

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

**DATE OF INTERVIEW:** April 14, 2011

**LOCATION OF INTERVIEW:** Waterloo, ON

**NAME OF INTERVIEWEE:** Joan McKinnon

**NAME OF INTERVIEWER:** Louanne Aspillaga

**NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER:** Stefanie Petrilli

**TRANSCRIBED BY:** Krystle Copeland

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Joan McKinnon was born on December 17, 1934 in Timmins, ON. Joan has two sisters named Sandra and Diane. The daughter of Loretta and Keith Sterling, her full birth name was Joan Mary Sterling. Loretta's parents, Rafaela and Leopoldo (Leo) Mascioli, came from Cocullo, Italy to Canada in 1912. Joan's grandmother, Rafaela, died approximately a year after arriving in Timmins with her husband. Joan's grandfather, Leo was a prominent figure in the construction of Timmins through his company, Mascioli Construction. Prior to his role in the City of Timmins, Leo worked in the coalmines of Nova Scotia, the silver mines in Cobalt, and the mining camps of what became Timmins. Leo was a pioneer in the area, however he was interned as an enemy alien on June 10, 1940, after being arrested and taken to Toronto. Leo's brother, Antonio (Tony) Mascioli, was also interned after his arrest. Joan recounts growing up in Timmins, as well as her family life, and the events surrounding the arrest and release of her grandfather. Joan states that while interned, her grandfather and his friend and fellow internee James Franceschini were making business plans together. Joan also speaks of her mother's experience of having her husband, Keith Sterling serving with the Canadian Services overseas while her father was interned as an enemy alien.

**INTERVIEW**

**JM: Joan McKinnon, interviewee**

**LA: Louanne Aspillaga, interviewer**

**SP: Stefanie Petrilli, videographer**

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 00:00:09]

LA: My name is Louanne Aspillaga, Project Assistant for the project Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens, Memories of World War Two, interviewing Joan McKinnon in Waterloo, Ontario. Today is April 14, 2011. Okay, so, please state your full birth name.

[Camera zooms in]

JM: My full birth name, Joan Mary Stirling, and that's spelled with an "i", the Scottish way. [Says with a smile]

LA: When were you born and where?

JM: I was born December 17, 1934 in Timmins, Ontario.

LA: Can you tell me about, uh, your family...your parents, your siblings?

JM: Yes, uh, my mother, um...Loretta Elda Stirling, was Loretta Elda Mascioli. And her parents, uh, were, um, Rafaela and Leopoldo Mascioli. My dad, Keith Stirling, actually Keith Alexander

Stirling, and his parents were, um, Mary Baker Stirling and, um, Alexander Stirling. Uh, let me see... [Looks up in thought and then shrugs with hands out]

LA: Your siblings?

JM: My siblings...I have two other sisters. I'm the oldest of three girls. One is Sandra O'Grady now. And the other is Diane La France, both living in North Bay. [Smiles]

LA: Um, what do you remember about your childhood?

JM: [Inhales] Uh, in what way? I'm just wondering do you want me to point into a certain section or something? [Smiles]

LA: Um, anything that you can remember about growing up, and how family life was. How was it living in Timmins?

JM: Uh, I felt—in hindsight, I can say I felt very fortunate to live in Timmins and be brought up in Timmins. Both my sisters have discussed this on many occasions. And the reason I say this is that, frankly, everybody in Timmins was either—uh, we had a term—straight off the boat or a child of someone straight off the boat. And, uh, it was a true melting pot. [Nods] And I know in Canada we have the B & B, you know, the bilingual, uh, uh, bicultural. We had it in Timmins, uh, before Mr. [Pierre Elliott] Trudeau decided that it was important to do. Uh, we had, uh, a large French contingent and we had a very large Italian contingent. Many of them coming, uh, frankly, from the village of Cocullo, where, uh, my mother came as a child of, uh, three—actually, I think she was probably between the age of two and three. And, um, where, uh, my grandfather, Leo Mascioli was born, and, uh, and he left, uh, from there, for Canada, when he was, um, between nine and 10 years old—actually for the United States first, entered through

Boston. Uh, what else can I tell you? It was a mining town, uh, it's a, a town of, uh, frankly, um, um, granite rock and pine trees, and navy blue water [laughs], eh, and not much else around it, uh, but bush for miles, and miles, and miles. And in those days there was no fancy airport, uh, and the road to, uh, Toronto would have took you 12 hours to drive it. And, uh, the train also took 12 hours to go from Timmins to Toronto. Uh, the, um—it was basically a safe town. Uh, it was pretty basic. We had, uh, a lot of miners, and they worked shifts, so there's people out day and night on the streets. Uh, there were some rough edges to the town, there's no doubt about it. Uh, when my parents lived on Second Avenue in a small house that was right on the street, uh, there was what we called a "blind pig" right next door. And that was a, um, uh, a bootlegger. All you had to do is lean out the window and knock on the window and you could have a bottle of whiskey passed over. A very casual lifestyle. Uh, uh, uh, later on my parents moved to another home. Uh, there was no "blind pig" next door, but, uh, it was a lovely home. A lot of the Italian people at that time lived, um, somewhat together, in an area of the town that was, uh, named the Moneta, and, uh, we always re-referred to the Moneta area as sort of the Italian area.

