**Kate:** Good morning this is Kate Moore for the National Park Service and today is the 13th of January 1994 and I’m in Fullerton, California at the home of Ruby Samfilippo who came from Italy in 1946 when she was 16 years old. Why don't you begin by giving us your full name and date of birth?

**Rosa:** My Christian name is Rosabianca Samfilippo I was born October 21st 1929 in Rome

**Kate:**  The city was Rome.

**Rosa:** Rome, Italy.

**Kate:** Could you describe what the town looked like when you were younger?

**Rosa:**  From what I hear from my daughter who's been travelling over there, it hasn't changed. The traffic has not become any less chaotic or congested. The street vendors I believe used to be at the corner of every neighborhood, they'd be street vendors every day, the fresh air markets, I don't believe are there anymore.

But from what I hear the flowers and the Spanish steps, the flower vendors still do come. It’s really hard for me to say, I haven't been back for so long. It’s been a very very long time that I’ve been back. In fact over 35 years.

**Kate:**  What was your father's name?

**Rosa:**  Cesare Civelli.

**Kate:**  Could you spell that please?

**Rosa:**  The last name?

**Kate:** Both

**Rosa:**  Cesare is C-E-S-A-R-E. Civelli is C-I-V-E-L-L-I.

**Kate:**  What was his occupation?

**Rosa:**  He was a sculptor.

**Kate:**  What did he look like? Could you describe your father?

**Rosa:**  Well, he could look about the closest thing to a devil if you picture somebody in costume, with his piercing eyes and the only thing I know to call it is a widow's peak, the point in the middle of the forehead and very slick back hair and hair pulled back slicked and a thin face and a pointy chin and with his absolutely perfect Jewish nose.

In Rome and I don't remember the square, there's a ministry of something that has the 3 profiles in bronze on its front? And the African and the white and the Jewish are represented and my dad has the perfect Jewish profile, so if you can picture that nose on a very small boned face.

**Kate:**  And what about his personality and temperament?

**Rosa:**  I did not really grow up with my dad so there is a little bit that I remember about him was that he tried to find humor in some things to relieve tension, so I must say humorous at times, very deep in thought and sometimes very negative but it's kind of vague, I did not grow up with my family.

**Kate:**  Is there a story about your father that you associate with your childhood at all?

**Rosa:**  His superstitious, superstitions. So it's strange that I thought he was going to kill me once when I dropped the thing of salt, a little shaker of salt and from that day on I guess I realized what superstitions was and what it could be and I have never been so I still use 13 as my lucky number and I love black cats and I walk under ladders every chance I get.

He almost killed me. I fell into a mirror and broke that and I thought that was going to be absolute death because he knew that at least I thought I was going to die by his hand but anyway it was a fiery temperament but he never put a hand on me, it was just the fear, intimidation of children.

**Kate:**  What about your mother's name? What was your mother's maiden name?

**Rosa:**  Palcani

**Kate:**  How do you spell Palcani?

**Rosa:**  P like Paul, P-A-L-C-A-N-I.

**Kate:**  What was her occupation?

**Rosa:**  Well she was a very creative wonderful seamstress that she did not really use her talents. I can remember some things that she sewed and I was awed that the fantastic wonder perfect finish. Perfect, absolutely perfect finish of the garments, I don't think that she was a happy person. I didn't see her utilize her talent or depend on it or take any pride from it somehow. That’s about what I remember.

**Kate:**  What did she look like?

**Rosa:**  Very pretty, petite brunette with gorgeous blue eyes with this kind of a chestnut auburn you'd say here. Gorgeous white skin, beautiful teeth, never had a cavity in her mouth, never. But that's a story I hear, I don't know after I lost track I don't know but that was the story that grandma never had a cavity. She was very pretty.

**Kate:**  What about the chores around the house. What did she do? Who did the work?

**Rosa:**  See now you're asking me really hard questions because my mother and my father really didn't raise me.

**Kate:**  Who did?

**Rosa:**  My grandmother, my aunt and my uncle who were my father's relations.

**Kate:**  Your father's mother?

**Rosa:**  My father's mother, my father's sister and my father's brother.

**Kate:**  Could you describe them, describe the people who raised you?

**Rosa:**  Grandma was grandma, the love of my life and the love in my life was grandma. So I’m going to get very emotional when I talk about grandma but my aunt worked very hard because she supported grandma.

**Kate:**  What did she do?

**Rosa:**  She worked as a bank official with the banco di Roma, I don't remember which bank but she was an official with a bank and very responsible, very unhappy was alone her whole life because she never married. She took care of mum and then she took care of her brother's kid. So her life was burdened by all these responsibilities.

**Kate:**  What were the two names and grandmothers’ full name?

**Rosa:**  Maria Teresa. I had to stop and think, isn’t awful grandma, Maria Teresa

**Kate:**  And uncle's names?

**Rosa:** Paula Civelli and Antonio Civelli. My dad and my uncle had the reverse, Antonio Cesare Civelli and Cesare Antonio Civelli. Those were their names. So Antonio was my uncle and Cesare was my dad.

**Kate:**  How would you describe how your grandmother looked?

**Rosa:**  She looked regal, absolutely regal. Walked straight, held her head high. She had this gorgeous skin. I don't remember ever make up on her. She just brushed her long grey hair and piled it up on top of her head with this little... but it was soft, it was wavy around her face. She was very very very warm, tender person.

**Kate:**  What house did you live in as a child? Which place did you live in, your grandmothers?

**Rosa:**  It's hard to remember because at times I can see myself with my dad in whatever apartment he lived in. I never remember seeing me with my mother. I don't know if l ever lived with my mother, if I ever did. I have no recollection but the house that I remember mostly was the apartment building that was mostly used by these banks employees, most of those people were employed by the bank. Vaile Mazzini in Rome.

**Kate:**  How to you spell that.

**Rosa:** Viale Mazzini? V-I-A-L-E M-A-Z-Z-I-N-I.

**Kate:**  And that was where your grandmother and...

**Rosa:**  And grandma and aunt had this beautiful apartment on the ground floor. I remember the marble entry in this beautiful statue. It was just a lovely, small...

**Kate:**  How big?

**Rosa:**  Fairly small. It’s going to be hard in the end this business of real estate. I should know square footage, right? I would say 8- 900 square feet possibly. Long, long hall with a nice long bathroom, a nice size kitchen and a two bedroom with French doors going out to the front. It was very nice.

**Kate:**  It was indoor plumbing?

**Rosa:**  Oh yeah.

**Kate:**  And electricity?

**Rosa:**  Oh yeah.

**Kate:**  And so how was heating?

**Rosa:**  That's going to be a tough one. I just don't know.

**Kate:**  Did you have a garden at all?

**Rosa:**  No, this was an apartment building, you realize it was like 17 I don't know 16, 12, I don't know how many floors. But I remember standing outside yelling like crazy to reach the person who lived on top floor that was a friend of mine to go out bicycling, bike ride. I know it was lots of floors.

**Kate:**  Where exactly in Rome was it? What part of Rome was it in?

**Rosa:**  Central, very central. Viale Mazzini is right down [unclear 00:09:04]. My memories don't connect from [unclear 00:09:08] and Viale Mazzini to Piazza del Espana, I just don't remember the distance in between.

**Kate:**  What was Piazza del Espana?

**Rosa:**  The Spanish steps, a very central tourist type of thing and then Viale Mazzini would lead to Piazza del Popolo which is another central Apiem way runs into Piazza del Popolo, so I can't I really can't, it's not the outskirts, it was right in the middle of town.

There were stores other apartment buildings, a big town square where there'd be shoe store and a delicatessen and then in the corner would be this fresh air market. It was a very residential area.

**Kate:**  Who did the cooking in the family?

**Rosa:**  Grandmother then and I would help

**Kate:**  So what was your favorite food?

**Rosa:**  People are going to freak out, brains. She fixed, what do they call them here, sweet breads?

**Kate:**  Sweet breads.

**Rosa:**  I couldn't even tell you. I guess it was beef I don't know, all I remember, it was delicious and it was long long time before I knew what I was eating and it didn't faze me because we did eat a lot of organs, liver and kidney and they were all fixed. Very very delicious but fish, this was just a delicacy that she served but it was mostly fish

**Kate:**  What type of fish?

**Rosa:**  Squid, white fish, not a lot of shrimp and crab and all that stuff that's so popular here but mostly the salmon, the white fish. It was boiled and served with lemon. Nothing fried.

**Kate:**  What was meal time like?

**Rosa:**  Mostly it was just grandma and I in the kitchen

**Kate:**  You ate how many times a day together?

**Rosa:**  3 times. She’d have the breakfast would always be the bowl of warm milk and the hot bread, homemade bread and butter or Ricotta. Lunch would be maybe a bowl of soup and bread and dinner would be some kind of cooked green and maybe a plate of cheese at the end of the meal, backing up to the fish, maybe a pasta pastino or rice.

