

FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY
ITALIAN-AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVE

NARRATOR: Ann Blumberg Capone	INTERVIEWERS: Vincenza Iadevaia, Viviana Pezzullo, Federico Tiberini
Place: Boca Raton (FL)	Length of registration: 17:03

Date: March 24, 2017

- **Name:** Ann Blumberg Capone
- **Place and date of birth:** Mount Vernon, New York, September 24, 1921
- **Generation:** 2nd
- **Family origin:**
 - **Grandparents:**
 - Rosa Tremonti, from Afragola (Naples, Italy)
 - Domenico Capone, from Afragola (Naples, Italy)
 - **Spoken languages:**
 - English (native language)
 - Some knowledge of Neapolitan dialects
- **Relocation in Florida:** 1950

TIMING	TOPIC OF DISCUSSION
00:01 - 00:45	AC's date and place of birth and list of schools attended.
00:46 - 01:23	AC's job at Columbia University.
01:24 - 02:00	AC's father name and place of birth. Age when he came to America.
02:01 - 03:03	America as a "land of opportunity". AC's father decision to move to America.
03:04 - 03:20	Paesanos in America.
03:21 - 03:44	Location of AC's father in America

03:45 - 04:20	How AC's parents got married.
04:21 - 04:37	Age of AC's parents when they got married.
04:38 - 04:53	Reason of the marriage.
04:54 - 05:40	AC's father wine production. The importance of a wine cellar to store bottles.
05:41 - 06:52	AC's memories and anecdote about her father's wine.
06:53 - 06:56	AC's health conditions.
06:57 - 07:21	AC's father visiting Ann in Florida. Impressions and reason to refuse to move there.
07:22 - 07:31	Reason why AC moved to Florida.
07:32 - 08:07	Story and year of moving to Florida.
08:08 - 10:43	AC's story of her job in Florida and how she knew her future husband.
10:44 - 11:10	Il Destino, the Fate.
11:11 - 12:43	The story of her parents; her mother was an orphan.
12:44 - 13:56	Anecdote about AC's mother going to the convent.
13:57 - 15:05	AC's mother had a good education and learned how to embroider.
15:06 - 15:28	Italian as the only language spoken within her family.
15:29 - 16:02	"Sega sega", an Italian lullaby.
16:03 - 17:03	AC's visit to the convent. Meeting Suor Virginia.

Key Words:

Florida Atlantic University; Migration; Italian-Americans; Campania; Napoli; Afragola; South Florida; Oral history; Customs; Folklore; Tradition; Ethnic; Microhistory; Memories; Paesani; Lullaby; Mount Vernon; Family; Marriage; Wine; Wine Cellar; Sunshine; Love; Destino; Orphan; Nun; Convent; Italian Language; Embroidery;

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

Paesano (countryman)

Destino (destiny)

Cartelle (word indicating a mix of different powders used to produce “fake wine”)

Sega, sega (original nursery rhyme)	Ann's version
<p><i>Sega, sega mastu Ciccio, na panèlla e na saciccia; 'a panèlla ce 'a mangiàmmo e 'a saciccia ce 'a stipàmmo; ce 'a stipàmmo pe' Natale, quanno vènene 'e zampugnàre. E zampugnàre nun vènene cchiù a saciccia t'à mangi tu.</i></p>	<p><i>Sega, sega mastu Ciccio, 'na panella e nu saciccio; 'o saciccio ci 'o mangiammo e 'a panèlla ce 'a stipammo...</i></p>

Italian-American Oral History Archive

Interviewers: Vincenza Iadevaia, Viviana Pezzullo, Federico Tiberini

Interviewee: Ann Blumberg Capone

ABC: Antonetta Capone, Blumberg. S-- When I was born.... Sono nata.... English? (to interviewers) Italian? What do you want? (Pause) English is, is....

Female Interviewer: Okay.

ABC: September 24th, 1921. I was born in Mount Vernon, New York. I went to school, uh, Nathan Hale Elementary School, Washington Junior High School and Edison High School. Then I attended Columbia University for a few years. Then I got a job at Columbia University. Uh, I'm trying to think. I worked for Professor Wood—Ben D. Woo-- Wood, W-O-O-D—uh, in the Statistical Bureau. What we did was, we graded with the IBM machine the, the entrance examinations.

