

[00:00:00] **Madoris:** Okay. All right - so it's recording now. Um, so we're just going to start with a brief information about you. What's your name or any details that you feel that are, you know, important that we know about you first?

[00:00:16] **Jane:** Well, I am 63 years old. My name is Jane Marie Brown. My maiden name was Buscaino before I became Brown [both laugh].

Getting married so many years ago, I automatically took Brown because that's what we did. You wouldn't question it, whatsoever. You know - you just take your husband's name. If I were to get married today, I think I would want my name Buscaino and, uh, I felt I had lost my identity because when someone sees my name on a roster or a piece of paper of some sort, they would know pretty much, you know, you could tell that's an Italian name.

So [00:01:00] having Brown, it was just like I could be anything. And I [pause]... Just went with the flow and did how we were taught, how we were - it was a culture you take your husband's name.

I have three children and we live in the woods of Accord. I came here from New York City, 32 years ago. We built a house in the woods.

[00:01:26] **Madoris:** Can you tell me a little bit now about your family and, you know, cause you mentioned your last name and the Italian heritage and all that. Um, can you tell me a little bit about your family?

[00:01:38] **Jane:** My family. Um, you mean right now? Like my family unit? Or growing up in the city?

[00:01:46] **Madoris:** Um, yeah, growing up in the city, your, your Italian family.

[00:01:51] **Jane:** So, um, I grew up on Carmine and Bleecker Street in Greenwich Village, New York City. And um [00:02:00] I had a wonderful childhood. I grew up in a building that was a family-owned building, and I grew up with my, um, grandmother and my aunts and uncles and my cousins. I think there was like 13 cousins in the building. Is that right? Well, maybe, actually maybe less - a little less than that.

Anyhow, my mother was one of five sisters and, um, we were very close. Very close - all the cousins were close. It was like - they were like siblings. And you could run from apartment to apartment in our building. The doors were not locked and, and, uh, something good was always cooking. [Laughs]

When you were making your way up the stairs to go up - I lived on the fourth floor - you smell something good and you stop in and you eat it [both laugh].

[00:02:51] **Madoris:** That's nice.

[00:02:52] **Jane:** It was very nice. And the men worked - we had a hardware store at the base of the building, Nocetti Hardware Store [00:03:00]. And my father and my uncles worked in the hardware store.

It was very nice. You don't find that no more today – families. No.

[00:03:13] **Madoris:** Yeah. Um how did your family get to the U.S. how...?

[00:03:18] **Jane:** I actually brought, um [rustling in a bag] - I have the name of the.... My great-grandmother – no, my grandmother, my grandmother arrived in America on June 8, 1920 on the ship Vittorio Emanuele III. I have this little paper that I took with me because I, I thought you may ask something like that.

So she was taken out of school at the age of eight to care for cows. You know, she used to have to go up the mountain and take care of the cows and - little children, you know. They had jobs. And...

I don't know if you know what polenta is [00:04:00] polenta.

[00:04:00] **Madoris:** Uh-huh.

[00:04:01] **Jane:** Yes - so my grandma used to just get a polenta in her pocket, you know and you go in the mountain. It was amazing. And that – that was my mother's mother, Marina (and um) Cardinale. And I - and the house we built in the woods is Cardinal Road. I loved it because my mom - the name, the family name, Cardinale.

Okay. So... And my father's mom told me this - she died at 101 - she lived around the corner from us...

[00:04:32] **Madoris:** Here in Kingston?

[00:04:33] **Jane:** No, no – in New York City, yeah. In the Village. And she told me that had to - she had to go (very little girl) - go up the mountain, take care of the [pause] sheep or the cows, you know. And there's a little sad - a little strange, but she told me that they would.... They had not - not much.

So they used to watch a little bird's nest - if they see a nest and then they see [00:05:00] the mama and the papa, you know, and then they know when the little eggs hatch, and they keep an eye and they see (little bigger, a little bigger, a little bigger) just right before they could fly away every day when they come to take care of the animals. They know.... They take - they steal them from the nest and they stick them on a stick - on a skewer stick - and they roast them!

And they eat them. That's so bizarre to us today – like [shouting] “Oh my god!” - but that's how they did it.

