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Lucchetti, Ina Interview

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Stockton Immigrant Women Oral History Collection

by Sally Miller

LUCCHETTI, INA (Italian)

July 9, 1980

Interviewed by Mary Wedegaertner

Transcribed by Unknown

Wedegaertner: Can you tell me where you came from in Italy? What the make-up of your family was, what your parents did, and a little bit about your life in Italy?

Lucchetti: Well, I was born in a little village called Corfino. It's in the Apennines mountains in northern Italy. It's in the province of Luca which is Tuscany and my father had come from [Parma]. [Parma] is in the province to the north and my mother had lived in that area, in the Tuscany region. My father was in the first World War, and after he came home from the war, he was a prisoner of war for eighteen months, I think he said, in Austria. And after he came home, well you know Italy was in pretty much of a mess you know. There wasn't too much there to do, and so he had at the time – there was, you know, it was open for people to come to the United States, and so he had put in his application to come to the United States to see if he could earn a better living, of course, than he was doing there, and then with he hopes of sending for my mother and I. I had a brother and a sister, too, that had died when they were small children because of lack of medication and doctors and what have you because the little vialle where I lived was very, very primitive. It's way up in the alps, but they have the lower alps, and it

snowed a lot in the winter and the house we lived in was like a 500 year old house. The walls were like eighteen inches thick, you know, solid rock and facilities to match, you know. There was a fireplace, that was it – a few sticks or something whatever you could find in the forest to make fire, and all year I remember all your meals were cooked in the fireplace and the bread was baked outside in kind of a beehive shaped oven, and Mama did the washing in a great big giant pot-like, I would call it, but they would build a fire under it. This big pot would be, have a fire under it and they would put not hot, but ashes from the fireplace. They would take the ashes and run them through a sieve and get them nice, you know, nothing else in there except the white ash, and they put handfuls of this white ash from the fireplace in their wash to whiten their clothes. How they got their clothes so white with such primitive things. Then the water would boil in this big pot and I could remember my mother going up on a couple of steps with a big paddle-like to stir the clothes while they boiled, and of course this was a big job just like all their things, you know. The way they lived. There were a great big ordeal, but to them it was just common every day things. What grew there were chestnuts and the chestnuts were the staple of the village, almost. They would harvest the chestnuts in the fall. They would dry them in like smokehouses. They would be put in on, they weren't trays, but they were almost like trays, but they were made of twigs laced with each other and then put into one layer upon another and then at the bottom of this little smokehouse they would build a fire until the chestnuts would loosen from the outer skin. They were roasted. And then what they did was every family had so many chestnut trees say, and then they would have like a celebration. Each family, there was never any money exchanged because there was no money. They would help each other. So if it was your time, you harvested your chestnuts, you put them in the smokehouse and dried them and then after to get the husk, you know the brown husk, off of the chestnut, it was... this was kind of like I said, a celebration, because what the men would do, they would get, you know, like a butcher block. Most of the time what they were are the bottoms of big fat trees, you know, it was like a butcher block, but it was really the bottom of a big tree. And they would take the chestnuts and put them in sacks and they would beat them on these blocks and so they wouldn't split the sacks, they would dip the sacks in kind of melted lard. There would be like four men around this square, around the block and they would beat like a rhythm, each one beating.

Wedegaertner: They actually beat the sack on the thing rather than beating the sack with something else?

Lucchetti: Right, no they beat the sack on the block and they would play like a rhythm, you know, until the chestnuts were loosened from their outer husks, and then they would dump them in kind of a big tray again that was straw, or something like that, they had made and the women would separate, you know, the meats from the husks and then they were put in other sacks and brought to the miller who lived down the mountainside and the miller would grind the chestnuts into chestnut flour. Now that was brought back to the house and you would have – if you heard of Italian polenta, well, that's made of cornmeal. I guess Columbus brought the corn over instead of vice-versa, back to Italy from the United States, from America, and so cornmeal

– we grew corn also, but that was kind of hard too, you know. We didn't grow as much of it, but that was – the cornmeal polenta, instead of bread, you know. Sometimes you would eat the cornmeal polenta and the chestnut polenta is kind of like a lightish brown pudding-like. You would cook it in water and you would put the flour and keep stirring it, and it would for say about an hour with a little salt and then they would turn the kettle over onto a marble slab because marble is very close to us. My window, I could see the marble quarry where some of my cousins used to work, so we had marble tables. We were very poor, but marble was just like what you would use since you had a lot of, and so that's why we used it. And then they would, like the polenta, they would turn it over on the marble and the slice it, cool it a little bit, and slice it like you would eat bread and then you would eat that in the morning for breakfast and sometimes they would toast it over the hot, you know, flame in the over. In the oven, listen to me, I the fireplace and then at noon you would eat that like bread. We had bread, but that was kind of our staple because we had a lot of chestnut trees so they utilized the chestnut flour and made this kind of polenta that you eat all the time.

Wedegaertner: Did you eat it like some people eat cornmeal mush, they slice it or fry it with syrup or butter or something sweet on it?

Lucchetti: Yeah, but not – we didn't eat anything sweet because sugar you had to buy. We didn't have syrup. I didn't know what sweets were, except sugar was bought, sugar and coffee. And coffee, if you were very rich you would buy it. Most of the time they would take grain and they would roast it and they would call it [borzo] and they would make a drink from that like we would have postum here. That was our drink, our coffee drink, but it was again utilized, everything they grew because like I said, there wasn't much money and they just used what they had and of course everybody in the village had their own garden. They grew potatoes and all their vegetables and everything. Another big celebration-like was the killing of the hog in the wintertime. Every family would raise one or two hogs and then they would help each other again in the butchering of the hog and making sausages, the prosciutto. Prosciutto is like ham, only it is raw. It's cured with salt, and of course there was salami and the bacon. But their bacon is different from our bacon. Again, it's kind of a cured meat that isn't smoked, it's called ponchetta and so the pig sustained most of the families throughout the winter monts and the potatoes that they stored in their, under their – because the houses in the village were very, very ancient and tall and skinny in the city. Just a minute, I'll show you a picture.

Wedegaertner: So you were actually in the village rather than out in the country?

Lucchetti: We lived in the village, and see, the houses are all in clusters, they were always built like that for protection from enemies even though they were way up in the mountains. Whoever had built the little village it was centuries ago because in one of the roads there that they have, they have kind of an underground, well, it isn't an underground passage, but like a tunnel like and on this wall in this tunnel there are the roman numerals the year ten hundred something and so you see how old the village must be. So everybody lived in the village but all their little pieces of land are around the mountains or in steppes on the mountain-side, and I call it postage stamp

farming because they had a little piece of land on this side of the mountain and maybe they'd have to walk ten minutes before they get to their other piece of land and everybody knows their own piece of land and wow, don't you dare put foot on it, you know, and they all grew their own, like I said, walnuts. They had the chestnuts and walnuts and the apples and whatever could grow there. The weather in Tuscany is very much like California so they would grow. Of course the mountainous area where we lived, it was very hard to grow a lot of things, you know. It wasn't a valley so they had cut steppes out of most of the good land and would grow whatever they had that they wanted to eat, and of course they would always, like my mother's brothers, she had, I think, there was seven brothers and another sister, and the brothers were all very good hunters because there was a lot of forest and they would go out and hunt for wild anything and whatever is in the forest. I remember that they were very lucky because they usually had red meat or some kind of meat in the house where most of the people, if you didn't have pork or chicken or rabbit that you raised or ducks, you didn't buy beef. You see, beef was something that only the rich people could afford. We never knew what beef was and fish also. We weren't too lucky to be able to get fish because we were up in the mountains and we weren't near the ocean. Even though Italy is very close to – it's got seas all around it, it doesn't have the fish, so. We would have trout from the lakes and from the streams in the mountains, but not much of anything else, you know, as far as the meat line. I lived in this little village until I was seven and my father had come to the United States. I was born, I think, a couple of months after he had left Italy because he had put in his request to come and his request was accepted so he had to come. Why he came to Stockton was because other people from the village had settled here. I don't know why, but there was several men who had come to the Stockton area long before and they had gone into business and made money and they were very prosperous at the time, you know. They were more prosperous than anyone in the village was and so they would write back, and of course mail took forever, but it is almost as bad as it is now and they, I remember one of the men. He was a hotel owner and he had like a hotel and boarding house and it was called the Golden West Hotel. The rest of the people in the village looked up to him because he had come to America, which was like a dream, you know. If you could come to America that was what everybody was looking forward to, and then he had put up this business and he was successful. Well, then he would send for whoever wanted to come from the little village to help him, you know, in the – to be a cook or waiter or whatever to help him in his business and then he also found them work in different places in town or work in the farms in this area. So, my father had heard that this man would help him and so that is how he came. He came here and when he first came there wasn't too much work he had told me, but there was all this work in the farms so he worked a little bit in the farms and well, when he got a chance to work in the farms and then of course they board and roomed you for a dollar a day and then he was fortunate he thought. He was fortunate that he got a job in the brick yard. There was a brick yard here in Stockton on south McKinley and so he started to work in the brick yard, setting bricks in the oven and, you know, making the bricks. I don't know exactly what his duties were and so of course then that was a steady job, you know. He had gotten a steady job that he worked not only summer, but winter also, and he had saved enough money to send for my mother, but by the time he had done that the immigration doors were closed to – remember in

