

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
ORAL HISTORY OF HOUSTON PROJECT

“Religion in the Gulf Coast”

Mary M. Mezzino

Interviewed by: Ernesto Valdés
Date: May 15, 2008
Transcribed by: Michelle Kokes
Location: 5025 Casa Grande, Dickinson, Texas

EV: This is Ernesto Valdés and I am interviewing Mary Cottonbridge is that correct?

MZ: Mary Cottonbridge.

EV: Mezzino?

MZ: Mezzino.

EV: 5025 Casa Grande, Dickinson, Texas and the date is May 15, 2008. Okay so I have explained to you what we are going to do with this interview right? And about putting it in the Special Collections at the University of Houston and what they will do is it will be available to people, historians that researchers that my want to come buy and research these particular areas. But also probably make them available through the computers so, you know, that's why we have to have all these releases signed. So would you state your full name please?

MZ: Mary Mezzino I go by Mary Mezzino.

EV: Okay. Where were you born?

MZ: Galveston.

EV: Would you mind giving us the date?

MZ: I'm 90.

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EV: Okay.

MZ: August the 14th of... 1917.

EV: Okay. And where you... did you go to school there in Galveston? Can you tell me now far you went in school?

MZ: Well I just went through high school and then I went to two years of business school, two years.

EV: Right and did you live all your life there in Galveston?

MZ: Yeah. Came here like 20 years ago.

EV: To Dickinson.

MZ: A few years in Houston, three or four years in Houston.

EV: Okay now did your... it was your grandmother who initially migrated here is that correct and where did she come from?

MZ: She is from the island of Elba. Rio Moreno.?

EV: That's where Napoleon was?

MZ: That's right in this gorgeous palace he lived in after they kicked him out of everything they put him in a palace.

EV: Can you tell me, number one, did she come alone when she came?

MZ: No she came with my grandfather and two children.

EV: What was your grandfather's name?

MZ: Orlando.

EV: Orlando? And who else did you say came here?

MZ: Well two kids I think one was Luigi, I can't remember what the other one was.

EV: They were her siblings?

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MZ: No my mother, stupid me my mother was five.

EV: Okay do you know when it was that they arrived here?

MZ: I've got it somewhere. [speaking to daughter Maureen Patton] Do you know?

MP: I don't know but I can find out.

MZ: They came when my mother was five years old.

EV: Did you get to know your grandmother?

MZ: Oh sure. She is the one who dictated the story...she would tell me she wanted me... she talked to me in Italian and I can speak every word in Italian... I mean I can understand every word but I can't speak. But she would speak to me in Italian and she gave me and I wrote this, that she dictated to me and then she would say, "You talk to me in English." She wanted to learn English. So, as a result, I didn't learn to speak Italian because...

EV: You didn't learn to speak Italian? (laughter) Did she learn to speak English?

MZ: Quite good and she used to get onto me in the inner urban and Galveston and come up here in Dickinson can you believe that on Saturday and preach the sermon and she would bring me with her.

EV: What was the inner urban a bus?

MZ: No, it's a railroad car and I wish they would bring it back it was wonderful. Then on Sundays she taught the service, I mean she did the service. Then it grew and grew I'll have to show you a picture of the group. So she had, she wrote off for Reverend D'Alburgo who was a preacher and then he took over.

EV: Is this for me can I have this?

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MP: You can't take it it's the last copy we didn't realize...I'll scan it and email it to you.

EV: Okay.

MZ: I think I threw out five copies I've looked all over the house for them and I can't find them.

EV: I assume your mother spoke with you in Italian?

MZ: Oh yeah. But she... my father who was born in Austria and my grandmother would rather speak to my father who spoke perfect Italian... he spoke five languages.

My mother just botched it all up. She threw in funny words and all kinds of things. My grandmother taught school so she spoke beautiful Italian.

EV: Did she... now you were telling me how she was able, how she came to the United States. Tell me again how that happened.