My dad was Domenico Capone, and, uh, he came to America-- He was born in Afragola, Napoli. And he came to America.... In those years, you just pay a fair and you come to America. You didn't need any, any other permissions. He came to America at the age of...maybe seventeen, eighteen, ah, because the people that went to America and came back to Italy, they described America as the land of opportunity. Everybody was doing well. You could find money on the ground, you know, so to speak. So he figured that would be a good place for him to go, because his father had passed away, his mother was a widow, and his younger brother was in school. So he figured he would go to America for a while, and from America he could support his mother and his, and his brother, 'cause he wanted his brother to have a good education because he didn't have a good education. So he came to America, and uh.... They, they always had some paesan in A-- America, and he looked his paesan up, and he went to live with his paesano. And he, uh, went to work for the city of Mount Vernon. I'm trying to think what he did. Anyway, and he worked for the city of Mount Vernon for a long time.

My mother had a half-sister in America and she met my father, she knew my father. (Clears throat) So she thought he would be a good catch for her sister. (Laughs) So she sent, she sent for her sister. It was in the convent, to come to America, and she introduced her to my father. So they got married.

Female Interviewer: How old she was?

ABC: Seventeen, eighteen, something like that. He was thirteen years older. He was almost like her father. That was done in those years. They got married because her sister felt sh-- she would have-- He would be able to support her. He worked for the city of Mount Vernon. Okay. So they bought a house in Mount Vernon, and they lived there.

Now my father liked to make his own wine. He said the wine you buy in the stores are made with, eh, *cartelle*, he'd say, uh, so.... He wouldn't trust those wine. So he had somebody

come and excavate under the house and made a wine cellar, because when you exca-- excavate you get cool weather. Am I right?

Female Interviewer: Yes.

ABC: So they excavated and he made a wine cellar. And, and in the cellar he used to order grape from California, and make his own wine. I can still picture the, uh, the thing where you put the grape in and you turn it and, and the wine comes out. So--

In fact, I have a little story. One day my mother was babysitting with my cousin. My cousin was a, a little kid, so he went down the cellar. He was supposed to be taking a nap. He went down the cellar and he saw the wine there so he starts drinking wine. My mother wasn't aware of that. So when he, then he came upstairs, he was drunk. So he fell asleep on the couch. So when my, my uncle came home, my mother says, "This kid's been sleeping a-- all, all afternoon. Maybe something's wrong with him." So he says, "Okay, I'll take him to the doctor." He takes him to the doctor and the doctor says, "This kid is okay, but he's drunk!" (Laughs)

I came from the winter. I used to get pneumonia, (Sounds of female voices speaking quietly) bronchitis....

Unnamed Female Speaker: Tell also the story about when your father went to visit you.

ABC: When he, he looked outside, (Sound of female voice speaking in the background) all the sunshine. He look-- He didn't like the winters 'cause he always got sick.

Female Interviewer: Hmm, hmm.

ABC: So he saw the, the nice sunshine and he said, uh, "You live in paradise!" So I said, "So move here!" "I can't move here because they don't have cellars." And why, why did I move to Florida? Because the weather was good and I knew that I, I'd be healthier in Florida.

The year was 1950. I came here with a friend of mine who worked for Pan-American Airways. So, she flew Pan-American because she worked for them. I flew Eastern Airline. And then we met. And, uh, we stayed at the YMCA, or YW, whatever. YWCA. WM is for the men and Y, YW is for the women. Okay, so...let's see. I said, "Well, if I stay here I have to get a job." So we, we took an apartment together. I had my, I had a, ah, we called him 'uncle,' he was my mother's cousin. He lived here. So... But, but Kay and I lived together. And, ah, next door to Kay was a girl, and I, I, I met her. I says, "No, I, I can't stay here. I need to get a job." So she says, "Oh." She says, "I know some attorneys that knew, that said they're looking for a girl 'cause they're not happy with the secretary that they had. So she gave me the name—Robert Goldenberg. So, a funny name. I was used to Italian names, you know? So I called him and I said, "I understand you're looking for a secretary." He says, "Yes we are." He says, so I said, "I'd like to come for an interview." So he says, "Well, come after five because the girl leaves at five. We don't want her to know." Okay, so I said, "Okay." So I went at five, and he interviewed me. I had good credentials—a letter from Dr. Wood from Columbia. I had good credentials. So he saw these, he says, "I'm satisfied to hire you, but you have to be interviewed by my two associates." So I said okay. So I went after, I went the next day or so and I was interviewed by his two associates and they were satisfied and I got the job.

