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**NAME OF INTERVIEWEE:** Mary C. Thornton

**NAME OF INTERVIEWER:** Melina De Gugliemo

**NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER:** Lucy Di Pietro

**TRANSCRIBED BY:** Elissa D'Souza

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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**

Mary Thornton is the daughter of internee, Guido Gioberti, who was interned in Camp Petawawa for about two years during WWII. Born in Hamilton, Mary moved to Italy with her family to learn the Italian language and culture. She returned to Canada at the age of 12 when times got hard in Italy. At the time of Guido's arrest, the family was never even given the chance to say goodbye. Their only form of communication with him was through censored letters. Mary's father made use of his time in the camp by learning several languages and reading as much as he could. She describes that on the day that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) ransacked their house she was "shivering" and "frightened to death." Although

the family was never given any explanations or provided with any apologies for this and other related events, Mary believes that the police or government did not even know what they were looking for. Mary recalls Casa d'Italia as a venue for social activities prior to the war, and does not believe that it was used as a political gathering ground. However, it was shut down during the war. She notes that before the war, the Hamilton Italian community was close-knit and very social. Doors were never locked, and people used to drop in and visit each other often. Things changed during the war, and the community no longer socialized out of fear of being accused of colluding. She notes that the discrimination faced reached a point whereby they changed their family name from "Gioberti" to "Gilbert," so that they can acquire jobs. After her dad's release, no one talked about what had happened to him, but instead tried to move forward with their lives. She recounts how the war years shaped her life and that of her father's, both negatively and positively. Mary worked as a seamstress and describes music as being a huge part of her family's life. Her dad played in the Italo-Canadian Marine band before the war and was the bandmaster. She delineates the career path that led to her receiving numerous awards for costume design, and that resulted in her and her daughter forming the internationally renowned Toronto theatre company called Famous People Player's Theatre. She attributes her success to her positive outlook on life. Today, Mary's granddaughters are also a part of the family business.

#### **INTERVIEW**

**MT:** Mary Thornton, interviewee

**JD:** Jeannine Dupuy, granddaughter of Mary Thornton

**DD:** Diane Dupuy, daughter of Mary Thornton

**MDG:** Melina De Gugliemo, interviewer

**LDP:** Lucy Di Pietro, videographer

[Title screen]

[Camera fades in at 00:00:12]

MDG: This is Melina De Guglielmo on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Um, I'm at the Famous uh, People Player's Theatre, in, Tor-well in Toronto, Ontario. And, Mary if I could ask your full birth name, as well as your birth day.

MT: Hi my name is Mary, Thornton, and my maiden name was Gioberti. I was born February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1916, in Hamilton Ontario. Now I was, raised by two wonderful, parents. They came to C-Canada as, on their honeymoon. He was uh just around 20 years old, and my mother about 15.

MDG: And what were your parents' names?

MT: My, my-my dad's name was Giober-uh Guido. My mother was Nazarena [?], Zana...and they came on their honeymoon.

LDP: Pause.

[Camera fades out at 00:01:12]

[Camera fades in at 00:01:13]

LDP: Okay, its—

MT: Do repeat that now?

LDP: No no.

MT: —Okay.

MDG: —It's okay, we got it. We'll just pick up from where we left off.

MT: And um, my dad was a graduate of Bologna University of Bologna. And um, my mother was a housewife and wonderful mother. And uh she had uh, wonderful ways and wonderful cook I learned everything from her. And um, after...uh...they had two children, uh three children I was the second one, in 1916, and my mother and dad decided we should go back to Italy and learn the Italian er language and so on. Not knowing very much about Italian language so, we go back to Ocolipicano [?] where they came from, and I went to school there and then, and um my and I went as high as la quinta [?], and on la quinta [?] I got the scholarship, to paint on ceramic at our ceramic factory in Ocoli [?] very, famous uh factory. But we came back to Canada, in 19...well, 12 years I was 12 years old...

MDG: And why did, why did you uh your family decide to come back to Canada?

MT: Well... [turns to look at granddaughter]

JD: Why did they decide to come back to Canada?

MT: Well...then it was the wartime and things were getting bad and my dad...uh, we went back with enough money to hold us without having to work, and my dad had the-the one and only limousine in Ocoli [?]. And of course he got, uh driving all the dignitaries and the Prince of—as a matter of fact uh, Prin-Principo Umberto [?] came to Ocoli [?] and I was, 12 years old then and I presented him, for the, fr-from our school, the bouquet of flowers to Principo Umberto [?] very handsome prince he was then.

JD: Hm.

MDG: So was your, was your dad uh, involved with the with the pr- with the—

MT: Not politically but he was the driver for the bishops and the dig- any dignitaries that came to town. But so you know our money ran out...and so he came back...and earned enough money to g-have us back shortly after we came back to Canada.

MDG: And where did you—?

MT: In the early—late, late 30's.

MDG: And where, where did your family settle once they came back to Canada?

MT: Where...? [turns to granddaughter]

JD: Where did your family, s—

MDG: —Settle when they came back to Canada?

MT: We came back to Hamilton.

JD: Hmm, hmm.

MT: We came back to Hamilton but the only job my dad could find—oh then of course in 1940...out of the clear blue sky, um...he was picked up at Copy North and Randall [?] where he worked, and I believe I wasn't there s-but I believe that they were handcuffed and brought, taken straight to Petawawa.

MDG: And why was he arrested?

MT: And we have no idea why they were picked up, and what they were looking for then they came down to our house, and they ransacked our house inside out, taking pictures of the wall and turning drawers upside down, and...without telling us anything. We my mother and I we were just shivering, frightened to death of what was happening 'till, later we found out that this is what happened.

MDG: And—

MT: Now, my dad was a bandmaster...for the uh...Italo-Canadian Marine band, and um...the association with the Casa d'Italia, which we normally belonged because we were, you know that was the only place to go.

JD: Hmm, hmm.

MT: Uh there was no political, uh interest at all there was never any, political uh...meetings that that I know of.

MDG: So what, what ty- what types of events would there be at the Casa d'Italia?

MT: Dances. This is where we met uh...er our mates and so on. Yeah so it was a social activity, just uh, for weddings and er...christenings and...

JD: Hmm, hmm.

MDG: And would other people in the community that, maybe lived on your street or friends of yours also go, uh to the Casa d'Italia?

MT: Were they what?

JD: Would other relatives and friends go there for social events?

MT: Oh yeah. So that's just [unclear] the whole Italian community.

JD: Yeah.

MT: As a matter of fact today even uh lately they have reunion of uh the Sherman Avenue gang and, and neighbourhood there and, the Italian band used to play practically every Sunday, and they would march along the um...Italian community like this year it's St. Clair, Sherman Avenue and Barton Street and uh, and um they would, play up and down the street and it was a just a wonderful, social activity, picnics and so on.

MDG: And tell—a lot of Italians lived on Sherman Street...

MT: Yes.

MDG: ...Sherman Avenue sorry.

MT: —Yeah, yes.

MDG: What other families do you remember, do you remember any of their names the families that lived around?

MT: Yes they were the uh Colangelos and the...um...Marshas [?] and...um...gosh Tophenies [?]  
and...um...there were so many.

JD: Hmm.

MDG: And what was it like growing up, uh on that street?

MT: It was social socializing there was—nobody ever locked their doors you could go on in and out  
of a house with-without even permission everybody was welcome, and things soured badly after  
the war.

MDG: So tell me about what you remember about uh the-well the rest of the day so the RCMP  
came to—oh sorry th-the officers, do you remember who came to your house?

