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Oral history heirlooms: vitality and substance in learning

Arlene Abate Carpenter

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ORAL HISTORY HEIRLOOMS: VITALITY AND SUBSTANCE IN LEARNING

by
Arlene (Abate) Carpenter

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 2006

Dr. Diane Penrod

Dr. Roberta Harvey

Date Approved

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ABSTRACT

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ORAL HISTORY HEIRLOOMS: VITALITY AND SUBSTANCE IN LEARNING
2006
Dr. Diane Penrod, Graduate Program Coordinator
Dr. Roberta Harvey, Academic Thesis Advisor
Master of Arts in Writing

The major problem confronting educators is incorporating a simple, profitable, stimulating, and integrated learning technique in the classroom that motivates students, internalizes lessons, and produces active, enriched learners. This thesis demonstrates that the oral history genre is the viable solution. Nine planned project stages guide educators in establishing a new dimension of knowledge for students where interviews and research combine living memories with documented resources to create and preserve personalized history. The author obtained information through personal interviews with family members from the descendents of Vito Antonio Mevoli, Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli, Dominick Abate, and Catherine (Lorusso) Abate and researched data from the Gloucester County Historical Society, Camden County Historical Society, legal family documents, such as marriage certificates and naturalization papers, and websites listed on the reference page. A creative research project where the culmination of data is defined serves as a tangible means for educators to evaluate various steps in the learning process. The result of implementing this methodology in education is that learning expands beyond the classroom into the community; therefore, lessons are more relevant to students and they retain knowledge longer. Appendices include
wedding photographs, personal letters, and legal documents of Vito Antonio, Filomena, Dominick, and Catherine that support this research.
DEDICATION

To my children,

Derek, Lori, Kristy, and Marc Carpenter

Your family is God’s gift to you.

Carry forth the traditions, love, unity, and importance of family gatherings that your ancestors began. Merge them with your own traditions to create special memories. Document them through the oral history genre where special treasures are preserved for future generations.

(Photograph Courtesy of Maryanna (Kavanaugh) Abate)
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for supplying me with His mercy, grace, strength, and wisdom that has sustained me throughout this thesis as well as throughout life. The Lord identified oral history as a valuable educational tool long before educators discovered its validity. The Bible is a perfect illustration of the oral history genre. It consists of a series of personal stories about ordinary people as well as famous leaders whose lineage began with Adam and Eve, God’s creation. I am thankful that the Lord has allowed me to experience the significance of this genre through reading these stories in the Bible years before writing this thesis.

I thank my ancestors for their traditions and lives that designed this oral history heirloom depicting our family culture for future generations to treasure. Through the passion of these ancestors, I learned the value of the family unit. I also learned that there is an urgency to document those precious memories beginning with my grandparents and expanding on to include my parents and myself. Any further documentation beyond my generation is dependent upon my posterity to record in order to carry forth this new tradition of creating future oral historical heirlooms.

I thank all of my family members whose time and recollections added substance to this oral history project: Canio A. Abate, Canio R. Abate, Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate, Catherine (Abate) Decker, Ellen Abate, Rita (Del Rossi) Chudzinski, Robert (Bobby) De Ninno, Marty De Ninno, Elena (Macina) Leming, Frank Macina, Nick Mevoli,
Pauline (Morelli) Sassi, Loretta Scarengello, and Rose (Del Rossi) Wdzieczhowski. Without their stories, this thesis would have lacked substance.

I thank my husband, Kevin, for his support and understanding during the many hours that I put forth in research and writing. While I was engulfed in my work, he was gracious enough to order take out for dinner and routinely mop the kitchen floor.

I also thank Esma Tussey, my former neighbor, for her patience and guidance in editing my undergraduate essays and research projects. Esma was instrumental in the blossoming of my writing skills during my developmental years at Glassboro State College, now known as Rowan University.

I also thank numerous other friends and educators who have inspired me toward the completion of the Master of Arts in Writing program at Rowan University. One of my graduate school friends is Teresa Colanero. Our friendship grew from our first class in the spring semester of 2002 and continued through to graduation. Together, we will enter a new realm of life as writers. I appreciate Teresa’s encouragement and artistic perspective in writing and how it disclosed to me a unique twist to the oral history genre.

I also thank Laura Erwin and her father, Ernest Montagnaro, for the many hours spent translating Filomena’s family letters from Italian to English. Their work provided me with further insight into Filomena’s family and her lifestyle in Italy. Personal letters reveal the heart of the writer and capture an intimate perspective of history. Theses letters defined the
character of Filomena as a woman who learned to provide for the needs of her family in spite
of financial sparseness.

My deep appreciation is extended to my professors, Dr. Diane Penrod and Dr. Roberta Harvey, for their support and dedication to this thesis as they critiqued and navigated me through each chapter. They demonstrated excellence through their personal writing skills and encouraged me to attain excellence as a writer. Thank you for your devotion and the many hours you put forth to refine my writing techniques. I also thank all the professors at Rowan University who through their classroom instructions, projects, examples, and encouragement guided me through the developmental stages of my writing life at the graduate level. I have matured as a writer since that first class in 2002 and anticipate expanding my experience and skills further as I emerge more deeply in the writing field.
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PREFACE

When I was young, there were three things that were common family occurrences: gathering around the kitchen table, eating home cooked meals, and listening to life stories from the past. It was always exciting to hear about World War II, Grandpop Abate’s barber shop, visiting cousins in Wildwood, Grandpop Mevoli’s wine making, working three jobs to supply food for the family, or many other exciting tales. One thing was sure; our family story sessions never ran dry. As a young child, I failed to realize the significance of this oral history genre that immersed me with the culture and traditions of my Italian ancestors. I lost precious memories due to ignoring their significance and I failed to document them when they were narrated.

As time passed and those memories faded and ceased due to the death of the story tellers, I realized that my children missed those precious experiences that my cousins and I shared with my grandparents. In this thesis, I encouraged my parents, cousins, aunt, uncle, brother, and sister to recall their memories of my grandparents. I document their stories because of the significance of my grandparents’ lives in my family history. Through this thesis, my children and other relatives now have access to these stories. A greater comprehension of our family heritage is now available to my relatives as recounted through this documentation. As a result of these stories, the historical events of the twentieth century contain personal significance to future generations when viewed through this ancestral insight.
In this thesis, I refrained from interjecting large portions of my opinions and stories in order to avoid any bias in these recollections. I personally knew Vito, Filomena, and Dominick. Catherine was deceased before I was born so I can only imagine what my life would have been like knowing such a precious woman. Listening to others describe their special memories with my ancestors further convinced me of the value of oral history. These recollected stories provided me with a glimpse into my grandparents’ life through various perspectives other than my own. I now perceived my grandparents as parents, aunts, uncles, as well as through different stages of maturity. Since family culture and heritage is so valuable, I knew that I needed to discover the best method to preserve these documented stories as well as the legal documents that accompany them.

As I meditated and researched the oral history genre during the initial planning stages of this thesis, I realized that motivating educators to incorporate this genre in learning was the most feasible topic for me to pursue. In hindsight, I recalled various experiences throughout my life where I was exposed to the oral history genre. One such experience was in teaching high school history. When my lesson plans included hands on projects, guest speakers, personal stories, and oral history accounts instead of rote textbook details, my students retained historical knowledge longer and internalized this knowledge.

Determining the thesis audience was a natural choice of my heart. Since my first day in school at age six, I knew that teaching was my first love; therefore, it was natural for me to direct this thesis toward educators. Educators are granted the privilege to participate in
molding and transforming the minds of today’s youth by preparing them for life and careers. Educators also possess the means, through assignments as well as the creativity, available resources, and the talent to incorporate this genre within their classroom lessons. The responsibility of reviving the art of storytelling within the realm of the oral history genre can also be included in their contribution toward the expansion of their students’ world of knowledge.

The oral history genre allows students to reach beyond their textbooks and into the heart of history and life through living historians who have lived and experienced such events. The unique perspectives of common men and women historians add vitality and substance to learning. The best means for me to illustrate this genre to educators is to support oral history’s function in education, provide feasible steps for educators to follow to incorporate this genre in the classroom, then to personally follow these steps and produce a sample research project that culminates all data together into one document. This is the methodology of this thesis.

Chapter One explores four main beneficial effects on students that I believe the oral history genre demonstrates to educators. This includes the natural story-telling process that unites generations, the personal undocumented accounts of history that add vitality to textbooks through personal interviews, the improved student comprehension and recall that occurs as a result of personalizing history, and the internal satisfaction that oral historians feel when culminating their research into a final project. This chapter also contains examples
of educators who have incorporated this genre in the classroom and are active supporters of its validity in education.

Chapter Two provides educators with nine simple developmental stages for oral history projects. These stages are suggested by two professors from Utah State University, Grace C. Huerta and Leslie A. Flemmer, who are active supporters of oral history classroom projects. Incorporated within this chapter is my personal progression through these stages.

Chapters Three and Four consist of my final oral history project that evaluates and coordinates my research through personal interviews. Chapter Three recounts the unique adventures of my maternal grandparents, Vito Antonio Mevoli and Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli who as Italian immigrants traveled to America to preserve their lives from death and famine. Time restrains and the shortage of living historians hindered me from capturing my maternal grandparents’ entire story; but, the documented details paint a colorful picture of their character traits and personalities.

Chapter Four contains less informative details than Chapter Three because documentation pertaining to my paternal grandparents, Dominick Abate and Catherine (Lorusso) Abate were not as well preserved as those of my maternal grandparents. This chapter demonstrates to educators that research projects may successfully be completed regardless of the quantity of available documents. This union of an Italian immigrant, Dominick, with a Pennsylvania born woman, Catherine, reflected distinctive goals established in the midst of tragedy. Time restraints and the shortage of living historians also
hindered me from capturing my paternal grandparents’ entire story. Dominick and Catherine’s written heirloom in this thesis portrays lives in the twentieth century that contrasts the lives of Vito and Filomena. The main difference is that Dominick and Catherine’s family life consisted of more tragic events that influenced their choices and molded their character into unique individuals.

Chapter Five evaluates the results of my experience in this oral history project as well as my aspirations for its future within my family and in education. This chapter petitions educators to explore the realm of the oral history genre as a means to expand students’ learning and educational development. My intent in this thesis is to provide educators with a sample of the effectiveness of utilizing the oral history genre as a means of supplementing textbook lessons through an interdisciplinary method. It is not my intent to provide educators with an all inclusive oral history resource for classroom use. There are numerous websites and oral historians who expand upon this genre.

Some historians demonstrate oral history’s value through documented interviews like Studs Terkel. Others such as Rhonda G. Lewis successfully utilize this genre to supplement textbooks. Some historians offer suggested lesson plans such as those provided through the website Step-by-Step Guide to Oral History. I do not claim to be the expert in the oral history field. I am one of this genre’s many educational supporters.

The final portion of this thesis, the appendices, consist of original documents, family heritage charts, IRB forms and consent sheets, interview questions as well as my CV. These
documents verify dates, names, and other specific details pertaining to the final culminating project of the reconstruction of the lives of my grandparents. This material serves as a sampling of the types of resources that students may incorporate in their final research project.
CHAPTER ONE
The Pedagogy of Oral History

"The very nature of learning lends itself to an integrated approach with reinforcement through experiences beyond the schools walls, such as community service, mentorships, and structured learning experiences" (New Jersey Department of Education. 1996. p4). One problem that educators struggle with is providing stimulating classroom activities that motivate active learning. History, social studies, science and English are sometimes perceived by students as boring subjects instead of profitable and useful information for life beyond the classroom. One solution that establishes validity in learning is the pedagogy of oral history. Educators have learned that the oral history genre unifies classroom knowledge and the community; it also unifies learning and experiences to produce engaged learners.

The oral history genre must be incorporated within the classroom as a means to reconstruct traditional passive learning methods into beneficial interdisciplinary, active research projects. Students who are required to complete assignments related to course syllabus have the time and the resources available to incorporate in such a project. Since technology opens vast resources for educators, why not tap these reserves to facilitate enriched learners? Through the oral history genre, students grasp factual content more clearly and develop analysis techniques, compare / contrast methods, cooperative learning competencies, open-ended questioning skills, and artifact collection and preservation principles. The information presented in this chapter testifies that teaching
through the oral history genre is crucial to facilitate enriched learners who internalize facts and academically and personally mature.

Oral History is More

The oral history genre is more than genealogy, more than memoir, more than history, and more than biography; it records the living memories and feelings of humanity during monumental events in history. Genealogy defines family descendants. Memoir provides biographical information through journaling or personal writing. History records documented facts. Biography records individual life histories. Oral history provides a new dimension to families, eras, events, and communities by uniting generations together through the interview process and correspondence.

Oral history methodology gathers data through interviews and research that are then interpreted and analyzed. The results of this research are defined through a collection of artifacts presented in a variety of ways. Such presentation of artifacts may be through a classroom presentation, book, or any other fashion that is chosen by the educator. Often, verbal recollection, from individuals who have experienced historical eras, are systematically gathered and preserved through the use of modern technology such as computers, CD’s, video cameras, and tape recorders, then converted into written cultural artifacts.

Oral historians or students’ role-playing historians then verify the verbal recollections through research. Once verified, this information is analyzed, then integrated within its appropriate historical content and preserved for future generations. An important effect of students researching events as historians is that they become
enriched learners who are motivated to learn because history becomes more personalized. When supplemental textbook knowledge is included in classroom instruction, it relates factual knowledge with reality. When students’ interview living historians and they elaborate on these facts, students also learn the heart of history that is not included in textbooks.

Why Oral History?

My interest in the oral history genre as a means to supplement textbook learning began in 1993. As a history teacher, I struggled to motivate junior high and high school students to learn historical facts and information. My greatest success came through research projects and guest speakers. As a result, my 12th grade Economics classes learned more about the economy and its effect on small businesses during the creation of their personal corporations. Students designed the office building, the financial structure, and the corporate structure by utilizing the economic knowledge from the classroom textbook and combining that material with their personal experiences and research.

The final classroom presentations demonstrated the unifying effects of utilizing the oral history genre to produce enriched learners. Even though the interview process was not a requirement, several students found it profitable for gathering significant information. One student, whose group created a painting works store, discovered that her grandfather’s knowledge of business ownership provided greater insight for her and her classmates about the complexity of the economy on small businesses.

This project encouraged disinterested students to become active learners. After the grumbling and complaining about the project requirements, all students demonstrated
interest and excitement when their business structure was complete. It was evident to me that the oral history genre utilized in my Economics class successfully produced a more enriched learning experience for my students. This activity encouraged them to expand their learning beyond the classroom for additional resources. These resources included living historians who provided my students with personal insight into the economic facts presented in the textbook. This unified economic lessons with reality when reinforced by an active member of the community.

My interest in the oral history genre for pleasure began as a young child participating in our family tradition of relatives and friends’ gathering around the kitchen table sharing stories about “the good old days,” as the past was referred to. As I listened to my family recollect their experiences during each stage of the twentieth century, this infused me with personal historical knowledge in an informal manner. These undocumented stories of my maternal grandmother sewing on an assembly line, my maternal grandfather’s recipe for wine, as well as my paternal grandmother’s Monday night soup and my paternal grandfathers’ barbershop heightened my love for oral history.

Today, my interest in the oral history genre has a new purpose. I realize the importance of documenting humanity’s stories before they are lost. Through the Master of Writing program at Rowan University, I began documenting my parents’ stories. While contemplating the content of my thesis, I decided to interview my parents about their childhood days. Interviewing them has unfolded to me a new dimension of understanding about their generation.

After gaining insight into their former years before parenthood, I now perceive them as people instead of only my parents. My mother at eighty-one years old glows with
excitement when she shares family memories of driving to Wildwood, New Jersey during her teenage years to relax on the beach and visit relatives. As age steals away my father’s vigor and mental functions, it fails to rob him of the freshness of yesterday when he recalls his younger days. While sharing his memories of World War II, his eighty-five year old mind becomes more vivacious.

When I documented these stories, I was convinced that the living history of my parents must be preserved for future generations to treasure. Years after my parents’ existence, generations to come will intimately know them as people instead of genealogical names. I believe that everyone needs to articulate personal life stories; generations need to hear these stories; artifacts, family values and lessons from these stories need to be preserved. In this thesis, *Oral History Heirlooms: Vitality and Substance in Learning*, I illustrate the means to utilize this genre through the educational system and the methodology for educators to easily incorporate it within their curriculum as well as a sample final oral history project.

**Case Studies Illustrate the Oral History Genre's Effectiveness**

Several case studies from oral historians and educators are examined in this thesis to illustrate the beneficial effects of the oral history genre in education. My focus is to define the oral history genre and explain four main ways that I believe that lives are changed when learning includes student research and interviews. The first way in which lives are changed is that this genre allows the natural story-telling process to occur to unify generations. Secondly, this genre discloses the undocumented events in history. Thirdly, this genre encourages greater student comprehension and information recall.
Lastly, this genre creates fulfilled oral historians who are satisfied with their accomplishments.

Oral History and Education are United

Educators were persuaded to consider this resourceful tool in 1966 through Eliot Wigginton and the Foxfire Program from Rabun Gap, Georgia (Kuhn & McLellan. 1997. p4). Wigginton’s students interviewed residents of Appalachia and recorded their traditions and folklore. The analysis and interpretation of their findings were compiled into a series of magazines and books. Once educators were enlightened by his use of the oral history genre in the classroom, they too began experimenting with this innovative teaching method. A new teaching philosophy emerged encouraging educators to provide the means through the oral history genre to unite generations and build connections between schools and communities. The Foxfire Program and the teaching techniques utilized are expanded in Wigginton’s book, *Sometimes a Shining Moment: The Foxfire Experience* 1986.

Other literature was written to further encourage the use of the oral history genre within education (Kuhn & McLellan. 1997. p5). In 1976, John Neuenschwander wrote *Oral History as a Teaching Approach*. In 1979, James Hoopes wrote *Oral History: An Introduction for Students*. In 1989, Rebecca Oxford wrote *Language Learning Strategies: Conversation Skills through Oral Histories*. Then, in Great Britain, an article by Alan Redfern, *Talking in Class: Oral History and the National Curriculum*, was published through the Oral History Society (OHS). This national organization extensively promoted the use of the oral history genre as a successful teaching method to produce
enriched learners. Today, the Oral History Society’s website and publications continue to encourage educators to explore this avenue of research.

In conjunction with the Oral History Society’s goal, teaching guides and incentives were designed and distributed by other innovators. In 1988, a guide by Barry A. Lanman and George L. Mehaffy, *Oral History in the Secondary School Classroom*, was available to assist educators in utilizing the oral history genre as part of their curriculum. Also, awards were issued for educators initiating this genre in pre-collegiate and post-secondary education. Various workshops sponsored by the Organization of American Historians (OHS) began in 1997 at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association. Lastly, the OAH *Magazine of History* was produced for educators to provide them with current updates for incorporating the oral history genre within education.

Since the Foxfire Program introduced oral history as a beneficial tool in K-12 education, vast resources began emerging through the World Wide Web to assist educators in enriching the lives of students through the creative use of this genre. One site, *Step-by-Step Guide to Oral History*, provides simple steps that are adaptable for every grade level. The resources and oral history links supply researchers with a basic foundation to begin and succeed in their oral history adventure. Educators, who are motivated to incorporate the oral history genre within their classroom but are unfamiliar with utilizing it, will find this website useful and profitable in their endeavors.

There are innumerable ways in which students benefit from participating in a life story approach to learning. These benefits are as simple as learning to transcribe tape-recorded interviews to more cognitively intensive benefits such as learning to interpret
interviews in relationship to history. Research demonstrates that the advantages of educators utilizing the oral history genre in the classroom are more profitable than can be defined; therefore, I chose four that were important to me as an educator. These four benefits are addressed as follows:

First Benefit: Stories Bridge the Generation Gap

The first benefit is that since everyone has a unique story to tell, people of all generations bond together by a common theme. When listening to family members recollect the past, one or more common themes are incorporated in their oral recollections. The themes of survival during trials, maturity through experience, personal roles in history, and traditions followed are repeated in every account.

The beauty of a youngster comprehending the memories and feelings of an elder bridges the gap between these generations. History books fail to bridge this gap unless they relate the era to the learner. The teacher has the means to include life story projects as supplements to textbooks to close the generation gap. Professor Mimi Feingold and Professor James Francis Warren bridged the generation gap for two of their students when they allowed them to explore their ancestral generations through the oral history genre. Feingold’s and Warren’s experiences are outlined below.

Marilyn Geary’s Bridge

Mimi Feingold, Professor at University of California, Berkeley Extension, closed the generation gap in 1973 for Marilyn Geary, bookkeeper and travel consultant for L’Ente Nationale Italiano per il Turismo, in San Francisco (Geary, Summer-Fall 2002;
Marilyn graduated from U.C. Berkeley as an English major with a History minor but was unsuccessful in obtaining a teaching job. She accepted a travel consultant job in order to satisfy her longing to learn the Italian language and to learn more about her grandparents’ life and community in Italy. After three years, she knew that her soul was empty and that her goal remained unfulfilled. She registered for Feingold’s History X105.5 class, *Documenting the Twentieth Century: An Oral History Approach*.

Marilyn was unsure of her future in this class. She was inspired by Studs Terkel, radio broadcaster on WFMT in Chicago and author of several oral history books. He sparked her interest in the oral history genre through his collections of interviews of common men and women during historical events that shaped the world. Marilyn’s initial goal was that Professor Feingold’s class would challenge her intellect and satisfy her need for variety. This goal was transformed to incorporate a lifetime centered upon the oral history genre.

Once Feingold established the groundwork for the class life story project and Marilyn chose her topic, Fisherman’s Wharf’s Italian fisherman, she dove into the task of interviewing the San Francisco fisherman on the wharf. Each one had a story to tell and was anxious to disclose the vast treasure of their experiences throughout the twentieth century. “I had completed the interview and learned a great deal, all without a single equipment glitch. I was hooked,” said Marilyn after spending the afternoon living back through time and within a world and generation unknown to her.

Marilyn’s interview experience transformed her life and career from bookkeeper and travel consultant into an oral historian and the owner of Circle of Life Stories in Mill Valley California. She has also written *Marin City Memories*, interviews of African
Americans, from Marin County, California, who worked during World War II in the Sausalito, California, shipyards. “Since my first interview in 1973, my experiences with oral history have been as fresh, varied and satisfying as that unforgettable bowl of cioppino, fisherman’s soupy mixture of fresh catch.”

