

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

DATE OF INTERVIEW: May 10, 2011

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Timmins, ON

NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: Norman Mascioli

NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Travis Tomchuk

NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER: Travis Tomchuk supported by Kevin O'Grady

TRANSCRIBED BY: Krystle Copeland

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ABSTRACT

Norman Frank Mascioli was born in Montreal in 1924, and is the son of internee Antonio (Tony) Mascioli and Anna (Ninetta) Mascioli. Both his parents were from Cocullo, Italy, and his father came to the Timmins area to work in the mines around the time of World War II. Antonio was later in business with his brother, Leopoldo (Leo) Mascioli, a successful Timmins businessman who was also interned as an enemy alien. During this interview Norman explains that his father was interned twice: first for a period of nine months, before being released after a trial and was then arrested and interned again a few months later for a short period of time. Norman believes he was only home for a few weeks before unexpectedly being taken away again and that the second internment was more difficult on his mother than his first absence. Norman tried to visit his father a few times during his internment and was able to see him through the bars of his jail cell in Timmins, but unable to visit with him in Toronto. Norman's mother, however, did drive to Petawawa on a monthly basis to visit her husband while Norman was away at school. He explains that he did not face any discrimination for being Italian while growing up in Timmins, but that there was an incident during the war period involving riots and violence against local Italian Canadians.

INTERVIEW

NM: Norman Mascioli, interviewee

TT: Travis Tomchuk, interviewer

KO: Kevin O'Grady, support videographer

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 00:00:09]

TT: Okay, it is, um...May 10...Tuesday...2011. My name is Travis Tomchuk. I'm in Timmins at the home of Norman Mascioli. My first question is if you could state your full name?

NM: My name is Norman Frank Mascioli.

TT: Um, when were you born and where?

NM: Nineteen twenty-four in Montreal, Quebec.

TT: Okay. Um [makes whoosh sound]...[long pause] can you tell me a bit about your parents? Their names...

NM: Uh, my father's name was Antonio and my mother name—[closes eyes in concentration while speaking] my mother's name was, uh, Anna, uh, we called her—everybody called her Ninetta.

TT: Okay. And your mother's, uh, birth name?

NM: Uh, Martocchia[?].

TT: [Long pause] Um, and where were your parents born?

NM: They were both born in Italy, in Cocullo. In, uh, the, the Abruzzi.

TT: And do you know what years they were born?

NM: [Says while looking up in thought] My dad was born in 18...uh, 99. And my mother was born in 1904.

TT: [Long pause] And, uh, did they both come to Canada around the same time or separately?

NM: No, my dad came over and, uh, I—when he was 17. And he worked in Cobalt. And, uh, then he had to do his military duty in Italy. So he went back to Italy and that was the—he, uh...he fought in the, in the Libyan war, where Italy had in-invaded Libya and, uh, then after his military duty he came back to Canada. And, uh, that was just before World War One. And, uh, having spent two years fighting he wasn't too eager to, uh, fight again. So he, uh, he went to Montreal and he had, he had—got a job in a munitions factory. And he spent the rest of the war years there...wo—and, uh...then after the war he came back to the...he came back, I believe, to Timmins. And, uh, then he was engaged to my mother and he had her come over and he married, he married her by proxy—it was the only way he could get her over here. And then he, uh—and they got married in a church in Montreal. And then they, they came to Timmins.

TT: Do you know what year they were married?

NM: [Looks up in thought] Nineteen...nineteen, I believe. No...sorry...uh, 1920, I think it was.
Yeah.

TT: So at what point then would your mother have made it over to Canada?

NM: Uh...I think she came over right after the war. About 1918, 1919, or early 1919. Yeah.

TT: [Long pause] Okay, so you said your father fi—when he first came over he was in Cobalt?

NM: [Nods] Yes.

TT: And what was he doing in Cobalt?

NM: Miner.

TT: Did, uh—was he striking out on his own or did he work for someone?

NM: No, he worked for a mining company, I don't know which one, but, uh. And then when he came to Timmins he worked for, uh, a mine...the old, uh [looks up in thought]...I can't remember the name of the mine now. But, uh, he's very, very proud of the fact that he worked as, uh, uh, he worked at the mine as a miner and then he became the track foreman. When they used to lay track for the...for the—whatever they called them there—the little, little trucks that went into the mine and brought out the ore. So he was quite proud of that, you know.

[00:05:11]

TT: And, uh, was he always involved in mining in some...

NM: No, after that he went to work with Uncle Leo and, uh...they worked together right...right through to his retirement, so. They got into construction, Uncle Leo got into construction and, uh...my dad worked with him. And—

TT: And—I'm sorry—

NM: Go ahead.

TT: Um, did—was your father, uh, like a business partner with your uncle? Or...

NM: [Nods] Uh, yeah. I, I believe so, yeah.

TT: [Long pause] Um, what about, uh, some of your other family? Um, okay, so you have your Uncle Leo, uh, uh, uh—Leo Mascioli, his first, his first name is it Leonardo or—

NM: No, Leo-Leopoldo.

TT: Leopoldo. Okay. Um, and, uh, were there other family members like, uh, any, any siblings to your, your father or your, your uncle that lived in Timmins that made the trip—

NM: Yeah, my [clears throat], my uncle had two children. Daniel and Loretta. And I had no brothers or sisters. [Shakes head] I had a brother; he died when he was about seven. I would be about four at the time. So...

TT: And what was your brother's name?

NM: Dario.

TT: Dario.

NM: Uh huh.

TT: [Long pause] And your mother, um, did, did she work? Did she, um, look after the home?

NM: No, she was, uh, uh, she was a homebody. She looked after the kids and cooked the meals and did the washing. And of course things were very primitive in those days. There were no—you know, there—you had to, you had to pump the water out of a well. You, you know, and, uh, you had to haul in the wood. And, uh, uh, it was pioneering stuff and yeah, it was hard work. Then eventually as, uh...Uncle Leo expanded his, uh, business and my dad was with him and you know, things got, uh—they were doing pretty well and my dad—I remember the first house we were in, I've seen pictures of it, and it was nothing more than a shack really. But then they built, they built, uh—or they—I don't know if they built it, but they rented, uh, a, a bigger house. Yeah.