MT: Well, the unfortunate part of of the ironic part of the thing, is that the um, um...mounted  
police, later the um, my my daughter, became friends of twins, twin girls, and they happened to  
be the daughters of the con- the...um...

JD: The officer...

MT: —the officer, named Tacti.

MDG: Okay.

MT: And, and so when I met him later on w-uh through my daughter, uh he kind of gloated over  
the whole thing he never even gave any explanation of why he did it and, and....

MDG: So w-was this the man that arrested your father?

MT: Yes, no no well he's the one that, that ransacked our house.

MDG: Okay.

MT: So I don't know who picked my dad up er, er at this time.

MDG: And did they ever tell you what they were looking for?

MT: No they never told what they're looking for. Th-they never got anything there was nothing that we could get there was...it was a just a...a bad thing that happened I don't think th-they kn-they knew what they were doing.

MDG: And of the other families on the street that you mentioned were they also affected by, by this?

MT: Well they were all frightened yes, th-they were all frightened wondering what's going to happen.

MDG: Hmm, hmm.

MT: And um...a...um...the what I, I can remember...uh going back to history, Chamberlain...uh realized, Mussolini's uh, way of doing things, and sort of, they understood each other. And I don't know what pact they made between the two of them, but then, Chamber lost his seat, in Britain, and um...oh dear what's his name...

LDP and JD: Churchill.

JD: Winston Churchill.

MT: No...[puts hand to forehead and closes eyes] oh dear...and and then he became, an enemy—  
oh gosh the the Prime Minister of of Eng- of England at that time. It'll come to me and I'll add it on  
too. [laughs]

MDG: It's okay.

MT: Chamberlain and um...well anyway, well he didn't like Italy at all...and of course he, he didn't  
respect any of the pacts that was made with Chamberlain and Italy at the time. So now Italy is in a  
position, the Germans were invading Italy, so what else could he do? He, he didn't have the  
support of England, so he joined with the Germans. And then, you know what happened after  
that Dieppe and all that and the slaughters of, of uh Canadians uh...just to, to, invade Italy.

[TIME: 10:26]

MDG: And at the time how did you...uh how was your family um..., how did they learn about what  
was happening in the war? Did they—

MT: Well we had the radio, the radio was always blasting the news about Italy this and...uh...and  
Germans and, uh uh uh it was chaos it was, was frightening uh we changed our name from,  
Gioberti to Gilbert. It was so bad, you couldn't use the word or say who you were.

MDG: And who would be uh...discriminating against you?

MT: Well all the uh...other uh English, um.

JD: Hmm, hmm.

MDG: So did you—?

MT: When I got my first job in at Robertson store, I had to say I was Gilbert I couldn't say I was Italian, you know. I would never have gotten a job.

MDG: And when did you get your first job?

MT: In 39? Not, uh not 39 a-about 49?

JD: Hm.

MT: ...45? [looks at granddaughter]

JD: [unclear] Somewhere around there.

MT: —I can't remember the dates but anyway.

MDG: Okay so go—

MT: —It was shortly after.

MDG: Sure. Um...

MT: Yeah.

MDG: So going back to now uh...your, your dad had been picked up, uh, by the RCMP and what happened to...your family at home?

MT: Well my mother had to go w-to work and I went to work and um, my brother...my other sister too.

MDG: What was your brother's [unclear], what was your brother's name?

MT: My brother's name was uh Jim, and he um...uh...worked as a cleaner, um...um...laundry and cleaning um...that he ended up buying that later on in uh...through the years. And so we worked at Copy Noise [?] we all worked at uh...it's the only place that we could get a job as uh because we were all good sewers. My mother was uh, the finest sewer ever.

MDG: Yeah.

MT: And uh so that's how we, managed to live. And we, didn't socialize anymore amongst Italians each family kept to themselves you know because we were scared to be, caught...uh negotiating or whatever we were supposed to be doing.

MDG: So you mentioned that all the doors had been unlocked before the—

MT: —And now they're locked and so everybody stayed in their own places yeah.

MDG: And when did you find out where your dad was taken did you find out where your dad had been taken—?

MT: —Well then we we were told that he was in Petawawa and we used to receive letters from him, with little windows cut out here and there I guess words that were censored uh that they didn't want us to know. We never did find out what they were. Sorry I never kept any of those.

MDG: And um...was he taken to Petawawa right away or was he—?

MT: —Right away. Nev-we never said goodbye or anything...uh from from work to Petawawa.

JD: How long was he there grandma?

MT: I think he was there about two, two years for sure, but or more.

JD: So you didn't see, grandpa—

MT: —No never saw him then.

JD: Two years.

MT: No.

JD: So you would just get all these letters—

MT: —Yeah.

JD: ...with cut windows out—

MT: —That's right.

JD: So you wouldn't know what he was, doing.

MT: No, no.

JD: So you—

MT: But he was fine and that's it. But uh one thing that he my dad was a self-made man, and he made use of all that time that he was in Petawawa and he ended up learning three, extra languages, and he spoke the best English Bostonian English they used to say...

MDG: Hmm.

MT: We, thought that he was a showoff.

MDG: Wow.

MT: And um, French he learned and Spanish and Russian.

JD: Hmm.

MDG: Whoa.

MT: So when he came out of that he was uh more educated than he went in. [chuckles]

MDG: And how did he learn in in the camp who taught him—?

MT: I guess they had schools and teachers there in Petawawa. That they had courses that to go to if you wanted to go. So I don't know what the other men's did.

JD: Hmm.

MT: Uh...

MDG: And um, back at home were you and your mom ever required to report to the RCMP yourselves, or your-and your brother, and sister?

MT: Yes...

MDG: Yeah.

MT: We had to fetch for ourselves...? [turns to granddaughter]

JD: No, did you have to—

MDG: —Report...report every—

MT: —No we didn't have to report to anybody, no, no. The only thing is that when we got these letters, whether they were in the mail delivered to us or how I don't remember that part yeah.

MDG: And...um...did you—at this time you were working a-a-as a seamstress...

MT: Yes.

MDG: And did you have uh any friends that you would you would go and and meet or spend time with during this time?

MT: Did I with...? [turns to granddaughter]

JD: —Did you have...

MDG: —Did you—

JD: ...any friends or anyone that you met, during this time, the two years that grandpa, was, in the camp? Like did you socialize a lot...

MDG: Did you socialize...?

JD: ...or were you just working all the time?

MT: Just working no, we didn't...w-w-we didn't uh go to Casa d'Italia anymore.

MDG: What happened to the Casa d'Italia?

MT: I have no idea whatever happened to it. Then, they they did on the outside where the emblem of an Italian um...I can't remember what do you call them...on the outside of uh Casa d'Italia and they cemented it in so it looks like a pillar instead of...uh...a symbol, uh...

MDG: A symbol? And what what—?

MT: —A fascist, fascist symbol.

MDG: O-kay.

MT: So they ce- uh...cemented that in I remember, uh...remember that part.

MDG: And uh...did wi- did your dad belong to any clubs or—?

MT: —No he didn't. No, he didn't. The only club he belonged to was the band...

JD: Here grandma. [reaches to get a framed picture]

MT: ...'cause he wrote the arrangements for every instrument.

MDG: Hmm, hmm. Yeah, and s-...

MT: Yeah.

MDG: So we have a photo uh... a photo on camera here and could you describe the the photo, to us?

MT: Th-this is his um, um Ital- ma-Marine band they call it and he didn't want to be, the conductor because he didn't want the responsibility, but he became the...um bandmaster, and he wrote the music, k- re-recomposed the music for the different instruments. He was a, a very well uh...good mus-musician.

