

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

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NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: Leonard Tenisci

NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Ray Culos

NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER: Anna Wilkinson

TRANSCRIBED BY: Krystle Copeland

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ABSTRACT

Leonard Tenisci is a son of internee, Fioravante (Fred) Tenisci. Fioravante Tenisci was born in San Leonardo, Abruzzo, and his wife, Emilia (Emily) Tenisci née Barazzuol was born in Abbotsford, British Columbia. The Tenisci family had 10 children and remarkably took many

family trips together, including a vacation to Italy in 1962 when the children ranged in age from 16 to two. Leonard was the second eldest and went to UBC for Zoology before pursuing a career in photojournalism and acting. Fred Tenisci was interned before he was married, and was sent to Kananaskis, then Petawawa—writing daily letters to his fiancé that were eventually destroyed. Leonard recounts that when his father was arrested, he owned a retail shop full of religious items. Since his father had received short notice that he would be arrested, he went to Father Balo at St. Anthony’s parish whom held onto some of the expensive items for him in the church basement. Leonard explains that his father spoke about the lighter side of life in the camp, including the choir that he started as well as his interaction with the Mayor of Montreal, Camillien Houde. Leonard is disturbed and shocked that despite many letters of reference from the Archbishop, his father’s work, and the President of the Business Association in Trail his internment continued. The RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) told Fred Tenisci that in order to prove that he was not an enemy to Canada he would have to join the Canadian armed forces. Mr. Tenisci accepted on the condition that he would not be sent to Italy to fight against his relatives and friends; however the police could not guarantee this so he accepted his fate in the internment camp. Leonard mentions that his father thought the police were very polite and that he held no grudges about his internment experience, and upon his release continued to be a very productive and positive member of the Trail community. Leonard has dedicated 15 years of his life towards promoting world peace as a result of his father’s experience during the war, and continues his work with transcendental meditation in countries around the world.

INTERVIEW

LT: Leonard Tenisci, interviewee

RC: Ray Culos, interviewer

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 00:00:10]

LT: [Stretches arms out]

RC: Uh, this is Raymond Culos in conversation with, uh, Leonard Tenisci. And the subject, ah, today is, uh, the *Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens: Memories of World War II*. Leonard, ah, could you, uh, tell us, uh, when and where you were born please?

LT: I was born, uh, in 1947, July. In Trail, BC. A mountain village...town...mountain town. [Smiles]

RC: [Laughs] And, ah, can—what was the names of your parents please?

LT: My dad was, uh, Fioravante Tenisci. Uh, when he came to Canada they couldn't pronounce his name so they named him—they gave him the name Fred. [Lays hands out on knees] So he still got to sign F. Tenisci. [Motions making a signature with right hand in the air] My mother's name was Emilia Barazzuol. Uh, when she went to grade one she couldn't speak English, uh, and her teacher, her teachers were all English and they were uncomfortable with Emilia so they declared her name is Emily from now on. [Says while making a chopping motion with hand] So she became Emily. And then she married my dad and became Emily Tenisci.

RC: So where, where, where was she born?

LT: My mother was born in Abbotsford, uh, just a few years after her parents emigrated from, uh, Corneliano [d'Alba] in northern Italy, in the Veneto Province [sic]. And my dad emigrated from, uh, Abruzzo. Yeah.

RC: What's, ah, the name of his town?

LT: San Leonardo. That's where I get my name. [Smiles and laughs]

RC: So what year would that have been when your dad emigrated from Italy to Canada?

LT: Uh, he was 21 and he emigrated in 1928, so he was born in '07. Yeah.

RC: And, uh, were your parents born after the war?

LT: [Looks up to the ceiling] Um, before, my mother was born in 1922, so just after the first war.

RC: [Says quietly] Right.

LT: My dad was born in '07, so yeah. [Shrugs]

RC: When were they married, what year were they married?

LT: Uh, June 1945. Yeah. [Scratches face]

RC: I see. And, uh, how many children did they have?

LT: Ten. [Smiles]

RC: Ten. And are you the oldest?

LT: Uh, I am now. But I'm, I'm the second born, I had an older sister who, who, uh, passed away at a very young age. Yeah.

RC: How did te—10 children or nine children—

LT: Oh it was—

RC: —fare in a, in I guess it was one large house—

LT: Yeah. A large house, yeah.

RC: Could you give us a little detail about the...

LT: It was great. Um, from my own point of view I enjoyed having, being a part of a large family. Um, it was fascinating to watch my mother how she organized everything. She was so, [pauses and looks up] uh, organized. I mean she would, ah, she taught the girls—were there was four boys and six girls and she taught the girls, ah, her technique of making lunches for all, you know we had everybody from elementary school all the way up to high school at one point. So we had a long counter [extends arm out horizontally] and she would—there would be bread, bread, bread, bread, bread, bread [motions laying out bread slices down the counter] just a great big roll of bread. [Motions laying down bread with hands]. And then, uh, another girl would come along and butter. Butter, butter, butter, butter, you know, 20, 30 slices. Somebody else would come along and, uh, they'd put baloney, cheese, or peanut butter according to who wants what for their lunch. [Laughs] And then they'd slap them together. I took three sandwiches. My brother took two. The girls took one. And then she'd throw an apple or an orange or a cookie into each one and, uh, that was, that was... [Laughs]

RC: Amazing.

LT: You can imagine making breakfast after church, um, on Sunday morning, you know. Uh, eggs and bacon—or not—well we have bacon maybe once a month 'cause it was so expensive. Uh, it was a, it was a ritual. It was a real production line too. Yeah.

RC: Was it, uh, some difficulty on the part of the family to afford all the, uh, these wonderful—

LT: If, if there was, if there was we never got a, a much of a hint of it. Because my father never, never, um [waves hand no], discussed his financial state. Never. The only clue I ever got was he went out of his way to buy bread, uh, day old bread at 10 cents a loaf. And he got—he went out of his way to buy milk at a lower price too because you know, I was a milk freak. My brothers loved milk and we went through lots of milk. [Gestures with arms]

RC: Yes.

LT: So he ended up getting, ah, crystallized milk, mixing it with fresh milk. And, um, crystallized milk [rubs chin and looks off to the side thinking], we didn't like it, uh, he got talked into a contract one time. [Laughs] Guy came to the door; salesman came to the door [scratches face and hits lapel microphone] selling contracts for this, uh, Sunrise Dairies. And it was crystallized milk, one step up from powdered milk. It wasn't powdered it was crystallized. [Gestures with hand] And my father said, "Look, I know you're selling—you want to sell us something. What is it, what is it you want to sell?" He says, "Well, I've got this Kenwood chef it's a blender it's an all—it does everything, it's a blender, it's a mix master, it's a bread kneader, it does everything [moves hands frantically]. And ah, in order to, to get this chef, we throw in the chef if you buy a two year contract for milk." Yeah, so my dad said, um, my mother was whispering on the side, "Fred, we don't need that milk, but I'd like the chef." [Makes no gestures with hand] You know. He said, "I'll tell you what, how much is the chef?" He says, "Well it retails at 350 dollars." She says, "I'll tell you what, sell me the chef and forget the milk." [Makes chopping motion with

arm] And, ah, the guy wouldn't do it. But what he did was he compromised. He said, "Uh, I'll give you a six month contract. You buy the chef outright, we'll give you a six month contract for the milk and then, um, you can make up your mind after that whether you want to continue or not." We didn't. We made it clear that we didn't want to drink that stuff anymore so. [Smiles]

RC: Great.

LT: Yeah.

[00:06:02]

RC: So, uh, uh, how was your dad employed at that time? When all this was going on?

LT: He was, um, his main, his main source of income was with Cominco. He was, um, a supervisor. He was a shift boss at the, uh, natural gas fertilizer plant for Cominco. That was his main source of income. He also ran a travel agency in "The Gulch," which is the Italian dis— Rosser Avenue, the Italian district [motions a long street with arms]. And, um, he was—he also had an appointment from the Italian government as a consular representative for, for that area. Consular Agent. For—

RC: He was very busy.

LT: Very—

RC: Did you get to see him often? Did you do things with him?

