

Rebecca: My name is Rebecca Flaminio...your name is?

Giuseppina: Giuseppina Flaminio.

Rebecca: Yes, this is my Nonna. She was born in 1930 in Torre de Passeri in Pescara in Abruzzo, Italy. She's the mother of three to my Father and two Aunts. She immigrated to Canada in 1959. Today is October 6th and were holding this interview in my Nonna's house in Hamilton, Ontario. Nonna, I'm going to be asking you a few questions on your trip from Italy to Canada and your experiences throughout and I also have my Father here translating for us. What's your name?

John: John Flaminio.

Rebecca: Ok Nonna, first question, what brought you to Canada?

Giuseppina: *confused

John: Why did you come to Canada?

Rebecca: Better life?

Giuseppina: For my husband.

Rebecca: Because he was here? Why did he come to Canada?

Giuseppina: When?

Rebecca: Why?

Giuseppina: Why? Because I got my husband here.

John: No, why did he come?

Rebecca: Why'd your husband come? Why'd you both leave Italy?

John: Why did Dad come here first?

Giuseppina: Papa? I don't know.

John: He needed work? Did he work?

Rebecca: Was he following the masses?

Giuseppina: He worked yeah.

John: Who told him to come?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: *replying to Nonna, who called him?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian .

John: So, he went through an agency, he (Nonno) came over when he was younger to work and an agency said there's availability here (Canada) to work to pick plants on farms?

Giuseppina: Yeah! Speaks Italian.

John: So, he came over to do that.

Rebecca: Was he running from the war?

John: This was after the war.

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: So, he was a diesel mechanic on a boat in Italy. When he came to Canada he became an electrician.

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: Oh, he studied here to become an electrician, in Canada.

Giuseppina: Yeah, yeah!

John: But he was single, right?

Giuseppina: He was single.

John: But he was back to Italy, he got married.

Giuseppina: Yes!

John: And he came here by himself, right?

Giuseppina: Yeah, after three months we got married, Papa come here.

John: Right so you were married in Italy but then Dad came here.

Giuseppina: Yes.

John: And he worked and then you came after.

Giuseppina: Yes! Speaks Italian.

John: He was building a house?

Giuseppina: Yeah!

Rebecca: This house, no?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: So, he said don't come yet because I don't have doors on the house.

Giuseppina: I don't have door in the house, I say I want to come back.

John: And Nonna said "I don't care about doors; I just want to come"

Rebecca: Yeah, this house?

Giuseppina: Yeah.

John: *confused, No ma this house? I was born when this house was built?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: But you guys were in Laurier.

Giuseppina: Yeah! Speaks Italian.

John: And he was building this at the same time? I see I see ok.

Rebecca: So besides Nonno did you know anyone else that lived in Canada here?

Giuseppina: No.

John: Nobody?

Giuseppina: *confused.

John: Did you know anybody in Canada when you came?

Giuseppina: No, Speaks Italian.

John: Did Dad know anybody when he came here?

Giuseppina: Yeah! Speaks Italian.

John: Vince and DeBenedictis (friends). So, Dad knew them when he came to Canada?

Giuseppina: Yes, yes! Speaks Italian.

Rebecca: So family friends?

John: Yeah, so there was nobody else? Nobody from Toronto, like our cousins from Toronto?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: Did he know that when coming to Canada that they were there?

Giuseppina: Yeah!

John: Before?

Giuseppina: Oh no, speaks Italian.

John: Oh they came after. So Dad really didn't know anybody here?

Giuseppina: No

John: And you didn't know anybody here?

Giuseppina: No, no nobody.

Rebecca: Ok, and you first arrived in 1959? What part of Canada?

Giuseppina: In Halifax.

Rebecca: In Halifax! Ok, and how'd you get here? By boat?

Giuseppina: I came by boat.

Rebecca: By boat, and then from Halifax did you fly to Ontario?

Giuseppina: No! I go by train from Halifax, we took the train from Toronto. We went to Toronto.

Rebecca: Ok, ok.

Giuseppina: In Toronto, Remo (my Nonno) was there and he bring me Hamilton.

Rebecca: And he brought you here? Ok, how was the boat? Do you remember the experience?

Giuseppina: The boat was, um, speaks Italian.

John: *surprised, do you remember the name of the boat?

