

THE HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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TAPE 1, SIDE 1

PS: Start with what you want, and then  
we'll go from there.

MT: All right. My grandparents -- Lucy  
and Joseph Macaluso -- were born in Sicily. I think my  
grandfather was born in Palermo. [Interruption] My  
grandmother was a seamstress. My mother would see a  
dress, and she would say, "Fannie, you like that?" And  
she would say, "Oh, yes, Mama," and she would [make a  
pattern] out of newspaper, [sew it,] and there was her  
dress. My grandfather was a tailor, and he used to make  
suits for big men that [couldn't be purchased in a store.  
They didn't have "big men" stores like we have now.]. So  
they were very talented.

PS: They were married overseas?

MT: No, no. They came [to America at] seventeen years old, two kids -- they came over, married, and had four children.

PS: Now what year did they come over?

MT: Let's see. My mom was born in 1907. So they had to come in -- 1906? -- because I think she was born right away, they were so much in love!

PS: No waiting.

MT: They couldn't wait. But it wasn't an arranged marriage, and I thought that was so great. Because years ago, you know, it was always arranged. The Italians used to call it "amachad." That's slang. They used to call it an "amachad" marriage. They raised their four children, but they died before I was born -- which was very sad. My mother was the oldest, and she had two brothers and a sister.



PS: And she was the oldest.

MT: She was the oldest. When her father died, she wasn't married. She was sixteen years old.

PS: She was young.

MT: Yes. She was sixteen and [her father] was thirty-five --

PS: Oh, how young!

MT: -- when he passed away. Now my mother married, my grandmother was with her children. She didn't have any money, and my dad -- the man that he was -- said to my mother, "Fannie, why should your mother be paying that rent? We could bring them all in with us." Now she was eighteen, he was twenty-one.

PS: Oh, geez.

MT: He said, "We'll bring them all in."  
She said, "Tommy, are you sure?" My mother was very wise.

"Are you sure you want this?" He said, "Why? You don't want your mother living with you?"

Okay. Long story short: They came in, and they lived with my father, twenty-one -- the mother lived there, and the kids. There was a little boy, my uncle, who was nine years old. He had an accident once and they needed a legal guardian, and my father ended up adopting him. So he's like an adopted brother of mine, because we weren't even born. So that was their story. Five years later, my grandfather died, my grandmother died at forty, she was so heartbroken. So that story was somebody so much in love. So much.

Now we go over to the paternal side. The paternal side, they were from Monte San Giacomo. Monte San Giacomo was a province of Solerno. Now all the Monte San Giacomese (we're going ahead), they were the ones who brought St. Ann's statue to America.

Now, getting back to the grandmother and grandfather -- this was an arranged [marriage].

PS: Okay. So on Dad's side it was arranged, and on Mom's side it was a love-match.

MT: Yes. This was arranged. I never knew my grandfather, either. All I had was my grandmother, but she wasn't a typical grandmother; she was a business woman.

PS: Really.

MT: She was into business. (Maybe that's where I got that thought -- from her.) But she had like sixteen to eighteen children (with twins, etc.), but only about eight lived. And -- she used to deliver --

PS: She was a midwife?

MT: No! She delivered her own.

PS: She delivered her own! Okay.

MT: She delivered them like they were -- I don't know -- rabbits? Then she'd go out in the field and get the coal. That's what they used to do, you know -- like when the trains would pass downtown (they're still there, the trains). There used to be coal trains, so what the people used to do was that all the coal that fell --

they would go and pick it up and bring it home. That's what she used to do. She had a candy and grocery store.

PS: And was that here in town?

MT: Yes -- 523 Jackson Street.

PS: Do you remember the name of it?

MT: She didn't have a name. It was "Marie's." That was her name. She was Marie; naturally, I was named after her. I thought that was something, that she delivered her own -- she wasn't a homemaker. She was [a] business [woman.]

PS: But she had eight kids, who lived, out of sixteen.

MT: Yes. But the oldest took care of the young ones. My aunt would take care of those kids. That's what I have about [unclear].

PS: Do you have any idea -- were they married back in the Old Country, and then came here? They were married here?

MT: Well, this was an arranged -- I think she was here, and they sent for him. So she never knew who she was going to marry. You were just told, "You're going to marry Francesco. Maria, you're gonna marry Francesco, and that's it." But she was born there.

PS: Oh, she was born there.

MT: Yes. So I really don't know when she came, but I know she was here, they sent for him, and there was the arranged -- I just wanted to give you differential of when you're really in love and when it's arranged -- and how my maternal grandmother died of a broken heart. Because what I would like my cover to say is, "What Matters Most" ["Love" on the inside.] Is that okay?

PS: I think so.

MT: But that's how I feel about love,  
anyway.

Now my dad. He was born in Hoboken.

PS: Do you know what year?

MT: Yes. What was my mother -- 1907? He's  
1905.

PS: Is that your parents?

MT: Look at her! Is that Angelina Jolie?  
Huh?

PS: Handsome couple.

MT: She could have been a top model, she  
was so beautiful. Yes, I think she looked like Angelina  
Jolie.

PS: Yes, I can definitely a resemblance.

MT: Well, anyway. Now my dad. He was a  
loving, compassionate -- every positive adjective you can

think of was my dad. He was small in stature, but a bigger heart you couldn't find. He helped everyone. He was a hard-worker. It was his passion.

PS: What did he do?

MT: He was a plumber. Then he became partners with Tom Pascale, and it was Pascale & Luongo, Plumbing & Heating Contractors. He was just a crackerjack plumber, he really was. He could [do anything.] He built a summer home for us in 1948 --

PS: Where was your summer home?

MT: In Toms River -- and we would spend our summers there before I was married. Then with my children. We just spent every summer there. He passed away December 25, 1973 -- yes. On Christmas day.

He was in Toms River. See, I was with my mother all my life -- when I married we lived in the same house-- but when he retired [at] sixty-five, he said, "Fannie, let's go to Toms River." My mother agreed, and [they lived] there three years. But every weekend I had

to go down there, because my mother was lonely, she was so used to me. In all kinds of weather I was there.

Anyway, then he became ill. I remember it was August, and I said, "Look, Dad. You come home with me, and we'll see what's going to happen." Well, he did. He came home with me in August, and he said to my mother, "Now you stay here. You're not coming home because you have to take care of the tomatoes, and the peppers, and [the garden,]" because this is the kind of guy he was. He says, "I'll go with Marie. She'll take care of me," and I did. Then my mother, naturally, came home in September and he passed away, like I said, in December. He was just so great.

Christmas he died, and it was also my mother's birthday.

PS: Wow. That's very interesting.

MT: So on Christmas day we have mixed emotions.

Now the day of his funeral was funny. He had picked a mausoleum, and my mother said, "No way am I going to see what you bought." She never would go.



PS: Why not?

MT: Oh, no, she didn't want to see it.

PS: Bad luck?

MT: No! I mean, before he died he bought this. Oh, no! I wouldn't, either. No! She didn't want to see. She knew it was in Fairview; that was enough. "Don't tell me no more. I don't want to see it." So the day of his funeral, we did not know where we were going. So I said he still led the way -- in the hearse. He led the way to it. And -- he had always told me, "When I die, I do not want any of my family or my friends to drive. I want them all driven." We had fourteen limousines, two flowers car, and him leading the way. And there wasn't one person in that cortege that he didn't help -- not one.

PS: That says a lot about your dad.

MT: Oh! I mean, he was so well-liked. He was just great. I know it's a long time, but I still [miss him.]

Now my mother -- Fannie. You say, "What kind of a name is Fannie for an Italian?"

PS: Yes!

MT: Well, her name was Alfonsina.

PS: And her maiden name was -- ?

MT: Macaluso. Like I told you, she was married at eighteen and my dad at twenty-one. She gave birth to my brother at nineteen -- when she already had all those other kids! My brother -- his name is Thomas but they call him Tippy. People know him as Tippy, but I always called him "Brother."

Now my mother -- she was a beautiful --

PS: What year did they marry?

MT: Nineteen-twenty-six. She was fashionable, and very classy. Very classy. But she worked very hard in the home.

PS: So she always worked in the home, she never --

MT: No. She always worked in the home. I told you about her mother and sisters and my grandmother. After my brother was born then I was born, and we lived in my grandmother's house, the paternal grandmother, at 523 Jackson Street.

Now my mother not only cared for her family, she even cared for and took care of my father's. There was a niece and nephew downstairs. She would cook, they would come up. I remember, even then, sometimes sleeping upstairs. We were only two children, but our house was -- oh, my god! I used to sleep with my aunt. We were I don't know how many in the bed.

Anyway, this was the type woman she was. She was a very good cook, and a very good baker. As far as my grandmother, she and my father brought her back to life. She had pneumonia, and they took care of her, too.

PS: Now is this the paternal grandmother?

MT: Paternal -- because the maternal was gone. Yes.

What else? Oh. We always had a beautiful home. We had a beautiful bathroom. We had --

PS: Now why does that stand out in your mind -- the bathroom?