LT: [Nods] Yeah we did. We did. Yeah. Yeah, he made sure that he saw us between [moves arms back and forth]—he'd come home from his main job, spend an hour with us, then go to his other job, then come back home for supper and he was ours for the rest of the evening [gestures with arms]. We all watched TV together.

RC: So when you, uh, completed high school what did you do then?

LT: Uh, I took grade 13 in Trail. Um, we were the last class to have grade 13. It was first year university or college after that. [Gestures with arm and then scratches face] And, uh, I went on to get a degree in Zoology at UBC [University of British Columbia].

RC: Excellent.

LT: Lead to a short career in research biology. Till I went to the other side of the tracks [gestures with arm].

RC: So what other discipline did you choose after that? Did you...

LT: Well, the, the, the fund—the funding for research dried up when I was in the middle—I had just finished a major contract in Prince George as a fish biologist. And I, I was, I was applying not only to Canada but to other countries as well...for a year. And I said to myself—I prayed [gestures up to the sky], I, I don't know who I was talking to? God [gestures to the sky with both arms], myself [gestures to himself], whatever. I said a little prayer, the next job that comes along, either photography [starts counting on hands]—'cause I'd been an amateur photographer all my life. I loved taking pictures. And I was now involved in teaching myself dark room. And I said, I said, "Okay, whatever comes first. Biology or photography, I'll grab it." And,

uh, I was offered a job at the newspaper up in Prince George, so I, I went there. [Gestures with hand] Became a photojournalist.

RC: So was that at the Citizen then?

LT: Citizen, yeah. [Smiles and nods] You know that newspaper?

RC: Yeah.

LT: Yeah. [Smiles]

RC: Yeah.

LT: Yeah.

RC: So what, uh, what year would that have been?

LT: Uh, let's see, I, I started at the citizen in 1974.

RC: Right.

LT: Yeah. And I'd, I worked from 1970 to '74 in the, uh, water quality research field. For BC [British Columbia] research out at UBC. Yeah.

RC: When did you come to the lower mainland? And become a resident in Vancouver?

LT: Um, at the beginning, just after graduation for a few years and then, uh, when I—how, how I got to Prince George was on a biology contract. Twelve months. And then I stayed there to

work at the newspaper. [Gestures with arm] And then, uh... then I ended up in Ottawa for 13 years [gestures to his left with thumb].

RC: Oh...

LT: [Rubs face] Uh...and in that time period I switched from journalism to acting. [Gestures with hands] And, um, the acting industry in Ottawa was sort of dying. So they said, my, my union rep said, "Go to Vancouver, there's tons of work out there." So I came back to my roots here. [Makes sweeping motion with hand] In 19...90 I came back to Vancouver. Yeah.

RC: And what sort of, uh, job opportunities were there for—at that time in, in, ah, acting? What did you do?

LT: Uh, not as many as they had promised me. I was quite disappointed actually.

RC: Mm hmm.

LT: Um...I was working...not full-time but enough to [makes gestures with hand] support myself.

RC: Yeah.

[00:10:05]

LT: But I also had to take jobs as, uh, extra, you know doing extra work. Background extra, they call it human furniture. Yeah. [Laughs]

RC: [Laughs]

LT: Or, or organic props, I heard the other—we're organic props. [Laughs] Uh, but then, then the acting work came more and more. And now I'm doing mostly you know, I, I work basically as an actor now, principal actor, yeah. [Nods]

RC: Um, again, speaking of your parents, um, uh, did your dad precede your mom because of the age difference, he was you—a lot older wasn't he?

LT: Yup.

RC: When did he [unclear]

LT: He, he passed away in 1980, at quite a young age. Yeah, he was, he was only 72. [Looks up thinking] 1980...73, he was 73. He had had a stroke. From, um, about 10 years prior to that and his health just deteriorated for 10 years. And, ah...it was 1980 in April; I think he died very close to his birthday. Just after his birthday.

RC: And your mum?

LT: She lived to the ripe age of 80-something. Uh, in 2003, now that would make her 81 when—just, just a few weeks shy of 81 when she died. Yeah. Yeah. [Nods]

RC: You mentioned earlier “The Gulch.”

LT: “The Gulch.” [Nods and smiles]

RC: How was it, ah, in the way—for a young fellow to grow up, uh, after the war? Was there any, uh, form of discrimination or did you get along well?

LT: Oh, oh there was. There was, yeah.

RC: Can you describe what you experienced?

LT: Most of it, most of it was good-natured...well, or they, they tried to make you think it was good-natured. Like they, they'd call you a wop and then they'd smile. You know that kind of thing. And I just got used to it. I knew who I was, you know. [Gestures to himself]

RC: Yeah.

LT: I, I, I just thought that you know, you're being an idiot calling me a wop. So you're the fool, not me. [Motions with hands out and then points to chest] You know. I think most of my family thought the same way too. My brothers and sisters, they just, they just kind of laughed it off 'cause, um...we, we had a very strong sense of who we were from, you know, from my parents. Our sense of Italian-ness was very, very, big you know. [Gestures with hand] We, we—I—we basically lived an Italian life. [Gestures arms out to the side] Big, big extended family. It doesn't matter what, what there was to celebrate: first communion, uh, [car horn honks] graduation, wedding, whatever. [Counts events on fingers] Everybody was invited, everybody.

RC: So, I guess it wouldn't be difficult to have 20 people have a sitting for dinner?

LT: [Shrugs] Oh, oh, easily, easily, yeah, easily. Uh, our family alone was 12 and then when there was a, when there was a, a communal dinner with the relatives there must have been about at least 30, 35 people there.

RC: How was the connection between your family and the church in Trail? Were you active?

LT: Very, yeah. Very much so. [Nods]

RC: Did your dad get involved in...

LT: Oh yeah. [Nods]

RC: Can you explain that to us?

LT: He, he started off as, ah, a choir member at St. Anthony's Church. And an altar server, he was, um—I guess you'd call it a deacon. Don't the Anglicans call it a deacon? When you're kind of the priest's assistant? [Gestures with hands]

RC: Yeah. That may be, yeah.

LT: I'm not sure what the terms is, but he... [Nods]

RC: But he, he would have been an altar boy?

LT: An altar server, well he was a—

RC: An altar server.

LT: Yeah.

RC: Okay.

LT: He was—

RC: Sure.

LT: He was a young man, he was probably you know, well over 30 when this was going on, yeah, so. Altar server. And he, uh, he always kept close to the priests. They always came over for dinner [makes gestures with arm to indicate priests coming over] you know, Father Rosia[?], Father [Settinio] Balo. I didn't know Father Balo, but he had passed away, but all these priests were always coming over for dinner. And so he started off as a, a choir singer as well and then he directed the choir at St. Anthony's Church, um, that's the Italian Parish in Trail. And then we moved to the other side of the river, um, to get a bigger house 'cause our family was growing [gestures moving with hand]. And, ah, and we switched to the other parish; still lots of Italians at that parish, but it was more mixed, more mixed. And again, he, he took on the, the, the directorship of the choir. Yeah, got me involved in the choir. I went from being an altar boy to being a, a singer in the choir.

RC: Wow.

LT: Yeah, so, yeah we were always involved. [Scratches head] My mother was president of the CWL, Catholic Women's League, for a while, very involved in that. I was involved in Columbian Squires, the pre-, pre-Columbian Knights of Columbus, you know.

RC: Yes.

LT: Yeah.

RC: And your mum also was involved with the, uh, uh, with the consulate agency?

LT: Yes. Yeah, she, she was given that position after my father got sick from his stroke. Um...he sat down with my mother and with the Consul and they decided that he needed some help because he had been quite weakened by that condition. And his powers of speech was compromised from the stroke. So she fielded a lot of the phone calls. He told her, he basically taught her the ropes for you know, several months and she took over full-time...eventually, yeah.

[00:15:03]

RC: Did, uh, your mom and dad ever, uh, go to Italy as a married couple?

LT: Without the kids, you mean before having kids? [Smiles]

RC: [Laughs] Or with children?

LT: No, with kids, yeah, yeah.

RC: Could you explain how that came about and where you went?

