

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

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NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: Teresa Mongiat

NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Melina De Guglielmo

NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER: Krystle Copeland

TRANSCRIBED BY: Louanne Aspillaga

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

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ABSTRACT

Teresa Mary Mongiat (née Bertolli) was born in Italy on June 1, 1924 to Chito and Luiza Bertolli. In December of 1930, the Bertollis immigrated to Toronto, Canada and settled within the Friulani community in “the Junction area” – Dupont and Symington. Teresa’s family relied on relief (welfare), as her mother did not work and her father, being sickly, was on and off work. Teresa recalls her family renting and living with other families, stating that at one point there were eight kids living in the house. Teresa doesn’t speak of this in negative light; in fact she cherishes the way everyone shared and helped each other. In 1940, Teresa was 16 years old, and found it hard to secure a job because she was Italian. She finally found work as a domestic, working for an Italian family. It was during this time, that Teresa was ordered by the RCMP to report to the local police station. Teresa feels that her enemy alien designation during the Second World War was because of her Italian birth (unlike her younger brother, Dino) and because she did not possess citizen papers, like her parents. Teresa explains that at first she had to report weekly, and then monthly. She was finally relieved from her reporting duties when she complained of its inconvenience. She states, “People talk about discrimination today, they truly don’t know what discrimination is.”

During the war, Teresa changed jobs and worked in a plumbing warehouse; she talks briefly about the changing role of women as they entered the workforce. Also in this interview, Teresa talks about social events she attended at various Italian Canadian community organizations, such as picnics and dances. In the postwar period, Teresa helped new immigrants, who did not speak English, by accompanying them to doctor’s appointments and/or immigration offices. Teresa is married to Leopoldo Mongiat and they have three children. She talks about a family trip back home to Italy in 2000 for her and her husband’s 50th wedding anniversary. Teresa describes the joy of having to visit their hometowns, and the fulfillment of sharing that experience with her children and her son in law.

INTERVIEW

TM: Teresa Mongiat, interviewee

JP: Melina De Guglielmo, interviewer

VD: Krystle Copeland, videographer

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 0: 00:12.2]

MDG: Alright so this is Melina De Guglielmo, today ah in Toronto, Ontario. Today's July 26, 2011 and if I can please ask you to state your full birth name, as well as where you were born and what day you were born?

[Reaches over and moves something out of the way]

TM: Oh, let me get that out of the way. [Chuckles]

MDG: Sure, no worries. No problem.

TM: Okay, my maiden name?

MDG: Oh yeah!

TM: Okay, my, my name is Teresa...Bertolli Mary Mongiat.

MDG: Oh.

TM: And I was born ah, in... (Liva, Bercano, uh Odina) [?], Italy.

MDG: Oh, and, and what day were you born?

TM: June the first, 1924. And uh immigrated to Toronto on--in December of 1930.

MDG: Wow. So do you have any memories of, of Italy when, when you were a child?

TM: Oh, they're um...some of them are like a dream.

MDG: Yeah.

TM: Uh, although when I returned to Italy in 1974, some things that were the dream...I recognized. My relatives took me to where I was born and, uh and then things sort of materialized and it, it was, funny how they came back to you.

MDG: Hmmm.

TM: But uh not too much.

MDG: No?

TM: No, no, not, not too much. I, I re--like I was too young I think—

MDG: -- [Says faintly] Hmmm--

TM: --to uh...to you know, too many things have happ--happened in all those years.

MDG: Yeah.

TM: Yeah, but, um.

MDG: Yeah. And um, do you have any siblings? Brothers and sisters?

TM: I had a brother but he's since passed on.

MDG: Sorry.

TM: Yeah.

MDG: And what was his name?

TM: Dino.

MDG: Dino.

TM: Yeah.

MDG: And your parents' names?

TM: My father was uh Chito and my mother was uh Luiza, Luiga.

[Unknown woman]: Bertolli.