MT: The bathroom? Because everyone else had the bathroom in the hall. But back then, it didn't dawn on me to think, "You've got -- " No. I thought that was how it had to be. We had the bath, we had the shower. My father was a plumber, so that's why. We even had steam heat -- which, woo! You know. They had the stove with the coal then. But he did that. He did that for us, so we had the luxury of a beautiful bathroom.

What else? Oh, my mother, being so neat and clean -- I remember this -- she would change the kitchen curtains every week!

PS: Oh, geez.

MT: [You washed your clothes with a washboard and hung them on a clothesline.] If it was cold they'd come in like bacala. You know what bacala is, right? That stiff fish? They would come in like that. And

me, as a little girl, I would help, too. I would, on the washboard -- she'd say, "All right, Marie, come on," and I would [also] scrub the floor. "Get in that corner!" Oh, yeah.

PS: So how long would it take your mom to do the wash with a washboard? Did she have a day set aside as washday?

MT: Yes. I think they used to do it on Monday.

PS: Monday was washday.

MT: I think Monday.

PS: And it would be like the whole day?

MT: Well, she was pretty fast. She had to change the curtains, remember -- and, and -- make two meals a day. My dad used to come home from lunch, and she used to cook -- and then cook at night, and go shopping.

PS: How many people was she cooking for?

MT: Well, then she was cooking for me, my brother, and her -- well, then one brother got married, the other sister got married. It was just the little one. He's ninety now.

Anyway, he went into the service. But when they were there, before that, she would cook for everybody -- and bake! And bake, too. [She did it all.]

Well, she passed away March 4, 2000.

PS: Oh. Fairly recently.

MT: Yes. Well, prior to that, she lived with me for twenty-seven years. Because when my dad passed away, no way was she going to stay in Toms River.

PS: Now how did your parents meet?

MT: Oh, they lived on the same block, on Jackson Street. They lived on the same block, and my -- it's funny.

I don't know. You want to hear all this?

PS: Yes!

MT: Well, my mother's family -- my mother was born in New York, so she had all her people in New York -- her aunts and cousins, and they were all professionals -- a cop, a lawyer -- whereas on my father's side, they weren't. So they used to bring gentlemen from New York to meet my mother. Now my mother didn't care for them. There was *not* going to be an arranged marriage. No way -- after her mother and father were so in love? No way.

PS: Let me ask you a question. If her mother had been a love match, let's say -- who was it that was trying to do the arranged marriage?

MT: Her mother?

PS: No, no, no. You say her mother --

MT: Her aunts. Her aunts thought that my mother -- I mean, she was so *beautiful* - [she should marry] an executive. No. She wanted my father -- the plumber.

PS: They knew each other as children.

MT: Yes. They lived on the block. "Hello."  
"Hello." My mother always told me, "I used to see him,"  
and her heart used to go [pitter-patter.] She said, "I  
just loved your father," and that was it -- and they were  
bringing all these men, and she said, "I didn't want  
them."

[And] when he saw her -- they were kids. You could  
see. She married at what -- eighteen?

PS: Eighteen you said.

MT: Yeah. And he was twenty-one. Then she  
had my brother when she was nineteen. But that was  
another love affair, where they didn't want -- and, even  
the other side, the paternal side -- they didn't want him  
to marry her!

PS: How come?

MT: My grandmother said, "Why should *my*  
son support her mother and all those kids?" But,



regardless, they were married. They were married, and very, very much in love.

Let me see. My brother -- he's a good guy. A good guy, yeah. I'm his baby sister. I'm his baby sister. He was always shorter than I was, and even to this day, if he introduces me -- and I'm still taller than he is -- "This is my baby sister." When I was in trouble, like in school, and a big bully wanted to run after me and kiss me, my brother, little as he was, went up to him and grabbed him, and said, "If you ever, ever, follow my sister again I'll knock you out." So he was always protective of me. No, he's good. That's my brother.

Another thing about my brother -- he was in the Army, Navy, and Marines.

PS: I've never heard of that before. How does one do that?

MT: He was eighteen and drafted. They gave him a choice of Army or Marine, he chose the Marines. Then he was in the Navy reserves. Then when the Korean war whatever -- they called him back, the Army. He was short of, maybe, six weeks of service, and he went into

the Army. So I think that is so funny -- my brother was in the Army, Navy, and Marines.

PS: He only missed the Air Force.

MT: That's right.

PS: Of course, it wasn't around in those days.

MT: Right. Right. That was that. Now where do we go?

PS: I'm going to ask you a couple questions. [...] Now you were born in Hoboken?

MT: Yes.

PS: At home? Or in a hospital?

MT: I was born at 313 Jackson Street. Midwife. I was eleven pounds when I was born.

PS: A big baby, for those days.

MT: Now I'll tell you what my mother ate. She was very small, my mother. She must have been maybe a size ten. Maybe. Now let me tell you what she ate for nine months. She ate a bunch of bananas. Do you know how many are in a bunch?

PS: No, but a lot.

MT: Twenty-five.

PS: Twenty-five in a bunch. Okay.

MT: Yeah. Twenty-five bananas. And sometimes, when the peddler passed and the bunch was bigger, sometimes there were thirty in the bunch. [And] three [thick] ice-cream sandwiches -

PS: Who made them, the peddler?

MT: No, the peddler used to pass with the bananas, and she used to tell her friend, Mary -- who ended up being my godmother -- "Mary, go get the bananas. Here comes the peddler." But then, for nine months he

knew, just get those bananas ready. She'd go around the corner and she would get the ice cream, like three. She'd get one at maybe breakfast time (I don't know. I wasn't there). But how could she have eaten all those bananas -- and that's it! That was her diet for nine months. You wonder why I'm like this? All those fat cells?

PS: It's not the bananas.

MT: They never left me! Never!

When I was three months old, we moved to  
523 Jackson Street --

PS: -- from 313.

MT: Yes.

PS: So you moved a couple of blocks away -  
- up the street.

MT: Up the street. Yes. And it was a  
wonderful neighborhood. Across the street, on Jackson  
Street -- that was empty. There were no projects or any

of that. We thought we were really in the country. We used to play there.

PS: Did it ever flood?

MT: No! We never had a flood. No. Never. We had cobblestones.

PS: So it was an open field back here, for playing?

MT: Yes. But -- little that we knew, even -- way back by the tracks, they used to dump the garbage!

PS: Oh, really. That was the garbage dump.

MT: Yes! It was a dump! And we thought we were in the country! All the kids used to play there. I wonder why we didn't get sick. See! You need germs. You really do.

PS: Yes, you do.

MT: You need the germs.

PS: What school did you go to?

MT: I went to No. 8 School, which was  
Sadie Leinkauf.

PS: What street was that on? Do you  
remember?

MT: On Adams -- the Citadel. Do you know  
the Citadel?

PS: Yes, I know the Citadel. So that was  
No. 8 School.

MT: Yes, No. 8 School. Then after No. 8  
School, we were there until the sixth-grade. Then from  
the seventh- to the ninth-, I went to Joseph F. Brandt.  
From there, from the ninth- to the twelfth-, was  
Demarest. That's as far as I went.

PS: Now did you have Mr. Stover?

MT: Yes.

PS: He was your principal.

MT: Yes, I had Mr. Stover. He was good. He was good. At Brandt, we had Mr. Coleman. Number #8 was Mr. Tastre.

PS: All men.

MT: Yes. Oh, yeah. You didn't have women principals then.

PS: Did you have women teachers?

MT: Yeah. You would have more women teachers than men, but principals -- ?

PS: All men.

MT: Oh, yeah. And my school days were good, very good. [Unclear] neighborhood was good.

PS: Now was your neighborhood mainly Italian? Was it mixed?

MT: Yes.

PS: It was mainly Italian.

MT: Yes.

PS: It was mainly Italian. Was it the same region of Italy, or all over the place?

MT: It was all over.

PS: And would you hear a lot of Italian being spoken down there, or was it pretty much English?

MT: English. English. My grandmother spoke Italian. [I] never learned. We never learned Italian, because our parents spoke English.

PS: Well, I know that in my family, they wanted the children to speak English. They didn't want them speaking Italian; they wanted them to assimilate, and become American.



MT: Well, we didn't hear it, the Italian. We heard the English, and that's what we spoke, because our parents spoke English. I wish they would have. I really do. I would love to have learned Italian. When my grandmother spoke to me I would understand her, a little bit, but that was it. That was it. My father spoke fluently, but not my mom. She would chop it a little bit.

That was my school days. My school days were good, but in kindergarten I didn't want to go to school. No. I didn't want to leave my mother. I did not want to leave her. And you know, I never left her -- until she died. I would cry and run out of school -- and ask anyone to take me home. That was terrible.

PS: But you obviously felt safe asking anyone to take you home.

MT: Oh, yeah, I did. What do you think, like now? I'd say, "Would you take me home?" "Do you know where you live?" "Yes. Please take me home to my mother."

PS: And how often would you do this?

MT: Oooh, god! A couple of times a week,  
or more.

PS: What was your mother's reaction?

