

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

DATE OF INTERVIEW: October 16, 2011

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Montreal, QC

NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: Giulietta Doganieri

NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Joyce Pillarella

NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER: Adriana Rinaldi

TRANSCRIBED BY: Lisa Kadey

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ABSTRACT

Giulietta Doganieri describes her life in Canada during the Second World War when her father, Nicola Doganieri, was interned. Nicola was interned for three years at Camp Petawawa, likely because of his involvement with a fascist organization. While Giulietta's father was interned, her mother cleaned houses to bring in an income. Aside from working hard to make ends meet, Giulietta's mother also had to take care of the children — two of whom were physically disabled. Giulietta once accompanied her mother to Petawawa to visit her father, although she does not remember many details of the trip, other than the joy of seeing her father again. While Nicola was in the camp, his three-year-old daughter, Anna, died. Like many other children of interned parents, Giulietta says that her father never spoke about his experiences, and that there was a taboo with the children asking questions. Giulietta also states that she didn't realize that her father was so important to the community and that he helped so many people, as her parents never talked about these activities. She was also unaware of the Italian newspaper that her father ran. Giulietta describes the deep feelings of shame she had around her father's internment, and her fear that he would be considered guilty, even though he was a good man who helped so many people.

INTERVIEW

GD: Giuletta Doganieri, interviewee

JP: Joyce Pillarella, interviewer

AR: Adriana Rinaldi, videographer

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 00:00:10]

JP: October 16th, 2011. I'm Joyce Pillarella, and I'm interviewing Giuletta Doganieri. Giuletta, you're the daughter of Nicola —

GD: Right.

JP: Doganieri.

GD: Yes.

JP: How many children were you in the family?

GD: Eleven altogether.

JP: And what happened to all eleven children?

GD: Uh, three of them, they were, um, paralyzed, three boys. And, uh, uh, like, four of them died already—

JP: Okay.

GD: —like, three boys and a girl. And, uh, that's what we're left after with, uh, eight children.

JP: Okay. And, uh, do you want to tell me about, uh, life at home when you were a little girl?

GD: Well, for me, it was really happy, because my father—I was the first girl in the family. F—
for him, it was really something, because he was always saying he had to adopt a girl, and then I
came. And I—all those year, I wondered if I wasn't adopted. That was funny.

JP: [Laughs]

GD: So, I was Daddy little girl, for sure. [Laughs]

JP: And then—and what was like, uh, life, uh, for you as a child?

GD: For me, it was happy.

JP: Yeah?

GD: Yeah, I had a happy life.

JP: The whole—uh there was always people, your brother Romano was saying—

GD: Yeah. Yeah, always people, family and friends, too. Yeah, always somebody.

JP: Did your parents entertain, uh, people at home also, or it was just—

GD: No, more, uh, if, uh, they would do something at the hall, like, my father used to do things, you know? And, uh, we use—I remember with my mother, I used to help her do the sandwiches and the, the meal for the night there, salads and everything, I remember that.

JP: You said “the hall”?

GD: Well, when you see, like, Casa D’Italia would make something, or I think it was Gentili (?) [unclear; 0:02:02.7]. They used to do, uh, or even [unclear; 0:02:05.9] when he was there. So, we—you used to do the food for them, for the night.

JP: And you used to prepare it and bring it over there?

GD: Yeah. I used to help my mother to do it.

JP: You must have had to help your mother with the household chores—

GD: Oh, yeah.

JP: Oh.

GD: Because they call me the second mother, yeah. Or the youngest boy in the family used to call me the second mother, because I was always taking care of the, the younger one, always, always.

JP: Your mother, uh, was working and taking care of—

GD: —the family.

JP: —all the children.

GD: Yeah, yeah.

JP: That's incredible.

GD: Yeah.

JP: Did she work every day, or did she work so many times a week?

GD: Uh, she works, uh, almost every day of the week. Not weekends, because you—before Saturday and Sunday, uh, people didn't used to work. And I know one of my cousins come—came to babysit, too, she was telling me. Because sometimes she didn't have nobody to, uh, stay home with the other kids, so she used to come and babysit us while she was doing the cleaning.

JP: All the children were born in Canada?

GD: All of them.

JP: So, your father came here—he was married here?

GD: He was married in his twenty—I think twenty—if I am, uh, me, I have the date, it—w—he was 24 years old when he got married.

JP: And he was already in Canada?

GD: Yeah. He was born 1903, but from...1903—apparently at three years old, he left Italy with his mother. Uh, from Naples, they took the boat. Naples and then to New York. But after that, I don't know. I don't know when they came to Canada or nothing, that's what I'm finding out right now. I'm doing all the papers and everything to find out when he came in Canada.

JP: And your mother?

GD: My mother was born in Montreal.

JP: Oh, she was?

GD: Yeah.

JP: Italian?

GD: Yeah, Italian, too. Uh, she used to speak to us French, and my father, Italian, and we had to answer my father in Italian. That was a must.

JP: Oh, he wanted you to learn Italian?

GD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Which, we don't regret it today. [Laughs]

JP: And your mother, why would she speak French to you?

GD: Because my mother, she wanted to speak French so we'll learn the language, but—and she didn't have an accent, nothing, my mother speak good, uh, French. And my father wanted us to learn both languages at the same time, so.

JP: And how's—um, at home, like you said, you spoke Italian with your father, what made your house feel, uh, Italian?

GD: Well, everything was Italian. It's like, uh, not just the food, but everything. Everything we're doing, like, if it was holidays or something, was something really—we plan always Italian, an Italian feast.

JP: Did you go to, uh, church as a little girl?

GD: Yes, yes.

JP: Which church did you go—

GD: Was, uh, Notre Dame um della Difesa. That was on Dante Street.

JP: Yeah.

GD: Yeah.

JP: And, uh, did you participate as, uh—in a Communion—

GD: Yeah, I used to be in the procession, that's why my brother, he doesn't remember, I used to be dressed with my Communion dress, and, uh, go with procession, that I remember. Every year, it used to be, I think was at St. Mary something, one of the saint. And we, we had to get dressed and be in line with everybody.

JP: And did you participate in any other, uh, religious feasts?

