

**NAME OF PROJECT:** *Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens: Memories of WWII*

**DATE OF INTERVIEW:** June 16, 2011

**LOCATION OF INTERVIEW:** Toronto, ON

**NAME OF INTERVIEWEE:** Antoinette (Toni) Ciccarelli

**NAME OF INTERVIEWER:** Melina De Guglielmo

**NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER:** Lucy Di Pietro

**TRANSCRIBED BY:** Krystle Copeland

**DATE TRANSCRIBED:** July 28, 29, 2011 & August 2, 2011

**ACCESSION No.:** ICEA2010.0003.0002

**PROJECT NOTE:**

**Please note that all interviews have been transcribed verbatim. The language in this transcript is as it was provided by the transcriptionist noted above. The project staff have not edited this transcript for errors.**

**ABSTRACT**

Antoinette (Toni) Ciccarelli is a 95 year old woman, born in Guglionesi, Campobasso, Molise, Italy on September 23, 1915. She was 6 years old when she immigrated to Canada with her mother Brigitta Bassano, and sisters, Teresa and Rose. Toni's brother, Joe, was born shortly after their family's arrival in Canada in Hamilton, and her brother, Frank, was born in St. Catharines, Ontario. Her father, Vincenzo, died after the family moved to a farm in Scarborough some years after their arrival. After her father's death, her mother moved the family to downtown Toronto, where Toni worked in various grocery stores and did volunteer work at Casa D'Italia. On June 10, 1940, she was sorting mail at the Front Street Post Office when she was picked up by two RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) officers, taken to a police station and fingerprinted. She was released and had to report to the police whenever she left town, in addition to her monthly reports that were carried out until the war ended in 1945. She describes some internees' arrests, such as Mr. Eliseo Orlando and his sons Roy and Italo, and recounts going down to the Exhibition grounds to bring the two Orlando boys some of their

belongings. She describes her wedding and 39-year marriage to her husband, Pat (Pasquale) Ciccarelli, as well as her children, Loraine, Patrick, and Cathy. Toni explains that she is most happy when spending time with her 6 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. She also finds volunteer work very rewarding, and has been giving her time to the Canadian Cancer Society, Villa Charities, Variety Village and the Heart and Stroke foundation since 1974.

#### INTERVIEW

**TC: Toni Ciccarelli, interviewee**

**MDG: Melina Di Guglielmo, interviewer**

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 00:00:10]

MDG: Okay, so...this is Melina De Guglielmo on June...15—June 16—15—16, 2011 [laughs]. Um, if you could please state your full birthname?

TC: My name is Antonietta Maria...Ciccarelli, née Bassano.

MDG: And where were you born and when?

TC: I was born in Guglionesi, Provincia di Campobasso, on September the 20— *ventitré, millenovecentoquindici*.

MDG: Oh. Um, so tell me about growing up in Italy, your early childhood, what do you remember?

TC: Well, now—I'm going to talk to you in English. [Laughs]

MDG: Yeah.

TC: Okay. What I remember more of when I was a little girl is going in—on the—uh, my, uh, my mother would put us on the balcony and watch my mother go through the processions of the different Saints. Especially the one, Our Lady of, of Sorrow. And then sometimes we'd go to the big church and I'd always say, "Oh, I want to go see my grandpa. I want to go see my grandpa." 'Cause he just lived on the other side from the church. [Motions with hand] And my mother would take us there and there we'd be. And then the other memories I remember, my father's brother, oldest brother, Frank had a place out in the country. And during the, during the summer part they used to go out there early and, and stay there. And, ah, I would go there and I would—oh, I was, I was the apple of his eye [smiles]. And he wanted me to no—not to come to Canada, he want my mother to leave me there, leave me there, no. And it was just there—and oh, he had two daughters and—but I was, I was the Queen of them all. [Laughs] Because I don't know—you see when his wife had a child, she lost it. And when my mother got the malaria fever, she breastfeed me, so actually I was with them until I was about almost two years old. But I didn't have the breastfeed anymore. So this is why I think we were so close. And that—so—and then of course we came here to Canada.

MDG: Oh. And what, what were your parents' names?

TC: My parents?

MDG: Yup.

TC: My father's name was Vincenzo, and my mother was Brigitta.

MDG: And did you have any brothers and sisters?

TC: [Ponders question]

[Pause]

MDG: Any brothers and sisters in Italy?

TC: Yea—no. I—no—well, when we came here to Canada we were three. My sister Teresa, myself, and my sister Rose.

MDG: And Teres—was Teresa the oldest?

TC: Teresa was the oldest. Well, two had died ahead of her. So Teresa was the oldest. And I was the second, Antoinetta, I was there. And my sister Rose...was the baby. And she was born 1920.

MDG: And, and, ah, do you remember the voyage? Do you remember the trip to Canada?

TC: Yes, I remember...going to Naples and getting on the big ship. [Emphasizes the word big] And it was—there was—and some of them were down below. [Motions down with hand] But we were on the ground level...and then, then there was another level and another level up above. [Motions up with hand] And I know I was in one of those...bouncing around all the time. And my mother—we were on the ship, maybe three days, and my mother got seasick so badly, she had to be put to bed. So, it used to be my sister Teresa and the, uh, Salva—I guess it would be the Salvation Army or one of the ones on the, on the ship. We'd take us and walk us around and everything else. And I used to sneak around and get up to the top. Especially when it was during the time when they used to dress in beautiful gowns and everything nice. [Motions and

gasps loudly with wide eyes] I thought they were princess you know or something. It was just one of those things. And then, uh, we get off, and we landed in New York.

MDG: So you went to Ellis Island first?

TC: Yeah, to Ellis in New York. [Nods] And my sister Rose had developed a few of the measles. On the last day of the ship, the measles broke out, so we were quarantined.