Giuseppina: Andrea Doria.

John: The name of the boat was Andrea Doria.

Rebecca: Were there a lot of people?

Giuseppina: Yes! A lot of people but I can't come upstairs because I was sick.

Rebecca: Yeah! I remember you saying you were sick.

Giuseppina: And I got the baby! (my Aunt Gaberielles) And somebody watch the baby and I stay down in the.... Speaks in Italian looking for word.

John: Latrine? In the bathrooms?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: The first level?

Giuseppina: Yeah! Speaks Italian.

John: Yeah, so she was feeling seasick, she couldn't get out of her couchette.

Rebecca: And so who was the lady taking care of Aunt Gabe?

Giuseppina: Just one friend that come with boat with me.

Rebecca: Ok, so just a friend.

John: Where was she from?

Giuseppina: Maria, Pompeii.

John: *Thinks last name is Pompeii, and where was she from? Was she from Abruzzese as well?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: Oh! She was from Pompeii?

Giuseppina: Yeah! Speaks Italian.

John: She was younger like you.

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: So, she met her on the boat.

Giuseppina: Yeah, I met her on the boat.

Rebecca: And how old were you when you immigrated here?

Giuseppina: Twenty-eight.

Rebecca: Twenty-eight? And you're from Torre de Passeri, um, and you said your journey was, you were really seasick and everything.

Giuseppina: Yes, every time, every time.

Rebecca: Yeah but, generally the surroundings were pretty happy?

Giuseppina: Yeah, everybody happy over there, you know.

Rebecca: Yeah. Ok and do you remember your first impression of Canada?

Giuseppina: Remo bring me to Joanna's (friend) house, and I know Joanna and after Remo got a girlfriend.

Rebecca/Giuseppina/John: *laughs.

Giuseppina: I was so jealous, *laughing.

John: But, Ma what did you think of Canada when you came? As soon as you stepped off the...

Giuseppina: I like it!

John: Did you like it?

Giuseppina: Yeah I like here.

John: Yeah? Was it cold? When was it?

Rebecca: I imagine it would be summer, no? On a boat?

John: Was it cold? When was it?

Giuseppina: It was March.

John: March?

Giuseppina: May.

John: Oh, May, May.

Rebecca: Yeah, yeah so it was warm.

John: May in Halifax so it was, I don't know, not really warm?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: *replying to Nonna, right but we lived on Geneva, then we lived on, um...

Giuseppina: No, Speaks Italian.

John: I can't remember anyway, Delmar?

Giuseppina: Barnesdale.

John: Oh! Barnesdale! So, she first arrived they had a rented place on Barnesdale in Hamilton, a rented house and then they bought a house? Up on the mountain? (Hamilton Mountain), They must have.

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: *Replying to Nonna, why did he the first house?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: *Replying to Nonna, no I didn't.

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: *Replying to Nonna, oh! Yeah?

Giuseppina: Yeah! Speaks Italian.

John: So, Nonna is saying that when she first came, right, they rented a place in Barnesdale and then from there Nonno was building a house on the mountain.

Giuseppina: Yeah, April Court.

John: April Court?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: No because Gabriele (my Aunt) lives on April Court, but it must be by Delmar because Salvatore and Eva (friends) lived around that area.

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: Ok, so on the mountain by Buchanan Park (in Hamilton).

Giuseppina: Yeah, Buchanan Park.

John: Uh, Nonno was building a house and that's where, um, their good friends, Salvatore and Eva, Eva was walking by and she noticed Aunt Gabriele, she said to Nonna, my Mum, "I think your Italian because the baby looks really Italian her beautiful Italian eyes"

Giuseppina: *laughs, yeah.

John: And that's when they first met and they were friends ever since, right?

Rebecca: Oh no way! Ok!

Giuseppina: Yeah!

John: I didn't know that!

Rebecca: Oh!

John: Anyway, so yup. So your impressions of Canada then was... you liked it?

Giuseppina: Yeah! I like it.

Rebecca: Clean, nice?

Giuseppina: I always like it.

Rebecca: Yeah?

John: You were happy to be here.

Rebecca: Did you encounter any obstacles or barriers as a new immigrant to Canada?

John: Was there any problems that you had or anything that you found was.

Giuseppina: No, I just, I just um jealous.