[00:04:54]

JM: I, uh, went, uh, to school, uh, a, um, a separate school, two room schoolhouse. Uh, nuns were our teachers. And, uh, well, it's about a four or five block walk to it. And then later on to the grade seven and eight, the local public school, and then to the one high school that we had, Timmins High and Vocational School. Uh, that school was fantastic. We had one school with everybody from 'round the world. I can remember once a teacher—we had about 40 kids in the classroom—going through the classroom and saying, "How many countries are represented here?" And there were 26. Uh, just a, a huge, uh, diversity of people, and, uh, there was very little of what I would call, class...uh, separation. Uh, you, you had your more educated group of people, of course, the doctors, the lawyers, the mine managers were very important people,

uh, and, uh, some, uh, strong business people, uh, but everybody, uh, mixed together without, um, uh, what I would call, strong class distinctions. Uh, now that didn't prevent some good snowball fights between the French school and the English school across the street. And, uh, some rather interesting name calling, but, uh, it, it was in fun, it wasn't in malicious, in a malicious way. So those are some memories. I mean we—the winters were long. There was an outdoor skating rink, from my house there were about four that I could walk to and they were just all over the town and, uh, a little ski hill outside. And, um, and the great Mattagami River where we would swim, uh, and there, uh—and you could boat on the Mattagami River. There was also Gillies Lake, which unfortunately had been sort of half filled in by the mine slimes; the slimes were, um, the tailings left over from the productions. And I think nowadays probably nobody would swim there, but, um, in those days it was a little milky, but we swam there [laughs and smiles] and, uh, nobody worried about it. [Chuckles] Uh, we were very fortunate, um, in Schumacher to have built by the McIntyre Arena, the, uh—by McIntyre Mines, excuse me, a wonderful recreation complex called the McIntyre Arena and it was the only place in Ontario at that time that had ice during the summer. And the famous Olympic skaters of that time would come up and practice, uh, their skating, and it was just great entertainment to go and watch these exceptional skaters.

LA: Mm hmm.

JM: Also Timmins produced a lot of hockey players, and, uh, and, uh, the McIntyre Arena and those outdoor rinks certainly contributed to it.

LA: Well it sounds like you have a lot of fond memories of Timmins and your childhood there.

JM: [Nods] Absolutely.

LA: Uh, I'd like to go a little bit back to when you mentioned your, your mother, uh, Loretta, came to Canada with her parents.

JM: Yes.

LA: Um, when was that about? What year?

JM: Uh, she was born in 1910. And it was, I believe, later in 1912.

LA: Okay.

JM: Uh, her mother died [LA clears throat in background], um, um, about a year and half after they came to, uh, Timmins. Uh, in fact granddad Leo sent her back to Cocullo, thinking that the mountain air of Cocullo would help improve her health. She had TB [tuberculosis] at that time and, uh, she just wasn't going to survive. [Shakes head] And she had, uh, Danny and Danny was one when she died. And there's only about two years difference between Danny and mum, so, uh [gestures with fingers]...the timing in there is, uh, a bit off, but, uh, mother was three or four when, uh, her mother died.

LA: Okay so, Loretta and her father, Leo Mas-Mascioli—

JM: Mascioli. [Nods]

LA: —and her mother, uh, moved to Canada in 1912.

JM: Uh, along with her older sister, Maria.

LA: Okay, and, uh, ha—did your mom say anything about her experience, uh, moving to Canada?

JM: Uh, she was very young and, uh, she really, uh, didn't say very much. No. Um, other than, um...uh...they certainly weren't very rich and, uh, they lived, they lived the life of immigrants. Granddad at that time was working in the, uh, mines. I, uh—at that time I don't believe he had struck out into the construction company business. Uh, he, um, he-he'd had many experiences in the North with mines, um, prior to that in Cobalt with the silver mines. And as for mum, um, her early childhood was not what you would call a, um, very family oriented. Uh, granddad could not, um—I don't know what the situation was about getting a nanny and I guess you didn't get nannies in those days in Timmins. So he sent all his children, at very young ages, uh, the two girls to a convent in Montreal, and they literally lived there as very young children, uh, with the Sisters of Sacred Heart. And the young son, Dan—Daniel—went to, uh, Loyola. And they were literally brought up by the Sisters and, and the Jesuits, uh, except in the summer time, um, and I'm not sure who looked after them in the summertime. But I know that, uh, Dan spoke French and Italian before he ever spoke English because, uh, of his experiences at Loyola...as a very young child.

[00:11:04]

LA: So when, uh, Loretta, Marie, and her parents...and Daniel were living in Timmins, uh, did they live in their own house when they first arrived, or did they live with other family members that came to Canada prior to?

JM: No, these—uh, no, they had to, um—they rented a house first. And they had to, um...they didn't have relatives that came prior. Granddad was the first one from Cocullo to come to the North. And he was the one actually who brought out a lot of his relatives and friends from

Cocullo...and sponsored them. And in those days sponsoring isn't what it is today. Today you seem to bring them out and stick them right on [rolls eyes and waves hand] welfare, or, or on, uh, OHIP [Ontario Health Insurance Plan] and so on. In those days you had to guarantee that you would find them a job, you'd find people a place to live, and for a year you made sure that they had food, and all the basic necessities of life. And that was the responsibility of the sponsor. So it was a pretty heavy load...to, to do when you brought f-family members out. And of course in those days you all—any money you made, extra, you sent home to the family anyway. [Nods]

LA: Mm hmm.

JM: Mm hmm.

LA: So, um, your grandfather Leo stayed in touch with family and friends—

JM: Very much so. [Nods]

LA: —'cause as you stated, he sponsored a lot of them.

JM: [Nods and says softly] Yeah.

LA: Did a lot of them come to Timmins or did they move elsewhere?

JM: Uh, a lot of them came to Timmins and North Bay. Um, North Bay, almost like little Cocullo in places. Uh, granddad was eventually hired by the mines as a recruiter. And, uh, they needed people to work in the mines. The mines were going very, very quickly, and, uh, Italians made very, very good workers. They, um, didn't mind working hard and working at tough jobs. And,



uh, and granddad was paid to help sponsor these people and see that they get settled and worked in the mines.