**Kate:**  Did your aunt have dinner with you?

**Rosa:**  Sometimes she’d have supper, sometimes she'd be there.

**Kate:**  Now your other family members, your grandmother raised you as such, was it because your parents were occupied with other...?

**Rosa:**  Yep. My parents were too occupied fighting each other. They were living apart.

**Kate:**  So you were closest to your grandmother of all people?

**Rosa:**  Yeah. Oh absolutely but realizing that she was the emotional support of my life but the financial came from my aunt. She supported everybody and my uncle was only in the picture very short time. He lived there for a time but a very short time because he moved out, then to be married at a late age. So that was the 3 of us.

**Kate:**  What about religious life?

**Rosa:**  Religious life of course would be catholic, born and raised catholic. Going to the church, the only reason I went to the church was because grandma again expected me to go and I wanted to be with her so I would go but I was not happy in church. I felt it was a very hypocritical system and I still do and I hope not to offend anyone by saying that's just the way I felt as a young child. The things I heard and I saw in the church did not make me feel comfortable.

**Kate:**  How often did you go?

**Rosa:**  Every Sunday.

**Kate:**  Every Sunday.

**Rosa:**  If it whatever came up in between then I would walk.

**Kate:**  Which place did you worship in?

**Rosa:**  There again it wasn't very far. It was just to the square and a little short ride. I probably walk you there but I can't tell you the name of the street. It was the [unclear 00:13:06] is the chapel of [unclear 00:13:10]. I guess I have to back it up and was my most favorite statue to see the [unclear 00:13:15]. It still is to this day.

**Kate:**  Did you have your first communion then?

**Rosa:**  Not at that church. That would be- where did I have my first communion? Something to do with the parochial school that I was attending then and that was more closer to I want to say Piazza del Popolo and it was a huge street, it was on an incline that went towards the river and the ministry of army navy something was across.

This is terrible I don't remember, I just don't know. Mussolini’s institute was the sisters wore the charity, I think the sisters of charity and went from the elementary to the high school for a very brief time because I wasn't allowed to finish school in a normal way cause at the time that I was going to school all hell was breaking loose around, so that was..

**Kate:**  The war you mean?

**Rosa:**  Yeah

**Kate:**  Let's back up a little bit. How did your grandmother, at home did she teach you prayers or things like that? Where there any other manifestations at home besides once a week at church?

**Rosa:**  Just by everyday life and the things that we talked about. There was prayers at night that we would say our prayers when going to bed but it wasn't an overabundance. It was just there and it was just part of our daily life’s and belief and that was it.

**Kate:**  Did you ever experience any prejudice or persecution for religious beliefs?

**Rosa:**  No, I had so many other things to be concerned about. That doesn't seem to be one that stands out in my mind.

**Kate:**  How about holiday celebrations what type of holidays celebrations were your most favorite things?

**Rosa:**  I don't know how much of this stuff I’m blocking out but I cannot for the life of me, so many people have asked me about holidays. It’s really strange the way it's so fragmented and I can see grandma and I baking cookies. I can see me cutting into the dough little forms of that you cut and then I can see me and I don't even know who I’m with on a big marble slab.

If anybody knows what gnocchi’s are, you know how you bake with a potato floor and you roll them in a really long roll and you cut them and you have to wash them with your thumb and shape them with your thumb and I remember that. So where that comes from I have no idea but I do know it's connected with holidays somehow.

**Kate:**  Do you have any recollection of Christmas?

**Rosa:**  I know what I almost forgot. My uncle used to build- while he was there we had a corner in the study that he used as a study. The living room that he used this little corner as a study and we blocked that off and we would build the [unclear 00:16:04], the nativity and I would help them to build things out of paper Mache and snip little things, the chocolate and all these neat little things.

These little figurines that we sometimes would cut and accumulate, I would come by and we'd buy some. Some were given as gifts and some we would just make. That was the big thing because we started that real early and I didn't even remember sharing that with him and I don't know why he was there more than my aunt.

My aunt seemed to be the one who was away working most of the time. She worked in the day and she worked in the afternoon or she worked at night somehow. Maybe she had to have two jobs take on all the responsibility that’s possible.

**Kate:**  What about Easter. Do you remember anything about Easter?

**Rosa:**  No.

**Kate:**  A special dress?

**Rosa:**  No.

**Kate:**  Tell me about your school life? What was your school life? Can you describe your school?

**Rosa:**  I going to really hurt a lot of people and I hope that they realize and not take it personal because this is my life I’m talking about but the most love and hate that I felt in as you said before prejudice of any kind was from the sisters.

There was one that stands out in my mind that's an absolute saint, sister Clara and she was the sweetest most wonderful loving little and I mean little person. I don't think she was 5 feet but from the others they were so stern and so severe and so angry and I think that the more, they must have seen my need for affection as weakness or something so maybe they tried to help me be strong by being actually very mean, very hurting.

**Kate:**  How?

**Rosa:**  I was very tall and gangly. I’m 5'8 now and I think I must have been 5'7 by the time I was 11 years old. You can just picture the tall skinny gangly kid that wasn't dressed quite properly because I’m sure with all the hardship that my aunt had taking care of this whole family that she acquired, she couldn't be so concerned about fashionable things. So this being a fashionable school...

**Kate:**  You didn't have uniforms?

**Rosa:**  Yeah, we did. I’m talking about uniforms and the shirts and the skirts and the socks and the whole thing had to be changed every so often. Well if it didn't get changed, guess what, I grew out of it. Didn’t I? So if I grew out of them I was belittled and made to feel very much ashamed that I didn't have a new skirt this year. I was wearing last year's...

**Kate:**  Who did that? The sisters did that?

**Rosa:**  The sisters, yeah. Yes ma'am the kids picked up from the sisters but when the mother superior sets the tone, the kids are going to pick up. So I had such a terrible memory of that time. I had not an easy life but that made it so hard to accept. I just thought if love and acceptance doesn't come from here where does it come from?

**Kate:**  My father had a similar story in England about those types of schools where he had to the proper clothes---

**Rosa:**  Wow.

**Kate:**  But that was really for a kid horrible.

**Rosa:**  Yes it was horrible.

**Kate:**  There was a very similar story like that.

**Rosa:**  And that was worse in the first year of high school when we were doing gym and what not, the mother superior, this woman was so gorgeous. young and so angry and later on I learned to feel sorry for her more or less and let her go with whatever love I had because I can't tell you the humiliation of all these girls coming down the staircase and rushing into the gym and her pointing me out and yelling and just stopping me and yanking in my skirt, “Where do you think you're going with such a short skirt?” and my bloomers were not down to my knees because you had to wear the little bloomer underneath the little pleated skirt and that whole bit, part of the uniform. That was the day that I turned...

**Kate:**  Do you think that they think that you were wearing short skirts because you wanted a short skirt?

**Rosa:**  Must have but they never asked, did they? They just assumed.

**Kate:**  I see they thought you were trying to wear risqué clothing.

**Rosa:**  Absolutely. And that's why my thing is about communication and assumptions because I think that whole thing was about assumptions. But she knew my life history, she knew my background or didn't know or didn't care to find out. She knew I came from a broken home, she should have known but see there is my should but I don't mean to lay my should on anybody but she could have--

**Kate:**  She could have had the stereotype of a broken home child wanting to get away from different you know?

**Rosa:**  Could have, never bothered to find out, never talked to me. Just accused me and antagonized me and intimidated me and just put me down and I thought ok, you're on your own kid.

**Kate:**  The school that you went to how many children were in the class altogether?

**Rosa:**  It was a big class. I’m trying to give you a number. Couldn’t 35 maybe 40? I don't know big class.

**Kate:**  Was crowded then?

**Rosa:**  Yes.

**Kate:**  Do you remember a specific playmate?

**Rosa:**  Yeah, I can see their little faces I couldn't tell you their names. I don't think any of them were from my building. The people I made friends with in the building somehow didn't go to the same school and yet we were all Catholics, so I don't know why I was picked for that particular school.

**Kate:**  And it was a private catholic school?

**Rosa:**  Yeah.

**Kate:**  What was your favorite subject?

**Rosa:**  I sure didn't have many, I’ll tell you, art, drawing. It always was.

**Kate:**  Did you learn English prior to coming to the states?

**Rosa:**  No.

**Kate:**  You didn’t know a word?

**Rosa:**  No, I listen I hear sounds, I’d say, “Okay this is what it means,” I never would say them until I got here.

**Kate:**  So you heard some English before you got hear?

**Rosa:**  Yeah, the people around me, the guy I married. I would hear from those people. We were liberated, there’s a lot of people running around using that language, so I get to learn it, the sound of it and what it meant kind of but I never used it so it was kind of funny to listen to me in Italian and them in English and we would communicate and talk back and forth. This is funny.

**Kate:**  So you spoke Italian to English speakers?

**Rosa:**  And they spoke English to Italian speaking.

**Kate:**  What about entertainment? What did you do for entertainment as a kid? You mentioned bikes?

**Rosa:**  Probably as a little tinny kid I was always considered a tomboy cause I’d always be up there running, so the running and somehow I remember me in a little wagon. Somebody must have given me a wagon but it was at grandma's house, I remember that street and somebody pulling me on that wagon. Then the little tricycle, then I fell so hard and so long that if my legs and my groins and my glands was all swelled up and I was sick the next day.