[00:05:36] **Madoris:** Um, and then, um, now when do you come to Kingston and how does that happen?

[00:05:45] **Jane:** I spent all my summers in Rosendale, which is not far from Kingston. Rosendale is close. And we bought a summer house - my family bought a summer house, so I was a little girl, maybe five.

And [00:06:00], um, I spent every summer of my life in Rosendale on River Road. We had one house that, you know, we called it the Big House. It wasn't so big in thinking back today. But it had two bedrooms and it was the big house because it had heat. And then two bungalows and the people in my building - my family in my building in the city.... Everybody would come to the country and, and, uh, again, we were all the cousins. In the night, we play raid, we make a fire, you played tag you had bicycles.

Then we grew up bigger and they got, um, dirt bikes. And we always were very entwined my family with the - they were like my siblings. Um, uh-huh. Although the word is cousin, you know. And my aunts and uncles - all very close.

Yes. So in Rosendale I spent all my summers and I knew I had a great love for the Hudson Valley. Wonderful. I wanted to be here and I felt that when I got married [00:07:00], I was gonna build a house in the country and live happily ever after. And I did. [Laughs]

[00:07:09] **Madoris:** [both laughing]. That's amazing! And what was your first impression of the area of like, Kingston?

[00:07:15] **Jane:** Oh my gosh. Well, I just.... You know coming from the city - coming up to this area and having mountains and trees and.... You know, I grew up in, um [pause] concrete land, you know in the city. You, we didn't have um [pause] a driveway or yard.

We used to go - in the hardware store there was this big brown wooden window, like a latched window, and we would climb out of that the kids. 'Cause we used to play in the cellar. And we would climb out there and you play in the city yard. It's like cement with a drain. You know, there's no grass or trees and we.... But what fun we had - we used to climb from yard to yard to yard in the back there.

And [00:08:00] the people would yell at us, "Get out of here." We were mischievous, we were little.... And we would go to Zeppieri's Bakery. And he used to throw his dough out in the back and we used to have dough fights. You know that was a different life than coming up here. And you catch frogs and you have beautiful views and, and, um, trees and grass.

And it just.... I, I, I loved it. I still do today and I instilled it in my own children. They have a great love for the Valley.

[00:08:32] **Madoris:** Yeah. When you moved to Kingston, who like.... What were the first things that called you in terms of like community or like organizations or anything that you got to know where you socialize with people?

[00:08:45] **Jane:** Ummm – well. I get mixed up - that's a good question and I get a little mixed up because I don't know like what age I'm talking about, but I have to say like.... Okay - so I would associate that question with when I got married and [00:09:00] my husband and I started building a house up here.

We used to drive up every weekend and see how much they did, you know. Finally we got in there and my son, Michael, my first child was born and, um [pause]. I think the first community relationships that I experienced - maybe not my husband, but myself – was ('cause he commuted to the city for awhile. Yeah. Um..) was playgroup because my children were small. And, um, I learned to drive when we built the house up here - I didn't even drive. Oy i aye.

So go to play group and meet other moms with little children. That was my first community. Uh, and church - of course. I sang in the choir in Saint Peter's Choir. And, um, yeah. And we made a lot of friends at church and when the kids started going to school, but, um [00:10:00], before school was definitely, my first relationship with community would be playgroups.

[00:10:08] **Madoris:** And how was those, how were those interactions at first or like throughout - how did you feel in those spaces?

[00:10:15] **Jane:** Very good. Very good. Because, um, they were like-minded people because.... If you go to playgroup, obviously they are stay at home moms. And I was blessed with that ability to stay at home. So these were other stay at home moms, even though they had left careers and, you know, did.... With the uh the luxury of staying home - it was fabulous.

[loudly] We played all day! [both laughing]

[00:10:44] **Madoris:** That sounds fun.

[00:10:45] **Jane:** Oh my god – those were the best days of my life! When my kids were little.

[00:10:50] **Madoris:** And then were there some challenges that you faced coming here or anything that, um, any barriers, challenges?

[00:10:58] **Jane:** Um [00:11:00], [pause - sigh] the only challenge I - come to mind – ‘cause I don't know the questions you're going to present to me.

