

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

**DATE OF INTERVIEW:** June 19, 2011

**LOCATION OF INTERVIEW:** Montreal, QC

**NAME OF INTERVIEWEE:** Sandra Corbo

**NAME OF INTERVIEWER:** Joyce Pillarella

**NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER:** Joyce Pillarella

**TRANSCRIBED BY:** Louanne Pillarella

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**PROJECT NOTE:**

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

**ABSTRACT**

Sandra Corbo was two years old and living in Toronto with her Scottish mother and Italian father, when two of her family members from Montreal were interned. Her uncle, Nicola Corbo, and grandfather, Achille Corbo, were interned at Camp Petawawa for 12 months and 23 months respectively. As a result, Sandra's family was uprooted, with her parents having to move to Montreal to help the rest of the family. Sandra fondly recalls growing up in an Italian household, while she lived with her paternal grandmother for a short time. However, when her grandmother became sick and was hospitalized, Sandra's world turned upside down. She was sent to an orphanage as her parents worked and could not afford to keep her. Since her grandfather, Achille, was one of the founders of the Sainte Giuseppe Orphanage, her parents believed that Sandra would be given extra care and attention. This was not the case as Sandra recalls the nightmares and fears that she endured as a child, stemming from her awful experience at the orphanage.

In the interview, Sandra also touches on growing up in Montreal, hanging out with her schoolmates, and attending prestigious schools. She states that her uncle and grandfather were different men when they were released from camp. Likewise, she also comments how her family members – her aunt, her uncles, and her dad – were negatively affected by the internment of their father and brother. The internment experience proved to have negative, life-long effects on Sandra and in a way shaped who she is today. She continues to do her part in educating the public and the younger generation about this event in Canadian history. She hopes to see something built in the Memorial Chamber in the Peace Tower in Ottawa, acknowledging the “falsely” accused Italian Canadian internees and/or enemy aliens. She also wishes that the Canadian government would send a Certificate of Exoneration – “of not guilty verdict” – to the families of those who were interned.

#### **INTERVIEW**

**SC: Sandra Corbo, interviewee**

**JP: Joyce Pillarella, interviewer**

**AR: Adriana Rinaldi, videographer**

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 0:00:11.8]

JP: Ok, it's uh June 19, 2011. I'm interviewing Sandra Corbo. I'm Joyce Pillarella. And uh Sandra is the niece of uh Nicola Corbo, who was interned, and the granddaughter of Achille Corbo, who was also interned.

SC: Right.

JP: Okay, so we're just--for identification.

SC: Uh huh, okay.

JP: Alright, so I, um--why don't we just start uh, Sandra, just tell us a little bit about your family? Like the members of your family. When did uh, your grandfather come to Canada more or less and--

SC: I believe my grandfather came to Canada in the early 1900s. Uh, he arrived in New York and they travelled up to Montreal. Uh, I don't know how long it took them, where they stopped, but I know that they arrived in Montreal. My grandmother, I believe came over on the same boat. [Says shaking her head] I'm not sure. I'm not sure of any of this.

JP: But Achille Corbo came with his wife, alone--the, he, he didn't have children at the time.

SC: Uh no, because all my, uh, the--my father who was the eldest [Smiles and exhales softly] uh was born here and all the others were born here.

JP: So--

SC: --My father was born in 1905.

JP: So Alessandro was your father?

SC: Right.

JP: And he was born in 1905.

SC: Yup.

JP: And then afterwards there was?

SC: Ni--uh. You want--

JP: --The names of the--

SC: --Nicola was born [Inhales] 190...6 or 7, I'm not sure. And then there was...[Says counting with her fingers] I think Aida, then I'm not sure of any of the--I think Guido, Joe, Mario, and be--ah, Dino.

JP: So there were seven children?

SC: Yeah. There were seven children.

JP: Okay, uh--

SC: --And my, my own personal family there were just three of us. My mom, my dad. My mom who was uh, Winifred Agnes Sutherland from Toronto. She met my dad in, in that area. My father was working for a company in, I think it was Guelph, Ontario. And that's where they met, met in 1936. And they were married in 1937 in New York City, St. John the Divine! Church. And that caused quite a commotion in the Italian family--

JP: Why?

SC: --Because they were not married in a Catholic church so the marriage was not really [Clears

throat exaggeratedly] valid! And uh, I think that they had a ceremony in 1941 or '42 just to validate. Yeah, for the Italian, for the Catholic family. [Someone sneezes in the background] And uh, well, I was born here in Montreal. At the age of nine months, I think, we moved to Toronto, where my father was working. And we stayed there until 1941 when uh, my grandfather was interned in Petawawa. And my dad had to come back [Sniffs] [Says while breaking up and tearing] to help the family. [Pause]

JP: So...when they were--when the men were picked up, your, your grandfather and your uncle uh were picked up. At this point, your dad is in Toronto.

SC: Right.

JP: 'kay. And you were, you were a little girl.

SC: I was a little girl. And he, he escaped being picked up because--

JP: [Unclear]

SC: --Yeah. My dad escaped being picked up because he was in Toronto and that, n--under the-- what I understood, was that it was normally the head of family and the eldest son who were interned in specific families. Now, I didn't know at that time where they got the information. I just know that uh, they went [Makes noise] off the street. And they were gone. There was no explanation to the family.

JP: Before we get into the internment, what happened with your family, I just, I wanted to, um, give a just uh, a brief biography of uh, who Achille was. What, what was he doing? And Sa--not Sandra, your dad, but uh Nicola, uh what was he doing in Montreal? His occupations?

[0:04:59.1]

SC: Well my grandfather was uh...tailor and my uncle was a notary. One of the first Italian notaries in the community and um, [Shrugs] ss--you know that's about all that I can really tell you because at that point in time, I didn't get to see them very much. You know, being in Toronto, uh...I got to see more my mom, my mom's people but...

JP: Um, their involvement as far as the Italian community with afterwards, what did you know--

SC: Okay, what I found out--

JP: [Unclear]--

SC: --What I found out was that my grandfather f--founder, one of the founders of the Italian church, Notre Dame la Défence [Notre Dame de la Défence]. He also was a co-founder of the orphanage, St. Giuseppe. And he was one of the people who was able to convince the Quebec government to allow the Italian schools to teach Italian. I mean and this was really something because there was only the English school or the French school. And it was uh, premier and I'm proud of it!

JP: Yeah, because there's a lot of people that we've, we've uh spoken to that were able to get a trilingual education.

SC: Mmm. Yeah unfortunately, I didn't get it! [Chuckles]

JP: But he was able to pay for [Unclear] very uh different.

SC: I also know that he was uh, a very important member of the Ss--Sons of Italy, the Order of the Sons of Italy and was decorated by the king of Italy to whom he had an allegiance. I mean, he was proud of Victor Emmanuel, you know. He also believed in what Mussolini was doing for the Vatican and bringing back the states to Rome, which had been confiscated. And that was one of the reasons why he supported them and I know that they had collected all their jewellery and sent it over to Italy to help Mussolini and his endeavor. And I don't think ever, ever, ever that my grandfather had anything against England or Canada. He was just--his home and native land was still--he was born in Italy and uh he loved his Italy! You know. He loved Canada too. And he was very upset that Canada would treat him the way it did.

JP: So your--how do you--your, your--'cause Achille Corbo's name, I mean you see it at the church.

SC: Hmm mmm.

JP: It's in the plaque in the [Unclear] Madonna della Difesa and like you said, he had contributed to the institutions--

SC: Hmm mmm.

JP: --and the Italians needed at the time when the colony was very young. What do you attribute his ability to have such, such success in bringing about such fundamental changes?

SC: I really--I think he was a very patient man uh he was very politically astute. I mean the discussions at home, at Christmas time, was always politics. I mean we had uh one liberal, we had one union nationale, and we had a conservative! And I mean, that's where I learned my politics. Um, I can remember from the time I was five years old. [Unclear] Talk of uh, Sir Wood,

uh Si--Sir Wilfrid Lavier [Laurier?] and talk of Omer [?]-I forget what his last name is--Ama--but uh it was always politics and who was good and who wasn't good and who, who, this one was working for. I know I had an uncle who worked for Geo--Paul Sauvé. I had another uncle that worked for Pauli Me [?]-Georgie Milatan [?]. Yeah, the notary. He worked for Georgie Milatan [?]. And the, the little guy, Bernard Dino, he worked for Sauvé, then he worked for Daniel Johnson and so on. And I mean, that's where I got my political education. And believe me, I was very politicized. [Chuckles, JP also chuckles in unison]

JP: Did the politics, that you're talking about, it was Canadian politics?

SC: Yup.

JP: Did they ever talk about Italian uh [Unclear]--

SC: --Uh, they might, they might have talked of it. But it would have been in Italian and I wouldn't have understood.

JP: Okay.

SC: Plus the fact that uh, we were little kids so we were always off somewhere playing.

JP: Alright.

SC: Yeah.

JP: So Nicola Corbo--



SC: [Sniffs]

JP: --were the first uh notaries here in Montreal to in [?] Italian community [Unclear] How did he, how did he come about? This position. So he was able to study here. Do you know where he went to school? What happened?

SC: Hmm.

JP: What's his story?

[0:10:11.5]

SC: No, I don't remember where he went to school. Uh—

JP: --He was well known.

SC: Yeah.

JP: --in the Italian community.

SC: He might have gone [Sighs] I don't know if he went to the Jesuits. I don't know if he could-- my grandfather could afford that. Um [Shakes head] No, I can't, I can't answer that question.

JP: So, ok. We did pretty much uh, an overall and that's enough.

SC: [Laughs]

JP: But getting to--it's June 10, 1940.

SC: Yes.

JP: The RCMPs--the Canadian government's coming down, they're rallying up the Italian men on the streets and their homes and their places of work. Um, Achille, your grandfather, and Nicola, your uncle, they're rounded up on that date as far as you remember? I mean [Unclear]--

SC: --I think so. Yeah. Uh, uh, yeah, they were, they were rounded up at the very beginning.

JP: Okay so then, it would be that day.

SC: You know.

JP: Uh, your father is--

SC and JP [in unison]: in Toronto--

JP: --at this point. They get arrested. What happens next now in your family at this point? Who's it, who's at home? 'Cause you were at St. Denis at the time?

SC: No, I was--

JP: [Unclear] I'm sorry your family was living--

SC: --They were living on St. Denis. I don't know what happened there. All I know is that that card that my grandfather sent my dad in 1941, I guess it was, wondering why he hadn't heard

from his son for over 14 months when he had been interned as an innocent in the, in the Petawawa concentration camp, as a Prisoner of War. He didn't understand how come his son hadn't gotten in touch with him.