GD: No.

JP: That was it?

GD: Mm-hm. Oh, no, it's true. I used to sing, uh, at the church, too, on Sunday with the class.

JP: You went to that school next door to—

GD: Yeah.

JP: —the church, right?

GD: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just there, next door.

JP: So, you were—you went to school and—were they—they were doing the trilingual program, they were—

GD: —Yeah, they were, they—yeah, yeah. Uh, they used to teach Italian in the morning, French, and then up to, I think, the fourth or fifth grade, we'd start, like, half a day English, and then French.

JP: And for you, what, what did you consider yourself when you were a little girl? Canadian, Italian, or both?

GD: Italian-Canadian. I'm always—I was always saying I was Italian-Canadian. Never I would say (laughs) I from Quebec. I'm a Canadian.

JP: Yeah.

GD: You know?

JP: Was there, um, any racism or any remarks with other kids when you were a young girl?

GD: Not really.

JP: Everybody, everybody seemed to get along?

GD: Mm, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

JP: When you were a little girl, uh, before your father was interned, what street did you live on?

GD: Uh, before it was, on Alexandra, I—and then it was Basile Routhier (?), that was the street.

JP: So, up until that time, um, in the 30s...life was just regular—your father was working. I mean, he had all these children.

GD: Yeah.

JP: They were all born before 1940.

GD: Mm-hm.

JP: All chil—all the, all the—

GD: No, some of them after. No, no.

JP: Oh, some them after?

GD: When he came back, there was, uh, two after—three after, that were born after, when he came back.

JP: Okay.

GD: Yeah.

JP: And, um, your mother was helping out in terms of—

GD: —the cleaning.

JP: —Yeah. The—

GD: And she used to do cleanings, uh, other houses that stood away or from—she used to work for my uncle, and, um, that was the—we used to call him 'Uncle', it was our cousin, really. So, she used to go and clean there.

JP: Did you know that your father did, uh, *Il Diario Italo-Canadese*—

GD: —No—

JP: —That he published this newspaper?

GD: I was so proud, though. [Laughs] Such a surprise. Such good souvenir. [Crying]

JP: He did a lot, eh?

GD: [Nodding] Sorry. Yeah, I knew he did a lot of helping, but, uh, I didn't know at this point.

[Crying]

JP: It's okay.

GD: I'm so proud.

[Fades out at 0:08:16.9]

[Fades in at 0:08:18.2]

JP: 1939, 1940 that we're talking about here.

GD: Yeah. I learned that he was an important man, and he never showed it, never told us nothing about it. I knew he was helping a lot of people, that I knew about it. Up to that point, no. Because he never s—he didn't say nothing about it. Even in the house, even my mother never—nobody talked about it.

JP: So, it's kind of strange, because now, having seen and read some things about how he was helping people in uh, Italian colony, and going back and reflecting on your childhood, the man that was in the house, your father, does it match to what you see in the news—do you—

GD: No.

JP: —like, the private person I guess this is what I'm—

GD: —Yeah, yeah—

JP: —asking you.

GD: Mm-hm.

JP: Does it match the public person that he was?

GD: It does.

JP: It does?

GD: It does now, yeah. For me, he was always an important man for me, and the—I could see with the other people, too, the way he used to act with the other people. For me, yeah, I remember the—that's the way it should have been, like, you know for him, it's like—

JP: —Do you remember that, um, from people who would come to your house, in terms of how they treated him, or how they looked up to him or how they—people coming for help? Do you remember any of those type of interactions?

GD: I remember people used to come either to have some papers signed or something, you know, that they needed for something, he was always there for them.

JP: And I guess this explains what he was doing?

GD: Yeah, yeah. Now I know what he was doing, because at the time we didn't know.

JP: Giulietta, it's unbelievable how your father did so much, and he kept it from his children.

GD: Yeah. [Nods] Nobody knew about it—

JP: —'Cause it was all good, that he was doing.

GD: Yeah, yeah. I knew he was doing good, because a lot of people, they would come home and, uh, needed help, and he was there all—always ready to help the people, you know? But up to that point, we didn't know.

JP: I mean, he was, he was really championing for the underdog.

GD: Yeah, yeah.

JP: And the community, and trying to get people what they, uh, deserved—

GD: Mm, mm. Mm.

JP: —whether it was money from the government,—

GD: Yeah.

JP: —assistance.

GD: Because I'm surprised, because his mother died, he was young. Apparently he was—my mother was saying he was a baby. Up to what year did she die, I don't know. So, he was like, by himself. And the father wa—used to live in New Brunswick, so I don't know where my father was, like, in between. So, that's what I'm trying to find out today, you know what happened.

JP: When your father was arrested, what do you remember from that day?

GD: Me, I don't remember. So, I was about four years old, then. I don't re—but I remember that they did arrest him, and I was crying all the time, because I wanted to see him. And, uh, we didn't know where he was, and, uh, after when they said he was arrested, I couldn't understand why. For me, it didn't—he wasn't doing nothing wrong, but then I was young, you know?

JP: It must have affected you quite emotionally, too, because you were just saying how you were Daddy's little girl—

GD: —Yeah, yeah, yeah—

JP: —You were the first girl in your family.

GD: Yeah.

JP: And your father was really looking forward to—

GD: Mm-hm.

JP: —having a girl. You came by, and then all of a sudden, they pulled your Daddy away.

GD: Yeah, yeah. For me, it was really hard. I took it hard, really.

JP: You weren't even in school yet?

GD: No. I wasn't in school. But then when I started school, I remember that I had to do my First Communion. And, uh, I refused. I said no, I wanna wait when my father comes back. So, I waited for my father to come back to do it. That's why two other brothers did it—and I did it the same time as the other one that were younger. I wanted him to be there. That's how much I wanted my father to be there with me.

JP: That's true, because at that age, at a young age, that was your most important—

GD: Yeah, sure.

JP: —public occasion—

GD: Yeah, yeah.

JP: —that marks a young girl's life, was the first Communion.

GD: Mm.

JP: The nuns were okay with that?

GD: Yeah. I guess they under—understood, too, because I wasn't the only one, maybe, I don't know. But, me, no, I refused not to do it.