Jason Lim’s Bridge

The second professor, James Francis Warren, Associate Professor at Murdoch University in Perth, Western Australia, influenced a student in 1995 to pursue unifying the generations (Lim, Summer-Fall 2002; p53). His student, Jason Lim, enrolled in Approaches to History which focused on the sociological, anthropological and philosophical perspective of historical studies. Jason was in the first Murdoch University Honours’ class in Asian Studies and was searching for a satisfying career upon graduation. His only experience with oral history was the numerous family accounts from his grandparents, who lived in Singapore, during its Japanese occupation from February 1942 to August 1945. He also remembered the stories told by his parents pertaining to their childhood during the mid-1950’s to 1970, when they were married. “At a young age I understood the value of memories, but my family never jotted them down in a personal journal or diary,” said Jason who missed hearing the stories of his grandfather who died when he was five-years-old. Oral history was important to Jason especially since Singaporeans did not keep personal archives; therefore, those life stories and lessons were lost once the elders were deceased.

In Warren’s class, Jason pursued the history of the rise and fall of the trishaw, a bicycle with a sidecar, powered by the legs of the cyclist, in Singapore from 1947 to
1983. He traveled to Singapore to the Oral History Centre and listened to five trishaw riders interviews from the 1980's. Their experiences with passengers and inspectors fascinated Jason, as well as their insight into the organization of the trishaw industry. He also interviewed an elderly trishaw rider and owner of a repair shop in the 1960's. “My experience listening to these interviews conducted by the Oral History Centre increased my interest in local history”, said Jason with assurance as to where his future was headed. He was hooked on oral history and its power to unify generations through revealing the personal history of those who lived in the past.

After graduation, in 1996, Jason Lim worked in the National Archives of Singapore then transferred to the Oral History Centre in November 1998, where he interviewed countless individuals regarding their experiences within a particular era. Jason became the coordinator of The Civil Service—A Retrospection where he interviewed men and women active from 1950-1980 as Malayan and Singapore Civil Service employees. Jason also was the project coordinator of The Japanese Occupation of Singapore, 1942-1945, where he second-handedly experienced the trauma of war and loss of dignity that his ancestors had experienced. Jason learned about his heritage. He began documenting the history of Singapore, thus changing the tradition of unrecorded verbal stories into a new tradition of documented stories preserved as artifacts for future generations.

Second Benefit: Filling the Gap of History

The second benefit of utilizing the oral history genre in the classroom is that history books and documentaries fail to capture the full content of events. People fill the
era’s gaps through their personal knowledge and extraordinary insight. Two Secondary
p105) as well as Professor Rhonda Lewin, accomplished this goal to fill the gap of
history textbook accounts. Huerta and Flemmer’s experience is detailed below.

Grace Huerta and Leslie Flemmer

Grace Huerta, assistant professor at Utah State University in the College of
Education, and Leslie Flemmer, (Huerta & Flemmer, Nov/Dec 2000; p105) history
teacher at Bennion Junior High School, Salt Lake City, Utah, and doctoral candidate at
the University of Utah joined forces to design a life story programs for high school
lack; however, is the human element,” said Huerta and Flemmer (Huerta & Flemmer,
Nov/Dec 2000; p105). Their goal was not to replace textbooks but to supplement them. It
is important for students to learn pertinent facts related to historical events as well as the
sequence of activities leading up to turning points in life. Oral history projects restore the
excitement of learning by disclosing the human element to students. This expands their
understanding of subject matter and historical events by providing them with authentic
stories told by people who lived through the specific time period. Huerta and Flemmer’s
(Huerta & Flemmer, Nov/Dec 2000; p105) method to achieving success in the classroom
by utilizing the oral history genre consists of nine clearly defined stages where students’
academic progress is evaluated.
The nine stages are listed below.

1. Assess availability of materials
2. Select a project theme
3. Establish a project outcome and skills checklist
4. Preliminary research—common readings and resources
5. Mock interviews and development of transcription skills
6. Pre-interview proposal and scheduling an interview
7. Developing an interview schedule
8. The formal interview
9. Compiling the final project (Huerta & Flemmer, Nov/Dec 2000; p9)

Each planned and organized stage teaches students to confidently conduct interviews, interpret data, and compile results into a completed presentation to the class. These stages are expanded upon in this thesis. Chapter two exemplifies each step as I demonstrate them in relationship to my final project of documenting my maternal and paternal grandparents’ life stories in chapters three and four. Each of the nine stages is adaptable to any educational level from preschool to college level students.

Rhonda G. Lewin

The second educator to fill the gap of knowledge in textbooks was Rhonda G. Lewin, B.A and M.A in journalism, Ph. D. in American Studies and educator in 1961 at the University of Wisconsin- Superior and the University of Minnesota. She is also the author of several books including the Witness to the Holocaust: An Oral History devoted
to obtaining “the whole story” (Lewis, Summer-Fall 2002; p47). One of her main reasons for utilizing the oral history genre was to produce the historical account of immigration into America. She included the interaction of immigrants within a new world of foreign languages, and unfamiliar customs. Since the media, history books, business reports, and journals fail to include the human side of history, Lewin captured that human side. Her desire was to provide greater insight into historical events through personal recollections of people. This inspired her to teach a class for the University of Minnesota’s Elder Learning Institute called By Myself, I’m a Book.

As illustrated by Huerta, Flemmer, and Lewin, (Huerta & Flemmer, Nov/Dec 2000; p105) oral history is the means to gathering the completed story that history books fail to teach. Why shouldn’t every educator utilize the valuable resources available to gather the inside historical stories through learning the emotional content, and the relationship of these events on those who lived them?

Third Benefit: Greater Comprehension and Recall

The third benefit of the oral history genre utilized in the classroom is that it increases student comprehension and information recall. Since American classrooms today contain more multicultural and linguistically diverse students, textbooks alone are incapable of reaching the educational needs of each diverse student; the oral history genre supplements textbooks to allow students to comprehend historical events within each learning level and gain greater personal insight, like the Ghana society.

In Ghana, West Africa, there are also a wide variety of cultures and linguistically diverse students who have successfully developed educationally through the use of
“friendly talk.” Laura Dull, Assistant Professor in the Department of Secondary Education at the State University of New York in New Paltz, New York, and Delinda van Garderen, Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Studies at the State University of New York in New Paltz, New York, have researched the importance of teaching Social Studies through the use of the story. In Bringing the Story Back Into History: Teaching Social Studies to Children With Learning Disabilities, (2005) Dull and van Garderen illustrate and suggest methods to supplement textbooks to facilitate the education of multicultural and linguistically diverse students. They emphasize the use of the oral history genre utilized in the classroom as the educators in Ghanda illustrate (Dull & van Garderen, Spring 2005; p5). Also, Elsa A Nystrom, Professor of History at Kennesaw State University in Georgia, illustrates how the oral history genre also increased student comprehension of history in her History 3332 classes (Dull & van Garderen, Spring 2005; p5).

Laura Dull and Delinda van Garderen’s Friendly Talk

Textbooks need suspense to stimulate learning. The oral history genre provides the opportunity for students to explore their natural desire for mystery as they discover the undocumented truths living within each unique individual. Also, life story projects allow students to work within their own culture and language to learn by obtaining these stories from familiar people, perhaps even family members. Educators who bring relevance to history for all students through a narrative story instead of the usual expository methods that are common to most textbooks produce greater student comprehension and information recall.
Bonnie Armbruster and Thoma Anderson, professors and authors whose primary focus is curriculum development, suggest that one method to make textbooks “audience appropriate” is through “friendly talk,” as the Ghanian textbooks illustrate. For example, to teach students about the population of Ghana, a dialogue between a father, Papa, and his son, Kwaku, is used.

Kwaku: Twelve million people in Ghana! The population of our country is increasing very fast indeed. That is very good!
Papa: Why are you happy about the increase?
Kwaku: Because it will make us strong as a nation. The more our numbers, the greater our country. Don’t you think so?
Papa: It is not always true that when there are a lot of people in a country, the country is strong. People must work hard and use our cleverness very well to make the country great (Dull & van Garderen, Spring 2005; p3).

Not only are students learning about the population, they are also learning about imperialism in a fashion that is common to children. There is an element of mystery as Kwaku asks his father similar questions that an average elementary student would ask. Through conversation, learning occurs that facilitates interest and knowledge. These Ghanaian textbooks are solid examples of the creative means of using the oral history genre to “instruct as well as engage children in learning social studies facts, concepts and causations” (Dull & van Garderen, Spring 2005; p5).

American educators can also engage students in learning through the use of the oral history genre within the classroom as Dull and van Garderen suggested. Their methodology includes nine other strategies to use in conjunction to oral history to improve learning. These strategies can serve as culminating projects after oral history research and interviews are completed.
1. Recast a story as a play
2. Rewrite passages in dialogue format
3. Interview
4. Create story boards or cartoons
5. Write personal oral histories of themselves or other guest speakers
6. Participate in field trips
7. Design diary logs, video or slide presentations
8. Join book clubs
9. Write surveys (Dull & van Garderen, Spring 2005; p5)

Educators produce enriched learners if they reach beyond the textbooks into the creative use of the oral history genre to satisfy students’ diverse educational learning levels. Through these nine strategies, students will become active learners maturing within their own individual learning levels. Dull and van Garderen state, “Bringing the story back into history- in oral and written forms- not only makes learning more interesting, it make learning possible” (Spring 2005; pp5-6).

Elsa Nystrom’s Community Outreach

Elsa Nystrom also incorporated The Oral History genre into her History 3332 US Social and Cultural History from 1865 to the Present class and has never returned to her traditional teaching methods. Her students gained greater subject matter knowledge as well as facilitated personal interactions with the community. After attending a series of workshops on service learning, Nystrom chose to incorporate the life story aspect in her teaching. Instead of requiring student to complete a research paper, she required a final
project based on life story interviews. All students who completed the class assignment benefited educationally as well as personally from the project. The following students illustrate this truth.

Brent Saxon: I thought it was a waste of time. I began to get a little more interested... I learned a lot of things that I never did previously in school.

David Oglesby: It got me very interested in the subject matter more so than I would have been otherwise.

David Evans: If it wasn’t for these interviews, I might not have ever really known the truth.

Shawnte Scott: It is more exciting to me to learn history and culture from an actual primary source rather than read it from a book.

Julie Key: I feel I have a much broader view of the twentieth century (Nystrom, Summer-Fall 2002; p61).

As noted from these quotes, Nystrom’s students developed a greater comprehension of history as well as developed content knowledge through this first-handed experience with the oral history genre. Knowledge through experience has a greater likelihood of creating a more permanent understanding of history than textbook information.

Dull and van Garderen (2005) as well as Nystrom (2002) facilitated active learning through the use of the oral history genre and have restructured their teaching methods to meet the needs of their students. Their methodology utilized active learning within the classroom to supplement textbooks, as well as meeting the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse students prevalent in today’s classrooms.
Fourth Benefit: Satisfaction and Contentment

The fourth benefit of utilizing the oral history genre within the classroom is that it provides the participants with a sense of accomplishment. They become content knowing that their efforts have produced documents disclosing valuable aspects of life within historical events. Pamela Dean, founding director of the Williams Center for Oral History at Louisiana State University and activist for the Main Folklife Center at the University of Maine, (Dean, Summer-Fall 2002; p210). and Studs Terkel, former radio show host of WFMT in Chicago and writer, illustrate this fact (Lewis, Sep.1, 2001; p210).

Pamela Dean's Career Change

Dean became interested in the life story approach to learning through a Tuesday-Thursday class at the University of Maine. This provided the opportunity for her to complete her BA in history and remain in close contact with her family. In Edward Ives’, folklore professor at the University of Maine, Oral History class, Dean learned the basics of the oral history methodology as well as respect and honor for the informants and their craft of story telling. For her interview assignment and biographical sketch, Dean chose her Aunt Ethel as her subject. Even though Dean knew her aunt and family well, once she began listening to Aunt Ethel’s her stories, Dean realized that her ancestral knowledge was limited.

Aunt Ethel revealed that her ancestral lineage consisted of a variety of class structures. “I was hooked. There was a book here surely and getting an MA in history would give me the structure to write it,” said Dean. (Summer-Fall 2002; p2). She was
now motivated in her pursuit to obtain verbal stories from living historians who possess valuable truths that need recording. She had so much fun in Professor Ives’ class that she expanded her education toward an MA in history where she conducted over thirty interviews, then went on to complete her PhD.

The results of her learning experience through life stories directed her into working for seven years at UNC-Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, for the Southern Oral History Program. She also managed her own oral history center for ten years at LSU. She eventually returned to the University of Maine where she became an oral history activist like Professor Ives. Capturing oral historical details became a valuable aspect of her career and life. After discovering her love for oral history, Dean never returned to her former life without the oral history genre.

**Studs Terkel’s Life Story Collections**

Studs Terkel is a second example of an individual devoted to collecting life stories. As a radio host and writer, interviewing was second nature to him. His goal was to record stories from ordinary people within a personal context and to document their version of various situations. Lewis indicates through his journal, *Studs Terkel’s Will the Circle Be Unbroken*, that Terkel strived toward obtaining the immortality of man through the oral history genre that transfers knowledge throughout each generation. Terkel’s books are collections of oral history stories from the mouth and heart of ordinary people who add to historical accounts and events. *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* is based upon man’s oral history accounts pertaining to death, rebirth and faith. *Hard Times* is based upon the interview from “non celebrated people” recounting their experiences surviving
the Great Depression. *Working: People Talk about What They Do All Day and how They Feel about What They Do, Race: How Blacks and Whites Think and Feel About the American Obsession, and The Good War* are a few of his books that illustrate the wide range of subjects that Terkel expands upon through the oral history genre.

Terkel’s books are based upon topics of interest to himself as well as to the community. He has explored most topics through interviews and has published a book to document these stories and their relationship to these subjects. He captures immortality among those interviewed because their information is documented and enables future generations to experience these same adventures through eyewitness accounts. In his books, the oral history genre as well as the interviewee becomes immortal.

Terkel has had a major impact on society through his promotion of oral history. He published the voices of common people that had previously been silent. His love for oral history is evident in the output of his writing. “The journey is what it’s all about,” he states about his future writing goals (Lewis, Sep. 1, 2001; p210. p2).

The oral history journey is unforgettable to all, as this thesis will illustrate. I am included in this group of touched participants. My interest was sparked as a young child sitting at the kitchen table learning about my ancestors’ past and longing to hear more historical accounts of my heritage. If I had realized the importance of these stories at that time, I would have possessed a library full of archived records. Since I missed this first opportunity, I will now begin to capture these stories through documenting them in this thesis. I will also assist children in capturing their heritage by instructing and enlightening educators in regard to the availability of this resource in my thesis *Oral History Heirlooms: Vitality and Substance in Learning Add Vitality and Substance to*
Learning. My goal is to motivate educators to implement this learning method within the classroom and provide them with this methodology as I illustrate oral history techniques and document my paternal and maternal grandparents’ life stories. Educators will experience my grandparents’ immortality as I reconstruct their life and character through the interviews of relatives who knew them. Together both educators and I will transform the world into generations who treasure and value the oral history genre as a profitable education tool.
CHAPTER TWO

The Methodology of Oral History

Cliff Kuhn, assistant professor of history at Georgia State University and Majorie McLellan, associate professor of history at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, support the value of the oral history genre implemented in learning. (1997; p5). They state, "Oral history is inherently interdisciplinary; as students move from planning and field research to public presentation, projects break down the traditional compartmentalization between history, writing, reading, graphic arts, and theater." Their experiences teaching history through this non-traditional method as well as their research for the Organization of American Historians have motivated them to support educators and students in incorporating this genre in learning.

Because I also support the oral history genre as a profitable classroom tool, this chapter provides an in depth study of the nine project stages that Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105) suggest in Using Student-Generated Oral History Research in the Secondary Classroom. This chapter includes examples of my personal applications to these stages as well as suggested lessons that educators may incorporate in their oral history projects to reinforce and teach interdisciplinary curriculum.

Huerta and Flemmer’s (2000; p105) nine stages examined are

1. assess availability of materials
2. select a project theme
3. establish a project outcome and skills checklist
4. preliminary research—common readings and resources
5. mock interviews and development of transcription skills
6. pre-interview proposal and scheduling an interview
7. developing an interview schedule
8. the formal interview
9. compiling the final project

Within each stage, are specific applications that I later followed in completing Chapter Three and Chapter Four which is a culmination of all nine stages into a final project. Educators of every grade level may adapt these suggestions to suite the appropriate developmental levels of their students. Huerta and Flemmer’s, (2000; p105) stages are the core of this study, but not the entirety of it. Various academic resources, as well as my personal educational insight and experiences, blend this oral history experience into a viable solution for creating an effective oral history methodology to use in the classroom.

Since my goal in this thesis is to inspire educators to utilize oral history in the classroom, the best means for illustrating its significance and simplicity is through sample projects that educators may incorporate within their curriculum. The result of this project is that educators should experience each stage from the beginning to the end as well as benefit from my personal oral history presentation, the reconstruction of the lives of my paternal and maternal grandparents. The combination of Huerta and Flemmer’s (2000; p105) stages and my experience as an educator create a unique resource to equip educators to explore the oral history genre in their classroom.
One of my goals is to assist educators in adapting the sample suggestions to their specific student needs. These activities should engage educators in identifying viable methods of incorporating oral history within their classrooms in specific ways and create unique lesson plans to use within other content areas. The sample activities will also further develop in the students' a fundamental knowledge of research methodology, tools, and resources. Frequently, beginning a new project is difficult for educators because of unfamiliarity with the subject matter. Once the oral history genre is clarified and its usefulness is established and illustrated, it becomes a comfortable method for educators to incorporate in the classroom to motivate learning.

Since a major task such as an oral history research project expands over several months, it is more profitable to divide it into several achievable goals. Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105) divide these nine steps into specific activities adaptable into several lesson plans. These steps provide the planning and evaluating methodology for educators to organize this project as well as evaluate students’ progress through each stage. Huerta and Flemmer define goals and structure interview practice sessions to instill student and educators’ confidence and ensure a more successful outcome of this project. The nine stages explain Huerta and Flemmer’s (2000; p105) step-by-step plan as well as well as my step-by-step plan in completing my personal oral history project.

Stage One: Assess Availability of Materials

Huerta and Flemmer’s (2000; p105) first stage involves educators deciding upon the appropriate technology available to students as well as the technology that is pertinent to their age level. Educators should define the expected outcomes of the oral history
project: Will students produce a visual presentation through Power Point, photo collage, or imagery poster board display? Will they present a written presentation through transcripts of their interviews or refer to portions of the interview? The answer is determined by the availability of materials as well as the grade level of the students participating in the project. Middle or high school students may be required to transcribe complete interviews whereas elementary students may only transcribe portions of the interview that are applicable to their research project.

Educators should determine if students are expected to use audio tape recorders, and if so will the school supply them or will the students? Will video cameras be required, and if so, who will supply them to the students? Students also need to be trained in operating such equipment. Educators may require elementary students to use more simplified technology such as camera, photographs, scrapbooks, letters and phrases, and binders. Middle school and high school students, who are more computer savvy, may be required to utilize Power Point presentations or graphically designed biographic pages, blogs, websites, or a family newspaper or journal to display their research results.

Some factors that determine the type of technology needed are the students’ developmental stage, the available technology, the purpose of the project, and the educational learning goals. Teachers may approach outside resources such as local historical societies for the availability of technological equipment as well as libraries. These locations may rent equipment to educators for use in the classroom.
My Specific Choice of Materials

The manner in which I applied Huerta and Flemmer's (2000; p 105) first stage to my oral history project is that I chose to limit the interview technology to note taking. The transcribed interviews will not be included in the thesis because of space limitations, but portions will be posted on our family website Abate/Mevoli Nostalia, of which I am the webmaster. The computer, the World Wide Web, the Camden County Historical Society, the Gloucester County Historical Society, Campbell Library at Rowan University, and several books related to oral history were my main resources. My interview notes have been saved onto a flash drive, preserved on paper and labeled along with the completed thesis.

Artifacts, such as photographs, legal documents and personal letters, were collected from the resources listed above and from relatives and governmental agencies. These artifacts will be preserved in an acid free scrap book format that will be copied and distributed to my first cousins and siblings. The original scrap book will be housed in my personal library, but the copies, printed on acid free thesis paper, will be housed in each family member’s library as documentation of our family’s heritage.

My expected outcome chosen for the culmination of this research is a written and oral presentation. This presentation utilizes basic technology such as a personal computer and the World Wide Web as the main source of research. I believe it is most profitable to encourage creativity within the presentation to allow students to think outside of the subject matter and include their artistic and technological talents. Once stage one has been established and completed, educators should guide students through the second stage.
Stage Two: Select a Project Theme

Huerta and Flemmer’s (2000; p105) second stage assists educators in determining whether the class focuses the oral history project on a subject theme and whether this subject is event oriented, theme oriented or time period oriented. Selecting common elements for the projects that meet both the curriculum and students’ needs provide continuity of reading material and interest among the class.

To illustrate these choices, I provide sample subject themes in social studies, history, writing, science, and English. Choosing an appropriate theme provides educators with the opportunity to recommend research and reading materials that support the project. Once the general theme is established, students can choose their specific research topic within that theme. Through the following examples, I provide educators with sample themes and sub-themes that may be utilized for each subject.

An example I suggest, in the social studies subject theme, is presidential leadership. Within this theme are various divisions and a suggestion for each one.

- An event sub-theme - Vietnam War and President Nixon.
- A theme sub-theme - America’s view of President Nixon during the Vietnam War.
- A time-period sub-theme - President Nixon from 1969 to 1973 and the Vietnam War.
A second example in the history subject theme is intercultural merging. Within this theme are the following suggested divisions:

- An event sub-theme - immigration into America.
- A theme sub-theme - the influx of immigrants from Communist countries.
- A time-period sub-theme - the influx of immigrants after the Korean War, 1953-1965.

A third example, in the writing subject theme is descriptive writing. Within this theme are also three suggested divisions:

- An event sub-theme - the biography of a grandparent who chose a trade career during President Johnson’s years in office.
- A theme sub-theme - the biography of a grandparent who influenced your life.
- A time-period sub-theme - the biography of a grandparent alive during the twentieth century.

A fourth example, in the science subject theme is technology and trains. Within this theme students may choose one of three divisions:

- An event sub-theme - transportation before the PATCO Speedline.
- A theme sub-theme - the inventors of the technology utilized in developing the PATCO Speedline.
- A time-period sub-theme - the development of the PATCO transportation system from 1969 to the present.
A fifth example, in the English subject theme is a reflective essay. Again three specific choices are suggested:

- An event sub-theme - the student’s life learning to play a specific game or sport.
- A theme sub-theme - using instant messenger to communicate with friends.
- A time-period sub-theme - student’s life and choices within the last two months or last weekend.

