

Maria Fabiano

**Interviewed March 26, 2008
By Jean Seegers
Midway Village Museum**

Maria Fabiano

Jean Seegers: Would you give me your name please.

Maria Fabiano: My name is Maria Fabiano.

JS: And you are married?

MF: I am a widow.

JS: When did your husband die?

MF: My husband died the 26th of January of last year, 07.

JS: Do you have children?

MF: I have six children.

JS: And do they live here?

MF: None of my children live here in town. No.

JS: Where do they live?

MF: Well they are kind of scattered. I have two in California, one in Michigan, one in Texas, one in Arizona and one in Gurnee, Illinois.

JS: So you don't see them very often; do you see them often?

MF: I see the closest one quite often. She thinks that she is responsible for me because she is the closest.

JS: Okay, do you have grandchildren?

MF: I have nine grandchildren. We just had a granddaughter born on my husband's death anniversary, 26th of January.

JS: What is your education?

MF: I have an Italian high school education and I got a GED here in Rockford and then I went to Rock Valley for a little bit.

JS: So your education was in Italy?

MF: Yes, mostly.

JS: Where are you from in Italy?

MF: I am from Palermo, Sicily.

JS: Have you worked since you've been in this country other than in the home?

MF: A little tiny bit, I worked more on a dare than a need. My husband didn't want me to work ever but it was like there was a job posted in the newspaper from in those days it was called Weise's which is Bergners and it's like you know I was telling my 16 year old daughter who was very timid to go and apply for it and she said well if you like it so much you apply for it and so it

was like a dare and I said okay. I did. I got the job and I worked in the housewares department which was downstairs in Northtown.

JS: How long were you there?

MF: I was there maybe a year but it was strictly part-time in the evening. I would go for just a few hours.

JS: Did you enjoy that?

MF: I enjoyed that.

JS: How long have you been in this country?

MF: I've been in this country almost 50 years, almost 60 years.

JS: How about in Rockford?

MF: Always in Rockford.

JS: You moved to Rockford originally..

MF: Right.

JS: So what year did you come do you remember?

MF: I came in November of 1948.

JS: What brought you here?

MF: I met this beautiful boy who was a soldier with the U.S. Army. He came with his group to occupy my little bitty town of 5000 people and I met him then.

JS: Where did you meet him? How did you meet him?

MF: It was kind of a little bit of a story prior to him the American army invading Sicily we had a sick little brother. He was maybe about nine years old. He was sick with typhus. We were you know during the war things were really, really nasty. We had very poor very, very poor. We couldn't take care of ourselves. We had very little to eat and we ate anything we could get a hold of. Things were very tough during that time right during the war. So my brother got sick and so there was the doctor in town was taking care of it, his illness as malaria which was almost the complete opposite of typhoid and that's what he had was typhoid and so he was practically dying so there was we had met an Italian lieutenant in the Army. He suggested we would bring our brother for the Italian Army doctors to see him to see what they could do for him and they immediately knew that he had been he had typhoid but he was dying so they told us just leave him so we stayed at this a little Army Hospital. It was a very small Army Hospital, Italian Army Hospital so we stayed there just to take care of my brother and this is when we got invaded by the Americans and they felt they had to take over this Army Hospital which like I said was totally nothing and one of the them they left three soldiers to stay and watch over this hospital and one of the three was the guy that became my husband.

JS: And his name?

MF: His name was Nick Fabiano. I met him; he came down with malaria where he was in my little town and we kind of took care of him.

JS: Your family?

MF: Well my family and the hospital. He was in the hospital. We took care of him. We became friends and he started visiting us at our house and that's how I met him but at the time there was absolutely nothing you know nothing.

JS: Romantic?

MF: Romantic with him. He was 12 years older than I was. I was 13 so that fall he moved on with his with the Army. They moved him on their way to Italy and I moved with my family to the city of Palermo so I could go on to high school. This little town was so small it was only elementary and junior high. It was no high school so we moved to the city and I went to high school in Palermo and my husband's family was able to trace us. I guess he told them about this wonderful family that he met and we started corresponding and I guess they waited until I grew up so when I was 18 they asked me if I would consider coming to the United States and marry him.

