

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

DATE OF INTERVIEW: June 21, 2011

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Grimsby, ON

NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: Eugene William Guagneli

NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Melina De Guglielmo

NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER: Lucy Di Pietro

TRANSCRIBED BY: Lucy Di Pietro

DATE TRANSCRIBED: November 1, 3, 5, 2011

ACCESSION No.: ICEA2011.0038.0001

PROJECT NOTE:

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

ABSTRACT

Eugene William Guagneli is the son of Luisa Guagneli, who was one of four Italian Canadian women interned in 1940 at the Kingston Penitentiary by the Canadian government. At the time, he was a teenager about to begin his high school studies in Niagara Falls, Ontario. Along with his father and uncle, Guagneli was himself declared an enemy alien, although born in Canada. He recalls his mother's involvement in the Italian community, mainly with the church and the Orders Sons of Italy Ladies Auxiliary. She also taught Italian language classes. He believes that his mother was targeted due to her standing in the community by an informant and not by any real political support for fascism or the Italian government. He describes the day the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) arrested his mother in their home, including rough treatment at the hands of one of the officers. He also notes her detainment at the Don Jail in Toronto as being very difficult; there was no communication with the family about her location during this time. His mother did not speak about the experience after her release, and what he knows is mostly from overheard conversations. Now retired, he speaks of his later university studies and

career as a teacher, and working for the Department of National Defence on military bases in Germany.

INTERVIEW

EWG: Eugene William Guagneli, interviewee

MDG: Melina De Guglielmo, interviewer

LDP: Lucy Di Pietro, videographer

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 00:00:10]

LDP: —now recording.

MDG: Okay, perfect. So this is Melina De Guglielmo on June 21, 2011 in Grimbsy, Ontario. Um, and I'm gonna first ask you to please state your full name.

EWG: Eugene William Guagneli.

MDG: And when were you born and where?

EWG: February the 13, 1927 in Niagara Falls, Ontario.

MDG: And tell me a little bit about your earliest memories of growing up in, in Niagara Falls?

[Noises in background]

EWG: [Shrugs] It was a very friendly neighbourhood. Um, there weren't very many Italian families. I think there were only two Italian families in the neighbourhood. So it was, it was a mixed, uh, neighbourhood. Today we would call it multiculturalism, but we didn't even know that word then. And, um, people were friendly. And it was a good neighbourhood to grow out—uh, grow up in—

MDG: And what street did you live on?

EWG: Robinson Street.

MDG: Robinson Street. And, and—

EWG: Within, uh, uh...hearing distance of the falls. [Gestures to distance with hands] The spray from the falls used to come over [indicates a wave with right hand] and fall on our house. And, um...

MDG: So how was that in the winter? Would you get some icicles?

EWG: We would get ice on the ground [points to floor with hand] and on the driveway. So—and maybe a block further on [hand gesture] there would be nothing.

MDG: Oh, okay. And, and tell me a little bit about, uh, your parents? When, when they were born and where, as well.

EWG: [Sighs] My mother was born in Urbino, on the same street where Raphael was born. The painter Raphael. And then her family moved to Pesaro. Her father was a, uh, uh, a very proficient gardener and he became the head gardener for the, for the city of Pesaro and he also

had a, uh, a flower shop, which my mother helped run. My father was born in what is part of Romagna really, but it's the part that comes down and joins Le Marche. And, uh, and then his family moved into the Marche, but they were country people. They had, uh, a large farm, and then eventually made furniture. But that was, uh, much later, 'cause he came over to Canada when he was 17 in 1914.

MDG: Hmm. Wow. And—

EWG: His, his sister was here.

MDG: Oh and, uh, did he come for work, for...

EWG: He came over to get work.

MDG: And your mom's family?

EWG: My mother, uh, well the family lived in Pesaro. And, uh, my mother met, um, my father's sister Assunta 'cause she was visiting in Pesaro. And, uh, they, uh—he—my aunt gave my mother my father's, uh, address in Canada and, uh, and then they started to correspond for a couple of years. And, uh, and then she said that she would come over and stay with my aunt and uncle. Not where my father was living. Stay with my aunt and uncle. And, um, if they got on—if she got on with my father then she would marry him.

MDG: Mm. And I don't know if I got your parents' names. Did I?

EWG: No. My father's name is Arturo. And my mother's name was Luisa. L-U-I-S-A. And her last name was Cicchini[?].

MDG: And, and your dad obviously was Guagneli?

EWG: Pardon? [Leans forward to hear question]

MDG: Your dad was Guagneli.

EWG: Guagneli. Right. [Nods]

MDG: Yeah. So, um, now coming back, how did, how did they, eh, settle in Niagara Falls?

EWG: Well, when my mother first came over she stayed with my aunt and uncle. And then eventually married my father and then they, uh, lived with my aunt and uncle, uh, for a few years. And, uh, and then they bought their own house.

MDG: And this is the house on Robinson.

EWG: [Nods] On Robinson Street. Yup.