JP: His son being Alessandro--

SC: --Um, yeah--

JP: --your father.

SC: My father. Alessandro. Ah--the only I--explanation I can give for that was that when my dad found out, he and my mom worked to try and see if they couldn't do something about it because uh my grandmother had a friend in--Arthur Meighan, who at one point had been interim Prime Minister of Canada, and she tried through him to see if she couldn't get my grandfather released. And I think that the fact that they had to find a job for my dad, had to pack up everything, tie up loose ends in Toronto and move to Montreal, ah--uh probably [Shrugs] is the explanation why my dad never got in touch with his father. I can't believe that he didn't get in touch with his mother and his family. No. Ah, but [Shrugs] I don't remember that um, I was too young! I was only, eh, '40, I was only two years old.

JP: So...when did your family, and why did your family leave Toronto and come back to Montreal?

SC: My fath--m--my family came to Montreal 'cause they wanted to help out the family. They, they, there was only my dad, and my Uncle Bernard Dino, who were able to give full support to the family. Bernard Dino left his Sainte Marie, he was at Collège Sainte-Marie, he left his studies. He was in the second year of his Bachelor of Arts, I believe. He left his studies and got a

job at the Greyhound bus people. Working, I don't know if he--I think he may have driven the bus for awhile in order to support his family. And my dad, my dad when we were in Toronto, was sending clothes and sending money to support the family.

JP: And then, at one point, he had to move back--

SC: He had to move back.

JP: --because your grandmother at this point is alone in the house?

SC: Yeah.

JP: Ah--well she was at home [Unclear]

SC: No, she was--she had--she, sh--

JP: -- her husband was gone.

SC: Yeah, her husband was gone and she had the responsibility of three children at home anyway. I don't know if, if Guido was working and Joe was working but I'm not sure whether they were living at home or whether they were, I don't know, but I wouldn't--I would believe that they would be living at home, being bachelors.

JP: Right, so you have Bernard Dino now who has to work - he's pulled out of school.

SC: [Says counting with her fingers] Yeah, Mario was--

JP: Mario.

SC: [Says counting with her fingers] --went out of school. Was pulled out--

JP: [Unclear] out of school. Joe, was already working.

SC: [Says counting with her fingers] Guido was already working.

JP: Guido was already working and your father--

SC: Was working.

JP: --Alessandro comes back from Toronto, Montreal and he has to work to support the family.

SC: Yeah.

JP: So, all these people now, how big was that house on St. Denis?

SC: I don't, I don't know. I never saw it. I don't remember it.

JP: Okay.

SC: I don't remember.

JP: Judging from the addresses, probably one of those duplexes, I would imagine.

[0:14:58.5]

SC: It was a corner lot.

JP: 'Kay.

SC: And uh it was, it was big enough for them anyway.

JP: And, your mom is there also?

SC: [Says with a nod] Yeah. We moved in--we were living together for awhile until we found a place to stay. Uh, we moved to Verdun, but I'm not sure. I think we moved to Verdun in '42? [Pause] So between '40 and '42, we might have been living with my grandmother. I do remember having breakfast every morning with my uncle before he went to work. And we had the good old Italian breakfast of baked black bread and coffee, café au lait!

JP: This was the uncle that worked at the Greyhound.

SC: [Says nodding] Yeah. Yeah, he was my, my favourite uncle. He was my godfather. And he was my adoration. I followed him around like a puppy dog!

JP: [Laughs softly]

SC: [Laughs softly]

JP: [Clears throat] So...your uncle...

SC: Hmm mmm.

JP: Nicola, is released right away pretty much.

SC: Right.

JP: He stayed--he was away for a month or two. 'Cause it just said, in the documents, he was released that summer? [Unclear]--

SC: --Yeah in June. He was released--

JP: --Same year or was it the year after?

SC: [Exhales softly]

JP: I don't--

SC: --No he was released in ah--it might have been a year--

JP: --[Unclear]--

SC: --It was a year after.

JP: So he stayed a year in the internment camp.

SC: Yeah.

JP: And um—

SC: I don't know what happened to his practice--

JP: [Unclear]--

SC: --Because at that point he was practicing notary. So I don't know what happened to his practice. Uh...And I know he came out, he was not uh--he was not the same man at all. According--

JP: --People have changed.

SC: He changed. He was uh, he was pretty embittered.

JP: How did you perceive that as a young person? How did you see the difference? Or how did he act around you and your family?

SC: Aaahh...uh he was, it, it, it--I can't explain that. I just...it's almost as if he was out to prove something. [Shrugs shoulders. Pause]

JP: Huh.

SC: You know, he always, he, he was always pushing us to go to school. Study hard, save my money. You know? But from what I gather, from what I heard, uh via different members of the family, was that, he was not, not the same person at all. Even his uh, wife, found that he had changed a lot. He was, he had lost a lot of his charm and his...

JP: Well he had been interned for a year.



SC: Yeah. [Nods] And I mean, they, they weren't, they weren't badly treated there uh...They, they had pretty well a run of the camp. I mean I can remember some pretty wild stories about them being told to plant the garden around the, the [Chuckles] the camp. And what they ended up doing was planting the [Says in a sing-song way] red, white, and green all around, so that the Italian flag was [Says in a sing-song way] all around the camp. And another thing they did was in the mess hall. They found a way of making dye, and they took some old cloth, and they dyed it [Says in a sing-song way] red, white, and green and hung it in the mess hall. And the [Unclear] had to come in and take it down. Ah, those were stories that I was told.

JP: They wanted to keep their uh--

SC: Ah! They wanted to keep their identity. And believe you me, I'm going to Petawawa this summer and I am planting an Italian flag right square in the middle of the camp! [Nods]

JP: Oh, good for you.

SC: And I have a friend whose son is asking to be posted in Petawawa, he's with the Canadian army, he's over in Afghanistan right now. And we're going to call on him and he is going to escort us onto the premises and I am planting a great big, green, white and red flag. [Nods]

JP: Why is that important to do that for you?

SC: Because I think the whole thing was bad! There was no reason for this. My grandfather was a good man. He did a lot for Canada. He paid his taxes. He didn't go on welfare. He never had to get money from anybody. He earned his living his own life. He was--even menaced by the mafia. So was my dad for that point. You know. They were--I know my father told me he was walking down St. Lawrence Street one day and, one chap came up beside him and said, "Get

out of here Corbo. Mafia's looking for you." I know my grandfather refused to go on strike and he was threatened. They, they told him they would break his legs.

[0:20:23.9]

JP: On strike when he worked uh...

SC: When he was working as an, as a tailor. Now, I think that was before the concentration camp but you know, he kept--he had a clean nose. He was a good man! He was very religious. He took his church seriously. I mean, he was uh, marrier for years and years and he would go and he would count the money and he was--he made sure things were done they should be. He was proud of that church...He loved it. I mean I was baptized there. It, it's, it's all part of the family history and when you look at the church and you know the story of all the paintings up there, there's the whole story of the, of, of the Little Italy here in Montreal. That's, that's my heritage!

JP: Yeah.

SC: You know and the, and the things that I remember is though, we used to make wine. My grandfather used to make wine down in the--downstairs and the--and the big!--I can remember the big barrels! [Makes hand gestures] And going [Makes sniffing sound and action] But his wine was good. And my grandmother used to make all her sausages. I can remember, the sausages hanging. I mean, and these are--I was just a little, little kid. But I can remember, you know, all the different things hanging. I remember watching her kill a chicken in the backyard! Or going to the Jean-Talon ma-- Jean-Talon market. Those are things [Touches forehead with both hands] that I remember from when I was staying with her.

JP: And, she, she did everything from scratch at home? All the [Unclear]--

SC: --Yeah. Oh yeah, oh yeah. Oh yeah! I used to roll the [Says while making rolling hand gestures] macaroni for her. I mean she taught me how to roll the [Says while making rolling hand gestures] spa--the, the spaghetti. And oh yeah, and I mean that pot was on the stove--it went on the stove at 5 o'clock in the morning. And oh-ho, oh yeah no, no the food! Gotta say [Nods] that we didn't, we--

JP: --Did you speak any Italian at home?

SC: I spoke Italian, English, and French when I was a little girl. [Shrugs] Because it was the only way that I could communicate. My grandfather spoke English and Italian and my grandmother spoke French and Italian. And uh, so the only way that I can communicate with them was...in Italian! And [Shrugs] unfortunately, I didn't--I wasn't able to keep it up.

JP: Did you feel Italian growing up or Canadian?

SC: I don't know what I felt. I had a very, I had a very mixed feelings because I loved my Sutherlands, my grandparents. And I loved, I adored my uncles who were in the army, and then--eh one was in the navy and one was in the air force. But I also adored my uncles [Siren wails in the background] on my father's side of the family. So to me, there was really no, no difference, you know? They were good people. [Someone sneezes in the background] I could-- [Pause] [Siren wails louder in the background] I got it [Smiles, chuckles].

JP: Still a little close there, um.

SC: I know, I can remember taking the train to Toronto from Montreal and all the soldiers on it. And it never dawned on me that they were fighting against my grandparents. [Shrugs] In the uh--eh, it, it was only later as I learned history that I, I realized, hey, you know, it was against Hitler. Yeah. [Nods] It was mainly against Hitler. And um...

JP: 'Cause uh, 'cause your family on your mom's side were fighting for the Canadian army?

SC: Yeah.

JP: They were fighting for Canada.

SC: Yeah. Yeah, one of my uncles was uh, he, he was on Juno Beach. He was in the second uh, the second debarquement [?] on Juno Beach. He was escorting, uh, getting uh the ship with all the boys on, into, into uh, onto the beaches. And he was being fired on by the Germans. I just discovered that this year. Because he made um, he made a thing for Veterans Canada, Heroes Remember, where he talked about his experiences during the war. Uh you know, eh, but at that point in time, I loved them all. They were all my family! And it didn't really--I was a Canadian. I was--I had a lot of things, you know. And I think part of my charm was my English family, was that I was so Italian, so spontaneous, so warm and loving, you know. I mean, I'd run and jump in their arms and they--the Anglos are not like that. They're, they're, they're a lot--not colder but, less demonstrative? And I think that's one of the things my granddad loved about me was that I was--I just loved them to bits.

[0:25:31.2]

JP: The house, with the, the Italian house that you grew up in, um did it have things that were Italian in the house?

SC: Oh yeah, everything.

JP: What was Italian in that home?

