



**Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens:  
Memories of World War II**  
901 Lawrence Ave. West  
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**NAME OF PROJECT:** *Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens: Memories of WWII*

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**LOCATION OF INTERVIEW:** Dartmouth, NS

**NAME OF INTERVIEWEE:** Esperando Razzolini

**NAME OF INTERVIEWER(s):** Nick Sehl; Louanne Aspilla

**NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER:** Louanne Aspilla

**TRANSCRIBED BY:** Louanne Aspilla

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## ABSTRACT

Esperando Razzolini, an 87 year old man, was born in New Waterford, Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia on November 9th, 1923. His parents were Annabelle Razzolini (née Marsh) and Rodolfo Razzolini. Esperando's paternal grandparents first immigrated to Canada before the two world wars and then moved to Buffalo, USA. His father, aunt and uncle remained in Canada. Esperando's mother was born in Canada but was of Belgian and Italian origins. According to Esperando, his mother belonged to one of the "first families" in Cape Breton that came over from very early on.

Rodolfo belonged to the Italian nobility, but in Canada he was a small business owner operating (shoe store) in the business sector of New Waterford. It is in this non-Italian neighbourhood, that Esperando lived with his parents and his five siblings. On June 10, 1940, Rodolfo was arrested and detained, before being sent to Petawawa where he was interned for 27 months. He was one of the 22 men interned from Nova Scotia.

Esperando talks about growing up in the Jewish community, going to Mount Carmel [a non-denominational public school], and pursuing work as a coalminer during his father's internment. He also speaks of the many interesting positions he held during his lifetime — as coal miner, pilot, prospector, construction engineer and classification officer — and his passion for learning, especially math and science.

## INTERVIEW (AUDIO ONLY)

**ER: Esperando Razzolini, interviewee**

**MR: Marie Razzolini, interviewee's wife**

**NS: Nick Sehl, interviewer**

**LA: Louanne Aspilla, interviewer/videographer**



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[Title screen]

[Audio starts at 0:00:17:1]

NS: This is Nicholas Sehl, Nova Scotia researcher, on June 23rd. Located at 20 MacKay Street, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, interviewing Mr. Razzolini.

MR [In the background]: Recording.

[Pause]

MR: [In the background, repeats louder] Recording.

NS: Oh Christ. I'm sorry.

MR: [Laughs in the background]

NS: And may I have your full name, sir?

ER: Esperando Razzolini.

NS: And where were you born?

ER: In New Waterford.

NS: New Waterford, Nova Scotia? And where--eh when?

ER: Uh [Pause] November the 9th, 1923.

NS: Okay. Um, can you tell me a little bit about your family, sir? What you remember about your parents, your grandparents, your siblings?

ER: [Inhalates] [Says while exhaling] Whooo-oooo. This covers a lot of territory.

NS: Please.

ER: [Laughs] Okay. Ah...My mother is Annabelle. Uh, her name was Marsh before she was married [Clears throat] And my father, Rodolfo Razzolini, [Clears throat] from Asolo, in Italy. Uh [Laughs] [Exhales] Through my mother's connection, born in Canada, uh, I guess I'm related to [Laughs softly] about four or five of the old families in Cape Breton that came over very early. [Sniffs] And uh... I don't know deep you want me to go--

NS: [Inaudible]

ER: --into this?

NS: Anything you'd like.

ER: Anything I would like! [Exhales] Now...uh...the old families in uh...Cape Breton, they're Burnses [?], uh...Middletons, Fin--uh...[Clicks tongue] Oh [Inaudible] forgetting, but the--there are four or five very old families that settled there in the very early day. Uh, my mother's origin of her parents is um...Ireland. So--but on my father's side [Clears throat] it's uh quite a different story. Uh [Pause] If you would think about the time of

the war, when it first started, Italy at that time had a king plus a dictator. The dictator declared the war in favour of the Germans, but they still had a king. Now, I come from the nobility. My father was a noble, part of the royal family. When he got interned, during the war, uh, it was very disruptive. This...was a major, major blow to the family. I was in high school and I was writing exams, and this was in the about the middle of the exams. And I didn't want to go back to write anymore. It was a total upheaval. Uh [Pause] Uh, a, a Mountie officer came, after my father was taken away. And he told me, "We have nothing against your father, but we're taking him away more for his own safekeeping." So my father was two years in the camp-a little better than two years. And then they had a trial, after two--a period of two years. But the judge at the trial never asked my father about anything about, anything connected--at that time there was a, a club uh...Dopolavoro, I think they called it, after work. It was just a get-together. And uh...the judge, all he knew, all he asked my father was about the royal family in, in Italy. Now, I--if I wanna talk more on grandmothers and grandfathers and stuff, I'll go back to my mother. [Clears throat] I never met my grandfather on my mother's side. He got drowned, he was a fisherman. [Clears throat] And, I...my father's side, before the war, [Unclear] he came over in 1912. But before the Second War, uh the rest of his family came over-not totally. He...stayed in Ca--he--they moved over from Italy and they came into uh Canada first and [Clears throat] [Laughs softly] I had uh, two aunts, and an uncle. And they went to the United States [Sniffs] and they settled in Buffalo. And my grandfather and grandmother came over and they all became Americans. My father stayed in Canada and one sister--she stayed in New Waterford and a brother. A brother went out to Alberta [Clears throat] and he married a woman that had a son, previous to the marriage. And uh, the son took the name of Razzolini, but he's not family. [Clears throat] So this is all I know. He--I met him in Buffalo and he had coal mines out in Drumheller, out west. [Clears throat] So I don't know too much, too much about him. And uh, my grandpa, I never met him at all. He died in Buffalo. And I seen my

grandmother just before she died--very old woman of in her nineties. [Clears throat] I met her. But that was it. I met my cousins and I met my uncle and I met my two aunts in, in Buffalo. Another brother in the--my father's side, settled in Argentina. [Clears throat] A brother stayed in Italy where he died. He died in Italy. And so that takes care more or less my father's side of the story. But so I get back to [Says laughing] World War Two. This is the time of the problems. And uh...it wasn't--it--outside of being totally disruptive in the family, I mean you can imagine for a moment that if you have a family and all of a sudden the Mounties come in and took your father away and you know, uh, question mark [Laughs] you know. The whole thing. So, it was very disruptive. But it was a time when the people did not understand the Italians and of course the--Italy was with--in World War One with the Allies but this time, they...with the dictator, Mussolini, they favoured Hitler. So it was, it was quite an up--quite an upheaval. My father was alright. And I, I know one of the people that got interned. They seemed to have taken all the businessmen away. And, this was Favretto, he later moved to Montreal with his family. But they beat him up. He had--he took a beating. So actually, uh, my father, now you'd have to [Says laughing softly] you'd have to know my father. Uh...he--ah--this was later of course, he didn't mind being interned. He was out in the woods and my father's a naturalist. So to be out in the woods and working outdoors, this, this was right up his alley. He didn't mind it. He called it his vacation! So, it, it didn't bother him too much. The family back home [Clears throat] [Laughs softly] Things weren't as bad as it sounds. The, uh, authorities supplied uh--the groceries. They supplied the groceries and the groceries were supplied [Clears throat] by uh, a, a store, by the name of Hinchey's. And Hinchey at that ti--I think at that time or later, but no, around that time, he was the mayor of New Waterford. So, uh [Pause] so he uh...he uh...supplied the groceries to all, to all the families that were interned--as far as I know. But I can only speak of my family, what happened to my family. [Clears throat] Now. [Clears throat] [Pause] So, we got the groceries. Now, [Laughs softly] the Pit Committee, it was...ah, well it's a mining town.