JP: That would have been what, grade two at the time?

GD: I was grade one at the time.

JP: Grade one... And when you refused to do it, do you remember at school ever talking about it with any girlfriends as to why you refused?

GD: No. No, no. Nobody [unclear; 0:13:07.4]—

JP: —Nobody asked anything?

GD: Nothing, nothing. Nothing, nobody talks about it, no.

JP: That's so common at that time, and yet it's so hard for us, in the year 2011, to understand why people were always silent.

GD: Mm.

JP: How do you ex—

GD: —But you know the—me, uh, I would explain it. Even up to before I talked to you, before I met you, I was ashamed. I was ashamed—talk about it. [Crying] Because the people I thought, you know, people thought he was bad, and for me was a good man, he wasn't bad. Even to my kids, they want to talk about it—

JP: And you didn't.

GD: [Crying] ...It's like I wanted to forget that never happened. But it did happen... And so that was—I were—I used to hear, you know, that they was talking about them, the fascists and everything. I didn't want to hear it. It's like I couldn't believe, you know, I couldn't believe what happened.

JP: So, even when—you kind of did the same thing, because your kids—you, you couldn't bring yourself to bri—to talk—

GD: —The kids, never told them, I was ashamed. It's like—

JP: —How do you define shame? It was shame of what?

GD: —Well, because they thought he was guilty. You know, not, not my kids, but I mean, you know, they were—

JP: —The government—

GD: —like the government, yeah, like, they were—you know, prove them, [Wipes eyes] that they were guilty when they arrest them and everything.

[0:15:00.0]

JP: So, it was—the shame is really like a shame of feeling that you did something wrong?

GD: Well, it's like my father did something wrong, but I knew he did nothing wrong. But for me, it's like I didn't want to talk about it. It was something I couldn't talk about it.

JP: Is it like a sh—um, feeling like you were going to be misjudged?

GD: Yeah.... [Nods] Yeah. You know, I'm sure the other one of the family too felt like that, I don't think I'm the only one.

JP: When your father came back, did you have questions for him?

GD: No, because we, we wouldn't talk about nothing. He came back, I was happy to see him, and everything. It was really something for us, for him to be there, you know, after three years. No, we never talk about nothing. And him, too, he never said nothing about it.

JP: As time went on, because you were still a little girl when he came back—

GD: Yeah, yeah.

JP: —in 1943.

GD: 1943, so yeah, I was, uh, seven years old, then.

JP: Okay, so you were still a little girl.

GD: Yeah.

JP: And then how do you understand? It was—a seven year old girl is just happy to have Papa home.

GD: Yeah.

JP: When you got older, did you ever have questions in your mind?

GD: Yes, I did. But you would never ask.

JP: Okay. I'm trying to understand, because this seems to be really common. What blocked you from asking?

GD: Well, since him, he didn't want to talk about it, it kept us from asking question about it, because he never talked about it.

JP: So, his silence made—

GD: —His silence—

JP: —made it seem like it was taboo?

GD: Yeah.

JP: Like, it was not a topic you bring up?

GD: That's it, no, because he never, never...never talked about it—

JP: —Would you ever—did you ever go to your mother to ask questions about your father?

GD: Never... [Pause] Never. Even, even my brothers, the one I talked to, the same thing. It's like, uh, nobody talked about it.

JP: So, even amongst the family, amongst the siblings?

GD: No. [Shakes head]

JP: Did one of the kids die while he was in camp? Or something like that?

GD: Uh, um, it was—the little girl, Anna, she was three years old. She died.

JP: —While your—while Nicola,—

GD: —Yeah, yeah—

JP: —your father was in camp?

GD: Yeah, yeah.

JP: That must have been awful.

GD: I remember, because before, they used to expose them, you know, in the house, eh? And it was in the living room then. We used to be on Clarke Street at the time, and it was not a big house. [Says laughing] It was a small house. And, uh...I couldn't take it, me, to have her in the house there, you know? It's like—I took it really bad to see my sister there. You had them in the living room in the house there. But at the time, it was like that.

JP: How old was Anna when she died?

GD: Three years old.

JP: [Pause] And your father was—I mean, I understand—

GD: —My, my parents—

JP: —you don't know, but your father obviously was not able to—

GD: —No, he wasn't able, but I don't know if he did write to my mother with—I don't know if he would have wrote something for us, I guess my mother would have tell us, I don't know.

JP: Your mother must have told him by mail that, uh—

GD: —Yeah—

JP: —one of his daughters died. [Pause] And you had your sister in the house. How long would they expose the body in the house usually?

GD: I, I think at least three—at that time, at least three, four days, at least.

JP: In the house?

GD: In the house. Be—because people used to come to the house and—

JP: Right. It's a long time.

GD: Yeah.

JP: Yeah, 'cause you have your, your sister's body in the house—

GD: —Yeah, and I remember like it was yesterday, you know? I still see her there. It's like, uh...

JP: You, you mentioned that was on Clarke Street.

GD: Yeah.

JP: You were on Alexander Street before?

GD: And then Basile Routhier.

JP: Okay. Did your mother have to also—the family, did they have to move—

GD: Well, for—

JP: —while your father was interned?

GD: Uh, I think that, uh—no. I think they arrest him on Basile Routhier. And after, went Clarke, Clarke.

JP: While he was at the, uh, camp?

GD: Yeah. Then we were on Clarke Street.

JP: Your brother, Romano, was saying how the house was very big. You went to a smaller house?

GD: Meanwhile, yeah, the m—the one big was—must have been Basile Routhier, he was saying. But the one on Clarke Street, we had uh, a living room, room, another room here in the back, kitchen, and that's it. That was all—how big it was. Small house. It's still there. I pass by sometime and I'll look at it.

JP: And were—well, three children, you said, were born after—

GD: —We were six, and after, some of them were born after.

JP: Right.

GD: We stayed there 'til—then we move up to, uh...more near Papineau Street (Avenue) and Zotique Street (St. Zotique E Street) after we moved there.