LT: Yeah, yeah. We, we went—well I took a trip in '51 with my father and my sister and I, Dolores. My older sister and myself and my dad, we went to Italy. In 1951. I was, I was just, just a kid, I was less—just under five years old, and Delores was just under six. We took, uh, uh, this older fella with us, from—I think he was in Fergie [Ferguson, BC]. Uh, he wanted to drive across Canada with us to visit his relatives [gestures to his right with arm]. I think he was *Abruzzese* as well as my father. [Pauses, places hands on face and says pensively] So we went with, uh—we took Mr. Pratolini across Canada, we went on the Queen Elizabeth. Yeah. Came back on the Queen Mary. [Laughs] Yeah, and in, in 1962 we went with the entire family.

RC: So you're now a, a dozen?

LT: We're a dozen in '62. Age range was 16 down to one and a bit. Or going on two. [Counts on fingers] Two years old to 16. [Smiles]

RC: How did that work out in terms of getting accommodation while you were in Italy? It must have been a challenge at times? [Laughs]

LT: [Smiles and shakes head] I don't know how he did it, I think he just, ah, he just knew in advance. He talked to people in advance. We, we, um, we actually [looks off to side thinking]...we had to find campsites wherever we went. We camped. We had a couple of tents stashed away in the back of the station wagon. We took the car, the station—big Chevy [Chevrolet] Brookwood station wagon, nine passenger. We camped across Canada and we camped across Europe. [Static from lapel microphone rubbing against clothes] Yeah.

RC: Extraordinary!

LT: Camping is big in, in Germany and France and Italy, they love it over there.

RC: What memories do you take away from—

[Fades out at 00:17:00]

[Fades in at 00:17:01]

RC: So, uh, could you tell us what memories, uh, you've taken, uh, away—back with—you took back with you rather from Italy that still resonate—

LT: Fr-fr—oh yeah.

RC: —with you till this day?

LT: From that trip especially, yeah. Oh absolutely. Um, I made a—I think we all did my sibling and I, we made some very, very strong, uh, emotional connections. Really, really strong. Um, I think more so with my father's family than with my mother's family because we were only in the Veneto area [gestures upward] for a small amount of time. And um, we, we stayed at San Leonardo, my, my grandfather's—my, my grandmother, my *nonna* was—had passed away by then, let me think now [looks up thinking]...yeah, she wasn't there, it was just my grandfather was still, was still around and, and my dad's brothers. So, they all lived in the same community. And they don't, they don't live on their farm over there, they live in the village. Everybody lives in the village. [Gestures a small area with hands] And then, and then the agricultural land is just on the edge of the village. [Spreads arms out] So, at about four o'clock every morning, you hear all these tractors going past, you know, it's amazing, this line of tractors. [Gestures to tractors driving down road]

RC: Yeah.

LT: Whatever they're doing whether they're, today they're tilling, or whether they're clipping vines, or doing the harvest or whatever. [Gestures with hands] It's a big procession. It's not really out of town; you could walk to the fields. In fact I used to, I spent in '92 I spent, um, I spent two months there and, and we spent three weeks harvesting the olives. Um, and I could walk to the olive groves, but my uncle had had, um, he had had an accident [slaps leg], he wasn't very good with his leg, he was limping a lot. So, he had me drive the tractor every morning so we went out there. It was great. Yeah, so, um, where, where was I now? We were

talking about what...what memories I brought back from that? Just the deep emotional connection with, with my relatives. And, uh, um, I was 15 years old in 1962 and I don't ever remember being so emotionally just ripped apart as the day that we left.

RC: [Sighs]

LT: Yeah, the day that we left. I was crying like a, like a, like a little girl.

RC: Yeah.

LT: On the plane. It took me about half an hour to settle. I—they put me beside these two gorgeous, gorgeous women [gestures and says with emphasis]. One was my age, and one was about three years older, you know. And, ah, it, it took about half an hour for me to realize how lucky I was, how lucky I was. [Motions next to him and laughs] Yeah.

RC: [Unclear due to laughing] Let's go forward. [Laughs]

LT: Yeah, yeah. So I, I got over it, I got over it and, uh, then we had a great trip back. [Gestures with arm] But you know, the, the deep connections were there and every time I went back, um, they didn't want me to leave. [Shakes head and shrugs] I—the last—when I went in '92, uh, my aunt would say, uh, "Leonardo, how long are you gonna stay?" I said, "Oh, I don't know. A couple weeks?" She says, "No! A couple years!" [Says with emphasis]

RC: [Laughs]

LT: And I said, "Well, we'll compromise, how about two months?" [Lifts two fingers]

RC: Yeah.

LT: She said, "Three months." I said, "No, no, two." [Gestures with hand, shakes head and smiles]

RC: And that was...

LT: [Nods] That—yeah, I stayed for two months.

RC: That's wonderful.

LT: Worked with them, you know cleared land, worked in the harvest and all that. They couldn't figure out why I was working. You know, "You come all the way over here and you work?" [Gestures with hand and shrugs] I said, "Well, what am I going to do, sit around and watch you guys work? I'm here to help."

RC: Wonderful.

LT: Yeah. [Smiles]

[00:20:28]

RC: Uh, your father, uh, when he, uh, first came to Canada, did he go directly to Trail or was there, uh—

LT: No.

RC: —uh, another, uh—

LT: No.

RC: —town that he settled in?

LT: No. After getting off at Halifax, which was the main thing in those days [gestures to his right]. Halifax or Montreal. He took a train across Canada and he settled in Fernie [motions to train going across country]. He had, ah, his aunt and uncle were in Fernie...and his cousins. So he liv—worked in the mines for two years. And his father was there...trying it out. [Points straight ahead with finger] Just to see if he liked Canada. [Shakes hand in gesture of uncertainty]

RC: So, this is the coalmine in Fernie?

LT: Yup. [Nods]

RC: Was there, uh, anything about his, uh, time there, uh, uh, that, uh...would give, uh, a hint as to what, uh, his future would be? Like did he settle for coal mining or did he like—

LT: There was, ah, there was bit of a hint there because, um, [places hand on head in thought] um...he was...he, he, he spent some time helping other people better their lives. And he was always interested in having a best life you can get.

RC: Mm hmm.

LT: In fact, he tells a story; he, he met this young girl over there. Somebody introduced him to this young girl and he found out later, that they were trying to set him up with her. [Gestures with hand] She was a prostitute. And, uh, he just shook his head. He said, "Look, come here. I'm gonna pay for your time, we're gonna sit and have a cup of coffee." And he tried his best to convince her to get out of the business. [Makes chopping motion with hand]

RC: Oh...

LT: He said, he said, "Please." You know, he really pleaded with her to not throw her life away. And, um, it's, it's the kind of guy he is. He, he just likes to, um [rubs chin in thought], encourage people to, to be the best that they are, you know. And he'll—rather than being, um, gossipy and, and negative, he always tries to get—

RC: Yeah.

LT: —the best out of you, you know. I don't know what happened to that girl, but he tried his best to get her to go straight.

RC: And, and your grandfather by this time had decided to go back?

LT: Well, well he, they spent, they spent I think, he had been there for a year and they spent about a year together, in the mines.

RC: Mm hmm.

LT: And my grandfather he got pretty sick of it. He said, "No, no, I can't do this." [Shakes head] He went, he said to my dad before he left to go back to Italy, he said, "Before I go, I want you to

promise me that you won't stay in these mines." My dad gave his word. So he went, he spent another few months and he moved to Trail. Yeah.

RC: While he was in Trail, he, um, uh, he became distinguished as a, uh, a musician...your father?

LT: [Nods] Yes. Yes.

RC: And, uh, could you tell us a little bit about, uh...

LT: Yeah.

RC: ...the band, uh, that he—

LT: Yeah, yeah, yeah. He, he joined, he joined the Trail Maple Leaf Band, which is, um, what would you call it? A brass band. Marching band, they used to march. They used to give stationary concerts as well, as well. And, uh, this guy called Mystery De Pasquale. I don't even know what his real name was, Guglielmo I think or something. I think it was Bill. [Looks at Ray with uncertainty]

RC: Yeah, that what Bill is, yeah.

LT: Yeah. And, ah, Mystery, everybody knew him as Mystery. And, uh, he was the bandleader. My dad played, he played, uh, clarinet. [Motions playing the clarinet] In fact, he had one of the few silver clarinets around. I think did you see that picture of him? I think it was silver.

RC: Yes.