Rebecca: *laughs

Giuseppina: Cause he (Nonno) got this girlfriend.

Rebecca: *laughs

John: Right, but what about...

Giuseppina: I was so mad.

John: But, Ma, what about like when you went, where did you find super markets? Did you find it hard to speak?

Rebecca: Hard to accommodate?

Giuseppina: Oh yeah.

John: Tell us about that.

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: So how did you go to the super market?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: So she used to go to Steinburg's and actually that's where she used to see Grandma, at Steinburg's cause that's where she would work.

Rebecca: Really!

Giuseppina: Yeah I saw her.

Rebecca: Oh no way!

Giuseppina: Yeah, I remember.

John: But that was way later, so you used to go to grocery store even though you didn't know the language. Did you find that hard?

Giuseppina: *laughs, Speaks Italian.

John: So she found it difficult, she bought cat food where she thought it was tuna.

Rebecca: *laughs, Oh and you bought cat food.

Giuseppina: I thought it was tuna but it was cat food.

Rebecca/Giuseppina: *laugh.

Rebecca: So other than that nothing really? Oh, okay! Um, did you bring any items of importance with you when you came to Canada? Like photographs, family heirlooms?

John: What did you bring from Italy when you came?

Rebecca: Big suitcase of stuff?

John: What did you take with you from Italy when you came over on the boat?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: So she brought all her linen because she...

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: She brought a big trunk, uh all her linen because she used to needlepoint, right?

Rebecca: Oh, right, right.

John: So all of that needlepoint she brought with her.

Giuseppina: Yeah but no, Speaks Italian.

John: But like linen like blankets and towels.

Giuseppina: Yeah! And towels.

John: And what about anything specific from your family that brought with you, any, well you brought all your rings with you.

Giuseppina: No, Speaks Italian.

John: Your rings.

Rebecca: Jewelry, photos?

John: Pictures?

Giuseppina: I don't know.

John: No?

Rebecca: *points to wall with old photos hanging, how do we have all these?

John: Those came from Italy, didn't they?

Giuseppina: Yeah!

John: Yeah we went back and got them.

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

Rebecca: Oh, you went back after?

John: Yeah.

Rebecca: So all the photos we have now were not with her initially?

John: *To Nonna, so you didn't take any pictures when you came back.

Rebecca: In your trunk.

Giuseppina: Oh yeah! Speaks Italian.

John: Yeah well that was when she was, okay, when she had her um, when you go on, what's the word I'm looking for?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian, Honeymoon!

John: Honeymoon! Thank you, so when they were on their honeymoon they took all those pictures (referring to pictures hanging on her wall) and you brought all those with you.

Giuseppina: Yeah.

John: Yes.

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: Um, so nothing else you didn't bring anything from your family when you came over?

Giuseppina: No, Speaks Italian.

John: *replying to Nonna, yeah that was after.

Rebecca: Just basically clothes and stuff.

John: Yup! Just clothes and stuff. She didn't have much.

Giuseppina: No.

Rebecca: Ok, and you can say no for this next question, would you be willing to allow them to be studied and made available to a wider community?

John: No that's okay. Would you want to have those pictures available so that other people can look at them and write about them? (pictures not used in project)

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: No? No.

Rebecca: And did you encounter obstacles, barriers, difficulties giving birth in Canada?

John: When you had Rosie (my Aunt), did you have any difficulties? Any people...

Giuseppina: Speaking English.

John: Even speaking English or anything else that caused, um...

Rebecca: Like documented papers and stuff like that?

John: Yeah did you not have the right papers for them? Did you have any issues when you went to St. Joseph's hospital?

Rebecca: Getting healthcare?

Giuseppina: No.

John: Did you have a doctor?

Giuseppina: Yeah, Dr. Scime.

John: Dr. Scime was available for you. So, no right? No issues, problems?

Giuseppina: Yeah, Speaks Italian.

John: Was there any, did you come against anything that caused you an issue with going to the hospital or getting care?

Giuseppina: Yes! Because, Speaks Italian.

John: *Replying to Nonna, but that was physical...

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: Right, so Dad couldn't show up because they didn't allow the husbands to go into the birthing room. So, what about language Ma? Did you have issues talking to them?

Giuseppina: No.

John: You could understand them and speak?