TM: Yeah, Ber--Bertolli. Yeah, yeah. And they, they, they became uh citizens of uh Toronto and uh at that time, uh my mother was put on my father's citizenship paper but I wasn't.

MDG: [Faintly, unclear]

TM: Because I was a minor.

MDG: Oh geez.

TM: And so they were citizens but I wasn't.

MDG: Oh wow.

TM: An--and I--things have changed since then. Now, they, they put your children on you know but uh, but I, I was an alien, can you believe that from outer space! [Laughs]

MDG: Oh I-- [Laughs] Wow. And, and so to take you back to those uh early days, um do you remember the voyage at all to, to Canada?

TM: It was stormy.

MDG: [Says faintly] Really.

TM: It was uh, it was a stormy vill--voyage. And uh my mother tells me that I was seasick. I don't remember. [Shakes her head and smiles]

MDG: [Says faintly] No.

TM: I don't remember too much about it.

MDG: And, upon coming to Canada, where did your family settle? Which area?

TM: Uh, we settled in the um...Roy--Royce, at at that time it was called Royce Avenue, but today it's Dupont Street--

MDG: --Oh!--

TM: --and the Symington Avenue area. So um...it, ah, I don't know were, what in particular you would call it, the Junction I guess.

MDG: Oh.

TM: It was in uh, the Junction. There was uh, a Friuliano [?] community there.

MDG: Hmmm mmm.

TM: And I guess, you know, you just sort of stick to your, your own.

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

TM: Uh, there, there, because of the language and at, at that time the Depression was hitting and of course you wanted to be with your own for help and whatever.

MDG: Yeah, and did you have family here as well?

TM: No, nope. There was no uh, no aunts, no uncles, no cousins, no one. My parents were here on their own. Both of them. None--neither my father nor my mother had family here. They were just on their own.

MDG: [Says faintly] Oh my God.

TM: And, and friends meant a lot.

[0:5:07.9]

MDG: [Says faintly] Yeah. I'm sure, and, and so there was a lot of Friulani uh in the area.

TM: Yes.

MDG: Yeah and was there any other ethnic groups uh living there? Or any other uh immigrants family?

TM: Oh yes, there was uh quite a few, [Stutters, unclear] quite a few. Uh, uh and they were--we were more or less, um...you know all went to St. Mary the Angels Church on Dufferin Street there, and that was the meeting place for all im--all immigrants you might say.

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm mmm.

TM: And uh...But oth--other than that there we--there was a mixture, there was a mixture of immigrants. Friulani and uh whatever other kind you know of Italians. But we were all in the same boat and everybody helped each other.

MDG: And, and where did your parents find work? Did they find work? Uh here--

TM: --My mother never worked--

MDG: -- [Says faintly] Hmmm mmm--

TM: --and uh my father, unfortunately, wa--had uh, some health problems, and uh he found a day's work here and there, and wherever, wherever he could.

MDG: [Says faintly] Yeah.

TM: You know. And uh we were um...what, what can I say, relied on, on the city for we--welfare more or less, you know. Uh.

MDG: Was it called relief at that time?

TM: Yes.

MDG: Yeah.

TM: Yeah it was the relief, you know.

MDG: Yeah.

TM: They gave you bonus--they gave you cheques and uh, uh, so much for this and so much for that. And uh of course the baker, and the milkman, and the grocery, they--if you don't--didn't use your quota, they would give you uh the, the rest back in cash and uh--

MDG: -- [Says faintly] Ohhhh--

TM: --So you would put it toward other groceries or something like--to that effect.

MDG: Okay so it wasn't um, how did the quota work like how, how that--so you would get a cheque every month or you would get an allotment per store or something like that?

TM: Well you would get so much for the baker, so much for the milkman, and so much for the grocery store. So uh if you didn't, er, eh use all the, you know your allotment for the eh--bread--

MDG: --Hmmm mmm--

TM: --well the baker would give you back 20 cents, 50 cents, whatever.

