

Transcript for Oral History Interview

Conducted for University of Maryland Course Hist428M – Fall 2015

Instructor: Dr. Anne S. Rush

Interviewer's name: William T. Mohn IV

Interviewee's name: Adriana Busti-Carioti

Interviewee's Country of Origin: Italy

Interviewee's Current Residence: Bowie, Prince George's County, Maryland U.S.A

Date of Interview: October 4th, 2015

Place of Interview: Bowie, Prince George's County, Maryland U.S.A

Interviewer: Alright I am William Mohn and I will be interviewing Adriana Busti-Carioti. We are currently in Bowie, Maryland is October 4, 2015. Alright, first we'll start with a pretty simple question. I'll just ask coming from Italy what would you say is what's a childhood memory or experience that is you always think of from back home?

Adriana: From back home? I just uhm, excuse me (cough) very simple life it was after World War Second. So we, we really don't have anything and there were no work for young people and and of course I'm ambitious to work and go on and make better for me. So I decide to come to United States and of course I always love Italy, Spoleto where I come from. My Madre have two sisters here already in the United States in which bringing me over. A man from Italian Embassy he did my paperwork and as soon as I get here. About a year later, I met my husband that he was here with the Italian Embassy his father was military. We get married and I have five children, all boys, and my life started here and I am very happy and I'm glad that I came to this country and it made much better for me and for my family.

Interviewer: So just to clarify at uh what age did you come?

Adriana: I came at only nineteen.

Interviewer: Nineteen?

Adriana: I just started my birthday is October 8th so I was just 19 years old and December 12 I came.

Interviewer: December 12th of 1965?

Adriana: Yes.

Interviewer: So did you move directly to the Washington DC area?

Adriana: Yes, actually moved into Silver Spring. And then from there I met my husband. Every Sunday we used to go, I came with my sister, my sister went back after one year, after one year high school, and she went back and uhm we used to go to Italian church in downtown Holy Rosary (name of the church) and that is where I met my husband in a Italian church in downtown.

Interviewer: So what exactly did your journey to the United States look like just ranging from not necessarily exactly physically how you got here, that too, but emotions you were feeling?

Adriana: The experience to get here was very, very exciting, but also scary because I don't know the language I got to find my way, I need to learn everything that was new for me. And I did it because I am a very, very demanding person that I do not give up so easy I have to make it and I think I made it.

Interviewer: Before you moved I know you were only 19, but what was your occupation what did you do before you know?

Adriana: Back in Italy?

Interviewer: Yup.

Adriana: Uhm really after the school after you finish school there was no jobs you go from one place to the other. I used to help a lot where my father used to work. He used to make pasta, factory where they make pasta flour, so I used to, have to, after school go there and help make flour package and then sell it to the store to the people who run the place and I think we used to do this once a month. And of course it was all day long work. But let me tell you after I finished it I looked like a fish in the flour ready to fry because I was uh all white all over.

Interviewer: So tell me a little about Italy at the time I know it was after World War II, but?

Adriana: Ah Italy at the time it was very I should say poor. I mean we had rich people and people like me that, you had to leave, because was no job for young kids and everybody struggled to make a day. If there was any job it was for the family, the father the mother, whose got to support their family. But for the young people kids it was bad not, not, no jobs at all.

Interviewer: So tell me a little more about your home town? Just what was it like there? I know there was a festival.

Adriana: My city Spoleto? My city, it was a really, really nice city. It was very small, you could walk all over it that's what I did because we did not have at the time, no car, so we walked everywhere, but it was very very home .I don't know how to say it, you, everybody know each other, everybody go out to pizza and café, just have ice cream and meet friends and just walked to everywhere. And that was the way we would spend the night or afternoon or Sunday go to church. Actually went to a Catholic Church and Catholic school in Spoleto. And so in 19 uh I can't remember exactly when I was 14 the Spoleto festival started by Carlo Menotti bring the Spoleto festival. Now I think they do it down in Charleston, South Carolina also the same festival called the Spoleto festival USA. And at the time of the festival that's when I worked in the theatre to make some money of course, but it was exciting at the time. Because we got the

movie stars and exciting people come from everywhere from all over the world. And then I come over to look for a better job, better life, I should say, and I think I made it. I struggled, but I think I did it. I think I comfortable now. I got my job and I got my five children, I got my eight grandchildren... and I think I did it pretty good you know? I survived, I should say I survived.