So when you say that - if I had to think quickly, it would be that I was away from my mother. I mean, but people move far from their mother - and I'm two hours away. But to me that was far and.... And yeah -I lived in the woods and I was having baby, after baby, you know. And um my family - my siblings and the babies they were having and my mother - you know, we were separated.

So to me, that was a different way of life because I always knew... You know, even when I moved out of 11 Carmine Street and I got my own apartment on McDougal Street.... You'd come out of the subway at West Fourth Street and you stop in the hardware store first and say hello to everybody and see what's up. Then you go home, you know [laughs].... And maybe not - maybe you go upstairs to eat.

So I, I - it was uh a bit of a shock, but my love for the area. And it was like a dream for me. Um, beautiful home that we built. Uh, nobody has a home like that yet. You know, we were just growing up – my my [studders] my cousins, my peers. And it was very exciting to have such a home. You know two bathrooms, a big house - not even that it's a big house, but to us – coming from a little apartment! We own the whole building and we each had little apartments, but ideally - really it's like one big house with the – that we all lived in.

But, you know - I shared a bedroom with my sister. And so to have this - big house... It was a dream come true. And even though I missed my family and my neighborhood - so to speak - I didn't miss my neighborhood enough that it would outweigh the love I felt for living in the forest and I'm raising my children in the woods. We have water by my house and.... It was like playing house - buying furniture. Uh, you know, it was like playing house and I loved it. And then everybody came to visit me.

[00:13:13] **Madoris:** That's amazing. And then, um, was there anything that you didn't like about Kingston or something that you think Kingston could have...?

[00:13:22] **Jane:** Well Kingston - to me - was the city because I live in Accord. So I'm, I'm, you know, uh, I guess 20 miles, you know. So we would come to Kingston for things we needed, you know. Kingston - and to think this, you know.... I came from New York City, so this is not the City. But like up here - like this is the city [laughs - pause] and I'm not.... And no, I didn't not like anything. I liked everything. That's why we stayed. Yeah.

[00:13:53] **Madoris:** Um, what about when it comes to like - now we're going to talk a little bit more about like culture and cultural traditions [00:14:00]. Did you continue to practice any cultural traditions coming to Kingston?

[00:14:04] **Jane:** Oh yeah - in my home?

[00:14:08] **Madoris:** Yeah....

[00:14:09] **Jane:** Yeah.... Um [pause – thinking] - cultural traditions... Well foods - absolutely foods. Yes. My children feel very Italian - they do. And they're proud to be Italian American. Um, I worry about how generations get further and further away.... Because you know, I, I understand a little bit of Italian, but you know.... The further - more generations - they're getting further and further away from the.... And so it's important to me that my kids know the traditions and eat the foods and all that. Yes!

And let's see [pause].... Silly things like [sigh] um traditions that we do [pause]. I celebrate, like [00:15:00] [long pause] I celebrate, I don't know what to think of as a tradition, but of course [long pause]... Like setting up the Manger at Christmastime. Do you mean things like that?

[00:15:12] **Madoris:** Uh-huh.

[00:15:12] **Jane:** Yeah!

So a tradition we do is - I have - I pull out the box of all the figurines that belong in the manger and my kids were small. And we would each take a turn and pull out, um, one of the items.

But you don't know what you're going to get 'cause it's all wrapped up in tissue paper. And so it was big competition like, you know - you wanted to get somebody with a little clout. Like Saint Joseph or like an angel or something. Then if you got a chicken or a donkey, you weren't [laughs] happy [both laugh].

And I allowed my kids to set it up – however... Wherever they felt that figurine goes. So it was a little coo-coo. You know - it wasn't always very right. And my daughter Gillian would be like.... She couldn't stand it, you know. She had to have everybody where they're supposed to be [Madoris laughs]. But [00:16:00], um - that was a special time that we did together. Like they would never come home from school and the mangers up. No - that was a family activity.

But I'm trying to think - at home what we would do that... You know, in my growing up, um.... Lots of stuff. I don't know, just [pause]...

There was always just.... I don't know why I'm being - having a brain freeze for this because we do a lot of traditional stuff and I'm just not thinking about it right now.