the twenties, early twenties, twenty-four, 1924 I think, the United States closed the door to the immigration and they put everybody on a quota system. Well Italy, in southern Europe it was, you know, closed off – like if you were English, they'd say, I don't know how many, I'll just say this at the top of my head – they were allowed say a thousand people a year to come over. Well Italy was maybe allowed a hundred, you know. There was that much discrimination and France, Spain, Greece most of the southern European countries were put on a quota. My mother and I had to – my dad had sent for us, but we had to be put on this quota so we couldn't come until it was 1927 or 1928, and I remember real well because we were out in the forest gathering chestnuts and the man who brought the message was all excited, and I remember him running out in the forest saying, my mother's name was Asunta, "Asunta, Asunta you can go to America." We dropped chestnuts and all and just danced for joy because we were so happy, and sure enough my mother had to get all the papers and all this rigmarole and then after we left the little village, I remember leaving the little village on a little donkey. I sat on the donkey and my mother had another donkey with two huge suitcases on the donkey. She was leading the donkey and my uncle was holding me on the other donkey because the mountain roads were very steep and there weren't any roads and there was a great big gorge that had to be passed, and the only way you could pass it was a donkey or a walk.

Wedegaertner: You were probably eight or nine?

Lucchetti: I was seven. And my first experience in seeing another city was then. I had never seen a big city. It was my first experience on a train and then when we got to Genova, because that's where the boat left from – of course, on the train too, I saw my first black person and that really was an experience. My mother hadn't thought about explaining other types of people to me and I was really – I'll always remember that man looked so different to me. His skin was so dark and then we got on the boat in Genova and it took, it seemed like forever I guess to my mother because the day she walked on the ship she got seasick. And she went into her cabin and she never got out of the cabin for the whole time across the ocean and there was another couple with us that came back to the United States too. It was a man and his wife. He had already been here and his wife was able to come so he went over there and he accompanied them back so we were fortunate that he knew maybe five words in English and so – they had a little girl too and so we, I think her mother got seasick too, but I remember the other little girl and I had a ball because we just had the full run of the ship.

Wedegaertner: You didn't get sick, huh?

Lucchetti: No, I didn't get sick and the one thing I remembered was eating spaghetti from hot dishes and that was to me luxury and eating anything I wanted which was another luxury and of course when we got to America, you know, I thought I had gone to heaven and it was just such a big thrill. The other thing was the ride across the United States. We were, I think, almost a week on a train.

Wedegaertner: Where did the boat dock?

Lucchetti: Of course we had to go to Ellis Island, and then into New York and then through interpreters or the other man that was with us made some connections, you know, so we could get to the right – I don't know how they ever managed with the language barriers they had, how to get to the destinations they had. But we were on the train and in those days the train didn't have a dining car. Of course it would stop every once in a while and there would be vendors and also there would be places that sometimes they would stop and I guess they had like cafeterias or restaurants and the conductor would get his watch out and he would point to a certain time and he would make the motion like how you eat so we'd know that was the place where we would stop to eat. But Mother was all prepared for that. When we left the village they had dried cheese, you know a wheel of dried cheese, and three or four salamis and hard boiled eggs and I don't know what else but all of these things that – and the journey that, that way you would never starve and the bread was very, very old and very hard by then, but you still could eat something. So, they were all prepared and they had little knapsacks with all their, you know, at least some provisions that they wouldn't be caught without anything to eat. I remember in the restaurants that we would get off and eat, well you know the bread especially was like cake to me because our bread was real brown and tough and real peasant style bread, and then they'd give us these white slices of, well to me, it was like cake. I would just devour it. It was something that I had never tasted before and of course we didn't like all the things because they were very strange to us, but that didn't matter. When you were hungry, you would eat anything. And I remember that this very nice conductor who my mother has always said that he always seemed to take care of us because we were kind of, you know, we couldn't talk in English or anything and so he always took us under his wing. When we got off the train in Stockton, we wanted to give him a tip. I remember my mother saying that she wanted to give him a tip, and so in Italy the smaller the money was, like a dime, you know would be like a dollar over there. Well in those days a dollar was a dollar. Well, my mother wanted to give him a tip and she didn't know money from anything so I remember she has always said after she found out the value of the money she says, you know, "what I gave that beautiful poor old conductor", she says, "I gave him a dime tip." She says, "I thought I was giving him a dollar." It was, you know, when you just don't know, you don't know. So, my father was working in the brick yard and of course we, when we got here we were living in kind of a boarding house. Again, it had a place where mother could cook, but the rooms were all upstairs, you know, and then when one of the apartments emptied, I guess it was an apartment over a garage. We lived there for a little while. My first experience at school was really something. We got here in February, and of course, it was Washington's birthday or Lincoln's birthday, I don't remember what holiday it was, but of course I went to school I didn't know how to speak English, but I did go to school every day those first few days and this one day I went to school just like every other morning because I remember it was only about three or four blocks from where I lived, the school was, and so I always walk home for lunch. So, I had gone to school that day and everything was shut up. The doors were closed, no children were playing in the yard, and I knew that I felt rejected anyway because I couldn't speak and all the children would play with their own little groups and I was always like a little outcast and so I just sat on the stairs and cried, and cried, and cried. I would beat on the door with my feet and my fists asking "Please, teacher, please let me in" in my

Italian and I thought oh they just don't want me because I'm Italian and so I was crying and I stayed there until I realized nobody was going to open that door for me and I remember crying all the way home and going in the house and of course my mother didn't know one holiday from the other, my father didn't either. He was working every day and that wasn't a holiday at the brick yard. He had to work just the same. Oh, my mother thought it was terrible, poor child they don't want you at school. What are we going to do? So, she went to one of the Italian neighbors and she said – and then we saw all the children playing out in the street, you know, on the sidewalks and things and she thought it was weird, but she didn't realize why and then she went to the neighbor and the neighbor says "oh there is no school today. It is a holiday." Well, I had a reprieve, but just the same it was a terrible feeling to think that, you know, that you are rejected. I remember I didn't learn English in the classroom. I learned it out on the play-yard more than in the classroom. Do you remember hopscotch? Okay, well I thought that those pretty little trinkets the girls were throwing on those squares, they were crazy they were throwing them away. So, I would pick them up. I learned pretty fast that that wasn't the thing to do. And little by little I learned English, but it was tough.

Wedegaertner: Were there not many other Italian children in school?

Lucchetti: Not in the school I went to. It was Washington School at the time. It was way down on West Lafayette which now is like yuck.

Wedegaertner: So, you must not of lived in a predominately Italian neighborhood?

Lucchetti: No, there wasn't too many. There was this family we lived with that had the rooming house or whatever it was and the apartment, but there wasn't too many Italians. I remember a Japanese family lived next door to us and then there wasn't too many Italians right close. There were some, you know, down the block or something, but there weren't too many right close to where we lived. When my father found another apartment we moved on North El Dorado and Anderson Street so that's where we moved and we had apartment there and my middle sister was born and then my younger sister was born and we lived in that area and then my father bought a house right around the corner and that's still his home on Jefferson.

Wedegaertner: Is this your father that is here now?

Lucchetti: Yes, he'll be 88 in September. Of course, the neighborhood there was very, it was little Italy. That part was and my mother never really learned English too much because she didn't have to.

Wedegaertner: Did your father learn it those years he was here without you?

Lucchetti: Yes, but he still speaks it broken. He understands, but he doesn't talk it.