JP: Did the move have anything to do with the fact that your father was interned, and there was no money coming in to the—

GD: —No, because my father was doing pretty good, after. He was working, like, seven days a week. Even—

JP: —No, but I'm saying, when he was interned—

GD: —No, he was interned he th—yeah. No, it was better after.

JP: But did you have to move because it was less—because your, your father was interned and it was [unclear; 0:20:48.8]—

GD: —No, no, no, no, no, no. It was because he wanted a bigger house for the family.

JP: Oh, but the Clarke Street house, I'm talking about.

GD: Yeah, yeah, yeah. The Clarke Street house, from there we moved.

JP: Okay, okay.

GD: Because he wanted a bigger room for the family. It was too small.

JP: Okay, so the bigger home is where you were during the internment period?

GD: That was when my brother—and after we moved to Clarke Street, when he was there. And after from there, we moved again when he came back.

JP: [Pause] Wow. [Pause] And while your father was interned, do you remember what it was like in the family for your mother?

GD: I know it wasn't easy for her, for sure, you know. So—but she went—she worked hard at it. We always had something to eat. Ah, [chuckles] most of the time, it was always almost the same thing.

JP: —You would—

GD: —But we're eating. It was bean and pasta and, uh, maybe once a week a bit of meat, if we had some. If not, well—

JP: Pasta [unclear; 0:21:55.2]—

GD: —That's it. [Laughter] We were so happy with it, it's like, yeah.

JP: And what happened to the money that your father had? Was it frozen, do you know?

GD: [Throws hands in the air, shaking head] Blows lips.

JP: Did you ever find out afterwards?

GD: [Shakes head] Never.

JP: 'Cause your brother tells us the business stopped, the javel business.

GD: Yeah.

JP: The newspaper stopped.

GD: Mm.

JP: Although I doubt very—I don't think he was doing that to make money, because it was—

GD: —No, the way he was, uh, going around—

JP: —He was probably lucky to cover his costs—

GD: —Mm-hm, mm-hm—

JP: —I don't think that was a—

GD: —Mm—

JP: —That wasn't a, a lucrative, uh—

GD: —No—

JP: —venture—

GD: I remember my father making money when he used to be in insurance.

JP: That—which was afterwards.

GD: [Nods] Yeah.

JP: And so all these years after—when your father came back, you knew instinctively, I can say, that it wasn't a topic to talk about?

GD: Yeah. No. [Sahkes head]

JP: And then right—and then so, you just seemed to pass that on to your kids?

GD: Yeah.

JP: You just knew?

GD: I was telling you, I was ashamed to talk about it, because everybody thought that they were guilty, you know. They took him in, and thought did something wrong. And that's not the way I remember him.

[Fades out at 0:23:13.1]

[Fades in at 0:23:14.4]

JP: You have a story about the Communion dress, too?

GD: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Uh, we didn't have an—...a lot of money at the time, and, um, I remember that, uh, I wanted a white dress. I wanted to be dressed like the others with new clothes. And, uh, a lady, which I don't know who it is, I was young, she dressed...my two brothers and myself in all new clothes, the shoes and everything. And later on, what I did, I wanted to dress a little girl for Communion at the—you know, to—and I remember that I told that to my mother. And she said, "Oh," she said, "I want to buy your shoes." I said, "Okay." So, I buy—so we dressed a little girl that, uh—

JP: You didn't have the money to do it?

GD: Well, my parents didn't have the money to do it at the same time.

JP: No, the girl, I'm saying.

GD: No, that's it. The mother was, uh, by herself with the daughter, and, uh...

JP: So, you gave back—

GD: —Yeah, yeah, yeah. I always said that I'm going to give back one day to somebody. And I had to do it, it's like a...

JP: Do you think there were [unclear; 0:24:31.0] acts of, uh, kindness at that time, or—'cause your brother was saying, like, people were also scared and they stayed away.

GD: No, not—no. I mean, he was a bit older maybe, at, at his school, maybe, but I didn't feel that. I didn't feel that.

JP: Do you think a reason, uh—how do you explain your mother not talking about your father's internment to you while he was at the camp?

GD: Well, maybe she was told not to say nothing. That's what I'm thinking. And maybe him, too, he was told not to say nothing about it while he was there. So, that's why I think that we never talked about nothing.

JP: Why do you think there was a cover-up, if there was? If there was, 'cause, like, we were—we don't know, but how—why do you think they would have covered it up? What were they covering up?

GD: You mean not to talk about it?

JP: Yeah.

GD: Well, maybe they were told not to say nothing, I—I don't know. It's like maybe they thought there would be more trouble if they would talk about something. They must have been scared, too.

JP: Yeah. And those pictures you were showing me—

GD: —Yeah—

JP: —of the, uh, get-togethers, the family get-togethers—

GD: —Mm-hm—

JP: —and, uh, you also had the picture on, uh, on Dante Street (?).

GD: Yeah.

JP: Were there other, uh, souvenirs that—of photographs, like, these were the only few things that were left from your dad?

GD: Yeah. I don't have nothing, and that's all I have. It's too bad, because I don't have much. He must have—he must have had a lot of picture, but I don't know where they went.

JP: Yeah, if he had the newspaper, he may have had —

GD: Oh for sure, but—if—because him, he used to keep everything, you know. He used to be proud of his stuff, what he was doing. And I was surprised that I don't have nothing. The thing that, uh, that I showed you, the thing that my mother had in her things when she died—and I took everything, because I wanted to take all the picture and everything—

JP: —Mm-hm—

GD: —for the family. And, uh, then, uh—what I did, I made doubles for the brothers and give it to them, but, uh...

JP: Maybe the, the RCMP took everything when they, um—

GD: —Maybe—

JP: —Searching.

GD: Yeah. That's what they're saying, but I don't know. It's, uh—no, I think, after, when he was older, when he was in the intern, should have kept all his things there. I don't think they would take his stuff after. I think this, yes, maybe.

JP: Yeah.

GD: You know? But after that—

JP: And your father, did, did you—you remember him having a uniform at home? A [unclear; 0:27:24.3] shirt?

GD: I remember he had a uniform with his boots and the, the pants there.