LA: Okay. Um...you, you mentioned your school experience, the Timmins High being very multicultural, um, but what about your elementary school? Did you find it was a mix of, uh, non-Italians and Italians? Or—

JM: Oh, yes, a total mix. [Nods] Yes.

LA: Okay.

JM: Absolutely.

LA: And, uh, what age did you begin to work? Uh, during—

JM: My— [Smiles]

LA: —high school? After high school?

JM: No, well my fist job was, uh, at 16 working at the construction company weighing the trucks. [Chuckles] And, and doing the paychecks. That was my fist job—uh, summer, yup.

LA: Was it a lot of manual labour or more paperwork?

JM: Oh, it was paperwork. [Nods]

LA: Okay. And—

JM: The, the trucks just went on a scale and you weighed them, you know. [Gestures with hand and nods]

LA: Okay. And apart from that, uh, construction job was there any other jobs you did?

JM: Um, I actually, uh, I was fortunate as a younger child to go to camp for a couple summers and then I ended up working at various camps also during the summer.

LA: Okay.

JM: And that included, well [looks up in thought]...into university. Yes.

LA: So living in Timmins, where you were born and grew up, uh, did you live in the neighbourhood which you mentioned, uh, Mineta—Moneta—

JM: Moneta. Uh, when we were very young, yes, uh, we lived on the edge of the Moneta. And then, uh, when I was, um, around three [says “three” slowly] my sister, uh, Sandra had been born and we moved into, frankly, a lovely home that granddad had built for his daughter and son-in-law. And at that time my dad was very ill from, um, a fungus disease he got in the mines, and, uh, wasn’t able to work for a while, and, uh, until he, he, healed. And, uh, I can remember that when we moved into the new house. And, uh, it was a lovely house, but it was not in the Moneta area. [Nods]

[00:15:15]

LA: Can you tell me a little bit more about the Moneta neighbourhood?

JM: Uh, the um [makes smacking sound with tongue], uh, there, uh, eventually, uh, there was a, uh, Sacred Heart Church built there. And it had a, uh, an Italian-speaking, uh, priest the-there to serve the area. Uh, there were, um, uh, Catholic schools in the Moneta area that helped, uh, uh, serve that population. Although, uh, they didn't teach in Italian, they taught in English, so that the, uh, young people could learn English. And many of them, the parents, the—especially the mothers, they stayed at home, they had trouble learning English. Uh, fathers learned it just by working. And the children were often the translators for the mothers. And, um, the, uh, there were a lot of little, um, corner stores, like, uh, little, uh, cheese and meat and, and variety stores. Uh, uh, it was a very colourful area.

LA: What about, uh, your neighbours and your street? Can you tell me a little bit about that?

JM: Um...uh, when we, uh—I don't have a lot of memory—well I have only a little memory of, um [makes smacking sound with lips]...w-w—uh, of our first house. And it was a side of a duplex. And it was built right on the street. And, uh, it was, um, a bit of a rough neighbourhood. And I know mum and dad had created a big fence around the backyard and sort of made the backyard like a little outdoor room, uh, for our home. And, um, uh, they, they owned the house, but they rented the other—outsi—the other side, uh, for revenue. And, uh, it, um, uh, it was close to the train station at that time and as I say there was a, a “blind pig” next door, uh, just to add character. And, um, and then our next home, uh, was, um, in, uh, an entirely different part of town, but it was perched on a lo—uh, on a hill, so it was quite a view from that, uh, home. And, uh, the, um, neighbours were again all mixed. Uh, there were—uh, they weren't necessarily Italian, they were of, uh—it was a totally mixed neighbourhood.

LA: And the second house was in what part of town, you said it was not in the Moneta area?

JM: Uh, it wasn't in any part of town that had a name. You know, I can't, um... [holds hands out with palms up palms] give it a name. [Shakes head]

LA: Okay. Um, so let's talk about the social activities that you were involved in.

JM: Uh, well, um, Timmins afforded quite a bit. As I say, uh, th—there was a lot of outdoor—winters are long, so either join the winter or you fought it. And, uh, uh, the, the easiest thing was to ski. And I know my mother and dad always—they used to skijor behind a horse. Uh, you— you'd, um, hitch up a horse and you'd ski—um, he would pull you around, so that was called skijoring. [Smiles] The, um, uh, most people skated and skied or curled. There was a lot of curling. Um, Schumacher had a, uh, a badminton club and a lot of people played badminton. In the summer the Italian community in particular, had a several bocce course, course—courts set out. [Makes gesture with hands] And—oh, lawn bowling. [Makes hand gesture] Uh, [makes smacking noise with lips] the, um—eventually, uh, a, a couple of Italian clubs were established. Uh, one was called the Dante Club. Uh, they, uh—where often, um, Sunday afternoon the Italian men seemed to like to gather for a drink and some cards and lots of chit chat. And, uh, the clubs came—became social centres. Uh, what else? Uh, there was, um...skating at the McIntyre Arena, uh, hockey games to attend...out, but a lot of the entertainment was, uh, made by yourself and your friends. You really went to dinners and parties, from house to house, to friend to friend. Um, there wasn't, uh...a lot—I mean, you could go to the movie theatre, but there wasn't much else to, um—I mean there was no orchestras and, and, uh, art galleries, and those sorts of things. So, uh, people made their own, they made their own fun. Uh, there was, uh, a dance hall called the Pav, the Pavilion, and that was, uh, very popular. So it was, um...you, you—yes, you entertained yourselves. [Nods and smiles]

[00:20:07]

LA: Were you part of any of the community organizations or any of the clubs?

JM: Yes, there were clubs and my dad did belong to the Lion's Club. And I think granddad did too. [Long pause] That's the only one I can think of right now.

LA: Okay. Did you and your family attend church?

JM: Yes. [Nods]

LA: Okay.

JM: Yes, Roman Catholic Church.