JS: Did you remember him?

MF: I remembered him you know like I said he was gorgeous, look at him he was gorgeous.

JS: Very good looking.

MF: But I didn't know if I was ready to get married. Those days the United States had a program where this military people that had they that were in Europe could bring to this country girl or wife they met and they called it I don't remember what they call that. It'll come back and where we these ladies they met could come to the United States for three months and see if we like it and if we wanted to stay we only had three months to do that and he of course at the time he was not my husband then. He had to put a deposit and a guarantee, money guarantee that I could go back if I chose not to stay so he did he put a deposit. I see him and I wasn't going to go back so we got married. I came in November; we got married in January.

JS: So where did you live at that time than?

MF: I lived with his mother who had been hoping to have maybe a commune or an extended family in her house, just a plain House in North Winnebago like her daughter was married, was living there, she was hoping that I would marry my husband and then live there and all and it didn't happen. It didn't happen. It was horrible.

JS: Oh you didn't live after you're married?

MF: I'm married and I lived with her for about three years but things got very sour. I mean she was a wonderful, wonderful person and I think I was a wonderful person but you just can't live together, just doesn't work not when she felt that it was her son and I felt he was my husband so it didn't work too well.

JS: So you came to Rockford. What did you think of Rockford when you got here?

MF: When I came I came in the wintertime and the thing that really got me most probably the most wonderful thing was the cold weather.

JS: You liked the cold?

MF: I loved the snow. I had never, I grew up in Palermo and we never, once in awhile it would snow but you see it fly and you see there's no flying. It just melts, never accumulates, never and

so I was absolutely; I just went crazy over this whether I could go outside behind the door and the snow was up to my knees. I loved it, loved it so I loved that, loved the weather.

JS: How did you acclimate yourself; did you like living in Rockford?

MF: At the time, at the time things were I came from a large city at the time; Palermo was like 500,000 people and over there we don't live in houses like we live in Rockford. You live in condominiums; you live in apartments so you go up to the we lived in a third-floor in an apartment it was a big apartment but it was an apartment it was not a house.

JS: You had no yard?

MF: No yard, absolutely no, no and in a way when spring came I loved that too I loved the idea that you could go out and that's your yard and my father-in-law would make a garden and I liked that. It was different.

JS: What was your life like before you came here?

MF: Before I came here it was still Italy was still in the economy was very, very poor still because when I left I came here in 1948 and I think we had just barely the Americans had just barely gotten rid of the Germans because the Germans even though they made us feel that they were our friends; they actually occupied Italy. We were occupied. I mean Germans were everywhere like the Americans were everywhere when they came so our life was still very, very, very tough. I mean you couldn't go to a store and buy the food that you want. Meat was totally out but then necessary things like oil, pasta we ate pasta, bread. We had to get those things with coupons. We had to go to the bakery and they would cut the coupon off for the day they would give me the certain amount of pasta so things were not the economy was very, very bad and so when I came when I arrived my mother-in-law new that I was coming so she had all this all this should be doing all this canning specially for me. I don't know if you ever heard of this it's called Caponata which is an eggplant appetizer which we loved. It was a Sicilian recipe and all that good stuff and then you know I was starving. I mean I came and all this stuff it didn't take me long to put on a lot of weight because I wasn't used to that eating that much so that's what it was like.

JS: Did you have to, you told me that before you came here you may be were a little unsure about coming until you saw him?

MF: Right, I wasn't sure actually one thing I knew for sure I was coming back and this is what I told my boyfriend. I had a boyfriend and that was that; I'm coming back. I had this golden opportunity to come to this country and you know you go to America and I wasn't going to pass it and yeah I wasn't sure I was going to stay but I think if you would've seen my husband I think you would've stayed too.

JS: Had you ever been you'd never been in America before had you.

MF: No no I hadn't been to any other country but Italy.