JP: The—

GD: —The tight, like, a [unclear; 0:27:30.6] [Gesturing]—

JP: —A [unclear; 0:27:31.7]—

GD: —Yeah, yeah. I don't know what you call those pants. And I remember—

JP: [unclear; 0:27:35.0]

GD: And he used to wear, like, a hat.

JP: A fez.

GD: Yeah, that I remember.

JP: So, he did have the fez, he had the [unclear; 0:27:43.5] —

GD: —Yeah, I remember. I may see him going away at night—some night with it. Yeah. That I remember.

JP: So, then he was most likely a member of some fascist organization.

GD: Yeah, he was, he was.

JP: But it's interesting, 'cause reading through, through the, uh—his commentary in the newspaper, uh—he was also very critical of the organizations at the same time.

GD: Mm-hm [Nods]

JP: Uh, and pointing out things that they should be doing for the community where they may have slacked off. So, despite the fact that he was a member of a *fascio*, if we're to judge that—

GD: —Mm-hm—

JP: —I mean, we would guess by his uniform, he was also very objective about it, it seems.
Because he does—

GD: —Yeah, he does talk about it, yeah.—

JP: —point out the shortcomings and they're not doing this—

GD: —Mm-hm, yeah, mm-hm—

JP: —and they could be helping these people—

GD:—Yeah, yeah, yeah—

JP: —So, he wasn't, uh—he was very open-minded, your father.

GD: Yeah, yeah, he was. Even with us there, he was. He wanted us to have a trade; he wanted us to do good. And I remember, I, I wanted to quit school at 13, and uh he was saying, "You're not quitting school at 13." I said, "I don't want to go to school anymore." So, that's why he paid me, like my brother, courses, to go to a school, which I had to learn how to sew, how to cook and everything and doing all kinds of stuff. He said, "No, you won't be starting before 16 if you want to go to work." And that's—[Laughs] And I said—

JP: —So, he put education first for you?

GD: My father, yeah, for everybody, for all the family. We weren't rich, and even my brothers, they used to play instrument. My father used to pay everything at the time. We didn't have that much money, but for him, that was important, see? We were lucky. That's what my kids are telling me, you know, "You were lucky at the time," because the parents didn't used to think like that at the time.

JP: No. And what was it like for a woman at that time, a young girl when—in terms of courtship and getting married, was it difficult or—

GD: [Laughs softly]

JP: —how did a girl [unclear; 0:29:51.6]—

GD: Well, I have to tell you, my father with me, there. It was really difficult, really, really difficult. I couldn't wear lipstick. I couldn't wear Cutex. I couldn't do—I couldn't talk to the boys.

[0:30:00.0]

JP: —And that you couldn't wear—

GD: —Talk—Cu—even Cutex. [Gestures as if painting on nail polish].

JP: Oh, okay.

GD: And couldn't talk to the boys. I was 16, then. It's like, uh, oh my God. [Laughs] I was the first girl, eh? [Laughs] Oh boy.

JP: So, how would you—how would girls that were 16 years old, how would they meet boys?

GD: Well, usually it would be, like, neighbours, you know, like that. But, um, no, I didn't go out really before 18 years old, really, really. Not before 18.

[Fades out at 0:30:36.9]

[Fades in at 0:30:38.1]

JP: How did you feel afterwards? Time goes by, and you, you're, you're hearing about this thing, and you're hearing that your father was considered, uh, an enemy alien to Canada, the arrest...

GD: You know—

JP: —What do you think they should have done?

GD: They should have done, I think—they had to make sure that he was doing something wrong first, you know? If, yeah, they had proof that he was doing something wrong, yeah, arrest him. But they didn't have no proof, and he was—he wasn't the only one that they arrest, you know?

JP: Do you think simply being a member of an Italian organization in Montreal—

GD: [Says softly] —Yeah—

JP: —that was under the fascist umbrella, do you think that was enough cause?

GD: Yes.

JP: To be arrested? That's—no, but do you think that was valid is what I'm saying?—

GD: —No, no, it wasn't. I don't think it was valid, but for them, it—like—

JP: —For the police—

GD: —Yeah. Because they—and what—me, I remember when I was younger, when he used to be with the fascists there, they were helping people, that's all I remember.

JP: They were what?

GD: Helping people. I don't remember, uh, hearing that they were doing bad things, you know?

JP: That's interesting, like, helping people in terms of what?—

GD: —Yeah—

JP: —Because you're talking like, the 1930s, it was the Great Depression.

GD: Yeah—

JP: So—

GD: —But after, he was still helping family and everybody—

JP: —He would help the families—

GD: —somebody in the need, yeah.

JP: —who needed, uh—

GD: —Yeah—

JP: —food—

GD: —Food and some—yeah, they used to help them. So, that's why I can't understand why....

JP: They were looking after the Italian colony.

GD: Yeah, yeah.

JP: That's what—how you remember it? And afterwards, did your father get together with friends, like, that would come over and maybe your father would say, "Oh, yeah, I was at the internment camp with him"?

GD: Never.

JP: He would never say anything like that?

GD: Never, never, never.

JP: So, whether they were or weren't, you didn't know?

GD: Never, no.

JP: Whether they were, because he didn't mention it.

GD: No.

JP: And you don't remember stories?—

GD: —The only I'm—I remember is Camillien [Camillien Houde] because I went to see him.

That, you know, that's the only one I remember.

JP: You went to his house?

GD: I—we used to go to his house, and I went to see him with my mother, by car, I remember it was winter.

JP: —Oh, you went to Petawawa?!

GD: I went with Madame Houde, too, at the same time.

JP: Do you want to tell us about that, how old you were and what happened?

GD: [Exhales] I don't know, the first—

JP: That would have been, what, '41, maybe? Or '40?

GD: About the '40, I think, '41, something like that—

JP: —Oh was it cold or was it warm?

GD: It was cold, it was winter.

JP: So, it would have been winter of 1940—early '41, somewhere there.