LA: And it was the church with the Italian-speaking priest? Or...

JM: Uh, no. Uh, we were further away from the Moneta, so the nearest church was, um, I would say, Irish Catholic, if you—if we can use that expression. The Church of the Nativity.

LA: Okay.

JM: It was right around the corner from the Cathedral, and the Cathedral was the French church. [Smiles and laughs]

LA: Okay. So we're gonna be talking more, a little about, about your family. [Says with emphasis on "your"] So, uh, when did you marry?

JM: Uh, I married in, uh, I've got to think about this, uh, 1962.

LA: Okay. And your husband, uh, husband's name?

JM: Is William Wayne McKinnon. We just call—he goes by his first name, Wayne. Wayne McKinnon. [Smiles]

LA: And how, uh, how did you meet him?

JM: Blind date. [Laughs]

LA: [Laughs]

JM: Organized by a friend. [Smiles and laughs]

[Cross-dissolve between clips 00:21:26]

LA: —did you meet your husband, William Wayne McKinnon?

JM: Uh, when did I meet him? Uh, let me think, um...um, I met him in 1960. Uh, uh, best that I can remember. And Wayne had, um, received his engineering degree in, uh, Saskatchewan, and had moved out, as they say, East, to Toronto to work. And, um, and that's when a friend, uh, organized this blind date for us. The, the blind date was organized I guess [looks up to ceiling in thought], was it late '60 or early '61? [Nods]

LA: So you met him in Toronto?

JM: Yes. [Nods]

LA: So what were you doing in Toronto—

JM: At that time I was teaching high school and, uh, Wayne was working for Lincoln Electric as an engineer, and it's a welding firm. And then, um, [clears throat] he signed up to go to law school, Osgoode Law School. [Coughs] And, uh, we continued and got married while he was in law school. [Nods]

LA: Did you have any children?

JM: Uh, yes. [Clears throat] I had, uh, two before, uh, he graduated. [Nods]

LA: [Long pause] So you left Timmins in what year?

JM: Uh, I beg your pardon?

LA: You left Timmins in what year?

JM: I-I-I left him? [Says with a bit of confusion]

LA: Timmins.

JM: Oh, I left Timmins. Well, um, let me see. Uh, I went to university in 1954. And so I guess I partially left Timmins at that point. And I graduated from university in '59 and my, um, teaching in, um—excuse me, university in '58 and my, uh, teaching in '59. So really, from '59 on I lived in Toronto permanently. [Nods]

LA: And so were your parents and your grandparents still living in Timmins? Or were you the only one who left?

JM: Uh, my, um—oh let me see, my mum and dad, uh...were living in Timmins. And, uh, uh, granddad Leo had died at—by that time. And, um, um, my grandfather Stirling actually died in my first year university. So there was no one left. [Makes gesture with hands to indicate nothing left] And my grandmothers both died in their early 30s. [Makes gesture with hands] So, uh, the longevity of, uh, the ladies on our side isn't very good. But, um, uh—then, um—yes, 'cause granddad died—Leo died in '51 and granddad Alex Stirling died in, uh...let me think. Fifty-five. January of '55.

LA: Okay. Um, can you recall if your grandfather or your father or your great uncle were involved in any political organizations? In Timmins?

JM: I'm...do you know I'm not sure about that. [Looks up] Um, I, uh...know that my parents helped, always helped in the election of a friend. But they ran around and just delivered pamphlets. And, um, the, uh—my grandfather—uh, no, uh, my great-uncle Tony, I believe was involved, um, in an organ—an organization that, um...[smacks lips] eventually, uh, started to have some fascist overtones. Um, unfortunately. At the time it wasn't seen that way, but it was seen later, when [Benito] Mussolini, uh, declared war, to not be seen as, um...uh, very Canadian. Which is unfortunate because both Leo and his brother, uh, Tony thought they were true Canadian citizens and they were, you know—well actually they were British subjects at that time; you didn't have a Canadian passport.

[00:25:38]

LA: Um, can you state your great-uncle Tony's, uh, full name?



JM: Um, I don't know his middle name. I—um, Antonio Mascioli.

LA: And he moved to Canada when?

JM: After Leo. Uh, a few years after Leo. And, um, I don't have that exactly. Um, I believe he came in through Ellis Island 'cause I have, um, a niece who's been doing some research on that.

[Cross-dissolve between clips 00:26:07]

LA: When did your great-uncle Tony Mascioli immigrate to Canada?

JM: Do you know I'm not completely sure, but I believe that he came out when, um, Leo, uh, started working in Northern Ontario.

LA: Okay. And you mentioned that your great-uncle Tony was in an organization that may have had fascist undertones later on. What was the name—

JM: What—

LA: —of that organization?

JM: Um [long pause], I would say that, um—uh, you know what, I'm not sure.

LA: Okay.

JM: Not sure. [Nods]

LA: Was it was like more a fraternal club or...

JM: [Holds hands out in front] It, it—frankly, that’s exactly what it was. It was, uh, a group of guys getting together to enjoy each other’s company.

LA: And...tell me about any resistance to fascism in your neighbourhood or town of Timmins.

