

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

**DATE OF INTERVIEW:** November 20, 2011

**LOCATION OF INTERVIEW:** Niagara Falls, ON

**NAME OF INTERVIEWEE:** Irene Paone

**NAME OF INTERVIEWERS:** Sarah Cozzi and Ernesto Virgulti

**NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER:** Spencer Johnston

**TRANSCRIBED BY:** Melinda Richter

**DATE TRANSCRIBED:** February 8, 2012

**ACCESSION No.:** ICEA2011.0078.0001

**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 has not edited this transcript for errors.**

**KEYWORDS/TAGS**

Niagara, NiagaraFalls, Paone, IrenePaone, RalphPaone, RaffaelePaone, Interned, Internee, Internees, internment, EnemyAlien, EnemyAliens, ExhibitionGrounds, Exhibition, CNE, Petawawa, CampPetawawa, camp, camps, CampLife, Canada, Canadian, Canadians, Italy, Italian, Italians, ItalianCanadian, ItalianCanadians, Family, Work, CanadianArmy, CanadianServices, FirstWorldWar, WWI, WW1, WorldWarOne, SecondWorldWar, WWII, WW2, WorldWarTwo, war, RCMP, RoyalMountedPolice, MountedPolice, FamilyBusiness, immigrant, immigrants, immigration, immigrated, CanadianGovernment, shoemaker, Covelli, LeoCovelli, LeonardoCovelli, JoeDenis, NorthernCompany, grocery, GroceryStore, McDonaldGrocery, familybusiness, SonsofItaly, OrderSonsofItaly

**ABSTRACT**

Irene Paone was born on October 24, 1914 in Italy. She came to Canada when she was 13 years old.

Her husband, Ralph Paone, was also born in Italy (b. September 22, 1910) and came to Canada when he was 14 years old. The couple met while they were visiting Leonardo Covelli's house in Niagara Falls. (Note: Covelli was also interned). Ralph lost a leg in an accident working at a paper mill before they were married. After they were married Ralph opened a shoemaker shop. In 1940, Ralph was arrested by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and taken to the Niagara Falls jail. From there he was taken to the Exhibition Grounds in Toronto and then on to Petawawa. He was in the camp for six months until he got sick and was sent home. During Ralph's internment, Irene got a job cleaning a motel. When Ralph got home he sold all the shoemaking machinery, took a year off and then got a cleaning job at the Northern Company in Chippewa. He worked there for three years before opening up McDonald Grocery with Irene and his sister. The Paones sold the grocery store in 1954; Ralph then worked at the post office as a janitor. While Ralph was interned, Irene's brother, Rocco, fought for Canada in the Second World War; Rocco died in battle in Normandy in 1945. Irene's father also fought for Canada but in the First World War. Irene speaks a bit about the other members of the Italian community in Niagara Falls who were interned and about the location and activities that went on at the Sons of Italy Hall.

## **INTERVIEW**

**IP: Irene Paone, interviewee**

**SC: Sarah Cozzi, interviewer**

**EV: Ernesto Virgulti, interviewer**

**SJ: Spencer Johnston, videographer**

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 00:00:11]

[Text: Irene Paone. Wife of internee Raffaele (Ralph) Paone]

IP: My name is Irene Paone. I was born October the 24<sup>th</sup>, 1914. I was born in Italy, Figline Vegliaturo, Provincia Cosenza. Okay? And I was, and I, I was Ralph Paone's wife.

EV: And where was Ralph born?

IP: Ralph was born in Aprigliano...Aprigliano, Agosto, Provincia Cosenza.

EV: When?

IP: Ah, 19—1910.

EV: 1910.

IP: September the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

EV: Did you meet there?

IP: We met here in Niagara Falls.

EV: Oh, here. Not over there.

IP: R-Ralph was only 14 years old when he came from Italy. I was 13 years old when I came from Italy. So we met here.



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

EV: And how did you get to know each other?

IP: We happened to visit Leo Covelli's w, uh, house.

EV: Okay.

IP: That's where we met.

EV: And Leo was—

IP: Leo was Ralph's first cousin.

EV: And he was interned too.

IP: He was interned too. [nods]

EV: Yeah. Okay. So when you, you met and you had a, a...

IP: We met over Leo Covelli's wife. Ralph walked me home. From then on we both fell in love—

EV: Mmmhmm.

IP: It was love first sight. [smiles]

EV: And how long, how long did you date until you got married?

IP: Uh, well we got married after two years because he was, uh, he was working at the Ontario paper mill and he lost his leg. He got hurt and he lost his leg. So he was in the hospital for about six months. But being that I was in, we were in love before, we were going to get married, I still married him.

EV: So that didn't bother you.

IP: Didn't bother me.

EV: Yeah.

IP: We loved each other. We were married for 71 years.

EV: Wow. Wow.

Unknown: 72 and a half.

IP: Uh. Well. Yeah.

EV: Um, so when did you get married?

IP: We got married, uh, um, 1932.

EV: Okay.

