

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

DATE OF INTERVIEW: August 9, 2011

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Hamilton, ON

NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: Phyllis Morreale and Rita Morreale

NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Vikki Cecchetto

NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER: Nadia Mior

TRANSCRIBED BY: Lisa Kadey

DATE TRANSCRIBED: December 1, 2011

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ABSTRACT

In a follow-up to their first interview, Phyllis Morreale, and her daughter, Rita Morreale, talk about their experiences living in Hamilton during World War II. Phyllis' father, Luigi Mascia, was interned at Camp Petawawa. Phyllis postponed her marriage for a year while her father was in the internment camp. When the police came for Luigi, the police barged into his home, took his papers, and arrested him. Phyllis describes the experience of getting her father out of the internment camp. After Luigi was interned, Phyllis and her mother were contacted by a man who said he could get Luigi out of the internment camp for a \$5000 fee. They paid the fee and went with the man to Ottawa. He told them that Luigi would be home in a week's time. The same process was repeated with Phyllis' great-uncle, Sabatino (Sam) Bartolini, who was also interned. Rita and Phyllis discuss how the Canadian government's policies affected other members of their community, including Italians who lost their jobs, and those who had to register every week while their children served in the Canadian forces. They also talk about their lives in Hamilton after the war.

INTERVIEW

PM: Phyllis Morreale, interviewee

RM: Rita Morreale, interviewee

VC: Vikki Cecchetto, interviewer

NM: Nadia Mior, videographer

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 00:00:09]

VC: So, we're back here again with Phyllis and, uh, Rita Morreale, and they're gonna tell us a little bit more, um, about what it was like growing up, [camera zooms in slowly] and what it was like living in the time of, uh, the Second World War. So, Phyllis, can you tell us a little bit more about the neighbourhood? Where was it that you were living here in Hamilton?

PM: Sherman Avenue.

VC: Sherman Avenue.

PM: Sherman Avenue.

VC: Uh, yeah. And can you tell me, who was around there? What kind of people? Were they all Italians?

PM: Italians—

RM: Polish.

PM: —mostly Italians.

RM: Polish.

PM: And Polish.

RM: Polish people, yes.

VC: Oh good.

PM: Yeah, mostly Italian. And it was a good neighbourhood.

[Camera zooms in closer]

VC: Mm hmm.

PM: Everybody was, wa—the children, the parents—

RM: A lot of relations, a lot of relations—

PM: —a lot of, um—

RM: —aunts, uncles, everybody seemed to live around one another, yeah.

PM: —you know, everybody helped one another.

RM: Nobody locked doors. [Shakes head]

PM: When my father was taken away, people showed up, “Is there any help, is there anything we can do? Do you need anything?”

VC: Mm hmm.

PM: And the grocery stores brought food over, ‘cause there was, um, Mastassi’s[?] on one corner, and, uh, Chehocci’s[?]. There were all grocery stores.

RM: [Nods]

VC: So this is and Sherman and Barton?

PM: Sherman and—yeah. [Nods]

RM: Barton and Sherman, yeah. [Nods]

PM: But mostly Sherman.

VC: Oh, okay.

RM: More Barton and Sherman area.

VC: Alright. And so, you, um—at, at this time, you were about—

RM: Twenty? [Looks at PM]

VC: —twenty years old?

PM: I was 20.

RM: Twenty. [Nods]

VC: Twenty years old.

PM: And I was gonna get married.

VC: Yeah.

PM: And I had set the date, and then we cancelled it, because my father was interned for a year.

VC: Right.

PM: Yeah.

VC: So, before, um, where did you go to school, uh—

PM: Gibson Avenue.

VC: Oh, Gibson Avenue?

PM: Gibson Avenue.

VC: Uh, was that the elementary or the high school?

RM: No, that was the elementary.

PM: No, no. The I—elementary. And I quit, and then I took a business course.

VC: Oh, alright.

PM: And then I studied music.

VC: Oh.

PM: I went to the Conservatory.

RM: [Unclear]

PM: And I studied, uh, right up to my teacher's exam.

VC: Wow.

PM: Yeah.

VC: And that was the Conservatory here in Hamilton?

RM: [Nods]

PM: Yeah, oh yeah.

VC: Oh, alright.

PM: Oh yeah.

VC: Very good.

RM: And also at Lorette [Loretto] Academy.

PM: Oh yeah. Uh, my sister—when my mother and father used to go away with the horses, my sister was boarding at Lorette [Loretto] Academy.

VC: Oh good.

PM: And then I went there, and took some lessons under Mother Anna.

[Loud noise, possibly train, in background]

VC: Okay.

PM: Yeah.

VC: And which sister was this?

PM: Josephine.

VC: Jo—

PM: She passed away a couple of years ago. Mm hmm.

RM: [Nods]

VC: Okay, I'm sorry. And your dad was—his name?

RM: L-Luigi Mascia.

VC: Luigi Mascia.

RM: Luigi Mascia. [Nods]

VC: And your mother's name?

RM: Rosina.

PM: Rosina Mascia.

VC: Rosina Mascia. And what was her m—uh, what family was s—was, uh—

RM: What was her maiden name? [Asks PM]

PM: Barbario[?].

VC: Uh, Barbario[?].

RM: Barbario[?].

PM: Yeah.

VC: And had they been here a long time?

PM: Oh, my mother was only 11, 12 years old when she came here.

RM: [Nods] Yeah.

VC: Oh, alright.

PM: They were all young.

RM: Yeah.

VC: So do you remember, more or less, when her family came over from Italy?

PM: Well, grandma, I remember grandma real good.

RM: Her sisters.

PM: And then the aunts, like, we all—

VC: Mm hmm.

PM: Y-you know, in those days, we were close with the relatives, the aunts, the uncles, the cousins. Not like today.

VC: Mm hmm, yeah.

PM: Today they're distant because who's here, who's there. [Gestures with hands]

VC: Yeah.

PM: But in those days, uh, Sundays was either at Aunt, uh, Rosie's house, Aunt Josie's house, Aunt Ida's house, that was Sunday...afternoon.

RM: It was all, it was all family. It was all family, yeah.

VC: It was all family.

PM: All family.

VC: And were, were—was that mainly, um, the Mascia family that you had?

PM: Uh, Mascia and Maso[?].

VC: And Maso[?], okay.

PM: Yeah, my mother's sister.

RM: Mm hmm.

VC: Oh, very good.

PM: Yeah.

VC: Alright. And, um, so they would've come—probably your mother's family would have come at the beginning of the century?

[Camera zooms out slightly]

RM: Mm hmm. [Nods]

PM: Yeah, oh yeah. [Nods]

VC: Nineteen hundreds?

RM: [Nods]

PM: Yeah.

VC: When did they first come to Hamilton?

RM: Must have—

VC: Do you remember?

RM: Well, mom—grandma was only 16 when she got married.

PM: Yeah.

RM: I have her wedding picture there. [Points off camera]

VC: Oh, wow.

RM: I have a picture, the wedding picture.

PM: Yeah, she was only 16 when she got married.

RM: She was only 16 and she was born in 1900.

PM: And my father was 20.

VC: Oh, alright.

RM: So, she's been—she was here a long time. [Nods]

VC: Okay, very good.

RM: Yeah, yeah, yeah. My grandmother was a twin, but the twin passed away.

VC: Oh, I see.

RM: Yeah. And then she came here with her sister, Mrs. Bartolini, Ida Bartolini.

VC: Right.

RM: That's her maiden name. And then, uh, Mrs. Maso[?], who also was a sister—

VC: Okay.

RM: —there was three of them [holds up three fingers]. Yeah, yeah. [Nods]

VC: Right. And so, uh, there was, uh, Josephine, your sister?