The educator determines whether the research project sub-theme is event, theme or chronologically oriented. The samples above provide my suggested illustrations of the differences between each sub-theme. Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105) recommend that once the subject theme, sub-themes, and research orientation are established, the educator then determines whether the class will work in small groups or individually. The value of independence is that specific skills are evaluated in relationship to one initiator and developer. An independent project may also work well with reflective essays within the English subject theme, since the end result requires one student’s response as opposed to a group’s cooperative response.

Group projects may be more appropriate for a history subject theme where students determine the concepts such as the reasons behind the influx of immigrants after the Korean War. This method establishes teamwork during each stage of the project in more complex topics. Group work also allows for more varied creativity in a project since the experiences of each contributor is utilized. In group projects, educators may be
required to intervene if the weight of the activity is not balanced among the teammates and one or more individuals are not contributing.

My Specific Project Theme

In relation to Huerta and Flemmer’s (2000; p105) suggestions, for my stage two, I chose the subject theme for writing oral history. My oral history project contains a time period sub-theme, which is to reconstruct the lives of my paternal grandparents, Dominick Abate and Catherine (Lorrusso) Abate, and my maternal grandparents, Vito Anthony Mevoli and Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli, during the twentieth century. The project is based upon the events that molded the character of my maternal and paternal grandparents. Data is obtained from relatives who interacted with them during their lifetime. This oral history project incorporates history, science, social studies, English and writing together in the final project outlined in Chapters Three and Four. From my example, an educator could incorporate additional evaluations from this project into each subject for elementary school students even though the main skills assessment pertains to writing. I chose this project as an independent task instead of a group project because its foundation is personal in nature. The independent focus allows the researcher to be the determining factor of the contents of the project. Once stage two is planned, educators should guide students through the third stage.

Stage Three: Establish a Project Outcome and Skills Checklist

In stage three, Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105) define the requirements for each stage of the project. This includes a learning skills checklist. A checklist provides clear
and specific goal for the students to insure that they receive a successful experience with the oral history activity. The project outcomes suggested by Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105) are oral presentations, poster boards, short films, skits, portfolios, and multimedia work, web pages, written narratives, dialogues, and debates.

The educator determines the most appropriate outcome based upon the grade level of the student. Using the previous examples that I suggested in the social studies subject theme and within the time-period sub-theme, this project may be best illustrated through a poster board presentation to clearly define President Nixon’s activity from 1969 to 1973. However, the history subject theme pertaining to immigration into America may be best displayed through a skit that captures the heart of each character through dialogue and actions.

A third option in the writing subject theme pertains to the biography of a grandparent who influenced the student’s life. This may be portrayed through a portfolio that displays photographs and memories. The science theme of inventors of the PATCO Speedline may require a multimedia presentation to capture the complexity of this technology. Lastly, the English theme of a reflective essay on a school event in the student’s life may facilitate a written narrative that allows for more personal meditation.

The educator’s goals should determine the appropriate outcome as well as the evaluation checklist.

In stage three, Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105) emphasize the importance of the skills checklist based upon the grade level of the students. Huerta and Flemmer believe it is important to evaluate the students’ progress as they complete each stage of the development of the oral history project. Continual evaluation not only provides the
students' with a sense of accomplishment, but it also provides the teacher with checking points to confirm that the students are following directions and progressing academically.

*My Specific Project Outcome and Checklist*

If I were to use this project in a classroom in the writing subject theme, I would compose a skills checklist appropriate for a project outcome of a written presentation and oral presentation combination. Since this was a thesis project and not a classroom project, a skills checklist was eliminated. Educators may choose to eliminate or alter any of the nine stages to meet their specific needs just as I chose to eliminate the skills checklist for my project. As an educator, I agree with Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105) that a skills checklist is necessary and beneficial for students as well as educators. The following section illustrates the type of checklist that I would incorporate within this oral history writing project if I were to introduce the project to a class.

This checklist can be utilized to reinforce other subject matter in the curriculum. For elementary students, when they practice interviewing skills, they may also be graded in preparing open ended questions as part of the grammar curriculum as well as their interview transcriptions. Oral history projects provide educators with unlimited opportunities to coordinate a variety of learning skills into one project. In conjunction with my theme of writing oral history, several evaluation points may be established. Elementary educators may incorporate grades for their students in each curriculum area such as history, English, writing, art, and science through my writing project. The following samples that I suggest, demonstrate possible project evaluations in these subjects:
1. Writing-(descriptive writing) - The students may be graded upon their ability to present a clear and precise image of the interviewees as they describe their relationship to the subjects. Clear action verbs as well as detailed information are required to accurately portray the significance of each interviewee to the study.

2. English-(interview questions) - The students may be graded on composing ten clearly designed open-ended questions to guide the interview in the most profitable direction. These questions should be written informatively and illustrate basic research knowledge that the interviewer has obtained.

3. History-(research skills) - The students may be graded upon the information that is gathered that relates to their topic. It should be pertinent and scholarly. It should be accessed through the World Wide Web, historical societies, and books.

4. English-(thank you letters) - The students are graded upon the format and content of the thank you letters written to the interviewees. They should contain a standard format as well as personal reasons for the interviewer's appreciation of the interviewee's services. Each one should consist of a blend of uniformity and uniqueness. The format should be structured yet a specific portion of the interview should be acknowledged to personalize the thank you letter.

5. Science-(Art-artifact preservation) - The students may be evaluated on the extent of their artifact preservation. They are required to follow
directions and arrange their display in a neat and orderly fashion. The artifacts should be relevant to the research topic.

6. English-(bibliography) - The students may be evaluated on the content of their bibliography. Were the research materials actually utilized and relevant? The students are required to follow the APA format for the bibliography.

7. History-(historical content) - The students may be graded upon the body of the research. Their writing skills should illustrate their ability to interpret facts from the interviews and combine these facts with the artifacts collected to create a unique personal insight into history. The format should progress naturally and smoothly throughout the twentieth century.

This checklist suggests a sample of the vast interdisciplinary uses of the oral history genre in the classroom. Once educators have established their personal checklist and project outcome, they can guide students through stage four.

Stage Four: Preliminary Research, Common Reading and Resources

In stage four, Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105) guides students to specific research avenues. This may include books, websites, historical societies, government agencies and sample oral history models. This provides a starting point for students to begin their research as well as a basis for classroom discussions. Huerta and Flemmer, (2000; p105) suggest the Oral History home page, the National Council for
Social Studies home page, and the History/Social Studies Web Site for K-12 Teachers-
Genealogy Site as valuable tools for oral history projects.

These resources and readings provide educators and students with the foundations for formulating a plan regarding oral history projects. Once students begin their research in one or several of the websites listed, additional information will branch forth. Students may begin to compose their bibliography from these resources. Elementary students whose knowledge of the World Wide Web may be limited may also access these databases through their educator who may print related websites for their review. An example that I suggest in the social studies subject theme of the Vietnam War and President Nixon, is that the educator may choose to print portions from the Rutgers Oral History Archives pertaining to the Vietnam War. After the students read these accounts, they may receive the educational foundation necessary to expand their research.

**My Specific Preliminary Research, Common Readings and Resources**

In light of Huerta and Flemmer’s (2000; p105) suggestion, the resources I used may be beneficial to educators. This includes the *War Letters* by Andrew Carrol, 2001. This book contains eyewitness accounts of events pertaining to the various wars. It is written in letter format beginning with the Civil War and expanding through the recent War in Bosnia. Whatever texts are selected, educators should find useful readings that will motivate students in their research topics.

Also, *Division Street: America*, by Studs Terkel, 2006, contains stories that reveal the heart of the American people and their struggles and successes in America. This
resource provides students with a model to follow in interpreting their interviews in light of history.

*Reminisce The Magazine That Brings Back More Good Times* is a monthly magazine that contains stories, photographs, puzzles, recipes, advertisements, and much more. Each issue provides insight into the life of individuals from the past. This resource provides students with creative examples of incorporating research and interview stories within their own projects.

The websites that I found useful were the History Matters homepage, The Library of Congress: The Learning Page, the Oral History Society homepage, The Library of Congress-American Memory homepage, and Rutgers Oral History Archives homepage. Each site provides insight for educators and students to utilize the oral history genre as a means to expand knowledge. Students may branch into their own research area, once educators provide them with fundamental resources. After the students have gathered their topical information, they are then ready to practice their interview skill in stage five.

**Stage Five: Mock Interviews and Development of Transcription Skills**

In stage five, Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105) suggest that students practice using technical equipment as well as refine their etiquette and listening skills through specific interviewing methods. This includes students interviewing each other and advising each other as to methods that establish practical results. The educator may also invite a guest speaker to the classroom to provide additional interview practice for the students.
A second aspect of interviewing that Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105) emphasize is learning to transcribe dialogue where note-taking and listening skills are practiced. Interviewing assists students in determining those quotes that are relevant to the theme of the oral history project. Misspellings may be corrected and phrases such as "um and ah," should be eliminated, but "huh-huh" when it means yes, should be added. Students should also develop a working knowledge of the relationship between fact and interpretation. They need to learn to interpret the facts of the interview in relationship to the topics of the study.

An example that I believe illustrates this skill is that if the interviewee states that during the Depression everyone was poor, students should conclude that those in contact with the interviewee were poor, but according to the historical facts, some individuals did retain their wealth.

The Library of Congress, the American Folklife Center (2005; p 2-4) states that the goal of transcribing oral history is that the content should be accurate and understandable. It should contain a consistent style and level of detail throughout. One may transcribe the account formally or may abstract the major topics discussed. Either way, transcribing trains students in the art of reporting facts while at the same time interpreting data. Together these skills facilitate the development of students deducing logical conclusions from data.

Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105) also suggest that the interviewee be identified as well as any other speakers. A brief narrative about the interviewee’s life and its relationship to the project theme is recommended. When students transcribe the interviews, this personal information about the interviewee would guide their research.
topics as well as assist them in constructing appropriate questions. Huerta and Flemmer, (2000; p105), suggest that the educator work with the students to determine appropriate questions to ask the interviewee. Students may test specific questions on each other and evaluate the types of questions that produce the best results.

My Transcription Skills and Interview Preparation

In relationship to Huerta and Flemmer’s (2000; p105) stage five, my choice was to abstract major topics discussed in my transcriptions instead of transcribing the entire interview. To me, this was more appropriate in order to achieve my goal of reconstructing the character and life of my paternal and maternal grandparents. I decided that only excerpts from the interviewee would meet my need since I would not archive these interviews.

I believe educators should provide additional guidelines to their students in accordance with the intended project. For example, an unrefined transcript may be required to capture the heart of the message regarding the immigration project. Such data may be required if the goal is for the students to grasp immigrants struggle with the American language and culture. The educator determines the type of transcripts required that will meet the goals of the project. In turn, educators will also guide students to create appropriate open ended interview questions to practice within the classroom.

The open-ended question method does not lead the interviewee in a specific direction, but encourages a free response. I believe that students should be encouraged to prepare at least ten open-ended questions as a result of their topical research. Open-ended
questions encourage the interviewee to respond with more analytical and story telling answers rather than brief one or two word replies.

After the mock interview process, students should be encouraged to revise their questions as suggested by the response of their classmates. Once the completed list of ten questions has been revised, they may be evaluated as an English grade or one phase of the project. Once the students have practiced their interview skills, transcription skills and have developed their open-ended questions, they are prepared for stage six.

Stage Six: Pre-interview Proposal and Scheduling an Interview

Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105) suggest in stage six that students choose their interviewees. Students are required to submit a proposal about the intended candidate. This proposal is a paragraph or two describing why this candidate is selected, the time and location of the interview, a brief annotated bibliography, and sample questions. Educators should guide students in evaluating the age and time period requirements of the interviewees. For example, if the research topic is the assassination of Martin Luther King, the interviewees should be approximately forty-years old in order for the student to glean valuable information from that event. This approximate age places the interviewee within the time period of Martin Luther King’s historical era. Educators should prepare a list of candidates to assist those students who are unable to locate an interviewee. The interviewee should be encouraged to display or donate artifacts to assist students in their presentations.

Scheduling the interview is based upon the availability of both parties. The educator may provide class time for those students who are unable to schedule interviews
outside of their school hours. Younger students may be unable to schedule interview time independently from the educator, whereas young adults should be responsible to initiate the process.

**My Pre-interview Proposal and Scheduling of Interviews**

In light of Huerta and Flemmer’s (2000; p105) proposal, my methodology expands upon their means of choosing interviewees. It coincides with the four questions from the *Conducting the Information Interview* website, (p1-5.)

*Conducting the Information Interview* website (p1-5) suggests four questions that students should ask themselves when deciding upon whom to interview. I agree that positive answers to these questions should produce profitable data collection from the interviews.

1. **Does the person have the information I need?**

   Interviewees should be knowledgeable about the topic. For example, if the theme is writing about a grandparent who chose a trade career, students should be guided to choose an appropriate grandparent or the educator will supply an available interviewee as an option. The trade should be researched to insure that students understand answers and create informative questions.

2. **Is the person available for an interview?**

   For the social studies theme regarding Vietnam, students may suggest the perfect candidate, but the interviewee is unavailable to meet their needs. This is where a reliable list of interviewee supplied by the
educator may eliminate this situation. Also, this would allow for less enthusiastic students who may lose valuable time making their choice. A time limit for choosing candidates would be appropriate to insure timeliness of the project goals.

3. Will the person provide me with the information I need? Even though interviewees may possess the information the student needs, there may be several reasons for their inability to disclose it to the interviewer. To avoid intimidating the interviewee, students should humbly ask questions and intently listen to their responses while portraying a need-to-know attitude. For example, if the architect of the PATCO Speedline is interviewed, a knowledgeable student may be tempted to challenge his expertise, but should refrain from doing so in a threatening manner.

4. Can the person freely and accurately transmit the information to me? Many possible interviewees may possess the information needed but may be unable to communicate it to the student. They may be shy or emotionally or physically hindered from discussing the matter. They may also possess false assumptions or prejudices regarding the topic or ulterior motives for discussing the matter. If a student chooses to interview an immigrant who entered the United States during the late 50's and that individual was emotionally scarred from that experience, the interviewer may fail to receive pertinent information for the oral history project.
If students carefully select interviewees on the basis of those who meet the above four requirements instead of individuals they like, the experience will yield profitable results. The brief pre-interview proposal suggested in by Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105) in stage six of describing the potential interviewee allows educators to approve or deny the students’ choices. I believe that the interview proposals provide educators with the opportunity to evaluate this persuasive essay portion of the oral history project.

Depending on the age and developmental level of the students, educators should decide the appropriate method of interviewee selection while always providing resources when needed. Parents, community members, friends, and administrators are viable resources.

The basic criteria for my choices were that each interviewee must be a relative to my paternal or my maternal grandparents. Interviewees also must have been alive during my grandparents’ lifetime. Since the goal of my oral history project is to reconstruct the life of each grandparent, the interviewees needed to know my grandparents in depth. The interviewees also should have knowledge from one of the following perspectives:

- A child’s view of their parent
- A grandchild’s view of their grandparent
- A cousin’s view of their cousin.
- A niece or nephew’s view of their aunt or uncle.

This led me to select fourteen subjects of a variety of ages ranging from 58 years-old to 86 years-old. Since my grandparents were born in the late 1800’s, many relatives were still alive to recall various details of their lives. Because of these living historians, I was able to obtain data pertaining to various stages in my grandparents lives. The
relatives in their eighty’s possessed all their faculties and clearly recalled the past more than the present.

The information gathered through these interviews was cross referenced with information obtained through the Gloucester County Historical Society, Camden County Historical Society, and legal documentation such as birth and marriage certificates and naturalization papers.

A sample of a candidate’s proposal is as follows. My cousin interviewed was Robert (Bobby) De Ninno. He was born in 1937 and grew up on the same street as my maternal grandparents. His experiences with my grandfather, Vito Antonio Mevoli, cover the years from 1938 to my grandfather’s death in 1972. His interaction with my grandparents also include up to 1973 when my grandmother, Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli, died. De Ninno’s childhood perspective provided a unique insight into my grandparents’ lives during the late 1940s and early 1950s through to my grandparents’ life in their eightieth years. This perspective was different from the view of their daughter, Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate, my mother, who knew my grandparents from their thirty’s through to their mid eighty’s.

De Ninno met all the requirements of the four questions posed from the

Conducting the Information Interview website (p1-5):

1. He had first-handed knowledge of my grandparents.
2. He was available for an interview.
3. He willingly answered my questions.
4. He had no hindrances with regard to the interview.
The interview was scheduled and completed on January 1, 2006, at his home. As a prerequisite to my visit, I instructed him on the type of information for which I was searching. This allowed him ample time to reminisce upon these topics. In lieu of using a tape-recorder, I wrote out his responses to the ten questions. I chose the written option as opposed to the tape-recorder because only specific information will be included in the final oral history project. I did not intend to include full transcripts.

Once the candidate is selected and approved and the interview is scheduled, the students are ready for stage seven.

Stage Seven: Developing an Interview Schedule

Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105) in stage seven, illustrate the importance of students creating tailor-made questions appropriate for their interviewee. Students are encouraged to perform research on the interviewees’ background. Huerta and Flemmer suggest that students should investigate the interviewee’s “ethnic background, place and year of birth, religion, occupations, travels or specific community activities” (2000; p105) or any other aspect of their life that is pertinent to their oral history project. The purpose of such an in-depth study is to develop an understanding of the interviewee that will facilitate better communication between them.

After extensive research on the interviewee and the topic, students produce general questions to initiate conversation then, more specific ones pertaining to the theme of the interview. Follow up questions are prepared in anticipation of the interviewee’s answers to the open-ended ones. To me, this method of designing related questions may be evaluated by educators for a grade in history and English. Teachers may supply a list
Students should determine which questions are introductory questions and which are conclusive questions. This allows the interviewee to ease into the interview process. An example that I believe illustrates this process is when interviewing someone regarding a social studies theme, such as pertaining to President Nixon's Vietnam policies from 1969 to 1973, the interviewer may begin with a general question such as *what was it like as a teenager during the early 1970s?* This question is better suited as an introductory one as opposed to asking why so many Americans were opposed to the war in Vietnam.

**My Interview Schedule**

As suggested by Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105), after I researched my interviewees and my grandparents in depth, I prepared my interview questions. Since I believe open-ended questions allow for less structured responses, I utilized this approach with my interviewees. My foundational questions consisted of ten statements or questions:

1. Tell me about my grandparents.
2. Tell me about what they loved.
3. Tell me about the way they dressed.
4. What their goals were?
5. What were their motivating forces?
6. What were their strengths and weaknesses?
7. What traditions did they pass on?

8. How did the manner of their birth and date order of their birth affect their lives?

9. Do you reminisce about them? To whom?

10. Is there anything else that you would like to say?

During my interviews, more specific follow up questions emerged once I began with the ten interview questions. I chose these specific questions because my purpose is to capture the goals and character of my grandparents, not just interesting stories. Many times families choose to share interesting stories, but fail to capture the more personal aspect of the characters. I began with more general inquiries, then more specific ones and finalized the interview with more general inquires. I prefer this method because it progresses the interviewee through a comfortable sequence of questions that provide a warm-up, climax, and cool-down methodology. Once the interview preparations are completed, the students are prepared for the actual interview process which is stage eight.

Stage Eight: The Formal Interview

Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105) suggest that in stage eight students schedule and confirm interview times and follow the interview etiquette taught in previous classes. Interviewers should arrive promptly and help the interviewee feel comfortable with this project by initiating informal conversation before the actual interview process begins. Student researchers are attentive to the body language of their interviewee and adjust their questions accordingly. After the interview, thank-you notes are sent as well as a copy of the completed project or interview. This insures students practice good manners.
and express their appreciation for the time and effort put forth by the interviewee. I believe this stage provides the opportunity for students to learn the format of thank-you cards which also provides the opportunity for educators to evaluate the students’ writing skills in this genre.

My Formal Interviews

In following Huerta and Flemmer’s (2000; p105) guidelines for interviewing, each of my interviews were scheduled, planned, and confirmed. I usually met at the interviewee’s home or other convenient location. One cousin, Pauline, preferred to meet at my parents’ house, so I accommodated her. Several telephone interviews were conducted. Thank-you notes were sent within several months of the interview. I also plan to present all the participants with a copy of this thesis.

Stage Nine: Compiling the Final Project

According to Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105) the final stage, stage nine, is where students evaluate the data collected and interpret the material in relationship to the topic or the era of the study. The teacher determines the standards of the presentation and grades the students according to their compliance to those standards. The usual final project consists of a chronological, five-page life story narrative that includes the main focus of the project theme. This may include visuals, artifacts and illustrations that students may want to preserve as special memories for those interviewed or as future resources.
Huerta and Flemmer (2000; p105) state, “Oral history narratives add to the collective knowledge of local and national history and document our citizens’ participation in an event or development.” In my research, I discovered that local historical societies may incorporate students’ projects as part of their historical archives. This is a wonderful opportunity for students to expand historical knowledge and preserve their research for additional use.

My Final Project

In light of numerous available choices for a final oral history project, I chose only one for this thesis project. It is in the writing subject theme and consists of the life story narrative of a grandparent alive during the twentieth century. The life story includes pertinent excerpts from interviews, artifacts, and documents as well as photographs. The culmination of the data that I collected from interviews and resources is combined into a historical reconstruction of the lives and character of my maternal grandparents, Vito Antonio Mevoli and Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli, and my paternal grandparents, Dominick Abate and Catherine (Lorusso) Abate. I incorporate the historical, economical, and military events occurring during their life in America. This merger of American history and personal history reconstructs time and immortality to my grandparents. I chose this type of final project mainly to preserve the twentieth century for my children and grandchildren as well as those of my grandparents’ offspring. Chapters Three and Four demonstrate the results of this research.
CHAPTER THREE

Italy United in America

The culmination of this oral history project in Chapters Three and Four consists of my interpretation of the oral history method and research data collected to re-create my grandparents through the use of interviews and archives. Due to my limited resources and time, I am unable to unveil the full story of their lives, but even this small portion is sufficient enough to illustrate their character traits and the origin of our family traditions.

Since family research is an ongoing project, it is possible that further details of their lives may develop after the completion of this oral history project. For this reason, I will only include the materials disclosed within the time frame of this thesis from fall 2005 to spring 2006. I began this story with my maternal grandparents, Vito Antonio Mevoli and Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli and concluded with my paternal grandparents, Dominick Abate and Catherine (Lorusso) Abate. This limited glimpse into their lives serves as a family heirloom that is preserved for generations who have never known my grandparents or will never know them.