SC: [Chuckles] Well, the, the, the... I don't know...dishes. It, it was the way it was run. I mean there were a lot of linens that I know that came from Italy uh but it was the way that it was run. It was uh, an Italian home, and you had the smell of Italian cooking. You know and you had the wine, and, and there was always food on the table and there was always a lot of cheese and...uh, uh, I don't know how to... [Shrugs]

JP: It just felt--

SC: --Yeah it felt Italian. I mean, I know, my grandmother always had her big apron on. And so did my Aunt Aida, you know. The--they all had these great, big aprons. Eh, but it just--it felt. And it smelled Italian.

JP: So--

SC: --And in our position to--uh, it might have been a little bit more ornate. You know, have...I know that they had on, on the sideboard, they used to have these beautiful Venetian glass wine decanter with the little, the little glasses and uh, yeah I guess, if I sat down and really thought about it, I could find a whole bunch of things. But it was, it was an Italian home! [Laughs] What can I say!? [Laughs]

JP: Yeah, up until the time that they were interned, people were working, they were going to school.

SC: Hmmmm. [Nods]

JP: Life was good even though it was the Depression. I would imagine—

SC: --Yeah life was good. [Nods]

JP: --life was, was pretty good for them--

SC: --Yeah, yeah--

JP: And they had, one son was a notary and the father's working.

SC: Hmmmm mmm.

JP: And yeah.

SC: No, I don't think they suffered that much from the Depression. Uh [Pause] g--my father at the--the Depression was what? 1929?

JP: Uh yeah. '30s I think.

SC: Yeah, okay. So my father was in New York at that point studying at the New York School of Design, but he was making a contribution to the family, from his paychecks when he was working. He was also able to have a lifestyle, I mean he was going to the opera, eh, yeah but that was his thing. I mean he would have a hotdog for lunch and then he'd go to the opera! Uh, or he'd uh hang around outside and some people would come and say, "Oh you wanna come? Come with me!" So, you know, he always found a ticket to get to the opera. He also had an

uncle that lived uh, I think it was his Uncle Vincenzo, who lived outside of New York City, and he used to go and spend a lot of time there with them. Um, so the--life was good.

JP: So, yeah, the, that's why I'm just trying to get an idea of the family--

SC: Yeah, I know.

JP: It was okay, because even the fact that [Clears throat] a couple of kids were still able to go to school--

SC: Yeah—

JP: --and [Unclear]--

SC: --Yeah well--

JP: --higher level of education.

SC: Yeah.

JP: And then that, they wouldn't--they didn't need to be at home to work, or rather working to support the family.

SC: Well, my--I think my grandma--I don't know, I don't know that much about my grandfather's family. I do know that my grandmother's family was uh, her father was a professional. He was a doctor and I think that they had money so it would facilitate a lot of things. Yeah. I mean, it was 'shared share like' wasn't it in those days. [Shrugs]

JP: [Says softly] Yeah. So now at this point, you're living in Montreal, and um, and what happens? The men are still interned and with your grandmother is looking after you um--

SC: --Yeah, then my grandmother ha--was diabetic and she had to be hospitalized so at that point in time, I was placed in the orphanage because they figured that my grandparents being patrons, I would probably be treated with kindness and delicacy.

JP: This is the Sainte Giuseppe?

SC: [Nods] The Sainte Giuseppe Orphanage. And uh, yeah, no, the, the, the nuns did their job, I mean--

JP: And you were how old then?

SC: I was...I couldn't have been much more than four or five.

[0:30.12.5]

JP: So they had to place you in the orphanage because?

SC: Because my mother had to go to work. My father wasn't earning enough money at that point in time. So they--she had to supplement. Plus the fact that her brother had been killed in a plane crash. He was uh, a pilot officer, training other pilots to go over to Britain to fight and he was on an instrument checking flight when the plane crashed and he was killed. And they thought that there might have been a little bit of sabotage from the Germans, so she got a job working at Fairchild's [Fairchild Aircraft Ltd], who was one of the ones that were producing the



Canadian planes for overseas. And she was working with ferry command, which was the operations sending the planes over. They would send pilots flying the planes over to England.

JP: Hmmm mmm.

SC: Because it was cheaper that way. And uh, so she was working there to try and discover what was going on. So she had to put me somewhere and they all thought that this was the best place for me. They thought really, that uh I would get good care, better than if I had a babysitter, and it would be cheaper. I mean that was, one of the reasons they needed the money for the family.

JP: It all happened as a result--

SC and JP in unison: --of the--

JP: --men being interned--

SC: --Yeah--

JP: --and your grandmother being sick--

SC: --Yeah, yeah. That was a consequence. A direct consequence. And my life at the orphanage was not uh, I was not happy there. I got to see my mother once a month.

JP: Because?

SC: Because that was the rule.

JP: And uh, you know, I stood out because I always had fancy clothes. And uh, you know. Oh well, my mother made my clothes. And I mean, I, I, I wore little, little socks. I didn't wear the long stockings and the...I had the nice fancy shoes. But uh, you know, once I got in there, I got, I got wearing the same clothes the kids were wearing. I--

JP: --How did you feel when that happened?

SC: I wasn't happy. [Says shaking her head] I was not happy! I was not happy! I hated that place.

JP: Do--you, you knew why you were there--

SC: --I didn't know why I was there. I just knew that I was there.

JP: It was--

SC: --Well, I mean, the, the reason I don't know why, it's a [Touches forehead with hand] logical reason, the con--conclusion that I drew, from all the facts that I knew, that mama, mom had no choice. She had to work and it was not feasible to hire a babysitter.

JP: And--

SC: --So.

JP: --With that, you realized everything afterwards, you saying that when you went to the orphanage you didn't know why you were going to the orph--Did they tell you your, your grandmother was sick?

SC: I don't remember.

JP: Okay.

SC: I don't remember. I, I--the only reason I knew my grandmother was sick was because my dad told me. I don't, I don't remember when he told me. Uh...I might have been...oh it's well, while my mom was alive so I was under the age of 17, 'cause mom--

JP: --How--How old did you stay at the orphanage?

SC: I was there from...Well, five six. [Says nodding] I was there for two and half years.

JP: Do you want to tell us what it was like at the orphanage, like, were there, were there other girls that had been there for the same reason like you or were they--

SC [Talking over JP who is unclear]: I think my cousin was there. My two cousins were there, Maria and Rachelle. Uh, they came a year later and I think there was--well there, that's another story that I don't think I should uh discuss but there was family problems there because of the internment, again. The family got upset and my uncle, my uncle was part of the entertainment troop, he played the clarinet. So he was off and his wife couldn't take it. And uh, she was living at home with my grand--oh with my aunt, and I, see I don't remember that part. I just know that she couldn't take it so she took off. So the kids were left and they got put in the orphanage with me.

JP: And what was life like, with day to night, at the orphanage?

SC: [Exhales] [Whispers] I don't remember. I just remember recess when we got cookies - Mr. Christy or whoever. I think it was David, he used to send great big barrels of cookies and we would get our cookies, you know, and uh...I don't know if it was a glass of milk? Uh, I think it was a glass of milk. No, we were well fed. I mean we had wonderful pizza. The, the meals, I remember was good. I remember the, the bread, and the black bread, the homemade bread, and pizza. I loved that big, thick pizza. The real pizza! [Says laughing softly] With just a little bit of herbs on top and uh, the rest [Someone sneezes in the background], the rest I don't remember. I remember going to bed at night and I remember being a real scamp. I used to cause all kinds of problems because I would wander in the night and I would crawl under the beds and scare the lay--living daylights out of the kids. And then I'd jump in bed with my cousin, or I'd hide in the bathroom and when somebody came in, I would pop out. And I would go, "Booo!" To the point, where they had to take me to their core--choir practice. They would take me and sit me beside one of the girls who kept me quiet. While they did their choir practice and then when they went to bed, they'd bring me back to bed.

[0:36:09.3]

JP: Did the mother superior or the nuns um, ever talk to you about eh, the--what was happening with the--

SC: --[Shakes head] No--

JP: --uh [Unclear]--

SC: --Never. Never--

JP: --eh your family--

SC: --Never. Never. Never--

JP: --They never brought it up or asked you—

SC: --No--

JP: --how you felt?

SC: No. The only thing they wanted was, "Parlez Italiano!" And I'd say, "No! I speak English!"  
[Nods] And I think that's when I started resenting being Italian.

JP: It was a way to...

SC: [Nods] Hmm.

JP: ...rebel against being in the orphanage?

SC: Yeah, yeah, no, I, I--

JP: --How did the nuns treat you in overall?

SC: Uh, some of them were nice. There were a couple that--there were--well, there was one that was really not very nice. She was a nasty number. She used to grab my feet when I was going up the stairs and make fun of me. The, the others, they did what they could. I mean, they were, they were contradina [?]. You know, and they were used to boys and they were kind of rough and you got cuffed on the ear or you got uh, you know a good smack with the strap if you

stepped out of line. And I got my fair share of it. 'Cause I was not, no, I was not a happy kid! And when I'm not happy, I'm bad. I'm [Nods] I cause trouble! [Nods]

JP: That monthly visit with your mom.

SC: Hmm.

JP: And [Unclear]--

SC: -- [Says nodding] I was--I went home.

JP: --Oh you were able to--

SC: --Yeah, they would come and get me on a Friday night and they would bring me back on the Sunday. And I would create havoc at home because I would have these horrible nightmares. And I--Oh! I was terrified! I mean, I, I, I learned all kinds of s--silly stories about the boogeyman and you know, if you're not good, this is what's gonna happen to you and I would go home terrified. I was--I wouldn't go to bed unless all the lights were on. I was terrified of lightning. [Nods] It took my mother ye--I'm still don't like lightning! I mean, I, I, I don't show my fear because I have a daughter and I have four grandsons. And, I don't--they, they have no fear of it but hmm mmm, I don't like it. Still don't--and I'm still don't like the dark. I still have, you know, fear that there's something lurking out that's--I mean we had to inspect under my bed! Every night my mom had to get a flashlight and look under the bed and say, "See? There's nothing there." And all the lights had to be in. And I'd wake up in the middle of the night and I'd go and jump in her bed. Until she took me out of there. That's what it did to me. Uh, I was not happy.

JP: Well, besides the fears it sounded like it also created a lot of anger?

SC: [Says nodding] Yup, I was very angry.

JP: 'Cause you really had no control?

SC: [Says nodding] No. No. No and I, I can remember at one point going home and looking uh, my mom and dad were cooking, and I was standing in the hallway looking in at them. And I said to myself, "They really don't need me here anyway. Do they?" You know, and I was what, maybe five years old. Doesn't matter whether I'm here or not. [Pause, nods] And I rebelled a lot, because I used to--she would put me to bed, and in those days you didn't have all these fancy screens. You had uh, mesh...or cloth mesh, and I used to cut a hole in it. And I would sneak out and go and play! And all of a sudden, you know mother would come to the door and she'd say, "I heard your voice out there! What are you doing? You're supposed to be in bed." And she'd put me to bed. And we'd sew up the screen and next day I'd do the same thing. Eh-- I got into mischief. Eh--it carried me through because uh, I can remember when they took me out of the orphanage and they put me in a very classy girl school. And I was seven years old. I used to travel from Verdun to Guy and St. Catherine, by bus. And I would never come home. [Chuckles]

[0:40.34.5]

JP: What do you mean?