Wedegaertner: But you spoke Italian at home all the time?

Lucchetti: At home always Italian. Like all her friends she'd just walk down the street and they would do their crocheting or what have you and they would all, you know, talk in Italian.

Wedegaertner: Did you find yourself being in the position of doing a lot of interpreting for your family then?

Lucchetti: Yeah, then I was the big cheese of the house, you know. Someone knocks on the door and I had to be the interpreter and just like I think the Mexican children do for their families. They interpret for the grown-ups. Well I had to do that for the family.

Wedegaertner: Did you find that you got pretty well accepted by the other children in school though after a short period of time or did it take a while?

Lucchetti: Oh yes, I guess you always felt like you were an outsider because, you know, your lunch was different if you brought lunch, of course I use to go home, but your mannerisms were different, and your cultures was different. You integrate very quickly when you're young though, so I don't think it bothered me too much.

Wedegaertner: Did you bring non-Italian friends to your home as a young child?

Lucchetti: Yes, I had – yes as time went along I did.

Wedegaertner: This was fine with your parents?

Lucchetti: Oh yes, that was okay, sure.

Wedegaertner: Where did you go to high school?

Lucchetti: I went to St. Mary's high school, a Catholic school, but after, when I was a sophomore I got rheumatic fever and I was sick for a year, so then I didn't go back to high school. I went to continuation high school and then I went to business college and then got a job.

Wedegaertner: Did your mother work after coming here at all?

Lucchetti: Oh yes, she worked when – well I don't remember when she started working, but she worked in the canneries, you know, getting the tomatoes ready and the peaches and things like that. She worked in the canneries. In fact, I remember I went to work when I was thirteen.

Wedegaertner: In the cannery?

Lucchetti: Yeah, I worked in the cannery with her.

Wedegaertner: Was that your first job?

Lucchetti: Yeah, I worked in a cannery.

Wedegaertner: Were you bother members of a union then?

Lucchetti: Oh no, there was no such thing as a union then. We got 33 1/3 cents an hour.

Wedegaertner: That's not very much, compared to what they get nowadays.

Lucchetti: Yeah, right.

Wedegaertner: Did this bother you when your mother first started working? Did you mind not having her at home all the time?

Lucchetti: No, because it was good. We bought the house then you see. We were able to buy a home.

Wedegaertner: This was more or less just seasonal or did she work quite a bit?

Lucchetti: No, she just worked seasonal. It was just seasonal and papa still worked in the brick yard and she just worked in the summer and fall, early fall and that was just about it. The rest of the time, you know, she did all her chores.

Wedegaertner: What was your next type of employment after the cannery work?

Lucchetti: Well, I went to school and I went to business college and I worked for an employment office for a while. I guess that was about it and then I got married and I was married when I was eighteen.

Wedegaertner: How did you meet your husband?

Lucchetti: Oh, my husband came to visit the man next door. The man next door was an old bachelor and my father being Italian made his own wine and the man next door had come over. When you had a good vintage, they would bottle it and put it away like for your wedding and things like this and so my dad had some wine that was very good and so this old fellow next door had come over to cork it, to bottle it, and to cork it, you know, so that it would keep for a later time and my husband was with another man, and they had come next door to visit him and he poked his head out the window. We were in the basement at the time and he was corking the wine bottles and so he said to him, "I'm over here. I'm not home. Why don't you come over here", and of course this older gentlemen introduced us, my mother, my dad was working at the time, and my mother and I and my two little sisters were, you know, helping wash bottles and I don't know what else we were doing and then as they were – the old fellow was still doing his job filling the wine bottles and corking the bottles and then he says to my mother I'm running out of corks and it had to be special corks and oh my goodness what will we do. Well, Ina, better go to the Italian grocery store which was Angelini's and buy some more corks. Well, Angelini's was on the corner of San Joaquin and Market Street and we lived off of El Dorado on Jefferson Street so it was like maybe twelve or fourteen blocks and of course, we did walk to church and we did walk to Angelini's grocery store, but Frank had a car. Frank was my husband of course and so he gallantly offered to bring me instead of having to walk, you know. So he brought me to the store to buy the corks and we just struck a conversation and before you know it, he kept coming back to visit, not the old man next door and so that's how we got acquainted.

Wedegaertner: Did your family have a car at this time too?

Lucchetti: My dad had a car, yes. It was a '34 Chevy.

Wedegaertner: Were there a lot of Italian businesses in this area like the Italian grocery store? Were there other retail businesses?

Lucchetti: Yeah, there was a lot of clothing stores like Fedi's and the Hub and Marianis which is still operating right now, and the Genova bakery and there was another clothing store on the corner of main and El Dorado, men's clothing store and also I can't think right now, there was a lot of other grocery stores, [Gai Delucci's] of course, and a lot of other grocery stores too. That were strictly Italian.

Wedegaertner: Was your family what you would consider a very religious family?

Lucchetti: Oh yes.

Wedegaertner: Which church did you go to?

Lucchetti: We went to St. Mary's down on Lafayette.

Wedegaertner: Were they involved in any clubs or organizations?

Lucchetti: My father belonged to the Forresters and you see the Italians wanted to integrate into the society, American society, so they did join other organizations that weren't Italian, in order for social activities. He did belong to the Forresters and to the [Versialetti] the one that is 103 years old.

Wedegaertner: Is that for just men?

Lucchetti: Yes, that's just for men and I remember he used to take me to the different affairs they had you know because my mother wouldn't go with my two little sisters, then he would take me along with some of the other neighbors and so forth.

Wedegaertner: In talking to one of the Italian ladies she mentioned that she belonged to an organization, I thought she said the Druids or something like that.

Lucchetti: No, my mother never belonged to any, outside of the church, I mean. She never was active in any organizations.

Wedegaertner: You don't know if this one would be this lady's...?

Lucchetti: I know there's the Druids. Yeah, there's a lot of different Druids.

Wedegaertner: That's not just an Italian organization?

Lucchetti: No, it isn't but there are a lot of Italian people who belong to it. And my father of course belonged to The Sons of Italy and then we did belong to the Catholic Federation.

Wedegaertner: So, did most of their social life then revolve around those clubs in the church?

Lucchetti: Yes, there are families that they knew, but there wasn't too much socializing outside of just common everyday things like playing cards or just talking and just getting together.

Wedegaertner: What type of card games did they play?

Lucchetti: Well, they are called Brezcolla. Another one's called [Visetto] and Casina.

Wedegaertner: Are they anything like our bridge or pinochle?

Lucchetti: Not really. They have their own. My father used to play [Bocci] and my father used to play in a band. He was a tuba player in a band, and he used to play in a band when he first came to the United States because he used to play in Italy. He was in a band when he was in the army in Italy. So, he was in a band here, too.

Wedegaertner: Do you remember the name of the band?

Lucchetti: Ah, [Miestrosillio's] band, I guess, I don't remember really. He would probably be able to tell. I just don't remember right now. In those days for celebrations and things they would always bring out the band, you know, so we would always go along to see, you know, or be in the celebration, but we didn't play any instruments.

Wedegaertner: About how long after you met Frank was it before you got married?

Lucchetti: I guess I was sixteen when I met him, so I got married when I was eighteen. So, it was about two years.

Wedegaertner: Fairly long courtship then?

Lucchetti: I guess, well we didn't go together right away. You know how you are just friends and I really don't remember how mine was, but oh yes, it was very proper to do that and I could never go out with him unless my two sisters went along.

Wedegaertner: Were there rules about your dating? Did you have to wait until a certain age?

Lucchetti: Oh yes, that's why I said I wasn't allowed. I was sixteen. I couldn't go out by myself. If he wanted to take me to a show, fine, my two sisters came along.

Wedegaertner: Who was the disciplinarian in the family?

Lucchetti: My mother was more than my father. He was easy going, he wouldn't discipline us too much. It was my mom's job to do that.

Wedegaertner: Who controlled the money in the family?

Lucchetti: My mother too. Papa would work and he would bring her his check and she'd pay all the bills and she took care of all the finances, more than my dad. Even to this day, he doesn't care about money and he just, you know, it's there. He doesn't care too much about which way as long as

things worked out. He didn't have too much interest in any kind of business or anything like that.

Wedegaertner: You mentioned in your talk that a lot of Italian people wouldn't have anything to do with banks. Did your family deposit in the bank?