MT: She wanted to kill me! She smacked me.  
Oh, yeah! And then she would have to drag me back to  
school. Drag me back to school. It's a good thing the  
teachers liked me. They really did. They liked me, so I  
got away with it. I'd say, "I'm sick. I'm sick." But  
other times, they didn't know I'd left until my mother  
brought me back.

PS: How many kids were in a class? Was it  
big -- that they wouldn't know you had disappeared?

MT: Maybe I'd say I had to go to the  
bathroom or something. I don't remember. I was five years  
old.

PS: And then you just kept going.

MT: I kept going. I'd to the bathroom, and  
then run right out to my mother.

PS: And when did this stop? When did you stop running home?

MT: Well, I know I did it all of kindergarten. I did. And then I was all right. And the teachers were so nice to me. In fact, they used to bring me to all the classes and I didn't know why. They'd say, "Look at her today! Look at her today!" Like dressed -- my mother always dressed me -- that little girl -- and they used to bring me all around -- but I didn't know. I didn't know why they did that, so that never went to my head. Nothing ever went to my head.

PS: You went to public school.

MT: Yes.

PS: Was there ever any consideration by your parents to send you to a Catholic school?

MT: No. Because where was the Catholic school? St. Ann's wasn't there.

PS: Again, it's interesting to me because my father is four years older than you, and he and his brother went through public school. But my mother, who went to Jersey City -- went to an all-Catholic school. They were Irish. I'm wondering if there was something about that -- that the Italians came over, liked the public school system, and you kept going.

MT: It could be that they couldn't afford it. How about that? Or even gave it a thought?

PS: In our family, my father's family was more affluent than -- my mother's family really struggled during the Depression. If anybody should have been sending their kids to public school at that point --

MT: Oh. They didn't?

PS: I'm just wondering -- both Italian, both [unclear].

MT: Yes. I really didn't have any friends who went to Catholic school. My children did. My kids.

PS: Your kids did.

Now when you were going to school at No. 8, were there primarily Italians in that school?

MT: Oh, that was mixed. That was mixed.

PS: What was the mix?

MT: Irish, German, Italian. That would be it, that I would remember.

PS: Do you remember a time when you were growing up that there was any particular ethnic group that was the majority in town?

MT: No. Or maybe the Irish. I think the Irish -- because the Irish, then, and the Italians weren't getting along too well at that time. But it never bothered us. See, we never had that -- my block anyway. We never had that discrimination -- for anyone. I never did and I never will. But I know, like, we were downtown -- the Italians -- and the Irish were uptown. But that didn't --

PS: Now if you're like my father,  
"downtown" is what we would consider the west.

MT: Yes. West. I was Jackson Street. I  
couldn't get any "downer."

PS: What Daddy calls "downtown."

MT: Yes -- downtown and uptown. But that  
never affected me or my friends on the block. We never  
said, "Oh, look at that -- that Irish this," or black --  
no. Never.

PS: Did you see a lot of blacks in town  
when you were growing up?

MT: The blacks were on First Street. The  
blacks were on First Street, and they never bothered  
anyone. It was just like "their section."

PS: Just like the Italian section --

MT: -- and like the Italian. The Irish and  
German were uptown, the Italians were downtown, and the

blacks were on First Street. [Some Irish were downtown, too.]

PS: Now when you were growing up there was a lot of industry.

MT: Oh, yes.

PS: What do you remember about factories and things?

MT: I remember the pencil factory. Maxwell, naturally, because we used to smell the coffee.

PS: Could you smell it all the way [unclear]?

MT: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. All the sewing factories. There were so many. So many.

PS: And could you hear them? What would you hear when you went by?

MT: The sewing? No.

PS: The machines or anything?

MT: No, you didn't hear the machines. No. We were just happy kids growing up. Really. Very happy. My high school -- happy. I was in the play. I loved it, because I loved show business.

PS: Now when you got out of school, did you go to college? Did you go to work?

MT: No, I didn't go to college. We had just moved to Tenth Street. We were at 208 Tenth Street. Now Mother, again -- she didn't want me to go to work. I said, "But Mother, I can't stay home." It was new to her, this new place. So I stayed home -- it was almost a year -- and then I went to work for my dad. I was their secretary. My dad was the worker; he was on the outside, with all the men. I was in the office with his partner, so he was more my boss, not my father, and we got along wonderful.

PS: Where was this?



MT: 208 Adams Street. Then we went to 206 Adams Street. But that's where it was. I worked there until I was pregnant. When I became pregnant I left, and I went back again when my second daughter went to kindergarten. I never left them alone, never left them without me. In fact, in the summers I would hire somebody to take my place and I'd spend the summer. I'd come in once a month or three weeks or whatever, do payroll, office, type -- do whatever, do the invoices -- do whatever I had to do. But I never did leave them.

PS: How did you meet your husband?

MT: Oh, that's a story. We'll go to the marriage now, right? Not the kids.

PS: We'll go to the kids later.

MT: Oh, my god. This is too long a story.

PS: Entertain me.

MT: Oh, you will be entertained!

All right. I went on a blind date with my girlfriend. She says, "Please Marie, come with me. I want this guy. I want to go with him. Oh, please come." I said, "Terry, I don't want to go on any blind date." "Oh, come. Come." Now she introduces me to this guy. Now we really didn't have any --

PS: -- chemistry?

MT: No! But I went -- stupid. I went. Now Terry never wound up with the guy, and there I'm stuck with this one. Right? Now. Okay. I'm with him. I'm like, what? Seventeen? So I kept going, "not knowing." Then there was a boat ride, the Michael Borelli boat ride.

PS: Who's Michael Borelli?

MT: Michael Borelli was running for councilman. This was the time when DeSapio came in.

PS: Okay. So what year are we talking?

MT: We're talking '47.

PS: Oh. This was after McFeeley got  
dumped.

MT: Yes! Yes!

PS: Okay. Now I've got my timeframe. Okay.

MT: Yes! So this was big. Now this Michael  
Borelli, who was running for councilman, had a boat ride.  
I wanted to go on the boat ride, so I said to the "guy,"  
"You want to go on the boat ride?" and he said, "All  
right." He never showed up. He never showed up.

PS: So you're on the boat by yourself.

MT: So I went. I called this friend down  
the block. I said, "You want to come with me?" and she  
said, "All right. We'll go. We'll go." So now I had a  
good time, all day. We were playing and we were doing  
whatever. Now at night --

PS: This is an all-day -- ?

MT: Yes! All day. I don't know where we went. Bear Mountain maybe. I don't know where I went. So now it's at night, and we're in the ballroom of the boat --

PS: -- of the boat. This is some boat.

MT: Yeah! Oh, it was beautiful. So now, across the room, this guy looked at me, and I looked at him, and he gestured, "Want to dance?" and that was it.

PS: That was it, huh?

MT: Love at first sight. That was *it*. So now what do I do?

PS: I don't know, you tell me.

MT: I wanted to be with him.

PS: [Unclear]

MT: Yes.

PS: You're still in high school.

MT: Yes. Now am I seventeen. When I met him, yeah. I was seventeen.

Well, anyway I just -- I don't know. There was a difference. I thought the other thing was love. When I met him, and that chemistry and that whatever -- forget it.

So now I'm with this other "guy." Now this goes on for four years!

PS: You dated two guys for four years?

MT: I never dated Nickie -- just waited for a Thanksgiving Day parade, when he would be there; waited for dances where maybe I would see him and he would -- and he would. He would go over to the "guy" and say, "Can I dance with Marie?" and he would say, "Oh, yeah." So we would dance, and I would say, "Why doesn't he ask me out? Why doesn't he?" But he didn't want to break up the other. So this went on and on. And I knew. I said to this "guy," "Look. I just want to tell you one thing. Before I would ever *think* of marrying you --," and I'm going into my twenties, you know, "I *have* to go with

Nickie. I *have* to!" "Why do you want to go with him? He's this, he's that." I said, "This is *it*. I'm *telling* you."

So now this guy goes in the army -- not Nickie, the other guy. Now I'm praying, "Please, dear God." Before I went to work I used to go to church. We can't put all this in; I'm just telling you the story. I'd go to church, "Please, please, don't let him write. Don't let him write." The guy didn't write for four months! So, I went to his mother, brought the ring -- oh, yeah. They gave me a ring, an engagement ring. I didn't want it, but it was like -- "Okay." What was I saying?

PS: You gave the ring back.

MT: They wouldn't take it. They wouldn't take the ring back. I said, "Look, your son is not writing. He's probably not interested." But the family didn't want to hear it -- and they were a wonderful, wonderful family. So I said, "Well, I'm sorry. This is my life." I was in love with Nickie, and that was it.

But, little did I know that Nickie fell in love with me when I was five!

PS: When you were five?!

MT: Five! He said, "I saw you. I was on the corner selling junk." He was eleven, I was five. Five years old. "I saw you and you were so cute, and I just loved you." Well, when I was fifteen, going to high school -- see, I didn't know this before I met him on that boat -- he said to one of his friends, "You see her? I'm going to marry her." And he did. And he did.

PS: But you didn't know him --

MT: No! I didn't know him from Adam.

