

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

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NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: Antoinette (Toni) Ciccarelli

NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Melina De Guglielmo

NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER: Travis Tomchuk

TRANSCRIBED BY: Grant Karcich/Krystle Copeland

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PROJECT NOTE:

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

ABSTRACT

Antoinette (Toni) Ciccarelli is a 95 year old woman, born in Guglionesi, Campobasso, Molise, Italy on September 23, 1915. She was 6 years old when she immigrated to Canada with her mother Brigitta Bassano, and sisters, Teresa and Rose. Toni's brother, Joe, was born shortly after their family's arrival in Canada in Hamilton, and her brother, Frank, was born in St. Catharines, Ontario. Her father, Vincenzo, died after the family moved to a farm in Scarborough some years after their arrival. After her father's death, her mother moved the family to downtown Toronto, where Toni worked in various grocery stores and did volunteer work at Casa D'Italia. On June 10, 1940, she was sorting mail at the Front Street Post Office when she was picked up by two RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) officers, taken to a police station and fingerprinted. She was released and had to report to the police whenever she left town. She describes some internees, such as Mr. Eliseo Orlando, and also describes other Italian Canadians from her neighbourhood who served in the Canadian military. Mrs. Ciccarelli tells of meeting Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and asking him for her fingerprints when he gave his

apology at Le Parc in Concord, Ontario. She relates details of her wedding and family and her move from Bathurst to Caboto Terrance after her husband, Pat (Pasquale) Ciccarelli died. She concludes with a description of her fund raising activities at the Columbus Centre.

INTERVIEW

TC: Toni Ciccarelli, interviewee

MDG: Melina Di Guglielmo, interviewer

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 00:00:10]

MDG: Okay, so this is Melina Di Guglielmo, uh, interviewing, uh, Antoinette, uh, née Bassano, Ciccarelli, um, on December the seventh, 2010. Okay, so the first few questions that I'm going to ask you Toni are a little bit about your early, um, early life and childhood and stuff like that, okay? So...um, where were you born?

TC: I was born in Italy, in Guglionesi, *provincia di Campobasso*. Yeah and now Molise. Used to be Abruzzi, now it is Molise.

MDG: Now it's Molise. And do you remember anything about, about the town?

TC: Well I remember a bit of it. My—I remember my father's grandmother. And I remember my father—my mother's grand, uh, father, grandfather. He was just a gem. I was his idol[?]. I was his, his little Rose. [Smiles]

MDG: Oh! That's nice.

TC: Yeah His little princess.

MDG: Yeah and what—

TC: We did a lot of things together.

MDG: Okay. And what, what did you do together? What do you remember?

TC: Well I used to sit in his lap and he'd sing to me and he'd tell me stories and everything else. And then take me for little walks. That I remember my mother's father, because my mother's, uh, mother died before I was born.

MDG: Before you were born.

TC: Yeah.

MDG: And did you all live together in one house?

TC: My mother—no first of all we lived in—on [by] ourselves. Then after my father came to Canada from It—uh, to be in there. My mother went to live with her father, so that she took care of her father and we were company.

MDG: Do you—

TC: And my—her sister, younger sister, lived there also.

MDG: Okay. And do you remember what year your dad came to Canada? He left and came to Canada?

TC: My father came here the first year in 1909 and then—and went, went to Alberta cutting down trees. He didn't like the foreman was doing. They would take their first pay and everything else and after they worked there a month or two he'd let them go and put someone else in place. So he came back home. And then after the, the—he came back to Canada and then shortly after that war broke out. He came back to Canada in 1912.

MDG: Okay.

TC: In 1914 war broke out. He came back to Italy because he said he cannot fight his two brothers and his brother-in-law. It was family. So he came back to Italy and he—at the Second World War.

MDG: Hmm.

TC: Uh...and then in between that, in 1915, I was born.

MDG: Okay and what day in 1915 were you born?

TC: I was born in 1915, the 23rd of September.

MDG: Twenty-third of September. Okay. And, uh, what do you remember about your early childhood, so your life in Italy? Do you remember...

TC: Not too much. Bec—I remember my mother saying this—there to—what they called nursery, but it was all prayers and everything else, you know and little games and things that—that’s about all I remember very much.

MDG: And did you speak Italian to your—well obviously yeah—

TC: Oh yes we spoke Italian—

MDG: —at home.

TC: And I remember my father’s oldest brother he was very kind because my mother had to work on the, on the farm. And I used to go my fath—to my uncle’s place and they would look after—and there would be—the, they had the house there all summer long. That’s where they used to live, out in the, the *campagna*.

MDG: Out in *campagna*.

TC: Yeah.

MDG: Yeah.

TC: And I remember that. And, and I know I stayed with my uncle for about a month before we came to Italy. And he didn’t want me to leave to come here. I was his pride and joy because when I was born my mother got [unclear], she couldn’t feed me, and his wife had just lost a child so she was my—

MDG: She nursed you.

TC: [Nods] She nursed me. So that's why we're very very close with them. And I used to call her *mamma* Teresa.

MDG: That's very sweet.

TC: Yeah, yeah [smiles].

MDG: Yeah. And do you remember when, um, when your mom first told you were coming to Canada or—

TC: No, well my moth—we knew then when I had to go to—I went and my, my uncle stayed for a month, we knew we were coming to Canada. I was excited about coming to Canada, but then I cried when we had to leave. When I had to leave my uncle and my—and his wife. And his two daughters they were very kind. So...

MDG: Yeah. And do you remember—how did you come to Canada? Do you remember?

TC: We came by ship.

MDG: You came by ship.

TC: Adriactica.

MDG: Oh, sorry?

TC: Adriactica.

MDG: Oh, okay, Adriatica.

[00:05:09]

TC: Yeah [nods].

MDG: Yeah. Was the name of the ship?

TC: Yes. I think so if I've got the spelling right.

MDG: Oh...

TC: Yeah.

MDG: Yeah. And, and do you remember life on the ship or...

