Versalini, Ann Interview

Mary Wedegaertner

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Wedegaertner: How old are you Mrs. Versalini?

Versalini: I'm 88.

Wedegaertner: Do you know when your birthday is?

Versalini: My birthday is the 20th of December.

Wedegaertner: So you'll be 89 on your next birthday. Do you remember the first home you lived in here in Stockton? Was it in the country or was it in town?

Versalini: I don’t know that either ‘cause I was pretty young, I guess. I don’t know.

Wedegaertner: How many sisters and brothers did you have?

Versalini: I had two sisters and two brothers.

Wedegaertner: Are any of them living now?

Versalini: They’re all gone.

Wedegaertner: Where did you live before you came to live here?
Versalini: I lived in Stockton first.

Wedegaertner: In which area of Stockton did you live in – what street did you live on?

Versalini: Oh I don’t remember.

Wedegaertner: How long have you lived here at Crestwood?

Versalini: I’ve been here a long time. When I married I went to San Francisco. I lived in San Francisco and then I went to live in Santa Cruz for awhile. Then I came back here.

Wedegaertner: What type of work did your husband do?

Versalini: What kind of work, I can’t remember. Oh, I know. They took the garbage from the schools. They kept the schools clean.

Wedegaertner: He did that in San Francisco?

Versalini: Yes.

Wedegaertner: And Santa Cruz?

Versalini: I don’t know in Santa Cruz what he did.

Wedegaertner: Did you ever work. Did you ever have a job like anything in your life?

Versalini: Yeah.

Wedegaertner: You probably worked very hard?

Versalini: Oh, I had a job as a child. I worked for a lady she was a schoolteacher. She was awfully good to us. I used to set the table and wash the dishes and things like that.

Wedegaertner: You didn’t live at her house though, did you?

Versalini: I didn’t live there, no. I lived at home.

Wedegaertner: How much school did you have? How many years did you go to school?

Versalini: About two or three years and we went to a Catholic school which of course is different than the others, but we didn’t go to school too much because we either had something else to do or it was too cold and we didn’t have the proper clothes to go. In the summertime, my relatives had farms. We used to go there and help pick up vegetables and things like that and then we got something to bring home.

Wedegaertner: Do you remember what kind of vegetables they grew?
Versalini: No, I don’t.

Wedegaertner: Was your father a farmer also?

Versalini: No.

Wedegaertner: Do you remember what type of work he did?

Versalini: He worked for the cemeteries. That’s the first work that I can remember.

Wedegaertner: Did your mother ever work?

Versalini: No, she had plenty of work home.

Wedegaertner: Did she do all of her own baking? Like pies and cakes or bread?

Versalini: No, she didn’t have much time for things like that nor the stuff to make them. No, we didn’t have very much of that kind of stuff. We were very poor.

Wedegaertner: Did she sew your own clothes? Did she make your own clothes?

Versalini: I don’t remember that.

Wedegaertner: Did you ever sew?

Versalini: No.

Wedegaertner: What about your sisters and brothers? Did they go to school very much or did they have to work too?

Versalini: No, they didn’t work. My brothers worked naturally.

Wedegaertner: Did you have anyone else living in your home with you besides your parents? Any boarders or anything like that?

Versalini: We were usually by ourself. We didn’t have I guess a very big house. We were lucky to have enough for, we all slept in one bed as far as us girls did.

Wedegaertner: Do you remember when you first got your first automobile. Your first car?

Versalini: First car! Oh, lord. I’d been married for a long time. I don’t even remember when we got it, but we had a car for a long time.

Wedegaertner: Did you and your husband have children?
Versalini: Did I have any children? Oh yes. I had three boys and one girl. But I have the girl and that’s all I have now. Oh I had one of my boys left.

Wedegaertner: Is your girl the youngest? Is she the youngest child, the girl?

Versalini: No, I think my boy is the youngest.

Wedegaertner: Do they live here in Stockton?

Versalini: Yes. Oh, my boy lives in a small town outside of Stockton.

Wedegaertner: Where did they go to school? Where did your children go to school?

Versalini: I think they went to the El Dorado school. I think that’s where they all went.

Wedegaertner: Were their friends mostly Italian children?

Versalini: No.

Wedegaertner: Did they have very many Italian friends?

Versalini: They had some, but not many. They never speak Italian anyway. That is of course I only have two now. My girl and my boy.

Wedegaertner: And none of them learned to speak Italian?

Versalini: No.

Wedegaertner: Did your husband still continue to speak Italian at home? Did you and your husband continue to speak Italian?

Versalini: No.

Wedegaertner: Which Catholic church did you go to?

Versalini: St. Mary’s I think. I’m not sure. It’s been such a long time ago. There’s so many different churches now.

Wedegaertner: There really are.

Versalini: I think it was St. Mary’s.

Wedegaertner: That’s right downtown. Did a lot of your friends go to the church also?

Versalini: Some of them. I don’t remember that either.

Wedegaertner: Do you remember things like the Depression, [how that] affected your family?
Versalini: Oh I don’t remember that either. We just got along the best we could. We weren’t used to any better and we weren’t used to any worse. As I say this lady where I worked as a child. She was awful good to me. When I got married, she bought me everything I needed to get married. When I had my first baby, she gave me everything I needed for my first baby. Yes, she was an awful good person. An awful good teacher. She was a teacher, you know. She knew all about children.

Wedegaertner: Do you remember her name?

Versalini: Powell, I think it was. I think it was Powell.

Wedegaertner: Where did she teach? Do you know?

Versalini: Oh, I don’t know. She didn’t teach when I was there. She had quit teaching already.

Wedegaertner: Did your sisters work for her at all?

Versalini: No, I don’t remember what they did.

Wedegaertner: Do you remember any of the floods in Stockton?

Versalini: No. I don’t remember that either.

Wedegaertner: What did you and your sisters and brothers like to do at home for fun?

Versalini: I don’t know that either. I don’t know if we played. We always had something to do.

Wedegaertner: Did you and your husband belong to any organizations or any groups? Did you and your husband belong to any clubs or anything like that?

Versalini: No.

Wedegaertner: Was he Italian too?

Versalini: Yes.

Wedegaertner: Was he born in Italy?

Versalini: I don’t know that either.

Wedegaertner: Did you ever go back to Italy to visit?

Versalini: No. After my husband died, I didn’t move anywhere. I just stayed right here.

Wedegaertner: Did you ever talk about going to Italy?
Versalini: No. We were never interested in that.

Wedegaertner: Did you have any relatives that you wrote to or anything?

Versalini: No.

Wedegaertner: Do you have any grandchildren?

Versalini: Yes, I have one nephew. No, I see I have one. Two, I think I have two. I’m not sure. One lives in New York, I think. I get a card from her or letter once in a while.

Wedegaertner: When your children were growing up, did they have certain chores that they had to do at home?

Versalini: Oh, I didn’t even pay any attention to it. I guess they did what they could.

Wedegaertner: You didn’t have dryers and things like that?

Versalini: No, we didn’t even know what they were. You washed by hand in those days.

Wedegaertner: Right, it’s a lot of hard work in those days.

Versalini: If you don’t mind, I’m going to go.

Wedegaertner: Okay, thank you very much for talking to me.