[Cross-dissolve between clips 00:07:59]

TT: Okay, so you were telling me a bit about your mother looking after the home—

NM: Yeah.

TT: —and the primitive conditions—

NM: Yeah, yeah. And, uh, then as I said, uh, you know, things got a little better; they got a little better home. Pretty soon they had running water, you know, and all the services. But, uh, my uncle, Uncle Leo was the entrepreneur. He was the older brother. He was, uh...he could barely,

he could barely read and write. But he had a, a vision and, uh, a lot of guts. So, uh, my dad went along with him and they were partners in various businesses. Uh, at the time I think Leo started to, uh—he was, uh, working for the Hollinger and, uh, doing contract work for the mines. And my dad was right in there helping him. So...I guess it was a very, uh...they had it tough. It wasn't easy. But, uh, they persevered. And, uh, they did very well for themselves.

TT: So when your father, uh, finally made it to Timmins, what would the city or town, if could be even called that, what would it look like back then?

NM: [Clears throat] I know, uh—I used—I mean we've all seen pictures of the early days in the camp when the mines were first starting and, yeah... Uh, I really, I really can't tell you because when I came into the picture at least the things that I remember, things were pretty good. You know. I-I've got to tell you the one story. Uh, there were, uh..uh, cousins and, uh, they were living in a shack...behind the old, uh, theatre which is now the, uh, seniors centre in Timmins. And, uh, the two of them were in there and they had a wood stove and they had no running water. And I guess they used, they used to use the facilities in the theatre [gestures behind with thumb], there was a theatre there. And, uh, this would be...I, I would have been...maybe...I don't know, 13 or 14 years old at the most. And, uh, at Christmastime—it was Christmastime—my mother said, "Go call those two, uh, your cousins, uh, to come over for Sunday, for Christmas dinner." So I went to wake him up and, uh, they were—the place was colder inside than it was outside. They had no water. It was frozen. They had—so they had—they, they had built, uh, the fire and they had a little plug that they put in the bottom drain of the, uh, in the trap, the bottom of the trap, so he got this hot, uh, in there to melt the, to melt the ice in the pipes so that the [gestures with a sweeping motion with hand]—they co—they had water that's about it. So they had... And they were—one of them was in bed and they had the trunk on top of him and his overcoat and, uh, the trunk, uh, because it was so cold, you know. And he was fully dressed. They were both—they would never ta—never take their clothes off at all in that

place, unless they had the heat on, you know. [Shakes head] So, things were—[chuckles] the average person, I'll tell you, had it tough. But...

[00:12:01]

TT: And wh-when you were growing up, what, uh, what part of Timmins did you live in?

NM: Uh, there was an Italian section. Like, uh, in Timmins there was, uh, [says while counting on fingers] a German section, there was a Polish section, there was a Finnish section. You know, everybody had come and [gestures with hands]...into their own—well, they were called over from the old country and they'd come and they settled beside, uh, the people that they knew. And, uh, the same thing with the Italians. But we didn't—uh, we lived a little bit out of the Italian section. We lived on Balsam Street. And, uh, right next to us was a line of company homes [gestures to indicate a line of houses], the Hollinger, uh—but they were, uh, they were for the—basically for the shift bosses. They were little better type of home than they had down, uh, in, uh—down on Mountjoy Street, which were, uh, really, uh, just boxes. So we were...we weren't in the best section of town, but we weren't in the worst section of town either. So...hmm.

TT: And, uh, did you—was there a public school in the neighbourhood? Did you?—

NM: [Nods] Yes, I went to, I went to Moneta Public School, which was, uh, one...two blocks away. And, uh, my mother was a devout Catholic. And, uh, but she wouldn't send me to, uh, the Catholic school because it was about five blocks away. [Smiles] So poor little Norman, he couldn't walk the five blocks so...I went to Moneta school. [Chuckles]

TT: And what do you remember about the Moneta School?

NM: [Shrugs with hands out to the side] Well, uh, I grew up with all my friends. You know, but it was, uh...it only went to, uh, I guess grades seven. Because a-after Moneta School I had to, uh, I had to go to Central School to do eight and nine. So... In those days they didn't call it, uh, grade, uh, eight or grade nine, they called it [starts counting on fingers] se—junior fourth, senior fourth, uh...junior fifth, senior fifth. So... But, uh...oh, I made lifelong friends in Moneta. We still have coffee together. Well they're down—we're only down to about three now...of the, uh...so. But they—and, and they're not all Italians either. They're—uh, we had, uh—[counts on fingers] one of my best friends was a Syrian boy, and we had Jewish, uh, Jewish friends, Italians, uh, English, Scots. It was very c—Italy—uh, [shakes head] Timmins was, uh, quite a cosmo-cosmopolitan place. And, uh...everybody seemed to get along. Uh, we had—and, and each of the, each of the, uh...ethnic groups had their own hall. [Counts on fingers] There was, there was a Polish Hall, there was the, uh, Finnish Hall, there was the It-Italian Hall, uh...there was a Hollinger Hall. Well, and, uh, the only trouble was the Italian boys used to go over the Polish Hall and dance with the girls and the Polish guys didn't like that and there would always be a little ruckus. And then the, the, the, the Polish guys would come over to the Italian club and dance with all the Italian girls and they had a little ruckus, you know. But they...most of it was in good fun I guess. Yeah, so...

[00:16:01]

TT: And the, the makeup of your neighbourhood then it was, it was quite mixed. It reflected—

NM: Oh yeah.

TT: —the people that were at your school then.

NM: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, like we lived—well next door to us were the Cowens[?] on one side. And, uh...he was the, uh, he was the guy with the big baton who walks in front of the, uh—you know, keeping time [pretends to hold a large stick], uh, when they have, uh, when they have bagpipers, uh, have a parade. And he had two sons and he, he—they had to learn the bagpipe. Every night after school, every afternoon after school you could hear them going in the ba—they were in the basement, but you could hear them [chuckles] three doors away, you know, with the bagpipes, so... And on the other side of us, there was a French family. Across the street was another French family and the—and, uh, an Italian family. [Points with finger] And yeah, there were two or three French families right around us, so. But that was the makeup of the town.