MDG: And where did he learn to, music?

MT: I don't know it's a s-was a self-made man as I say.

MDG: Wow.

MT: He, he played the French horn like you wouldn't believe, um...and, trumpets and any of the...um...any instrument except violin.

JD: Hmm, hmm.

MDG: And where would he uh, where did he find other people that wanted to play with him?

MT: Well from they were all from the club.

MDG: And uh—

MT: —They were all young guy eh young, young there was uh Dr. Corsini and oh the Ferries and...they were all the first musicians, and they were all taught, mostly, by playing, by practicing uh on a, on a Saturday and so on.

MDG: And do you remember what kind-what songs they would play, or, some of their famous songs?

MT: Oh well any...any march into the Souzas, Souza's um...t-band music...marching music...

MDG: Yeah...and would the—

MT: —and symphonic music for they had lot a, if they had a concert in the park it would be symphonic, or operatic arias [?] and tr-um...aida [?] traviata [?] all these songs um. Sym-like—

MDG: —And— I'm sorry, go ahead. [short pause] Do y-do you remember see-going to see your dad play? Do you remember going to see your dad play?

MT: [looks at granddaughter] Do I go into the other concerts?

JD: Did you—yes.

MDG: —Do you remember—?

MT: Oh yes, we never missed the concerts.

MDG: Yeah.

MT: Oh no they we-were highlights even though as young as we were didn't understand much about it, but we were taught every opera there was um...

JD: Hmm, hmm.

MT: As a matter of fact em, uh we entertained...um, Bucy Berlin [?], at our house.

LDP: Wow.

MT: And Leonard Warren [?] who was the best uh baritone of that era. And unfortunately he died on stage, s-singing his last aria, at the Met.

LDP: Ohh...

MDG: Ahh...

MT: So, we were at his uh—we were at the Met at the time, he was in the [unclear], and he sang this beautiful aria... [sings a line in Italian from the aria]...and he hits this...high A...and I'm telling you, th-the uh tremendous, applause and the curtain comes down and the applause continue continue, hoping that he'd come out, to take a bow.

JD: Hmm, hmm.

MT: And then, Rudolph Bing who was the um, general manager of the Met came out and announced that he had died...

JD: Hmm.

MT: ...and the opera was finished. Now for such tremen- [laughs]...tremendous applause sound...to no sound at all...

JD: Hmm.

MT: ...nobody communicated with the next person saying I can't believe it I can't a—we get back to our hotel...and we say, "I can't believe it. That can't be true." And so um, yeah I remember that, so we all came home, [wipes nose with tissue] v-very sad.

[TIME: 20:24]

LDP: When was that?

MT: Now, that was 19-...oh skip my mind now w-that 19... [long pause]...1960. My dad had already died. He hadn't seen that part. Would have been terrible. Yeah Leonard Warren died 1960 March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1960. [slaps armchair in jest] H-how come I remember that? [Everyone in the room laughs]

MDG: [laughs] Wow...

MT: [laughs, and wipes eyes with tissue] Yeah.

MDG: So music was always very—

MT: —Always in our house...

MDG: Yeah...

MT: ...morning noon and night.

MDG: Did you learn any-to play any instruments—?

MT: —Oh yeah, well I never played any instrument but then I became involved with an opera company in Hamilton...

MDG: Huh, huh.

MT: ...and uh, I was their uh wardrobe mistress.

MDG: Oh.

MT: And from being a wardrobe mistress they were short of a, of a personal, um...

JD: Chorus.

MT: ...compa-uh...yeah, ch-for the chorus—says, “Mary you got to sit there”. “I, but I don’t sing.”  
“But no you got to sit there anyway.” So lucky for me I knew the arias.

MDG: Ah ha.

MT: [sings a tune unclearly] And before I knew it I was...[in a funny voice] “Did that come out of  
you?” [Everyone laughs]

MT: And so from then on that’s how...b-but I had to give it up because I had stage fright so  
terrible.

MDG: Oh really?

MT: Oh...I could never ever...

MDG: Yeah.

MT: My last role was was at in *Boheme*.

MDG: Oh really?

MT: I left that, and left that. They said it was a typecast. [laughs]

MDG: [laughs] Ohh. So what would, what would scare you? Was it being in front of all the, all the people that would...?

MT: Mmm... [turns to granddaughter]

JD: What scared you? Why did you have stage fright—?

MT: —I don't know it just strangled me...before and, and after. After was even worse than before because...did I hit that right, did I sound flat, did I, was uh sharp...[unclear sounds]...there was I there, was I? So I had nightmares before and after and I wasn't worth it to me.

MDG: Yeah.

MT: Then I had two children to raise...

MDG: Ohh...okay.

MT: ...and a business to carry on. So—

MDG: So now going back, going back to the war years...

MT: Yes.

MDG: ...uh when did your dad come home? Do you remember the day that he came home?

MT: Well he came must have come back around 43...5...something like that.

MDG: Okay. And actually before that did you get to go visit him while—?

MT: —No, no we were never allowed any visiting permission. We were, we had no car but as far as I know we were never asked to go or my mother would've gone.

JD: Hmm.

MDG: Yeah.

MT: Yeah, no I don't think we were ever asked to go.

JD: Hmm, hmm.

MDG: And, um...was there ever any explanation through the whole time that he was gone?

MT: Never any explanation whatsoever...before or after. Not to my knowledge.

MDG: And did you—

MT: —No, no apologies, no um...um...jus-have, one of the, that we had to do it or anything like that. N-nobody was accused of anything that I know of. There was nothing to accuse anyone it was just, because you were Italian and Italians were at war with England and was just one of those things you had to do.

MDG: Do you think that, that maybe there were people in the community who might have, uh...pointed fingers or maybe acted as informants, and um...

MT: N—

MDG: ...trying to get others...uh?

MT: No I don't think anybody—t-they were all, very gentle people, I there's nobody there that I would think, I would be suspicious of.

JD: Hmm, hmm.

MT: No.

LDP: Did that RCMP officer, who your, daughter knew the twin daughters of, ever say why he thought he had to ransack your house?

MT: No, no never. He never answered my question he just laid there and very...smiling to himself. I said, "What were you looking for?" No never answered...just smiling to himself.

MDG: Hm.

MT: It was just nothing it was just a prank.

MDG: And d—

MT: —A war prank uh just to show authority uh, they had to show authority I guess. I'd have no explanation for it.

MDG: Were there, were there any, was there any talk of people being able to pay money to get their, their family members out of the camp?

MT: No.

MDG: No.

MT: No I don't think so. [pause] No I don't think so.

LDP: How were you treated by your...non-Italian um, colleagues, like at work or in the street or...when you went and did, grocery shopping or...?

MT: Wasn't very pleasant.

JD: Hmm, hmm.

MT: If if they knew you were Italian they would just, not, treat you very nicely. It's uh, it was unfortunate, and um...my mother used to have an explanation for it she'd say, "You know...you do good and forget about it, do bad and they have to think about it. Let them worry about it. No-you-nothing-you, you did-didn't do anything...so keep your face up. Don't I-I-look down. Look up all the time." So that's how we managed to get through everything.

JD: Hmm, hmm.

LDP: Do you remember any specific events that, stayed with you?

MT: No was generized it was j-just general, like that, was just general.

MDG: And when your dad came back, uh home do you remember him coming back the day he got back?