LT: Yeah, I believe it was silver. Um, he was also a, an accordionist. Very accomplished accordionist. Not the piano keyboard, but the button keyboard. [Pretends to hold and play an accordion] And, um, when he was in the camp, in the, uh, the internment camp, he had picked up, um, he traded or something, somebody gave it to him or he traded [moves hands in a back and forth motion mimicking trading], he received in trade, um, an old, um, button accordion, very simple. And he spent hours entertaining his fr—he was very good, he was, he was—his fingers would fly on that thing, you know. He had a huge repertoire of songs. Yeah. He sang too of course, you know.

[Sound of horn and truck backing up in background]

RC: And you mention the internment, um, [truck horn and beeping] it makes me, um, ask, um, how did it ever happen that your dad, uh, was, um, detained, arrested and sent to the internment camp? What, what do you—can you tell us about that?

[00:25:00]

LT: [Takes a deep breath and looks up at the ceiling] Um, the story that we got from him and my mother was very simple. He was an Italian who had been in the Mussolini Youth Party, the Fascist Youth Party as a kid. It's like boy scouts, you know, you join boy scouts, they join the Fascist Youth. And that was the sanitized version that we got. That because he was, um, an ex-member of the Fascist Party as a young man in Italy, he was picked up. Sent to the camp. But, uh, in the meantime, you know, I've learnt from [points towards Ray with an open palm] reading your histories and reading other articles that, um, he had been contributing, um, articles to a fascist newspaper...in Vancouver. And, uh, he was also, um, very good orator, he

was very much into, he, he loved to make speeches. He was able to stir people up [waves hand in circles]. Very effective speech maker. I should say orator. [Laughs]

RC: Yes.

LT: Um, so I think—now as I understand it, the, the, the speech he made to a group in Vancouver where there was, um, several dignitaries involved, there was some people from the ship, etcetera. Um, he made a speech, uh, commemorating the march on Rome. [Holds hand on chin while thinking] And then later on, about a year later he contri—he was contributing articles to, um, the fascist press in Vancouver. So, from his point of view, he was just being patriotic [shrugs]; encouraging people to love their country, despite the fact that they're immigrants, they're now Canadians. That's fine. Be connected to your Italian roots. [Gestures with hands] And, um, he actually, along with many Italians at the time he actually thought that Mussolini was going to do wonderful things for Italy. Nobody anticipated him falling in love with Hitler [gestures with arms spread out wide] and joining him in his declaration against England. Nobody anticipated that. [Shakes head] And I remember my father many times, he had expressed his complete, utter disappointment at Mussolini, the way he ended up, what he had done; betrayed the country by allying himself with a, a brutal dictator like Hitler. So, you know I think he felt a bit, um, red faced about it all [makes gesture with hand]. His intentions were very pure, um, but still the government saw it as a potential threat so they did what they had to do.

RC: Yes.

LT: Yeah.

RC: Uh, would he have uh, belonged to a political party here that, uh, was, ah, out of favour with, uh, say the Canadian government? Is that...

LT: No, not that I know of. [Shakes head]

RC: Uh hmm.

LT: No, it was just his involvement in the, involvement in the—you mean at the time back then? [Motions hands to one side]

RC: In 19—say 1939, 1940. Uh, the—

LT: I don't think so. No, I don't think so. [Shakes head] I think he was just involved in the, uh, the fascist movement...as it was in Canada. Yeah. [Gestures with hand]

RC: And, ah, so, he was obviously single and he, uh—do you have any information as to what happened? Like did someone come and arrest him or did someone detain him somewhere?

LT: Yeah they, they arrested him. They came and arrested him. They came after, um, Pompilio De Vito [counts on fingers], lived up on the hill there. [Points up to the top of a hill] Um [looks off to his left], my dad was living down in “The Gulch” there [gestures down in a valley] with the G[?] family. And um, there was another fellow from Trail who got detained; you might know his name [gestures to Ray], uh, was it...?

RC: Uh, well the priest of course, uh...

LT: Father Balo.

RC: Balo. Uh, he, um, was detained as well.

LT: Oh, was he?

RC: Yes. And—

LT: 'Cause he had, he had been brought over to be involved in the Italian [makes coming over gesture with arm]—and he was also a fascist sympathizer too I believe.

RC: Yes.

LT: Father Balo.

RC: When, um, the Italian Consul, [Dr. Giuseppe] Brancucci, came to Vancouver, he made a point of doing, uh, uh—conducting a tour.

LT: Yeah. [Nods and makes gesture with arm]

RC: And I think he came—

LT: [Nods] He did go to Trail on that tour. Yeah, he did. Yeah.

RC: And talked to your dad I believe.

LT: Yeah. [Nods]

RC: Do you think that there might have been a connection there, of support?

LT: I'm sur—

RC: Back and forth?

LT: Probably.

RC: Yeah.

LT: Although I don't know for sure, but I, I, I would guess. I would guess. Yes.

RC: Are there any letters that survived the, uh, war? Your dad, uh, uh, writing to your mother as his girlfriend of the day...uh...

LT: Well that, yeah, that's an amazing story, uh, as far as I know they were destroyed. [Laughs] Father, uh, [Giacchino] Bortignon, who was at Sacred Heart Parish. Now this is [shakes head and brings hands together]—the connections are so [pauses and gestures toward chest with hands] strong. You know, like Father Bortig—my father was sent to Sacred Heart Parish when he, he was working in Trail at Cominco. He came, he went to Vancouver—the workers compensation board sent him to Vancouver 'cause he'd injured his back and they didn't have a clinic, a rehab clinic in Trail. So they, all expenses paid, they sent him to Vancouver to do rehab there. Physiotherapy. And while he was there, he asked around, he said, "I want to—could you direct me to an Italian parish? Where I could, number one, hear masses in Italian, and number two, um, sing in the choir?" [Counts on fingers] So they sent him to, um, Sacred Heart Parish where low and behold [laughs] there was Father Bortignon and I think he was also ah, he might have also been a, a fascist sympathizer.

RC: Yes, he was indeed.

[00:30:45]

LT: Yeah he was, yeah okay. [Smiles and nods] Now, Father Bortignon, um [pause] when my father was sent away to the camp he, he, he arranged with, with the Pries—he arranged with my mother. He said, "I'll write you every day." He had already asked her to marry. He had been rejected by my grandmother because she was pretty mad at him because when they first met, she was 17 he was 32 and that's just too much of an age gap for her to handle. [Gestures with hands] [Long pause] So anyway, when he went away to the, uh, to the camp, he told my mother, "I will write you every day. Guar—I promise you." Or at least three or four times a week. [Gestures with arms] And he did. And he says, "I will send the letters to Father Bortignon. I've already talked to him, and you go to him, when he has a letter he'll give it to you." Because he knew that if he sent them to 633 Atlantic Street, she would never get it. [Shakes head no and waves hand] Because mama would just [motions tearing the letter]—she'd rip it up. [Smiles] So, here's the thing, um, every one of his—see...Mrs. Barazzuol, my mother's—my *nonna* [claps hands], she anticipated that move. So she, she went to Father Bortignon—she was there every morning for mass, she saw him every day of her life, every day, morning mass. And she said, "If, if this Tenisci character sends any letters to my daughter, you rip them up, you burn them." [Gestures with hand] He agreed. So, [laughs] everything he sent to her, via him, via the priest was destroyed. As far as I know. I don't think he saved them, I think he was true to his promise to the mother. So when he came back to—from the camp, uh, he was heartbroken because he figured, well I guess she, she's changed her mind. He went back to Vancouver, just to have a talk with her, to see where she stood after the, after the war was over. Or after his stint was over. And she said, "You've got a lot of nerve showing up at my doorstep. After promising to write me, and not one letter." [Says with emphasis while holding up one finger] He says, "I wrote you five, five times a week." [Says while laughing] And then they, they put two and two

together; they realized that the priest had destroyed them. And then my grandmother she did admit that, she told them, yeah, she did admit it. But they survived. They survived the experience and, and you know, they, they eventually got married.

RC: My God.

LT: [Laughs]

RC: So the first camp that your dad visited, do you know the name? Or, uh, do you know where?

LT: [Scratches head] Just, I just know it was at Kananaskis.

RC: Yeah and, uh...