Interviewer: So before you came to America, I know you had family here, but what would you say was your relationship to America, Did you know a lot about America, did you ever read about it?

Adriana: I did read about it and I want to come to America because America was the best. What I looking for was I was excited to see cowboy all the west. To me it was west, the cowboy, the horse and when I came to Washington and I say where are the cowboy? I'm looking for cowboy, cowboys, and the west but no cowboy here, but yes it was very exciting to come to Washington to America. Yes.

Interviewer: So you say that you just, did you say other than not finding the cowboys...

Adriana: No did not find cowboy here in Washington.

Interviewer: Would you say your experience or what you believed, you know, the idea you had in your head of what America was, would you say it lived up to your expectations?

Adriana: Yes, I think yes. When I came to this country of course the first few years it was homesick. I wanted to go back all the time, but then I thought you want to go back because your family your roots are there but there is nothing like here, you don't have the chance that you have here. So for many year I go, not back and forth, but I stayed with one foot in the water in the ocean and one foot in the land. I don't know I want to stay here, I want to go back, It was a difficult time for me to decide and I know I want to be here but it was such a homesick very very homesick to go back.

Interviewer: I believe it

Adriana: Yeah.

Interviewer: Other than, you know, just the distance, how did your family life changed from coming to America? Did you talk to your family often?

Adriana: From the beginning, I didn't have a telephone so from the beginning I write. And slowly with the year go by everything getting better, I am getting better, so phone call maybe once a month to let them know and to hear from them, how they going.

Interviewer: Did they ever come over here?

Adriana: Um, my father...My Madre came when my number three son was born which was 44 years ago. My father came when my mother died, which was twenty years ago. And he came and stayed all summer here and then he went back, yeah.

Interviewer: How about your, you said your sister went back, did she ever come back here?

Adriana: No, she never came back. She went back after one year high school went back and got married opened clothing store. She did very well and I don't know what year but I know that twenty years ago she get very ,very ,very sick. She got lupus. She had to close her store and she still in bed, she cannot get up. And she is a very sick girl. Yes, I try to go back. I used to go back once a year but now it starts to get difficult. So I try to go every two years, but I want to go back and see her of course and see my brother, my cousin, everybody there the family that I left behind.

Interviewer: So after you moved here how long was it before you went and visited back to Italy for the first time?

Adriana: It taking me six years, six years to go back yeah.

Interviewer: So, tell me about when you first showed up and you came into Silver Spring. Tell me about the first couple of experiences you had, when you first got here, setting your roots?

Adriana: It was okay, it was good I want to stay, I want to start a life here I, want to it was a little difficult to learn the language and I still think I got to learn to learn the language to get used to this different life that like I said it was a little difficult and I keep in the back of my mind, I've got to make it I have to get used to it I have to become American citizen and I have to do like American do it. You go to Rome you do it like Roman do it. Here, Adriana you are in America you do what America do and that's what I did and now I think I am American I still need to learn some English maybe some pronunciation but I think I'm settled pretty good, yeah, I think so.

Interviewer: So when you moved here did you live with your aunts.

Adriana: Umhm.

Interviewer: And what was like your first job where did you start out?

Adriana: I think I babysat started babysitting a little boy. I can't remember his name it was so many years ago, but yes I did babysitting for some family.

Interviewer: So did you. Go ahead...

Adriana: Then I met my husband at Italian church then we get married and we started from there to slowly to get ahead.

Interviewer: And what did he do?