IP: January the 9<sup>th</sup>.

EV: And Ralph lost his leg when?

IP: Ralph lost his leg in 1930.

EV: Okay. What happened at the paper mill?

IP: He was uh, his leg got on a belt. He put his leg up. He tried to open a window and he put his leg on, on the, on the belt, for the belt to start to go. And he almost got rolled in, in those, you know, those big rolls, you know, paper.

EV: So what happened, so after that, like, what kind of work did he do?

IP: Then the—

EV: Did he get compensation?

IP: Then he was—He got compensation. He was getting only \$27.50 a month. And then he couldn't work any other places. So he learned to sh—to be a shoemaker.

EV: And where did, did he open up his own place?

IP: He opened up his own place, yes.

EV: Which was where?

IP: At the corner of, uh, Portage Road and the, the, uh, Old Stone Road.



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

EV: Old Stone.

IP: Yeah.

EV: Not far from here.

IP: No.

[Camera moves up and down]

EV: Um, so, when you, after you got married and, uh, he started working as a shoemaker. Uh, the kids came around how many kids did you have?

IP: How many—?

EV: Children.

IP: Only one.

EV: Just the one?

[Someone laughs]

EV: Just the one. And, uh, so life was pretty good?



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

IP: Y—

EV: I mean, notwithstanding he had his—

IP: We lived with my mother-in-law and father-in-law.

EV: But things were okay.

IP: They were—Everything was okay.

EV: And so did he start getting involved, did Ralph start getting involved in the Italian community? Uh, was he in the Sons of Italy?

IP: No.

EV: No.

IP: No. The only place we both [SC coughs] enjoyed was the, the Sons of Italy.

EV: Yeah.

IP: We—

EV: He wasn't part of the, uh—

IP: Nothing. Nothing. No.



EV: So, uh, what do you think happened? Why, why do you think they, that he was picked up?

IP: Ralph never, he never used to get together with people or whatever. He was really a quiet man, very quiet, you know? And, uh, I don't know what happened. There was, um, at, uh, [clears her throat] uh...you know, the member at the, uh, Sons of Italy—

EV: Yeah.

IP: —they had little arguments there so they split up.

EV: So this is the, the Marconi Club or something?

IP: No. Ours was the Sons of Italy.

EV: Right.

IP: The other one was the Ito Canadian[?].

EV: Okay.

IP: They split up.

EV: But they were together at one time.

IP: At one time we were all together.

EV: Hmm.

IP: And then they split up. See and those members, some of the members, they tried to get some of the members from the Sons of Italy to go over there.

EV: Right.

IP: And, you know, and they didn't so what they, I guess, we thought that this would happen. Because the, they called. See nobody went to the, to the Mounties in person. They just called. And then—

EV: But you think it was because the, because the club had—

IP: Well—

EV: —split.

IP: —we don't know. But my husband—I mean, we didn't have no enemy. We were fiends with everybody.

EV: Yeah.

IP: I mean, we don't know what happened. He just, you know, they just picked him up and that was it. And nobody said nothing why they picked him up.

SC: No explanation.



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

IP: See?

EV: Now, we'll talk about that after but I'm trying to find why—What about his cousin was Covelli?

IP: Covelli wasn't even—He didn't even belong in, uh, uh, Sons of Italy.

EV: Oh, but he got picked up too.

IP: He got picked up too.

EV: Hmm. So you don't know why.

IP: We don't know why, no.

EV: You don't know why it happened.

IP: No. No.

EV: Okay.

[fades out at 00:06:45]

[fades in at 00:06:46]

IP: While the people were calling and the mounties came to pick everyone up, well then our doctor from the lodge, uh, went to the police there, when they were there. And he said, uh, “Well, you've

been picking all those people from the Sons of Italy. I'm the doctor. So then you should pick me up too." Since then they, they, uh, people had to go over there and report people. They, they didn't believe anybody else by phone.

EV: Do you know who the doctor was?

IP: Doctor Brown.

EV: Oh really?

IP: He had his office on, uh, Victoria Avenue.

EV: He wasn't Italian.

IP: No.

EV: No.

IP: No.

EV: Okay. So, how was the neighbourhood where you were living?

IP: We were good. We had a good neighbourhood.

EV: Mixed? Italian? Uh, more Italian?

IP: Yeah. There were a few Italians and there were other nationalities. Yeah.

EV: So things were fine?

IP: Oh yeah.

EV: Yeah.

IP: Oh yeah.

SC: Where was the house?

IP: The house was on Robert Street.

EV: And after the police, can you describe what happened when, when Ralph, when they came to arrest Ralph? Can you describe that? Was it in evening? Were you, uh, what time of the day was it?

IP: It was, uh, in the evening. He was still at work. I was home with my, my in-laws, trying to make supper. The...two, uh, Mounties went into the shop. They searched the place. Then they locked the door. They, they kept the key. They followed Ralph home because he had a car there. Ralph came home with the car. He put the car in the garage. The police took the key. And they kept the key from the shop and from the car until Ralph came home.