MT: Yes well now, not a word was spoken, of whatever happened it was a closed deal. He never talked about it didn't want to talk about it. And, we were never...wuh interested about it. Uh...it just we never talked about it that's all I can say.

MDG: And, why do you think he didn't want to talk about it?

MT: I have no idea.

MDG: Yeah.

MT: It's a closed book. They never dwelled on anything really uh no and, and...he'd come home, from work for instance sometimes and he would [unclear] [gestures with arm up and down in imitation] "I'm going to get it, I'm going to get even with this, I can't take a job my boss this my boss that" and so on. And, my mother used to s—and we were scared you know, and she'd says, [gestures with arms in a "quiet down" motion] "Just let him rave let him rave on, let him be quiet and he'll quieten down, he'll quieten down [unclear]." Finally he would quiet down and everything was fine. But uh, uh, but as a rule...I he never uh...held any grudges about relatives you know, uh...it's your brother-in-law it's your m- you kn- like we used to hear other...my aunts and uncle I can't go because my [unclear] is speaking to my uh uh brother my sister and all that. Um my mother and dad never had to...um,to my knowledge, ever had a, say "I'm not going to go there

because he's a, he's a, your [Italian word]" you'd hear this, all the time about...m-my aunts and uncle talking about each other.

MDG: Yeah.

MT: So um, they were always peace, peacemakers more than, a-aggravating a situation.

MDG: Wa-was your family very religious uh...?

MT: Yes, m-my mother was. My dad didn't go as often but my mother was very very religious yeah.

MDG: And, which church i-in Hamilton?

MT: St. Anthony's.

MDG: And who was the priest at the time there?

MT: At the time...j-there was Father Bonome [?]?...at um, All Souls Church...and Father Mascari at St. Anthony's Church...well...

MDG: And, did the priests—

MT: —And then another one, then became priest later later on...

MDG: Uh huh.

MT: ...Sardo. Father Salvo that he just came i-in the modern times.

MDG: And did anybody from the church uh, get together to help your family through that time, or...?

MT: No, no. No we didn't get any help, uh church-wise like you know like they do today b- uh, food banks that stuff like that no.

MDG: Did-how about the, United Church? Were there-I know that there was uh, a United Church, as well, that helped different families throughout the time did anybody—?

MT: —Well there was a talk about a church, trying to get the Italians...um, immigrants, to join their church from Catholic to Anglican...and a lot of Italians did sell themselves short. Yes uh, that that brings that memory back too. B-but my mother used to say, "Filomena, you do what you want to do I do what I want to do." "But yeah but that priest said this," I said, "No, that doesn't matter ." She couldn't convince my, mother, to...join that church.

[TIME: 30:16]

MDG: Who's Filomena?

MT: Filomena, Filomena...[long pause] oh...can't remember the last name. She lived on Sanford Avenue. Our backyards were back-to-back. Can't think of her last name. [laughter] But she joined the, the the Anglican church.

MDG: During the war?

MT: The war yup.

MDG: Because w-there was a sense that the—

MT: —Oh well I don't know what her reason was to join...but uh I know that they were trying, to c-convince, the, new, the new Italians and the old Italians to, go to their church. Ah funny you should bring that up...[MDG laughs] ...I hadn't thought about that for...[laughs]

MDG: Well it's a common theme a we-we've been finding with a lot of the Hamilton families that they were helped out by the United Church.

MT: Oh well there you are you see so, that was the that was the that was the trick. Yeah.

MDG: And uh was your dad able to find work when he got back, from...?

MT: Uh, not for awhile but then he got, uh—my mother was working already there...

MDG: Yeah.

MT:...and so through, t-talking, her boss into hiring my dad and so he got in too, and he learned to do, uh pressing with the Hoffman machine, which is a big machine that presses...um...um, uh suits, men's suits very flat. Hoffman...that's the job he had.

MDG: And uh, did he work for uh a company?

MT: Copy Noise and Randall [?]. Yeah.

MDG: And and did he enjoy that work?

MT: Well it wasn't his kind of work but it was work and he made it, he made it he made himself like it 'cause there was nothing else to, to, to...to do. Now before we went back to Italy if we want to turn back...

MDG: Uh huh.

MT: ...he was what they called, a "jitney" [?]. Jitney [?] was like a taxi driver. You got in your car you drove your car and you picked up a passenger here dropped him off two blocks away, and so on and so forth, and all for ten cents. Now this is a, nine-before 1922...

MDG: Hmm, hmm.

MT: ...before 1922. So he made enough money for us to go back to Italy, through that deal, uh that kind of work. But then, they were outlawed because th-, eh, um there was no controlling, the money coming in and out.

MDG: Yeah.

MT: So they, invented taxis...and to get a taxi you had to have a license, and from then on so you know the history of the late taxis today. So that's what happened to, that we went, and when we came back of course then he couldn't do that to, to be a taxi driver, and then my mother got him into Copy Noise and Randall [?].

MDG: Oh okay I see.

MT: And that's where he worked 'til he died.

MDG: So your mom was very ambitious to...

MT: Oh she never stopped. Best cook ever, best dressmaker ever, best everything ever. Very peaceful ever.

MDG: And uh y- uh you um, have a mirror here on the, on the floor if we can, we can raise it up. Can you tell me about t—?

MT: —Oh th-, oh this is my...my dad carved this, when he was 16 years old in the universities. He he carved this...at school.

MDG: So this was back in uh, Bologna right?

MT: In Bologna, yup. This was in the early er, 1900's. Yup.

MDG: And why is that special to you? Why is that—?

MT: —Because uh it's the only thing I actually have of of my um, [voice breaks] my dad? Um...um, so I was tr- I treasure that all, from my, s-when my mother died [wipes eye with tissue] I er, I asked, this is the only thing I wanted. Maybe I appreciate the handcarving on it I don't know. But uh...

JD: I've always loved the angels.

MT: —Ya, ya. [wipes eye with tissue]

JD: I used to play with this when I was a kid.

MT: Ya. [wipes eyes with tissue and sniffs] Yeah there some pieces missing now.

JD: Well that's my, my fault. [MDG laughs]

MT: Ya. [smiles, then sniffs]

MDG: So, so after the war uh what happened to you Mary? Tell us a bit about your life story.

MT: Well then you see I got married to a Canadian.

MDG: And what was his name?

MT: His name was Stanley Thornton. And of course I broke all the rules. [MDG laughs]

MT: And my mother says, "You know this, is not going to work." Oh yes it's going to work oh yes because he's English because that. He was not only, English he was from Irish-English parents, so he had...so I had to compromise a whole lot. A-but, they always liked our hospitality...

MDG: Hmm.

MT: ...but we never, entered their hospitality. If you know what I mean...

MDG: No not real-explain further [laughs]. Let me know...

MT: [clear throat] We welcomed, we welcomed them into our house...

MDG: Okay.

MT: ...but we could never, be welcome in their house unless we got invited.

MDG: Oh I see.

MT: And...and never got invited.

MDG: And this is on your, husband's side.

MT: On my side so I had two children with uh with him, and 15 years later, well, things fell apart. And um, I regained my individuality again, after 15 years of raising two children and a husband to, worry about, um m-trying to make it work, trying to make it work, he doesn't mean it, he can't uh... And we ki- I did- I inherited some of my mother's, peaceful-making, and so, 15 years later he decided so I had to go along with it and um, uh actually thanked him for it. [wipes nose with tissue] Then he gave me back my individuality, and from then on I had a new life. I've been involved with the theatre company and um, I've been making the costumes and, and as a matter of fact, I got s-so many awards for my costume-making...uh... There's one here, that I got at the Columbus Centre.