TC: Well, all I remember on the ship is we got on the ship, we were on it about a week and my mother was—went into the hospital. She was seasick all the way over there. And so, there used to be—some, some lady use to be—well, I found later that they were the Red Cross. I didn't know then, I just thought they were nice kind ladies.

MDG: Yeah.

TC: Yes.

MDG: Oh...and, and you came with your brothers, your brothers and sisters right?

TC: No, I just came with just two sisters. My brothers were born here in Canada.

MDG: Okay. So your two sisters' names?

TC: Was Teresa.

MDG: Teresa.

TC: Teresa [Says with Italian accent].

MDG: Whe—and she's the oldest?

TC: She was the old—she was born in 1912.

MDG: Okay.

TC: And then I come after her.

MDG: Uh huh.

TC: And then came my sister Rose—was born 1920.

MDG: Nineteen twenty, okay. Alright so...so you took the ship and came with your f—with your mom and two sisters to Canada—

TC: [Nods] We landed in New York.

MDG: Oh, you landed in—

TC: Yes [nods].

MDG: —Ellis Island?

TC: Ellis Island. If you go to Ellis Island you'll see it [makes motion of a sign with hands].

MDG: Oh, you'll see it.

TC: The name and everything else—all the—when we landed and everything else.

MDG: Oh, do you remember that day...or...

TC: Well, I was too young there, but I do remember that when we got to Ellis Island my sister had broken out with the measles. So we could not get—there we left the ship, but we had to go to, to a place when we had to stay in for a whole week [makes motion on the table with hands] until my sister got through with the measles. And then my father came and got us.

MDG: Oh. So he came from Canada to come and get you in New York?

TC: Well he was already in Canada, but he was working in bridgework, [taps nails on table] because he was working for the railroad.

MDG: Oh okay.

TC: So he came from...ah...

MDG: From Pittsburgh?

TC: Peterborough.

MDG: Oh, Peterborough.

TC: From Peterborough. He came in. And then from there on we went to Hamilton—went to Peterborough. We were there a short time and then he had to ship back to Hamilton, so we all moved to Hamilton.

MDG: You all moved to Hamilton?

TC: Yes. And my brother Joe was born in Hamilton.

MDG: Okay, so Joe was the next sibling?

TC: He was the first of the boys.

MDG: Okay.

TC: Yeah. He was born March the sixth...1924.

MDG: Okay. So Joe was born and you were the big sister who...

TC: Well I was there—it was my sister Teresa was still there and then, uh, my sister Teresa got married at 16. We were at that time living in Bridgeburg.

MDG: Okay.

TC: Which is Fort Erie now, but it used to be called Bridgeburg.

MDG: Alright.

TC: And, uh, she got married there 16 and then that left me being—from Bridgeburg we went to Niagara Falls. At that time my sister was already in, living in Toronto. Now, in, in Niagara Falls we were there because as my father got switched from place to place [motions with finger] we moved. After he went around, found a place to stay and then we'd all move. In seven years we were in six different cities. [Laughs]

MDG: Wow, oh my gosh [laughs].

TC: In Hamilton twice.

MDG: Hamilton twice. Which was your favourite place?

TC: Niagara Falls.

MDG: Niagara Falls. Why?

TC: It was beautiful.

MDG: Oh, yeah.

TC: And then from St.—Niagara Falls we went to St. Catharines, which was beautiful—was nice. And then from Nia—St. Catharines to Ni—whether it did the Welland Canal and it had to do with the railroad. And then we came to Niagara Falls.

MDG: And how—and, and Frankie was born...

TC: He was born in St. Catharines.

MDG: In St. Catharines.

TC: 1925. August the 17th, 1925.

MDG: Seventeen. 1925. And was Frankie the last?

TC: Yes.

MDG: He is the last of...

TC: Yes [nods].

MDG: Yes. Okay. And so you were living in St. Catharines?

TC: Yes [nods].

MDG: And Frankie was born. And then...

TC: Then from there we moved to Niagara Falls.

MDG: Okay.

TC: And from Niagara Falls—we were there till 1930.

MDG: Till 1930.

TC: My father gave up his job at the railroad. He got tired of moving around and around [makes circle gesture with hand]. So he bought a farm in Scarborough.

MDG: Oh, he bought a farm in Scarborough?

TC: Yeah. So we were in Scarborough there—on February the second we came to Toronto. We moved on—in the farm. March the 24th my father died. We were only in Toronto about 40 days when my father died.

[00:10:05]

MDG: And, and, what, what was his...

TC: And my mother was left trying to run the farm and everything else.

MDG: What did your dad die of?

TC: Spinal meningitis. He took, he took a fever on Friday; pneumonia set in on Saturday; Sunday spinal meningitis; Monday morning he was gone. Left my mother with four kids [taps nails on table]. I was the oldest. My father died in March. The month of May my mother said, “No more school, you have to go to work.”

MDG: So you were in grade—do you remember what grade you were in?

TC: I was, I was in grade eight, but I didn't do my exams. So it just counted as grade seven because I didn't do my exams for them.

MDG: And so your mom pulled you out of school and you had to go to work?

TC: Yes. My first job was 12 dollars a month, from seven in the morning till 11 o'clock at night. In a fruit store.

MDG: Wow. Which fruit store?

TC: It was called Leoni's Fruit Market.

MDG: Wow. And, and what would you have to do?

TC: What I did there. Well, they had two children. I used to have to look after them for a while and then go down and help. Once the kids got settled, having their rest, go downstairs, wash celeries, pack potatoes, all of this and then the kids were there at night. The afternoon at night. Working the store. Helping customers.

MDG: Helping customers. And at the same time your mom was at home watching the other—watching your brothers and sisters.

TC: Yes, yes [nods].

MDG: Because she couldn't work, because obviously—

TC: [Shakes head] She couldn't work. My brother was only three. So...

MDG: And your, your oldest sister was already married?

TC: Yes [nods].

MDG: Yeah, so it was the four.

TC: She was already—yeah.

MDG: Out of the house.

TC: Yeah.

