**[Beginning starts at 00:50:21]**

**Kate:** Good afternoon, this is Kate Moore for the National Park Service. Today is the 13th of December. I’m in St. Clair Shores, Michigan at the home of Angela Serafini who came from Italy in 19 …

**Angela:** 19.

**Kate:** 1919 when she was six years old. Why don’t you begin by giving me your full name and date of birth please?

**Angela:** Angela Serafini, I don’t know whether I was given a middle name. I was born July 27th 1913 in this little village of Felcioni in the commune of Sassoferrato. In a part of Italy, which is north of Rome, but along the Adriatic coast.

**Kate:** What is your maiden name please?

**Angela:** I’ve never married. It’s still my maiden name.

**Kate:** Could you spell the name of your hometown?

**Angela:** Yes, the little village or the commune? I better give …

**Kate:** Both.

**Angela:** The little village was called Felcioni [audio silence].

**Kate:** One more time.

**Angela:** Sassoferrato is spelt, S-A-S-S-O-F-E-R-R-A-T-O. It’s in the region of Ancona, A-N-C-O-N-A, in Italy.

**Kate:** Do you remember what the town looked like?

**Angela:** Yes, the little village was a little farming community, they were all farmers. It was a small farming community, a bit hilly. Everybody lived in the village and they walked out to their farms each morning.

**Kate:** The major industry was agriculture or what else was there?

**Angela:** Yes, agriculture was it. They had a little factory that made tiles for the roofs, at that time. I have since visited there, about 10 years ago, was most the recent stop. They now have a shoe factory and they have a cement business of some sort.

**Kate:** When you were you a child, that tile factory was there?

**Angela:** The tile factory was there, but neither of the other two.

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

**Angela:** Aurelio spelt A-U-R-E-L-I-O.

**Kate:** What was his occupation?

**Angela:** He was just an unskilled laborer.

**Kate:** What did he work at in the town?

**Angela:** I don’t think that he worked at anything except helping his father with the farm because he left home when he was about 14 years old. He first migrated to places in Europe, mostly France and Germany, before he came to America.

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

**Angela:** He was medium height five feet, six inches, I believe, a brownie completion, brown hair, brown eyes, medium weight for that height.

**Kate:** Could you describe his personality and his temperament?

**Angela:** He had a rather impulsive temperament. A great man for being with his buddies, he had travelled around a bit with groups of his friends. When we first came to America, mother and I joined him. I think he was a bit overwhelmed with the responsibility of fatherhood, but he adjusted very well.

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

**Angela:** Not particularly, because I didn’t know my father until I came to America. Only in a picture, they point him out to me in a picture that he was a member of a group of 10 or 12 men.

These were all emigrants who migrated first to Minnesota in a mining village of the mining town of Hibbing, Minnesota. These men had their pictures taken and my father was the only one smoking a cigarette, he had a cigarette in his hand. My mother would point out my father to me as the man with a cigarette in his hand. That’s how I knew my father. I met a stranger when I came to America.

**Kate:** You had never known him before you came?

**Angela:** No, not at all.

**Kate:** What about your mother’s name?

**Angela:** My mother was Anna Mencotti M-E-N-C-O-T-T-I.

**Kate:** That’s her maiden name, Mencotti?

**Angela:** Yes.

**Kate:** What was her occupation?

**Angela:** Just a housewife.

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

**Angela:** She was a beautiful woman. Not too tall, about 5’1” with very peach black hair, a light skin, I have my father’s skin. Brown eyes and good figure, very much interested in her home, she was inclined to do crafty things, all typical Italian temperament. Kind of, would go off the handle rather quickly, but a very warm individual, very much warm.

**Kate:** What were her chores around the house then?

**Angela:** Pardon.

**Kate:** What did she do around the house?

**Angela:** Cook, clean, wash, the duties of a housewife.

**Kate:** Is there a story about your mother that you associate with your childhood?

**Angela:** Not particularly, but she tried very hard to instill in me to get an education, to learn all the duties of a housewife. She tried to get me to learn how to sew my own clothes because that was an art that she didn’t acquire. Other than that, she urged us to have a better life than she did. She didn’t want to see us go through some of the things that she did.

**Kate:** What about brothers and sisters?

**Angela:** I have no brothers, I have two [inaudible 00:58:51].

**Kate:** What were their names?

**Angela:** First one to be born in America was Anna Maria Serafini. She looked very much like my mother and a very intelligent child but she drowned when she was 12 and therefore, we miss her. Then the third child was Ada Serafini, A-D-A.

**Kate:** Ada is how much younger than you?

**Angela:** She’s 11 years younger, actually 10 years 10 months younger than I.

**Kate:** Could you describe your house in Italy as you remember it?

**Angela:** Yes, it was like these townhouses here with two rooms on the first floor and two bedrooms up on the second floor. The houses in that village were all attached, they were really townhouses. They circled around a plaza. As I said the barns for the animals, if they had any, were in a different location.

**Kate:** Do you remember what it was made of, your house?

**Angela:** A stone more than a brick. It did not have any running water at that time or toilet facilities.

**Kate:** How was it heated, do you remember?

**Angela:** A fireplace.

**Kate:** Was there a garden?

**Angela:** The gardens and the farms were always away from the homes. In these little agricultural villages, most of the people lived in the village. Then they would walk out to their farms. This is what my grandfather did.

**Kate:** What did they grow in those …?

**Angela:** Mostly wheat and garden things and vineyards, my grandfather had a lot of vineyards. By the way we lived with my grandparents, the Serafini grandparents’.

I remember the World War 1 was occurring at this time, when I remember things. My uncle who was a brother of my father also lived in that house, but during the time that I was living there he was not there because he was fighting in the war.

My father happened to have left the country before, sometime before Italy entered the war. My dad came here first in 1906, went to Minnesota to work because these other boys, the young men were going there and he also had an aunt living in Hibbing.

He lived there five or six years and then returned to Italy. He met my mother and in about nine months or so they married. I was born nine months almost to the day after their marriage. Then he left sometime after my birth but before Italy went into World War 2. Remember the war broke out in 1914 but Italy didn’t enter the war till 1915.