SC: I would go and stay with my girlfriend. Then, I'd phone my mom and I'd say, "Okay, I'm at so-and-so's house. Come and get me." 'Cause I didn't want to go home. Why would I want to go home for?

JP: But you would go to school?

SC: Yeah, oh I, I like school.

JP: What school did you end up going to?

SC: Miss Edgar's and Miss Cramp's.

JP: Oh--

SC: Uh.

JP: E.C.S.

SC: Uh. [Nods]

JP: That's uh--

SC: --Uh huh. [Nods]--

JP : --[Unclear]--

SC: --Uh huh well--yeah.

JP: Very high end.

SC: Yeah. [Pause, nodding] I went there and then we moved to Grommer [?]

JP: How were your parents able to put you uh in school there afterwards?



SC: [Laughs]

JP: They worked?

SC: Yeah, they worked. Yeah. They saved. They did without.

JP: They made all that sacrifices.

SC: [Says nodding] Yup. Hmm mmm. Yup, no my dad made a lot of sacrifices. His whole life. I mean he paid for my uh, my Bachelor of Arts. I went to uh College Gesù du Maritz Marie [?] and then I went to Madame Bougoiré.

JP: So--

SC: --He paid for all that. [Shrugs]

JP: You went from being in the orphanage [Unclear] in the orphanage--

SC: [Coughs] Excuse me.

JP: --girls that--were there girls from Italy? Who was in the orphanage? Who were the, the regular...?

SC: It was...my understanding that a lot of the kids were orphans from I don't know where. I think some of them might have come from Italy. I'm not sure.

JP: You never made friends with the other girls?

SC: [Says shaking her head] No. Oh no, I used to get in a fight.

JP: Were the girls tough in there?

SC: It was mainly the boys. I didn't--I, I don't...I don't remember. [Says shaking her head] I really don't remember. Gonna have to stop. [Begins to cough]

[Pause]

JP: Ok Sandra we were just talking about the, the orphanage 'cause you were saying, some of the kids, you think they were from Italy and there were boys and girls.

SC: That was my understanding. [Shrugs] You know, uh where I got that, I don't know.

JP: And this orphanage was in the--

SC: --It was in Montreal. It was on St. Andre between St. Catherine and I don't know, maybe Dorchester Street. It was right there ay, ay in the center. And I remember D-Day. [Says in a sing-song voice] Oh do I remember the cars honking and people screaming and ha! The jubilation! And we would try and jump up - the fence was about seven feet high - we'd try and jump up and see if we could see. [Laughs] We knew the war was over.

JP: But you're saying it was enclosed?

SC: Yeah it was enclosed.

JP: Compound.

SC: Yeah it was! It was a prison! And it was asphalt. There was no grass. I can still see it. It was [Says with hand gesturing] a big yard down at the end there was she--kind of a shed thing where you can sit out of the sun. But um, yeah, no I don't remember making any frien--one girl, the girl that used to sleep beside me. She had a little trick. [Makes hand gestures] She would roll her hankies up and make marionettes. And we would play, you know. She'd bend her knees and the marionette would slide down and she would keep me amused like that. That's about the only friend - beside my cousin. My cousin was there one year--she--one year after I got there, she was there. And I used to get, get into her bed with her. And that drove the nuns crazy. They'd come in in the morning and here we were, the two of us sleeping. [Imitates yelling] "Not allowed to do that!" Uh, too bad [Shrugs]. But then the school too was something else. I remember grade one, I--my handwriting wasn't that good, so oh, I'll never forget that. Uh, we were taken to the grade two class, and we were made to [Holds both hands out palms up] hold up our notebooks so that everybody could see what terrible writing we had. And then the teacher would come and she'd smack us on the hand with a ruler. And she didn't use the flat side of the ruler either; she used the [Makes hand gesture] metal edge. Yeah. And I remember her do--giving me one whack and my cousin flew out of her desk and jumped on the woman. I think she got kicked out of that school for that. [Nods] Yeah!

JP: [Unclear]

SC: Yeah. [Nods] She was three months older than me. Yeah! That's what I remember of that school. And I remember not wanting to do my confirmation because I was going to get slapped on the face. I didn't want that. And I fought with them. Tooth and nail. Finally, it was--I can remember it was my uncle and the priest that finally got me calmed down enough to go. And I, and as I went up to the bishop, I looked at him and said, "Don't hit me!"

[0:45:36.8]

JP: And did he?

SC: Yeah, he just gave me a little [Slaps her face lightly]. But I was terrified of that. You know.  
[Nods]

JP: And that's what toughened her to the discipline.

SC: [Nods] Hmm mmm.

JP: It must have been, it sounds like they, they used—

SC: --They used--

JP: --to embarrass you to--

SC: --Yeah [Nods]--

JP: --to get what they wanted--

SC: --Yeah, yeah--

JP: --you were saying [Unclear]--

SC: Yeah, I had, I had a problem with wetting my pants! And they would hold up my underwear and show it to everybody, "Look!" [Shrugs] You know, so I learned to hide it. I would hide it everywhere. Eh! You know, that was uh--today, it's known as stress right? [Shrugs]

JP: And would you, were you able to tell any of these, these things to your parents, when you saw them once a month?

SC: [Shakes head] Nope.

JP: Because?

SC: It never even crossed my mind. I just know--the only, my only reflex was, "Mom, I don't wanna go back." "Mommy, please don't send me back." "Mommy, can I stay here?" And getting up every night, um making life miserable for them, because...I was terrified. I was literally terrified.

JP: It was your way of screaming out.

SC: Yeah. [Nods] I mean, yeah, I liked them. There, there were a couple of nuns that, the, the nur--the infirmary nun was a real sweetie. The madre Camilla was a wonderful person and I knew I could go and take refuge with her. When I--when it got too much, I'd go to her office. Yeah. Ah--but the others [Shrugs]

JP: And your grandfather, Achille, had put money--

SC: --They, they didn't know--

JP: --he, he had put money to build--

SC [talking over JP, unclear]: --Yeah! He, he, yeah--

JP: --and--

SC: --He'd rounded up funds for it and he was, he was one of the uh, founders.

JP: And they knew that you were the daughter.

SC: [Says nodding] Uh huh, yeah they did.

JP: That didn't change--

SC: --No. No, I wasn't to be treated differently. [Smiles] Which isn't, you know, kind of normal? I just think they went overboard. Well, maybe I put them up to it too. Maybe I was being stubborn, I don't know. I just...I just remember hating it there.

JP: When you were there, during that month, did you actually--everyone leave the orphanage or little--

SC: --No--

JP: -- [Unclear]--

SC: --Never--

JP: -- [Unclear]--

SC: --Never. Never... Eh, whoa! I shouldn't say that. I think we might have gone to the oratory. Yeah, but you know we might have done a couple of pilm--pilgrimages but no [Inhales]. I do

remember vaguely, that they used to have people come in to entertain us, but it's very you know, it's very vague. [Shrugs] That's all I remember.

JP: So, what happened? When, when were you taken out of the orphanage?

SC: I was in grade, going into grade three.

JP: 'Kay.

SC: So that would have been--I would have been seven? So, '38 plus seven, would be '45?

JP: '45.

SC: Yeah, yeah, I, I, I remember, I remember D-Day at the orphanage so it had to be after '45.

JP: Right--

SC: --And I, then they put me into uh a private school. Uh.

JP: Not E.C.S. right away?

SC: Yeah.

JP: It was E.C.S. right away.

SC: Yeah, yeah, because mom [Sniffs] I don't know how the story goes but mom, went to Havergal in Toronto, which was a high-end school. And I do believe that the founders of Ms.

Edgar's and M--Ms. Edgar and Ms. Cramp I think where alumni from Havergal. I don't know. I done my research on it and I can't find the link, but mom told me that there was a link there and that's why she put me in that school...which was uh...

JP: How is that feel?

[0:49:56.4]

SC: It was okay. At that point in time, I was free, you know. I didn't have to wear the s--well yeah, I had to wear the school uniform but I was free. I could move around the way I wanted to. I was home. I went home every night...And I was with my mom and dad.

JP: You didn't rebel like you did?

SC: I did--in a different way I guess uh...I used to take off with my girlfriends [Laughs] I don't know that I wanna tell these stories. [Laughs]

JP: We can skip them.

SC: Well, well, no. [Laughs] We would, we would take off at recess and we'd go out to the mountain...No--well--eh--no. First of all, we were on--the first year I was there we were on uh Guy--uh, yeah Guy, between Burnside or Dr. Pen--

JP: Burnside's not the Maisonneuve.

SC: The Maisonneuve and St. Catharine. Then we moved up to the corner of Cedar and Côte-des-Neiges and that was you know, two minutes from Beaver Lake. So when we had courses we



liked, we stayed. But--ah--there were only four girls in the class. But, come recess time, if the course that we, we had after recess wasn't what we liked, we'd go up...to the mountain. And go up to Beaver Lake and have some fun. Ah. [Shrugs and smiles] [People chuckle in the background] And it was only a half-day school--

JP: --Oh really?

SC: Oh yeah we started at nine and we finished at one o'clock and we had lunch at school. And many of the time--oh ooh--many of the time, I caused a strike there too because they used to give us tapioca pudding and we wouldn't eat it. And they'd bring it and my mother would get called, "Would you please talk to your daughter, you know." "Mom I don't like tapioca and rice--eh, I don't like tapioca pudding. It's called 'fish eyes and glue' and I won't eat it." And none of the girls would eat it. [Chuckles] And then another thing we did was we would hide on the nuns--uh we would hide on the teachers. The, the --it was an old house! And it had the French doors so at one point, we'd roll up the doors and we'd be in the middle and we'd wait for the teacher to come. And we'd sit there and wait and wait and see how long she'd stay before she'd leave. [Joyce chuckles in the background] If she stayed too long then we would unroll the door and sit down for our class. Oh yeah. I was something else. And I would travel. I mean I had to travel from Bannantyne--Allard and Bannantyne up to Côte-des-Neiges so that was about an hour and a--an hour and something? And often times, I would go on a busman's holiday with my girlfriend. We'd--

JP: --That's--

SC: --Well, we would take the golden chariot. And--you ever heard of the golden chariot?

JP: No.