Adriana: My husband used to work for a company after his father and mother go back to Italy and finished service on the Italian embassy, and we get married and this Italian man that used to have a store, I should say. He used to make the lamp and he got green cards for us and after that we become American citizen after seven years. We waited for five years and, yeah, so we become American citizen and pretty much soon that was what we were interested in doing.

Interviewer: I know you were very homesick and you went to the Italian church were there any other ways that you reconnected back to the Italian people in this area back to the Italian culture?

Adriana: Yes sometimes I go to the same Italian church they have a lot of activity, but now I live a little far away and we not going all the time. We used to go to Italian festivals met a lot of Italian people, but we do not have many Italian people in this area, most are in New York that I have a few friends Italian that we get together and do picnic or whatever you know activities that come up they call me and we like to like I say we go to the Italian church pretty often.

Interviewer: What would you was it difficult for when you came here that there wasn't a very strong Italian community?

Adriana: No not at all.

Interviewer: Were you expecting a stronger Italian community?

Adriana: I didn't look. I just don't know what I did I just kept going day by day to find my way to learn the language and to getting better to like I said after I married I stayed a few years at home then I decide I need to do much better with the money because a lot of kids come up. So I learn to be a beautician I learned to be a beautician and excuse me (cough) then I find a babysitter, excuse me (coughing) that she was from Cuba and she just come from Cuba living next door to me and so always tell me about life in Cuba she left two children behind because it was a time of service over there so she couldn't take them out. So I told her that if she watch my children I go back to work.

(Coughing)

Interviewer: You can get some water if you like.

Adriana: Excuse me.

(Coughing went and got water)

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Adriana: So, My neighbor was from Cuba and she always we get together at lunch time and she always tell me about all she went through to come into this country. Her story so she left two children over there. So I told her that would go back to work if she babysat my kids so she could have some money to send a package to Cuba to help her children. So I paid her and that's when I started to learn the Spanish better than the English so now I know the Spanish better than the English because with all the the Spanish people around here I find people to talk all the time and so she babysit my children till the last one.

Interviewer: Was it difficult still learning the language to get a job as a beautician?

Adriana: No with my language it wasn't difficult I did not find it difficult to find the job because I knew my work and I learn it very fast so my job was okay.

Interviewer: So what would you say when you first came first came here going back to that image of America in your head what was completely different then what you thought? What you thought it was going to be?

Adriana: Everything, everything, everything you know especially here you need a car to get everywhere. In Italy I could walk everywhere so that was very difficult because I don't have a car by the way. So I had to learn to drive and had to buy a car and understand the people the school for the kids everything was different.

Interviewer: After being here when did you get your first car?

Adriana: I got my first car I already had two children it was after Stevie number three maybe after 10 years I was here. I don't remember exactly. It was difficult to learn and you have to say everything in English not like now everything is also in Spanish. I never had that opportunity English or nothing! I remember learning to drive and park a car it was difficult I park all the way far away where no one there but I made it you know it was very difficult because like I said everything was in English. Then I have to go to test for beautician which was difficult because it was in English. The writing the reading it was difficult and then I started work for retirement home contracting for a retirement home and so I need a manager license. So then I have to go back for manager license otherwise I couldn't work there and that was a little difficult also. You have to know all this brain stuff and the here and the functions like doctor. So I say I should become a doctor instead of a hair dresser but I make it through that too.

Interviewer: Tell me a little more about since you did have five sons and you didn't have a car for a very long time tell me a bit about the home life?

Adriana: Well by the fifth son I did have a car let me think now uhm yes well from the beginning I would stay home and then when I got the car bring everyone to the babysitter fill it up some in the school some at the babysitter some here some there. So I was so tired coming home from school and take everyone here or there sometimes I have a baby and put the baby in the car seat and I forget bag on top of car and diapers on the front of the car at the time the car had big bumper on the front and could put stuff there and people were waving and I say why are they waving what do they want everything is fine and the baby bottle was on top of the car and the bag was in the front. When I get home I go oh this is still here no wonder they were waving and more than one time it happened to me because you have to catch the kids going into street and all the kids have seatbelt it was just crazy and how I was everywhere. I was size six and weighted 116 I was a skeleton but after everybody mhm run here there. Fix dinner everybody take shower everybody ready, ready for school, everybody ready for babysitter uh I don't want to go back. No, no no.