**Kate:** Do you think that he left knowing that he had a chance of going to war and that’s one of the reasons he left?

**Angela:** I don’t know that, I can’t answer that but I’m awfully glad he left.

**Kate:** How many rooms was in that house that you lived in?

**Angela:** Four.

**Kate:** What kind of furniture did you have?

**Angela:** Very simple. In the kitchen, regular kitchen supplies and they cooked by the fireplace. Living dining room was a big table and chairs. In the corner was a cabinet for storage of your dishes and things.

My mother, since she liked to sew a bit, had a sewing machine in that room and that was it. The big window that overlooked -We had a river going through the village, we could see the river down below.

**Kate:** Did you keep animals at all?

**Angela:** They grew certain grains and had this vineyard.

**Kate:** Which grandparents lived with you, you’re maternal or paternal?

**Angela:** Paternal.

**Kate:** You always lived in the house of your paternal grandparents?

**Angela:** Right. That was the custom in Italy, when you married a man you’d go to his family.

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

**Angela:** My mother mostly and then my grandmother.

**Kate:** What was your favorite food in Italy, do you remember, as a child?

**Angela:** Since I was the first grandchild, my grandfather did things for me. One of the things that I remember, he made a certain sapa which is really a syrup from a mashed grapes. He was a grape wine producer or [inaudible 01:05:30], whatever you want to call it.

When certain grapes that he didn’t use in his wine business I guess not business, he went ahead and cooked it down till it became a syrup.

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

**Angela:** S-A-P-A. This was what I would eat on my polenta, when we had polenta for sapa.

**Kate:** What’s polenta?

**Angela:** Polenta is a corn meal mash actually, but the Italians serve it with a meat sauce usually or a fish sauce or sausage and polenta. Wherever corn is grown in Italy, this seems to be a common grain they use in their everyday cooking.

**Kate:** Do you remember the kitchen of the house?

**Angela:** Yes.

**Kate:** How would you describe it?

**Angela:** Small.

**Kate:** What was in it?

**Angela:** The fireplace, a small table and a couple of chairs, that’s about it.

**Kate:** Was there the water?

**Angela:** There was a sink, but the women had to go to the well to pick up the water.

**Kate:** What was mealtime like?

**Angela:** I don’t know, just like any mealtime.

**Kate:** Everyone ate together?

**Angela:** Yes.

**Kate:** How many meals a day did you eat, do you remember, together?

**Angela:** Probably the evening meal. Because we got up at different times, I’m sure I did. My mother always tended to me.

**Kate:** What were your grandparent’s names?

**Angela:** My grandfather’s name was Marc Antonio, M-A-R-C Antonio, no excuse me I’m wrong, Luc Antonio, L-U-C and then A-N-T-O-N-I-O, double name. My grandmother was Mary Serafini.

**Kate:** To whom were you especially close in the family?

**Angela:** My grandfather and my mother.

**Kate:** Do you have any anecdotes about your grandfather?

**Angela:** Yes, he really spoiled the dickens out of me. He always used to go to Rome in the winter month because of his wine making ability. He would go to the homes of the wealthier people and make their wines.

He always brought me something home. It caused a little jealousy amongst the other playmates, because I always had a gift from Rome. I remember he brought me a little basket. Then he would take me on his shoulders to his vineyards, which were a distance away as I said. We’d pick grapes and put it.

The only time he ever would get angry at me is because I picked one little grape out of a bunch. He always insisted I pick the whole bunch. I didn’t want the whole bunch. I wanted to go and try each different -Because he had several different kinds of grapes.

**Kate:** What grape region was it again?

**Angela:** Ancona, it’s off the Adriatic Coast and just north, about 200 and some miles north of Rome. Rome is on the western side of Italy, if you think of the map, Rome is on the west side and we lived on the east side near the Adriatic.

We were about 10 or 15 miles inland from the Adriatic. Ancona is a city port, is a port on the Adriatic. Our province is still called the Province of Ancona.

**Kate:** What type of wine is produced there?

**Angela:** Either the dark wine or the white wine. Muscatel was the white grapes that they used a lot of. The dark wine, the black wine or deep red wine, I can’t tell you the name of the grapes.

**Kate:** What was religious life like in Italy at that time? Were you religious your family was it …?

**Angela:** Yes.

**Kate:** What denomination?

**Angela:** Catholic.

**Kate:** What did you do to worship?

**Angela:** We did the usual things, follow the Holy days and then go to church every Sunday. I was naturally baptized at birth, but I remember having my first Holy Communion in Italy.

It was not done in the little village where we came it was done in the bigger community of Sassoferrato. Sassoferrato was a little city of about eight or nine thousand people. It has a, what they call a [borgor 01:11:35] which is the low flat land and then a big hill.

Evidently early on the community started up on that hill. In our church that I had my communion in was up there in that convent. I can’t tell you the name of the church however.

**Kate:** Was everyone in your family religious? Went to mass?

**Angela:** I would say yes. My grandparents were not as strict with the religion as my mother was.

**Kate:** Was her family more religious?

**Angela:** Yes, definitely.

**Kate:** Her family was from what region?

**Angela:** The same region only they lived in a different village nearby.

**Kate:** How about at home, did you have prayers every night before you went to sleep? Did you have…?

**Angela:** Yes, my mother would say the prayers and I had to repeat her.

**Kate:** At night?

**Angela:** At night.

**Kate:** Did your grandparents do the same, do you know?

**Angela:** No.

**Kate:** It was to teach you prayers?

**Angela:** Yes, she taught me prayers. I remember that I used to get tired of it so I’d ran off to my grandmother and sleep with her for a while. She didn’t bother me so much. I remember that specifically.

**Kate:** Did you experience any religious prosecution or prejudice at all?

**Angela:** No, none whatsoever.

**Kate:** What about holiday celebrations, what were your favorites?

**Angela:** Christmas all the time. It was always a happy occasion regardless of the holidays because I remember going to my maternal grandparents. My mother comes from a large family, not a small one like my dad did.

My mother had five sisters and only three brothers. The brothers were in America, there was only one that went back. These men it seems as though they come over and then find things not so good they go back. One of her brothers went to live in Italy and remained there and died there.

The other two came to Detroit. I didn’t know them until we moved here. Therefore, the holidays were all spent at maternal grandparents’ house.