Lucchetti: No, at the time my family, you know – no they did. They put their money in the bank and the gold standard was not in anymore then too so, you know, in the olden times they would hid their money cause it was gold and they knew nothing would destroy it, you know. A fire or anything wouldn't destroy it. I guess that would melt it down, but they mostly buried it or hid it in special places, but no, my family didn't have that much money to worry about.

Wedegaertner: From day to day, right, or month to month?

Lucchetti: Yeah, in those days it wasn't that much money, it was during the depression too, you know, all that time and my father during the depression the brick yard closed in Stockton and he had to travel to Pittsburg, California, that's down in the bay area. Every morning he would leave four or five o' clock and if it was, you know, the winter months are foggy. It was very bad. He did that all for I don't know many years during the depression in order to work to support his family.

Wedegaertner: How else did the depression affect your family?

Lucchetti: []

Wedegaertner: I had a couple more questions looking this over about your school days. Did you find your teachers were fairly accomodating in trying to help you? You said that you thought perhaps that day that they were locking you out of the room, but were they actually quite helpful to you or not or did they not seem to...?

Lucchetti: Oh, I think my first teacher didn't really have the patience I think with a foreign child as much as after we moved out of that neighborhood and I went to Jackson School. Those teachers were much better, and they really took you under their wing to really try and do everything to help you. Of course, by then I knew a little English, but I remember that first teacher. I would just sit in the classroom and just look out the window or look around. I didn't get too much out of the whole thing. Like I said, I learned English by playing with the children in the playground.

Wedegaertner: Did she have other languages to deal with too?

Lucchetti: She probably did. She probably had Chinese, Japanese and other people too that she, I don't remember. I know that she was an older lady and she didn't have the patience with the kids that the other two teachers that I had you know I made, I was going to school at Jackson school after they were much – would you believe that my fourth grade teacher who used to teach me at Jackson school still comes out here to our place and she's one of my customers. Her name is Miss Brown, and the other teacher is Miss Brownfield. Now bother of them I remember they're still in the city and I still see them, yeah. They were very helpful and very nice.

Wedegaertner: There's one question here that says "Did school help you understand life here in the United States and was there ever anything you felt confusing about what you heard or learned about the United States in school?"

Lucchetti: Much, of course, because in Italy I went to school when I was two, hard to believe, but they have in the little village there were three nuns who had, I guess, they took care of the teaching of the children and the mothers would go on in the fields, you know, to work for their living really because they didn't sell their products there, they just worked to eat and the nuns in the little village would take all the children from two on and they kept us part of the day while the mothers were out in the fields and so I had gone to school since I was two I guess. It was like nursery school of a sense, but I remember they used to show us how to do things with our hands like sew and things. I've got things that I made when I was just a little, child. I don't think that I could make now that my mother had kept for me, you know, little embroidery things a little cut out things in cloth that the nuns with the patience they had would sit and work with you and then I was like in the second or third grade about the time I came over. Let's see, I was seven and as far as like math and I guess that was the only thing I was more advanced because I could understand that in English, too. Like writing and English, it was very difficult for me. The spelling was the hardest thing. Your silent letters in the English language is what confused me the most. I lived history. I still love history. Now that's my pet, you know, and so that I really to me, it's like reading a story and continuously learning about history, the history of people. But the American schools were very difficult for me in that sense, yes. The one thing that I really loved when I was older, I don't know when they started, they had home ec. And I took up cooking and that was just delightful because it was so different than our Italian cooking. So, I thought I was really something. I'd go home and try to duplicate some of the things the teacher would show us how to make in school and I thought that was just really great stuff, but I did catch on to English and spelling which I hated because it was so hard for me. You write Italian like you speak it. In other words, you almost sound out every letter that you, you know, the way it's written, but the English, that's the hardest thing for me was that. But once I did master how to read and write, it was okay.

Wedegaertner: Did you have anyone else living with your family as you were growing up, another other relatives or boarders or anything?

Lucchetti: We had boarders, but they didn't live with us. They lived like over the garage or something like that. All the families used to take in somebody that had come from Italy and board and room them for a while.

Wedegaertner: So, did they eat with you for a while?

Lucchetti: Yes, they would eat with us, but that was when I was very, you know, still small. It wasn't when after I was a teenager, no. But when it was just a few years when my mother was here from Italy that she did that.

Wedegaertner: Did she bring any other things with her like she brought those little things that you made. Was she able to?

Lucchetti: Oh yes, she brought linens that she had made herself. We had, I guess, is it flax?

Wedegaertner: Flax, yes.

Lucchetti: Okay, in Italy before you get married you better have all your linens and so she had blankets and linens she had woven herself. I still have pieces of some of the woven wool, yes, great big black and white squares, black and red squares, pardon me, and then the beautiful embroidery work. I'll show you some. That's what was in the huge suitcases and then she had a lot of different things that she had made for her trousseau. She brought all that stuff, yeah and pictures.

Wedegaertner: Did you have a hope chest essentially for when you got married?

Lucchetti: Yes, I did the year before we were married, he brought me a hope chest for a Christmas present and of course I filled it all with linens too because that was the proper thing to do.

Wedegaertner: Did you yourself belong to any clubs or anything as you were growing up?

Lucchetti: Not when I was growing up. After I was married, I belonged to the Italian Catholic Federation and being I know how to read and write Italian, I became the secretary because all the minutes were all written in Italian.

Wedegaertner: Did you have a real large wedding?

Lucchetti: I guess it was large in sort of speak of course. I remember the reception; it was in the basement. We had the wedding at St. Mary's church and the reception was held in the basement. But the Italian basements are made like giant family rooms. There were all furnished completely. The walls are finished, the floors are either linoleum or something and they have a kitchen down there and they have sofas and radios or whatever you had. So the Italian especially if you lived south, you know, the neighborhood where I was raised, they all had a big basement where they would live there just mostly in the summer time and then have gatherings for a party because the basement was as big as the whole house. It was like a hall, you know, and someone played an instrument would come over and they'd dance or you know have a great time. So I remember that for our wedding, I think some of the neighbors did the cooking and of course they were all I think all what we could call paisani, the people that came from the same little village that we came from were asked. We didn't have any relatives except our immediate family and then the neighbors so I would consider it was a pretty good size wedding for the, you know, in 1939.

Wedegaertner: So, did your husband come from a large family?

Lucchetti: No, he didn't. He had just another brother and two sisters and he worked for P.G. & E. He was a bookkeeper for the P.G. & E.

Wedegaertner: Where did you first live then when you first married?

Lucchetti: We lived in an apartment on Park Street.

Wedegaertner: Are any of those the homes in the neighborhood of where you lived still standing?

Lucchetti: Yes, my father still lives in the same house.

Wedegaertner: How did you get from his P.G. & E. job to the ranch?

Lucchetti: Well, he worked for the P.G. & E. until it was, oh brother, I don't remember. I also worked as a dental assistant and one of our friends was a dental assistant to Dr. Prince who had a dental office on East Main and El Dorado, and she wanted to take a leave of absence for about a year so she trained me for about two months with no pay, our course, and then I assisted the doctor and I worked for a year and I got fifteen dollars a week and then from there I worked at the PX at the Stockton airfield until World War II. Then I was an alien, you see I was never a citizen. I didn't have my, but I wasn't twenty one yet and so I was married, but yet I was an alien and so as I was working there, they had to leave me go because I was Italian and at the time the United States was against Germany and Italy and so I only worked there, I don't remember maybe six months or something and then because I had sales experience, there I worked. Remember Smith and Lang? If you have lived here in Stockton long, year I worked at Smith and Lang and Lerner's and Pennys. And my husband worked at P.G. & E., but then just before – well, the war was already going on and the people that lived in this area right here where we are living now were looking for someone to work in the ranch. One of the men wanted a permanent hand so to speak, and I had just had my first child, my first son. My husband come to work for this man out on the ranch and quit P.G. & E. By the way, he had been working for P.G. & E. since he was sixteen years old. He had gone to business college and he was a bookkeeper and of course he didn't start that in P.G. & E. I think he started in the addressograph or something like that and worked up and he came and worked here on the ranch for a man to help him run the ranch, and then after that we moved to another ranch and he was managing that ranch and then we bought this land in 1946.

Wedegaertner: Were you both in pretty much agreement that that's what you wanted to do?