Interviewer: It was a full time job. So when you guys were raising your kids did you try to put some of your Italian culture and life style?

Adriana: Defiantly, defiantly my children when they sit at the table everybody sit at the table they eat with the fork, with the knife, no elbow on the table, no you cannot talk with the mouth full. Everybody can talk but not with mouth full. Everybody eat at the table at the same time nobody say I bring my food to TV, in front of TV dishes in front of TV. I say no TV off everybody sit at the table that's my culture that's how I grew up everybody eat together. Six o'clock is dinner time after dinner we read we do everything we have to do, but when it's time for dinner, breakfast or whatever everybody got to sit at the table together.

Interviewer: Was it strange did you ever have to like at some point see your children and say they have kind of been Americanized you know what I'm saying?

Adriana: Yeah.

Interviewer: The American culture affecting them.

Adriana: Yeah and that's fine. You know I put everything together American, Italian because my children were born here they have to have their American culture, but also my culture and try to speak Italian to them so they can learn the language . I think I did pretty good. They learn the language they learn the Spanish with the babysitter and of course English is their own language.

Interviewer: That's great I was just talking about things that are common in your culture. What is a cultural or social norm in Italy that you wish was more common here in America.

Adriana: You and your family every Sunday. Sunday is very important back in Italy everybody go see grandma, see mom, everybody get together .Everybody go see it's its Sunday it's for you for your family to do things together. Let's go maybe eat out, but also lets go see grandma first because grandma is part of your family you know so yeah that is very important for us.

Interviewer: A tight family?

Adriana: Yes, a tight family.

Interviewer: Uhm so just going back when you think of Italy what is the first thing that comes to mind the first thing you think of when you think back on Italy?

Adriana: Well everything, but what comes to mind I think of walking Spoleto streets, sit in the café, have a cappuccino and just talk with my friends and just walk like go back in summertime because it is good you know the weather is good the fruit is good you walk in the street people selling fruit and so you buy fresh fruit. And get together and lunch time in Italy you have four rush hour 8 o'clock in the morning the store close at 1 o'clock go home and eat till four o'clock then go back to work and work till 8 o'clock this three hours in the daytime is for your friends, four your nap, for whatever you have to do, go to café have a cappuccino, lunch and and this is life in Italy unlike here its rush rush rush, but you can't do different here.

Interviewer: Was that very overwhelming when you first came here from that four rush hour to working all at one time through?

Adriana: Yeah, it was a little difficult since you're not used to it, but better at it now I got used to it, but at the beginning it was a little difficult yeah.

Interviewer: So have you gone to the Spoleto festival anytime recently?

Adriana: Yes I went to Charleston are you talking about here or?

Interviewer: Oh no the one in Italy.

Adriana: Oh in Italy, Yeah I have been many times before I came here I used to work there I did lots of stuff. Open the door see all the movie stars, musicians and that it was just just good. All

the young girls used to do this like I said we waited for the Spoleto Festival we can have a little job mhm.

Interviewer: So just going back to coming here and adapting would you say to an extent you were perceived or uh kind of misunderstood because there were not many Italians in the area?

Adriana: No, I was not no not many Italians in this area.

Interviewer: Do you think you were kind of perceived or misunderstood here, than in your country of origin?

Adriana: Uh like?

Interviewer: Like you know discriminated against or people didn't talk to you or anything like that?

Adriana: I did not find discrimination when I came over. I find more now than before.

Interviewer: Really?

Adriana: Yes, yes when I came over not at all, everything was fine you know but now it is more.

Interviewer: More discrimination now?

Adriana: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: That's interesting I just wanted to talk about transitioning to the American culture again. What were some things that when you came to America you just loved that you didn't know about in Italy but when you came here you were awestruck almost that you really enjoyed?