**Kate:** What were their names?

**Angela:** Mary Mencotti and my grandfather was Joseph Mencotti.

**Kate:** What did you do at Christmas?

**Angela:** We had La Befana which was our Santa Claus. He always brought us a gift and we had to hang up our stocking and I got …

**Kate:** How do you spell La Befana?

**Angela:** B-E-F-A-N-A, very simple. We hang our stockings and we’d find an orange maybe and some nuts, some candies.

**Kate:** How about gifts?

**Angela:** A doll was about almost my usual gift at Christmas time. We didn’t get the things that children nowadays get, we just weren’t that wealthy.

**Kate:** What about church? Was church a part of it?

**Angela:** Sure, always.

**Kate:** When did you go to church?

**Angela:** Usually in the morning.

**Kate:** Christmas day?

**Angela:** Yeah on Christmas day. While I was small, as you grow up it’s a little different.

**Kate:** What do you remember of your school life in Italy?

**Angela:** I didn’t have any school life in Italy, because they don’t take their children in until they are six years old and I had just turned six. My mother taught me a little bit at home.

**Kate:** How about English, did you know any English before you came?

**Angela:** No.

**Kate:** What did your family do for entertainment?

**Angela:** The entertainment in those villages is between families. Whenever there’s a holiday or some occasion to get together and have a dance somewhere, this is what they did.

**Kate:** What were the names of the dances they did?

**Angela:** The same as we do today. In my part of the country they didn’t have any dances that were peculiar to the peasant life.

**Kate:** You mean waltzes?

**Angela:** Yes, [inaudible 01:16:34].

**Kate:** What games did you play as a child? What type of children’s game?

**Angela:** I danced like the grownups, they used to have a kids dance. These families would get together and they would teach their children to do …

**Kate:** You danced the dances with the grownups that you learned to dance there?

**Angela:** Yeah. We played amongst our own playmates, played house I guess.

**Kate:** If you would tell a childhood story to people about your childhood which one would you tell? Do you have any stories either you being naughty or something unusual that you did or something happened to you?

**Angela:** Mainly the fact that we were always participating with our parents. I didn’t have a father and I always felt let out that my father wasn't around like the rest of the kids. We were always doing things in groups, parents with their children.

**Kate:** Who decided to come to the United States for you?

**Angela:** My father.

**Kate:** He came first?

**Angela:** Yes.

**Kate:** You mentioned that he knew an aunt he had in Higgins?

**Angela:** In Hibbing.

**Kate:** Hibbings?

**Angela:** Hibbing.

**Kate:** Hibbing?

**Angela:** Hibbing.

**Kate:** Hibbing, sorry.

**Angela:** He went to live with her the first years before he was married.

**Kate:** Now when he first went over did someone sponsor him? Did someone send him the money?

**Angela:** No.

**Kate:** Where did he get the money to come over?

**Angela:** He always worked. These boys go out and work from the time they can …

**Kate:** He saved the money?

**Angela:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Do you remember getting your papers ready and getting everything ready to go?

**Angela:** No, my mother was involved in that.

**Kate:** What about packing?

**Angela:** I don’t remember that either.

**Kate:** You don’t remember packing? You don’t remember what you left behind and what you retained?

**Angela:** No, just what my mother tells us. My mother left behind her bedroom furniture and a lot of her diary, both of cloth and stuff like that. When I went back, 10 years or 12 years ago, I saw some of the furniture was still left in that upper bedroom.

Her dresser was still there and that was lovely and I wished I had it here. It was a walnut piece, with marble top. Relatives began splitting it and taking parts of it and all that was left in that house.

In the meanwhile that house, the property have certain rules, most of it goes to the males of the house. One uncle had finally married and had his own family there, two children, a boy and a girl. He died. Well the property goes to his son officially.

The son married, had his own son and died young. He was only 32, or 33 years old. That house went to his son, a second cousin of mine in other words. The widow when her husband died would not stay in the house, she went off to Rome, to work I suppose and raise her son.

They did not want to return back to the village. They put the house up for a sale and now the house is owned by somebody else. The person that bought it was a Roman, in Rome it’s very hot in the summer time, they like to go up in the hills.

We were in a slightly hilly country and it was cooler up there. As a matter of fact, we weren’t far from the mountains. They bought this house as a cottage, so to speak, for their summer vacations.

**Kate:** [Audio silence] about America before you came?

**Angela:** Not much, not anything really. She just told me where we were going. She tried her best to teach me the name of the town of the city here in Detroit and …

**Kate:** Did she know any English?

**Angela:** No, she’d never been away for more than about 50 miles distance from where she was born.

**Kate:** Was she happy to leave?

**Angela:** No, very unhappy.

**Kate:** Did you want to leave?

**Angela:** I had no choice. I had no feelings except that I was unhappy that she was unhappy.

**Kate:** How did you know she was unhappy?

**Angela:** She didn’t never forgot telling me about it.

**Kate:** You mean before she left?

**Angela:** I was not so much aware of it, but after we landed here she just didn’t like it. She’s almost the youngest in her large family and she missed her sisters very much, her family.

**Kate:** She was homesick for her family?

**Angela:** Absolutely, very homesick.

**Kate:** Do you remember any attitude she had before she left, back in Italy when you were small?

**Angela:** She just didn’t want to come. It was her father who said, “You’re married now you have to follow your husband.” I know that she was unhappy about coming. Once she was here, she was unhappy.

It wasn't until Ann was born and was maybe four, five years old that she said, “I can’t go back.” Because my father was getting disgusted with her, he was ready to send her back. He talked about it, but I don’t know if he really meant it.

**Kate:** Do you remember the discussion between her father and her back in Italy before she left?

**Angela:** No, because I didn’t know my father, he left.

**Kate:** No I mean your mother’s father.

**Angela:** My mother’s father …

**Kate:** When he said, “You have to go.” Did you hear that conversation?

**Angela:** No, she told me that.

**Kate:** How did your father feel about you coming?

**Angela:** He insisted that we come. We could only come after the war.

**Kate:** Did anyone give you a goodbye party?

**Angela:** No, there wasn’t such a thing. I only can tell you what one of my cousins said when I visited there more recently. He said my mother cried and cried, she says, “I’ll never see you again.” That was her feeling and she didn’t see her parents again.

