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NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: Sandy O'Grady

NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Travis Tomchuk

NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER: Krystle Copeland

TRANSCRIBED BY: Krystle Copeland

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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 has not edited this transcript for errors.

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ABSTRACT

Sandra Raffaella Stirling O'Grady was born in Timmins on March 2, 1938. She is the granddaughter of internee, Leopoldo (Leo) Mascioli, and the daughter of Major Keith Sterling, both of whom were in various camps during the war. Leo was interned at camp Petawawa as an enemy alien while Keith was in a German camp as a prisoner of war while fighting with the Canadian Armed Forces. Her mother had the difficult position of sending support to both a husband and father who were interned for completely different reasons. Sandra's paternal side

of the family, the Sterlings, came from Scotland in the 1840s and her maternal side, the Masciolis, arrived in Canada from Cocullo in the early 20th century. Her grandfather, Leo, left Italy at the age of nine to begin work as a shoe-shine boy in Boston, before working in Nova Scotia with Guglielmo Marconi, and then in the Silver Mines of Cobalt, Ontario. He finally settled in Timmins—then known as Porcupine Camp. Leo Mascioli established himself as one of the most prominent and influential individuals in Timmins through the Mascioli Construction Company by building many of the city’s buildings and sidewalks. Sandra describes her grandfather as a very generous man who acquired much, but also gave a lot back to both his family and the community of Timmins. He was at a meeting in downtown Toronto when the RCMP arrested him and accused him of supporting Mussolini, when he had actually only been sending money to support his siblings back in Italy. Leo’s brother, Tony Mascioli, was also arrested and interned as an enemy alien. Sandra explains that after a year in Petawawa, the reception her grandfather received from some individuals upon returning home was devastating; some former friends would cross the street to avoid speaking with him. She believes that he was forced to leave his beloved Timmins because of such ramifications of his internment. Sandra believes that other events in Timmins may have been connected to their Italian heritage, such as her uncle Danny being hit over the head while outside the family home and the family dog being poisoned on Christmas Eve, 1943. Many Italian homes in Timmins were also being trashed, sometimes by the RCMP as an intimidation tactic; however Sandra, her older sister, and her mother lived in a more multicultural area rather than in the Italian district. Sandra spends the final part of her interview discussing her father’s role as a Major in the Algonquin Regiment of the Canadian Army and the battle he fought it when he was taken as a Prisoner of War by the Germans. He was interned at a camp in Braunschwig, Germany called Oflag 79 until his return home on June 15, 1945.

INTERVIEW

SO: Sandra Raffaella Stirling O'Grady, interviewee

TT: Travis Tomchuk, interviewer

KC: Krystle Copeland, videographer

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 00:00:10]

TT: This is Travis Tomchuk we're in North Bay Ontario. It is August 10th, 2011. And we're at the home of Sandy O'Grady. My first question um, is if you could give us your full name?

SO: Sandra Raffaella Stirling O'Grady.

TT: And um, when were you born and where?

SO: I was born in Timmins, Ontario and I was born on the second of March, 1938.

TT: And what can you tell me about your family? Parents, uh grandparents, siblings.

SO: Uh, starting with my immediate family, uh I'm one of three girls. Uh I have an older sister and a younger sister. I'm the middle child that they write about you know. [laughs] We have jokes about that. Um, my mom and dad are from immigrant families. One got here earlier than the other. My dad is from a family of Scottish immigrants. Who came over in the 18...40s. Suffering persecution in the town of Sterling. It's just a coincidence that my last name is Sterling. Um, my mom is an Italian immigrant who came to this country as a three year old child. Uh, in 1912, so she was born in Italy in Cocullo and uh she was brought to this country and two years after they got to the Porcupine camp which is now Timmins, her mother passed

away. Mom was about five. So mum grew up without a mum. Actually both my parents grew up without mums. I think the early mining camp was very, very physically hard. Almost especially for the women, and it was not easy for the men either. And um, mum's growing up years were [sighs] uh different than most of us—granddad, there were no English nannies or [o'pere's] in Timmins in 1913, 14. And to get a good education he sent his family away to Montreal for a real classical education and the children grew up speaking French before they learned English. But of course Italian at home and um, my dad lost his mum when he was one year old. And uh there were three little ones. I don't know— my granddad was an amazing man that he kept them all together and uh what few housekeepers there were in Timmins I believe the Sterling family went through them all. Because the kids gave all the housekeepers such a difficult time. Dad said it was sort of funny, but I'm sure it wasn't funny for the housekeepers. But um, they both had similar growing up—. And I think mom and dad—because Timmins was so tiny in the beginning they would have known almost all their lives because that's how small that community was in those days.

TT: And what were your parent's names?

SO: My mom's name is Loretta Mascioli, then Sterling. And my dad's name was um, Alexander Keith Sterling. And he went by the name Keith. And because he spent so much time in the military you have to put a Major in front of that. So Major Keith Sterling was how most people knew dad. [nods]

TT: And the names of your siblings?

SO: My older sister, Joan, uh is now Joan McKinnon living in Kitchener Waterloo and my younger sister Diane, she lives here in North Bay just about...um, five blocks away from us here. Diane LaFrance is her name.

TT: [pause] Um, what can you tell me about your childhood?

SO: My childhood....um, I look at my childhood with Rose coloured glasses. Uh, um, in spite of dad going off to war and how very difficult that must have been for mum and then the difficulties with the internment that affected the family um, I like to call my mother a brick. She uh was one of these people who was able to keep um a good face forward. And she really did that for Joan and I. The two war time kids. And I knew there was something going on in the world that wasn't good. I could tell that you'd see a look in mum's eye and you'd think oh, something's really not well.

[5:10.3]

And...somehow she was able to put such a good face on for Joan and I. We both agree that in those five years of the wartime that we had five wonderful years. And um, that's a wonderful accomplishment on her part and how lucky for us. Um, growing up in Timmins was— I had no idea what a privilege it was till I got older and then you'd compare with other people about their growing up. In Timmins in the 40s and the 50s um, it was Huckleberry Finn. We just went out and played in the streets, and walked to the edge of town, and tromped through the bush, and took our lunch and um in the wintertime you went sliding at the Gulch and you came back for supertime exhausted, wet, and hungry. And um, mom was glad to see you and in today's world that could not happen. And we took it as a given. We were so free, and you were told not to talk to strangers and there's some funny stories about that. Um, but our freedom was just endless. And it was for all kids. I was at a funeral in Toronto um, a year and a half ago a wonderful woman who lived two doors away from us. And her brother in law, who also grew up in Timmins, talked about our growing up here as Huckleberry Finn days. And that's how it describes it. It sounds almost corny but we had ultimate freedom as kids to roam and explore

and make up games and go make forts in the bush and that kind of thing. It sounds kind of rough but it was great actually. And um, of course when dad came home in '45, um, the world changed again. That was an interesting process for my parents and I'm sure many families went through this. Dad had been gone for five years...I was two when he went away I was five—seven when he came home. And I wouldn't have anything to do with him. And I can picture while I'm sitting here, me sitting in the kitchen in Timmins and saying, "mom, would you tie my shoelace for me?" And she's cooking dinner and she's really busy doing a hundred different things, and dad's sitting there, reading the newspaper. And mom said, "Well, get dad to do it." [laughs] I could hear myself saying, "Who, him?" [laughs] and uh, "who, him" became sort of a mantra that we all ended up sort of chuckling at. But uh, it, it, it just was a big adjustment for, for me. Who's this guy, uh and coming home from the prison camp he didn't look like the guy that went away. But uh, he persevered, which is a good thing. And um, going through my high school years was uh, Timmins High had uh a series of teachers who were so dedicated to the students. It was, it was so heartwarming when, when I think of it now. And the gift of time that they gave to all the kids. I came home most nights around six o'clock, six fifteen after basketball, volleyball, track and field, club meetings. And the teachers weren't going home until we did. So they, they made it all possible. And it was a truly rich experience for me. It was uh, I was really lucky. [nods]

TT: And whereabouts uh were you living in Timmins. Like could you describe your neighbourhood?

SO: Oh, yes. Yeah. The corner of Seventh and [Hemlog] Street. Was uh...a nice part of town. Lovely homes and um, it uh, it was a lovely neighbourhood in that we all knew each other and knew each other really, very well. And in...the bad old days, um, I don't know if it still exists in Timmins because I don't live there as an adult now, but people would just drop in. After super and uh, dear friends from across the street, they used to come over and they'd sit and talk for

two or three hours and there was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing at all times. And with the kids, with the adults, it was just um, it was just sort of like a warm hug everywhere. And uh, having said that, going downtown was the same thing. Being a smaller city you got to know the people who were the shop keepers, and uh, when I came home at Christmastime from university I had to go downtown and say hi to all the people in the shops. [laughs] That I knew because it was just sort of a part of your circle. It was, it was, tremendous warmth. I, again, I was really lucky.

[10:00.4]

TT: And what kind of businesses uh, would there have been in your neighbourhood?

SO: Oh, it was completely residential. Yeah, yeah. I think there was a little corner store a block and a half away in both directions. Yeah, yeah, a very nice street. Yeah. [nods]

TT: And how about um, the ethnic make-up of your neighbourhood?

SO: Um, it was, it was a real mix. Uh, I like to say that Timmins invented multiculturalism before the rest of the world discovered the word. We didn't know that's what it was. Um, mining communities attract people, new Canadians from all over the world. And we sure did. They came from every corner of the world. Um, we had quite a mix. And sometimes the last names of your neighbours would be [puts hands out wide] big long letters, all connected with a y and the end and uh, the young kids would always know how to pronounce them and uh, and you didn't realize until later in life oh, well they were Croatians or they were Serbians, or those were Romanians. And um, I didn't have those tags on anyone when I was growing up. We, there was just this incredible mixture of last names it was uh very, very rich that way. Yeah, wonderful, just wonderful. [nods]

TT: And then, how did everyone get along?

SO: There again, I, I tend to look at that with rose-coloured glasses and I know that um, nothing is perfect. And there were tensions here and there, um, there was an ugly slang word for every nationality that you could possibly think of. And the Italians certainly weren't immune to that one either. There, there were slang words used and they were thrown around in the school yard and when you're really young and you do hear those words regularly. It just becomes part of your vocabulary although I certainly was told never to use them. Um...on the whole, I think climate and geography trumps all. Um, the winters were long and cold and severe. Nothing that you, you couldn't endure but I think the basic ground mentality in that community was you had to get along well enough to get through the winters and if you're stuck in a four-foot snow bank, you want Joe with that unusual last name coming out of his door, front door to help push you out of that snow bank. And uh, I think there was an incredible cooperation. Um, but there were some bumps here and there. [nods]

TT: And you mentioned uh, going to high school but uh, could you tell us about other schools you might have gone to prior to um, your upper years?