Adriana: Uhm you know what like I said I got to get used to it. It wasn't like wow it was too much of a change too big of a change for me to say oh no I need to get used to it. I left and I can't go back because the economy there was bad. The economy there was bad so here I had to make it I had to get used to it. The only thing that really in Spoleto. Where I come from Umbria the region is green all year long even the winter the tree never lose leaves the mountain is green. When I came in December, December 12th the tree does not have leaves! Everything was so sad! I started to get sick. So what happened to this tree? I never knew tree doesn't lose leaves. They lose the leaves, because in my city in Umbria my region the trees always green so when I saw this than the depression, really depressing.

Interviewer: That is when the homesickness hit?

Adriana: Yeah a lot.

Interviewer: How did you get into going to the Italian church? Did you have family that went there?

Adriana: No, yeah my aunt told I could meet people. I could meet young guys and young women like me yeah.

Interviewer: So when you first came here with your sister went back did you ever think of moving to a different place in the country? Was there a place that you really wanted to be?

Adriana: No, I've wondered all of my life why I didn't move to you know California, but I couldn't because my ex my husband, ex-husband now he had his father at the Embassy he was young man like me so we can't you know I stay here.

Interviewer: If you had the choice do you think you would have moved to California?

Adriana: Yes, I love California. California reminds me of Italy.

Interviewer: So, I'm just wondering why your aunt came here originally?

Adriana: They came after the World War Second with the ambassador and worked for them. They were cooks I think in the kitchen I think they made dinner yeah.

Interviewer: How did your family feel about you coming to America? Did they want you to, or did they want you to stay?

Adriana: No, they told me it was a good idea because there was nothing there for young people there. I thought they not like it that I left, but they also think it was a good opportunity for me to have a better life. Better opportunity to at least work.

Interviewer: Did they ever think about coming over?

Adriana: For good? No, but they came to visited my father came my mother came, my brother came.

Interviewer: How about your brother did they ever get any ideas of coming?

Adriana: Ah well no they were already married with the children, no it was too much for everybody. You move when you are young or you not move at all.

Interviewer: So you came in by plane? First time on a plane. Tell me a little more about that trip over here?

Adriana: The trip over here it was I made it with Alitalia (airline company) and it was so long and when we get to New York we had to change for Washington, but that night it rain so bad or something with the plane. I couldn't come so we stayed in a hotel there. So yeah I had four, four American girls that take same plane so they help me get from one plane to another. They went to Italy for tour you know? They help me in New York and so we came here the next day. Washington the next day

Interviewer: Where did you land?

Adriana: In Washington?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Adriana: Ah I landed in the city uhm.

Interviewer: Reagan?

Adriana: Yeah Reagan.

Interviewer: Did you ever think about staying in New York?

Adriana: No.

Interviewer: Just wondering since it's such a large Italian community.

Adriana: No, I like a small place. A small city I love Annapolis, I like Bowie. That is what I didn't get used too there. Like When I go to Rome one day and it is done for me too much. When I go to New York one, two days most and I have to go home.

Interviewer: Too big?

Adriana: Too big, beautiful, gorgeous it is too big I get lost.

Interviewer: I know you lived in Silver Springs and now in Bowie where else did you live in this area?

Adriana: That's it. I don't move around much I make my roots some place I stay. I don't like to move.

Interviewer: What year did you guys move into Bowie from Silver Springs?

Adriana: Where did I move?

Interviewer: Just you know how long you did live in Silver Springs before?

Adriana: I moved to Bowie in me say fourteen years ago.

Interviewer: So you lived in Silver Springs up to then?

Adriana: Yeah.

Interviewer: Show was the community there?

Adriana: The community it was good I like it. I like it. My neighbor was Italian, born in Argentina but family was Italian and we get along fine. On the other side I had a couple that already retired from work. All day she raised one of my kids. She never had kids so she thought he was her kid. Paul and Paul have a room over there, Paul sleep over there, Paul, Paul, Paul. I couldn't even call and say Paul come home. She say no Paul have a room over here and she never had any children wonderful, wonderful people. So I say Okay you can have him I have five. I have four so you can have Paul. So yeah wonderful people. My neighbors were nice, nice people.