Lucchetti: Yes, once he started to work on the ranch, he liked it much better than being cooped up in the office. He thought this was, you know, even though you didn't get a salary every month, you got what came, sometimes the crops were good and sometimes they weren't, but first of course when he was working as a foreman like, he was getting regular wages, but then when we were working on the ranch by ourselves, well then it was hit or miss. On the very first year that we bought this ranch, our oldest boy was three and our youngest just celebrated his first birthday and this ranch had, well it has a lot of history. This land here, it had to be six hundred acres that

belong to the Booty family, and they had a great big two story, ten room house and right where this house sits and it was just a beautiful little home. It had four fireplaces, eleven-foot ceilings, the kitchen was tremendous. It was like thirty feet by eighteen wide, and it was that big because they use to board and room their farmhands too in those day and when we bought the ranch we started to remodel this old, old home and not having much money, we did most of the work ourselves and we worked on it for three months and then we finally moved into the home and it was in March and my middle son was born on the eighteenth of March , and we had just moved in to celebrate his first birthday. It was on the twenty-fifth of March. That night our house caught fire and burned to the ground, and we lost the house. The beautiful ten room house that we had slaved for three months and the tank house and a huge barn that had every, you know, a lot of other things in it and so we, our income for that year was not only with the loss of home, but was about one thousand dollars. That's all we had made that year. We moved into my father's and mother's home with the two boys because we had no place to live. So we lived with them for almost a yar and then there was a little house that had two rooms and a bath and a kitchen and we moved there. It was across the street, that this man rented to us so that way Frank would come, you know, it was close to the ranch again to work the ranch.

Wedegaertner: Oh, how devastating though.

Lucchetti: It was. If it wasn't for, you know, saving the children and ourselves, if I'd lost them, I think I would have gone out of my mind because we had worked so hard. I remember I even wall papered one of the bedrooms and you know it was an eleven foot ceiling and not knowing beans about wallpapering and Frank did all the plumbing and made a me a beautiful kitchen sink and all this stuff and then everything burnt down and we had no fire department and no, nothing. No one helped except the people that came by the highway. They ran in that burning building and save a lot of our furniture and a lot of the things downstairs, nothing upstairs. Everything upstairs burned, but a lot of things downstairs they pulled out. I learned who they were. Some of them after I opened the fruit stand. That's what got the fruit stand open because our house burnt. See our house burned and so we moved into the little house way over on that side of the street where this little house was and in order to get the house we had to also rent the ten acres of land that had the walnuts and peaches on it. Well, we didn't have peaches on our land here before and so when the peaches got ripe, we were, you know, besides ourselves. What are we going to do with all these peaches? We had to ship them to San Francisco of course. We know there was a wholesale house in marketing in San Francisco because we had, there was quite a few of them. But it so happened that that year it was very warm and it was over the fourth of July holidays that these peaches got ripe and all the wholesale houses were closed and one of the men who worked for the wholesale houses – well, you live on the state highway, why don't you just put a sign up and start selling your peaches to the public? Well, I had the two little children. One was about almost two and the other one was almost four and it was quite a chore, but between putting them in the playpen and I don't know, I think I tied them down to a tree, I don't remember exactly what, but I got an old table and made a couple of signs and that day – the day I opened I tried to sell my peaches to the public. I didn't do too well, but

then the time that the people were coming back from, you know, this highway goes to the mountains, and the lakes and everything coming back I remember we had a tremendous business. We had three couples that had come from town out to visit us with their children and by the midday we had all the women packing peaches into boxes and all the men climbing trees picking peaches and we sold one hundred fifty boxes of peaches that day. We thought we were millionaires. So that is the start of my little fruit stand which is thirty-three years old today and of course it sells a lot more than peaches and it's been a great experience for our three sons too because they all started when they were very little helping at the fruit stand and then growing their own things and selling them. My oldest son, the one that just called from New York has his own business in New York. He's manufacturing greeting cards.

Wedegaertner: Where is he in New York?

Lucchetti: New York City, and my second son, Dave, he is president of the Pacific Supply of Sacramento. He has 7,700 employees. He is thirty-four years old and he has just been made president of the company. And our youngest son, as I told you before, is in the fruit business and now he's home hoping to take over. You know he is running the ranch for us. We're hoping one of these days he takes over our little ranch and little business.

Wedegaertner: Did you try to perpetuate a lot of the customs and traditions that had been celebrated in your family as a child? Did you try to carry that over with your children a lot?

Lucchetti: Yes, we tried. In fact, that's why I'm very active in the Italian community. I helped the Italian Consulate start the Italian school here six years ago in order to preserve our traditions and our heritage.

Wedegaertner: You started that all by yourself, did you?

Lucchetti: With the Italian Consulate.

Wedegaertner: That one meets on Saturdays?

Lucchetti: We have classes Saturday mornings from 10:00 – 12:00 and then we also had classes in the evenings one year and we also have classes now in Linden at Waterloo school and we also have a class in Tracy. So, we branched out from Stockton to Linden and with Tracy.

Wedegaertner: Your classes don't meet all through the summertime, do they?

Lucchetti: No, we run from the later part of September until the first of May. We not only teach language, but we teach culture and then for the last four years I go to the public schools and give talks on the Italian culture to the children because after my, well when my youngest boy was, I guess, he was in grammar school and my middle boy was going to Delta. I went back to school at Delta and I got my AA degree and I was substitute teaching in the Stockton Unified School District.

Wedegaertner: In the elementary grades?

Lucchetti: Elementary grades, yeah. And I also had been, well I'd taught religion since I was in high school. I would teach part-time, you know. I would teach religion at old St. Mary's and then at St. Gertrude's and at St. Michael's, and I've been teaching for twenty eight years, so I love children and I talk their language so I thought I would like to teach and I substituted in the elementary schools.

Wedegaertner: Did you ever want to go and get your teaching credential?

Lucchetti: Oh, I felt I was too old. I felt like I'll just leave the young people that are getting their teacher's credentials to, you know, do that and being I started the Italian school I thought I would devote my spare time to doing that and that's all volunteer work of course, but I would do it that way and still be with the children. I still teach my religion classes every Friday after school and I teach at St. Michael's. I have my classes every year.

Wedegaertner: That's great.

Lucchetti: Oh, I love it. I hope I never have to give it up.

Wedegaertner: You did become a citizen shortly after you were twenty-one then?

Lucchetti: Oh yes, we started talking about that and I never finished. I remember the Second World War. I had to be in at eight and here it was so silly because I was married and everything, yet it was one of those things. It was the law. You know, they took the Japanese and put them in camps, well the Italians and Germans couldn't get out of the house after eight. I don't know if we wanted to do any damage, we could have done it before if we wanted to. Golly, we loved this country. There was nothing that would make me do anything against it, but anyway those funny laws were like that and I did, even though I had gone through all the schools here, I still had to go to school to get my citizenship papers and then I, of course, I became a citizen and that was that. But it wasn't until after I was married.

Wedegaertner: When you first came here with your family, did you and your family think of yourself as Italians, Italian-Americans and how did that change you?

Lucchetti: No, very Italian. I think we always, you think of yourself as Italian first even though my family, you know, my mother and father became citizens even though their language in part was a little difficult. They did go to school. They both got their citizenship papers and as tough and as hard as English was for them, they struggled because there was nothing they would do. They wanted to do more than become American citizens because they loved this country so much. In fact, my father who had been here since the early twenties, well, he came in 1920. He went back to Italy in '72 with my youngest son and he hated it. He just wanted to come home. This was home, not Italy. I mean he loves the traditions, you know, all the old-time things, but as far as a country, I think if he was a young man and had to do it over again, then he would go and fight for this country instead of Italy if that were the case. No, America is our home and we consider

ourselves Italian-Americans, but we always consider ourselves as Italians first. But what is funny, when you go to Italy like I was in Italy just two years ago. When you go to Italy now, you are the Americano and we consider ourselves as Italian here, but as soon as you go into Italy, you become the Americano. You're not Italian over there. You're American over there. It's really a switch.

Wedegaertner: Have you felt close to the Old Country, but I suppose you have since you have been leading towards, back to Italy?

Lucchetti: Oh yes, as far as the history of Italy. What Italy has given to the world in art, literature, music, things like that, I think there is no country in the world that can do what Italy has done for the rest of the world especially western civilization. I'm very proud that I'm Italian, but prouder that I am an American citizen. But as far as the culture, is that what you meant?