MDG: And so, um...when did you—so your early childhood you remember growing up in a, a very multicultural neighbourhood.

EWG: Right.

MDG: And who were your first, uh, childhood friends in, in the area?

EWG: Well, uh, the children acr—around, uh, you know, the— on the street, on the various streets. Uh, there, there weren't [shrugs]...any real, any Italian, uh, children I played with; they

were Anglo-Saxon or Scottish origin, or Irish. Um, there was a Czech family, and they had two boys. And so it was a very mixed group and we got along well.

MDG: Okay. And were your—was your family, uh, religious? Did they attend any, any—

EGW: Yes, they attended St. Anne's, uh, Catholic Church. And I went to Sunday School. I went to a public, um, elementary school. Barker's Street Public School. And then to the collegiate, Niagara Falls Collegiate Institute.

[00:05:17]

MDG: And did you enjoy school?

EGW: [Nods] Yes, very much. Yup. I liked school. I got on well. Did well.

MDG: Yeah. What were your favourite subjects?

EGW: Oh, languages I think and history.

MDG: Hmm. And, um, did your family belong to any social organizations where you associated with other Italian, uh, people in the, in the area?

EGW: Yes. My father belonged to the Sons of Italy and, uh, my mother belonged to, uh, several church organizations, ladies' groups, and so on. [Phone ringing in background] And, uh, she eventually became president of the, uh, woman's division of the Sons of Italy.

MDG: Okay. And what, what, um, what did the Order Sons of Italy do? Or what were they—

EWG: It was—it's a fraternal organization. I still—it exists today too.

MDG: Mm hmm.

EWG: Still, both in Canada and the States.

MDG: And, and your mom's role, uh, in the Order Sons Ladies Auxiliary? Is that, is that correct?

EWG: [Leans forward to hear question] Which?

MDG: Was it part of the Order Sons of Italy Ladies Auxiliary?

EWG: [Nods] Yes.

MDG: Yeah. And what, what activities would they engage in?

EWG: Oh, they had dinners and, you know, spaghetti dinners and things like that. And they did charitable work, raise money for charitable—now she did—she taught, um, through the church, through a, uh, Father Zaza, [camera zooms in] who was a Carmelite monk, but he was the parish, uh, uh, priest. And he wanted to set up, um, Italian classes for the children. And since my mother had sort of the equivalent of a high school or grade 12 education here in Canada, um, she spoke fluent Italian as well as her, uh, Marchegian dialect. [Gestures with hands]

MDG: Mm hmm.

EWG: And, uh, so he asked her if she would teach the little ones. And so she agreed. And so for a couple of years there she taught Italian classes.

MDG: Oh yeah. And, um, were you also encouraged to attend the Italian classes that your mom—

EWG: Uh, yes. Mm hmm. [Nods]

MDG: Yeah. Is that how—did you learn Italian, uh, from—

EWG: Well we spoke Italian at home. Right.

MDG: Okay.

EWG: Mixed sometimes with the, with the dialect, but, um, my mother tried to speak to me more frequently in, in Italian.

MDG: Yeah. So—

EWG: But, but the dialect came out.

MDG: Yeah. And do you remember also the, uh, social events that were, were held at the Order Sons, or ever attending any—

EWG: Uh, no I don't remember. I remember there were—[shrugs] you know, all—they used to go to meetings and then they'd go to these dinners and, and, uh, but I never attended.

MDG: Oh. And so was your mom often busy with her, with her, uh, with her work, with her charitable work?

EWG: Yes, because she belonged to several church org—other church organizations, the Ladies of St. Anne and...

MDG: Yeah.

EWG: ...you know.

MDG: And would, um, would other, um...uh, community members, uh—well actually do you, do you know the names of any other, uh, members that were part of the, the Order Sons of Italy Ladies Auxiliary? If you, if you can remember...

EWG: Well...no, I don't, I don't really remember. I remember the Sauros for instance. Because, uh, uh, he was the, um—uh, Mr. [Liborio] Sauro was the local United Church Minister for the, for the, uh, Italian United Church.

MDG: Mm hmm.

EWG: Which was just down the street on Stanley Street [points with left hand]. And, um, they lived two doors—three doors down from us. And they were very good friends to my mother and father and kept up the friendship even after, um, they moved to...to Toronto. [Points with fingers]

MDG: Mm hmm.

EWG: Reverend Sauro went to, to, uh, another parish in, in, in North Toronto.

MDG: Yeah, yeah. And, um, would you ha-hang around the Sauro boys—

EWG: Oh yes. Yeah, yeah, we played all the time. Yeah.

MDG: Uh—

EWG: And then we visited, uh, whenever we went to Toronto and we stayed over with them. And when I went away to, uh, to, to university, the University of Toronto, I stayed with them the first few days and then went into residence.

MDG: Yeah. So was it a very close community then? Where, uh, where you grew up? In term—like close-knit...

EWG: Um, well it was a friendly community. Like we—there were no coffee clatches [klatsches] or things like that. But with the Sauros it was much closer than with some of the other families, but...