MDG: Oh!

TM: And 15 cents in those days went a lot of ways. [Chuckles]

MDG: Yeah.

TM: So, so you would put that towards something else.

MDG: Oh. And did you share the family home with other families? Or what--did, did your family rent a space?

TM: Yes, we rented uh, we rented two rooms on Symington Avenue.

MDG: [Says faintly] Yeah.

TM: Yeah.

MDG: And what, what--do you remember what that was like living with other families or?

TM: We--well at one time, the family that we were living with, um, they were very kind people and uh there was another family living there. We were all crowded together, and we all shared. And uh there was the--uh--this other family they had two rooms in the attic.

MDG: [Says faintly] Oh.

TM: And uh, and the landlady and the landlord they, they also had a couple of boarders so we were all in--

MDG: --in there.

TM: In, in one big house, the whole bunch of us! And there was, let's see, two, four, about eight kids in the house.

MDG: Oh my goodness.

TM: At that time.

MDG: Wow, how many bathrooms? [Laughs]

TM: One! [Laughs]

MDG: Just one! Wow!

TM: [Laughs] Just, just one. And we, and we made do.

MDG: Yeah.

TM: We made do. You didn't, you didn't stall in the bathroom. You went--

MDG: -- [Unclear]--

TM: --Yes, yes--

MDG: --Yeah--

TM: --you just did and, and you dashed out you know, to, to make room for others.

MDG: Yeah. Hmmm.

TM: Yup, yup.

MDG: And so did you go to school or, or did you work um?

TM: I went to uh St. Rita's Ca--Separate School and, and then um when I uh graduated from my grade eight, I started to work uh because it was necessary and that's when the war broke out.

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

TM: And it was very, very difficult to find a job. And uh you uh, you went to look for work and soon as they heard the name, and they say, "You Italian?" And you'd said, "Yes." And, "No work! No, I'm sorry." You know. And uh, I...well from the month of June 'til about November, I could not find a job and I travelled all over. And I ended up by--uh someone was kind enough to um...let me know of a job and I went in as a domestic.

MDG: Okay.

TM: So that's where I ended up in a, in a household with four children and you know--

MDG: --Yeah--

TM: --and thankful to have a job. [Nods and smiles]

MDG: And what is just because of your, your last name or was it for any other--were you a part of Italian groups or--

TM: --No, no, um my father belonged to a club that was called Fratanzana [?]

MDG: Hmmm.

TM: And um, but that didn't have anything to do with it. It was just because you were Italian.

MDG: [Says faintly] Oh.

TM: They, they all of a sudden Italians were just...smeared. They were looked down upon, you know. Soon as they heard the Italian name they just--

MDG: -- [Says faintly] Wow--

TM: --"Nope sorry!" And some of them didn't even say sorry, they just said, "No!"

MDG: [Says faintly] Oh my gosh.

TM: Yup.

MDG: And was this also happening to um, your brother or to your--

TM: --No my brother, my brother was too young, he eh, he was too young to, to be involved in, in, in this. And uh, but then again, he was born here so it would have been a different situation for--but uh, no, I knew of other young ladies that uh, young women that had that problem too.

MDG: [Says faintly] Oh.

TM: And uh--unless they were already in a job...they--but to go out and find a job it was very difficult.

MDG: [Says faintly] Ohhh. And what did you--do you remember what your parents thought of, of this when you would come home and say you know you didn't get a job because of--

TM: --Well, they, they were very disappointed and, and of course uh I was...too young really to uh understand the impact of the, of the political uh play at the time.

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm mmm.

TM: Uh, I co--I would hear my father of talking with other men about politics, and, and uh but I wasn't interested in those things. I was interested that I have to find a job, I, I need this, you know you're, you're sixteen, you're starting off in life, and there's so many things that you that you, you want and you see, that you say, "Well why can't I have it?" But--

MDG: [Says faintly] Ohhh.

