Three Generations of Italians: Interview with Anna Arcade by Maureen Sweeney

Anna Arcade

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COVER SHEET FOR INTERVIEWS

NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: Anna Arcade

INTERVIEWER: Maureen Sweeney

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 5/79

SUBJECTS COVERED
Interview of a First Generation Italian

Italian's in Rhode Island

Anna Arcade

by

Maureen Sweeney

May 1979

Dr. Carmela Santoro

G.S. 361
I. The Old Country

Interviewer: What part of Italy were you born in?
Interviewee: I was born in Naples, Italy.

Interviewer: How long did you live there?
Interviewee: I lived there for seventeen years.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little about Italy or what the country was like where you lived?
Interviewee: Well, Naples is a big city, almost more or less like New York. It's a good size city.

Interviewer: What was it like growing up in Naples?
Interviewee: We didn't do much. We went to school. We enjoyed life, we were very young and we didn't know too much about life yet.

Interviewer: What kind of work did your father do in Italy?
Interviewee: My father, he worked for the railroads.

Interviewer: Did your mother ever work in Italy?
Interviewee: No, she never worked.

Interviewer: Why did you leave Italy?
Interviewee: I fell in love and I got married.

Interviewer: Did you come to America alone?
Interviewee: Yes I came to America alone.
II. Emigration

Interviewer: What year did you leave Italy to come to this country?

Interviewee: I came to this country in 1947.

Interviewer: When did you land in America?

Interviewee: June 13, 1947.

Interviewer: Where did you first land when you came to America?

Interviewee: I landed in New York city.

Interviewer: How did you get to this country?

Interviewee: By boat.

Interviewer: When you came to America what was your destination?

Interviewee: I wanted to come to Providence to live.

Interviewer: Did you reach the destination you had set out for from Italy?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: How did you feel about the trip over here? What was the boat ride like?

Interviewee: The boat was nice, but I was young and scared because I was alone. I didn't know too much, or what I should expect when I arrived in America.

Interviewer: Was the trip over here an emotional or physical strain on you?
Interviewee: No. It should have been an emotional trip but I was so young and afraid that I didn't think too much about the trip.

Interviewer: Did you speak any English when you came over on the boat?

Interviewee: No, not what so ever.

Interviewer: Once you landed in America did you feel as though you would remain here?

Interviewee: Yes. I always wanted to come to America and once I got here I knew I would stay here.

Interviewer: What did you want to do when you came to America? Did you have any goals?

Interviewee: I wanted to get married and to raise a family.

Interviewer: Did you want to come to America?

Interviewee: Oh yes.

Interviewer: Did you ever want to go back to Italy once you came to America?

Interviewee: I want to go back to Naples to visit my family. It was a long time since I'd seen them. I missed them very much. We were close and it was hard when I left.

Interviewer: Were you married when you came to America?

Interviewee: No.
Interviewer: Did you get married in this country?

Interviewee: Yes I did. I married my sweet and wonderful husband in America. His name is Steven.

Interviewer: Is your husband Italian?

Interviewee: Yes my husband is an Italian.

Interviewer: Is your husband originally from Italy?

Interviewee: No, he is not from Italy.

Interviewer: Was your husband born in America?

Interviewee: Yes he was born in the United States of America. He was born in the 1920's early 1930's.

Interviewer: All in All are you satisfied that you stayed in this country?

Interviewee: Yes I am very very very satisfied that I stayed in America. I now have a terrific husband and three wonderful children. I have one son and two gorgeous daughters.

III. Early Settlement in American

Interviewer: When you first came to America where did you live?

Interviewee: Providence.

Interviewer: What was your house like when you came to this country?

Interviewee: I lived with my aunt. She lived near Providence College. A one family house it was cute I thought.
Interviewee: I was used to living in big buildings in Italy, they were high rise buildings. I thought this house was cute.

Interviewer: How many people lived in the house with you?

Interviewee: My aunt, my uncle, their daughter, and myself. Four people lived in the house.

Interviewer: Did any of your brother or sisters live in the house at your aunts?

Interviewee: No they all lived in Italy in the high rise building.

Interviewer: Were the people living in the house your relatives?

Interviewee: Yes they were all relatives.

Interviewer: Was there more than one family living in your aunts house?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: What was it like growing up in the house?

