

2-20-1979

# Three Generations of Italians: Interview with Mary Longo by Ann Coffey

Mary Longo

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**COVER SHEET FOR INTERVIEWS**

**NAME OF INTERVIEWEE** Mary Longo

**INTERVIEWER** Ann Coffey

**DATE OF INTERVIEW** 2/20/79

**SUBJECTS COVERED**

Life in Italy

Coming to America

Transition

Settling in America

Attitudes

Traditions

Ethnic identity

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Oral History Interview

with

MARY LONGO

February 20, 1979  
Home in North Providence

by Ann M. Coffey

INTERVIEWER: Where did you live in Italy?  
INTERVIEWEE: Montinere Provincia Campobasso  
INTERVIEWER: What was the size of the town?  
INTERVIEWEE: Very small  
INTERVIEWER: What was it like?  
INTERVIEWEE: Quiet, people lived off the land.  
Everyone was friendly and helpful. Most  
of the people in town were relatives.  
INTERVIEWER: Did you come from a big family? How many?  
INTERVIEWEE: A family of five children  
INTERVIEWER: What did your father do?  
INTERVIEWEE: Brick layer  
INTERVIEWER: What did your mother do?  
INTERVIEWEE: Housewife  
INTERVIEWER: How old were you when you left Italy?  
INTERVIEWEE: Sixteen  
INTERVIEWER: Do you remember much about your life in  
Italy? school, work, etc...

INTERVIEWEE: I helped my mother with her work. Washing, cooking, and cleaning house. At that time education was not as important as tending to a family.

INTERVIEWER: Did you come to America with any members of your family?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Were any members of your family already here? If so did you meet them here?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. I lived with my sister and her husband.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you decide to leave Italy?

INTERVIEWEE: To come to this very rich country and send money home to my family so they could join us here.

INTERVIEWER: Did you know what America was like before you left Italy?

INTERVIEWEE: People were wealthy, well-dressed and work was plentiful.

INTERVIEWER: Were your goals the same when you finally got to America? Any job opportunities available?

INTERVIEWEE: Things were not as I pictured. I worked in a mill where cloth was manufactured.

INTERVIEWER: Did you find it hard being in America?

INTERVIEWEE: No. I stayed with my sister till I was married four years later. She helped me

adapt to this new country.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever have a problem with communication? American money?

INTERVIEWEE: Money was not a problem once explained. Communicating, that is something else. I could not speak English at all but I managed with the help of my sister and her husband.

INTERVIEWER: Did you live in a city, town, or rural area?

INTERVIEWEE: Town of North Providence.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you choose to live where you did?

INTERVIEWEE: This is where my family lives.

INTERVIEWER: Was it far between your house and your husband's job?

INTERVIEWEE: We lived in walking distance of his job.

INTERVIEWER: Did you go to school in America?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever work in America?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, until I married. I married at the age of twenty.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think women should work?

INTERVIEWEE: Not if a woman has children. The family should be the center of her life.

INTERVIEWER: What traditions did you continue in America?

INTERVIEWEE: The same as my mother's. The family is the most important thing. In those days women

were not as they are today. The wife had to do whatever her husband said. She made no decisions of her own. The husband was the head of the house and she did what she was told.

INTERVIEWER: What do you feel about religion?

INTERVIEWEE: I attend a Roman Catholic Church. I am very religious. I am eighty-two years old I do not walk very well. My parish priest comes to my house very often.

INTERVIEWER: Did your family follow marriage traditions?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever go back to Italy?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I could not find the time. I had no interest to go back to Italy. Life there was very hard.

INTERVIEWER: Do you consider yourself Italian or American?

INTERVIEWEE: American. I have lived here much longer than I have lived in Italy.

INTERVIEWER: What was your biggest disappointment, if any, in America?

INTERVIEWEE: I was not disappointed. I am very happy here with a wonderful family.

INTERVIEWER: Thank-You.