



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

An interview with
Catherine Bregante Ghio, 1896-1994

APRIL 27, 1980



[MP3 Audio File](#) [Length: 2:23:05] (65.5 MB)

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INTERVIEWER'S NOTE

BOB WRIGHT: This is an interview with Mrs. Catherine Ghio taken on the 27th day of April, 1980 at her home at 2766 State Street in San Diego. My name is Bob Wright.

Could you give me your full name and when you were born.

CATERINE GHIO: My name is Catherine Bregante Ghio. My middle name is-I don't have a middle name, so I go by Catherine Bregante Ghio. Before marriage I was a Bregante so I really use that a lot. What else would you like to know?

BW: Where were you born and when.

CG: I was born in Italy in Riva Trigosa, Italy, on December 24, 1896.

BW: That is incredible because you look so relatively youthful. I understand your Father brought you to San Francisco.

CG: Yes. Daddy was here before--Daddy was here in 1900--and Mother took care of us for five years while Dad was in America in San Francisco. "

BW: What was he doing there?

CG: He was on the fishing boat; he was with the fishing industry in San Francisco.

BW: Did he have some relatives or someone who brought him there?

CG: Yes, he had a brother there and he was living with a brother and working for a fishery. So you see from way back Dad was in the fish business. Then during the San Francisco fire he went back to Italy after the fire because my Mother had heard that there was an accident where he was working and she thought that he was gone. It was another man. So the brother wrote to my Mother and told her that he was alive. But she said, "I don't believe it until he comes home." So he decided to come home and he came back to Italy.

BW: Did he tell you anything about the fire? Was he right in San Francisco at the time?

CG: Oh, yes, he described it quite well. He was just coming in from shipping on a boat and they felt it at sea. And then they saw the fire bursting out all over San Francisco.

BW: Was there a ground swell under the boat?

CG: Yes, there was a swelling and a roaring.

BW: A roaring?

CG: Yes, a roaring noise--I guess it was from the tremor. You see, they were close to the shore--they were not too far out because they were getting in to bring the catch in. This is when it happened.

BW: Did they come the rest of the way in and help with the rescue?

CG: Yes, he did and helped with the rescue, and then when everything was settled--you know, he stayed about a month or so--and when things were more settled he went back to Italy. My Mother was very sick then. She was frightened until she saw him. She was very sick and she had to be under the doctor's care for a while. Then she got well. Then, after that, two [of m] brothers were born. Dad had always said that he had the idea that he wanted to get back to America and my Mother said, "If you're going, we're going, too", so that is how we started out.

BW: There was more money in America than in Italy, then.

CG: Well, he liked America much better and he liked to work over here so that was the reason why. So that is how he came down with all of us.

BW: You said you were 16 years of age when you came here.

CG: That is when I came to San Diego but when I was in San Francisco I was only 12 years old.

BW: Were you impressed with the change?

CG: Oh, yes. I can remember I was very happy to be here. We came across on the ship from France. My Mother had a baby only five months old--one of my brothers was five months old at the time. It was in the middle of winter. So Dad took us by train when we got to New York so we could stop and get food on the way down for the baby and for all of us. We traveled as tourists, I remember well, and we got to San Francisco on the 4th of December in 1909.

BW: All you could speak was Italian, I guess, at that time.

CG: Yes, but I went to school and learned the language in a year. I learned very fast--it was broken English, I guess--but I learned the English quite well.

BW: At an early age is a good time to learn a language.

CG: Well, then, I made friends--you see, I went to work when I was 14.

BW: Doing what?

CG: I went to work in a fruit cannery and I had to tell them that I was 16 because they wouldn't have allowed me to work at the age of 14. So I was packing and working in the fruit during the summers. I worked there for about three years.

BW: Do you remember the name of the company?

CG: Oh, yes, itts....oh, I don't think of it right now but it'll come to me.

BW: Let's see, now, you had two brothers and how many sisters?

CG: I had three brothers and I was the only girl; the oldest of the family.

BW: You are the oldest and the only girl and you had three younger brothers.

CG: The only girl until I was married and six months before I had my own daughter, my Mother had a sister for me.

BW: So there were five in the family.

CG: Yes. Well, there are only four of us now; one of them passed away my youngest brother passed away: the one who was five months old when we came over from Italy; the one who was born in 1909.

BW: There are other Ghios. There is somebody here by the name of Edward J. Ghio. Did you know him?

CG: Edward J. Ghio--that's my brother-in-law. No, this is not the one. (Bob Wright apparently showing Mrs. Ghio the newspaper clipping and picture of an Edward J. Ghio who died in San Diego in March, 1979 No, this is another Ghio.

BW: All Ghios aren't necessarily related, then, I take it--in San Diego.

CG: No, they are not. There are two or three different branches of the Ghios in San Diego. My father-in-law came here--oh, I don't know what year, but he was, let me see--all the children were born in San Francisco My husband was born in San Francisco. I really couldn't tell you about all the families,

BW: Your husband wasn't born in Italy, then? The newspaper article must have it wrong.

CG: No, no. They made a mistake in there. He was born in San Francisco, but I met him in San Diego.

BW: That is what I understand. Well, how long did you stay in San Francisco, then? Was your Dad still fishing?

CG: From 1909 to 1912. No, Dad was not fishing anymore. First, he worked in the cannery--in the fruit cannery where I was working--and then he was called to take a job down at the waterfront buying fish for the fish market. That is what he did; he was only working in the fruit cannery for about six months. Then he had to get a job because he had a family to support so he took anything that came along. Then he got that job down at the waterfron]and that is where we started on the fish business.

BW: Did you live in an Italian district here in San Diego?

CG: Yes, we did. We lived on Mason Street--it's on Mason and California--clear over from where the wharf is. It was just a few blocks from the wharf. (Mrs. Ghio apparently is referring to the Del Monte fruit cannery where she worked before coming to SD-SAB

BW: That was considered the Italian district, wasn't it? (See Page 8)

CG: Yes, it was--clear up to about ten blocks around was considered the Italian district.

BW: I don't think it is that way now.

CG: No. You don't find many of them there now; they are all now in different places. Just like here: this part was all Italian at one time and now they are all scattered: to Mission Hills and different places.

BW: That is what I want to get to a little later. That is one of the questions that I was going to have to ask. Why did you move to San Diego?

CG: We moved to San Diego because one of my uncles was here running a fish market. He told my dad, "Why don't you come down and work for me here instead of staying in San Francisco." So that is how we came and got to San Diego--that was in 1912. And he worked for my uncle for, oh, about a couple of years. Then when one of my brothers got to be 16 he worked in the fish market, too. When he learned the business my dad got together with my brother and said, "Well, we should have our own fish market now." So Dad started a retail fish market on F Street and my brother was running it at first while my dad stayed with my uncle. Then I went to help my brother.

BW: Where on F Street?

CG: It's between 5th and 6th on F. The place is still +here and it is still the same: it still has those marble counters. I passed by a few days ago and I turned around and saw at the front part of the window--Dad had put marble there to put the fish on top with the ice when we had the retail fish market--so you could see it from the window. But it is still there. Then when we moved from there they put a laundry in there. Dad moved away from there and built a building on Broadway between--well, where the Navy is--the building is still there. During the war Dad had to move--the government wanted the place. He had to move and they gave him a place down on the waterfront.

BW: On Broadway? Where?

CG: Down near the wharf, right next to that big Navy building; the supply building. It's right next door; that little building, next to the post office. You know where that is? Well, that place is still there

BW: Then there was a building across the street where Bernie's Restaurant is on Harbor Drive.

CG: Yes, Dad had the fish market there and he was selling cocktails, and we helped. That is where I learned the business and all about fish. It's been in the family and then I got married to a fisherman so that helped a lot.

BW: Well, when you came here did you live in essentially an Italian district?

CG: When we came we lived on Kettner here, just a few blocks from where I live now, at about the 2400 block about Laurel and Kettner. The La Jolla train was going by there when we came down on that railroad there--there was the La Jolla train--streetcar--going back and forth.

BW: I know San Diego was a lot quieter and nicer then than it is now.