LT: Did it have a name, I don't know?

RC: No, that, it, that would have been the name I, I, I guess.

LT: Kananaskis camp for... [Gestures with hand]

RC: And then to Petawawa is that correct?

LT: Petawawa after that. [Nods] Yeah. He went to Petawawa.

RC: Did he meet people, uh, at the camps, uh, that he befriended and, uh, kept in touch with?

LT: [Nods] Oh, oh, absolutely, yeah, yeah.

RC: Can you tell us about that? Uh...

LT: I don't know too many of them, but he said they made a lot of very, very strong connections there. He, he, he said as a result of the camp he knew people, you know, all across Canada [gestures wide with arms]. And he never made any attempt to really visit them that I knew of, except for one person. Yeah, this—do you want me to tell you his name or just give...

RC: Yes, absolutely.

LT: [Laughs]

RC: [Laughs]

LT: [Laughs and claps hands] Okay, we went to a trip, uh, just the year after we came from Italy, I think it was. The year after we went to Italy, we went to California. We were addicted to camping after that trip to Italy. We, we loved to go camping for the summer. We took a trip down to California, all the way down to, um, all the way down to Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara. [Gestures going on a trip with hand] And around that area, around, um, uh, in the cent—there's a, uh, what's the name of that community outside of Santa—Carpinteria, Carpinteria. Just outside of Santa Barbara. He said there's a guy there from the camp, we're gonna go there. His name is Joe. [Laughs] Joe [Giuseppe] Grimaldi. If you want to edit out his last name that's fine with me, but all—'cause you asked. [Gestures to Ray with hands]

RC: Sure.

LT: Joe Grimaldi.

RC: Thank you.

[00:34:59]

LT: He said, "I knew him in the camp, we'll go visit him. You know, I, I wrote him a letter saying we were coming down, he's expecting us." And ah, that's all he said. So the 10 of us, plus the parents, 12 of us, we show up at Joe's place. He lives, he lives out in the country, a nice little place, you know. Beautiful house. Nice, spacious, lots of garden, lots of grass, you know. And, uh, the old man, the old guys are chatting away and he introduced us all by name and everything else. And, and, uh, he said, "Do you want something to eat? Do you kids want something to eat?" [Says with a deep voice and accent] The old guy he says. He says to his wife in Italian, "Bring out something." [Gestures with hand] So she comes out with a pitcher of water [laughs] and, and a tray full of—what do you call it? The really thick, dense German pumpernickel. [Gestures with hands to show how thick the bread was]

RC: [Laughs]

LT: Really thick you know. [Pretends to bite off a tough piece of bread.] And here we are, I mean we're kids, right? [Gestures with hands]

RC: Right.

LT: We were expecting donuts. Biscotti. Sandwiches. [Counts items on fingers]

RC: Yeah.

LT: [Shakes head] No, he sent out a tray of pumper—and not only was it pumpernickel, but it was stale pumpernickel. And, and my dad was very gracious, my mother was very gracious throughout the whole visit. And they, they [bows head] thanked them, you know, and shook hands and all that. We got in the car later on and he says [laughs], he says, "That old guy was cheap in the camp and he's still cheap!" [Counts on fingers and laughs loudly]

RC: [Laughs]

LT: We had a good laugh.

RC: When he was in Petawawa did he meet, uh, the former Mayor of Bur—of, uh, of Montreal?

LT: He did yeah. [Nods] Um, what was his name? It was, uh...starts with a...I can't remember. But he said, he said a very funny story about the Mayor, the Mayor of Montreal at the time. I don't even know if he was Italian. Um...but everybody, everybody in the camp was assigned—they had to, they had to keep their dormitory clean. [Gestures with hands] It was like a military operation, it was like being in the army. You had to make your beds in the morning. The floor has to be swept. And they want to keep you busy. [Gestures with hand] And my father, my father was kind of, um, he was like a straw boss. He was a shift boss whatever.

RC: Mm hmm.

LT: He was in charge of making sure everybody did their chores. [Moves hands in side by side motion] And everybody had to take a turn at latrine...you know. [Points with finger] You get the brush and the, and the, and the rags and you have to clean the toilet, clean around the toilets. [Gestures cleaning the toilets] And so he tells this guy, he goes into the, into the lava—latrine and he sees somebody else cleaning the toilet and it was Mr. Mayor's turn to clean the toilet.

He says, "What are you doing, it's not your turn?" He says, "Well, he paid me some cigarettes to do it for him." He says, "How long has that hap—been going on?" He says, "Well, this is the third time or whatever." So he went to, he went to Mr. Mayor, sat him down and he says, "Look, it's not right what you're doing." [Says pointing a finger and shakes head] He says, "We're all together here." He says, "We're all equal." He says, he says, uh—and the guys says, "But I'm the Mayor, I'm a Mayor, I don't do stuff like that." [Gestures with hands and shrugs shoulders]

RC: Yeah.

LT: And he said to him, he says, "So, you're gonna—you—are you trying to tell me that your shit doesn't stink and ours does?"

RC: [Laughs] Well said.

LT: [Laughs] He didn't have an answer for that. So, uh...so he did get him to chang—to work. I mean after that he did do his own jobs. His own latrine duty, you know.

RC: I think the Mayor's name was, uh, Camillien Houde or...

LT: Yeah.

RC: H-O—

LT: H-O-U—

RC: —D-E.

LT: That sounds about right.

RC: H-O-U-D-E. Do you know why he was at, at the camp? There was a story...

LT: No, no. I don't, I don't. I heard something— [Gestures with hand]

RC: About conscription. I think he was French Canadian and, uh—

LT: Yeah.

RC: —was against conscription.

LT: Against conscription, yeah.

RC: Did your dad have any more to say about that, uh, ex-Mayor?

LT: No, no, he just told me that he was, uh, he was, he was all wrapped up in his own importance. That's all he said. He was, he was a politician of the old order. And, and coming from Italy he was probably used to that, you know, you see a lot of these European Italian politicians who are a cut above everybody else in their own point of view [points to head]. You know, I don't do stuff like that, I have my minions do it for me.

RC: There's a picture of your dad with a group of, uh, internees where he seems to have a little cap—

LT: [Nods] Yeah.

RC: —[unclear] a cravat or something. Did he ever, did you ever, uh, talk to him about any of the, those memorabilia that he brought back or...

LT: No, no. [Shakes]

RC: Yeah.

LT: In fact I never—I found out later that they wore, um, they wore targets on their backs. [Points to back with finger]

RC: Yes.

LT: So in case they escape they'd be easier to shoot. [Laughs] But, he never told us stuff like that. [Gestures with hand]

RC: No.

LT: No. Um, he told us only the, um, the gentle side of life in the camp. A few det—

RC: How, how was the food, did he complain? Or did he say it was—

LT: He said it wasn't that good.

RC: Mm hmm.

LT: It was adequate, but it was bland.

RC: Yeah.

LT: It was bland and it was just enough to keep you alive, plus some. [Gestures with hand]

RC: Yeah.

LT: You know. But—

RC: Did he talk about work detail outside of the camp? Did he, you know, because some of them went out and worked, uh, on—

LT: Yeah. [Crosses arms]

RC: —the roads.

LT: Yeah, he mentioned that, he mentioned that. Uh, he mentioned that guys were—I guess they were at gunpoint too. They had armed guards there. They were taken out...ferried out in a vehicle. [Gestures large vehicle with hands] Maybe in the back of a pickup or on sitting in the back of a troop carrier or a flat bed truck or something like that. And they would clean roads and come back. Yeah, he mentioned that. And there's a lot of internal stuff to do too. Like the grounds, keep the grounds clean. Yeah.

[00:40:52]

[Leonard picks up glass of water and drinks]

RC: Uh, there's a photograph of your dad at a picnic on Bone Island that was taken in August 1939 and he's standing next to, uh, Fred, uh, uh, Ghisi—

LT: [Federico] Ghislieri.

RC: Is there a connection in the families [Leonard places glass on table] between, uh—

LT: Oh yeah.

RC: —the Teniscis and, uh, the Ghislieri?

LT: Absolutely. Absolutely.

RC: Could you tell us a bit about that?