**Kate:**  Did you have any games like hide and seek and or those types of things?

**Rosa:**  Yeah we used to have it later on and hide and seek. The park across the street was wonderful we used to hide there all the time. Jumped the hedges, so we'd have jumping games and we'd have running games and we were hiding.

**Kate:**  Rope games did you have?

**Rosa:**  Oh yes, thank you for reminding me. I forgot that I was a great rope jumper. Yeah we did.

**Kate:**  And did you have songs with the rope game.

**Rosa:**  That was just kind of rhythmic sing song that didn't mean anything, I don't even remember what songs but I remember the beat and the rhythm. I just couldn't remember the song but I know that we would pick up, the one you'd jump in you'd change the leading, the switching from jumping to turning the rope and so on and you had certain sing songs that went with that.

**Kate:**  Did you have any games like kick the can and those things?

**Rosa:**  No I don't remember those but the bicycling and the running.

**Kate:**  Is any story they tell about you at childhood that typifies you, about something that you did?

**Rosa:**  Something that I did?

**Kate:**  You could have gotten in trouble, you did something good?

**Rosa:**  I got in trouble for standing up to people all the time. I got in trouble in school all the time for standing up to people and then there were the group of the in girls with all the status and probably all the money that would come to my desk and I’m sitting down looking up at all these people standing around with these angry faces and wondering, “What the heck did they want with me?” And they would just try to pick a fight and I’d just sit there and look at them because I’m not a fighter.

I mean I would defend myself but I’m not into violence, I’m very anti violent person. All in all I was scared to death but I wasn't going to fight. So that may be something that would indicate whatever my personality.

**Kate:**  When it came to coming to America to the states, why don't you tell us about how you got into the position of coming over here and what happened?

**Rosa:**  Well, as I said the years of the war and the liberation movement and all these chaos that was going on with the all these troops invading Rome and the American troops who came. Marched in and see there I go again. I don't know if it was June of '44. I can't even remember dates but I can remember having to march down [00:25:20] which…

**Kate:**  What was the atmosphere then?

**Rosa:**  Everybody was screaming and jumping and running and waving and laughing and doing tricks, turning summersaults in the street and it was something that we waited for so long to see the last of the Nazis and all the fascist and Nazis. Whoever escaped and then these people come in the next day with all the tracks and the jeeps and their flags. It was unbelievable. I don't even know how to describe it.

**Kate:**  You were a teenager at that time were you?

**Rosa:**  Yep. All of what, 13, and 14 I don't know yeah.

**Kate:**  Do you remember your grandmother's reaction to all this? Did she a condition about the establishment?

**Rosa:**  My grandma died that year. She never saw it.

**Kate:**  She died?

**Rosa:**  Yeah.

**Kate:**  So she died when you were about 12?

**Rosa:**  13, 14 just before, she never saw it.

**Kate:**  How did you get in a position to come over here?

**Rosa:**  Well I married a [unclear 00:26:24].

**Kate:**  How did you meet him?

**Rosa:**  Some social thing that we had at the house. they used our house at the time was as I said my dad was a sculptor, he rented this, I don't even know, I can't tell you all the details because that was the only time I remember living with my mother and my father. Lo and behold, I must have been all of 15. They were beautiful together.

**Kate:**  So when your grandmother died you didn't live with your aunt anymore?

**Rosa:**  No, that was the brief that I lived with my dad but I’m sure I didn't live there all the time.

**Kate:** So when your grandmother died what did your aunt do? She continued to work?

**Rosa:**  Yeah, I’m sure I stayed with her for a while. Yeah, she worked. She just always worked. She also died very young. She was 56 when she died, my aunt. My uncle had married in the meantime, my mum and dad were still not together but I do know that they came together with this thing after the war, this liberation thing.

Well actually it was just prior that. it was part of the march, the liberation that as I started to say about my dad having rented this huge artist studio, that is right on I would say not quite a mile down from Piazza del Popolo or Rifaminia.

It had been considered a monument of some sort because there was a fountain in the front of it. All this wonderful water, you can go any day and pick this water. It was wonderful and it was right in front of this building with its big, big gate that led into the studio. So I wasn't supposed to be lived in, it was just supposed to be a studio but we ended up living there because there was no place else to live. With the circumstance of my grandma dying, I don't know why they got together because they didn't last together very long but that was the only time that we were together.

**Kate:**  So 3 of you lived in?

**Rosa:**  Actually lived in the studio for maybe a year. It wasn't very long

**Kate:** It was at that studio that you had the social engagement where you met...?

**Rosa:**  In the USO whatever, there was a beautiful place with a gorgeous yard and there was little fountain. It was a very lovely garden. That’s what it must been. Where in an artist could draw or build their statues, it was very much that kind of a place and somehow they got to, I don't even know who they were.

If my dad was involved or volunteering the space because of the troops that needed USO, places to accommodate the soldiers that needed some Rand R because Rome was the place where a lot of people were sent for R and R but they had to wait an awful long time, I guess what they did was have a place that where there was music and dance and I think they could buy, not drinks like a bar but they could come and bring or somebody served them something, cause I know I wasn't allowed to go because they were serving drinks.

Whatever that was about I think that it was mostly my dad giving permission to use the place as much as I don't even think at that time they'd be a permit. The city would have to give a permit. I think it was just a person that lived there said, “Sure go ahead and use it.”

But then the participation came by us wanting to see all these noise and happy sounds and music and of course sometimes they were fights, we could hear them fighting and screaming and breaking glass. So then of course I’d yanked back from the balcony, get back in the house slam the door, because of whatever was going on down there. That’s how I got to meet a lot of neat, neat nice folks that were just so homesick, so homesick.

They would little by little approach my mum and my dad and say, “If we bring food, would you fix it for us?” I mean, come on, we were starved. We had that. We’d been on rations for a long time so we didn't have plentiful. Food was not plentiful then so just the mere mention of all this, we would definitely,

I can imagine them saying sure. All I knew is they were some great feasts that were fixed downstairs, fixed in a big table, all these people would come and they were so happy to be there and then we'd fix spaghetti, risotto. The usual thing, they’d always bring something like a chicken or a steak. I don't even know what because they, whatever the money, their pay was, I’m sure they acquired this stuff and brought it and they would have these big cookouts. I guess 12, 15 people, whatever the amount of food and the amount of people that participated were paying. It was like a big family to me.

**Kate:**  That's where you met your husband?

**Rosa:**  That's where I met him.

**Kate:**  Can you imagine the first evening you met him?

**Rosa:**  This is one of those where I bet you not too far in the steps and nobody caught me and also he comes up and says, “You want to dance?” And I go, “Oh wow.” See if I can sneak a little further and go dance. Can you imagine a 15 year old kid with all this music and I love to dance anyway so I was dying to get out there and dance?

**Kate:**  What was he doing in your step?

**Rosa:**  Well because the place that led to this area came right up to there was a cupboard, it was a gorgeous entrance through the huge gate and a big like circular chalice covered with wisteria. It was just absolutely gorgeous and then it led to the staircase that led up to huge steps very long that led up to the top of the studio.

And this humongous wooden door, big double door that led into the area that we had made into a home. So those are the stairs and I kept going down the stairs to get closer and closer to the bottom so I could see more and more.

**Kate:** So you want to dance?

**Rosa:**  So I was trying to sneak to the dance floor and before we got there he says I can't dance. Anyway that's how we met and by that time, somebody found us and somebody says, “What are you doing?” Run scared like a couple of kids.

**Kate:**  Then did he keep coming to your house?

**Rosa:**  Then everybody got to meet him and he kept coming back. Sure that's what happened.

**Kate:**  Then tell us more about what happened about that deciding at least to come here.

**Rosa:**  Deciding to come here? Let’s see, my dad was like, by the time he found that he wanted to hang around for more reasons than just to be part of the family, he had said, “I’m looking to marry this girl.” My dad definitely was against it we had a big row about, “Why should you keep me from doing this?” All he could say is I was an only child and he wasn't about to lose me to somebody they didn't even know from another country and it was a big ugly fight.

**Kate:**  Can you understand him now?

**Rosa:**  My dad?

**Kate:**  Yeah

**Rosa:**  Yeah. Oh yeah

**Kate:**  But at that time did he seem different like he was unreasonable?

**Rosa:**  If you realize what I’ve just said about these two people, I felt they had no right to my life. They didn't raise me. They didn't really give me anything. How dare they say what I can and cannot do? That was my fighting spirit and 15 years old, of course I had to go by what they said but I also said before, I would stand up to people that would get in my way and I’d say, “How can you refuse and tell me what to do when you haven't had a part in my growing up. Nothing, where have you been? You haven't been mother and father to me, how come all of a sudden now you're mother and father?” So I guess my logic.