RM: Mm hmm. [Nods]

PM: [Nods]

VC: Yourself, were there any other, um—

PM: No. [Shakes head]

RM: No. [Shakes head]

PM: Just the two of us.

VC: Oh, just the two of us.

PM: Just the two of us. [Nods]

VC: Wow. Okay. Now, um, when we were talking before, you, you talked about the day that your father was, uh, was arrested.

PM: Yeah.

VC: And, and you had mentioned that, um, the police barged in.

PM: Yeah. [Nods]

VC: How did they barge in? Did they—

PM: Well, they practically pushed the door, and we heard this big bang. And they came in, ransacked the desk, took all the papers out of the desk, whatever there was there, and they took my father, dragged him in the car, and took him away. [Gestures with hands]

[00:05:07]

VC: Now, when, when you say they barged in, was that at your home?

PM: Yeah, in my home. [Nods]

RM: [Nods]

VC: Oh, alright.

PM: Oh yeah.

VC: Okay.

RM: Right on Sherman Avenue. [Nods]

VC: Right on Sherman Avenue.

PM: Yeah, yeah.

VC: And d-do you remember them having a list or, or anything that they were carrying, anything?

RM: [Asks PM] How many of them were there, do you remember?

VC: Do you remember how many there were?

PM: Three.

RM: Three.

VC: Oh, alright.

PM: Yeah.

VC: And were they R—all RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] or were some of them also—

RM: Were they—

PM: [Shakes head and gestures to her clothes] No they weren't dressed up like—

RM: They didn't have uniforms.

PM: They were—

VC: Oh.

PM: They weren't dressed up in uniforms.

VC: Oh, I see.

RM: They weren't dressed up as police or anything like that. [Shakes head]

PM: No.

VC: Oh, alright.

RM: They were just ordinary—

PM: No.

RM: —F—looking like CIA agents or FBI people [shrugs] or—

PM: Yeah.

VC: Right.

RM: Yeah. [Nods]

VC: Okay. So—but you don't remember them maybe having papers that they were marking off your dad's name—

PM: No, no. [Shakes head]

VC: —or anything like that?

PM: No, no.

VC: Alright. Now, you also said, you also said the last time [cat meows] that, um, uh, you visited—

RM: [Looks down at cat] Shush.

VC: —you visited your father when he was at the CNE [Canadian National Exhibition]. [Cat meows] Um, uh, down—

RM: That's where they dropped them all off at.

VC: Where they dropped them all off.

PM: Yeah.

RM: Yeah.

PM: Yeah.

RM: That's where every—that's where you saw them.

VC: Do you remember anything more about that place?

PM: Well, I mean, um, I was in the car—

VC: Uh huh.

PM: —with, um, two of my friends.

VC: Uh huh.

PM: And my Aunt...Ida was with me. And we started to cry, because in Toronto they were walking them up and down [gestures back and forth] like, uh...

RM: [Scoffs]

PM: ...you know, they were—

RM: Like slaves.

PM: And we started to cry because it was a sad sight to see these men—

VC: Mm hmm.

PM: —that were hard working citizens.

VC: Yeah.

RM: Mm hmm.

PM: See I have a picture of my father that says, “Italo-Canadian helped build Canada up.”

VC: Yeah.

PM: I have a picture of my father in *The Spectator*.

VC: Yeah.

PM: Headline is, "Italo-Canadian helped build Canada up." And then it's got—my father was a liquor salesman—

VC: Yeah.

PM: —a well-known liquor salesman, because even today, I have people saying, "Oh, your father supplied the liquor at my wedding."

VC: Yeah.

PM: 'Cause in those days they didn't have halls—

VC: You're right.

PM: —with liquor licenses.

VC: Yeah, yeah.

PM: They had liquor salesmen. And then my father was a well-known horse owner.

VC: Yeah.

PM: See? And, uh—

RM: The idea of them, when they took them all to Toronto was that they just basically loaded them on the trains and took them up to Petawawa.

VC: Yeah. So, then, uh, do you, do you, uh, remember more or less how long they stayed at the CNE? Was it a few days?

PM: Oh no, not long. [Shakes head]

VC: Okay.

PM: Not long. No, they were shipped to Petawawa.

VC: Immediately.

PM: Immediately.

RM: [Nods] Hmm.

VC: Right.

RM: Was there any correspondence? Did you ever get letters from grandpa? [Asks PM]

PM: No, no. [Shakes head]

RM: [Looks at PM and shakes head] There was no correspondence.

VC: Oh, okay.

PM: No, as far as I remember, no.

VC: And, um, wh—these—when you said you, you saw them parading the internees around—

PM: [Nods] Yeah.

VC: —were they, were they doing anything to the internees or—

PM: No, no, they were just marching them up and down. [Moves hands back and forth]

VC: Okay.

PM: Marching them up and down.

VC: Alright.

PM: That was it. It was horrible.

VC: Were you able, were you able to get, uh—

PM: No. [Shakes head]

VC: —close to your—

PM: No. [Shakes head]

VC: —dad, like, to say anything?

PM: No, we sat in the car and watched it.

VC: Oh dear.

PM: We sat in the car and started to cry.

VC: Okay.

PM: It was horrible.

VC: Wow.

PM: Just horrible.

VC: Uh, good lord. Um, now you said you were 20 at the time of—

PM: [Nods] Yes.

VC: —uh, uh, the internment.

PM: Yeah.

VC: Uh, and I know you're born in September, so—

PM: Yes. [Laughs and nods]

VC: —we can, we can figure out—

PM: [Smiles] You're right.

VC: —more or less when you— [Laughs]

PM: We're Virgos, boy, we—no wonder—we're Virgos. Great.

VC: And Rita, how about you? When, when, more or less, when you were—the year you were born?

RM: Mm hmm, '44.

VC: Forty-four. Alright.

RM: Mm hmm. [Nods]

VC: Um, I know that the last time, uh, we talked also about—[cat meows] you took another trip to, uh, [cat meows] to do something to help your father.

PM: Yeah, to Ottawa.

VC: To Ottawa.

PM: Yeah.

VC: Can you tell us a little bit more about that, um—

PM: Well, uh, this, this gentleman came to our house and he said, “We can get your father out.”

[Camera zooms in slightly]

VC: Ah.

PM: But it costed money.

RM: It’s extortion. [Laughs]

PM: So we went to Ottawa with this gentleman, wouldn’t tell us his name, and as far as I remember the—said that he came from Toronto.

RM: Oh, alr—and so this—

PM: And he contacted some Italians—

RM: —this gentleman—ah.

PM: —in the city. So, we went to Ottawa. We got off at Ottawa, in Ottawa. And two gentlemen greeted us and took as to the Chateaux Laurier Hotel.

VC: Okay.

PM: And my mother and I were left there for a week all by ourselves and then a week later he came back and said, “Your father will be home in a week.”

VC: Okay.

PM: And sure enough my father was home in a week.

RM: But there was money paid.

PM: But we paid money.

RM: Yeah. [Nods]

VC: And—

PM: And we weren't the only ones—

RM: No.

PM: —'cause then we got my uncle out.

RM: That was the only way you could get out of the camp, was if you paid. It was extortion—

VC: And who—

RM: —to pay money.

VC: —who was your uncle?

PM: Uncle Sam.

RM: Um, Uncle—his name was Sam [Sabatino] Bartolini.

VC: Oh Sam Bartolini.

RM: He was married to my grandmother's sister.

PM: Yeah.

VC: Oh that's right. That was your—that was your mom's married name.

PM: Yes. [Nods]

RM: Yes. [Nods]

RM: Yup.

PM: Yeah.

VC: Uh, maiden name. And, uh, I know that you don't want to say exactly how much money that you gave, but it was—

PM: [Shrugs] It was around 5000, something like that.