TT: [Long pause, TT whispers to KO in background, unclear] And the, the friends in your neighbourhood, at, at your school everyone's—you know, were their, their fathers generally working in the mines or what kind of occupations did they hold, hold. As well, what did, uh, their mothers do?

NM: Most of the, most of the people that I knew...their fathers were miners. There were some, uh...in those days there were, there were a lot of corner, uh...marke—uh, what, uh, I wouldn't call them, uh...but the, the corner store where they sold canned goods and stuff. And, uh...it was a, it was a polyglot of people. But, uh, to, to think the majority of people in town worked in the mines. I mean that was it, that was the reason to be here, you know. So...

TT: And with school were there, you know, particular subjects you were, you know, more interested in than others? Did you like being at school?

NM: I didn't like school. Never did. [Chuckles] But...I—that was...I, I would say I was an average student. I...I wasn't the dumbest guy in the class and I wasn't the sharpest one either, so. But, uh, oh I muddled through. Hmm.

[Noise of something crinkling in the background]

TT: And, uh, so you—after the Moneta School you went to Central—

NM: Yeah.

TT: And then how many grades did you do there?

NM: Two, eight and nine. Yeah. And then I went to Timmins High. For thr-three years. [Looks up in thought] I remember, yeah, I flunked third year. That's, that's when I wound up in St. Mike's. I never tell my kids that. They didn't—they, they found out though. [Chuckles]

TT: What's St. Mike's?

NM: St. Michael's College in Toronto. Yeah, in Toronto.

TT: Okay.

NM: A boarding school. I was a boarder.

TT: Okay.

NM: Yeah. I did my high school there the [counts on fingers] third, fourth, and fifth year. Yeah.
So.

TT: And how did you find that?

NM: That wasn't...well, I didn't have much choice there. You had—being a boarder, you, you had to study, you know. So, it seasoned my bacon really.

TT: Hmm.

NM: Yeah. It was a good move. [Inhales sharply] Yeah.

[00:20:10]

TT: Did you go to university?

NM: Yeah.

TT: Yeah.

NM: I went to, uh...I went to Michigan Tech. I got a degree in civil engineering. Yeah. I graduated in 1949. [Nods] So...

TT: And then where—did you come back to Timmins or...

NM: No, I came back, I worked for my uncle in, uh, Sudbury. From well, '49 I got back in June and I started to work for him in I think August...in Sudbury. And I was there till...well till we

finished the project in '52. Then I came back and I worked for Mascioli Construction. And, uh, I wound up back in Sudbury; they had a job in, uh, uh, putting some sewer lines in, in Sudbury. And, uh...I, I was back here in Timmins in '53. And I went to work at the Timmins garage, which is part of the Mascioli enterprises I guess. And, uh...I spent, uh— I got married in '55. And that's—stuck it out with the garage. And then in 1958 I brought my cousin Dan out of the garage into construction. And, uh...been there ever since. So...

TT: And you mentioned that in 1952 there was a project that you had completed in Sudbury, what was that project?

NM: Uh...there was the, the old grand theatre. My uncle had bought it...and we gutted it completely. And then we put in a theatre and office space. [Gestures to the right and left with hands] And I don't know what they call it now...but it's, uh—I even forget the name of the street it's on. But it's still used as a theatre I believe...uh, for special screenings and stuff like that. So... Yeah, that, uh... I, I worked closely with my uncle down there. In fact we shared an apartment for a couple of years. But, uh, he was all set to go and he said, "We're gonna go to British Columbia." He says, "That's the future of the country's going to be out the West." And, uh, but unfortunately he died just shortly thereafter, but...yeah. He was a hard taskmaster, I'll tell you. [Shakes head with a smile] He fired me I, I would say at least a dozen times. You know... [Shake head at the memory] We had a lot of fun. Hmm.

TT: And in those, those cases where he, he fired you, how long would the firing have lasted?

NM: About an hour. Yeah, yeah. Well... [Long pause] Uh...he'd, he'd, uh, he'd call me—he'd leave sometimes—he, he wouldn't be in Sudbury all the time, but he'd go back to Toronto or North Bay and then he would call me. He'd leave Sudbury—what it takes what, an hour and a half to get to North Bay? [Asks someone off camera] And he'd...before he left he used to say

[points with finger], "Well, here now, I want you to do this and I want you to do this and I want you to do that and you know." "Okay, okay, okay. I got it." Anyway, he used to leave, away an hour and a half, and call me up [pretends to hold phone to ear], "Did you do that? Did you, did you? Did you do what I told you? Did, did you do that?" I said, "Well, gee, you just left I haven't got to it yet." [Throws up in the air and mumbles as if upset] Gave me shit over the phone, you know. [Laughs] Then he'd come down and I'd have to take him around and show him everything that we'd done since he left. And then he would, uh, you know, "Why did you put that there? Why didn't you put it over there?" [Points from one spot on the floor to another] "What the hell's the difference?" [Shrugs with arms out to the side] You know. No. Anyway, that was an hour of hell. [Chuckles] And I us—I used to hate that part. But then he'd leave me [gestures with hand], he'd go into the...the apartment and he'd cook up a meal. He was a great cook. And he'd cook up a meal and then we'd have a meal together, you know, and everything was hunky dory. Next morning...on the job he'd give me shit again. [Laughs] So...it was fun. Well....

[00:25:19]

TT: [Long pause] So what other things can you tell me about your, uh, your Uncle Leo? He's a hard taskmaster, a great cook...

NM: Yeah, well he, uh, he was a great visionary. He, uh...it's too bad he died so, uh, young. Actually he died in his late 70s I guess it was. [Looks off camera to confirm] Huh? [Nods] Seventy-five, yeah. So... [Shrugs] He loved to read the paper. I mean, uh, uh, we'd have our dinner and he'd read *The Star*. And he would read it out loud. [Holds hands in front as if holding up a newspaper] He would read—he used to read slow, you know. And, and he'd read, and he'd read it to me all the time. "Ah!" he'd say, "Look at this...look at this...dah-dah-dah-dah-dah." You know, and this—and after every—every evening it was the same story. You know, he had

to read the, uh, the press. And, and, uh, he knew what was going on in the country...as well as in the town. I don't know how he, uh, you know...I could never figure out how he, he, uh, had such an insight into things. But, uh... Elections...he would—he'd—I think every time, he'd call the elections the way they came out. You know, he, he had a feel for these things.