Vito Antonio Mevoli / Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli

Vito Antonio Mevoli and Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli are my maternal grandparents. There are some areas pertaining to my grandparents' lives that are still under investigation and may forever remain a mystery, such as the reason that Filomena came to America while her parents stayed in Italy.
The purpose of this final oral history project is to begin a tradition of recording family stories beginning with my grandparents’ lives and eventually expand to incorporate each family member. Such an approach places responsibility on each generation to add their parents to this thesis. In this chapter, the documentation illustrates the means by which my maternal grandparents’ lives were molded and directed in relationship to the historical events of the era and their surrounding circumstances. This includes the manner in which their life choices affected their progeny. Their story is told chronologically based upon birth order. Since Vito was born first, Chapter Three begins with his story and continues with Filomena. Their death concludes this chapter and is combined with a summary of their lives as husband, wife, mother, and father in their pursuit of a better life in America.¹

Vito Antonio Mevoli’s Birth

In late 1800s Italy, during the time of a socialist movement in the country, a son was born to Domenico and Giulia (Moliterno) Mevoli. On January 21, 1885, this son, Vito Antonio Mevoli, would be the successor to the Mevoli estate in Monopoli, Italy. During an economic crisis that spread throughout Italy, the Mevoli estate, on the southern coast of Italy overlooking the Adriatic Sea, prospered. The main source of its prosperity was the vast farming of olive trees that yielded rich olive oil as its natural resource. Vito

¹ The information in this thesis consists of family member interviews and research data that were gathered from Ellis Island passenger arrival archives online at ellisisland.org, Society. Cultural records have been cross checked with the Gloucester County Historical Society, Camden County Historical Society, and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel / Fatima Church documents as well as documentation from various websites listed in the reference portion of this thesis. This information is subject to my personal interpretation. Original source documents such as birth certificates, death certificates, marriage certificates, estate notices, Census records, Certificate of Naturalization, Petition for Naturalization, personal letters, and Italian Trust Telegraphic notes were contributed by family members.
and his father, Domenico, toiled on the farm morning till evening seven days a week reaping the olive harvest, while his mother, Guilia, nursed his younger sister whose name is unknown to our family. In the farm's solitude, Vito's quiet spirit, craftiness with his hands, money management skills, survivor instinct, and helpfulness were developed as he worked side-by-side with his father to support and maintain the farm and estate.

Upon Giulia and Domenico’s deaths within 1885-1900, exact date is unknown; Vito, under the guardianship of his cousin, according to Vito's son, Nicholas Mevoli, became responsible for managing the estate and farm. The property financially supported him and his sister whose name is unknown. As told by Vito's grandson, Martin De Ninno, Vito's brother-in-law, Mr. DeBello, desired that his wife become heir to the estate instead of Vito. Mr. DeBello's solution was to murder Vito to insure that Vito's portion of the estate also became his wife's inheritance. According to Vito's son, Nicholas Mevoli, in Italy “the boys get everything and the girls don’t get anything.” Once Vito became aware of this plot against his life, he chose to leave Italy for America, the land of freedom. Relinquishing farming and moving to a new country was a life altering event that further cultivated Vito's survival instinct. He would continue working hard, as his father taught him, but in America now instead of Italy.

**Coming To America**

By age 21, Vito was forced to flee from Italy to save his life. He sold what items and goods he managed to confiscate from the estate and transferred the money into Italian Republic Bonds because he couldn’t carry large portions of money aboard a ship to
America. On an ocean vessel, he was safe with bonds rather than cash that could easily be stolen.

In April 1906, Vito boarded a 3.984 gross ton ship called *Citta di Napoli* in Naples, Campania, Italy, and sailed to New York City with 1,665 other passengers. The sour smell of sweat and the streaks of dirty perspiration that painted the passengers’ bodies were his comfort for days as the ship transported him to the land of freedom.

To conceal his identity as Mrs. DeBello’s brother, when Vito signed the ship’s passenger log, he changed his age from 21 to 34 and his marital state from single to married. Any association with his sister may have resulted in his death. According to the ship’s manifest, Vito also dropped his middle name, Antonio, on the passenger record. However, as indicated from the original document, Regno D’Italia, Passaporto Per L’Estero, this passport identified him accurately as Vito Antonio Mevoli. By the time Vito spotted the Statue of Liberty, in New York City, I believe that he must have finalized his methods of surviving in America. “He was a very clever man,” said Bobby De Ninno, his grandson. Vito’s carpentry skills, endurance, and farming abilities, as well as his money management skill, are a great combination for success in any country.

Vito’s new life in America corresponded to Emma Lazarus’ poem, *The New Colossus*, engraved on a bronze plaque on the inside wall of the Statue of Liberty since 1903. Lazarus’s words have greeted over a century of immigrants:

*Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses*

*Yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore, send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me: I lift my lamp beside the golden door.*

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After entering New York City, Vito’s residence in America was not confirmed, but his daughter, Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate, believes that he may have lived with his friend, Steve DeBeasir, on Beckett Street in Camden, New Jersey. Perhaps Steve was waiting for him when the *Citta di Napoli* docked or perhaps Vito took several buses to meet his friend in Camden. Regardless of the transportation method used to arrive in New Jersey, Vito’s adventure into America, as well as his desire for success, must have been some of his foremost thoughts. With Vito’s estate and wealth behind him and his farming lifestyle now an occupation from his past, a new challenge awaited him in America. The Italian Republic Bonds would serve as the basis of his financial security.

Along with the bonds, Vito’s most valuable possession was the desire to survive and the strength to endure the manual labor necessary to financially prosper. In Italy, Vito was accustomed to rising early and working hard. This routine had been established on his family’s Monopoli farm. As a farmer, perhaps an olive oil producer since Monopoli’s prosperity related to this resource (Galt; p3), Vito knew that, given a portion of land, he could produce his own food and survive. Into the land of opportunity he ventured, prepared to offer all his strength toward success. This land was quite different from the elegant estate to which he was accustomed. This new land was a city overlooking the Delaware River; Camden, New Jersey.

Once established in America, Vito traveled by bus from Camden to Philadelphia’s foreign exchange bank on Broad and Federal Streets every six months to obtain interest payments from the bonds, according to Vito’s grandson, Martin De Ninno:

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Every six months, the coupons to the bonds matured and he went to Philadelphia's foreign exchange bank on Broad and Federal to obtain the interest from the bonds. When Grandpop and I went to Philadelphia, we also went to 9th Street to buy the baby goat. There were live goat pens and we picked out the Easter goat. The roasted head was called Capasella. I ate the cheeks. Since there was no difference in taste between the goat and lamb, Grandpop told everyone on Easter that we were eating lamb. Gombar Dominick and Gombar Tessy were from the region of Basalagada and they ate goat instead of lamb too.

Vito’s income from the bonds sustained him until he found employment as an apartment maintenance worker. He began rebuilding his finances through hard work and wise money management. In 1906, with Theodore Roosevelt as President of the United States, and an average annual income of $879, Vito’s mind was set toward being successful in America, (dmarie.com/timecap/; 1906), servicing the apartments and the heating and air conditioning needs of his tenants. Throughout his life, Vito used his craftsmanship to earn additional money by completing odd jobs for his rental customers in addition to his main job responsibilities.

Marriage and Family

Filomena’s brother, Nick Onorato, learned about Vito’s strong character through a friend who worked with him at Campbell Soup Company, in Camden, New Jersey according to their son, Nicholas Mevoli. Between 1906 and 1909, Vito’s life united with

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Filomena Onorato’s. Perhaps her quarter sized brown eyes attracted him or maybe her charming smile. According to the Certificate of Marriage, Vito Antonio Mevoli, twenty-four years old, and Filomena Onorato, nineteen years old, were lawfully married on May 17, 1909, at the Church of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel on 832 South Fourth Street, Camden, New Jersey. The priest who signed the certificate, and whom we assume performed the ceremony, was Reverend M. DiIelsi. The two witnesses were Ippolito Mariono and Rosinia Cerabona. According to Nicholas Mevoli, their son, Vito and Filomena’s horse drawn wagon lost its wheel while transporting them to the church that day. I wonder if Vito’s handyman skills repaired it or he instructed a friend to do so.

The wedding photograph shows Vito with thick black eyebrows and a mustache. His black hair is parted on the left side, combed a quarter of the way down his forehead and over to the right. He wore a white tie and shirt with a black suit that held a flower in the lapel. This image contrasted with Vito’s normal work attire of dark-colored pants and army fatigue-colored button down shirt.

Regardless of each American’s family’s economic status at the time, the economy was changing as rapidly as the culture. A wave of inventions swept across America beginning in 1900 with Eastman Kodak’s Brownie Camera. The technology era ended in 1999 with IKONOS blast into space. This technological explosion enticed Americans to spend their hard working money on a variety of innovative goods and services, but not Vito. In 1909, he had only begun restoring some of the wealth he left behind in Italy. He wasn’t about to waste it on enticing inventions. He saved his money instead of purchasing luxuries, such as an automobile which cost $500.00 in 1909 (dmarie.com/timecap/; 1909).
Vito and Filomena saved for eleven years toward the 1920 purchase of their first home, a two-story brick house on 303 Chestnut Street in Camden, New Jersey. Since the average price of a home in 1909 was $4,500 while the average annual income was $944 ($18.15 per week) (dmariel909), this was quite an accomplishment for an immigrant. The average price of a home in 1920 rose to $6,296 while the average annual income was $1,130 ($21.73 per week.) (dmarie.com/timecap/; 1920).

Until then, the couple shared a house with relatives as they anticipated their future independence in light of the brewing of World War I in Europe. Two documented addresses where the couples resided as a family were 811 Dauphin Street, as noted on their son, Domenico Mevoli’s, birth certificate on December 17, 1913, and 317 Mt. Vernon Street, as noted on their son, Anthony Mevoli’s, birth certificate on February 21, 1920. By the early 1940’s Vito purchased three investment properties. One property adjoined his Chestnut Street house and two other properties were located on Sycamore Street recalled his daughter, Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate.

According to property records, on May 12, 1920, Vito and Filomena purchased their first house for $2,100.00, which was way below the average price of Camden houses in 1920. The Chestnut Street house was a maintenance man’s dream, perfect for Vito. The property deed traced the house history: This two story brick house with a six foot black wrought iron fence was built in 1891, and originally purchased by Mary Ann Boultinghouse, who then sold it in 1894 to Arthur and Lillie Herron who sold it to Vito and Filomena. Chestnut Street was the perfect location to raise five boys and three girls within the Italian-American community.
The couple conserved money to support a large family by refraining from purchasing commodities such as bread which according to dmarie.com cost $0.11 a loaf in 1920 and tomatoes. Instead, Vito built in his basement a brick oven five foot wide by four foot deep, enough for five medium pizzas, three Italian Easter Pies or Colomba as known by our family, or six loaves of bread at one baking session. Daily, Filomena mixed and kneaded mounds of flour, eggs, and yeast as she prepared dough for baking in the brick oven. While the home-made treats were cooking, they created the enticing aroma of an Italian bakery inside and outside the house. Vito slid his long wooden paddle under each loaf or pie that rested inside the fiery oven to remove them when they were fully cooked. Neighbors and friends couldn’t resist the temptation to visit and share in this feast. This brick oven saved approximately $40.15 per year if their family of ten ate one loaf of bread a day.

Vito also saved money by not purchasing an automobile. In 1919, the cost of an automobile was approximately $355, not including gasoline and maintenance. Since few family members and friends owned automobiles during the 1920s, car pooling became a common practice along with public transportation or walking.

Bobby De Ninno Vito’s grandson remembered when Vito worked in the Parkside section of Camden. Vito took the bus on Kaign Avenue to Bayard Avenue. Once Bobby got his license, he sometimes took his grandfather to work or home from work. Bobby also met Vito some mornings for breakfast in his little room in the basement of one of the complexes. Vito had a bed, stove, and refrigerator in this little room. Since Vito awoke so early to put coal in the houses and hot water, he sometimes made breakfast or took a nap once every apartment was warm and toasty. Bobby loved eating breakfast with his
grandfather because Vito made Bobby’s favorite food, “eggs, bread, and dried hot peppers on the side.”

Vito’s little red wagon with a long black handle transported his tools from apartment to apartment as he completed his repairs on the neighborhood homes or on his own home. Bobby De Ninno Vito’s grandson recalled that Vito built a kitchen with an adjoining bathroom in the house on Chestnut Street. He also built a dog house and shed combination. The shed was a big building with the bottom half containing an open door for the dog to sleep. On top of the dog’s house was a floor and a closed portion for his tools. Vito also built pigeon coops for his son, Frank’s pigeons.

First radio, then the automobile, then television influenced my maternal grandparents more than any other commodity. Even though Vito failed to be fully drawn into the commodity trap of the twentieth century, he did purchase some items such as the radio, movie theatre tickets, and a television.

Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate’s, Vito’s daughter’s, most impressive memory of her father was his 4:00-4:30 am kitchen table appointment with Mussolini and Winston Churchill during the 1930s to 1940s. With war brewing in Europe, Vito feasted on every earsplitting word vibrating through his head as he nourished his body with breakfast before work. The tiny black radio, resting on the white trimmed ledge conjoining the kitchen and dining room, announced daybreak to every sleeping soul in the household. All eight children knew their father was awake when Mussolini or Churchill’s voices echoed throughout the house in the early morning.

From Vito’s first TV, date unknown, until his death in 1972, cowboy and Indian shows replaced Mussolini and Churchill. “He sat on the sofa in the living room with his
arms folded and he was entranced by the action," said Vito’s granddaughter, Elena (Macina) Leming. Since Vito understood Italian better than English, cowboy and Indian movies entertained him more thoroughly because there was more action than communication. When company arrived, Vito found an appropriate break in the show and joined everyone for coffee and snacks in the kitchen or dining room. Vito also enjoyed watching cowboy and Indian shows at the movies. His grandson Bobby De Ninno was his movie companion. They went to one of three theatres in Camden; the Lyric, Princess or Roxie. For nine cents, Bobby enjoyed warm popcorn and his grandfather’s company.

Making wine was one of Vito’s specialties that he must have learned in Italy. Every guest enjoyed a special treat of Vito’s home-made wine. “Dad, Uncle Tony, and Uncle Charles squashed the grapes,” said another grandson, Canio Abate. Vito’s wine press was permanently secured in the concrete basement. The grapes were transferred through a clean coal chute. “Mounds of white and red grapes slid into the basement while sour flies swarmed all over them,” said Vito’s granddaughter, Elena (Macina) Leming.

Fruit flies, sour flies, Drosophila, appear out of nowhere to contaminate fruit by laying eggs on rotting produce. No one in the family knows for sure how Vito protected the wine from contamination, but everyone loved the results. “There were three barrels of wine labeled #1, #2, and #3. Barrel #1 was the best wine; it was the juice of the wine. Barrel #3 was not so good; it was from the presses. Each barrel contained a different quality of wine. I always went down to get the wine for company,” said Vito’s grandson, Marty De Ninno.

Every day, Vito sat at his special chair in the kitchen with his Rock-N-Rye bottle filled with homemade wine that he drank with his meals. “He drank his wine from a
small empty grape jelly glass,” said Vito’s granddaughter Catherine (Abate) Decker. “I never saw him drink more than one glass. He never got drunk.” Sometimes the wine put others to sleep, like Vito’s son-in-law, Fred Macina and Vito’s son, Frank Mevoli. “Grandpop laughed when my dad and Uncle Frank fell asleep after drinking a couple glasses of wine,” recalled Vito’s grandson, Frank Macina.

Vito also made anisette, a sweet anise-flavored drink, using 100% alcohol purchased from the drug store. Once he added a small amount of anisette flavoring to the 100% alcohol, Vito stored the liquid under the sink in the kitchen to ferment. “One time, he didn’t make the anisette yet and the bottle had 100% alcohol in it, I drank it and my throat was burning,” said grandson, Bobby De Ninno. “I drank water to get the burn out. I never told Grandpop.” Even though Prohibition in the United States banned the sale of alcohol, wine and hard cider were permitted to be brewed at home.

Vito and Filomena lived independent lives, yet they worked well together as a team preparing food for the family gatherings. Filomena cleaned, mixed and combined the ingredients of several Italian specialties. Vito transported the prepared food down the basement into the brick oven. Vito grew the tomatoes in his garden and Filomena canned them for spaghetti gravy. Vito strung the hot peppers in the basement and Filomena fried them. Vito grew white figs and hot and sweet peppers in the garden, and Filomena served them. Vito’s grandson, Frank Macina, recalled that Vito wrapped the fig tree with burlap every year. This tree, planted in Vito’s small city yard, yielded figs every year because of its protective covering throughout the winter season. Once the cold weather passed, Vito removed the burlap and allowed the fig tree to absorb the sun and warm weather needed to bear delicious fruit.
Vito was less outgoing than Filomena. He stayed at home while she socialized with her church friends and went visiting. The money he earned was for maintaining the house. Her money was for food. He enjoyed wine and she never drank it. He enjoyed his dogs, Chief, Fluffy, Beauty, and Barron, while she ignored them. He cared for the pigeons and enjoyed when his son Frank raced them; she anticipated cooking those pigeons who failed the flight test. He went to bed by 9 pm and awoke at 4 am. She went to bed after midnight and awoke at 7 am. His broken English consisted of more Italian words while her language included more English words. He worked outside the home seven days a week while she worked five days a week outside of the home. He loved the Wurlitzer player piano, whereas she loved cooking. Vito’s son, Nicholas Mevoli, recalled that one day his father came home with the Wurlitzer piano from Lit Brothers, but nobody played the piano. His daughter, Ann (Mevoli) Macina, purchased the piano music rolls that produced beautiful music that penetrated throughout the house even though no one touched the piano keys. Their lives combined in a unique fashion to build strong family unity among their children and their families.

Even though Vito was not the “huggy, kissy” type of grandfather, whenever anyone was in his presence, his love, generosity, kindness, and gentleness predominated. He was a man of few words and of those few words never a complaint was heard. His goals included working with his hands to provide for his family. While the family gathered around the huge dining room table, he rested contently listening to the variety of conversations and observing the activities. I often wonder if he every reminisced about Monopoli and the estate that he left behind. He never spoke to his family about his parents or life in Italy, but he reaped many blessings in America.
Vito grew so content with his life in America that he became naturalized on September 27, 1926. Perhaps America’s freedom and protection of human rights motivated him to pursue citizenship or maybe it was the family that he and Filomena created. Regardless of the reason, Vito knew that he was prepared to renounce his Italian citizenship and begin his American citizenship. The official document of the United States of America Certificate of Naturalization, number 2243451, described Vito as a five foot, six inch tall man with dark brown eyes and grey hair. The United States of America Declaration of Intention document stated that he was five feet four inches tall. This document was signed on November 22, 1921. Its purpose was for Vito to renounce his allegiance to Victor Emmanuel III, King of Italy, and declare his desire to become an American citizen. It also lists his eight children, Julia, sixteen years old, Anna, fourteen years old, Dominick, twelve years old, Frank, ten years old, Charles, eight years old, Anthony, seven years old, Nick, four years old, and Elizabeth, two years old.

It was signed by the Clerk of the Common Pleas Court, Charles F. Wise. At age forty-one, Vito began his citizenship in America. I wonder why he chose to become an American citizen at that time in life. Perhaps there were financial benefits to citizenship since it was shortly after the purchase of the Chestnut Street house that he stated his allegiance to America. Perhaps it was beneficial to his family. Whatever the reason, he lived as an American citizen for forty-six more years, more than half of his lifetime.

Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli’s Birth

In 1890, Southern Italy, within the heart of the La Croccia and Malerba mountains and the Gallipoli Cognato forest, Filomena Onorato was born on August 10. She was the
youngest of five children born to Giuliano Onorato and Ann (Ponzio) Onorato. Two children, Maria and Francesco, remained in Italy with their parents, while three children, Isabella, Nick, and Filomena, eventually immigrated to America according to daughter, Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate. Since Southern Italy was more impoverished than Northern Italy, their diets consisted of starches as opposed to meat. Cooking was an important aspect of survival and the Italian heritage and custom. Cooking from “scratch,” basic ingredients were a necessity for Filomena’s family because groceries were limited in this poor section of Italy.

**Coming To America**

I’m not sure why Giuliano Onorato and Anna (Ponzio) Onorato remained in Accettura, Italy while sending their fourteen-year old daughter on the *SS Celtic*, a 2,857 passenger ship, to America on March 19, 1906. I wonder if the illiteracy, cholera, poverty, malaria, earthquakes or landslides that predominated Italy at that time encouraged them to make that decision. Maybe it was the political unrest as well as the financial hardship that encouraged the family to send their youngest child into a better environment. Regardless of their motive, Filomena must have been frightened to travel alone with neither reading nor writing skills nor any proficiency in the English language. According to her daughter, Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate, upon her arrival in America, Filomena lived with her brother, Nick Onorato, who had arrived several years earlier. Since Nick and his family were content in America, Filomena’s parents must have been assured that he would properly care for his sister.
Marriage and Family

Filomena’s fifty years of marriage was focused upon doing what she knew best; cooking, cleaning, sewing, and gathering the family together for meals. According to her granddaughter, Catherine (Abate) Decker, some of her special meals included home-made raviolis, pasta and bread, angel wings (fried cake), Struffoli (tiny ball cookies wrapped in honey) and Colomba, which was traditionally baked for Easter dinner.

The concept surrounding the Colomba was related to the Catholic faith, Lent and fasting from meat on Fridays for 40 days prior to Easter. Lent, which is 40 days before Easter, but excluding Sundays, is a period of time when Roman Catholics abstain from certain foods to identify with Christ and His suffering. During the Easter celebration, it was customary for Sicilians and Southern Italians to celebrate the completion of this Lenten period with feasting on a rich, cheese and meat filled Easter pie (Vogel, p1).