VC: Okay.

PM: Yeah.

VC: Um, so when was—

PM: Approximately 5000.

VC: Okay.

RM: Money, money had to pass hands if you wanted to get out of the camp.

VC: Oh alright.

[00:10:22]

RM: And those that couldn't raise the money; they stayed in there for the duration.

VC: Oh, okay.

RM: That was the bottom line.

VC: That's, that's—

PM: Like Fernanda's [Colangelo] husband, I think he was there four years.

VC: Oh...yeah.

RM: Yeah.

PM: He was there four years.

RM: Four years, yeah.

VC: Yeah.

PM: Poor Fernada left with six children.

VC: Wow.

PM: And no money. A lot of them were left with no money. And when my father came out, on Christmas Day [camera zooms in slightly], we used to deliver groceries to the, uh, women whose husbands were interned.

VC: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

PM: Like Nick Zaffiro, his sister had to quit school so she could get a job. They needed the money.

VC: Yeah, yeah.

RM: [Nods] They needed money, yeah.

PM: It was terrible. [Shakes head]

VC: Yeah.

PM: It was the worst thing—

RM: And half of Stelco was empty because half of them were Italians.

VC: Were interned. Yeah.

RM: Yeah. [Nods]

VC: Wow. Um, when, when we were here before, you talked about a Mr. Mack[?]. Uh—

PM: Well, that's who—the name was.

VC: Oh, I see. So they just gave their name as—

PM: Yeah, did—ga—that's all. [Waves hand in front]

RM: Yeah.

VC: That, that was—

PM: That's all we knew him by was—

RM: Yeah.

PM: We could call him Mack.

VC: Oh alright.

PM: And that was it. No name, no nothing.

VC: Mm hmm.

PM: Nothing.

VC: And while, while you were at the Chateau Laurier, did they contact you at all?

PM: [Shakes head] No, na—no.

VC: You ju—they just—

PM: A whole week my mother and I were by ourselves.

VC: Oh wow.

PM: Yeah.

VC: Good lord.

PM: Two men greeted us at the station.

VC: Okay.

PM: So it was a clique. [Brings hands together]

VC: Yeah.

RM: Yeah.

PM: It was a clique, it was a—

RM: Yeah, it was extortion. No two ways about it.

PM: You know, they should have investigated more then—

RM: Yeah.

PM: —instead of waiting so long.

VC: Yeah.

RM: Yeah.

PM: They should have done something a little bit more then.

VC: Yeah.

PM: But I'll be honest with you, a lot of them that should've, kind of...ran away like scared rabbits.

RM: They were scared, they were scared.

VC: Well sure.

RM: Yeah.

PM: You know, they were scared. They didn't—

RM: They were afraid that the same thing was going to happen to them.

PM: —want to get involved.

VC: Yeah.

RM: Yeah, yeah. [Nods] Much like everything else.

PM: Yeah.

VC: Yeah. And I guess once, once they came home, they, they were—were they also afraid to talk?

PM: Once we came home, we started off like nothing.

RM: Yeah.

PM: My father opened up a grocery store here on King Street. [Gestures behind her] And we just went on with our life. [Twirls hand in a circle]

RM: Mm hmm.

PM: Like, uh, really it was just great.

RM: Yeah.

PM: You know? But it was because we had relatives, family—

VC: Yeah.

PM: —which kept us—

RM: You had a su—a big support group. Yeah, very close-knit—

PM: You know, we had a support group.

RM: —very close-knit—

VC: Mm hmm, Mm hmm.

RM: —people.

VC: Um, you—when, when your father was in, uh, Camp Petawawa, uh, did he meet up with any of the other internees that were here from, uh, Hamilton?

PM: Oh yeah.

VC: Do you remember who he was—

RM: Well— [Starts to count on fingers]

PM: Well, Mr. [Francesco] Zaffiro.

RM: Zaffiro.

PM: Um—

RM: Olivieri.

PM: Olivieri.

RM: Anthony [Antonio] Olivieri.

PM: But Olivieri was the first one to be released and that's how we got wind of being released—

RM: Yeah.

PM: —and paying the money.

VC: Ah! Okay.

RM: Yeah.

PM: He was the first one.

RM: Yeah. [Nods]

VC: Okay.

PM: We were sh-shocked to hear about it.

VC: Okay.

RM: Yeah.

PM: And, um—

RM: There's a picture someplace that I did see.

PM: Yeah.

RM: And there was a picture of my Uncle Sam— [Starts counting on fingers]

PM: Yeah.

RM: —my grandfather, Benny [Panfilo] Ferri, um—

PM: Yeah, Benny Ferri. [Points to VC]

RM: —who start—who started a band up there. Rocco Perri was in that picture. There was a whole slew of them.

PM: Yeah.

RM: And oh yeah, they all saw—

VC: Mm hmm, mm hmm, yeah.

RM: —one another, yeah.

VC: Yeah.

RM: All saw one another.

VC: Now, um, uh, you were saying that, that, um, uh, the first time that you heard about money, um, exchanging hands was, was with Mr. Olivieri.

PM: [Nods] Olivieri, yeah.

VC: So I guess they had to pay money too?

RM: Oh yeah.

PM: Oh sure. [Nods]

VC: Oh alright.

PM: Oh sure.

VC: Yeah. And, um, did, uh, did your, your dad also meet up with, um, um, uh, Giacomelli, Mr. Giacomelli?

PM: Yeah, oh yeah.

VC: Osvaldo Giacomelli?

PM: Yeah, they—

VC: But he, he was one of the younger ones?

RM: He was younger ones, yeah.

PM: Yeah, yeah.

RM: Now why they took him I have no idea. He was only, what, 18? [Asks PM]

PM: Well one of them—

RM: He was really young.

PM: —one of them was taken to Toronto and put in the Don Jail and that was sad. That was sad. [Shakes head]

RM: Yeah. Who was it? [Asks PM]

VC: You don't remember who that was?

PM: I, I think it was Giacomelli.

VC: Oh alright.

PM: I'm not sure.

VC: Okay.

PM: But I think it was Giacomelli that was put in the Don Jail.

VC: Okay. And then—

RM: And then—

VC: And then he was—

RM: —then sent up to Petawawa? [Speaks to PM]

PM: Yeah. [Nods]

VC: And then sent up to Petawawa.

RM: Mm hmm. 'Cause he was very young.

VC: Yeah, yeah.

PM: Very young.

RM: Yeah, he was one of the youngest.

PM: And then they kicked out some of the Italians from the steel plant.

VC: Oh, did they?

PM: Just put them out. Oh yeah.

RM: Yeah.

VC: So that they, they, they were just, um, uh—

PM: Th-they were put out.

VC: They, they didn't, they didn't have a job? They didn't—

PM: I think Jimmy Benedetti was one of them. And, no, they didn't have a job. They—oh, it was terrible, it was terrible what went on.

RM: Mm hmm.

PM: It was the worst thing Canada could have ever done.

VC: Yeah.

RM: Yeah.

PM: Canada should bow their head in shame.

VC: Yeah.

RM: Mm hmm.

PM: Doing a thing like that and allowing it.

RM: There was no—

PM: And allowing it too long.

RM: And it never—they never did that to them in the States. They just did that here in Canada.

PM: Yeah.

VC: Yeah.

PM: They never did that in the States.

RM: So they didn't do that in the States. No.

VC: Yeah. Did your father, uh, did your father—was your father ever given, sort of a, um, um, a document saying, uh, this is the reason that you were picked up?

RM: Were there— [Speaks to PM]

VC: Or, uh, this was the reason that—

RM: —any papers or anything?

VC: Any papers?

PM: No.

VC: Do you remember anything like that?

PM: No, no, no. [Shake head]

RM: No.