But...anyway.

TT: Would those be elections of, you know, municipal—

NM: Municipal, federal, or provincial. He, uh...[long pause] yeah.

TT: And how about your father, what can you tell me about him?

NM: Well, my father was, he was, uh, the opposite of my uncle. He was...uh...very outgoing. He was a people person. He liked people. And, uh...he was kind. Total strangers would come up to him sometimes and say, "Tony, how are you? How you doing? How you doing? Say, listen can you lend me 20 bucks?" And my dad would give him 20 bucks. And then he'd ask somebody and say, "Who is that?" You know. So, he, uh... I didn't really get to know my dad I think because when I was small he used to work long hours. And, uh, sometimes, uh, I wouldn't see him at all except, uh, in the morning. When he left for—and he used to leave before I was up. But, uh, and then I'd be in bed before he, he, he got home. But, uh, he liked to sing. And th—now this a habit he developed—he must have learned this when he was interned. They must—because I know they used to have singsongs. [Twirls hands in a circle] Uh, I know that much. But—'cause I, I don't think I—I don—I never remember him singing before. After, he was always at the Dan—at the Dante club. [Gestures hand in a circle] They, they used to sing—he used to sing with the—he used to love to sing with people, you know. And he loved to dance. And my mother didn't dance. [Chuckles] And my dad couldn't dance, you know. [Smiles] But, uh...he tried...you know, he'd try everything. And he was, my dad was, uh—had more education than

my uncle. And my dad became, uh...pro-consul for the Italians. And he used to write letters to the, uh—for the, uh, for the Italian immigrants. And a lot of them couldn't read or—couldn't read, couldn't write, you know, because now we're going back into the 30s and 40s, you know. So, uh, and, uh, so...a couple of—I remember one time I met, uh, the Italian Consul came to Timmins—I forget who the—I forget his name. But anyway, my dad, uh, went up to get him at the Empire, he was staying at the hotel. And they took me along you know. And the Counsel asked me if, uh, if I understood Italian. Uh, he asked me in Italian. He said, "Do you talk Italian?" I said, "*Nansegnà[?]*" which is dialect for a little bit, you know. And he got a great charge out of that, he said, "Ah! [Unclear]" And so, my dad had him over for supper at the house and, uh, I forget why he was there or what he did after that, but, uh, so. But my dad used to write letters for guys who wanted to bring their wives over. Had to fill out forms and stuff, so he did it for them. And, uh...I remember people coming to the house. You know, a couple of them every week...to get something, something done. So...

[00:31:01]

TT: And do you know how your father got this position as pro-consul?

NM: I have no idea. [Chuckles] I have no idea. I guess they were looking for somebody to represent them, you know, the, the Italian community in Timmins. But...ac-actually after, there was a-another cousin of ours took the job over after my dad was, uh, uh, kind of retired. And he was, he was quite a, quite a few years.

TT: And did your, uh, your father receive some kind of stipend for—

NM: [Shakes head] No.

TT: —his position? No.

NM: No. It was strictly voluntary. Yeah.

TT: And how long did he have that position?

NM: Well, [sighs heavily] I don't know. [Long pause] Had to be a good 20 years. As far as I remember. Yeah, it was quite a while.

TT: And you said the vice-consul had visited Timmins?

NM: Timmins. [Nods] Yeah.

TT: And your father hosted him.

NM: Yeah, yeah. [Nods]

TT: Do you know what year that was?

NM: No. Well, it couldn't have been...what the hell would I have been then? [Looks up in thought] About 14. I, I think that was before the war too. Yeah. Yeah, that would be around '37, '38. I wasn't very—I was—I would say 13, 14. Yeah.

TT: And were there special events in—when the—

NM: [Shakes head] Well, I, I don't know why the—he, he was up here. I don't know why. There must have been some do of some kind at the time. You know, because I, uh...I remember

now...see before the, before the Second World War the, uh...Italy had in—had invaded Ethiopia. [Points with finger] They, uh—'cause every other country had colonies in Africa, so I guess [Benito] Mussolini—or I don't know if it was Mussolini or not, but he figured that he wanted to play with the big, with the big shots, you know, with the big wheels. [Gestures with hands] So he invaded Ethiopia. And, uh, at the time, uh, I think the guy was up here to...uh, get, try to get money for, uh, the war effort. And in those days they, uh, the ladies gave their wedding [touches his wedding ring], their gold wedding bands, traded them in and they got a lead one in, in return. And, uh, the gold was to go to pay—help pay for the war in Ethiopia. And they had, uh, they had a meeting with the Italians in the Goldfield Theatre. My uncle's theatre. And, uh, he donated the, he donated the theatre for the, for the meeting. And, uh, they had collected a bunch of wedding bands from the Italian ladies in, in Timmins and the, and the Porcupine. Yeah, so... I think that's one thing that was against my dad, my dad and my uncle when they, uh, when they interned him. You know. So... [Shrugs] But at that time there was, you know, England and—uh, En-England had, uh, had put sanctions on Italy because they had invaded Ethiopia. And, uh, the Italian, the Italians were not fond of the English after that. In fact I think the guy was Anthony Eaton that was the foreign minister. And he was, he was responsible for the—at least Italians blamed him for instituting the, the sanction. And, uh, so that's why they were having...the Ita—the Ita—that's why they were, they were trying to raise money to, uh, you know, to further their—the war effort in Ethiopia. So...

[00:35:47]

TT: So in light of that were there any, um...you know, confrontations between Italians living in Timmins and English folks?