**Kate:**  Who promised that you would go to this, was it your idea or was it your husband's idea? Whose idea was it to come here?

**Rosa:**  By marrying me he wanted to bring me home and this was his home, so that's what he proposed. and the more he talked about it the more it seemed like a dream come true that I wouldn't have to of course realizing that my home life had not been very happy, this guy is talking about 6 boys in the family, this big family.

**Kate:**  Where was your husband from?

**Rosa:**  Pennsylvania

**Kate:**  Pennsylvania. What town?

**Rosa:**  Jonestown. Gerome. I’m sorry, Jonestown is the city that we lived in. Jerome, Pennsylvania.

**Kate:**  Where is that?

**Rosa:**  Yeah. Where is that? That’s what I said. I don't think you'd find it but it was a little coal mining town and close to Jonestown. It was the closest city, I remember Jonestown was there.

**Kate:**  Let’s back up a little bit, so he proposed, wanted to take you home. You remember the preparation you had to do?

**Rosa:**  We had to be packing. I had to be approved of, I had to sign things. I have to be interviewed by his captain, by his chaplain, before we'd even think to set up whatever wheels needed to be engaged to get to the marriage date.

**Kate:**  What were those interviews like?

**Rosa:**  Well I don't know if they wanted to see if I was sane or if I was I, they'd ask an awful lot of questions.

**Kate:**  What kind of questions did they ask you?

**Rosa:**  What are you from? What do you want? How did you meet? Very much like these questions. Where did you go to school, why did you go to school, where did you grow up? What did you do? What’s your mum do, what did your daddy... questions digging into your background?

**Kate:**  And was there about that you're too young?

**Rosa:**  Of course but you realize that I didn't look 15, I probably looked 21. I didn't feel like I ever was a child. I don't think outside of those games and things that we talked about that I remember doing with my friends at different times. It’s like I don't remember being a happy child at all so I felt like I was an old lady. Always said I was an old lady at 9 by the time I was nine.

**Kate:**  You went to the interviews and what about your home situation at you were preparing to go. When did you know it was possible to go? You went through the interviews...

**Rosa:**  I think when my mum and dad saw the determination that we were going ahead with all this stuff, they were like there is no sense in fighting her, and she’s going to do it, so then we can to get their written permission obviously and we had another big row over that and another meeting with I think the chaplain and then because of my age he was asked to sign on for another 6 months a year whatever.

Another year to be sure that this is what we wanted. So he stayed on longer than he needed to be and he was shipped in April which wouldn't be such a great distance here for us but then it was. I didn't have any ways of getting there. We’d have to hitch hike to get back up.

**Kate:**  Did he do that?

**Rosa:**  Yeah we did.

**Kate:**  He hitch hiked to see you?

**Rosa:**  Yeah.

**Kate:**  That's romantic. This whole process then took how long? You actually when you met

**Rosa:** Probably 8 months.

**Kate:**  How old, 15?

**Rosa:**  I think I must have been 15 or not quite 15, I don't remember exactly the months or the years. I’d have been at least close to 15 because then I was like 16. October is my birthdate and then February 10th '46 is when we were married, so I would say the whole thing took almost 3 months, 9 months, 10 months.

**Kate:**  What was the atmosphere at home once they realized that you were going to do this? Was it tolerable?

**Rosa:**  No, it was grumpy and hurt and kind of, we’re trying to accept it but we don't like it and I really didn't care. I think they caused me so much grief. It’s like what's a little more hurt. That’s the way l felt then.

**Kate:**  You don't talk about your mother's attitudes as much as your father's. Why?

**Rosa:**  I think that she probably either didn't care or showed her caring in a different way or the way I always felt like she was hoping I would make it so that she would able to come because then she did come, after we got here. So it was almost like she was not helping but really wanted to see it go through so that she could also come out here.

Which to me wasn't coming to America but I think to her it was, it is now, don't get me wrong, this is my home now but the thing didn't strike me then as, “Oh wow, I’m going to America,” it was like, “Oh my god I found this great guy and I’m going to leave this place where I am so unhappy.” It was only when I stood on that ship and pulled away that I realized what was happening. Believe me.

**Kate:**  What about packing. What did you pack before you went?

**Rosa:**  I didn't have a heck of a lot.

**Kate:**  You remember taking anything dear to you?

**Rosa:**  I remember red sandals that's about it. That was the first pair of little thongs, not really thongs. I don't think we had thongs then. Little strap sweet little red flat sandals. To me it was like the best thing I ever had. It was mine.

**Kate:**  How did your aunt react to you leaving? You obviously were part of her house.

**Rosa:**  My aunt absolutely disowned me after I went through this and I raised you here, I don't want to see you go and loose yourselves and you don't know what you’re going to get into and you don't know what this family is. Just totally afraid of the same thing that people here were afraid to get from there. They didn't know what they were getting from there. My son is going to marry who and what, from where? The reaction was the same on both ends.

**Kate:**  But your aunt cared.

**Rosa:**  My aunt cared and the way she cared is that she was fighting to keep, longer than anybody else she was fighting to keep me here. I mean there.

**Kate:**  How did you do that?

**Rosa:**  Pardon?

**Kate:**  Were you more tolerant of that since she was a part of your life?

**Rosa:** Yeah.

**Kate:**  [unclear 00:40:10]?

**Rosa:**  I knew she cared and I know that I realized that how much she did care and yeah that felt good and I did want to hurt her but I wasn't about to change my plans because as far as I’m concerned they were made and grandma was gone, I hate to say it, it sounds terrible but I didn't care about my aunt as much as my grandmother. If grandma had been there maybe it would have been different. I think that's what I need to say. Maybe, I don't know.

**Kate:**  Alright, so you packed your things and what ship did you go over? How did you get passage? Wasn’t it a time when it was difficult to get passage?

**Rosa:**  Yeah, it was very difficult. you had to sign on, you had to wait for your turn , you had to apply for all the stuff, you had to get all these checkup and shots and all the paperwork and all these stuff and then we had to go on a hospital ship and I’ll be dammed if I remember the name of it. Somewhere I’ve got it written down. It was a beautiful hospital ship that left.

**Kate:**  Military ship?

**Rosa:**  Yeah and in the meantime he wasn't supposed to go before me but he had been shipped because all this was happening while he was in Naples and I was taken off from Naples but I never got to see him because before I ever took off they had shipped him back. It was one of these army thing, can’t control that.

So by the time I knew that my voyage was coming closer we had word that he had to go back. So he was already there, here. Listen to me, here there. He’d gotten back to the states way before I even got on the ship, strange.

**Kate:**  Describe getting on that ship and what you were thinking?

**Rosa:**  It just hit me all of a sudden that, “My god what have I gotten myself into and what am I leaving and where am I going. I know what I am leaving but I don't where I’m going to.” When that ship started to move it was like my heart was just being torn. I don't know how best to, really emotional time.

**Kate:**  Were other people also having the same kind of reaction?

**Rosa:**  Yeah because all the ship was full of is war brides and a lot of them had been living with their husbands there. That had had children and some of them had come as I don’t even know from where and but some had gotten married there and made a family, made a home and became a family and others were like myself, married to GIs and to come out here.

Some had waited an awful long time to be immigration because they were coming from other places. So in Naples, we all came together from so many places in Rome had so many years of waiting and all these different lines that came together was wonderful, the camaraderie then afterwards on the ship but that first pulling away was like wow?

**Kate:**  Did you stay overnight in Naples when you went there before the ship pulled away?

**Rosa:**  Yeah they had both some hotel where all of us had to stay and we all had to be accounted for so we couldn't do anything. Once I went on that trip to Naples, it was like I was prisoner. I mean I wasn't but it was like being in prison, I couldn't do anything. I wasn’t my own person anymore I belonged to the United States government.

**Kate:**  You had to wait for this passage, you got there they put you in a hotel?

**Rosa:**  They were responsible for us until the day we got to the states and we were claimed by our husbands.

**Kate:**  Did anyone see you off? Describe the scene when you left Rome? Who was there?

**Rosa:**  It's so blank. I don't know. I don't know when I left Rome. I can't remember if I got on a train. See my daughter keeps saying that I’m forgetting pieces of my life.

**Kate:**  Wait a minute. We can go back a little bit. Your aunt didn't want you to leave. Your father and your mother didn't want you to leave. Was there any teary sort of goodbye or did you just leave?

**Rosa:**  Yeah, I cannot remember all these fragments. I remember my dad signing this paper and throwing it.

**Kate:**  It could be painful. I mean it could be that it was very emotional.

**Rosa:**  That's why my daughter says to this day she says, “You're either going into some kind of hypnosis or some kind of regression thing to be able to pick it up,” because I see all these fragments. As much as I sit and think about them I can't put them together.

**Kate:**  You're on the boat. You remember that point about pulling out and having doubts about the unknown?

**Rosa:**  Doubt and fear.

**Kate:**  Yeah, fear. What were the accommodations like in that boat? Where did you stay?

**Rosa:**  I happened to end up next to the last bottom thing. It's a good thing I wasn't, I guess they go by alphabetical and I was an S, and I didn't have any children and I was younger, so I think that they accommodated me and we'd gotten to feel much older and so on. We’d gotten these little bunks, next to the last.