MDG: And what, what do you mean you were quarantined? Did they—

TC: Well, because my—at that time they thought you were going to catch the measles. S-so, we were put in a room, my mother, my sisters and myself. With my sister Rose.

[00:05:11]

MDG: And where was your dad?

TC: Well my dad hadn't come yet for us. Because my dad was supposed—see he worked for the railroad and he was supposed to come in from Hamilton. But from Hamilton he was in Peterborough, on a job in Peterborough. So they had to get in touch with him and he came. So he came about two or three days after that. Well that—by that time the quarantine was over and we got on the ship and we went to Peterborough. And then we were in Peterborough for about...four months, five months, maybe six months. And then we got transferred back to Hamilton. When my father was transf—put back there and we were in Hamilton. And my brother Joe was born in Hamilton. And then from Hamilton, we went to St. Catharines and my brother Frank was—my brother Frank was born in St. Catharines. And then from Nia—from St. Catharines we went to Niagara Falls. And from Niagara Falls—my father worked there for a

while and then he got tired of this running around, back and forth. He bought a farm in Scarborough. On Midland Avenue. And, uh, we moved here in To—in, in, in Toronto on the second of February. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of March my father died, the same year. Left my mother with 10 acres of land. Five greenhouses and three—my sister Teresa was already married, had a child and also expecting a second one. So she couldn't help us very much. So by the end of April...or May—no by the end of May, my mother said, "No more school, you have to go to work."

MDG: So, um—

TC: So we moved from the farm. Oh, before that—the following year, the house burned down.

MDG: What do you mean—the house burned down in Scarborough?

TC: [Laughs] In Scarborough.

MDG: Before your dad...passed away?

TC: After my father died. After my father died. My father died in March. The following year the house burnt. Not all together, but it burnt quite a bit there. The—

MDG: How did that happen?

TC: Well, we—I don't know. But see, in there up at, up at the top of the roof [motions up with hand] they were storing, storing stuff up there. And I guess the heat and everything else, the house burned down. It burned down. And at lot of the—some pictures of my father in an old, beautiful old frame [Motions round frame with both fingers] was gone. And, uh, a lot of his

papers, ah, a lot of his medals and all that is all gone. So, but anyway. So the following yea—that was 1930—in '32 we moved to Toronto [unclear]. And we—at the beach. And we were at the beach for a while there and then the, uh, the fella closed, closed the store where I was helping out at the store. My mother lived in the upstairs apartment. So that's when we moved—in '33 we moved to College Street.

MDG: And what was your—was your mom able to work, after your father passed away?

TC: No. My mother couldn't work. My, my brother was only three years old, four. At that time women didn't go out to work. They, they—what she used to do is take in sewing, iron clothes for people and bake for weddings, for showers, for christenings and that. And that's what she'd do.

MDG: And, and were you, um, did you go to school? And...

TC: Well I was taken out of school at the end of May. So, there was no more—I was what they call there now would have been grade eight. I didn't even do my exams grade eight so I didn't really had to, to cast me as grade seven. 'Cause I didn't do no exams for grade eight.

MDG: So what was your first job?

TC: Fruit stores. I worked in fruit stores. I worked any kind of job I can do and then course 1939 it was at the beginning of the war. I, I got a job at the post office in the month of September. 1939. And [long pause] the following June...a war broke out and I remember I was on Station A...and Station B.

MDG: What were the Sta—

TC: No, Station E. We had like little rows. [Motions rows with hands] Station A and Station E. That's how you put in the streets or the initials or where—any of the initials started and where you're going to the other, were all the streets. So that the postman they would put them together, so the postman had time to—

MDG: So you organized the mail.

TC: Yeah, organized. Yeah, I guess so. And so then, all of a sudden June the 10<sup>th</sup> [pause]—with the Happy Gang were on. They used to put it on very low, but you could hear. [Motions radio antenna] And ah, all of a sudden it was interrupted. Italy has declared war, gone in with Germany. [Pause] What within the—I would say, 15—maybe a half an hour. I was called in the office.

[00:10:47]

MDG: By who? [Pause] Who called you in the office?

TC: They told my foreman, to go in the office. I went into the office and two RCMP were there waiting for me. They said, "You have to come with us down on Adelaide Street." I says, "What did I do?" They said, "We'll tell you all about it when we get down to Adelaide Street." So I went down there and I was fingerprinted. And I was told that because I was doing volunteer work at Casa D'Italia they said I was a fascist.

MDG: So tell, tell me about the Casa D'Italia and what you did there.

TC: Well at Casa D'Italia, it was a place like, well, like Columbus Centre is, a multicultural place. People went there. The men after work or Sunday or anything else would go down there and



play cards and everything else. The women during the daytime would do crochet, knit, whatever it is, sewing or whatever it is they would do in there. And, Franceschino [James Franceschini], at that time was a big contractor. Used to go hunting, and if you caught any of the, the, uh, uh, deers or whatever it is, they would cook it all up and have a dinner reunion to the Italian [unclear] there. And you would pay five dollars for a complete dinner and music and everything else, you know? Well, somebody would bring cookies, somebody would bring beef, but the main meal, pasta or pasta whatever it was there with that meat that was, uh, there with a salad. And ah, and that was—and if they had showers or something I used to go down there and help in the kitchen. Peel the potatoes, wash this, do that, set the table and everything else. That's all it was. So...

MDG: And so back to that day, June 10, 1940, the, the RCMP just told you that you—or just fingerprinted you. How did you feel?

TC: I felt... [Long pause] I, I said, I said, "What? What have I done? What have I done?" I felt like a criminal. I really felt like a criminal. [Nods] And because then I—they said, "You have to report every month down here. And every week you have to phone and tell us where you are." And I thought, Oh what? Did I just get out of jail?