MDG: Okay and so how did you feel growing up in, in sort of in, uh, Toronto at the time and, and having to work so—

TC: Well, once I got out of that, that store I got into a couple of other places that I worked. It was—would be Christmas helping and everything else. It was [unclear] factory, doll factory, hand paint the doll faces [gestures using a paintbrush] and things like that. Then I got a lovely job in another fruit store which they were very kind and everything else. Which called [unclear]...fruit market.

MDG: And where was it?

TC: And it was on Queen Street, down by the beach.

MDG: And would you be doing the same work for them? Helping in the store?

TC: Well I was, I was only helping in the store. They had men to go down and do all the work down the basement. I was only helping the customers. They had a daughter and which—she had no sisters, nothing, I became her young sister. So it was—they were so kind and very gentle.

MDG: Yeah.

TC: In the meantime, his brother had a store just two blocks—two or three blocks away from him. And he said, "You know what? My, my brother has a place upstairs that's not rented. And they don't use it. Maybe your mother can go and live there?" So my mother—so we moved down there and we lived down at the beach. For about two years. And then from there my mother was very lonely, she couldn't speak English, nothing. Never had no friends and everything, and that's when we moved down to College Street.

MDG: Okay, so you lived in the flat. And was it a flat?

TC: Yes [nods], with the—above— [Motions up with hand]

MDG: At the beaches and then you moved to College Street?

TC: Yes [nods]. We moved to College Street.

MDG: On—

TC: We moved to—on Treeford[?]. And we were there about a year. They sell the place to his family, they start coming in. And so then from there we went to 220 Claremont. And from 220 Claremont, that house got sold. We went to 273 Claremont. And we were there until I got married.

MDG: Till you got married. Okay, and now—

TC: I was married in 1946.

MDG: Nineteen forty-six. Okay, so we're going to back it up a little bit. Um...so when you first moved to College Street, you were also volunteering already, right? Or...

TC: Yes [nods].

MDG: Yes. And what, what was your first volunteer position? Do you remember?

TC: The church.

MDG: The ch—

TC: [Laughs] Helping the church. And then of course, when they had the Casa D'Italia I—my good friends there, the Orlando's, said to me, "We need somebody to come and help." 'Cause they, they used to have—it was like Columbus Centre, you know. Multiculture [sic] place, where the men after work would go and play cards. The women would go there and knit, crochet. [Gestures with hands] Have there—serve the little sandwiches and that. I was always helping in the kitchen. Either peeling potatoes, carrots or something. Helping with sandwiches, washing dishes. Whatever it was, but it was a place there. Because, you know, they were very kind. They

always—whatever was [left] over, “Take it home to your mom, take it home to your mom.”
Which was wonderful.

[00:15:27]

MDG: So there was, um, there were—how did it work? So were there social clubs that were part of it?

TC: It was a social club. Everybody did volunteer work. [Gestures with hands] The cooks go in there it was volunteer that they did. Somebody else went in there did something—teach you how to do this, it was volunteer. [Gestures with hands] It was nothing paid, it was all volunteers.

MDG: Yeah and were there, um, any sort of political parties—political groups working out of the same space?

TC: Well what they claimed—how would they say it was a political was because Franceschino [James Franceschini] had the big contract. Okay, now he used to go hunting a lot and he used to bring it at the villa of the, uh, Casa D’Italia there. And the cooks would clean and every—do all the cooking and everything. And we’d have like we do here banquets. And they used to charge five dollars, seven dollars, something like that. [Gestures with hands] People would go. So that was the social that they had. But when I was there they used to teach Italian. They had Italian school in there. For those who did not speak Italian. They got there. So that was—there was nothing talked about fascist. [Gestures with hands] As a matter of fact, in the meantime even in the City Hall they had a big statue of, of Mussolini [motions to show how big statue was]. Almost as tall as him, at the City Hall un— until Italy declared war then within five minutes it was all smashed to pieces.

MDG: Yeah.

TC: But I mean it was not—we—they were friendly. It was there. I mean the Mayors went to Italy and everything else. [Gestures with hands] [Unclear] So it was nothing. At that time the story was Italy done good. Because Italy made sure that they went to school. They made sure that they—that who needed help they got help, uh, they done a lot of this. Helping the children there. They—he did a lot of good. Until he went with Germany. Once he went to Germany I guess he got hungry, whatever it was there. He thought he was—they were going to give Italy there. I don't know. But it was just what you hear the stories that [gestures with hands].

MDG: Hmm.

TC: But how it was there that the names they all got, because in there we had the names. [Motions signing into a book] You know, who used to go there and everything else. And I searched that. My name was on there that I was a volunteer. Going to do volunteer work.

MDG: So they had a list of names—

TC: And also I used to the school. You know, there was a class there trying to pick up my Italian [shrugs].

MDG: Yeah. And did you notice before the war broke out, did you notice a lot of discrimination happening against Italians?

TC: No, no [shakes head]. They were very good friends. Once Italy declared war, the fruit stores people went—the people that I knew there, they had to close their store. Tony Fusco—they sold their store. They had to do it. They couldn't. They would take—you put—you know how

they—in the summertime they put their stuff all out [gestures with hands]. They would take tomatoes, smash through the windows [motions throwing tomatoes]. Get eggs, smash through the windows [motions throwing eggs with other hand]. Take the potatoes, thrown them in the middle of the road [motions with hands]. They did a lot of disgraceful...

MDG: And, and who was it that was doing this?

TC: The English [hangs head].

MDG: The English. Yeah. And did you notice that—

TC: The English. The French.

MDG: Yeah.

TC: Most of them were the English.

MDG: Were the English.

TC: If you were an Italian just don't even bother. They wouldn't even walk on the same side of the street with you.

MDG: Hmm.

TC: They—we were called dago, wop, dig-ditchers.

MDG: Yeah. And, um...so the 10th of June 1940...tell me about that day and what you remember.