SC: That's the sun...ss--the, the sun carriage--the sun chariot uh, tramway. It was in tiers and it went did--the mountain and it did the streets of Montreal in the summer time, so we'd get on that—

JP: --Oh those uh--

SC: --The open carriage yeah--

JP: --[Unclear] Open carriage, yeah.

SC: Yeah and we would get on that and we would go and do a little tour. Or we'd go down to the...to um, the drawbridges, the, the bridges at the Lachine Canal. 'Coz that, that was on my way home. So my, my best friend would come home with me and we'd stop there and get off and get on to the bridge while it was swinging and [Chuckles and wipes face with her hand] I was eight years old.

JP: Wow.

SC: Yeah, my, my grandsons get a big kick out of it when I start telling them these stories. They say, "Grandma, come on. Tell us some more!" Alright, why, I would, I would come up here [Points off to her side]. My uh, there was one of the, one of the girls lived, uh, you know where [Makes hand gestures] the boulevard or whatever and [Makes hand gestures] [Sighs] I, I forget the name of the...[Puts hand over her face]

JP: Closer to this side?

SC: I forget the main--name. It's where, it's where [Says gesturing with hands] Côte-des-Neiges and the other one separate, you know?

JP: Yes.

SC: [Says gesturing with hands] You, you come down this way.

JP: Yeah.

SC: [Says gesturing with hands] Yeah and there's a big apartment building there? Well one of the girl's grandmother used to live there so we would end up in her place [Points off to the side]. Go visit her and have tea. Then--

JP: --That would be close to your school, you're right.

SC: Yeah, yeah. And then the other one, sh--uh, the, the other girl lived uh, near Victoria Hall? Victoria Theatre? In Westmount? The, the, you know. So we would go to their place and have tea, you know. I mean [Shrugs].

JP: So at this point--

SC: --And then my mother would get a call and say, "Well, you know mom. I'm here. So you can come and get me." [Laughs] Uh, uh--

[0:55:02.5]

JP: --Your friends at that point were more Canadians--

SC: --Yeah--

JP: --at that school--

SC: --Yeah--

JP: --'Cause I--

SC: --Yeah, no, they were all I--they were all--

JP: --any Italians?--

SC: --No, no. Yeah, there was one but she was older than I was. Rosemary De Guarena. F.D.R. Frank De Rice. The ice cream? Yeah, that was her. And the funny thing about that was that I met her, I met her daughter-in-law when I was teaching in Hudson. There was this Wendy De Guarena and I looked at her and I said, "Mmm! I used to know a Rosemary De Guarena." And she looked at me, she said, "That's my mother-in-law." And I said, "Okay." And I brought her a picture of Rosemary, 'cause Rosemary was my adoration. I mean, you know, little kids gets crushes on the big girls, so.

JP: Hmmm mmm.

SC: She was one of them. She was a nice, nice girl. Really sweet.

JP: So [Clears throats], your grandmother was at the hospital [Sandra chuckles] and she was sick.

SC: Yeah, yeah.

JP: And so what happened after?

SC: [Pause] Well, uh, uh, that's when I went to the orphanage and um--

JP: --Right--

SC: --what went on--

JP: --She died right?

SC: She died, yeah. She died and my father carried this enormous guilt for years because they was a question of amputation. She was diabetic. And he refused to consent to the amputation and for years and years he--I mean he told me this, maybe five years before he died--he, he, that he felt really guilty, that he had caused his mother's death. And I talked to my uncle, the notary. I told him, I said, "You know, list--" No, 'kay, it, it was more than that. More than ten yea--five years before he died. Well. Ah...I told him what was going on in my dad's head and he said, "You tell your father that she died of a heart attack. That's what killed her. It had nothing to do with the gangrene and you know. So. But he, he never really, he never really accepted that. He, he, he died with [Touches chest and as a result, the microphone] that guilt on his [Nods] conscience.

JP: She died in what, in 1940--

SC: --She died in 1942, um, I think it was in '2.

JP: And--

SC: --He, she—

JP: --her husband--

SC: --My grandfather was never--

JP: --[Unclear]--

SC: --Yeah--

JP: --It happened with him while--

SC: --He--

JP: --his wife was--

SC: He was never allowed to go and visit her. Even though, he had a trial at that point and he got...I'm not sure if he got to go to the funeral or if...uh, his trial was while the funeral was going on...I think--I said before that I didn't think he got released on time but I, I do think that they were humane enough to run him through before the funeral and let him go to the funeral. 'Cause that's the day he was released. That was the day he was declared innocent. [Nods]

JP: And he was able to just attend the funeral but he was not able--

SC: --He didn't--no, he was not able--he was not allowed to go and see her in the hospital. No matter what kind of intervention.

JP: And I guess [Unclear]—

SC: --was made on his behalf--

JP: --You, you even have some documents you said that show that he was trying to get released?

SC: Yeah, uh, my mother, [Wipes eye] my mother's mother - my grandmother - was friends with Arthur Meighan, and they tried through him to see if they couldn't speed up the case so that he could be--get an early release but [Makes noise with her mouth] didn't happen.

JP: So, how, how what, what was Achille like, your grandfather, when he came out?

SC: What I remember him as being was a very quiet man who used to sit and watch the rest of us interact. He was always--he always had a smile. He was always happy to have us but you know, he...I just see the, the, the image I have is a very sad man...who walked with his hands behind his back. I don't know what he did after he came. I do know that once my uncle, the notary, got his business established he went and worked as a courier for him. 'Cause he was the one person that my uncle felt, he could give, uh, special documents to and make sure that they got taken where they were supposed to go.

JP: So you're saying that, because this is after Nicola came out--

SC: -- [Nods] Uh huh--

JP: --he was able to re-establish himself as a notary?

SC: Yeah, he did.

JP: And, but he--his character had changed--

SC: --Yeah--

JP: --you said?

SC: Both of them. Both of them. Eh--from what I can gather, my grandfather lost his enthusiasm. Like I didn't--I have no, no knowledge of his participating in any kind of political life like he used to. He went to church. He went to Notre Dame de Defense. He did his job as marrier. He um, he participated in--he--I mean I, I seen pictures of them in their assemblies, but [Shrugs] I don't remember him as being anything but a very quiet man.

[1:00:55.6]

JP: Is it--what are, are you saying that it silenced him?

SC: Uh, uh...I don't think it silenced him. I think it made him very sad. I think he was a very sad person and that he didn't want to burden people with his troubles. Now, that's my interpretation.

JP: Do you think, there must have been feelings on his part, that he felt responsible for what had had happened to the family afterwards, and the troubles and [Unclear]--



SC: --Well, no doubt—

JP: --after—

SC: --No doubt. Yeah, no doubt. But I also think that he felt that Canada had really let him down. You know, that this Canada that he had adored and would never have hurt just...took the stuffing out of him.

JP: And he had trusted Canada?

SC: Yup.

JP: And he trusted--

SC: --He, he, no, he was Canadian through and through!

JP: Did he--

SC: --He never wanted to go back to Italy! He, you know this was--he didn't want to go to the States! Um, I, I don't remember him ever going to the States. I remember him staying--the furthest he went was Plage Laval! 'Cause they had a summer place there, but, no, I'm, I'm--not true, he came to my, my mother's funeral. [Sniffs] And no--he was what--mom died in '55 so he was in his 70s. And he came by car with his youngest son - I think there were two of them - I don't, I don't remember who came.

JP: And that was an exception.

SC: Yeah. But he came to Toronto to my mother's funeral which impressed my mother's dad because uh, you know, to have this man do this just to go to the funeral and go back home, because [Sniffs] that's how much he loved his daughter-in-law. [Shrugs]

JP: Yeah.

SC: But even then, there was, you know--aah--I don't remember ever having a conversation with him. I mean, he used to call me over, and give me a little glass of wine, but uh...you know ask me, "How are you doing?" But...

JP: What did he want for you?

SC: I don't know. I think he was proud at the fact that I was the first grandchild to graduate...from university. [Says nodding] I think that made him pretty proud.

JP: And also, what you said about Nicola, how he trusted his dad with the documents after uh...I wonder if that reflected something bigger, in terms of mistrust for him too.

SC: It might have. I mean, I don't know. I never--I didn't have that, that much interaction with him. I, you know, we were not, we were not close. I didn't, I didn't particularly, like him. Not a nice thing to say, but I didn't like him.

JP: And these stories, about the internment and everything, you said, both men came back, they were silent about it. They didn't talk about it--

SC: --Yeah, no, they--

JP: --with your family--

SC: --Not, not to my knowledge—

JP: --Little discussions at the table didn't [Unclear]--

SC: --Not to my--No, not to my knowledge--

JP: --[Unclear]--

SC: --No. [Shakes head]

JP: It was kept from you?

SC: Yup.

JP: [Unclear] you did or not but it was kept from you--

SC: --Yup.

JP: --in other words.

SC: Yup.

JP: So--

SC: --Well you know in those days they didn't believe.

JP: Pardon?

SC: In those days, they didn't believe in sharing anything either, you know. You don't, you don't talk about stuff! Especially bad stuff, you don't talk about it.

JP: Why? Why was that in those days?

SC: Well...I don't know [Shrugs]. It's...part of the way people were brought up. I mean how hard is it today to get a person to tell you that they love you. On in those days it was even worst, you know. Eh, eh--

JP: --[Unclear] say that?

[1:05:16.0]

SC: No! You don't talk about those things! You don't talk about emotions! The psychology was aah--no--and now we know that if you don't talk about your emotions, that's what's gonna kill ya. [Nods] Your soul. You gotta talk about what you're feeling. Especially when you're feeling bad, that's the only way ta' get over it. Believe me, I know. [Nods]

JP: So that whole...era, um, you have a lot of, a lot of these memories, some of are--

SC: --Yeah!

JP: --[Unclear] like your, your uncle and your grandfather they came out, they, they didn't want to talk about it.

SC: No.

JP: So that whole s--all those stories, of that whole time period, that was all kept inside?

SC: Yup. It was lost.

JP: [Unclear]--to them?

SC: Uh, who? Uh--em.

JP: Like, what's your guess? What do you think--

SC: --Well, well, I think a lot of them maybe started to drink. There might have been a lot of abuse - family abuse. It had to come out some way. [Shrugs] Anger had to come out--unless, the only thing I can see is at, at one point in time they used to get together...all of them and talk about it. You know, like, I don't remember haaaaa... all the names anymore. I know that there was Franco Franceschini, was one of them. I don't know about Tore Vistarchi, whether he was interned. Um, now I know these were friends--Franceschini--yeah he was a friend of my dad's. Ah, and I know that Tore was a good friend of my dad's and they used to get together a lot. He loved my mom. And there was Chidiotto [sp?] too. I don't know if...