TM: --there was no money and, and you, you wanted but you couldn't get--

MDG:--[Says faintly] Ohhh--

TM: --Though.

MDG: Wow. And did you have to um report uh monthly?

TM: Yes, I uh, I was told um...uh notices came out and I was told that uh, as an al--I was an alien and I had to report to the police station. And I remember um...going to a--the police station on Keele and Dundas. I think it's still there, Di--Division 13, and then I was told to go to another police station, and it was on Oakwood...near Vaughan Rd. And I went up there and I was fingerprinted, just like a criminal, and um, uh, I, I, at the time, I thought, This is a joke.

MDG: [Says faintly] Ohhh.

TM: And I had to report once a week--

MDG: --Once a week?!--

TM: --Yes, I had to report once a week and, and this was for a couple of months.

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm mmm.

TM: And then when I found my domestic job, I went and I told them that I couldn't report because I was uh [Stutters, unclear] moving into this home and where I was going and everything. And I had to give them the address of where I was going. And they says, "Well then you can report once a month." So I did that for a couple of months and then I said, "This is inconvenient for me." So they said, "Okay, okay." And then I didn't report anymore.

[0:15:12.2]

MDG: Nooo?

TM: No.

MDG: And so did they ever give you a reason or a formal, um, you know a formal um paper sort of saying this is why you had to be fingerprinted?--

TM: --Nope.

MDG: No.

TM: No.

MDG: No.

TM: No. You, you know, I ne--I don't, I don't remember them ever I--all I know is I was told because uh Italy had gone to war and I was not a, a Canadian citizen. And I--like I explained to them that my parents were and I brought in my dad's citizenship paper and they said, "That's your father's, that's not you."

MDG: Wow.

TM: And uh, and so I, again as I said, I, I wasn't really, really that knowledgeable about it and uh you just sort of went along.

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm mmm.

TM: So--

MDG: --And were there other, um, friends of yours that also had to be fingerprinted or [Unclear]--

TM: --I think there was uh, if I remember correctly there was another girl that lived um down the street and she had to go and she was fingerprinted. But the um, the young lady that was living, the--at whose home that we were living at, uh she was born here, so she didn't, uh, uh and then, and the children of the landlady they were all born here.

MDG: The landlady was also Italian?

TM: Yes, yes, yes.

MDG: And what was their names just to--

TM: --Their names were Di Monte.

MDG: Oh.

TM: Yeah.

MDG: Yeah.

TM: Yeah so they uh, in, in fact one of her, her son that was born in um, in Italy, he had uh moved to the States.

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

TM: --And so he was in the States at that time when the war broke out. And her other children were born here and one of her sons uh ended by going into the navy.

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

TM: So uh, you, you know they uh, but they, as again, they were born here so they were, they were okay, you know.

MDG: And was there talk, or did you see uh any other families um having their dads interned or taken to camp Petawawa?

TM: Um...Yes, I knew of one family whose uh father was interned but uh, they--we, we--it was um--we knew, I, well I--my parents--

MDG: -- [Says faintly] Hmm mmm--

TM: --I should say, knew of--uh knew him more than I did.

MDG: [Says faintly] Yeah.

TM: But, but he has, uh he and his wife have since passed away.

MDG: Okay and what was their name? Or what were their names?

TM: Di Valentine.

MDG: [Says faintly] Di Valentine. And again from the Friula--Friu--

TM: --Yes, yes, yes, yeah you know. So.

MDG: Yeah.

TM: But uh, it, it was a, it was a hard time.

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm mmm.

TM: It was a hard time at that period.

MDG: Yeah, and, and the family you went to work for as a domestic, were they Italian as well?

TM: Yes, yes they were dom--they were Italian.

MDG: And what was that family's uh name?

TM: Filacetti [?]

MDG: Filacetti.

TM: Yes, yes. They were--they, they uh [Pause] they were from Calabria.

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

TM: Yeah, wonderful people, yeah.