MDG: Mm hmm. And, um, so then growing up, and, and close to the war year, a-about how old, uh, would you have been, um, I guess in World War Two?

[00:10:08]

EWG: When the war was declared, I was—it was the summer between grade eight and, and grade nine, [shrugs] so I was 13.

MDG: Mm hmm. Oh and I didn't even ask, did you have any other siblings, as well?

EWG: Yeah, I have a sister who's five years older—uh, younger than, than me.

MDG: Younger. And her name?

EWG: Ma-Marie.

MDG: Marie. Okay, so, um, you were about, uh, 13—12 turning 13 years old.

EWG: Yeah.

MDG: And do you remember, uh, the day June 10, 1940?

EWG: Right. [Nods]

MDG: And do, do you remember what happened to your family on that day?

EWG: Well...I have vague memories of it. But, uh, I remember...several men around. Uh, herding us—we were all outside because it was a beautiful day—herding us into the house. And, um...you know...it, it seemed to me, they, they seemed to be angry. They seemed to be asking questions, and giving directions and they seemed to be...quite officious.

MDG: Mm hmm.

EWG: And, um, and I remember standing at the door to my parents' bedroom and one man was in there going through the drawers [gestures opening a drawer] in the dressers and, uh, there was a statue of St. Anthony [gestures to statue] on the dresser and it started to topple over [gestures to statue falling] and my mother went over to grab it and he hit her [makes a motion with his right arm indicating the movement of the fist], so that she couldn't, uh, reach the

statue. And, um, I remember that shocked me. I'd never seen anything like that before. Uh, and then, um, she just left with them. And, and of course everyone was very upset.

MDG: Mm.

EWG: My aunt and uncle were living with us at the time.

MDG: Mm.

EWG: 'Cause they had no children.

MDG: Yeah.

EWG: And they had come to live with us before. They had been living with us for, uh, a couple of years.

MDG: And was there ever any explanation from, uh, I guess—were they RCMP officers, were they...

EWG: They, they were. But they weren't in the usual [chuckles] uniform. They were in business suits.

MDG: In business suits. And did they have papers or a warrant for...

EWG: I—if they did, I didn't see it.

MDG: So they, um, they ravaged—well they seemed to be searching through the home...

EWG: They searched everything. [Nods] They searched through everything. They took away, uh, all my, my, uh, history notes and geography notes from grade eight. And they took away a big bristol [indicates a square with his hands] board, uh, project that, that I had made in—for the Daughters, uh, the Daughters of the Empire, and I had won first prize. And, and there was a-a map, a product map of Canada with, you know, little oil wells and, uh, and, uh, beavers for fur, and so on. [Gestures with hands] And they took all of that away. It took me years to get that stuff back.

MDG: Wow.

EWG: I had to write quite a few letters. Eventually I got it all back.

MDG: And, and, where did they put that, uh—

EWG: [Shrugs] I don't know where it went. [Laughs] Someone had it.

MDG: Yeah. And, uh, well who did you write to, to get it back?

EWG: I, I can't remember the name. But I, I, I'd been given the name to write.

MDG: Mm.

EWG: It was a, um, a department or ministry in Ottawa. [Shrugs]

MDG: Oh okay. And, uh, where did they take your mom?

EWG: They took her to the Don Jail. Which it...it was a terrible jail...at that time. And I think that was th...the worst part of the experience for her. She said it was really horrific. And I guess they were pretty rough with the ladies.

MDG: Mm. And were there other ladies in the area—

EWG: Uh, I don—well the only one that, that we knew or would have been that, uh, Miss [Verna] Lo Bosco from Welland.

MDG: Mm hmm.

EWG: Uh, she didn't know any of the other ones. Um...they were all from other places I guess.

[Bird sounds in background]

MDG: And, and, um—

EWG: I don't know how long she was in the Don Jail.

MDG: Oh okay.

EWG: But I remember, um...I overheard as she was talking to Zia[?] Marietta, this was after she came home, and her husband had come home too, and they were having a [shrugs]... And she, she was telling them, and I could hear how terrible it was in the Don Jail particularly.

MDG: Hmm. And, um, were you able to go and visit your mom, uh, or go see—

EWG: No, then from there she was taken to the Kingston Penitentiary.

MDG: Okay. And, and, at that, at—though before that point was there any correspondence between her and your family?

EWG: Uh, no, none. [Shakes head] Not until she got to Kingston. We didn't know where she was. We didn't know a-at all. I mean she just was taken away and that was it.

MDG: Hmm. And so, um, at the Kingston Penitentiary then did she begin, uh, sending—

EWG: And then she was, uh, st—then she—they allowed her to w-write.

MDG: Mm hmm.

EWG: And I think it was one letter a week, I'm not sure. 'Cause I mention in that one letter [gestures off camera], but—that we didn't get the letter that week. So it sounded like we, we got a letter every week and we—I was able to write, my father was able to write.

MDG: Mm.

EWG: And we were able to visit once.

[00:15:14]

MDG: And so, I guess they let you know that she would—did they—well sorry—did they, did they let you know how long she would be there or why she was—

EWG: No.

