

FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY  
ITALIAN-AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVE

<b>NARRATOR:</b> Adrienne Martin	<b>INTERVIEWERS:</b> Vincenza Iadevaia, Viviana Pezzullo, Federico Tiberini
<b>Place:</b> Florida Atlantic University Boca Raton (FL)	<b>Length of registration:</b> 07:32

**Date:** 2/20/2017

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- **Name:** Adrienne Martin
- **Place of birth:** New Haven, Connecticut
- **Date of birth:** February 11, 1948
- **Generation:** 3rd
- **Family origin:**
  - Maternal grandparents:
    - Favara, Agrigento (Sicily, Italy)
  - Fraternal grandparents:
    - Unknown
- **Spoken languages:**
  - English (native language)
  - Some knowledge of Standard Italian
- **Relocation in Florida:** Wilton Manors, 1955

TIMING	TOPIC OF DISCUSSION
00:01 - 00:52	AM moved with her parents from Tampa to South Florida
00:55 - 01:07	The visit of her Sicilian grandparents
01:10 - 01:28	Comparison between South Florida and Sicily

01:32 - 01:48	First impression of South Florida
01:54 - 02:01	Sicily as a memory...Bucket List!
02:26 - 02:45	The discovering of Italian language
02:53 - 03:12	The assimilation
03:51 - 04:15	Salt Mines (Sicily)
04:18 - 05:46	Italian-American Tradition: "Seven fishes"
05:48 - 06-10	A Sicilian object
06:12 - 06:40	Research of her Italian heritage and her grandmother's documents in Ellis Island
06:41 - 06:58	the arriving of her grandmother and grandfather in Usa

### Key Words

Florida Atlantic University; Migration; Italian-Americans; Sicily; South Florida; Oral history; Customs; Folklore; Tradition; Ethnic; Salt Mines; Ellis Island; Facebook; Feast of the seven fishes;

### List of the Italian Expressions and Traditions Mentioned in the interview:

*Andiamo andiamo (Let's go)*

*Vieni qua (Come here)*

Pasta from scratch

*Carretto Siciliano (Sicilian donkey cart)*

*Sette pesci (Feast of the Seven Fishes)*

Italian-American Oral History Archive

Interviewers: Vincenza Iadevaia, Viviana Pezzullo, Federico Tiberini

Interviewee: Adrienne Martin

**AM:** Hi. My name is Adrienne Martin, and I've lived in Florida since I was seven years old, and I'm sixty-nine now. So that is...sixty-two years? Okay? And the reason, um, that my parents moved—obviously I just came with them—was that, um, two-fold. One, my father had grown up in Florida, uh, in an area just north of Tampa. That's where he had all of his schooling. And then by the time he finished high school, the Depression hit, and the family had to move back up north because there was no work. There was nothing to do, and there was a family with five children. Um, my mother had never been to Florida, except for one vacation that we took two years before we moved here, but she had problems with the cold winters—health issues—and so he thought it would be better for her to live in the South, um, and so we moved. And I started second grade in Florida. Uh, so we came in, like, August. The following...February my grandmother and grandfather came with one of my aunts and uncles, and stayed with us for about six weeks. My grandparents were from Sicily, from a little town called Favara, that is near Agrigento... Okay? And, um, my grandmother said right away that the plants and the weather, everything, just reminded her very much of Sicily, and she really enjoyed her time here. Although once they saw that we were doing okay, and we weren't living in a tent or anything like that, they didn't come back again, because they really didn't like to travel, um, away from home. So, um...

When my father was trying to explain to me what it would be like to be warm in the winter, and he said, "We can go to the beach and go swimming on New Year's Day." And so, that first year, we went to the beach and went swimming on New Year's Day. We never did again, but we did that first year. So that was how he explained to a seven-year-old what it was, what the weather would be like.

**Female Interviewer:** [softly] Hmm.

**AM:** Yes.

**Female Interviewer:** So you told me that your family comes from Sicily, right?

**AM:** Yes. Ha—

**Female Interviewer:** Have you ever been to Sicily? Or...

**AM:** Not yet. That's on my list for the next time I go back. I've been to Italy twice, but not to Sicily.

**Female Interviewer:** [softly] Hmm.

**AM:** So...

**Female Interviewer:** And what did you feel when you went to Italy? Is, uh... Do you feel Italian in a certain way? Do feel a special connection to this country, to your—

**AM:** [Talking over interviewer] I don't know...

**Female Interviewer:** [continuing to speak] ...um, the mother's side—

**AM:** [Talking over interviewer] I want to say yes, but everything was just amazing. I loved the art and the architecture, and I...I could go back a, a million times if I had the money and the time.