MZ: The Baptist church brought her here in Galveston.

EV: How did they find out about her?

MZ: Well they knew about her because of letters and things that had been going back and forth and they heard about her and they wrote her and asked she would like to come to America and so she came.

EV: Was there a fairly large community in Elba that were Protestant?

MZ: No not too many. But they were Protestant and then my great grandmother was Catholic and Protestant. She went... my grandmother used to say she didn't know when she was going to church. My great grandmother Maria... I'm named after her.

EV: And these were... the name of her particular group is that the Waldensians?

MZ: The Waldensians. See that started in France.

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EV: Right.

MZ: Where they took me... Waldo to Waldo in France when I was going all over Europe and they took me to a place where he had preached for a long time in France.

EV: Was that Peter Waldo?

MZ: Yes.

EV: He was considered the head of the... he was like the Martin Luther of Europe is that correct?

MZ: Yeah but he just started that big church and center. And there are some here like Maureen said in North Carolina and all over.

EV: Were you in contact with them... were the churches in contact with each other?

MZ: Other churches are. In fact we have....

MP: There is an article here about the guy who was the head of the church, the Waldensian church so that... like I said up on top of all the employees here.

MZ: That's _____ yeah (10:02)?

EV: So when the Baptists... your mother you said she came over rather young?

MZ: Five.

EV: Okay.

MZ: The Baptist church sponsored her and they gave her things for the little... she had a little house and two Jewish people... one Rabbi Cohen and the other one was not a Rabbi but he had a store in Galveston and he gave her a pump organ... the church... two Jews and they helped her. Of course, it just grew and grew and grew.

EV: Because of her ministry I suspect. Now did it grow among everybody or just among Italians?

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MZ: Just some of them were Catholic and some were not but they all came to the church.

EV: Now did she preach in English or Italian.

MZ: See there's the church (showing photo)... there's my grandmother right there. So you can tell she is a big one and she wrote off... this is me, my father and mother, that's my baby sister and anyway that is the whole congregation. It grew from like 6 or 8 people so she had to give it up and she got him to come back and take the church over. Here's something... the Presbyterian church, I mean Baptist church had been helping her all the time and then they lost a lot of money back then and the Presbyterians always had more money and they took over the church and this is at the Presbyterian outside.

EV: Is this the church in Galveston?

MZ: In Galveston.

EV: Is it still there?

MP: That's the chapel that's next to the main sanctuary there, First Presbyterian.

MZ: Let's see this is the outside of the church and this is a little... this is the one that's outside... the chapel.

EV: You said that somebody had to come take over... Now who was that?

MZ: She wrote to get Reverend D'Alburgo to come over and take the church.

EV: How do you spell his name do you know?

MZ: D'Alburgo. _____ (13:11) it never lasts long... because she was so good that it didn't last long.

EV: You mean that the church didn't last long?

MZ: No...

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MP: Well they also assimilated into the English speaking churches eventually. I mean that was the whole point.

MZ: Some of these... right there.

MP: Some went to the Baptist church.

MZ: They went to the Baptist... and some went out of town, Texas City, Lamarque.

EV: When you had services I suspect they were in Italian right?

MZ: Yeah. We used to go as children... we used to go to the big Presbyterian Church and then at 5:00 we went to that church.

EV: And did they always continue their services in Italian, sang?

MZ: Always, sang...

EV: Was there anything different between the services... the type of services.

MZ: No.

EV: I'm saying that because there was a lot of different. The differences when I would go to the Mexican Presbyterian church with my grandmother as opposed to the Anglo Presbyterian church... there was a big difference. Even the way they sang. The hymns they sang.

MZ: I have a hymn book that we used to sing. I have one hymn book I managed to find one... you know and I just up and left everything and we sang in Italian.

EV: Oh really? And when your folks were... you grandparents were... were they under any type of discrimination or...?