SO: Yes, um, during the war years when I was starting school, my older sister and I attended a small two-school room school just down the hill from our house. And it was run by the Catholic School Board. And um...there were some health issues related to that school. It was very unusual, um, we were beaten every day. And uh that's quite a long story. Um, my mum had promised to raise the children as Catholics and that seemed fine and doable, um...the stresses in the classroom were so extreme that um, it started to affect my health. They thought I had stomach cancer. And uh the good news is they did all the fancy tests and I was perfectly fine, but what was happening was I was sort of a quiet child and what I was doing was internalizing all the fear that I felt in the classroom. And uh, during the war years mom had enough on her

hands to, to deal with other than changing us from school. But when dad came home uh, I think they talked it all over and mum when to the priest and said, "My children's health has to be taken into consideration first." And he agreed, he knew there were extreme troubles there. And uh, we went to the public school, Central School right in the heart of the city, uh for our public school years. Both Joan and I, and uh, it was just a wonderful experience for me. And then we moved on from Timmins High from Central School. So it was um, we were lucky. The quality of the schooling was—when I got to the University of Toronto, as a first year student, I, I worried a little as to oh, I'm coming from this really far northern community, I wonder how I will equate with the kids who've had their...their high school training in the big city where they have pools, and the swimming pools in the schools and things like that. Maybe they would be just uh way ahead of me and uh no, that wasn't the case. I had been really well trained. So I considered myself very fortunate.

[15:33.4]

TT: And what was the name of the Catholic School? [That you started in?]

SO: Yes, it was called St. John's. And it was two rooms and you had grades one to four downstairs and five to eight upstairs. And uh, if you sat in the first row you were in kindergarten, if you sat in the second row you were in grade one [says with a laugh], if you sat in the third row...so obviously the population for that school must have been quite small. Uh, to have been that way. It uh, it was an interesting part of my life. I was so fortunate to have very supportive and intelligent parents to, to work us through that area.

TT: Hmmm. And um, with having four grades in the same room, now did...you know how were lessons conducted by the teachers?

SO: Oh, good question. Uh...I was living in fear all the time, I...um, she would address the kindergarten kids and give them something to do and then spend some time with the grade ones and uh, it was a difficult task to give to any teacher, and now, country schools seem to do it and uh I suspect that she had to be a good time management individual to, to be able to work and hand out the work according to the grade levels. I remember more about grades three and four. Um, she— I had the feeling she spent more time with the threes and fours. But that could be a distorted memory. I, I don't know that was, it was a most unusual time.

TT: Okay. Um...and then you said you went to the U of T.

SO: I did.

TT: And what did you do at the U of T?

SO: I went into a science program at the University of Toronto. Um, and it was uh food chemistry and really to become a dietian. And uh, textile chemistry we studied. It was mostly chemistry and physics. And uh, it was heavy I was really nervous that I wouldn't be able to pass it all and let mom and dad know that their investment was worthwhile. Uh, I did work hard and I did alright. And um, a being in the science program, you get to pick one art subject each year that has to fit into your schedule. And uh, that was always interesting. There weren't many subjects that could fit into my quite heavy um, timetable. But in my third year, I, the one subject that fit in was [Near]-Eastern History, 1A. And it was one of the most intriguing course I took...it was so different than everything else I was studying. And uh, I learned how the ancient Mesopotamians made beer. I mean important stuff to know. Anyway it was interesting stuff. And uh, the sciences were heavy but very rewarding and uh, I worked two summers in a row in um a large dining room setting at a youth camp. We had to put in time working with commercial food preparation to be able to get yourself ready to become a dietian. I didn't go

that route uh after working in the dining hall for a couple of summers. I went to OCE to become a high school teacher after I graduated. So I was a teacher in the sciences and the maths, as well as home-ec.

TT: Um...what uh, what years would you have attended U of T?

SO: I entered in '56 and I graduated in '59.

TT: And were there many women in the sciences at that particular time?

[19:45.6]

SO: Good question. Um, to tell the truth, there weren't that in the scheme of things, there weren't that many women in university at that time. It, it was a real privilege for Joan and I to be at a major university. And both in science courses. Um, my class was very small; it was 12 or 14 women. Um...there were men in food sciences, but very few. It was not considered a go-to destination in the 50s. Uh like it is now. Um, the number of women on the campus was really proportionally quite small. And I wasn't even aware of that to be honest in my own little world where I lived in women's residence and then, I never felt an imbalance. But uh, when you look back and you see the percentages, it uh it was a gift for me to be able to go to university no question. And especially coming from a smaller town like Timmins. When Joan went only three graduates from Timmins High went to University that year. [raises eyebrows] In my year there were a few more. And it's gone up from there, which is wonderful. And we now have universities in the north which didn't exist in, in my day. So...there are more opportunities now.

TT: And, and how about your professors, were there any women professors teaching the courses that you might have taken?

SO: Yes, there were. Yes, we had quite a few women professors. The physics teacher was a professor...uh, my biology teacher was a professor. Oh...was she ever tough stuff, she was hard to please. Um...I would say it was almost half and half. Yes, they were amazingly well represented. Yeah. And my, in Organic Chemistry teacher from first year is a Nobel Prize winner. And uh, uh, I, I get a chuckle whenever I read about him in the news and so on and I think it was his first year teaching and he was this nervous little guy up at the front. And I think he was intimidated by all those students. [says with a laugh] Anyway, time marches on. No, it was a good mix, yeah.

TT: And what was it like uh, coming from Timmins and moving to Toronto?

SO: Oh, it was a big adjustment. Um...I had been to Toronto a couple of times with my family. I, I knew enough streets to be able to get around. I'll tell you the biggest thing that uh, affected me as uh, on a day to day basis was how cold Toronto was. And that would make you smile. Uh, how could a kid from Timmins feel the cold in Toronto? It was the dampness. I, they say, oh it's dry cold it really isn't as cold...well, uh when the wind blew off Lake Ontario and I had a really heavy tweed coat. It was like an army, great coat almost and I'd have that on, my hats and mittens and boots and in Toronto of course they don't always have their boots and their mittens. But I'm looking like right straight out of the north...and I was still chilly. But that was my biggest adjustment were the winds and the dampness in Toronto. But uh, oh I just dove in with both feet. It was uh, wonderful to explore a big city and I did live in residence so I had a good home base there, and uh, you know they were great years. I was again, really lucky.

TT: So, what kind of um, you know social activities would you have engaged in while at university?

SO: Um, I wasn't much of a social butterfly. I, my future husband was living in Toronto at that time and we started dating at that time. Getting involved at the university level, uh, I got involved in some things at my faculty...and would help out with different events. And I would help out with some things in the residence. I didn't join— I joined one club and uh, I got quite active in this one club. And I was secretary, treasurer or something. I played the piano whenever they had meetings and all the old rah-rah songs....I, I was careful not to spread myself too thin because um, I really wanted to pass. [laughs] And I, I knew that I had a lot of work to do to pass. So I was very careful with my time.

TT: And um, how did you meet your future husband?

SO: Oh, that's a great story. Um, Kevin grew up in Timmins as well. And uh, we met in grade one. Which, which row was that in, in that little classroom. And um, the, the nun, the teacher said "we have a new boy uh, in the class today and his name is Kevin O'Grady we want you all to say hello." And I was sitting in the second seat in this one row. So there was an empty seat in front of me. And she put the new kid in the seat in front of me. Obviously I was not pleased with having someone sitting in the front seat, and when the teacher wasn't looking I hauled up my ruler and whacked him on the side of the head. And poor Kevin, that was his introduction to me. [laughs] He survived. Uh, and we did play in the sandbox together and we've known each other almost all our lives. And then his family ended up moving to Toronto when, just around the time Kevin was starting university and uh, that was lovely for me because his mum would, uh a couple of times a month invite me over for a home cooked meal. Which was really a treat.

[25:49.3]

TT: So he was attending university at the same time you were?

SO: Yes he was. He uh, Kevin took a four years honours degree in Zoology at the University of Toronto. And then he was accepted into dental school and so he completed his dental school at the University of Toronto. [nods]

TT: And uh, you had mentioned earlier that you were trained as a teacher and then you began to teach. So were you teaching in Toronto or was it in Timmins? Where exactly did you work?

SO: Uh, I taught in Toronto uh, briefly. We got married and Kevin was starting into dental school and the plan was for me to teach high school in Toronto in East York and I did have a job and our oldest daughter had different plans. And uh, she arrived on the scene uh a bit earlier than we had expected. And uh, I went into retirement quite quickly in my first year of teaching. And uh I didn't go back to teaching. When we moved to North Bay, I had many offers, I was lucky that I was able to stay home with my children and we had a growing family by then and uh, so I didn't go back to teaching. I've done other things with my time. But uh— involved with teaching but not in the classroom.

TT: Hmm. So what uh, what would that have been?

SO: Oh, oh I sit on a bunch of boards here in North Bay and one of them is called Sport North Bay. I am very keen and um...very aware of the physical activity of young people and I'm— Sport North Bay is like a sport council in this city. And we work at trying to improve the quality of physical activity for all children and we also work with the schools. And we also work with the public health department and the city to try to reinvent the wheel I guess and, and create more activities in the parks. It's, in today's world, it's so different than from when I grew up. With all that freedom and out and about all day long. It's a different world. The children don't seem to spend as much time outside or um, involved in structured games. That's an interesting problem right there. Uh...structured games have become so structured that you can't join if you

don't have the right t-shirt and the right socks and the right shoes and the right helmet. And some families just can't afford that. So we're working on coordinating all the aid agencies in North Bay to make it easier for a single mum to get access to some assistance, to be able to get her two little guys into some kind of program. So, I'm, I'm dancing all around education in different ways, but the sport thing is an important one to me.

TT: Okay. And to back up just a bit, when were you and Kevin married?

SO: We got married in August the 13th, 1960. So, on Saturday it will be 51 years. It's hard to believe.

TT: And uh, how many children did you have?

SO: We have three girls. I repeated what my parents had done. Uh, my oldest daughter, Kathy um, she's currently living in Irvine, California, which is southern California. Our second daughter, Marion, she is living in Gainesville, Florida. And our youngest daughter Diane; I do have one in Canada, Diane lives in Toronto.