MDG: —interned?

EWG: Nor why. No. [Shakes head]

MDG: No.

EWG: No. And when we went, I went with my father. And my, my sister was only about five years old.

MDG: Mm hmm.

EWG: And...um...yeah, she would have been about five. And, uh, but they wouldn't let, um, my sister go in and visit. I was allowed to go in with my father.

MDG: Hmm. And why wouldn't they let your sister go in?

EWG: [Shrugs] I assume because she was too young.

MDG: She was too young. [Pause] Yeah. And, um, during the time that your mom was taken away, what did your dad, uh, then have to do that he might not have otherwise—

EWG: Well, fortunately my aunt and uncle were with us. And they had no children. And my aunt was like a second mother to me and had been for ye—for several years, uh, after they came to live with us. And so fortunately we had my aunt to look after me and, and, uh, and my sister. And my father just carried on work, as best he could. He—for awhile there, right after the war,

of course and he, he didn't get any work [laughs] and then things eased up as I said in my letter that he was getting work and...

MDG: Yeah. And, um, did you face also in school, did you face any sort of discrimination for having your mom—

EWG: Um...as far as school was concerned...I don't think ma-many people knew. I don't think maybe any of the teachers, maybe one teacher knew. There was a teacher named Mr. Rose. But he had changed his name to get the job. His name was La Rosa. And he was a Phys-Ed teacher, a very fine teacher, and I, I think he knew. Because his parents were, were living down near St. Anne's Church, so they would have known and he would have known.

MDG: Mm hmm.

EWG: But I don't think most of the—if the oth—if any of the other teachers knew, they certainly didn't let on.

MDG: Mm hmm. And, uh, how long was your mom kept, uh, in—

EWG: I can't remember exactly how many months. Maybe you could—if you can find out exactly how many months. It was o-over a year as you can tell from the dates on the, on the, um, on the letters.

MDG: Yeah. Yeah, we definitely, uh—

EWG: Uh, yeah. [Nods]

MDG: —can look and, and see on our list, um, what date she was released. Some, some internees it's not noted, but we have a few lists that we're working with so hopefully, uh...

[Fades out at 00:17:55]

[Fades in at 00:17:56]

LDP: Okay, it's now recording.

MDG: Okay, so, um, what did your dad do, do for a living while—

EWG: Oh, he and my uncle had a, uh, a, a little business. [Gestures with hands]. Uh they, they redid houses, um, alterations on houses and, uh, stucco work if it was needed. They had their own little company.

MDG: Okay. And, and, uh, was he doing that even before, before the war or was that—

EWG: [Nods] Yes, yeah.

MDG: Okay.

EWG: He was doing that before.

MDG: And, um, we had just brought up, um, the—there was, um, sort of a stigma associated with, with the Italians, that, uh, happened to be, um, very political. So, uh, during that time, uh, it perhaps could have been, um, believed that, uh, Italians were fa—often fascists because of

the Mussolini government. Now was, uh, your mom ever, um, perhaps part of the organizations that, that were deemed to be fascist at the time or—

EWG: No. No. She didn't and, um, t-there were two instances where, where it would show that she wasn't very friendly [chuckles] with, with the, with the idea of, of, of fascism. It was during the, the, um, uh, the Italian war in Abyssinia...Ethiopia. Uh, and, and there was a group in Niagara Falls that star—wanted the, the Italian women to give their gold wedding bands, uh, to have them melted down and send the money to, to Italy and my mother refused to give her, her, her wedding band. That was one case. And then because she had been teaching the, the Italian lessons to the children, um, she was offered, uh, uh, a free trip to Italy. I think it was a three-week holiday in Italy. And, uh, and then she investigated and she found out it was being financed by, by, uh, the fascist and so she didn't go. Another lady that, that was teaching, the other lady that was teaching the, the older children, she went instead, and the lady from Welland went. And—but my mother wouldn't go.

MDG: Oh.

EWG: Now it was again her feeling. [Laughs]

MDG: Yeah. And, uh, was this before, uh, she was married to your dad or, or during the—

EWG: Oh, no, no. This is just before the war. [Gestures with hands]

MDG: Just before the war.

[00:20:29]

EWG: Yeah.

MDG: Okay. And, uh, so...uh—

EWG: She was married in, um, 1925.

MDG: Okay. And so she didn't—she chose not to go to Italy or to donate her gold, um, and so was, was she, uh, antifascist or—

EWG: Uh, yeah. [Nods] Yeah.

MDG: Yeah, yeah.

EWG: As a lot of the people from Le Marche were, you know.

MDG: And if you could tell me—I know we've talked a little bit about this before, but it would be great to get it on camera about the, the Le Marche people—

EWG: [Shrugs] Well there were a lot of people in Le Marche who were very antifascist. They suffered quite a bit. Like her, her families [gestures with hands] in, in, in Pesaro and, um, ran into difficulty.

MDG: Mm hmm. So had, had—

EWG: It goes way back.