Interviewee: Well I really didn't grow up in that house in America. I grew up in Italy. I was older in the house in America, but it was pleasant.

Interviewer: What was the neighborhood like, was it big, small, a lot of people?

Interviewee: No, it wasn't to big. To me it was small because I was used to Naples the big city. My neighborhood in America was small and there weren't to many people.
Interviewer: Were there many people from Italy or people who were Italian?

Interviewee: Yes, there were a lot of Italian's but there were also a lot of other people.

Interviewer: What were the attitudes of the people in your neighborhood towards Italians?

Interviewee: The people were very friendly towards all of us in neighborhood.

Interviewer: Did you feel there were any conflicts in your neighborhood to the Italian family?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Were the any types of prejudice towards the Italian family in the neighborhood?

Interviewee: No I don't think so. There is always some type of prejudice around. But I don' think the was any directed on the Italians in particular.

Interviewer: Did you ever live on federal hill?

Interviewee: Yes, I lived there for a while.

Interviewer: When did you leave federal hill?

Interviewee: I left federal hill in 1963

Interviewer: Where did you move to when you left federal hill?

Interviewee: Over here in Cranston, Rhode Island.

Interviewer: Have you ever gone back to Italy to visit?

Interviewee: Yes.
Interviewee: They were very very happy to see me. They also wanted to know everything about America. They wanted to know how I was doing and if I liked it in America.

Interviewer: Was there any hostility towards you when you went back to Italy?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: When you go back to Italy now is it the same as when you left?

Interviewee: No. It has all changed.

Interviewer: How has it changed?

Interviewee: Well I left right after the war and everything was all broken down and everything was all remodeled now and everything was up again. So it has very changed.

Interviewer: How often have you visited Italy?

Interviewee: I only went back once, in thirty-two years. Maybe next I will go back.

IV. Employment

Interviewer: What type of employment was available for you or your
Interviewer: husband when you first came to America?

Interviewee: Most of it was textile.

Interviewer: Did you work?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Why not?

Interviewee: Because I had a baby nine months after I got married. I had to stay home and take care of the baby.

Interviewer: What type of job did your husband have?

Interviewee: He worked in textiles.

Interviewer: Was your husband ever taught any education while on job?

Interviewee: No he never had education on the job.

Interviewer: Did you find more job opportunities in this country or in Italy?

Interviewee: More in America.

Interviewer: Have you ever worked?

Interviewee: NO, I never worked until recently. I had to go to work to help pay the bills because he is out of work, he has been ill.

V. They Family When you were growing up in Italy.

Interviewer: What language was spoken in your home?
Interviewee: Italian.

Interviewer: Did you value your family?

Interviewee: Yes, very much.

Interviewer: What did you value most about the family?

Interviewee: Togetherness that we had and the closeness that we shared.

Interviewer: Tell me a little about your family in Italy, how many children?

Interviewee: We were a normal size family. There were six children. There are three girls and three boys.

Interviewer: Did you have a large house?

Interviewee: Yes, we had three bedrooms a waiting room, seven or eight rooms. I remember all happy times. My father was the only one working when we were young.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little about what the city was like?

Interviewee: The city was clean (now when I went back it was dirty and messy). When I lived there I didn't notice the dirt. Of course there were the slums and there were the good parts.

Interviewer: What was the role of your father? What were some of his responsibilities?

Interviewee: He worked for the railroads. He built bridges. He was the boss, he made the big decisions in the home.
Interviewer: What was your mother's role in the family? What were some of her responsibilities?

Interviewee: To bring up the family. She didn't work. She didn't have to clean the house. We had a maid who came and washed our clothes.

Interviewer: What were the roles and responsibilities of the children in your home?

Interviewee: My sister used to clean the dishes, I used to do the shopping, and my other sister washed some clothes and more or less took care of the rest of the house.

Interviewer: Did any of the children in your family work?

Interviewee: My brothers worked with my father in the railroads.

Interviewer: What was your home like?

Interviewee: We lived on the fourth floor of a big high rise building, and the house was Italian provincial.

Interviewer: When you came to America what did you bring with you?

Interviewee: I didn't bring too much. I brought my silk made by hand nightgowns.

Interviewer: What was the food like in your home?

Interviewee: We had lasagna, roast, leg of lamb, etc.