MZ: My great grandmother was thrown in jail. She was kind of a feisty type. My grandmother used to say, "She sounds just like you Mary." She always said something

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real quick. My grandmother used to tell me, "Wow!" But anyway, my grandmother...

the story is really the story about my great grandmother and...

EV: That's the one they put in jail?

MZ: Yes. They took us to the jail to show me it when I was on Elba. Anyway, you know Garibaldi's Army came marching through Lovorio. He said, "I want you to let out all of the prisoners." So they let my great grandmother out. When you read all about this in 1174, very interesting. And they showed us some of the tanks where they hid. They were taught to lower themselves on rope and... it's all in there. And they went into the caves to keep from being persecuted or killed. So when you read this you'll see that.

EV: Some of the reading that I did said one of the writers had to write to France for support because they were being so discriminated against, so abused and had so much violence by the Catholics.

MZ: They had to hide!

EV: They were so atrocious, it was so bad that words can't even describe what... I mean they were awful things. They would tear babies apart.

MZ: That's right. My great grandmother she and my grandmother both had beautiful handwriting that is one of the few things... people would come, salesman would come to Elba and they would need someone to write for them. My grandmother used to do that. She used to write letters to their wives or you know. So, after a little while, after my great grandmother got thrown in prison, she didn't... nobody ever came. Well one day one came and then she asked him if he would bring her a bible. They burned all the bibles in Italy. See in Rome was not the capitol of Italy back then. So the man said, "No I can't take a chance like that." Well he did. One day she was baking bread and he

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walked up a pretty good thing...and my grandmother thought, "You know... all the bibles will burn. Baking this bread and she heard a knock on the door and it was some man and he said, "Maria are you a protestant?" She said, "I'm a Protestant." And my grandmother said she was so slick. Anyway they went off and she went over to get her bread... and she had put a bible on top of the apron of the dough and she went over there and the dough had covered the bible and they gave her... So she tore the pages out of the Bible and put it in a loaf of bread. I never did ask her how she wrapped the pages or anything but she put them in the bread and then she put them in a basket and off she went and took the bread to here and there and then told him. And then one day they caught her on the street. "Are you a Protestant?" She said, "Protestant and a half." So he took the bread out of her basket and cracked it over his knee and saw the pages and then they took her.

EV: That's when they arrested her?

MZ: Yes. But when Garibaldi came through they let her out.

EV: How long did she remain in jail?

MZ: I don't even remember.

EV: Do you remember what year that was more or less?

MZ: I don't know... Valdansians in Italy.

EV: Was that in the middle of the 1800's sometime?

MZ: I would think about....

EV: That was right after Napoleon was there right? Because he was exiled I think after 1812 obviously.

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MZ: Thank God into a palace. (laughter) Peter Waldo is 1174 and he started preaching then. I couldn't tell you about the time.

EV: I was just curious how close I was to the time of the exile to the palace.

MZ: This is her story and I said...

EV: So how did your mother... did your mother pick this up from her mother... in terms of missionary zeal?

MZ: She was _____ (23:25). She was only about five years old but she knew a lot. My grandmother was the one that really taught us. It was 1848 when they were given civil rights.

EV: 1848?

MZ: You read that you'll see.

EV: Now when the Protestant Italians came here to Galveston did they live in a certain neighborhood together or did they just live anywhere? So was there much... was there any animosity with the Catholic Italian's here?

MZ: No, like I told you the Jewish people helped so much.

EV: Yeah that's interesting isn't that? When did the two congregations begin to merge just day to day kind of things?

MZ: They didn't merge. A lot of these... a lot of people, "Oh that's okay," went on to another church. Some of those people went to the Baptist Church. We stayed with the Protestants and they took the money to help. My grandmother helped to keep when they were in a rut and to this day I have cousins who are Baptists and their parents went to the Baptist Church. My cousin Bobby, funny he called me the other day. He loves the Baptist Church.

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EV: Is that right?

MZ: His mother loved the Presbyterian Church at the time. So that's how it went.