EV: Oh. They wouldn't give it to you.

IP: No. Nothing. They even stopped the pension that we were getting: \$27.50 a month.

EV: Oh. The disability thing.

IP: That's right. They kept everything until the day he came home.

EV: And you never got that money back after?

IP: Yeah. Yeah. He got it all back. Yeah. Yeah.

EV: So what happened? Uh, so they went to—

IP: They went there after they cl—the locked the door they came over to the house. In the meantime there were other three Mounties at our home. We had three d—We had a house and we had three doors: back door, front door and side door. The whole three doors, the, the, three—They all came in at the same time. They come in just like lightning. They opened the door and they rush right in. And they told us to sit and not to talk. While one was with us in the kitchen. Two others, they went all over the house to search the house. They even moved my mattress. They did everything, you know. They didn't find nothing. Then after they came down and they took Ralph with them. My mother-in-law tried to hug her son. They won't let him. So my mother-in-law, uh, um, she fainted. They didn't care. They just took Ralph and they left. The next day—

[00:10:23]

EV: No, no explanation.

IP: Nothing. Nothing. There were three of them. We, while the other two that had gone into the shop,

they left. There were only three at the house, you know. So, the next day we figured that, uh, where would they be? So we went to the police station...uh, to the jail. We went to the jail. So that's where they were. A few they were in Niagara Falls, few in St. Catherines, few in Welland. They split them all up. So they—

EV: You went to the jail and—

IP: We went to the jail, me and my mother-in-law. They let me see Ralph for about five minutes. They won't let my mother-in-law see her son. Can you imagine how she felt? So then a few days, few days later in the same week, we, we didn't know where they were at because we knew that they weren't in jail no more here. So through some friends of ours who were in Toronto and they happened to walk on the Exhibition Ground. So they let us know that they were there, which, which the Mounties wouldn't tell us where they were. So we went, me and Mrs. Covelli, we got somebody and we went to the Exhibition Ground. We went there and they told us that there was nobody there, while they were there. A couple days later, somebody else let us know that they were there. So again we got somebody else and we got there again. Then, then we, we were able to see them. But only for ten minutes.

EV: Wow.

IP: See.

EV: Can you describe how it was? What did Ralph say, um, what did he tell you?

IP: Well, you know, he was having trouble with his leg. He needed stuff for his leg. So then we had to, we had to go back. We came home and the next day we went back again. They were gone, you know?

EV: Hmm.

IP: Yeah. They took them to Petawawa with a truck. They had such a hard time and there was another guy there. Um, his name was, uh, Patsy, uh, Sulfie, Sulfi[?]. I guess you have it there too.

EV: Yeah.

IP: He was a, a handicap too. He could—He couldn't even get up to the, to the truck.

EV: Hmm.

IP: You know? So one police, one of them guards with the, with the rifle, he pushed them right at the back, he says, "If you don't get the hell out and go in there I'm going to shoot." Can you imagine?

EV: Right.

IP: You know, them with one leg, you know, to get up on the truck was hard, you know. Anyway they went. We didn't know where they, where they had gone. Then, uh, maybe a week later or something we received a letter. They let them write a letter to us. And we could write back then. There was the only thing then.

EV: So when you went to the Exhibition to see Ralph, uh, how many people were there there? How many people were interned? Did you see any others?

IP: Well, there—All the ones from Niagara Falls were there.



EV: Yeah. Roughly—You recognized all those people.

IP: Yeah. Oh, I, we know them all.

EV: Yeah.

IP: You know, we were all friends.

EV: So what, ten, fifteen, twenty? More or less?

IP: I, I, I don't remember how many.

EV: But there were a lot of people there from all over the place?

IP: Yeah, there were other people there too. Yeah.

EV: Okay. So he, did Ralph tell you how he was treated in the jail and then at the Exhibition?

IP: No. He couldn't say nothing because there was a guard right there.

EV: Right. So he couldn't talk.

IP: Yeah. And while—I went in first. Then Mrs. Covelli went after. While I was waiting outside they had a guard there. And he asked me, he says, “Hey lady, why don't you come out with me tonight? We're going to have a good time. You don't know. You're not going to see your husband no more.” You know,

that was terrible.

EV: Right.

IP: But at that time we, I was afraid. If it was now I would have told him, you know, where to go, you know? But I didn't say nothing. You know, I just took it and, and that was it.

EV: Yeah, so not only your husband was treated like—

IP: Yeah.

EV: —an animal, but basically—

IP: Yeah. Yeah.

EV: —tried to get—Yeah.

IP: Yeah. They tried to, you know. [shrugs]

[fades out at 00:15:29]

[fades in at 00:15:30]

EV: So Irene, you said that you weren't able to see him and, uh, did your mother-in-law come to, uh, the Exhibition?

IP: No.

EV: No. They wouldn't let her.

IP: [shakes her head]

EV: Uh—

IP: Well, no, she didn't try to come.

EV: Because they didn't let her see him in the jail.