TT: Um, and then just to back up a bit more, about uh, tell me a bit more about Timmins when you were growing up. Um, you mentioned that there were um different shop owners that you were on good terms with and you would say hello to when you would [go home at] Ch—during Christmas time, etcetera, etcetera. Um, can you tell me about those people? The businesses that they had as well as like any churches that they had in the neighbourhood that maybe your family went to, that kind of thing?

[30:11.7]

SO: Um...I'd, I didn't think that Timmins was such a small place and I still don't think it is. But the intimacy that we had with different shop keepers was amazing. When I look back. Uh, Mr. [Delgedeese] he owned um, a smoke shop that sold um tobacco and newspapers and uh, and he was almost a member of the family I felt. Uh, you couldn't go downtown and not talk to [Alfie] it was just part of your day. Um, during the war years um, my granddad would rent a little cottage um, and on Lake Nipissing. And mom and Joan and I would take the train to North Bay and we'd stay at the hotel in the night times but we'd go to this little cottage during the day. This was granddad's treat to, to his daughter and the grandchildren. And the one summer when we had this little cottage on the beach, um, [Alfie Delgedeese] owned the cot— was renting the cottage next door and he taught me how to swim. [laughs] And he wasn't just a shop keeper to me, he was a guy I dove off his shoulders and he showed me how to, how to hold my nose and all that sort of stuff. [says with a laugh] Just a dear, wonderful, warm, and gentle man. And, and he knew these were two kids that didn't have a daddy for some length of time and he was one of those people that just sort of steps in and helps take on part of that role. Um, there were a lot of little Italian shops in down Pine Street at the time. They're not there now. Um, they were like a timepiece. And you know, the salami's hanging from the ceiling, and the chunks of cheese and that. Mother was very fussy about which salami she would buy and give me a slice of this, and [pretends to taste] hmmm, no and I'll try this one...and again it was uh, it was a shopping event as much as it was a social event. And um, the main department store in, in Timmins, Bukovetsky's uh, it was just an institution. Again, uh run by two uh, a family of immigrants who came and they ran a wonderful department store. And I can close my eyes and well actually— I don't even have to close my eyes. I can picture the day that nylon stockings arrived in town and my mother, yes she was in the line up to get...you were allowed one or two pair that you could purchase. At Bukovetsky's at the stocking counter. Oh...that was big stuff. And um, it again the lady behind the counter was someone that you call by their first name. And uh, you knew them, you knew about their lives and that sort of thing. And the professionals in your life, your doctor and your dentist, oh my goodness in my case

uh...our dentist was my parent's closest friend. And um, his story is writ large in Canadian history. Uh, Henry was a pilot as well and um he didn't survive his last flight, a fishing trip up north of Cochrane. And you may have heard of the hockey player, Bill Barilko being lost. Well, it was our dear friend that was flying that plane. And uh, that plane has been on Lake Nipissing six weeks earlier and I'd been in it. And uh, it's quite a story. Uh, there's a saying in flying, "there are no old, bold, pilots." And Henry did take some risks. I gather they did so well on their fishing trip; they loaded the pontoons with their catch. And they were too heavy to get lift off. Um, but as I say, the professionals in our lives, the lawyer up the street, the doctor two doors away and they were the people you did business with. They...and um, there just was such a closeness. The lawyer across the street went on to be a Supreme Court justice in uh the province of Ontario. And uh, he'd come over in the evenings, two or three times a week and I'd sit there because Greg always had the best stories to tell. From his law practice. And when the stories were getting to the really interesting point, my mother would lean forward and say, "dear don't you think it's time you went and finished what your...your high school studies for tonight." [frowns] And then you knew you had to exit and then probably it got more interesting after you left you know. [someone says "shhh, come here, come here" in the background]. So, do you want to do something about [children speaking in the background] it's going to be a little noisy if—

TT: We can take a break.

SO: Okay, I didn't think they'd be here quite this soon. Sorry about that. [camera fades out]

[35:06.6]

SO: Sorry about that. [says quietly]

TT: Um, okay so you were telling me about uh, about some of the people, shop owners professionals that you knew.—

SO: Uh hmm.

TT: Growing up in Timmins...

SO: Uh hmm.

TT: Uh...what else, was there a church that the family attended with any regular [frequency]?

SO: Yes, there was a French Catholic Church, and Irish Catholic Church and an Italian Catholic church. And uh, we attended the Irish Catholic church which was just about two blocks from the house which was uh, it was a place that we went to once a week and ultimately ended up having Sunday school lessons there and uh, I was married there and my oldest was baptized there and it uh, it held the passages of many family members. And it's no longer operational. Um, from politics and dropping numbers I understand. Um, it was uh, we had a variety of priests there, Les Costello the hockey playing priest, you might have heard about him. He, he was just one of those wonderfully warm and wacky individuals who just, he just would come into your home and uh you'd have a chat and he'd look over at the family dog and he'd say "do you want me to bless the dog?" And we'd say "sure." [laughs] And he'd go over and bless the dog and just, he just had a wonderful way with people and he filled the church and uh, those years were just lovely, just lovely. And I attended the Italian Church sometimes, but not on a regular basis just cause— I thought it was strange it was called the Irish Church but it was closer to home, so. It was easy to get to. [nods]

TT: And were you involved in any kinds of organizations through the church?

SO: No, no I wasn't. The uh, the only thing I was involved with was Sunday school which would have been an extra. And we did that after we started attending the public schools and uh, and they, we had a class for an hour every Sunday afternoon and that was about the only extra thing I did there. [nods]

TT: Um, and uh what can you tell us about your grandfather, Leo Mascioli?

SO: An amazing guy. I'm so lucky that I have a living memory of him. He...as the memories of a young child, uh he was a larger than life individual. When he came into a room, he really did take all the oxygen in the room. As a very young child, I was a bit intimidated by his presence—presence, because it was overwhelming. He, he did...it sounds corny but he did fill the room. He uh, he was amazing. He just had a plan and an idea for everything going. He'd come into the house and he'd say, "Loretta, the girls should learn how to play the piano." "Yes, dad that sounds like a nice idea." "I'm going to send a piano, and the girls are going to learn how to play the piano. That would be a good thing." "Yes dad that sounds lovely." And of course within five days a grand piano arrives at the house. So, it's over at my sister's house. It's uh...it's my first most favourite instrument in the whole world. And it was thanks to granddad. And we did learn to play the piano thanks to granddad. And he, he just had plans for the future at all times. I, I don't know where his visions came from but he just kept, there was a well spring in there, they just kept coming. Aside from his accomplishments—accomplishments in the business world. Um, he always had plans for these grandchildren. Where they'd go, what they'd do. And how to enrich our lives. Um, one cold January night, he had moved to Toronto by now. It was after 1940 and he phoned mum and a long distance phone call in those days was quite a big deal. It's hard to imagine you know we're so casual with our long distance calls in today's world. And uh, he said, "Loretta, the girls are going to go to camp this summer." And she said "oh, that's interesting dad." He said, "I was in a meeting in Toronto today and there was someone there

sitting on the board and he told me that there's this camp in Algonquin Park and his granddaughters are going to go there. So, I, I think my grandchildren should go there." And mom said, "Dad what was the name of the camp?" "Oh, I don't know I, I'm not, I'll find out." Well, "Where exactly is it located?" "I'm not really quite sure, it's somewhere sort of near Huntsville or something like that." "Well, could you get me a bit more information?" I mean he was gung-ho. We were going to go to camp and have all these wonderful experiences, but he didn't get all the details but anyway...mum followed through and found out about this camp that granddad had obviously heard about and God bless granddad, it's because of him that he, he sent us in the early years. And gave us this wonderful experience of um going to camp and living independently, sort of for a month at a time. And learning canoe tripping and we really had some funny comments about that in our house.

[40:42.7]

When you think of how my family got into the Porcupine area it was by canoe and portage and packs on their back, and now my parents are paying us to go to camp to go to do canoe tripping. [laughs] Mum said, "who could have ever realized?" Anyway, they were wonderful experiences and as I sit here, our granddaughter just finished a month at that same camp, and our grandson is running the canoeing program at the boy's camp. So it's a tradition granddad's started long, long time ago. He, he wanted the very best. For everyone in his life. He, he worked so hard himself. Um...I think you could qualify him as a workaholic. One day he phoned and it was in the spring. And because we were playing the piano, we used to go into the music festivals. The Kiwanis music festival. And I went in every year and it was a good exercise to go in and be fearful and have sweaty palms and have to get up there and try and do your best. And this one year, I came second. Well...there was no one more surprised than my parents. [laughs] And granddad happened to have phoned that night. And mum's saying all the things that you know, you want to hear...pat, pat, pat. [pats herself on the back] Oh, "Sandra played in the

festival today and she played really nicely and she came second and we're so proud of her" and I'm just like this [grinning and bouncing in her seat] and he said, well, "put her on the phone, put her on the phone..." as I say, long distance phone calls were a big event in those days. And he's granddad on the other end of the phone, and he says "congratulations, I hear you came second in the festival." And I said "oh, thank you very much." And there was a big long pause on the other end of the line and then he said, "First would be better." [laughs] He's absolutely right, and if he could have only lived a few more years, I pulled off the top prize one year and I just though, granddad wherever you are, I did get there. Anyway he, that tells you anything you have to know about the guy. He, I could, I could write two books on him. Uh...um...if mum was taking Joan and I to Toronto to get our orthodontists work done, after our pilot dentist died in that accident, um, we'd get up in the morning to have breakfast on the overnight train from Timmins to Toronto and granddad would be sitting in the dining car waiting to have breakfast with us. He would have gotten on the train in Huntsville. Probably no sleep and didn't look any the worse for wear for it you know. He said, "Oh I just wanted to surprise you." Just he, he had prodigious energy uh, he just, he just exuded energy, and enthusiasm, and ideas and that's what I think of him. Um, just the most amazing guy. He, um, he loved nice clothing. And he would go to a ladies shop in Toronto; maybe Eaton's or Simpsons and he'd line up a saleslady that was about the same size and shape as my mom. Slim little lady. And he'd pick out some outfits and say, "could I ask you to try these on?" And some little sales lady would try these things on and he'd say, "Okay, would you send those three outfits up to mum." And a box would come and there'd be some lovely things for mum and he had a good eye. Yeah so, and he would do the same for the children. He uh, he, Eaton's College Street was in business in those days and they would bring in imported um, little dresses from Spain and Italy with the hand work. Beaut—I've saved a couple of them, they're just little treasures. And uh again, a box would come and it was love granddad. And uh, he uh, he was so proud of his family. The family was not very large. They lost several members along the way, but he, he just was so proud and

he was an interesting man. I, I wished I had had him in my life longer but um, I was lucky to have known him. Just a human dynamo.