**Kate:** How much luggage did you pack, do you remember?

**Angela:** No, I haven’t any idea.

**Kate:** Did you take any food, do you remember, with you?

**Angela:** No.

**Kate:** Did you have any special toy or anything you took with you?

**Angela:** No.

**Kate:** You traveled with your mother and you?

**Angela:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Kate:** What port did you leave from?

**Angela:** Naples.

**Kate:** How did you get from home to that port?

**Angela:** I presume by train, that’s the only way we could have gone.

**Kate:** You don’t remember the train trip?

**Angela:** No, I don’t remember that train trip. All I remember is that my grandfather, maternal grandfather, took it upon himself to make sure that mother had an escort or was with someone. He found out that another family was coming to America from around there.

In this case, the man had come back to pick up his family of five children and a wife. We traveled with them up to Naples and got on the same boat with them. Then in New York we had to separate because they were going to Minnesota and we came to Detroit.

I remember the crossing somewhat, it was a very lengthy crossing. I remember Naples, only again seeing the first street cars and the first -I don’t remember when I saw the first blacks in Naples or whether they were on the ship. I can’t remember.

Once we were on the ship and were mid ocean somewhere, we had boats coming, small boats with coal to be delivered at our ship. The people that were delivering the coal were very black people.

I tried to figure out what islands we might have crossed, where these people could come and deliver us some extra fuel. They were in loin, they just had a little thing covering their privates and that's all.

The passengers would throw them buns and white bread, they ran for it, they acted like, in my mind as a child, I used to think, I wonder if they were slaves, when I learned about the slavery here in America. I don’t know it might have been the Azores, that’s not so far away from Italy.

**Kate:** You remember seeing people of a different race for the first time?

**Angela:** Right.

**Kate:** What about the name of the ship do you remember it?

**Angela:** Yeah Dante Alighieri.

**Kate:** How do you spell that, do you remember it?

**Angela:** A-L-I-G-H-I-E-R-I.

**Kate:** Just to go back a bit, before you were going to get on the boat, do you remember waiting for it?

**Angela:** Yes, at the dock I remember. Again there, I remember these people throwing money into the water. These young boys would dive into the water and collect those moneys that were thrown overboard. That really intrigued me. I’ll never forget that because I didn’t see that again until I went to Mexico.

**Kate:** This is in Italy?

**Angela:** This is in Italy.

**Kate:** Where did you stay when you waited for the boat?

**Angela:** We were put in a hotel, that was another episode that I remember well, because I would wake up during the night and my mother was fanning me. She had me …

**Kate:** She had you?

**Angela:** Laying on a towel that she had brought from home, eminently this place was not very...

**Kate:** Clean?

**Angela:** Clean. It wasn't that it was hot. I guess there were some cockroaches around there. This man that we were entrusted to, there were seven of them traveling all together. He had to economize.

**Kate:** You stayed in the hotel how long, one night?

**Angela:** I don’t know.

**Kate:** No family member saw you off, you were by yourself. You had this man who saw you off?

**Angela:** You mean to the boat? They saw us off to the train from the village.

**Kate:** What was that like?

**Angela:** Everybody crying and the usual stuff.

**Kate:** When did the ship depart from Naples, do you remember the year and the day?

**Angela:** Yeah I have the dates here. It was September, the 10th 1919.

**Kate:** Where did you sleep on the ship? Do you remember the ships accommodations at all?

**Angela:** We had to go third class on account of the man. My mother always says she had enough money to go second class.

**[Continuation begins at 00:00:00]**

**Kate:** What about the dining facility, the sleeping facility, could you describe what you remember.

**Angela:** The sleeping facilities were- words don’t come to me easily anymore. We were in a big room with other people, other people of the same sex of course. These beds that children have …

**Kate:** Bunk beds.

**Angela:** These were bunks. Food was very poor, at least my mother constantly complained about it and she hardly ate. The trip was a very lengthy one. It was about a month in transit.

**Kate:** Why so long?

**Angela:** The only reason that my mother told me was because they were watching for mines, it was right after the war and so we came. Amnesty was signed in 1918, the fall of 1918 and we came almost a year after or immediately after, 10 months after.

**Kate:** Do you remember the food yourself?

**Angela:** No, not necessarily. Except in the afternoon, maybe it’s because my mother -Around four o’clock they served us a hot bread, like a focaccia what we know today as a focaccia. She says she lived on that and I did likewise I guess.

**Kate:** Do you remember the dining area, with whom you ate?

**Angela:** No I don’t. Again, I was with my mother and this family.

**Kate:** What about other nationalities, do you remember other nationalities aboard?

**Angela:** On the boat yes, that’s the thing that surprised me. The Dutch people with their wooden shoes and other people were dressed very gaily, colorful costumes. I didn’t know that Italians wore costumes too but they seemed to exist only in the southern parts of Italy. They didn’t exist in our parts of Italy, where I was raised.

**Kate:** You saw people with wooden shoes and what did you think about that?

**Angela:** Thought it was odd.

**Kate:** What else did you see? Did you hear the languages spoken?

**Angela:** Sure, but I didn’t understand them, it was very strange to me.

**Kate:** How about going on deck, do you remember going on deck?

**Angela:** Yes.

**Kate:** What did you see?

**Angela:** Ocean and people, that’s about it.

**Kate:** Were you allowed to play on deck at all?

**Angela:** I don’t remember that, but I imagine so.

**Kate:** Was it a rough or smooth sailing?

**Angela:** A bit rough.

**Kate:** Were any of you sick [inaudible 00:03:28]?

**Angela:** Yes. A lot of people were sick.

**Kate:** Was your mother?

**Angela:** I guess my mother was but I wasn’t, I faired all right.

**Kate:** What else about the voyage, do you remember anything in particular?

**Angela:** Not really, not that much, except these black men had just bothered me because they were fighting for the bread. These Dutch people and a lot of, I imagine they were from Russia or those countries that wore the babushkas, they were in very colorful head dresses and skirts that were like [inaudible 00:04:11] very floral. I hadn’t seen that kind of clothing before.

**Kate:** What did your mother tell you while you were on the boat? Did she tell you anything?

**Angela:** Yes to be careful and not to go try to do things on deck that might injure me or fall overboard. There were gossips going around, you know how a child listens to all these going on, once I heard that somebody fell overboard or threw herself overboard.