IP: No. In the jail, no.

EV: So tell us about how your mother-in-law reacted to all of this. Was this—This was her only son here?

IP: That's the only son.

EV: Yeah.

IP: Yeah.

EV: So she must have been pretty just—

IP: She felt terrible. She, she was sick over this. Yeah.

EV: Yeah. Could you tell us about—

IP: I don't know. She couldn't even talk even talk to him, you know. Just, uh, they just let me go and see Ralph for five minutes. That was it.

EV: But then once he went to Petawawa you never saw him—

IP: No. Never, never, no.

EV: They wouldn't let you go?

IP: Well, [laughs and shrugs] we didn't go. We didn't have no money.

EV: Yeah.

IP: How, you know?

EV: And we'll talk about that.

IP: Yeah.

EV: So tell us, uh, you only had, uh, a letter after what? Two or three weeks?

IP: Um, about maybe the second week.

EV: Second week.

IP: Yeah.

EV: When he went. So up until then you didn't know—

IP: Yeah. And the letter was written in Italian. Yeah. And I wrote back.

EV: So—

IP: They used to censor the letter. Oh yeah.

EV: Yeah? What do you mean? Did you see some things crossed out or...?

IP: No, there was nothing because we didn't say nothing, you know.

EV: Yeah.

IP: We didn't—Why? We didn't know nothing. We weren't involved with nothing. So, you know.

EV: So the whole time he was there, did you...did they ever tell him why they picked him up?

IP: No. No.

EV: Nothing. He didn't know nothing.

IP: Uh uh.

EV: Uh uh. Um and he, the whole time that he was there—He told you what he did there?

IP: He didn't do too much.

EV: No.

IP: Mr Covelli he to w—He worked.

EV: Yeah.

IP: They had to go cut woods, you know. But my husband didn't. [shakes her head]

EV: W—

IP: With one leg he couldn't do much. Then he got sick.

EV: Oh really?

IP: And, uh, he was the first one home from, you know, in Niagara Falls.

EV: What, what happened? What, what did he get sick from?

IP: He got—He got home on December the 13<sup>th</sup>.

EV: Do you remember when he went in there?

IP: I think it was on June the 28<sup>th</sup>.

EV: Okay.

IP: A—

EV: So he was there about six months?

IP: Yeah. [nods]

EV: So he got sick. Do you remember what he got sick from?

IP: He was so sick. When he come home he was so sick so I don't know if they sent him home for that or for what. I don't know but, you know.

EV: What was it?

IP: He had like bronchitis, you know. It was, yeah. I was getting ready to send him a parcel for Christmas. You know? Me and Mrs. Covelli. And he surprised us. He was, he got home. You know.

EV: But nobody told you he was coming home.

IP: Nobody. Nothing.

EV: So he just showed up.

IP: He just got home and that's it.

EV: How did he get home?

IP: By bus, I think. I don't know how they brought him home.

EV: Wow.

IP: You know. I wasn't home when he came home. And then my father noticed—I guess he went to my father's house to my, my parents'. And my father came to call me where I was.

EV: Hmm.

IP: And when I went home he was home.

EV: So he was the only one to leave?

IP: He was the only one to leave.

EV: Covelli stayed there?

IP: Pardon?

EV: Covelli. His cousin.





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

IP: Oh. Leo Covelli, he was there over a year.

EV: Yeah, so he didn't go. He stayed.

IP: No. No.

EV: Nobody else.

IP: Nobody else.

EV: Yeah.

IP: There was another one came home for Christmas. His name was, uh, Joe Denis. He was the next one home.

EV: So did he tell you what, what he did when he was at the camp? I mean, he couldn't work.

IP: He couldn't do nothing.

EV: Right.

IP: No, no.

EV: No. No. Did he tell you any other stories?

IP: Nothing. My husband was the type that he didn't talk too much about anything, you know.

EV: Do you think he was, um, he just wanted to forget it?

IP: I guess so, you know. I don't know. He, we never talked about anything, really. I, I don't remember asking him, you know, things. I don't know.

EV: Was he ashamed or...?

IP: No. He wasn't because he didn't do nothing wrong, you know.

[00:20:03]

EV: So, Irene, could you tell us while he was at the camp what was life like for you and the family?

IP: Life for me, uh, I, I lived with in-laws. I didn't have no money. Then I had to go and get a job. I got a job in one of the motels. And those motels before, they didn't have no bathrooms inside.

EV: Oh.

IP: So we had to clean the rooms. They used to have a piss-pot and we had to clean that too. Can you imagine? [laughs] I had to do all that job.

EV: Probably for very little money.

IP: It was very little, yeah.



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

EV: So is that how you survived?

IP: That's how I survived, yeah.

EV: What about the s—

IP: But I didn't have to pay no rent because I lived with my in-laws.

EV: What about the shop?

IP: The shop, forget it. It was shot. It was closed. Yeah.

EV: The car you couldn't drive.

IP: The car [shakes her head] no.