JM: Uh...I would say there wasn’t any strong opposition to it until, um, 1940, um, June 10, when Mussolini declared war against Britain, and the colonies of course, and that’s what we were at that time. Uh, and then these, uh, fraternal organizations and even the clubs that they had set up, uh, became—uh, pe—uh, people became suspicious. Eh, and more than that it was fear. It was fear of the enemy. [Gestures with hands out] And a lot of people believed in the propaganda that [Adolf] Hitler had a fifth column and the fifth column consisted of all of the, um, immigrants who had come to this country, who were from Germany, from Japan, and from Italy. And, um...many saw them as potential subversive enemies. And, and that’s sad because I would say, um, I can’t imagine that almost 100 percent weren’t just Italian—uh, excuse me, Italian-Canadians, German-Canadians, and, uh, Japanese-Canadians. And to give you an example, this turn—town, Kitchener, is very, very German oriented. So German oriented that during the First World War they changed the name of Kitchener from Berlin to Kitchener. That’s how, how, um [holds hands up and out in front]...uh...tough people felt against, uh, the immigrants who came from the country that they’re at war. So a lot of tension was set up in the community...uh, sadly, sadly. Uh, the, um, the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police], uh, under the War Measures Act, um, had no problems going into the Italian homes, anytime they sought—wished to, to—uh, as they didn’t need warrants. Um, there were, um, some thugs who, uh, had no problem beating up the Italians, as they were an enemy. Sadly, uh, some of those, um...young toughs, uh, were—belonged to the Algonquin Regiment, which was the, um, Canadian Regiment from Northern Ontario that actually fought very valiantly in the Second

World War, in just some really tough, tough, uh, battles. Uh, and my father, uh, Captain Stirling at that time, was a recruiter for the Algonquin Regiment. So we had this strange set up in our family where my mother ha-had her father being vilified as an Italian, albeit a very successful business person at that time. And hiring many, many people that worked for him. And then she had her husband as a recruiter for the Algonquin Regiment and then some of the young men, uh, took it upon themselves to go and beat up some of the Italians. Uh, uh, [shakes head] just, uh, a, a strange, um, dichotomy of ca-carryings on.

[00:30:40]

LA: But before the Second World War, how were the Italians getting along with the non-Italians?

JM: Absolutely fine. And I think that shows in that book that I pointed out to you that the, um, the Italians really, uh, were some of the original workers in the mines. Helped get those mines going. And when a lot of the Scots, uh, people settled in the area—well, Scots and everything else—um, no problem. And, um, and that book points out that the mine manager appealed them, “You’ve been working together as friends for years. [Says with arms held out] What’s going on here?” And, and what was going on was unfortunately the declaration of war. And all of a sudden your friend [gestures to her left with hand] that you’ve been working at is the enemy. [Gestures to her left with hand] And, uh, and it was promoted a lot by the fear...uh, of, uh, of, uh, Hitler’s third—fifth column. [Clears throat] The Italians themselves, they just did everything to fade into the woodwork. [Gestures with hands] They just keep their heads down; they said, “Don’t make any waves. Uh, just, uh, just don’t do anything to upset anybody in the community.” And they just kept their heads down. The term was: “Keep your head down.” And they did. [Says while nodding] And, uh, many went out as far as they could to show that they were good Canadians. Um, they, uh—you can check, they—as the book also points out that

they bought, uh, Canadian War Bonds to show that they were on the Canadian side. There was in some of the literature I've given you, a huge meeting held at the Goldfields Hotel, uh, over 500 people came to it, many of them were Italians, to try and express their, uh, faithfulness to Canada. Uh, one of the speakers at that, um, meeting and one of the organizers was my uncle Dan, my mother's brother. To try and show that people like Leo and Tony were not the enemy, that they were good citizens, and that, uh, at the time of their pick-up, when they were picked up off the streets by the...RCMP, and, uh—they were taken to Toronto first. Uh, they were held at the, uh, Horse Palace area there in, in Toronto before they were taken to Petawawa. Uh, and, and when they were first picked up...they just disappeared. We didn't know what, what had happened to them. And, uh, there was a short period of time in which the family had no idea where, um, Tony and Leo were. And, uh, there was a period of time that we couldn't even communicate with them. Uh, and, uh...when that all settled down, uh, um, the family, uh, hired a very good lawyer from Toronto, his name was [Everett] Bristol and there was a, uh, a law firm Bristol-something-and-something at that time. Uh, I remember I was a young child and I just heard the chatter of the, of the adults, you know, talking about this. And, uh, um, eventually, there were about 600 I believe, Italians [crow sound in background] incarcerated in the Petawawa area and I don't think one was finally ever, um, found guilty of treason or subversion. Uh, there was good company in that camp. There was, uh, Mayor Camillien Houde from Montreal. Uh, there was, uh, the, uh, famous contractor from Toronto, [James] Franceschini. Franceschini and my grandfather were good buddies. In fact, they were in there planning to buy the, uh, old, uh, Kind Edward Hotel in Toronto [says while laughing] while they were in the camp. So they were busy, uh, promoting business even in there. Um, uh, granddad, uh, did go to trial and was completely exonerated. [Nods] But, you know...for those who believe that where there was smoke there was fire...he, uh, was never comfortable living in Timmins again. He, uh, I know, had some experiences that he'd be walking down the street and [sound of crow in background]...prominent businesspeople that he knew would cross the street in order to not have to talk to him. So there was this...sort of almost and exiling, by certain people [says with

emphasis on “certain people”), not all. I mean obviously there were people—uh, our, our...local MP [Member of Parliament] went to bat for him. People like Roy Thomson, who became Roy Thomson of Fleet, when to bat for him. [Gestures with hands] Uh, the, uh, city clerk went to bat for him. These were prominent people who believed. But, uh, when in war, there’s such fear.