We had two mines going; 16, 12, and about two miles out was number 18. So there were three collieries. But it's a mi--must understand this is a mining environment.

[Clears throat] Now there I am-uh I guess I was 16 years old-and the Pit Committee came. And the--they were from 16 colliery. And one of them was Italian, but he wasn't interned, [Sniffs softly] but he knew the family and uh, one of the Nemises I think. And uh...he said that, Canada was at war and they were short of men in the mines. And I was available but I considered going in the coal mines. So, oh well I [Clears throat] The family was there, a--and yeah ok, I'll go in the coal mines. [Clears throat] So, I went in the coal mines and now this was a cheque coming in, so I turned it over to my mother. So that's what kept the family I guess and clothes and what other things you need in order to run a family. [Clears throat] So...I was in the uh coal mines [Clears throat] ...uh doing shift work and doing the odd thing. I loaded coal, I think I done it all. I done brushing, which is the removal--taking of the stone down to make the tunnel. Ah, mainly though I done picked up what they call a reduction shift, where they turn out the coal. And uh, later on, the manager called me in the office, and this was a couple years later, and he made me an Official. So I became an Official at DOSCO [Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation]. So I came off of shift work and I ca--became a salary man. Uh...so I suppose I stayed in the mine...I don't know...maybe around, I lose track, around eight or nine years, I guess.

[Clears throat] Uh, my father come home from the camp after two years, and until business got going again, and I was now at [Inaudible] monthly salary, I turned my cheques over to my father. And uh...he uh...got on his feet again. Once he was on his feet, uh, he said, "Well I don't need your money [Laughs] [Unclear] you keep it!" So uh, ah, there was...a number of years there [Clears throat] that I still worked...And uh, at that time, well, I have to go back now, to the start of the war. At the start of the war, Italy wasn't in it. I'd sent a letter to Ottawa. I wanted to join the Airforce. Aircraft were only important to me. [Clears throat] When I've--one of those kids that built models left and right and all of this sort of thing. [Clears throat] And uh

[Pause] But I got a letter back from Ottawa and things were chaotic in Ottawa. Uh, they weren't prepared yet to recruiting. That they would be in touch. But, I never heard from them. Now with my father in the camp [Clears throat] and being part of a [Says laughing] royal family, I became a wander--a ward of the Amer--Canadian government. Basically, I guess couldn't even join the girls guides, you know and it's one of those things. [Clears throat] And uh... [Laughs softly] After the war, well my father was home now, and after the war I--business was up. Uh...and the war is over. At, at time I took flying lessons. So I still hold a pilot's license. And I was with the Royal Flying Club and my instructor, was Frank Co--Cookie we called him. He was a pitfire pilot during the war. [Clears throat] So Cookie trained me how to fly. I sold [?] with Cookie. Then I went over with Bra D'or Ways [Air Bras D'Or], another airline, and uh, I done up. That's another story now to the flying career. [Sniffs softly]

[0:14:26.1]

NS: Um, just going back for a moment, sir.

ER: Yeah.

NS: Um, specifically about your childhood. Is there any memories you remember very specifically about your childhood that are important to you?

ER: Yeah, I would say. Very important, uh school. Uh, I was just a...a student, a mediocre student I guess during my low grades. When I hit high school, it was a different story. I actually, I never thought I'd do anything. But I came first in the boys, and I came second in, second in leading the class in high school. Uh, while I was in highschool, uh, I took correspondence cour--er night, night classes uh with the science teacher. [Clears throat]

I took up radio, three years. And I done well in that for the three years I came first in my class. Uh, during my high school days, I'd, I'd ask--the science teacher was Trevor, Lawrence Tre--uh Trevor [Clears throat] So, I asked him after, after long after years later, how come I was the only student in high school one, I can get the keys to the lab any-- whenever I wanted. I didn't take French or, or English, or Latin and English rather, um or Latin and French, sorry. And uh, they Kiwanis [?] Club had donated to the school a 16 mm projector...which I ran. I ran it in Central School and I ran it, uh I would get driven up to the two Catholic school. And I would show the filim [film]. The filim [film] was picked by Trevors, the science teacher, some contact in Ontario. And the Americans claimed that they were the first to use filim [film] for educating children. Not so. Trevors was about two years ahead of them. So, I ran that projector. The Kiwanis [?] also donated a pa--uh microscope to the school. And in those days, not like today, I mean forget it, uh different time, and I can get the microscope whenever I wanted. [Clears throat] I'd go to the Principal and ask for the microscope and he'd give it to me. And I asked periods later, "How come I was the only student to get all those little privileges?" And the only answer [Clears throat] he gave me at that time was uh, "You, you were different." [Whispers] That's all. That's, that's the answer I got from Trevors. So I, I done quite well really when I look at it. [Sniffs softly] You [Pause] had a good teacher. I had Nancy Bowden. The Bowdens played a role in my life. I now have to go back further with the Bowdens. Mrs. Bowden was what my mother used to call, uh, "Old Country English." They had come from England. And she'd came over with her husband and two daughters, Nancy and I forget the other one, because Nancy had a big, big influence on my life. [Clears throat] Now in my childhood--ha, in Italy, my father was an altar boy. But when here in Canada, we never went to Church. [Sniffs] And he told me, ha. He says, "You do what you want when you're old enough to make up your own mind." So, he didn't want me to be uh, to grow up influenced by any other people. I had to do my own dece-decisions. Now, [Clears throat] m--old Mrs. Bowden, I, I have to use her. [Clears

throat] She was uh, taught at sch--what they're all teachers. Mrs. Bowden, Nancy, and [Unclear] the other one slips my mind. [Clears throat] But they were all teachers. Now, Mrs. Bowden, old Mrs. Bowden, taught me in kindergarten. Uh, she also taught my three sisters-I had four sisters but three at that time-she taught my three sisters piano lessons. Now, I was exempted from the piano lessons. I was supposed to take up violin lessons but at that time, I had an eye problem, okay. So rather than exaggerate the eye, my parents done away with the music lessons. [Sniffs] Now, sometime, old Mrs. Bowden would come to the house to teach my sisters and sometime, my sisters would have to go up to Mrs. Bowden's. [Sniffs] Now, I don't know how old I was. I was on a scooter. Now I don't know old a kid is when they play with scooters. [Sniffs] I could read. [Sniffs] So I went to my sisters, we're going up to old Mrs. Bowden's place. [Sniffs] And that's about...oh about a kilometer I suppose from our place. So I go up [Exhales] and they're taking their piano lessons. [Sniffs] And I'm sitting on the chesterfield. And old Mrs. Bowden says, well they had a library, a bookcase full of books [Sniffs], "Take a book and read it. You know, while you're waiting." And I just happen to pick Darwin...the... [Laughs softly] the uh...the uh...Evolu--based, based on Evolution. [Sniffs] And Nancy comes home. Now, Nancy knew I didn't go to Church. And this is a small town. She was Church of England but Nancy was quite modern [Clears throat] in her thinking. [Sniffs] And she says--seen me reading Darwin. Well she says, "If you're interested, take it home." And then, [Unclear] home. So I took it home. I read it. [Sniffs] I take it back and she gives me Huxley. Why we behave like human beings [Laughs] So, so, and that's started me on science. And fr--from then on, I'm a 100 percent science. And I still read it. Trevors in--got me in that state of mind, to study. And I've studied all my life. And it's--I still study. I'm 88 and I still buy scientific textbooks.