VC: Okay. [Cat meows]

[00:15:30]

PM: Once my father came home [camera zooms out], uh, there was—it was like it never happened.

VC: Okay.

PM: No really.

RM: Yeah.

PM: It was like he—we started all—

RM: I don't think they talked about it much.

PM: No.

RM: They just came home, put their fractured families together—

PM: It was done, it was done.

RM: —and that was it. Yeah. [Nods]

PM: And we went on with our life.

VC: Yeah.

RM: Yeah.

PM: I got married, had my wedding, and, uh, we just carried on. [Cat meows] We had a groc—

VC: So how long did you wait before your dad came home to have your wedding?

PM: A year.

VC: Oh alright.

PM: Yeah. Oh yeah.

VC: Oh okay.

PM: A year. Yeah.

VC: Okay. And then the last time you also mentioned, uh, Alfie [Alfonso] Borsellino.

RM: I was the one that talked about—

VC: Oh alright.

RM: —Alfie Borsellino. Alf-Alfie Borsellino was in Italy at the time with my, uh, father-in-law. And they were go—they were going to go to Sicily.

VC: Okay.

RM: And they actually had asked Alfie, “Do you want to go to, to Italy?” And he said, “Well, here I’m fighting for the Canadian government, yes, this is what I’m going to do.” In the meantime, his parents here in Hamilton were registering if not every day, every week.

VC: Okay.

RM: And yeah, and that—he wasn’t the only one.

VC: Yeah.

RM: There were quite a few of the, the boys. Donny Capelli, I think was another one. And I knew this because of my, my father-in-law, ‘cause he spent most of the term, um, during the war in Italy.

VC: Okay.

RM: And he met up with a lot of these Italian fellows, and they were fighting for the Canadian government, and yet their parents here in Hamilton—

VC: Yeah.

RM: —were having to go to—

PM: That's right.

RM: —to register.

VC: Who, who's your, who's your father-in-law?

RM: His name was Royce Arnold.

VC: Okay.

RM: Yeah. And he was in, in Italy, fighting in the—during the Second World War.

VC: So he was part of the Canadian army?

RM: Yes. [Nods]

VC: Oh alright.

RM: Oh yes. And that's how—see, he went—and he—in his regiment was Alfie Borsellino and a few of these other Italian fellows. And he—when he, you know, when I got to know him, he said, you know, he said they would ask these Italians, “Do you want to go to Sicily?” And they'd say, “Well, here—we're here fighting the Canad—we have a cause. We're fighting for the Canadian government.” And yet their parents had to go and register every day. So it was a travesty. I mean here on one hand you had somebody fighting for your country [makes air quotes when saying “country”], and yet on the other hand, your country was making these poor people suffer.

VC: Yeah.

RM: So it was a catch-22 situation.

VC: Wow, wow.

RM: Yeah, it was very sad, very, very sad.

VC: Um, now, I, I know from other, from other people that we've talked to that, um, uh, there's, there's maybe an idea that there might have been informants, um, at the time. Do you—had you—

PM: Oh there was an informer.

RM: Yeah.

PM: Oh definitely.

RM: Yeah, there were informers.

PM: Definitely.

RM: Nobody ever talked about—

PM: There was an informer.

RM: Yeah.

PM: Where else would they have gotten the names?

RM: Yeah.

PM: And then, uh, uh, it was always the north end that were taken, and then the east end with the Sicilians, none of them—they were left alone.

RM: No. But—no, the north there wasn't—

PM: It was an informer—

RM: Yeah.

PM: —from that hall.

VC: Okay.

RM: Casa d'Italia.

PM: No, no, not Casa d'Italia, that other hall, that Italian hall. [Points to the right]

VC: Okay.

RM: Oh. Okay.

VC: And where was that hall?

PM: Uh, the—uh, the, the—

RM: Was it—

PM: What was it called, that It—

RM: What was the name of it? Not the Venetian Club?

PM: Venet—no, not the Venetian Club.

RM: No.

PM: That other Italian club that the boys belonged to.

RM: I don't know. [Shakes head]

PM: It was an old It—it was one of the first Italian clubs, uh—

RM: Yeah.

VC: It—was that the one that was, uh, near John, or, or James?

RM: Casa d'Italia?

VC: No, because the Casa d'Italia was on Barton.

RM: Barton Street.

PM: No, no, the Casa Italia was on Barton Street.

RM: Yeah, I don't know the name of that one.

VC: Okay, I'll have to, I'll have to investigate.

RM: Investigate that, yeah.

PM: Yeah.

RM: But it, it just—

PM: On that street—was it on [unclear]? 'Cause we used to go to the dances there.

VC: Okay.

RM: Oh.

PM: And we're pretty sure that the guy that was running that hall was the informer.

VC: Okay.

RM: Yeah. [Nods]

PM: We're almost sure of it.

RM: Yeah, but—

PM: But, uh, he's dead.

VC: Yeah.

PM: He died.

VC: Yeah.

RM: Yeah.

PM: But, um, we're, we're pretty sure he's—

RM: They had to get their information from someplace.

VC: Somehow.

RM: Yes.

VC: Yeah.

PM: He was one of them that gave the names—

RM: Names.

PM: —of these people.

RM: Yeah.

VC: Yeah. Now, um... [Cat meows]

RM: [Clicks tongue and looks down at cat] You're a pest.

VC: ...uh, you said that you grew up on Sherman Avenue, and then you got married, uh, a year after your dad came, uh, home from the, uh, internment camp. Um, where did you live after you, you were married?

PM: I lived with my parents.

VC: Oh, good for you. [Laughs]

PM: My father said—

RM: I was—we were there till I was six.

PM: —eat and drink, and put your money in the bank.

VC: [Laughs]

RM: Yeah. I was there till—

PM: Those were my father's words. Eat and drink, and put your money in the bank.

RM: Yeah. [Smiles and nods]

PM: And that's what we did.

RM: And I stayed there till I was six.

PM: And—

VC: Okay.

RM: And then we moved to the east end of Hamilton.

PM: And then we bought our house, and we paid for it.

RM: Yeah. Everybody lived in that house. My, uh, my, uh—when my Aunt Josie got married, and her husband Frank was in the army, they lived there. And then there—my cousin, Rick. So, we all kind of lived in the same house. [Nods]

VC: Oh, very good.

PM: Oh yeah, very good.

RM: Yeah.

VC: That's really good.

PM: Very good.

RM: Mm hmm.

VC: So again, so you s—you, uh, lived—you continued living on Sherman Avenue for quite a—

PM: Oh yeah.

VC: —quite a long time.

PM: Oh yeah.

RM: Mm hmm.

VC: And what was the, what was the neighbourhood like? [Camera zooms in] Um, uh, during the time, uh, after your father came home until the end of the war?

PM: The same, wonderful.

RM: It just continued.

PM: Oh yeah.

RM: Just continued.

PM: We just continued.

RM: Yeah.

PM: Like I have girlfriends that—

RM: Yeah.

PM: —one of them lives in St. Catharines. We had a grocery store, and they had like a convenience store. And we still talk about the good old days and that.

RM: Mm hmm.

VC: Right.

PM: Oh yeah.

[00:20:36]

VC: Yeah. So there was no—uh, no sort of people who came around and, and said nasty things to—

RM: Animosity?

PM: No, no, nothing, nothing. [Shakes head]

RM: No, no. [Shakes head]

PM: It was just—we just went right on.

RM: When I started in high school, I think that would have been in '53, '54, something like that. Um, a lot of the Italians still lived in that area. The Sicilians again were in the north end, and a lot of the, the girls I went to school with their, their parents were still living in that Barton and Sherman area.

VC: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

RM: Yeah. [Nods]

PM: Oh yeah.