GD: I'm sure it's Peta—Petawawa, that we went. And—

JP: —Yes, it would have been. [unclear; 0:33:22.5]

GD: And that's where I went. It was winter, I remember. Went by car with the wife of Camillien Houde, and the only one going with them was me, because my father wanted to see me, and I wanted to see my father so bad, that they—she—they brought me with them. And I remember Madame Houde covering me with a blanket, because I was cold. Then when we got there, my father was sitting, Camillien Houde was beside him, and I s—I know my father was so happy, I sat, I sat on his laps, and, uh, so happy to see him. I remember like it was yesterday. For me, it was a treat, and I was lucky to go and see him. I was like, the only one in the family. It's like—

JP: —How old—um, no, sorry, how long were you able to stay with your father?

GD: I think about an hour, if I remember, about an hour. I know we didn't stay that long. And he was sitting, like, uh, on a bench or a chair, and, uh, it—we weren't private there, because everybody was sitting down.

JP: And in that room, was it, was it a, a barrack?

GD: Yeah, it's something like a barrack, yeah, yeah.

JP: A barrack? And, so you were there, your mother—

GD: —yeah, and Madame Houde—

JP: —and your father. Uh, Camillien Houde and his wife.

GD: And his wife, the wife.

JP: They were sitting in the same room?

GD: Yeah, yeah.

JP: Were there soldiers around, do you remember, as a little girl?

GD: I don't remember, I don't remember.

JP: No, I'm sure you don't—

GD: —Yeah, no, I saw my father, that's it. [Laughs]—

JP: —because you would have been so happy just to see your father. That was the only person in the room for you.

GD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

JP: And your father—so, you were, you were able to touch your dad.

GD: Yeah, I was sitting on—yeah, yeah. Because some people, there was, I don't know, was—some people may—they say they couldn't see their parents.

JP: That's right.

GD: Like, my brother said, they couldn't—they weren't allowed. Yeah, I went. It's like—him, he doesn't remember, he doesn't know that I went, but me, I remember like it was yesterday.

JP: —And in the car, on the way der—there, did your mother prepare you in any way?

GD: No.

JP: She said nothing to you?

GD: The—just I knew that I was going to see my father. And that's it. Nothing.

JP: She didn't say, you're—he's going to be in a uniform, maybe?

GD: No, nothing.

JP: Nothing, eh? Did you know where you were going at the time?

GD: I knew I was going to see my father.

JP: You did know where it was?

GD: No, no.

JP: You didn't know it was a, an internment camp?

GD: Uh, I knew he was in an internment camp, I knew it.

JP: But then again, what does a seven year old know about an internment camp?

GD: Well—

JP: —Right?

GD: Yeah, I was happy to see him, who cares where he is? It's like— [Laughter]

JP: And Mrs. Houde, uh, drove the car?

GD: No, she had the driver.

JP: She had a driver.

GD: Yeah, we were sitting in the back. She had a driver.

JP: That was a long drive for an hour.

GD: Yeah, and you know when I was—now, today, that we pass by, I said boy, I thought it was more far at the time than today. It's like, seems so far away.

JP: That's a long drive to Petawawa from Montreal.

GD: Mm-hm, mm.

JP: And then you drove back.

GD: Yeah.

JP: [Whistles softly] [Pause] Wow—Did your father bring anything back from the camp?

GD: Yeah, he brought us, um—I think to everybody. He brought us either a small, uh, jewelry box or some art that he made out of wood. He brought us that.

JP: You don't even know if he worked while he was at the camp?

GD: [Shakes head] No.

JP: And when you saw this picture with your dad [Hands GD an old photo]

GD: Oh, my God. When I saw this picture with my dad, and when I saw the newspaper, really, my husband was reading the newspaper, he said, "I think there's a picture, it looks like your father." I said, "Are you sure?" He said, "I don't know, it looks like him." I was looking at him, and I went close and close again, I said, "This is my father." I couldn't believe it. I was so excited. I said, "Boy, this is my father! That's him! I'm sure it's him there!" [Laughs]

JP: That's crazy, eh?

GD: Yeah [Hands photo back to JP]

JP: In the year 2011, to see your father in the newspaper.

GD: Ohh, I can't—I couldn't believe it, it's like, uh—I've been—I've been waiting so long that somebody would talk about it, and to let everybody know that they were good people, you know? And when I saw—and then when I saw your name, and ev—you know, everything I was reading, and I said, "Oh my God." Because we used to have small pieces of paper, you know, that—in *The Gazette*, the whole page on that, never saw it. I saw you on TV, and I was looking for you, and I was saying, "Who's that woman on *Global*? I saw her," I said, "And she talked about, she went there, where they were, there's nothing anymore." I said to—and then you told me, "That was me." I said, "Oh my God."

JP: So—

GD: I said, "I was been looking for you—"

JP: —For years. I've been looking for you for years!

GD: Oh boy.

JP: This was the newspapers, I've been wanting to give them to you, isn't that strange?!

GD: [Laughs] Oh yeah.

JP: We've been looking for each other for years!

GD: And if it wouldn't be for my son, I wouldn't be here today.

JP: Yeah.

GD: It's like, you know. I said, "Oh, do I get—" He said, "Ma" —didn't say nothing, went home. Phoned me, "Ma," they day after, "Guess who I'm on the phone?" I said, "Who?" "Joyce." I said, "What?" [Laughter]

JP: I was thrilled. I was thrilled to talk to you.

GD: Oh boy.

JP: So, now, that's curious, because, like you said, you didn't speak about it—

GD: —Mm—

JP: —up until this point, and then, seeing it in the newspaper had an affect on you. It—

GD: —Yeah, because everything came back, like, you know. It had an affect on me, and I was happy.

JP: So, it changed—the fact that it was public—

GD: —Yeah, I was, I was relieved like, okay, something's going to be done about it. Now, they're going to tell the truth, you know, and he's going to be innocent after all those years, you know? That the people thought that he was guilty.

JP: It's interesting, eh, when, when the story went public. The difference

GD: The difference that make to people, me, I—

JP: —family.

GD: Yeah, me, I was so relieved when I read that. I said, “Oh, it’s about time.” Saying to myself, “Oh, it’s about time somebody’s doing something about it.”

JP: It’s the kind of story that, because it was quiet—

GD: —Yeah.

JP: Could we say, like, it actually brought more pain, or it just covered the pain, or—for families?