MDG: Hmm. [softly]

TC: And there was a [unclear]. But anyway. I was very bitter and everything else. But my mother was a very understanding person. She said, "No." 'Cause Father would call and say, "Come and help us with the bingo." "No, I'm not coming." [Says angrily] And my mother said, "No, that's wrong. That's wrong. You have to go do what you have to do. And, and just as God says, 'When you hit this cheek, turn around and give them the other one.'" [Turns cheek] He—she says, "You'll make a better person. Better person." And this, from there on then I started doing more

volunteer work. And I wanted to be a nurse so badly. But I had no education. I had no money. I had nothing. I had to take what it is. Because I had to hold two and three jobs to help to pay the rent, to buy food, everything else.

MDG: And do you remember, um, other people in where you lived—close to where you lived being arrested or taken away by the police?

TC: Well, there was quite a few on our streets that were taken in. Some of the names I don't remember there. But the ones that I knew that were close friends, that, ah, were very kind to my mother and everything else and also—was the, the Orlandos. Because when we just came out here my father had just died. After 40 days. And mother was so embarrassed that she didn't have a, a decent suit to bury my father with. Mr. Orlando was about my father's build and he said, "Brigitta, don't worry about it. I just have a brand—a beautiful suit. By the time we lay your father—your husband out, it will be finished."

MDG: So he was a tailor?

TC: And he, he was a tailor, yes. And he, he was arrested because he was doing Ontario boy's wear. Doing things for the kids. For boys. Like yeah. Anyway so, he made th—he gave it to my mother. My mother could never forget that. And I can't never forget that. She—

MDG: Were, were the Orlandos the first family that you met, in, in Toronto?

TC: Yes. [Nods] They were the first family that we met in Toronto with—through my sister Teresa. 'Cause my sister Teresa worked in a fruit store, that her—with her husband. 'Cause that's him and his first cousin had a store together and, ah, and they was next door to the Orlandos and that's how we met the Orlandos.

[00:15:40]

MDG: What was the name of the fruit store?

TC: Uh, uh, oh wait a minute...it was owned by the couple, ah...[unclear]—but I forget—I think something about the beach or something. I forget the name of the beach. [Long pause while thinking] But anyway it was down on Queen Street.

MDG: Okay.

TC: And, ah, I think it was 2094 Queen Street East. And my mother lived at 2156 or 21- something. The brother...that had the store, well they closed the store so my mother had to leave. Uh...and that's when we moved up on College, College Street.

MDG: And the, the Orlandos moved too, to...

TC: No, the Orlandos still lived at the beach. They still lived there. They lived on Pine Street. Yeah, they still lived—yeah they still lived down on the beach.

MDG: And, and what happened to them, uh, to the Orlando family, um, on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1940?

TC: Well when Mr. Orlando died—uh, Pine Str—Pine Street was—I think it was sold. And he had built another one, a small bungalow. And that's when his daughter got married. She went to live in the bungalow and his wife moved up [sighs]...up on Sheppard. Uh...I think [unclear] in a con—condominium place. And that's where she died up there. But Lidia Orlando, she was, she was a nurse at St. Mike's. Uh, she died of cancer, brain cancer.

MDG: And who were—which of the Orlandos were you friends with? Which ones of the Orlandos did you grow up with?

TC: Well, Lidia was just a, a year or two older than me. That was who was my fr—girl friend. You know but I mean that family were the family there we close to all the family. Because the boys were around my brother's age. You know. And Mrs. Orlando and my mother—my mother was a little bit older than Mrs. Orlando. So, we became very good friends.

MDG: And what were the boy's names?

TC: One was Roy and one was Italo. Italo was the oldest and then there was Roy. 'Cause they had the two boys. Lidia was the oldest and she was the, the girl. And that's the one that became the nurse. Then Italo and then Roy. Well, Italo after moved to California. Doing all these, um, uh...ships, no not ships his planes. At—they go up and travel up around there [motions up in the air]. What do they call them? I forget. Uh...oh...I forget. They go up for a week or two weeks, a month. What, what do they call them now? Uh...

MDG: Oh, like the spaceships?

TC: Space—yeah. The spa—with the... [Motions with hand]

MDG: He was ah...he was...

TC: He was, he was working one—on those kinds of ships. [Motions with hand]

MDG: Oh, I see.

TC: Yeah.

MDG: Okay.

TC: Yeah. And Roy was an architect.

MDG: Hmm.

TC: He became an architect.

MDG: Hmm. And, ah, what happened to the boys then, uh, when the war broke out?

TC: Well the boys were—they were in school. They were—got picked up. Their father was picked up first, and then the boys were picked up and that's when Mrs. Orlando, Maria Orlando called me she says, "Antonietta, Antonietta!" She says, "They took my kids. They took my kids. Please go down to the exhibition." [Says in a worried and high-pitch voice] And she said, "They got them at the exhibition. They got no sweaters, they got nothing." So I says, "Okay," I says, "I'll come down." So I took the streetcar and I went down to the beach and picked up their sweaters and picked up their prayer books and their rosaries. And I went down to—from there I went straight to the exhibition. And they were...stationed...in the Ex but [motions in distance] just away from there, a big, big place where they—I guess they slept there till they—where—almost here a whole week before they gathered everybody and they shipped them to...Petawawa. And, ah, so, I went and I gave them their sweaters and everything else and they—

MDG: Did they, did they just let you through? Were you allowed to—

TC: No, I was there, but there was two peop—two RCMP [motions two figures with hands] or whatever it was there and watch me when I handed them their sweaters. And I said to them—you know and they said, "Tell my mother not to worry. We're okay, we're okay. And thank you for—" She—and I says, "And your mother said to please say your rosaries and your prayer book. And God will prov—will look after yous." And then I cam—come home. [Shrugs shoulders]

[00:20:43]

MDG: Hmm. Did you see anybody else while you were down there?