PS: Until you got on the boat --

MT: Then I got on the boat. But he knew me, because he said he used to watch me go to school.

PS: Now where did he live?

MT: He lived on Jefferson Street.

PS: And he'd see you go off to school.

MT: He'd see me go to school! I was Jackson Street! So I'd be walking up to school, going back after lunch (we came home for lunch), and he would see me. He told this guy, "See her? I'm going to marry her." And I was fifteen. So it was five, fifteen, and he did. He did marry me.

PS: So the other guy is out of the picture.

MT: Now the guy -- that guy -- comes home from Germany. His mother did something that got him a furlough to come home. So he comes home to me, he came up in my room, and I said, "What are you doing here?" He said, "I came home to marry you." I said, "Oh, no. No way. You didn't write to me. I didn't know where you were. Tell me why you didn't write to me?" He said, "I can't tell you. I don't know why." I said, "I do." My prayers were answered.

So then I was in heaven -- but a little hell came after that.

PS: Do you want to talk about that?



MT: He was a gambler.

PS: Oh. That's hard.

MT: Then he started drinking. But I never stopped loving him.

PS: You have two children?

MT: Yeah. And when I divorced him, we were still in love -- only I just couldn't take it.

PS: You couldn't live with him.

MT: No more, after twenty years. I couldn't. The girls were [grown], and I just couldn't. We were separated many times, many times, but it didn't affect the girls. Because they had my father -- and they saw how much in love we were. We really, really were.

So after the divorce, who did I have the love affair with? Him. Until he died. About three weeks before he passed away he called me. I was in the café, the dessert café (we didn't get to that yet). He said, "Marie, I have to tell you something. I will love you

until the day I die." It was just so unfortunate, because we did have that strong, *strong* love for each other, but he was afflicted. That's a disease.

PS: Alcoholism, yes.

MT: That *and* -- I had a double-header.

PS: The gambling.

MT: The gambling, too. And that was it. He died [in 1984.]

PS: And what year were you divorced?

MT: Seventy-five.

PS: So you were married around '55?

MT: Fifty-three. Yes, we were married in '53, January of '53. That was my love story.

PS: And you have two daughters.

MT: I have two daughters -- Roe (Rosemarie) and Francine. They're my everything, really. They're my everything. In my family, we're like Velcro. We are. We're like Velcro. We are so, so close. And I have my two wonderful grandchildren [Santi and SSasha], and I have a grand-dog [Gypsy.]

PS: Everyone needs a grand-dog. My parents have a grand-dog. It's very important.

MT: Yes. My granddaughter wanted the dog. In fact, she wanted that dog when she was like thirteen. She had gotten very ill after my mom passed away, very ill. We didn't know what -- she was in the hospital for two weeks. She went through all kinds of tests, and there was nothing wrong with her. It was just something that was very traumatic.

PS: How old was she?

MT: She was thirteen. She was very, very close to my mother, and it really affected her. So, like I said, we're a very, very close-knit family.

PS: Now you've been in Hoboken through all the changes.

MT: Yes.

PS: My dad left in '60, and we would come back and visit my uncle. I remember Hoboken in the '70s, thinking, "Who'd want to live here?" So what was that like? You go from this city that's thriving when you were a kid -- when did you start to see, "This is not the town that I remember?" When did you start to see changes? And what were the things that stuck in your mind, that "this is changing?"

MT: Oh, we'd have those little riots, when the Puerto Rican families came in.

PS: What year are we talking about?

MT: Isn't that the '70s?

PS: Maybe late '60s, early '70s?

MT: Seventies. Yeah. And then it just started to change. And then we had that big fire --

PS: When you say it started to change -- what do you remember changing?

MT: I don't know. Like, maybe, neighborhoods? See, like now, we don't have neighborhoods. They're gone. That's what I remembered -- neighborhoods.

PS: And when you say "neighborhood" -- what did "neighborhood" mean to you, that you see lacking now?

MT: Togetherness.

PS: Like knowing who your neighbor was?

MT: Caring. Caring. Now, everyone, it seems are on their own and for themselves. That's how I feel.

PS: And you saw this change when?

MT: I guess around then. But then I worked, and the change never really bothered me. Never. Like they'd say, "Oh, the Puerto Rican thing." It didn't bother me. I guess because of the way I am. I don't discriminate. I love all people, always.

PS: I remember Washington Street being very dirty, as a child, when we'd come up here. It's a memory of mine.

MT: Dirty?

PS: Trash, litter.

MT: Oh, litter all over, you mean, and garbage all over the --

PS: Yes!

MT: Well, I don't know what time that was. Who was in office then?

PS: I don't know.

MT: You know what I mean? That tells you something, too.

PS: The waterfront was obviously a big employer when you were a child. What do you remember?

MT: About the waterfront? Well, you have to remember -- I'm on Jackson Street. Very seldom would I be coming up here to Castle Point. Maybe I went to Castle Point to go sleigh-riding. That was in high school. We would go sleigh-riding in Castle Point.

PS: Was that big among all the kids?

MT: Yes, we used to go. It had nice slopes, and we'd go sleigh-riding there. Waterfront -- waterfront, you had the bars, so we never came up here. Every, every block --

PS: -- had a bar.

MT: Every house had a bar underneath. The bars were all along the river. So we never came up here, because there would be drunks, maybe. No. No, I didn't.

So part of the change -- and then, in the '80s, it started -- new people were coming in. New people. That's when I opened my business, just about -- in 1981.

PS: And what prompted you to start your business at that time?

MT: I don't know. I was with a friend, and we said, "We should open a little business." So we thought about it and we said, "Okay." So now I'm looking for a location. We [looked] on Washington Street, and I saw [nothing. The corner of] Fourth and Garden Street [caught my eye. This was it.] Do you know where I was -- "Le Jardin?" Were you ever there?

PS: Yes. Yes, I was, a couple times. I was sorry when you closed.

MT: Oh, so many people.



Okay. I saw that place, and I just visualized it. I wanted it. There was no way -- I wanted it, and I didn't have a dime but I wanted it. So we looked, and I said, "All right. Let's see who owns the property." We did. The Pizzas' owned it. So I knew, then. I called and I said, "Is Charlie the barber retiring?" Because he was there *fifty* years.

PS: The fellow that owned the barbershop?

MT: Yes. He was there fifty years. I said, "Well, maybe it's time that he retired." They said, "No, why? Do you know something?" I said, "No, I don't know anything." Now in the background, his sister is saying, "Ask Marie if she wants to buy it, buy the property." I said, "Oh, yes!" I didn't have a dime, and I'm saying yes! I wanted it. You know when you want something?

Well, anyway, we got together a deposit and we were going to do this. In the meantime, in June (we didn't buy it yet, now), in June I went to No. 8 school to pick up my daughter (she's a teacher). I went into the class. She wanted to show me something. Coming down -- all right. We got in the car, the car went out of

control, and we were in a very big accident.

[Interruption]

"Now this is what we're going to do. We're going to buy this place."

PS: Now you're in an accident.

MT: The building. Now I'm in an accident. I break my arm -- in fact, I've got the scar, from here -  
-

PS: Oh, yes.

MT: Now my arm, I have three casts that didn't work. The doctors said, "You need surgery." Okay. I got the surgery, I got the two plates, the six screws in my arm (what a way to get screwed!), *and*, now, this is going to take a year. Now my hand is getting stiff, and they said, "If you don't start moving your hand, you're going to have like a wooden hand." I was massaging -- 5:00 in the morning, 6:00, just massaging, massaging -- because how was I going to bake?

So we buy the property that September [1980], and I kept doing therapy, to Frank Sinatra's (my Frank) "New

York, New York." I'd go like this and like this every day, a little more and a little more, until I was able to --

PS: -- reach your hand up.

MT: Yes -- to that song. So that song means a lot.

We opened, and then four months later the partner went out. So I took over, and from then on it's history. I was there twenty-one years, and I finally sold. Well, the business I owned -- the property she owned with me, but then [she] turned it over to her son.

TAPE 1, SIDE 2

MT: -- want to sell. He said, "Marie, it's up to you. You did everything, all these years. No problem. You took care of the building," which I did. He said, "Whatever you want." Which was great. So I said, "All right, Michael. I think maybe we will." Because the boy, who was a friend of mine -- Jeffrey -- he was working for a realtor. So he's the one who found out that someone wanted to buy the property. Now Jeffrey, he was my friend. He was eighteen; he came in as a customer; and

then my busboy; and then my waiter; and then he was in the kitchen. When I couldn't, he'd be there. He finally passed. He passed away. Oh, I miss him. Because I was his second mother; he was always with us. Always.

PS: And you just decided you were ready to make a change, and you heard that somebody wanted the building and you decided, "Now's the time?"

MT: Yes. Yes.

PS: I know. One day I was walking by --

MT: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. You know what I did? [He, the buyer] didn't want the café. I said, "Well, if you don't take the café, you don't have the building. Because I'm not looking to sell. You want to buy." So finally they said, "All right." And I said, "Look. I'm not taking anything out of the café." So what I did was I got the key, closed the door, and left everything there. I just left everything there. I didn't want to deal with selling the refrigerator, sell this, do that. No! I wasn't looking to sell. So they bought it, and it's what?