CG: We lived just about two blocks from the water--that's where the water was, on 101 highway. I never took my shoes off in San Francisco but when I came over here--it was around the 4th of July--and, oh, I thought it was a treat to be able to take my shoes off and go in the water. It was just a couple of blocks from the house.

BW: Yes, down at the foot of Laurel Street there used to be a bathhouse where you could go swimming and everything. I understand there were a lot of stingarees stingrays down there then.

CG: Well, there were a lot of stingarees stingrays but you know, the water was shallow and you could see them But you had to be careful because there were rocks there that had those little tiny oysteretbs on them and if you stepped on those it would fix your feet in very good shape. Yes, the water was very clean. I saw all the sand that they filled all of that in--with and when they built all that up with the first cannery: Mr. Hume's cannery. It was a sardine factory, a sardine cannery. That was the first one in San Diego.

BW: That was right at the corner of Laurel and where Pacific Highway is now.

CG: Well, a bit below, way on the end, after the first filling they put in. Hawthorn Street..

BW: I remember when I first came to San Diego in 1941 there was a cannery right down there where Solar is now. You didn't work in that cannery.

CG: Yes, I sure did. Because when I came down when I came to San Diego--I didn't know anybody and I didn't know any girls and I used to watch them go to work. With them just a block below, I could see them go to work. I asked my Dad if he would let me go to work and he said, "Oh, no, you've worked enough; I don't want you to go to work anymore." I got very unhappy because I was used to working and I wanted to be where the young people were. In those days you couldn't get out like they do now--you go on your own--you just had to follow rules. Dad was a wonderful man and he said, "Well, if it will please you, go ahead and try it." The manager lived across the street from us so I called to him one day when he came home from work and he said, "Yes," he said, "you come on, Caty, we've got a job for you." So I worked in there for about a couple of years.

BW: You were about 16 then.

CG: Uh-huh. After I got there--after about six months working there--they put me on as a floor-lady because I knew the cannery work from San Francisco days and I knew the work so they made me a floor-lady. I was a floor-lady for a couple of months, but then the old people didn't want to take orders from a 16-year old, so I had trouble with them. So I decided to ask for another job because I didn't want to be a floor-lady. Later they had to give me two paychecks so as to show them that I was getting the same money as the other ones that were working, because I was doing special work: they put me on special packing. As a special packer you would get more. So that the other girls would not know how much I was getting they paid me in two checks. They paid you in cash--everything was cash then--so they gave me two bags. It was funny. But then I enjoyed the work and I made friends with the girls. I enjoyed it very much.

BW: Were they predominantly Italian? Mexican, or ...?

CG: No, no; the older women were Italian but most of the other girls were San Diego born. girls.

BW: You went to school here, I assume.

CG: Yes, some school in San Francisco, but not here. I was graduated at 12 years of age from the Italian school in the eighth grade--in Italy.

BW: Then when you were in America you really didn't go to school.

CG: When I came here I went to school for about six months and that was it. No, there was no more schooling after that; I just taught myself.

BW: That leads up to another question. Was it a pretty close Italian neighborhood? I mean, did everybody know each other and help each other in those days.

CG: Yes, very much so.

BW: Would you call it a ghetto, as such?

CG: No. No, it was like when I was young and there were mothers who worked in the cannery. One mother would watch out for me; then another mother would watch for the other girls, so that nothing happened to them, you know. That was the only protection that we had in coming home, you know, to guide us coming home if they lived in the neighborhood they took us home, because sometimes it was early in the morning and we had to walk from there--the Del Monte Cannery, that was it--and we had to walk about 15 or 20 minutes from Mason Street to the cannery, where the cannery is still now, in San Francisco. That cannery is still there now where I worked.

BW: Oh, you are talking about San Francisco now.

CG: Yes, San Francisco.

BW: But in San Diego it was a little looser--the Italians sort of stayed together.

CG: No, each one was in their own. area; we all went to the same church,, you know, and you'd meet; we were all friendly. They helped each other make the wine. When they knew you were going to make the wine, they would come over to see if they could-help you.

BW: Were the Portuguese predominant here, too? They all located a little farther down, didn't they?

CG: Yes. They were all over in Point Loma--they were mostly in Point Loma. There were very few Portuguese on this side. DeFalco's was the first grocery store in San Diego. When I came to San Diego they were the first Italian grocery, right across the street from the post office. I still know all of the family that is left.

BW: The post office downtown, then.

CG: On F Street, right across the street from DeFalco's grocery.

BW: I remember DeFalco's down on India and Date Streets.

CG: That is where he was after he moved from down there. After old man DeValco passed away, why then the sons took over and had their place down on India Street. But the only Italian grocery then was DeFalco's. When we came to San Diego there was nothing: no grocery, no nothing. You had to go to the bakery. There was one bakery up here on Columbia Street and you had to go at nine o'clock in the morning to get your bread or you wouldn't get any all day; you'd be late. No vegetables; no nothing. You had to watch for a couple of trucks that used to come around and sell vegetables. You would have to flag them down so that they would come over to your house. That was in 1909. You could gets fruits and vegetables that way.

BW: And how about meats?

CG: For meats--there was a butcher shop down on India Street. There was a lady in there who sold the meat, an old lady--I don't remember her name--but she was the butcher.

BW: Weren't there other stores further out, like out toward 7th, 8th, 10th Avenues, in that direction?

CG: Out in that direction there were some stores but we didn't call it downtown..

BW: When these jets take off, they really make a noise, don't they. I can't stand it on the ship sometimes, it's really awful.

CG: Well, right here it isn't so bad. But where I used to live,a few blocks down from here, my house shook when the planes would go by.

BW: I -am trying to get a mental image of San Diego back in 1909-10. It sounds like it was a quiet, peaceful place.

CG: Yes, it was. It was quiet and there wasn't much doing. There were a couple of shows--you had to go downtown.

BW: Stage shows?

CG: Movies, and then there was the Savoy for stage shows. The Savoy was on the corner of 4th and C Street. You would pay a nickel, or a dime, to go see a movie. Dad used to take us to a movie down on F Street for ten cents, I think--or a nickel or a dime--but not any more.

BW: Your Dad was rather liberal then, I take it; he wasn't very strict.

CG: No, no, he was a family man, very nice. He was an understand-able man. For his family he was a very, very good man. So was my Mother. She was a hard-working woman; I tell you, she worked hard, with as many children as she had. I was the first one of ten children. Some of them have passed away. I thought you said you were the oldest daughter of five.

CG: I am the oldest daughter of ten children; there are only five living. I just mentioned the ones who are still living; the others died at a younger age.

BW: What did most of the Italian men do whom you knew in San Diego?

CG: Well, most of them were fishermen. A few had stores, like clothing stores--in Pacific Beach, a couple of them in Ocean Beach. Then there was another one--I don't know the name of it--but they were selling men's clothes. But most of the Italian fishermen used to get their clothes down at that store--I don't remember the name of it because it had been there a long, long time. Oh, it was Lion's, downtown, and then down on the same block was another clothing store where the fishermen bought, because I used to buy a lot of clothes for the fishermen in that shop. The fishermen who didn't have families over here would call me and come over and ask me to buy them some clothes at that store. But that was later when I was married. They used to see my husband with clothes that they liked and would ask, "Where can we go and get clothes like that?" They didn't even know where to go. So there were just a few stores, you know, downtown. You could go downtown and you knew everybody in the stores and they knew you. Whitney's was clear down on Fifth Street, way down below F Street in a little hole-in-the-wall. And there was another shop: Marston's; then there was Holwasser's, Hamilton's Streicher's for shoes, and two or three other small stores. So I remember all of those, but there wasn't too many stores downtown. There was a jewelry store: Jessop's.

BW: Most of downtown was at Fifth and Market in those days, wasn't it?

CG: Yes, Fifth and Market, on Fifth between Market and C.

BW: That's where your Dad had his store, down on F Street.

CG: And there was a fish market before that--the Oliver's, Lawrence Oliver, manager, American Fish Market that was here.

BW: Was most of this fish caught right off Point Loma? What was the most predominant type of fish?

CG: Right off Point Loma. Most of the fishermen over here in San Diego would fish for halibut. They had nets for halibut. They had small boats--there were no big boats then. They fished with nets. And then during the summers they had crates for lobster. Then they were only 25 cents a pound.