TC: While I was there I saw Mr. Breglia. Uh, I saw uh...Mr. Bacci. I saw Mr. Magi. [counting with fingers on hand] Uh...and who was the other one? [Long pause while thinking] Uh, I think I saw about five or six of them when I was there.

MDG: That you recognized.

TC: One of them, I know that he had the laundry on, uh, Manning.

MDG: Which one was the—

TC: Just south of Bloor.

MDG: Who was this?

TC: One of the boys. I forget his name. And then from there, he had the, he closed that up and his son started to work at the market. He was in at the market. At the big, the big market at the Lawrence. Yeah. And that's where he, he opened up a place and was there. He used to be

known for his sausage. He used to make the best sausage. He used to deliver it all over the place, for all of them. [Motions with hand] And that's how he made a living.

MDG: Yeah. And so you mentioned the—Mr. Breglia, Mr. Magi. How did you know, how did you know them?

TC: Well, Magi, I worked with him for a while.

MDG: Hmm. At the—was this at the—

TC: At the 14 Lamp[?]. 14 Lamp[?]. And, ah...Breglia...Breglia was—met him at the, at the, um, Casa D'Italia. [Counts with fingers] She was one of the women...for there. And Bacci—the other one there. They were all women from the kitchen. Because Mrs. Orlando was the head one, controlled everything and ran everything. [Motions with hands] And that's, ah, that's how I met those other women.

MDG: So, Mrs. Orlando was part of the women's group?

TC: She was with the—yes. She was—ran the group—with the women's group. And there was ah...Cavaluzzi...there. There was a lot—a whole bunch of them. Uh, [long pause] they used to be in the kitchen. They were the ones that did the cooking and everything else. [Motions with hand] And I was peeling potatoes or carrots or set the table, or wash this or wash that. [Shrugs]

MDG: Mm hmm. So they, um, why did they arrest...their, their, let's say Mrs. Orlando's children or why did they arrest Mr.—

TC: Well, they [unclear] because they said the boys were fascists because they were with their father a lot. You know. See—Mr. Orlando because he was doing uniforms, there, uh, uh, boys wear. He was doing the shorts and they call that and the little jackets. Uh, and he was calling them the, uh, fascist outfits.

MDG: For the kids?

TC: For the kids. Well, ah, well, ah, even the boys [throws hands up in the air] wore, they wore shorts, little shorter pants, you know there, but cover their knees where the kids were shorter. But that's what they wear. [Unclear] They said they were wearing their uniform.

MDG: And what was—do you remember, um, any, any children's bands, or, or what, what the kids used to do in these uniforms?

TC: No, the only thing as I said, is all I know was that Mr. Orlando had the Ontario boys wear. He was doing, like jackets, uh, pants, for boys, for teenaged boys, you know grown up boys and everything else. Even some of the men pants stuff. But they had a section. Ontario boys wear. And then they had the things that they did for men. [Motions two different areas with both arms] So, it was a tailor. He was a tailor. He was a formal tailor shop.

MDG: Uh hmm. So in, in the area that you lived, would you say a lot of people were affected by, by either having their family members interned—

TC: Well, they were picked up at St. Agnes Church. They were playing cards. They picked up Father Riccardo. [Counting on fingers] Because they said they allowed him to run there and there was—they said it was a—there was a, a meeting—a fascist meetings. We had the Italian teacher. She taught Italian. Yes, I went to the Italian school. [Shrugs] There to try and [unclear]



because I wanted to pick up my [unclear] Italian, and then forgot it, I forgot all about it. I didn't want to know no more about it. [Gestures with hands] I learned more my Italian now since I've been doing volunteer work talking to this one here. [Points with finger] It's all dialect. It's not good Italian. But, this is it, I picked up Sicilian dialect, *Calabrese* dialect, *Barese* [unclear] [Counting on fingers] The only thing I couldn't pick up was, uh, from the Friuli. There's—that is out of the question. [Laughs]

[00:25:19]

MDG: [Laughs] So, um, back to, back to the war days. Were you—did you feel fear? Did you notice that the people around you were afraid? Of what was—

TC: Well, you could not—you'd go into a store, you couldn't do it, they'd look at you. If you went to the Italian store you were fine. But if you went down there or anything else they'd look at you. They were called dagos, wops, dig-ditchers [sic], any kind of names you can [unclear]. [Says counting on fingers] If we were two or three girls, you know, like come out of church on the sidewalk, we'd be walking or talking or something else. "Break it up, break it up, break it up!" [Says excitedly while waving hands in front] The men were there because—after we got—before it got dark you wouldn't dare, dare go out. And the fruits store guys, they used to take—especially real English. They would take their—uh, you know they—I don't know if they still—they still do—put the fruit outside? Okay? I guess you must have remembered this—they do. Well they would take their tomatoes and throw it at the window. [Motions throwing overhead] Take the eggs, throw it at the window. [Throws] The apples, take and throw them in the middle of the road and everything. All those fruit store—a lot of people had to close up. [Says with arms extended]

MDG: Mm hmm.

TC: Break their windows and everything—they had to close up.

MDG: And who did this? Who, who were the people that were, were doing this?

TC: Well, the people that were against, against the Italians.

MDG: Hmm. Hmm.

TC: All [unclear]. The Irish, the Irish, the English, they were [unclear] because we were against them, see? So, they—this is why they were repaying us for what we—they were doing. We had—here in Canada we had nothing to do with it—the war. We had nothing—we were nothing there. When we came out here, Mussolini was not even in power. He wasn't even mentioned anywhere. We didn't know about Mussolini until after the war. With—during the war we got to know Mussolini. So anyway. [Shrugs] It was—but ah, at the, at the Casa D'Italia Agnes Savoia was our secretary for the Consul. For the Italian Consul.

MDG: It was called the Italian Consul?