JS: What did your parents think about you getting married and moving away for good?

MF: Well my father was not in favor of it. My mother was my, mother my mother had nine children. There were nine of us and so like I said those were difficult days so I think my mother hoped that I would come and I would be able to call some of my brothers and sisters and that never happened.

JS: They never came?

MF: They never came. I think I did apply for two of them and never came even close.

JS: Did they want to come?

MF: At the time they did, at the time both of them were unemployed and they would have loved to come but as it turned out I think it was best for them to be in Italy. One, the one that was going to come became a dentist and my other sister then married.

JS: So they're still in Italy?

MF: Yes yeah.

JS: Do you have many that are still living siblings.

MF: They're all living. There were nine of us. They are all living except for the oldest sister and the youngest brother.

JS: What happened to the one that had typhoid?

MF: He's the dentist.

JS: Did it take a long time for you to make arrangements before you came?

MF: I don't know how long of a time it took. I think it was in Italy things move very slowly. It's not like this country. Anything illegal it seems like it takes forever. Yeah I had to have documents and papers and all this. I had to go from-- it took awhile; it took a few months.

JS: What was your; did you go by ship?

MF: I came in with a ship named Saturnia. It was a sister ship to the Vocania; Vocania and Saturnia. What's neat about this is that my youngest son was able to go back in the records and found even my paper when I got on the boat where I had to sign so I put my signature and I'm looking at this thing and it's unbelievable what you can do on the Internet today.

JS: Was it a difficult journey?

MF: No I was full of adventure. I loved it. Everyone was sick around me except me. Everybody was seasick, everybody because November I think it was the 10th of November the sea was not very nice it was and it was not like you go on a you know on one of those trips where you sit on the deck and sunbathe and stuff like that; no it was bad it was pretty bad.

JS: How long did it take?

MF: I think it took every bit of 10 days.

JS: Where did you come in then?

MF: I came in in New York. I didn't come to what is it, Ellis Island; no they did all these documentations they did it all on board all the, whatever they needed to do. They did it all on board so when I got off the boat my husband to be and his mother and his brother were waiting for me right there at the bottom of the stairs.

JS: And what year was that?

MF: 1948.

JS: And how did you get from New York to Rockford..?

MF: They came in a car. They actually came and got me in a car big humongous Oldsmobile. In those days they were monsters and then as we're getting out of I think we were in New Jersey I think we're going through New Jersey; we were waiting at some stoplights and somebody behind us wasn't going to wait for it so he ran right through us and we ended up in a hospital. That was my first encounter in this country in an emergency room.

JS: Were you badly hurt?

MF: No, my mother-in-law got hurt a little but we didn't. The car got hurt very badly. We had to leave it behind and then we came to Chicago by train.

JS: You didn't know anybody in this country other than your husband?

MF: No.

JS: Did they make you feel welcome?

MF: They made me feel very welcome. Yeah, I'll never forget my especially my father-in-law he just went totally banana over me. He loved me. Maybe it was my Italian. I don't know what it was.

JS: Were there others besides your husband; did he have brothers and sisters?

MF: Oh yeah. He had three brothers and two sisters then.

JS: Did you know was there anybody from your country in the neighborhood?

MF: No, no. Then my mother-in-law before I came my mother used to live in South Rockford so she...

JS: Your mother-in-law?

MF: My mother-in-law used to live in South Rockford among all the Italian people but she had bought a house on North Winnebago the 1000 block so there were no Italian people. So my closest neighbors were all American.

JS: And you said you lived there for a couple of years and then you and your husband did you buy a house?

MF: No, we just rented not too far from my mother-in-law. We rented an apartment. I lived with my mother-in-law about I think I lived with her for three years and then we moved into an apartment.

JS:
Did you have children by that time?

MF: I had two children. I had my two daughters.

JS: And you lived you said you lived close by?

MF: Very close, oh I don't know maybe a block and a half.

JS: Did you see a lot of them then?