BW: Abalone, I understand, wasn't too popular then, was it.

CG: Abalone became popular later. We knew what abalone was but you couldn't put it on the market then, nobody would eat them.

BW: I understand you could pick them off the rocks easy in those days.

CG: Oh, yes. We used to go on picnics--my husband and the children--off La Jolla shore there and that big rock that is there before you go to La Jolla. We would have our picnics below there and we used to go into the water and pick those tiny ones and my husband would clean them, pound them a little bit and then we would broil them on the stove that I had brought for the picnic.

BW: Do you know how much they cost in restaurants now?

CG: Nineteen dollars a pound! I can't understand that; that is terrible. When we put abalone in the "Star of the Sea" [restaurant] we sold the whole abalone. And a pound was a whole one, the way they used to come, no slices, no nothing, and that was a prize plate. I tell you, when you put your teeth into that it just would melt in your mouth.

BW: You must have a way of softening it up.

CG: You see, abalone, if it is cleaned right away and pounded when it is caught after it got to shore, and cleaned, then you could freeze it. But you had to pound it first. If you waited till later it got tough. It would relax but it wouldn't come tender. You had to do it when the abalone was tough in order to relax the muscle. In other words, you would pop it out of the shell, clean it up, take off all the outside part, trim it off, then after it is stripped you pounded it real well before you sliced it. It can be pounded after you slice it, but it is better to pound it while it is whole, as you cannot slice a whole abalone after it is pounded. If you slice it before, when it is cleaned, well, then you are able to slice it. If you pound a whole abalone after it is cleaned, why then you have to cook the whole abalone as it is. But to slice abalone, you can slice it after it is cleaned.

BW: Now you said they caught halibut, and what else.

CG: They would go out for rock cod a lot. We used to get all different kinds of fish here: pompano, sardines, anchovies, mackerel--there was plenty of fish.

BW: Was some of it shipped in from Mexico, too?

CG: Well, when they'd go to Mexico they would go for tuna--they used to get a few tuna here but they fished those with a pole line. But that came later.

BW: I was thinking--you had a fish store, but how did you supply this fish store?

CG: There was plenty of fish coming in; plenty of fish. Then it got so that the fish was plentiful. Small fish had been coming in earlier. First there were only a few boats. The fish markets used to provide the coast with fish from San Diego; carloads full of different kinds of fish.

BW: San Diego would supply all this fish?

CG: Supply Los Angeles; supply all the coast. I remember when the markets were packing it to be shipped.

BW: There must have been a lot of fishing boats.

CG: Oh, yes, there were quite a few fishing boats.

BW: Weren't the Chinese active then, at that time? They were active earlier; probably before your time.

CG: Not that I know of. Must have been before my time, then.

BW: They just iced up the fish and shipped it?

CG: They just iced up the fish and shipped them--cleaned them and shipped them.

BW: Then I guess they also did some canning.

CG: The canning came later. Everything was fresh. They didn't even freeze them first; they were freshly caught, cleaned and then they shipped them out, because they were always able to get what they wanted.

BW: I thought you worked in a cannery--was it a fishing cannery or what?

CG: When I worked it was before I was married--I got married, let's see, I was around 20 when I was married. Then I didn't work any more. When I had been working my Dad had started the fish market and I helped him.

BW: And your husband was one of the fishermen who had his own boat.

CG: He was fishing for his dad. The boat was named "Panama."

BW: Was it a one-man or two-man boat, or what?

CG: Oh, no. There were six or seven men and they all shared in the catch.

BW: Did they go out every day?

CG: For halibut they would stay out for two or three days. Then they got so they went fishing lower down--down to Baja, California. Then they used to stay a week. The most they ever stayed out was two weeks. Then they iced the fish on board--they had the ice to ice the fish.

BW: Did it ever get fished out around here? You know, considering so many fishermen.

CG: Well, no, but, it depended on the run. They used to tell each other, "The run is today", the fish are running on this side and this place, and in that way they used to tell each other.

BW: They worked together, rather than being in competition, then.

CG: Well, maybe they'd follow each other and see that it looked like he was getting some fish over there, so there must be a school over there. That's the way it was.

BW: There were no radios in those days.

CG: No, no radios.

BW: Was there an Italian Community Center here where you people gathered, like a church or something?

CG: A church: The Holy Rosary Church.

BW: Do you still go there?

CG: Oh, yes, I still go there. My children were all baptised there and they were married there. I helped with the church a lot. We still have plays there. They used to have little plays. There was an Italian woman, as I remember, who trained the little children and they used to give these little shows to interest the children to come to church. She did a good job. Of course we helped--all the mothers helped. They [the Ghio children] all went to Washington School--it is still there. Then they went to Roosevelt Junior High and then to high school--San Diego High. They all had a little college education.

BW: How long were you married?

CG: I was married 17 years before my husband passed away.

BW: I understand, according to the article here, he had an ether overdose.

CG: Well, that is what I was told. But if it was today, I could have claimed malpractice. They told me that if he was in New York, he would be at the neck of every doctor because this man--my husband--was very strong, physically strong, and just for a broken nerve in his arm.... I don't like to go into that because it is painful and I don't want to knock anybody, but that was one doctor's mistake, so I just....

BW: You are still pretty bitter about it.

CG: Well, not bitter about it but they told me that if he was in New York he would be at the neck of every doctor. So I called ten doctors and out of ten doctors, why, they never found out what was wrong. They found out too late what was wrong. Being a strong man the ether they gave him--they had to give him much more ether--and that ruptured his pancreas. He did it by just lifting up a box, it ruptured the muscle in his arm. Today they don't do that kind of thing; they give a local. So I was left with three children to support.

BW: Well, did you go back and live with your Father?

CG: No, I lived at my home on Kettner. My Dad and family were good to me; they helped me. They lived just about three blocks from me, on Columbia. Dad bought a house on Columbia and it's still there. One of my brothers still lives there.

BW: Where did you live then?

CG: I lived up on Union. When I was married I lived up on Beech Street and from Beech I went on Union and from Union I came here to State Street where I am living now: at 2766 State Street.

BW: How old were you then when your husband passed away?

CG: I was 42.

BW: The kids were pretty well on their own, weren't they?

CG: Well, they were 12, 13 and 14.

BW: Well, they really weren't on their own. But they could be of help to you.

CG: Well, yes, they were. They went to school. Then my daughter-she went to high school: San Diego High School.

BW: Let's see, that's Adel.

CG: She wasn't graduated; she was about 17 and she went to work in office work for Mr. McCaffrey who had a net place. He knew my husband and he knew me. The school was looking for a job for her and said Mr. McCaffrey needs an office girl. The teacher told him about Adel and he said, "Oh, if it's a Ghio girl, Mike's daughter," and she said, "Sure". So she went to work for him and she worked for him until she was married.

BW: Did you do any work during this period of time?

CG: Two months after my husband passed away my Dad got sick; he got a strep throat. He was sick with a very much temperature, so I had to help my mother. My Dad was sick for two years; he had to have a trans fusion. I was the only one who could drive, so as I was able to drive I had to go back and forth to get all the apparatus at the hospital for the transfusion.

BW: Mercy Hospital?

CG: No, there was a hospital on Fourth Street--I don't remember what they called it. So after two years, almost to the date that my husband passed away, my Dad passed on. So then I had my mother to take care of. After my husband passed away I told my Dad that I was going to do something for myself. He said, "You've worked enough and I don't want you to work anymore." He said, "No, you're not; you're not going to go to work; you just take care of those children as they need taking care of." Then he passed away.

BW: How did he expect you to do that without an income?

CG: He was going to help me financially.

BW: I don't want to delve into finances, but the reason I am asking this type of question is because, all of a sudden, it looks like you are in a pretty bad situation. Taking care of your mother, your children and yourself, it sounds like you had a tough row to hoe there for a while.

CG: I just had to think straight and pray to God to help me. And I came out all right.

BW: Well, it was sort of a logical thing for you to do: to open a restaurant.

CG: Well, I didn't do it right away because the children were too small.

BW: Now let's see, this was in the '30s.