**Female Interviewer:** And why did you decide to study Italian?

**AM:** Because I never had the chance be— Part of, um, what I did miss out on, living here since I was seven, is that I was never around extended family. And so, if I had learned Italian, I probably woulda learned Sicilian dialect, anyway.

**Female Interviewer:** Hmm.

**AM:** But I never had the chance even to learn that [emphasized]. I did spend quite a bit of time with my grandmother when I was, like, preschool age, while my mom was at work. But she had always been very much, even with her children growing up, she'd been very much interested in the idea that we are Americans now and we do everything the American way, and so... She spoke in dialect with her sisters, but to her children at home, not that much. And to me, really not at all—she spoke English.

**Female Interviewer:** [softly] Hmm.

**AM:** Um, and the only thing I remember, and I didn't know exactly what the words meant [emphasized]—

[Sound of two interviewers whispering briefly to each other]

**AM:** —um, as like a direct translation, but she would say, “Andiamo, andiamo!” And I just knew that meant I'd better move.

**Female Interviewer:** [sound of amusement]

**AM:** Go faster, or do something. [laughter]

**Female Interviewer:** [laughter]

**AM:** And sometimes she would say, uh, “Vieni qua,” and I knew that meant ‘to come.’ But I never really thought about them in terms of translation, and, and she pretty much really didn't try and speak Italian to me then.

When I was in Connecticut, over the summer, when I was a little bit older, I did get her to teach me how to make pasta from scratch.

**Female Interviewer:** Uh-hum.

**AM:** And, um, um, I remember my grandfather telling me about, um, the salt mining in Sicily, and at the time I really was thinking in terms of a mine, like a cave, uh, but, um, I think he was really referring to the salt flats that are, were the— near, uh, Marsala...

**Female Interviewer:** [softly] Uh-hmm.

**AM:** ...Tripani... Northwest corner of Sicily. They do the salt—sea salt.

**Female Interviewer:** Eh-ah, is there a tradition, and also a lullaby, something that you remember from your past, your grandma or something? Traditionally *Sette pesci*?

**AM:** Well, ...[laughter] My—I don't, really don't— Well, I guess I was too young. I don't—

**Female Interviewer:** [softly] Hmm.

**AM:** —really remember my grandmother doing it. My mother did it, and I don't even remember her doing it when we were real [emphasized] young, but she did it when my [emphasized] kids were growing up. And so now, um, my son has taken—and his wife—have taken over doing it.

**Female Interviewer:** [in Italian] Secondo me... [sound of amusement]

**AM:** So I don't know for sure, but, um, if you go back before Vatican II in the Catholic Church, uh, ah, Christmas Eve was a day that you couldn't eat meat. And so I think that's how the tradition started of having a fish dinner. Um, as far as why there's seven fishes, my understanding is not necessarily an Italian thing if you're in Italy. It maybe is more of an Italian-American [emphasized] thing. I don't know. But, um, I think it's based on seven Sacraments, and that's why there're seven fish. So, but as n— as things change with each generation... When my mother did it she baked this fish, and she...boiled that thing, and she fried this, and she put that in a sa— And it was really seven, really separate things that were a lot of work. And my son and daughter-in-law do it like one or two fish for appetizers and then we make something like a *Zuppa di Pesce*.

**Female Interviewer:** Uh-hum.

**AM:** Where you've got five more fish [laughter], all it one place, and it's just one dish so it's a lot easier. But, you know, as far as they're concerned they're still fulfilling the traditions. Now that's the modern version of it.

My grandmother had, um, I don't know if you've seen the Sicilian donkey carts? They're very colorful. Um, I think they actually have some in Mexico, that are similar, but my grandmother had one of those that was about yea big. Um, and she had kept it in her china cabinet in her dining room. And sin— When I was small we always had Sunday dinner at grandma's house, so I would see it a lot.

I had looked on Ellis Island, and, um, I found out that she was sixteen years old when she came here. And she had, uh, came with her sisters. And according to the records her, her father was already here. And I haven't had time to look further, but I don't know if, if her mother— I know her mother ended up here so I don't know if her mother was already here with her father or exactly when she came, but according to the records the five sisters were meeting their father and

going to New Haven, Connecticut. And then, that was in 1911, and she was sixteen years old. And my grandfather, um, came when he was twenty-three years old, um, a few years after her. And, uh, he was going to New York. He had an older brother who was already there. And so he went to meet his older brother. And, um, those New York cousins I still am in contact with, so... Thanks to Facebook. [laughter] It's nice to have that.

Well, when I was thinking about it when I was looking at the Ellis Island website, and, um, I've heard this said before there were a l— so many, why are there so many men [emphasized], um, named Tony, that are Italian, and the answer is because, when they were at Ellis Island they each had a little name that— tag that said “To NY” T-O-N-Y [laughter], and so they thought their name was Tony.

Audio file transcribed by Angela Riveccio, FAU Digital Library