NM: [Shakes head while TT is asking question] Not till that one episode where the soldiers went down into Moneta. And, uh, that's the only one that I...because they, uh—I know the, uh...the

manager at one of one of the mines, the McIntyre I think it was [points to left]...there was—some of the Scotch and Welsh miners didn't want to work with Italians. So they, uh—I think his name was McInnis, he was the manager at the McIntyre. He called the miners all together and said, "Either you work together..." He says, "The Italians have been here working for us for a long time, they've been doing a good job. And you guys either have to work with them or go find yourself another job." So, which was good. So, I guess they, they had to work together from there on, so. But, uh, that [shakes head]...I think there was a little hist—you know, panic 'cause, uh, war hysteria at the beginning. But, uh, after that, [shakes head] I, I don't remember any incidence. I was never, I was never victim of any, uh...harassment of any kind by anybody. And none of my friends were. That I know of. You know. I know some, some of the Italian boys had to, they had to register with the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] or the provi—uh, every, uh, once a month they had to register. But aside from that [shakes head]...you know... Of course when you're a teenager, you know, life's a bowl of cherries, but if there was something—if something bad had happened I'm sure I would have known about it. Yeah.

TT: So, when, when did you find out that Italy had declared war against, uh, England and France?

NM: Well, I was just—when the, uh, when the war started there...I forget what year? When would that be '41? Forty or '41.

TT: [Whispers] Forty.

NM: You know, that was, uh, that was in the papers that was common knowledge. That's, that's when I found out, uh... [Long pause] But as I say, [shakes head] until they come in and, uh—until the, the RCMP came into the house...[clears throat] it never occurred to me that we were anything, you know, but Canadians, I mean. So... [Long pause] And that there ever was

anything, I guess my parents would have kept it from me. You know, that, uh...so. I can't honestly say that I was a victim of anything at all. And none of it, none of—anybody I knew didn't have any problems. [Shakes head] So... [Long pause] Well...

TT: [Long pause] And you had mentioned the RCMP coming to the family home.

NM: Yeah.

TT: Uh, what time of day would that have been?

NM: I don't remember that personally at all. I don't know if I was not here, maybe I was in St. Mike's at the time, I don't know. But I don't remember that happening at all. So... And my parents—I remember my mother saying that they ransacked the house. They looked everywhere, you know. Telling me about that and, uh...but, uh, [gestures toward his chest] I, I wasn't there when it happened. I—either that or I blocked my memory of it becau—but I don't think—I wasn't there definitely.

[00:40:23]

TT: And so how did your mother relay this information about what had happened to you?

NM: About the internment you mean?

TT: Well, how—

NM: Yeah.

TT: —about the police...

NM: Yeah. Well I, I don't know how she told me [chuckles], but, uh, she did tell me. And, uh...when they [clears throat] when they picked my dad up...I—well I don't—in the first place I don't think they found anything. I, I think my dad had a shot gun...and, uh [shrugs and shakes head]...that's all. That's the only gun I ever saw in the house. And, uh—but when they, they, they picked up my dad, they arrested him and they had him in, in the jail in Timmins. [Gestures with hand] So, I [shrugs, shakes head and purses lips]...now I-I'm confused in my own mind. I was there when they picked him up, but I don't remember them coming to the house and doing anything. 'Cause I remember going to the jail and trying to see my dad and they said, "You can't see him." So I went out and I walked around the side [motions to walking around building with hand] and I looked in the, in the window and there was bars and there was a window [gestures to indicate bars on a window] and the—because the cells were in the basement. And, uh, I knocked on the window [makes knocking gestures] and my dad was there and he came over. You know, and we could—the window was between us [gestures to indicate window], we couldn't [shrugs]... But, uh...I don't know if that was—that—[shakes head and pauses in thought] I, I just can't remember if that was—that may have been the second time they picked him up, because they picked up my dad twice.

TT: Oh.

NM: So...I don't know why the second time, but yeah.

TT: And so what your father was picked up originally after the war was declared—

NM: [Nods] Yeah.

TT: —and then let go?

NM: Yeah. Well, no then they had the cour—he was in there for about nine months and then they had a court case and, uh, he was found not guilty and they let him out. [Gestures to indicate case being thrown out] [Makes a circular gesture with hand] But then a short while later, they picked him up again. Now I don—but I only think he was a couple of weeks in there and they released him.

TT: And fi-fi-first when he was picked up initially, the first time and then spent the nine months interned—

NM: Yeah.

TT: —what was he told about why he was being...

NM: [Shakes head] That he was an enemy alien. That's the—I mean they didn't give you excuses they just...yeah...so... But, uh, [sighs heavily] he was, uh—then they took him to Petawawa. And that I, I remember trying—uh, I remember being in Toronto after they picked him up and I...I, I went to the RCMP headquarters which were down by Union Station. [Gestures with hand] And, uh, tried to see my dad. And, uh [shrugs and shakes head]...the RCMP wouldn't, wouldn't tell me anything. And, uh...now how I got there I don't know. And, uh—but I don't remember. But I do remember going there and asking and [shakes head] they wouldn't tell me anything. So...

TT: And then the second time your father was picked up, what—did—was it the same thing? Was it you're an enemy alien? Like what was the justification for a second—

NM: [Shakes head]

TT: Hmm.

NM: I don't know. I don't know. Hmm. [Long pause] My Uncle Leo wasn't. As far as I know he wasn't. But, uh, I don't know. [Shakes head and looks down]

TT: And your father and your uncle were they picked up, uh, at the same time and spent the same amount of time—

NM: [Nods] The first time, yeah, I think so, yeah. Yeah, I think they all were picked up. It was a, a big sweep. All over Ontario, you know. So...

[00:44:44]

TT: And you know, how did, how did you react, how did your mother react when the RCMP took your father—

NM: Well, you know, it was, it was a ticklish time, uh, there's not much—you couldn't say anything. You know, they were afraid to say anything to anybody, you know. Except, uh, we were fortunate that my cousin Dan was a lawyer and, uh, because the government put in a conservator for all the, uh, businesses and, uh, then my mother was on an allowance. And, uh...but life went on, I mean it was, uh—we had no choice. I think my, my mother used to go see my, my dad. About once a month they—she used to drive down there with, uh, my two cousins. And, uh, I think, I think they had a visiting day, I don't know, but they... And uh, uh, I think he, I think he got ca-care packages, you know. [Chuckles] And, uh, so the time they spent in the...in the camp was, uh...they, they, uh, they would work, they would work gangs, they

would go out and dig ditches and fix the roads and I guess they used to go out singing. I think that's where my dad picked up his... And, uh, they had, you know—they kept busy and they cooked and they... And I, I never heard my, my dad or my mother tell me that he was ill treated in any way. And, uh, that the guards were always good to them. I understand that the Italians were working and they were fixing things up, you know, and they were, uh...nobody was worried about any, any of them escaping or anything because... But the, uh, the Germans were there too in Petawawa. And apparently the Germans wouldn't do anything. They said, "We're prisoners of war and that's it. You have to look after us." So... But the Italians, they, uh...I, I know there's, uh—[speaks to someone off camera] I've got to give you something. I got—I don't know [points behind him]—I've got some wooden, uh, kitchenware, like spoons and ladles and stuff that one of the, uh, inmates had made. And the—I don't know if they sold them to my uncle and my dad or they were given to him, but anyway, I've got those. So they, they, uh, kept busy and they helped themselves. So...