TC: Well that day...I was working...at the post office. [Tone changes to very serious and hands folded on the table] While I was there the broadcast came on. Italy has declared war...with Germany. Well, within minutes, maybe half an hour or something like that [gestures with hands]. To me it seemed like minutes [gestures with hands]. Two RCMP came. They were in the office, I was called to the office, I went in the office. They said, "You can't work here anymore. You have to come with us." I said, "What did I do wrong?" [Gestures with hands] "You just come with us." So I went down—had to go to Adelaide Street. I had my fingerprints done. In the meantime, from there on don't matter if I even went to, uh, Hamilton, Niagara Falls, I had to report before that I was leaving Toronto. I was like a prisoner [gestures with hands]. She's there, I sit there, I had to report everything. Trying to get a job, I— [shakes head]. As Antoinette, I was nowhere, could get nowhere. So finally I took—I decided you know what, I'm going to use my maiden name. Which was confirmation name, Marie. So I went as Marie and we went around different places. Finally a Jewish man, went in there. I was told to go into there [unclear]. Mr. [unclear] said to me, "Go try it. Over here—there doing uniforms." So I went down and I said, "Mr. Navine[?]." I said, "I would like a job." He said, "What is your name?" And right away I said, "My name is Antoinette, but we call me Marie." [Says harshly]. And he says, "Calm down, calm down, calm." [Motions calming down with hands] I said, "You know what?" I says, "What difference does it make...what my name is and what I am." He says, "You're Italian?" I said, "Yes!" I wasn't worried now. I said, "Yes." And he says, "Calm, calm down, down" [gestures calming motion], because I was skittish [gestures being jumpy and nervous]. And he said "Okay." I said, "I'll work one week with no pay, and if I can't do my job, then tell me to go. If I do, I want to be paid for that week and then on." [Gestures and points with hand] He says, "That's fair, that's fair." [Gestures with hands] From then on, I worked there for a while and then they said to me, "I understand you know how to run a two needle machine?" I said,

"Yes." So he says to me, "We need a place in Hamilton to teach how to run the two needle machine." He says—I said to him, "I'll tell you one thing is, if I do that you have to call the RCMP and get fingerprints." He says, "What happened!? What'd you do!? What'd you do!?" I told him the story of what had happened. He said, "That's fine." He said, "Okay." So they called and they said, "Yes, you can go there." So I went to Hamilton—at that time we had a *comare* of ours—seven times or eight times *comares*, so finally they became an aunt [gestures with hands and laughs].

MDG: [Laughs]

TC: Yeah. And I went to live with her, board with her, and went to work with her children, her two daughters at the, uh, [unclear] place doing the uniforms.

[00:22:25]

MDG: And during this time you were still—how, how long were you designated an enemy alien?

TC: [Unclear] until the war was over. Then the war was over I was free to do what I want to do. [Gestures with hands] But until the war—till they declared war was over, we're at peace, they lost it, they lost, that was it.

MDG: So you—

TC: I was fine.

MDG: You would have to go down to the, uh, RCMP station on Adelaide Street every month?

TC: What I had to do is call in.

MDG: Oh, you had to call—

TC: But if I was in the city, I had to go call—I had to go down.

MDG: And what would they, what would they ask you?

TC: They would ask me where I've gone to that month, what it is there and everything else. And how I was having trouble getting a job. Those were the questions.

MDG: Those were the questions [repeats softly].

TC: But most of it, I used to go to a grocery store and call in, phone that I was still in the city, I was still in the city. And then another time I was taking a trip to Buffalo, 'cause we had relatives in Buffalo. And so there, "And when are you going to come back? What time are you leaving?" I sa—and I tell them what time we're leaving. "What time are you coming home?" I says, "I don't know how long we're going to be." But I says, "I'll call when I get home." I had to call when I got home. [Nods head].

MDG: And w—

TC: I had to keep everything...[motions three spots of table to signify keeping track of places]

MDG: Keep track of everything. And were you the only one in your family designated as an enemy alien?

TC: Yes, well but see my sister Rose was only three years old and she wasn't involved in the volunteer [laughs], anyway, so, so that was—made the big difference. Anyway, so, but my brother Joe had already, before this was even happening, as soon as they were declaring war, he went and signed up to go in. Frankie went in but they wouldn't accept him because [unclear] fingers, he couldn't sho—hold a gun [motions shooting a gun with hand]. And uh, so that was it. And then after I was fingerprinted [shrugs].

MDG: So while you were designed an enemy alien, your brother Joe was actually—

TC: He's in the service [nods].

MDG: In the service.

TC: Yes [nods].

MDG: In the Canadian—

TC: Yes [nods].

MDG: Military. Yeah. And, and did you talk with him during that time? Did he know what was happening to you back home?

TC: [Gestures with hands] Well, well when he came home we told him what was—[unclear] there, but there was nothing there. He never got home very much. He or—I think he only got home two or three times during all that time [counts with fingers].

MDG: And he was stationed...

TC: In Kingston.

MDG: In Kingston.

TC: Yeah, my brother told you what he was doing.

MDG: Yeah.

TC: Yeah.

MDG: And what did your mom think of—while all this was going on with you?

TC: My mother [unclear] what can they do. [Holds both arms outstretched] She says, [unclear] she says, "There's nothing I can do. You know?" [Gestures with hands outstretched and shakes head] I know that I was trying to do all kinds of jobs because my mother how was she going to live. We had a very kind lady who was just, uh, had the grocery store and she was saying, "Please just don't worry. There's a little black book. Write down all what you buy, [unclear]." [Motions writing in a book] "When you got the money you come and give me five dollars at a time, two dollars, what it is, we mark it off, like this." [Motions crossing off the list] Yeah. [Folds hands]

[00:25:37]

MDG: And, um, do you remember any of the people on your street, or, uh, being taken away?

To—

TC: No, I know a lot of the boys had joined in and were in the service.

MDG: Okay.

TC: Yeah. The other people that I knew didn't live near my district. They lived further away. But I knew who they were. [Gestures with hands]

MDG: Who were taken to camp?

TC: [Nods] Who were taken to camp.

MDG: Yeah. And, um, do y—you spoke to me before about the Exhibition.

TC: Yes.