MDG: And how did this all make you feel having to report? I, I know that you mentioned you thinking--you not thinking much of it or thinking it was a joke and a bit of hassle. Was there anything else that you, you remember feeling, any resentment or anger, um at the time--

TM: --Well yes uh, uh at the time, especially when you, you were turned down for a job.

MDG: [Says faintly] Yeah.

TM: You, you'd say, "What have I got to do with it?! I'm here. I'm not over there, you know. I have nothing to do with it. So wha--how--why, uh why turn me away for this?" And uh, and you just got these shotty looks uh as if to say, you, you know you're a criminal or something. And, and uh...and, and of course when you went out any--if you went out [Clears throat] --excuse me-- if you went uh downtown shopping or something, and, and uh you didn't look Italian but if they heard the name and they put it together, you, you'd get these side looks. You know people--"Oh you're at war with us, you're a criminal." You know and it--So silly! So silly!

MDG: [Says faintly] Yeah.

TM: So people talk about discrimination today, they, they truly don't know what discrimination is.

MDG: [Says faintly] Yeah. Yeah.

TM: But.

[0:20:30.2]

MDG: And um...so after uh--was it the RCMP or was it the police that you had to, to report to? Do you remember if it was the RCMP or--

TM: --The police--

MDG: --It was actually the police.

TM: Yeah.

MDG: Yeah.

TM: Yeah, yeah. It was the R--RCMP that uh had put out the orders--

MDG: --Okay--

TM: --but uh, you, you went to the police station.

MDG: And you received the order by mail or [Unclear]--

TM: --You know to be honestly truthful with you--

MDG: --Yeah--

TM: --I can't remember.

MDG: Can't remember. Yeah.

TM: I can't--I, I really can't remember. All I know is I was told, "You had to go."

MDG: Yeah.

TM: You know. And I, I [Pause] so far back that--

MDG: -- [Says faintly] Hmmm--

TM: --it, it's slipped my mind.

MDG: Well it was many years ago now so.

TM: Yeah, too many. [Laughs]

MDG: Yeah. Yeah.

TM: But I'm thankful I'm here to be able to tell this story.

MDG: And then after the war ended, how did your life change, ah after the--uh after 1945?

TM: Well the first thing I did after the war changed, I went and made application to become a citizen. [Laughs]

MDG: [Laughs] Yeah?

TM: That was the first thing I did because then of course um people after a while relaxed and things went back to normal--

MDG: --Hmmm mmm--

TM: --and uh, and I did get a job and uh and then I went to uh apply for my citizenship papers. And, and I [Clears throat] re--remember I had to uh, bring someone in that knew me and uh...I didn't want anyone to lose a day's work to come in and vouch for me, so I asked this uh fella that worked with me and I says, "Would you come with me and you know lie about it? You've known me for three years but you gotta say you've known me for five." And he, he did come

and, and uh, he slipped and he says, "Oh I've only known her--" You know, so he wasn't accepted so I had to find somebody else. [Chuckles]

MDG: --Oh that's [Unclear]--

TM: --So it was another date that you had to make you--[Chuckles]

MDG: Oh my goodness.

TM: But eh, eh but soon as I got--uh I know one time, my friend and I wanted to cross to go over to Niagara Falls and of course, I didn't um...I didn't have uh any papers or anything, and I--no passport to go over to Niagara Falls. And uh, uh I had to lie my way through--

MDG: -- [Says faintly] Yeah.

TM: I went and uh...to the priest at St. Mary the Angels. And I told him I...uh...uh, a song-and-dance story and he wrote me a letter and, and with that letter I got across the border.

MDG: And who was the priest back then?

TM: I don't remember.

MDG: You don't remember.