TT: And your mother's, uh, visits to Petawawa, how would she have gotten there?

NM: Well they drove. They drove, yeah. So... I, I didn't...I didn't—I don't remember too much information except that I have pictures of her going—uh, uh, outside the car with the Petawawa sign behind them. So, that uh... But nobody ever talked about it after. You know, I—my cousins who were older than I was and were more involved, [shrugs] they never said—I never heard—remember talking about it to them, you know. And my mother never said a hell of a lot. My dad never. [Shakes head] Except that, uh, one time [clears throat] he was talking about them going out and working and, uh, and then cooking...they'd cook up and I guess the, the guards would, uh, sneak them some food so that they could cook. [Says with a laugh] And, uh, they-they'd feed the guards too though. The-they were treated pretty good. Yeah. They had no complaints there. Well...

TT: So even some of the stories you do know about, uh, the camp experience from your father—

NM: Yeah.

TT: If, if there wasn't a lot said about the camp then how, how would these kinds of stories, um, be told? Like would people sitting around and be reminiscences or...

NM: I guess. I, I...[long pause] 'cause my dad never discussed it with me, you know. My mother used to tell me some things about it, you know. That he had told her. But, uh...the memories are a little vague on a lot of things.

[00:50:02]

TT: [Long pause] And you had mentioned that, uh, when your father and your uncle were interned, um, that the businesses were, they were overseen by, by someone else. Is that—

NM: [Clears throat and nods] Well Dan was the con—Dan was the conservator—became the conservator. And, uh...that's all I know about that part. [Shrugs] I...I know my mother got a, a...what do you call it? [Pauses in thought and then looks to someone off camera. Whispering heard in background, unclear] Allowance. [Laughs] And that's, uh—he got an allowance and I got an allowance. But aside from that, home life, home life went on...it was—we never starved or anything like that. We were...yeah.

TT: And, um, did, you know, have any other, um—like were there any fathers of any of your friends that you went to school with that were interned or...

NM: [Nods] Yeah. Yeah, there was a—well the one—the closest one was this [Giuseppe] Giustini. He was the—he had a corner store right about three doors from us. He was, uh... But his, his son and I were, we were buddies. He never said anything about it and neither did I, you know, that I remember, we never talked about it. And, uh, there was another, there was a shoemaker. I don't know—I didn't know his family at all. But, uh... But it, [shrugs] you know, it happened. And after it was over everybody wanted to, I guess they wanted to put it behind them, they forgot about it and it wasn't, it wasn't, uh, it wasn't something we talk about, talk about at the dinner table. And, uh...but just kind of faded away. In a way it should have been. So... [Nods] And a lot of people were very bitter. A lot of people lost, from what I gather, lost, uh, lost everything. You know, because there was no income coming in and... But, uh...we didn't. As I say there was a conservator and we had an allowance from the businesses and [shrugs] life went on. So...

TT: Did your uncle lose any of his businesses once he returned from camp?

NM: [Inhales heavily and shakes head] Not, not to my knowledge. I don't think so. You know, I know noth—I mean my dad did nothing they just, they just took over from where they left off. Carried on.

TT: And then, you know, for your friend whose father was interned, um, again you mentioned that your—you and your friend didn't really talk about this—

NM: [Nods] Yeah.

TT: —but do you have any sense of how his, him and his mother coped?

NM: Well they had this little corner store and she—the, the mother ran it, you know. And, uh, the kids helped I guess. Yeah, because I remember Domenic he, every once in a while, he'd have to go tend the store. So... But, but the average...I imagine there were, I don't know now, but I imagine there were people that, you know, that would be left destitute because of the—if the wage earner was not bringing in any money, uh, you know they were... Mind you, did very few Italians ever go on the, uh, on the dole in those days? So...I imagine everybody chipped in that hadn't been interned and looked after the individuals that were in dire straits. Uh...hmm.

TT: And then, I was also wondering too, how about, um, you know, if there were Italians that might have worked for, you know, your uncle or your father that were interned...do you know if there were any, uh, help given from the businesses to, to help these families?

NM: I don't think so. I don't—as far as I know, no. 'Cause the only ones that were interned were people that pretty well had businesses or, uh...I don't even know. Uh, no, I [shakes head], I—that's all I really, uh—that's the ones I remember were—they had businesses. There was a shoemaker and, uh, and the, uh, corner store. So...

[00:55:57]

TT: Did anyone, um, you know, talk about why some people were interned and others weren't, even at that time, or after the fact?

NM: Well after the fact there was, yeah there was, uh, there were...there were—yeah, we wondered, you know, we wondered. And, uh, I imagine everybody else wondered too why, you know. Well I can see my dad and Leo going, because I mean they, they were business people, they were prosperous and, uh, successful. But, uh, some of the others...it just didn't make sense. Uh, but... So it was, the government decided we'll pick them all up and then, you know, we can let them go when we find out what—if they're...so.

TT: [Long pause] Now to back up just a, a bit, uh...I wonder if you could talk a bit more about what happened in the Moneta, uh, after, after, you know, word had gotten out, um, that Italy was at now war.