**Kate:**  It wasn't your own cabin with bunks or was it?

**Rosa:**  No it was like a big dorm. All these suspended

**Kate:**  [0:45:17.1 inaudible] was it clean?

**Rosa:**  Oh yeah, this was a hospital ship.

**Kate:**  Who were your other bunk mates in that same dormitory?

**Rosa:**  I lost track of every one of them. Mimi and Francisca and all these people that were wonderful and we stuck together 4 or 5 of us and somewhere I had pictures of these wonderful ladies that never saw each other again.

**Kate:**  How long was the trip?

**Rosa:**  9 days, 10 days.

**Kate:**  Did you talk at all with the other people about the fear that you had, did you talk amongst each other?

**Rosa:**  We all shared the… I wonder what's going on. I wonder if what he told me is true because at this point we didn't know. How do you know whatever somebody represented? Fear is a horrible thing. All these doubts started to creep in about are we going find what we were told? What if they are not there? What if they got into the way, what if they're criminals? Where are we going to end up? It was horrible the insecurity, the not knowing cause none of us have ever been in touch with the people at the other end and knowing that most of us were not really welcome.

They weren't looking to welcome us with open arms but they did. The bottom line is good that they did but we didn't know it then. I know one was going to New York and one other gal was going to California. They were so many different areas that we were going to but we each had to wait for our mate or an agent of the mate to pick us up. What do I want to say? A responsible party before they would release us and so when we docked we were there like 3, 4 days just waiting for all these people to come and claim and get off the ship.

**Kate:**  Vouch for you?

**Rosa:**  Yep

**Kate:**  Let’s go back to the boat a little bit. Were you allowed on deck? Did you have a...?

**Rosa:**  Oh yes, we were absolutely treated. Oh sure it was just like a cruise.

**Kate:**  Did you have any entertainment on the boat?

**Rosa:**  No just what we did ourselves. Music and going to listen and see movies and lectures and they were things like the movie room. They would have different movies and they would have different like travel things and it was neat.

**Kate:**  Was the trip rough or smooth.

**Rosa:**  No it was smooth, absolutely smooth. This ship was humongous. It’s very very comfortable and then also I did feel the ocean, I don't get sea sick. We’d sit up there in our little bathing suits and get sun tan. That’s probably the best tan I ever had in my whole life.

**Kate:**  What about your travel companions. Did any of them people who you were there by chance with, did they ever become ill on the boat.

**Rosa:**  Oh yeah if you're talking about being sea sick. I had to leave my quarters because I was becoming sick listening to them be sick. So we were trying to rush them up in the air because we were quite a ways down. Yeah I remember that but that were something that you just do when you're in a situation. Somebody needs help so we just do it. So we all just grouped together.

**Kate:**  What about the food? Do you remember the food in the boat?

**Rosa:**  Plenty, plenty of food. It was great food, there was plenty of food. There were meats, vegetables, fruits, rolls. I know if we got hungry we'd go back and get crackers and rolls because we were starved. We were all young and so hungry. The sea air makes me so hungry.

**Kate:**  So actually the boat trip was actually quite nice.

**Rosa:**  It was great, very very nice.

**Kate:**  Do you have any other anecdotes about the boat trip, anything that happened, foolish or not foolish?

**Rosa:**  No actually it was fun. The camaraderie was great, like I said the four or five of us that hung around together and just talked about our dreams and sat and got a san tan. It was really the most that I remember.

**Kate:**  What were the dreams? Do you remember any dreams?

**Rosa:**  Wonder what kind of house we're going to live in? The house in the hills and the house in the pool and all these stuff you hear about when you're married and I wonder there is a tree growing on the back yard that grows money, the money tree. It was in jest but it's what people hear about America.

**Kate:**  What did you think about, what were your expectations before you left about the United States?

**Rosa:**  I think that I expected to be coming very much like what I left and I can't tell you the shock. It never occurred to me, I’m coming from Rome it's going to take a lot to match up. Didn’t occur to me. I’m coming from a town and I’m expecting to find a town that looks like that. Well guess what? No streets no sidewalks.

**Kate:**  What about in terms of material wealth. Did you expect everybody to be wealthy?

**Rosa:**  No because my husband had been concerned about mom and dad's ability to take care of whatever they needed to take care of. He’s gone and he had so much allotted to go back to them while he was in the in fact even after we were married. He had asked me can I still continue to send my support and I said sure.

Money is not been anything that ever helped me with anything. With all my problems money wasn't going to help anything so I never really had any and I didn't depend on it although I’m not stupid. I realized the importance of money and therefore I did need anything so why not.

If he was concerned about them and he seemed to be more the more concerned. He always was. Of the 6 boys, he always took care of mum and dad.

**Kate:**  Of the 6 boys what birth order was he in that 6?

**Rosa:**  3.

**Kate:**  The third born. Back in the boat now, can you remember seeing land for the first time?

**Rosa:**  Yeah.

**Kate:**  Can you describe that?

**Rosa:**  Well we were all looking for it. We saw the dolphins before we saw the land about the same time. I guess it was dolphins and then saw the line. What we thought, “My god is that it?”

**Kate:**  Was the line...?

**Rosa:**  Ground? No it did not close on the sky line and then as we got closer off course the buildings but the statue, to see that.

**Kate:**  The Statue of Liberty?

**Rosa:**  Yeah, that was kind of awesome.

**Kate:**  What was the atmosphere at the boat then?

**Rosa:**  It was ecstatic. Everybody was screaming and jumping and so elated and then everybody got so quiet. It’s like we didn't have anything to say. We were all in our own thoughts.

**Kate:**  So it was an emotional thing?

**Rosa:**  Oh sure.

**Kate:**  What about the New York City skyline from the boat. Did you see that at all?

**Rosa:**  Mmh.

**Kate:**  What was your impression about that?

**Rosa:**  It was a big city. That seemed like I’m coming to what I left, kind of, sort of. You could see it's a city.

**Kate:**  You went through Ellis Island did you not?

**Rosa:**  Yep.

**Kate:**  How did you get from the boat to Ellis Island?

**Rosa:**  You got me, I have no idea. I remember when we went back to visit this past year that little shuttle type thing I said reminds me of some kind of shuttle a thingy something that takes so many people...

**Kate:**  Tag boat

**Rosa:**  Yeah type of thing. At a time and get over there. It must have been either alphabetical order, somehow. I don't know what order. I couldn't tell you.

**Kate:**  You remember taking that small boat?

**Rosa:**  Very very vaguely. I’m just thinking that I’m putting it there but I really don't see it. I’m putting it there since our trip to New York with my daughter last year and remembering that this is something like I had taken but I can't really see it or see the people in it or know how many people or in what order.

All I know is that getting off this thing, whatever it was, it was in Ellis island, that I knew but I didn't know where I was then and it was such a huge, it was so big and so high and so congested and so noisy?

**Kate:**  Was it clean?

**Rosa:**  I don't remember clean at all.

**Kate:**  Do you remember seeing anything for the first time that you had never seen before?

**Rosa:**  All these like a barracks, not like a barracks. I don't even know what to give it. It was such a lot of space and bodies. So crowded and noisy and chaotic, is the word I want. Although there were people there attempting and accomplishing lines of some sort, maybe it was just my state of mind. The confusion was more in my mind. That’s what I remember. It was very very frightening.

**Kate:**  Do you think your companions were often as equally as frightened? Was that something that was...?

**Rosa:**  Well I don't know. I don't know that I ever saw them.

**Kate:**  Once you got out the tower.

**Rosa:** Yeah.

**Kate:** How were you treated by the staff at Ellis Island?

**Rosa:**  What's the word? Not rude but businesslike but brusque. I don't think they understood how scared we were.

**Kate:**  What were you scared of? Were you scared...?

**Rosa:**  All these bodies and all these hands grabbing at you and all these people telling you to take off these clothes and roll up this sleeve...

**Kate:**  You mean the medical examination?

**Rosa:**  Yeah, I’ve never been through a medical examination in my life. I was 16 years old. I’ve never been to a doctor's office leave alone in a stirrup with a vaginal examination, my god. There was like...

**Kate:**  So women they gave you an examination

**Rosa:**  They didn't do a vaginal properly, they looked. I don't know that they examined. I’m trying to be correct here.

**Kate:**  So when you got out of the boat, walk us through what happened, you remember? You remember the people in that. What happened, they yanked you out?

**Rosa:**  In lines in the benches in the seating and the waiting. It went on forever.

**Kate:**  At what point did the medical examination come in to this?

**Rosa:**  I have no idea after how many hours. I don't know how long I was there.

**Kate:**  You had shots and thing you said in Naples before you left, you had some sort of examination didn't you?

**Rosa:**  Before we went through the counseling with the chaplain and all that. After that I had to go through my blood test and all that stuff. But I think here is where I got whatever shot you had to get for immunization.