[00:16:28] **Madoris:** Can you think of anything that you used to do at home that you can't do here? That you don't no longer do in Kingston or like living around here?

[00:16:35] **Jane:** Oh well um being Italian like um... [pause – sigh]. There was like a special night - Holy Thursday - like there was special nights that we would.... We were much more connected to the church and um being able to walk on foot. So there was a special night in the neighborhood where you visit, you know, there was a few [00:17:00] churches in walking distance.

So we would go from Our Lady Pompei over to Saint Joseph's over to Saint Anthony's. You know and you make this pilgrimage trip and it was uh...

[00:17:12] **Madoris:** I used to when I was a kid too.

[00:17:14] **Jane:** You did?! Yeah, yeah. And go to the cemetery and you know - visit the graves of our loved ones.

I have a plot here in the country because my second child was still born.

Yeah. I have three kids, but my second child, Bonnie, she was still born and, um yeah. So not being afraid of going to the cemetery and 'cause she – I had... It was like learning to walk and talk again when I lost my little baby. It was very difficult because she was perfect in every way. It was a cord accident and she um [pause] just was beautiful and big - eight pounds, seven ounces. She was [00:18:00] lovely and we were shocked. So when my children were small, we would go to the cemetery a lot and um decorated very sweetly for every holiday. Easter had all the bunnies, Valentine's Day had all the hearts, Christmas, you know.... Always look beautiful.

And um we would put a blanket out and have peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and - like a picnic that people, families don't really do that anymore. They're lucky if they even go to the cemetery now, nevermind like hang there. You know?

And then I found out in later years that my daughter Gillian, she - my kids are Michael, Gillian, and Justin - and Gillian was... When she was going to SUNY New Paltz, she would go to the cemetery and with a blanket by her sister, Bonnie, and just put out her books and everything. It was a good studying place, the cemetery because it was quiet and she felt loved by her sister. Very nice. And I had - didn't even know that until [pause] [00:19:00] - I don't know when she told me - when I heard about. So the cemetery stuff...

Um [pause] you know... I'm shocked that I am uh dumbfounded for traditions. I'm going to be mad when I drive home. I'm going to go, “[loudly] OH I shoulda told her this! OH, I shoulda told her that!”

[00:19:18] **Madoris:** [laughing] Um let's talk a little bit about something that might remind you of traditions - uh, food. Right?

[00:19:25] **Jane:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:19:26] **Madoris:** What are some favorite foods?

[00:19:30] **Jane:** That is a tradition. We would make homemade gnocchi and it's fun. Even now I get my children - we put Italian music on and [hear her rubbing her hands together] we're all there rolling and doing the things and even their significant others - they get a kick out of it because some of them are not Italian and they don't know what.... You know - it's exciting to learn this [pause] food. So...

Or ravioli you know. To make the homemade is extra special. It's not something you would do every Sunday, like they did years ago [00:20:00]. It's an event! [Shouts] "OH Sunday we're going to make gnocchi! [Madoris laughs] Get ready – bring your boyfriend, your girlfriend."

But I still want to do it. Yes. You still have to do it - have to show them, you know.

[00:20:13] **Madoris:** What is your favorite food?

[00:20:15] **Jane:** My favorite food. I like Eggplant Parmesan. That's - I really do love Eggplant Parmesan. It is a favorite of mine. Yeah.

[00:20:26] **Madoris:** Oh, that's good. Now that you've talked about some of the Italian traditions and cooking and things like that, has there been any like American tradition that you have taken up or like your family has continued or started?

[00:20:42] **Jane:** Yeah. And American tradition [long pause – thinking]. I don't – no. I can't think. I don't know. Like what would that be?

[00:20:53] **Madoris:** Like um.. [pause] 4th of July or like uh...

[00:20:58] **Jane:** Well we get together [00:21:00] and that's uh not very familiar to a lot of my friends - but my three kids and their special.... Well my daughter just got married last week. So I have one son-in-law and then I go to my two sons that have girlfriends.

So what I'm trying to say is - so they come a lot, like we have Sunday dinners together. Even during the week, somebody will pop in and we cook, we eat and, um [pause]....