TM: I don't remember, you know, but, but uh I'll have to pay for that one! [Laughs]

MDG: [Laughs] Oh goodness, I don't think so! [Laughs]

TM: [Laughs]

MDG: Um, so you, you mentioned that you got a new job, or a different job? Eh, um, was it in a different type of field or the same--

TM: --It, it was in uh, it was in uh, um, a plumbing fa--a plumbing warehouse and uh, and I was the, I was doing a bit of everything there. And, and uh and they were all young fellas because it, it--all the old ones had gone off to war.

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

TM: And then the older ones came back, and of course well by this time the, the firm got bigger and so they could take--have--keep the new ones and take on the old ones again, you know. But, but it changed, it changed.

MDG: And speaking of which um, how did the women, the role of women change during the war years, having uh a lot of the men taken away? How did that change? Do you remember any, anything like that?

TM: Well, eh it, it opened doors for women. It, it opened doors for women. Women were allowed then to do different kinds of jobs that before they weren't even thought that a woman could do such a job. And uh, it, the, it, it really did open doors and socially as well, as uh, uh work-wise.

[0:25:29.4]

MDG: Hmmm mmm.

TM: It, it sort of helped the women co--come alive.

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

TM: We re--we realized that we could do things on our own.

MDG: Yeah sure.

TM: Yeah.

MDG: Yeah. And um, and then when the men came back did they have to leave a lot of the jobs that they were, they were doing in order to make room?

TM: Well some women went ba--uh, some women star--you know stayed at home and raised families and uh some made careers out of their jobs, and, and then um, the workforce um [Pause] opened up. The workforce opened up and there, there was room for women and men. Yeah.

MDG: And um socially, let's s--what would--um--even during the war years or shortly after, what would, what would um, I guess a young woman, or what would you do for fun? Um, when you weren't having to report and things like [Says while laughing] things like that.

TM: Well, I was a good movie-goer. [Laughs]

MDG: Oh yeah?

TM: I, I enjoyed the movies and uh, and then of course there was the uh, the dances down at the um, um...ohhhh! What is it?

MDG: --Was it the Palais Royale?

TM: The Palais Royale yes. There was there and then the summer dances in uh, the Sea Breeze and all, all the sunny side strip there you know. And uh, and then um your own clubs, uh your own national clubs held dances.

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm mmm.

TM: And uh, and there, there were--we were socially busy.

MDG: Yeah?

TM: Yeah.

MDG: Yeah.

TM: Yeah.

MDG: And were you part of the Friuli club? Was it around um--

TM: --Yes the Famee Friulani uh, uh...was founded in 1932.

MDG: Hmmm mmm.

TM: It was a bit of standstill for a while during the war there. But then afterwards and then in 1938, there was the Societa Famee Firulani [?] that was opened up and uh well I was too young for the old ladies at that time. What we call you know, uh what, what the teenagers call us today we called--

MDG: -- [Laughs]--

TM: --our grandmothers then! You know. But, but um, they held dances and uh yes, we were uh, busy little bees.

MDG: Busy bees? And, and where did you meet your husband?

TM: Uh--

MDG: -- [Unclear]--

TM: I, I met my husband--well my husband was an immigrant. He came in 1948 to Canada. And uh we met at uh, at a dance at St. Mary of the Angels Church.

MDG: Oooh.

TM: Uh, uh a Friulani dance at uh St. Marys the Angels. That was the meeting grounds
[Chuckles]--

MDG: -- [Laughs]--

TM: --at those days. You, you know uh, a lot of the immigrants thought, the--they were having Sunday night dances at the church. And a lot of the immigrants, oh my God! They're dancing at the bottom, you know downstairs in the church. Couldn't believe it!

MDG: Yeah!

TM: Couldn't believe it! But--

MDG: --Yeah and what they--would they have a band or, or was it just you know [Unclear]--

TM: --Oh bands! Bands! They had, they had live bands you--they, there was quite, quite a few people had little bands going you know. So it was quite lively.

MDG: Yeah.

TM: Yeah.

MDG: Yeah. And what was your husband's name?

TM: Leopoldo. Leopoldo Mongiat. Yeah.