CG: Yes. My oldest son, Tod- Adel was the first--but Tod was going with his Dad while his Dad was living; was going with his Dad down to the fish market. Of course at that time my Dad was working with my father-in-law in the fish market with my Father and my brother. So my first son used to go down to the fish market and he learned quite a bit from going down there. That is how he learned: by going down there. Then when my husband passed away Tod didn't want to go to school anymore; he wanted to go to work. And I said, "No, you are not, you are going to go to school, you are going to finish high school." Then I sent him to business college. He stayed about six months or a year in business college, then he quit. He wanted his Dad's job. So he asked my brother for his Dad's job and he got the job down there working in the fish market. Then the war came on and both he and his brother, Anthony--Anthony was in college; he was working and he was going to college. He finished his college while in the Navy 'under the Navy program for college students;.

BW: That was Anthony?

CG: That was Anthony. Tod was working in the fish market and wanted to enlist right away. hold him, "Give yourself time and see what happens and then we will go on from there." He had friends whom he knew in the service. Then, pretty'soon, Anthony went in first; then Tod went in and became a butcher in the Navy.

BW: What did Anthony do in the Navy?

CG: He got to be a Lieutenant in the Navy--I couldn't tell you what he did--he was shipped out on a ship and during the war there were a number of ships here. Tod was here and then he was shipped out. In the meantime my daughter was married and had three children. And her husband got sent out. So it wasn't easy. It was kind of tough.

BW: Yeah, you girls had a lot of worries, didn't you.

CG: It was kind of tough with all three of them gone, and my Dad gone, for my Mother and myself. I was a block leader in civilian defense and then I worked for the Red Cross and tried to help my daughter with her children. Then, while they were in the service, I was thinking what I was going to do after they came back, as I thought I had to do something for myself. I thought of different things and then I came out with the idea that I wanted to get into the fish business and show people how to eat the fish in San Diego.

BW: You had never had an experience of running a restaurant, though, at that time, but you did know fish and the cooking of it.

CG: I knew the cooking. We had a lot of friends and we had friends who had a restaurant and I was talking with them. Mr. Maurice Bernardini was a friend of ours and he had the first restaurant down here where Lubach's is now. I knew from their talk and then my son, Tod, was working in the fish business--he was delivering fish--and he got a lot of ideas too. Anthony was more of a bookkeeper in general, you know, with his job. So we started because we knew what we were doing.

BW: That's the secret: first, you had the background....

CG: I had the background, the know-how and the work, and we weren't afraid of the work.

BW: And then you did your homework in something you really didn't know that much about.

CG: I saw in the paper something about "fish and chips in a batter." So one day when the boys were still away I did all this--I said I am going to start some batter and I tried time and time again. Finally it took me a whole year.

BW: Were you looking for a special flavor, or what?

CG: A special way to keep the juice of the fish in and not to get a lot of oil in it. I wanted something like that; I didn't want a puffed-out thing that they used to have all over. You know about the English--I heard about the English.

BW: Ah! The English Fish and Chips, you can't get anything like that here in the statesl.

CG: That's what I heard about; the English Fish and Chips. So I said, "Well, that's what I am going to have." And that is what I got the idea from. And that is when we started. But today you couldn't start it the way we did.

BW: You mean, having to start with a small store.

CG: A small place and with the pots from my house--the utensils that I brought in from my home. I used them for about two years. Everytime we had a little money, well, we bought something. So that is how we got on.

BW: Is not that the secret? Not to take the profits and run, but to put the profits back in--just take enough to live on.

CG: Just take enough to live on and that's it. We didn't get paid; we didn't pay ourselves for two years, but took out just enough to eat on. You see, the boys were single then; they weren't married. Then after about two or three months my son-in-law, Roy Weber, came in with us. He was a wonderful worker. And he had to learn that all over, too. So it was just the family alone. I was offered later a lot of help; everybody wanted to pitch in. "Can we buy in," they said, after the things went on, but when I was in bad shape needing money, why.... no one offered to help.

BW: In other words, people wanted to get in on a good thing. I understand this batter that you created is still a family secret but you've passed it on.

CG: Oh, yes, it still is, but the grandchildren who are doing it now they know what it is. A lot of the things I've been doing they know about as I've passed it on to them. I don't have to be worried about it.

BW: Good! I was worried. There are two fellows I know whom you might know, too, who used to be the harbor pilots here in town. They used to go to your restaurant back then. Harry Krog--do you know him? And Ted Larsen?.

CG: Oh, yes, I know them. And John Bates, the Port Director. I went to John Bates first when I wanted to start the Grotto. This is funny because I went to Mr. Bates and I told him what I had the idea of doing. I knew him well and I wanted something down at the waterfront. I wanted to start something down to the waterfront so I went to Mr. Bates and I asked him what he would suggest for me. In San Diego at the time, right there by the ferry landing, there was a little shop--a dirty old little shop in there--that used to sell coffee, coffee cakes in there. That was the only place that was

there. Yes, there was another one down in the waterfront--I don't think which one it was--anyway it came down later. Oh, yes, The Red Sails Inn. It was on this side of the bay, right there where you turn to go onto the new pier, before you hit the new pier, that's where it was, on that corner there.

BW: You mean the G Street pier?

CG: Further over.

BW: Broadway? or by B Street?

CG: By B Street.

BW: You are not talking about Bernie's, are you?

CG: No, I am not talking about Bernie's. I don't know who had it-I know his wife is still living--because my husband used to sell the fish to him. My place was right there by the ferry. It was a boat that had been thrown up by a storm. I saw that boat there and I said to Mr. Bates, "How about this boat, can I buy this over here and put a little counter in it and have a fish place in there?" He looked at me and he began to laugh and he said, "O.K. But in the first place there is no sewer here; in the second place it will cost you a fortune to fix that; and we couldn't put a thing like that on the wharf here." But said, "We will try and see if we can get you something else." That is when my Dad's fish market was moved from Broadway during the war to where they all are now: on G Street. My brother had this little place in the front of the fish market that the government had rented for putting things in there, like some supplies for the government. That was at the end of the war and I asked my brother if he would let me have that place there and he said, "Oh, no, I'm not going to let you have it; you are just going to kill yourself." When he heard that the boys were coming in with me, then when I asked him again, he said, "O.K., if the boys come in, fine." So that is when we started.

BW: I thought you were further down where they had the fish market, where the white building was at the end, right opposite the police station. That is where I thought it was.

CG: Yes, that was the old building: where the markets are now, the new ones. Well, it was right on that corner. There was a big building; upstairs there was that clothing store.

BW: Rattner's, wasn't it?

CG: No, it wasn't Rattner's. They are still advertising on television, the same guy. A suit factory. He was a tailor. Yes, he was upstairs from the fish market.

BW: I can barely remember it. There was a fish market down. there and you were right next door.

CG: All the fish markets were in a line there, and we were at the end of it.

BW: And you had this one little counter there. That was a good location because of the people going across to Coronado and back.

CG: Oh, yes, that was a good location. When we started we could seat about 16. Then after a month or two we put tables in and we were able to seat 40. And after two months there was a two-hour wait for a table.

BW: Why?

CG: Why? Because the fish was good and in San Diego there was nothing like it. And the price was reasonable. There was no one in San Diego that cooked the fish that way. We used to have a lot of fun with people; they sat in every place they could think of; even families were split, two here, two over there. It was just a small place. We were there just four years. I understand even the leading citizens used to go down there.

CG: Oh, everybody came down there. They used to bring their own cocktails, drink them in the car while they waited for a table and then when we would call them they would come in. There was a lot of parking.

BW: That is really the secret of success now: to have a parking lot.

CG: Today we don't have a parking lot in San Diego but we have the meters.

BW: Did it take a lot of courage to expand, to move into another location, then into another location?