The holidays - of course, we're going to be together! There's no question – like you have to be in the hospital bleeding if you're not going to be there [both laugh].

So that in itself - that culture, that strongness, you know.... My, um [pause] - I liked that I have instilled that in my children and they feel it, they know. They go see their grandma and.... Yeah, it's important. They know that. It's not [00:22:00] that we see each other on.... It's the holiday, so they're going to come. No. We see each other all the time.

Anyway. Blessed, blessed blessed.

[00:22:10] **Madoris:** That's good. And then now talking about kind of like other people and you sharing your culture - what part of your culture would you like other people to embrace?

[00:22:22] **Jane:** Oh! Um... Um [long pause – thinking]. The food, I guess, huh? Yeah. Uh um... [long pause]

Uh - I wanna say even like religious stuff. I feel, I feel like... People close friends of mine and family, I could talk openly about, you know, "Oh, I said a prayer to the blessed mother for ba, ba, ba, ba, ba." Or like um [00:23:00] - I think every room in my house has some kind of sacramental item. If it's not a statue, it's a cross or something. I don't know an angel - at least an angel.

And um yeah, I wish that everyone could have good spirituality and good connection. I try to um [pause] - share that stuff I do with my close friends easily and with people that are not so close. Yeah. You - I don't know. You just worry that they're gonna think you're a religious fanatic or something.

But it's so close to my heart. I wonder if it's because I'm 63 now. [Loudly] Nah - I was always like that. Yeah. I wish that for everyone that they could have a connection, a lot of people don't have it [00:24:00].

[00:24:01] **Madoris:** Yeah. And then what do you think Kingston could have to make it more welcoming to people?

[00:24:] **Jane:** Oh. Hmm [pause]. Uh [long pause] I mean, there's parks and stuff, but [pause]... I guess like a central spot, maybe. You know how you go - did you ever go to Woodstock?

[00:24:30] **Madoris:** Yes.

[00:24:31] **Jane:** So there's like a Village Green, like, you know, that's like the central place. We - I don't think, I don't feel like we have a central spot in Kingston. There's beautiful parks and there's beautiful - by the water.

And, um, yeah, but [long pause]. Yeah, I wish there was like one central place where if you went there, you were gonna [pause] feel connected and see people [00:25:00] you know.

[00:25:01] **Madoris:** You think there should be, like, there should be more of a sense of community or like, um – ‘cause I...

For example - where I'm from in the city, we have a park in the middle of the like neighborhood. And just people just go and sit down, all of the neighbors go and sit down.

[00:25:16] **Jane:** Yes, that's right. I had that too - right across the street from my house on Carmine and Bleeker. It was Father Demo Square. And you could look out the window and you see the people on the bench. And my mother would say, “Oh, so-and-so’s down there - I'm going to go down now.”

You know – ‘cause you see everybody comes to the square. Yeah. We don't have a spot like that in Kingston.

[00:25:39] **Madoris:** That's true. Um and then this question is more related to like immigrants and things like that. You think - would you say that Kingston is welcoming to immigrants? Or how do you.... What's your perspective on that?

[00:25:52] **Jane:** Hmm [long pause]. I think it is – I do.

[00:26:00] I think it is, I would say yes.

[00:26:02] **Madoris:** Okay. Do you have any favorite story about being Italian in Kingston that you would like to share?

[00:26:10] **Jane:** Uh [long pause]. I can't think of one now. I can't think of one right now [long pause].

Well - I'll tell you this – but I am going back to the manger and I don't mean to, but maybe there's a reason. One time when I was feeling very um vulnerable or very [sigh] you know - I went to Saint Joseph's Church and they had a manger in the back of the church that the figurines are big – big as me. And there was real hay and there was nobody in the church.

And I went in there, I went in the manger and I laid down right next to the crib [00:27:00]. And I just liked it. Nobody was in there and I, I loved being in the manger. It was so nice and comforting and, you know, I could just feel like my eyes well up with tears and it was just sweet, sweet. It was a true Christmas.

And I was afraid that somebody was going to come in the church because they would say, “Uh-oh - what is this lady drunk or something?!” [Madoris laughs]

But um yeah - I, I love that sweetness and, um, and I love that they decorate of course with the nativites. Yeah.