It'll be six years July 24<sup>th</sup> that I closed, and I'm happy for it. [I sold in 2002.]

PS: What made you decide to do desserts?

MT: Well, I didn't want like a total restaurant, and I could bake -- so why not? And then, you know -- '80? "Oh, Marie," they said. "Are you crazy? Do you think you'll ever make it on coffee and cake?" I said, "Look, mine is not coffee and cake -- a dessert café." They didn't even know about decaf. When I said I would have decaf cappuccino -- they didn't even know what that was then. They didn't know that the little white lights I had in the window -- I was the first to do that in Hoboken.

PS: It was Christmas lights, right?

MT: Yes. They were like curtains. You know. You saw.

PS: Yes. It always looked so pretty when you went by. I remember the green and the white.

MT: [All white chairs and tables and walls. Green turf on the floor.] And the white building with the striped awnings. Oh, yeah. It was very pretty. Very pretty.

PS: So you had that for twenty-one years?

MT: Twenty-one years.

PS: And were you doing St. Ann's at the same time?

MT: That's right.

PS: Okay. Now you said that your father's family was from the area --

MT: -- San Giacomo.

PS: So somebody from this town -- they came here and brought a statue.

MT: Yes. Now the whole story -- which would make it easier for you -- I became the first woman to chair the Italian Feast.

PS: But isn't this the feast where the women are the ones carrying the statue?

MT: That's the St. Ann's Guild [and devotees.]

PS: So this was founded in 1910.

MT: Yes.

PS: And when you became chairwoman -- what year was that?

MT: Nineteen-ninety.

PS: So you were the first, in eighty years --

MT: [The church was] hosting something for new parishioners coming in, so we had like a kaffee-

klatsch, to introduce them to the parish. After that was over, we served then and whatever, and Father says to me, "Marie, when are you having your first meeting?" I said, "For what?" He said, "For the feast?" What? I said, "Father, are you *kidding*? Me? Why? Why?" I was like -- feast? "Father, I don't know the first thing about a feast, what to do." I said, "Yes, I cooked for the feast." I did that. I did desserts for the feast. I cut up a cape, when they wanted to -- you see, they were going to have a new cape in 1990, for her [the statue]. Now there was her old cape --

PS: The original.

MT: They were going to destroy it. So I said, "Why don't we cut it up, put a medal in there, put it in a little cellophane bag, and we could give it to all these devotees. *But* -- you do not *charge* them." So we did that, in 1989. We cut it up, and we made about \$4,000. Somebody gave me \$100, and I gave them the piece of cloth with the medal. I said, "Don't anyone charge. It's all donations, and you do better that way than charging." No. It had so many prayers on that cape!



So that's happened with the cape. The next  
year --

PS: Congratulations. You've got it.  
Now how old were you when you first got  
involved --

MT: -- in doing anything?

PS: Anything first-hand.

MT: Maybe [fifty years, or close to it.]

PS: And how did you get involved the first  
time around? Do you remember what your first job was?

MT: Yes. I belonged to the Third Order of  
St. Francis.

PS: What's that?

MT: That is an order [where you are  
professed] and take vows. Now while all the young girls  
were going to the "Children of Mary," I went with all the

old ladies and became a Third Order member -- which is a Franciscan order. I don't know why. There's another I-don't-know-why. I don't know whether I had a calling or whatever.

So I went with them, and we used to have parties, Christmas parties, and I used to do whatever -- because I was always into entertaining. I always liked to entertain, anyway, and that's what I had brought into the café, with all these special doilies, and special glasses and whatever.

Anyway, getting back to St. Ann's -- I was in that order, and we used to have cake sales. Nothing too big. Then we started a Calendar party.

PS: A Calendar party. And what does one do at a Calendar party?

MT: Now a Calendar party is, you select a captain for twelve tables --

PS: -- one for each month.

MT: -- one for each month. Then you select a holiday, and you decorate that table accordingly.

PS: Okay. Like the Fourth of July--

MT: -- or whatever. Now we did that. Prior to that -- again, the nuns in Ringwood contacted me and said, "We're having a Calendar party. Would you take a table?" I said, "What is that?" So they said, "Well, you just decorate a table." So I said okay. I got the parishioners at St. Ann's, we [hired] a bus and we went up there, and that was the Calendar party. Right after that, the next year, we did it, and I did it for about twenty years [at St. Ann's.]

PS: As part of the Feast, or something separate from that?

MT: No Feast. This is separate. This is [the] Third Order. This is the Third Order [of St. Francis, now called "Secular Franciscan Order."]

PS: Now this is [unclear] St. Francis, but is it out of -- ?

MT: You could be from anywhere, to join here, and become [a Third Order member.]

PS: But were you always a parishioner of St. Ann's?

MT: Always. Always. I was nine years old, going to -- I'm telling you, the neighborhood -- the girls, what we did? We used to go to the St. Anthony's novena on Tuesday. Tuesday evening. This is the kind of people who were on that block. It was so calm, and so beautiful, and all my girlfriends, and even the boys -- so great. I'm telling you -- my childhood was wonderful. Wonderful.

Well, anyway, getting back to the Calendar party -- that's that. Then I did priest jubilees. I don't know how many. For Father Joe, I did his fortieth, fiftieth, and sixtieth. And we threw an eighty-fifth birthday part for him, too. He was the party boy. He passed away. Nuns, I did for them. I did for other priests. I started the St. Ann Shrine. I started the St. Joseph Table. I always had a Christmas concert. There were always first firsts. So I'm really, really involved in the church, for years. Like I said, I always did

something for the Feast, but not that involved. Just like I said -- one year we did the cooking; then another year we did all the desserts; and the cape -- helping wherever. Then, when I started in 1990, I brought in a whole new Feast. Before that, they had like four strings of lights. When I left, there were twenty-two arches.

PS: It's huge. That's one of the questions I wanted to ask you. It's so big, and I was wondering like, when you first started, how many people would you say -- ?

MT: This is how I started. Well, I started the entertainment. There [never was] entertainment. They used to have the band, and maybe an opera singer on the [Feast] day. All the feasts around here. In 1990, when I started, he (the priest) already had the entertainment, which was a DJ. Now that wasn't what I would want to do. And we couldn't have gambling anymore -- because they always had gambling, and that stopped. That stopped. So now the priest says, "No, Marie, you know, no gambling," and I said okay. I said, "But, you know, instead of just food, why don't we put some vendors, like the crafts (always ahead of my time), put the crafts -- have them

come in with different things. You know, jewelry, frames, whatever. And I did do that, so I had maybe about ten. I had the "Sun Catchers" and all different things.

Well, there were some people who said, "What's this? This isn't a feast. Why would she have that?" Then there were others who thought it was beautiful.

So that year we grossed \$100,000 -- without gambling, which was terrific. So the next year I said, "All right. Next year we'll have the entertainment. We'll always have a headliner." I had gotten Connie Francis.

PS: Great. I had heard she had come one year. Was that '91?

MT: Ninety-one. No one believed me. No one believe me. "No way is she coming. No way will Connie Francis be there." And I said, "But she will. She will. I mean it." How about I get a call? Connie Francis says, "Marie, I love you. I love Maurice. But I'm not coming."

PS: Who's Maurice?

MT: Maurice Fitzgibbons. You know Maurice?

PS: I know the name.

MT: A freeholder?

PS: A freeholder. Okay.

MT: He was with me right along, from then on. He was the PR man. We'd go hang posters. Oh, we did everything.

Now Connie Francis says to me she's not coming. I said, "Why?" Well, the contact -- she had an argument with the one who was our contact. So now she doesn't want to come. Maurice and I spoke to her at like 2:00 in the morning. You know, she's a little difficult.

PS: It doesn't surprise me.

MT: But then she did come, after we talked. I was crying. I said, "You can't do this to me. People don't believe me as it is, and now they're -- " You know what I mean?

So she came, and she loved it so much that she said to one of her people, "Go get me a blue dress," [in honor of] St. Ann. She had a blue flower in her hair, the blue dress, and there she was. Now this was even a bigger success, and that went on and on. Then when Father Andrew came -- let me see. When did he come? Do you have the pictures there, of the priests? Let me see it. Where are we? Which book do you have?

PS: I have the one on the Feast itself, versus the --

MT: Oh, here it is. Nineteen -- is this '92?

PS: Yes -- 1992-1998.

MT: Now when he came, we really turned the corner. Because he was -- oh, he was so into it. I worked with him just great. He is a great, great friend. A great friend.

PS: So you did it '90 to '92?



MT: No! Until 2000.

PS: Wow. That's a long time.

MT: Until 2000. Then I'm back. I didn't do 2001, 2002, and 2003. I did 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, and I'm not doing 2008. I'm taking a break.

PS: So the original Feast, when you were a kid growing up -- a lot of food?

MT: Yes. Food.

PS: The statue goes around --

MT: Yes.

PS: -- and on actual Feast day, she's carried --

MT: Always.