[0:21:39.9]



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LA: And you owe it all to her?

ER: And I owe it all to [Says Laughing loudly] her. Oh yeah, oh yeah. And so, today I still d--I don't go to Church. I've studied religions the best I could. There's books downstairs on all the World Religions. I'm an atheist. [Laughs] I'm sorry but, but I can't, I can't, I can't, I can't go with it.

LA: Now did your mother object to your father's decision to make the children--

ER: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

LA: --Uh...so she wasn't upset that you guys didn't go to church?

ER: My mother, my mother never said anything uh mad at all. [Sniffs] She never butted [?] she supported my father quite well.

[BREAK]

ER: The uh...Father spoke Italian to her. She understood it. She could read it. But she never spoke it. I, I don't know a word in the language. But she understands, her father was from Italy. She understands Italian but doesn't speak it. Her mother was from Belgium and she understands [Laugh] French but she doesn't speak it. But she's got, more or a less, in a sense, three languages.

NS: And you're referring to your wife [Unclear]--

ER: Uh, wife, yes. [Sniffs]

NS: Um, just going back for a second to your father's immigration. Why did he immigrate to Canada [Unclear]...

ER: That's interesting. [Clears throat] My father, see, my, my--as far as I know, my grandfather was a medical man him--in, in Asolo. And my mother, er my grandmother, also worked in the hospital. Now, my father was sent over to Switzerland, which is just over the mountains. [Clears throat] Because this is rea--Asolo is really north Italy--uh the wife and I did the, the down there 15th wedding anniversary. [Clears throat] And uh, you can go to the, the Asolo is a, just like a, like a, like a, something like a pier, big pier houses and uh, Browning settled in there. And Browning, Browning is there. Uh, ha--it's a very historic uh--Napoleon money and pa--paid in Italy, his headquarters were in Asolo. But you go to the very top end of the ruins, around the time--built around the time of Christ but it's all in ruins now. It's only open on the weekend. But from the top of that, you look--if it's a clear day you can see the glint of water at, at Venice-the lagoon. And if you go to the other side of--to the north side, of the rock they call it, and you look up you can see the snow on the Alps of the Italian Alps. Very beautiful. And uh, so anyway, they sent my father over to uh Basil, Basil, Basil, in, in Switzerland. To college. [Sniffs] [Clears throat] But my father's a drop-out. And he, [Clears throat] took up a trade instead. But at that time, all the coal mines and all of the steel plants, was just--it's an English firm you know. [Unclear] was an English firm. And [Clears throat] they were recruiting...people to work in the mines and work in the steel plant. [Sniffs] And they went to North Italy. Italians have a...work ethic, I suppose, if you wanna call it. I know I have it. I, I, I...if I'm laid up I--it's, it's horrible to [Unclear] my wife has a tough time. [Clears throat] I have to get out and do something. And....so they recruited. So, all my father's friends in Asolo and stuff, came over to work in mines. He came with them. And he was in the mine just for a short period then he went into business on his own. But my

father had an influence on these people. I didn't understand the influence of my father in the Italian community. The people in New Waterford like the, the Bellos and all of those people. They come from...Asolo, the north Italy. And my father is royalty. And the Italians have a different outlook on royalty. I, I--when we--I was [Unclear] I was down to uh over in Italy, I went down to where her father comes from-Altivole. And I'm looking for a place to eat, it's not like Canada. And I ended up at this place but it was closed. [Clears throat] But I met the owner, but he had been in England so he can speak a bit of English. [Sniffs] And so when I introduced myself to him. He said, "Oh! One of the famous Razzolinis." So my father had a quite an influence on the Italian community and [Says laughing] everytime there was a election, [Clears throat] this group would come to my father's place [Sniffs] and talk to my father because he had this influence on the Italians. And...they were Liberals and ma--mainly but--m-most of--well at that time, and I don't know now. But at that time, all the Italians had voted Liberal. [Sniffs] So...but so they'd come. I used to laugh a little. I didn't understand at all at that time. I was pretty young. But, you'd only see these people [Says laughing] at election time. The rest of the time, you'd never see them at all. But it was funny. But anyway, that's the...that part of it. [Sniffs] Go ahead. Your turn [Sniffs]

[0:27:32.1]

NS: I'll, I'll just clarify--

ER: [Laughs]

NS: --When you said, um when you're telling--talking about the schools you were attending, what schools were they specifically? Their names?

ER: Ah [Exhales] I was in Central School. And there was Mount Carmel School and St. Agnes School. St. Agnes and Mount Carmel are, are Catholic schools, run by the sisters. [Sniffs] Now, from my front door I can see...the public school. The--so that's where I went. [Sniffs] I didn't go to Catholic school. [Sniffs] But then I ca--I wasn't religious [Sniffs] so this played right up in my alley. In the public school, everybody was there. [Sniffs] Uh, Church of England, Presbyterian, [Sniffs] uh, you name it, uh Jewish. Oh! I grew up in the business area of New Waterford. I--you're talking about your neighbours [Sniffs] Uh...I would imagine that the stores in New Waterford...I would say would be 80% Jewish. So all the kids I played with were Jewish. I've been mistaken for Jewish. Uh, I'll say this about them, I was a Gentile in the Jewish community. [Sniffs] All the old Jewish women made the wine. I was their official [Laughs] wine sampler of all this wine. [Laughs] And, and uh, I played with the Jewish kids. Uh, When we got married, well before that the Schwartzes. They were--Miss--old Mrs. Schwartz. She was a widow but she had sons and daughters. [Sniffs] And she was a millionaire. She ended up a millionaire. Uh, Irvey, her son--her second oldest son. He wanted to set me up in business. He said, [Unclear] [Laughs] And when we got married, uh, at that time, you couldn't go and get a loan like today. It's easier to get a house [Sniffs] at-- in those days it wasn't that way. He said, "Well, if you want a house, I'll build you a house!" [Laughs] Oh, hey, you know. So, I--the Jewi-- I suppose in some sense, you're so close to the Jewish community...that I guess you thought, you know, you were a Jew! You never thought you of being Jewish but you were accepted by the Jewish community.