EV: Uh, what about, uh, in the neighbourhood. People in the neighbourhood start to treat you differently?

IP: Very nice, no.

EV: No?

IP: No.

EV: That's good.

IP: Well, we weren't allowed to go out on the sidewalk and [picture fades out at 00:21:18 but audio continues] two or three people and talk. At that time—

EV: Really?

IP: At that time— No. Yeah! Really. Italian people, we couldn't get together and, and talk. You find two or three people on the street, we couldn't stop and talk.

EV: What would they do?

IP: What? We weren't allowed to, to, you know, to get together and talk.

[fades in 00:21:38]

IP: We used to ask the Mounties here why they took him and they wouldn't tell us.

EV: They wouldn't tell you.

IP: They wouldn't tell him nothing either. Oh, but you know, they not bother people. We used to hear that, uh, maybe, uh, they thought that, uh, they were, um, f, f, uh, *fasciste*, no?

EV: Yeah, yeah.

IP: That's what they thought they—

EV: Well, they thought, I think because of that split in the, in the club. Are we—?

SJ: We're good. Uh, we left off right at, uh, you can't get two or three people on the sidewalk talking—

IP: That's why they were picked because they thought they were fascists. But we, we came so young from Italy. I mean [laughs].

EV: Yeah. Now this one. This doesn't make sense. I know sometimes the president of the subcommittee or vice-president, these people.

SJ: Yeah. [quiet talking]

IP: The Sons of Italy was everything under the Canadian laws. You know, you know.

SJ: [quiet talking]

EV: Let's go back 'cause he missed the, uh, uh. Let's go back to say you couldn't go outside to talk to your friends.

IP: No. We, we couldn't.

EV: In the neighbourhood.

IP: We couldn't get together, a bunch of us and talk. No. They wouldn't allow it. Not to us. Even other Italians.

EV: And this was during the—

IP: During the war.

EV: During the war.

IP: Yeah.

EV: Okay. So how did they Italians feel during the war? They felt some pressure?

IP: Well, nobody felt good, you know. Because all the people were here. They were no—Maybe in Italy had fascists there.

EV: Yeah.

IP: But not here. Here nobody talked about it. You know.

EV: So they wouldn't allow you to, to talk to your neighbours outside.

IP: With the neighbours, yeah. Like, you know, but not, not. If you met somebody out there, they wouldn't allow you to stop and talk. See?

EV: Other than that the people, you didn't experience any discrimination from other people.

IP: No.



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

EV: No.

IP: That, no. We had a go, uh, to, uh, to the Mounties once a month—

EV: Oh yeah.

IP: —to sign our name.

EV: Any fingerprints?

IP: Yes, the first time we did, yeah.

EV: Fingerprints?

IP: Yeah.

EV: What else, uh...?

IP: Fingerprints and that was all.

EV: Yeah.

IP: Yeah.

EV: So when you sent, what did they do when you signed your name?

IP: They wouldn't, they didn't talk too much. They, we couldn't find out nothing. Mrs Covelli, she tried to ask 'em, you know, "Where are the men? Where did you people send...?" "If you don't shut up we gonna pick you up too," they said and told her. See? We weren't allowed to say nothing.

EV: So all the Italians had to go or just the—

IP: Just us.

EV: The ones whose husbands—

IP: My parents—We were Canadian, uh, citizens. My in-laws didn't have to go. My parents didn't have to go.

EV: Really?

IP: So, you know. Just us.

EV: When did you become a Canadian?

IP: Gee, we came from Italy my father had a citizen—My father came here when he was, uh, 12 years old. His father was working here. You know.

EV: So you were, you were Canadian when you got married.

IP: Oh yeah. I was Canadian, yeah. Even my husband. You know, he was Canadian too. So.



EV: It didn't matter.

IP: [shakes her head]

EV: So tell us, when Ralph came back how was life after that? What did he end up doing? What, uh...?

IP: Nothing.

EV: Nothing?

IP: Until, uh, for, for about a year then he got himself a job at the Northern Company in Chippewa, uh, cleaning, uh, just cleaning, you know. Because he couldn't do any other stuff.

EV: What about the shoesh—The shoe repair?

IP: There was g—He sold the, the machinery and all. We were lucky that we had a, a little, a little bit of room on the side of the garage. When we built the garage we built another little space so I had ever—all the machinery brought in there. So then when Ralph came home he sold it, you know, he didn't want to go back in business anymore.

EV: No?

IP: [shakes her head] No.

EV: Why?



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

IP: [shrugs]

EV: Not for him?

IP: He lost, you know...

EV: Yeah. So he started being, what was he? A janitor, or uh...?

IP: He was a janitor at the, at the, yeah, Northern Company.

EV: The Northern Company. What did they do there?

IP: They used to do, um, I don't know what they—Do you know what they used to do?

Unknown: Make—

IP: Oh, war things I think they used to do, eh?

EV: Yeah.

IP: You know, because—

Unknown: [unknown]

EV: How did he get that job?



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

IP: How did he—?

EV: Yeah.