[00:35:50]

JM: And, uh, it’s interesting, granddad never lived fully ever again in Timmins. He had a home there on Third Avenue. And, um, he, uh, lived sort of with a manservant who prepared his meals and so on, uh, because he had, uh, no close family, uh, living with him. And from then on he lived a bit like a gypsy. Like he was working in North Bay, well he’d live in a room in the hotel in North Bay. And, uh, he would, uh, live at a room in a hotel in Huntsville. Uh, so although Timmins was really his home and had been, it was no longer truly his home after he was, uh, exonerated. I can’t give you the time of how long he was in the camp before he was exonerated; I’m hoping that my, uh, second cousin, Norman Mascioli, will be able to provide that information more. It was legal doings and my parents—uh, my mother—my dad was at war at this time—never chose to speak to us children about that sort of thing. Uh, from my point of view [clenches fists], mother never told me that granddad had been incarcerated. And I do remember, uh, myself and another girl having a big fisticuff fight because she had said that my granddad was in jail. And I was saying there was no way he was in jail. [Laughs] Course I came home, tears all over the place, blubbering, and my mother finally had to try and explain that, uh, granddad, uh, wasn’t in jail like you think with thieves and, um, murderers and things like this, but he had been put in a special camp. Anyway, she did the, the things a mother does to a child who’s five or six. And, um, uh, and she...always just said, “Look, we’re not gonna talk about this in public. Uh, we’re going to [points to LA] keep our heads down, make no waves.” And it was about a year later I said to her, “I want to learn to speak Italian.” And it’s interesting—and now in hindsight I think I understand her thinking, and she said, “Oh, no, no, I

just speak *paesani*, you know, I just speak, uh, peasant, uh, peasant, uh, uh, Italian. I don't speak, um, uh, learned Italian. And, and, uh, I don't...I don't think I will." In hindsight, you know when you think about it, if we couldn't speak Italian, we couldn't be accused of anything. And for some reason the RCMP left my mother alone. The only thing I can think of was because dad was a captain in the Algonquin Regiment and eventually was shipped overseas. And eventually became a prisoner of war, of the Germans. So my mother was in the unique position of having...her husband incarcerated—in, in, in a prisoner of war camp in Germany and her father, uh, supposedly a subversive, incarcerated in Canada. Uh, a rather incredibly bizarre situation.

LA: Now you mentioned at the time you were about five or six. How old were your other siblings?

JM: They were younger.

LA: They were younger.

JM: Yes. Uh, in fact, uh, Sandy would have been, uh—if I was five, she would have been two. And Diane was born after the war.

LA: So do you remember the day your grandfather and your great-uncle were taken away?

JM: Uh, no. The reason I don't is because mother chose not to tell me. You see, that's why I came home in tears from school. And it was only a few days later. But he was taken on the 10<sup>th</sup>. He was picked up in Toronto, taken off the streets in Toronto. And, uh, Tony was picked up in Timmins.

LA: [Long pause] So did your mother, um, talk about the day that he was picked up, later on when you were older? Or—

JM: Uh—

LA: —did she never talk about it at all?

JM: I would say...it was such...an upsetting thing that there was very little conversation about it for the rest of our lives. You didn't talk about it, you didn't exist, it was just passed, and you had to move on with life. And, um...uh, I know that, um...there were one or two incidences, um, probably, uh, shortly after the war when my dad was home when things were said and, uh, I know my dad really went to bat to, um, protect granddad's name. And at that time, dad was working in the construction company, uh, uh, the Mascioli Construction Company in Timmins and granddad was working more out of the, uh, North Bay Construction Company. And, uh, um, so dad was in a position to, when he can, whenever he could to protect Leo's name. There was even an uncomfortableness after the war. [Shakes head] It, it was very sad. Uh, but...it probably made the Moneta area more cohesive. People just, uh, stuck together.

[00:41:22]

LA: Were the—were there evidence, uh, that the authorities provided why your great-uncle and your grandfather were interned?

JM: Uh...well, uh, from what I know is certainly with regard to granddad, he, uh, was basically supporting an extended family, in Cocullo. So, uh, the fact that you were sending money to your home, Cocullo, a small village, um, meant you were, uh, in the eyes of the RCMP, supporting the enemy.

LA: Now I know that you mentioned that you didn't talk about the internment experience with your parents, but later on, did you ever talk to your grandfather...or great-uncle about it?

JM: N—uh, never. It was not brought up.

LA: So the stories of camp life that he experienced with his brother, did you hear anything about that?

JM: None. That will have to come from your interview with Norman Mascioli. If, if, if indeed even he knows some of the details. I can't give you the details other than I did know that he and Franceschini [chuckles] were scheming to buy the King Edward Hotel in, in Toronto [laughing]. And, uh, the, uh, uh—[gestures with hands out to the side] no, I can't answer.

LA: Um, can you tell me a little bit about you missing your grandfather? Was there any correspondence between your grandfather, your great-uncle and your mother?

JM: [Nods] Yes, there was some correspondence. Uh, not a great deal, and it was never read to me. Uh, mother seemed to try to work very hard, and I think part of it was she was trying to protect us, out in the community, um, and sadly, disassociate us from that Italian side. [Gestures to the left with her hands] It's all part of keeping your head down. Uh, I'm not saying it's right or wrong, but she was in a position to, uh, try and, and protect her daughters. Um, uh, I only gleaned bits and pieces, um, uh...from, uh...listening to the business of the hiring—uh, because at great expense to the family, you had to hire a lawyer to, um, represent granddad, and that was certainly done. Um, I know granddad at the time when he was incarcerated was building, um, the, uh, what became the Victory Theatre. And of course that shut right down. [Gestures in a downward manner] I mean, you've got to remember that he had quite a few businesses going. The ones that are up and going, his, uh, son, very young at that time, was able



to, uh, keep, uh, the whole business, everything going, uh, from that point of view. But from the construction point of view and from the completion of the, what became The Victory—uh, he was going to call it The Grenada, but after it was completed in 1945 and '46, he named it The Victory. Uh, all his business [holds hands up] just closed right down [brings hands down fast]. It, it absolutely closed right down, down. And, uh, um...uh, he, uh, did come back and, uh—but he worked, uh, at later more in North Bay and in Huntsville and Sudbury.

LA: Okay. Now, uh, did your mother ever visit, uh, your grandfather in the camp?

JM: Not to my knowledge.