**Kate:**  What?

**Rosa:**  I can't even think.

**Kate:**  Diphtheria.

**Rosa:**  Whatever they gave you that's, yeah that's it.

**Kate:**  Did you have those papers with you?

**Rosa:**  Mmh.

**Kate:**  But even so they gave you an examination?

**Rosa:**  Mmh.

**Kate:**  How thorough was that examination they gave you?

**Rosa:**  Well the ear, the nose, that's it. Drop the clothes get the gown on and put your feet up on the stirrup and I’m trying to remember really truly could I have blocked it off to have a vaginal exam. I don't think I really did a vaginal examination but they probably looked to see that I had no sores.

**Kate:**  You never had that sort of examination before?

**Rosa:**  No.

**Kate:**  Did you have any fear being sent back.

**Rosa:**  Yeah, if he didn't come to get me I would have had to be sent back. Sure the fear was there.

**Kate:**  Or be rejected then.

**Rosa:** Oh sure absolutely, all kinds of fears. You name them they were there. I’m just horrified at what happens today, from one extreme to the other. They put us through that and now people come with all the disease and no papers and no permission and it's like a free for all.

**Kate:**  Did everyone have the same examination?

**Rosa:**  Well I’m sure.

**Kate:**  Where did they do that examination? Do you remember where they took you?

**Rosa:**  Well they had partitions of some sort, I don't know if they were actually rooms or partitions but everything was set up with little cots and the little tables and the people with the white coats and whatever they were. I don't even know if they were doctors. I’m assuming they were doctors and nurses.

**Kate:**  Did they speak Italian to you?

**Rosa:**  No.

**Kate:**  What did they speak, English?

**Rosa:**  English I’m sure because I remember saying, ‘What are you doing?” and trying to figure out what they were saying and what they were doing because I had no way of knowing.

**Kate:**  Did anyone at any time translate for you?

**Rosa:**  I don't remember. I really truly don't remember.

**Kate:**  Were you detained? Were you detained for any length of time at Ellis Island?

**Rosa:**  No.

**Kate:**  Where did you eat? Did you eat there?

**Rosa:**  I don't remember eating. Isn’t that awful? No I don't remember eating, totally not.

**Kate:**  You didn't have to sleep overnight in Ellis Island?

**Rosa:**  Somehow we were put back on the ship because I wasn't released from Ellis Island I was released from the ship. So somehow we got back to the ship until whoever was supposed to claim us claimed us. That doesn't make sense.

**Kate:**  You went through this whole experience and then you were put back in the ship to sleep?

**Rosa:**  Mmh.

**Kate:**  I see.

**Rosa:**  Until someone came to claim me.

**Kate:**  Who came to meet you?

**Rosa:**  My husband then but he was not notified that we had already docked and it took him from Pennsylvania to New York, however that long it takes to make arrangements. I was sitting there 3 or 4 days thinking for sure that I was never going to be picked up.

**Kate:**  In the boat?

**Rosa:**  Yeah.

**Kate:**  And was there anybody else in the same situation?

**Rosa:**  Yep.

**Kate:**  So the people you chummed around with in the boat, were they in a similar situation?

**Rosa:**  Oh absolutely and some got picked up and some were not by the time I was picked up. Some stayed behind and some had gone but that was a long time to wait knowing that the people at this end were notified. When I finally was able to discuss that with him, that he had not been notified until the actual day that the ship pulled in or something because it took him time to get the arrangements get the train, I guess he said train. Yeah train because we went back on the train.

**Kate:**  Why don't you describe--

**Rosa:**  Communication again.

**Kate:**  What went on those 3 to 4 days, what did you guys do?

**Rosa:**  We just mopped.

**Kate:**  You mopped

**Rosa:** Mopped, depressed slept, tried to talk and keep each other's spirits up and not knowing where we were going to end up more or else trying to accept the fact that if we were not picked up we were going to go back and try to get accustomed to the idea that maybe this was, bottom line can you accept the worst thing and then anything else seem less in between kind of.

**Kate:** What was the bottom line?

**Rosa:** That we'd go back and nobody would pick us up.

**Kate:** Describe what happened when you finally were united with your husband to be.

**Rosa:** They had to carry me. I heard my name called out and I passed out. The stress, I hold myself up for so long and then whatever happens that is supposed to happen, I do that with the children. With any emergency, I do the same thing.

**Kate:** So you collapsed?

**Rosa:** I'm Miss Strong and Superwoman and then I go...

**Kate:** So you collapsed, fainted?

**Rosa:** Yeah, I literally collapsed. I don't know that I fainted dead away, but I know that I had... Everything spun around, my legs gave away and I felt my buddy's arms, their hands on my arms and they literally dragged me screaming, "He's here, he's here. Come on, come on, and come on." Slap my face, pick up my arms, grabbed me on the butt and dragged me, literally dragged me to the waiting room.

**Kate:** What happened then? Did you regain your consciousness?

**Rosa:** Well the lights came back kind of quick but I felt so sick to my stomach I thought I was going to throw up.

**Kate:** And what was he feeling?

**Rosa:** He was feeling happy that he got there but he couldn't wait to find out how long have you been here. He didn't know anyone I knew.

**Kate:** Was that room filled with other people reuniting?

**Rosa:** Oh, yeah there were others. We could hear the names were being called out over the loudspeaker every so often, so and so, so and so, so and so. It went through at such a fast pace that for a minute it's like, "Oh was that me?" When I realized that was my name was when I jumped up and then I proceeded to fall over.

That was pretty much everybody's reaction. I don't know to what extreme [inaudible 00:32:03] extent that I was, but it was like everybody was jumping up and running and the people were happy for us but then after we left, and I looked back, they were like, "Oh, my God, I'm still here," kind of thing. That was sad because I never knew.

**Kate:** The people who brought you and saw you reuniting. Where did you go from there at Ellis Island? What happened?

**Rosa:** I went back to the train station.

**Kate:** And you went from the train to Pennsylvania?

**Rosa:** Mmh.

**Kate:** Was there anything you saw at that time you never saw before?

**Rosa:** A lot of train tracks, bare country. It wasn't pretty at all. It was like. I don't want to say ghettos because I don't know if it was just around the train stations and again the dirt, there was a lot of dirt and a lot of dreary looking stuff, just dreary.

It was not pretty and I was like, "Oh my God, is this America?" And of course, first impressions I was thinking this is the way it's going to be throughout America. Well I found out different. Right at the moment there was so much... It was a long ways by train.

**Kate:** Where were you going to? What city?

**Rosa:** Jerome.

**Kate:** Jerome, Pennsylvania. Once you got to Jerome, where did you go?

**Rosa:** Oh, his home, his parents’ home.

**Kate:** How did they receive you? What was that like?

**Rosa:** Oh, it was great. They all came running up to meet me and they all had been waiting to have a party and they wanted to give me what I found out was a shower, I guess. Everybody came with presents and everybody was teasing me and giving me business about why didn't I speak- How come- I don't know how to put this now.

What I spoke and what these people spoke were two different kinds of Italian. I would look at them saying whatever they were saying in Sicilian and say, "Can you say it in English?" These people would look at me and say, "What's wrong with you? I'm trying to talk to you in your own language and you're asking me to speak..." I didn't know what they were saying.

**Kate:** Your husband was Italian?

**Rosa:** Yeah, his mom and dad had also been five and six years old or six and nine years old when they came from the old country.

**Kate:** So he spoke to you in Sicilian, did he?

**Rosa:** No, no. He didn't. The family did.

**Kate:** Oh the family. So the parents who were from Sicily were speaking to you in Sicilian.

**Rosa:** To make me feel at home.

**Kate:** Her sister and her brother, mom's brother and sister's and neighbors, all these people that had lived together for so long and had worked on the same mines together, they were all there. They were all trying to make me feel at home and I was like, “They must be from Mars because what they're saying... Oh, wow.” It was funny. It's was something we laughed about for a long time after that.

**Kate:** Do you think you were accepted more because they themselves had immigrated than other people?

**Rosa:** Oh, I'm sure. To a point, I'm sure but I still think they had so many reservations because, why is he bringing this kid from Rome? I don't know what they must have thought. All I know they had as many fears and doubts as the rest of us.

**Kate:** What about the place you went to? What did it look like? Where did he live?

**Rosa:** It's a cute little... A clean and cute but it was a rural, rustic, little cabin, and I don't know how she managed to keep it the way that she that she cooked and everything on this old Franklin stove.

**Kate:** Wood burning?

**Rosa:** Wood burning, coal burning, wood burning, I think. It was a coal mining town, but it was a wood burning stove. Does that make sense? She did everything, to bake…

**Kate:** Was there indoor plumbing?

**Rosa:** No, had to go outside. Didn't have a washer, she washed everything by hand, until then. I can't remember when but she finally got a washer and I think maybe it was there before I left.