IP: My father was working there.

EV: Ah.

IP: So he got into there. Yeah.

EV: But he was off for about, what? Eight—

IP: He was off for a while, yeah. For a year, about a year. Yeah.

EV: Yeah. And so after that, how was life? Did life kind of get back to normal?

IP: Then he worked there for, uh, uh, for about three years he worked there. Then, me and, uh, Ralph's sister we opened up a grocery store and, and Ralph, you know, worked there too with us.

EV: When did you open up the grocery store?

IP: We opened in 1946.

EV: Uh, what was it called?

IP: McDonald Grocery.



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

EV: That's a good Italian name.

IP: Yeah. [laughs]

EV: [laughs]

IP: Yeah.

EV: Why? Because the street was named McDonald?

IP: Yeah. [laughs]

EV: The street was. Uh...what else?

IP: We had the store for about 8 years.

EV: Oh yeah?

IP: Yeah.

EV: You did, uh—

IP: And my sister-in-law.

EV: Uh...

IP: Ralph's sister.

EV: Ralph's sister.

IP: Yeah.

EV: Okay. Who did she marry?

IP: At that time she was married to Frank Dicar—Dicarria[?].

EV: Did they take him too?

IP: [turns her head to hear better]

EV: Did they take—Did the police take him too?

IP: No, no, no. They didn't have to go. No.

EV: Um, so this grocery store and Ralph helped you out there.

IP: Yeah.

EV: Did he continue working at the other place?

IP: No.

EV: No.

IP: No.

EV: Um, then after that—

IP: Then we, we sold the business in 1954. Then, uh, happened that there was one of our customers working at the post office. So with him Ralph got a job there. Again as a janitor, you know, to clean up.

EV: So he was cleaning, uh, the whole post office?

IP: Uh, the lobby, you know, he used to look after the, the furnace, you know? And, uh, you know how many times I, I had to go there myself and to help him to wash the, the lobby—

EV: Yeah.

IP: —because he couldn't do it. There was some jobs that he couldn't do and I used to go and work for nothing.

EV: During the day or at night?

IP: During the day. Yeah.

EV: Now, there was something interesting there, wasn't there? Ralph had access to, uh...



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

IP: [nods]

EV: To what?

IP: To, uh, Mounties.

EV: Yeah.

IP: Because that was his job. He had to, had to clean.

EV: Yeah.

IP: You know?

EV: So the Mounties had, what did they have there?

IP: They had offices there, you know. And they had a special room. That room was locked.

EV: Where was this post office?

IP: On Queen Street.

EV: Queen Street Niagara Falls.

IP: Yeah.



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

EV: So Ralph, ironically, now was cleaning the offices—

IP: Yeah.

EV: —of the guys who arrested him.

IP: That's right. Yeah. You see Ralph got a picture? [points to her right]

[00:30:04]

EV: Yeah.

IP: With the, you know, with the flag, you know, when they, when we got the flag.

EV: Yeah. Now—

IP: Oh, he was well liked, Ralph. They loved Ralph there. He was, they treat him good.

EV: But this was like 195—

IP: 1954, yeah. He, he work there, then until 197...He was 62 years old. When was it? 1972?

Unknown: I think so, yeah.

IP: Yeah. He retired from there.

EV: Yeah. Now, his nephew, he had a nephew there.



IP: He had a nephew, uh, uh, Peter Broccolo. Yeah.

EV: Broccolo?

IP: Broccolo. Broccolo. Yeah.

EV: What did he do?

IP: He was a Mountie.

EV: Ah. When did he become a Mountie?

IP: Well, you know, this was, uh, after Ralph, you know—

EV: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

IP: He was a young boy. And now his son is another Mountie too.

EV: Huh.

IP: Peter's son is a Mountie. They're in Saskatchewan.

EV: Oh yeah?

IP: Yeah.

EV: Now, did, uh—Who's Rocco?

IP: My brother.

EV: Your brother, Rocco.

IP: Yeah.

EV: Okay. Tell us about your brother, Rocco.

IP: My brother, Rocco, joined the army 1940.

EV: Yeah. So while Ralph was in—

IP: In Petawawa.

EV: —the camp—

IP: My brother—

EV: Your brother—

IP: Was, was serving the country, whatever. He, he joined the army. And he went to England—

EV: Hmm.

IP: —and he, he fought the war for five years. He was killed in February the 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945. He was there five years. He was wounded before. Still they send him back to fight again. And, you know.

EV: Where did he die, Irene?

IP: Norway, I think. You know, the last, where they, the fight the last, uh—

EV: Normandy?

IP: Normandy, yeah. [nods] Yeah.

EV: Where, where's he, is he buried there?

IP: Yeah.

EV: Where? Normandy?

IP: Yeah.

EV: So he never came home.

IP: No. [shakes her head]

EV: So how do you feel about this? Your brother gave his life and as a thanks they arrest your husband.

IP: I felt terrible. I was really hurt. You know?

EV: It didn't make sense.