[45:25.9]

SO: And anyone who worked with him my dad ran the construction company and uh, my mother did this incredible thing. This Italian immigrant lady. She married a Scottish immigrant. Well, granddad had a lot of difficulty with that. I don't know if you've seen the movie My Big Fat Greek Wedding? Oh, well go see the movie, you'll see granddad in there. Um, it's hard for [dogs barking] people from one very specific culture to watch a break from that culture. And uh, my mum knew she was marrying a prince, just he wasn't an Italian prince. [says with a laugh] But my dad proved himself over and over and over and it was hard to do that with Leo. He just expected and got the best from, from everyone. And uh, the men who worked under him, um they were taught really good lessons on how to work really hard. And do it right the first time. There shouldn't be a second time. He, he expected the best. And uh he achieved great things. He, really when I think of his story, it's kind of like a Hollywood movie story. Leaving home at the age of eight, and you think [gasps] oh, my goodness. That little boy that was at the house a few minutes ago, the older one is six. And you think imagine leaving home two years later than that. Anyway, he had a plan. And away he went.

TT: And do you know much about um, about his life and his story from when he left Italy to arriving in Porcupine camp?

SO: I do. Um, when he was eight, he left his little village of Cocullo he was the second oldest of six children. And he was the ship's boy. And I don't know what a ship's boy did and before the turn of the previous century, but maybe carry buckets of water or buckets of coal or that type of thing—a little gofer at the age of eight. And he sailed to Scotland and back. My, my suspicion

is that he went with a neighbour gentleman who was most likely on that ship and keeping an eye on him. He came home from that voyage and announced that he at the ripe old age of nine he said, "I'm going to go to the new world. To America." And I have been told the stories through the family that mum and dad were just couldn't believe this. Uh, he was amazingly insistent, and he left home at nine with the proviso that he would travel and live with uh a paesano, a fellow villager who was a good friend of the family and who was immigrating as well. And, and he did. They landed in Boston and he lived with this man, for I'm not sure how many years. But I know that in the beginning uh, he was um, a little boot black on the street. Shining shoes and I believe at some point in his evolution he worked in a small restaurant and for a bit of time...as he matured and he became aware of the world around him, he heard about this fellow named Marconi, with this new fandangled thing called radio. And Marconi was in New Brunswick, no Nova Scotia at the time. And he was looking for Italian labourers to build radio towers. Now at this point, Leo had a crew of Italian labourers, that he, I won't say managed, but it was considered his crew of workers. And they went from the Boston area up into Nova Scotia, and they built radio towers for Marconi. And I have read and I like to fantasize that Leo did meet Marconi. I mean it is, it's...I have read that he did. Uh, I do like to think that's possible. You know what they say, if you could go back to a moment in history, uh, to see these two pioneers in, in uh one rough and tumble...granddad Leo and this well educated electronics engineer, working together to create this new phenomenon, while Leo was in Nova Scotia he heard about the silver strike in Cobalt, Ontario.

[50:35.4]

SO: And he decided he would go and try his luck at silver mining. And I think he was in the Cobalt area for about two years. While he was in Cobalt he heard about the gold strike in the Porcupine camp. And then he...got on his big boots and that big pack and they walked in to the Porcupine area. Uh, I have been told that they no longer allowed men to go in singly into the

Porcupine camp the trip was too arduous and if the conditions in the winter got too severe too many died along the way, falling asleep in a snow bank and [nods] ending their days. What they did is they sent men in in groups of 20 or 30 or more and the man at the back of this line up of 20 or 30 people would be given a whip. And I understand that granddad took that role and you would ask, and if a fellow was too tired and he would lie down in a snow bank you'd ask him three times to get up and if he didn't get up, you'd whip him. It sounds so brutal but you were saving his life. And they had just lost so many that way. It just, the toughness of that, those early camp years I read about them and I just think...oh my goodness I've never been without a roof over my head and hot and cold running water and whatever I wanted to eat and um, in the very beginning, I don't even know how many tents there were. Um it, it was difficult in like you, and I just can't imagine in today's world. And yet they carved out an existence. Um, granddad went to work in the mine and he was called a straw boss and he had some authority. I don't know how all this worked out, but somehow granddad was involved in bringing Italian labourers over to work in the mine. And he was well respected. Both by the labourers, because he spoke up for the workmen because he was one of them himself but he also had a relationship with the mine management because he was helping through the Canadian government, don't ask me how he set this up, to bring over Italian workers in the mine. And mines are great places for new Canadians because you don't need to speak the language, you just need a pick and shovel and a strong back. And um, the language skills can come later. Uh...there were difficult times, the condition in the mine were dreadful. And the mine management uh, became very distressed when they found that the workers wanted to form a union. And I never fully understood what reading the riot act really meant until someone explained it to me one day. That um...the conflict between the management of the mine and the workers became so uh...so frightening and the only people with the big, heavy weapons were the mine management people. And they had like a police force and they were well armed. But the miners just decided, we have to improve this...and that movement was going to go ahead no matter what. It was decided that they would read the riot act on the steps of Timmins

Town Hall, and they chose granddad Leo [dogs bark in background] to uh, read the riot act and I get a smile on my face when I think of that because um, he, he was about five foot ten. He was not a really little guy, he was a good size. Um, he spoke English very, very well, but with a really thick, Italian accent. And I'm sure the riot act was not written in the way it would have been presented in Timmins and I just smile about that, isn't that neat that he was chosen. Because he was respected by the management and the miners had difficulty with the fact that Leo was standing there reading the riot act. What it means is once it's been read, if there's any activity or any kind of a rumble afterwards it's shoot to kill. I didn't know that. That's why reading it is so very important. [dogs continue to bark] And uh, some miners were very annoyed with Leo for taking that stance at that time, obviously things ended up getting worked out. We did end up with unions and so on. He moved on, he could see that maybe someday there was going to be a town here. And maybe they won't all be living in tents. And he said, maybe we need a construction company, and away he went. And do you want me to go on about his, his life as a...

[55:44.8]

TT: Yeah, please do. [Dogs are barking]

SO: He uh...he started off really small. Um, in the very, very beginning uh, in a mining camp there are virtually no women and a lot of men. And living is hard, hard, hard. The work is dreadful. And there's just no up time at all. And I don't know how he did it, but he would rent movies. There were no video stores to go and rent movies. He would get movies sent into the Porcupine and for five cents...he was set up some chairs in some hall somewhere. And they'd put on a movie show. And um, he, he moved from there to running his construction company and uh, everything needed to be built in Timmins. You need roads and curbs and gutters and sidewalks and all the infrastructure and um, I spent my whole life walking on sidewalks that had

this lovely medallion at one end of the cement work and it was Mascioli Construction company. And uh, it just was, the sidewalks were Mascioli. Um, he, he got into building downtown business offices and he built theatres and he built hotels and uh, oh my goodness...he, he took risks. He took very calculated risks. One of the biggest ventures of his life was here in North Bay building the Empire Hotel. It, it didn't start out to be the biggest, scariest venture of his life. He started building the hotel in North Bay in the spring of uh, 1929. And the boom or the crash came in October of that year and I just learned last year from another hotel owner in the city that, "you know about the fourth floor at the Empire Hotel?" And I said, "Well I know that there is one." He said, "Well, when Leo was building the hotel here uh, times were financially so difficult that they, the four storey building became a three storey building." And it wasn't until a number of years later that the fourth floor was added. The, the empire hotel here in North Bay, um the history of that building, it's a magnificent building...he if you have the time, just walk in. It's a senior's home now, retirement home um, look in the dining room. It looks like you're in downtown Florence. With all the plaster work. It's, it's magnificent. And I can say that. Um, the, the hotel was in dire straits with the depression...rolling ahead. And then this most amazing event happened in Corbeil, the quintuplets were born...the Dionne quintuplets. And people came, literally from all over the world. Even in the depression era. And they came and there were no motels in those days. Very few hotels and it kept the empire afloat. And there were a couple of Hollywood movies made in this era, with James Cagney no less and the crew all stayed at the Empire Hotel and uh, it, it sort of helped put North Bay and the hotel on the map. It was luck, because those were difficult years for anybody in business. And um, when they built the Empire Hotel in Huntsville, granddad bought an older building there—grand, hundred year old building with a big wooden veranda all the way around it. And he enclosed the older building and built a much larger building and dad was home from the war by then and um my dad who uh, didn't have the opportunity to go to university there was no money for that, but he was an electrician, an engineer, and a draftsman and an architect. All, all self taught I don't know how he did it. Dad drew up all the blue prints for the Empire Hotel in Huntsville. I was

just, I can, he—I can remember hanging over his shoulder as he's saying, and "I don't know how to get the plumbing into this room through this way and that way." And um, it was a real joined effort with dad working on the Empire Hotel in Huntsville. And um, he just, he was a very generous man. He had acquired much and he gave much away. He gave much to his family. He gave so much back to the community of Timmins. I can't give you the list because it's that long. It's, when I read I, I have read recently of some of the things that he'd given that I hadn't known. He, he was just an amazing guy. The School Boards came after him in the, the Catholic School Boards well because you're Italian and you're Catholic he, you must give all your taxes to the um, separate school board.

[1:00:58.6]

SO: And he said, "No, that's not fair." He said, "That's only half the community." He said, "I take my tax [space] and I cut it down the middle. I give half to the Catholic School Board and I give half to the Public School Board. And uh, you can't make some of those decisions without annoying some people but he thought that was more fair. And he just, he, he affected many lives in that community. And he, he...he gave and gave and gave. And some of his giving got him into trouble. [nods] Because he was writing cheques back to his family in Cocullo. In the run up to the war years. He had enough, more than enough for his own family and his siblings back in Cocullo, it was difficult back then, so he wanted to help out. And it's my understanding that some of those cheques who were made out to Antoinetta Mascioli [writes with hand in the air] and so on, the family names that the RCMP accused him of supporting Mussolini with that money. Well, all you had to do is follow the cheques. They were going to really specific places. All in one village. But uh, I guess they would use anything they could get their hands on.

TT: And when, when was uh Leo Mascioli interned?