PS: -- by the women, right?

MT: Yes. Always by the women.

PS: Is there a particular route? I've always been working, so I've never seen this.

MT: Oh, yeah. Do you know what I did one year? I brought her up on Washington Street.

PS: Oh, you did? Okay.

MT: I did. That was one year. One year I brought her all the way up --

PS: But mainly it's just in the neighborhood.

MT: Yes. But we go all the way --

PS: And you would have gambling --

MT: No gambling no more.

PS: But years ago.

MT: Prior, yes.

PS: What kind of gambling would there be?

MT: Like the wheel, money wheel. I never  
did that.

PS: And there might be a [unclear] on a  
Feast night?

MT: Yes, the Feast. Yes.

PS: And many days did it usually run?

MT: I really don't know. Maybe four, five?  
Four?

PS: Was it mainly for the neighborhood and  
the parish? Or were you drawing out of the area?

MT: Me?

PS: No, the old one.

MT: The old one. No, they didn't go out. I made it big.

PS: Yes, you did.

MT: I made it very big. I had billboards.

PS: Yes, I'd go to Newark and there's the sign. I'm driving, on Route 22, and there's the sign for St. Ann's. Yes.

MT: Billboards. Well, that's what I did. It was small. It was really small, and I just expanded it. I went up to like seventy-five vendors. Oh, yeah.

PS: And how many people -- like, would you say, back in the '40s, how many people might go, versus today?

MT: Oh, a fraction. But, you know, Feast day -- the devotees would always be there. There would always be a crowd. Always. I made it a festival --

PS: -- versus a feast.

MT: Yes. A feast *and* festival.

PS: There were other feasts in town,  
right?

MT: Yes. There was the Madonna dei Martari  
[Madonna of the Martyrs feast]. They honored me in 2000.  
I never helped them or did anything for them. I went to  
their feast, I was standing there, and they asked me to  
come up on the platform. I heard them speaking about  
somebody, but I didn't know they were talking about me.  
They said, "She's the one who inspired us."

PS: Is that the one that's down -- ?

MT: Yes! Yes! They used to be on Adams  
Street.

PS: And now they're on River --

MT: Now they're on Sinatra Drive. That's  
the feast. Then there was another feast -- Madonna dei

Virgine, something like that. I don't know. But they're not here anymore.

PS: Talk a little more, if you would, about the cape. You had mentioned that the old cape had all the prayers.

MT: The prayers. I'm not saying it's the jewelry. Prayers are when the people in the procession touch the cape with their --

PS: So people would touch it.

MT: Oh, yeah.

PS: So, as a person watching it, who would be going around -- if I had an intention or a prayer --

MT: -- you would want to touch it. You would want to touch it.

PS: Okay. I was wondering if maybe people pinned things on it.

MT: Oh, no. The only thing they pinned was money.

PS: Oh. They pinned money on it?

MT: Yes. She had -- but on the Feast, no? That's during the novena. She would have all the money pinned on her. But the Feast -- there would be a big bag, and there would be the men from the Holy Name Society, collecting money, then throwing it in the bag. That's how we did it then. But years, years ago, the money was pinned on the saint when you processed. She'd have so much money on her, because the people, then, actually wanted to pin the money on -- that would take forever!

PS: Why was that important, do you think?

MT: Their devotion. Their vow. Whatever. They just wanted -- that's like touching the cape. That's why I said I didn't want that just put away, or destroyed, or not. I said, "Cut it up. These devotees would just love it," and they did. Oh, they were so happy. I still have pieces of it.

And that's how the feast went. Every year it grew, and grew, and grew. Then there was the year I didn't do it, so I felt bad. So I consulted one year, then I was a little more the next year, and the next year I chaired it again and again, and that's it. But this year, no.

PS: Just too much.

Where would you like to see it go?

MT: I'm taking a break.

Oh, just where it is. You see, what we have now, with all the people -- you can't do this. Because this year, now, they're having it for eight days. That's a little much.

PS: What was it before?

MT: Sometimes it's five days, sometimes it's six days, sometimes seven. But this year it's eight, because you have to give the vendors a weekend. See, you always go according to the Feast day -- which is the 26<sup>th</sup> -- and whatever that day is (like this year it will be on Saturday) --



PS: They'll want the whole weekend.

MT: Yes. So you have to give it to the weekend before.

PS: I see. So that's really what determines how long the feast is?

MT: Yes. But you can't go longer than that. It's too much. It really is.

PS: Now has the church gotten complaints? Because at one point -- I had a friend who --

MT: Oh, have we ever! Oh-ho, my god! I had to go to meetings with Father Andrew. We went to the Citadel. They were okay. The Mews?! The letters! They did not want us there. Did not want us there. But, we told them, "We'll clean the street. We won't put any food vendors on your sidewalk, and we'll steam-clean it after," which we did. Some of the people used to go sit on the stoop. I guess you can't blame them. But we said,

"It's only once a year." A lot of them went on vacation that week. They would really go on vacation!

PS: I knew someone who had the corner mews, and he would have a big party one night. You'd just look down, it was the best place -- the big night of the music, the music night [unclear] --

MT: Well, the music was every --

PS: Yes, but like The Nerds or whatever the "headline," and we'd be up there. It was the perfect thing. You could be part of it without --

MT: -- being right in it. I remember them up on the roof.

PS: Yeah. We had the roof-deck, and it was just perfect.

MT: Yes, I remember them on the roof. In fact, we took pictures, because we said, "These are the people who are *complaining*! And there they are, up on the roof." But it wasn't the people who were complaining!

PS: No. No. It's usually all their party friends.

MT: I said, "There they are, on the roof!"  
And that's it. The Feast -- oh, I was so part of it.

PS: Now were you part of it in '84, when Sinatra brought Reagan?

MT: Yes. I made the dessert for Reagan. I wasn't chairperson -- because 1990 I really started.

PS: So you're going to the Feast in 1984. It's just a regular Feast, in your mind --

MT: No, I knew -- me? Yeah, I knew. I made the cake.

PS: So how did you find out? Did you get a phone call?

MT: Yeah, I got a phone call.

PS: Who called you?

MT: My friend Pat Politis. Pat did the cooking.

PS: Okay. So Pat's in charge of the cooking. She calls you up and says --

MT: "Marie," she says, "you have to make your cheesecake for Reagan." So I said, "Oh. All right." So I made the cheesecake for him, and I brought it. I said, "Look, don't you destroy this cake." Because, you know, somebody would have to taste it before he --" I said, "I didn't put anything in it. So please don't destroy it." It was so pretty. My chocolate-dip strawberry cheesecake. And that went to do you know how many people, that I made that for?

PS: No.

MT: Oh, my god! Kennedy, Ted Kennedy. Oh, my god. How many people? All these people -- let me show you. [Interruption]

PS: One other question with regard to Reagan, here. He was president at this point.

MT: Yes! He was running for that second --

PS: He was running for that second term. So he was already president at this point.

MT: Yes.

PS: It was chaos.

PS: How did they get Sinatra to bring Reagan to this? What do you know about the background?

MT: From what I understand, someone in the choir wrote a letter --

PS: -- to Sinatra or to Reagan?

MT: -- Reagan -- and he answered. I mean, he didn't answer, *they* answered, his people -- and said,

"Yes, we *will* come." And they came. And he [Reagan] asked Sinatra to come with him.

PS: Oh. He asked Sinatra to come with him.

MT: Because it was Sinatra's hometown.

PS: Okay. So you all know in advance. This isn't some surprise visit.

MT: No! Everyone knew. Everyone knew.

You know who this is.

PS: McGreevy.

MT: My pal. He's still my pal.

PS: Who's the girl?

MT: This?

PS: No. She looks familiar.

MT: Me!

PS: Oh! Geez.

MT: "She looks familiar."

PS: Your hair's so short there.

MT: No! It's pushed back!

PS: Oh. Okay. It looks like you have a  
short bob.

MT: No, it's just pushed back.

That's Father Andrew. Here's Kennedy.

PS: So how did Kennedy wind up getting  
your cheesecake?

MT: Because my friend Maurice said,  
"Kennedy's coming. You make a cake. Make a cake for him."  
He came in, and he got the cake. *He* got one.

PS: Bill Bradley. Okay.

MT: *He* had --

PS: Brendan Byrne. Yeah, I remember him.

Christina --

MT: -- Fontanelli. She's the one who sings  
-- I brought her into the Feast. Now she has gigs in  
Japan, and all over. But she still, every year -- she  
sings on the Feast day.

PS: Okay. And there's Governor Corzine.

MT: Yes.

PS: And who are these gentlemen?

MT: Who are they? You know, I've forgotten  
who they are. A group, a '50s group.

PS: A '50s group. Okay.

MT: And that's Russo. Here's Corzine.



PS: Wait -- that's Russo? Wow. I haven't seen pictures of him in a while. He looks a lot healthier.

George Palermo. Is he a comic?

MT: No. He owns Stinky Sullivan's [bar].

PS: Oh. Okay.

MT: Joe Pantoliano. We honored him.

PS: Boy, that's an old picture of Joe.