IP: It didn't make no sense. My father belonged to, he was a member of the Canadian—Because he, my father, he fought the war, the First World War. So—

EV: For Canada.

IP: For Canada. Okay? My brother, he did the same thing. My f—My husband had to go in Petawawa, you know?

EV: Your brother loses his life and—

IP: That's right.

EV: And that's the thanks.

IP: Yeah. We suffered. We suffered. You know, really. So, as I said, then they kept the key. They kept everything, you know? I didn't have nothing. It was hard, you know? [picture fades at 00:33:21 but audio continues] My in-laws, they were on welfare for ten years. [picture returns at 00:33:24] They didn't have nothing too much either. So when Ralph came home the, the, there was the, the, the tax to be paid. My in-laws, they had trouble with the furnace so we had to put in a new furnace. Ralph was the only son and we lived there. So when Ralph came home we had debts. You know, it was hard. See?



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

EV: It was hard to get rid of those debts.

IP: Yeah, yeah.

SC: Um, the only question later on about the other internee.

IP: So far she—Go ahead.

SC: Okay, um, you had mentioned last time we were here, um, it was a Wanelli[?]

IP: Yeah.

EV: Luisa?

SC: Yeah.

IP: She was the, the president of the—

EV: Sons of Italy. The Trieste Lodge.

IP: I forget the name now. I used to belong there too.

EV: The Trieste Lodge. The Sons of Italy.

IP: Yeah.

EV: Did you see her? They arrested her.

IP: Oh yeah. Mrs. Wanelli[?], she had a, a little—I don't know if it was a little girl or boy. Anyway, she had a child. She was bathing that child while the Mounties went to pick her up. She was lucky that she had her, she had her sister-in-law and her, uh, brother-in-law, they lived together. There were two brothers that they, you know, they lived together. So the sister-in-law took care of those kids. Mrs. Wanelli[?] was there a long time. She was there until the end.

EV: So when they were—They arrested her while she was giving one of the kids a bath and then they couldn't, she couldn't even—

IP: No. She couldn't even finish. Her sister-in-law had to do it. And the sister-in-law had, I think she had other children too. So the sister-in-law lived in there and she looked after them. Uh, Mrs. Wanelli[?] was there the longest.

EV: And for nobody—

IP: For nothing. For nothing.

EV: Only, only she was the head of the—

IP: She was, she was the president. Yeah.

EV: President of the women's—

IP: Yeah.

EV: —lodge.

IP: I forget the name.

EV: Trieste Lodge. Was it not Trieste Lodge?

IP: No, no, no, no.

EV: I can't remember either.

IP: I think it was Maria Bia[?]. I think.

EV: But it was the, the, part of the Sons of Italy.

IP: It was the same. Yeah. It was the same thing.

EV: Anybody else?

SC: Um, when we spoke last time you knew some of the names but there was a Luigi Linia[?]

IP: Yeah. He was R—my husband's, Ralph's uncle.

SC: Okay. Okay.

IP: And he was a good man. He couldn't even, he couldn't even speak English. He couldn't even read

and write, you know?

SC: Yeah. And where did he work? What did he do?

IP: Uh, he used to work in some of the farms, you know, helping farmers and stuff like that. He had a big family too.

SC: Okay. And was he also in the Sons of Italy or...?

IP: No. He didn't—No.

SC: No.

IP: No. He wasn't a member of Sons of Italy. No.

SC: Uh, there was a Bilatta[?]

EV: Yeah.

IP: Bilatta[?] Bilatta[?], yeah. He was a member. And Bilatta[?] was a, he was, he used to work at the post office, I think.

SC: Okay.

IP: You know.



SC: Coshcarella. No. Cashacarella. Lave Cashacarella[?]

IP: Cashcarella[?]

SC: Yeah.

IP: Uh, yeah. I remember. I remember them all, you know? [laughs]. Yeah.

SC: You remember where he worked? Did he also—

IP: I don't—That I don't remember. No. But I remember his wife. I remember the, the, his wife died. He's got a daughter though. I don't, uh, I don't even remem—I don't know her name.

SC: And was he in the Sons of Italy too or...?

IP: I think maybe he was. I don't know. I'm not sure but I think he was.

SC: Okay. And you mentioned, uh, Joe Denise? Denis?

IP: Joe Denis. Yeah.

SC: Yeah. And how did your husband, how did you know—?

IP: Oh, Joe Denis belonged in the, in the lodge. Yeah.

SC: Okay. So is that how you met Joe? Your husband and Joe. How did—

IP: My husband Ralph—

SC: Yeah.

IP: How we met?

SC: Yeah.

IP: Well, we all belonged in a, in the Sons of Italy.

SC: Oh, okay.

IP: So we used to go to meetings—

SC: Okay.

IP: And we used to be all together.

SC: Okay.

IP: And we used to have a dance, like an orchestra every Saturday night. And all the members, uh, used to be there and a lot of young people, they used to come and dance. We used to serve pizza and sandwiches, you know. We used to have a good time but that was it.