MDG: And going down to see them at the Ex.

TC: [Nods] Yes.

MDG: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

TC: Well, I can do—which was...the Orlandos. Now Mr. Orlando was doing uniforms for the fascist boys. That was a job. It was not their—it wasn't that it was their—'cause they belonged to the Casa D'Italia. Whether he was a fascist or not, that I don't know. His wife—they were very, very kind because when we first came to Toronto then my father died. He had just made himself a suit and Mr. Orlando—my mother was so worried that she didn't have a suit for my father and Mr. Orlando donated his suit. Put it on my father's back to bury him. And he used to make a little short pants for my brothers. She would make little skirts for us [gestures with hands], for me and my sister, you know and everything else. Little blouses, little dresses. They

were very kind, kind people. So when she—when her—she found her husband was picked up and they picked up her boys that was what worried her because they were in school, they picked them up in school. They did not get a chance to go home and get a sweater, get nothing. Pick them up and take them down to the Exhibition. And she phoned me, she says, "Antonietta please..." and she's crying on the phone. She says, "They took my boys, they took my boys. They have no sweaters. They have nothing. They don't have their prayer book, they don't have their rosary, nothing." 'Cause they were very—not over religious, but they were religious people and they believed in something. So I said, "Okay, I'll come down and get it." So I went all the way down to the beach, picked up, picked up their sweaters, picked up their rosaries, their prayer book and went down to the Exhibition. [Motions with hands] And when I went down to the Exhibition I asked them—they wanted to know what I was doing there, I says, "I have these for Italo and Roy Orlando, that the mothers gave me to give to them." [Gestures as if showing items] "That's fine." A lot of the men around there saw me. They knew who I was. [Motions men around and points to her chest] You know and everything. And they say, "Give regards to my wife! Say okay! Give [unclear]. Get this to my mother!" Whatever it is. That's the way it is, you know, there. So I gave the things to the boys and everything else and that was it.

MDG: And how did it look? Like had they put them all in the middle of—

TC: They were all in— [Gestures with up with hand]

MDG: Where were they?

TC: [Gestures with hand] Well you know where they were? I—down at the Exhibition, down at the side where they usually have the Venetian Ball now, but it's—I forget the name of it. The big, big—

MDG: The Liberty Grand?

TC: The Liberty Grand. [Nods] Well that used to be the place where all the boys—where they were staying. [Gestures with hand] See they—even where they came from England or wherever they came, all stationed in Toronto, at the—there—stayed at the Liberty. So that's where they—there—at that—at there—that grounds there is where I was, went up to see them. And there's where they got them. They were in the place there. The room was in there, so they came out because even though you come out there, there's all the grounds around. Around the grounds is gate, you know the big fence. [Motioning with hands] That's where it used to be anyway. And so I was—because somebody was right behind me I know, watching everything [motions behind her], so I give the things to the boys and everything else and then I came—I said to them, "Take care of yourself and I'll give my best to your mom." He said, "Tell mamma not to worry, tell mamma..." Well the boys were not there, they were in about a week or two and they sent them home. Yeah. Sent them home. But their father did the whole four years.

MDG: Wow. And during that time did you, um, speak with Mrs. Orlando? Did you still continue your—

TC: Oh, my, my friendship with, with Mrs. Orlando was always, always.

MDG: Yeah.

TC: They were very, very kind. Very kind person.

[00:30:09]

MDG: Yeah. And, and do you know whether she was able to—

TC: And as a matter of fact their, their daughter and I were girlfriends. [Gestures with hands]
She was a nurse at St. Mike's.

MDG: Oh, okay.

TC: Yeah.

MDG: Yeah. And was she able to go and visit her husband in camp? Do you ever—do you remember her talking about it?

TC: No [shakes head], because they sent away and you got a note to say—she didn't see her husband for the last—for the whole year that they were interned. They never got a chance to come home or anything else. As a matter of fact one of them, their father or mother died, I forget, they would not let them come home. Which they could have let them home. Even to come with a guard or something. But not. [Shakes head]

MDG: Hmm, hmm... Okay. So, then, uh, later on when they finally lifted the designation how did you feel? How did you—how do you— Do you remember the day when they—when you were no longer an enemy alien?

TC: Well, you know, we lost a lot of boys. Just in two blocks away we lost five boys. And within...within two to three weeks apart. Which was brokenhearted. My mother was always praying for them, helping them out whenever she could, and everything else. [Looks down at hands] [Unclear] Three doors away from us, one of the boys was in the Air Force, died. [Unclear], Dr. [unclear], if you ever heard of him—there—his brother died. Leoni boys—two boys of the Leoni boys died. Some of the others [unclear] there died. We lost about 15 in our own neighbour—in our neighbourhood.

MDG: And these were, uh, Italians—

TC: Children.

MDG: Children of Italians that went and fought?

TC: That went into the service.

MDG: Yeah.

TC: You know, they just went into the service. And yet some of them—some of their fathers were taken in. [Shakes head]

MDG: Wow. So what was the overall...feeling in the street like?

TC: They just said they were fascist. And that was it. And they was against the war, so they were taken in. Now when Mulroneu came here to apologize to the Italians in 1990 at Monte Casino [points with finger]...Pal asked me...he said, "We got a beautiful big cookie house but we have no cookies to eat." "Pal what do you want me to do?" "I want you to make some cookies." I said, "What do you want, rat poison or arsenic?" "Now Toni come on, the kids—it's going to the kids." 'Cause I knew from Mulroneu [unclear]. And he said, "Okay." So, I met him. So when I had to present the cookies...to Mrs. Mulroneu, uh, I said to him, "[unclear]" [Says in a serious tone] I said, "Mr. Mulroneu. I would like my fingerprints back." And he said to me, "Toni, I would love to give your fingerprints back, but I don't have them. The RCMP has them." "Well how can I get them back?" He said, "Well, they're gone. Either they're destroyed or see if the family wants." And at the top of my lungs, I yelled up, "A hell of lot of good that's going to do me!" [Throws hands in the air] We you know what I got a standing ovation. [Holds head in hands on the table]

And Pal says, “[unclear]...I knew something was going [unclear].” He said, “But I’m glad because you took it off your chest.” And then from then on I fought and fought and fought [gestures with hands] because I want my fingerprints back.