MDG: Okay. And, um...so after your mom's—uh, well you were corresponding with her while she was in the Kingston Penitentiary.

EWG: [Nods] Right.

MDG: And, uh, eventually after her release, uh, do you remember the day that she came home?

EWG: Uh, I remem—I don't remember the exact date, but I remember it was a great day to have her back. Yeah. [Smiles]

MDG: Yeah. And your memories of her return...

EWG: Yeah, it was won—and she—you know, it was very upsetting for all of us, but we were really glad to have her home.

MDG: And did you—yeah.

EWG: And very difficult for her...to adjust at first. She felt...well she felt that everyone knew, all the neighbours, everyone, but the neighbours started—after a couple of days co-com-coming over and, and greeting her and, and welcoming her back. You know 90 percent anyway.
[Laughs]

MDG: Yeah. And actually to back, to back it up, did those same nei—did the neighbours also support your family through, uh, the time when she was away?

EWG: [Nods] Many of them. Most. Yeah. There were a few who were really turned against us

and, and, uh, and wouldn't speak to us anymore or have anything to do with us. But, uh, they were very few.

MDG: And so upon your mom's return did she tell you about life, uh, in, uh, at the Kingston Penitentiary?

EWG: She was very reticent about ever talking about it. Uh, later on when I was older and at university and, uh, several times I tried to draw her out [gestures with hands] about it and she was very tight-lipped and, and, and, and, and actually said, "I wish you wouldn't ask me about it. I prefer—I'm trying to get rid of those memories."

MDG: And why do you think that she was, she was—

EWG: I think because she suffered so much, you know. I think it wa-was—'cause she, you know, she was a...a fine lady, she... And that was very hard for her to, you know, consider herself a, a criminal in, in a penitentiary.

MDG: And, um, did your mom resume her teaching—

EWG: Oh no, the classes, of course, there were no classes during the war. No.

MDG: Yeah. And, and, um, was she able to also, uh, rejoin later any of her social groups that she—

EWG: Just the, just the church ones.

MDG: Okay. And, um...are, are there any other, uh, recollections that you have from that time that you, that you remember and would like to share?

EWG: No, I, I remember missing her and wondering, you know, I kept saying, "Well why, why did they take her away and everything?" And, uh...my father couldn't really answer me. He didn't know. [Shrugs] And he didn't know what to say.

MDG: And do you think, uh, in other communities there were often, um, suspected, uh, individuals who may have provided information to the RCMP. Um, do you think that Niagara was one of the areas where there might have been—

EWG: Yes, very much so.

MDG: Yeah.

EWG: But we were never able to discover. I, I don't know whether my mother had a hi—uh, an idea who might—there were several people who...[shrugs] they used to call them communists, and, uh, who might have done it. But I, I don't, I don't know.

[Camera zooms in slightly]

MDG: And what reasons—uh, were there other reasons perhaps that maybe somebody would be encouraged to inform on another individual that you can think of maybe, uh, applying to...

EWG: [Shrugs] I don't know.

MDG: Hmm.

EWG: We were completely baffled. The whole community was. Because she was well known in the community and maybe that's why she...she was fingered. [Laughs]

MDG: And did, uh, did what happened to her during World War Two, uh, ever come up in, uh, well did she pursue any jobs or in any future career or in any—

EWG: No she never worked. And, uh, you know, outside of the... Um, there was a, um, a Canadian author [shift in camera angle] who, uh, interviewed her for his book, but I can't remember his name and I can't find—since I spoke to you, I've looked to see if—for the book and I can't find it. I lent it to someone and I guess I didn't get it back.

[00:25:55]

MDG: I believe she's in, uh, *Canadese*. Is it called *Canadese*? The—by Kenneth Bagnell?

EWG: That's it! [Smiles and points with both hands towards interviewer]

MDG: Yeah!

EWG: Kenneth Bagnell. Right.

MDG: Yeah, yeah. We have a copy in the office.

EWG: Okay, well if you read the section where he mentions my mother, he got it all wrong.

MDG: Oh yeah.

EWG: Not all wrong, but he got part of it wrong. He—my sister, my, my, my sister was the young one and he mentions about me [gestures to his chest] being bathed or in the bathtub and my sister was the one that was the older one. So he got that, that confused.

MDG: Oh and was this part of a particular, uh, story that—about bath—

EWG: It—no, no. [Shrugs] It had nothing, it was just he was describing. [Melina laughing in background] He, he was making—I don't, I don't, I don't remember whether my sister was having a bath when the Mounties came, but he, maybe for local colour or something like that. And then I went to—he was reading in Hamilton, uh, from another book that he wrote later on, but anyway I went to the reading and after the reading I introduced myself and, and referred to this passage and I said, “I think you got it wrong. I'm the one who was, who was [laughing], you know, in between public school and high school. My sister was only a little baby, I mean a little girl at the time.” So I think he—he was, “Oh, I have to get back to my editor, maybe have that changed”. [Laughs and shrugs] So I don't know whether he did. You can check in—

MDG: Yeah.