MF: Not at the very beginning. We left and I told you the situation was pretty rough so we didn't speak to each other but gradually yeah it improved yeah.

JS: And where do you currently live?

MF: Now I live on Knox Drive which is not too far from here it's right up to Perryville and Spring Creek.

JS: How long have you lived there?

MF: A long time. We bought that house in 1972.

JS: Do you have anybody living with you?

MF: Nope, my dog.

JS: Anybody from your home country in the area?

MF: Nope actually I have a friend but they didn't come from Sicily. We became friends when our boys were playing soccer and we became very good friends and but they are from near Naples.

JS: Now we talked a little bit about the job that you had in school. Did you go to school you said you got your GED?

MF: Here in Rockford.

JS: Did your visa limit you did it limit you to any kind of work at that time?

MF: No.

JS: When you got here how you did get around? You didn't have a driver's license?

MF: No, no actually the only one that had a driver's license I think in those days was just the man women especially I know there was no women in our family that drove.

JS: Were you close to shopping?

MF: No we had to wait until like my husband his day off was on a Thursday so Thursday was shopping day so everybody piled up in the car and we went grocery shopping.

JS: Did you take the buses?

MF: I, you know when I was pregnant with my first child which was in 1949 I used to go see my doctor who was Dr. Mamalia and he had his office in the Talcott building so I had to catch a bus to go but I couldn't speak English so my sister-in-law came with me and she did all the talking for me. Dr. Mamalia spoke English but he also spoke a beautiful Italian. He was from Northern Italy and after I came the first three months or so he got me in the other room and said to me next time you come by yourself otherwise you going to end up like all those people in South Rockford. You're not going to be able to speak English so I said to him I was afraid to tell my sister-in-law that so I said to the doctor you tell her and so yeah then I started catching a bus. I'd come downtown to see my doctor and then I would shop. The only thing we had in those days there were no shopping centers in Rockford the only thing we had was downtown. We had a Walgreens downtown and it was on North Main. I think yes North Main and we had Osco Drug which was on the corner of Church and State right on the corner by the Talcott building so I took my chances not knowing any English and I did go out. I did shop I don't know what I told those people in those days so I begin to venture like that but.

JS: Was that pretty scary for you?

MF: No no no no. I was an adventurer I think. It didn't scare me but you know prior to that I have to say that we did not have a car because we left it in New Jersey doing that so we, my husband and I walked like to the Coronado for a movie. In those days we had the Coronado and the Times Theater. What was the name of the other one the palace...midway...Midway was on Auburn I think? I think it was palace maybe so there were three theaters. Anyways he took me to the movies a lot no less than I would say no less than twice a week and so between the movies and between newspaper and between me, I loved to read like detective magazines. I love that kind of stuff in Italy so I did my very best I try to understand it. In Italy I did have two years of English but you know what you learn in school is not the same so I think I was able to kind of figure it out as I'm reading a house for example I would see a house and I would say only gosh that's that means a house that's how you spell it and so and then with the arrival of my babies and sending them to school and someone had to help them with homework and it was only in English so I think that I was able to to learn English pretty quickly pretty quickly.

JS: Did your husband speak Italian?

MF: The best that he could. He was not, this is so strange I think he learned a lot of Sicilian with his mother, his mother maybe would translate his mother lived with the Italian people in South Rockford so they would ask her to translate for them and I think my husband picked up a lot of the Sicilian through his mother but he never spoke maybe he would try to explain things to me maybe he would try to tell me in Sicilian we spoke Italian.

JS: There's a difference between Italian and Sicilian?

MF: Absolutely, Sicily was all Sicilian until Mussolini took power and then it was a law that in school we learned Italian the Italian language. Sicilian is a dialect. In fact it's the farthest thing from Italian you don't understand that but I was Sicilian to begin with so I knew Sicilian and then we learned Italian in school and so I could understand him when he would speak to me in Sicilian but then little by little he didn't anymore than I became more you know affluent with English and he didn't but you know it's so strange that in his dying days last year maybe a month or two or even three before he died I would go in the morning by his bed and I would say hi Nick and he would talk Sicilian to me and I would say Nick why are you talking Sicilian and he would answer in Sicilian.

