



# Maria Napoleoni

Interviewer:

So I'm here today just to collect some stories you may have to tell about you, your life, maybe immigrating, anything really you can talk about.

Maria Napoleoni:

Yes. Do I say my name?

Interviewer:

Yes, yeah.

Maria Napoleoni:

Hi, my name is Maria Napoleoni. I was born May 9th, 1956 in St. Michael Azores. And as growing up, my story is going to be about when I was growing up since I was little. I did have a good bring up childhood. I had my little brother. We used to play a lot outside and we used to do ... My dad was at a mill. He would rent a mill to grind the corn and the wheat. And I did, as I grew up like 10, 11 years old, I started helping my dad at the mill. Sometimes after school, me and my little brother will go to another mill, daddy used to rent it so we can help him out and then to grind the sacks of the grain. Then my dad would come in the afternoon and pick it up and then we'd go home.

So we did a lot of walking. It was far away from my house and we walked like half an hour to go back and forth to that place. And sometimes we had, up in another street, different street, we had the same thing. So my dad did different mills, different times, so that was his growing up. My grandfather on my dad's side was a miller also, so my dad follow his footsteps and he was very, very good at it and he was very smart for that.

And so I used to play in the river with my brother and we used to swim in the cold water, and so it was a good bringing up. I'm happy up to 16 years old. I got married to an older guy and I came to America and my life changed a little bit. So I got my struggles at first. And then after things didn't really work out, I moved to Massachusetts. When I came to U.S., I was very happy. Never seen America and it was very exciting. And then I moved to Massachusetts where all my family were because I brought all my family to Fall River. And that's where I've been living since 1982, I've been living in Massachusetts, and in Connecticut, I lived for 10 years.

I have a daughter, her name is Linda Talo and my three boys, William Napoleoni, Eric Napoleoni, and Walter Napoleoni. And I have 10 grandkids. There's one on the way in four weeks, and I got two great-grandkids and I'm very, very happy to have all my kids and my grandkids.

So I like America, so I never wanted to go back and live there. I just go visit once. I went visit quite a few times, but not to live there. My parents had five kids; three girls and two boys. My middle sister, Eberta, she passed away six years ago. And I do have an older brother in Canada, Toronto. And I have my older sister and my younger brother live in Santa Maria in Azores, and I am the only one here with all my kids, my grandkids, and my niece and nephews.

And we have good friends. And I've been coming to the program over here. I've been coming here to the senior with the other people. And, yeah, we have a good time. We do a little exercise, we play bingo, we play cards, and we do have a good time. And we do go to trips sometimes once in a while. So I really like living new life in Fall River.



Interviewer:

How old were you when you immigrated here?

Maria Napoleoni:

I was 16. I was 16 years old when I got married. And then my daughter's father was from Peru, so he went there to look for a girlfriend. So, after a few months, we got married in 1972, April 11th, 1972. And then on August 28th I came to America. I was 16 years old and now I'm 67.

Interviewer:

Yes. Now you mentioned your siblings are in St. Michael?

Maria Napoleoni:

I have two; one older sister and my youngest brother live Santa Maria in Azores. I am from Sao Miguel. I was born in Sao Miguel. We all were born in Sao Miguel, but they wanted to buy a house in Santa Maria. It's the smallest island of the nine islands of the Azores. Sao Miguel is the biggest island of the Azores. So I know Santa Maria I visited a few times and I liked it. It's cute, it's beautiful to go visit, nice beaches, nice places to go eat and stuff. So I really enjoyed that and I plan one of these days to go visit my sister because she's not doing too good, so I want to see her at least one more time.

Interviewer:

Do you keep in contact with your siblings and your family?

Maria Napoleoni:

Yes. Yeah, I speak to my brother by the video. Sometimes I see my sister on the video when she goes to his house for lunch and I speak to her a couple of times a week, yes. I do have the program for the international program so I can talk to her more often. And I speak to my brother too, and I got in touch with my other brother in Canada and my sister-in-law. So I do get in touch with my family, even though we are far away. So, yes, I visited Canada quite a few times, too. I liked Canada, but my place, I came to America, I stayed in America.

Interviewer:

What made you choose to live in Massachusetts, specifically?

Maria Napoleoni:

See, when I got married, I lived in Connecticut, in New Britain, Connecticut for 10 years. I was together with my daughter's father for eight years. Then we got divorced and then my family was living down here and I didn't have no family there. I didn't have really much friends, you know? So my daughter was only five and I needed to get a job. So I came to Massachusetts to be close to my family, so my mom can help me with my daughter for a little bit, and then I stayed here, living here.