EWG: —your copy and see whether I'm in the bathtub or my sister is. [Laughs]

MDG: [Unclear, laughing] And, and, um, so going back to, uh, upon your mom's release, um, what do you remember of, of, of that time period in school? Did things resume, uh, as, as normal or, or had the family changed...uh, significantly?

EWG: No, I started high school. And, uh...that was it. I just, uh, you know, missed her and, and, uh, and that was always there. [Shrugs] But as far as school was concerned it was fine.

MDG: Yeah. And, and, um, so after her release did you continue in your studies?

EWG: [Nods] Yes, uh, then I finished high school in, in, uh, 1945. And then I went to the University of Toronto and, uh, did a Bachelor of Arts and then went back for a Master of Arts and then went to, um, Ontario College of Education and became a teacher of English. [Smiles]

MDG: And how many years did you, did you teach English?

EWG: Thirty-five years before I retired. [Laughs]

MDG: At what level—uh, did you teach high school?

EWG: Yeah.

MDG: Yeah.

EWG: Mostly the seniors. I tried to—12 and 13.

MDG: Mm hmm. And what, what are some of the most valuable lessons maybe you learned in your years as, as a teacher?

EWG: In university?

MDG: Or in your years as a teacher?

EWG: Oh...well to know your stuff [laughs] and to listen to the students. Learn to listen. And, uh...just be well-prepared and, uh, try to understand the students and, and try to get across, uh, the love of, of, of literature. [Smiles]

MDG: Oh. And are there any particular texts that you would really love to, to share with the students? Any books—or that you would—

EWG: Oh, there were—I enjoyed teaching the Shakespeare and, uh...a lot of the works. [Laughs]

MDG: Yeah.

EWG: And in later years we were getting into some of the Canadian literature, which was very good. And, uh, but I enjoyed my years at Toronto. I did, um, for, for, um, my masters I did what you would call today comparative literature, but at that time I did it in the Department of Romance Languages, which was, uh, headed by Professor [Emilio] Goggio. He was the chairman of the Department of Romance, Romance Languages. So I did, uh, courses in like one of the history of the, of the, of the sonnet. And, uh, I had some very fine professors: Professor Goggio, Professor Leo, Professor Corrigan[?]. They were three of the great ones.

[00:30:15]

MDG: And then, then did, did you return to Niagara, uh, Falls to teach?

EWG: No, my first school was in Cornwall. Uh, I went to teach English in Cornwall and, uh, I taught there for five years and then I went to Collingwood, and taught English there. And then from Collingwood I, I went to teach for the Department of National Defence in Germany, in Northern Germany, in Soest, in Westphalia. And I taught there for four years. And then, uh,

went back to Collingwood for one year and, uh, and then, um, came to Cornwall—um, to, uh, to, uh, Grimbsy. And, uh, taught for another three years here and then went back to teach for the Department of National Defence, this time for the air force in Baden-Baden, in southern Germany.

MDG: Mm. And why were you attracted to teaching for the National Defence?

EWG: Well it was, uh, you know, it gave you a chance to live in Europe. [Smiles] And, uh, and have all those experiences, all the travel experiences. It was a good life. [Laughs and nods] The four years I was in, in, in Soest, I was, I was single and then, um, I married Helen, and, uh, we started a family. And, um, but then I was asked to go over again, if I wanted to go again. Our daughter wasn't even one year old and well just about one year old when we left to go to Baden. And Helen had taught over there also. She had taught for four years. One year in Grostenquin in France for the air force, two years in Germany in a town called Werl, Canadian base in Werl. W-E-R-L. And then one year in, in, um, Antwerp for the army. And then that's when we got married and then we came to, to Grimbsy and then when I was asked to go again, the three of us went over and, and spent three years in Baden-Baden.

MDG: Wow. What an adventure that must have been.

EWG: Yeah.

MDG: A family adventure.

EWG: Then after three years we came back to Grimbsy.

MDG: And, um, and, and where did you meet Helen?

EWG: Oh, I first met Helen in Cornwall—but these are... [Holds up hands while laughing]

MDG: That's okay. It's a life story, so... Yeah.

EWG: [Laughs] No.

MDG: Yeah. Um, and, and you had one, one daughter?

EWG: Yes.

MDG: Yes. Um, and are there—now looking back, um—oh actually what, what happened to your parents, uh...

EWG: Oh my parents went on living in Niagara Falls. My father eventually retired. And they star—stayed on in the, in the family house. And then he died, um, in, uh, 1988 [reaches for a card on table in front of him], uh, at 90—92, 92. And my mother stayed on in the house for one more year, and then she died the following year at 90.

MDG: Hmm.

EWG: And they, they, they had a good life right to the end. They, they weren't, you know, sick very long. They...they went in the hospital and then died a fe—just a short—about a week after, after they went in the hospital each.

MDG: Hmm. And, um, are there any other stories that, that, uh, you would like to share with us?