JD: [reaches to get a framed photo to hand over to Mary] I don't have—this is—

MDG: —Oh is that the award where it's the photo of, of—

MT: —Oh this is the...

MDG: Yeah, it's a photo of—

MT: —My k-, my, oh yeah, um but I forgot—I haven't got, the award plaque.

MDG: Oh that's okay tell me about it.

MT: Yeah and so uh, this was a masquerade, uh party we k-attend at Columbus Centre, oh almost 15 or 20 years ago. I made those elephant costumes, and we got first prize.

MDG: Wow.

MT: Yeah then I've always got a prize for costu- for buttons and bows if song was popular, and um...uh *Sunkist Babies* and so on. Uh anyway, uh...I've, I've been with the Famous People Player's for 38 years now, so...

MDG: Tell me why, why did, why did you join the Famous People Player's or, or...were you part of the...?

MT: Well, it's a—uh, I had a daughter who, was um, a...a loner. And when she was six years old I came back from Italy one trip, and I brought back a *Punch and Judy*, hand puppet, and she took these to these *P-Punch and Judy* which in Italy, if you're a puppeteer you're a very famous person, f-highly respected. I suppose inwardly I thought to myself, you know you...never planning anything, wouldn't it be nice if she'd like these two. Well she loved them and she'd be behind the chesterfield, playing with them and b-doing little thing, and I got involved with her doing them, and as time marches on...I was proud now for all the criticism I used to get, "What's the matter with your daughter she doesn't want to play with my daughter she doesn't want to do this with

this daughter..." Or in school she failed grades after grades 'cause she was always uh, staring at something she thought she saw outside. And there was a time when I was worried about her, maybe her mind isn't all there. But however...uh she, entertained them beautifully and from there from neighbours to...parties to...oh CNE'd here in Toronto. And then we started uh...um...our own company and uh, now it's, it's internationally known.

MDG: Yeah.

[TIME: 40:10]

MT: We go to Japan 11 years in a row, going next year again. And China when there was nobody we went after Nixon Nixon had uh just opened a road to, to China. The next ones was the Canadian troupe from Toronto.

MDG: And so tell me about what the Famous Pe-uh People Player's does, uh...

MT: Well we're a a theatre company and we train, and this is our inside story, is that we train mentally challenged, young, adults to be the performers...

MDG: Hmm, hmm.

MT: ...which is the most difficult of all art forms because first of all it's a one dimension...that means you can't turn sideways, or you black out. And it's all under black light, which picks up, all the, fluorescent colours, and you don't see the performers at all. Now how she got involved with the mentally challenged was, after each hand puppet theatre that she would do she would invite, a few in the front row to come inside her box, and do their own thing.

MDG: Hmm, hmm.

MT: And when she saw that they were so animated and so, attached to the character that they were holding if it was a bird or anything. And she thought you know, if if they were, they were—they lost their inhibition by being inside, and not seen. They forgot who they were. And so she thought of black light, because they're dressed in black hoods and so on...[sounds of something closing in the background][swallows and looks at something off camera] and so on, and um...uh... [sighs]

MDG: Oh that's okay, continue.

MT: Yup. [wipes nose] And um...so that's, so that's how it started so she asked me I said, "Well I don't know anything about black light what am I going to do with black light? And now that's going a little too far let's stick with what we know." "No no no we're going to do this." I wonder what would have happened if I had said no. Because it had, taken off...nobody knew though, until we were interviewed um...a...after a performance that we did for Liberace, here in Toronto. We were, er guest er performers at a, luncheon. And he stood up and he says, "We got to take you to, to Vegas." Of course, we says, "How you...can't go to Vegas. They don't know how to read or write or anything like this." He says, "I'm taking you to Vegas, because it's what you are you're, you're um...uh entertainers you deserve to be on stage. So we were in Vegas for 12 years.

MDG: Oh my goodness. And how did you like Vegas?

MT: Oh... [rolls head] [JD laughs] [MT smiles] I wish I could do it over again now, I 'cause I was, it was a, a wonderful life.

JD: Yes.

MT: Um...n-never knew, really you know you meet all these people. Ju-I was saying reminiscing Ginger Rogers the other night just watching her on television, in the dressing room, and, Robert Wagner, um, um...

JD: Natalie Wood.

MT: Hmm?

JD: Natalie Wood. [long pause]

MT: Natalie Woods yeah. Oh yeah all those, yeah.

JD: Elvis Presley...

MT: Elvis Presley.

JD: ...Frank Sinatra.

MT: Yeah...Sergio Franki my gosh we had dinners with him and uh....

MDG: Yeah.

MT: But you know was just a uh a day of living, uh a way of living it was nothing uh pretentious. They were just ordinary people. Jack Lemmon, you you name them all.

JD: Renee Semard [?].

MT: Robert uh...take uh...uh Paul Newman. Uh you would never know it was Paul Newman if he walked in the door.

MDG: Really? And and sorry I-I don't think I got your daughter's name, well your childrens' names.

MT: Yup. My daughter's name was Diane, and and she married a Frenchmen and uh her name is now Diane Dupuis. And she's the founder and uh, director of the, Famous People Player's...the most marvellous speaker there you could ever have. She replaced Jesse Jackson in Eng- in the States, one night that he couldn't uh, uh, uh...uh keep his uh, engagement and they sent for her. She's in uh, library book in in in uh the States. So and she was born in Hamilton.

MDG: Hmm, hmm.

MT: Um...

MDG: And, did you, did you ever, think or dream that your life would, would go this way, that th- all these uh [unclear]...?

MT: —No I never dreamt it but it certainly has been wonderful. I, I can, I can be a very um, um, happy to say, that I built the biggest, s-stage set ever. If you can imagine, a set that looks like a cave, that's 45 feet high.

MDG: Wow.

MT: That's four stories, and a half. [laughs]

MDG: Oh my gosh.

MT: And 75 feet long. And that went on Radio City Music Hall. You ever been in Radio City Music—?

MDG: I see it fro-I, I you know I've never been there—

MT: —Yeah. It's the biggest theater in the world actually.

MDG: Yeah.

MT: Yeah.

JD: You take after your dad grandma...

MT: Yeah.

JD: ...in many ways...both your parents.

MT: Yeah.

MDG: Yes, do, do you think that your ambition uh, came from...—?

MT: Oh my parents oh definitely everything I know is, is from them [wipes eyes with tissue], everything uh. I know I, I hear remarks of, of words that I would never dream of of of of um, of thinking about words myself but uh...

JD: [opens passports] —These are both parents.

MDG: Oh yes.

MT: ...uh uh singing uh singing sharp or or, flat notes and anything like that [unclear] his timing is off eh look it his timing is off he's holding that note too long it should never be that long you know. Uh it's all come into my mind.

MDG: Yeah.

JD: Grandma this is uh, your father's passport.

MT: Yeah he was born 1989.

JD: Nope—

JD and MDG: —1889.

MT: 1889.

JD: Hmm, hmm.

MT: 1889. Yeah.

MDG: And your mom?

JD: —And this is your mom, grandma.

MT: In 95, 1895...and they came as honeymooners.

MDG: Uh huh.

MT: Yeah.

LDP: And decided to stay?

MDG: And decided to stay—

MT: —Yeah. My dad had lost his mother and father, uh...at a very early age one after another and he had this dowry so, they decided to, em uh...invest and come and see, because they promised t- , that they would get a shovel, when they came to Canada to dig up the gold. [MDG laughs] That there was gold on the streets...