As I recall, making the Colomba was always a family event. Filomena, her children, grandchildren, in-laws, and Vito worked for days preparing eight to ten Colomba pies. Everyone pitched in to help. The kids peeled the eggs or helped carry the pies down to the basement to Vito who placed them in his personal hand-made brick oven. The men helped transport the hot, golden brown pies from the basement into the dining room to cool while the women and children squeezed into the ten by twelve foot kitchen. Sometimes, one of the ladies put a hard boiled egg into a loaf made from the remaining Colomba dough, sent it down to the basement for brick oven baking. When the dough was cooked, it served as sweet bread for the children.
According to the traditional Sicilian recipe that their daughter Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate passed onto the family, two pies consisted of several expensive ingredients for poor families from Southern Italy:

- forty-eight eggs
- five pounds of sausage
- one basket of round unsalted fresh cheese
- three-fourths pound of Italian ham
- four pounds of ricotta cheese
- twelve cups of flour

Filomena and Vito worked hard throughout the year to provide such a feast at the time when Southern Italian Christians celebrate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Easter was one of the many holidays when family members of all ages gathered together at Filomena and Vito’s house on 303 Chestnut Street in Camden for fun and socialization, but it was not the only time the Mevoli family feasted. According to her grandson, Frank Macina, “the tradition of gathering everyone together at grandmom and grandpop’s house was great.”

Sunday was also a special time at Filomena and Vito’s house. Filomena was the matriarch who gathered the family together in the traditional Italian custom of eating, laughing, and talking. Her personal strength, endurance and culinary craft laid the foundation for a family who carried forth the traditions of her special recipes and customs. There appears to be no documentation pertaining to her citizenship in America, but I believe that she possessed all the qualities of an American citizen. Through her generosity and hospitality, Filomena combined her 1800s Italian customs with the 1900s
American resources. Filomena, as a young child in poverty stricken Southern Italy, learned from her mother, Anna (Ponzio) Onorato, to survive on pasta. These cooking lessons that Filomena received established the ground work for many Italian traditions to be carried forth when these immigrants moved to America. While living in America, Filomena was now able to purchase her groceries at the local market rather than rely on farming and gardening as the source of these goods.

As I recall, our family always ate some type of pasta; homemade, of course. Ravioli was the highlight of the day. Fresh dough was mixed, stretched, and kneaded by the forceful rhythm of Filomena’s arms and hands. Then, it was squeezed through the dough machine until its thickness was appropriate. Once the pasta passed Filomena’s evaluation, portions of a ricotta cheese mixture were placed by the teaspoons full onto the dough and covered by flipping over the excess dough and sealing the edges with the imprint lines from a kitchen fork. Once the raviolis were dropped into boiling water contained in a huge silver pot, the family waited in awe for them to float to the top. This indicated that the raviolis were cooked, and soon to be devoured by all the family and guests present for the feast.

Filomena loved to cook. If it took all night to prepare a meal, she never complained, but continued working until the food was fully prepared to be cooked in the brick oven. According to her granddaughter, Catherine (Abate) Decker, Filomena’s strength and endurance were commendable. She continued preparing family meals until she was seventy-six years old.

Filomena’s endurance was also evident in the fact that she worked most of her life in Moroshnick’s factory, recalled her daughter Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate. The factory
was located on Liberty Street, two blocks away from her house in Camden. Filomena came home every day for lunch at midday and prepared dinner for that evening. She labored over piece work. For every garment on which she sewed buttons, hooks, snaps, and other items, she received a ticket. Each day Filomena saved her tickets until they accumulated to a reasonable amount. Then, she exchanged the ticket for wages. When her grandson, Bobby De Ninno, was nine or ten years old, he helped Filomena count her tickets to trade in for money. She and Vito kept their money separate that they earned from their jobs. Vito paid for the house and its maintenance and Filomena purchased the food and clothing for their family.

According to her daughter Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate, Filomena purchased clothing from Moroshnick’s factory for her family and friends at a reasonable price. Filomena’s job provided the family with benefits beyond the weekly pay check such as providing stylish clothing for her children, Vito and herself. Perhaps this was an additional incentive for her to continue working while raising the children. Filomena also loved dressing fashionably when she participated in events sponsored by Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church or the Ladies Auxiliary. Her outfits always included a coordinating hat when she was participated in the Procession of the Saints, bus trips to New York City, or any other event. Working at Moroshnick’s provided Filomena with easy access to affordable and fashionable clothing to accommodate her desire to parade with her female companions.

After 1900, Camden City was the center for most Southern Italian and Sicilian immigrants in the region, and an Italian Catholic parish was established in 1903 to accommodate this influx of parishioners (Koedel, 1979, p4.). Later, the church’s name
was changed to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church from the original name, Italian Catholic Church (Chronology of Camden, p3.) It was built on Fourth and Division Streets. Father Michael Di Ielsi populated its congregation through his outreach to the Italian immigrants in the City of Camden. Filomena and Vito were married there on May 17, 1909. Filomena resided in the center of this immigration outreach and she regularly attended services as well as weddings, funerals, baptisms, and social events. Throughout her lifetime, she attended her children as well as many of her grandchildren’s’ wedding services at Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Her faith and devotion to her Italian Catholic parish was her tradition that was closely followed by her future generations. Once Filomena passed away and the family moved beyond the parameter of Camden, other churches replaced the tradition Italian Catholic parish that was the heart of Filomena’s neighborhood.

Filomena carried the value of her Italian family unity into America. Even though she lived miles away from her sister Maria Onorato and her brother Francesco Onorato, they communicated through letters. She sent money, home-grown oregano or commodities to her poor family in Italy. Since Filomena never learned to read or write, a friend interpreted all incoming letters from Filomena’s family as well as wrote outgoing letters back to her family. The letters revealed the vast economic division in the twentieth century between her family left in Italy and Filomena’s new family in America. As documented from one interpreted letter written on November 30, no indicated year, pertaining to Maria Onorato’s daughter Anna, the Italian relations were very poor.

*I feel I’m with my shoulders to the wall and to not be able to afford to buy her clothes and linens. If you have any*

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sheets, even used ones, please send them to me. Don’t forget me you are my only hope.

Signed by, your sorrowing sister, Maria Onorato

(fu giuliano).

In Italy, Filomena was accustomed to her family preparing meals from available items. Sometimes chicken served as the main course, although during financial crisis, they were a rarity. However, according to Filomena’s grandson, Canio Abate, in the mid 1900s, it was customary for the chicken man to deliver live chickens in crates in Camden. Filomena usually bought two or three chickens at a time from him. The first time Canio experienced this tradition, he was unaware of the chickens’ future destiny. He played with the chickens in the kitchen. The birds became his pets until, without any warning Filomena opened the crates, took the chickens out, slit their throats one-by-one and drained their blood in the sink. Then, she dropped them in a pot of hot water and pulled out their feathers. Canio was shocked that his pets were dead, but he enjoyed dinner that night anyway, which consisted of freshly killed and cooked chicken.

Filomena’s daughter Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate recalled that when she was a youngster, a special family treat occurred when Gomba Nick, a, close family friend, invited Filomena and her family to the Seven Sea’s Club in Wildwood, New Jersey. Whoever could fit in his 1931 Model “A” Ford Delux Rumble Seat stone-brown Roadster with Tacoma Cream pinstripes was spending the day at the South Jersey sea shore. Filomena was one of the first ones in line. She loved traveling and visiting friends and relatives regardless of location of their residence.
Even though she worked hard in Moroshnick’s factory and at home, Filomena’s leisure activities always included people. She loved to socialize whereas Vito loved to stay at home. Perhaps the social preferences between Vito and Filomena were due to their different working environments. Filomena worked side-by-side with other Americans whereas Vito worked alone. After dinner from the 1930s to her death in 1971, Filomena walked down Chestnut Street to house number 327 to visit her oldest daughter, Julia (Mevoli) De Ninno, and her family. In her later years, Filomena and her son, Anthony (Tony) Mevoli, became known as the “night riders” because they often visited friends and relatives after 10 pm. As I recall, it was very common for them to visit family members up to and beyond midnight. As soon as the tap, tap, tap of the keys was heard on the glass pane of the door, everyone inside knew it was the “night riders” coming for their usual late-night visit. Even though Filomena was socially ready for a visit, her body was usually tired by the time she was 70 years old and she usually fell asleep in the chair several times throughout the visit. Her grandchildren named her brief sleeping episodes “cat naps”.

I recall her favorite chair at our house was a large wing-backed chair with a firm cushion. From the 1960s until her death in 1971, she enjoyed staying with her daughter, Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate’s family for a day at a time. Our house was always filled with noise and commotion since it consisted of my three brothers, my sister, and me running around. She loved it. Perhaps it reminded Filomena of the hustle and bustle of her younger years when her children were growing and all family gatherings and dinners took place at her house.
When her grandchildren were old enough to help her clean, Filomena enjoyed watching them work around the house. The routine was similar with each generation. Filomena sat in a chair with her arms folded and directed the cleaning process. Conversations were scarce throughout the cleaning days, but the grandchildren enjoyed her company.

Since the family lived in the city of Camden, small family owned mom-and-pop stores were strategically located in the neighborhoods to provide easy access to groceries for each resident. At noon, she sent the grandchildren to the Greek Market or Johnny’s store for lunch items. One grandchild, Canio Abate, remembered Filomena making the best pepper and egg sandwiches. The aroma penetrated the house as he anticipated the feast. “Nothing was as good as Grandmom’s cooking and peppers and eggs,” he recalled. Her grandson, Frank Macina said, “Grandmom’s asparagus soup with whole eggs dropped in was the best.” Regardless of the lunch, Filomena’s special meals pleased every taste bud.

Elaine (Macina) Leming, another grandchild, remembered scrubbing the kitchen floor. Filomena instructed Elaine to scrub in a circular motion: “No, no, you do this way. You do around and around.” After the floor was clean, newspaper was placed on the linoleum to keep it scuff free for a brief period of time. Then, the dusting began with special care for her son, Tony’s “knica-knacks” as Filomena referred to them. Since Tony lived with Vito and Filomena throughout their lifetime, he displayed his collection of antiques on the shelves separating the two living rooms.

The highlight of the cleaning process was scrubbing the marble steps in the front of the house. Perhaps those steps represented a trophy of honor for Filomena because the steps functioned as a general meeting place for her and Vito’s friends. According to her
grandson, Bobby De Ninno, Vito and his friend from Italy, Steph, or Vito’s cousin from the Merchant Marines, congregated there and spoke Italian, but they never drank wine outside. Several photographs of Filomena and her friends preparing for their outings were taken by the marble steps so the stone needed to sparkle. Each week her grandchildren scrubbed the marble with Bon Ami powder, a pumice stone and a bucket of warm water.

Filomena’s special hobby was playing the numbers using some of her earnings from Moroshnick’s factory. According to granddaughter, Elaine (Macina) Leming, each Saturday, when she came to clean the house, she watched Filomena sit on the mahogany telephone chair and dial 0 for operator on the heavy black metal phone. She spoke in broken English, “Operator. I no know how to do this, you dial for me?” Then Filomena gave the operator the bookie’s phone number. Once connected, she rattled off in broken English a string of numbers. Afterward, she resumed watching her granddaughter clean. I’m not sure how often she won, but Filomena regularly placed her bets each Saturday while her grandchildren cleaned the house.

Arrivadercci America

I remember Filomena’s last minutes on earth as ones that demonstrated her compassion and consideration of other’s needs, as she had done all her life. On April 10, 1971, several family members were visiting her in Cooper Hospital in Camden. I saw the weakness in her eyes when she said in broken English, “Leava me alona, a fewa minuets.” After we left the room, Filomena expired.

According to the death certificate, the cause of Filomena’s death was cerebrovascular accident (stroke) complicated by cardiac decompensation. Alone in her
hospital bed, the combination of stroke and a deteriorating heart took her last breath away. Filomena accomplished her goal of serving the needs of others not only in her life, but also in her death. I believe she did not want her family to watch her die because she knew that watching her die would be a difficult burden to bear. Filomena’s life and death were characterized by doing what is best for others. Maturing from a young teenager into a family matriarch without the guidance and support of parents was a major challenge that Filomena successfully mastered.

Even though Vito had no intention of leaving America, he knew that since he was mortal, his life would end some day. One year and twenty-five days after Filomena’s death, Vito died. His cause of death, according to the death certificate was “carcinoma of prostate with metastasis to bones of spine; anemia; atherosclerotic heart disease; failure; uremia due to nephrosclerosis.”

At eighty-seven years old, Vito accomplished his goal: to live in America and work diligently, utilizing his skills to sustain his family financially. By the 1950s, Vito became the proud owner of four Camden properties as well as the patriarch to eight children, eighteen grandchildren, and numerous other extended family members. Restoring lost wealth in Italy and successfully supporting a large family was a major accomplishment for Italian immigrants such as Vito, especially during the twentieth century when commodities abundantly multiplied and the economy fluctuated.

The family mourned the loss of Vito and Filomena; yet, their lives continue through their descendants, genetically as well as through memories such as those recorded in this thesis. Vito and Filomena were buried together in the New St. Mary Cemetery in Bellmawr, New Jersey. Their gravestone contains an ornate metal photo.
frame displaying their smiling faces as a token of their satisfaction and accomplishment of a job well done in mastering the American life style.

Both Vito and Filomena began their immigration to America under unique circumstances. Vito was forced to flee to survive from an assassination plot that threatened his life in Monopoli, Italy. Filomena was forced to flee to survive from Accettura’s widespread poverty in southern Italy that threatened her life. Perhaps their goals of creating a better life in America and surviving against life’s trials unified them. Together, they accomplished a better life than the fate that awaited them if they stayed in Italy. Not only did they lead active lives into their eightieth years, but they left memories and traditions behind for their family to treasure.

Vito and Filomena’s economic status in Italy contrasted their abundant riches in America which consisted of a home and a unified family. The economic background also varied of the 1,000,000 immigrants who entered America each year from 1905-1917; yet, each one added a stroke of color to the painting of the American life during this era. In the 1960s, President John F. Kennedy summed up the immigrants’ contribution to America’s artistic nature when he stated,

\[ \textit{Everywhere immigrants have enriched and strengthened the fabric of American life.} \]

This truth is evident through the lives of Vito Antonio Mevoli and Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli, my maternal grandparents.
CHAPTER FOUR
America's Melting Pot

The struggles and successes of families in America are as unique as each individual. The choices that each family member makes are dependent on a variety of variables. Chapter Four explores the character traits, strengths, and survival instincts of my paternal grandparents, Dominick Abate and Catherine (Lorusso) Abate. The data collected from the interviews and the documentation gathered were more obscure than the information gathered for my maternal grandparents. There were fewer eyewitnesses and fewer preserved documents, which provide a significant challenge for an oral historian. This chapter demonstrates that an oral history project can succeed regardless of the quantity of resources.

Dominick Abate’s Birth

According to U.S. Naturalization papers and the baptismal certificate of Joseph Marelli, Dominick’s step-brother, in southern Italy, in the Comune of Ferrandina, Dominick (Abbate) Abate was born to Leonarde (More) Abbate and father unknown. The spelling of Dominick’s last name changed from the Italian version of Abbate to the

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2 The information in this thesis consists of family member interviews and research data that were gathered from Ellis Island passenger arrival archives online at ellisisland.org, Society. Cultural records have been cross checked with the Gloucester County Historical Society and Camden County Historical Society, and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel / Fatima Church documents as well as documentation from various websites listed in the reference portion of this thesis. This information is subject to my personal interpretation. Original source documents such as birth certificates, death certificates, marriage certificates, estate notices, Census records, Certificate of Naturalization, and Petition for Naturalization were contributed by family members.
American version Abate. There was no available documentation indicating how and why the name changed; however it was common practice at Ellis Island to Americanize immigrants’ names. Documents that were gathered failed to reveal the identity of Dominick’s father and the circumstances of his residence. Dominick’s United States Of America Petition for Naturalization verifies his birth on May 15, 1891, in the Basento River Valley surrounded by both the Appennino Lucano mountain range and the Pollino mountain range. His rugged beginnings set the stage for his survival instincts and his endurance that prevailed throughout his nine years in Italy and sixty-one years in America.

**Coming To America**

According to Dominick Abate’s United States of America Petition for Naturalization, he immigrated to America on March 7, 1899, from Naples, but the young man could not remember the name of the ship. Ellis Island records failed to produce documentation verifying this information. Dominick’s daughter, Ellen Abate, remembered a long ago conversation with Dominick where he stated that he was a young boy when he arrived in America. Dominick must have arrived in America with his mother, Leonarde (More) Abbate, since he was under age and unable to travel alone. Somehow and somewhere in Italy, Leonarde met and married Vincent Morelli, shoemaker, according to the Certificate of Baptism and Birth Certificate of Joseph Morelli, Dominick’s step-brother. Dominick lived with his new Morelli family in America. According to Dominick’s son, Canio Abate, the Morelli family loved and
treated Dominick no differently than any other family member. Dominick’s common nickname in the town of Camden, New Jersey was Morelli.

Shortly after Dominick’s immigration into America, Joseph, a step-brother, was born in Camden, March 20, 1900, the son of Leonarde and Vincent Morelli. At the time of Joseph’s birth, Leonarde was thirty-five years-old, which would have made her twenty-six years-old when Dominick was born. There is no available documentation confirming the natural birth or adoption of Dominick to Leonarde (More) Abbate. Joseph Morelli’s birth certificate states that there were four children in this marriage, but only three living. Documentation confirming the sibling’s whereabouts is unavailable. Joseph Morelli’s daughter, Pauline (Morelli) Sassi, has no recollection of an additional sibling of her father, Joseph. According to Dominick’s son, Canio Abate, he also remembers Dominick’s step-brother, Joseph Morelli, but did not recall any other siblings.

As a nine-year old, in 1899 migrating into America from Italy was a difficult transition for Dominick. He left his friends and familiar culture during the formative stage of life that focuses on the importance of peers. Coming to America, Dominick entered an unknown and unfamiliar environment, language and relationships. According to his son, Canio Abate, Dominick’s education ended in third grade, yet, “he was a very intelligent man.” In light of Canio’s recollection, Dominick was only educated in Italy, which means that the young boy may not have spoken English at the time of his arrival in America. This language barrier when combined with the need for peer acceptance presented Dominick with a serious challenge in his new homeland. Survival in the midst of an urban community, Camden, where ethnic gang affiliation predominated, required that youngsters demonstrate strength, ingenuity, and leadership ability in order to survive
peer pressure. Also, I assume that since his natural father did not come to America with him, he may have died in Italy.

The circumstances surrounding Dominick’s father’s death or disappearance must have influenced Leonarde (More) Abbate enough to not change Dominick’s name to her new married name, Morelli. No documents have been found to validate this theory other than Joseph Morelli’s birth certificate, which specifies Morelli as Vincent, Leonarde, and Joseph’s last name.

The disappearance of Dominick’s father was the first recorded tragedy in this young man’s life. Two other tragic events affected his emotional development after Dominick’s immigration to America. They were the premature death of his mother, Leonarde, and his wife, Catherine, which all occurred before Dominick’s 55th birthday.

As a young child coming to America without fluent English and perhaps confused about his father’s disappearance, Dominick, as any other nine-year old, tried to fit into the new American culture. For children the highlight of the era of the 1900s was street craps, a dice game where players place wagers against the outcome of dice rolls. Since Dominick’s life in Camden, New Jersey, consisted of gambling as a means for obtaining instant wealth, he must have developed this addiction during his youth on Camden’s streets.

Dominick learned to survive in America under the direction of wonderful parents while he battled with the enticement of wealth gambling brings. “Gambling causes excitement, often leading the participant to forget about the problems and the stresses of everyday life.... designed to transport players beyond the realm of rational decisions.”

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(Bechtold, p2). According to Dominick's daughter Ellen Abate, "his goal was to hit the numbers and hit it big."

As Dominick matured, he also developed into a hard working Italian American. His occupations as both a bartender and barber provided him with a steady income and gambling either added to or subtracted from it.

**Marriage and Family**

Perhaps it was from the window of his barber shop at 312 Pine Street, Camden, that he fell in love with Catherine (Lorusso) Abate's natural beauty. Their story began when her baby-blue eyes, petite features, and confident stride fluttered past the window of the barber shop while a glimmer of sunlight captured her radiance.

Dominick was frozen with awe, recalled his niece, Rita (Del Rossi) Chudzinski. What beauty! What charm! World War I had begun in America, but peace burst forth in his heart. He leaped out his barbershop door and into Catherine's life. I wonder if Dominick put aside his past sorrow and knew from that moment that Catherine would be his bride. This day was the beginning of Dominick's true freedom in America. Since his mother's death, he now was free to love again and raise children who would carry forth his family traditions and his heritage.

According to their marriage certificate, Dominick and Catherine were married at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church on February 12, 1917, by Rev. Di Masi with James Paradiso and Josephine Moffa as witnesses. Dominick, twenty-six years old, married Catherine when she was twenty years old. They raised eight children; Joseph, Canio,
Vincent, Anthony, Leonard, Dominick, Rosemarie (Rosary), and Ellen. Their marriage began in the midst of World War I, 1917, and ended in the midst of WWII, 1944.

In their wedding photograph, Dominick had thick wavy black hair and thick eyebrows, and he maintained a serious expression on his face. He wore a black tuxedo with a white bowtie and carnation attached to the lapel on the left side. Over time, these features changed throughout Dominick's life. His face reflected his endless struggle to provide for his family and to deal with the hidden pain of the loss of three loves in his life; his father, mother, and wife. Dominick grew a mustache and lost most of his hair, but inside his soul, he remained the hard working and honest businessman who immigrated to America as a nine-year old.

Dominick worked and moved in different locations throughout the city of Camden during his twenty-seven years of marriage to Catherine. According to Boyd's Directory of 1920, in the first documented record of their rental house, they resided at 312 Pine Street. Then, the 1924 Polk Directory listing states, in 1924, they rented a house at 328 Beckett Street, until 1940. From 1940-1944, when Catherine died, their new and last rental address was 303 South 3rd Street.

Each of these moves represented Dominick's financial struggle to survive in America. According to his son, Canio Abate, the family usually moved because they could no longer afford the current rent. By 1934, Dominick earned fifteen dollars a week and by gambling strived to make it thirty. Catherine’s persuasive methods failed to break his gambling logic, as Dominick responded with, “We need the money. I wanna win some money.”
“He never got in trouble with people because of gambling,” recalled his son, Canio Abate. Even though Dominick was desperate for money and the Italian Mafia lived a few houses away from his barber shop, he treated them like they were average paying customers and friends. Dominick never participated in any other methods of obtaining money other than hard work and gambling. He talked to his Mafia neighbors when they got their hair cut and waved to them as they passed by. He was friendly to everyone and he always made an effort to protect his children and make their lives different from his own.

Dominick loved politics, especially around 1934 when he was active as the Vice President of the Liquor and Beverage Association. His political business existed outside of the barber shop and his house. “His speeches were amazing for a man whose education ended in third grade,” said his son, Canio Abate. After dinner, Dominick met with his friends on the corner to discuss whatever issues were brewing for the day, recalled his niece, Rosemarie (Del Rossi) Wdzieczkowski.