**Kate:** Do you remember seeing land for the first time?

**Angela:** Yes.

**Kate:** What was that like?

**Angela:** I saw the Statue of Liberty.

**Kate:** How was that?

**Angela:** Exciting. I didn’t understand it but these older people were all so excited that you couldn’t help.

**Kate:** How were they excited?

**Angela:** Talking, laughing and joyous that they had finally arrived.

**Kate:** Was everybody on deck at that moment?

**Angela:** Sure.

**Kate:** What about your mother?

**Angela:** Likewise.

**Kate:** Was she happy?

**Angela:** Sure, she was happy because she had had such a bad voyage. She suffered from lack of decent food and sleep, proper sleep. We didn’t like our accommodation or she didn’t.

**Kate:** Was there cheering or anything like that? Do you remember any of that?

**Angela:** I think so. All I can say is there’s was a lot of talking, a lot of laughter going on.

**Kate:** Do you remember seeing New York City for the first time, the skyline?

**Angela:** No, that didn’t make much of an impression on me.

**Kate:** Going to Ellis Island, how did you get from the ship to Ellis Island?

**Angela:** That’s the part I don’t remember. All I remember is this big room in Ellis Island where we were placed.

**Kate:** What was it like? Describe the smells and sounds and everything.

**Angela:** It was full of people and we were sitting on wooden benches. We just waited. This was the time that I remember a good deal of it because I was very uncomfortable. I had to go to the bathroom. My mother didn’t know where to take me. I was hungry, so I started to cry. She didn’t know what to do for me.

Along comes a man that stopped to ask my mother in Italian, “Why is she crying?” She explained to him that I had to go to the bathroom and she didn’t know where to take me and hat I was hungry.

He showed her where the bathroom was, it was just off the big room. I remember it as a big room, to a child a small room would -everything looks big because now when I saw it, if it’s the same size it’s just average. We went to the bathroom, washed our hands.

When we came back this gentleman came back with a loaf of bread and some cheese. I don’t suppose you would know because you’re much younger. At one time there was a cheese on the market and I remember seeing it after I landed here. It’s called Gorgonzola, but it had larva in it. They claimed that that cheese was the best, we didn’t eat the cheese. We had never seen it before. We ate the bread.

Then we sat for a while longer. Then a lady came along, I remember her as being such a beautiful woman. She spoke Italian and she knew -Evidently she was a part of the setup there and she put us on the train for Detroit.

**Kate:** Was it clean at Ellis Island?

**Angela:** Yes, I can’t say that it was dirty. It was just filled with people. I do remember my mother, as we were led into the- before we sat down, we had to go through a narrow place. Everybody was pushing and she was so cautious because on the right side of us, was a wire mesh that screened us somewhat.

She says, “Be careful don’t touch that, you might break your hand if you hang on to that with all the shoving behind.” There was a man that then interrogated us, just asked us where we were going is really all he. When he came to me he asked me and I told him, as best as I could.

**Kate:** Did he ask you in English?

**Angela:** Yes of course. It was not an Italian man. He started to howl, the way I answered him. I was embarrassed, I didn’t know whether, did I do something wrong?

**Kate:** He was laughing?

**Angela:** He was laughing at me for the way I pronounced it I guess. From there we sat down and the episode that I told you occurred.

**Kate:** What about a medical examination?

**Angela:** Nothing, because we had all of that done in Europe. I have those papers because I looked them up. Wherein there was proof of my mother’s marriage to my father and that I was their legal daughter. That we had a physical exam and that everything was fine.

**Kate:** Were you detained in Ellis Island at all?

**Angela:** No, because the train that we took to Detroit was a night train and we had to get to that.

**Kate:** Was there any entertainment going on?

**Angela:** No.

**Kate:** When you went to the train, who was to meet you in Detroit then?

**Angela:** My father and my uncle. My uncle was my mother’s brother the one that was …

**Kate:** What at that point do you think were your mother’s expectations about America?

**Angela:** I don’t know.

**Kate:** You got to Detroit, where were you going in Detroit then?

**Angela:** To my Uncle John’s home, who was here in East part of Detroit.

**Kate:** Do you remember what the address?

**Angela:** Yes Burns, it was on Burns Street, 600 Bern Street, it’s off of [inaudible 00:11:49].

**Kate:** It’s not too far from here is it?

**Angela:** No.

**Kate:** How did you get there from the train?

**Angela:** In a cab.

**Kate:** Had you ridden in cars before?

**Angela:** No, not I, my mother must have.

**Kate:** What were your first impressions of Detroit when you got there?

**Angela:** None that I remember. I just remember the cab that we came in. My father didn’t mean anything to me. My uncle didn’t mean anything because I didn’t know them.

**Kate:** Did you see anything at that point that you’ve never seen before?

**Angela:** No, not really.

**Kate:** What about the house of your uncle, could you describe it?

**Angela:** Yeah, it was a one floor house, bungalow, pretty good size bungalow, living room, dining room and a reception room when you enter. A large kitchen and two bedrooms and a bath downstairs and then he had another bedroom and bath built in upstairs.

As I was growing up we used to visit there all the time and go there. My American aunt, my uncle John, her name was Grace, took us downtown to buy American clothes. Dressed me up, and I remember what beautiful clothes I had.

**Kate:** How many rooms were in that house?

**Angela:** Five down and two up.

**Kate:** How people lived there?

**Angela:** My uncle and his wife and two boys. He had only two sons at that point, later on he had a daughter.

**Kate:** Your father was living where?

**Angela:** My father was living in Detroit also, but with my other uncle. They were in a flat near Highland Park, Michigan.

**Kate:** Did your father then come to stay with you?

**Angela:** We stayed there for a day or two. Then we moved to our other uncle’s house, where my father and he shared the living quarters.

**Kate:** The flat?

**Angela:** The flat.

**Kate:** What about the neighborhood at that time could you describe the neighborhood.

**Angela:** It was just a poor laboring people’s neighborhood. That particular street had duplexes or two family flats I should say. Then my father rented a house for us, a block or so away from there, still in Detroit. That was a bungalow and it was furnished. Then he bought it and we lived there for a number of years.

**Kate:** What was he employed as at that time?

**Angela:** At Fords.

**Kate:** Doing what?

**Angela:** Mechanical work.

**Kate:** On the line?

**Angela:** On the line.

**Kate:** Your uncle?

**Angela:** My uncle was an educated man. He had had a lot of education in Italy. He was supposed to have been a priest. When he was ready to be ordained, he gave that up. He wasn’t going to go through with it.

