

Spring 2019

Interview of Rosanna Mastrangelo

Rosanna Mastrangelo

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Field Notes

Interviewee: Rosanna Mastrangelo

Interviewer: Juliana Mastrangelo

Interview Dates: March 31, 2019 & April 9, 2019

Interview Location: Mastrangelo Residence, South Philadelphia.

Field Notes were written on April 25, 2019.

The Interviewee:

Rosanna Mastrangelo was born in February 1964, in South Philadelphia. Her parents, along with the rest of her family, were Italian immigrants who had come to America after the end of World War II in hopes of rebuilding a better life for themselves. Raised in a tight-knit Italian neighborhood and surrounded by Old World traditions, Rosanna quickly realized the importance of remaining close to one's roots, especially in forming her unique sense of identity. But as she went to school and became acquainted with people of other backgrounds and experiences, it became ever more clear that her sense of identity was divided. By the language she spoke, the type of education she received, and the abundant opportunities which presented themselves to her- Rosanna came to perceive a grave difference between herself and her parents. She was not just Italian, she was an Italian-American. And her home and her heart belonged forever in America. Her life story, which is recounted in this interview, proffers excellent insight into the process of assimilation among first-generation immigrants. Her story is also full of interesting facts about mafia history, and even allows for some insight into the problems and concerns of those weathering midlife.

Today, Rosanna still resides in a predominantly Italian neighborhood of South Philadelphia. Her home, which she shares with her mother and daughter, is still devoted to keeping the Italian culture alive. She has also spent nearly 40 years of her life serving the United States Federal Government as an auditor at the Defense Logistics Agency, and she couldn't be more proud to be an American, to support the war fighter and the American way of life. Surely, the sacrifices her family made in order to achieve a better life were not in vain.

The Interviewer:

I, Juliana Mastrangelo, was born on May 30, 1995 in Philadelphia, PA. Though I was born in America, I live life as a true Italian. I was born and raised in South Philadelphia by Italian parents and from the day I was born, my family has worked hard to instill in me a deep passion and respect for our Italian history, traditions, and culture that permeates to this day. Inspired by the tales of war and immigrant life passed on by my family, I realized my love for history at a very young age. Now, I am proud to say that I hold a B.A. in History along with an Italian minor granted by La Salle University. I am also pursuing a Master's in History there as well, for which this assignment is required. Once my schooling is finished, my aim is to become a professor and help not only to inspire in young adults a love and respect for the past but to foster in them a sense of self-discovery that begins with knowing your past.

Description of Interview, Sessions I & II:

As has already been mentioned, this assignment is designed as a practice interview for Dr. Barbara Allen's 650 Oral History class which is required as part of the Master's program. In light of the biographical abstracts above, the reasons for choosing Rosanna Mastrangelo as a formal interviewee should be quite evident. Although there is one more missing piece to the puzzle that certainly influenced my decision and that is, if it hasn't already been guessed, that the interviewee is my mother. Therefore, the task of establishing rapport and obtaining knowledge of the interviewee's life story, as is essential for an oral history interview, was already achieved. I asked my mother sometime in February if she'd be willing to help me out with this project and she seemed delighted, although she insisted her life was not all that interesting and warned me about her jitters when asked to speak off the cuff. I told her that her sense of boringness was nonsense and that I would provide her with my questionnaire prior to the interview so she could take the time to reflect upon her responses, and this seemed to ease her mind. Now since we live in the same household, there was no need to abide by any formalities in order to schedule a date and time to perform the interview; we simply discussed it over dinner one night.

The first interview session took place on March 31, 2019. It was a normal Sunday. We had gone to mass that morning and ate our pasta dinner at 1pm, after which it was decided we would begin our interview. My mother, grandmother, and I sat at the dining room table. I had ensured that all obvious sources of background noises were taken care of, except of course for one-my

grandmother-who did interject a time or two during the interview. As I prepared to record the first time, my mother burst into a laughing fit! This episode must've lasted five minutes- a sure sign of nervousness since she was never recorded before- and I was forced to restart my audio recording. However this time, the jitters gradually faded away as we talked and the interview turned out quite successful. I stopped the clock at an hour and one minute, thinking it would be best to divide the time before either one of us got tired.

With deadlines approaching, we agreed to meet for a second session in about a week. During this time, I took the opportunity to draft some follow-up questions based off of the last interview. I again, provided my mom with a copy of such questions so that she could review them, and feel all the more confident in her responses during our next interview. On the afternoon of Tuesday April 9, 2019, after a hard day at work for both of us, we met in the kitchen to complete the last part of our interview. The atmosphere was calm and quiet. It was a beautiful day outside, and we kept the deck door open for some fresh air. Again, my grandmother-who found this whole scheme rather interesting-took a seat at the dining room table to listen. On the whole, everything went very well; maybe even better than the last interview since, when she talked, my mother seemed less nervous and more enthusiastic! Her responses were also more reflective and elaborate, just as expected for an oral history interview. And yet, there was one downside to this session-it became very emotional. Listeners to this recording will notice many instances of brief pauses caused by tears. And at one point, it even became necessary to stop the tape for a few minutes and then, restart so that my interviewee could have some time to compose herself. The questions which evoked such strong emotion were related to present circumstances, more specifically about myself, her daughter. In hindsight, it would seem as if "growing pains" were the main culprit of such weeping but as my interviewee does reveal, there is a little more to it. Still, my mother's answers were heartfelt and moving. There can be no doubt that she seized the moment as an opportunity to express some of her deepest feelings; and this to me, is a true signifier of an oral history done well.

Notes on Recording:

This audio recording was made using the QuickTime Player application on a MacBook Pro. It was automatically saved as an M4A file extension, accessible to iTunes, QuickTime, and Windows Media Player.

Notes on Transcript:

In order to best preserve the original essence of the interviewee's reflections while at the same time, make the discussion appear coherently legible for future researchers, a brief description of the editing choices made while drafting the practice transcript are as follows:

- Eliminated most repeated words, unless used for emphasis.
- Eliminated all false starts.
- Eliminated any crutch words.
- Included information about sounds and gestures in *italics* in parentheses (*example*).
- Placed a time stamp at the top of each page to serve as a reference for timing.
- Used hyphens to indicate abrupt transitions, interruptions, or any dependent clauses that occurred mid-sentence.
- Labels (*pauses*) in italics and parentheses for any temporary stops in speech lasting 4 seconds or more.
- Created footnotes to serve as references for any phrases translated from Italian to English.
- Used all forms of punctuation, including periods, commas, ellipses etc., according to the editor's grammatical preferences.
- Used quotation marks to indicate reported or hypothetical speech.