EV: Now tell me when did you get to travel over there?

MZ: I've been to Italy twice. The first time I went my tour group would take me to Elba and my little grand daughter, Maureen's daughter told me, she said "Grandmother it's very difficult, you know." Have you been?

EV: Not to Italy, no.

MZ: Well you have to get on a ferry and you have to be there on time. You have to know when it is going to be. Sometimes it's not going to be and all that. Our group wasn't going to fool with it. So I got to see all of Italy. You know Rome... everything but I didn't get to go to Elba. And I had this friend that was a lot younger than I. She was like in her 60's and she said, "You know I'm going to take you to Elba after all that listening to you about it." She did a lot of work trying to find out about it all and she did and we went.

EV: When was that?

MZ: Like two years ago? When did I go two three years ago?

MP: The year of Rita, the storm.

MZ: Oh we got stuck. We had to stay at the hotel four extra days because of the storm. But when I got there and my nephew told me exactly what I was going to find and everything. They call it the PiTiaza Valdeza. (27:40)

EV: Tiaza?

MZ: Tiaza Valdeza Church. And then across from it is a hostel and we stayed at the hostel for four days and nights. It was wonderful! I've never been to any of the hotels

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we stayed at... but anyway we walked in and when I walked in on the wall was my great grandmother and my grandmother and over here on the wall was their marriage licenses and just all this stuff. They still were there! My two grandmothers! You should have seen... they pulled out the books and showed me all those things. It was really...

EV: You had two grandmothers doing this?

MZ: Well the great grandmother was thrown in jail and then my grandmother was the one who was brought here by the Baptist Church. But they told stories about them and just everything.

EV: That must have been very nice.

MZ: Oh it was. My friend that I was there with, "Mary I had no idea we were going to have this kind of time!" She had a fit over it. She just thought it was wonderful, well I did too. Anyway they brought their books and showed me things like my grandmother had a beautiful handwriting and all this stuff it was really something, really was. It was just... I knew it was going to be nice but I just didn't dream it was going to be the way it was you know?

EV: Doesn't it seem to you sometimes like there is a very thin curtain between you and that era?

MZ: Oh yeah!

EV: Like if you just had some kind of special string and you could just kind of step into it? Yeah because I started doing my family genealogy and part of my family was Scotch Irish and fought in the Civil War, The Battle of 1812 and I saw his original petitions that he made because he... on his own changed his name and then explained to

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the government about his pension and why he changed his name. You hold the original documents and you just feel... it is just a very strange feeling.

MZ: I have all these things I will have to get them all together. I have the marriage licenses... you know everything. But it is so funny how things happen.

EV: How long did you stay there?

MZ: Oh we were there just 8 days.

EV: Was Elba the only place you went to?

MZ: All the way down to Sicily. I told Maureen I'll probably never make that trip again. I'm not there like I used to be. I'm so glad I went when I was 80 because I can't do what I used to do. When you're 90 you realize there are other things you can do and certainly sit in a chair and read a book but it really is... I felt like I was in a time warp. I was back there when they were there, you know. Because all these people all knew about them. It was like we were talking about them. They remember their "Maria" you know my grandmother or **Artemesha**.

EV: What was her name?

MZ: **Artemesha**. Those people, some of them were like 70 and 80 years old, they remember well when it happened because they were all alive then. They knew all the stories I was told, you know. Because the stories about her getting thrown in jail, her baking bread with the Bible inside.

EV: Baking the word.

MZ: She was not... my grandmother used to tell me I was more like her than like my grandmother. "Just like my mama!" she used to say. But I was flip when I was little and I sassed, you know. She told me.

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EV: Did your family maintain the Catholic traditions when you all moved here?

MZ: No. They were Baptists.

EV: Just the culture. For example did your husband have to court you the Italian way or the American way?

MZ: He was Italian 100% Italian.

EV: Did he....