VC: And when you went to school did, did, um, did you find out about any of the other, uh, girls—

RM: No. [Shakes head]

VC: —who had had, uh—whose fathers had maybe been—

PM: No. [Shakes head]

RM: No. [Shakes head]

VC: —picked up?

PM: No.

RM: No. They probably never ever knew about it. Who's to say?

PM: No.

RM: I mean I knew about it because, you know, my grandfather and—I mean, I just knew the stories that they used to tell. But it w—there was never any talk. I mean nobody ever—

VC: No. Right.

RM: —I don't think they really even knew, you know.

PM: No.

VC: Yeah.

RM: Yeah. [Nods]

VC: And again I know th-that, um, that, uh, we talked about it before, but how do you think this, this, uh, experience affected you?

PM: Oh...well, we were young, and, uh—

RM: Probably didn't realize the whole—

PM: They—no.

RM: —um, the whole idea of what they were doing.

PM: Actually, everything happened—

RM: So fast.

PM: —so fast. Yeah.

RM: Yeah.

PM: You know, and we just got married and carried on like—as though nothing had happened.
Really.

RM: And I th—and I don't think at that time they were really politically in tune, what was going
on.

PM: No.

RM: It was just something that happened, and, and that was it too.

PM: That was it.

VC: Right. Yeah.

RM: Yeah, yeah.

VC: And d-do you think people, um, kept quiet, uh, for reasons that they were afraid? Were they afraid that maybe they would—

PM: No, I, I think they just didn't want to talk about it.

VC: Mm hmm.

PM: I, I gu—I think they just—

RM: Yeah.

PM: —said, it's done, it's done, and forget it.

RM: And let's get on with our lives.

PM: We didn't want to—

RM: There might have been a stigma of shame attached to it, so they just wanted to just—

PM: Yeah.

RM: It's over with, it's—

PM: Yeah.

RM: And you have to understand, too, these people were immigrants.

VC: Yeah.

RM: So when they came to this country they came with nothing.

VC: Yeah.

RM: They have had a lot of hardships in their lives. This was one more hardship to overcome.

VC: Okay.

RM: It w—it shouldn't have happened, but it did.

PM: Yeah.

RM: And I think they were in a survivor mode.

VC: Mm hmm.

RM: You know, they came here with nothing; therefore, they were going to survive this.

VC: Yeah.

RM: You know, I mean, when they came here, they came here out of destitution. They had—they were sleeping in chicken coops over there, you know.

VC: Yeah.

RM: So America, you know, with—as, uh, [unclear] said, the, uh, you know, the roads were paved with gold, but he said, they forgot to tell us we had to pave it.

VC: Yes. [Laughs]

RM: You know. And, uh—but I mean, they were all in a survivor mode, so this is one more, uh, hardship that they had to endure because, uh, then after that, um, it was basically the Italians that built up the construction industry in Hamilton.

VC: Yeah.

RM: [Camera zooms out] And it wa—they were living, you know, on pennies and dimes, but they had the idea, and it worked.

VC: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

RM: And they worked hard. [Nods]

VC: Mm hmm.

RM: Yup, so.

VC: Right.

RM: You know.

VC: So your dad continued with the, the grocery store.

RM: Mm hmm. [Nods]

PM: Yeah. [Nods]

VC: And your mom, and, um—

PM: Yeah.

RM: Everything went on.

VC: Yeah.

RM: Yeah.

VC: How lo—how much longer did they have the grocery store? Did they, uh—

RM: I don't know. When did they give it up? [Asks PM]

VC: When did they give it up?

RM: After the war? [Asks PM]

PM: How much longer what?

RM: How long did grandpa have the grocery store before they gave it up? [Asks PM]

PM: Uh, a couple of years.

VC: Oh just a couple of years?

PM: And then he got sick.

VC: Oh.

RM: Yeah.

PM: And then he started to do downhill.

RM: Yeah.

PM: Yeah.

VC: And what about the horses?

RM: Oh that was long gone.

PM: Oh yeah, the horses, like, we gave up the horses after.

RM: Because there was no money to be made in the horses.

PM: Yeah.

RM: Yeah.

PM: The horses weren't doing that good.

VC: Okay.

RM: My, my, my, my father's, um, high time in the horses was basically latter 20s and 30s.

VC: Okay.

RM: By the time the 40s arrived—

PM: Yeah.

RM: —it was just basically costing too much money.

VC: Oh alright.

RM: 'Cause he, he would take his horses, my grandmother and grandfather would spend six months of the year in Cuba, and—

VC: Ah!

RM: —he was one of the very first, um, uh, horse owners to actually have his horses travel by plane. That was a very nov—

VC: Wow.

RM: —big novelty. And—

PM: Well, I showed you the picture. [Gestures behind]

VC: Yeah.

PM: Yeah.

RM: And he had horses in Hialeah in Florida, Cuba, they used to spend six months of the year. So, yeah, he was, he was quite well known. But then when it got to be the '40s, there would—you couldn't make money on the horses anymore. Yeah. [Shakes head]

VC: Okay.

RM: So they gave up all the horses. Yeah.

VC: Yeah. And was, um, one of the other, um, uh, one of the other things that I, that I've been reading about, is the fact that, uh, when, uh, people were interned, um, their property was confiscated and was taken over by the, uh, the Custodian of, uh, of Property. Did that happen with your father, too?

RM: [Shakes head] No.

PM: No. [Shakes head]

VC: Okay. So—

PM: No, no.

RM: Nobody's property was—

PM: No, no, no, that wa—nobody was touched, no.

RM: No. The property wasn't con—we were not like the Japanese.

PM: No.

RM: The property wasn't confiscated, no. [Shakes head]

VC: Okay.

RM: No, no.

VC: Alright. So, any-anything else that you can tell us? You, you, you said that you, um, uh, you, um, you went to the Conservatory and did your music training and, and all of that. So what did you do with your music afterwards?

[00:25:45]

RM: She plays the piano for all the seniors. [Laughs]

VC: [Laughs]

PM: I—to be honest with you—you know what happened? You want to hear the true story? I had already studied all my teacher's exams, my theory—

VC: Uh huh.

PM —and, uh, and, uh, lover boy came along.

VC: Ah!

RM: That's my father.

PM: And I didn't go.

VC: And what was lover boy's name? [Chuckles]

RM: Louie.

PM: Louie.

RM: Luigi.

PM: Luigi.

RM: Luigi.

PM: And I didn't go for my exam.

RM: He came from the north end. He came from the—

PM: But I taught a lot of the neighbourhood children.

RM: Yeah, yeah. [Nods]

VC: Okay.

PM: Yeah.

VC: So this would have been in the '40s and '50s—

RM: [Nods] Fifties.

PM: Yeah, yeah.

VC: —that you were teaching the neighbourhood children?

PM: Yeah, yeah.

VC: Wow.

PM: Yeah.

RM: Yeah.

VC: Wow.

PM: Yeah. And we had a good life.

RM: Yeah.

PM: No, we really did, we had a good life, we can't complain.

RM: Yeah, yeah.

PM: We had a real good life.

RM: And then she ended up working in the grocery store across the road from us when we moved to Tolton Avenue.

VC: Okay.

RM: Yeah.

PM: Yeah.

VC: And, um, was, uh, was Luigi Morreale's, uh, family, were they, uh, interned?

RM: No.

PM: Luigi had no mother, no father.

VC: Oh dear.

RM: No, the father—

PM: His—

RM: —the father he never knew died when he was about two.

PM: Two.

RM: And, uh, the mother—my dad was about 19 when his mother died.

PM: Died, yeah.

VC: Okay.

RM: And they lived on Mill Street in Hamilton, which was in the north end, 'cause he was Sicilian.

VC: Okay.