JS: He was in.

MF: He was in bed.

JS: Yes but he didn't have any mental problems or anything?

MF: Yeah, he had dementia little by little yeah it got worse and worse and by the time he died but it's so strange that this man was speaking perfect Sicilian. I never spoke Sicilian to him. I thought if I went in the room and I said something in Sicilian well okay but I didn't hi Nick how you doing and he would say and the people they would come in to help me the aids they would come in to help me get him out of bed and he would tell me things in Sicilian against them. I dare not to make them understand what he was saying but it's so strange that's strange.

JS: How did you integrate yourself into the community was their clubs, church.

MF: No, no I think I think it all happened through the school system children were going to St. Peter's I got involved you know with all the school doings and all that.

JS: Before that time though you didn't?

MF: No no I am met a neighbor and it's so cute because now she said to me Maria I remember those days when you would come to the house she didn't speak Italian; I didn't speak English but I would go to her and with my hands and the little English that I knew we managed fine we became best friends.

JS: Is she a neighbor now?

MF: No she's not a neighbor now, now she's got Alzheimer's. I still go pick her up even now and then take her out to lunch but she still she is still a good friend of mine.

JS: How about church what church did you attend?

MF: Church we belong to St. Peter's and that's where my children went to St. Peter's.

JS: Did you belong to any other organization?

MF: Nope.

JS: How about your husband?

MF: Nope, I'm trying to remember, no my husband came back from the war pretty, pretty mentally hurt those days they had no I don't know if you know but they didn't have any thing to give these young guys. He came back he was severely, severely wounded.

JS: Where was he?

MF: He was severely wounded in Italy twice.

JS: No I meant on his body.

MF: Oh all over, all over, his kneecap was gone, his shoulder was gone severely wounded so when he came back mentally he was pretty, pretty depressed and in those days you don't go to a psychiatrist. He needed a psychiatrist badly but there was not such a thing and not only that but if you did that it had to be oh you don't let people know that you went to a psychiatrist.

JS: Was that difficult for you?

MF: It was very difficult because he was doing I was very young and I never seen people do what he was doing and I did not understand so I'm sure that we argued a lot.

JS: Did you know that he was having these problems before you came?

MF: No no I knew that physically he had been wounded, mentally no I didn't.

JS: Did your mother-in-law help with that.

MF: No, I think maybe was the opposite is true those days I mean she was you know from the old school so she didn't understand it either she dare not to say that mentally he wasn't you know.

JS: What did your husband do for a living?

MF: He worked at the post office but because he was wounded twice he had a what do you call it, he had a pension from the VA and he was able to function fine. He was you never knew that he was so severely wounded. He really remarkably he was able to work full-time at the post office inside he was a clerk at the post office but mentally like he would tell me he was going he would

go to work and if I needed him during the day I would call the post office and they would say he didn't show up this morning and he would just go to a park and spend the day in his car.

JS: That must have been difficult.

MF: It was very difficult yeah it was.

JS: Was it hard on your children too?

MF: I don't know if it was hard on the children and I was able to take on his role. I was almost like a mother and a father to the kids. I would always make sure that he played a role in the family. I would say oh my god wait till your dad comes home and I'll tell him. Dad never did anything; he never disciplined them so I was the disciplinary one. We did okay. We did okay. It was hard; it was very, very difficult the first years it was very difficult and then.

JS: Well you were very young.

MF: Yeah and then my youngest brother-in-law at the time was in college and then he went in to law school. He's a lawyer in town and I remember the years passed before, he's the guy that suggested that Nick needed to go to a psychiatrist so he introduced us to a psychiatrist here in town and we went to him regularly.

JS: It helped?

MF: A little bit maybe I think it helped me more than him because I went with him and I learned all about his problems you know I would say yeah a little bit..

JS: Were you or your husband were you active in politics or community actions of any kind?