Dominick believed he was responsible for earning money and supporting the family. His wife was responsible for taking care of the house and children. Catherine’s two sisters’ Margaret and Lena helped her with the housework and child care, recalled his niece, Rosemarie (Del Rossi) Wdzieczkowski. Most of Dominick’s days consisted of working in the barber shop, bar, or out on political business. His hours at home were scarce. Because of his outgoing personality, he learned to speak English fluently enough to become an American citizen.

On October 2, 1923, after completing the United States of America Petition for Naturalization, Dominick Abate was accepted as a United States Citizen, certificate 82.
number 1866487. Three children are listed on the document, Joseph, born May 6, 1918, Canio, born March 2, 1920 and Vincent born August 26, 1921. Dominick must have learned to read and write English fluently between the years 1920-1923, as the Fourteenth Census of the United States 1920-Population records him as illiterate. I assume that some of his knowledge developed from Catherine, who indicated on the same census, that she was literate. Dominick’s signature on the petition is clear and legible which validates his knowledge.

Dominick always dressed neatly and professionally. In the barber shop he wore a white t-shirt with a cardigan sweater and suspenders recalled, his granddaughter, Catherine (Abate) Decker. When he went out, he always dressed up. After Catherine’s death, Dominick married Jenny (DeVaro) Abate and his attire changed from t-shirts and suspenders to suits, recalled his niece, Pauline (Morelli) Sassi.

When he cut his customer’s hair, I remember a natural peace permeating his presence. Smoking cigars in the barber shop and house was a common practice, recalled his granddaughter, Catherine (Abate) Decker. His occupation was not work but a hobby to him. During the twentieth century, barber shops were social gathering places for men to discuss politics, personal developments, and the economy amongst the comfort of friends. Dominick enjoyed the companionship and the emotional escapes of listening to others chatter about their challenges and their various pathways in life. “All his customers liked him, they thought he was a charmer,” said his daughter, Ellen Abate.

If his customers felt sick and needed a haircut, Dominick made house calls. His daughter, Ellen Abate believed that the barber shop was the best thing for him because he was happy there. Sometimes Gomba Guss, a close family friend, and Dominick sang in
the shop. I agree with his daughter, Ellen’s belief that Dominick was happy in his barber shop, but I also believe that the reason for his contentment there was because the shop served as his personal therapist, according to today’s terminology.

During Dominick’s lifetime few individuals dealt with emotional losses. They rarely pursued counseling as an option. It was more common to ignore the pain and sorrow like Dominick did with the hope that it would disappear. It was not until the 1960s that family therapy emerged as an option for handling grief. Dominick’s loss of loved ones combined with his continual financial struggles and health issues formed a core of suffering within this gregarious, self-confident Italian-American.

According to his daughter, Ellen Abate, sometimes when he became nervous or emotional, Dominick’s hands shook and he stopped cutting hair for fear that he would cut someone. In retrospect, perhaps he suffered from Parkinson’s disease. Some of the symptoms are tremors in extremities (Parkinson’s disease, p2). Two factors causing Parkinson’s disease that I believe Dominick possessed were age and exposure to environmental toxins, which may have been responsible for his cardiovascular disease as well other medical problems passed onto his progeny.

In Ferrandina, the region of Basilicata where Dominick lived for nine years, the extraction of methane was the predominant industry. According to the article, Weight of the Evidence or Wait for the Evidence? Protecting Underground Miners From Diesel Particulate Matter, exposure to methane gas is directly related to cardiovascular and cardiopulmonary disease as well as many other health risks. Perhaps these environmental toxins seeped into the water, food supply, and air and may have been responsible for
Dominick’s tremors. Even though these undiagnosed medical conditions lay unnoticed by others, I’m sure that they influenced Dominick’s life choices.

Once Catherine died in 1944, Dominick married Jenny (DeVaro) and they moved to 22 South Main Street, Medford, New Jersey, according to his daughter, Ellen Abate. “She was a good cook.” Her son, Morris De Varo (known as Larry) grew close to Dominick’s daughters, Ellen Abate 5 and her sister Rosary (Abate) Meyers 9 years old at the time. Jenny and Larry were kind to the girls. Jenny worked at the Campbell Soup Company in Camden, but she always made sure the girls and the house were clean and that everyone was well fed. Jenny’s fashionable dress with a fox wrapped loosely around her neck was in style during the 1950s. Larry was the only family member to carry on the traditional barber occupation. Years later, he followed Dominick’s footsteps in the same shop on Main Street in Medford, New Jersey.

Driving from Camden to Medford was approximately a 24 mile trip but, it was quite an adventure for Dominick’s grandchildren. “It was like traveling to another state,” grandson Canio Abate recalled. The windows of cars in the 1950s rolled down to the bottom of the frame allowing the cool breeze to whip our hair around as the grandchildren smelled the country: farms, hay and grass. The family ate Sunday dinner in the dining room with Dominick sitting upright in his chair at the head of the table and solemn conversations projecting from his deep voice. The grandchildren listened and ate until everyone had their fill, then they were free to play upstairs or outside in the huge yard with Curry, Dominick and Jenny’s greyhound dog, or play near the firehouse next door. “After dinner, Dominick sat in the chair and smoked a cigar,” recalled his grandson, Canio Abate. One of the favorite memories that both his grandchildren Canio Abate and
Catherine (Abate) Decker recalled was when Dominick’s daughter, Ellen Abate, took them down the street to the movie theatre after dinner. Ellen recalled that the theatre had an old tin roof that played a melody in the rain and also distracted the audience from the sound effects of the show.

Dominick was a good cook. He made macaroni on Sunday. He frequently loved experimenting with different ingredients. Once, he put cloves in the spaghetti sauce (gravy as Italians call it). He also made delicious roast beef soup. “One day, he put meat outside in a new trash can to keep it cold and the dogs ate it. That was the end of the soup that day,” said his daughter Ellen Abate. Greens were also a familiar addition to every meal. Sometimes it was dandelions or broccoli rabe, but Dominick made sure that green vegetables were part of every feast.

Dominick must have believed in the old philosophy that *children are to be seen and not heard*, because his words were scarce with his grandchildren. His countenance was one of sternness and distance; yet, I remember the warmness in his eyes. It was almost as if he longed to express the love in his heart, but he wouldn’t allow himself that luxury since he had previously loved and lost his father, mother and wife. There was also sorrow burrowed behind his hidden warmth. His grandchildren recall that there was rarely any joking or laughing in his presence, a feeling of seriousness and coldness predominated. After much reflection of Dominick’s life, perhaps the pain of losing three loved ones at a young age may have affected his ability to express love toward others. Also, perhaps the undiagnosed medical problems may have stolen away some of his joy. Regardless of the reason, Dominick’s life in America was more sorrowful than the lives...
of my maternal grandparents, but he accomplished his goal to survive through whatever circumstances arose.

**Catherine (Lorusso) Abate’s Birth**

The story of Catherine’s birth has not been documented. There are two versions that provide insight into the matter. According to her niece, Rita (Del Rossi) Chudzinski, Catherine’s parents were not able to afford to support her and were going to put her up for adoption when Canio (Harry as he was sometimes called) Lorusso and Rosemarie (Mecca) Lorusso offered to adopt her.

A second scenario was recalled by her daughter, Ellen Abate. Rosemarie (Mecca) Lorusso had a baby that died at birth. Canio and Rosemarie had a friend that worked at West Jersey Hospital who was aware that a child was orphaned by two parents who were killed. Once Canio and Rosemarie saw the child, Ellen (birth name), they immediately fell in love with her. Once adopted, they changed her name from Ellen to Catherine.

According to the 1910 Census, Canio and Rosemarie raised seven children, Joseph, age 22, William, age 19, Katherine, (misspelled) age 13, Angelana, age 11, Antonia, age 9, Margaritta, age 7, and Dominick, age 2.

Regardless of the circumstances surrounding her birth, Catherine became a member of the Lorusso family. They loved her as if she was their natural kin. According to her niece, Rosemarie (Del Rossi) Wdzieczkowski, they never talked about Catherine’s adoption because she was accepted and loved no differently than any other family member. According to Dominick Abate’s Petition for Naturalization, Catherine was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on March 23, 1898. Canio Lorusso’s estate document from
June 9, 1947, lists two orphanages besides additional beneficiaries, the St. Michael’s Orphanage and St. Mary’s Orphan Asylum. I am awaiting search results from St. Mary’s, since this is an all female orphanage; St. Michael’s is an all male orphanage. I assume that Catherine (Abate) Lorusso may have been adopted from this orphanage.

In 1901, Catherine’s parents owned a grocery store, on 719 South 8th Street in Philadelphia, according to the Gopsill’s Philadelphia City Directory for 1901. She became friends with Ethel Waters, a Christian and secular singer, according to daughter, Ellen Abate. Perhaps their friendship began in a Philadelphia Catholic school or at a Methodist revival where Ethel’s life was changed by Jesus Christ (Hickey, 2005). This friendship must have developed between 1905, when Ethel was enrolled in Catholic school, and 1907, when Catherine and her family opened a grocery store on 319 Stevens Street in Camden, New Jersey. With Catherine’s kind and compassionate spirit, perhaps she was one of the friends who were patient and loving to Ethel. Ethel stated that her “hatred and defiance were met with love, her badness and meanness with patience” with regard to her brief education in Catholic school (Hickey, 2005). Since both Ethel and Catherine remained friends beyond their childhood years, I assume that Ethel’s statement may have described her relationship with Catherine.

Marriage and Family

In her wedding photo, Catherine’s beautifully round face is accentuated by a braided band across her forehead with a long veil attached to the back of the band. Her modest white laced gown beheld a long trail. On Catherine’s lap rested bouquets of greens amidst scattered flowers. Her five bridesmaids and flower girl embraced matching
bouquets. Catherine’s smiling face accentuated her round face and high cheekbones and contrasted the bridal party’s serious expressions. Her eyes portray her radiance and inner beauty.

Canio Abate, Catherine’s son, recalled that “everyone loved my mother.” Catherine stood five feet tall with long light brown hair that she styled into a long braid then twisted it into a knot behind her head. “She had a little curl down the front of her face,” remembered Catherine’s niece, Rita (Del Rossi) Chudzinski. Her normal attire consisted of long house dresses and a natural look. She never wore makeup. According to her niece, Rita (Del Rossi) Chudzinski, Catherine spoke and read English and Italian, which she learned from her parents, Canio Lorusso and Rosemare (Mecca) Lorusso.

Cooking was one of her specialties. According to her son, Canio Abate, Sunday was pasta day and Monday was soup day. Catherine’s niece, Pauline (Morrelli) Sassi, loved watching Catherine make home-made pasta with a kata, a rod with wires running across it. Catherine laid the dough on the wires and pushed dough through until the wires cut it into strips and pasta dropped onto the table. The pasta dropped into a large pot filled with boiling water until cooked to perfection. Then, Catherine’s famous homemade gravy from fresh crushed tomatoes added the finishing touch to this Sunday dinner.

Catherine’s soup making routine was a special treat for neighbors and friends. Her son, Canio Abate recalled that every Monday the aroma of some variety of soup sent a message to neighbors and friends to stop at Katie’s (Catherine’s nick-name) house with their pots for a taste of the weekly treat. Soup, salad, and bread were a meal those days. Sometimes, Catherine placed a huge piece of meat in her 16 quart pot to flavor the soup,
then, she scooped it out before dropping the vegetables in. The beef was cut in small pieces and marinated in red wine and olive oil, then placed on top of the salad.

On soup night, her niece, Rosemarie (Del Rossi) Wdzieczkowski, said that Katie shrieked loudly, “Come on, the soup’s on the table.” Everyone came to the kitchen for dinner. Katie teased her niece Rita (Del Rossi) Chudzinski by saying, “You gonna have dinner with us? I gota soup today. I can’t afford steak like your family.” Rita loved Katie’s soup as well as all her cooking.

There was no formal table setting at Catherine’s house. The huge pot was secured in the middle of the long wooden table with two coordinating wooden benches.

Even though her family struggled to provide food for the eight children, Katie’s generosity with soup was well known throughout the neighborhood. On soup day, neighbors and friends arrived with an empty pot and left with a filled one. “With eight kids, you stay in the kitchen,” said Katie’s niece, Pauline (Morelli) Sassi. Pauline loved to watch Katie cook and between her meal preparations, she nursed her youngest daughter, Ellen Abate.

Catherine’s children were the most important part of her life. Her niece Rita (Del Rossi) Chudzinski recalled that Katie corrected her children saying, “You’re gonna make your father mad.” Rita also classified her as an “ideal mother.” Her son, Canio Abate, recalled her discipline as a gentle taps with the words, “I give you love tap, your father will hit you harder.” Usually the children obeyed to her.

Catherine’s loving nature toward her children was clearly illustrated by her youngest daughter, Ellen Abate, who only spent the first five years of her life with her mother before Catherine’s death in 1944. Catherine often held Rosary (Abate) Meyers
and Ellen Abate in front of the opened oven door to keep them warm since there was no heat in the house. Along with the warmth from the gas stove was the comforting sound of Catherine’s soft voice narrating stories as she hugged and snuggled the children close to her body. Her gentleness also comforted them during financial difficulty during World War II when commodities were scarce and five of her six sons were soldiers.

One of Ellen Abate’s favorite memories was when Catherine slid the towel back and forth over the child’s hair after a warm bath and said, “zegga, zegga, Lumma Lena.” When she was small, Ellen’s bathtub was the kitchen sink. Ellen said, “She had a warm way about her, a warm hug.” Catherine’s warmness and love comforted Ellen when they lay together in bed during the months when Catherine was too sick to leave the bedroom.

Ellen Abate was the only child born in the hospital. The others were born at home with the help of a midwife. Since Catherine always wore house dresses, it was difficult to know when she was pregnant. Ellen recalled her brother, Joseph Abate’s story when he said that he didn’t know where his mother was going on June 21, 1939. She was dressed and was leaving the house when Joe asked his mother where she was going. Her answer surprised Joseph when she told him that she was going to the hospital to have a baby. Even though Joseph was in his early twenties, he was unaware of his mother’s pregnancy. Her house dresses hid her pregnancy well.

Catherine loved music especially when played on the piano. She played hymns as well as Italian songs. Her son Canio Abate imitated her when he sat by her side and played one finger at a time. He couldn’t keep up with the graceful flutter of Catherine’s fingers dancing across the keys. When they lived on Beckett Street, she played as her children sang. Her son, Canio, recalled that several times neighbors stopped at the
window to listen to the family sing-a-long. In 1940, their sing-a-longs ended when the piano remained at the house on Beckett Street because the family moved to 3rd Street and this new house could not accommodate a piano.

Since Catherine had eight children, most of the holidays were at her house. Her son, Canio Abate remembered having fun during these gatherings. Sometimes there were birthday parties at the Lorusso’s house. Regardless of where they celebrated, when the family gathered there was always food and laughter. One of Catherine’s goals was to teach her children to cook, even the boys. Catherine told her son, Canio, “See what I do because someday you may get a woman who doesn’t know how to cook.”

Catherine also encouraged her children to speak Italian. Her son, Canio Abate, recalled her speaking to him and his brothers in Italian instead of English. She simplified their learning by combining English sentences with a few Italian words. The last words Canio ever heard from his mother came when he enlisted in the United States Air Force during World War II. *Attento essere*, interpreted *be careful*, as she surrendered her son to fight for America. Even though Catherine’s heart was filled with sorrow and her eyes were flooded with tears, she was proud that her son was an American soldier. The last photograph taken of her husband, Dominick and son Canio, is a special heirloom to Canio because it represents his last moments spent with his mother. She died while he was battling over seas. The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor had uprooted many young men from the security of their homes and families and had broken many mothers’ hearts.

Shortly after Catherine’s son Canio Abate enlisted, her four other sons left her household. Joseph Abate, Vincent Abate, and Anthony Abate joined the United States Army, and Leonard Abate joined the United States Coast Guard. Five sons were uprooted
from her life within months after Pearl Harbor was attacked. Her faith in God was tested each time she read the newspaper headlines such as *Our War Casualties Reach 105,205 Total; 20,104 Dead, 32,905 Missing are listed by Army and Navy* (New York Times, 1943, p6). Since Joseph and Canio were the only two of her boys to battle overseas, she must have continually wondered if they would be included in the casualty count recorded in the newspaper.

By the beginning of 1944, I believe the severe emotional stress of reading the news headlines, listening to neighborhood war discussions combined with her motherly protective instinct and feeling of helplessness to protect her sons at war and daughters at home drained her physically and emotionally. I’m not sure how she was diagnosed with tuberculosis but it must have been tuberculosis infection and not the disease, since she was not quarantined. Tuberculosis was a very common disease for the urban poor in America during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It was an epidemic in most European countries, usually from spitting. Catherine may have been exposed to tuberculosis years before and lived with the infection until later in life. According to the website *What is the Difference Between Tuberculosis Disease and Tuberculosis Infection?* by pharmaceutical manager Stacey Lloyd, a patient with tuberculosis infection does not know he or she is sick and is not contagious to others (Lloyd, 3/26/06). No other family member died from this illness beside Catherine and her brother Tony Lorusso who died several years before Catherine, according to her niece, Rosemarie (Del Rossi) Wdzieczkowski.
Arrivadercci, America

Catherine never stopped cooking during her illness. Her two younger sisters, Margaret (Lorusso) Del Rossi and Lena (Lorusso) Romano, helped her clean, iron, cook, and care for the girls when Catherine was sick. Margaret and Lena made sure that all was well in the household and that Catherine was tucked into bed for the night before they left. Tuberculosis was incurable in the 1940s when Catherine was diagnosed with this disease. It was not until 1947 that a shot was available in England, but it wasn’t until the 1950s that medical treatment results were successful in America (Garg, 2004).

According to Catherine’s niece, Rosemarie (Del Rossi) Wdzieczkowski, to receive treatment at Lakeland Hospital free of charge, patients were required in 1944 to reside in a specific section of Camden. Since Catherine’s sister Margaret (Lorusso) Del Rossi lived on Van Hook Street, well within the designated section of the city, Catherine resided with Margaret for two weeks before her admission into the Lakeland Hospital.

Since Rosemarie (Del Rossi) Wdzieczkowski lived with her mother Margaret (Lorusso) Del Rossi, and Catherine, she remembered that even though Catherine was sick, she always laughed. Catherine’s two daughters, Ellen Abate and Rosary (Abate) Meyers, lived with Catherine’s other sister Lena (Lorusso) Romano during this time. Rosemarie’s most memorable time was when she and Catherine sat on the rocking chairs on the back porch and admired the variety of flowers in the garden. Catherine’s favorite flower collection was the blue flags. They are a specific variety of iris. Their blue/violet color is highlighted with white and yellow contrasting splashes. Catherine rested with Margaret and her family for two weeks before being admitted into Lakeland Hospital. The medical treatment she received failed to save her body from the infection that
captured it. Catherine died on April 8, 1944. However her two oldest sons, Joseph Abate and Canio Abate, were overseas at the time of her death. They were not notified of this tragedy until their arrival home to America several months later.

Catherine’s life was short yet powerful. The legacy she left behind is one of love and honor. The compassionate and family-oriented lifestyle that she modeled was passed on to her family throughout many generations. Her ingenuity in preparing meals utilizing limited funds has passed along a tradition of an enjoyment of cooking. She was an angel of love and compassion according to those who knew her.

Even though her death certificate has not been located, both nieces, Rita (Del Rossi) Chudzinski and Rosemarie (Del Rossi) Wdzieczkowski, confirmed that their Aunt Katie’s cause of death was tuberculosis. Her uncle Tony Mecca was the funeral director and embalmer who prepared her body for a viewing in Catherine and Dominick’s living room at 303 South 3rd Street in Camden, New Jersey, before her burial in the New Camden Cemetery on Ferry Street and Mt. Ephraim Avenue in Camden.

Dominick lived seventeen years longer than Catherine. Two months after his seventieth birthday, on July 31, 1961, Dominick died from a “right Hemiplegia, paralysis, due to previous episodes of CVA, stroke.” (Pennsylvania Department of Health, Death Certificate) He had suffered several strokes before his body surrendered with total right side paralysis while he resided in Brown Nursing Home at 1425 Snyder Avenue in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His body was also laid to rest in the New Camden Cemetery beside Catherine.

Looking back upon Dominick’s life, he succeeded in ways that other young immigrants failed. He supported a family of ten during the Great Depression and during
two World Wars. He was a young entrepreneur, accepting the risk of establishing his own barber shop. Even though he struggled with a love of gambling, he managed his desire sufficiently to provide a home, food and clothing for his family. His strength to endure through tragedy and struggles is carried on throughout his family. He was a man whose life in America began with the courage to face new challenges and ended with his challenges met.
CHAPTER FIVE

Preserving the Heirlooms

The oral history project of recreating the character and goals of my paternal and maternal grandparents demonstrated that this genre has the potential and vigor to transform students from passive learners into interdisciplinary active researchers. It happened to me during this thesis. I followed the nine project stages suggested by Huerta and Flemmer and created an heirloom for my family of the lives of my ancestors who genetically and culturally contributed to a portion of my heritage. I discovered that this heritage changed in character throughout the years; but, it retained the core structure that is traced back to my grandparents, Vito Antonio Mevoli, Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli, Dominick Abate, and Catherine (Lorusso) Abate. Thus far, each generation continued to adapt to the individual historical eras in which they lived and will most likely continue to do so throughout time. As I researched my heritage through interviews, documents, and historical resources, the twentieth century became personally significance when I viewed it through my grandparents’ perspective.

For me, this learning experience would have been less likely to occur if I depended upon my own personal motivation to complete this project. Even though I am interested in my family heritage, would I have actually made the time to complete such intense research? Would I have pursued the eyewitness accounts of my relatives? I believe that the answer to these questions would be no. Like so many other busy individuals, I would have legitimately supported the fact that I don’t have time in my
busy schedule to devote to such a project. Herein lays the beauty of education. Since this oral history project is a vital portion of my thesis, I squeezed the time into my previously unavailable days to accomplish all of these tasks. The result is an oral history heirloom and a tradition that has become a vital portion of my family heritage.