Wedegaertner: Well let's see, I guess, the culture and the living conditions. Do you still have relatives there? While you were growing up here?

Lucchetti: Yes, all our relatives were over there. We just had the immediate family, then of course when I got married, I got my husband's family's relations, but otherwise we didn't have any immediate family here because my mother's brothers immigrated to South America and Australia and France and they never came back to Italy. The one from France of course did, and then of course my mother and father were here and so our family was from different parts. But, like I said again, the culture and the history of Italy and what Italy has given to the world is great and that's why I would like the people to keep their traditions and their heritage alive in their children especially with inter-marriage now. Inter-marriage into other races, I mean, now you know like Americans. We call everyone else who isn't Italian, American. Whether they're German or English or Scotch so when a boy or girl from a family marries outside the Italians, well, they're marrying an Americano. They're not marrying an Englishman, or German or whatever and so you can see that the children are getting away from their heritage. Away from the customs and tradition. The traditions that the Italians have. We are very proud of them so we think that they should be kept up.

Wedegaertner: Now do you just have one boy that's married or two of them?

Lucchetti: I have one boy that's married.

Wedegaertner: Did he marry an Italian girl?

Lucchetti: No, he married an Irish girl and she's a doll.

Wedegaertner: Did this present some problems when he was first going with her?

Lucchetti: No, not at all because we don't think that way. I think our family, my generation doesn't think that way anymore. I think my mother's generation thought that, you know, that Italians should marry an Italian because they would get along better in the family and everything. Now my

generation doesn't think that. In fact, a lot of my friends' children have married, not Italians. They have married Americanis.

Wedegaertner: Do you find that your son and his wife are carrying on the traditions too, and she's willing?

Lucchetti: Yeah, well Chris has learned how to cook and like, you know, when a young couple get married, the Italian tradition is to give the [conveti], the almond, the Jordan almond candies to the guest. Well, I had explained this to Christ that the Italian families, oh she thought it was neat so of course she did it too, and I think that our little grandchildren, now they aren't learning the language as much as I would love them to learn the language, but they live in Wilton which is near Sacramento, and so I don't have that close association with them every day, but when they are here, they have learned to eat Italian food and they love Italian food. In fact, my little grandson who is just five that you met tonight when he came because my daughter-in-law had left the little girl here for four days and now it's Ryan's turn to stay with us and so the first thing he asked me after he was here, he goes - I'm Nonee because in Italian a grandma is a Nonee, and a grandfather is a Nono, and so he goes "Nonee, what are we having for dinner," and I said, "I don't know. What would you like for dinner?" Guess what he said, "Spaghetti."

Wedegaertner: He definitely has an Irish name, though.

Lucchetti: Right, Ryan and Meagan and Leah, the little girl. And my son's wife's name is Christine Marie Lucchetti, and guess what my name is, my name is Christina Marie. Yeah, that's my name – everyone calls me Ina.

Wedegaertner: Were you called Ina even before you came over here?

Lucchetti: I was called Ina because in Italy we lived with my grandparents and my father's mother was name Christine and little Christina they called me. The last three letters of Christina is I-N-A, so my name was Ina. In Italian, it would be Eena, when I came here it turned into I sounds so it became Ina. But my name is Christina.

Wedegaertner: It sounds like your life was so full when you were raising your children, with your volunteer work that you really didn't miss working out of the home, did you? Or miss not having a part-time job or paying job?

Lucchetti: Oh, I did, I worked.

Wedegaertner: Oh, when they were young?

Lucchetti: Yes, I worked in the, you know, I had the fruit stand every summer and then I worked at Pennys.

Wedegaertner: I thought that was before you got married?

Lucchetti: Oh no, I did that right after from the dental assistant I went to work in the sales departments, but I use to work part-time all the time. I worked all the time when I was married except when I was carrying the children or something like that, but I did work most of the time and then I've always worked on the ranch.

Wedegaertner: What are your feelings in general about Women's Liberation?

Lucchetti: Well, I feel I'm very liberated. I don't see, I mean I've never felt that I was catered to in any way by the males. I've always held my own and I feel a woman has the right, you know, to do everything just like a man does if she wants to.

Wedegaertner: Would you be quite supporting of it?

Lucchetti: Yes.

Wedegaertner: Do you consider yourself very much of an activist for any particular causes?

Lucchetti: Well, I am right now especially because I belong to Women for Agriculture and that's a very activist, I guess you would call, organization because we are trying to fight for the right for the farmer. I'm religious chairman for the county.

Wedegaertner: You're extremely busy it seems like.

Lucchetti: Well, I always feel what you could do for people is much more important than what you can do say for a house. Housework is dull. You can do so much of it, but I'd rather keep working with people or children than just scrubbing houses.

Wedegaertner: I had a friend once who said that housework was something she did when she didn't have anything else. She did in her spare time.

Lucchetti: That's me too, like I'll be doing housework from 11:00 -2:00 in the morning sometimes because I don't have time. I'm too busy with my other duties in the daytime.

Wedegaertner: What were your greatest concerns as a mother and perhaps what are you most proud of or happy with as far as your children are concerned.

Lucchetti: Well, I think you always want to give your children what you don't have, or you struggle to get. So giving the children a good education that they can make a good life for themselves was upper most in both my husband's and my mind, and being they've all succeeded I feel really happy about it because all three of them, even though Ralph has come back to the farm in a sense, I think that's success too because nowadays farming is a big job and it has a lot of challenge and a lot of work not only sweat, but I mean other work too that you have to consider raising food for humanity, and I think it's very important and my other sons in their own fields, I feel they are very successful and I am just very proud of them.

Wedegaertner: I meant to ask you back when we were talking about when you first came out and had the big house and everything, did most of the Italian farmers settle in this particular area? Say east of town here?

Lucchetti: Not all of them. Who settled in this area mostly were Genovese, people who came from the [Legurian] area of Italy and the [Pemmontezi], all the northern part. Now the people from Tuscany work in the Islands. What we call the Islands, like Roberts Island and Holland Tract and all the Islands where they raised asparagus and potatoes and corn and things. It seems that mostly the people from Tuscany are in that area, and the Tracy area, Patterson around in there and the Genovesian and Pemmontezi are mostly in this area here. They are mostly fruit farmers and gardeners. They call themselves because they grew a lot of the vegetables. The majority of the vegetables in this area here in what you would call the Waterloo-Morada-Linden area. There's a lot of people that live here. In fact, I couldn't tell you how many families because there must be over five hundred Italian families that live in this area alone. That's why when they told me to give a talk about the Italians that the San Joaquin Historical Society, I said you can't because there are so many of them. It's really hard, really difficult.

Wedegaertner: Were you affected by the floods at all. Your ranches or anything or were the big floods before you?

Lucchetti: They were before I lived here. Oh yes, we bought the ranch in 1947, so the dams have controlled that. They had a lot of that problem long before, you know, like when I gave that talk about...

Wedegaertner: Mr. Boggiano was telling me about that.

Lucchetti: In fact, our place right here where we are sitting now, this was where the old house was that we built. We rebuilt our house in the same area where the other old house burnt. The history of this area was that this was the only land around here that was high. Where the house and the barn were built, it was kind of a knoll and when someone dies in the winter time when there was floods, they would be buried here and then reburied in a cemetery at a later date when the ground dried out, so I knew that this area was a little higher than the rest of the area around here.

Wedegaertner: What would you consider, looking back at your life, the best age to be?

Lucchetti: That's a very difficult question because I think every age you live you probably look back and say, well that was better, but it probably wasn't. the age you were living it was probably the best age. But I guess between your thirties and forties when your children are growing and there is so much activity and the family is really, I mean especially Italian families are pretty a close net family, and the grandparents are still active in the family and everyone, and as you look back would be a happier time, but I think the time you are living is probably – you should never look back really. You should always look forward. I feel the time you are living right now is probably the best time.

Wedegaertner: How would you feel about like your father living with you or your grandparents living in your home?

