NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: Maria Capaldi

INTERVIEWER: 

DATE OF INTERVIEW: October 16, 1975

SUBJECTS COVERED

- Description of town in Italy, family
- Arrival in America, impressions
- Schooling
- Recreational activities
- Return trip to Italy
- Satisfaction with life in America
Mrs. Maria Capaldi
Henrietta Street
October 16, 1975

Q: Tell us a little about your town in Italy.
A: My town was not very big. Maybe 3,000 people. Most of the people were farmers. Nothing to get ahead. All you could do was farm. It was Molese.

Q: It wasn't very exciting?
A: Not for me. It was small. There's was nothing to do.

Q: What did you father do?
A: He farmed.

Q: Did your mother help?
A: Yes.

Q: Was it your own land?
A: Yes.

Q: How large a family is it?
A: I have three brothers.

Q: Did you go to school there?
A: Yes, I was going when I came here. I didn't finish school the year before I came. I was fourteen. It was about 8th grade. We came in April.

Q: Did you come with your family?
A: Yes, my grandmother was here, my father's mother. She called us. She was really born in the U.S. but her mother took her back to Italy when she was very young. She found out she could come back if she wanted to because she
was a natural born citizen. Then two aunts and one uncle were here.

Q: Was your father the only one left in Italy?
A: Him and one other sister. She sent for both of them, but we came first.

Q: Did you sell everything?
A: No, we left everything to my mother's father.

Q: Did you fly?
A: Yes, into New York then into Green Airport.
We were only there for three hours.

Q: Did you have any impression?
A: There were a lot of people.

Q: Did anybody meet you in N.Y.?
A: No.

Q: How did you know the right plane to get?
A: We asked people. They were helpful.

Q: Who met you here?
A: Everybody.

Q: Did you any of them?
A: I knew my grandparents and some of my uncles I remembered.
We went to my grandmothers and she had a house already furnished for us.

Q: Where was that?
A: In W. Warwick.

Q: Did you get any impressions?
A: I liked the house immediately. We had a T.V. and telephone.
I didn't expect it.
Q: What did you think of W. Warwick?
A: I liked it and still do.

Q: You're married now.
A: I have been here 7 years. I'm 21.

Q: Did you go to school?
A: Yes. I went to summer school twice a week. Then I applied to tenth grade and when they got my records from Italy I started and graduated. In 1971.

Q: You learned English very well and fast.
A: I studied very hard during the summer.
   At the time I went to school they only offered French and we didn't really think about coming here. I took French for 2 years. I was determined to learn English once I was here.

Q: How did you like school here?
A: I loved it. It's not as hard here. They make you memorize everything there in Italy.

Q: How did the other children treat you, did you feel strange?
A: Sometimes. The first day was so strange. There was a nice girl that showed me around.

Q: Did anything impress you at first?
A: Everything. I was happy to be here. I never wanted to go back to Italy to live.

Q: In the seven years you've been here have you changed any of your ideas?
A: No.
Q: Had you pictured anything when you came here?
A: I knew it was a better place than where we were. New people. We could do a lot of things. It was a chance to be someone. I wasn't disappointed at all.

Q: Do you speak Italian in your home?
A: Yes.

Q: Do you and your husband speak Italian?
A: Sometimes. But before I was married I spoke all the time because my parents didn't understand. We speak a dialect. To my husband I speak Italian.

Q: Are you a citizen now?
A: Yes.

Q: When?
A: A year ago.

Q: How did you feel about that?
A: I was proud. My husband gave me the idea, first he became a citizen. We were going to stay here.

Q: Are your parents citizens?
A: No, they want to but you have to be able to read and write it and they can't even speak English. Until they learn they will not.

Q: What did you enjoy most about the school you went to in W. Warwick?
A: I just enjoyed it. I like math and bookkeeping and typing. I took a business course.

Q: How about extracurricular?
A: No, because I didn't know anyone much.
Q: Did you make friends easily?
A: Yes.

Q: Is there anything about school that you didn't like?
A: No. The first year I came I didn't miss one day.

Q: Are you a bookkeeper?
A: I'm really a sample typist.

Q: How did you find your job?
A: I went for the exam. My aunt told me I had to take the exam before I could apply for any state jobs. I work at the Institute for Mental Health.

Q: Do you have any particular ambitions about continuing your education?
A: I think right out of high school I was, but my main interest is in raising a family now.

Q: Did your husband come from the same area in W. Warwick?
A: No from Providence.

Q: How did you meet him?
A: At the beach. Summer of 1971.

Q: Your husband graduated from RIC?
A: Yes, teaching in Spanish.

Q: Does he have a job in teaching?
A: No.

Q: Were there any conflicts with what you left behind and what is here?
A: No, not really. What I came to was better.

Q: How do you feel about labor unions?
A: I have to belong but I don't see what they are doing.

Q: What do you do for relaxation?
A: Housework, knit, sew, crochet. I make all my clothes.
Cook, clean.
Q: Do you go to movies or things like that?
A: Once in a while. I like to dance.
Q: How about sporting events?
A: No. I don't have time.
Q: Nightclubbing?
A: No.
Q: Where do go dancing?
A: At the church. Holy Ghost.
Q: Clubs, do you belong to any?
A: No.
Q: Are you interested in politics?
A: No. I never got interested in that.
Q: How long have you been a citizen?
A: One year.
Q: Have you voted yet?
A: Yes.
Q: Do you consider yourself a member of a political party?
A: I don't know.
Q: Would you like to be involved in politics?
A: No.
Q: Are there any political questions you're interested?
A: No.
Q: Do you attend church regularly?
A: Yes, every Sunday.
St. Ann's.
Q: Do you read the Italian paper?
A: Once in a while.

Q: Do you take any magazines?

A: Italian magazines. Ones that have crocheting patterns. I keep up with Italian papers.

Before I was married all I read was English. I found I was forgetting a lot of Italian words.

Q: Have you been back since?

A: For the first time, all over, last September. We went to my town and husband's town.

Q: How did you feel?

A: I felt happy to be there but a lot has changed. I guess I was a little disappointed.

Q: Did you feel that you were seen as Italian or American?

A: I guess more of an American.

Q: How do you see yourself now?

A: As an American.

Q: Was that the first time you had traveled throughout Italy?

A: Yes. I had just been to Rome and places around my towns.

Q: What was your husband's town?

A:

Q: What do you like best about the U.S.?

A: I like the opportunities you have to do something for yourself.

Q: Have you been disappointed in anything?

A: No. Maybe because I came from a little town. Maybe if I had come from a big place I would have felt I could have had the same there. The stores, etc.
Q: Would you come here again?
A: Yes.
Q: To R.I.?
A: Yes, but I haven't seen much of the U.S.
Q: Do you think you've changed since you've been here?
A: Maybe. I learned a lot of things since I've been here.