MDG: Yeah.

TC: And I've been fighting since.

MDG: Ever since. Wow. And I, I remember you telling me that you were very bitter at the time.

TC: I was very bitter. Very, very bitter. I didn't want to do no more volunteer work, I didn't want to go to the church to do volunteer for Father, I didn't want to do nothing anymore. And my mother says, “No...that’s not right. That’s not right. [Shakes head] What you do is, you got hit on this cheek [points to cheek], turn around and give them the other cheek [points to other cheek].” She says, “That's what you got to do.” So Father [unclear] used to phone, “Brigitta, send Antoinette down.” “Alright Father.” [Unclear] “Put her on the phone.” “Antoinette, I want you here.” [Knocks on table] “Alright Father.” And I'd go down. It was bingo or clean the hall or help in the kitchen. Something else there. And then from then on I started doing more work with the, uh, Variety Village, with the kids. I started doing different things. Heart and Stroke, helping out. And then, then of course with the Villa [gestures with hand], they were starting with the Villa. Joe Carrier and my husband were boy friends [motions two people with fingers]. So Joe Carrier was in charge of this here and he said, “Your wife is very good at doing things like that, get her involved with this.” He says, “I'll ask her.” So I says, “Okay! I'll help out.” It's going to be another house for the—for our, for our seniors, you know. I had an elderly mother. So, anyway, I started there. I went around selling books from door to door. And I used to get there, but—I don't know if you understand Italian or not [points to Interviewer and Videographer with both hands]. *Ma che sei stupido o sei mata? Gli italiani non mettano gli figlie nella riposo.*

Le guardano loro [points to chest]. And I said, "Yeah. But time has changed, you don't know. Alright, okay, fine [unclear]." About eight months, six to eight months later, I'm in the Villa, we already had opened up the Villa. Out in the Villa doing something. This gentleman calls me, "Toni." "Yes." He said, "I have an apology to make." He says, "I'm the one that said that you were stupid and you were crazy. And that you—we don't put it. I just had to bring my grandmother in here. My mother can't handle her." In Italian I said, "*Chi sputo in cielo ci riviene in faccia!*" [Points up into the air] He said, "My grandmother used to say that all the time! [Bangs fist on table] That if you spit in the air it comes back to your face."

MDG: Oh boy.

TC: And that was the story.

MDG: Wow.

[00:36:41]

MDG: And so, you mentioned your husband. When did you meet your husband?

TC: I met my husband at a st—uh, Jack and Jill shower. [Smiles] This is going back in '30...'33? I guess '33—'34, something like that. My cousin from Buffalo was getting married and of course she had no, uh, friends in Toronto and I had no but—I didn't know nobody in Buffalo. And she—every summer she used to spend it with us. So she met a lot of my friends. So we thought, We'll give her a shower. So, it was really supposed to be a ladies shower. All of a sudden my girlfriend says, "Are you crazy? We can go to Christie Pitts and watch the game and meet our boys." So, I thought, Oh God, I'm not going to have anybody here. I said you know what, "Bring your boys [gestures with hands]. Bring your friends in." They said, "You mean we can bring our boyfriends

in?" Which was never [shakes head]. Usually we used to meet in corners because you could never [taps nail on table]. And I said, "Ah, yeah." So, we did. We had that. And, and my—one of the boys—one of my girlfriends her boyfriend says, "I have a boy friend which I [unclear] all the time, do you mind if I bring him?" I said, "What's one more? [Gestures with hands] [Unclear] Bring him in." [Laughs] So, this is how it was and I met him. So after the shower he had a Chevy, a '32 Chevy.

MDG: Oh wow.

TC: And uh, so he says, "Let's go down, down at the exhibition—down at Sunnyside [points with finger]," where they had the uh...uh...12-inch hotdogs and everything else you know. And you could put the jukebox on and dance and everything. I said, "Fine." Which was my cousin, with her husband-to-be and two other girl friends of mine. So, we pile up thr—three or four [motions stacking], they were sitting on the—in the rumble seat. I was sitting in the fr—there were three of us in the front. So we all went down there and everything else. And then he kept asking—phoning me. And I said, "I'm too busy. I haven't got time [unclear] get there." Because I [unclear]—I couldn't get serious. I mean to say, he had his parents, they were both sick. He had to—he was the only child. He had to look after them. I had to look after my mother. [Gestures with hands] There was no way we could get serious.

MDG: And, and what was—and what was his name?

TC: Pat—Pasquale.

MDG: Pasquale.

TC: They call him Pat.

MDG: Ciccarelli?

TC: Yes. Yeah.

MDG: Yeah. So you met him and you, you knew you couldn't get serious.

TC: We'd get there anyways so...

MDG: And how many years did you—were you together? Before you got married?

TC: Ten years.

MDG: Ten years.

TC: Ten years. His mother—I saw his mother just before she died. On—which was Palm Sunday. She died on the next day [looks down at hands]. She said to me, "Why don't you want to marry my son?" I said, "Because Lorenza, he has to take care of you and your husband. [Gestures with hands] How can he take care of me? And if I have a family, who's he going to look after? Me and my family or my family or your family [points with finger]? It's not going to work out. No way." She says—so she says, "You know what? Whatever I leave behind, you are going to use it [points finger]." And I thought to myself, She's nuts. [Laughs] Six years later...I—that I got married, I used all—I walked into her house, saw furniture—we couldn't buy no furniture, it was after the war. I used all her stuff. [Gestures with hands]

MDG: Oh.

TC: So there you are.

MDG: So wh—when—

TC: And we were going to be married in June, but his father died. So we had to—got married in November.

MDG: In November. And do you remember the wedding?

TC: [Nods] Yes.

MDG: Well of course. Yeah.