[00:27:35] **Madoris:** Um and now this is going back to the beginning when you're talking about your family and things like that.

How do you think migration changed your family?

[00:27:46] **Jane:** How did it change my family?

[00:27:49] **Madoris:** Yeah. Coming to the - your family coming into the U.S.

[00:27:53] **Jane:** Yeah. Uh hum [pause]. How did it change [long pause]?

[00:28:00] I don't feel like - I don't - I mean I didn't know them, but I don't feel.... I don't feel like it changed so much because [pause]. I'm happy with how we stayed close. It - my family like I said before, we were blessed to be able to have one building and it was like a fortress. We were all in there, you know?

Um I think if my family would have came and somebody settled over here, somebody settled over there or.... Or I don't know. Like maybe if my mother - she was one of five sisters - maybe if they didn't remain close, you know. Maybe that would've been uh something, but no.... We - it was still important. Family's first.

Yeah. Very strong ties [00:29:00]. Yeah. I brought this little thing. I thought maybe I [rustling of bag]...

[00:29:04] **Madoris:** Yeah you can share whatever you want....

[00:29:06] **Jane:** Oh okay. So this - I won't (wear's my glasses) - I won't read the front part, but this is something that I wrote about my grandma. And um she - this is my grandmother I told you before. Her name was Marina - Marina Cardinale.

So this part comes here - I made a list of like, "Recipe for a Real Grandma." [reading] "Here are all the things that you need." You know, [reading] "One: she has to live real close, preferably in your building. So you don't ever need a coat when you go to visit her and you can visit her in your pajamas. Two: she has to give you money for your loss tooth even though the tooth fairy already did. Three: she has to hang your artwork on the wall with scotch tape - just

under the sconce [00:30:00] lamp near the kitchen table. This way everyone could see it. Four: she has to be.... Oh - she can't be too fat and she can't be too skinny. Five: she has to wear perfume. Six: she has to wear dresses and hats and shoes with straps. Seven: she must wear small fur animals around her neck that have beady little eyes [laughs] that are not really theirs [laughs]. Eight: she has to be quicker than your mom when it comes to throwing change out the window when you call from the sidewalk 'cause you need to buy chalk or ice cream. Nine: she always should have breadcrumbs to feed the pigeons in the square.

Ten: she has to be real good at television game Jeopardy. Eleven: she has to make delicious gravy. Twelve: she has to throw a head back when she laughs hard. Thirteen: she should have light brown eyes. Fourteen: she has to have - always have flour, eggs, oil, and [00:31:00] those tiny little colored balls that you sprinkle on top of what you made - nobody ever always has them. That's how you know if she's a real grandma. Fifteen: she has to wear a pretty bracelet that has lots of cool charms. Sixteen: she has to tell you about the father, the son, and the holy ghost and Seventeen: she has to sing nice songs - Italian ones are a plus.”

That's – yeah....

[00:31:25] **Madoris:** That’s so beautiful.

[00:31:26] **Jane:** I know. I got to read this one more little piece, “But most importantly, she has to have a special teacup. This is the real proof. I remember times when I would be crying and my grandmother would place me up on her lap. That is when the important teacup is needed. My grandma would gently placed that pretty little teacup lightly against my cheek. As tears fell out of my eyes and streamed down my face. She would collect them in her cup.”

“And when enough had been accumulated, grandma would put that fine China to her lips and drink down the salty tears. To my surprise – and each time worked like a first - I would stop crying. Awestruck might be the word - filled with awe and wonder. “It was holy water,” grandma would say and she would place a teacup with the pink roses on the saucer with the pink roses and I would be all better.” [chuckles]

[00:32:20] **Madoris:** Wow [Jane laughs]. That’s amazing.

[00:32:22] **Jane:** [laughs] It's so sweet - I know. Awe [sigh] - she was a good grandma.

[00:32:30] **Madoris:** Well, thank you so much for everything. Is there anything else that you would like to share? Anything...

[00:32:36] **Jane:** No, I'm sure when I ride home, I'm going to think of everything [laughs].

[00:32:43] **Madoris:** Thank you so much.

[00:32:43] **Jane:** Thank you.