JP: [Unclear]

SC: I know he had stables. Eh, he ha--uh, up North. Oh yeah, Starky [?] had stables too. My, what beautiful stables! All...um ceramic. I remember them. Beautiful, beautiful. He loved his horses, but he and dad were really close. Now, I don't know if he discussed anything with him. I

don't know about Franceschini, you know uh...I just know that, that was the group...of friends that they had.

JP: When, when you were in your late teens, early twenties, was your dad still alive at that point?

SC: Yeah.

JP: Um, did any of--at that point did you ever notice like, um...uh family occasions or whatever, did people come over, did the, did the conversations ever go into that? Like I'm talking--

SC: --No.

JP: --about ten--

SC: --No--

JP: --twenty years--

SC: --No--

JP: --thirty years--

SC: --No--

JP: --later--

SC: --No--

JP: Nothing eh? It's still remained silent.

SC: Yeah, the only, the only time my dad talked to me was to tell me that Britain had been wrong. That instead of leaving Mussolini to face the Germans by himself, he should have joined the, the--Britain and French should have come to his rescue. Uh, he also felt that it was in retaliation for Mussolini's trying to colonize Ethiopia, but you know that was my dad's interpretation and uh I haven't done enough research to really be able to make up my mind. Uh I ju--I feel, personally, that Britain was wrong and so was France, you know? And the proof of the pudding is look at how many of the Italians went underground, you know. And I blame the Church for a lot too.

JP: What, what could they have done, that was better?

SC: The Church?

JP: Yeah.

SC: Monte Cassino. [Nods]

JP: Oh.

SC: You know the story of Monte Cassino and the Pope! [Nods] Hmmmm mmm. He should have never done that. That was wrong. [Pause] A lot of people were killed for no reason. To protect what? What was he trying to protect? Well...My, my father was horrified the--'cause that was one of the things that made me quit the Catholic Church. And my father was horrified. He said,

"You can't do that." I said, "No! No man is going to allow something like that to happen and I am going to follow him. No way. No how...Uh, and I still to this day, don't go to church...I believe in God but um, it's between Him and me. Well! My mother was an Anglican, yeah. And for years, my father never went to church but my mom did you know so ye--it's a lotta [Makes hand gestures] it's a lotta stuff in there that's um...[Says nodding] I'm giving you too much information. [Nods]

[1:10:36.7]

JP: No.

SC: [Chuckles]

JP: You can decide what, what's--

SC: [Chuckles] Well I don't know how relevant this is.

JP: [Unclear]

SC: But you know, it's the whole contradiction.

JP: It all goes together. Yeah.

SC: Yeah, it's the contradiction. Either you're a Catholic and you abide by the rules. Now I don't know why he didn't go to church. I have absolutely no idea why he didn't go to church.

JP: Did that all happen after uh, '40s?



SC: Yup.

JP: ...It's interesting to see how they um...

SC: Now I don't know whether it was because he believed he was living in mortal sin because he married my mother in an Anglican church and you know. Who knows what was going on in their heads?! [Chuckles]

JP and SC: [Chuckles in unison]

SC: [Raises one hand in the air] Eh, it's funny now but my father was very, very, very [Makes hand gestures]. You know and I mean I drove him wild because I was the opposite. You know I threw everything out. I don't wai--I was sixteen years old...And that was the end of the church for me. But then, I had been with the nuns and some of the garbage that they taught me, you know, they--

JP: --Knee-jerk reaction--

SC: --Yeah--

JP: --is what you're saying.

SC: I mean they used to get mad at me because I didn't go to church every morning. Well! I had been taught by my mother that if you want to please God, you're pleasant. And if it means you have to sleep in, then you sleep in. And that's the [Unclear --I had to go the, I had to go, go to the aumônier - I don't know what you call him, the chaplain? - and beg him to tell the nuns to leave me alone. I said, "Look I don't go to church 'cause I am too tired and I know that I'm going

to be in a very bad mood. If I sleep an extra hour, I'm going to be in a good mood and I'll be able to be civil to everybody. And I--isn't that basically...what it's all about? And he said, "Yeah." And he spoke to the nuns, but I don't know. No.

JP: Did um, [Sandra sniffs] did your uncle and your grandfather, who had had close ties with the institutions in Montreal, prior to being arrested, what happened to the ties to the institutions in Montreal after the arrests? Did he maintain them--

SC: I think--

JP: --or did they--

SC: --Uh, I'm not sure. Uh, all I know is that when my grandfather was exposed, the Sons of Italy came in full regalia to pay homage to him. Now, I do believe that he wore his little pin [Points to an imaginary collar on her blouse]

JP: The little fascista pin?

SC: Yeah. I'm not sure but seems to me I can re...

JP: You remember there was a pin on his left collar?

SC: Yeah. [Nods]

JP: Where was he exposed at home or uh?

SC: At Granatos. Right, you know? Corner of Jean Talon and...I think it's Auriginier [sp?]

JP: Yeah.

SC: Yeah, right there. Yeah. And uh, Nicholas' office was at the corner of Jean Talon and  
Castelneau...Right in that [Makes hand gestures]

JP: Right there, right near the market?

SC: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JP: Under the arch.

SC: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah and then the market. I used to go to the market with my  
grandmother.

JP: So, Achille was a member of the Sons of Italy, also--

SC: --Oh yeah--

JP: --[Unclear]--

SC: --Yeah, yeah. He was a member of the Sons of Italy and he did his fair bit to make sure that  
Mussolini got enough money, you know ay...my father showed me the ring my grandfather had  
and I said, "Well, how come?" He said, "Because he took all his gold and they melted it down,  
and they sent it to Italy. To pay for the Vatican."

JP: So [Stutters, unclear] and Nicola too?

SC: Well, I, I guess so. I think the whole family must have done it.

JP: So they, they did participate in the uh...[Unclear]--

SC: --They participated they--

JP: --[Unclear] gold--

SC: --Yeah, i--i--in--because Mussolini was bringing back the Vatican. I mean that is what I was told. That they supported the fact that Mussolini was bringing the Vatican back to where it belonged and that was the greatest achievement. That was what they thought.

JP: Yeah.

SC: I don't think they saw the rest. [Pause]

[1:15:08.6]

JP: And--

SC: --You know that and the fact that Hitler was at the door, knocking, and he was gonna move in whether the Italians went along with him or not. And I think Mussolini's decision was, "I'm gonna save as many people as I can." Which didn't do him any good, did it? In the long run.

JP: Did Achille Corbo, did he participate in anything with the Casa d'Italia before? Social events or um--

SC: [Sighs]

JP: --[Unclear] or...?

SC: Yeah, I think he did. [Stutters]—

JP: --[Unclear] contribute [Unclear]--

SC: --Yeah. I, I--

JP: --and afterwards?

SC: I know that uh...[Makes a face] It was not, you know, people didn't like using the word, "Casa d'Italia." I mean there were weddings there but I think it was mainly because it was Dieni that was there...and Dieni was uh--my uncle Joe was married to Viera Dieni, so you know, I mean it was not--and he worked there, he used to, he used to tend bar at the Casa.

JP: At the restaurant?

SC: Yeah. [Nods] Yup, that was his other job.

JP: So, it was, was it also because that building had been associated with the internment?

SC: I think so.

JP: And that just left a scar on [Unclear].

SC: Yeah. Uh, uh, I think it was basically--I don't think it was my grandfather, I think it was more, more my aunt. I--it's, it's me I think. I'm squinting [?] [Smiles]

JP: It's the way your aunt did--

SC: --I think it was my more my aunt that objected to it, because of the whole, the whole situation. 'Cause I don't, I don't remember, I don't remember the boys going there. I think the only one that went there was Joe, because he worked...Ah, aaah [Exhales] I know the, the name, I know where it is, I know what it looks like inside, I've been--

JP: -- [Unclear]

SC: Well yeah I'm kinda...my cousin [Unclear] told me that they were, they're turning it into uh, uh, a monument? Which I think is really great, I think it's important. And I think a lot of the uh, stuff about the internment should be exposed there too. Huh. And did you know that Notre Dame da Defense is a national treasure?

JP: Yes, m'am.

SC: You knew that?

JP: Yeah.

SC: I, I discovered that...[Swallows] when--

JP: --[Unclear] Church.

SC: Uh, yeah but for Canada--

JP: --Yeah--

SC: --to declare it a national treasure--

JP: --[Unclear]--

SC: --that means nobody can touch it ever. I think that's mmmm, mighty fantastic. [Says while making hand gesture] My grandfather did that!

JP: That's something you should be very proud of and you're lucky.

SC: I am, I'm very, very--no, I mean my nonno I'm proud of. I have nothing against him.

JP: What do you think should be done to honour these men?

SC: [Smacks lips] I think that each family should be given a certificate of exoneration...Not even an exoneration, 'Of not guilty as charged' and with the humble apologies of the Canadian people...In as much--I don't know if you have ever been to the Peace Tower in Ottawa. Have you been up--

JP: No--

SC: --to the remembrance?

JP: No.

SC: Okay, well you might want to go and have a look there and then you'll understand why I am saying. In as much as the soldiers have been honoured, I think the people who have been falsely accused of something should be honoured in the same way. Their names should be [Makes hand gestures] written down as a memorial. [Wipes eyes with tissue]

JP: Should, should it be public or private?

SC: I think it should be public. It needs to be public. It was done to them publicly.

JP: Hmmm.

SC: It wasn't hidden. I mean you read the newspapers, "The alien Italian enemy." Hmmm mmm. 'Cause if you look at the city of Montreal, how much of it was built by the Italians, the masonry, the churches, the paintings, you know? My father's cousin, Joe Barsy [sp?] was uh, uh, worked with marble. He put in a bunch of marble stuff all through Quebec. Nincheri, all the paintings he's done, [Says shrugging] he's known the world over. He has a church out where I live with his paintings on it, you know? That was it--and oh the poor guy he was put in a bad position, eh? 'Cause he was forced to put [Says chuckling] Mussolini up there. [Chuckles, sniffs] And--

JP: --And would--how should this all be done? If they were to do something in Montreal?

SC: I--

JP: --[Unclear] able to commemorate them, where would you put it?

SC: Where would I put it?



JP: If you're talking about a public--a place that's public?

SC: Hmm...[Nods] Good question. I think the Italian people should decide...where they want it. [Nods]

[1:20:50.9]

JP: And [Exhales, Pause]

SC: [Sniffs] And I think that each member of an affected family who is still living should be given a hand engraved invitation. [Nods] 'kay? But I don't think I will be around for that. I hope my daughter--

JP: [Unclear] to say that. [Chuckles]

SC: I hope my daughter will [Sniffs].