**Kate:** What was the address? Do you remember?

**Rosa:** No.

**Kate:** What street?

**Rosa:** It was route something or other, Jerome. I don't know the street.

**Kate:** How was the house lit?

**Rosa:** Bulbs.

**Kate:** Electricity?

**Rosa:** Yeah, they had electricity. The wood burning stove, the outside bath. Yeah, they had to have wires and electricity because of the washer.

**Kate:** How big was the house, the cabin?

**Rosa:** The kitchen seemed to be larger than the rest of the house. The rooms were actually small. I can't even remember where I slept that first night. Now that you're asking me these things and I'm walking through the kitchen and I can't remember.

**Kate:** Were you married when you got here?

**Rosa:** Oh yeah.

**Kate:** Oh, you were already married? You were married back in Italy?

**Rosa:** It was hard enough to get... You think they would have let me leave without being married? No. I'm just kidding.

**Kate:** You were married by the chaplain?

**Rosa:** No, it was actually in our own church. The priest...

**Kate:** You never mentioned that part though. You just didn’t mention your wedding.

**Rosa:** Oh, okay. That's true.

**Kate:** You had a wedding back in Italy and who attended?

**Rosa:** Yeah, we got married... his captain, his lieutenant, some attorney friend of my dad that was my best man. You had best men. You don't have women. You don't have the same kind of wedding. It was just the guys- and all my friends that I remember growing up with, all about the same age, some of the older sisters and some of the brothers and it was some very nice celebration. This attorney, the Agostino, doesn't it sound wonderful? The Agostino had the reception at his house. It was very nice.

**Kate:** Then were people really- by that time resigned to your wedding?

**Rosa:** Oh, yeah. Everybody was really happy, was really accepting. It was fine after that.

**Kate:** How long was the before you left?

**Rosa:** It was February and then I left in July so quite a while.

**Kate:** We'll go back to Pennsylvania, the house that you went to, how many people were living in it?

**Rosa:** Well mom and dad and Joe was there and Sam and Tony. Sam was the oldest, Tony was the youngest. I don't remember if Lou, who's next to the youngest was there. For some reason, I don't see him in that house as much I see him in the one in Michigan. I remember Lou in that house but I don't remember him in this one. That would be four, five people.

**Kate:** I counted six.

**Rosa:** Where'd you count? Ruby and Joe, mom, dad, Oh, Sam and... Yeah six. You're right.

**Kate:** So how many bedrooms were there, in the cabin?

**Rosa:** I'm telling you, I don't remember where we slept. I truly do not-

**Kate:** Well it was crowded let's put it that way with all the people...

**Rosa:** Yeah, but not really because the kitchen was so big. We could have slept in the kitchen for all I know. I remember the living room and all the neighbors and all the presents, how many they were because I'm getting it mixed in my mind with the house in Michigan, where mom and dad's room was-

**Kate:** Nearest neighbors. Where were the nearest neighbors to that cabin? How far away were they?

**Rosa:** Pretty much like it is here, across the street, although it was just dirt.

**Kate:** They were dirt roads.

**Rosa:** Oh, yeah. There were no sidewalks and they all had little gardens in the back and their clothes lines. They were just individual little houses. I'd say half the size of [inaudible 00:39:48] maybe a little further than that. I don't even know how to measure lots. The little houses were all in the back yard.

**Kate:** What job did your husband...? What was your husband's name? Joe?

**Rosa:** Mmh. Joe Samfilippo. Joseph.

**Kate:** Right, Joseph and what job did he first get when you got to the States?

**Rosa:** Well the job that he was... To get the job, we had to go back to Harrisburg. I'm trying to remember why Harrisburg. He must have worked at some branch of this... It had to do with stocking parts of some sort.

**Kate:** For what? Parts for…?

**Rosa:** Airplane maybe, some kind of a plant. All I know is he did not get his job back that he was supposed to get back like the boys came back to their jobs and that was just something that didn't happen.

**Kate:** Let me get this straight because I didn't ask specifically. In the army, what was his position exactly, his rank?

**Rosa:** I think he advanced... It was not a career thing for him. -Corporal-

**Kate:** In the Army?

**Rosa:** He was in the Air Corp.

**Kate:** Describe briefly how did you learn English by the way? Did you have any stories about that?

**Rosa:** Yeah, by reading the newspaper. I'll remind you I was reading English and somehow, I don't know how, but it made sense to me. I would turn on the radio and I would read the newspaper. I guess the sound and the words, don't ask me how but I did it. I'd go out and I'd point to things. If I had to go out and buy anything, I'd go out and point to things and then I would wait for that person to say, "Oh, chicken," whatever it was I was pointing to or whatever fish it was that I was.... So that's how I learned I guess.

**Kate:** Did anybody even make fun of you or did you have any prejudice because....?

**Rosa:** No, everybody was really friendly, very helpful, very, very helpful.

**Kate:** Did you experience any bigotry or any persecution for being foreign in this country?

**Rosa:** Well strangely enough it was when I took my first job that I really did not know how to speak the language well. But that lady saw I think the possibility of having this.... Something out of the... I can't think of the word, something to draw business, to attract attention. When you do in the business world to attract attention in advertising is always bring something outrageous.

So here I was in the super sharp sportswear where they handle riding clothes and things that I never even handled, and knowing that the manager, I'm talking about. This woman knew that I didn't know the language that well but I was willing to learn, and she knew I had a sense of style because I put things together.

I don't know how she figured it out but before long I was modeling stuff in her store and I think there was a lot of jealousy. Because I wasn't speaking as well as people that was born here and was going to school here and yet she had hired me, a novelty. Is that what I'm trying to say? A curiosity and a novelty maybe.

I was involved in a little fashion show showing whether they were sportswear... It was a sportswear riding, very prestigious little specialty shop in Harrisburg. I think that that was probably the reason why the girls were not as friendly. I don't know why. I didn't do anything to them. I just did my job. I came and went.

But they made fun of me being so naive and would come out with outrageous things about them going out with so many men at the same time. Just stupid stories, like they were trying to impress me or shock me and I would just look at them and say, "Gee. You're sure mixed up, kid." But it did hurt me because I wondered why they would want to be upsetting me. I didn't understand why. I didn't feel I was doing anything to hurt them.

**Kate:** Was that the only experience you ever had like that?

**Rosa:** Yeah, because after that I just learned to...

**Kate:** Speak.

**Rosa:** Not only to speak, I was speaking then, but there were times I had to run and say, "What's jodhpurs?" For instance, somebody would come in and say, "I want to see Jodhpurs in a size whatever, 12," and I'd go, "Sure." I'd run to somebody and say, "What's jodhpurs?" I didn't know what they were.

**Kate:** I don’t know either.

**Rosa:** They were riding breeches.

**Kate:** What about your religious life? Did you continue to go to church here?

**Rosa:** There was a time. I don't think we even were close to a church. I don't remember that being such a big, important part of our everyday life until after the kids came. Somehow I don't remember any connection. I know we went but it wasn't a belonging kind of thing. After the kids and the catechism and the choir and the ushering, you become part of the community kind of. So we did that. We did the right thing after the kids came? No.

**Kate:** Describe your life briefly to me. You had children or what happened after this initial phase in your life? How did you let the course of your life go here in the States?

**Rosa:** We just kept trying to better our position because the income obviously satisfactory to him. He did not receive the same job. He wasn't making enough money to support us or be able to pay the rent. I immediately said I'm going out and get a job and in those days-

**Kate:** You mentioned you tried to better your life, say some of the milestones in your life since then, what's happened to you sort of. You had a family....

**Rosa:** Are you talking about how we progressed from that point to get to be...

**Kate:** To now.

**Rosa:** Oh, to now. Oh that's a long time, lady. We're talking about 40 years. We moved from that situation in Jerome knowing we had to go back to work. We went to Harrisburg and moved on from there to Michigan.

**Kate:** Where in Michigan?

**Rosa:** Right outside Detroit.

**Kate:** North or south?

**Rosa:** Dearborn, River Rouge, Allen Park. That's where mom and dad Samfilippo had decided to move to because with all these boys and work being so scarce, there was the Chappell Steel something and a lot of them got jobs there. That's where Joe was encourage to go to be able to get more permanent work and some benefits, the usual thing and I of course...

Oh we went to live with them because now they had moved so they got this big house in [inaudible 00:46:44] place in Wyandotte, Michigan and so that's where we ended up moving to with them. They could use the help with payments on the house so we had this little basement kind of a bedroom set up. It was nice. It was like our own little pad and I helped with the chores but we paid rent so we were helping each other. That was great. When he went to work at Chappell I went to work at Sears, which was....

**Kate:** Lincoln Park.

**Rosa:** This was in Wyandotte, Michigan. It was still... It was not our home. Lincoln Park was when we bought our own home. My oldest one was born in Wyandotte General. Wyandotte General, can you believe that? Anyway I went to work at Sears. That was then the biggest store in Wyandotte and the whole store you could probably put [inaudible 00:47:43]. No, small by today's standards, but it was a complete store.