RM: So they really had no, uh—nothing touched them in regards to the—

VC: Right.

PM: Yeah.

RM: —I think there were five children in the family. And then my dad was, I think, one of the very first Italians to be hired at Wallace Barnes.

VC: At where?

RM: Which was just down the street on Sherman Avenue. [Points to the right]

VC: Oh.

RM: It's now called Associated Springs, but in those days, it was called Wallace Barnes.

VC: Okay.

RM: And they made springs.

VC: Okay.

RM: So he used to walk home for lunch, 'cause he just lived down the street.

VC: Okay.

RM: [Nods] Mm hmm.

VC: Wow.

RM: In those days, um—and I mean—I, I heard the stories, and that—I mean, if you were Italian, you could not get a job in any of the big department stores like Eaton's or places like that. I mean, they would not hire Italians; there was just a no-no.

VC: Mm hmm.

RM: And most of the Italian men ended up working at Stelco and Delfasco. And then, of course, a lot of them, after the war, there was a big building boom, and that's when a lot of them got into, um, construction.

VC: Right.

RM: And all your high name builders today all came from that background.

VC: Yeah.

RM: [Nods] Yeah.

VC: So when did, uh, when did Luigi's family come to, to Hamilton? Was it, uh—

RM: Fifty-three. In the early '50s.

VC: Okay, so they were not, uh—they, they wouldn't have been—

RM: They were not part of that, no, no. [Shakes head]

VC: No, they wouldn't have been—

RM: They didn't come here till about '52, '53.

VC: Okay.

PM: Oh no.

RM: And that was the, uh—this would have been Emilio's mother and father.

VC: Right.

RM: The two sisters, and there were three brothers.

VC: Okay.

RM: Yeah.

VC: Alright.

RM: A whole bunch of them came over here, yeah.

VC: And what about, um, what about your mother's family? Uh, did they—were any of them interned?

RM: No, no.

PM: No, no, no. [Shakes head]

VC: Uh, what about—

RM: My grandfather—my mother—my grandmother had one brother, Benny.

PM: One brother.

RM: But he lived in the States? [Asks PM]

PM: He lived in Toronto.

RM: He lived in Toronto.

PM: He worked at, uh, uh, Sears in Toronto.

RM: Yeah.

VC: Okay.

PM: In the bakeshop.

VC: Okay.

RM: Bakeshop, yeah.

PM: And he married an Irish girl there.

RM: Yeah.

VC: Okay.

PM: Yeah.

VC: So your—

PM: No.

VC: —the Bartolini's were, were not—

RM: No.

PM: No, no.

VC: —were not, um, affected by the—

RM: No, no.

PM: No, no.

VC: —the internment?

PM: No, no.

RM: No, no.

PM: No, no.

RM: No, no.

VC: Okay. Um...anything else you want to tell us about growing up during that time, some of the, uh, some of the—

PM: Well, like—

VC: Were people afraid? Were people—once—when, when they—

PM: What do you want to hear?

RM: [Chuckles]

PM: Uh, the Italian girls, like, we couldn't date unless you had an escort.

RM: Oh well.

VC: Okay. [Laughs]

PM: In those days. Remember?

VC: Yeah.

PM: Did you ev—was it like that in Toronto?

VC: Oh yeah! [Laughs]

PM: Yeah. Do you know what I mean? Like—but it—like—

RM: That was the time.

PM: —it was better then than today.

RM: It was the time. Yeah, it was—

PM: Today, they're letting it be too free.

RM: Yeah.

PM: They date at 16. They're getting pregnant at 16. And, uh, like, I'm not sorry now when I look back.

RM: Yeah.

VC: Okay.

RM: But I think in that time, too, the, the essence of the situation, you really didn't marry out of your cultural environment.

VC: No.

RM: Basically Italian married Italian, Italian married Catholic.

PM: Oh yeah.

RM: And I mean that went on for a lot of years, a lot of years.

PM: Yeah.

VC: Sure.

RM: And then of course, things have changed once kids started to go to school.

PM: Yeah.

RM: You know, but—

VC: Sure.

RM: I mean, if you marry—come home with an Irishman, oh my god. [Throws hands up in the air]

VC: Yeah. [Laughs]

RM: You know, what are you—what am I going to do with this *mangiacake*, you know.

PM: Well, my uncle he married this Irish girl that worked in the bakeshop in Toronto, and they disowned her.

VC: Oh.

PM: 'Cause she was marrying an Italian.

VC: Oh dear.

RM: Yeah. [Nods]

PM: In those days that was unheard of. Yeah.

VC: Wow.

PM: They disowned her.

RM: Yeah.

[00:30:20]

PM: They were going to buy her furniture—

RM: Yeah.

PM: —and that. And, uh, they bought—

RM: They had their ways about them.

PM: Yeah.

RM: But I don't think it was just the Italians. I think—

VC: No.

PM: But that's in those days—

RM: All the, the Polish had their ways, the Jewish had their ways.

VC: Yeah.

PM: Yeah.

RM: They always wanted to marry their own.

PM: Yeah.

VC: Yeah.

RM: Yeah, yeah, yeah. [Nods]

VC: Oh good.

RM: Mm hmm.

VC: So you're still—you're still playing the piano, are you?

PM: Oh, there it is. [Points off camera to the left]

RM: Yeah. She goes to the nursing homes and plays for the seniors.

PM: Yeah.

VC: Good for you.

PM: Oh yeah, I, I go to Villa Italia. Next Friday, I'm going to Villa Italia. And the piano player, John, there's my picture with John. [Points to the left]

VC: Uh huh.

PM: And, um, then when he finishes, then I go over and I play. And the Italian women want to hear *O Solo Mio*. [Sings]

VC: [Laughs]

RM: [Smiles and nods]

PM: La, la, la, la. [Sings and then laughs] They want to hear the Italian songs.

VC: Good.

PM: I've been playing since I was eight years old.

VC: Wow.

PM: Yeah.

VC: Wow.

PM: I took lessons at eight. Yeah, yeah.

VC: Wow. That's great.

PM: Yeah, we were—like, um, uh, uh—how will I put it? We weren't Italian-Italian. Like, my father got into a lot of English-speaking people.

RM: Mm hmm. [Nods]

PM: And that's how he got to be a liquor salesman, and got to be a horse owner.

RM: Yeah.

VC: Yeah.

PM: Because my father's like me. [Gestures toward chest]

RM: He branched out, he branched out. [Gestures outward with hands]

PM: We branch out.

VC: Yeah.

PM: We don't stay with that little—

RM: Yeah, we branched out.

PM: —cultural circle.

RM: My mother went to the United Church.

PM: Yeah.

VC: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

RM: And they had, uh, uh, uh—what they call All People's Mission.

VC: Yeah.

RM: And, uh, everybody, a lot of the Italians went there.

PM: Yeah.

RM: And they had their Sunday School and that, which the Catholic Church didn't have.

VC: Mm hmm.

RM: And, uh, I think also, too, they had much more opportunities for the younger people to go there and play basketball or volleyball—

PM: That's right.

VC: Sure.

RM: —or whatever.

PM: That's right.

RM: The Catholic Church did not have anything like that. I mean, did—the best you—with the Catholics, you went to church on Sundays, and that's what you had.

PM: We went camping, we went hiking, we played volleyball in the back of the church. And no, it was wonderful.

RM: Yeah.

PM: It was a great thing for young people.

RM: Yeah.

VC: [Laughs]

RM: But the Catholics Church didn't have that.

PM: And they don't have that today for young people.

VC: Yeah, yeah.

RM: No, no.

VC: Since you were, uh, around the Barton and Sherman area, did you ever go to the Casa d'Italia? Did you ever—

PM: Oh, we went there all the time.