TC: It was called...uh, daughters—uh, no, Casa D'Italia.

MDG: Okay.

TC: That was the name of it.

MDG: And—

TC: Casa D'Italia.

MDG: And the women's group, do you remember the name of the women's group?

TC: No, they were a group just like here. They'd just go in and out. [Motions with hand] You know, who ever wanted to go. They just go in there, sit down, one would do this crochet, take a copy from her crochet, take some there. No, there was no—actually it was not a group, it was just an open house, like it is here. It's open house.

MDG: So Mrs. Savoia was a secretary...

TC: Agnes Savoia was secretary to the Italian Consul.

MDG: Okay.

TC: So if they had to have anything done, your passport or anything else, you had to go to the Italian [motions with hand]—[unclear] aunt had a post office at the corner of Claremont and Treford—and ah, Mansfield. They closed it up on her because she was hel—she—the Italians were sending money home to Italy. And that's what—they were working here they used to go to the post office—well this is even before the war—and, and to send money home. You know. Letters, everything else. That was it. That's why they had to close up.

MDG: Hmm. Becau—they had to close up because the RCMP closed them down?

TC: The RCMP told them that they had to close. They took it away. They had to close up.

MDG: Hmm. And what else, ah, did the RCMP close? Do you remember other things that they closed?

TC: Well, I think they closed quite a few—what they had the, the, uh, Italian banks were closed. Uh, I don't know any others there. But I know that anything to do with the part of the Italians they were closed up.

MDG: And what happened at the Casa D'Italia?

TC: Well, Casa D'Italia was taken there and the RCMP took it over. And they, they had it for five years. And after the war they gave it back to the Italians.

MDG: Is that where you, you used to have to go and report every month?

TC: No, I used to have to go on Adelaide Street to the, uh, the RCMP office.

MDG: So they had different locations where they would—

TC: Yes. On Yonge and Adelaide. That's where I used to have to go and report. Had nothing to do with Casa D'Italia. [Shakes head no] After the war there, Casa D'Italia closed—was closed [chops hands out to the side] only for the RCMP.

[00:30:01]

MDG: And do you remember, um, what they would ask you when you had to report? What were they—what did they—

TC: No, they asked me what I've been doing, if I've gone anywhere, have I done anything. No. I says, "I can't get a job, I can't get a job." [Says angrily and then sighs]

MDG: And where did—

TC: So that's when I took Marie, was there, I took it in front of me and called it Marie Antoinette. [Gestures with hands] A lot of people, the Italians changed their names. Johnny Lombardi, his name was Johnny Barbalinardo. You knew that? Okay. That was his name. He had to change when he joined the army. My cousins [points hands at chest] the Ciccarelli's, their name is Carol.

MDG: Hmm.

TC: They changed it. Because he went in the army and, and the rest of the family were having a heck of a time. The, the only thing that they would not change his name was his sister. His sister and his young brother would not change his name. They changed it, but the other two older ones, they changed their names. Because they couldn't get no jobs. They couldn't get nothing.

MDG: And for, for yourself, what happened to you? What happened to your job?

TC: Well, as I said I was out of a job— [cut off by Melina]

MDG: [Unclear]

TC: Sure. I was out of a job. I was worked in fruit stores. I worked in canning factory. I worked in the biscuit factory. I sold Avon. Regal cards. Anything I could do to raise a dollar.

MDG: And what about your, your—

TC: In the fruit stores I used to do over there. I worked for 12 dollars a month. [Says with anger] What—looking after two kids and going down the basement and wash the celery and the lettuce. Because that's all I could get. And the other thing she would pay me is when I used to go home she'd give me lettuce that was touched up or anything an—and my mother would clean it all up and everything else. Or tomatoes that were soft and everything else. She'd make sauce with it. That's it.

MDG: And did they, uh, did they call you an enemy alien when you were going to report? Did they designate you as an enemy alien?

TC: Well, as I said the only thing at one time, right on Adelaide...and Spadina. I went there and I asked to job. And he said to me, "What is your name?" And I told him, and, ah, I said, "Bassano." He said, "*Italiana?*" I said, "What the hell difference does it make?!" [Says angrily] That's exactly right. I said, "I came here for a job. I will work for one week for nothing. If you just let me try. And if I don't do the job, just send me home. But if I do the job, I want to be paid." He says, "You're pretty nifty aren't you?" And I said, "Well this is the way I feel." There. He said, "I know what you're going through." He says, "We went through a lot." So he says [unclear] did. And I got a job there. And then from there—

MDG: Who is, who is this man? Where, where was this job?

TC: Uh, at Adelaide and Spadina.

MDG: Uh huh, and—

TC: It was a tailor shop.

MDG: It was a tailor shop—

TC: A big factory, they were doing uniforms.

MDG: Do you remember his name? Your boss?

TC: Mr. K—ah...oh, wait a minute. Kin—ah. [Looks down thinking] One was Mr. Diamond. And the other started with a K, but I forget now. It might come to me. And they're the one that, uh, gave me—and then they said, "Can you run a two needle machine?" And I said, "Well show me what a two needle machine is." So they showed me, I said, "Yeah, I can do that." So I did it for quite a while here. And then they said, "We need somebody to do uniforms for the RCMP—the air force." And he said, "And they don't know how to run a machine. We're going to send you to Hamilton." And I told him what had happened and he says, "We'll look into that." So they phoned and they said, "Yes you can go." But I still had to report.

MDG: How did you report?

TC: Well, I had to—when I came—I used to come home every weekend, 'cause I used to stay there through the week. And, uh, so I had to there—but they knew—because they would check from work, whether I was at work everyday or not. So, they would—they looked after that. The only thing is I called in that I was back when and I was going back in on Monday morn—Sunday night. Yeah. And that's it. So and then—

MDG: And what happened, what happened to your brothers and sisters during the same time?