[00:40:34]

TC: Yeah. [Smiles] It was—Beautiful. November the 16th. We did not know that that day was Santa Claus Parade. [Laughs and puts head down on the table] He lived downtown and I lived at Dundas and Grace [laughs]. Off College Street there. Well he had to cross—he couldn't get across [motions crossing street with fingers]. So I, I waited for father to, to call me that Pat was already in the Church [taps nail on table], he wasn't there. So, he called me, he says, "What happened to the groom?" Here he had to get the police escort to get him across the street [motions crossing the street with finger] 'cause they had to cross the street to get over to St. Agnes. So we were half an hour later [taps ring on table].

MDG: Oh.

TC: But anyway...it was a beautiful day. Beautiful sunshine day. And then at night it rained. That was our blessing.

MDG: Yeah. And where was the reception?

TC: The reception was at Mount Carmel Hall.

MDG: Okay. And—

TC: And we were married at St. Agnes Church.

MDG: Oh wow.

TC: You saw? [Nods]

MDG: Yeah.

TC: On Grace.

MDG: Yeah.

TC: Yeah.

MDG: Neat. And afterwards you have how many chil—well, uh, you have...

TC: My first daughter was born in 1947. December '47. My second one was born in March...March the 28th... '49. And then I lost one. And then in '56 I had my baby. My Cathy.

MDG: And, um, how, how did you...feel being—you were used to sort of being a mother figure too, helping your mom so then having other children—wher—actually where did you live before we get into—where—when you, when you, uh, got married with your...

TC: [Unclear] Bay and Gerrard.

MDG: Bay and Gerrard.

TC: Right downtown.

MDG: Wow. In a house or...

TC: Yes, [nods] my, my in-laws house.

MDG: Okay. And...and how did you find being a mother, um, to your...

TC: Well, to me it was there that—because after I had my daughter, my mother—my brother al—already got married [gestures with hands]. My brother Joe was already married and Frankie was going to get married. So my mother came and lived with me. Now Frankie got married first, then Joe and then...my mother came and lived with me. So I was right back home. [Gestures with hands]

MDG: So your mom helped you too?

TC: Yeah. Well she could 'cause I had the two kids both.

MDG: Uh huh. And you were wor—

TC: Yeah. My daughter was born. I used to have to take her to the hospital three times a week [tapping ring on the table]. [Unclear]

MDG: Why?

TC: She was born with her head on her shoulder [places head on her shoulder]. We had to straighten her out. She's as straight as can be now [gestures with hands parallel].

MDG: Wow.

TC: But it took a whole year.

MDG: Wow.

TC: And then [unclear] my son, because he was a big baby [unclear] there. [Unclear] birth. Opposite way [flips hands over]. He was born with face paralysis. So, started all over again down at the Sick Kids—it's a good thing I lived downtown because the children's hospital was right there. You know I used to just walk across to get there [motions walking across street with hand]. So we got there...

MDG: Oh gosh. And, and you were working the whole time that your—or, or were were you staying at home?

TC: [Taps rings on table] Well there would be times there that I was there—I was selling cards [unclear], just, ju—just something to keep going.

MDG: To keep going.

TC: Because we lost the house on Gerrard. So—because I mean to say—hospital—we had to pay hospital, we had to pay treatments and everything else [counts on fingers]. So...that was it. Then we moved up after that. In 1951, we moved up at Bathurst and Sheppard. Yeah.

MDG: And you stayed there for...

TC: Well until I got—till I left. Until after my husband died a year later. [Taps ring on table] I couldn't handle the house. It was too big. Too much work. I wasn't able to do it. So, long, a lot of grass. No one to clean. [Unclear] to look after this. So my daughter was getting married. I said to her, "You stay in the house and I'll go to the apartment." So then, a year later, they decided they would buy the house. So they bought the house and that's how—I lived on that.

MDG: Yeah. And you moved to...

TC: I moved here.

MDG: Caboto Terrace.

TC: Yeah.

MDG: Yeah. And at the same time you were also volunteering for Villa Colomb—

TC: Then I started doing [gestures with hands]—well I used to do volunteer when my husband would take me. My mother was living with me. She would be there. My kids were already grown up. Okay. My son was already married. So I used to go down and help out. My husband would come along. Sometimes he would come at night. I would—we would—Tony would come with his mandolin [motions instrument under arm]. My husband would play the piano there

[motions playing the piano]. And we'd have a sing-song. And then about 9:30 we'd say to them, "Okay ladies time to go to bed." [Motions leaving with hand] "No we're having such a good time, good time." [Smiles and laughs] [Unclear] go there. We used to entertain them...there. So it was just a lot of, a lot of fun.

MDG: Yeah.

TC: My husband when they opened up he did all their printing. Everything they needed in the house because he was a printer.

MDG: Oh, he was a printer.

TC: Yes. And then when Columbus Centre [unclear] he did exactly the same thing [points behind with finger]. He put the whole office and everything they needed. [Gestures with hands].

MDG: Wow, that's great. And, and he worked here too? As a—was, was he the first...uh, President? No. Before Pal [Palmacchio Di Iulio]?

TC: No. [Shakes head] He was never involved.

MDG: He was never...

TC: He was never involved with anything [motions no with hands].

MDG: Okay.

TC: He had no time for that. He didn't want that.

MDG: Oh, I see. Okay. But he met Pal through—

TC: I was the volunteer [points to self]. I—actually I met Pal after there [motions with fingers and hands]. At first the time, it was Paul Ariatta. You know Virginia? [Points with finger]

MDG: Mm hmm.

TC: Her husband was the first administrator here.

MDG: That's right.

TC: Now what did we did when we sold bricks for the Villa, he came around, he said, "Toni, you done it for that, how about helping us at the Columbus Centre?" [Gestures with hands] So I said, "No problem!" So we helped out and then we had the telethon. We used to work around the telethon getting all the things in there, whatever it is. I was at Simp—at that time I was doing work full-time at Simpson's. So I used to ask everybody at Simpson's, "We're having a telethon, need help." "Okay Toni, whatever." And I used to write down their names and how much they gave me and then I used to present it at the telethon [motions writing on paper and presenting paper]. And they would get a receipt for what they used to give.