NM: Well...when Italy joined, when Italy joined, uh, Germany and declared war...I guess the Italians were...were in a very uncomfortable position I suppose you'd say. And, uh—but, you know...uh, the older folks were worried I guess. The younger folks...you know, Italy, Italy was, Italy—you know, we were Canadians. And, uh...I don't...I don't really remember any difference in what we did or what other people did. The, the ones that weren't involved weren't interned. Some of them had to report as enemy aliens. And, uh, some of, some of the older boys were called up. And I guess a couple of them took off into the bush and they weren't going to go [chuckles], they weren't going to go to war against Italy, you know. So, but, uh, they was—there were quite a few Italians wound up in the army. You know, I mean, uh...even, uh, our, even our cousins. Loret[?] he was in the army. Uh, Guy was in the army. And, uh...you know, we had, uh—it was ironic that, uh, you know, some Italians would be interned as enemy aliens and yet they'd want the Italians to, uh, you know, to fight against them. So, but they—that's—there's always a—you know, two sides to every story I suppose. But... Hmm.

[00:59:33]

TT: And then after, after war had been declared between Italy and, and France and England, the—some local soldiers marched into the Moneta—

NM: Oh yeah, that was...yeah, they were a bunch of young bucks, young soldiers come home and got beered up and they were gonna [chuckles], you know... That uh—I, I—that was a-an isolated incident—incidence and I'm sure that, I'm sure it never happened again. But I don't [shakes head]...maybe I was sheltered, I don't know, but I, I, I was never encountered any

animosity from anybody. And, uh...I-I've been trying to think about that. And, uh...just...it, it never occurred. It was a non—a non-happening as far as I was concerned, you know. But... And that was—the tragedy of the riot there, it was, uh...they down played it in the media, you know, I mean this—well the police and everything, kind of tried to—they were embarrassed by what had happened. And, uh, they should have been with good reason because, you know, there—it was against people that—innocent people that were, you know, living here as Canadians really. But you can understand it...[shrugs] they're Italians, just like the Poles or the Germans, you know, I mean they were born there, it's their country, their relatives are there, their, their customs, uh, you know, once you're born Italian, you're Italian all the time. You're born Canadian, you're a Canadian all the time, you know. But, uh, once you...because, because Italy went to war there's no reason why that we should be branded with a—the enemy alien, uh...so. Anyway, that's, that's my idea, but...

TT: So what do you know of what happened, uh, during the riot exactly?

NM: Well, not any more than what I've read. [Clears throat] I guess they went down there and they were looking for Italians and they, they come across a couple of them and they beat them up. And then evidently they, I guess they...they didn't go, they venture any further. They only went in about a block. Because I guess there was a bunch of the young Italians were, were waiting for them. So, there was never—they didn't get any further than that. I think there's a story about—in the [gestures off to side]—about the fella that's in front of the Empire Cigar store. Which was a—it was a meeting spot on Third Avenue and the Main Street. And he was standing there and they—the crowd was coming down towards him and says, "There's another, there's another wop, let's get him." You know. And the guy turns around [turns around] to see who the hell they were talking about, you know, so...[laughs] And then, uh, the store owner came out with a hammer and said, you know, "If you touch him, the first guy to touch him, I'm

gonna whack him in the head with the hammer." So that—they dispersed. But, uh...that's [chuckles], that's the only thing I've heard about. That I know about. Yeah.

TT: Were any of your friends or their families affected by it?

NM: No, no. None of my—nobody. We were, we were as shocked as—you know, when the news got out about it—we were as shocked as... [Shrugs] But they never, like they—where we lived was kind of before Moneta and, and we didn't know anything about it. So... Well...

TT: And, and for those, uh, you know, who had to report as enemy aliens, did you know anything about that process? Like how often then went or—

NM: Once a—

TT: —what they had to do?

NM: Once a month.

TT: Once a month.

NM: Once a month, yeah.

TT: And do you have any idea of what they had to do when they went to the police?

NM: [Clears throat] Just report. Go in and they'd ask you who, you know. I don't think they'd ask you any questions, you'd just have to, they just wanted people to know where—you know, they wanted to know if the people were still there or not. That's basically the idea.

TT: Okay.

NM: Yeah.

TT: [Long pause] Um...okay just to go back to your, uh, father and your uncle being in camp. Um, granted they didn't speak a great deal about their experiences.

NM: Yeah.

TT: Um, but did they ever—you know, besides the food being okay—did they ever comment on the places they had to sleep or, um, or any relationships with, uh, fellow internees, Italian or not.

[01:05:35]

NM: As far as, uh—I have no idea how or where they slept or how they slept or, uh... And as far as, as far as my dad, he, uh...he, uh...he never said a thing, to me at least, about, uh, any problems they had in the camp with—there no doubt there were, some Italians were pro-fascist and some were anti-fascist, but never said any—never said—I've never heard, never heard of anything from anybody that there was a problem there. So... I can't help you there.

TT: And did your parents carry on a correspondence while, while your father was in—

NM: I don't know. I don't know if they could write to—and, uh...[shakes head] but... 'Cause I was never asked to write to my dad. So I'm sure that my mother would have made me write, you know, so. I never wrote and, uh, we never received any—as far as I know we never received any letters from him either. So...

TT: And, uh, did your mother ever, um, talk about her visits to Petawawa? How much time she got to see with your father?

NM: [Shakes head] Nope. And...and I'm thinking, you know, now I'm thinking [scratches head], Why, why wouldn't she have told me things? Either, either I've forgotten...either I've forgotten or, uh...or she didn't tell me, you know. And I, I don't recall ever...when she came back I don't recall, recall her saying, "Your dad was good, your dad was bad," or anything. No. And that seems strange to me. But, uh... So I don't know if I have a faulty memory there or...I don't know. No.

TT: And so, when your father was released after nine months. Um, did you have any, uh, notice that he was coming home or, or what happened exactly?

NM: No. I, I think we found out about a day before or something like that. And he came home the next day. Yeah...yeah. I was—that was a good surprise, you know... [Long pause] But they had, uh, they had a court case, uh, I have a, I have the transcripts of the trials. [Gestures to the back] In fact, did you want to see those?

TT: Yeah, I would.

NM: Okay I'll make you a copy.

TT: Great.

NM: Good. [Long pause] So...

TT: And were you, were you actually at home when your father returned?

