Three Generations of Italians: Interview with Joseph Casdia by Marie Squatrito

Joseph Casdia

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SUBJECTS COVERED

Where he came from

Life as a child

Family

Customs and holidays

Reasons for moving

Expectations and disappointments

Employment

Customs brought to U.S.

Return trips to Italy and changes noted

Move back to Italy

Whether he feels Italian or American
SUBJECTS COVERED

Where he came from in Italy

Life as a child in Italy

Family

Holidays and special saints days in Italy

Why he moved to the United States

Expectations and disappointments (was not disappointed)

Employment

Customs brought to the United States

Visits back to Italy and how he feels it has changed

Would he ever move back to Italy

Does he consider himself to be an Italian or an American
Oral History Interview

with

Joseph Casdia

February 23, 1979
Interviewee's Home

by Marie Squatrito

INTERVIEWER: Could you tell us what town in Italy you come from?
INTERVIEWEE: Barcellona Provincia, Messina, Sicily
INTERVIEWER: Was it a large town or a small town?
INTERVIEWEE: Very large.
INTERVIEWER: Do you know how many people lived there?
INTERVIEWEE: Seventy thousand.
INTERVIEWER: How long did you live in Italy?
INTERVIEWEE: Forty-four years.
INTERVIEWER: Well, I guess we'll begin by talking about your life in Italy as a child. How many children were in your family?
INTERVIEWEE: Thirteen.
INTERVIEWER: How many were boys?
INTERVIEWEE: Seven boys, six girls.
INTERVIEWER: What did your father do for a living?
INTERVIEWEE: Post office clerk.
INTERVIEWER: How about your mother's role in the family? Did she work outside the home?
INTERVIEWEE: No.
INTERVIEWER: What did she do in the house?
INTERVIEWEE: Housewife, take care of the children.
INTERVIEWER: As a child, did you have any special responsibilities? Did you have to have a part time job or anything like that?
INTERVIEWEE: I go to school. After school, I go and learn furniture making.
INTERVIEWER: Did you get paid for that?
INTERVIEWEE: No.
INTERVIEWER: Was religion a large part of your life as a child?
INTERVIEWEE: Yes.
INTERVIEWER: Did you go to church every Sunday?
INTERVIEWEE: Oh yes.
INTERVIEWER: How about during the week? Did you ever have special days that you went to church?
INTERVIEWEE: Oh yeah.
INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any celebrations that were really special to you? Any feasts?
INTERVIEWER: What did they do at the procession?
INTERVIEWEE: The big procession--the way of the cross.
INTERVIEWER: What was the name of the church that you went to?
INTERVIEWEE: St. Sebastiano.
INTERVIEWER: Who was the patron saint of your church?
INTERVIEWEE: St. Sebastiano.
INTERVIEWER: Did you have a special day for him with a feast?
INTERVIEWEE: Oh yes.
INTERVIEWER: Was there anything special that you remember about that day?
INTERVIEWEE: January 20.
INTERVIEWER: While you lived in Italy, did you ever go into the service?
INTERVIEWEE: Oh yes.
INTERVIEWER: When did you go in? Do you remember?
INTERVIEWEE: In 1939.
INTERVIEWER: What did you have to do when you went into the service?
INTERVIEWEE: In 1939, go the first time in Albania. Stay in Greece, after to stay prisoner in Germany.
INTERVIEWER: How many years were you a prisoner for?
INTERVIEWEE: Two years in Berlin.
INTERVIEWER: After that, what happened?
INTERVIEWEE: After 1945, come back in Italy.
INTERVIEWER: Were you out of the service then?
INTERVIEWEE: Out of the service. Yes.
INTERVIEWER: What did you do after that?
INTERVIEWEE: After, go into the shop with my family--the pastry shop. I come back to Italy. No make no more furniture. I learn the pastry shop. I stay over there until I come back in America.

INTERVIEWER: Did you enjoy working in the pastry shop.

INTERVIEWEE: Oh yes.

INTERVIEWER: Who ran it?

INTERVIEWEE: My sister. I take over.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you decide to come to the United States?

INTERVIEWEE: I meet American girl, now my wife, and decided--marry.

INTERVIEWER: Did you meet her in Italy or did you meet her in the United States?

INTERVIEWEE: No, in Italy.

INTERVIEWER: What town did you move to when you moved to the United States?

INTERVIEWEE: Bristol, Rhode Island.

INTERVIEWER: What were your expectations of the United States? What did you expect it to be like?

INTERVIEWEE: I like.

INTERVIEWER: Did you think you were going to like it here?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh yes.

INTERVIEWER: Were you happy once you got here?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any difficulties?

INTERVIEWEE: No.
INTERVIEWER: Any language problems?
INTERVIEWEE: Just a little bit at the first time. Now I stay alright.
INTERVIEWER: Did you feel any prejudice toward you when you came to the United States?
INTERVIEWEE: No.
INTERVIEWER: Was is hard getting a job?
INTERVIEWEE: No.
INTERVIEWER: What did you do when you first came?
INTERVIEWEE: I started a baker shop over here. After, stay too much work, just stay all alone, quit the baker shop. I come back to the shoe factory, worked for fifteen years. After, retire and now stay in house.
INTERVIEWER: You retired?
INTERVIEWEE: Oh yes, retired.
INTERVIEWER: O.K., did you like working in the shoe factory?
INTERVIEWEE: Yes and no.
INTERVIEWER: Were the people nice to you there?
INTERVIEWEE: Yes.
INTERVIEWER: Were they understanding?
INTERVIEWEE: Oh yes.
INTERVIEWER: Did they communicate well with you?
INTERVIEWEE: Yes.
INTERVIEWER: Are you a citizen of the United States?
INTERVIEWEE: Oh yes!
INTERVIEWER:  When did you become a citizen?


INTERVIEWER:  Do you think you brought many of your customs and traditions to America?

INTERVIEWEE:  Yes.

INTERVIEWER:  What kinds of things did you bring with you? What kinds of things do you do now?

INTERVIEWEE:  I make alot of pastry--cassata, Sicilian cannoli, baba--alot of kinds of pastry.

INTERVIEWER:  You make all those pastries for special holidays?

INTERVIEWEE:  All the pastries, yes.

INTERVIEWER:  How about your handiwork? Tell us a little about that. Does that have anything to do with your furniture trade?

INTERVIEWEE:  Oh yes. Sometimes I stay in. I make a stool or anything. Now, now just started a big Christmas tree all in macaroni and sprayed in gold--a star on top and 140 Christmas lights.

INTERVIEWER:  O.K., alot of the things that you learned how to do in Italy, you still do now?

INTERVIEWEE:  Yes.

INTERVIEWER:  O.K., have you been back to Italy since you moved to the United States?

INTERVIEWEE:  Oh yes.

INTERVIEWER:  How many times have you been back?

INTERVIEWEE:  Three times.
Are there any major changes that you noticed in Italy since you left?

Oh, it changed a lot. New buildings, everything. Now stay twenty-one years, stay over here. It changed. A lot of differences, change everything. The style is more modern. Life stay more better than before.

So then you like it better there now than you did when you lived there before?

I like Italy. I like more better to stay over here.

Would you ever consider moving back to Italy?

Just for visit, alright.

But not to stay?

No.

O.K., one last question for you. It's a toughie! What do you consider yourself to be, an Italian or an American?

When stay in Italy, stay Italian. Now, stay over here, American citizen, stay citizen.

So you think you're an American then?

Oh, yes.

O.K., thank you very much.

Your welcome.