[0:30:00.5]

LA: Were there a lot of Italians in the public school too?

ER: Aaaaah, no. Most of--all--far as I can tell, the, the rest of the town, the Catholics, uh, the--they were Catho--they went to Catholic school. Mount Carmel, I think, took most of the Italian children. Yeah.

LA: Where did your sisters go to school?

ER: Oh same place as I did [Pause] Yeah, Central, Central, Central School.

LA: And in high school?

ER: Central. Same thing.

NS: Um, just so we can get to specifics, sir. Uh, what was the name of the area you lived in, and the street name, this neighbourhood...

ER: Aaah. I lived on Smith Street. But the business--the family business was next to the post office and the post office was very central. [Sniffs] The, the main street in New Waterford is Plummer Avenue and one of the branches coming off is Smith Street. And uh...I guess on the corner of Smith and, and Plummer Avenue is the bank. And right behind the bank is the post office. And that, that was our place. Yeah. Now, I could come out like I said in the front of our business and look down over and I can see Central School. [Clears throat]

NS: Uh, so just in your childhood, uh besides schooling and--was there anything else you remember doing for fun, in your neighbourhood or....?

ER and Mrs. R: [Laughs in unison]

ER: I, I wasn't a, I wasn't a little saint when I was small [Laughs]

Mrs. R: [Laughs in the background]

ER: Aaah, ba---, nnnnn, aaah. [Exhales] Yeah, a lo--things to do sure. Uh, when I was going to school. [Sniffs] My chums [Sniffs] chums. Not Jewish chums, but I had other chums. One was Scottish, Andrew Dickson. And the other one was Billy Westerway. Uh, English, okay? And uh, [Sniffs] sure uh Andrew Dickson and I done a lot of rifle shooting...[Background 'clang' noise] with a 22. I have a bad eye. The doctor suggested that I was treated [sp?]--well my father took t--two specialists. Both specialists looked at my eye and said the vision was that good in it, they did not want to touch. [LA coughs in the background] And they recommended exercise for the eye. [Sniffs] Okay, and today, I guess they can fix it. But you're going back in time, you're going back 70 years, you know? [Clears throat] And--or better than 70. But Andrew Dickson and I done a lot of rifle shooting. I had 22 rifle. And uh, we done a lot of target shooting. Lot of terrific amount of target shooting and with Billy Westerway it was trout fishing. And we'd go to McNeils Brook and we'd fish for trout. But yeah, uh I built a boat...uh...it had scrap lumber...and we [Laughs softly] one of the neighbours, he'd had--uh--a pony and a cart. We put the boat on that and took it out to Lingan Bay and we'd hide it in the woods. But we sailed the Bay, you know, stuff like that. Right now, the wife and I [Clears throat] we have a 40 ft. sailboat that I keep at South Shore Marina. [Clears throat] And uh...she's the, the, the, the, the sailor in the family. She likes being on the water. [Clears throat] And I think if I ever sold the boat, it would mean more to her [Laughs] so anyway... the way it goes.

NS: Um, so at this time were you involved in any political organizations or groups? Or young youth groups?

ER: Nope, nope, nope, nope, nope. There was no--I wasn't--belong to any no group whatsoever, uh...no clubs or no clubs...uh, went to school, went to night school...uh...went trout fishing, gun shoo--gun shooting, uh, out in the woods with my father. My father is a natur--uh, out in the fall, gathering mushrooms. Uh, I didn't understand that mushrooms were such an important thing to the North Italians until I went to Italy. It's on the menu, you shouldn't get it quite easily but [Clears throat] but I learned from my father, poisonous mushrooms, good mushrooms. I, I, I [Unclear] then I had a canoe later on, I went canoeing and trout fishing and you name it, you know, but I supposed my life you know was outdoors. And, in some ways I lived much like the Indian. I had a little lean tube tent uh, that I got the fabric up from a place called Abercrombie. It's in New York based where suppliers takes edition [?]. [Clears throat] But I got this material up my father--er my mother sewed it for me but it was what they called a baker tent. [Clears throat] You can put the fire outside, it was like a lean tube and uh...the heat. And I put that, rolled that up, and put it on a packsack and go with the fish and rod and topography maps hike. There's only a couple of topography maps in Cape Breton at that time. I had them, I would pick this (place, fire the bush someplace) [?] [Laughs] get a friend and off we go off into the bush [Clears throat] spend the night you know, fish for trout and stuff like that. But you're outdoors all the time, very outdoorsy-like, very outdoorsy-like. [Sniffs]

[0:35:39.2]

LA: What did your sisters do for fun?

ER: Beg your pardon?

LA: What did your sisters do for fun?

ER: [Exhales]

MR: [Laughs in the background]

ER: That's a good question. [Sniffs] I have one sister, she had to come first every year in her grades and she did. Uh, she later married the, the mayor's son [Laughs] Another sister, uh she married uh, uh and uh...her first husband was Belgium. Her second husband was Belgium. [Sniffs] But she married and the, the third--my two older sisters, I lost them just this year [Sniffs] at 93. They were twins. [Sniffs] And one up, up in Ontario in Kingston, she died and three months later, her twin died. Both at 93. Uh...and the Art [other?] she married a German, part German, part English, Scottish I should say. Her mother was Scotch. Joe Calvin, their name was Calvin. He came--he was a, an--a mining engineer. He founded the Stirling mine in Cape Breton. Lead and silver. And he done prospecting. I done prospect--oh I prospect [Says laughing] too by the way! I had, I had the, I [Laughs] it's a long story [Sniffs] God. And uh, [Sniffs] during the war, he was known as "Dosco Joe." He brought the long wall system from Germany into Canada and they done away with the pillar. The pillar coal mining was leading pillars of coal. This was the complete extraction of coal, the long wall system. It was quite, quite, very hard to understand his English, very German accent. And he was my, sort of my mentor when I was prospecting. I would go to see Joe and be in his study [Clears throat] he'd explain parts of Cape Breton, where to look and what to look for. And like Tungsten [?], or--he had found float Tungsten, float--what they called float that uh, an ore sample, but where it came from they couldn't find. But I found it, a number of thin--molybdenite, I

found hematite, and i found uh arsenic that goes in lead batteries. And...I--during the war, with the atom bomb, I was in contact with the head geologist here in Canada and he told me where to look in Nova Scotia. We had radioactive ore in Cape Breton. It's called gumwheat [?] And he told me where to look [Whispers] going [?] Okay but [Clears throat] I never, I never did follow up on it. [Clears throat] But, the uh....claims that I had Ontario company took them over and they changed Louisburg, I was at Louisburg, I'd done the...it's a long story. [Whispers] God...this goes on for hours. [Clears throat] And you wanna find out about the war?

NS: Oh no, anything?

ER: [Exclaims] Anything?! [Laughs] Oh God!

NS: [Unclear]

LA: This is a life story so while we are focusing on war, we also wanna know, you know, your childhood, what you did before and after, so--

ER: Oh gee, after the war. Boy, how do I--

NS: Yeah, we can get after the war um in just a moment. Um, do you remember any fascist activity or any, any talk of fascism in your community as a boy?