VC: Oh, and what kind of things were going on at the Casa d'Italia?

RM: Well soc—

PM: Well we had dances.

RM: It was a social club.

PM: A social club. We had our meetings.

RM: Yeah, yeah.

PM: My mother and father always came. And then just down the street here on Victoria Avenue is, um— [Points to the right]

RM: The Sons of Italy.

PM: It's, um, um, a vil—

RM: Sons of Italy.

PM: Sons of Italy.

VC: Right.

PM: Just here.

RM: Which is now in this building.

VC: Okay.

PM: And, um—

RM: Its' on the corner. [Gestures to the back]

PM: —my parents used to come bring food. That's how it was in those days. Everybody would bring food from their home.

RM: Yeah.

PM: And in there [points off camera], we would cook in the kitchen, the women.

VC: Uh huh.

PM: We had a ball, we had a ball. It was great.

VC: Mm hmm.

RM: Yeah.

PM: Not like today. Today it's too much like [places one hand up and the other hand down low] who's up here and who's down here.

RM: Yeah, yeah.

VC: Yeah.

PM: Whereas in those days, we were all equal.

RM: See the primary, the primary church in the commun—the Italian community in, um, on Barton and Sherman was St. Anthony's.

VC: Right.

RM: There were probably, probab—you know, most of them were Italian. Up in the north end, it was All Souls.

VC: Yeah.

RM: Where Father [John F.] Bonomi was.

VC: Yeah.

RM: And, um, St. Anthony's always had their spaghetti supper, and, and stuff like that.

VC: Oh really? Even back then?

RM: Oh yeah, yes.

PM: Oh yeah.

RM: But St. Anthony's originally was on Clinton Street.

VC: Yes.

RM: Yes.

VC: Yes.

RM: And then of course they moved over to, to Barton Street, yeah.

VC: To the bigger... So, I hear that, that the Casa d'Italia, they also had language classes, they—

PM: Yes.

RM: Yeah.

VC: —they taught—

PM: And that's another thing.

RM: They had the Italian school.

PM: The It—the Italian girls, there was two of them, would come to our house, true story, and my father would pay them out of his own pocket.

RM: The teachers.

VC: To teach—

PM: My father paid the teachers out of his own pocket.

VC: Oh, wow.

PM: They would come to get their pay at our house. They were teaching the young people Italian at Casa—

RM: Saturday mornings.

PM: Yeah.

VC: On Saturday mornings?

RM: You'd have Italian school. [Nods]

VC: Oh, wow.

RM: Yeah.

VC: Okay.

PM: Yeah.

RM: Yeah, you had Italian school.

VC: And, um, did any of the, did any of the, um—I also heard that, that sometimes, uh, some of the, uh, the, the, the Italian Canadian, uh, children, uh, got free trips to Italy...from the Casa d'Italia. Is that true?

PM: They got what?

RM: Free trips.

VC: Free trips to Italy?

RM: Do you know anything about that? Free trips to Italy through the Casa d'Italia? [Asks PM] I don't think—I, I don't remember anything like that.

VC: No.

PM: No.

RM: No.

VC: Oh, okay.

PM: No.

RM: No. Could have been, but I don't know.

VC: Yeah.

RM: Yeah.

VC: So they had dances?

PM: Oh yeah.

RM: [Nods] Yeah.

VC: They had dances at the, at the Casa d'Italia?

RM: It was a social club.

PM: That's where we danced and—

RM: They had their weddings there.

PM: Weddings there, showers there.

RM: Yeah, oh yeah.

VC: Wow.

PM: Oh yeah.

RM: 'Cause there weren't many halls around.

VC: Yeah.

PM: [Unclear]

RM: There was the Polish hall.

PM: Yeah.

RM: And then there was, uh, uh, on Clinton Street where St. Anthony was, if you remember, downstairs they had the hall.

PM: Yeah.

VC: Yeah.

RM: And that's where you used to go for the weddings and stuff like that. Yeah.

VC: Right, right, right.

PM: Yeah.

RM: Until the big halls started to—

VC: Right.

PM: Yeah.

RM: —started to build up. Yeah, yeah.

VC: Oh well that's good.

[00:35:09]

RM: Oh yeah. And there was only one funeral home that everybody went to, and that was Dwyer's.

VC: Oh!

RM: Dwyer's was a funeral home, every Italian, everybody went to—'cause that was basically the only one around. And then Nick Friscolanti built Friscolanti's and then it just went from there.

PM: Yeah, that—now Friscolanti's.

VC: Yeah.

RM: Nick Friscolanti actually worked with my father at Wallace Barnes.

VC: Oh, I see.

RM: And he was, he was apprenticing, doing an apprenticeship at Dwyer's, and he used to kid him about what he was going to do, but... [Shrugs]

VC: [Laughs]

RM: He got the last laugh. Yeah. [Smiles]

VC: That's true. That's very true.

RM: But no, in those days, there was only the one funeral home, and that was Dwyer's.

VC: Yeah.

RM: Yeah, yeah. [Nods]

VC: Very good.

RM: [Camera zooms in] And in fact, when my mother got married—she may not have told you this story—but when they brought the ch—the chairs in—‘cause they got married out of the house—

PM: Oh yeah! [Laughs]

RM: —they drove up in a big black hearse, and they got all the chairs from Dwyer’s.

VC: [Laughs]

PM: Oh, the neighbourhood looked and wondered—

RM: ‘Cause that’s where—that’s whe—that was the only place you could get a lot of chairs.

PM: Oh, they couldn’t—

RM: You phoned the funeral home, and they delivered them in a big black hearse. [Smiles and nods]

PM: Yeah, yeah, oh, it was funny.

VC: [Laughs]

RM: Yeah, that’s true.

PM: The neighbours were looking, they said, “Oh my god,” you know.

RM: Somebody died.

PM: Did somebody die?

VC: [Unclear]

RM: But you used to have to borrow them from the, uh, yeah, from the funeral home.

PM: Oh no, it was great in those days.

RM: Yeah, yeah.

VC: Wow.

PM: Those days were great.

RM: Lots of fun, yeah, it was lots of fun.

PM: Lot of fun, a lot of good things to remember.

RM: And everybody—we all used to walk through the alley, and everybody had chickens. ‘Cause I can remember my Auntie Cia[?], she lived in Clinton Street, and I used to walk through the alley, and she’d give me four eggs, and I’d have to bring them home to my grandmother. [Holds hands flat out in front] You know, we’d have to, have to—everybody had chickens, you know.

VC: Yeah.

RM: And, um, you know, we did, did [unclear] tomatoes and there was no such thing as going to supermarkets or—

VC: Yeah.

RM: —you know, you had—the big place to get the meat was [unclear] and my grandfather would go there—

VC: Yeah.

RM: —and they'd buy the pork butts and make the homemade sausage, and, you know, it might make 300 pounds of sausage. It was a community affair, you know.

VC: Yeah.

RM: I mean, when you did tomatoes, it took a whole week, you know.

VC: Yeah.

RM: But it was a community affair, you know. And out of gardens, that everybody had, you fed a lot of people.

VC: Sure.

RM: You could feed a lot of people, you know.

VC: Sure.

RM: But that's were the days where the women stayed home, and—

VC: Yeah.

RM: —that's what they did. That's what they did. But I must say, um, there were a lot of women, had seven and eight children, and the thing was, they're—they had a program. In the morning, you, uh—who went off to school, um, you did your housework, d—uh, everybody got dressed up, you got cleaned up, and at one o'clock you went to *visita*.

VC: Right!

RM: And that's what people did.

VC: Okay.

RM: They would go visit.

PM: That's right.

RM: They would go visit. Sit in this one's kitchen, and then go visit this one's kitchen. And then it'd be 4:30, husband was coming home, gotta go home and gotta make supper. And that's—that was their regime.