LT: Well, Fred Ghislieri was his brother-in-law. Well, his future brother-in-law. My dad was single at the time. So, Fred, who's actual name is Federico, he was married to Mary, or Maria, Barazzuol, my aunt, my mother's sister. And, uh, so my father had already been courting Emily, Mary's sister. So, so he was hoping to be Fred's brother-in-law, because he was hoping to marry Emily, you see. So yeah, there was that connection right there. [Gestures with two hands coming together] And there was also the connection with the Italian, uh, the fascist business too because Fred Ghislieri's father he had—he was running an Italian, uh, fascist press. A fascist oriented press in Vancouver.

RC: Oh? [Says with surprise]

LT: Yeah.

RC: That's, uh, Ma—Mario then is it? Mario.

LT: [Nods] Mario. Yeah, yeah.

RC: And, uh, were any of the Ghislieris, uh, interned as well then?

LT: [Nods] Yup. The two brothers, um, Fred and his brother, uh, Herman. I guess his name was Erminio. And the old man, Mario. [Lists with fingers counting]

RC: Any stories that your mother would have related to that side of the family in terms of the hardships or the conditions?

LT: The Ghis—Ghislieris? You mean well my uncle—

RC: [Unclear] That's right, yeah.

LT: [Looks up thinking] Uh, she didn't talk much ab—well she just talked about life during the depression basically. I guess that was—

RC: Mm hmm.

LT: —sort of...around the same time.

RC: When, um, when your dad was apprehended, um, I believe he, um, had a little Catholic religious items store.

LT: [Scratches face] Yeah, religious articles.

RC: Articles, yes. And, uh, what happened then to all that, uh, inventory?

LT: Well he, he was forewarned that the RCMP was coming after him. He knew that. He didn't make any attempt to hide. He was living at the G[?] residence, boarding with them. [Gestures up to his right] And they took him in, you know, like a member of the family. And, uh, he was, he was forewarned. They said they cou—they might even come tomorrow or tonight, they might even come this afternoon. So he went down to St. Anthony's parish—or he phoned—he probably walked over there because G[?] house to the church is about maybe 80 meters. [Gestures with arms] It's just three or four lots away. And he, he found Father, uh, Balo. He asked him to take his—he had a spare key, Father did. He said, "Go to my store and take out all the good stuff." He says, "Take out all the expensive statues and the golden crucifixes and everything that's really high end."

RC: Mm hmm.

LT: He says, "Leave all the prayer books and all the holy cards and the cheap rosaries. You know take the expensive..." So he took as much as he could and stashed it in the basement of the church.

RC: Was your dad, ah, treated fairly by Cominco—um, he was an employee and then this happened. What happened to his job opportunities following that, do you know?

LT: He got his job back when he, when he arrived. He, uh—yeah, according to Danny G[?]-um, Danny was born in 1930 so he would have been 10 years old when my father was taken away. Danny, Danny he wasn't there on the day, he doesn't remember the day, but he does remember I spoke to him about a month ago, about two months ago. Danny remembers that,

um, he said, "I don't remember them taking him away. But I do remember, um, suddenly he wasn't, he wasn't there anymore. He just wasn't there anymore." And he said he understood about war. He knew...that governments will do things like that in the time of war. I guess he was a bright 10 year old kid. But um, to get back to the point of your question was—what was it again your... [Points toward Ray]

[00:45:14]

RC: Well, uh, uh, the, the items that, uh, were in the...his, uh, little store...

LT: Yeah.

RC: ...were taken away.

LT: Yeah.

RC: He likely lost his job.

LT: [Points to Ray] Oh, his job yeah.

RC: How did—how was he treated [unclear]?

LT: Oh, okay, when he, when he came back. [Gestures coming back with hand]

RC: Yeah.

LT: All—Danny also went on to say—and now I got to live this through Danny 'cause I wasn't even born yet. [Gestures with hand] He went on to say that when he came back, he said there

wasn't a hint—this is quoting directly from Danny [places hand in front in a stopping motion]—he said, “There wasn't a hint of suspicion as to this man's character, his true character when he came back.” He says, “There wasn't even a hint of any suspicion...of character.” He—they just treated him [shrugs and raises arms out to the side]...like the guy he was, very well, uh, respected in the community. He was a leader in the Italian community, he was very much involved in the English community as well, the civic community. Very ded—um, um, he always made sure that he was, was up to date on municipal government affairs, BC government affairs. He always knew what was going on. [Makes sweeping gesture with hand] Yeah.

RC: Was he a, a member of the, uh, Christ—Christopher Colombo, uh—

LT: Yeah. [Nods]

RC: —organization in Trail?

LT: Yeah. [Nods]

RC: And did he take a, an active role?

LT: Yeah. He was, uh, he was the past president more than once. He was also, uh, I think the job which he really loved was a social convener. Uh, he, my dad was an impresario by nature, he was a real impresario. He liked to put on shows. He got me and my sisters and my brothers up on stage doing skits, playing music. [Gestures with hand]

RC: Oh, that's where you got—you come by [unclear].

LT: [Laughs and shrugs]

RC: [Laughs]

LT: From my mother too. She was a thespian in high school.

RC: Oh! [Says with surprise]

LT: Yeah. Her teacher told her, her drama teacher told her, she said, "Emily, I want you to seriously consider a life as an actor." You know, being a professional actress. She said, "Your talent is [points up in the air]...up here. The other kids are just doing it for fun [gestures to the ground]." She says, "You've got talent."

RC: Oh my.

LT: But life got in the way, you know, marriage, kids. [Shrugs]

RC: Yeah.

LT: She made a choice. Yeah.

RC: Your, your mother helped your dad quite a bit with the agency, the, uh, I mean, um, the consular, uh, uh, representative. How did your dad get involved in that, do you have any knowledge of, uh, how...

LT: [Shakes head] I don't know how it started. I think, um...I think he saw a need for a travel agency in the Italian community. Because back, uh, back in the '50s there was lots of people coming over from Italy. [Gestures coming over with hand]

RC: Yeah, sure.

LT: And lots of people going back to see their relatives. [Gestures going back with hand] They wanted to keep in touch with the family. All this coming and going, coming and going. And, and there's a couple of travel agencies in Trail that were handling all their bookings, they weren't even Italian, they were, you know, uh, Vipond travel and you know, Vipond was, uh, sort of an English...maybe English, French Canadian whatever.

RC: Mm hmm.

LT: So he decided to on the side he opened up a little travel bureau. [Gestures to a small building with hands] He learned the ropes very quickly and he was their representative, for all their trips. [Motions with hand in front of him] Yeah.

RC: So he had the travel agency and then the uh, being an Italian Consular Agent as well.

LT: Yeah. [Speaks over Ray, Ray's question unclear] So, so that—yeah, I think, I think the Consular Agent—I think the Consular um, appointment came out of his association with, with the Italian community. [Gestures with hands]

RC: Yes.

LT: Uh, Brancucci or, or whoever his successor was at that point saw that he was so deeply involved as a leader in the Italian community that they said well this is, this is the man we should offer this appointment to. So they—yeah.

RC: And [long pause, Leonard reaches for glass of water and takes a sip] you told a story earlier, about, uh, having fun at family gatherings and some of the old Italian patriotic songs.

LT: [Smiles and leans back] Oh yeah.

RC: Do you remember any of that?

LT: *Faccetta Nera*. [Starts singing] *Faccetta Nera, faccetta nera!* That was one of my father's um, favourite, uh, squeeze [starts mimicking playing the accordion with hand]—we called it the squeeze box, his button accordion. That was one of his favourite songs. [Starts humming tune of song by mimicking sound of accordion with mouth and playing accordion with hands] [Starts laughing and gestures with hand] I had no idea that it was a fascist—a fascist—I had no idea! I think it was just—I thought it was just an Italian folk song you see. [Throws hands up in the air]

RC: Do you know the origin of that particular song?

LT: No.

RC: Of, uh...

LT: I've seen it in a movie though. [Points to his right with finger]

RC: Yeah. It was, uh, something that came out of the Ethiopian campaign.

LT: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. [Nods in understanding]

RC: *Faccia Nera*.

LT: [Nods and scratches face] *Faccetta Nera*.

RC: Yeah.

LT: Yeah.

RC: Yeah. [Laughs] You, you, you still remember the tune, that's for sure.