GD: Why? Like, I’m telling me, I—it’s covered the pain the same time, like, I think most of us were ashamed of it. It’s like, you know, they think your father was guilty of something, that, uh, you didn’t believe that. Me, I never believed that, you know, that he was guilty of something, so—

JP: And I guess a discussion of it in a public way removes that shame.

GD: Mm. And it gives people a chance to talk about it. What they keep as regret—

JP: —Is it the same effect, like, right now you’re sitting here and you’re talking about it, and you’re the one who’s forming the archive and the history, and it’s being told through your eyes, is that, is that the—how is that different from when you just read about it where it’s being told by people who do research or history?

GD: It’s not the same thing, because now I know that something’s going to be done about it.

JP: What do you want to see done?

GD: That, uh [Pause] to know the people that—remember the—everybody that's going to read about it, you know, that they gonna believe that they were innocent, you know? That's why I want my father to be recognized, he was innocent.

[Fades out at 0:41:21.9]

[Fades in at 0:41:23.6]

JP: That's incredible, though, how your father's generation, the men—

GD: —Mm—

JP: —who were interned, the children like yourself, were able to move on—

GD: —Mm—

JP: —in their own ways.

GD: Yeah.

JP: And remarkably, not hold these grudges, like you were saying.

GD: Mm-hm.

JP: Many kept the pain inside.

GD: Yeah.

JP: That's really remarkable. What do you—how do you attribute to the fact that the, the—these families have been able to just say, “You know what? We're moving ahead, we're going on, we're going to better ourselves, our children.”

GD: Yeah, that's it. But the, uh, you know, I have to tell you that, uh, like, my father always wanted us to get ahead and do good things, and that's what I want to do for my children. I was always in the back of them, always following them, whatever they were doing. And I think that comes from him, what I was doing.

JP: But they were able to accept—like, your father, on one hand, if we look at even the, um, the copy of the paper that you have in front of you, there's the [Says laughing] British flag—

GD: —Yeah—

JP: —and he's covering the story of when Queen Elizabeth came here to Montreal. So, he's honouring, if you will, um, the British presence in Canada—

GD: —Yeah, yeah, it's something.—

JP: —at the time, and at the same time, he was able to don his, his uniform.

GD: Mm.

JP: So, I'm taking that, that he was able to have a certain respect for the, the British government—

GD: Mm.

JP: —and, uh, the Queen, but at the same time, respect Italy. Like, he was able to, uh, honour both.

GD: Yeah.

JP: Am I wrong, or?—

GD: —No, no. That was my father, for sure.

JP: So, they didn't, they didn't—they came out of it, and they still moved on, and they still—like, your dad, like you said, he went in to work, he didn't talk about it, he—

GD: —That's it—

JP: —picked himself up, he lost his javel business, he lost his publishing business and he went to work in insurance.

GD: Yeah.

JP: He stayed quiet about it, your mother stayed quiet about it.

GD: And my father, the same time, the insurance, they used to have the people coming from Italy at the same time. He was doing everything at the same time. Not just the insurance.

JP: How were the relations with the new immigrants that came after World War II, and the older ones that were already here like yourself? Older, maybe, is an incorrect word to use. The first group versus the second group. How did you—how were the relationships between the new ones and the original immigrants?

GD: Oh, I think it was good for us. It was good. Yeah.

JP: Was it easy to make friends with the new people, or was there a language—

GD: Yeah, yeah for us—

JP: —barrier, was there—

GD: No, no, for us, no.

JP: Um [Pause] was there anything else that, uh, you wanted to tell us about your father that I didn't ask you?

GD: No, I think that covers everything, yeah.

JP: And afterwards, do you think that there was any kind of division in the Italian community because of the internment?

GD: Yes, I think there was. Mm.

[0:45:00.0]

JP: And what would those—like, there was a division that was drawn along the lines between those who had been interned and those who hadn't been interned?—

GD: —Yeah, yeah, after, yes.

JP: —And how would that play out in small ways? Like, what would be a way that one would feel that?

GD: Well, I guess they would feel that after, when they came back, uh people thought they were guilty for sure, because they kept them for three years. So, that—what made the difference there. So, they believed they were guilty.

JP: Because the length of the internment—

GD: —That's it. If they would just let them go after a few months, I don't think that would make the difference. But for three years?

JP: That's a really good point.

GD: Yeah.

JP: The length of the internment had—

GD: Yeah, because some of them, they were apparently—they went to Bordeaux [Bordeaux Jail]. I heard, Bordeaux, after a few—like, six months, they were out. Those people were okay, but then after three years? So, those, after a few months, yeah, they were clear, everything was okay. But, uh, the others stayed there for three years, so.

JP: How do you think your mother got information—for example, men that were being released before your father's release, was there any information being communicated to the families that you know of?

GD: No.

JP: Your mother really kept it quiet.

GD: Yeah.

JP: How did she manage during that time? 'Cause she had to maintain—

GD and JP in unison: The family.

JP: She, she dealt with the, the death of a daughter.

GD: Yeah, and she had to, uh—she, well, she went through like, three boys that the—were disabled, so she had a lot of work with those three boys, you know, that she had.

JP: They were physically disabled?

GD: The three of them. That—and it was three boys. One died at nine years old, one at 18, and the other one at 33 years old. And she kept—they were home all the time.

JP: So, she had—and they were, they were alive when your father was interned, they were [unclear; 0:47:19.1]—

GD: Oh, well, yeah, there was one, there was two of them.

JP: So, she had those two—

GD: —Those two, plus, uh—

JP: —she had the death of a daughter.

GD: —Yeah—

JP: —She had the healthy children as well.

GD: Yeah.

JP: She had to work, she had her mother—

GD: —Yeah—

JP: —in the house—

GD: In the house.

JP: —also.

GD: Yeah.

JP: And her father was at—pardon me, her husband was at the camp.

GD: Mm-hm.

JP: [Pause] How did she do it?

GD: [Laughs] I don't know. She was strong, though, strong woman. She was really strong... And the house would be spic and span. My mother always, even she used to clean, uh, elsewhere, the house, it was spic and span all the time.

JP: [Pause] That's amazing.