MDG: So volunteer work was important for you throughout your whole—

TC: It's the most important right now.

MDG: Yeah.

TC: Yeah.

MDG: Throughout your whole life and that—and—

TC: That's my life.

MDG: And how are you...inspired to help others in that way?

TC: When they asked me what is my [unclear] you know of all, uh, the things there volunteering [looks up at ceiling]. I said you know what, "Think this. You do something for someone, you go home at night and you go to bed. You say, 'Gee I helped someone.'" You feel good, you feel wonderful, you want to do it again, because you get this. Now there was a great big story in the Star, one of the gir—one of the people wrote on the Star: "She'll walk a million miles for one of their smiles." It was the headline there. [Unclear] of doing the wheelchairs and everything—I'm pushing one of the chairs. And then I decided—I said to Pal—was Pal here at that time. Uh...you know Pal, they used to do the bicycle ride...or the run. I said, "Pal, I can't run." They used to go to as far as the City Hall and then they used to ride back. I said, "I can't do that." But I said, "I want to help somewhere. What can I do?" I said I could go strolling. I says, "How about if I walk?" "Okay Toni, go ahead." So that's how I started the walk. The first year it was for the handicaps. They used to be in the Villa and they had no place there. [Gestures with hands] They were here for a while there. So we raised—for two years whatever money I raised—then they moved them down off Glencairn there [unclear]. So then, from that I said, "We need a bus. We need a bus." So I wa—I walked. Two, three years we got a bus. The ladies auxiliary all went in [unclear] and everything else. So we—the ladies auxiliary we bought a bus. The, the first bus. That was it. Then from there on we needed another bus. We needed a—we needed a hairdresser so badly, because they used to be down in the basement.

MDG: Oh.

TC: No windows, nothing. [Gestures with hands] And when they used to do perms, the smell of it there—I was in good health and I used to be sick [motions to self]...

MDG: Wow.

TC: ...from the smell sometime. And I never used to be there all day. It was—you know it was there. So...for three years in a row...finally the—when the money was supposed to go for the hairdresser, Vaughan needed it badly. They were building Vaughan. So the share went to Vaughan. But then after that they replace it. They said, “Toni we will give you—get you the [unclear].” So now they got the hairdressing.

[00:50:01]

MDG: Okay.

TC: Then I, I walked in memory of Johnny Lombardi [Johnny Barbalinardo Lombardi]. We raised money for that. I, I’ve walked for Orey Fidani. We raised money for—that’s where I raised the most money. [Unclear] Some of them used to give me five dollars, ten dollars, twenty dollars, whatever it is. [Gestures with hands] I got as far as five thousand, ten thousand from some of them [unclear]. They said, “We know what you’re doing Toni and it’s a very good cause.” They did it. And I have two friends that I used to get ten thousand dollars.

MDG: My gosh.

TC: Five thousand, seven thousand. From five to seven. From seven to ten thousand dollars. That’s how I was able to make it. The stairs there—the last year that I done, it was 47 thousand dollars.

MDG: Wow. [Says softly]

TC: So you know, it wasn't that—but to be [unclear]—it just meant that I was able to help somebody [says forcefully and gestures with hands]. Even though what I went through, I used to say—with Canada—but just it's my country. When I walked for Abruzzi—I was interviewed—"How would you like—why you want to walk for Abruzzi?" You know. And I said, "I'm a true Canadian for 85 years." Or 80 years at that time. Because Abruzzi [unclear]. And I said—but I said, "I can't forget my roots. Where I was born." I said, "So if I have to help them," I said, "I'll help my country, but I have to help where I was born." Everything else. So Con [Consiglio] Di Nino says, "I told you! I told you!" [Bangs fist on table and laughs] So, when he gets up there, he's got, he's got some of them from Italy—you know that they came from Abruzzi to collect the money that we there. Okay. Con Di Nino says, "Toni Cicarelli, get the hell up here!" So I get up there. He says to them out there, he says, "You know all of you guys, you—you give a hell of a lot of money, but you know what, it all came out of there. A cheque. [Motions signing a cheque] You got reimbursed by government, you got this. But this young girl has walked and she's raising all the money, and she never got nothing out of it. Because whatever they raised, they got the receipt. Not her." He says, so he said, "So don't forget that!" [Says pointing finger] "Be a volunteer!" And I'm not—no, he said, "Don't forget that!" And I said, "And be a volunteer!" [Laughs and puts head down on table]

MDG: [Laughs]

TC: Oh, it was lots of fun though. Memories and memories.

MDG: Yeah.

TC: Good memories.

MDG: Yeah.

TC: Bad ones, but they got countered by the good.

MDG: So...

TC: And I always say, Lord, help me to remember. Nothing's going to happen to me today that you and I together can't handle. And that's my prayer every day and every night.

MDG: Wow. That's amazing. So where there's a will there's a way. Right?

TC: Yeah. [Nods] And the world go 'round and around. [Gestures in a circular motion]

MDG: Wow. Well Toni thank you so much for coming in and—

TC: Oh, you're quite welcome.

MDG: And, uh, doing this, uh, pilot interview. Um, there will be some other interviews that we will probably do later on in January and stuff like that.

TC: [Nods] Yeah that's okay.

MDG: To sort of see if I've missed anything that we really—information that we wanted to get—

TC: That's alright. Yeah. [Nods]

MDG: And stuff like that. But thank you so much.

TC: You're more than welcome.

MDG: You're such a joy to work with. [Laughs]

TC: An—any time I can help, that is—I'm here.

MDG: Great.

TC: The more—the few years that God gives me. That's it.

MDG: Nice.

TC: Ninety-five. I hope I get a few more years to do a little more. But if not, I'm ready for it.

MDG: Alright. Okay, so I think we can sign off.

TC: Now I can finish my coffee.

MDG: Yeah, finish your cappuccino. I've got to finish mine too.

[Fades out at 00:53:59]

[End of interview]