LT: [Smiles] Oh yeah. Yeah.

RC: Um, are there any artifacts at all that, uh, your dad brought back from the camps? That, that...

LT: [Shakes head] Not, not that I've seen.

RC: Yeah.

LT: He was—I don't think he was much of a [gestures with hands] sculptor or—his, his creative intelligence came out through music.

RC: Mm hmm.

[0050:24]

LT: Yeah. He was a musician and a singer. And he put together a choir at the camp too from his musical—love of music. He put together a choir. I don't know where he managed to get the

music, but he got...music score—I've got it here in my files actually, the original score. It's the mass of St. John the Baptist by Reverend...John Turner or something like that. Written in...near the turn of the century. [Gestures with hand] And it's very, it's almost, um...[rubs hands together] um...in the st—it's almost in the style of [Felix] Mendelssohn or one of those early Romantic composers, you know.

RC: Yes.

LT: And, uh, he, he got together 150 voices in the, uh, in camp Petawawa. He rehearsed these men and, uh, he had been in a conductor, a choir conductor before, so I guess that was his, uh, way of contributing to their, you know, to their joy.

RC: Yeah.

LT: Helping him forget the rigors of the camp.

RC: Yeah.

LT: So, uh, so he, he rehearsed him. And they did a performance of, of this mass. You know, everything, right starting from the Curia, uh, the Gloria, the Sanctus, the Agnus Dei, etcetera, etcetera. The whole thing. [Gestures with both hands in a circle]

RC: I see.

LT: And I don't know if it was a cappella or if they managed to get an old piano. I don't know, he didn't say anything about that.

RC: Mm hmm.

LT: Or they might have—they had instruments in the camp. I'm sure that he got some—

RC: Yes, there was a band in the camp.

LT: Yeah, I'm sure he got them to accompany.

RC: Mm hmm.

LT: Yeah.

RC: That's amazing. [Says with surprise]

LT: He actually had public performances too outside of the camp too. Yeah.

RC: Excellent.

LT: Yeah.

RC: And, ah, any photographs survive, uh, the camps, you know, with the, with the, uh, the choir or the musicians?

LT: [Shakes head no.] Just the ones I've seen, uh, you showed me a couple. [Points to Ray].

RC: Mm hmm.

LT: There was, there was one there, the one at, ah...

RC: At Kananaskis.

LT: Kananaskis, yeah. That's—was that the one where he had the little military hat on?
[Gestures to hat on his head]

RC: Uh, that's right, yeah.

LT: I think there was a couple of instruments in that photograph. The Bone Island one there, there's an accordion in that one, but that wasn't the camp, that was... [Points to Ray]

RC: No, that was—

LT: Something else. Yeah.

RC: —before [unclear]. Yeah.

LT: Yeah.

RC: Uh, do you have, uh, any personal animosity towards the Canadian government for what, ah, took place, uh, during the, the time of the conflict—the war between Canada and, uh, Italy and the fact that your dad was interned? Do you have any personal...?

LT: [Shakes head] No.

RC: ...feelings of regret of any kind or are you...

LT: No.

RC: Do you wish they had done—

LT: I, I, I have, yeah, I have—over the years there have been times in my life where I've felt some, um, a little bit of anger. Thinking to myself, no, why couldn't they have just, um, not assumed so much. Do a bit of research. Find out if this guy's really on the level. Find out if he is a threat to the country before you lock him up in jail. [Gestures with hand]

RC: Yeah.

LT: Maybe some of these guys were, but I'm willing to bet that a huge majority of these internees were not a threat. [Gestures with force with hand] And, uh, what really...what really got me was, um...my father had letters, letters of character reference supporting him, um, Cominco, um, Brass, uh, the local MLA [Members of the Legislative Assembly] for the current government, Provincial government at the time, parish Priest, um, members of the—President of the Business Association in Trail. [Lists off names on fingers] All of these letters of character reference, you know.

RC: Yes.

LT: Telling them that this man is an upstanding citizen, would never do anything seditious against the country. He was an excellent citizen. Um, very passionate about being a Canadian, as well as being an Italian. Um, and also the Archbishop wrote him a letter. [Looks up in the air and sighs]

RC: So would this be at the time when he was going to the, uh, the tribunal board say in Petawawa where he was pleading his case? And then they asked him to get, uh, letters of reference? You think that's, uh—is that the connection?

LT: I, I underst—no, I might be wrong, but I understood that this was before being sent over, but I don't think it was. I think he was already there.

RC: Yes, perhaps.

LT: Because they just did this [smacks hands together] wham! Overnight. [Looks up and sighs] So, uh...so, during, during his interview he sat down with a tribunal—now these guys have all these copies, all these letters from the Archbishop and the, everything else. [Says with hands out in front of him] And, um, he—my dad said, "Well"—I don't know if he had an advocate with him or he spoke for himself, I'm not sure. But he said, "Doesn't—does this not convince you that, that I'm not a threat to your country?" And they told their answer was, "You can convince us that you're not a threat by joining the Canadian army and fighting for Canada." My dad said, "Fine, I'll join the army if you guarantee not to send me to Italy because I refuse to fire a rifle at any of my *paesano*, any of my friends." He said, "What if I get sent to my, my home country and my home territory. I'm facing across the barbed wire and I'm facing—"

RC: Yeah.

LT: "—friends and neighbours and relatives." [Shakes head] They said, "We can't guarantee you that." He said, "Good, send me to the camp." [Gestures with arms]

[00:56:02]

RC: Oh...

LT: Yeah.

RC: So that actually was a proposal at some point?

LT: Yup, they proposed that to him yup. "You join the army, you don't have to go to the camp."
[Gestures with thumb and laughs] It was cr—not much of a choice. [Shrugs]

RC: No.

LT: Go over there and get shot at, or stay safe in the camp for the duration of the war. [Laughs and smiles]

RC: [Long pause, Leonard reaches for glass of water and drinks] Uh, one final question if I may, uh, has—did your dad's experience, uh, in the camps in any way, uh...change your outlook on, uh, on life as a Canadian?

LT: [Sighs deeply]

RC: You know, was it something that bothered you and it allowed you to think differently then you might have thought had he not been interned?

LT: It reinforced my desire for, uh—I, I, I'm involved in a world peace organization myself.
[Gestures to his chest] I've been around the world doing these world peace projects for the last, on and off for the last you know, 10, 15 years. Um, and I guess I've always had a touch of that. You know, maybe I wasn't able to—[unclear as Ray speaks in the background]—that empathy,

yeah. So, having heard his stories, having seen what the government did to the Japanese, and to the, you know, they put the Germans in the camps as well, and the Italians. Having seen that and just being completely [bird sound in background] uh, heartbroken by what these men had to go through.

RC: Yes.

LT: For something that they weren't even involved in. Um, it just made me more resolved, uh, in my desire to see society change.

RC: Excellent, yeah.

LT: You know, I didn't see any point in, in harbouring any grudge against the Canadian government because they did what they had to do. And my father understood that.

RC: Mm hmm.

LT: He never complained—I never heard him once complain [waves finger in the air] about the Canadian government for—or the RCMP for sending—he, in fact he said that the RCMP were polite. Yeah, when they took him in they weren't mean. They, they were just, they had their job to do.

RC: Mm hmm.

LT: They didn't mistreat him. Yup.

RC: In reference to your experience in, in this world organization that you made reference to, uh, is there something about that experience that you can share with us? Uh, what was involved?

LT: Um, it's actually um, almost every, almost every state leader in the world knows about this and they know about the research that's being done. Um, and all, all of the directors of penitentiaries across the US [United States] and Canada know about it, they know that this technique can decrease internal crime rate in prisons. It can stop wars, it can reduce uh, crime rates, civic crime rates, national crime rates, um, but they refuse to do anything about it. They refuse to fund it because it sounds too weird. And they're—and they've admitted it! They said—and I'll tell you what it is in a minute. But they've admitted it, they said, "We can't fund this. We know your, we know your record, we know you've stopped wars as a matter, um, um, demonstration." We've sent demonstrations, peop—projects over to Tehran and to, to Thailand. We've actually been able to stop the war while we're there. When guys go back home, their money runs out, the war starts up again. [Gestures with hands] He said, "We know this. We know your, your success rate. But we're, we're elected officials. If we okay an act of Parliament to fund this, this process, we don't get elected because people think we're weird." [Nods] Yeah, that's—theses are the exact words of almost every politician that's been approached on this. They all said the same thing, "No, I'm, I'm an elected official, I can't do it." [Waves hands] So anyway, what it is, it's, um, uh, med—transcendental meditation. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi who came out of the, out of a cave in the Himalayas in 1957 to try and create peace on the planet and he, he worked until...uh, 2000 and, when did he die? 2008...I think. He went from '58 to 2008 doing nothing only, only world peace. To try and create peace on the planet.