[0:39:37.1]

ER: [Clears throat] Outside of the after-work club, now I think that was originated in Italy, I think that's where that came from. But my father was never all that active in any,

any of, any of that....They're all sort of--before the war uh, Mussolini was making an impact on all Italians, uh, and I suppose in some ways it was like Hitler before the war in Germany. Uh, he sort of got them out of the rust, okay? Now, Mussolini, I suppose they, they done a lot of work in Italy and uh...Italy at that time had colonies in Africa. Uh, Libya and E--Eritrea, you know. [Clears throat] And everything was sort of moving and you must understand, I think, as far as all the Italians that came over, they came over, more or less, to get work. Once Italy--Europe is a very funny place. If you had land and it's established and there's a family, something like in England, that the, the older--their younger children don't inherit anything. They have to move out of the country if they want anything and set up someplace else. So England had it, they all had it in Europe. So...but when Mussolini came into thing, uh, what happened there is...well things are booming back in the old country. [Laughs] So they didn't want to go back but they, they felt good that it was, it was changed. And I know people right now, today, my barber, he's retired now, and he went back to Italy. His daughter was born here, she went over and he tried to get her back in Canada she wouldn't come [Laughs], you know? I mean life was good so, so they stayed. They stayed [Whispers] Same thing. But I can't remember my father outside of being talkative I suppose that things were booming in Italy, that's all. Now one thing that he did do, and he uh...had a number of medals in gold. And uh, my mother had gold. And Mussolini at that time uh, put out a bid to all Italians, if they had any gold that they didn't want, please send it to Italy! So they--he sent the, the gold medals, and I know my mother's uh wedding ring went, and he replaced--they got a return for that--made a buyer [Laughs] but, but, but that was just a...tie with the old country, that's all. They all done that. So...I can't see anything you know, too out of place with that sort of stuff. All I, all I know about the family is the Mountie, what he said [Clears throat], "We sent him for his safekeeping." Two, my mother got letters. They went through the centers during the war. Three, my father didn't [Says laughing] mind being out in the woods. Uh, they say they made 20 cents a



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day. That didn't occur to him, it didn't-- you know--they--he had his room and board and, and as long as the family was getting on, he didn't get it. You know? So it was--he said, "It was two years." He said, "My vacation!" And then he'd come back and start business up again. It wasn't--and while he was gone, the--they uh supplied the groceries and then, then of course, I worked and I supplied money.

LA: Did you have to pay for the groceries or?

ER: No, no. No, groceries were free.

LA: And do you know how much uh, did you guys get welfare too?

ER: No, just, just for groceries. Just for groceries.

LA: Would you pick them up or would someone deliver it to the family home?

ER: [Exhales] Aaah. That's a good question. I think they were delivered. [Pause] Every--all the groceries stores at that [audio fades out] had horse and wagons, and slaves and stuff and they done the--all the delivery. Unless you're living very close to, to the grocery store.

NS: Um, before we move into the internment, I'll just ask Louanne if she has questions about your childhood.

LA: Um, I guess just to clarify; you said that you had four sisters, so you were the only boy?

ER: No. [Clears throat] In the family there's, there's four girls, and two boys, myself included. And right at the present time, I'm alive at 88 and my sister, Beatrice, and her brother, Dante. They're all up in Ontario. And they're still alive, but they live apart of course. Dante's over at one side--they're twins again, named Dante and Beatrice. That's my father. [Laughs] You know anything about Dante and Beatrice?

LA: No.

ER: You don't, eh? Oh God, they're famous lovers! [Laughs] [Unclear] Literature. Oh yeah. No, no.

[0:45:25.9]

LA: So at the break of the war, in 1940, how old were you and your siblings?

ER: Whooooo. I wasss--at the start of the war I was in high school and I guess I was 15. Annnnd, I had three sisters older than me in that period. That was all that was there at that time. Ah, no. Uh, Dante and Beatrice were there. Yeah, they were small. Very small. [Whispers] Yeah. [Sniffs]

NS: Ok. So starting with that, sir. Can you describe from the day you remember the police came for your father? Where you were or?

ER: Where I was? [Pause] Good question [Pause] [Says quietly] I wasn't in school. I was home. [Pause] [Talks in normal voice level] And it was just an upheaval...You know. The Mounties come in and just took him away. Period. That was it. [Sniffs] And we didn't see him no more. Uh, he went to some place in New Brunswick first and then they shipped



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him to Petawawa. And from Petawawa they sent him home. That's all I can remember on that part of it. [Whispers] Yeah.

NS: Did they give an explanation for why they were there? Or present anything?

ER: No, uh...Well if they did, they didn't--I'm not aware of it. Let me put it that way [Clears throat] It was, it was very disruptive, uh. You know, you didn't know what to think [Clears throat] And everyone was you know...gasping for air [Laughs]

NS: Do you remember how your father reacted to the situation specifically?

ER: No, not really. No, no, I don't remember that.

LA: Was the whole family home when the RCMP came for him?

ER: I think so. I would say yes to that.

LA: And how many of them did you say came to your home to--

ER: Oh--

LA: --pick up your father?

ER: --when--about three of them came I guess to pick up my father. [Clears throat] And...about, oh about two or three days later I forget the time, that's when the officer from the Mounties came in and said, "We've got [Clears throat] nothing against your father. It's uh...we took him for his own good. Safe--



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NS: They--

ER: --Safe

NS: And they never--

ER: --Safe-keeping.

NS: They never uh, expanded on that, the why it was for his own good?

ER: Well the people, the local people were up in arms. Okay? So they figured there might be some violence. So...Now, you must remember that most of the people taken, as far as I know, were business people. People that worked in the coal mines, didn't seem to be affected. And it's just that the miners would not work with them during the coal mines. They wanted them out. They were scared. They figured they--I don't know--they figured [Laughs] that...People are funny. [Whispers] People are funny.

LA: Did you know any of the other men that were taken away? Were they--

ER: All I--

LA: --fathers of your friends?

ER: Uh----ohhhh...God--I forget how many was taken away in New Waterford. I would--not--see we didn't live in the Italian community. You must understand, we're up in the business community. Most of the Italian community was either in the district of 12,

which was the twelfth colliery. Or number 14, which would--er--part of town that we called down at 14. And they came from those areas. Now, the biggest amount of Italians were in the number 14 area. [Sniffs]

NS: How long was your father interned for, sir?

ER: In--in camp? About, I would say, around two years. I, I give it, I would say two years. But it might be a month here, month--a couple of months. You know, I, I--exact date, I don't know.

NS: Did he share his experiences while he was there with you?

ER: Aaah, when he came home. Yeah, he told us about it. It--he wasn't up--he wasn't uptight about nothing...You know. He--[Laughs] To him, it was--the family was looked after back home, you know? To, to him, it was like--all a big joke, you know? These people [says laughing] don't know what they're doing! [Laughs] So, this is how he looked at it. [Clears throat] He wasn't, he wasn't uptight about it.  
[Sniffs]

LA: Did he bring anything home from the camp?