Lucchetti: Well, right now my father is living here with me. He's going to be eight-eight in September. I think he's living here temporarily. He has his home and he lives in his home with my cousin. My cousin is teaching, he's a teacher. He teaches at St. Mary's high school he teaches Italian and Spanish. We sent for my cousin when he was fifteen years old and he was from the same little village where I was born and we were there in 1964, I saw what a very, very bright young man he was and I thought, oh we just have to get him to come to California to live with us so we could send him to school because if he stayed in the little village – Italy is so densely populated and the jobs are very hard to get. He would have probably grown up in the little village and been a shepherd or something like that. I saw how intelligent he was so I asked his mother and father who are my aunt and uncle if they would let us bring Luigi to the United States and we would send him to school. They have four daughters besides Luigi. Luigi is next to the youngest and so of course it was rough for them to let him go, but they realized it would be better for him. We got him when he was fifteen years old and he's just like our son, really, and I taught him English. It was my turn to teach the Italian the English at the time, and so I would keep him up. He was fifteen already so he was already set in his ways you know and he had gone. He was like in high school over in Italy and so I would stay every night, you know, drill with him on the English language because he didn't know beans when he came over. He knew how to say hi and thank you, I think that was about the only thing. We sent him. We signed him up at the Linden High School and he went through Linden High School and then he went to Edison because my mother passed away so he moved to town to live with my father who is his uncle and he went to Edison High. Graduated from Edison and went to Delta and then worked his way through University of the Pacific and now he is teaching Spanish. He talks Spanish fluently just like he talks Italian and English and he is just a beautiful young man, and anyway he has gone to Italy to bring his class from St. Mary's to a trip not only to Italy, but five countries in Europe, so he's going to be gone for two months so my father is living with me, just temporarily, but he was going to be just staying here in the daytime. He wanted to go home and sleep. Well, last week when he was walking down the street in his neighborhood, again, on Anderson and El Dorado there, this happened off of San Joaquin with one of his other buddies because they meet. They go to each other's houses and play cards or just talk or just visit. They were walking towards their homes. They had met at another old fellow's house and they were walking towards their homes and there black youths attacked them on the street at 3:30 in the afternoon and mugged them and beat them and knocked them to the ground.

Wedegaertner: Was this just a few weeks ago?

Lucchetti: Just last Tuesday. It wasn't in our paper because we get another edition out here. Other people have told me that they have seen it in the paper so my poor dad got so frightened that I don't want him to stay, you know, down there. So that's why he is living with me, but I think it is a beautiful opportunity because, like I said, now my grandchildren came over and you should have seen my little granddaughter who's ten. He taught her how to play an Italian game with

cards and I never saw him laugh so hard trying to teach her the Italian game, but she doesn't talk Italian, but she's learning the symbolism and the different ways of doing things and so he had such a good time with her so I was telling my daughter-in-law, Chris, just to leave her. Stay a little longer. So what she did, Chris took Meagan home and little Ryan has moved in with us for a little while too, so they're just really great. It's just beautiful to have. Not only grandfather, but great grandfather. It's pretty super to be privileged to have that.

Wedegaertner: Can you think of any particular Stockton event that has affected you and your family? Maybe something political or something?

Lucchetti: Off the top of my head, I just can't really think of anything.

Wedegaertner: Are there any government programs that you particularly enjoy having or particularly dislike?

Lucchetti: Oh you mean like welfare or something like that. Yes, because we hire people to pick our crops and it irks us no end when we can't get workers and here are all these people who are getting money and are able bodied and can't work so to speak. It's sad because we've always worked since we were young and we know what it is to earn your own bread, and it's not fair that other people take advantage of other people's money and not work. We've had people working for us that brag that they are on welfare and then it's not only the first generation, but maybe the second or third and it's really sad in that respect and I know that sometimes they don't really tell you until they are working for you for a while and they don't want you to make them a check. They want you to pay them cash and then you find out why and then of course you have to report them or you try, but they always give you fake names and fake I.D.'s so you really don't anywhere with it. They're really sharp on things like that which irritates me no end and then I have people who have tried to, young people, able bodied people who come at my little fruit and vegetable place and try to give me food stamps and that irritates me no end because I feel, we you know, I think in this country anyone who is able to work or who wants to and has ambition to do something, there is no way that anyone is going to stop them. They could earn a living some way. They shouldn't be offering them the taxpayer's money.

Wedegaertner: Now, your husband wasn't in the service, was he?

Lucchetti: No.

Wedegaertner: Your boys were all too young to be?

Lucchetti: Yeah, the middle boy was in the service, Dick, the one that's married and has three children. He was in the National Guard and my other boy had a hearing problem, not really hearing problem, but something was wrong with his ears so he was 4-F when they checked him out and the youngest was too young to go in, and now he is too old for the draft.

Wedegaertner: How do you feel about the draft registration?

Lucchetti: I have mixed feelings about that, I really can't see wars of any kind of course, and I just can't see why the youth of our country has to fight for older people's mistakes, and I guess you would say I'm against it. If someone wants to make a career of their, as an army or navy person, that's good and well. That's their choice, but to almost force people into signing for the draft, I don't think it's fair.

Wedegaertner: I think we have just about covered everything; you'll be glad to hear. I want to ask you a little about your Bible school for about eight years, was it?

Lucchetti: Well, like I told you, we have people who harvest our fruit and in the spring time we always had cherry pickers. We have a cherry farm besides the other fruit and we have people. We have about forty people that work for us to pick cherries and before the Mexicans came to work as farm workers we used to have people from the middle west in Oklahoma, Arizona and they used to make a living going from crop to crop. All the different seasons picking fruit and they were family people and they were very nice people and this was their life. They were just experts at picking fruit and so they went from ranch to ranch and so forth, and every season we'd see the cherry pickers come with their families to pick our fruit and so we always ran our own crew so to speak and I was the crew boss. I was the person who stayed out in the fields with my children in school and my little one with me, but my other two children in school and I would assign trees to be picked and checked and cherries that were picked that they were cleaned and so forth, and I would usually punch their card for every box they picked or we also weighed their cherries. Sometimes we worked on weights so we would go along with the truck, the scale and we would write, you know, John Jones picked eight hundred pounds today, and so forth. Well, they were always families, but the families would work together. Now the children didn't really work, but they carried boxes to the families, but they would maybe pick on the lower limbs or something. The child labor laws really weren't that strict, but the children really didn't work, you know, I mean they just helped if they were old enough. We had about twenty-five children. I remember that year that I started this, and I was going in the orchard checking my papers and so forth and this little boy was crying. He was just sobbing his little heart out and I just couldn't figure out what had happened to you. Well, he had gotten a spanking for something he hadn't done that someone else had done, and so being I had just gotten my teacher's certificate in religion and I was just really up on this stuff I thought, you know, so I says to the poor little child, well it's too bad that this happened to you. Why don't you just offer it up to God and say this is my offering for the day because I have received something that I really shouldn't have got the spanking so you have this as something you could offer up to God. Of course, I could imagine that little child probably looked at me and said, "boy, what a dumb bunny she must be. Whatever that means." So the poor little guy goes to me, "God. God who?" and I says, "You know, God." And he says, "You mean like goddamit?" and I just couldn't believe it, and I just couldn't believe what he had said and I thought to myself this child doesn't even know that God exists. I just couldn't believe it. It was just a shock to me. So then I just started talking to the little boy and started telling him, "Who do you think made the sun up there," "I don't know," and I said, "how about his world? How about this tree? How do you think this tree grew?" "I don't know, guess the farmer planted

it." I said, "the farmer planted it, but there's someone mightier than the farmer, he's called God." He is. Well, he just couldn't. He had no idea of a supreme being and so I thought, okay I'm out in the field all day, I've got all these twenty to twenty-five kids running around all day, playing in boxes, you know, throwing clods of dirt at each other doing all kinds of things children do. I thought maybe I'll do something about this. Maybe some of the other children don't know about God either, and they were all White Anglos, they weren't Mexican children, and they weren't Catholic. In fact, I never did meet a Catholic that was working for us. So I went around to the parents and they were all up in the trees picking cherries of course and I said, he, how would you like if I gave your children kind of a Sunday school classes in the fields during the day. Well, they were delighted that they wouldn't have to worry about where little Johnny was or little Mary was and so I got the kids to get a bunch of cannery boxes and made a big circle and put the cannery boxes down and set one up for a desk and I got a lot of pictures that I had collected from my own children that I was teaching. And I started to tell them Bible stories and. (tape ended).