RC: Yeah, yeah.

LT: He trained thousands of people including myself on this technique. It's a—it works as a...self-evolutionary tool. When you meditate, you evolve personally, your, your, your, um, you start to reach deeper, and deeper levels of consciousness in your own mind. But also when you do it in a group, um, that growth of consciousness is spread to the people in the area. Regardless of whether they know what you're—you could be locked away in a basement and doing this; nobody knows that you're there. And every person in the area will be affected by it. So, what, what he did in the, in the very beginning he says, "We're going to show you how it reduces crime rate." So he would send some people to Washington, D.C. I was involved in 1985 in the Washington, D.C. project. A few thousand people from all around the world descended on Washington. And, um, we did this yogic—it's called Yogic flying, or levitation. We don't—some people actually levitate, but not everybody does because it takes several years to develop the purity to be able to do that. But regardless of whether you levitate or not, it has an effect on collective consciousness. So what happened in Washington, while we were there for the two months, the crime rate in Washington just plummeted [makes diving motion with hand] and stayed down. And when we left, it just creep—crept back up again. [Makes rising motion with hand] Yup. Same thing in Guelph, Ontario. I was in Guelph Ontario one summer and, um, same thing happened there. And, um, I went to Kosovo or to—I spent, uh, 15, 15 months in Dubrovnik to try and stop the Kosovo war when NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] was carpet-bombing, um—they were more of a villain than, than the Serbs were. The—NATO was the real villain in that war from what I was told by our researchers.

[01:02:19]

RC: Mm hmm.

LT: That they were, um, carpet-bombing on the pretext of trying to find some evil General. And they say, [snaps fingers] "Son of a gun he wasn't there after all, we'll have to carpet-bomb

another village.” But then, uh, Bethlehem metals was supplying all the, all the raw metals for the war machine. Making trillions of dollars. Then they would carpet-bomb a village and then Bethlehem construction would be given the contract to reconstruct the village. You see? And meanwhile, uh, the only thing I can assume from that is that the NATO generals were having their pockets stuffed with, um, you know, bonus money from, from Bethlehem. [Stuffs pocket on shirt and then gestures with his thumb] So anyway, that's a side story. But we went over there to, um, to, um, Kosovo. I was there for 15 months and I left when the project—when the war ended and the war only ended when we got enough...people involved to have an effect. There's actually a mathematical, uh, level that you have to reach in order for it to be effective. It has to be the square root of one percent of the population. [Counts on fingers] If you got a population of 16 million, you want to reduce the crime rate—you're a group, your, your group has to be the square root of one percent of that. 16—and it doesn't amount to a lot people. Maybe 500 people, maybe 1000.

RC: Mm hmm.

LT: But the, the day that, the day that we reached that critical level of people. The next day that war stopped.

RC: My God.

LT: And as our numbers fluctuated [moves hands up and down on a scale], one, there was one time we only had 70 people, 70, 72 people um, and during that time there we had a professor of political science running statistics on our, on our group. He was actually doing a thesis on this. We didn't even know about it until it was over. He told us at the very end that we had been running statistics on what you're doing. And he discovered, using statistics now, he discovered with a great degree of, um, statistical significance that the war atro—the level of

war atrocities, was directly connected to the size of our group. [Moves hands up and down on a scale]

RC: Oh.

LT: When our group reduced in size, there was more rapes, more murders, more bombs. When our group grew in size, that—what do they call it? They called it level of atrocities dropped. [Balancing out hands] And we needed...295 people...minimum to make an effect. And...the guy what's his name General, um, Slobodon Milosevich—Time magazine writes Milosevich would walk into that assembly every day, where the Russians are trying to broker a peace accord. He would walk in and the same thing would happen. Milosevich would come in late, he'd sit down, start swearing and yelling at the Russians, insulting them, "I will never sign this peace accord!" and he'd walk out. And that was the meeting for the day. Next day same thing. And then as Time Magazine reports. One day Milosevich came in, sat down and the Russians were cringing for another verbal attack. He said, "Let's have the contract. Where do I sign?" And the very—the previous day before that, um, that's when we reached 305 people. You see? Uh, now this might sound crazy. [Gestures with hands] This might sound like I'm talking off the top of my head, just sort of dreaming, but like I say, this political science uh, professor of statistics he was running you know, he was running the probability factors into our, into our, uh, cause and effect and whatnot. He said, he said, "I can say with absolute certainty, with 96 degree of certainty that your actions caused these different fluctuations in the war."

[01:06:17]

RC: Yeah.

LT: But, [puts hand up] we'll never...get credit for it. I don't—no one—none of us expect credit for it. [Gestures with both hands up] I'm telling you because it's a personal story.

RC: Yeah.

LT: And it doesn't matter who gets credit or not, if you can create world peace... [shrugs, shakes head and slaps leg] that's all you want.

RC: Well, thank you very much for sharing that. I, uh, I'm fascinated by it.

LT: Yeah. It's an interesting topic, really. [Reaches for water and drinks]

RC: Thank you very much. That's brilliant.

LT: Is there anything—

[Fades out at 01:06:47]

[Fades in at 01:06:48]

RC: Would you mind explaining, uh, how your, your, your, your father, uh, was treated by the wider Italian community in Trail when he returned home?

LT: Um, as far as I know—uh, again from Danny G[?]
—he was treated quite well. But, I think, I think there was some residual, um, resentment towards him that lasted for several years. And I'll tell you, I tell you why I believe that is because, um, somewhere, somewhere in the early '60s he was nominated by the Trail, um, citizen of the year committee. He was nominated to be

citizen of the year. And, um, now I don't know, I don't know if this is, um—you know when you get married—I don't know if they do this in the Catholic Church, I don't think they do—if anybody can tell why, if there's any reason this couple cannot get married, etcetera, etcetera.

RC: Yeah.

LT: Well, there's one guy that took it upon himself to, to dig up some dirt on him. It was, ah, he was a rival travel agent. Now my father was a travel agent pretty well to the Italian community. And I guess this guy probably maybe wanted his business, you know, wanted to take over his clientele or something like that. But I don't know exactly what happened but, um, he brought up some dirt, some political dirt, which turned out not to be true on...my father. And this, this effectively squashed his nomination for citizen of the year. He was pretty much a shoe in. [Gestures with arm] Um, and this was just a formality to kind of, "Is anybody—can anybody tell me why this man should not be called—named a citizen of the year?" Well this particular guy—I won't tell you his name because there's relatives of his watching this movie maybe—um...he, he bent over backwards to go to city council. To go to this, uh, heritage counsel who, who do this nomination to, uh, to tell him about this, this guy's not to be—this Tenisci, Fred Tenisci, is not to be trusted. He created a scandal that was really a, a massive lie. He turned, uh, something very minor, twisted the facts. [Gestures with hands and throws hands up in the air.]

RC: Ha!

LT: Yup. So he never got to be citizen of the year that year. [Laughs]

RC: My goodness.

LT: Yeah, he was nominated again a few years later he was nominated, but it was a very, very close run between him and another fellow. Who, who, you know, they all deserved to be citizen of the year, but you know. [Shrugs] This one particular—and we, we all felt that it had to do with the fact that he was an Italian and that he had been in the camp and there had been suspicion of potential sedition maybe in the eyes of the RCMP or the Canadian government or whatever. So I think this guy just sort of dug up his past as a, as a suspected fascist or practicing fascist or whatever, yeah and that lead to his, uh, yeah this tragedy.

RC: Wow. Again, thank you very much for, uh, uh, sharing that information...with us. Thank you.

LT: [Nods]

[Fades out at 01:10:06]

[End of interview]