NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: Roberta Russotti
INTERVIEWER: 
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SUBJECTS COVERED

Life in Italy, family
Arrival in America
Schooling in Italy
Education in U.S.
Recreation in Italy
Impressions of U.S.
Recreation
Definition of "Italian"
Roberta Russotti
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Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School

Q: You told me you were ten years old when you came to the United States and you've been here two years. That means you remember a little bit about where you were born and where you came from. What was the name of the place you came from and what it was like?

A: The place was Taolini and it was very beautiful and I have a book at home and it's really nice to have a lot of beaches, old hotels. Everybody come from all the places because it is very beautiful and I would really like to go back there and see my grandma and aunt.

Q: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

A: I have two brothers and I am the youngest.

Q: What does your father do? Did you come with your mother and father?

A: He worked at a hotel as a chef, then he worked for a family. My mother worked as a maid in another hotel, Hotel di Meo. Before she worked in a private house in a villa.

Q: How did they happen to come to the U.S.?

A: My father in 1964 came to Michigan and stayed for I don't know how long and then returned to Italy and then waited many years before we could come here. He wanted us to see a new world. My aunt and grandmother didn't want us to leave. I and my brother wanted to come here and we like it.
Q: So you came with your parents and both brothers, even the one who didn't want to come. Does your father or mother have any relatives here?
A: My father has relatives here but I don't know where. Not around here.

A: Yes, December 23.

Q: And you came by plane?
A: Yes.

Q: Where did you land?
A: We landed in New York and then we took a train here. And then a friend of my father's who has a big shop, they used to come to Taolina and we would drive them places—really good friends—now my father works in his shop. My mother and father work together.

Q: What kind of shop, what kind of work do they do?
A: Jewelry shop. 18 or 14K.

Q: Is this why your father came to Providence, because he knew this man here?
A: Yes, he wanted to go to Michigan, but then this man said if he wanted a job he would give him one. My mother said that we might as well stay here because we know them and then they could show us everything.

Q: Did they find a place for you to stay?
A: Yes, and now we bought a house this year. It's real big and we get lost in it.

Q: Tell me a little about going to school in Taolina
A: I went first to fourth grade. In fifth grade I took an exam
and then went to another school. It was prima media for three years. And then if you want to become something else you have to take another exam. But you can get work over there if you don't want to go to school because there are not as many 16 year old workers as there are here. You really have to find work over there.

Q: How did you like school over there? Did you like it?
A: Yes.

Q: Was it hard?
A: It was harder than here. When I came here I had all A's. I was really smart. I was in the smartest room or almost in the sixth grade. And now I am in the smartest room. And my brother is in the ninth grade at La Salle. When I finish this school I am going to go to St. Marys.

Q: And what do you plan to do after school?
A: I want to try nursing or secretary or a hairdresser. I don't really know. Then I would like to work and get a house.

Q: When you were through school in the day what did you use to do for fun? (in Italy)
A: Over there we had the same teacher for five years. I like here better. We use to have to go to school on Saturdays. I like it here better.

Q: What did you do for playtime over there?
A: I use to go with my friends. I had a close girlfriend, she almost looks like me. Her house was almost next to mine. We always use to stay around together. I felt bad when I came here. I didn't want to leave her.
Q: Do you remember when you first came to Providence? What did you think of Providence?
A: I thought it was strange. We used to live in a hotel there. And then I didn't know how to speak here. If I had known how to talk it would have been better. But then we went to school and I learned really fast how to talk. Everybody says I talk really well. The first time I was here I said how am I going to learn all that English.

Q: Is this the only school you've been here?
A: Yes.

Q: Are you in a regular grade or a special class?
A: Do you mean for English? Yes. I have Mr. Brigam. He is very nice. I had another teacher too, I like them both.

Q: Is there anything about Providence, you said you felt strange, is it just because you couldn't speak English? Or is it something about the things you saw?
A: Yes. The school and house. Over there all the houses were together.

Q: At home do you speak Italian or English?
A: I speak Italian.

Q: Do you speak Sicilian dialect or Italian that you learned in school?
A: I speak Sicilian, at least with my mother.

Q: Do you think that you will forget the Italian language?
A: I don't think so. There is a teacher from Mt. Pleasant that teaches us at night in Italian and English. My brother first went to Central but my father didn't like it there.
but a teacher helped my brother to learn English. My brother likes to speak only Italian especially at home.

Q: Would you rather go to work or to school?
A: Go to school.

Q: Do you read any books or magazines or papers at home?
A: Yes, a lot from school. I don't read that well and now I have a lot of homework. I like reading magazines.

Q: When you are not going to school, what do you do?
A: First I go home and do homework with my girlfriend. Then at 4 o'clock I do my housework. At five my mother makes supper. After we watch T.V. and go to my girlfriend's house. I usually go to my girlfriend's and go outside and see a lot of my friends.

Q: Do you go to movies?
A: Yes, sometimes. No one much goes to the Italian movies, though.

Q: Do you belong to any clubs?
A: No.

Q: What do you enjoy most about school?
A: There are a lot of good kids and you can share with others. I like cooking. I have sewing next quarter. I really like it (school).

Q: When you first came here (school) did the children treat you different, did they make you feel that you weren't one of them?
A: No they really liked me when I came here. I couldn't talk well, but they tried to understand me. All my teachers liked me a lot.
Q: So you've had a happy experience here?
A: Yes.

Q: Do you think that you are going to become a citizen?
A: Yes.

Q: Do you see yourself as Italian or American?
A: As Italian.

Q: When you say you see yourself as Italian, what does it mean to be Italian?
A: When you are born there you always have that part of Italy with you and you talk like that. You can't change your style from being like that. I think I am Italian more because I like to be one.

Q: When you say your style is Italian, can you tell me a little bit more?
A: Like cooking and sewing, you know the Italians know how to make a lot more than the Americans. The style, well you act like an Italian not an American.

Q: How does an American act?
A: He's just different than an Italian, I don't know.

Q: When you think of somebody as being American, what do you think of?
A: For me, I guess the language. I really like my American girlfriends a lot, it's just their style. When I first was here my father said look how fast they talk. Now I can understand better, but when they talk really fast I can't catch up with them.
Q: What do you like best about the U.S.?
A: I like everything, but I really like school. They're easier than there but really nice. I like the houses. All America keeps going around, not like there (Italy). I like the beaches in Italy though.

Q: Have you been to the beaches here?
A: Yes.

Q: And how do the beaches compare?
A:

Male voice: My sisters husband was stationed in Naples, Italy for a couple of years. My sister has over 100 things from Italy.

Q: Have you done any traveling in the two years you've been here?

Q: Are you disappointed in anything in America?
A: No. Everything is alright

Q: Suppose that you had to make the decision to come here, not your mother and father, would you make the decision to come to America?
A: If I had known how it was I would not have come because I really loved Italy. I always told my friends that I wanted to come here. If I had been here before, I don't think so.

Q: Do you know how much the Italians have done for the world?
A: I don't know that much. All the shoes that are here are from Italy. They like to trade with America.