MF: Never been what you call involved with anything serious no we've always been very much Democrats. We talk about politics a lot. Now my children are very involved because..

JS: Let's step back a little bit here how did it feel to come to a foreign country especially how did it compare to Sicily?

MF: Like I say I was very much an adventurer in those days. I was very excited I was excited about coming. I was excited about the boat.

JS: When you saw New York?

MF: Well we didn't see too much of New York. We came out pretty that's why we got hit it was nighttime when we came out of the boat we didn't see New York I seen the statue through my little window in my room I seen that. I didn't even understand it then I don't even think it meant very much to me then.

JS: Have your ideas changed about America since you came?

MF: Oh absolutely. I love America. I always love, I'm an American. I love America; I've always been a patriot and my children of course they're like me and my husband was also very American. I mean I bought my first foreign car and he told me he wasn't going to put a foot in that car. He was very, very much an American.

JS: Did your move to the United States turn out like you had hoped it would?

MF: Yeah I would say yes, yes it did.

JS: What was the best part?

MF: The best part I don't know I think I felt I had all this freedom that I didn't have in Italy. In Italy because maybe the way we live and the condominium before you go and do anything out you have to really you know dress up clean up you know you always lived in fear of what your neighbor if they hear you if they see you, you wanted to you know where now sometime in the wintertime I'm in my pajamas, I put my coat on because I'm running out of milk and that's the mental freedom you know the freedom of thinking the way you want to think ,doing what you want to do and I always did do my own thinking it wasn't like you know I was always free to do what I wanted to do.

JS: Your husband didn't restrain you in any way?

MF: No not at all, no he encouraged me. He encouraged me to drive.

JS: When did you get your license then?

MF: I got my license if I'm not mistaken when I came back I had gone to Italy I think in 19 I want to say it was 1961 and there was that was the first time I think I went back and when I came back he insisted that I would take driving classes and I didn't want to so he started teaching me how to drive and he wanted me to drive oh he was he gave me moral support and physical support always and maybe that's the way I feel you know you may find somebody that came from Italy that may didn't feel like I do. Maybe I had the right person next to me. He was very, very, very proud of me very...

JS: What was the hardest thing and the most disappointing thing when you came here?

MF: Well all this the problems I had with my in-laws, those were very difficult times and then coping with his mental illness which was not that you could see it. People never understood. People never knew what I was going through because he looked normal, he acted normal all the other things I was the only one that could see it all.

JS: Depression?

MF: Yeah, I think those were the most difficult times.

JS: How about disappointment, were you disappointed about anything here?

MF: No I don't think so; no I've never been disappointed.

JS: What did you think of Rockford when you arrived?

MF: Well like I say Rockford was a town compared to my town. I came from Palermo at the time it was like 500,000 people and we were right on the sea I mean I would walk actually maybe six or seven blocks or so and we were right on the sea, I mean I would walk actually maybe six or seven blocks or so and we were on the sea, right on the beach and so we went to the beach all the time. Our summers were spent on the beach and so I don't think I liked that Rockford did not have a sea; that was disappointing and in the summer the man in those days the man of the house in the summer they would go to a lake. The women didn't go.

JS: Why is that?

MF: In those days I don't think women went to the lake may be in the Fabiano family I don't know and I couldn't understand that I wanted to go to the beach. I was pregnant and I wanted to go to the beach.

JS: What lake did they go to?

MF: Oh I don't know maybe Lake Delavan in Wisconsin. They would go to some lakes in Wisconsin nearby and I do remember that there were arguments about that that I wanted to go to the beach and that I wanted a bathing suit and my in-laws were oh my gosh oh my gosh what are we getting into and finally I bought a bathing suit and my sister-in-law told my doctor that; can you imagine Dr. she wants a bathing suit ,she wants to go to the beach and he said you let her go to the beach so that's and I was the only woman that went with the guys. There were at least three or four brothers they would go and I was the only lady.

JS: And the sister-in-law didn't want to go?