MDG: And so he was uh, I guess he was a recent immigrant.

TM: Yes.

MDG: And uh, how your family--what, what did your family think of, of you dating a recent immigrant, um having been here for a few years by then?

TM: Well, they were pleased.

MDG: Yeah.

TM: They were very pleased. And uh, uh...my, my husband says, "I came around because your father offered me wine!" [TM and MDG laugh in unison] And of course, for, for a recent immigrant, you know, uh-
-we're used to their wine in Italy and they came here and of course our liquor laws were a little bit more strict those days. And you know, everybody had homemade wine and but these poor immigrants they were starved, you might say, and so when he came and my father offered him wine, he thought, Oh wow this is great!

MDG: This is great!

TM: [Laughs]

MDG: [Chuckles] That's wonderful. Yeah.

TM: Yeah.

MDG: And, and when were you, when were you married?

[0:30:40.4]

TM: I was married in November of 1949.

MDG: Okay.

TM: Yeah.

MDG: Yeah. And where was your, your wedding uh reception? And uh--at, at St.--did you get married at St. Mary of the Angels?

TM: No, uh I didn't. I got married at St. Cecilia's Church on Annette Street and we had our uh wedding reception at uh the Italian Recreation Club on Brandon Street.

MDG: Oh.

TM: That was the...in thing!

MDG: In thing!

TM: Oh that was the big thing that was opened um, that was opened that year in July, they had the official opening of it and uh it was wow, the Brandon Club you know and, and you probably heard many romances starting up at the Brandon Club--

MDG: --Yeah--

TM: --because they used to have Sat--uh Sunday afternoon dances and what not. So it was, quite a few--I, I think if Brandon Club could tell a story--

MDG: --Ha! It would have a lot to say?! [MDG and TM laugh in unison]

TM: It would have a lot to say. Yes, yes.

MDG: Oh, that's great. And then um, did you have any children or?

TM: Yes, I had--I have three children. I have a daughter and two sons.

MDG: Oh. And is it important for you to tell the story also for--so that your children uh know what happened to you or have you tell them?

TM: Oh they know.

MDG: They know.

TM: They, they know the story. And they think it's uh, a big joke. "Hey, my mother was fingerprinted!" [TM and MDG chuckles in unison] You know, the--when they first heard it they thought, Oh my mother! Fingerprinted! [Chuckles] You know. And, and uh, but they've, they've heard the story many a time. We--we've--I've told them. I've ah, I, I believe that they should know--

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

TM: --that uh, the--their grandparents had a hard time.

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

TM: And uh, and it wasn't easy growing up uh during, during the thir--during the thirties and forties. A lot has changed, a lot has changed and boy have we improved.

MDG: Yeah.

TM: Since then.

MDG: Yeah.

TM: Yeah. Mmmm.

MDG: And now do you still maintain strong ties with the Friulan uh--

TM: --Yes, I do. I do. Yes, I, uh, I'm a member of the Friulana Club and a member of the um...Societa Famiglia [?]

MDG: Yeah.

TM: I still--although my children never have found it in them to uh, to follow in their father's footsteps and then my footsteps but uh they know how I feel. In, in 2000, in the year 2000 uh we ce-- [Stutters, unclear] the year before we celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary and instead of having a big party, we all--we took our children back to Italy to show them where my husband's hometown was and where I--where my hometown was and we showed them where I was born and where their father was born. And uh, they--it was a real eye-opener for them

MDG: Hmmm.

TM: Even for my son-in-law who's a Newfie. [Smiles and chuckles]

MDG: [Laughs] Yeah, well I'm sure! To see where your parents were born and whe--how come they have come--

TM: --Yes, yes--

MDG: -- [Unclear] a really wonderful--

TM: --Well my son-in-law um he said to my husband, he says uh...he said, "You know." He says, "To leave a beautiful place like this," he says, "must have been very, very hard."

MDG: Hmmm.