LA: And you mentioned that the lawyer was hired, so—

JM: Uh, yes, Bristol.

LA: Was he, uh, the reason why your father—your grandfather was eventually released?

JM: Well, he certainly represented him, at the law—at the, um, court inquiry. I—I'm not sure, but I believe they set up a special court near the camp in Petawawa to deal with, uh, the, uh—all of these people who had to go through a form of a court case. And, um, uh, I know that Bristol was considered to be one of the best lawyers at the time. And obviously he was successful.

[00:45:42]

LA: Hmm. Now you mentioned that you're not sure how long your grandfather and your great-uncle were interned.

JM: No.

LA: Would you estimate at—

JM: A year and a half to two years. [Nods]

LA: Okay.

JM: Yeah.

LA: And, uh, you mentioned that at school, uh, you got in a fight with somebody [JM nods] who said your grandfather was incarcerated?

JM: Absolutely.

LA: But did the neighbours know?

JM: Oh! Oh, everybody knew.

LA: Everybody knew.

JM: Oh everybody knew. I mean it was all over the papers. Uh, I mean, um, uh—now I, I wish I had some of the *Timmins Daily Press*, uh, articles on granddad being incarcerated, I don't have, but I'm sure they must be in the archives, because he was probably one of the most prominent citizens in Timmins. I mean, uh, there isn't a sidewalk you can't walk on that doesn't say constructed by Mascioli Construction Company. Uh, he did most of the sewer, most of the water, made most—uh, built all the roads. Uh...frankly he constructed Timmins. [Nods] And,

and so he was very, very well known. And he-he'd made some enemies, you do when you're in a position like that. And, and there were obviously some people who, um, uh, as Jim Bartleman, uh, in the one article pointed out, uh, he, uh, was a fascist and why, uh, would anybody be supporting, uh, him not to be...in uh, in the prisoner—uh, excuse me, in, in, um, the camp at Petawawa.

LA: In general, how, how would you say your neighbours and the community reacted to your family after your grandfather was interned?

JM: Um, uh, uh, some remained very good friends, very good. Uh, others, uh, shunned. There's no—they just shunned. You know, wouldn't talk to you. Avoided you. But, uh [shrugs]...that's the way it was.

LA: Were there any material or emotional support from your friends and neighbours who remained loyal to you?

JM: Uh, the, the good friends were very supportive, they really were and rallied around and remained friends. Uh, because there were basically five years there when mother had, uh, no husband there. And, uh, it's a pretty lonely life, especially when he's overseas maybe getting killed. And, uh, and, um, your only other main relative, you have, a brother, Danny, and Danny was very, very good. He visited mother every single night during the war on the way home from work. So he, he was very, very supportive, uh, of, of her. Uh, and, uh, and she needed that support. She really did. And I think he needed it too. You know, because he's trying to run granddad's business, be a businessman in the community and yet there were people in the community that won't even talk to you. [Throws hands up in the air and shrugs]

LA: How did your teachers treat you in school?

JM: Um, I, um...I don't remember as a child any different treatment. I have to say that. I don't remember.

LA: Okay. Now, other than your father, uh, being a captain and serving in the Algonquin, um, did you have any other relatives that were serving in the war?

JM: Interestingly enough, uh, my mother's brother Danny tried to sign up, uh, to be, uh, in the army, and, uh, also to prove that the family was, uh, on the Canadian side, if I can say that. Unfortunately, at the time he had diabetes and he was blind in one eye. Needless to say, they marked him 4F and, uh, he was rejected. But at least he made the effort and he was trying to show—when I say the Italians really tried to show that they were good Canadians, they did, they really did try. Um, now in our family, um...no, I can't think of anybody else. On my dad's side, uh, he had a brother, but he was older and, uh, s—beyond the age that you had to, uh, sign up. And, uh, I'm trying to think...uh, well that's it, it's a small family, there are not a lot of other people.

[00:50:19]

LA: So, uh, your uncle Danny tried to sign up after your grandfather was taken away?

JM: That's correct. [Nods]

LA: Okay. So...you said you, you didn't know where your grandfather and your great-uncle were taken.

JM: No. [Shakes head]

LA: Uh, how long after, before you guys found out?

JM: Oh, probably a couple of days, that's when I was informed by my schoolmate that my grandfather was in jail. Now, I didn't see my grandfather all that much, he was—really work was his life. He literally—he didn't have a family, uh, per se. This was when, uh, mum and Danny were gro-grown up. And he, he just, he just worked. [Nods] He'd worked all his life, from the age he was nine. And, uh...you know, when you think about it, um, uh, that was his life. Now after he came back, after the Second World War, um...I'd be lucky to see him twice a year. He just—because Timmins was no longer his home.

LA: Did you guys get any advanced notice that your grandfather was [JM shakes head] coming home?

JM: Oh. Um [looks up in thought]...you know, I can't answer that. I, I can't answer that. I don't know.

LA: Okay—

JM: Grandfather just appeared one day and after a couple years absence and you didn't talk about it. It was a bad situation, it was a bad time and you wanted to do everything to forget it [waves hands to side as if pushing situation away] and it-it's, it's the way they handled it.

LA: Do you remember the day he came home? Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

JM: Um...not much. Other than, um, he showed up [laughs] and it was good to see him. And, uh, and remember you're a child and time goes, you know and you're not as affected as if you were older. And keeping in mind he wasn't in my life every day, prior to that. He, he was, he

was literally a businessman. Um, he, uh...just literally came for dinner. Just like he might have been to dinner the day before, you know. [Smiles]

LA: Mm hmm. Um, now, I know you already said a little bit more—um, you said earlier, um, about your grandfather, how he was after his release from the camp, but can you tell us a little bit more about his life after the camp?