The excitement of investigating the past through the eyewitness accounts of my family as well as the historical resources that contain data pertinent to the lives of my grandparents, their character traits and traditions transformed me into a firm believer in the value of oral history as an integrated approach to learning. My research allowed me to grasp the lifestyles of Italian immigrants during the twentieth century and further comprehend their struggles, sorrows, and pleasures. It also allowed me to record previously undocumented accounts of history during my grandparents’ lifetime through family interviews. My analysis skills were further developed as I gathered historical facts and interview stories, then evaluated them in relation to my grandparents’ choices and individual circumstances.

This oral history project became more than genealogy to me, more than memoir, more than history. It opened up to me a world of living memories of my relatives that I would have never imagined. Catherine, my paternal grandmother is the only grandparent that I have never known. Through this thesis, I know her beauty, her love and her compassion. I visualize the aroma of soup permeating throughout her house and neighborhood on Mondays. She is now real to me.

This project made history more personal to me, and therefore more memorable. It also allowed me to unite past generations of my grandparents to future generations including my grandchildren. My children and grandchildren now have documented
records that illustrate that their great-grandmothers, Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli and Catherine (Lorusso) Abate cherished family gatherings where good food, love and compassion predominated. They will also have documented records to remind them that if necessary two or more jobs may be required to provide for one's family just like their grandfathers, Vito Antonio Mevoli and Dominick Abate, exemplified. If Chapter Three and Four of this thesis was never written, those Abate-Mevoli character traits may not have been identified for their future reference.

This thesis project now provides my family with a documented historical heirloom to refer to when determining which of their personal character traits were inherited from a particular grandparent. Was it a quiet spirit, craftiness, money management skills, cooking sewing, socializing, warmth, compassion, endurance, gentleness, musical talent, ingenuity, or the survival instinct? My parents, the first generation offspring, have embraced a unique blend of these character traits. My father, Canio Abate, carried forth his mother's musical talent one step further into playing the accordion by ear.

My mother, Elizabeth, continued gathering the family together during special occasions for a home-cooked meal; but, she added a new dimension of playing board games and card games such as Uno with her grandchildren. If I traced the lineage further onto the next generation, I would identify similar changes to our family traditions. For example, my brothers and sister and I share these special family gatherings at each of our homes where we all unite to celebrate holidays and special occasions. The traditions are adapted but the theory of unity remains.
Through this project, I obtained a special personal identity as well as a more intimate connection with my roots in society. The Abate-Mevoli roots began in Italy and Pennsylvania and are anticipated to expand in unique territory with each additional generation. If I had chosen to pursue my lineage beyond my maternal and paternal grandparents, my history would have expanded.

Educators must grasp the opportunity to share this amazing oral history experience with their students to enrich their knowledge through an active participating in living history as well as facilitating their appreciation of the unique value of every human life. History books indirectly emphasize that only those individuals who impact society are important enough to be remembered since only those stories are worthy enough for print. Oral history projects correctly identify every individual life as a significant aspect of history.

Studs Terkel, a well known oral historian, reversed the trend of only recording life stories of famous historians. He captures and records the events of history through the eyes of common citizens. In his book, *Hard Times*, Terkel pursued such topics as evictions, arrests, honor, humiliation, and success and portrays them through common citizens such as Harry Norgard, a former free-lance commercial artist; General Robert E. Wood, a former vice president of Sears, Roebuck; Elsa Ponselle, a former principal of an elementary school in Chicago. These names may never appear in history books, but Terkel’s recorded accounts of their perspectives of life during the depression bring tears to readers’ eyes and understanding to their hearts. Perhaps society’s views on murder, suicide, and abortion would be transformed if educators develop this approach of oral
historical documentation in learning about life and if they encouraged students to read
some of Terkel’s personal interviews.

**Oral History’s Effect on Students**

The oral history genre utilized as a textbook and classroom supplement has numerous beneficial effects on students, four of which are supported in this thesis. Even though the benefits of this genre expand beyond this thesis, I focused on four that I believe were major ones. The first is that oral history bridges the generation gap. I personally attest to this truth since I experienced the pain and fear that gripped the soul of my grandfather Dominick Abate when I wrote about his adventure in America as a nine-year-old. My heart longed to experience the compassion and love that emerged from my grandmother Catherine (Lorusso) Abate as she snuggled with my aunts Ellen Abate and Rosary (Abate) Meyers. She kept their bodies warm and their minds happy through verbal stories that she whispered in their tiny ears. I now understand why my grandfather Vito Antonio Mevoli glowed with pride as he listened to the cacophony of voices from his family gathered around the table. He left one family in Italy, but created a new one in America. The strength and humor of my grandmother Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli previously escaped my perception until I heard the stories of her phone calls to her bookie and her chicken dinner methodology. These are only a few of the examples of how the oral history genre changed my life through revealing to me the hearts of my grandparents.
Supporters of Oral History in Education

This thesis illustrated how Marilyn L. Geary became hooked on oral history when she spend the day with the Italian fishermen at the San Francisco Fisherman’s Wharf. Her reluctance to approach these old timers was transformed into an unforgettable walk back through time. Dominic Strazzulo kept her entertained from early in afternoon to beyond dusk with his stories about the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906 as well as a life in the Sicilian community in Augusta, Sicily. Geary’s walk into this previous generation inspired her to pursue the oral history genre beyond her History X105.5 class and into the lives of others.

Jason Lim, the student in Associate Professor James Francis Warren’s Asian Studies class at Murdoch University, Perth Australia, also experienced a transformation that unified generations. His family research directed him into the history of the rickshaws in Singapore. He learned that the transportation industry in Singapore that was cut off in 1947 played a major role in the life and culture of his ancestors. Lim’s investigative studies increased his compassion for Singapore’s history and motivated him toward an occupation as a Research Officer for the Oral History Center. He was transformed from a student to an active researcher who was intrigued with his cultural history.

The second beneficial effect in the oral history genre is that it allows the natural story-telling process to fill the gaps of history. Through this research, I have personally comprehended my grandparents’ parental limitations during the early twentieth century. Their occupations and household responsibilities provided them less “play time” with their children. As I learned about their economic struggles during the Great Depression as...
well as their limited commodities, this knowledge made me appreciate the fact that I raised my children in the twenty-first century which thrives on time-reducing commodities, such as microwave ovens, email, and automatic washers and driers that allowed me more “play time” with my children.

As I listened to the stories recalled by my parents, cousins, aunts, uncles, brother, and sister, my grandparents’ lives emerged into an exciting narrative consisting of humor, sorrow, compassion, drama, excitement, and revelation. Every family member contributed a simple story, but the unification of these stories, facts, and history created a colorful twentieth century tapestry revealing the unique lives of my grandparents: Vito Antonio Mevoli, Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli, Dominick Abate, and Catherine (Lorusso) Abate.

Substance and vitality expand textbook materials when the natural story-telling process includes the heart of history through life stories. Grace Huerta and Leslie Flemmer state, “an oral history is a record of spoken memories.” These memories are not found in textbooks but through the lives of those who personally experienced history. After developing the nine project stages of an oral history project and implementing them within the classroom, Huerta and Flemmer concluded that these stages are beneficial to guiding students into comprehending the relevance of history that textbooks fail to offer. Oral history supplies this relevance through the spoken memories from those who lived history. Huerta and Flemmer are not alone in their devotion to obtaining these heart warming accounts of history through eye witnesses.

Rhonda G. Lewin began using oral history as a research tool toward obtaining her Ph. D. in journalism. Using eye witness accounts to fill in the gaps of history was a
familiar technique for Lewin. After pursuing information pertaining to American immigrants’ adventure within a new language, culture, social life, economic structure, and work ethics, she shared these missing pieces of history with others through her editorial articles for the Minneapolis Star and American Jewish World as well as other outreaches.

The third educational advantage of utilizing the oral history genre is that it instills greater comprehension and information recall within the learners. The images that I portrayed regarding the lives of my grandparents are imprinted within my mind and my soul. I believe that the reason this occurred is because my research disclosed vital information piece by piece; therefore, I absorbed facts more intimately as a researcher than a textbook reader. Geographically, I normally would have struggled memorizing the home towns of my grandparents, Dominick, Filomena and Vito which were the Comunes of Ferrandina, Accettura, and Monopoli. Since I located these towns listed on various places such as their passports, naturalization records, and Italian maps, they became more ingrained within my memory. Oral history research provides the sensory perception that learners require to retain information. Three educators, Laura Dull, Delinda van Garderen and Elsa A. Nystrom have also experienced improvements in their students’ comprehension as a result of utilizing the oral history genre in the classroom.

Laura Dull and Delinda van Garderen professors at State University of New York in, New Paltz also demonstrated that oral history facilitates greater comprehension and recall in students. Dull and van Garderen recalled the experiment in the Ghana educational system. The excerpts that Dull and van Garderen shared from the Ghanaian textbooks illustrated how African children became cognitively engaged in social studies.
through stories. After reading the narrative interactive dialogues between the elders and their children in these textbooks, Dull and van Garderen's college students comprehended the learning power of compelling ancestral stories that engaged these learning disabled Ghana children to become active learners. Oral history produced enriched learners within these academically challenged Ghana students.

Educators in America also learned that students' comprehension improved through the oral history genre. Elsa A. Nystrom's merger of oral history also referred to in her work as service learning, and her History 3332 class produced a major transition for her students. The conversion from passive learning through films to active learning through research was not readily accepted at first. After these students completed the interviews and project, they enjoyed the class and admitted to learning more through this methodology rather than through the films. After her first experience with service learning, Nystrom's goal was to expand this genre into her United States History classes. She stated, "The biggest gainers from the experiment are our students as they record real history rather than writing an often trite and unoriginal research paper."

The last beneficial aspect of the oral history genre is the satisfaction and contentment gained from analyzing artifacts and data, unveiling hidden truths, reminiscing, and completing the culminating project. As I progressed through this thesis the satisfaction and contentment of the thrill of discovery to the discovery itself permeated my being until saturation point. My goals have been accomplished. I have met the research challenge of creating a valid and profitable oral history project that serves several purposes.
One of the purposes of this thesis is to persuade educators to incorporate this pedagogically sound genre within their curriculum to integrate learning and produce active students. A second purpose is to initiate within my family the tradition of documenting oral historical accounts that re-create the lives of our ancestors for future generations. A final purpose is to fulfill the requirements to obtain my Master of Arts in Writing degree. For me, completing these goals as well as anticipating an exciting future incorporating the oral history genre within my freelance writing opportunities instills in me an inner contentment that expands beyond words.

Pamela Dean also experienced a similar satisfaction from her undergraduate work in the oral history genre. She was hooked by only one interview with her Aunt Ethel. The excitement and pleasure of reminiscing about the class structure of her family inspired Dean to advance from a student finishing a BA in history to an educator with a Ph. D in history. She is one of many educators who after experiencing the thrill of oral history as an undergraduate student chose to pursue and share this genre with others through as an educator.

Studs Terkel also experienced the thrill of oral history within a different aspect than education. He is a retired radio host and seasoned writer who captures the heart and souls of thousands of people through all walks of life from the Depression, inner cities such as Chicago into the medical field and more. He demonstrates how, as he put it, “ordinary people with extraordinary spirit faced up to life-shaping dilemmas.” The satisfaction of adding vigor to history keeps Terkel actively pursuing the stories of living historians who add a deeper dimension to knowledge.
The oral history genre has been tested and tried by various students and educators and has stood the test of time. As the author of this thesis, I attest to the method's validity and its significance for the classroom. Oral history research projects incorporated within learning produces enriched active learning. Educators must capture this genre and experience first-hand its power to transform their students into vivacious, motivated learners.
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Appendices
Appendix A

Vito Antonio Mevoli

And

Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli’s Documents
The Mevoli - Onorato Family Heritage
(Courtesy of Arlene (Abate) Carpenter

Giulia (Moliterno) Mevoli
Dominico Mevoli
Monopoli, Italy

(Mother)
(Father)

Anna (Ponzio) Onorato
Jiuliano Onorato
Accettura, Italy

(Mother)
(Father)

Vito Antonio
Mevoli
Born in Monopoli, Italy
on January 21, 1885
Died in Camden, New Jersey on March 15, 1972

Married
May 17, 1909

Filomena (Onorato)
Mevoli
Born in Accettura,
Italy on August 10, 1890
Died in Camden, New Jersey on April 10, 1971

Children

Julia (Mevoli) De Ninno
Anna (Mevoli) Macina
Dominick Mevoli
Frank Mevoli
Charles Mevoli
Anthony Mevoli
Nicholas Mevoli
Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate
Map of Monopoli, Italy

Birth Place of Vito Antonio Mevoli

http://www.weather-forecast.com/locations/Monopoli.shtml
Map of Accettura
Birth Place of Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli

http://www.sangiuliano-accettura.org/mappa.htm
Vito Antonio's Birth Certificate

(Courtesy of Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate)
Vito Antonio Mevoli and Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli

Wedding May 17, 1909

(Courtesy of Anthony P. Mevoli)
Vito Antonio Mevoli and Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli's
Marriage Certificate
(Courtesy of Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate)
Vito Antonio Mevoli's Petition for Naturalization

(Courtesy of Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate)
Vito Antonio Mevoli's Naturalization Certificate

(Courtesy of Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate)
Vito Antonio's Telegraph

(Courtesy of Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate)

Ricevuta di un deposito per la somma di

Lire

inscritto addi

intestato a

Vedere avvertenze a tergo.

AVVERTENZE IMPORTANTISSIME

I depositanti hanno l'obbligo di ritirare la presente ricevuta al momento in cui effettuano il deposito e di riscontrarne la regolarità formale e la sua esatta corrispondenza con le scritturazioni del libretto.

Le ricevute devono essere accuratamente custodite dai correntisti fino a che sia stata eseguita dall'Amministrazione centrale la revisione dei libretti e ne sia stato convalidato il credito.

L'Amministrazione non riconosce i depositi che non risultino accreditati nelle sue contabilità centrali e che le siano stati partecipati per una somma diversa da quella depositata, quando non siano state osservate esattamente le disposizioni ora dette.

I libretti speciali per gli Italiani residenti all'Estero debbono essere spediti all'Amministrazione centrale ogni biennio per la verifica del conto e per l'iscrizione degli interessi maturati.

Il termine utile per la presentazione dei reclami in via amministrativa intorno ad irregolarità è di tre anni oltre quello in cui fu eseguita la revisione.
Vito Antonio's Telegraph to
Giuliana Onorato (Filomena's Father)
(Courtesy of Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate)
Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli's Letter from Sister Maria Onorato

(Courtesy of Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate)
Accettura, 30, Nov.

My Dearest Sister,

I am immediately responding to your letter. I’m sorry to hear of the problems your son has had. A son has continual need of moral, help, and guidance. For me, things have been the same, problems are never absent. My husband is the same.

Recently, we celebrated (had) a small party for my daughter, Anna, we took photos. Unfortunately, they didn’t come out too well, but I’ve sent them on anyway.

I’ve been a little ill, my dear sister, and it’s noticeable in the photo. I have trouble sleeping, day or night. If I were in good health, I would be able to see my daughter’s well-being, but I feel I’m with my “shoulders (back)” to the wall and to not be able to afford to buy her clothes and linens. If you have any sheets, even used ones, please send them to me. Don’t forget me; you’re my only hope. I’m happy that you’ve celebrated 50 years of marriage.

Though, unfortunately, I must tell you that the day after I received your letter of 23 Nov. our brother Francesco, died.

He was crying in my arms that he would have liked to see your photo, but died before being able to. I’m in great sorrow. Francesco loved me much. Now, only we sisters are left.
Write to me often and don’t make me worry. Be brave. A big hug to your husband and to all your children.

Your sorrowing sister,

Maria Onorato (fu guiliano)
Carissima Eugenia e Cugino,
ringrazio molto che sei venuto,
mi hai scritto e sei venuto.
Vedo che è venuto alcune lettere.
Cugino caro, sei venuto e sei venuto...
Sono scelte da me.

E se il buono, giudice del mio

La tua lettera.

Un bel giorno.

Asteria, 28 luglio 1826

Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli
Astoria, L.I. 15 July 1960

Dear Cousins,

Thank you very much for coming to visit me. I’m so sorry not to have been able to see you. Yesterday, I went to the cemetery, (the family has now remained isolated in 4 walls.)

That is God’s will and we pray that He will take them into Paradise. I want to thank you so much for the money you left ($5.00) to my daughter-in-law, Antonietta, for the mass on 12 Sept at the Church of Sacro Cuore (Sacred Heart), 3320 Street in New York City where sister was a member.

I beg you, dear cousin, to write to me once in a while for courage and comfort. I want you to know that I have received the letter of your sister Maria, in which she states that she is sick and will need a liver operation. She says she has no money and would like help. I am asking you to help, even if it is only $5.00.

We hope all be well. For now we wish all of you the best.

Your Cousin,

Nicola Onorato
# Filomena (Onorato) Mevoli’s Death Certificate

(Courtesy of Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate)

## DIVISION OF HEALTH, CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY
### CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCAL FILE NUMBER</th>
<th>STATE FILE NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. NAME OF DECEASED</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRST</td>
<td>MIDDLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FILOMENA (PHILOMENA) O. MEVOLI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SEX</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. DATE OF DEATH</td>
<td>APRIL 10, 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. COLOR OR RACE</td>
<td>WHITE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. AGE (IN YEARS)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. DATE OF BIRTH</td>
<td>8-9-1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. WAS DECEASED EVER IN U.S. ARMED FORCES?</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. PLACE OF BIRTH</td>
<td>ITALY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. CIVILIAN OF WHAT COUNTRY?</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. MARRIED [ ]</td>
<td>MARRIED [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER</td>
<td>139-05-4879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. PLACE OF DEATH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITY</td>
<td>CAMDEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BORO</td>
<td>(CHECK BOX AND GIVE NAME)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOWN</td>
<td>CAMDEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION</td>
<td>COOPER HOSPITAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADDRESS</td>
<td>303 CHESTNUT ST.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. USUAL RESIDENCE (IF INSTITUTION, RESIDENCE BEFORE ADMISSION)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITY</td>
<td>CAMDEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATE</td>
<td>N.J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. USUAL OCCUPATION (Give kind of work done during most of working life, even if retired)</td>
<td>HOUSEWIFE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. FATHER’S NAME</td>
<td>GIULIANO ONORATO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. MOTHER’S MOTHER’S NAME</td>
<td>ANNA PONZIO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. INFORMANT’S NAME AND ADDRESS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITO ANTONIO MEVOLI</td>
<td>303 CHESTNUT ST., CAMDEN, N.J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. PART I DEATH WAS CAUSED BY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. IMMEDIATE CAUSE (a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPLICATION OF CARDIAC DECOMPENSATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19a. WAS AUTOPsy PERFORMED?</td>
<td>YES [ ] NO [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19b. IF YES, WERE FINDINGS CONSIDERED IN DETERMINING CAUSE OF DEATH?</td>
<td>YES [ ] NO [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. DECEASED ALIVE AT DATE STATED ABOVE?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. DATE AND HOUR OF INJURY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. HOW INJURY OCCURRED (ENTER SOURCE OF INJURY IN PART I OR II OF ITEM 18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. PLACE OF INJURY (Describe, e.g., in or about home, farm, factory, street, office building, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. CITY, TOWN OR LOCATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. COUNTY</td>
<td>CAMDEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. STATE</td>
<td>N.J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. WAS DECEASED EXAMINED BY MEDICAL EXAMINER?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. DATE AND PLACE OF BURIAL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. LOCATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. CEMETERY OR CREMATION NAME</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. CEMETERY OR CREMATION ADDRESS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. DATE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. REMARKS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. NAME OF FUNERAL HOME</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. LICENSE NO.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. LOCAL REGISTRAR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Confirmation**: The certificate provides detailed information about Filomena Mevoli’s death, including her immediate cause of death as a complication of cardiac decompensation. The certificate also includes her place of death, residence, occupation, and information about her informant and burial arrangements.
**Vito Antonio Mevoli's Death Certificate**

(Courtesy of Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLACE</th>
<th>Vito A. Mevoli M</th>
<th>3-16-72</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COLOR OF SKIN</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATE OF BIRTH</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COUNTRY OF BIRTH</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESIDENCE</td>
<td>Camden, N.J.</td>
<td>303 Chestnut St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAIDEN NAME</td>
<td>Julie unknown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLACE OF DEATH</td>
<td>Strawbridge Nursing Home</td>
<td>303 Chestnut St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAUSE OF DEATH</td>
<td>Carcinoma of prostate with metastasis to bones of spine; anemia; atherosclerotic heart disease; failure; uremia due to nephrosclerosis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTS OF BONES AFFECTED</td>
<td>Spine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTS OF ORGANS AFFECTED</td>
<td>Heart; Kidney</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTS OF MUSCLES AFFECTED</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTS OF NERVES AFFECTED</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTS OF BLOOD AFFECTED</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLACE OF BURIAL</td>
<td>New St. Mary Cemetery</td>
<td>Bellmawr, N.J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BURIAL DATE</td>
<td>3-16-72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE OF ISSUE</td>
<td>3-17-72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHERRY HILL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH—CHERRY HILL TOWNSHIP

Date of Issue: 3-17-72

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE COPY OF A RECORD IN MY OFFICE

WARNING:

DO NOT ACCEPT THIS COPY UNLESS THE RAISED SEAL OF THE TOWNSHIP OF THE CHERRY HILL BOARD OF HEALTH IS AFFIXED HEREON

Arthur R. Bartolozzi
Registrar of Vital Statistics
Appendix B

Dominick Abate
And
Catherine (Lorusso) Abate Documents
The Abate - Lorusso Family Heritage
(Courtesy of Arlene (Abate) Carpenter

Leonarde (More) Abbate Morelli (Mother)
Unknown first name Abbate (Father)
Vincent Morelli (Step Father)
Ferrandina, Italy

Rosemarie (Mecca) Lorusso (Adopted Mother)
Canio Lorrusso (Adopted Father)
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania & Camden, New Jersey

Dominick Abate
Born in Ferradina, Italy on May 20, 1891
Died in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on July 31, 1961

Married February 12, 1917

Catherine (Lorusso) Abate
Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on March or February 24, 1898
Died in Camden, New Jersey on April 8, 1944

Children
Joseph Abate
Canio R. Abate
Vincent Abate
Anthony Abate
Leonard Abate
Dominick Abate
Rosary (Abate) Meyers
Ellen Abate
Map of Ferrandina, Italy
Birth Place of Dominick Abate

http://www.big-italy-map.co.uk/map-of-basilicata-map.htm

Providence of Matera Comune of Ferrandina

http://www.big-italy-map.co.uk/map-of-basilicata-map.htm
Map of Pennsylvania

Birth Place of Catherine (Lorusso) Abate

Dominick Abate's Step-Brother, Joseph Morelli's Birth Certificate

(Courtesy of Pauline (Morelli) Sassi)
Dominick Abate’s Step-Brother, Joseph Morelli’s Baptism Certificate

(Courtesy of Pauline (Morelli) Sassi)

Certificate of Baptism

Church of
SS. Peter and Paul
Camden, N. J.