MZ: Lord no. Honey my husband was somebody you would love. She is just like her {Maureen} daddy, just a spitting image. Always up... never down and honey, you know what he'd say, "Don't worry about it." Of course he was Catholic and he liked to have a [REDACTED] and Ray said I had to go talk to the priest so I did and then when we left. He said, "No you have to do." So and so. I said, "Maybe we'd better go outside and forget it." When he drove me at home I said, "I think you'd better forget about the marriage and everything else because I'm not going through all this stuff." See my father was Catholic in Austria but he turned Baptist like my mother. The priest had all these things he wanted me to do. He was not going to be there... He was telling me somebody else was going to do... whatever it was. I had too many "ifs ands and butts."

EV: So where did you end up getting married?

MZ: We got married in my church, First Presbyterian Church and when he died he died as a Presbyterian.

EV: Oh really he joined your church?

MZ: Yep and he's written in this book more than I have. I haven't even been in it much. But he worked real hard in the church but there are too many people in the old days.

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EV: Well I was just asking because I had... my father when he courted my mother... had she lived a couple more years she would have been 90 herself, she was born in 1914. She would have been... he courted her in the Mexican style. He came to the parents first and asked permission, you know all this kind of stuff.

MZ: My husband went to talk to my daddy.

MP: Not to court you but to ask you to marry him.

MZ: No he just asked my daddy permission to marry me. We dated and we did all kinds of things. It just means that we were [REDACTED] (36:23). He liked to go to night clubs. He liked to do things that I didn't like. But we finally, but I finally got to where I enjoyed going out to dance.

EV: Was he in the military?

MZ: No. He had a terrible time with his family. They thought it was terrible that he was going to marry me.

EV: My mom and dad had the same problem. Because my grandfather was very, they were very, very Catholic he was Knights of Columbus. He came from Knights of Columbus in the winter and whatever they call them. You know they went to prayer every... every morning my grandmother. So when he married my mother who was a Protestant they had to get married in both churches. They got married in Catholic and Presbyterian. We were baptized in both of them too.

MZ: That's strange.

EV: My aunt just would not sleep. They got married in the Presbyterian Church first but my aunt just couldn't stand it. And she went and argued with the priest and finally he went ahead and married them in the Catholic Church. So we were kind of multi...

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Probably like you there are some things I really like... mostly ceremony because the theology and the way they teach...they don't teach the children anything it's just.

MZ: His sister, Angelo's Mother... the same with my mother. My husband was an angel and as I said he and Maureen were exactly alike in every way. My son is exactly like me, he worries. I have yet to see here disturbed over anything, really I'm serious. She is just like... she knows how to handle everything but they just keep at it. They were just so ugly about it. You would have thought it was in the ancient day before you would do that. And I told my husband... I think we need to forget about this. Let's just forget about it. He said, "You're not going to let them do that to you?" I said, "They are doing it to you they aren't just doing it to me." Well he calmed me and he asked me if I would go out with him and we did. We walked down the beach and he started singing. "Then in a little town like this... Laaaa ta da tad a da...." I'll have to ask Maureen I can't even remember what. I said, "What in the world are you doing?" and he said, "I'm proposing." I said, "My God you could have picked something different!" And then we went to giggling and laughing and we talked about it and we decided we weren't going to let them mess this up. But it was always there. All the time we were married it was always there. Even when... well she came over one night and said, "Oh he'll always be a Catholic." So it was never, ever finalized. They just had their way about it and that was just it. It was too bad.

EV: Yeah my grandfather was... there is flat bread that the Mexican bakeries make in El Paso it's about like this; it's kind of oblong, flat bread. It doesn't have much of a taste they call it Protestante (in Spanish) and my grandfather always loved those bakeries because they served your bread right there, Protestante. (laughter).

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MZ: Well that's too bad.

EV: If that was the worst he did...he was fine otherwise everything was okay. It's just that he was very... they say he was a big Knights of Columbus guy.