[01:09:23]

NM: I think I was. I think I was 'cause I, I remember, yeah I, I remember [long pause], you know, it was a happy time. I remember my mother was all upset, well, not upset, but she was, uh...yeah. But then, when he did get back, everything seemed to return to normal as far as I was concerned, you know. He, he went back to work. He, uh... [Shrugs] And, uh...I remember a lot of people coming over. And, uh...I remember people asking him questions about the camp, you know. And he, he spoke about, he spoke about it to them and, uh...he didn't have bad things to say about it except, you know, being incarcerated. But I remember him telling people about the, uh, about cooking, you know [phone rings in background] and then the guards, uh, would, you know, sneak him some meat and some stuff and they'd make, they'd make the gravy and the, uh, homemade macaroni, you know. And, uh, how they'd feed the guards and, uh, and that the guards were in cahoots with them in getting the food, you know. That's, uh...but I remember him saying that, you know, that they were ne—I do remember him saying that they, uh, that they were never ill treated. You know, so...yeah. Hmm.

TT: So when your, um, your father and your uncle came home where there—you know, you mentioned people coming to your—

NM: Oh yeah, yeah.

TT: —to your family's house, etcetera, but were there like any, any parties or like dinner parties? Like celebrations at the—

NM: I don't think so. No, I don't think so. Not on—uh, I don't remember that at all. I just remember, you know, like neighbours, friends come over and you know so, but, uh...no I don't remember any, any parties or anything like that.

TT: How long was your father, um, like his initial return, how much time before he was picked up and re-interned?

NM: [Shakes head and sighs heavily] I don't recall. I don't really know. I don't think it was very long. I would say maybe two or three months in between. And, and how long he was away the second time I, I don't think it was very long, but maybe a week or two I don't know, you know, so. And I don't know where he went, I don't where, uh—right now I don't—'cause that was—that I'm sure I was away at school. 'Cause I remember my mother phoning me and told me that they'd picked up dad again and, uh...so... [Shrugs]. Hey, that's a long time ago now, you know.

TT: Mm hmm.

NM: So...

TT: And then when, when your mother told you that your father had been re-interned, um, you know, did she—how did she feel? Was it, was it apparent or was it—she was stating a fact. Or...did she...

NM: Oh, she was upset. Highly upset, you know. So...like I asked her, you know, if I could come home, and she said, "No, no." She wouldn't let me go home so...but she had, my cousin was staying with us. And, uh...so she wasn't, she not—she wasn't alone, you know. Well, but, uh, I think she was more upset the second time than the first time. Yeah. So... 'Cause when I went, when I went home for Christmas I guess it was, my dad was already back. You know, the second time that he was taken, I wasn't, uh...I don't think I was home when they—and I wasn't home when they took him and I wasn't home when he come back. So...yeah. Hmm.

TT: And the, the court, uh, trial or—that your father was involved in...

NM: Mm hmm.

TT: ...um, who was—was there a lawyer that they had?

NM: Yes—

TT: Was it just you or was it—or was it your father only or was it your father and your uncle that were both on trail?

NM: I think they were both on trail at the same time. Yeah.

TT: And do you know who was, uh, representing them?

NM: [Shakes head] I-I've got it there I'll show you. [Points behind his shoulder] You can—I'll...uh, I'll fax it out or I'll send them or I'll mail them to you when I make copies.

TT: Okay, alright.

NM: Yeah.

[01:15:24]

TT: Your father is back, for good.

NM: Mm hmm.

TT: Um, did he have any problems with, um, you know, people in the community after?

NM: [Shakes head] No. No, just back to normal. Yeah. I really—I don't know how many people in town knew that he had been interned to be frank with you. 'Cause once he got back, life returned to normal as far as we were concerned, but dad never said anything or indicated in any way that, you know, there was any animosity out there against him. So...

TT: [Long pause] Um...did your father ever seek some—like any compensation for being interned?

NM: [Shakes head and says with a small laugh] No, I think once he was, once he was out he didn't want to, he just wanted to forget everything. [Says while waving both hands out as if to cancel out what happened] He just wanted to get back to normality. And he never—the thought never occurred to him I don't think. First place he wasn't the kind of a guy that, you know, who was looking for, uh, anything. And, uh, I'm sure Uncle Leo was definitely not interested in compensation. Yeah.

TT: [Long pause] Also, after, uh, or even during the Second World War, once Italy had declared war, um, do you recall any, uh, Italian families that might have tried, you know, Anglicized their last names or maybe stopped speaking in Italian?

NM: [Shakes head] No. No...no.

TT: [Long pause] You had also mentioned that there was some family that, um, had enlisted with the Canadian military, is that correct?

NM: No, but, uh...some...some young fellas were in the army. They joined the army, they were called up, you know. And they were in uniform. Uh, they were soldiers. Yeah, and there was

navy. There was one guy that was in the navy. And...yeah, a cousin, our cousins as I said before, our cousins were in the army.

TT: And what were your cousins' names?

NM: Loret[?] Mascioli and, uh, Guido Mascioli.

TT: Okay.

NM: Yeah. [Long pause] Yeah, there were, there were quite a few Italian boys from here, in the army. Of course they were called up.

TT: Right.

NM: Yeah.

TT: Well I've pretty much asked all the questions I had planned, um, so is there anything that, you know, I haven't asked you about that you wanted to speak about? It could be anything.

NM: [Sighs heavily] I don't think so. I think you've covered everything and I'm, I'm just sorry that my memory isn't as sharp as it should be, I suppose or, but, uh... No... No, I think that's about it.

TT: Okay. Well thank you very much.

NM: Well, thank you.

TT: For taking the time to speak with me.

NM: Thank you.

TT: Sharing your experiences.

NM: Thank you.

TT: Much appreciated.

[Cross-dissolve between clips 01:20:07]

[Recording of five wooden utensils on the carpet side by side]

[People speaking in background]

TT: And were these given to your father—I know some of them have Leo—L. Mascioli written on them. So were they—

Unknown woman: Some have A and some have L.

TT: Okay, okay.

Unknown woman: So they were given to both I guess.

TT: Right.

[People speaking in background while camera zooms in closer to the utensils. Zooms in close on the names inscribed on the handle]



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[Fades out at 01:21:11]

[End of interview]