VC: Yeah.

PM: That's right.

RM: But they only—they would have seven and eight kids.

VC: Yeah.

RM: But they had to go *visita*.

VC: Yeah.

RM: Yeah. [Nods]

PM: And then when we preserved tomatoes—

RM: Yeah, oh god.

VC: Yeah.

PM: —well, it was a party.

RM: It was a party, yeah.

VC: [Chuckles]

PM: A group would come to our house.

RM: It was funny.

PM: And peel the tomatoes and that.

RM: Drink, drink wine.

PM: And then drink wine.

RM: Yeah.

PM: And have a nice meal and then we'd come to your house and do the tomatoes at your house.

VC: [Laughs]

RM: Oh yeah.

PM: And then do the—that's the way it was.

RM: That's the way it was, yeah.

PM: It was great, just great.

RM: And the guys would cork the bottles, and we al-always preserved the tomatoes in beer bottles.

VC: Oh okay.

PM: Yeah.

RM: 'Cause of course we didn't have Mason jars. So I can remember as a kid, sitting there with this funnel and this wooden pummel, and pouring the t—and, you know, jumping down on the beer bottles. [Gestures to pounding on beer bottle]

PM: [Laughs]

RM: And you could only go so far, because when the guys capped them [mimics putting cap on bottle], if they were capped to close and the tomatoes were too close, they would go, pop. [Throws hands up in the air] So you had to be very careful how you—

PM: [Laughs]

RM: And I was only, like, yea high— [Gestures down low to indicate height]

PM: Oh!

RM: —but I had my own stool, and—but it was all beer bottles. It was always beer bottles.

VC: Wow.

RM: Yeah, we used to collect the beer bottles, and of course my grandfather, being a liquor salesman, we got all the beer bottles, you see.

VC: Wow.

RM: Yeah, yeah. [Nods]

VC: Good lord.

RM: Yeah. N—and they also used to do the wine in sometimes—

VC: Yeah.

RM: —the beer bottles. Yeah. [Nods]

VC: Yeah.

RM: Yeah, that was another thing, they all made their own homemade wine.

VC: Sure.

RM: None of this buying juice, you went—I mean I—in the early days, I don't remember—my grandfather would go to the farms, and we would have bushels of cantaloupe, bushels of—everything was bushels. There was none of this one or two or three, you know.

VC: Yeah.

RM: It was bushels. And four dozens of eggs. And everything was multi, you know, you never had—I mean, you know, you could have 15 coming in, and my grandmother could have a meal on.

VC: Yeah.

RM: You know, no problem. No problem whatsoever.

VC: Wow.

RM: Yeah. And they used to buy the pasta, I remember, in the big long cartons. [Gestures wide with hands] The big carton boxes of pasta, and every Italian always had three or four boxes of pasta. They used to get it from the wholesalers down in their basement. 'Cause if you starved, you always had pasta, pasta and tomato sauce.

VC: And, and who—where were the wholesalers?

RM: Oh, a lot of them were in Toronto.

VC: Okay.

RM: Yeah, they used to go to Pasquale's and Unico and places like that, yeah. [Nods]

VC: Oh.

RM: And of course, my grandfather, having the grocery store—

VC: Sure.

RM: Yeah.

VC: Would, um—

RM: And then, uh, like, I can remember also the detergent used to come in boxes, it was loose. And we used to have to bag it.

VC: Oh.

RM: We used to have to bag the—yeah, there was none of this fancy dancy-dancy packaging, it was all—we used to have to bag it.

VC: [Laughs]

RM: And I can remember as a kid, bagging the detergent in little bags that you could sell, you know, you're—you'd be—have to wear a mask almost.

VC: Sure.

RM: Because you were just being—I sneezed all the time, you know, but—

VC: Wow.

RM: Yeah. It was quite a, quite an atmosphere, yeah.

VC: Wow.

RM: There was none of this, give me six slices of anything.

PM: [Laughs]

VC: Yeah. [Laughs]

RM: Nobody bought six slices. And that—you bought three and four pounds, you didn't buy six slices. Plus everybody did their own prosciutto.

VC: Yeah.

RM: Everybody had a fruit cellar.

VC: Yeah.

RM: So you always had a lot of food.

VC: Yeah.

RM: My grandmother used to can peaches, pears, cherries.

VC: Yeah.

RM: You know, you always had fresh stuff, you always had fresh stuff. None of this going to the grocery store, buying a quart of this or—

VC: Yeah.

RM: —you-you'd never have that, no. [Shakes head]

VC: Right, right.

[00:40:53]

RM: You never had that, you know.

VC: Wow.

RM: Yeah. And I mean today we would look at it and go, that's a really hard way of doing things, but in those days that's what they did, and it was a fun thing.

VC: Yeah.

RM: And shopping was a social thing.

VC: Mm hmm.

RM: Shopping was a social thing. You went to the meat guy for your meat, you went to the egg guy for—you went to the market. So you went to the egg guy, you had the potato guy, you had this one who had the best, uh, *pomadores* [*sic*] and then you would barter with them, and yadda yadda yadda.

VC: [Laughs]

PM: [Laughs]

RM: Uh, I can remember a friend of mine, um, they had six kids in the family, and his father worked at Stelco, but his father could not speak very good English. And it was a fight among the kids; nobody wanted to go to the market with the father.

VC: With the father.

RM: 'Cause it was embarrassing. And he'd say, "Oh, no, it's your turn, it's your—" Okay, so he said, "Take me by the hand," I was like six years old, off to go to the market. So now we get in front of the basket of *pomadores* [sic], tomatoes. "How much you want for that basket of *pomadores* [sic]?" He'd say this in Italian. Fifty cents, or whatever. "Ah, too much, too much." Then we'd go to someplace else. "Oh," he said. I was dying, I'm—I was so embarrassed. And then we would come to somebody and he'd say, "Ah"—and in Italian, the father would say, "Ah," you know, [mumbles] he's a jackass, mean in Italian. [Unclear], you know.

VC: Mm.

RM: And the little boy would say—and he'd say, "Wh-what's your father saying?" "My father says you are a jackass." [Laughs]

VC: [Laughs]

PM: [Laughs]

RM: "What did I know?" He said, "I was six years old." You know.

VC: [Unclear]

RM: Yeah, yeah. And my father used to say, they used to go to, um, Levy[?] Brothers, which were on the corner of King and James.

VC: Mm hmm.

RM: And pay 25 cents a week or something to—when they bought a suit or something, you know.

VC: Wow.

RM: Yeah, yeah. [Nods and smiles]

VC: Good lord.

PM: Yeah.

RM: Yeah. That's when, that's when downtown Hamilton was—it had everything there.

VC: Yeah.

RM: It was, it was a cultural city.

VC: Yeah.

RM: You know, yeah. And everybody was dressed. [Holds finger up in the air]

VC: Yeah, yeah.

RM: On Sunday, when you walked—eh, Mom? [Looks to PM] When you walked down the street, the men were dressed, suits, ties.

VC: Yeah.

PM: Not like today.

RM: The women—not like today.

PM: Not like today.

VC: No.

RM: No way.

PM: My goodness.

RM: You never went to a funeral without being dressed.

VC: Yeah.

RM: You never went to sc—church unless you had a hat. [Gestures to head]

VC: Yeah.

RM: Yeah. [Nods]

VC: Wow.

RM: Oh yeah. But things have changed.

VC: I know. Things have changed.



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RM: Things have changed, yeah.

VC: Alright. Well, I think we're good.

NM: That's, that's good. Good stuff.

VC: That's good.

RM: Good.

VC: Thank you very much.

RM: You're very welcome.

[Fades out at 00:43:16]

[End of interview]