MF: No they thought it was so immoral I think they felt it was immoral especially a pregnant woman and you know those days we weren't wearing what they wear today we were wearing the one piece that covered you know.

JS: What did you miss most about your home in Sicily?

MF: I think at the beginning I missed my family. I think I still do a little bit. In fact we talk all the time, all the time.

JS: How many are still over there?

MF: Well in Palermo which is my, my hometown Palermo there are two brothers and one sister.

JS: And extended family also?

MF: Right and then there is I have a brother, I have a sister in Rome a brother in Terino and I have a brother in [Brindase].

JS: Do you get home often back to Italy?

MF: I was yeah; I went to Italy I was in Italy this past fall. I was there for my birthday. I was there from September last two weeks of September first week of October of this past year.

JS: And then do you stay with family?

MF: I always stay with family yeah and when my husband was alive he came with.

JS: Did he enjoy it?

MF: Oh he loved Italy he really I think he was more Italian than I am. He loved Italy. He loved Italian food.

JS: Do you think you'd ever go back there to live?

MF: No not to live no. I couldn't, no I couldn't, I couldn't lose my freedom not

JS: This is home now?

MF: Oh yeah this is home absolutely.

JS: Have you your children do they know a lot about your culture?

MF: Yes yeah they do them do especially the oldest ones you know they do.

JS: Are they interested?

MF: They are interested and they feel very much Italian my children.

JS: Have they gone back?

MF: Oh yeah, yeah.

JS: Do you through the time they were growing up did you introduce those cultural things and the food and all that into their life?

MF: Always yeah right, right.

JS: What kind of Italian cultural things?

MF: Yeah, we yeah we were always in fact my youngest son just had a child. I told you my newest granddaughter and he actually corresponded with his cousins in Italy, sent the babies pictures with the what do you call it the e-mail by e-mail he sent all the pictures so they do you know my children are.

JS: What kind of traditions did you keep up in your home when they were growing up?

MF: Oh we kept up if you remember no you're not going to remember in those days the night before Christmas the night before New Year's you couldn't have meat so we made everything without meat you know and I did this all the time and even though now I might add some sausage or something I still go with the old-fashioned so when they come for Christmas they practically know what we're going to have and I still make the cookies the Italian people we don't even do that in Italy now anymore nobody, nobody does that I'm doing what my mother-in-law did before Christmas you know we sit down and make all these Italian cookies. I still does that and I cook very much Italian you know a lot of pasta.

JS: Do you think all of this, are your children doing this as well?

MF: No, no, no. I have one of my nieces last year ask me could you teach us to make those fig cookies and so they came maybe a week or two before I left for Arizona and they brought all the ingredients and I show them exactly you know to grind I don't know if you know what I'm talking about the fig cookies those Italian fig cookies you don't know that no that's too bad you should've told me I would have brought you some. Well anyway they came and my kids don't even know how to do that, my daughters don't know how to do that and now my nieces do.

JS: Maybe the next generation will try to pick up more of that.

MF: Yeah, you know it's strange but my youngest son is very much into that very much into the cooking the Italian cooking and the Italian cookies and going to church and so he is I don't know what maybe because he was with me the longest I don't know.

JS: What do you like to do for fun?

MF: You really want to know? I stretch myself very, very thin. I am a gardener. I make I still make a big garden and I know what to do with all this stuff make a big garden so I'm a gardener. I was into quilting. I was into patchwork and I love to read. I love to read. I'm never without a book never ever. I loved to cook everybody knew me as oh a great cook now since my you know since my family is gone away and then my husband would eat none of that slowly I'm becoming more like my old hundred-year-old friends.

JS: Not cooking so much.

JS: Yeah trying I'm desperately trying to go against Mother Nature which is you know pick up something, pickup a frozen dinner at the store and just throw it in the microwave. I'm fighting it. I'm fighting and I want to get in front of the stove not because but I don't like it but yeah I'm still cooking for myself.

JS: Do you have outside activities? Do you do a lot of clubs or anything?