TM: He said, "Now," uh he says. "Now," he says, "I have a different opinion of immigrants."

MDG: Wow.

TM: He, he really um, he, he really felt that you know um...he, he dealt with immigrants and whatever, and, and he says, "Now I can understand the immigrant a little better. To leave a beautiful place like this." And he says, "It must have been very, very hard."

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

TM: And I thought, Wow that was worth the m--the, the pre--

MDG: -- [Unclear]--

TM: --Yes. Yes. To, to hear them you, you know especially someone who didn't--never even thought--

MDG: --Yeah.

TM: But when he saw, when he saw Italy, and uh, because they did some travelling on their own afterwards there, and when he, he says, "What beauty."

[0:35.41.0]

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm mmm.

TM: You know. So.

MDG: Are there any stories that you can, you can think of uh from that time period, or any other stories that you'd like to share with us today?

TM: Well [Pause] the...you, you know in those days maybe we were poor.

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm mmm.

TM: But there was a certain...comra--[Stutters, unclear] being comrades helping each other. [Stutters, unclear] One for all and all for one. I, I re--I remember going to uh Lambton Park. That's uh ...around the Runnymede area, Dundas and Runnymede area. The Famee Friulani would hold their picnics there and uh, a few people had cars or trucks. So they would say, "Be

at a certain time at a certain spot and someone will come by and pick you up." Because not too many of people had cars. So they, they wo--they would all cooperate they would be all, you know. And then you would go out there and it would be just one happy family.

MDG: Yeah.

TM: The--those, those are things that uh...are--they stay with you.

MDG: [Says faintly] Yeah.

TM: They, they stay with you--

MDG: --Community and bonding and, and getting together--

TM: --Yes--

MDG: --to get through everything. All those challenges and--

TM:--Yeah--

MDG: --Yeah.

TM: Yeah.

MDG: And when you then saw the influx of Italians in the fifties and sixties, was it different from [Stutters, unclear] you having been here for many years [Unclear]--

TM: --Well uh, having that influx, I was very fortunate; I was living with my parents. I had um, I had my daughter and I was living at uh, with, with my parents. And um, people needed help.

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

TM: And so knowing the language, the English and the Italian, people would come by and say, "Can you help me...do this?" or "Can you take me here?" Or doctor's appointments or go here or go there. And uh, I remember going, practically every other day taking someone to an appointment somewhere either the--I, I often went to the unemployment office with people and uh, or interviews for jobs, and doctor's appointments and dentist's appointments. Uh, you name it, I was there. I was, I used to say, "They helped me and now let--my turn to help them."

MDG: So you never forgot those people that helped your family?

TM: No, no. We--eh--you know you asked me, there was uh, an English woman who lived next door to where we lived and she had a little boy. And she used to let me play with her little boy and she'd be forever correcting my English. She'd say, "No, you don't say it like that. You, you--" Very nicely, very nicely. And it hel--it really helped because my, my parents didn't speak English, they only spoke Friulano.

MDG: [Says faintly] Hmmm mmm.

TM: And um...so I didn't really get to practice English you--i--in school--outside of school and this Mrs. Jack she would uh correct me and she would say, "No, the proper way" or "the proper--" and, and it really, really helped. It really helped me. And, and I had a teacher who very--really helped me with my eh, uh, English and my correction of the English and what not. And, and you, you don't forget, you don't forget the help that you got. And when I, when I could

help either fill out papers or whatever, I did it. And I was happy to do it. Because I, I could leave my daughter with my mother and then I could uh, you know, take off and help these people whichever way I could.

MDG: Hmm.

TM: And you know lot of people remembered, they, they say, "You helped us so whatever." But uh, it always comes back.

MDG: It always comes back.

TM: It always comes back, yes.

MDG: Well thank you so much for sitting with us today and sharing your life history.

TM: You're, you're welcome. It's been a pleasure.

MDG: It's been my pleasure. [Laughs] It really has.

[Fades out at 0:41:01.4]