Giuseppina: I understand them a little bit.

John: You understood a little bit.

Rebecca: I mean I think it's pretty universal.

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: She had an Italian doctor.

Rebecca: Oh! So that made it easy.

Giuseppina: Dr. Scime.

John: Dr. Scime was fluent in both English and Italian.

Rebecca: Oh, ok! So, was he just initially given to all women who were Italian, like immigrants?

John: How did you find Dr. Scime?

Rebecca: Like how did you find an Italian doctor?

John: Was it DeBenedictis?

Giuseppina: I don't know.

John: Because they lived close to each other, right?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: Yeah, her friend Joanna like found him.

Rebecca: Found him?

John: Yeah.

Rebecca: And describe your experience as a new mother as a recent immigrant to Canada. So before Rosie (Aunt), you had Aunt Gabe. How was it immigrating her with a baby?

Giuseppina: Rough.

John: It was rough, why?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: How like what did you find difficult? I mean you...

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: She was strange to the land and didn't know anybody, it was her husband.

Giuseppina: Yeah.

John: Remo who helped her out with everything.

Giuseppina: He help me everywhere.

John: To go out and to speak and to go into the community and to speak to people. What about with a new baby? Um, what would you be doing?

Rebecca: Well, I assume like, what it could relate back to was when you were sick and you had a baby and you needed someone to take care of it, thank God there was a kind person to take care of it but I guess that would've added extra struggle because you're not only thinking about yourself now. You have to worry about two things.

John: Right. Anything else that was trouble with...

Rebecca: Like finding a school, was that hard?

Giuseppina: No.

Rebecca: No?

John: Who did you have anybody to help you?

Rebecca: When Nonno was working?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: *replying to my Nonna, oh yeah? Oh you went to an Italian school?

Giuseppina: No, Speaks Italian.

John: Oh she went to an English speaking, or she took English classes?

Giuseppina: Yeah but not much anyway, just little bit.

John: Only a couple of times.

Rebecca: Ok! And did you exchange letter with relatives in Italy?

John: Oh all the time.

Giuseppina: What?

John: Did you ever write back to Italy?

Giuseppina: Yeah

John: All the time. Ma, I remember you and Zia Vendorinna used to send letter back and forth all the time.

Giuseppina: Yeah.

John: So how often would you write home?

Giuseppina: I don't know, Speaks Italian.

John: No but how much? Every month did you write letters back?

Rebecca: Every week?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: She used to send money.

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: So we had one Aunt that she used to send money to.

Giuseppina: Yeah.

Rebecca: Through the mail?

John: Through the mail. And that was always an issue right? Ma, every time we send money. through the mail?

Giuseppina: Yeah, Speaks Italian.

John: So her sisters used to always write her and she used to write her sister and send money to her sisters. But, Ma, tell us about what would happen when we would put money in the envelopes. What happened to the money? When you used to call Zia Vendorinna up and you'd say "Did you get my letter?".

Giuseppina: Yeah.

John: And did you get the money?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: *replying to Nonna, no I know! But sometimes you would.

Giuseppina: No, Speaks Italian.

John: Yeah, she used to then speak on the phone. But most of the times it was writing letters and then you would put money in and then she would say “I never got it”.

Rebecca: As a joke?

John: No.

Giuseppina: *disagreeing.

John: No? Ok. There were times I remember you said that they never went through.

Giuseppina: Yeah?

Rebecca: Like people would take the money out?

John: Somebody, the post office...

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: So there was a time when she was about to put the money in the envelope that she was writing to her sister and some woman came in and said “Can I use your phone?”. So she (Nonna) let her use her phone, she left the room and she (stranger) took the money.

Rebecca: Oh *laughs.

Giuseppina: She took the money and she left.

Rebecca: Aw see you can't trust, that's funny. Um, would you be willing to allow those letters to be transcribed, studied and made available to a wider community?

John: We don't even know where those letters are. Those letters went to Italy, they never. Oh!

Those letters, did you keep the letters that Zia Vendorinna used to send you and your friends?

You didn't keep any of those letters?

Giuseppina: No.

Rebecca: *laughs, you tossed them.

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: *replying to Nonna, your Father?

Giuseppina: No, Remo.

John: No but did you keep any of the letters Zia Vendorinna sent you?