This is to Certify

That __________ Joseph Morelli

Child of __________ Vincent Morelli

and __________ Leonard Abbate

born on the 16th day of March 1900 and

was

Baptized

on the 6th day of May 1900

According to the Rite of the Roman Catholic Church

by the Rev. __________ William Pabst O.M.C.

the Sponsors being __________ Francis Gionelli

and __________ Dominica Zogorino

as appears from the Baptismal Register of this Church

Dated __________ June 16, 1942 __________

Fr. Austin O.M.C.

Pastor

41
Dominick Abate and Catherine (Lorusso) Abate’s Wedding

February 13, 1917

(Courtesy of Anthony P. Mevoli)
Certificate of Marriage

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel / Fatima Church
832 SO. 4th ST.
CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY 08103
(856) 541-7618

This is to Certify

That Dominick Abate
and Catherine (Lorusso) Abate
were lawfully Married
on the 13th day of February, 1917
According to the Rite of the Roman Catholic Church
and in conformity with the laws of
the State of New Jersey
Rev. De Masi officiating,
in the presence of James Paradise
and 
Witnesses,
as appears from the Marriage Register of this Church.

Dated March 15, 2006

PAS DE

NO. 312 F.I. MEMEY CO., INC. MINEOLA, NY
Catherine (Lorusso) Abate's Step-Sister
Margaret (Lorusso) Del Rossi's Death Certificate
(Courtesy of Rita (Del Rossi) Chudzinski)

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
PENNSAUKEN TOWNSHIP, CAMDEN COUNTY
January 23, 1987
I hereby certify that the following is a true copy of the
DEATH CERTIFICATE as filed in my office.

Deputy Registrar, Vital Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF DECEASED</th>
<th>DOB</th>
<th>DATE OF DEATH</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Del Rossi</td>
<td>1-22-87</td>
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<th>PLACE OF DEATH</th>
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<th>COUNTY</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Maple Shade</td>
<td>Burlington</td>
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<table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE USE ONLY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

144
1910 Census

(Courtesy of Camden County Historical Society)
**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**PETITION FOR NATURALIZATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dominick Abate</td>
<td>123 Main St, City</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AFFIDAVITS OF PETITIONER AND WITNESSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Signature</th>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Abate</td>
<td>Petitioner</td>
<td>February 13</td>
<td>Signature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Smith</td>
<td>Witness</td>
<td>February 13</td>
<td>Signature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Johnson</td>
<td>Witness</td>
<td>February 13</td>
<td>Signature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PETITION FOR NATURALIZATION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DECLARATION OF INTENTION

16 years after the date hereof

Abate, Dominick, age 34, born in the Kingdom of Italy, at Jaffa, on the 7th day of May, 1878, was first naturalized under the name of Dominick Abate. He was born at Jaffa, in the Kingdom of Italy. His last residence was in Jaffa, in the Kingdom of Italy, and his wife was also a native of Italy. He has been a citizen of the United States of America for six years. He is a Catholic and a member of the Catholic Church. He took the Oath of Allegiance on the 14th day of May, 1884, at the Court of the United States in the District of New York. He has not been an alien in the United States of America for more than six months. He is a citizen of the United States of America and is irreversibly subject to its jurisdiction. He is a resident of the State of New York, and has resided in the City of New York for the past ten years. He has been a citizen of the United States of America for the past six years. He is a Catholic and a member of the Catholic Church. He took the Oath of Allegiance on the 14th day of May, 1884, at the Court of the United States in the District of New York. He has not been an alien in the United States of America for more than six months. He is a citizen of the United States of America and is irreversibly subject to its jurisdiction. He is a resident of the State of New York, and has resided in the City of New York for the past ten years. He has been a citizen of the United States of America for the past six years. He is a Catholic and a member of the Catholic Church. He took the Oath of Allegiance on the 14th day of May, 1884, at the Court of the United States in the District of New York. He has not been an alien in the United States of America for more than six months. He is a citizen of the United States of America and is irreversibly subject to its jurisdiction. He is a resident of the State of New York, and has resided in the City of New York for the past ten years. He has been a citizen of the United States of America for the past six years.
Catherine (Lorusso) Abate's Funeral Card

(Courtesy of Canio R. Abate)

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."
- St. Matt. v 5

May you have mercy on the soul of
CATHHERINE ABATE
BORN FEBRUARY 24, 1897
DIED APRIL 8, 1944

PRAYER
O gentlest Heart of Jesus ever present in the Blessed Sacrament, ever consumed with burning love for the poor captive souls in purgatory have mercy on the soul of Thy departed servant. Do not sever in Thy judgment but let some drops of Thy Precious Blood fall upon the devouring flames and do Thou O merciful Saviour send Thy angels to conduct Thy departed servant to a place of refreshment, light and peace. Amen.

May the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace, Amen.

ANTONIO MECCA
Funeral Director and Embalmer
819 S. Fourth St., Camden, N. J.
Bell Phone 657 Keystone 36182
Dominick Abate's Death Certificate
(Courtesy of Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate

[Image of Dominick Abate's Death Certificate]

C. L. Wilbur, Jr., M.D.
Secretary of Health

[Certificate details]

Date of Death: Aug. 31, 1961
Place of Death: Camden, New Jersey

Dominick Abate

Medical Certificate of Death

Arteriosclerosis

Other Conditions: None

Place of Burial: Camden, New Jersey

[Signature and seal of official]

149
Dominick Abate's Monument

(Courtesy of Elizabeth (Mevoli) Abate

GEORGE A. REID
Monumental Works * Marble and Granite

1800-04 MT. EPHRAIM AVE.

SOLD TO

ADDRESS

To cauliflower 7-31-61 to complete
the inscription of

Dominick Abate
also to forever

Monument $20.00

Thank you.
EMERSON 3.3161

GEORGE A. REID Monumental Works
1800-04 MT. EPHRAIM AVENUE. CAMDEN, N. J.

CONTRACT
(DUPLICATE)

I, (We), N., of 287 VANDERBILT ST.,

Town of CAMDEN State of N. J., hereby authorize

GEORGE A. REID, of Camden, N. J., to erect complete on my lot No. , Section No. ,

Location of Monument on Lot in Cemetery

in Town of , about or as soon as practical, monumental work substantially of the following sizes and description, viz.: (all work to be first class and foundations and settings to conform to cemetery regulations.)

ABATE MONUMENT

JULY 31 - 1961

In consideration whereof, I, (We) promise to pay to the order of GEORGE A. REID, of Camden, N. J., the sum of , Dollars, as follows:

% Upon signing of the contract $.

% Upon completion of the foundation $.

Balance strictly cash when the work is erected complete $.

Total $.

This work to remain the property of GEORGE A. REID, with right of removal reserved, until paid for in full.

Under no conditions will orders be binding until accepted by the office and no single order will be accepted for less than $50.00, unless paid for in advance, and all orders taken subject to delays caused by labor troubles, accidents and other contingencies beyond our control. In cases of dispute it is hereby agreed that the facts of the case will be submitted for arbitration through the National Granite Mfg. Association, and it is further agreed that both parties will abide by their decision. Agreements with Salesmen, verbal or otherwise, not contained in these articles of agreement are not authorized and no changes therein shall be valid without the written consent of GEORGE A. REID, nor shall this contract be cancelled without mutual consent, after execution and delivery thereof.

Executed at , this day of , 19. .

Purchaser

Administrator for Estate Salesman

Address

Salesman's Address

151
This is to certify that

Arlene Carpenter

has completed the Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 10/05/2005.

This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research
- ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants
- the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process
- a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
- a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent
- a description of the role of the IRB in the research process
- the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.

National Institutes of Health
http://www.nih.gov

http://cme.cancer.gov/cgi-bin/cms/cts-cert5.pl

10/5/2005
Step 1: *Is the proposed research subject to IRB review?*
All research involving human participants conducted by Rowan University faculty and staff is subject to IRB review. Some, but not all, student-conducted studies that involve human participants are considered research and are subject to IRB review. Check the accompanying instructions for more information. Then check with your class instructor for guidance as to whether you must submit your research protocol for IRB review. If you determine that your research meets the above criteria and is not subject to IRB review, *STOP*. You do not need to apply. If you or your instructor have any doubts, apply for an IRB review.

Step 2: *If you have determined that the proposed research is subject to IRB review, complete the identifying information below.*

Project Title: **Oral Heirlooms: Adding Life and Color to Genealogical Name**

**Researcher:** Arlene Carpenter

**Department:** Writing Arts

**Location:** Hawthorn

**Mailing Address:** 137 Rolling Acre Drive, Glassboro, NJ 08028

**E-Mail:** carpentera@rowan.edu

**Telephone:** 856-881-8387

**Co-Investigator/s:**

**Faculty Sponsor (if student):** Dr. Diane Penrod

**Department:** Writing Arts

**Location:** Hawthorn

**E-Mail:** penrod@rowan.edu

**Telephone:** 856-256-4330

Approved For Use by Rowan IRB: 7/04
Please answer Questions 1-5 below

1. WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH?
   The objective is to gather eyewitness accounts through oral historical data pertaining to both my maternal and paternal grandparents and transform them into tangible memoirs.

2. DESCRIBE THE DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH INCLUDING WHAT WILL BE REQUIRED OF SUBJECTS (ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEET IF NECESSARY):
   The subjects will be required to answer a minimum of 10 questions [additional questions will be asked as needed]. Their answers will either be recorded on tape or on paper or both. The interviews will take place in their homes or the home of another relative. Since one cousin is in a nursing home, that interview will be performed there.
   Questions are attached.

3. DESCRIBE THE SUBJECTS WHO WILL BE PARTICIPATING (NUMBER, AGE, GENDER, ETC):
   The subjects are cousins, aunts, parents, sister and brother all over the age of 50. Both males and females are included in this group and all have known one or more of the grandparents. Seven subjects for each set of grandparents will participate; this is a total of fourteen in all.

4. DESCRIBE HOW SUBJECTS WILL BE RECRUITED (e.g. ADVERTISEMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS IN CLASS, E-MAIL, INTERNET)
   Subjects are recruited on the basis of their interaction with the grandparents. Since gathering oral historical accounts is the goal, all subjects must have a story to tell through an eyewitness account of their life a part of my grandparents' life. Subject will be contacted by phone.

5. WHERE WILL THE RESEARCH BE CONDUCTED:
   The research will be conducted in the subjects' homes or in a nursing home, where one subject lives.

NOTE: IF THE RESEARCH IS TO BE CONDUCTED IN ANOTHER INSTITUTION (e.g. A SCHOOL, HOSPITAL, AGENCY, etc.) A PERMISSION LETTER FROM AN ADMINISTRATOR ON THE LETTERHEAD OF THAT INSTITUTION MUST BE ATTACHED.

IF THE RESEARCH IS TO BE CONDUCTED AT ANOTHER UNIVERSITY, A SIGNED COPY OF THE IRB APPROVAL FORM FROM THAT UNIVERSITY MUST BE ATTACHED.

ATTACH THE CONSENT FORM TO THIS APPLICATION. The Consent Form must address all of the elements required for informed consent (SEE INSTRUCTIONS).
NOTE: IF THE ONLY RECORD LINKING THE SUBJECT AND THE RESEARCH WOULD BE THE CONSENT DOCUMENT, AND THE RESEARCH PRESENTS NO MORE THAN MINIMAL RISK OF HARM TO SUBJECTS, YOU MAY USE AN ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURE FOR CONSENT. IF YOU WISH TO REQUEST PERMISSION FROM THE IRB TO USE AN ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURE, ATTACH A COPY OF THE FIRST PAGE OF YOUR RESEARCH INSTRUMENT OR A LETTER WITH THE REQUIRED INFORMATION (see Instructions).

If you are requesting an exemption from a full IRB review, STOP. Complete the last page of this application ("Certifications"), and forward the completed (typed) application to the Office of the Associate Provost for Research, The Graduate School, Memorial Hall.

IF YOU CANNOT CLAIM ONE OF THE EXEMPTIONS LISTED ABOVE, COMPLETE ALL OF THE ABOVE AS WELL AS THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR A FULL IRB REVIEW.

Does your research involve a special population?
no ___ Socioeconomically, educationally, or linguistically disadvantaged racial/ethnic group
no ___ Pregnancy/fetus
no ___ Cognitively impaired
yes ___ Elderly
no ___ Terminally ill
no ___ Incarcerated
no ___ No special population

At what level of risk will the participants in the proposed research be placed? (Note: "Minimal risk" means that the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. The concept of risk goes beyond physical risk and includes risks to the participant's dignity and self-respect as well as psychological, emotional, or behavioral risk.)

_x___ Minimal Risk    _ ___ More than Minimal Risk    ____ Uncertain

I. HOW WILL SUBJECTS BE RECRUITED? IF STUDENTS, WILL THEY BE SOLICITED FROM CLASS?
_They will be recruited by me contacting them through the telephone
2. WHAT RISKS TO SUBJECTS (PHYSIOLOGICAL AND/OR PSYCHOLOGICAL) ARE INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH?
   _No risks_

3. IS DECEPTION INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH? IF SO, WHAT IS IT AND WHY WILL IT BE USED?
   _No deception is involved._

4. WHAT INFORMATION WILL BE GIVEN TO THE SUBJECTS AFTER THEIR PARTICIPATION? IF DECEPTION IS USED, IT MUST BE DISCLOSED AFTER PARTICIPATION.
   _After their participation, the subjects will receive a photo copy of the completed thesis._

   I will ask the subjects if they mind having their names identified in the text, if their response is yes, then I will refer to them only in regard to their relationship to my grandparents, for example, cousin, sister or brother. They will also sign a consent form.

6. HOW WILL THE DATA BE RECORDED AND STORED? WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO THE DATA? ALL DATA MUST BE KEPT BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR FOR A MINIMUM OF THREE YEARS.
   All data will be stored in my home in Washington Township, NJ. The data that is disclosed for the thesis will become public knowledge, a copy will be filed in the Savitz Library at Rowan University, the Gloucester County Historical Society, and the Camden County Historical Society.
CERTIFICATIONS:
Rowan University maintains a Federalwide Assurance (FWA) with the Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. This Assurance includes a requirement for all research staff working with human participants to receive training in ethical guidelines and regulations. "Research staff" is defined as persons who have direct and substantive involvement in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting research and includes students fulfilling these roles as well as their faculty advisors.

Please attach a copy of your “Completion Certificate for Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams” from the National Institutes of Health.

If you need to complete that training, go to the Web Tutorial at http://cme.nci.nih.gov/ 

**Responsible Researcher:** I certify that I am familiar with the ethical guidelines and regulations regarding the protection of human participants from research risks and will adhere to the policies and procedures of the Rowan University Institutional Review Board. I will ensure that all research staff working on the proposed project who will have direct and substantive involvement in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting this research (including students fulfilling these roles) will complete IRB approved training. I will not initiate this research project until I receive written approval from the IRB. I agree to obtain informed consent of participants in this project if required by the IRB, to report to the IRB any unanticipated effects on participants which become apparent during the course or as a result of experimentation and the actions taken as a result; to cooperate with the IRB in the continuing review of this project; to obtain prior approval from the IRB before amending or altering the scope of the project or implementing changes in the approved consent form; and to maintain documentation of consent forms and progress reports for a minimum of three years after completion of the final report or longer if required by the sponsor or the institution. I further certify that I have completed training regarding human participant research ethics within the last three years as indicated below my signature.

Signature of Responsible Researcher: ___________________________ Date: 11/17/05

**Faculty Advisor** (if Responsible Researcher is a student): I certify that I am familiar with the ethical guidelines and regulations regarding the protection of human participants from research risks. I further certify that I have completed training regarding human participant research ethics within the last three years as indicated below my signature (attach copy of your “Completion Certificate for Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams” from the National Institutes of Health).

Signature of Faculty Advisor: ___________________________ Date: 11/23/05
Participants over the age of 18

I agree to participate in a study entitled "Oral Heirlooms: Adding Life and Color to Genealogical Names," which is being conducted by Arlene Carpenter of the Writing Arts Department, Rowan University.

The purpose of this study is to gather eyewitness accounts through oral historical data pertaining to both my maternal and paternal grandparents and transform them into tangible memoirs. The data collected in this study will be combined with data from the World Wide Web, New Jersey, Camden County, and Gloucester County records department and will be submitted for publication in a thesis.

I understand that I will be required to freely submit oral accounts and any tangible documents to assist in this research. My participation in the study should not exceed one hour.

I understand that my responses will be anonymous and that all the data gathered will be confidential, unless I agree to disclose my identity. I agree that any information obtained from this study may be used in any way thought best for publication or education provided.

I understand that there are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study, and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without penalty.

I understand that my participation does not imply employment with the state of New Jersey, Rowan University, the principal investigator, or any other project facilitator.

If I have any questions or problems concerning my participation in this study I may contact Arlene Carpenter at (856) 881-8387 ext. ___.

(Signature of Participant) (Disclose My Identity) (Date)

(Signature of Investigator) (Date)
Ten Interview Questions

1. Tell me about my grandparents. Please include any photos or documents.
2. Tell me about what they loved.
3. Tell me about the way they dressed.
4. Tell me what their goals were.
5. What were their motivating forces?
6. What were their strengths and weaknesses?
7. What traditions did they pass on?
8. How did the manner of their birth and date order of their birth affect their lives?
9. Do you reminisce about them? To whom?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to say?
Appendix D

IRB Consent Forms
Informed Consent Form

Participants over the age of 18

I agree to participate in a study entitled "Oral Heirlooms: Adding Life and Substance to Learning," which is being conducted by Arlene Carpenter of the Writing Arts Department, Rowan University.

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(Signature of Participant) (Disclose My Identity) (Date)

(Signature of Investigator) (Date)
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(Signature of Participant)  
(Disclose My Identity)  
(Date)

(Signature of Investigator)  
(Date)
Informed Consent Form

Participants over the age of 18

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(Signature of Participant) (Disclose My Identity) (Date)

(Signature of Investigator) (Date)

164
Participants over the age of 18

I agree to participate in a study entitled "Oral Heirlooms: Adding Life and Color to Genealogical Names," which is being conducted by Arlene Carpenter of the Writing Arts Department, Rowan University.

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If I have any questions or problems concerning my participation in this study I may contact Arlene Carpenter at (856) 881-8387 ext ___

(Date)
Ellen Abate

Informed Consent Form

Participants over the age of 18

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If I have any questions or problems concerning my participation in this study I may contact Arlene Carpenter at (856) 881-8387 ext. ___

(Signature of Participant)        (Disclose My Identity)     (Date)

(Signature of Investigator)       (Date)
Rita (Del Rossi) Chudzinski

Informed Consent Form

Participants over the age of 18

I agree to participate in a study entitled "Oral Heirlooms: Adding Life and Color to Genealogical Names," which is being conducted by Arlene Carpenter of the Writing Arts Department, Rowan University.

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I understand that my participation does not imply employment with the state of New Jersey, Rowan University, the principal investigator, or any other project facilitator.

If I have any questions or problems concerning my participation in this study I may contact Arlene Carpenter at (856) 881-8387 ext ______.

(Signature of Participant)  
(Disclose My Identity)  
(Date)

(Signature of Investigator)  
(Date)
Informed Consent Form

Participants over the age of 18

I agree to participate in a study entitled "Oral Heirlooms: Adding Life and Substance to Learning," which is being conducted by Arlene Carpenter of the Writing Arts Department, Rowan University.

The purpose of this study is to gather eyewitness accounts through oral historical data pertaining to both my maternal and paternal grandparents and transform them into tangible memoirs. The data collected in this study will be combined with data from the World Wide Web, New Jersey, Camden County, and Gloucester County records department and will be submitted for publication in a thesis.

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(Signature of Participant) ___________________________ (Disclose My Identity) (Date) 3/18/06

(Signature of Investigator) ___________________________ (Date) 3/18/06

Rosemarie (Del Rossi) Wdzieczhowshi
Appendix E

CV

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Arlene Carpenter  
137 Rolling Acre Drive  
Glassboro, NJ 08028  
856-905-2659

Education

MA in Writing (expected), Rowan University, NJ (May 2006)  
Nursery School Certification, Rowan University, NJ (1976)  
BA in Elementary Education, Reading Certification, Rowan University, NJ (1974)

Thesis

*Oral History Heirlooms: Adding Life and Substance to Learning*  
Graduate Program Advisor: Dr. Diane Penrod  
Academic Thesis Advisor: Dr. Roberta Harvey

This thesis explores the oral history genre utilized in education to integrate learning techniques in the classroom that motivate students, internalize lessons, and produce active enriched learners.

Honors, Fellowships, and Scholarships

Upsilon Chapter of Alpha Epsilon Lambda (2005)

Publications

*Payroll Services at Rowan University*  
*Is Entrepreneurship Hereditary or Learned?*  
*Mevoli and Abate Nostalgia*  
*Love Grounded*  
*Girl Scouts of the South Jersey Pines Maintenance Manuel*  
*Washington Township, NJ Field Hockey Team Senior Appreciation*  
*Pay With Ease*  
*NBI Business Plan*  
*The Battle of Gettysburg*  
*The Gettysburg Address*  
*Industrialization Nineteenth Century Gangs*
Teaching Appointments

Banner Instructor for Payroll Services Staff, Rowan University, NJ (2004- Present)
Eighth Grade Reading and Guidance, Bell Oaks School, Bellmawr, NJ (1977-1978)
First to Fifth Grades Remedial Reading, Bellmawr, NJ (1978)
Bible History Grades Pre-School through Adult, Deptford, NJ (1977-1997)
Kindergarten, Burke and Crescent Park Schools, Bellmawr, NJ (1975-1977)
First Grade, Bellmawr Park School, Bellmawr, NJ (1975)

Teaching Experience

Bible History (1977-1997)  Bethel Community Church

Research Interests

Oral History
Creative Nonfiction
Technical Writing
Historical Fiction

Related Experience

Technical Writer in Payroll Services, Rowan University, NJ (2002-Present)
Technical Freelance Writer for American Institute for History (2005-Present)
Independent Freelance Writer for Gracefullygraphic (2004-Present)

Professional Memberships

Institute of Children’s Literature
Camden County Historical Society
Gloucester County Historical Society
Writers Digest
American Institute for History

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