CG: Well, yes, as we went along the business was fine but we had to get a lot of help and the help took more money than we would take in. The place was too small to make it go; the expenses came up too high. In the meantime there was a good offer for us for a lot out in La Jolla. We put a down payment on it and slowly, slowly we bought it and said, "Well, we'll do something with it." We bought it as an investment. When things went a little tight and we didn't know what to do I told my son I would like to have something that I own myself. He said, "Well, we've got that lot, let's put a restaurant on it." So that is when we built that restaurant where it is now. We bought that lot and we built on it. I remember quite well when we went to borrow the money. One of the banks said I didn't have enough collateral--I don't like to give the name. Then a friend of ours who worked for the First National Bank--he has passed away now but I knew him well. That morning when the boys asked for some money to build the first bank said, "No, you don't have enough collateral; we can't do it." I said, "Fine." So this man who was with the First National Bank, now California First National Bank when it was in San Diego--I don't like to mention his name--he came down to the restaurant for lunch the very same day that the boys had asked for the loan that they couldn't get from the other bank. This man came over--I saw him there when I was cooking in the kitchen--and I said, "Oh, you are just the man I want to see," because he had told me, "Any time you need help, call me." I told him what the situation was and he said, "You come up with your boys tomorrow to my office." And we got the loan with which to build the La Jolla restaurant. He was the one to loan us the money to build that one. Then from then on we went on and we kept putting them in. That is how we built all of them.

BW: The next one was out in La Mesa, wasn't it? You must have had a good architect on these because I like the way they are laid out.

CG: Well, I always wanted a grotto and I wanted all the grottos to look like a grotto. Now we couldn't do it anymore because it would cost a fortune. You have to go the simple way. But you see La Jolla and La Mesa were built with the grotto effect--the first two we started. Then when we came to San Diego we moved from where we were on 101 Pacific Highway --we had to move from there. The building on 101 was getting pretty bad and we asked the Port Director to give us a place. My son and my son-in-law were in the office of the Port Director's to see what they could give us. Finally they decided that they would give us--when they built over there on Shelter Island--that they would give us that point. But things were getting pretty bad and we couldn't stay down there on 101 any longer because the building was falling apart and we had too much expense to keep it up. Finally, we went to the Port and my son and Roy went after them to give us a spot, and they decided to give us the spot that we have now.

BW: That was pretty good because normally the Port probably wouldn't have given it to anybody else to let them build out over the water like that. But they needed attractions down there at the time; there wasn't anything.

CG: There wasn't anything down there except the *Star of India* and that was on the other side and it wasn't doing anything.

BW: Well, you helped our business on the ship quite a bit. When people have to wait to eat an hour or two they come on the ship.

CG: You take the ship, when it was on the other side it wasn't doing anything, but since we've been there the *Star of India* duplicates the business.

BW: That, too, was kind of a courageous thing to design and build out over the water like that.

CG: It was costly. We were in a lot of trouble, borrowing the money for this and that and the other.

BW: Did you have a good architect? Or was it your own design and idea?

CG: Oh, yes. No, no, it wasn't our design; we had to have an architect; somebody to know what he was doing. But you see, over the water, we had already had that experience in La Mesa. You see, we built over a lake out there. That's another one that has got quite a story.

BW: In what way? You had to talk somebody out of it?

CG: About getting the place there. It was just a jungle. When we looked at it it was just one big mess of trees, all closed in; and I tell you....

BW: Could you imagine what it was you wanted in there?

CG: Well, when we saw it--they showed us the spot--and my son said it would be a good spot. We were looking for a place in La Mesa and there were a few different places they showed us. Then we came onto this one--they had told him about this one--and Tod took me over there. And I said, "When I went through it I didn't have any more stockings." We went through the whole thing. They had flower pots in there--this fellow who had it--he was keeping it for himself for growing things. When I came out of there I told him it was just a jungle. I said, "A restaurant in here! My goodness!" and the owner said, "Well, let's wait and see." So the owner himself cleaned that place up; he worked hard with it. He cleaned it up and two years later he called us to see if we still wanted it. That is when we got the idea to go ahead with it. That was built on the water, too.

BW: There again, it was a good architectural design; a restful place to be.

CG: Now, we had to do some remodeling. Everybody said we were crazy to go into a hole like that, just to get in a place.

BW: Financially and physically you were in a hole.

CG: Yes, but my boys and Roy worked 16 hours a day; they put in their time; they worked hard. If I didn't have them I couldn't have done it. If I didn't have their good help, 14 stools would have been enough for me.

BW: You know, you are right; hard work does get you where you want to go. It takes guts, too, though; the nerve to make the change.

CG: You have to think before you go to see where you are going to put your foot. And work at it. And some knowledge--of course you learn more and more as you go along. You make one mistake but you try not to make it again.

BW: Have you reached a point where "enough is enough"?

CG: Well, you see, I had told them that now it's enough, we are not going to go on, but now we've got a new generation coming up and they want to expand. I don't know what they want to do. Right now it's on status quo for a little while. But I know they are talking about going up above--into North County. But now with this situation that fish are scarce and the price is so high. Then the building is so high to build. You put an awful lot of money into it, how are you going to get it out?

BW: Do you think there is a limit to how much people are going to pay for a meal now?

CG: Well, you know, San Diego is one of the cheapest places on the coast...

BW: In the world!

CG: In the world, yes it is. So that is what we have to do. When we started we never went higher than a nickel or dime when we raised prices. Now we have to raise fifty cents and a dollar because the fish costs ten times higher than. when we started out. So it depends on the price of the fish.

BW: Are they still locally caught fish?

CG: Yes, there is quite a bit. We serve more fresh fish than anything else, unless they are out of season. Then if it is frozen we tell them, the customers, that it is frozen. But we buy from all over the country.

BW: Do you have your own fishing boats out here?

CG: No, we don't have any more fishing boats, but we used to. It doesn't pay. But we buy from the local fishermen.

BW: You know the idea I like is that wharf or dock that you have alongside where the boats can come in themselves.

CG: There are quite a few boats that come in there. They take their food from the fishette out to their boat and away they go.

BW: Seems like that would be an ideal situation where a fishing boat could come in with fresh fish and bring it right in.

CG: No, You see, that has to go to the fish market first; the fresh fish have to be taken care of before they get them there. Did you ever go down to the fish market and see the work that has to be done before they get there to the restaurant?

BW: I've seen it in New York, but not here.

CG: Well, sometime you go down there and go over to Tod and he'll tell you--show you what has to be done. We have the commissary down there now. It's on Lovelock Street. Go in there sometime and ask one of the boys what it takes; what they have to do to the fish before they get there to the restaurant. Everything comes portion controlled, so it goes to the restaurant just to be cooked, that's it. And nothing is cooked ahead of time, except the soup; and the lettuce is fixed, things like that, and the potatoes. Everything comes from the commissary. The work that has to be done over there--you can't believe it.

BW: Whose idea was it to have the commissary as the center?

CG: The boyst. They couldn't go without a commissary. You see, we had to have each one go and see that they do the things right. That was a job there in itself. Before, I used to do it all myself. Now each one has got his own job. Anthony is taking care of the office; Roy, my son-in-law, was taking care of routing the fish to the different restaurants and Tod had all the cooks under him; with Morey, who has been with us for 25 years, to take care of the kitchens. First, it was me.

BW: So you set the standards, then.

CG: Oh, yes. That's the way it is run. Everything is run just so, now--not a little bit of this and a little bit of that--everything is weighed.

BW: Weighed?

CG: Everything is weighed. Your order comes in--you get eight ounces of fish; it's eight ounces of fish for everybody. It's cut portion controlled.

BW: That's how you figure the cost. Even when I go to get a milkshake they weigh it half the time.

CG: Well, you have to do that because now with the price of food so high, and especially fish. What we used to have to pay from 10 to 25 cents a pound now is three and four dollars a pound wholesale. And then fish is not made like meat. After you get all of the bones out of the fillet, then what have you got: you've got fish about this size and then when you get two little bits of pieces like this, well, that's it, you're through. Because everything is fillet, at least that is how we sell our food. None of the American public wants to be bothered about bones. If you were in the old country you'd try to do something with the bones that you get with the fish because everything is so expensive. But over here in America, the American people, we are spoiled! I remember when we first started one woman found a piece of fish bone in her fish and she said, "It's fillet, it shouldn't have any." But we can't get all the meat off the bones. I said, "When the butcher shop cuts his meat sometimes he's got little pieces of bone left there too and he has to get them out too. So with the fish--we can't get all of them."