Female Interviewer: So after the interview...

ABC: Yeah...

Female Interviewer: ...you got hired...

ABC: I got hired...

Female Interviewer: ...and then you, you fell in love.

ABC: Yeah.... (Laughs) Well, there were three lawyers—one was married and two were single. But I liked him better. (Laughs)

Female Interviewer: Oh...

Female Voice in Background: Okay.

Female Interviewer: ...it's a beautiful story.

ABC: Well, it's *il destino*. I believe in that, because from New York I came here. It was my destiny. We all have a destiny, don't you agree? Our life is mapped out: what we're gonna do, where we're gonna go, who we're gonna meet.

Well, my mother was an orphan 'cause she lost her mother when she was three years old and, and her father when she was eight years old, so.... She-- In Italy the, the relatives took the boys and raised them because they could send them to work, but they can't send the girls to work, they don't work. So there was a, an, a, an, an aunt and an uncle who had no children and so the relative says, "Why don't you raise Rose? You have no children." And they were pretty wealthy. So, I think he used to sell Singer sewing machines. So anyway, she went to live with them, but she didn't treat her right. She wasn't used to children, so any little thing she would get punished. So one day when there was a parade where someone died, the nuns and the orphan girls used to march into the parade. I mean, I don't know I didn't live in Italy, but she used to tell me. So she asked one of those girls, "Do you like living in the convent?" They said, "Yes." "Are the nuns good to you?" Sh-- they said, "Yes, they're good to us." So one day she, she took a, a bus and she said to the bus driver, "I have no money, but I have to get home." Imagine, at her age she, she could figure these things out! She says, so the bus driver says, "It's okay, come aboard. I'll take you." So instead of going home she went to the convent. She knocked on the door and Mother Superior answered the door. She said, "Yes?" She says, "I have no mother and no father. Could I come and live here?" So she said, "Sure." So she took her in, but she had to report it to the authorities that this little girl came there to live. So the next thing she knows, she, her, her aunt and her uncle came. And, uh, they wanted to take her back, she didn't want to go back. She cried. And so she stayed in the convent. And there—the nuns were school teachers—she got a good education. So, I don't know how long she was there, I c-- can't remember. But she had a half-sister in America. And she, when she heard her sister was in the convent, she a-- asked for her, (sound of female voice in the background) that she would come to America and she would live with her.

Female Voice: Yeah.

ABC: Oh, they taught her how to embroider. Yeah, they, she did that. Beautiful embroidery. They taught her how to do that. That's how the nuns made a living, because the, the rich people used to have the, the nuns make these, these, uh, sheets and pillow cases for the trousseau, and, ah, so she learned that craft, yeah, how to do that.

Oh, yeah. We always spoke Italian. When I went to school, at five years old, I didn't know English.

Female Interviewer: So you spoke only Italian at home?

ABC: Yeah. Well, they didn't know English.

Female Interviewer: (softly) Yeah.

ABC: So we spoke Italian. So the first five years of my life I spoke Italian.

Female Interviewer: Oh, okay. And Anne, um, do you remember any lullaby or any story, something in Italian that reminds you of your childhood or your parents.

ABC: Lullabies. I should. They'd put the, on their lap. (She recites "Sega, Sega" in Italian). (Laughs) I remember that.

We took my mother back to Italy, and we went to the convent where she was raised. And there was one nun who was still alive, but she was in retirement after all those years. So we went there, my cousin took us, my Italian cousin. And, uh, we went to visit *Suor Virginia*. And, uh, my mother used-- *Suor Virginia* had blue eyes, and my mother used to say, "If I have children, I wish they have blue eyes like you." And so, sure enough, she did. (Laughs) We, we were very happy to at least meet one nun. It was like, eh, like meeting my grandmother, because she, eh, she knew my mother when she was a little girl.

Audio file transcribed by Angela Riviuccio, FAU Digital Library