Giuseppina: No, no, Speaks Italian.

John: I thought maybe you would have kept them. No, she didn't keep any of the letters.

Rebecca: No? Ok.

Giuseppina: No.

Rebecca: Where is home for you and why?

Giuseppina: Why?

John: So, when somebody says where is your home, would you say, where is your home is it Canada or is your home Italy? Where's home for you?

Giuseppina: Canada.

John: Always been Canada?

Giuseppina: Yeah.

John: So Italy has never been?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: But it didn't feel like home? You know when people say "I feel at home here"?

Giuseppina: No, I feel good in here.

Rebecca: You were ready to leave Italy?

Giuseppina: I feel really good.

John: Canada has always felt home to you?

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: *laughs, she has no regrets at all. She didn't really feel like Italy was her home.

Rebecca: You didn't like Italy?

Giuseppina: Because I don't have anybody, only my sister.

Rebecca: Oh, ok, ok.

John: So, yeah, she never really felt at home there.

Rebecca: Fair, ok. And looking back at this experience is there anything you have done differently?

John: Looking back at the whole...

Rebecca: All of Canada.

John: When you came over with Gabriele, when you settled here with Dad and everything. Would you have done anything different?

Giuseppina: No, Speaks Italian.

John: So she said "No, what would I do differently I have made a family here.

Giuseppina: I made a family, I was happy.

John: She was very happy, she had her own place to live because she always rented when she was in Italy.

Rebecca: Ok.

John: So they never owned anything, um, she grew up in the Montessori. Right?

Giuseppina: Yeah.

John: So she grew up with the Nuns so she really didn't have, kind of that family unit but when she came to Canada now she had her own house. This place. Um, and then she had her own family so it was ah...

Rebecca: No brainer.

Giuseppina: I was good in here.

Rebecca: Yeah, you were happy.

John: She was good here.

Rebecca: Did the experience of motherhood, giving birth in Canada give you an increase sense of Canadian identity? In other words, did this experience make you feel more Canadian?

John: So after you had Rosie and you had me, um, did that experience make you feel more Canadian? Because now your kids were born here?

Giuseppina: Yes, I feel in here good.

Rebecca: More established.

John: So, you felt more Canadian than Italian.

Giuseppina: Yeah.

Rebecca: Is there anything further you would like to add to this story? And when you lived in Italy I remember you telling a story about was it the Germans?

Giuseppina: We go back with the baby?

John: No.

Giuseppina: Johnny was ten months old. When we come back.

John: Oh when we went back to Italy, yeah, to visit.

Giuseppina: You remember?

John: Yeah that's where I learned how to walk.

Giuseppina: Yeah, Speaks Italian.

John: In Pesacra. Do you want to talk about, do you remember when you were younger like 12 years old and it was the second World War? And what it was like to live in the town during the second world war?

Giuseppina: Yeah the German was down my house.

Rebecca: They went down on your house?

Giuseppina: The German was there and somebody want my sister, one German want my sister.

My Father he say, "No way". Because... speaks Italian.

John: So the German wanted to visit her sister but her Father said, "No way" and he was the one who held.

Rebecca: The shovel?

John: Had the shovel behind the door expecting the Germans to come in, right?

Giuseppina: Yeah.

Rebecca: But they never did?

John: They never did, right?

Giuseppina: No.

John: They went away.

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: *replying to my Nonna, their horses were there?

Giuseppina: Yeah!

John: So the Germans had their horses parked there.

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: Where my Father, Remo's house was.

Giuseppina: Yeah.

John: So they had put their horses there.

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: And then the overhead planes that went by and bombs were going off.

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: So they had like a little sky light in their kitchen and it broke because one of the bombs went off close to the house.

Rebecca: Oh and the glass broke?

Giuseppina: Yeah.

John: Yeah she remembers that. You were what? You were twelve? If you were born in 1930, yeah! Ma you were twelve.

Giuseppina: Yeah.

John: So this would've been 1943.

Giuseppina: Speaks Italian.

John: So when the planes were going over they used to run and hide.

Giuseppina: Yeah.

John: Yeah.

Rebecca: Oh my God.

Giuseppina: Yeah, long time ago *laughs.

Rebecca: Alright thank you for participating Nonna.

Giuseppina: You finished!

Rebecca: Yeah that's it!