MDG: Wow.

MT: ...which never was.

MDG: [laughs] Yeah.

LDP: And then they decided to stay?

MT: They stayed at and then 12 years later we moved back to, Italy...

LDP: Hmm, hmm.

MT: ...with three children they moved back to Italy with three children. And we went to school there. Yeah.

LDP: Did—

MT: —And uh, that's where I, got a scholarship to paint ceramic, at the ceramic uh factory. But I came back to Canada. But I learned everything from school there 'cause after school we all—this is something that they should have here in Canada I've been saying this forever, is to have, uh uh schools up to, let's say, three o'clock and then from three to six to go to a trade.

LDP: Hmm, hmm.

MT: A tailor, we went to s-dressmakers, millinery, cooking, painting. We had to do that. This is how I learned everything I didn't have to go, to anything, special. It was all taught and doing, delivering, putting, taking uh bastings off, sores, uh, uh, and and learning how to cook from peeling potatoes and that. [unclear] People don't do that anymore here in Canada and this is what's wrong.

MDG: Hmm, hmm. So the arts, the the arts are very important to you?

MT: Oh yes, [unclear] definitely, definitely. Yup, yup. [wipes nose with tissue]

MDG: And what is your hope for the future of Famous People Player's.

MT: Well...it's endless. I think this uh...it's an endless uh uh because there's new generations coming in all the time. And right not they're er, not only teaching theatre they're teaching culinary

art...uh and uh that's something tha-that started this year, that they're taught how to uh, prepare foods at the tables now it's a dining, uh dining uh...theatre as well. So there's lots to learn for these uh...children who are, so called mentally challenged, but they have, uh more intelligence than most normal people have, because they're not using it properly. Yup.

[TIME: 50:03]

LDP: Could you tell us a little bit more about your first show with Famous, People Player's?

MT: Well the first show [sighs]...well actually the first professional show would be with Liberace.

LDP: Ohh?

MT: And there was only one number. And I remember, making the, the fishes and the little...um...[sighs] ladybugs...[JD laughs] ...oh yes [laughs] ladybugs...and spiders.

JD: Yeah.

MT: And it was um, to the number called...

JD: —*Boogie-Woogie*.

MT: ...*Boogie-Woogie*.

MDG: Yeah.

JD: Hmm, hmm.

MT: And Liberace imitation of Liberace, puppet, of almost a facsimile, but not quite as we, improved on it as we went on. And uh...so that this is how he hired us with this, and we get to the airport each one, of the performers had their own props in a, um cloth bag. We get to the airport and the airport "What do you got in there?" He says, "I got a spider." "What have you got in there?" He says, "I got a ladybug." "What do you got in there?" [JD and MDG laugh] Get over there so, it held us up because we we had no papers we didn't know at the that you had to have papers soon go across. [MDG laughs] Well we finally get across, miss our flight we got on the next flight...and uh Liberace phoning and so on and whatever happened in between. So um...

MDG: And how would you develop these networks you you like even with Vegas, well, with Vegas ?

MT: So then from Liberace we came home and um...uh...mm...to one job after another uh it-it's just...

JD: Just kept working, kept...

MT: Yeah.

JD: ...keeping busy...

MT: Yeah.

JD: ...getting calls...doing shows...

MT: Yeah.

JD: ...going to—

MT: So Diane w-was now, sh-also, yeah so Diane is on, on it she she knew w-what she was doing and all I did was, making the props and I knew nothing about making props. [MDG laughs] Not at all.

MDG: No?

MT: It's just what I thought I c-would like to see. I, I haven't copied anything of a book or anything what does a ladybug looks like a with a hat a tie and a...

MDG: Uh huh.

MT: ...all these things yeah. Is this Diane? Yup.

[sound of a door latch opening]

MT: This is my daughter now. [pointing to someone off camera]

MDG: Ohh?

MT: Diane.

DD: [off camera] Hi, I'm just on...[unclear] —

MDG: —Oh okay—

LDP: —No worries.

MDG: Ahh, that's wonderful.

MT: Um...um.

MDG: Are there any other stories that thinking back now uh either during the war years or things that happened after the war years that you [sound of a door closing], you'd like to share with us?

MT: Oh... [long pause] [looks up, deep in thought]

MT: Well, uh...I was married in 43.

MDG: Hmm, hmm.

MT: I was married in 43, and then off course uh, uhh...D-day was shortly after I'm sure it was of 45?

MDG: Hmm, hmm.

MT: Yup. And my husband became a soldier. Uh, um, um, so I was a war bride I was to say. Uh, it and it was, you know—and a- when I look back it must have hurt my parents a-a-a lot to think that I um, I um, switched from...Italian, to uh...to a Canadian. But, they were um, supportive and helped me uh, through it all. They never said I told you so. Um...

MDG: So they were always very supportive of, of...—

MT: —Yeah, they were very supportive yeah.

MDG: And what happened to your parents did they, did they remain in Hamilton, uh, after a you, you were married?

MT: [turns to granddaughter] They which?

MDG: Did they stay in Hamilton your parents?

MT: Oh yes yeah, my mother and dad both died there. Yup.

MDG: And when did your parents pass away?

MT: That's a good question.

MDG: Hmm, hmm. [long pause] Okay.

MT: [thinks] It's a few years ago I can't, really—

JD: —I think grand [unclear] died in 1960. No—

MT: —Uh—

JD: —Uh, uh Leonard, Warren died in 1960 he died before that.

LDP: Hmm, hmm.

JD: And then your mom died after Leonard Warren. I think she died in the, 60's too.

MT: Oh my mother was er in her late 60's, uh they both were in their in their late 60 when they died.

JD: Yeah.

MDG: Hmm, hmm.

MT: Youngish. And to tell you hows, um, uhhh, my dad was, when he became ill, they diagnosed him for sarcoma, of the blood, was unusual, and they had come up with a, a drug but had never been tested, g-nitroglycerin. So, he offered to to, try it on him...

MDG: Hmm, hmm.

MT: ...and he made medical, umm, history in a magazine, uh that it uh killed all the cells somehow, and he survived that. And then he became, ill...and uh they thought it was a kidney failure and he said to the doctor, "Somebody's making a mistake 'cause I know it's not my kidneys. It can't possibly my kidneys." "Well yes it's your kidneys." So anyway he went into a coma, and he says, "You know, uh whatever I'm going to say is going to be the truth. And you stay here and, and you listen to me now." So he says [unclear] "It, I, they're going to find out, and I want, you make sure you [unclear] I want in [unclear] so you know, that I'm right." And sure enough, it was the prostate not the kidney.

MDG: Hmm, hmm.

MT: Had they removed the prostrate he would have been another, year or so longer but anyway, that just to show you how deter- how he—he read books like you wouldn't believe from the library that uh, on on every topic you can imagine. And I think, the war years, have ha- actually helped him in a way...um, to do his own thing...

MDG: Yeah.

MT: ...when I look back. Like uh uh it wasn't responsible to earn a f-, earn, a keeping for his family...uh, he put it to good use. And um, there was no animosity, with the English after that, ever. I-In fact he, almost became one himself.

MDG: Really. And h-how did that happen?

MT: But he was always, he was always loyal to uh, uh, being Italian. Yah.

LDP: Did your father play music after the war did he start another band or did he participate in—?

MT: —No.

LDP: No.

MT: No he didn't start the band after that, no. This was all before the war.

LDP: Oh.

MT: Yah.