EWG: [Shrugs] I can't think of any. I, I know it was a—they were both very good parents. And my mother particularly was a, a fine lady. She e-enjoyed good things and, uh, um...and was, you know, a good mother...and encourage—both of them encouraged me to go on in school and, as far as I could.

MDG: Hmm. And was, uh—

EWG: And the same with my sister. She went on to become a nurse.

MDG: And, and your sister, also what happened? And what—where did she, uh—

EWG: She went—uh, became a nurse, uh, went into training at St. Joseph's Hospital [gestures with hand] in, in Hamilton. And then, uh, became a, um, a specialist in the delivery room at St. Joseph's Hospital. And then eventually married and started a family and now lives in Cambridge, Ontario.

MDG: And have you kept in touch with any of the, um, family members that you had mentioned growing up with in, in Niagara Falls?

[00:34:59]

EWG: Nnn-no.

MDG: Sorry, any of the, uh, family friends—

EWG: Uh, n—uh, friends.

MDG: Yeah.

EWG: No, family. Right. Um, I have an uncle who, um, my mother brought out after the war. He had been in the, uh, uh, Italian army and was taken prisoner by the British in North Africa. And he was interned there and then eventually after the war returned to Pesaro. And then, um, uh, he, he had already been married and then he had a family, two children, and my mother brought them over...sponsored them...and they came and stayed with us. Uh, we had a, a big house, so, um, we, my parents made it into a—made an apartment on the second floor and they lived there until they could, uh, buy their own house. And he worked for my father for the first few years and then eventually worked for the hydro. And he was a gardener also, and eventually became the custodian of the, um, the Flower, uh, Clock in Queenston...because he was a trained gardener in, in, in Italy. The gardening ran in the family.

MDG: Oh yeah.

EWG: [Laughs]

MDG: Yeah. And, um, were there any other family that came over from Italy that your, your parents perhaps sponsored or—

EWG: No. No, there was—he was the only one that came over and then, um, he had two children, my cousins.

MDG: Of course. Alright.

EWG: And they both became teachers.

MDG: Oh. So teaching runs in the family.

EWG: [Nods and laughs] Right.

MDG: Yeah. It's usually families of teachers, right. Yeah, yeah. And, and Lucy did you have any, uh, questions that you...?

LDP: Who was home that day that the RCMP came? You mentioned that you were on the street and you were sort of—

EWG: Well, we were playing, playing, yeah. Well—

LDP: And your aunt and uncle were there and—

EWG: No, my, my, uh, my father and, and, and my uncle were not there. My aunt was there and my mother and, um, they knew where, where my father was working and it happened to be not very far away, so one of the neighbours went and got him, and he came back. He came home...while this was going on.

LDP: And when did you find out that your family—that your mother was being—had been taken? But you and your father were also designated as enemy aliens?

MDG: [Unclear]

EWG: I didn't understand the question.

LDP: When did you—did you find out that—at that same time that both—your—you and your father were also going to be designated as enemy aliens?

EWG: N-no. [Shakes head and shrugs in disbelief] We didn't get any—noth-nothing.

LDP: So when, when did they make you get that card [border identification for enemy alien card]?

EWG: [Looks down and shakes head] I don't remember.

LDP: You don't remember.

MDG: Hmm.

LDP: Do you remember ever having to go with your dad or your dad having to go to report with your uncle to the police?

EWG: Y-yes. I remember I went with my, my mother and father to the police. Just to be with them.

LDP: Mm hmm.

EWG: I didn't have to register every month. I had to get that card. [Gestures to table in front of him] Maybe, maybe that was the only time I went was when I got that card.

LDP: Mm hmm. Do you remember your father talking about having to go...to—

EWG: Well, he was annoyed because he had, he had been a citizen for many, many years. I mean he came out in 1914 and I think he became a citizen...[shrugs] in the early 20s or you know. So he became a citizen very early on.

LDP: And you were born in Canada—

EWG: [Nods] And I was born in Niagara Falls, right.

LDP: Right. Do you remember, um, any—I, I know you said your neighbour—in your neighbourhood that there didn't seem to be much mention of it, but do you remember being exposed to any like newspaper coverage or any other kind of press, where, you know, the Italians were being spoken of a certain way?

EWG: Oh yeah. There were [laughing] lots of articles in the *Niagara Falls Review* about, you know, the Italians and so on. Uh, there was one interesting little incident where my mother and I were on the streetcar. Niagara Falls had streetcars at that time. And she very seldomly spoke to me in, in Italian in public, uh, but for some reason we were sitting in there and she turned to me and spoke in Italian. And, uh, someone turned around and, and said, “Why can't you talk white?”

LDP: Wow.

MDG: Oh.

EWG: And...and that was it. [Shrugs] And then just turned away and... [Laughs]

MDG: Oh wow.

LDP: Mm hmm. But those incidences in your memory were few and far between?

EWG: Yes. I can't remember very many of them.

LDP: Mm hmm. And you—

EWG: You know, you were called a wop or, uh, uh, by some people and, but, uh, I, I can't remember too...really that much discrimination. I know my father sometimes ran into it, uh, trying to get jobs, because he was an independent, you know, entrepreneur—his little company and sometimes he ran into difficulty but...

