLI: Oh, I was already twenty-six or something, right?

LOUIS: Twenty-nine.

MOLLI: Sure. That's why in between there I went to a

lot of dances.

MOORE: And did your husband like to dance, too?

MOLLI: No. I married a fisherman and a hunter. He don't care, he didn't care much for dancing but I did my dancing when I was younger. And I had a lot of friends. We went to the big band dances.

Three or four dances a week because we knew where all the big bands were around here, you know. All around the states here in Pittsburgh, Greensburg and all around.

MOORE: And did you have children?

MOLLI: Yeah, three children.

MOORE: When were they born?

MOLLI: One was born in '41 and the others in '43. We were married in '39. So, and they're doing real good.

MOORE: And um, and what do they do?

MOLLI: Right now I have seven grandchildren. Seven grandchildren. And the youngest one is in the second year of college. The others are all graduated with degrees.

MOORE: Oh. Now, when you look back, you came, too, you know, at twelve year old, well, acutally twice you were, you were in the States but how do you,

what do you think about your parents' ideas of coming to the States? How do you...

MOLLI: I think it's the best thing they ever did because there was nothing in Italy for them. Nothing at all. They didn't have enough for ground to work and to make a living. So it was really, but what, what surprises is how they got along here and worked and everything without knowing the language, you know. And yet, they got by. With their work and somehow they learned a little word here and there and some friends that were here that knew a little bit more helped out. That's how they got together.

MOORE: Did they intend to go back before they died?

MOLLI: No.

MOORE: To live.

MOLLI: No. This was their home. This was their home.

MOORE: And have you ever thought about going back to live?

MOLLI: No, just to, just to visit. I have cousins over there yet.

MOORE: And when you go back to visit what is your impression over there?

MOLLI: Oh, now it's all together, it's almost like over

here. They wear the clothes like they do here and, the only thing they don't have football over there. (Louis laughs off mike) They don't have football and...

MOORE: American...

MOLLI: Baseball. They only have that running, you know...

MOORE: Soccer?

MOLLI: Soccer, sure.

MOORE: And what, (she laughs) now, your children, did you speak Italian, your husband was Italian, he was born in Italy, right?

MOLLI: No, my husband wasn't, he was born here.

MOORE: Oh, he was born here. His parents were Italian.

MOLLI: Yeah, they talked Italian real good. His mother was really nice.

MOORE: So did you talk Italian to your husband at home?

MOLLI: Not very much. Only the dialect that we spoke. He knew our dialect because he lived among all our friends up there. They were from the same part that we were and once in a while he'd come out with a few words in Italian and we'd get a big kick out of it.

MOORE: So to your children what did you speak?

MOLLI: Oh, English, all the time. My children could understand maybe a little bit of Italian but they all, my son I don't think would remember very much.

MOORE: So when you think of yourself as a nationality what do you think of yourself as identity-wise?

MOLLI: Well, right here. Where I'm at right now. United States of America.

MOORE: You think of yourself as American?

MOLLI: Sure, sure.

MOORE: Do your children identify with being Italian?

MOLLI: No, they, well, they say they're Italian, I mean they, they're, they recognize that that's where we came from, you know, but they're American. Sure.

MOORE: And um..

MOLLI: They've got the schooling here and they work here and they appreciate everything that they have here. My daughter has a beautiful home. My son is in St. Louis. He works for, he's going to be maybe 30 years working as a civilian for the airforce.

MOORE: What does the Statue of Liberty now mean to you

in retrospect in your life?

MOLLI: When I see it I just feel it's the light of the world, like when we came and we saw it for the first time.

MOORE: And you still feel that now?

MOLLI: Right.

MOORE: Um, I'd like to thank you on behalf of Ellis Island for helping us and telling us your life story and we'll send a copy of this, as well.

MOLLI: Thank you very much.

MOORE: This is July 20th, 1994 in Arnold, Penn...

MOLLI: Pennsylvania...

MOORE: Pennsylvania, right. I'm signing off for the Ellis Island Oral History Project.