JM: Uh, he, um...went right back into his business life. Um, as I say, he didn't feel comfortable living in Timmins anymore. He lived the life a bit of a gypsy...um...in hotel rooms, his hotels in both North Bay and Huntsville and a place in Sudbury. Uh, he, um...he—actually, he never had what I would call a happy life from a family point of view until he was over 70. And he, uh, found a lady to love and, um, he only had a few years with her and he bought a lovely home in Toronto and settled down with her there. And he finally retired—sort of “semi-retired” [says making quotation marks with hands], if I can use that term—uh, not until he was, oh boy, I would say about 72. So he had, uh, finally, uh, three years of a home and a life and, uh, some happiness. And, uh, was able to put his work and his life—uh, that part of his life behind him. [Pushes hands to the side] Took a long time.

LA: How did Timmins, uh, the community of Timmins react when your grandfather returned?  
Um...

JM: Well I think I explained that, um, there were certain people who did everything they could to avoid him.

LA: Mm hmm.

JM: They'd even cross the street. Um, the, uh—some people were more than prepared, from a business point of view, to get back into business with him, which was good. Because he had proved that he could be a very shrewd businessman. Um, as for friends in Timmins, he had a few in the Italian community, but I would say not too many close ones in the community other than in the Italian community. And his friends were mostly business, business connections.

LA: What happened to the businesses that were closed down? Did he ever get them ba—

JM: Oh, yes, yup. [Nods] Oh he wasn't goin—one thing about granddad, he was tough and strong and, and, um, they were his businesses and he got them up and going again. Yes, very much so. And by this time he had a son who could do the legal work and the business work and could run it from a business point of view. [Gestures with hands] He just loved to construct.

[Nods]

[00:55:28]

LA: Okay. Um, so are you familiar with the de-debates surrounding the internment of Italians in Canada?

JM: The de...

LA: The debates on internment. What is your position on, on that?

JM: The debates? Okay, I, uh...well, when you look at the history of it, um, most of the Italians—well I—to my reading and understanding, not one was found guilty of subversive actions. [Says the words "not one" with emphasis] The only thing I can think of, it was the—this issue of the, um, Hitler's fif-fifth column, the, uh, the idea that the immigrants were here and they were

subverting Canada from within. [Making fists with hands] And therefore, supporting the war effort. And that wasn't true at all, but it was a terrible rumour, and it was a great fear. And it's almost like the fear, uh, pushed [pushes hands forward], uh, I guess the politicians of the day and the RCMP of the day to, uh, incarcerate, uh, the Germans, the Italians, and the Japanese. Um [shrugs with hands out], uh, in hindsight was it right? No. At the time, the fear was previtol—prevalent and I guess it was seen as right. It's almost like, uh, if you can refer to the FLQ [*Front de libération du Québec*, Quebec Liberation Front] in Quebec, when the War Measures Act went out, and they just picked people up all over the place off the street. Same idea! There's fear, bombs going in Quebec off in mailboxes and stuff like this. They had kidnappings. A murder. Uh, and fear prompts a wide net of gathering people. Again, is it right? Uh...I'm not saying it is. Uh, does it help people at the time to feel more secure because these people who might be subversive have been put away? [Gestures to the left with hands] I suppose that helps to calm fears. But, um, it didn't accomplish anything. All it did was, uh, to me, um, bring a great deal of suspicion upon a community that was basically very hard working and, um, uh, very faithful to Canada. [Shrugs with hands out]

LA: Other than your grandfather and your great-uncle, do you know of any others in Timmins, uh, who—any other friends of your who's, uh, family was interned or designated as enemy aliens?

JM: And you know I'm sure there were, but I don't know.

LA: Okay.

JM: And I'll leave that to Norman, uh, Norman's interview.



LA: Okay, well that's all the questions that I have for you today. And I want to thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us. If you have any other final comments, uh, please state them.

JM: [Long pause] Well, thank you very much. I've really appreciated this interview. I do want to say that I look back on the accomplishments of my grandfather. I believe that he was an incredibly exceptional person. Uh, anybody who leaves home of their own will and against their father's will, first of all, at the age of nine, to work on a ship, to go to Scotland, to come back. At the age of 10, to go to Boston, uh, with a distant friend of the family, who pretended to be his father, uh, and with only a few dollars in his pocket and literally started working at the age of 10 as a bootblack in Boston, and in various kitchens. And who worked his way, without any schooling, from the age of 10, through, uh, the, uh, coal mining in Nova Scotia, and through, uh, the silver mines in Cobalt and from there up to the mining camps of what became the Timmins area—was then known as the Porcupine Camp. And remember in those days, the train only went to Matheson, and the only way you got to Timmins is you walked 50 miles. Or if you had a canoe, you canoed it and walked 50 miles. Uh, you've got to say that the people—and both my grandfathers, Alex Stirling and Leo Mascioli were pioneers into that area. You had to have an awful lot of grit and an awful lot of gumption. And to start from scratch, and to be the main builder of most of the infrastructure of Timmins has got to say a great deal for the, um, smartness and the self-taught—'cause he was self-taught, all the way—knowledge of a person like my grandfather. My other grandfather, uh, sent his wife out to have his—their third and last child, my dad [points to herself], in Renfrew. My dad was brought in by canoe from Matheson and he was the first white baby in that area and the natives all came to see the first white baby. So it gives you an idea that these people—can you imagine living in a tent at 40 below? I can't. But, uh, you look at a person like granddad and he saw a need, he started a little store. Really it was sort of grub-grubstake store, you know, they had tents and pickaxes and

grub food and stuff like. [Gestures with hands] And he grubstaked quite a few of the, um, prospectors and you went from there. Uh, it's, um, it's an amazing life story. It really is.

LA: Thank you.

JM: You're welcome. [Smiles]

[Fades out at 01:01:24]

**[End of Interview]**