MF: I go to the gym yeah; I go to the gym regularly. I was at the gym this morning so I exercise. I do that what else I do.

JS; Do you belong to any clubs?

MF: I belong to some support groups. When my husband was when I was taking care of him by the way I never put him in a nursing home never even to the point where we had to get a (unknown word) to lift him up because his body was totally shot so we had this humongous machine to pick him up out of the chair and put him in a wheelchair and then from the wheelchair put him in bed. We had to use all of that but I kept him at home. I was able to do that to the end.. He died at home. Actually he died in my arms really because I didn't know he was dead so I was like you know.

JS Have you had trouble adjusting to his death?

MF: It's beginning to now he's been gone over a year and it was okay. My children thinks that of course you know that I'm going through this adjustment but I keep on going to the support group even know I had a you know a caregiver support group I was going to a couple of them. I still go to those. I go to entertain them those poor people. I do so I go to the support groups than I join a couple of support groups for grief support and I graduated from that. I was in grief and I think I did my grief. I think I did my grieving because my husband was in that condition for years and years and years.

JS: How long was he bedridden?

MF: Bedridden, I would say within maybe six years before he died then it was strictly a lounge chair, in bed and wheelchair but prior to that my husband was sick for a long, long, long time. He had shunts we had to put because he had enlarged ventricles in his brain and so at the very beginning of the sickness he was shuffling his feet and then eventually he had to have a walker and then eventually he had to have a wheelchair and then lost the disease just practically crawled up to where he lost all his body functions so we had to put him in diapers and all that stuff.

JS: He was bedridden?

MF: Well between bed and a lounge chair that's why we had to get all these machines to get him out of bed so I had these groups which I still belong to so I go to a couple of caregiver support group. I told them last time I went that I am taking care of myself so I need to be there right and I also told them that I come back for the cookies.

JS: You don't make them?

MF: No, they have been there. I go to Swedish American Hospital and they have a beautiful tray of cookies. I don't go for the cookies you know what I'm talking about but I have those places and then every last Saturday of the month I go to a club that meets at St. Anthony's Hospital and this is all a widow and widowers club and I go just to get out you know go to church get out of there something like a potluck and they do other things we go to the park in the summer have picnics, you know so yeah I have a few.

JS: This is the last question how do you feel about the current debate in this country about immigration and immigrants legal or illegal?

MF: I tell you I tell you I was just coming back from Arizona where the problem is more severe. We don't see anything here like they see their over there they'll stop a van on the highway and 40 people will get out and they run everywhere and they go hide everywhere and it's happening it was happening when I was there. I feel really terrible about the situation because I am an immigrant but I went through the legal channel I applied for citizenship.

JS: How long did it take for you?

MF: It wasn't that short I bet it took me from the moment I applied it took me a good two or three years before I became a citizen.

JS: And then you took the test?

MF: I took the test and I had a little flag.

JS: How did you feel when you.

MF: I was proud I don't know I always felt American .I think I felt American from day one totally with the culture totally and I feel bad about the situation that we have right now because with among the illegal immigrants first of all your going to find even other people from other countries they come in here through Mexico. It's not just the Mexicans there are people we don't even know who they are there coming even from Iran and Iraq and South America and everywhere but I feel real bad because a lot of this illegal immigrants are real honest people like we are and they come to this country and they're kind of caught where they are afraid to speak up for themselves because they are illegal and they feel they're going to send them back so they have no really no real protection but then we have the bad people who come in who are wanted by the law in Mexico they're able to come in you know you don't see much of it over here but especially in Arizona all the workers like people who were doing my lawn they can't speak English talking to them and they have to turn to somebody else and somebody else and I'm sure they're all illegal and what do we do if they send those people back who was going to do their work let me assure you Americans don't want to do that. They're not going to want to do that so it's too bad I wish they'll find a solution for that because there are some very good people who can't come legally they cannot come legally so and they come illegally I wish they would find a solution for that I really do because they do have some really good people among them.

JS: Okay, thank you.

MF: Well, you're welcome.