SO: Um, Mussolini declared war on the side of the [axis] powers on the 10th of June, 1940. And that was the day that the Canadian government sent the RCMP out through Ontario, Quebec and some of the Maritime Provinces to pick up the most prominent, male, Italians in each community. And that day, my uncle Tony was home, and they did get him from his home and put him in the Timmins prison. Timmins jail. Uh, granddad wasn't home. He was doing business in Toronto on that day. And they knew where he was. Obviously they'd been following him very closely. And they knew where to go and get him, and I don't know where that was. Somewhere in downtown Toronto. But, they put him in the horse stables at the CNE grounds in Toronto. There are groomsmen stables uh, uh there, they have the horse sleeps here and the groomsmen sleeps here [uses hands to mark out an area close to one another] and that's where the Italian prisoners were put in the first part of their imprisonment. I, mum was at home alone with two little children because it is war time and dad's away. And that's not unusual um, many, many thousands and thousands of women were alone...not all of them with two little kids but mom obviously was able to get a baby sitter and she made the trip to Toronto to go and see her dad. And she was not allowed to see him. He had no rights. No lawyer, no rights, no visitor. [Sighs] Ultimately, Leo was transferred to Petawawa as was Tony, as were most of the internees brought to Petawawa. And he spent about a year in Petawawa. And I've heard some interesting stories. Uh mum, mum was huh, poor mum. Mum was sending parcels overseas to dad and uh, she was selling—sending parcels to Petawawa to her dad to, to uh mostly I don't know what kind of groceries you can send in those days, but she would send food. And um, Leo not surprisingly took charge and he would put on a feast, that he...he was a wonderful cook. My mum learned to cook from the best I tell you. He was just so wonderful, in the kitchen. Oh, what a phenom. Anyway, he would put on a feast to try and make everyone in the camp feel a little better about themselves. And uh, and uh, getting extra food from uh mum and different relatives he was able to put on more of a feast. Having said that the Italians in the camp got the permission to have their own victory gardens. And they grew vegetables and so on. And um, they were encouraged to do that. And it's my understanding that after one of

these wonderful feasts that, it's sort of like the order of good cheer that Champlain uh, created to boost everybody's morale.

[1:05:57.0]

SO: The guards said, "how about you do the cooking and we'll do the clean up." Because the food was that much better and I just think that's a sweet story to come out of internment. That the— but I also heard uh, through Norman and Elena that there was um, there were very good feelings mostly between the guards and the Italian men. I believe there was fondness there. And history overtook everybody at that point. And there were tribunals set up...and they came to Petawawa. And each prisoner had to have his time um, being questioned by the tribunal. And I don't have the documents from Leo's trans— uh, the transaction of his questioning but amazingly I do have it for Tony. And what questions were asked and by whom and what the answers were. And at the end of the day both Tony and Leo were exonerated and allowed to go home. There was a contingent of people from Timmins who went to Petawawa for Leo's hearing to speak on behalf of his good name. And there were...I've read something like 20 or 30 people made that trip. And not everyone in Timmins was pleased that Leo was going to get out of prison. As is always the case, if you're a really high profile figure um, there will be people who will be resentful of your position. And that was not new in granddad's case. Um...I think the Germans have the most perfect word for it. It's called *Schadenfreude*, taking pleasure in someone else's misery. And granddad really got hit with that one when he came home. He'd been home in Timmins a couple of weeks and he was walking down the main street. And he saw someone that he knew coming towards him on the sidewalk and he thought oh, I'm going to be able to have a chat with...Joe. Joe crossed the street so he didn't have to speak to Leo. And it was devastating. Leo was a proud man. He uh, he, he had no idea that the ramifications from this whole experience were going to be as deep as they were. And they were—well it was very complicated times. There were things that happened and I was too young to put any

pieces of the puzzle together. And I said my mother was this wonderful actress who just carried on. Uh, during the war years, um my uncle Danny uh he was younger than mum and he was not married. And in the evenings, often, Dan would come over around eight, eight-thirty in the evenings and he would uh, sit in the living room in chairs pretty much like what I have here and he and mum would chat on maybe between eight-thirty and ten-thirty at night. And of course Joan and I were supposed to have gone to bed but of course we climbed down the stairs and tried to listen to what's going on in the living room. And then fall asleep on the stairs. Um, but for all the war years, Danny was one of the people who kept mum the most company. One night when Dan was leaving the house, uh and mum was on the inside locking up the back door and turning out the light and putting the extra chain on door. And she heard a strange noise outside the back door, unlocked the door, turned the light back on, opened the door and there's my uncle Danny lying unconscious on the sidewalk, right out, right outside the back door. Someone had been hiding around the corner of the house and when Danny stepped out he was clubbed over the head. Now Dan wore glasses and the glasses were smashed on the sidewalk as well. And you think about that. Now was it because there was an Italian living in that house? Who knows. Was it a burglary in process that Danny happened to stumble into? I don't know. There's no answer for that one and as an adult now I think about that and I think of my mum trying to go to bed and get to sleep that night. Uh, what's going on, you know is it racially motivated? Or is it...who knows.

[1:10:57.1]

SO: Uh, knowing what was going on in the political climate, it was just made everything a bit more scary. On Christmas Eve of 1943...someone killed our pet. We had a wire-haired Terrier named Perky. And he was poisoned. On Christmas Eve. You've got to really plan that one. Um, we had a fenced in backyard; Perky never got out of the yard. Somebody came into the yard. And you think about that and you wonder, why would anybody do it and why, well Christmas

Eve is specific. Had a very specific effect. Many of the Italian homes were being trashed, both by thugs in Timmins and sometimes regularly by the RCMP. They would knock the door down at three in the morning, go in, mess up the people a little bit, trash the house just to keep them fearful. And our house was never, ever broken into that way. And I've thought about that a great deal. We didn't live in the specific Italian part of town, but Timmins isn't that big. [clears throat] And my own little home-baked theory is that the headline in the Timmins Press "RCMP Trash Major Sterling's Home." [nods] Was maybe just a step too far beyond them.

TT: Hmm.

SO: Maybe it was the Anglo-Saxon name? Maybe it was the major out in front. I don't know. I have no idea. But you, you just start thinking about all these things in years gone by, and you can't ever retrieve any of that. So much of this, it was part of everyday life. Um...when Leo had that experience on Main Street he moved...he moved to Toronto. He left uh, his, his Timmins. [nods] His beloved Timmins. Uh, he lived on Broadview Avenue uh, in the house is still standing, it's a lovely place. And there were fruit trees in the backyard; I always thought that was really cool. And he took a real interest in it and that's where he came back for business on a regular basis, he was a busy man; he kept travelling. But he never again lived in, his, his Timmins. [nods]

TT: And roughly what year was he released from camp?

SO: '41, 1941.

TT: So then poisoning of Perky happened well after he had been releas—

SO: Oh yeah, Leo was out by then, yeah. But um the feeling again towards the um Italian community certainly lingered. With some people not with everyone. Uh, who knows. It's just

one of those things that did happen. And then you start thinking about them afterward and I don't want to sound paranoid but you just wonder, is it part of a bigger picture. Or was it a one off unusual event—just Christmas Eve does get your attention but um, who knows, who knows.

TT: And uh, what year then did he re-locate to Toronto? Your grandfather...

SO: I'm not positive. [pause] But it was...I think it was before the end of the war. Granddad did a wonderful thing, uh towards the end of the war, he would bring us down to North Bay every summer and I knew North Bay [clears throat] just as a summer playground. And here I've ended up living here. It turns out it's a playground all year round. Um, in 1944, granddad bought a piece of property down on Premier Road. And he started building a cottage and he called it his Victory Cottage. 'Cause everybody knew the war was going to end, it just was a matter of what day and what month. And he built this most wonderful cottage. And when dad got home, on the 15th of June, 1945. It's funny...some of this stuff is hard. [says while tearing up.] Uh, dad weighed 97 pounds when he got home from being in the prison camp. And we hoped in the car as soon as school was over and we drove to North Bay and we moved into this incredible, wonderful, new cottage. And my memories of that summer [pauses] talk about rose-coloured glasses...um, just playing on the surf on Lake Nippissing and playing cards in the living room on the rainy days. And just magnificent.

[1:15:58.5]

SO: And I have a picture which I will show you. I'll give it to you. And it was taken of granddad Leo just outside the front of the cottage. And he's got a grin on his face from ear to ear. Now, this was a very serious man. He, he laughed, but he was on the whole a very serious man. There's a big grin on his face. It's the most relaxed I think I have ever seen granddad in my lifetime. And it was a beautiful, warm summer day and mum said, "Oh for heaven's sake dad,

take your shoes and socks off and walk along the beach." "Oh, do you think so?" You know he was just so spit and polished all the time and his wardrobe intrigued me...he wore spats. And in summertime they were white, suede spats with the buttons down the side. Of course, I'm...my dad didn't wear spats. He wore army boots anyway [says with a laugh]. It was fun watching him take off his spats and his shoes and his socks. And he was rolling up his trousers to go for a walk on the beach and you could see his long underwear. [nods] He had been cold in Timmins days and he was never going to be cold again and mum was teasing him and he said, "Well, by God you've got to be prepared." You know and he went for a little walk on the beach and that was a huge relaxation for Leo. And uh, yeah he, he would come to the cottage and he'd want to work on some project. And mum would say, "Oh for heaven's sakes dad, take some time off." You know. He, he sort of didn't know how to do that. He had to be shown how to...[nods] enj— and he did enjoy life. He, he just enjoyed it at full speed all the time. But uh, the cottage has remained uh a very, very special place.

TT: And after your, your grandfather had been interned and your great uncle had been interned, you know did your mother talk to you and your sister about what was happening or like how did you find out what had happened to, to your relatives?

SO: Because I was so little, uh, in 1940 I was two years old. And you just can't explain anything to a two year old. And um, Joan was five. And mum not wanting to upset Joan who could understand more, didn't immediately tell her about Leo being imprisoned. And she was in grade one. During the war years they let you go to school a year earlier. And the kids at school started teasing Joan about oh, "your granddad's in prison." And she said, "No he isn't." And of course she came home in tears and then mum had to explain, "Yes, actually he, he is in a place that he can't get out of." And it wasn't...there weren't a lot of discussions that I was included in, really until dad came home from the war. By then I was seven and Joan was 10. And there were so many stories that they felt it was important for us to know. I'm really lucky; I had parents

who would talk. Many didn't. Whether it's the interment or what my dad's experiences were. And some of those stories um, it in the beginning they told us about granddad being put away and how it's hard to understand how people could feel this way, um...but in wartime unusual things happen and people are influenced in ways that you could never have believed. They were very, very careful how they phrased things. Uh, they were very careful about everything they told us. In that they never prejudiced us against anyone. And my dad suffered greatly at the hands of the enemy. And never once...never say never. Never once did I hear a negative word. About the ethnicity of our enemy. And I just thought, wow, afterwards you know I was given a clean slate. Make up my own mind. And dad told grim stories and he told, believe it or not there are some good stories in some of that wartime stuff. Human nature rising to its noble best. They explained things as we grew. And the stories got more complex—

TT: Hmm.