Interviewer: Who did the cooking?

Interviewee: My mother did all the cooking. None of us were able to help. It was her and only her who was going to do all the cooking. My father was always served.
Interviewee: first. My mother was very fussy when she cooked. We used to go in the kitchen and sneak food when she wasn't looking.

Interviewer: Do you have many relatives living in Italy?

Interviewee: Yes on my father's side. They were all from Naples. My mother's family lived in America.

Interviewer: Is your family very close?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Did your family ever tell you any stories in Italy?

Interviewee: They used to tell us ghost stories. They told us about a little boy with a red hat who they used to throw stones at. They used to call him nagia, and someone would chase him until one time he ran in the water and the other children were afraid of the water. Now they never chased him anymore.

Interviewer: What was the religion in your home?

Interviewee: It was Roman Catholic. We went to Saint Rita's church. It was all Italian and we went to that church every Sunday in Naples. We are good catholics. We are not over religious.

Interviewer: What traditions did you bring from Italy?

Interviewee: We always respected each other and especially the older adults.
Interviewee: We cooked the same meals in America that we did in Italy. We did most of the same things as we did in Italy.

Interviewer: How did you feel about politics? What were politics like for you?

Interviewee: I didn't know about politics.

VI. Your family in America.

Interviewer: How does your family differ now?

Interviewee: There are less people living in the home. We still value the family highly. We value the togetherness.

Interviewer: What has changed?

Interviewee: I am more liberal with my children than my mother was with us. Respect has stayed the same.

Interviewer: Is your family Italian oriented?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Have your children ever felt any prejudices against them.

Interviewee: No, they never mentioned any to me.

Interviewer: How many children do you have?

Interviewee: I have three. I have two girls and one son.

Interviewer: What is your husband's role in the family? What are some of his responsibilities?
Interviewee: My husband used to work but now he is sick. He is still the boss. He used to work at the outlet company. He cooks and makes the beds for me when I am working. He helps out around the house.

Interviewer: What is your role in the family? What are some of your responsibilities in the home?

Interviewee: I work. My husband isn't too happy about me working but he has no choice somebody has to work. We changed roles. I am an inspector. My other responsibilities are to my family, to be there if they need me.

Interviewer: What are your children's responsibilities?

Interviewee: They help out in the house when they are home. They wash clothes, they pick up, and they clean the dishes sometimes.

Interviewer: Are you still close with your relatives?

Interviewee: Yes we are still very close. We just don't see each other as much as we used to.

Interviewer: What is your home like and what are some of the meals you cook?

Interviewee: My home is very much Italian, but it has become more Americanized. I still cook the meals my mother used to cook.

Interviewer: Do you ever tell your children the stories you parents told you?
Interviewee: Yes I tell them the same stories.

Interviewer: What traditions have you passed on to your children?

Interviewee: I try to cook the same meals. We have fish on Christmas and leg of lamb on Easter. The holidays are the biggests. I try to pass them onto my children like the special meals we cook on the Holidays.

Interviewer: How do you feel about politics now?

Interviewee: I try to stay out of them. There are more Italians in politics now than before.

Interviewer: Are you happy with your home in Cranston, and your family?

Interviewee: Yes I am very happy, I love them both very dearly.

VII. Community

Interviewer: What was the community like when you first came over here?

Interviewee: On federal hill the people were very friendly. We were never afraid to go out at night.

Interviewer: How did you feel about your community?

Interviewee: Well everybody was nice and I liked to live there.

Interviewer: How did the people feel towards you on federal hill?

Interviewee: They were happy I was there. It was a lot relatives of mine on the hill. They were happy to see me.
Interviewer: What language was spoken in your community?

Interviewee: Italian mostly.

Interviewer: What type of relationship did your family have with the larger society?

Interviewee: We had a good relationship.

Interviewer: Do you feel your community on federal Hill fit in with the larger society (for example Rhode Island)?

Interviewee: I don't see why not, sure it fit in.

Interviewer: Do you feel there are any prejudices towards Italians in Rhode Island?

Interviewee: Yes. The Irish people where I work, they don't like us Italians. I don't know why we didn't do anything to them.

Interviewer: Do you consider yourself an Italian-American or an American-Italian.

Interviewee: An American-Italian because I've been here so long I do most of the American things. We are more Americanized as a family.