[0:50:08.9]

ER: Souvenirs. They made souvenirs and stuff at the camp. Okay. Little things. Coconuts  
[?] Little things--

LA: And--

ER: You know? Little cigarette uh things, for cigarettes and--m--matches and b--boxes, you know? [Says laughing] All of these queer little things.

LA: Do you uh, do you or your siblings still have possession of these items, or...?

ER: Aaah [Pause] Right off--offhand I'd say no. [Sniffs] Eh, a lot of things were made out of uh birds-eye maple. They would climb the tree with birds-eye maple in it. [Sniffs] Very interesting, though, in later years [Sniffs] [Clears throat] and I mean, much later years, [Sniffs] I had a lot to do with the forestry, in the forestry office in Newfoundland and the one up in, in Fredericton. They had a research centre there so I could--[?] [Sniffs] And one of the things that they were trying to find, was to be able to grow [Clears throat] trees that would have the bird's eye in it. And there a scient--one scientist I know of, that worked on that--why do they have it some trees and don't have it in others? And why can't we have it? So because it's a more valuable wood. And the trees were ornamental in furniture.

[Whispers] That's, that's...yeah.

NS: You were saying that your father's time there. Did he ever talk about specifics, um the accommodations, food, anything like that?

ER: [Sniffs] No, food was good. He figured--food was good and didn't mind. He did, he did, he didn't mind it! You know?

NS: And did he have a daily routine or a job at the camp, or?

ER: Oh yeah, they used to take them out and cut firewood, and take down trees and stuff. He didn't--this, this was up his [Bursts out laughing] [Says laughing] You must understand, working up in the woods was up his alley! [Laughs] [Sniffs]

NS: Did he ever talk about sports or music or anything that went on in the camp or...?

ER: Not about sports. There might have been some music. And the music came. I'm, I'm vague on the, on the music. So I really can't on--he--m-music was mentioned but whether or not they were Italians or Germans or what that done it, I don't know. [Whispers] This, I don't know.

NS: Did he have specific friends with him at the camp or people he knew or relatives from [Unclear]

ER: [Says exhaling] Aaaaah, no, he had no relatives, but he--some of the people were Italians from town. He knew them. And he made acquaintances with the other ones. Now, I can tell you a story afterwards, and this is years afterwards. We were up in Montre--[Says laughing] Montreal. I drove my father up. And he met a couple of the Italians that he knew up there and I think they'd might have been in the camp with him. And so they figured, they go down to this Italian restaurant [Sniffs] in, in Montreal. And my father didn't know the, the owner of them, but they're all around the table talking Italian. I don't understand it! So my father says, and I was getting bored. [Sniffs] And so the fellow that owned the rest--[Laughs] restaurant, ha, he says...called over the head waiter. He says, "Give him one of the best seats in [Says laughing] this table [Unclear] and give him whatever's on the [Says laughing] menu free. [Laughs] So I went and had dinner and oh! I would say...But two years later [Sniffs] I'm reading in the paper. God.

That fel--that owner of that hotel was a member of the mafia! [Laughs] [Unclear] I read-I thought it was very funny at that time. But eh, that was it. [Sniffs]

NS: Um, you mentioned German music was possibly in the camp. Did he talk about--was there any interaction between the other, um, cultures er--in the camp, Germans or otherwise?

ER: Yeah, he met a couple of Germans. Uh [Pause] But I think they were Prisoners of War...But most of the time it's, with the Italians, with the Italian people. Yeah.

NS: What about access to the outside world, to your family at this time? Did he correspond--interact--like could he communicate with you?

ER: Yeah, there's letters. But the letters had gone through the censors. These letters from the camp were censored. [Sniffs] Yeah.

NS: And how often did they come?

ER: [Exhales] I think they were, I think they were on a fixed schedule to tell you the truth. But my mother got quite a few of them. Now they were brief. What else could you write about, you know, that's very short. But that was it and my mother, you know, he was in touch with the family.

NS: Did anyone else ever attempt to visit him in the camp, or?

ER: Uh, not to my knowledge. Not to my knowledge.



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NS: Um, with your home life, who would you say was the main breadwinner of the family while your father was away?

ER: I guess it was me. Working in the mine, yeah.

NS: And what mine specifically, sir?

ER: Sixteen.

NS: And did you go specifically for this reason? Or do you think you would have done otherwise, or?

ER: No, more, more or less for that reason, I would say.

NS: Yes

ER: Because we were getting along alright at home. I mean, you know, we weren't--oh, you know, father was gone but we were making out. But, when the Pit Committee showed up, uh they sort of played on my patriotism I guess and yeah...okay, I'll go, I'll go in the mine.

[0:55:47:9]

LA: So this was what you mentioned earlier, when the Pit Committee said, "We have a shortage of men--

ER: Yeah



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LA: --because they're in the camps"--

ER: No, no.

LA: Oh!

ER: Oh, no. They were gone off to join the army--

LA: Because they joined the army! So you have a shortage of men.

ER: Yeah

LA: And they asked for, for people to come and sign up.

ER: Yeah. We had, we had people, we had people in the mine that actually come in off the farms.

LA: Okay.

ER: But they were misfits. They, they didn't last.

LA: Was there any resistance to Italian Canadians joining uh, from the other non-Italians that were in the mines or were the Italian-Canadians uh, welcomed to join the mine, when the Pit Committee posed this?

ER: When the Pit Committee came around, there was no Italians in the mines. I suppose I was the only, born in Canada, but the only one with the uh Italian name. I ran into no problems with the men in the mines. I...I thought I had the ability, this is strange coming...but I, I make friends easy. Okay? I, you know, you're not a pride-about [?] about person, you don't look at a person from a religious point of view, you don't look at them--the colour or anything that's not there. It's just not there. [Whispers] It's just not there.

NS: What about your mother during this time, sir? Can you explain her situation, what pressure she was under?

ER: [Sniffs softly] Well, her husband was gone. Uh [Pause] Well I suppose she had the worries of the family. you know, without a [says laughing] father. [Laughs] You know, that kind of.... My mother's a worker. You must remember she's a worker, good humoured, uh [Laughs]...ha...uh doesn't put up with no nonsense [Laughs] That kind of a person, you know? So yeah, we made out , you know, it wasn't.... Outside, outside of the upheaval, uh...it wasn't all that bad really. It's just that you ended up in a coal mine. Now you couldn't do anything else, anyhow. You know, what else, what else--nothing else that I can do. You know. I mean, you're tied down, you were a ward of a government, uh there was restrictions on you. And when they came, sure, I'll go in the coal mine. First couple of shifts, were what they called, a deputy boy. I went around with the mine inspector--see in the mine, you can't travel alone. You must have two people, okay? Just because of the danger. Now I can elaborate on that later, when I became an official, because it's not a 100% true and I'll tell you this from a coal-mining standpoint as an official in the mine, that if you follow all the rules and regulations laid down by the government on mining in Nova Scotia, you would never get a pound of coal out from the ground. Now, being a good Official meant knowing when--what you can do