He came to America as they all do. He ended up in Pennsylvania, I don’t know why in Pennsylvania. He didn’t know the language and he had to take any menial job. Then he met a woman and he fell in love and after a lot of trauma he -Her family had been here, she was born here.

**Kate:** Was she Italian?

**Angela:** Yes, her parents were from Naples. They finally gave up and allowed her to marry him. By that time he had gotten a job as a clerk somewhere.

When they moved to Detroit, he managed a small bank for her uncle. Her uncle owned this bank. It was one of the private banks. That’s where he worked until the depression.

Then when the depression came he established a tourist agency across the street from there. That was down by the Eastern Market area, where most of the immigrants lived at that time.

**Kate:** Was anyone unemployed in your family?

**Angela:** At that time? No.

**Kate:** What about the language? How did that pose a problem to your family?

**Angela:** My father knew some English, spoke broken English. My uncle by that time had learned English and could speak, read and write it. My father didn’t write it, he could read it. The language was a barrier for my mother. It was also difficult for me. I had a very hard time beginning at school.

**Kate:** Where did you go to school?

**Angela:** I went to Highland Park School because we lived close in the elementary school. I was put in kindergarten first. Then I had to go to the first grade. The teachers in kindergarten were very nice, they would keep me back from recess and help me with my English. I liked them very much but when I went into the first class, I wasn’t very happy.

**Kate:** Why not?

**Angela:** Because I was told to go to school with a young kid down the street who knew all the ropes. In this school, they had a crazy system, you’d go into the entrance of the door, the girls went up one stairway, the boys went the other.

Then there I lost him. I was befuddled and I did something wrong. This teacher, this was the first grade teacher, she came by and she started to talk to me. I didn’t know what the heck she was saying. She was shaking me up and I started to cry. Then what hurt me most was the boy comes around and he sees this going on and I knew that he would tell my mother. It was hard.

**Kate:** How long did was it hard for you then? Were you ever teased for being Italian?

**Angela:** Sure, teased because I was much taller than the rest of them. I’m not tall now.

**Kate:** You were older than you were…?

**Angela:** Yeah I was six and they were five.

**Kate:** You were teased for being taller but were you teased for being Italian?

**Angela:** For not being able to talk. I see the people down below us were Italians too. He knew the Italians but it was mostly because I was taller than the rest of them.

**Kate:** What’d they call you?

**Angela:** I can’t remember that.

**Kate:** Good. Your teachers you say treated you well.

**Angela:** The first ones did. The next one, on the first grade was the one that did all the shaking and yelling at me, going up this long stairway. I didn’t forget it and when I went into her class, I was terrified.

**Kate:** What happened in first grade, did you get through it?

**Angela:** Yes, I got through with all of it but it was traumatic. On one occasion for instance, she made us crawl on the floor doing this. Anyway, I got down on the floor and I had injured my arm the previous day going on a picnic with my aunt. I fell and eminently I hurt my hand.

Then it really was so painful, but I wasn’t going to tell her that. I went along and finally I gave up with a scream. She came to me and wondered what was wrong and I tried to tell her. That evening finally my parents decided that I had broken my wrist. They took me to somebody that put me in a cast. I was in a cast.

**Kate:** She knew it was serious?

**Angela:** Yeah, but I never liked her.

**Kate:** What happened after that? Did it get better and better?

**Angela:** We left, I can’t say that it -She was more decent to me shall I say. She began to look like she had some feelings for me, but we left. My parents had this house for themselves so we moved a block or two away. Then I was in a different school district.

**Kate:** You had any problems there?

**Angela:** No I didn’t, except that I got sick. I developed diphtheria and we were quarantined [audio silence] and was born and she was just a baby. We lived in this house with no heat.

**Kate:** What were the symptoms of diphtheria?

**Angela:** I had a bad cold for several days. Then my mother one evening looked into my throat and she said, “This looks bad,” and she sent my father for the doctor. He was trying to get the Italian doctor. He lived with another relative of ours, my mother’s family, a cousin of hers. He was also related to my aunt Grace.

He wasn’t at his regular residence and so my dad had to go where he was dining which was at my uncle’s house. He went there and got him. Then of course a doctor had a car and they picked up some medication.

The toxin, anti-toxin had just come in and they got enough for all of us. We were all injected. When he came home he was quite sure and when he came to our house he was quite sure I had diphtheria. That’s what it [inaudible 00:24:14] …

**Kate:** How does one get diphtheria?

**Angela:** It’s an organism, diphtheria organism, corynebacterium diphtheria. It’s a very serious. It could be a very serious disease because it infects the tonsils. Then the tonsils get bigger and bigger and closes your opening to your throat.

There was an epidemic of diphtheria. I had this serious cold, this was in 1922. It eminently had developed and they didn’t want it to spread to my sister especially. My mother put my father and she in the second bedroom and she slept with me.

We had such poor heating in the house. They had a stove right in the dining room to heat the five rooms. My little sister, she put her hands out of the covers and the next morning her hands were frozen.

My mother nearly panicked. When the doctor came, because he would come every morning to see me, he was able to thaw her hands out without any residual effect which was wonderful, the trials of an immigrant.

**Kate:** You recovered then?

**Angela:** Yes, after a long time.

**Kate:** How long is long?

**Angela:** About a month and a half.

**Kate:** And so you were out of school?

**Angela:** Yes.

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

**Angela:** Terrible, because that was the first year that -This was right after Christmas. My father’s friends had gotten me a Christmas tree and all these toys, this little girl coming from Italy. All of those things were burned, my books and everything was gone.

**Kate:** Because of the germs?

**Angela:** Yeah.

**Kate:** When you finally did go back to school, what was you feeling at that time?

**Angela:** I was behind things but I did catch up because the teacher realized what had happened to me and she helped me along. I’ll never forget her name was Ms. Robtail.

**Kate:** Did your mother ever catch it?

**Angela:** No she didn’t, nor did my father. This was a very bad period in the history of our industry here. There was the depression on in 1922 so my father was out of work in addition to that. It was a tough time for them.

**Kate:** Do you remember anything in learning English, anything that happened to you at school when you finally realized something or?