Interviewer: So when you first came over here other than going to the church. The community was very accepting and you know letting you in, trying to help you out?

Adriana: No, not really no I did it by myself nobody got involved really. I went to the church on Delphi and it was Italian American priest but he study in Rome so he know a bit Italian. And

many times he came to dinner at my house because he feel he was back in Italy. So yeah we get along fine at the church up there. My kids went to church school there and went to school there also.

Interviewer: I'm just going to go into what would you say are your hobbies? I know you like to cooking and everything. Do you find that is a way you reconnect with your Italian Culture?

Adriana: Yes! Well I work for I used to have a beauty shop maybe twenty three years ago in Bethesda. Then they knocked down the building and of course the new lease was too much money. So I go to retirement home and contract at retirement home and one time I think maybe Washington Post came and see what I do all day with this lady it was beautiful I think 1995. Then Let me think yes I keep going and doing this then I also got not that long ago two, three, two weeks ago I went to New York and I cooked for Italian restaurant. One of the best in the country. One of the best five in the country and that day was excellent also I have never cooked before for so many people I cook for my family but never for that many, but it was excellent day. So now I go back next week to do the Food Network yeah. I go back on Thursday and that's what's what I'm gonna do.

Interviewer: You are going to shoot for the Food Network?

Adriana: Yeah.

Adriana: And now I sell clothing. I sell clothing from Italy. I bring it over not too much a little money. Some used some new it gives me something to do I don't know sit still it. I know everything about clothing. My family used to have a clothing business back in Italy.

Interviewer: You're sisters?

Adriana: Yes my sister so I do that also Sundays, Saturdays I do flea markets I enjoy do it, but I also have beautiful clothing too beautiful.

Interviewer: So I'm just going to add is there anything you would want to tell us before we leave? Let's say if you were going to give some advice to someone who was coming over from Italy to American right now or any immigrant coming in what would you tell them?

Adriana: First thing, learn the language if you don't know. And then you got to settle someplace not go here or there settle and find out everything that you can about your community, the stores where city hall is and all these important places. Then you go to school if you have children, you go to school if you want too, but yes settle into one place and focus on what you want your life to be. Because if you go from one place to another you will get lost. You don't know you need to know the place you live you need to know the city where you live you got to know where everything is and then you can move on wherever but first you got to orient yourself like that.

Interviewer: Kind of adapt yourself to the American culture?

Adriana: Yeah, your children with your neighbors watch for that too.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you would like to talk about or add?

Adriana: No, I enjoy having my family over and enjoy what I am doing. I like being with my friends I enjoy going to work. My children tell me Ma relax just relax because I'm going going I never stop. I tell them when I die I relax a lot. So, I got to go keep doing things I got to do now. Because if you are not doing it now when are you going to do it? You know? Now I do it for fun. Of course you need to go to work to pay your bills, but also you do things for fun now One day I say I can't go in because I can't go to work because I have to go to New York. You can do it. There was time when I say I can't go to New York. I can't go to Annapolis. I can't go here or there because I have to go to work with family, house and everything. But now I go to work and my responsibilities to pay my bills, but if one day I want to take off then okay today is my day. Today I want to go to the beach then I do it. Instead of come in today I come in Saturday to work. Everybody agree because they wait for me to come. The wait for me to get their hair done. They ask me Adriana why don't you cook for us? I say it's not so easy. I used I used to do happy hour for them at the retirement home once a month I cook for them I do happy hour I do little horderves or appetizers so I enjoy that yeah. So that's it I think that is the way it is. This is the American way you do the best you can and be nice, be good, pay your bills, pay your taxes and wait for your time to come to the other side.

Interviewer: Alright well I really appreciate you giving me this opportunity.

Adriana: Yeah, oh well my pleasure I'm glad.

Interviewer: Alright, Thank You.