to produce coal. Now as an official-- it was a good discipline, I have to admit it was a good discipline. [Sniffs] [Exhales] You had to know what you'd get away with. Let me put it that way. And [Pause] there was once a week, a management meeting on a Tuesday, between the shifts, and the managers were there, the underground manager was there and the superintendent of the mine was Harry Hines. Now from my front door, I can look out up across Plummer Avenue and up on the hill, was Harry Hines' house. A huge big--the--see this is an English company. They, they looked after their official very good. The higher you were the more you got it. So here's the Hineses' house bal--you know really posh. Lots of land. A gardener, full time gardener gardening the flowers and growing the vegetables [Sniffs] And uh, each official had his residence--from manager--from mine--the house wasn't that big but [Sniffs] he had all of this special privil-- [Laughs] privileges. So it was a different, different thing. Now the meeting, Harry Hines would be at the meeting, either...you--the only excuse that you would have for not attending the meeting was that you were still underground working. And in those days, you worked six days a week. Not, not like now. To--today there's no comparison, whatsoever with today. The mine that closed here in Nova Scotia, just the last mine up here with the fella that got killed. [Clears throat] If that was my day [LA sneezes in the background] that mine would still be working. Those fellows [Pause] Actually I would say, killed themselves. From what I gather. From what I listened to, all the evidence. They tried to blame the management and stuff. I can remember talking to my [Clears throat] brother-in-law. The second husband of my sister, [Sniffs] Belgium, he was an official in the mine before he quit. [Clears throat] And he said, same as me, "If was us, at that time that mine would still be working. [Whispers] We'd still work the mines. Wouldn't close."

[1:02:10.1]

NS: Um, when you said that during this time, the authorities supplied the groceries. Uh, which authorities specifically, the Town Council, or the--?

ER: I, I don't know where that came from. I, I'll be honest about you. [Clears throat] Dealt with, dealt with my mother. [Clears throat] I know it was Hinchey's store that supplied the groceries. And I know that the Hinchey [Clears throat] headman Hinchey, I, I don't know if that or later or whatever, he became mayor of the town. [Clears throat] So Hinchey was the mayor. Muise, later became the, the mayor of the town and my sister married his son [Clears throat]. But he was mayor at the time. [Sniffs softly]

NS: Um, so what about the--your neighbours or the Italian community at this time, did they supply support as well or did they stay away?

ER: [Exhales] I would say they supplied support to my mother I suppose in their way, but I [Clears throat] I, I don't, I don't remember them. I don't remember them. We were--you must remember we were sort of divorced just because we're in business. We're up in the business section of the town. We're in the [Clears throat] center of the town [Clears throat]. The rest are way down there and the rest are way up there. [Sniffs] So... [Clears throat] Well they might have supported themselves if they had Italian neighbours but we didn't have Italian neighbours. [Clears throat]

NS: And I know you stated before, but just to clarify, during this time when you were working in the mines, you stayed in school as well or?

ER: Oh no. No, no. No, no. I was out of school. I quit [Clears throat]--my mother made me go down, ba--down, back to school and finish my provincials [Clears throat] which I only got a partial pass. [Clears throat] Understandable. [Clears throat] Now, I'm working

in the coal mines [Pause] I finished my Grade 11 by correspondence school in Halifax [Clears throat] and I got my Grade 12 and [Pause] uh, night school was when I was going to high school, that was in my high school days. [Clears throat] And uh [Pause] No, that's [Clears throat] that's about basically it. [Clears throat] Then [Clears throat] I educated myself. See, I, I, I held a number of jobs [Clears throat] but I was self-educated. When I, when I was at night shift [Clears throat]

MR: Gonna have to get him a drink of water.

NS: Oh, of course.

MR: [Unclear]

ER: When I was night shift, [Clears throat] when I was night shift, uh [Clears throat] you couldn't go any place coz you had to go to work in the afternoon/evening, afternoon. [Clears throat] So uh, [Pause] [Clears throat] so all morning I would study [Clears throat] and I studied surveying and mapping, okay. [Clears throat] And this is all aspects of surveying: [Clears throat] Hydrography, topography, photogrammetry, I studied them all. [Clears throat] Ah, oh you're looking after me, are you?

MR: [Unclear]

[1:05:27.1]

[Pause as ER drinks]

MR: [Laughs in the background]

ER: [Clears throat] Ah, ah, that helps. [Clears throat] [Pause] You're gonna have to understand that I used to give lectures. [Clears throat] When I gave lectures, my voice was good [Clears throat] Later on, as I got older [Clears throat] I couldn't lecture no more, I would let my [audio fades out] make the lecture. This at the Bedford Institute [Clears throat] but so anyway, I studied [Clears throat] photogrammetry, the works. Then...I got sick of coal mining coz I never did like--I never did--while I, uh an official, I never did like coal mining. I was good at it [Clears throat] but-and I done my work-but I never wanted it. [Clears throat] So [exhales softly] I figured I'd get out of the coal mines [Clears throat] and the province here were looking for people for the highways, highway construction. [Clears throat] [Softly exhales] So, Jim Thompson was my first boss. I remember putting my application in to uh--Halifax [Clears throat] and this was Friday he called me on the phone [Clears throat]: "You're successful, uh...we want you [Laughs softly] to come to work. Can you come Monday?" [Laughs] This is Jim. [Sniffs] [Clears throat] "No, I can't come Monday. I, I'm--God, I'm still working. I gotta resign!" "Okay, whenever you're ready, give us a call." So I go up to the coal mine, the headquarters [Sniffs] I resigned, and I went to work for the provincial government and building roads. [Sniffs] I was what they called an Assistant Resident Engineer [Sniffs] [Clears throat] [Sniffs] Now, I like the highways. I'm outdoors. [Sniffs] I like the work. I can handle the transit and I can handle the level. I can do all this stuff, nothing--second nature to you. It's easy. This is easy. [Sniffs] [Clears throat] [Sniffs] Mathema--oh--mathematics is something else I, I should talk--go back in time. If you want me to go back in time [Laughs] Mathematic [Clears throat] [Sniffs] [Exhales softly] [Laughs softly] [Clears throat] How can I put it? [Exhales] I'm in school... [Whispers] Ha! I got a partial pass in Math [Laughs softly] [Sniffs] [Whispers] Ha! Ha! That means I have to write math again in the next time school opens and I have to pass it to go in the next grade. You gotta know my father [Sniffs] My father goes down and gets the principal of school. The

principal of [says laughing] school would teach me math during my [Says laughing] summer holidays, two days a week [Laughs]. Oh! Two days a week I had to hike down to Victor Fischer's-he's the principal-go in his house, sit with the [says laughing] principal for all things, and we were scared of the principal when we're kids, you know, [Clears throat] and he taught me math. [Clears throat] I passed it. And from then on [Clears throat] mathematics and I are the best of friends. [Sniffs] [Clears throat] I'd go to Highway Department [Clears throat], math it's all math, it's kid's stuff [Laughs] [Says laughing] I could do all of it! There's no problem. So uh, there's things that I'd done in the highway that should have been done by an engineer, a graduate engineer, but I done them I--and they put me up to it. They--ha, ha--Jim Thompson [Sniffs] [Clears throat] Jim Thompson used me as a, a trouble shooter, his trouble shooter. Holy God. I remember being down [Clears throat] in the country. He wanted me to quit what I was doing down there. He wanted me up in Halifax to do the Armdale Rotary. He says, "Good experience for you." I'm pi--

[1:10:05.6]

MR [in the background]: Armdale Rotary, ha! Ha!