MT: Doesn't he look handsome?

Here's Louis Vaneri. He was in *A Bronx Tale*.

PS: Oh -- the "DuPrees." That was the group.

MT: Here's The Tramps. These are all people I had at the Feast.

PS: Senator Menendez -- before he was senator, probably.

MT: Oh, yeah. That was before. That was a party at the Elks. This is Pasculli and Janezewski.

PS: All these political people.  
And who's this?

MT: This is one of the Theresa brothers. He sings Sinatra tunes. These are pictures I had in the café.

PS: So were you standing there when Reagan was eating your cake?

MT: He didn't eat it in front of me. They took it. They took it.

PS: So did he stop and talk to people?

MT: Well, there wasn't that much. They all sat on the dais, and that was it.

PS: And what was the reaction to having Sinatra back in town?

MT: Oh! I was so mad.

PS: You were mad?

MT: Yeah! I was inside. I couldn't get out.

PS: You were mad you couldn't see him?

MT: Yeah! I wanted to go see Sinatra! I couldn't get out. Once you were in, you were in. So I think, not to upstage Reagan, he left. He didn't come into the "auditorium." He left, and I didn't get to see him.

This is my daughter, modeling.

PS: Oh, yeah? She's pretty.

Oh! That's an old picture.

MT: Yes. Jimmy Roselli.

PS: Who's he?

MT: A singer from Hoboken.

PS: Oh, yes. Jimmy Roselli.

That's the café.

MT: That's Miss America, giving us  
something from AIDS.

PS: Julius La Rosa.

MT: These are all pictures that were in  
the --

PS: Who's that? The baby?

MT: The baby, that's Sasha. That's the one  
who's in California now. We didn't get to the kids yet,  
to talk about them. That's Sasha.

PS: Is that a granddaughter?

MT: That's her.

PS: Oh. Okay.

MT: She was fifteen here; she is twenty-one there.

PS: How many grandchildren do you have?

MT: Two.

He modeled.

PS: Santi.

MT: Yes. He modeled. Now she's in the business. But he modeled when he was four years old.

PS: Who's this?

MT: Oh, you know, I've forgot his name.

This is from Kitty Dukakis -- that she enjoyed the cake on the plane.

PS: Oh, you sent her a cake?

MT: No! I gave it to them, when they came  
in.

PS: When did they come in?

MT: Dukakis -- when he was running.

PS: Yeah?

Have there been a lot of big political  
names, coming into Hoboken over the years?

MT: Where? To my place?

PS: Well, just in general. You were  
talking about Reagan, Dukakis --

MT: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We do.

That's Jeffrey, my boy.

Sadie Hawkins Day.

PS: Now how did you become friends with  
Maurice Fitzgibbons?

MT: Maurice was a friend of my daughters,  
in Church Towers -- where he still lives.

PS: Oh, does he? I didn't know that.

MT: Yeah. Then, later on, especially when  
I started the Feast, we became so very close, and we  
still -- he's one of my best friends.

Here's Le Jardin.

Here's the old -- before we renovated.  
That's how it was. And this is how it -- the menu and my  
hands. [When the sidewalk was repaired and the cement was  
wet, I placed my hands in the cement. So my handprints  
are still there.]

PS: Is that your family?

MT: Uh huh.

PS: Is that your mom?

MT: Yep.

PS: Wow. Good-looking family.

MT: I have two daughters. That's Santi and that's Sasha. My grandchildren. [Interruption]

PS: -- on the cape?

MT: Because people donate them. A pair of my gold earrings are here somewhere.

PS: So people donate jewelry, and it gets put on the cape.

MT: Yes.

PS: And these donations only take place during the Feast?

MT: That's the only time you put this on her. It comes out of the vault.

PS: The cape, or the statue?

MT: The jewelry! The shawl, with the jewelry!



PS: Right. So it stays.

MT: Yes!

PS: So each year you could add to it.

MT: You add to it, yes. People will give you jewelry; then they sew it on.

PS: Again -- what's the symbolism of the jewelry?

MT: Because! Whatever you --

PS: Whatever I want. Whatever it means to the person who gives --

MT: Whatever it means -- yes. For the prayer.

PS: Okay. And then this goes into the vault until the next year, when it comes out.

MT: Until next year. Then, if anybody had given any during the year, they sew it onto the shawl. To the shawl.

PS: Which is different from the cape?

MT: Yes. This is the shawl, and this is the cape.

PS: So the jewelry is on the shawl.

MT: Yes.

PS: Okay.

MT: Here's The Blue Notes.

PS: How easy was it to book some of these bigger-name guests for the festival? Was that a challenge? Or is it easy?

MT: Well, I had, finally, one -- King Broda, and he would get them all for me.

PS: Who's King Broda?

MT: King Broda has an entertainment agency.

PS: Okay. And do we pay them to come -- ?

MT: Yes. Yes.

PS: Okay. So if Ben Gazzara shows up, we're paying him?

MT: Oh, no.

PS: No. He shows up as a guest, on his own.

MT: He came as a guest. He sat in the audience and watched Jerry Vale, or whoever was up there -- Pat Cooper -- I forget. He just came because a friend of mine knew him, invited him, and he came.

PS: Now when I think of the festival, I think of sitting out on the steps watching The Nerds play.

MT: Yes.

PS: You've been talking about an "auditorium."

MT: Oh! That's the school.

PS: Okay. So in the school --

MT: In the school, I already -- that's where I had Jerry Vale, because it rained. I turned that into a nightclub.

PS: You did that every year, or --

MT: No!

PS: Just certain years.

MT: No! The year it rained!

PS: The year it rained. You said Reagan was in the auditorium.

MT: Oh. Well. That's where they had a dinner.

PS: Oh, they had a special dinner.

MT: They had a special dinner for that. But we never did that! That's not part of our Feast!

PS: That's what I was wondering.

MT: Oh, no! Oh, no! That's not part of the Feast.

PS: So if you had a big name at the play and it was raining, you could turn the auditorium into a  
--

MT: But we couldn't do it any longer.

PS: How come?

MT: Because we don't have a school. We have a school, but it's with Sts. Peter and Paul. Now it's Hudson Catholic, it's not St. Ann's School.

PS: So you can't just use --

MT: The building is ours. No, you can't use it any longer. We use it for our meetings, but you couldn't use it for that. In fact, when The Nerds rained out, I took them to -- do you know where The Shades are? [Levelor Factory]

PS: The Shades? No.

MT: 720 Monroe. It's an artists' building.

PS: Oh, yeah, yeah. Okay.

MT: You know where I mean? Okay. Well, we made arrangements that, if it rained, we would bring the entertainment in there, and that's what we did. But, not the school. Just to have a rain date -- you're going to

pay them anyway, so as many as wanted to come were welcomed!

PS: So when you were chairing this -- how far in advance did you start?

MT: A year.

PS: So the minute it ended, you started --

MT: Oh, yeah. I did it before. I was thinking who I wanted the next year, to come in.

PS: What would your criteria be? When you were thinking, "Okay, who do I want this year?" what were you thinking about?

MT: I'm thinking about who would draw! Who would draw a crowd! What do the people want! What do they like! And as the years went by, I knew what they liked. They liked the '50s, and I would get that group. They liked the '70s, and I would get that. They liked The Nerds, I would always get The Nerds in. Christina Fontanelli for the last night, with the opera. That's

sort of went with the last night, you know -- that kind of music. Then there was the spiritual end of it, with the novena, but I didn't do that. I did festival, you know. That was with your candles and all that stuff.

PS: How many people would be on a committee, working with you on this?

MT: Well, I would have a bar committee, the zeppole --

PS: Its own committee.

MT: Yeah.

PS: I love that. Its own committee.

MT: That's theirs. They like the bar, too. That's our biggest. Then everything else -- when I was doing it -- well, once we did food, in the very beginning. Then I just privatized it.



PS: How do you select the vendor -- like the zeppole? How do you say, "This is going to be a good -- we want to do this?"

MT: The zeppole? What do you mean?

PS: The food vendors. How do you -- ?

MT: Oh! The food vendors! Oh, the zeppole is ours. The bar is ours. Then I want sausage and peppers. I want a Greek. I want --

PS: But do they apply to you? Do you go out and search -- ?

MT: First, I search them out. Once I have them, that's it. Then the next year, all you do is send the contract out, you know?

PS: So you're pretty much set.

MT: Sure. Like this year it's easy for them. They open the books, and the contract's out.

Because all these people know what kind of a feast it is, so they all want to come back.

PS: So how many people now go to the Feast?

MT: Oh, thousands and thousands. You mean every night?

PS: Yeah. On a given night, how many people do you think you have there?

MT: Oh, I don't know. I know they used to say we had 50-100,000 people, maybe for five days. You know? There were thousands. There was one night I'll never forget. I tried to get through the crowd -- I was picked up. Me! Why?! I'm a little, petite woman. I was actually -- my feet were off the ground, that's how crowded it was. Crowds, like you couldn't believe. And every night! Then I had a Latin night. That's another night. A Latin night; the '50s; the '40s. I used to have a Sinatra night, like "Saturday with Sinatra" -- because that used to be on TV; you know, "Saturday With Sinatra."

