Italian Women and Girls: Interview with Maria Vacca by Carmela Santoro

Maria Vacca

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NAME OF INTERVIEWEE       Maria Vacca
INTERVIEWER
DATE OF INTERVIEW       October 30, 1975

SUBJECTS COVERED

Description of life in Italy
First impressions of America
Schooling in U.S.
Recreation
Return trip to Italy
Likes and dislikes about U.S.
Maria Vacca  
Central High School  
October 30, 1975

Q: Tell us about where you came from.  
A: I was born in Naples and came here when I was about 4 years ago. Life wasn't too good there. I was actually from the island of ______. But I really came from Naples. I grew up in there and went to school until 2nd grade.

Q: Do you remember the schools?  
A: One school and one teacher.

Q: What did your mother do in Naples?  
A: She stayed at home. My father was a hairdresser right around the corner from where we lived.

Q: How many children were there?  
A: I'm the oldest and two younger.

Q: So your grandmother was in the U.S. Where were others here?  
A: She was just here with her husband, the children were in Italy. There is only a sister and brother in Italy. They were here and decided to go back.

Q: Your grandmother wanted her children here?  
Do you like it here?  
A: Yes, it's a lot of hard work there to just feed the family.

Q: Did you come by plane?  
A: Yes, to Boston. My grandmother met us.

Q: You moved right to Providence?  
A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember your first impression of the U.S.?
A: There weren't as many big buildings as I expected from the talk. That was more in N.Y. It was snowing a lot. It was February. It was the first time I'd seen snow.

Q: Your grandmother had a place for you?

A: Yes. When we came here it was me, my mother and father and mother's brother. We lived there for a couple of months. The house next to it was for rent so we took it. My grandmother found another place for my aunt. After a couple of months my uncle's family came. Then the rest came. Some live in Warwick, the other near E. Providence, the other right around the corner.

Q: What did you think of the houses where you lived?

A: It was very different from Naples.

Q: How long have you been here?

A: 7 years.

Q: Have your impressions of the U.S. changed?

A: I still like it.

Q: Do you speak Italian at home?

A: Yes. We speak Naples dialect. Everybody speaks it.

Q: Are you a citizen?

A: Not yet.

Q: Are your parents citizens?

A: My father is.

Q: Do you think you'll become a citizen?

A: I haven't really thought it over yet.

Q: Did you go to school right away when you got here?

A: Yes. For half a year. Then I went to Kenyon for 2 years.
Q: Did you lose any years of schooling?
A: No.

Q: What is your favorite subject?
A: I like them all, I guess.

Q: Are you in a special program, English as a second language?
A: Yes.

Q: What kinds of subjects are you taking?
A: Western civ, special English, vocational, gym, math, sewing.

Q: Do you like to sew?
A: Yes.

Q: What do you plan to do when you finish school? Do you plan to graduate?
A: Well, I'm studying hairdressing at vocational now. We have to choose a different thing each semester and see what we like. In 12th grade we take tests and pay money and they give you a license and you go to work.

Q: You plan to go through the 12th grade and be a hairdresser?
A: Yes.

Q: Have your own shop?
A: Yes.

Q: Is that what your father is doing here?
A: He use to work at Beauty Nest. Now he works as a janitor at a school full time.

Q: Would you rather go to work or school?
A: Now, school. When I'm 16 I'll work part-time.

I'm 14 now, 15 in March.
Q: When you're not in school what do you do for fun?
A: Usually clean the house. After supper we watch T.V.
Q: Do you go to movies?
A: No. Sometimes the Italian movies.
Q: Do you go to dances?
A: Once in a while.
Q: Do you belong to any clubs?
A: No. My mother was in the ______ society.
Q: Are you interested in politics?
A: (She isn't too clear on what it involves) No, not really.
Q: You went back to Italy 2 years ago, you said things were better. What other impressions did you have?
A: My aunt got a new house, my cousins are older.
Q: Did you feel strange when you went back?
A: Oh, no. The air was different. I'm use to the bad air here.
Q: When you went there did your relatives see you as an Italian or American?
A: I didn't get much of an impression. I guess Italian. My father was always referred to as the American because of his citizenship.
Q: How do you see yourself?
A: Half on both sides. Usually mostly Italian.
Q: What do you like best about the U.S.?
A: That you don't have to work like you do in Italy. Better places to go. You get more money for your hard work.
Q: Are you disappointed in anything here?
A: Food costs a lot. It's getting higher and higher.
Gas prices are higher too.

Q: Did you have a car in Italy.
A: I'm really not sure.

Q: How about here?
A: Yes.

Q: If you had the choice to come here would you?
A: Probably.

Q: What is it to you to be Italian?
A: Perhaps the language.

Q: What about being an American?
A: Everybody's skinny. I wouldn't want to be one.

Q: Do you know anything about what Italians have contributed to the world?
A: Nothing that I can think of.

Q: How do you think you've changed?
A: There it's expensive to go places so you stay home more.
    School is on Saturdays.