**Angela:** Yeah, for instance the difference between tomatoes and potatoes used to bother me. My mother would send me to the store to buy a few vegetables. I’ll never forget this corner store, it was a Jewish family and she couldn’t understand why I couldn’t get the right things.

Finally I had to go back. I told this boy that was at the store, the fellow, the son of the Jewish proprietor. I said, “I want red potatoes.” I was to buy tomatoes, I didn’t see them.

He says, “Red potatoes? I never heard of red potatoes.” “Well they do exist nowadays.” I remember him just howling at me, “Oh there isn’t such a thing.” Then you go home and your mother says, “Yes there are.” It’s hard.

**Kate:** What about your religious life, did you continue to go to church?

**Angela:** Sure.

**Kate:** Was church a part of your life as much here as in Italy?

**Angela:** Yes, my mother believed in. She might not go but she insisted that I go.

**Kate:** Did she go to a church that spoke Italian?

**Angela:** Yes. It just so happened that we were in a neighborhood where the priest had gone to school with my uncle priest, the one that her brother, the one that lived here on the east …

**Kate:** [Inaudible 00:29:21]?

**Angela:** Yes, he was a wonderful priest.

**Kate:** You were speaking English in school but Italian at home?

**Angela:** Right.

**Kate:** Did it ever change to English at home?

**Angela:** No.

**Kate:** How about your younger sisters, did they learn Italian?

**Angela:** They had to learn Italian, broken as it was, they did.

**Kate:** Did you ever move from that address?

**Angela:** After my father died. My father died in 1942, he had cancer. The neighborhood had gotten kind of rough. It was a poor man’s neighborhood but everybody was respectable, they were all raising a family.

They were not all Italians, some of the original German families that owned that property. My father used to tell us that the area had been subdivided from the farming community that it originally was. That portion belonged to some German family.

The off springs of that family had purchased some of the lots, so they were still in that neighborhood. There were a couple of Jewish families and one Russian family and the rest were all Italians.

**Kate:** What did you do for entertainment when you were here as a child?

**Angela:** Just what any child does. Although I was given a lot of responsibilities at home, I had to help. I didn’t have as much time to play around as a lot of other kids did. I had to help with my sisters too.

**Kate:** Did any of your family members ever return to Italy?

**Angela:** Uncle John returned for my grandparents’ 50th anniversary. At that time my mother was supposed to go back but she was pregnant with the third child and so she couldn’t go. Whether she could have afforded it, I don’t know I have no idea.

**Kate:** Was it ever considered to bring your grandparents over here?

**Angela:** No.

**Kate:** They never wanted to? Neither set of grandparents?

**Angela:** No.

**Kate:** Do you think your family was satisfied? Your father was satisfied or dissatisfied with life in America?

**Angela:** He must have been satisfied but periods when he was very exhausted from his job at Fords because they paid them well as I understand, but they worked them very hard. He would get a little discouraged, he’d always say, “Well I’m not going to die in this country,” But he did.

**Kate:** How about your mother?

**Angela:** She was very dissatisfied and then she became very satisfied and happy. She adjusted finally but at the beginning it was hard.

**Kate:** How about at the time of your father’s death? Was she dissatisfied and then became satisfied later or?

**Angela:** No, she was satisfied by then. Especially after, as I said -Before even she had the third child, she was settled.

**Kate:** Because she felt she couldn’t go back?

**Angela:** That’s right.

**Kate:** She never saw her parents?

**Angela**: No.

**Kate**: Your father, did he ever see his parents?

**Angela:** No, only when he went back the first time.

**Kate:** Did any family tragedy occur during the years following your coming to America?

**Angela:** Yeah my sister Ann died, drowned, that was the biggest tragedy.

**Kate:** How did that happen?

**Angela:** It’s a long story. My Uncle John, this man that had the two sons, wanted a daughter of his own so much. Finally they had one. Before they even had that daughter they took to Ann because she looked like my mother, and my mother and her brother were very much alike.

They were somewhat partial to her. They would have her at their house, vacation was going down there. On this last year of her life, it was time for her to go to Uncle John and aunt Grace’s house for her vacation.

She went but she never got back, because my aunt took the two girls, her daughter and my own sister, on a picnic at [inaudible 00:34:31]. She went into the water where it was laid off to wade and never came back. She met a hole or something and she just went down.

**Kate:** What happened with your family then, how was it announced and what happened?

**Angela:** It was very hard. Very a strained of two families, they were never the same any more. It was a deep tragedy because my aunt was a sickly woman and my mother could never understand why she took these two kids with the help of a neighbor who had a car to [inaudible 00:35:16] and then dared to go into the water with the both of the girls. The three of them went into this water to wade. My sister didn’t make it back.

**Kate:** She wasn’t a swimmer? She didn’t swim?

**Angela:** No, nobody swam.

**Kate:** They were holes?

**Angela:** Yeah.

**Kate:** What about the course of your life? What happened after your childhood years? Did you live in the area this? Did you go on to school?

**Angela:** I went to the grade school and high school that I was allotted to. In high school I’d never thought I’d get to college so I took as much, I took five years in high school for a four year. Finally, this was again beginning depression and I was allowed -I started college I started at Wayne.

**Kate:** You went?

**Angela:** I went to Wayne. I was able to stay only a year, my freshman year. Then my father was out of work completely, had three days a week, he worked earned $25 a week.

One of my aunt’s relatives’ sister’s encouraged me to take this course of medical technology. I didn’t want to be a teacher. My mother felt that the only thing that was dignified for a girl to do was to be a teacher or work in an office. I didn’t want it work in an office and I didn’t want to be a teacher.

I tried this. I was admitted into a course at Grace Hospital here in Detroit. I took this course, which was six months. Then they selected two of the better students to stay on another six months which I did do. At that point they paid us back $150 which was the cost of the course.

**Kate:** What was the course?

**Angela:** Medical Technology. At that time you could work at that profession with these two years of college. It was immediately increased thereafter to a college degree, which meant that you had to have three years of college preparatory and then one year at the hospital training, work training.

Anyway, I got through that. Jobs were scarce. Finally I found a temporary job for six weeks. I was out of work again. Finally I got a job, six months after graduation, working at Wayne County General Hospital.

Finally I could get back to Detroit and I went to Grace Hospital, worked there for nine more years. I was the head technician for the last seven years. That was when World War 2 broke out while I was there.