BW: That is a lot of waste. I assume all that waste you sell for fertilizer or something.

CG: Yes, there is a lot of waste. For fertilizer, yes.

BW: We are running out of tape here very quickly.

CG: Well, I guess we've said enough about fish to last us for a little while. After it gets on that table there is nothing better than a good piece of fish.

BW: I've gotten addicted to eating shark. I find that is good eating.

CG: We sell quite a bit of shark. Shark is good eating, especially the kind they get now. You know shark is of different grades. Now we pay a good price for the fishermen to bring us this particular kind we sell. And a lot of people come over and ask for it.

BW: I've recommended it to people from the Mid West as something different to try.

CG: It's very tasty. Why, I ate shark when I was a little girl. Those little ones, like this. What do you think: the fishermen used to bring them in and dry them, like the Japanese do. During the wintertime we used to have it. We'd soak it and then we would have boiled fish. We had boiled shark. We grew up on it. Now they are making so much stories about shark--this, that and the other thing--we ate that, just like skate. It is good eating but the

only ones who will eat the skates are the Italians and the Chinese. And squids. Everybody loves squids now but they had to be introduced to the public; we had to teach them that that is good fish. Otherwise, if they don't hear it, "Oh, no, that's no good!" I used to stuff them and we put them on the menu. Well, we told them what they were but we heard, "Oh, they look terrible." They didn't want them because they looked terrible. After we made cutlets out of it, now we can't sell enough; we don't have enough.

BW: That salad bar you have at Harborside--I love it there; I eat too much.

CG: Once upon a time if you talked to anyone about eating octopus: " Oh, no! "

BW: I was the same way. But when I go to that salad bar I'm grabbing for that octopus. "

CG: But now you eat it and it's tasty. And so is everything else. And it's good for you. What is better than fish to eat? You know it's easy to digest; has the vitamins that we need. When you eat a piece of steak-you have to have the steak, also, of course. You eat a piece of steak and by the time you get through digesting that piece of steak.... But with the fish it is easy to digest and you have the same protein that any meat has, if not more. BV: Apparently you've gone into the effort of researching new fishes.

CG: Oh, yes, so much so. For the vitamins and what fish contain and everything else; if it is tough; if that particular fish is tough; if it has a lot of juice in it; or if it's dry when it's cooked. All of that you have to know.

BW: Did you do this research on your own?

CG: On our own--Dad taught me. My Dad used to sell sharks years ago when we started because he knew they were good eating.

BW: But who bought it? The Italians and the Chinese?

CG: Everybody bought it because we used to call it "greyfish." If we used the word "shark" we couldn't sell it. Now lots of times you see it--greyfish-in the stores. They also call it "whitefish" but it's nothing but shark. When I started the restaurant I said that every fish is going to be called what it is. The shark is going to be called shark. That is the way we started. Whatever it is: mackerel, if it is mackerel. No, we didn't fancy it up; we called it just what it was. So people know what it is and know what they are eating. We had these big squid steaks which we called squid steaks because it was squid. It's more like abalone to look at. A lot of people come in and say, "Well, I've eaten abalone and it's just like this." And I've said, "Well, you believe it's abalone", but it's squid steak, a big squid. We've been long on research, my sons and the whole family go into it; to research this and that and now that there are the grandchildren coming up, they have to learn, too.

BW: Are they taking an interest in the business?

CG: . Oh, yes, quite a few of them.

BW: You know, I am thinking--there is a tendency to feel--you are well off; you've- got it made; you don't have to lift a finger. Do you ever get the attitude, well, so let it slide? I thought the grand-kids might get that feeling, too.

CG: You catch it. You know before they go in there, because they begin by washing dishes. They've already been in the whole thing and they know if they want to stay. And we tell them, "If you don't want to stay, you go."

BW: They are like hired help, then. You either do the job or don't stay.

CG: Well, yes. Like the job, or don't. "If you want the job, stay." Now they are managers. There is Craig starting--Tod's son--trying to take his father's place. Rick Anthony's son--is already in the office. One is a manager down here and there is another one--so you see, they all went through the works. If that's the way they want to go, that's the way they have to start; they have to know all about it. It is not an easy thing to do; the restaurant business is terrible; you have a lot of things to learn. Especially today. Unions, and oh, this and that and the other thing.

BW: And then you can get sued for somebody slipping on the floor.

CG: If you drop water; if you drop a glass of water, they send you a bill for \$10.00 or \$15.00. Everything is like that. Therefore, I'm telling you, if we had to start today--today if you have to start--a restaurant would cost you a million now. What would you do with \$5,000. I know what you are saying because...

CG: Sometimes people say, "Why don't you come here; why don't you go to that place." They don't think. When they say [things] like that, people don't know anything about it; how much it takes to put up a seafood place. You know, for a restaurant that has meat, why, it's much easier. If they have prime ribs, you can cook quite a few prime ribs, one man alone; one man baking the potatoes; one making the salad. But we have to have 15 cooks cooking at the same time.

BW: Do you have problems finding cooks?

CG: We train them ourselves. When they come in they have to learn what we teach them. If they know something about cooking; if they like to cook: fine. But we teach them our way.

BW: Do you have problems finding quality help?

CG: No, we don't because we usually get people who are working for us; they've been doing something else; they've been there and they've been watching. Then we promote those fellows--that's how they become cooks for us. They may have some knowledge about cooking but they have to forget about that; just learn this way.

BW: A lot of them are Chicanos, aren't they?

CG: Some of them are Mexicans and we have colored. Now you have to have all kinds: Mexicans, Negroes, Japanese, Filipinos. You have laws that tell you that you have to have--the Union tells you that you have to have different kinds of people so we try to teach them all our way of cooking. I've had experience with that when I first started. I used to tell them which way they would have to do it in the beginning: this way and that way and the other things. One fellow in La Jolla told me, he said, "You don't know what you are talking about. This fish has to be cooked this way." So I said to him, "They gave you the job here, the manager hired you and told you that you have to follow rules about the cooking." He said, "Well, I've graduated from--some kind of academy--" and I said, "Well this is not the job for you, then. You have to learn my way of cooking; I do business with this kind of cooking, not with yours. I'm sorry." He said, "I'm not going to take an order from you, who do you think you are?" I told him I happen to be the one who started this place and the one who got the style of the fish--the way to cook them--and I want them cooked that way. So I said, "If you don't like it, you can go." "I'm not going to take these orders," he said, "these fish are not cooked the right way." I said, "That's too bad; you can go." You know, because he was a graduate cook, fine and dandy, I respected that, but as long as he was there I wanted him to cook my way. I only had that one incident, so that is pretty good.

BW: Another thing I've become more aware of recently is for a woman to start a business--you really had the boys to back you up--but for a woman working alone it was sort of not acceptable. Did you have opposition to the fact that you were a woman when you started this?

CG: It didn't bother me.

BW: I know it didn't bother you, but did it bother other people.

CG: No. No, not exactly, but I was told a few times, "You have the nerve to get into this kind of business.," It took nerve to get into the restaurant business. "Well," I said, "I had help with my boys." You know you get more courage when you have some backers to help you.

BW: Well all right, I can see that. But there is something that comes from--I get from you--is that you have a strong will and the courage to do things.

CG: Yes, very much so. My Dad taught me that. You know, he said, "You make one mistake, don't try to make the second one."

BW: You mean, it's all right to make the second one, but not the same one over again.

CG: He said, "You watch before...." You know I was the first girl in the family and I learned a great deal from my Mother because she was a hard worker and she always had a lot of work to do in taking care of all of us. But Dad was the business man. When my brother would buy some fish and he'd lose the profit, or lose on the fish, he'd say, "Well, you make this mistake this time; all right, you pay for it, but try not to make it again. Watch it before you go ahead." And I used to hear all of this because I was in there with them. But Dad didn't treat me any different, because I was a girl, not to talk about things and not for me to listen. Whatever he did he would say come on over and help me whatever there was to be done around the house. "Come on over and help me", he'd say. Whether it was a man's job or a woman's job, there was no difference. I had a hand in every thing. When I was young I remember my Mother used to send me out to buy things, but come back with so much money back from the store. As a little girl I can remember that. When I came to San Francisco my Mother didn't know how to speak English right away. I was able to go--I didn't care if it was Italian or whatever store it was--I'd go and buy. And I'd come back with the things. And I did all the buying for the family. So you see I wasn't wrapped up in cotton.' I used to hear the business people talk and that sort of thing stays with you; you learn different things when you get mixed up in the business with people. You get interested. If you are only thinking about yourself--I was interested in everything they talked about; I was willing to learn. And I was willing to go. Just because I was a woman, if it was a man's job, I'd get in and help, too. It didn't matter.