[1:20:49.1]

SO: And more filled out as we grew. By the time Joan and I were both teenagers there were a lot of open discussions about just about, if you asked dad or mum a question, "okay let's talk about that." And it was wide open. Uh, Joan was a voracious reader, and she'd—right after the war stories started coming out that most of the Western world was quite horrified to hear for the first time. And Joan would have her nose in the newspaper and she'd say, "Dad listen to this, this is what they did in some area" and she'd read a passage. And she said "You never went through anything like that, did you?" And we'd all look at dad and he'd just nod his head up and down. [nods yes] He was careful not to tell us the worst of the worst. But when you started piecing things together you got a pretty full picture. And my head is full of many, many stories.

TT: Hmm.

SO: And I'm really lucky that they took the time to tell us and they were all told without prejudice. Which is remarkable. I'm very lucky.

TT: And with regards to your father then, um what branch of the military, Canadian Military was he enlisted in during the war?

SO: Dad was a major in the Algonquin Regiment. The Algonquin Regiment is a regiment from Northern Ontario and they took recruits from Hurst and Cochrane and all the way down to Huntsville. And they chose a moose as their emblem. And on the crest, it says "*Ne-kah-ne-tah*." And that's Algonquin for "We lead, you follow." And the Algonquin Regiment uh, was involved in very heavy fighting. Dad tells me that when the fighting got the worst, they threw in the Scotsmens. And when they ran out of Scotsmens they threw in the Canadians. Apparently we're good fighters, I'm not sure where that comes from but apparently we, the in one particular battle dad was in in today's world we can get commentary from the German officers of that day. And in this one battle that daddy was in— actually it's the one where he was taken prisoner, um, they sold...the Germans so respected the Canadian troops that they called them [Pantsers] and in military dialect, that's quite a compliment. [shrugs] Uh, dad was a foot soldier. And uh, they were shipped over to England in '43 and they, by that time England was jam-packed. There were no barracks, no residence, nothing left for the Algonquin Regiment and anyone that came at that time. So they encamped the Algonquin Regiment along the country road south of London in the Sussex area, just north of Brighton. And there were nice, little English cottages along one side of the road, and the Algonquin Regiment encamped in tents, oh joy...in the wintertime, in England and uh...the dear people on the other side of the road, um befriended those Canadian troops as, like nothing ever before. And they would let the fellas come in and have a hot shower every once and a while and if someone could find an egg they would fry it and share it. And 'cause there were rationings at that time. And of course there

were the doodle bugs with the V1s and the V2 rockets in the...and they were called doodlebugs because literally they did wobble as they came through the air. And for all their precision uh, work that Germans miscalculated on, the positioning of the V1s and many of them fell short of London and they landed where the Algonquians were encamped. The good news about the V1s is you could hear them coming. So uh, you could duck. The V2s no. Uh and dad tells, believe it or not, funny stories about visiting the [Goranges] across the road and having uh, sharing a glass of lemon squash, that was a real treat. [says with sarcasm] And they could hear uh, a V1 rocket coming and everyone diving for cover and the room being quite trashed and the bottle of lemon squash still standing on the table you know what I mean. [says with a half laugh] There's humour in wartime, you just have to really look for it.

[1:25:25.6]

SO: He, dad was sent over across the Channel on the 24th of July, 1944 he was really lucky...he didn't go in, in the first wave and they had a secure beach head in France. So, he fought through France, Belgium, and Holland. And he was taken prisoner in Welburg on October the 31st, 1944. In the little farming town of Welburg which is just, just a tiny little place. And it took the allied forces five days to liberate that tiny town that's how fierce the opposition was. They were good; it was tough. And then dad's life changed dramatically after that. Um, do you want to hear...

TT: Yeah, well like do you know much about how he was taken prisoner?

SO: Uh hmm, uh hmm. I can show you a picture, of, of the cathedral in Wellburg. St. Cornelius Cathedral. And uh, a beautiful drawing was done of it by dad's best friend. And beside the cathedral is a German tank. And it's firing at dad across the street. Dad had set up his headquarters on the main street in Wellburg. And um, dad had lead the assault into this little

village. Uh, he was leading C Company. And they did really well. Almost turns out, too well. And C Company moved way ahead and for some unknown reason and battles often don't go according to plan...reinforcements were not coming up from behind. And the enemy saw their opportunity. Here's C Company sitting out there like ducks, unprotected, and they just circled them and took everybody prisoner. Dad made a run for it and he stopped to help a buddy who...was dead and uh, as he was getting up somebody landed on his back. And uh, there were days of interrogation and uh then I don't know if you've seen the movie Schindler's List? The box car rides? [nods] Dad had weeks of box car rides. Things were breaking down in Germany by this point. Uh, railways were being bombed...you were shunted into you know side roads, side yards and so on. And uh, he was put in a [allied] camp to begin with, with his men. But its strange how sometimes the Geneva Convention is observed, and how often it was not observed. But officers are supposed to be in a separate camp. That bothered daddy greatly. He thought if his men were good enough to fight with, they were good enough to stay with. But he was not in control. And he ended up in a camp called Oflag 79. In [Braunschweig] Germany. It's far enough away from the border that you couldn't make a dash for it. Although some did try. Um, the camp uh...the fighting had been very, very heavy in Welburg. So heavy that dad said to his men, "let's get rid of our great coats tonight and we'll pick them up tomorrow." And tomorrow didn't come. Not the way they'd expected it to. And so they went through the winter without their great coats. And that was truly significant. Um, now, life is breaking down in Germany at this time as well. They don't have a lot of provisions themselves and they didn't turn the heat on in the barracks where the men were kept on the floor with a thin blanket. But uh, I wish, I wish dad was here to tell you this because his eyes would just be dancing. Uh, dad was so ingenious he could fix anything. You break your toy, no problem, "I can fix anything." And he did. He found a piece of scrap metal. And don't ask me why, but he had his nail file with him when he went into battle. Why do you bring your nail file into battle, I don't know. It's a good thing he had it. He worked, and worked, and worked this piece of metal. And he made a key. And at nighttime when the last guard made his rounds, dad would get up and turn the heat

on. And before the first guard came in the morning, he would turn it off. They had heat all winter. And uh, the stories from the camp are...some are humorous. Red Cross parcels um, as I say, things are not going well for Germany at this point and um the guys are given the raisins and the toilet paper and the Germans take everything else. So what the guys decided to do, they were going to put—they were going to be there over Christmas so they all pooled all their raisins . And they poured water on them and they let them ferment. And they thought, we will have a roaring good time at Christmas and drink a toast. They did and they all got really, really sick. I guess it was not quite the treat they were hoping it would be. Uh, there is a story that I really like to tell. Terrible things happen in wartime on both sides. Because we won and we get to write the books, we don't tell our grim stories. Dad told me some that make you whither.

[1:30:45.3]

SO: This is a good story about our opponent. It is the duty of every officer to try to escape. Dad was married with two growing kids. He knew the war was coming to an end. Again it was just a matter of what date it was going to be. He knew it was coming very quickly to its end. He wasn't going to try and escape. He figured I'll just keep dodging the allied bombs in the camp and maybe I'll get lucky and go home. But one of the younger men in the camp said he wanted to try and escape. And what they do in a prison camp is they, they set up their own tribunal, all the allies and whoever has the highest rank in the camp is the camp leader...of the prisoners. And if you plan a plan to escape it has to be approved by everyone. Everyone has to be supportive. And they obviously had help from um, the guards because this fellow who spoke reasonable German, was a Canadian guy. They gave— they outfitted him in an officer's uniform. So there had to have been some assistance somewhere for one of our guys to get an officer's uniform, a German officer's uniform. To exit the camp, there were three checkpoints. And before I go any further, the rule is if you're caught escaping, there is no discussion...it's a bullet to the back of the head. And most guys know that, that's the deal. He gets to the first

checkpoint, he clicks his heels and he salutes. Move on. He gets to the second checkpoint, clicks his heels, and salutes. Move on. He gets to the third checkpoint and he is inches away from freedom. And the guard looked up at him and recognized him. And he lowered his voice and he said, "Turn around and go back." [smiles] That man went home. They were liberated by the American army on the 12th of April, 1945. And dad asked special permission of one of the officers if he could send an immediate telegram home because, because of the fog of war, when daddy was listed as missing in action, and that usually means they're dead, we just can't find the remains. Uh, it was months before we knew he was alive and where he was. Um, and he didn't know all that but he just figured it had, it wasn't easy at home either. And uh, he got to send a telegram immediately that uh, I have a scrapbook with all his stuff in it. And boy the telegrams are amazing reading. Um, and then they were uh [deloust] and shipped back to England. And uh, they hadn't had any experience dealing with starvation before. And God bless the Brits, they just wanted to do so much for these boys, and on rationing that they were, they just thought, that's okay we're going to treat them to a roast beef dinner and yorkshire pudding and gravy and all the trimmings. We just want these boys to get well so quickly so you know...and they all got so sick. They threw up for days. Their systems just could not handle it. And then, woops back to the thin consume and dry toast. You know. And uh, at the end of the war, the people who'd had the most difficult times were sent home first. And uh, that included prisoners of war and people who had been wounded and so on. So daddy got home. He was on one of the first ships. And uh, I think the trip home was quite a jolly affair. In that uh, they loaded the ships to capacity and your bunk, you could have it for eight hours, not necessarily at night for sleeping, because there were three guys sharing one bunk. So it was really packed quarters. But dad got home by middle of June, 1945. And uh, life became normal again. [nods]

[1:35:02.3]

TT: So, when some point your mother was told that your father was MIA...