I was still working there but had a lot of responsibilities. I ran the place pretty much because the boss man, the pathologist, was in service. They had a pathologist coming up, but as far as the girls were concerned, I had to supervise them. See that the tests were done and supplies were in. We had a school for medical technology there so I had to do some teaching too.

Then I decided I’d had about enough of that, it was overwhelming job. Because these girls that came into work would last about a year and then they were married and they followed their husbands into service, wherever they were sent.

**Kate:** This is during the war you’re talking about?

**Angela:** Yeah.

**Kate:** So?

**Angela:** In the meanwhile, my father got sick and died. I decided to change jobs. I went back to Wayne County where I could just do microbiology, which is what I was mostly interested in.

Actually microbiology is a part of medical technology, only I wanted to stick to that more than some of the others. I worked there and went back to school, nights, to finish my degree.

**Kate:** You had a BA in biology?

**Angela:** Yes, then I intended to get my Masters, but I was so tired going to school because with science degrees, you just have so much lab work, I had to take a lot of chemistry.

I used to drive home eating my supper while driving to make it in class down here at Wayne in time for six o’clock classes. Which went from six to nine, then by the time I got home it was 10 o’clock. It was really rough.

Finally I made it. I was too tired so I took a couple of years off and then I quit working. No, first I went back to Michigan. I went to the University of Michigan. Taking one course at a time and then they wouldn’t allow me to do that anymore. That was my experience for the first year. Then I had to take off entirely and go full time the next year.

**Kate:** At where?

**Angela:** At the University of Michigan.

**Kate:** You graduated from the University of Michigan?

**Angela:** With a Masters yeah.

**Kate:** With a Masters?

**Angela:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Kate:** In microbiology?

**Angela:** Microbiology.

**Kate:** Since that time, the war, you worked in what capacity then? What job did you work?

**Angela:** After I got my Masters I went into research which is what I really wanted to do also. I got a chance to work at Parke-Davis. I worked at Parke-Davis for 14 years until they closed the department then I was out.

They closed my department completely. What they do is they review your qualifications and if somebody in the other departments wants you, you have an opportunity to. That was given to me, but it meant going back to [inaudible 00:42:38].

In the meanwhile I had bought an apartment, my first co-op, down town. I had personal problems with my mother. I felt that I had to stick to the Detroit area. I looked around in Detroit. Finally an opportunity came to take a job with Wayne State University in research in microbiology.

That didn’t work out so well. I continued to work in microbiology in doing research for pathology until I retired. I worked a total of 45 years all together.

**Kate:** Did you marry and have children at all?

**Angela:** No I didn’t.

**Kate:** You basically did career most of your life?

**Angela:** Yeah.

**Kate:** You took care of your mother?

**Angela:** Yes.

**Kate:** How about your sister?

**Angela:** I helped in the family, I had to contribute. The eldest girl or the eldest person in the Italian families are always the more responsible ones in a way. I could have married I suppose, but the war broke everything up, it was a mess. Things just didn’t work out. Unless you were engaged at that time, you missed out on a lot of things.

**Kate:** When you look back, do you have regrets at all about that?

**Angela:** A little bit sure. I would like to have had a family and children of my own which I don’t have.

**Kate:** You have relatives living still?

**Angela:** I just have a sister who lives here in this -Not in St. Clair Shores she’s in East Point. She married, the youngest one in the family she married and came here as a bride, 35, 6 years ago. She has two children. They’re now in their 30s, both of them.

**Kate:** Are you close to them?

**Angela:** Yes, that’s them over there.

**Kate:** How do you feel about coming to America? You came quite young.

**Angela:** I’m very glad to be here. I always say that my father’s decision to make this his home was the best decision he came up because all of those boys or young men that he came to America with, most of all of them landed back home.

It’s hard in Italy, trying to make a living from farming when they have such small farms. It isn't like here in America where you have big farms and you can really produce and sell. There, they’re self-sustaining farms, but very meagerly.

The men usually have to go out and find something else to do when the season slacks. This is what my grandfather did and that’s what my father would have had to do.

My uncle, my father’s brother that remained in Italy, his children didn’t get a chance to go to school. I would have had the same problem because you had to go outer distance, board somewhere else where your schools existed, that is your higher education one, college or university.

Whereas here in Detroit, I could work and live at home and go to school. If you are ambitious enough, you could do that. A lot of Italian kids did that.

**Kate:** Do you feel the opportunities were more here for you?

**Angela:** Absolutely, this is what my mother came to realize too, yes.

**Kate:** Do you think that your parents were happy? Your father and mother both were happy about coming to the States in the end?

**Angela:** I think so. I’m sure of that.

**Kate:** Do you feel to be ethnically Italian still?

**Angela:** I’m both, I feel both.

**Kate:** Do you have both passports or just one?

**Angela:** I have my own passport now. I have my mother’s, when we came. If you wanted to see it I have it there. I’m very happy to be in America. I’m very American, but I’m not ashamed of being an Italian.

**Kate:** Do you still speak Italian?

**Angela:** Yes.

**Kate:** With your sister or who?

**Angela:** No, there’s nobody around anymore that I can speak with. I communicate with my relatives in Italy, that’s about the only chance I have of …

**Kate:** You go to Italy?

**Angela:** I’ve been four times since I’m an adult. I urged my mother to go back in 1950. That was after 33 years that she’d been in this country, of course her parents were gone. It was too long after being separated from her sisters. It just was a different world entirely.

I went back in 61, 62, something like that. Then I went back in 78 when I retired, it was a long span. Again in 82 or was it 81? 81 no 82.

82, UVM, University of Michigan, at that period they had a time when the travel department or the alumni association, I should say, they have their travel department, was having special trips into the capital cities of Europe.

One was to France, to Paris. Then came this opportunity to go to Rome. My sister who had always said, “I’m going to go someday.” I urged her to come, and through me she could join that trip. You go only for the one week, but you could have extended it longer at your own expense, using that same transatlantic fare. That’s what we did.

She married an Italian man who was born also in Tuscany and he was only two when he came. He also was in the service, while in service he was also sent to Italy with that regiment, I don’t remember who it was.

He was able to revisit his hometown. My sister wanted to see where her side of the family came and where her husband was born. She was able to do that on that trip.