SC: Yeah.

IP: Nobody talked about Italy. Nobody talked about anything.

EV: Where was this again? When, where was the, where was the club?

IP: The club on was, uh—Gee, do you remember that?

Unknown: I don't know where it was.]

IP: Uh, gee.

EV: It's not still there, is it?

IP: Yeah. But it's, uh, they sold, uh—It's a different name now. Do you know where, um, Casa d'Oro—?

EV: Yeah.

IP: Besisi's[?]

EV: Yeah.

IP: Well, this is on the same street. Casa d'Oro's on the corner [holds up her hands] and this hall is way down this way [motions with her hand]. The same—

EV: Oh, I think I know that place.



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

IP: Yeah.

EV: It's small.

IP: It's small place.

EV: Both sides.

IP: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

EV: It's still a hall now.

IP: Yeah, yeah.

EV: So that was the Sons of Italy hall.

IP: Yeah.

EV: Oh.

IP: They built it, yeah.

EV: Okay. It was near the, the, the milk—

Unknown: Oh, Bordens

EV: Near Bordens?

IP: Borden's. Right across.

EV: Right across.

IP: Yeah. Yeah.

EV: Right, right, right, right.

IP: Yeah. Yeah.

EV: I remember now. So when did that close? Or when did they sell it? After the war?

IP: Oh well, when they picked all those people—

EV: Yeah.

IP: —then they didn't have no more meetings.

EV: Right.

IP: So after the war, they sold it after the war. I think, I don't know when they sold it.

EV: That came, that came, that was—

IP: That was it. Yeah.

EV: Okay. No more after the—

IP: No. After the—When the war started that was it.

EV: Yeah. Did you get the Sons of Italy, did they get it going again after the war? Somewhere?

IP: No we didn't even, we didn't think—

EV: Yeah.

IP: —that they were, they were going to go again like now, you know, Club Italia.

SC: It's known as the Marconi Hall.

EV: The Marconi Hall. Yeah. Um, they had Club Italia but that was later.

IP: Yeah. Oh yeah.

EV: Twenty years ago. Something like that.

IP: Yeah. Really late.

EV: Okay.

SC: Um.

EV: Irene, when you think about all of this that happened, what are your feelings?

IP: I feel sick...because we were so happy to be in Canada, you know?

EV: Yeah.

IP: And, uh, we went through so much too: three years on welfare, you know? We were poor but we were happy.

EV: Yeah.

IP: We came at very young from Italy, Ralph and I, but we never thought that, we never felt that we wanted to go back.

EV: No.

IP: Never, never. We felt this was our home and we enjoyed it. And we were raised here and that was it.

EV: Are you angry? Are you mad? Are you, uh, you know, disappointed with the government?

IP: Well, we were disappointed with the government, yeah, because they didn't have no proofs why they had to pick all those people.

EV: And they still didn't.

IP: They were all good people, every one of them, you know. So—

EV: And you never, ever got any explanation.

IP: Nothing, nothing.

EV: No?

IP: Mmm mmm.

EV: They never told you—

IP: Not even a thank you.

EV: Yeah.

IP: [laughs] Or sorry. Nothing.

EV: Especially after your brother died.

IP: I know.

EV: You know. Uh, what would you like the government to do for you? Would you like an apology?  
Would you like compensation? What would you like the government—



IP: I think a little compensation would be okay.

EV: Yeah. I mean, it would never cover what you suffered.

IP: No. Never. [shakes her head] Never.

EV: But you see that as what?

IP: It was hard for my husband to, with one leg, you know, to be there.

EV: Yeah.

IP: He couldn't go to work. And he had to be with the, I don't know, with the other people in the camp, you know. He spent there almost six months. It was hard. Nothing doing, you know?

EV: It, of course, ruined his business.

IP: Y...Yeah. You know. When he came back from there even his car, you know, the wheels were all flat. He had, we had trouble even with the, you know, we had to get the car fixed. Then we got the keys and, you know, and he had to sell his machinery. So.

[fades out at 00:42:49]

[fades in at 00:42:51]

IP: He was a type, Ralph, he was a loaner. You know, he never liked to talk about like things with other people or whatever. Eh? Gee?

Unknown: He was very quiet.

IP: Very quiet. Yeah.

EV: But he liked his family.

Unknown: Loved his family.

IP: Oh, yeah. Eh?

EV: His family.

IP: He was a family man. Oh yeah, yeah. He was a good man.

Unknown: Very respectful. Very respectful.

IP: And the doctor used to tell me, "Mrs. Paone, you got yourself a good man."

EV: [laughs]

IP: Yeah.

EV: Anything else you want to say?

IP: Nothing comes to my mind now.



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

EV: Okay.

IP: I know we went through so much.

EV: Yeah.

Unknown: For no reason.

IP: Yeah.

EV: Still, still dealing with it.

IP: Yeah.

EV: *Grazie*, Irene.

SC: Thank you.

IP: Thank you.

EV: *Fantastico*.

[fades out at 00:43:52]