BW: Unfortunately, in some families the boys and girls are not shown anything, but just allowed to go and drift on their own and watch TV.

CG: Oh, there was no TV in those days. You had to do some house chores, help your Mother, do this and that. Then on Saturday and Sunday you'd go some place. Dad would take us to a show. In those days that's all there was; there was no dancing.

BW: Did the church play a large part in your lives? Was it predominant in your life?

CG: Yes, we went to church on Sunday. We were Catholic and we stayed Catholic. It was just the will of wanting to do things. And have the help enough to do it. We didn't miss anything. In San Francisco we had fish, we had meat. In those days you could eat for a quarter and for sixty cents you'd get a steak like this. Dad would bring home fish and we had vegetables all the time. We had sacks of beans; we had sacks of crackers. We used to pass by the cracker factory--they used to put those crackers in little bags that had a little dent in it: 25¢ a sack, and all kinds of beautiful cookies and crackers. We had everything. We had more things in those days than if we were to buy them now--now they'd cost a fortune. We got along with very little. Rent was \$15.00 a month.

BW: You know, that seems like going back almost in a complete circle. When you got to San Francisco did you see still a lot of damage from the earthquake?

CG: Yes, oh, yes. There were still bricks lying around. In fact, as I remember, I think Dad came home one day and said he was going to clean bricks but my uncle said, "You are not going to clean bricks! You'll get another job." There were still jobs for people cleaning bricks from the earthquake ruins; there was still a lot of it around. My husband's family was already here in San Diego before the fire; they were here, they were not in San Francisco.

BW: Did you find living better in San Francisco-better than in Italy?

CG: Well, you see, over there you are used to it-those things over there--and when you get over here it's a little bit different because of the ways, but it didn't bother me at all. I didn't find any difference because we had everything we wanted in Italy: food, clothes and everything, so I never missed anything. We had plenty to eat. We didn't have, maybe, the sweets as much over there as you have over here. But you had to have sweets after you were through eating. But those things, you really could do without those. We didn't think anything about it. I used to have an uncle who would go off on a ship. When I would go to school in Italy I had to walk an hour to go to school in the little town where we were each day. There was a sea town next to the town where I lived. He was the manager of a boat--a captain of a boat and he knew what time I would get to school where I was going. So he tried to meet me--he was single; he wasn't married yet--and take me into the candy shop on the corner and he'd buy me some candy and he'd buy me this and that. Then he'd put them in my basket and the girls would follow me all around when I had those things. "Oh, Catherine's uncle," they'd say, "brought her into the shop over there; let's see if she will give us some." Well, I used to pass it around a little bit and then I'd hide some of it so I could take it home, so they wouldn't get their hands onto it. But that was a treat for all of us then.

BW: Have you been back since?

CG: Oh, yes, I've been back about four times. I went in 1950, and then I went in 1955 and '70 and--oh, three or four times. The first time I went I went with my brother and my Mother sometime after 1950. My brother was going and asked if I wanted to go. Mom was living and I said I'd go. It was about the time we were building the La Jolla restaurant and I went with them. Then again, I think in 1955, I took my granddaughters to Europe. That was their graduation gift. I had four granddaughters and I told them I would take them with me for their graduation from high school gift, but not the boys. I said boys can earn their own way over. It's different for a girl and I thought about it. When the boys were ten years old I always took them for a trip somewhere around San Diego, but I never took them for a trip to Europe. But I took the granddaughters to Europe. I'm not sorry I did because it was an education for them and it was company for me. The last one was Tod's girl; that was about 1972.

BW: What is in the future for you.

CG: Well, I work only three days a week for fun--that's fun for me. I visit down at the commissary sometimes, meet with the boys and then I work a few days going to the different places. It depends on where I want to go; I don't go to the same spot all the time. I check the kitchen out and stay around and see what's being done. I walk the dining room, maybe once or twice, and talk to the people and see all around. The only trouble is if I go around once or twice my time is all gone by the time I come back. I talk to one; I talk to another; they ask this question and another question. You know, they want to know, "What is this fish and what is that; what can they get." They know who you are by now and they see you and call to you and, you know, you can't do anything but stop and talk to them. But it is fun for me.

BW: In talking to people who work down. at the restaurant down here on the harbor, and the one in La Mesa the other day, you are beloved; everybody still likes you; they are not afraid of you.

CG: Oh, no, I always treat them fair; I always treat them right, you know. I treat them as family like when we first "Now you do it this way, you do it that way." I am patient with them.

BW: You treat each employee as a family.

CG: We did, but now we can't--we have too many. But still they have that feeling. When I talk to them I talk to them nice and I show them one, two or three times. Then I tell them, "I'm not going to tell you anymore. You know it; why do you do it like this for?" Sometimes you have to treat them like little kids; you make them feel like little kids. Then pretty soon they get out of that habit and they do it the way you want. But I have to go to all of them. The minute I don't go, "Is something wrong with Mama?" I'm the mama for the Negros ; I'm the mama for the Mexicans; I'm the mama for everyone: I'm Mama Ghio to all of them. They've called me Mama Ghio from the beginning and they've never stopped. Some of them who work for me in the kitchen--there is a Negro who works for me in the kitchen and the first time he kissed me. And the girls said, "My. God, even a Negro don't kiss Mama Ghio!" "Well," I said, "he is no different than anybody else." What are you going to do? He still comes over to see me and it's about 15 years since he hasn't worked there. Still he comes by to say, "Hello, I want to see Mama Ghio, is she here" I talk to everybody and I am nice to everybody. I try to be. But I want the workers--I want them to understand what I want them to do and they are treated right. When we were in the little grotto I cooked for them--I cooked for the help.

BW: You know, I think it is good when you give them the holidays off, like Christmas and New Year's. You could make a fortune on some of these days: the holidays you close up.

CG: Why, sure, but you see when I started I never wanted to work on Sunday; I still feel that way. Sundays are for your family. Until I was able to. But then there were the bills to pay and the boys said, "Mother, we can't close on Sunday." So I said, "All right; you going to work on Sunday? Go ahead; I'm not going to work on Sunday." But I worked on Sundays, too, when it was necessary to pitch in. We had to.

BW: What was the decision what made you decide to close on some of these fruitful holidays when you could make money.

CG: Well, on holidays I want my family home. I liked to be with my family on holidays, so I figured everybody had the same right.

BW: You know you are losing a lot of money.

CG: Well, if we lose a lot of money on one day, we will make it the next. So what!. We make enough for a living. If you get greedy you won't be happy.

BW: I wondered about that. But how much is enough. You know, some of these millionaires want the next million, and then the next million.

CG: It's what you are happy with what you make it to be happy with. You can be happy with a dime if you have the nature, a good nature. But if you need a little more, well then, naturally you try.

BW: Even though you may feel that you have more money than you really need, so you sometimes get the feeling that you can remember the old days when you didn't have any money and you had to work hard

CG: Yes, it does come to you, but you don't regret it because you feel that it was a good lesson for you. That's what gives you the courage to go on.

BW: Starvation is a wonderful thing, isn't it.

CG: I never knew what starvation is, though.

BW: No, I know that you haven't, but some people have and it drives them into doing some pretty wonderful things.

CG: I never can say that I needed this or that; I've always had what I wanted. I was well-fed, well-treated. I was happy. I had a good family: a good husband and good children.

BW: But you also realize that you didn't get anything without working for it. It wasn't handed to you.

CG: No, it wasn't handed to me; no, I had to make it and I got help from my sons and from the Good Lord. I prayed many a time I was in a stitch. Nobody knew, but I came out of it.

BW: Prayer really helped you, then.

CG: Prayers, and the will to go on; not to give in.