Interviewer:

Can you describe what it was like when you first entered New England for the first time?

Maria Napoleoni:

Oh, it was a good experience. I never thought that it was going to be the way it is, but I love New England. I like the weather, I like all the seasons. I like the snow. I like the spring, the summer, the fall. So this is the place for me



to stay in New England. I'm not moving from New England, because I do like the snow. I don't like the heat too much, but in the house I have my air conditioner, so I'm all set, you know? Yes. But yeah, I like New England and I've been visiting different places by bus. We go in a trip, tour trip for the day and with my friends, my friend Maria and other people. And we do have a good time. We got out of the house, so that's nice.

When I was growing up, I used to play a lot with my little brother because we were the youngest. I'm older than him, three and a half years and a lot of times we spent most time was together. Him and his two friends had a go-kart, like a wood, a wood go-kart that they made. So we will go from the top of the hill all the way down to my grandmother's house. My grandmother live in the bottom of the hill. We go over the bridge where the river on the bottom was. My house was next on the other side.

So we used to go do laundry and wash clothes in the rocks in the river. That's how I met my daughter's father. So I met him. And my mom always tell the story that my grandmother was ... they didn't want to come to America because my grandfather on my mom's side had only one sister in America. She lived in Taunton with his family and my grandmother was afraid to come in a boat, so they never came to U.S. So my mom always wanted to come. She would tell me that story as a kid, you know? So that stayed in my mind.

So that guy came there and he wanted to take a couple of pictures. My other sister that she passed away, she says, "Why do you want to take a picture of my sister for?" He says, "Oh, I don't keep it." It was that minute camera, so he will give us the picture. But then after he will come and we had a feast that we can ... then I met him and then he wanted to talk to my parents, speak to my parents, because he says he wanted to get my hand in marriage. Everything was so fast. So I didn't really grow up to enjoy my life, you know? It was a thing because I had that in my brain that my mom wanted to come to America.

She says, "We could have been all American," this and that, so that stayed in me, you know? So when that guy came and I wanted to come, I said, "Okay." I liked him, I loved him, but he never really show me the love and that he cared for me because when we got married, my priest asked him, do you have kids? Did you ever got married? He said, "No," but he did have a baby girl that was one month old when I came to U.S and I found out. For the whole year I was very depressed. But I never went back. I just stayed here.

So that was me, for the whole year. I had a hard time, very depressed, crying, because he lied to me, he lied to my parents, he lied to my mom. I was only 16. He used me, you know? That's kind of a sad story, but the only thing that was good, it was that I got my daughter and then I got married in Massachusetts for the second time, and I have three boys. Then I have all my grandkids and two great-grandkids. And it was worth it for me to stay. My kids ask me, "Mom, why did you stay?" I says, "It was meant for me to stay. If I didn't stay, I didn't meet your father, I wouldn't meet your father. I wouldn't have you kids. And I want my grandkids." So that was my thing. I never says I will go back. Sometimes I say I should have gone back. But that's the way. Sometimes we are predicted in life for something in the future, and that was my future to have my kids and my grandkids.

It's a happy story. Sad, but happy at the same time. So I got my annulment with my first marriage because of my age, and he lied to me. But the only thing I didn't know was I knew after my daughter was like 14, 15, when her cousin that used to live with us, he used to go visit his other girlfriend, the woman, he never left her. So I didn't even know about that. That hurt. But I didn't know back then when I did my divorce, otherwise I would put that in. I wrote all my story. I wrote my story to send it to Boston, to Rome, so the Pope can annul my marriage. So my marriage was annulled with him, because of my case. But I didn't even know back then about that he was still seeing that woman. On the weekends, I would come with my daughter, as a baby, to visit my family. He will just go for the weekend with his mom and his niece to her house. So I didn't know that.

And then Blanca told my daughter the truth, and then that's how I knew. My daughter told me. So that's the only thing that him ... I don't hate him or anything, but I'm not happy for what he did. He should have not done that. He should have been truthful because my priest even ask him before we got married and he said, "No, that was not true."

So that's my life. And I know my son, William, he wanted to have in writing, but I know it's in recording. So he wanted to have a copy of my story about what I want to do. I'm going to write it down. Monday sit down, write it





down, and give my kids each a copy. That's it. The same story. Okay, so that-