TC: Well during there they were at school. [Unclear] and then my brothers' got little jobs. My sister Rose, she got some job working in a, a shir—a shirt factory. [Looks down thinking] So they

kind of helped out a little bit, you know. But I use—even though I worked down there, I worked at the Royal Connaught Hotel, checking hats at nighttime.

MDG: Uh hmm. Wow.

TC: A hatcheck girl. [Unclear] hatcheck girl was with money that I earned for myself. My whole wages went to my mother. For the tailor.

MDG: And what would you, what would you buy with the money that you earned for yourself?

TC: Well I would buy myself a dress that I wanted something different. Uh, creams. Kotex, which I didn't like [unclear] [laughs]. You know, personal, personal things.

MDG: [Laughs] Personal things.

TC: So, little—that's it. I'd go to a show. That's it.

MDG: Yeah.

TC: At that [unclear] time the show was only 15 cents or a quarter.

[00:35:42]

MDG: Wow.

TC: Yeah.



MDG: And what—did you have any friends to go out with?

TC: Well I would—when I worked at the de—at the fruit store they—there I had a lot of, ah, their—you know their family or anything else. Especially when I worked for [unclear]. They had a daughter named Sally. And she was around my age and she used to say, "Don't go home on the weekend." She says, "Stay, stay, stay, stay, stay with me! Stay with me!" [Leans forward and laughs] [Unclear] "I'll take you to the show." [Says with a whisper] And the—and she used to buy beautiful clothes. I was the only girl they had. And boys—she'd always say, "I don't like this anymore here you can have it." [Says while motioning tossing clothes over] I thought I was in [throws hands up in the air]—the cat's meow. [Smiles]

MDG: Yeah. Would you ever go down to the Palais Royale?

TC: Yes.

MDG: Yeah.

TC: We used to go down to the Palais Royale. [Nods]

MDG: And what, what happened at the Palais Royale?

TC: Well, not, not during the war. [Shakes head]

MDG: Not during the war?

TC: No, no after the war. That was when I met my husband. That's when we'd go there. After. Not during the war. [Shakes head no] No.

MDG: Okay, so we'll leave that for now. But, um, so your brothers were any of them, ah, drafted to go into the Canadian army?

TC: My brother Joe's in there, they were into the army. Canadian army. My brother Frank was not accepted. He joined but he was [unclear] because he's minus these fingers. So he couldn't hold a gun. [Motions to fingers] So, he was—and he went into the drapery business. And he, he had made himself after there for a while. You know and he got a little older, little older. And I got married. And I was able to do a little more for my mother. And ah, [unclear]. My brother Frank opened up a sho—his own place. Going to house to house you know. And doing the drapes and this and that. And my brother Joe at the [unclear] airport. So, you know after the war they were—it was not too bad. Yeah.

MDG: And, and so how long did, um, well hold on—your brother was, your brother Joe was in the Canadian army.

TC: Yes.

MDG: And where was he stationed?

TC: In, ah...Kingston or way up there. He, he was never sent overseas. He used to look after the uniforms of the, ah, captains, majors and all this [Gestures with hands]. Put all their clothes in together, shine their shoes, and everything. [Gestures work with hands] That's what he used to do. He had four or five that he had to take care of and do all their things there.

MDG: And did he know, did he know that you were an enemy alien while he was...

TC: Oh yeah, they knew that [unclear], but it had nothing to do with [unclear]. My brothers were born here. They were Canadians. It had nothing to do with—it was no, no problem.

MDG: Hmm. So you think maybe it was also because you were born in Italy? That's part of the reason why?

TC: Well, sure. [Nods] I was born in Italy. I was six and a half when I came here. Almost seven. I would have been seven. We came in April; I would have been seven in September.

MDG: Hmm. And, and how many years did you have to go through this, the monthly reporting?

TC: For the whole five years. From 1940 to 1945.

MDG: Do you remember the last time that you had to go and report?

TC: Well as I said—just about the last month—when Italy declared—uh, uh, war was over, I think it was June, July, something like that, I forget when it was over. And that's when I didn't have to go in anymore.

MDG: Did, ah—do you remember the las—

TC: Just I got married after the war. Yeah.

MDG: Do you remember when the war was over, the day that it was announced that the war had ended?

TC: Well, [unclear] came on there, I had nothing [unclear]. The announcement came on the radio and we're out on the streets down at St. Francis School, dancing and singing and everything else [waves hands up signaling the joy that war was over]. And that's when we even sang all the Italian songs. [Laughs]

MDG: Oh, really?

TC: After the war. Yeah. [Says while laughing]

MDG: Where did you go—

TC: We were singing *Giovinazza, Italia*, all of those songs. Ah, the war was over. [Smiles and laughs]

MDG: [Laughs] And, um, and where were the celebrations for the, for, for you that day? Do you remember?

TC: Well as I said, each one had their own. You know. Like on College Street. All College Street were celebrating. Dufferin Street, around here, they were celebrating'. Mount St. Mary's, the Angels, the Brandon Hall they were—each one had their own little there. So that's the way it was—everybody, yeah. [Shrugs]

MDG: That's nice.

TC: The church had...mass...of thanksgiving.

MDG: And how did it feel knowing that, that you didn't have to report anymore?

[00:40:33]

TC: Well, I felt, I felt like a whole load off my—but I was bitter. I was angry. Angry. [Says with emphasis] Angry and bitter. Yeah. But you know, it took a long, it took a long, took a long time for my mother to get me over that.

MDG: Hmm. And, and, ah...how, how long do you think it was before you started getting back into the Italian activities?