LDP: So, h-he just played at home then or, in-j- uh played recorded music? He continued to—

MT: —Oh yes and actually [wipes nose with tissue]...we owned, the only...uh the RCA only made...uh, three, radio, players—record players—with 22 tubes, only made three, and when Leonard Warren came to visit us, he, he autographed the, the lid [makes a writing motion in the air]...

JD: Uh huh.

MT: ...Lad Warren.

JD: You still have that.

MT: M-my brother had it—

JD: —Yeah.

MT: ...so I don't know where—

JD: —Yeah.

MT: ...that is now. Yup. So um...uhh...oh yeah, m-musica. So and the “gerrard” [?], is a, “gerrard” [?] is a turntable, trade name, for, the record player, and they used to come cause he'd say the reason that we're not getting the sound is the, the, the needle, that the arm that holds the needle is too heavy pressing onto the record, and the engineers used to come to our house, to, to see what he meant and they used to put coins on the bottom of it to make it balance, so they would, go back and redesign it and so on.

LDP: Based on your father's, input.

MT: Yup, that was my dad yeah.

MDG: Um and we talked about how the war years shaped your dad's, uh, shaped your dad's life  
an- how did the war years shape your life do you think?

MT: [pause] [turns to granddaughter] How did the what?

MDG: How— [unclear]

JD: —[unclear]—I think, I think it made you—how the war years shaped your life I think it made  
you more—you had to learn to be independent.

MT: Yes you had to be independent—

JD: —Yeah.

MT: —and and you know and be understanding um to others uh the the the...it was nobody's  
fault. And and you were, th-th-there's nothing you could do.

JD: Yeah.

MT: And uh and uh, if you let it worry you more it would've been been been worse we just carried  
on as peaceful—it, it did take a lot of, uh spunk out of him I bet like you know he, didn't socialize

as much...I, I can say that. Uh he wasn't outgoing like he was if we had to go out to dinners at, uh, uh Christmas New Years and all that, he'd go, but he wouldn't be, um...

JD: [unclear]

MT: ...like he was before, a-ahead of the ga- ahead, leader...

MDG: Yeah.

MT: ...of doing this, let's do this let's do that he would never uh, he...it was more my mother than my dad.

MDG: Yeah.

MT: He was very happy to be, sitting at home, after work and do nothing. Uh I think he had lost all that...uh socializing.

[TIME: 1:00:48]

MDG: Yeah. And um...going back to your work with the Famous People Player's and and uh working with your daughter through, all all those years um, what advice do you have, for a child who might feel, um as though they're alone or maybe the parents of a child who—

MT: —Yeah, well it's what I always say to them uh uh periodically I speak to school children 'cause we have school, shows in the morning, is...make, every job you have a happy one. You're going to start out delivering newspaper. Don't just throw the paper on the verandah, take it to the door. If it's raining t-try and put it inside the door take that extra minute, to, to, give your service. And

you'll say well I don't get paid for that. You never know. At the end you might get paid for it and if not, you're happy you have done something good. And, don't b- ever be ashamed of a job. Make that job, a happy one for you, and be proud. I will never forget, they used to have street, sweepers, with these long brooms, in Hamilton you know they used to sweep, and every time...you go up close to one he'd they go, and hide, as if they could hide. I finally, went up to one and I said, "Hello how are you today? Isn't it nice that you're doing something wonderful for us. You know we got to thank you, you're uh it's it's valuable..." and before you know it he started to s-straighten up. Yeah, yeah I guess I am. Now you're [unclear] there looking up at you. Yeah.

MDG: And so, do you think uh it was your positive outlook that that, attributed to all of this success of the—?

MT: —That's right yeah.

MDG: So keeping, the importance of keeping a positive...

MT: Yeah, uh uh, life is a-ab- absolutely too short, and you know, I have a saying I don't know...I um...the way I've lived my life...w-w-with the alphabet "C". Consequences, commitment...comedy...any of the C's...if you put them out to use, you can't go wrong. Because you think of commitment uh like yesterday I was so sick I would've called you easy and say I'm sorry, I c- but I came here and but I made my mistake that's how much I was, committed to come.

JD: Yes.

MT: And, what consequence would I have suffered you would've got mad, you would never come back again, and I would've lost you.

MDG: No. That's not true.

MT: No you know what I mean.

MDG: Yeah yeah. [laughs]

MT: And then I have to laugh at myself and if it wasn't that I could laugh at myself I would be lost, without humour.

JD: Hmm, hmm.

MT: Yeah. So there's the letter C's, any one of them circumstances and uh coincidence and all that they're all very valuable, the letter C and tell every child that to, that and to listen to your parents as much as you'd hate to hear them. Listen to your parents, 'cause they won't steer you wrong. Um.

MDG: And are you very proud are you now very proud of your, your daughter for...—?

MT: —I never think of it that way it's just the, w-we're happy together we're, uh we're doing things she apprec-uh, she's proud of my work I'm proud of her work and, she's the worst boss I've ever had...[MDG laughs]...uh but I have never failed her, you know. Like uh, she'd come to me like, "I don't see the gas tank anywhere." I says, "What the gas tank well I told you about two weeks ago see you never listen to me." [MDG laughs] "They're coming Esso people are coming this afternoon at two o'clock." I haven't got no gas tank how am I going to build a gas tank right now? So my gosh what am I going to do so I took one of my long cart and turned it upside down and painted a face of like a g-, put a rope on the side for the, gas nozzles on.

MDG: Wow.

MT: [sighs]

JD: And she started helping, mom in her 60's.

MT: Oh.

MDG: Wow.

MT: And so then, she calls, "Mary can you bring the gas tank over?" [MDG and JD laugh] I thought to myself, She's got a lot of nerve to think that I have a gas tank. [Everyone laughs] So I brought this box over and I says, "You have to excuse me I'm not going to show you the real thing..." [MDG laughs] "I'm going to show you the mock up one." "Oh well that's okay it's okay..." Diane says, "Dee, I, I just wanted to know how you were going to pull that one." [JD laughs] So it's been always like that. Do it yesterday for today.

MDG: Yesterday for today. And we have your granddaughter Jeannine uh, here—

MT: —I have two now...

MDG: Two?

MT: ...Uh, is Joanne still there?

JD: No, she...

MT: Oh. Now Joanne, is um, the director of, of the uh performance.

MDG: Uh huh.

MT: If you've never seen our show—is there one just later on?

JD: There's one tomorrow.

MDG: Okay.

MT: Oh no dinner tonight that's right tomorrow. You'll have to come by and see it. It is...as Paul Newman said, "There's nothing that you've ever, ever seen before."

MDG: Wow.

MT: Yup. And for me, to see all my, work on stage, is absolutely um, amazing, for me, that I, don't give myself credit.

MDG: Yeah.

LDP: How did Liberace, um...find out about you? Was he in Toronto—?

MT: —Well we were, we were, um...um, um...hired to perform, 'cause we were at that time a little unique little thing. So er were in at the park which is not there anymore, and uh, we were the entertainer at a luncheon.

LDP: Oh?

MT: Yeah. That's how that happened. We were at the right place the right time...[LDP chuckles]...and now about going to Japan, no going to China first, um...um we were the first, we were—by now, by that time we had more than one number, and we're playing in Vancouver. Uh we had a tour across Canada, played in Vancouver, and um, the mayor, of Vancouver was entertaining some diplomats from China, and where do you take him to the theatre, and we happened to be what's on the stage which they didn't know who. Anything that's at that theatre had to be good, so they came backstage with their [unclear] of crying and says, "My people's got to see you...you go to China." Well, we go to Japan but I don't know about China. So...that was October and in December, uh January we were on the Great Wall of China.