SO: [nods] Yeah, we got the telegram immediately and I, young as I was I actually remember that day and where we were standing in the house and looking out the living room window and watching the um, telegraph boy walk up the front walk. Uh, just to back up a little bit, during the war years, uh, we used to listen to the BBC on the radio. We had the old radios; they're great big things you know. [measures about waist height up in the air] With a funny little eye that you try to focus and get it clear. And at noon time, every day of the week there was a war report out of London that we got in Timmins. I'm sure everybody else got it in Canada if we got it in Timmins. Joan and I would be home for lunch of course and we were ordered...don't you say a word. Because often they would report uh, troop maneuvers on this BBC. They would say, "Oh the first Canadian army is doing..." well that would be that. You know, and not necessarily the Algonquin Regiment. But you'd know what part of the army he was involved with. And mom would know a little bit of news there but news is not like today's world. [laughs] You know, instant messaging, uh it took sometimes weeks. Uh, although telegrams were good. Um, when dad was taken prisoner, within a day or two mum got the telegram that says "we regret to inform you that your husband has been listed as missing in action." And as I say, that usually means we just can't find the remains. And um, anecdotally, there were some good comments about friends of dad's who were fighting in the area at the time and they were pretty sure he had been taken prisoner. And you, you live on that for a while. And because of the box car rides and the shuffling around and the confusion it took ah, the red cross is supposed to be the one that finds you if, that, that job was very, very difficult. Um, actually it was uh, Major Stock, Major Bob Stock, a friend of dad's who made it his point— he was in the Algonquin Regiment, to try and find dad. Between him and um...a fellow who was a war correspondent for the Toronto Star. Was a good friend of dad's. And the two of them were super sleuths. And they found dad. [nods] In Oflag 79. And Bill [Kinmon] was the reporter's name and uh, thank God for them. And then uh, mum got a telegram saying that he had been found, and where he was located and at that point she started sending more parcels. And uh, the, the Germans would

take all the good stuff and maybe give the guys the socks. I mean wartime is hell...for everybody. Um, the prisoners were supposed to write a postcard home to say they were okay and I don't know that they ever actually got mailed. I mean, life was breaking down so badly. I've got copies of the postcards in his scrapbooks there...it's interesting. I've got pictures of uh; I don't know how he got them, his records from the prison camp. His, his prisoner of war with the number across his chest and his thumb print and somebody on the allied side must have gone into all those camps, scooped up all those records, shipped them to England, shipped them to Ottawa. I mean—and then shipped them out to all the individual guys, I don't know. But dad's scrap book is absolutely amazing reading. Talk about original documentation. And uh, he um, are you interested in this stuff?

TT: [unclear]

SO: Yeah. Uh, in 1953, that's a long time after, well, it was after the end of the Second World War...dad got a letter from the defense department and they said fill out this form, write down all the hardships you experienced while you were in enemy uh hands and sign it and send it back to us. And you'll get some reparation. And dad said, "Oh for heaven's sakes. Germany's been bombed back to the...stone age. They have no money and I'm a nobody and this is maybe just a ridiculous exercise." However, he wrote a couple of things down and signed it, sent it in, thinking he'd never hear from it again. A couple of weeks, maybe six weeks went by, eight weeks, that form, that he'd just written a few things on, was sent back to him. With a letter that said, "if you agree with all the information that is on this form, would you please re-sign it and send it back in?" Somebody had gone through all those records, and item by item, by item...all the different hardships that dad had experienced. And he couldn't believe it, he read it all over and he said, "It's accurate. Somebody did a lot of digging." He re-signed it and sent it back in. Now here's where my memory goes blank...isn't that lovely? I can picture mom and dad standing in the kitchen, opening a letter from the defense department. And there's a cheque in

there. I can't remember...and it doesn't matter. I just remember the startled look on their faces. How could they afford to pay me...a little tiny cog in the wheel that much money? Because there is no money in Germany. As I say, I can't remember how much it was. But dad took the money and he took Joan and I downtown and he opened up a bank account for each one of us with reparation money, split it in half. And I only learned about two years ago that it was the Americans. That paid for that. Isn't that interesting? To try and help create goodwill so that we could all move forward. And that along with the Marshal Plan you know. And uh...yeah, I hadn't known that. 'Cause dad wondered where uh, Germany couldn't pay that money. Anyway, that uh...I've got all those records. And it's uh fascinating reading.

[1:41:46.8]

TT: And what did your father do in camp during the day?

SO: Oh...

TT: Did he ever speak of about what was happening?

SO: Oh, I think it was pretty boring. Pretty cold. Pretty miserable. Uh, a lot of them were sick. Uh...um, there were, there was a fascinating group of people in that camp, the allied soldiers there; there were Canadians and Brits and East Indians. Uh, Muslims. Dad had never seen anybody pray to Mecca. That was you know, coming from Timmins...and uh, New Zealanders. And oh, they were from all over. And uh, they had role call every day. He said that was terrible because you had to go stand out in the square and wait until the last person came out 'till they could count everybody. And uh, he said that was really very difficult 'cause they were so thin, and they had so few clothing and it was a very brutal winter. Uh, dad kept a diary all the men were given a diary uh, and empty one and uh, boy that's amazing reading. Um...one of our

members of parliament that went to Ottawa from here, Jean Jacques Blais, he's from Sturgeon Falls. And his dad is in dad's uh, war records and they knew each other. It's a small, Northern Ontario is a small community in one way you know. Uh...they did have, my youngest daughter is uh, a real computer person and she went on the internet a couple of years ago and she typed in "Oflog 79" and you think, what's going to come up? [shrugs] What's going to come up?! Some New Zealander on April 12, 1945 had a camera that had film in it and he was upstairs and he took a picture as the Americans opened the gate of the camp. And that picture is on the internet. I mean, wow! After all these years you know. Um, and then there was a picture on the internet of one of our guys um, an allied soldier. Uh, with headphones, and he's, he's working with a two-way radio. You think, in the camp? How does that work? You don't go into battle with a, your two-way radio on your back. And again, it was the guards who smuggled in bits and pieces of the radio. And our guys assembled it. And they could pick up all the, you know BBC and they knew what was happening probably as well as the guards did. So they knew when victory was approaching, uh, so the guards played an interesting role. In good ways, and other ways [shrugs].

TT: And did your father or any of the other um, prisoners did they have to do any forced labour of any kind?

SO: No, according to the Geneva Convention uh, as I say every once and a while they observed it. No, um, that's the one thing that's different from Shindler's List. Um, supposedly you're not allowed to force an officer to work. Um, as I say it's a convention that was breached and kept in very unusual ways. But in that way, no they were not forced to work.

[1:45:16.4]

SO: As, granddad was forced to work. Yeah.

TT: And I guess because of you know, your father having you know, enlisted when you were very young, and uh you know him being gone for like five years of so...

SO: Hmm.

TT: Um, after the fact, did you, did you ever get a sense like even through your mother or maybe your older sister like had your father changed in any way uh, from before he left 'till the time he came back?

SO: Again, we were really lucky, he was changed physically you know, he...I think his fighting weight was about 150. Dad was a little guy. But to come home at 97 pounds was uh, really very dramatic. Um....no, he, he was, he was still dad...full of beans, high energy level. Super guy. He was so dearly loved in Timmins. Uh...[pause] on the day of dad's funeral— he died at 51 from complications from the prison camp, the Timmins police force took the morning off work and formed an honour guard down the main street. He just, was the neatest guy. And we're so lucky that it didn't change him mentally. Uh, he was able to talk about all the experiences, the good, the bad, and the ugly and he, he never rambled on if you didn't ask him, but if you asked you got a good answer. And he, he was one of the ones that was able to get it out and talk about it. And um, the one thing that effected mum and dad most profoundly, from the whole war experience and everything they'd both been through was that they had an idea that time was the most important commodity that they had. They didn't know how important it was going to be...it was precious short. And they had another child in 1948, my baby sister, Di. And uh, life was starting all over again in a way for them. And um, it, it ended really way too soon. They, dad developed a heart murmur and one of the valves on the heart was developing scar tissue and wouldn't close quite properly. So you'd get a swish backward when you shouldn't be getting one. And how did that happen? God knows and he won't tell. I mean the prison camp

kept lots of records but not medical records on prisoners. And it was decided at the end of the day, he probably developed a form of rheumatic fever where he would feel sick, like the flu or something but everyone was sick in the camp 'cause the conditions were so terrible. And rheumatic fever the great gift that it leaves you with is years later it can lay down scar tissue...on heart valves. And in 1961 they, daddy was the seventh person in Ontario to be operated on at the Western Hospital to have the valve replaced. And he was the oldest, at 51 he was considered the oldest person they'd worked on and he was the only one they worked on who had a completely mysterious medical background. And he lived a day and a half.

TT: Hmm.

SO: And he would survive today because they give injections of vitamin K and that kind of thing. But um, back in 1961, it um, to keep the body cool he was packed in a tub of ice for 12 hours. I mean we've come, I mean things have advanced so quickly. Um, I know people who've had that operation uh more recently and it's not a piece of cake but it's, it wasn't 1961. And uh, my little sister was 12. So it was uh, it was hard. [nods] Again, my mother soldiered on.

TT: Considering that you know your grandfather was interned in Canada. Your great-uncle was interned here, and then you know, your own father is serving for the Canadian Military and becomes a POW um, in Germany....you know what did your family make of all these various circumstances?

[1:50:12.1]

SO: They from what I can tell, they were not bitter. Which is really saying—that's quite a sentence to say. Um, events happen in the world and sometimes they overtake individuals as they sure did in our case um...my mum's deepest regret was when they got married, dad got

really ill. And with an undiagnosed, he had developed some fungus thing in the mine and I don't know if that's what it was, but he was in bed for a year. And in 1938 he was uh, in the militia, the home guard. He had been in it for years and uh, they gave him a health rating of D minus or something because he was so sick at the time. And, miracle of miracles, 1939 comes and we're into war and they reassess him and he's upright by now, he's out of bed, but I believe he was walking with crutches and uh, they gave him a double A rating. In his health records. And if there was bitterness it was there. That uh, he really shouldn't have been sent overseas. He wanted to go, I mean he was that...[pumps both fists] he was a very patriotic Canadian. Uh, and he got to go. Uh, mum really felt that uh, someone who had been so ill just so previous uh there should have been some wiggle room. But they needed him. It's that simple. And they needed all the men they could find. And uh, that's the only area. She, she also said "if your time ever comes don't let your husband ever go to war." She said, "Don't let him do it." And we've been so privileged, that we have never been faced with what they had to deal with. As I say, they knew their time was very, sh— was very precious and um, the legion is a big deal, you know the guys go and have a few beers and talk over the old battles and dad went once or twice when he got home and he said, "I haven't got time for this." And uh, a lot of the men in the legion and some of his buddies were quite critical of dad. He, "you never come down to the legion" and he said, "oh, for heaven's sakes I've got two growing children and another one on the way and I, this is precious stuff for me, I've got other things to do with my life." Well, there were some noses out of joint because he didn't go sit there and swill beer. And uh, dad helped out on, oh my goodness ask dad to help you out with something and he'd do it all for you. But he just couldn't spend his time there; he just knew family was the most important thing. And work, he worked for the construction company and he gave that his all. And uh, he just, they both knew that uh...I think most of the Prisoners of War came home with that attitude...time was the most precious thing you have. Uh, I've heard other stories of other prisoners uh, it really helps you straighten out your priorities. [nods]

TT: And did your grandfather ever, you know did he ever talk about his camp experiences to either your mother or your father, or...