JP: You were aware of--

SC: --We--

JP:--[Unclear]--

SC: --We got to take political action. [Nods] You know it's politics. I'm spreading the word.

JP: [Unclear]--

SC: --You know, I'm spreading the word very slowly. I took uh, a young Italian girl to see Il Duce a few years ago. She said, "Sandra I didn't know." I showed her my grandfather's cards, this, that and the other thing. "I didn't know." I said, "No, but tell your kids." And she's telling all her friends, "This is what happened to Sandra's grandfather." I'm telling the, the, the younger generation on my, on my mother's side of the family. This is what I'm up against. I mean, I have a young cousin who knows I'm here today and I told him why. You know.

JP: What are their reactions?

SC: "Good for you!" [Chuckles]

JP: What do you think of the efforts, that [Unclear]--first of all I don't know if you were aware of efforts that had been made in the past by the Italian community to get some kind of a recognition. Uh, are you aware of them? What are your opinions? Um--

SC: I'm aware of one...one movement that was linked to the showing of Il Duce at the Sapoto [sp?] Centre by a young lawyer, Dino - I forget what his last name is. Uh, he's, he's uh, he's a councillor for the city of Montreal now. And he did, he tried hard. I, I just find that the people who could do something are not doing it. You know. Uh.. [Shrugs]

JP: And um--

SC: --And the guys, you know, the guys, the, the men like Giliardi [sp?] and all those, they're not here anymore. [Shrugs] 'Cause I know that these people would have worked their little buns off.

JP: Yeah.

SC: And I think he tried. And that was another friend of my dad's. I don't know--you know my father just wanted everything to [Makes a noise]. He didn't want it out [Pause] He wanted it to disappear--

JP: --Why do you think--

SC: --He was ashamed.

JP: He was ashamed.

SC: It was shame you know. He had always thought of his family as being this...upright, great community str--uh pillar. And you know, it kinda...plus there were--I mean you know it's not fun to be called a "W.O.P."

JP: It's that whole—

SC: --And it's yeah. Yeah, and it's not fun to be told, "To go back where you belong." And I've, I've experienced that. And it's not fun to have people tell you, "Oh those stinking Italians with their goddamn sausages in their li--line--you know their luggage when they come in through customs. Ohhhh! You know, you don't like, you don't like pizza and you don't like lasagna and you don't like spaghetti!?! Where the heck do you think it comes from?! [Shrugs] Oh bringing their garlic over - so what?!

JP: Yeah.

SC: [Says shrugging] No, no, though that, that kind of prejudice and that, and that was you know that was back in the '50s, '60s.

JP: Did you experience that when you were growing up?

SC: Oh yeah!

JP: In the '40s? In the '50s you experienced that?

SC: [Nods] At the orphanage I got a scar here [Touches her chin]. Got into a fight with a little boy... 'cause he was not an Italian.

JP: And what happened there?

SC: Well he beat me up! So oh! [Chuckles] He didn't get away with it. Because when I had the chance--two nuns had to pull me off of him. I was pounding the hmmm mmm out of him. And I was, I was five!

JP: Oh 'cause the orphanage was not just for Italian—

SC: --No--

JP: --kids--

SC: --No--

JP: --when you went.

SC: Yeah.

JP: And afterwards, uh, do you think there was any discrimination towards Italians--

SC: --It's always--

JP: --because of the internment, immediately afterwards--

SC: [Sandra sighs]

JP: --or in the community--

SC: --I think it was--

JP: --did you hear anything about that?--

SC: --No. No. [Shakes head] I think that the, the, the discrimination against the Italians was a blanket discrimination because of Mussolini. And I think it was not just members of the Sons of Italy or members of the pe--the, uh, who had gone to the internment camp. I think it was the Italians as a group.

[1:26:02.8]

JP: I think it wasn't a thing about just being [Unclear]--

SC: --No--

JP: --Italians--

SC: --No-- [Shakes head]

JP: --directed to the whole--

SC: --Yeah. Yeah--[Nods]

JP: --[Unclear]--

SC: [Sniffs] Severe prejudice.

JP: How did--so...

SC: [Chuckles]

JP: In light of that...looking back it now, from what you know, and from just from your own family experience and your, your lived experiences, what do you think it meant to these men to be fascisti? Like you said, your grandfather, your grandfather wore the, you think he may have worn the pin. He was a member of the Sons of Italy. Um...

SC: Uh, I--

JP: --What do you think the--who--what, what did Mussolini and fascism represent to the Italians then? In your opinion?

SC: In--I don't think it represented that much. Really. I, I think it--what it represented maybe was uh [Pause] support...for whatever good Mussolini was doing. 'Cause he did do some good. I mean, you know, there was a reason why he was put in and why the king was taken out.

[Shrugs] I think that's what it represented to them. It had nothing to do with real fascism. I don't, I don't think, nah I don't think that they were anti-anybody.

JP: Do you think--

SC: --I don't think they were anti-British, I don't think they were anti-Canadian. No, they were not in the same league as the Germans...I don't think they were out to exterminate a whole people. No! Not at all! I think it was just a recognition that something was going well in Italy for a change that li--Italy, you know Italy had hit bottom I think at that point in time. If I remember whatever history I knew. And that, Mussolini built it up much the same way as Hitler did Germany but not with the same intent. [Pause] That's how I see it. And that's how I think my grandfather saw it. I mean after all, it was his native land. I mean he was born there. And he still had family there.

JP: [Unclear]

SC: Yeah he still had family there. He had...uncles and [Pause]

JP: The letters, you showed me those photocopies of the letters, that uh your grandfather had sent your father.

SC: Hmmm mmm.

JP: And...uh--what was your reaction? Do you wanna just tell me what the letters were about and [Unclear]--

SC: --The, the, there was one written in August after my grandfather had been interned for 14 months and uh he was letting his son know that he was okay, that his young--younger brother had been released from the camp. Also, that he was very disappointed and hurt by the fact that he hadn't heard from his son for 14 months even though his son knew that he had been interned innoc--that he was innocent but he had been interned and accused of whatever unjustly, unjustly. And the second one was to--he also said, "Hello. Give, give your, give your--my Betty and my granddaughter a hug." But he also--in the second letter, he wanted to make sure that his wife and daughter got to go to the opera. Because it was Aida, and her name was Aida, and it was a specia--it had a special meaning for all of them. And that he wanted his son to escort her to that and make sure she got there. [Shrugs] So the man, you know, was constantly not thinking of himself. Thinking of his family, thinking of what his fam--family was missing out on. [Shrugs] It's enough to, it's enough to [Pause] do something to you, you know? Especially when, he--you're not even given a chance! He didn't, he didn't have a chance to say goodbye to his wife or family. Nothing! Wham! Bam! And the...you know, what was it the RCMP that came and got them?

JP: I think yeah--

SC: --Yeah—

JP: --in a lot of cases.

SC: Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

[1:30:48.5]

JP: And nobody knew where he was?



SC: No. Well [Shrugs]

JP: As far as you know?

SC: As far as I know, I don't know when they found out. And I think that probably that, that was what the lapse of time was, in that first 14 months. I think, you know, my father was trying desperately to--you know, I can give you [Makes hand gestures] all kinds of explanations for that, but I think basically, what they were trying to do was to get themselves organized to try and find out where he was and...

JP: How did you [Unclear]—

SC: --'Cause it could--

JP: --[Unclear] read those letters? When you saw the letters?

SC: Yeah--aaah--it hurt. [Blows nose with tissue] I felt bad. I felt that it was disgusting...that my grandfather should be treated in such a fashion, for no reason. He was not a criminal. He was a good man. I never heard anything evil said about him. Ever, ever, ever!

JP: And Canada said that they were picking up these men [Unclear]--

SC: --They were picking up 'alien Italian enemies'! [Unknown man says 'hmmm mmm' in the background]

JP: Do you think, so--

SC: --I think it's disgusting! [Chuckles]

JP: Your father and your uncle, could they have been threats to Canada?

SC: [Sniffs, laughs, coughs] No. [Chuckles]

JP: [Unclear] Okay.

SC: No. That's funny. [Chuckles]

JP: [Chuckles]

SC: It's funny! [Chuckles]

JP: No, I'm saying that because according to documents right, these are men that were supposed threats to Canada - all the men that were picked up.

SC: Yeah, well, what about uh, some of the high pollutant people - I will not name names - who were parading around with fascist armbands and were left?

JP: Yeah [Unclear]--

SC: --And were even allowed to go to higher, higher degrees than the government of this country.

JP: How do you figure that? [Sandra smacks her lips] Where's the, where's the sense of fairness in this?

SC: Mmm. Well. [Pause] Why was [Unclear] put into...Petawawa?

JP: You know why.

SC: Well sure because he told people not to be conscripted. It wasn't their war. It was England's war. That might have been a mistake. Aah! [Shrugs] Yeah, you know when you're party of the family...and we were part of the family, and I don't know uh...You know, I, I --separatism goes way back then. You know? It's not of yesterday. It goes back to Tasseau [sp?] and way back. Omer Guay [sp?], Romer Guay [sp?], a whole bunch. It's always been there, under the surface. You scrape it up a little bit and uh... You know, because I mean you had the other--you had a whole bunch of French-Canadians that did go to war.

JP: And in your case, in your family, one side of your family that was fighting for Canada and on the other side, you had a couple who were interned--

SC: --Yeah--

JP: --and considered threats.

SC: Yeah...And that was you know, that made for a ve--

JP: --How do you deal with the fact that it just, doesn't make sense?

SC: Well, eeehh....[Shrugs] I don't, I, I don't, I don't. I don't. I've let go of it...I mean there are a lot of things that don't make sense.

JP: What do you think kids have to learn from all this? What do you wanna tell them? Who do you--what you think [Unclear]--

SC: --I think kids have to learn to look at people as individuals. Forget about where they come from. It's more the person. That's what I've tried to tau--teach my daughter. Don't care who you are, it's what you are. It's what you bring. What you con--contribute to society to make it a better place that is important. You know, change--I could go on and on, you know. Why you look at the natives? I got involved, you know, in, in, in a couple of crisis. Why? Because they were being abused. Because they were natives.

[1:35:14.9]

JP: Do you think this is one of the reason, this whole experience in your family, has shaped you? In terms of like [Sandra smacks her lips] even helping people that are [Unclear] underdog situation like--

SC: --Yup. Yup. 'Cause I done that all my life. I--as a teacher, I worked with learning disabled kids - kids that nobody else wanted to work with. It's been my role. And I'm--you know what my name means, eh? "Protector of man." [Throws both hands up in the air]

JP: And that's what you do?