JD: Yeah.

MT: Right after, Dixon had been there. We were the only white people, on the street, no.

JD: First western act to perform—

MT: —You were just a little girl.

JD: Yeah.

MDG: Ohh.

MT: How old were you then, f-seven, five? No.

JD: I was in grade two at the time—

MT: —Three or four.

JD: ...but I remember it like—

MT: —Four years old, yeah.

JD: ...it was yesterday. Yeah. That was the only—

MT: —The only cars were our cars government cars with the little flags in the front...

JD: Hmm.

MT: ...[unclear] inside. And we were taken to um...uh...seal [?] companies where they hired only deaf people...

MDG: Hmm, hmm.

MT: ...because of the noise. And then they w-took us another, uh was a, a...

JD: They took us to—

MT: Deaf-mutes.

JD: Yeah. And and people who were blind—.

MT: —Blind...

JD: ...blind.

MT: ...and then the orchestra that were all blind musicians. So they, they uh, look after all their, um uh challenged people.

JD: Yes, yeah.

MT: Yeah, was, were very remote...

JD: Hm.

MT: ...except uh the uh big squares and that but the the houses were very remote, and no plumbing stuff like that, yeah. And then going to Japan we had a dinner uh...tourist from Japan, and the lady, loved our show and she wanted to know if we'd go to Japan, well we went to China we can't go to Japan okay. So, uh...she took all the papers with her, but when she got home, she couldn't sell it to anybody, the uh, so she mortgaged her house...

MDG: Wow.

MT: ...and had us going over there. That was during the earthquake [turns to granddaughter] Kobis [?] earthquake...

JD: The Kobase [?]-

MT: Kobase [?] earthquake.

[TIME: 1:10:23]

MT: And they said, “Well you didn’t tell us was that good. Have them come back next year.” And then next one you said next year too and next year too next year so...11 years. No theatre company can s-say that.

MDG: Wow.

MT: Not even being once, in Japan.

JD: Hmm, hmm.

MT: Three or four cities at a time, s-. When we arrived at the airport the very first time—[turns to granddaughter] do you remember that? [chuckles]

JD: Hmm, hmm.

MT: We could see these camera coming to, all over the place with uh over their shoulder ca-running running running running, and we’re looking behind us to see, uh wh—

JD: —Yeah [laughs], who’s here? [MDG laughs]

MT: ...wh- must be a rock band that’s landed here we’re looking around before you know it...

JD: —Yeah.

MT: ...they squeezed us into thing and it was us that were ca-. Well then we were all crying and and [laughs]...they showed us on TV. Eh, but now when we go we're all prepared very handsomely we're just looking for the cameras to be there. [LDP laughs]

MDG: Ahhh, that's great. And Jeannine how do you, how do you feel having grown up, in—

MT: —In, in Liberace's piano. Yeah.

JD: I feel very blessed...

MT: Um.

JD: ...I feel blessed.

MDG: Yeah, yeah.

LDP: Well maybe Joanne you can tell us—

MT: —But you never thought anything of it did you?

JD: No.

MT: It was just a, other people.

JD: It was normal for me.

MT: Normal people.

JD: But I feel very blessed and...I try, [closes eyes] I try to learn from my grandma. I try very hard.

MT: So I have Sunday dinners now, that tradition has never stopped...and uh I have as many as, uh...eight to ten people on a Sunday.

MDG: Wow.

JD: Yeah.

MT: I start Friday night...

MDG: Uh huh.

MT: ...Saturday after work here.

MDG: Wow.

MT: And uh, I, every, every Sunday's a little different. Um.

MDG: And what's your favourite recipe to make?

JD: Gnocchis.

MT: Gnocchis and raviolis, um, yeah. And um, all kinds of pasta I surprise them all the time. Um.

MDG: And are these, recipes that your mom taught you?

MT: Yeah but, uh, I never uh, measure anything. [LDP laughs] No. My daughter gets her p- her book out like this and [chuckles] has to read and oh... [JD laughs]...I, I haven't got this so she goes to the store to get tartar sauce. Well uh put something else instead of tartar sauce. [laughs with MDG] Yeah, she will. I [unclear] bet she'll hit her. No my I was my mother's uh, uh sous-chef I call it today always beside her. My, my dad used to love her, her cooking all Zana Zana this and Zana that. Oh.

LDP: [unclear]

MDG: Well thank you so much for uh, allowing us to uh—

JD: —Thanks grandma.

MT: Well I hope you got something out of it.

MDG: Oh my gosh—

LDP: —Of course.

MDG: —it was, it was the most interview- interesting interview and fasci- you know just wonderful experience for me.

MT: Well.

JD: Thank-you grandma, thank-you so much.

MT: If I think of anything I'll let you know. [laughs]

MDG: Yeah, we can come back for, we can come back for a follow-up—

MT: —I-I going to make sure I get you, um, a picture.

MDG: Okay.

MT: Yeah.

MDG: Great.

MT: Yeah.

MDG: Great. All right.

[Camera fades out at 01:13:43]

**[End of Interview]**

[Camera fades in at 01:13:44]

[Lucy films the different artifacts and speaks a little of them. There are background voices and noises throughout this part of the filming.]

LDP: [holds picture of two elephants-one pink, one blue-dancing] This is the photograph of the masquerade ball, in which she noted she won, first prize the Columbus Centre you can see, the rotunda in the background.

[Camera fades out at 01:14:01]

[Camera fades in at 01:14:02]

LDP: [holds picture of "Sartorio's Sons of Italy Band" - uniformed band members posing on steps with their instruments ] This is the, this is the photograph of her father's band, as you can see, the caption. [caption reads: *"Photo Circa 1910, Hamilton Courthouse Steps; Mary's Father and Diane and Robert's Grandfather (Second row, 5<sup>th</sup> from the left)*]

JD: I think that's her—

LDP: —Circa 1910.

JD: [points to someone in the picture] That's her dad.

LDP: And, that would be him there. Um I'm not sure what the location is but we could figure that out.

[Camera fades out at 01:14:28]

[Camera fades in at 01:14:57]

LDP: [focuses on mirror on the floor] This is the recording of the mirror that, her father handcarved...um, when he was 15 or 16 in school, made of wood and here, are the angels, as well as other floral...botanical...decoration, and sashes.

[Camera fades out at 01:15:24]

[Camera fades in at 01:15:25]

LDP: Here are the two passports.

[Camera fades out at 01:15:28]

[Camera fades in at 01:15:29]

LDP: [opens mother's passport] Here are the two passports.

[Camera fades out at 01:15:32]

[Camera fades in at 01:15:33]

JD: [unclear]

LDP: [opens father's passport] Yeah, sure. And her father here's a photograph of her father, in his passport, with his date...and signature.

[Camera fades out at 01:15:49]

[Camera fades in at 01:15:50]

LDP: [shows picture hanging on a wall] This is a, a...photograph of Mary, building a...puppet for a show. It's hanging on the wall in the lobby of the Famous People Player's Theatre.

[Camera fades out at 01:16:06]

[Camera fades out at 01:16:07]

LDP: [shows an old sewing machine] Your first machine.

MT: Yeah.

LDP: The first sewing machine, that Mary used to, build the first costumes. [shows framed text beside the sewing machine] And um, some copy on Mary's work as well as some [shows pictures on the wall above and around the sewing machine] photographs, of the first puppets being built, and Mary's work, on display...including a certificate from, Pope Benedict.

[Camera fades out at 01:16:49]