BW: Well, this sounds like quite a testimonial for the secret of getting ahead: work like hell!

CG: You know, really it's so simple. A little child tries to put his shoes on and he can't. You show him once or twice and he gets disgusted; he gets furious because he can't get that shoe on. You go to him and say, "You do it; try it again." "I don't want to do it," he says, Well," you say, "leave them alone, then, but you can do it.}' Pretty soon he goes out and does it and finds out what it takes to do it. It's the same with everything else.

BW: You get the satisfaction of accomplishing it.

CG: Oh, yes. Many things go wrong. Just walk away from it and then when you go back and try to do it again you will find that you can do it.

BW: I know what you are saying.

CG: Yeah, it happens to you; it happens to everybody. Things don't come easy.

BW: You've got a couple of more years on me. Do you still feel that that is what you have to keep on doing?

CG: No, I don't have to; but I want to. I don't have to if I didn't want to; but I find fun with it. I'm happy with it. What would I do at home after my work there is done. Go here or go there? If I feel like going to play cards, I go play cards. If I feel like going somewhere, I go. I don't have that feeling, "Oh, I have to go to work today." No. I go when I want to and eat what I want to and I've got what I want. And that's it! I'm satisfied.

BW: Good. Good. You don't have that pressure on you that you used to have.

CG: No, I don't. You see, when you are alone, if you wait for somebody to help-for instance, if I'd had gotten remarried and had a husband to take care of, and my children to take care of, sometimes it doesn't work. I've seen too much in my years of life of different things to go through with a step-father, or as a step-mother.

BW: Oh, you felt that a step-father would not have helped.

CG: Would not have helped 15- or 14-year old children. The mother would have to be there.

BW: In other words, you believe that a working mother is not a desirable thing.

CG: You know it is not easy to raise boys and girls and try to explain to them--you have to tell them--I had to tell mine, "I am your father and I am your mother and this is the way we have to do it. I have to have your help. You have to help me. If you are doing something wrong you put me into more trouble than I have." You have to talk to them. It is not easy. And today it is worse than in those days. There are too many other things that they can get into. I always provided them with what they needed. If they wanted company they could have brought it into the house. I'd cook for them. I told them to bring their friends; they would play here in the yard. And they had everything they wanted. I had a house full of boys from the neighborhood. And for the girls, if they wanted to play we had a big yard here, go ahead and play here. But I didn't want any swearing. If I heard of any--I'd be upstairs maybe making the beds and if I'd hear them--I'd yell at them downstairs and say, "Hey, cut that language." Of course today it's worse than ever; there are movies, there is this, there is that and the other things. It's much harder now than it was then to bring up children. They demand this; they demand that; they demand the other thing. And they take what they want.

BW: I think it still can be done, but it takes a lot more effort on the parents' part to put restrictions on them.

CG: I thank God I was able to get through it. They've got their own families now and they have to battle their own battles. But so far we've never had any trouble. So I don't think that we ever will. I've got 12 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. My daughter, Adel, had five; Tod's got four; and Anthony's got three. And now he's become a grandfather and he's thrilled pink. He didn't have any girls so his son recently gave him a granddaughter. She's almost six months old. Oh, is he thrilled that he has a little girl now!

BW: Before we finish off, do you feel that we have talked enough about the Italian life here in San Diego? There really wasn't that much here then, I take it.

CG: No. There were a few, you know, the local ones. And then the Portuguese came in. When the tuna boats came in, why then it was a different story.

BW: The Portuguese were on the other side of the bay, though.

CG: On the other side. Then there were a lot more coming in--they multiply, you know. It was just like me with my family. The young ones came out and then they had their own boats--the younger generation.

BW: Was there ever any friction between the Italians and the Portuguese? Or any friction with any other nationalities here?

CG: Ummm, no, not that I know of. We always got along. Even now with all the trouble they have. Now they are having trouble! The boats can't fish!

BW: Because of the porpoise thing. That's ridiculous.

CG: Did you ever hear of such a thing! The Japanese can herd them; the Chinese can do this; Russia can do that--come over here and get everything from us. I cannot understand why the government put and paid a man--a policeman--on a tuna boat to see how many porpoises they kill. What for?

For the other nations who go ahead and kill them and do what they want? What is this environment--I can't understand it. What has environment have to do with it.

BW: I understand what is making these people so unhappy is they see another foreign boat right along side of them killing so many porpoises.

CG: Well, you see, they are careful; they do what they can. But now the boats are going to other countries--fishing for other countries. What are we going to do? Are we going to have to pay for a little can of tuna \$2.00 and \$2.50 a pound? And we have to buy it from this other country. Why? Why are we doing like this? Why don't we give our American fishermen the same privileges that the other countries have. The other countries come over here and do it and we can't do anything about it. But we put ours under restriction! Why?

BW: No reason, no reason. It's just like when prohibition came in there were a few people who wanted liquor knocked off and it hurt many, many other people. That is what is happening now.

CG: You know, it seems to me to be so simple; and yet they have to go to Washington. Can't these people understand? What is it?

BW: I think they are going to be changing their minds shortly because they are losing too many boats from here.

CG: But what are they waiting for--the last minute?

BW: Yes, when the last boat is gone. That's what's happening.

CG: I hear the fishermen talk, you know. But I didn't know until a few months ago that they have a policeman on every boat; they pay a man, wasting money, putting a man made to watch what you are doing on your own boat where you have a million dollars invested. I don't know--I cannot understand it! That puzzles me a lot, knowing fish and knowing the fishermen. Maybe I'm wrong.

BW: No, you are not wrong. These fishermen, maybe, admittedly in the beginning did lose a lot of porpoises. Now they have better nets and they make better efforts to get them out of there. So you lose a few at a time, but not like they used to.

CG: But they can't do anything against the other ships.

BW: Anyway--we could talk all day about that, because I feel the same way. I've seen it happen; I've talked to the men.

CG: Well, you're down at the waterfront; you hear about all this.

BW: I know one thing I was going to ask you. Did you ever meet any interesting people in your business activities?

CG: Yes, very much so. People from other countries?

BW: Well, here in San Diego who are of interest; characters; or someone who would be of interest historically.

CG: Well, I knew quite a few of them but many of them have passed away now. There were quite a few: I knew a lot of the bank people, but there are very few left now, so many are gone. Like yesterday, one came in and he was in a wheelchair and after he saw me--right away I didn't know him--the

minute he saw me he embraced me and I didn't know whom I was embracing. He called me by name; then, finally, I remembered him. He was a man who had a business here and he and his wife I used to know quite well. I couldn't think of his name--and I can't think of his name now. The lady who was taking care of him told me, but she spoke so softly I still didn't know who he was. He couldn't explain or talk to me quite clear, so I just let it go at that. But I wanted to--and it was a puzzle to me until today I tried to think of who he was. I couldn't get the resemblance. He had a mustache and a goatee and I couldn't recall anyone I knew like that.

BW: Well, you've probably run into the leaders of the city over the years.

CG: Yes, quite a few of them. I know them because they give me the signal that they are in. Sometimes they call me--we don't take any reservations--but they call and say they are in a hurry as they have to go to court and will be down later. They call to say, "Try to save me a table." I tell them, "You know I don't save a table, but when you get here I'll take care of you."

BW: Well, I want to thank you very much for the Historical Society and for myself, personally. I came up here not knowing what to ask you except a few Italian questions, but we seemed to have gotten a lot of information on tape.

CG: They have often asked me why don't I write a book.

BW: What do you mean: a success book, or what?

CG: Just historic. The story of how I came through and what happened; coming through from where I went; how we came down; what we had to do and all those little things.

BW: When I do these interviews I always know there is a lot more there than I could possibly record. It is difficult to do it all. You see, the main point was the Italian background of yours; San Diego City at the time and how your business evolved to be the business that it is. Because it is a success story in San Diego.

CG: (Getting out a photo album now and showing some pictures.) Here is the medal given me from the President of Italy by the Italian Consul. The Italian Consul gave me the medal. (Reading from the inscription) "For what an Italian has achieved in America." He's the Italian Consul from Los Angeles.

BW: Thank you, again.

END OF INTERVIEW