Everyday, oh when my husband would go in with a load of picked cherries I would have to stay out with the people in the field anyway, so I just sat the children down and started to teach them. Like I said, I started with Bible stories and then I would tell them, ask them questions about things and found out a lot of things that they didn't know, but a lot of things that they were very smart about because of road smart, you know. Like all the different places they visited, and they worked the different orchards and the people they contacted and a lot of things and so I would teach them. They knew so-called geography and some of the history of their state of course, but they didn't know like this was Stockton, you know, what was Stockton. Stockton was in California. What was California? Of course, they knew Oregon, Washington and that, but to them they didn't have any idea of what it was composed of. In other words, it was just another place, and so I would show them maps of the United States and this was their country and so forth and it got so that the children would every year, I would give them – I went to the public schools and asked them for old books that they threw away and stuff and I went to the depot where they kept all these little books and stuff so I gathered boxes of them and I would give the children all these books to read and their reading was bad. They couldn't read or write very well. Their math was good, but their reading and writing was pretty bad and then I would give them books and I would give them catechism books also and it was just amazing every year we never had trouble getting a crew of people working for us because the children would bring the parents back here where...

Wedegaertner: You really had a reputation.

Lucchetti: Yes, so it was really fun that, you know, that they remembered me and I was always telling them that your parents always picked fruit, but I would love to see you go to school, don't stay out of school. Go to school and get yourself a job, something else, because picking fruit isn't the best thing in the world because it's only seasonal, and do you know just about three years ago I had the biggest thrill. A young man came to the stand and said, "do you know who I am?" and I said. "well, maybe I should know who you are, but I'm sorry I don't." and he said, "I'm Larry

Pennington.” Well, Pennington was a family that worked for us for about, oh twelve years. Every season they would come back and they had six children and this boy was one of the boys that I had taught, and he said, “guess what I am doing now?” and I says, “tell me.” He says, “I’m principal of a school down south in Lindsey.” I says, “oh, that’s just marvelous,” and he says, “I always remembered I went with my family for years and years picking fruit, but I always remembered that you always wanted every year you encouraged me not to pick fruit. You were talking against your business really in a way, but you sure helped because I went on to school and in my spare time went to night classes and I got my teacher’s certificate and I was so happy.”

Wedegaertner: It made it all worthwhile, huh?

Lucchetti: Yeah, I says just one child that, I imagine there’ smore that didn’t come back, you know, to tell you, but I’m sure there must have been more. It was just a thrill to have these little children that really no one really cared too much about, you know, they just were left to shift for themselves and because their parents didn’t have much education either. Some of them only had like a third or fourth grade education. So, the children didn’t think it was important for them to go either. After all they got here, they were doing already with, you know what they had and so it was really great, like I said about – that lasted until the white migrant families stopped, almost stopped, going from state to state picking fruit. Then the Mexicans, the influx of the Mexican worker came in and then I didn’t feel that I could work out in the fields anymore so we got a labor contractor and he would bring, they were mostly the single men. They weren’t families much anymore. So, I always worked with the families and it was great. I even got invitations to their graduations from grammar or high school from the middle west or wherever they lived, and we got letters form them, from the children and the parents most of the years. We got a big kick out of one family one year that we got this Christmas card and we knew, like I said, they didn’t have too much education, but I guess they must have gone to a shop and bought this Christmas card and it says Merry Christmas to the pastor and his wife and that was really something. We knew that they couldn’t read too well, but their heart was in the right place.

Wedegaertner: Did you teach the kids songs, too?

Lucchetti: No. I sing like a frog. I wish I could sing. Then I would, but no I did teach them little poems and, like I said, we always started with Bible stories.

Wedegaertner: About how many hours did you do this each day?

Lucchetti: I would do it maybe two hours and maybe they would have to do something or I’d have to do something, you know. So then I would go and then I’d say recess and they would go and do their own thing or whatever, but they would come and pull my blouse or my sweater, and they would say, “aren’t we having school today?” they were so eager to have school, you wouldn’t believe.

Wedegaertner: At what ages were your children at the time?

Lucchetti: Well, my little one he was always with me. My children were in high school and my little one was in grammar school after, but after school he was with me in the fields too. But sometimes like on Saturdays and Sundays and then after school was out, we would still be picking cherries, the boys would all be home.

Wedegaertner: I think that was a very caring thing to do. I can't imagine very many people doing that for their workers.

Lucchetti: I just felt the need when this little child did this. I just felt how many other people these little children don't know, and they didn't have any religion. If they did they went to, you know, some I don't know what kind of church, and I didn't teach them Catholic, you know. I didn't tell them to become Catholic or anything like that. I was just teaching them the principles of religion in per say, you know, like about God and Bible stories which are almost all the same. Oh, they were so excited about it. They couldn't wait and sometimes I'd leave a Bible story in the middle and say we would have to continue this tomorrow. "Oh, please tell us what happened," so in the morning when they'd come to work with their parents, you know, I'd be nudged at until I sat down with them again and we'd have school and our school would move from tree to tree, you know, from a group of trees that we were picking that day. Well, they'd carry their big boxes along with them and drag them and I'd have not only the little ones, some of them were maybe three or four years old, I'd have them up to ten or twelve and if the parents wanted them to help work, then of course they went to work, but they were really begrudging that time they had to work for their parents because they were missing out on school. Their so-called school, you know.

Not most people, some people because you're Italian. You belong to the mafia. That is foreign to me because I never even heard about the mafia until Godfather. I or whatever came on the books and what have you because – and our families and our way of life, we know nothing about things like that, and of course the mafia was started in Sicily and again, that was started for a good thing, you know, after I read up on it after I wanted to find out about it. Well, it was started in Sicily because the government at that time held down the peasants and just certain people ruled the land and the peasants did all the work and they never got any of the money for it. Well a group of people who thought they should get something better. It was like a union, say or a private organization. These men got together and said let's fight for our rights and so the mafia was started for a good cause, for a good thing, to organize these people so they would get better working conditions so to speak so they would get more for the amount of time and money and effort they put into their work. So, when they organized it, it was for a good thing. Then after it became a bad thing because they went into killings and vendettas and all that. But what made it worse was when it spread to the United States. When it came to the big cities of the east like Chicago and Philadelphia and places like that and they really took over as bosses or whatever they were that they could try to control some of their own people like the Italians that worked in stores and so forth had to pay them so they could get their jobs. Had to pay them because they had the stores in certain district and so forth. And it's sad that the majority of the Italians are – other people, the Americanis again, would associate just because you are Italian

that you are mafia. That is very wrong, and I resent that highly because it isn't true and there's very, such a limited thing. I think the T.V.'s and the movies in order to make money on this thing have glorified this to an extent way beyond what it should be because I think there is criminals and bad people in every ethnic group. They don't have to be Italian or Mexican or anything else, and it's sad that they did do that, you know. That it has been brought up like that, I mean. I think Italians throughout history of the Italians being in the United States, the majority of the Italians have done nothing, but good for the United States cause they love the United States and they have always worked for the United States and like I say when you go back to Italy, you're an Americano. You're not an Italian.

Wedegaertner: I meant to ask you one other thing about you. This organization that you said you were president or vice president?

Lucchetti: The Italian Catholic Federation?

Wedegaertner: No, the agriculture one.

Lucchetti: Oh, I am religious chairman for the San Joaquin County for it's California Women for Agriculture. Is that what you mean? It's nationwide, but they are called the United States Women in Agriculture. But California Women for Agriculture is five years old.

Wedegaertner: What is your platform, and what are you trying to accomplish?

Lucchetti: We're trying to have legislation to help farmers, and like filling the dam. Say if we don't fill the dam, where are we going to get the water to irrigate our crops? That dam is built by your tax money and mine in order that we have better agriculture. We don't have that water to the ocean and by a few people that rather go rafting for fun and destroy agriculture in a sense. Later, I mean not boom right now, you know. So, we're fighting for causes like that and like the different laws that go into effect in Sacramento.

Wedegaertner: What are your feelings, yours and your husbands on the farm labor organizations and movements?

Lucchetti: Well, I feel everyone has the right to unionize if they wish, but you don't want to ram it down someone's throat, like Chavez had done nothing for, I really feel, has done nothing for the real workers. He has a few followers and he's got a lot of backing from like the Ford Company, the Kennedys and people like that, but he is just really for one set of people. That's what's turned off a lot of our white people who are now on welfare who were workers. Farm workers who won't deal with Chavez or his kind and it's sad that this has happened, but we have to depend now on a foreign nation for supply for our farm work, and we shouldn't do that. We have enough of our people in our land that could do this work if they were only – if only there was some kind of union that was justified and right. But Chavez is very one sided and we're against that, and that's it as far as farming.