Of course I was a salesman without knowing I was a salesman from day one. I guess either my personality or, I don't know. I enjoy people. I'm a people person. So I immediately got a job in display, in advertising, window dressing. I had an absolute ball and learned a lot about the country, a lot about the business, a lot about the language.

**Kate:** What years was this?

**Rosa:** I'd have to remember fifty what? Let's see. My kid was born in '54 so this would have had to be somewhere between '49, '50, '51. I was 17. Does that help? I was almost 17. I wasn’t even legal.

**Kate:** 47 then.

**Rosa:** Was it that, '47, '48?

**Kate:** So in the 40s or 50s you were there. So then you moved to Lincoln Park at one point?

**Rosa:** Then from one job I'm trying to remember when he had been in the firm factory, the steel mill, long enough, he wasn't that happy. He was very much more a creative person. He was not that happy doing that kind of work and people were falling in the lion pits and coming out with no legs. It was horrible, scary. I'm trying to remember the connection.

I think we went directly from there and bought our own little house. We found this couple that wanted to move. It was a brand new subdivision. It just seems like it was always involved with sales and houses. This darling couple that had just bought this little house that was built on Liberty Street on Lincoln Park right by the edge of that park at the very end there was a park. We were-

**Kate:** [inaudible 00:49:22]

**Rosa:** I don't know that we walked through that to go to school for my oldest one that was born there. This is where this kid was born. She was born out of Liberty but she went to-

**Kate:** What school was it?

**Rosa:** Don't remember. Grace Carter is the only thing that comes to mind and that was Arizona.

**Kate:** I know Liberty Street. Okay, then fine.

**Rosa:** There was a little, we were one, two, and three from the corner maybe. We were only the second or third from the corner and we walked through the park to go out through that school, to get to the school for her to go to kindergarten. We were there that long because she was born in '54, started kindergarten, so that would have had to been '59 no, '58. 58, 59. She started school when she was four. We didn't have as many restrictions then. She was ready. So where was I going with this? That we bought our own home and this couple was-

**Kate:** [inaudible 00:50:19] school was it?

**Rosa:** Yeah, I bet it was. Because the bells sound, that's sounds... The minute you said it...

**Kate:** So that school [inaudible 00:50:26] and Champaign.

**Rosa:**  Oh wow.

**Kate:** She went to [inaudible 00:50:30] that’s why.

**Rosa:** Was it inside the park? Do you walk through the park?

**Kate:** [inaudible 00:50:34] 1959 I started at [inaudible 00:50:43]

**Rosa:** You were born in '54 also?

**Kate:** '53.

**Rosa:** Oh, wow.

**Kate:** Okay so you were in Lincoln Park and-

**Rosa:** She was born in one of the generals. Did I say that?

**Kate:** Yes.

**Rosa:** So somehow we got this little house and he land contract. I'd never forget that. In those days, it was taking up their contract and paying them so much because they couldn't wait, they wanted to leave. They weren't sure that we could take.... We weren't even sure. There was no consideration of doing it the way it's done now. They go through the bank and be qualified and get a loan and all that. We just did it directly. You got a house to sell, I want to buy it. Boom, that's it. We dropped the contract and that's the way they went. Then after so many years, I guess we took it over from them and paid them off so then it became ours and when we moved to Arizona, we sold it.

**Kate:** When did you move to Arizona?

**Rosa:** She had to finish kindergarten or first grade, kindergarten so '54, '59. That's right. It was the very end of 59, the very tail-end of '59.

**Kate:** You moved to Arizona.

**Rosa:** Moved to Scottsdale, Arizona, was brand new sub-division. The house had just been built. We'd taken a trip to go look at the subdivision. It was being built by Hall craft of all people in what was supposed to be the latest thing in opportunity.

Well the VA and that, the loans that come about, VA loans and we could buy with nothing down and we had this really great three bedroom kind of large double drive. We had air conditioning put on. Of course in Arizona, how can you live without air conditioning?

She finally got settled in the school and that's where we started with the church and the school and all the activities and built the neighborhood because it was very much built out of all the alfalfa fields and wheat fields. It was a very rural community that was just building up so we were part of that wave that came in-

**Kate:** What did you do for work there?

**Rosa:** What we did for work was that he looked for... I failed to mention that in Michigan, he had started to go... was `not happy with that mundane type of job, so he started to go to school through the VA bill of rights, commercial artist school that he completed. When we moved he was able to pursue that and hired out some shop, some sign shop that was hiring apprentices and so on and worked for some outfit in Scottsdale for a couple, three, four years. I don't even remember how long.

Then decided we would probably be better off to go in business for ourselves because this man was looking to retire and wanted my then-husband to take over that operation but it wasn't satisfactory. He was going to do all the work but take none of the profits and not have any ownership so we decided to go ahead and start our own so we did. It was kind of lean but it was good, started our own shop.

**Kate:** Did you have more children? You had one daughter alright.

**Rosa:** No, I've got another that was born in '60.

**Kate:** Her name is?

**Rosa:** Karen.

**Kate:** Did you have any family tragedies that occurred in the time that you lived in the States here at all that would be major?

**Rosa:** Oh, slightly few. I lost a baby between my first and second child. My husband's father was very, very ill. Well he had cancer. We nursed him and a cousin, also with cancer that we nursed. I'm sorry. My husband had a bout with what they thought was cancer because of the family history but it turned out to be nothing but an aggravated appendix of some sort and I thank God.

I can't remember besides my father, my father, his father. All this happened in just a very short time, the loss of the baby, losing his dad, losing my dad, his cousin that I had just met again over there. I was involved in nursing all these people and it was kind of sad that it happened so fast.

**Kate:** What about your mother coming here? You didn't mention that.

**Rosa:** My mother coming here, we had to go through... That man went through my husband did go through an awful lot of hardship to be able to bring that about. We had to vouch and oh, Jiminy's we had to have a certain amount of money and certain income just to get a visa for her to be coming here to live.

I guess she thought we found a money tree because she would come and go at will and we'd pay for the trips and it was a hardship because instead of paying for my house or starting my family I was paying for trips back and forth. This man wasn't going to be able to take care of it all.

She came and went about three times and the last time she left, I vowed that was going to be the last time because I was about six weeks away from giving birth to my first child and she felt the need to go back and not be here. And not be assisting or being present when that child came so I said, “That it. I think I paid my dues. I'm done. I've got my own family to raise.” So that was it. What else can I tell you?

**Kate:** So she stayed in Italy?

**Rosa:** Mm-hm.

**Kate:** When you look back over your life, how do you feel about having come to this country?

**Rosa:** Wonderful.

**Kate:** You have no regrets?

**Rosa:** Absolutely not.

**Kate:** So you would do it again if you had the same choice?

**Rosa:** Sure, I'm just taking the big step from Arizona, 30 cm and coming out here to California so I don't think a person changes, much as we like to think we change, for the better some things don't change. If you've got a fighting spirit or if you're a survivor, that's it, don't stop dreaming or you die? `

**Kate:** Your life here has been pretty... There have been opportunities for you here?

**Rosa:** Mm-hm. Sure.

**Kate:** Then did you come here to California, did you come alone, are you here alone or with [inaudible 00:56:40]?

**Rosa:** I'm here alone. No, I was divorced in late 78. I lived and started my real estate career in Arizona. My oldest daughter is still there, owns a cute little place in Scottsdale. My youngest one was always pursuing her own type of PR. Both my girls knew exactly what they wanted to do since they were little.

My oldest one is a math teacher at the high school where she graduated from in Scottsdale and the youngest one is here in Santa Monica, works with a big PR firm in, well I'm not sure if it's LA or Beverly Hills, somewhere downtown. I'm always in a position where one's going to be by me and one away from me. When I was in Arizona, this one had come out here. I'd say it's about 10, 11 years. It's been a while.

**Kate:** So at least you have somebody near.

**Rosa:** Yeah, so we're always going to be close to one and away from the other but that allows the other two to travel. This thing to New York was wonderful. We all three traveled together.

**Kate:** To see Ellis Island?

**Rosa:** Yeah, they had this idea about getting involved in the restoration and come to find out about all the wonderful that were coming out of this Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island. The youngest one that's here had started to put this thing together and once she knew that it was going together, she told me that this is what we're planning, this is what we're going to do. So plan it to do this together and we did. We spent the 4th of July there last year.

**Kate:** Did you speak Italian to them at all?

**Rosa:** Nobody wanted to have any part of it. My husband didn't want to learn it from his family, this is the strangest thing and the kids never wanted to learn it from me. Never wanted to, fought me. Now, "Why didn't you make me learn Italian?" So they now both tapes and classes and things and go great. When they were ready they did it. What were you going to do, fight? Make you learn Italian? You're not going to do that? Make me learn it.

**Kate:** I'd like to thank you on behalf of Ellis Island for participating.

**Rosa:** You're welcome.

**Kate:** We'll send you a tape of this too, a copy of this.

**Rosa:** Oh, my.

**Kate:** This is Kate Moore signing off from....

**Rosa:** Fullerton, California Orange County.

**Kate:** Fullerton, California on February 13, 1994.