TC: Well, as I said...Joe Carrier and my husband used to shine shoes at the Ford, Ford Hotel. And I used to chum around with Joe Carrier's wife. His wife then. But then it was his girlfriend. And often times it would be Joe and his wife, Pat and I would go out together, something like that, then all of a sudden they were going to build this...Villa Columbo. [Motions with hand] They started the ground. So, Joe said to my husband, "Pat, your wife is very amb—ambitious. She does a lot of—way with the people and everything else. How would she like to do—help us out?" So I says, "Okay. What do you want me to do?" He said—so uh, Joe Carrier—and said, "We have to sell bricks. 25 dollars a brick. Because we have to raise money to build a home for the age." For seniors. Well, when it came for old people, I'm a softie. And kids, I'm a softie. Teenagers no, because their spoiled brats! [Says with emphasis] I don't know about how you were brought up, but most of them there—because I think what we went through, we don't want our kids to go through that. We couldn't do enough for our kids. And we spoiled our kids. We—I admit, we spoiled our kids. I thank God I've got kids. I have very good kids, I've never been in trouble, never done anything else and they are all very ambitious. And their children are all going to college and everything else. University. So I thank God for that. You know. But I prayed that nothing—that they wouldn't have to go through anything that there. But I mean I see a lot of them...[unclear] have a lot, a lot of money. What do the kids end up with? Drugs. Smoke [unclear] and drug addicts. All of this. That's what they are coming to.

MDG: Do you think that your, ah—you said you're a softie even for the elderly. Do you think that comes from having to take care of your mom?

TC: Yes, and maybe it does. Maybe you know. I don't know, but anyway so I said, "Yes I would." So I went around Playfair and everything else, selling brick. [Motions to road with finger] And I remember one gentleman right on Playfair about, oh, five or six houses west of, ah, of the Villa now. And I went up to his door and I said to him—he says—in Italian he says, "*Ma che sei stupido o sei mata?* The Italian *non portano i genitori alla case di riposo.*" And I said, "Yeah." So, I don't know if you understand Italian? [Points to videographer] Yeah okay. [Nods] Well I said—so I said, "Yeah." So I said, "Well okay. So do you want to buy a brick?" [Unclear] He said, "You're wasting your time, you're wasting your time." He says, "We wouldn't put our, our, uh, family in the places like that. We take care of our family." [Says while patting chest] And I said, "Yeah, okay." So there. Well I would say within six maybe a little more months—ah, we had already built Villa Colombo—I mean this is after we built Villa Colombo. It could have been about a year or two later. Ah...I hear..."Toni!" And I turn around and he says, "I have an apology to make." I looked at him and I says, "What did you do now?" [Laughs quietly]

MDG: So this is the same man that you had talked to before?

TC: And he said to me, "I'm the one that told you that you were stupid and you were crazy and we wouldn't take our parents there. And I've just took my grandmother in. My mother can't handle her." In Italian and right at the Villa there I said, "*Chi sputo in cielo ci riviene in faccia!*" He says, "That's what my grandma says all the time!" [Laughs] So there you are. [Gestures with hands]

[00:45:16]

MDG: And so, was this—now you—

TC: That's my sp—speaking of the volunteer work. And I've been doing volunteer work now since 1974. Then I started doing Cancer and I started doing Variety Village, Heart and Stroke.

MDG: Why do you think volunteering is important?

TC: It is important. I'll tell you what it is. When you do something for somebody and you get a smile out of them, you, you go home and you think, God, I done something. And you go to bed and you can sleep. You—yes it's peaceful. And helping others, it is—that's what it is. The kids, you get joy with them all. You know. It is something—I don't know just how to explain it, but I know that I feel like a—and I know I did one of the walks and I have to show you that, that paper, it's in the Star, a big paper like this [measures with hands vertically], front page right there. And it sh—and it—I did walk that time it was for the handicap or the kids—'cause we had handicap kids downstairs here. [Points down with finger] There. They were here. And there was—it was getting too much. There was no place for them. So, we raised money and they opened up now on the Glencairn there. They got a beautiful place there. And ah...and I—so I was doing the—a, a, a 5K walk, I used to do. And it—and that day she came there and she—right on the front page she says, um, She'll walk millions of miles for one of their smiles. And I thought, gee, Am I that? I says, "It's, it's how I felt. Because I got a smile out of somebody." And that's just how I felt. So, that was it.

MDG: And, and working at the Villa, was this after you had gotten, you had gotten married?

TC: Oh, yeah, way, way after. Oh, I got married in '46. This is in '74.

MDG: So you got married shortly after the war then?

TC: Yes. Right after the war.

MDG: Did you meet your husband dur—

TC: Well we were supposed to be married in, ah, earlier in June. And his father— first of all, his mother died in '39. [Long pause] And, ah, I'll never—on Palm Sunday of 1939 and his father died on June the sixth...uh, 1940, 1945, so, no 1946 his father died—we were supposed to be married in June. We had to cancel our wedding and got married in November that same year.

MDG: Wow.

TC: 1946.

MDG: And where did you meet your husband?

TC: I got married at St. Agnes Church and I—we had the reception at Mount Carmel Hall. And we had about a 100 people, maybe a 150 people there. They were all people that, that came around—and what—at that time you were lucky if you got five dollars in your envelope. Ten dollars, eh boy, they were rich. [Laughs] But you would get maybe things that are, cups and saucers for your—not the good ones—you know for the, for your coffee. Coffee pots, something like that. Two or three dollars, whatever it is. Really. But, it was a lot of fun. And my—I had a beautiful wedding. But my mother didn't have much money. We had—we saved and there, and his mother—my mother-in-law said, "Why don't you want to marry my son?" I says, "Lorenza, how can I marry your son? You're sick; he has to take care of you. He's got to take care of your husband. I have to take care of my mother and my brothers and sisters." So I says, "How? How can we do it?" She said—so she says to me, "You know", she says, "run all you



want, but what I leave behind you're going to use it." And I did. She got married—she died in 1940 and I married. That's it.