GD: Mm.

JP: And during the internment, did Mrs. Houde, other than the time that she brought you to Petawawa, um...do you know if she helped the families? Would she—

GD: —Oh, you mean the family that they were in needed? Yeah, she would help the family, yeah.

JP: Like, she helped your family—

GD: —Yeah, oh yeah—

JP: —she would have helped other families as well, right?—

GD: —Oh, yeah, oh, yeah, they were really good. She was really nice lady.

JP: And what would she—how would she do it? She was able to get services or food or—

GD: —Well, she, she had a bit more than us, for sure.

JP: Yeah.

GD: And so she used to help the others.

JP: Did your mother have, um—have, uh, food coupons too—

GD: —at that time?—

GD: —Yeah. Uh, they called, uh—in French, *rations, coupons rations*. I don't know in English.

JP: What's it called in French?

GD: *Rations*.

JP: *Les rations*.

GD: *Coupon de rations*.

JP: Rations?

GD: Yeah. And she owed a debt, and I know, I remember, because we used to go to the grocery store with stamp. So I remember that, yeah. And some of the—sometime the church will bring us some—some of the priests will bring us some food, that I remember, bags of food, that I remember from the church.

JP: Your father was also friends with Father Maltempi.

GD: Yeah.

JP: 'Cause there's the—he went to a banquet afterwards.

GD: Mm-hm.

JP: In the late '40s, I believe.

GD: Yeah.

JP: So, that relationship continued—

GD: —Oh, yeah.

JP: Yeah.

GD: Yeah, he used to come at our house, too.

JP: Father Maltempi?

GD: Mm-hm.

JP: What was he like?

GD: Nice, a really nice man, yeah.

JP: Who else do you know—did you know that had been, um—even though they didn't talk about it, but did you know anybody else that—of the internees that were friends with your family?

GD: Uh, I heard of somebody that was. Didn't stay long, like, I said, not like three years like my father, but I just found out, years and years after. And I'm saying, "Oh my God, my father, too." Then we used to talk about it, and after that was it. It's like nobody knew nothing.

JP: How—what, what affect do you think it had on the men that had been interned, the fact that they were—had this silence over them? Do you think if they had been able to speak about it, it would have helped their healing?

GD: Maybe they were ashamed of speaking about it, too. I don't know if it would help, maybe.

JP: [Pause] Because it di—it was something that they had to deal with in silence.

GD: Mm, yeah. It must have been hard to keep it for themselves, for sure, not to talk about it.

JP: Some people remember some odd stories, about their fathers telling them odd stories about the camp.

GD: Oh yeah?

JP: Yeah.

GD: Oh, my father never.

JP: Never, eh? Not even a funny story—

GD: But I—no, and I guess he didn't want the children to go—to hear about it. I, I guess he just wanted to forget it, and go ahead with uh his family, and that's it. That's what he did.

JP: How did this incident shape you? How did it make you who you are?

GD: Well, it made me stronger, I find. And, uh, and I was always saying to myself, when I'm going to have a family, my family has to be really—it's important, priority is my family. And that's what made me strong, because in the family, you know, he did, too, for the family, work—he used to work, like, seven days a week, it's like, nights and days, so. I'm sure it was hard for my mother, but he had to do it.

JP: Yeah. And, and also the fact that you had to grow up with this thing in a quiet way.

GD: Mm-hm, yeah.

JP: You've maintained it.

GD: Mm.

JP: And now your children, they want to know.

GD: They—my children, they want to know, and, uh, they couldn't get over it, it was—they were looking the newspaper, and even I was with my son last week, he was there and he was showing to his girls, said, "Look, that's my grandfather. Look at this picture. He used to have a newspaper, look at that." They were all so proud. And they said, "We're so happy to see that,"

you know. I said, “I didn’t even know he had one,” and it’s like—so, you could see that they were happy, and that’s what uh—my youngest two said, they said, “I would like one,” they said, to, uh, talk with Joyce. They said, “One day, I would like uh—”

JP: —Oh, it’s my pleasure, anytime—

GD: —When the—when you’ll be coming down, and the other two’s going to be there, my children, I want you to come down to my place, even with your mother and, uh—

JP: —Yeah—

GD: —meet them.

JP: I’d love that, yeah.

GD: Meet with our family.

JP: Is there anything else that, uh, we need to say, did I forget, or something that I didn’t ask you?

GD: No, it doesn’t—

JP: —What do you want people to remember about your dad?

GD: That he was a good man. [Laughs] Whatever, it’s like, he was a good man for me. And, uh, and, uh, I always felt that he didn’t—never did something wrong, so that’s the way I remember my father.

JP: Do you think they should have compensated the families back then?

GD: Yes. Because we went through a hard time. Even, even us, the kids, I remember, I was 16, I started to work 16, because my father didn't want me to work before, and I remember one day, I told my mother, I said, "You know what? I'm fed up of having clothes from everybody, I said, "I want to buy my own clothes." I used to want new clothes, one of the [unclear; 0:54:17.9] would come down and bring me a dress, and then I, I said, "You know, I want to buy my own. I don't want any more things from everybody." I said, "I want my own clothes." That, I remember. I— at 16. [Nods] The only thing, new thing I remember was the First Communion dress. So, it's hard, you know, because my mother used to grab things and sew it again, cut it, and make it, you know, for one and then other and—

JP: —She recycled things by re-cutting and sewing things together—

GD: —Yeah, that's it. That's it. And I remember when I'm—when my father send me to the school, because he wanted me to go back to work, the one in charge of the school, she had call him one day, and he had to buy me new shoes for the school. I felt so bad, you know. I was 13, almost 14, then. He went right away and did it, but, uh, because he used to pay for me to go to school, it wasn't free. It wasn't free.

JP: They really prioritized the kids.

GD: Yeah.

JP: [unclear; 0:55:31.5]—

GD: —Mm.

JP: Um, I'm good, unless you've—there's anything else.

GD: No.

JP: This is good.

GD: Me, I'm good.

JP: Okay. Thank you so much, Giulietta.

GD: [Laughs] Thank you.

[Fades out at 0:55:41.1]

[End of interview]