LDP: Mm hmm.

EWG: Uh, no, there was, there was one family, uh, that wouldn't allow their children to come over and my mother liked to cook and always had lots of food, and, and, uh, if, if they came over and we were eating, they would—she would pull up a chair for them. And there was one family that wouldn't let their children eat at our house.

[00:40:37]

LDP: Hmm.

MDG: Hmm.

LDP: And did you ever find out why they wouldn't—

EWG: Because [shrugs]... “Oh, they have, they have garlic in their food and they...”

LDP: Oh.

EWG: [Laughs]

LDP: It was okay for them to play with you, just not—

EWG: Oh yes. [Nods] That's right. Or—yeah. [Laughs]

LDP: And your, your teachers never discouraged you in your, your pursuit? They treated you as they would treat any other student—

EWG: There was only one incident. This was before that we, we were to go, uh, to register for high school and, uh, uh, so I registered at the Collegiate, um, and I registered in the academic course. And then when the paper came before—this was—it would have been that spring before the war—um...the Niagara Falls Collegiate had a large, uh, technical department and most of the Italians went into the technical courses. Well when we got, uh, the paper my mother saw that I was registered in, in the technical courses and she said, “No, No, you're going to take the academic course.” So she marched me down to the school and that must have been June of the, of that year, and got them to change it back to the academic. [Laughs]

LDP: Mm hmm. So as far as you know they took it upon their own initiative to change the application.

EWG: “Well he’s, you know, an Italian name therefore he's going into the tech.”

LDP: Right, but you had registered for academic.

EWG: Yes.

LDP: Mm hmm.

EWG: And I had good enough marks and I...

LDP: Mm hmm.

MDG: Wow.

LDP: Did you—those were just some of the questions I had.

MDG: Yeah. I think that's, that's pretty much it. So in terms of, of also the enemy alien designation did that lift af—when did that lift?

EWG: Which? [Leans forward to hear question]

MDG: Uh, the designation as enemy alien for your fath—for your parents?

EWG: Oh. Oh. I don't remember how long that lasted, how they...

LDP: Mm hmm.

MDG: Yeah.

LDP: When you went to, um—throughout high school did you have to report? 'Cause you started high school just before the war?

EWG: Well yeah I started high school right after the war.

LDP: After the war. [Speaking at the same time as Eugene]

EWG: Yeah.

LDP: So—

EWG: That was June.

LDP: —you would have been finishing at the time of the end of the war?

EWG: Yes, it was right near the end of the war so I was doing grade 13 and if the war had gone on even six more months I would have had to register, you know, to, um, see about going into the, the armed forces.

LDP: Right. Okay.

EWG: You know...

LDP: 'Cause you would have been age of majority.

EWG: Yeah. Yes, I was getting to that age. But I, but I was going off to university, anyway, to St Michael's.

LDP: Mm hmm. And do you remember then throughout high school your dad having to report and your mum having to report?

EWG: Yes. [Nods]

LDP: So basically—

EWG: I don't remember how long, how long that went on, but I think it went on for a good part of the war.

LDP: Mm hmm.

EWG: I remember every month they had to go.

LDP: Mm hmm. And no one else from your family was, uh, designated—other than your uncle— or interned, just your mum?

EWG: Uh, my uncle—my aunt and uncle lived with us. They, they had to go and register too every, every month, but they never had any trouble other than that.

LDP: Mm hmm.

EWG: Mind you they, they were not, my aunt was not as outgoing as my mother, she was a homebody and, um, my uncle was a very quiet man also. Not very—I think he belonged to the, to the Sons of Italy with my father, but, but you know, just a member, not very active in it.

LDP: Mm hmm. And your, your father was never, as far as you know, considered for internment?

EWG: No. No. [Shakes head] Not that I know of anyway. He was never taken away or questioned or anything like that.

LDP: Mm hmm.

MDG: And, and do you know if your mum had a hearing at, um, at Kingston Penitentiary?

EWG: I don't.

LDP: Mm hmm. Did she say—does your—did your mum ever mention why she was released, or why she felt she was released?

EWG: She didn't know. She tried to find out I think.

LDP: Mm hmm. Did they—did she ever talk about when they, when they did tell her she was being released and what happened? Did they just let her know and give her a train ticket?

EWG: And they said, "You're going home." [Shrugs] Yeah and they sent her home by train.

LDP: By train. So they just issued her back her train ticket and whatever I guess property they had taken from her.

EWG: Right.

LDP: Her clothes and stuff like that. Do you know if she came back—do you remember if she came back in the clothes she had left with?

EWG: No, I'm sorry. [Shakes head and laughs]

LDP: No. No that's okay.

EWG: No, I don't know.

LDP: And...

MDG: Yeah. So I think that's, that's basically it. Um, thank you so much for—

EWG: Okay.

MDG: —sharing all these stories with us and your memories of the time.

[Fades out at 00:45:22]

[End of interview]