SC: That's what I do. I still do it today. When people need help and need protecting, they call me. [Pause] "Can you help me, Sandra?" [Nods, shrugs] Yup, you know, but a lot of that was my mom, 'cause my father didn't understand that. [Shakes head] He would watch me with the kids at school and he'd say, "Why do you let the child do that?" "Because he needs to act out. If I don't let him do it, [Says shaking her head] he'll never get over it." You know. I love him, he

knows I love him. And that's why he can do it. He can tell me he hates me, he can spit at me, he can throw--

JP: --[Unclear] you, you work with [Unclear]--

SC: --Yeah. He can throw things at me because he knows I love him. And when he's calm down, we'll sit down and we'll talk. [Shrugs]

JP: These gifts that you have on dealing with these people with special needs...

SC: [Shrugs] Uh, eh, it's not a gift. I love them. They're kids! They're in pain. They hurt. They need to be healed. [Shrugs] You know they're gonna learn how to read and they're gonna learn how to add, if you let them be. If you let them open up. If you [Says shaking her head] don't let them open up they're not gonna learn anything, because they're gonna be hung up on, "Who am I? Why do people not like me? Why do teachers think I'm dumb?" "You're not dumb, you just don't learn the same way so let's find out how you learn." [Shrugs] It'sss--huh.

JP: It, it sounds like a lot of the--you understand it because you were in, in some ways, you were in their shoes.

SC: Hmmmm mmm. [Says nodding] Always, always. Yup.

JP: Coming back from the, er, orphanage and [Unclear]--

SC: --Yeah always--

JP: --[Unclear]--

SC: --Yup. I mean, I, I, I --anybody who ask me why you go into teaching 'cause I hated school. [Smiles, raises one hand] What better reason, you know? I can do something about it. In my classroom, I can change the way kids learn. I can make it fun and that's what I did, you know. Everybody liked coming in my class! Parents would come and help me. "Ah! So nice in your classroom!" Well, I'm bragging now, but...you now some of my best friends are the parents of kids I taught.

JP: That's wonderful.

SC: Yeah.

JP: That's a great testament to...

SC: [Nods] Hmm.

JP: But I can see it in you. I can feel it--

SC: --Yeah?

JP: --just sitting in the room with you. I can feel it that you're that, that way.

SC: [Shrugs] Ah! I, I don't know any--I don't know how to be any other way. I'm not happy any other way. If I'm angry or upset, I'm not happy, you know? I, uh...I just [Makes a noise] throw it aside. I don't have time anymore. If I can't be myself and happy doing what I'm doing, then I won't do it. [Makes hand gestures]

JP: You got something--you were able to turn such a negative situation into a real...um positive gift that you're helping other people, who...find themselves in [Unclear]--

SC: --Well you know the old story eh.

JP: What happened to the other people that like, the other um, like Nicola, Mario and [Unclear] people who got pulled out of school? What happened to them afterwards?

SC: Uh...I don't think that they ever like my uncle Medea [sp?] I don't think he was ever happy? [Pause] I think he missed--he wanted--he would have liked to have been a lawyer. And I think he was--[Says nodding] all his life, he um, he was not happy. There was a part of him that was not happy. And I mean, I can see it. And I mean, the way he, the way he died was an indication. He blew his head off. [Nods, wipes nose with tissue] [Pause] And we never knew why [Pause].

[1:40:20.3]

JP: Any other ones?

SC: Mario? Ah, he worked but he had, he had, he had hearing problems and I wouldn't be surprised if he wasn't [Wipes eyes with tissue] learning disabled from what I can remember of him. You know he was always quoted [Makes quotation marks with hands] "the dumb one"...But, no, I don't think so. But I didn't--you know, I didn't get close to him. He was always good to me...and he loved my daughter but uh, never really got close to him. I, I think he was just, in those days, you know, you were either smart or not and I think he was [Makes hand gestures] and yet on the other hand, I think he was very smart. Might have been the smartest one of the bunch.

JP: Hmm.

SC: You know.

JP: He was just misread.

SC: Yeah. Yup. Anyway, he made a life for himself. He never got married but uh...

JP: And Joe?

SC: Joe?! [Pause, sniffs, shrugs] Eh! [Chuckles] I don't know. He, he, you know--

JP: [Unclear] because [Unclear]--

SC: [Blows her nose]

JP: --affected all of them too because they got pulled out of school like you said, you know--

SC: --Yeah, well, no, Joe was working already and so--

JP: --Joe was working already--

SC: --and so was uh, so was Guido. So uh--

JP: --And the girls?

SC: Uh, Aida? Aida was um...[Sniffs] No, she was not a happy lady. She never was a happy lady.



JP: Was she in school when it happened?

SC: I don't think so.

JP: Okay.

SC: But...uh, I think she felt after her mother died, that her life had been ruined because she had to stay behind and look after her dad. [Pause] Which wasn't the case really. [Pause] I think if she had wanted to get out and get a job, nobody would have prevented her. I know, I know my mother would have enjoyed having her father-in-law come and visit and stay with her for awhile.

JP: I guess, it's hard to judge you know--

SC: --Yup--

JP: --you plan--

SC: --Yeah it's hard to judge.

JP: [Unclear] over everything--

SC: --I just know that she was not a happy lady. She told me at one point because my story is not orthodox. Um, I have a 45 year old daughter. I was not married when I had her. And I can remember going to--I think I was going to Viera, my uncle Joe's wife's wake and I saw her waiting for the bus on the corner. So I told her, "Get--come on in the car." And she looked at me and she said, "Who's this?" And I said, "This is my daughter." She looked at me and she said,

"This is what I should have done too, I think." [Says shrugging] That told me her whole story, you know? So--

JP: --Such a difficult time for everybody--

SC: --Yeah--

JP: --and I guess, the support systems weren't in place [Sandra shakes her head] to help people that deal with situations that, I mean--

SC: --Well--

JP: -- [Unclear] designed by them--

SC: --Ah, but I think also the emotional impact was never looked at. I don't think people got therapy. Today, what do you do, you know? You come back from Afghanistan and your buddy's been killed, what do they do? They put you through a haw [?]-I mean they're beginning to recognize that the post-traumatic trauma needs to be dealt with. I mean these boys that are coming back, their lives are being ruined because they're seeing all kinds of horrors and nobody is paying attention because they're soldiers and--[Whispers] "Oh why you're, you're supposed to be tough!" Eh, give me a break. The human spirit is a very fragile thing and I don't think that they got any kind of support. I don't think the church gave them the appropriate support.

JP: That, that would have been one solution.

SC and JP in unison: Yeah.

JP: Maybe, there was just--

SC: --It, it would--

JP: -- [Unclear] association--

SC: --Yeah well that's it--

JP: [Unclear] I don't know.

SC: Yeah, that's what I see.

[1:45:03.6]

JP: So [Unclear]--

SC: --That's what I see.

JP: Yeah--

SC: Yeah. I mean because if you look, if you look at the guys...i--if you look at them. You know, if you look at [Says while counting with her fingers] Franceschini, he succeeded. He got his company he--you look at Vistarchi, he's doing--he did well. Uh...I mean those are but--th--those are the only two that I know. I mean look at all the contracts Franceschini got after the war. And, and uh Vistarchi he was, he was in construction too I think, eh?

JP: Hmmm mmm.

SC: Yeah he, he had a lot of work so they succeeded. Uh...I don't know. What went on in their heads I don't know. I can only tell you what went on in my dad's head and [Says shaking her head] my dad was not happy. You know it was, he, he, he--

JP: --[Unclear] the relationship with uh, your--his father?

SC: It was a good one!...They were good together! I mean, he--[Chuckles] he was a student and he bought his father a victrola in 1929 - I have it at home! [Nods] With all the re--he would constantly go out and buy him clothes or records or Tito Schipa re--records. You know, I have all that collection. When I was little I was made to [Makes whirring sound and wounds imaginary handle] "Eh! Sandrina!" [Makes whirring sound and wounds imaginary handle] [Chuckles] And then we'd sit and listen to the music. He loved his opera. I mean the tears would stream [Says while brushing palm over her face] down his face! My father too. They had that in common. They had the, the dress making in common. He adored his father. And I think you know, that this whole story really left a big mark on him. I don't know, 'cause he never talked to me. I'll have to talk to my daughter and find out if he said anything to her about it. 'Cause he used to talk to her more than me.

JP: Hmmm.

SC: Yeah, well [Shrugs] it's kind of normal isn't it? I mean, I was much too independent for him anyway. He always told me, "I don't know what to do with you" after my--well, you know, I had to be! You know what Italian fathers are like?

JP: Hmmm mmm.

SC: Do you think I would be what I am today? No. I got out from underneath the [Makes hand gesture and clicking sound]...Thank God! Oh, that's nice, eh? [Chuckles]

JP: No, but that, it was just uh--

SC: --I've had a lot of--

JP: --[Unclear] That, that was just the [Italian]

SC: [Says nodding] Yeah. I've had a lot of Italian friends tell me, "Sandra, how did you do it?"

JP: Yeah.

SC: I said, "Don't forget, I was brought up by a Scot. I was taught to be independent. And I was taught from a tender age to make my own decisions. You know? So--and plus the fact that my father always said, "You're a girl, your mother will look after you." uh, so, eh--that's what happened. So that's my story.

JP: Is there anything that I, I missed Sandra that you wanna talk about?

SC: I don't think so. I'm all talked out really.

JP: You know, I'm just thinking if there's anything we missed, any story...Hmmm

SC: No, I think we're pretty well co--

JP: --I think we covered everything.

SC: Yeah.

JP: Anyways, and then--I think we'll, we'll stop and eat something and [Sandra chuckles] then if there's anything else, we could always come back and--

SC: --Yeah--

JP: --take another second roll.

SC: Yeah.

JP: [Unclear] a piece of pizza, and uh, otherwise, thank you so much.

SC: Well I hope it helped you.

JP: It helped a lot! Totally different aspect of the story that um, had to be uncovered, and [Unclear] how it affected the people--even at the orphanage, I never uh, I never knew about that either--

SC: --No?

JP: No, and it's--

SC: Now, you know uh, it's from my perspective as a child but ah, ah, I was living it.

JP: Yeah, I mean, I mean you also get to see, you also--like how years later how this affected the families and the relationships in people's lives...people's lives.

SC: Yeah I'm just grateful that it didn't...it didn't affect my mother's relationship with her father-in-law. [Nods] Because it could have, I mean she could have--but she was, she was a special woman. It, it could have tended [?] her, it could have made her feel...

JP: Yeah.

SC: ...angry that...you know her precious child should be treated in this way, but no, she saw it as uh--well it was an experience...[Says shrugging] and it was good for me. So?

JP: That's it. Okay, thank you.

SC: Oh you're welcome.

[Fades out at 1:49:59.6]

**[End of interview]**