SO: He may have, but I wouldn't have known about that. Um, granddad Leo for all his own personal problems um, was so supportive of dad and the Canadian military. Uh, there—I've just come recently into uh possession of some really beautiful letters. Um, written by Tony and Leo and my mum's brother, my uncle Danny. All written to dad in support of "good for you, keep it up Keith. We need you guys, you know..." and they would send [clears throat] they would send dad gifts, parcels, and cash. Uh, soldiers aren't paid a lot. And a little bit of extra money would be nice to have on leave you know. That kind of thing. And the thank you notes from dad back to Leo saying "thank you so much for that gift you sent me and it's really come in handy" and so, um, there were communications. Letters are still amazing things. Make it across the ocean and back, you know. They're lovely letters. Yeah.

TT: And...was Leo Mascioli ever given any kind of um uh, justification for—or explanation as to why he was interned?

[1:55:06.3]

SO: From my knowledge, I don't think so; I think his biggest crime was having an Italian last name. He was the most visible Italian male in Timmins. If you want to threaten a whole community, take the top guy. That works well. And it did. [nods] Norman says you just put your head down and you didn't look up for five years. And there's a lady here in North Bay, who when I mention this period, she drops her voice. Almost to a whisper. To this day. [nods] We have no concept of how powerful that was. Um, Leo had donated everything under the sun including to his family back in Italy. They could have accused him as they did of supporting Mussolini, and he said, "Well no I didn't. They were family cheques, look at the books." He

belonged to some fraternal organizations, the Count Cavours society. Uh, the picture we were talking about, walking down Main Street in Timmins with your banners and your fancy hats and it was a communal thing. To celebrate old Italy you know. And as fascism took over you could accuse the people that belonged to the Count Cavours Society of being fascist because you're celebrating the homeland. And in all fairness to the paranoia of the day, how do you sort the two out? It was hard. But if you want to make a big statement, catch a big name and put him behind bars. And that's very effective. And it did, it kept the Italian community very, very fearful. Having said that they took a gentleman who ran a little corner store and I believe they took a shoemaker and uh, now are they going to have all different political opinions, but uh...[pause] I, I think granddad's biggest crime was being so prominent. And who would have ever known that I have a newspaper that I think you've seen through Joan um, that special edition that was printed on Leo. And I read it and I'm just amazed at what coverage they gave him and that was 1939. What difference a year makes. And um, the paranoia was so extreme and we've lived it with the twin towers coming down in New York City. Some things don't change. [nods] Difficult stuff.

TT: And you have a carving...

SO: I do, yes.

TT: So what can you tell us about this carving?

SO: This is the most amazing thing that just came into my world in May when I was up visiting my cousin Norman in Timmins. Norman is the son of my great uncle Tony who was imprisoned along with my granddad. There's a name written on here and it's in such small print that the camera won't pick it up. It says "L. Mascioli" and it's not granddad's handwriting. I suspect it's my aunt's handwriting. Um, this fork was given to me by Norman and Elena; they had several

forks and spoons that were carved by Leo and Tony in the camp. I didn't know these things existed 'till May. And it has the strangest hold over me. Um, this is so divorced from the man that I knew and yet it isn't. If you line it up [says while looking down the straight shaft of the long wooden fork with one eye.] its dead eye straight. [laughs] And he, obviously they had a lot of time in their prison camp to, to do these carvings. And it's just, to be able to touch something that came from his hands, at such a difficult time in his life but he didn't let it beat him down. He uh, he was the eternal optimist. And I am so privileged to have this remarkable World War Two piece of memorabilia that is from granddad. Uh...we're so lucky; there was a spoon and a fork for each one of the girls...my sisters. And I show it to everybody I know. [laughs] It's amazing piece. Just an amazing piece. And knowing whose hands it came from. It's very touching. [nods]

[2:00:14.5]

TT: So uh, I pretty much asked you all the questions um, that I have prepared I can think of so if there's anything that maybe we haven't touched on during this interview that you might want to speak about...

SO: Oh gee, we've covered a lot of territory. Uh...[pause] no I can't think of anything. Uh...[pause] the story really is about granddad. Um, just an amazing man. Uh, I consider myself just so blessed. To have had such loving parents who were so sensible and uh guided us into adulthood and I didn't know it at the time, I lost them both so young. But they gave me all the building blocks that I needed. Turns out they were Mascioli building blocks. [says with a thumbs up and laughs] And uh, we the family took some hard hits. But they were all very resilient people who were to me, eternal optimists and said there's always going to be a better day tomorrow. And they helped make it happen.

TT: Well, thank you very much for your time.

SO: Well thank you, thank you so much for coming.

[camera fades out at 2:01:49.2]

[camera fades back in to a photo of a father with three children in dress clothes]

SO: That's granddad Leo and his family.

KC: Nice outfits.

SO: The little girl is mum. She looks like a little wife. [says with a laugh] And the little guy is my uncle Ton— my uncle Danny. And the taller girl is my aunt Mary whom I never knew cause she died at uh 19. And this is a similar grouping, [shows a photo with three adult figures and little girl] no uncle Danny but, uncle Tony. [points to tall man on left]

KC: Hmm.

SO: And do you have these? I can't remember and that is uh, the picture of Leo that hung in all the hotels and that kind of stuff—

TT: Hmm.

SO: Uh, they cleaned him up every once in a while.

TT: Yeah, we might, we might have like the copies, like the print outs that I got while I was at Norman's of the family portraits but uh...

SO: Right, I love that picture. Doesn't that look like Mark's Work Warehouse? [shows Leo Mascioli in a uniform type outfit with a hat under his left arm.] I just love it. That's that's him. Hat under his arm, ready to go.

TT: How old would he have been in that picture there with the uh, the hat?

SO: Oh geeze...

TT: Any idea?

SO: Hmm, it would be in the 20s or the 30s. I, and that's just a copy [flips the photo] uh this is, this is the picture that was taken in North Bay at the cottage when he took off his spats, shoes, and socks, rolled up his pants and the long underwear was underneath. [shows photo of smiling man with tree behind him] That's the most relaxed I have ever seen him. [close up shot of smile]

TT: Hmm.

SO: And that's just my most favourite picture of Cocullo. My husband took that. [shows photo of town in the hills with blue and green colours in the background] And....Travis you've got all those things...

TT: Yup.

SO: You sent me that from the newspaper. I was mentioning the uh...you can take all this stuff but I think they have it all you know. [says as folding out a copy of a newspaper]

TT: Yeah, we have, we have the uh...

SO: You have—

TT: The Timmins uh Press excerpt there.

SO: Yeah. [shows close up of the Timmins Daily Press copy] Uh, what a monumental thing. And then a year later he's all locked up.

TT: Hmm.

SO: Uh...I'm in here. [says with a whisper] Here's my claim to fame. [turns pages of newspaper] There's my sister and I.

KC: Hmm. Cute. [zooms in on shot of two young girls]

SO: She looks really annoyed. She's holding my hand to keep me quiet. [laughs] Uh dear, anyway the, the centre has one of these so I can give it to you, but you do have one. Right?

TT: Well you know, I know we have the first— the third section, but I don't think we have the fourth.

SO: Well why don't, why don't I give you both.

TT: Are you sure, do you have copies of these?

SO: I have copies.

TT: Okay. Yeah, sure then that would be great, thank you.

SO: And I'd like you to take that cause I don't know that you have that one.

[touches the photo of Leo Mascioli at the cottage with the tree behind him]

TT: Okay.

SO: And um...

TT: I don't think we have that one either. [points to photo with hat under his arm]

SO: Okay, take it.

TT: Okay.

SO: Take whatever, take...these are for you [waves hand over all the images] if you want them.

TT: Okay, well maybe to be on the safe side, we'll take all of them if that's okay.

SO: Oh sure, please do. Uh hmm. [pushes all the photos of the side near TT]

[2:05:10.1]

SO: Yeah. Oh, you're taking pictures, I'm sorry and I'm moving them around.

KC: Oh no, that's fine.

[camera fades out at 2:05:20.5]

KC: So this is your mother's?

SO: Uh hmm. [shows a certificate of Canadian citizenship for Loretta Elda Stirling, and then image is flipped and scans over written document on the reverse side.]

[camera fades out at 2:05:45.4]

SO: ...[Travis] in Timmins. [shows image of men marking with flags in black and white]

KC: Okay.

SO: And this is um, of particular interest, it's the Cavour Society doing their march up and down the main street in Timmins. And the centre would prefer better quality than just a photocopy and as far as I know, the copy— the original that we know of is somewhere in Kitchener, Waterloo. And my sister might be able to track the guy down.

KC: Okay, great.

[fades out at 2:06:21.4]

SO: When you signed up and became a member you got a fancy name tag, you know?

KC: Hmm.

SO: And I think all this stuff is now on display in the Dante club in Timmins. [shows images of red, white, and green badges]

KC: Alright.

SO: And there's, there's a picture up close with a picture of the person who is named.

KC: Hmm.

SO: [shows image of membership badge that says "C. Cavour...Timmins Ont."]

TT: Oops, I spelled colour wrong. Yikes. That's embarrassing.

SO: [shows printed image of a red flag with union jack in the corner] Now, some of these flags...that looks quite British doesn't it? Um...[shows image of Italian flag with imprint "C. Cavour di [unclear] Timmins, Ont."]

TT: Cocullo its C-O?

SO: C-o-c-u-l-l-o. Yeah.

TT: Gotcha.

SO: [Shows additional images of flags. Sound of dog drinking in background] Now this one, as far as I know, is taken in Cucullo, 'cause that doesn't look like Timmins to me. Um...And am I related to anybody there? Um...I think I never knew Attilio, the oldest one [dog barks] he came over and then went back. I think that might be him. But I'm not sure.

KC: Hmm.

SO: There's no one really close to me that I know of in that picture. [dog cries in the background]

TT: [quietly laughs]

SO: And when my sister Joan was over visiting my cousin who, she's 80 and she still lives in Cocullo, Joan showed this picture to [Enya] and [Enya] got really angry. And she said, "oh Fascista." Uh because there were wearing the dark shirts.

TT: Right, right. Is there anybody in there that you know, or—

SO: No.

TT: Or would be of relation of some sort?

SO: Well, see I didn't know the oldest brother, Attilio [dog continues to cry] he did come over, but then he went back and I never knew him and this guy looks suspicious, like, like he belongs in the family...

TT: Yeah. That's what I was wondering too.

SO: But I don't know that.

TT: Uh hmm.

SO: But that's why there's a little x there. And because I never knew the man, I, look at the hat.

TT: They even have the priest on board.

SO: Oh yeah.

[2:09:08.9]