Then I'd have someone who would sing like him. Oh, yeah!

Oh, my god, I had so much!

PS: How much time do you think it took?

MT: Took me?

PS: Yeah. How much time, over the year, would you devote to all this planning and everything?

MT: I didn't take vacations. I closed my business one week before the Feast, one week during, and one week after, to recoup. Lots of work. Lots of work. Because your bar, your vendors, getting all those contracts out. I had Maurice for the publicity, and I had Marie Versaci, who passed away, God rest her soul. She was my secretary. I would just call up. I couldn't do all the physical -- I used to be on the phone, especially in the beginning, getting all this together, twelve hours straight. My mother used to come in with a cup of tea, or bring me water. "Marie, come and eat something." "No, no, Mother." And how many vacations I did not go on -- where my friends were going to Vegas, they were going to Italy,

or wherever they were going. "Oh, no, I can't. Oh, no, I can't." Well, now I could.

PS: So what is the payoff -- in the sense that -- why did this mean so much that you were willing to give up your vacations?

MT: Who knows? Something inside of me. Something just inside of me. I felt like "this is what I have to do."

PS: What are some of the funniest things you remember about the festivals? Anything funny happen?

MT: No, not too funny.

PS: You talked about the time when it was so crowded you couldn't put your feet down.

MT: Oh, yeah!

PS: What else do you remember? Things out of the ordinary -- things that stand out in your mind about different festivals.

MT: Some of them were rough. Some of them were rough.

PS: In what sense?

MT: You know -- maybe a couple of people arguing about different things. Stuff like that. But I'll tell you the truth. I think during the festival -- I don't think I was there, if you know what I mean.

PS: Like you were just so crazy --

MT: Yeah. I did it. You know what I mean?  
I did it.

PS: Now it's on auto-pilot.

MT: It's on its own pilot, and it's going. I would go somewhere else, I think, in my head. It must have been like Shirley MacLaine -- honestly! You say, "What's the funniest?" I really can't tell you.

PS: How many people are on -- I know you go at night, and there's the whole crew working the bar. How many parishioners are needed, to run that every night?

MT: The bar? Oh, the whole thing? Well, you have, in your bar -- how many are in there? Twenty? Thirty?

PS: It seems like a lot.

MT: Yeah. In there. Then in the zeppole, you have all the women. What do you have in there? Another thirty?

PS: Where does the zeppole recipe come from?

MT: That's the big secret.

PS: Do we know where it came from, originally?

MT: No. It's just "always been," and I don't know where it came from. You'd never get that recipe out of them. *Never.*

PS: Is it in someone's head? Or is it written down?

MT: I don't think it's written. No.

PS: So all the women who have worked it know what the recipe is, in their heads.

MT: Yes. That's right.

PS: So, god forbid, one lets someone else know.

MT: Yes.

PS: Very interesting. So that's in their brain.

MT: That's in their brain.

PS: Where did zeppole originate? Is this like an Italian -- why is this an Italian feast [unclear]?

MT: Italy! Italy! Of course!

PS: So this is something that was brought with them?

MT: Maybe. It had to be brought with the statue.

PS: And this has always been a key component of the Feast.

MT: Always. St. Ann's famous zeppole. Yes. That's it. And now our bar is just as famous. We started with a little --

PS: But as you get more young people, singles, of a certain age, who like to party, shall we say --

MT: Yes?



PS: -- have you seen the bar attendance --

MT: -- go up?

PS: Because I know when I go down with my friends, we always get at least one drink at the bar.

MT: Oh, yeah! It's like six-deep! It's like six-deep! You can't move at that bar.

PS: Right.

MT: But when I started -- oh, yeah. That's another thing I did. Before I chaired, I did the bar. Okay? Now, I mean, I did banana daiquiris, and strawberry daiquiris. That was the bar. My bar. [Unclear] bar. I burned out three blenders. But, I mean, I had ice cream to put in. Did I think I was in my home?! See, that's the way I entertain -- and I bring it wherever I go. And we had the fresh strawberries, the fresh bananas, and I was making those banana daiquiris, strawberry daiquiris. Oh, I'm telling you! Oh, I don't know when that was. Maybe in the '70s. Probably.

PS: And you went through three blenders.

MT: I went through three blenders. They were burning out. They loved them, of course.

PS: Now that the festival has grown so much, and it's drawing people from out of town -- do you have any idea what it means in terms of commerce for this town? What it's become, in that sense?

MT: Oh, yes! The restaurants! Oh, it's their best! It's their *best*! They love it! Because, I mean -- the people eat at the feat. They maybe have their sausage and peppers. [The zeppole line is] three blocks [long] or whatever it is. There has to be a way -- I don't know, they keep trying -- but there has to be a way where people don't have to wait that long. We tried different things, but it's still the same. The restaurants are jammed, because of people going to dinner --

PS: -- and then they go down. I know I usually eat first, and then go down.

MT: Yeah. See.

PS: Get my beer [unclear].

MT: Right! Right! And that's what they do. They come and they -- and what I did was, I started to open on the weekends, [at 1 p.m. instead of 6 p.m.] They were really totally against it -- the committee.

PS: The committee was against it. Why were they against it?

MT: "Oh, no. Too many hours," or, "That'll never work." I said, "But a festival has to be during the day, if it's the weekends." I don't say during the week, but on a Saturday and Sunday, it has to be open at least 1:00.

PS: And what was it before?

MT: At night!

PS: So on a weekend, it would always start at night.

MT: Yes! And I thought it should be during the day.

Well, I did. They did it then. I think they were still a little reluctant -- because [unclear] doesn't open, I don't think, at 1:00. They open later. [The zeppole booth.] But then, you know, it's so hot in there -- but then they have shifts. But still, there are the main people who have to stay there for hours, and it is very, very grueling. Oh, it's like a furnace in there.

PS: We've talked a lot about the commercial and the entertainment. What does the Feast mean to you as a Catholic? As a parishioner of the church? What does the actual Feast, the 26<sup>th</sup>, mean to you?

MT: It's St. Ann. I'm very devoted to her, and she has so many devotees. This goes back. You're saying, now, almost a hundred years. So this is embedded in us for generations. See, we go back. St. Ann's -- St. Ann's Day -- this is a *holiday* for us -- especially for the people who come from San Giacomo. And most of the

committee that I had -- do you know, most of them were from San Giacomo. I don't mean *they* --

PS: The family.

MT: -- the family were from St. Like you take Maurice, and you take that other girl, who passed away -- Marie Versaci -- there were other girls, on the food committee, their families were from -- and it's not that I chose these people because they were from the town. It just so happened that we were all from San Giacomo.

PS: But it just seems that there's something about this saint -- because you have St. Peter and Paul, and I don't see --

MT: No, it St. Ann, it's *her*. It's *her*. It's because she's the patroness of mothers and girls who want to become a mother, who pray to her.

Now I'll tell you a story about -- she was a reporter, Jewish. She wanted a child. I said to her (a Jewish girl), "You pray to St. Ann. Pray to her. You *will* become pregnant." You know, she became pregnant, and she

named her daughter Ann. That's why the people are so devoted to St. Ann. It's not only to become pregnant. I'm not going to pray to her to become pregnant -- although, she was sixty. She was sixty, when she had Mary. And Mary had Jesus.

PS: Right. At fourteen.

MT: Right. The mother was sixty, she was fourteen. Or fifteen.

PS: So it's a comfort for mothers to pray to her.

MT: Yes. It's just a comfort. I can't explain it. And every year, when she comes out of the church, and everyone's just standing there all teary-eyed, just tears -- and you could see it every year, and every year the emotion is exactly the same. You'd say, "After so many years, you're still -- ?" Soon as she comes right out and you see that statue -- I've got the chills now -- you just get so filled with emotion. And there are so many, who come from all over that day, to come back to honor her.

PS: People who have grown up here and left.

MT: You know -- people who have left. They went to other towns, or wherever they went. They come back.

PS: What about the younger generation? Because you talked about when you were a child, getting involved.

MT: Yes, we have the young.

PS: Are they mainly out of the parish?

MT: Yes. Yes. Yep. My daughters worked in the bar. They always helped me do whatever. Oh, yeah.

PS: Are there other parishes where descendants of this town have gone, where they have feasts along the lines of this? Have you heard of anything?

MT: No. Huh uh. I know they have the big feast in San Giacomo, Italy.

PS: Oh. Okay. So the town has a big feast for St. Ann. The town where it started has its own big feast.

MT: Yes. Yes.

PS: And this is paying homage to it.

MT: Yes. And she has a husband, St. Joachim. They've been honoring him on that day, too. That's supposed to be his feast day, but it never was. I don't know when that came about.

PS: Have you ever gone to the original, back in Italy?

MT: No. San Giacomo? I've been to Italy, but I'm sorry. I never went to San Giacomo, or Sicily. I've been there a few times, but never there. No.



PS: I'm going to add another tape. I'm  
going to ask you a few other questions.

MT: Then you can come back.