MZ: In the impact of the Depression that the First Baptist Church was not able to keep it up and so the Presbyterians took it over. So you know it's funny how things happen because I love my church and Maureen does too, we love our church. Let's see it was dissolved in 1943, the church. Reverend Spockey came in 1975. You know what, I write it in here. He and his brother both have done the same thing and Reverend Spockey was the Presbyterian and his brother was a Methodist and they both did the same kind of work.

EV: Well as I understand it... well were you raised as Presbyterian or Baptist?

MZ: Presbyterian.

EV: Well as I understand from reading up on this... the Valdensian is that right?

MZ: In Italian it's Valdensia in American its Valdensian.

EV: Well let's do it in Italian, it sounds more like my last name and I like that. Well you know I was reading in the... Well I thought you said Waldensians I wondered... I looked up in the computer and looked up Valdensians and there was a guy named Valdesians he made coffee called Juan Valdez and he went as a missionary from Spain to China and met with the Valdensians. That's where I say and I said, "That's what Maureen is talking about." But they were the Protestant branch and he stayed in Italy all that time with his minister.

MP: There's probably a connection somewhere in there.

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EV: Well it's because they are all Protestants. At some point one of these articles mentions that John Calvin got a little teed off at these guys because they weren't _____ enough. But they said, "We are following the precepts of the New Testament, not the things that man makes." Calvin was a good people. They had a hard time buying the predestination thing. See the predestination thing...

MZ: I think it's so sad that they can't live with the group. Like I have a bible class that I teach and we are all different denominations we never have a bad word among us. We have a Methodist, Presbyterian, two Catholics, Jewish...I can't even remember... but we are all different. But it's too bad when they can't get along. Just like this little man and his wife were coming down to the reunion and they are Catholic and they lived in Elba. We just had a wonderful time when we were there, just a precious man.

EV: Well are there any other folks that you think I could talk to, to get some of this shared history?

MZ: What do you mean?

EV: Just elderly descendants of the Protestant groups that came over.

MZ: I wonder if Bobby called here... he's Baptist, I don't think he has any history. You'll get a lot from this right here.

EV: Well you say somebody is coming in from Italy right?

MZ: From Elba.

EV: And you all are going to have some kind of meeting?

MZ: Yeah.

EV: I mean reunion or conference.

MZ: Are you going to be here?

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EV: I can be I guess.

MZ: Do you speak Italian?

EV: I speak Italian if somebody talks to me slowly and I speak in Spanish. I've carried on telephone conversations with e-mails in Spanish. I have a friend of mine, a guy over the internet... he has a B & B [bed and breakfast] and a cooking0 school in Tuscany. He wrote me... and I wrote to him and he wrote me back in this atrocious English. So I wrote back and I said, "Arturo, write to me in Italian because I can read it better and I'll write to you in Spanish and whatever Spanish you know you put in there and then we understood each other. But his English was awful. But I used to date a girl whose family was Udine way up in the North. So I guess what I'm saying is if you know folks who are going to be at this meeting would they be able to give me history about... would they know enough about their folks coming over here?

MZ: You'll find out in here... there is a history in here my great grandmother and my grandmother and you will understand more and this is, this here is the Protestant sect is flourishing.

EV: Where is this going to happen?

MZ: Alice, I think it's in June she's done the work. How do you know her? His big thing about Waldo...

EV: The thing that is funny about this is that my last name, Valdes, comes from Valdo and it came from the Visigoths when they invaded Northern Spain and they left the name Valdo and the "es" on the end of the word in Latin means sum up so Valdes is the sum of Valdo. So I saw Valdo in here and I thought.... It's strange, plus the fact that they had

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Valdes in there. And that actually should be an “S” they didn’t put the “Z” until the 1700’s or 1800’s. It just grabbed my imagination.

MZ: That will give you a lot of...

EV: Well I’ll talk to her about.