MDG: Hmm. And so, um...after the war, uh, what did you, what, what job did you have afterwards? What job did you get?

TC: What did—what jobs?

MDG: Uh hmm.

TC: Well the only thing is that we did—I worked for my husband for a while, I worked in the lace factory, cutting up laces. To, ah, for, uh, Frederick's. For neck—for their nightgowns and everything else. I did a lot of little odds—but not much 'cause my daughter was born in '47, so I had there and then my son was born in '49. So I had the small kids, so I didn't do much work, but I went around selling my Regal cards and ah, Avon. And then when I used to make money, I used to buy things for the kids at Christmas. But anyway, my husband was a printer and a musician. So...

[00:50:33]

MDG: And you would work sometimes with him sometimes in the print shop?

TC: In the printing shop, yeah, I would go and help him. And he would do wedding invitations. I used to go and help, because he used to print them and we used to ad the little, uh, open thing there. And put the printer and it would raise it [describes while using hands] the ink, it would raise their—so, it was raised. I used to put it on there, raise it and do it for him. Yeah. At that time, my mother was—came and lived with me. After that, there—after the boys got married

she had no place to stay. She came to live with me. So, I would get the kids ready to bed and then I would go and help my husband. So, we, we managed. We struggled, but we managed.

MDG: And how, how many years were you married to your husband?

TC: I would have been married, well it would have been, we would have celebrated our 40<sup>th</sup> year in November, but he died in August. So, 39 years, 39 and a half years.

MDG: And what's your advice for, for all those years of marriage with him? For getting along?

TC: We got along very well, yeah. One thing about my husband he had a smile on his face [unclear], no matter who it was always—I have a girlfriend of mine she says, “The only way I can remember Pat is there with all—and always a smile on his face.”

MDG: His name was Pat?

TC: His name was Patrick. Pasquale.

MDG: Pasquale. Pasquale Ciccarelli.

TC: Yeah. Yeah.

MDG: And how many children, ah, did you have?

TC: I have three. I have a girl, Lorraine. Named after my mother-in-law. My son Patrick, named after his father. And my daughter Cathy, named after my husband's sister that died. Her name was Caterina. And that's what my daughter is.

MDG: Hmm. And do you have any grandchildren?

TC: I have six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

MDG: And what do they think about all the work that you do?

TC: Oh, oh, "Ma, yeah, I don't believe it. I don't believe it." And I said, "Yeah." And someone will say, "You don't know what your mother went through." That—my kids don't know half—I, I don't talk about it. I don't talk about it. But they start talking about this war. And my, my kids didn't even know, that I was, that I had gone [unclear] fingerprints and everything else.

MDG: Why didn't you tell them?

TC: Well, I was—I didn't want—I, I, just wanted it out of my mind. [Gestures with hands] I didn't want no more memories of it. This is bringing it back now because I'm fighting to get an apology to the Italians. [Gestures with hands] I want, I want someone—I want the Italian Consul. That's why I want to meet him. I want to see him. I want to tell him, "Look, you can do something. Get us an apology. I want it in writing." [Says angrily]

MDG: Would an apology make you feel better about what—

TC: Yes. Yes it would. Not only make me feel better, it would make all the other Italians feel better [points finger to chest and then point outward], that they're apologi—that they got their—in Italian—I don't [unclear] your generation would be—you do something wrong and a person comes to you and says, "I did wrong." You know, to you it's like a million dollars. [Gestures with finger] That, that person low—and, and told—and gave you his apology. And,

and another thing, don't ever promise and with a handshake, and you don't keep it, you are dead...of your friendship.

MDG: Yeah.

TC: There's a lot of them—I do the same—I said, “Don’t promise me anything and give me a handshake. Because you're, you’re not there—I don't even want to see— bother with you anymore.” And there's two or three in this pl—here, here. [Points downstairs] They used to be here a lot. I don’t even—when I see them I turn my—I try to turn the other way. [Turns head the other way] Unless they come up to me, "What's the matter Toni, don't you want to talk to me?" And I say, "Oh hello, how are you? Goodbye."

MDG: So now, looking back we've talked about a lot of your life today and looking back on all those years, what do you think is the most important lesson that you've learned?

TC: The most important blessing was I have wonderful children. I saw death almost three times and God gave me back my life to carry on, to what I can do for others. [Long pause] And that's what I'm thankful. Most of all my children, my grandchildren, my great-grandchildren.

MDG: Is that when you're happiest? When you're with your frie—uh, with your family?

TC: Yes, yeah. I'm happy when I'm with the kids.

MDG: Is there anything else that you think you want to share that we haven't talked about today?

TC: No, not much there. I told you. There's nothing more, there's—what is there left now? All it is now I thank God for every day, every day I have. [Gestures with hands] And as I says, and I thank God that I'm still here and able to do that. I hope before God—before I close my eyes that my wish will come true, that we get the apology for the Italians.

MDG: Well thank you very much for coming in today Toni for the second time...for us, because we've done this before.

TC: Well, you know, it—to me you took a load off my shoulders too, also. And it brought back the memories and the thin—what we all went through, I don't think our generation would do it. Our generation couldn't do it.

MDG: Hmm.

TC: I don't think they could cope with it.

MDG: You think there was a lot of guilt.

TC: The struggle. The struggle and everything else. You know, to do everything—I mean to say, you used to see a lot of them and they have this and you had nothing. And you feel like you're like a little mouse. You know. That's the cat and you're the mouse. [Long pause] [Shrugs] And that's the way it is.

MDG: Well thank you so much Toni.

TC: You're quite welcome.



*Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens:  
Memories of World War II*  
901 Lawrence Ave. West  
Toronto, ON M6A 1C3  
T: 416-789-7011 F: 416-789-3951

MDG: You did great. Fantastic.

[Fades out at 00:56:55]

**[End of interview]**