MZ: I had copies. I had five copies in this house somewhere. I’ve been throwing out stuff and I know I threw it out. My friend had that one copy and I gave it to her the day I gave this talk... I gave a talk on this and she said “Oh can I have this?” I said, “Sure.” I gave it to her. When I couldn’t find it I called her and she said, “Oh Mary I have it honey.” I said, “Oh my God thank you!” She brought it to me and Maureen is going to make it.

EV: But this covers your family and the Valdes thing. And you don’t know any other families who have your kind of Italian Protestant genealogy thing like that?

MZ: No most of them are dead... really. Where is that picture?

EV: But you don’t know their children?

MZ: No I’ll tell you their children are dead too.

EV: They should have stayed Catholic.

MZ: That’s my cousin, she’s dead. There’s another cousin, she’s dead too. This cousin is dead and this is a friend that’s dead. They are all dead. She just died a few months ago. Francis DelVergo... this here this preacher here... he was her father in law, he’s dead. You know, there’s nobody. I’m 90 and I’m lucky to be alive. I don’t know how come I’m lucky to be alive!

EV: Do you know Del Ossio family?

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MZ: I know a Del Ossio but I don't know them. I know who they are. Do you know them babe?

EV: Is there anything you want to add to any of this?

MZ: Well ask a question!

EV: I think I've asked questions that I can for this particular...

MZ: That's going to help.

EV: Exactly.

MZ: I go way back in history on that.

EV: You told me this is the one that your grandmother dictated to you?

MZ: That's right. She was a school teacher and I wish I could put my hands on all the stuff that I've got but it's where I've been throwing everything out...

EV: Don't go back there anymore!

MZ: I like everything clear.

EV: I'll read through this and when she give this to me... she's going to give me a copy. Then I'll read through it and if I have any questions then I'll come back. How is that?

MZ: That's good. Well, my grandmother would take me on the inter-urban... the train thing. My father's grocery store was on the corner where the thing stopped and my grandmother would take me up here in Dickenson on Saturday and preach the sermon and I was five years old. We got back on the inter-urban and then the next day we went to church. That's what... I practically lived with my Grandmother because my mother and father had grocery store and my mother had to help him and everything else so she lived with us. But she had such a bright mind and I wish I had...

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EV: It sounds like she was busy all the time.

MZ: She was. She visited... she came up here to Dickenson twice a week sometimes.

When she heard someone was ill, things like that and then those two Jewish people...

they were crazy about her.

EV: What were their names do you remember?

MZ: Well Rabbi Cohen. Maureen what's that Jewish Funeral Home?

MP: Levi

EV: Levi?

MZ: Levi had a funeral home and they were real good to her. They brought her things, you know, that she could use. [REDACTED] coming over here and she left two kids over there and never got to see them again.

EV: Oh my goodness did you ever get to see any of your relatives?

MZ: No, no relatives.

EV: When you... did she ever marry folks or baptize them or anything like that?

MZ: No.

EV: So she preached and visited and that's what she did just worked in the fields of the Lord.

MZ: It just made you sick she'd get on the bus... she was a good missionary and both of my grandmothers were missionaries.

EV: How long did she live, how old was she?

MZ: In her 80's. I don't know how long... my grandmother died over there.

EV: Do you want to talk about your great grandmother, Maria, the one you are named after... was she buried there in Elba?

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MZ: Yeah and they took me up to her grave... walked up a little... God I was exhausted! Uncle Larry is going to be here Maureen and I'm going to tease him about that. You know Larry took me up to the top of the mountain where my great grandmother's grave. I thought I was going to die! Sara Lee said, "Don't you ask for any more graves!"

MP: Mama's always loved graveyards. When we were kids and we went to New Orleans we went to so many graveyards.

EV: My God the artwork they do there is fabulous.

MZ: Yeah so I don't know if there is anything else I can help you.

MP: Do you want to take a tour through the photo gallery in the hall?

EV: Yeah.

End of Interview