ER: I, I'm pissed off. And [Laughs softly] I said, "Holy God Jim." I said-- "It's a good experience!" I said, "Good experience in packing the [Laughs] [Unclear] That's what I was doing! I was going to work, sending me up to Inv--Inverness, with old Fritz Hamright. God, there's still snow on the ground. The contract is being let. And the road is not laid out yet. For everyday, that the contractors held up because of the Highway Department, there's a penalty. They have to pay thousands of dollars. So [Laughs] I went up there with Fritz. I worked till 11 o'clock at night and the office getting the grades ready and everything else. Get them ready to go out and put them on the next day [Says

laughing] to catch up with all the... Fritz wouldn't let me go! [Laughs] I had to stay up there with Fritz all--my God, that's the time her father died. Fritz let me come home for God's sake and [Sniffs softly] for a few days to bury her father, but, but anyway [Clears throat] Fritz, Fritz Hamright and I got along great. But it--to look at the long story, I enjoyed the high--I enjoyed highway work. I, I done all kinds of strange things until I was about ten years in the [Says laughing softly] Highway Department. And when I left, G.I. Smith [Clears throat] was the Minister of Highways, and Rick Wier was the Deputy Minister and I'm down saying goodbye to them. And they told me, "Look we hate to see you go. [Clears throat] We wish you good luck but if for any reason, that you want to be able to come back to the Highway Department." He said, "For whatever reason, for whatever time, if you want a job, there will always be a job for you here in the Highway Department." So I left to go with the Federal Government on the restoration at Louisbourg. So I was in charge of all the construction layout at Louisbourg. And I was in charge of all the surveys [Says laughing] in Louisbourg. And so, you're, you're in charge of that and Pat Thompson, Holy God, he--uh--gee, [Mumbles, unclear] this will get long-winded, you know. But Pat Thompson had gone to military college up in Ontario. He came from a pretty good family with connections. So I get called in by the Head Engineer of Louisbourg and he introduced me to Pat Thompson and he said, "He's the man, he's the man that wants to come with us. Would you take him out and show him what we're doing?" And I--this is--I done this a hundred times at Louisbourg. They come down from Ottawa or someplace and you take them around and give them the grand tour, let them go back, coz it's all construction see. It's all historic. So I took Pat out, showed him all around, then he disappears into the woodwork. Then, time marches on and Pat Shawn [?] was the head engineer. He went and built the telephone up in Montreal. He took the little Newfoundland engineer with him. He went up to Bell telephone [Sniffs] The oh--engineer that was left, he went--they offered him the job of City Engineer at, out at Medicine Hat. [Clears throat] He was from the west. I ran the

project for all summer. I...done a lot of things that you're not supposed to do--that's part of my mining experience. Uh, contracts. Contracts have to go out three, three tendures, at least three tendures. And the lowest tenure gets the, gets the contract. I put out the, well we had a Contracts Clerk that looked after that and, and she put out the three tendures. I had, uh, flock of ex-miners, [Unclear] ex-miners at Louisbourg. [Sniffs softly] I had, oh gee, 200 ex-miners, all sitting on their hands. I looked at the material when it would be delivered; I didn't look at the lowest, the lowest cost. I looked at the one that supplied me with the materials first and...that's who got the contract. Anyway, uh lo and behold, guess who comes back as the Chief Engineer, but Pat Thompson. Pat come back. So Pat and I worked pretty close at Louisbourg. I left Louisbourg and I went to Ottawa and went on special courses, to be a Classification Officer. And...I'm back down here again. I didn't wanna stay in Ottawa but I got to be a Classification Officer. That was uh, uh one year training in Ottawa at a special school that they set up for us. Long story, lots of detail. And anyway, I'm down here with BDW [Bras D'or Ways] and from BDW, I moved over to Environment over to Bedford Institute, as their Classification Officer. Then I met Pat Thompson, and well we had a little chat on the street and said, "Well maybe some day you'd come back with us." Okay, and then the Head of Personnel from Parks Canada came to me. Says, "We've got an organization at the skeleton. We would like to have you put some flesh on it for us. Would you come back?" So I owe Pat Thompson a favour. Pat Thompson, I was in the office...when I went to Ottawa the first time. I was at Ottawa, he put in--it was only a closed competition only within the government, outsiders couldn't apply. And I was in Pat's office when the telephone rang. And I hear him, "Tell him I'll talk to him on the phone." And he hung and he said to me, "They were asking me for a Jew [?]" But he recommended me. [Clears throat] So I figured, I owe him [Sniffs] something. So I went back and [Sniffs] put flesh on his organization for him and uh...before that though they moved me up to Ottawa and



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Census took my fingerprints and I had to take an oath [Sniffs] and they said, "You're security clearance is now sacred."

NS: [Unclear]

LA: Well it, it sounds like you have uh, you've had a long fulfilling career in different fields--

ER: Oh yes, it was a lot of fun!

LA: --so just to clarify, this was all after the war, after you were married?

ER: Nuh--yeah.

LA: Ya?

ER: Hmm, mmmm. I got married to her while I was still in the coal mines.

NS: So still in the coal mines and what year was that, sir?

ER: What year was that Marie?

MR: [Laughs in the background]

ER: [Laughs] Oooooohhhh.

MR: [Says in the background] 1952.

ER: What?

MR: 1952.

LA: And how many children do you have?

ER: We have a daughter. One daughter--she's a historian. She--[Mumbles, Unclear] and she got her degree here at Dal [Dalhousie University] and then she went up to--

MR: [In the background, unclear]

ER: I wanted to move to another university, she wanted to go anyhow. [Clears throat] But she had a choice; she could have went to the University of New Brunswick. She could have went to Waterloo. There's another one?

MR: [In the background, unclear]

ER: Out west someplace. [Clears throat] So she went to Waterloo. I said, "Well go up Ontario." I said, "No good going to...uh the one in New Brunswick." I said, "They're Maritimer. You go up and be another type of person." [Laughs] So she, she went and got her...

NS: Just to finish off the wartime period, um did you have relatives serving in the Canadian Services at that time, that you know of?

ER: Yeah I--in the Findlesons, we had uh, had uh, [Clears throat] uh, he got killed. He got killed overseas. That's one of the Findlesons from uh--

NS: And what was his name sir?

ER: Findleson. [Clears throat] Uh, Walter [Sniffs] Walter Findleson. And uh, he got killed. And uh, I don't know if Jack went or not. That's the same family, Findleton. Uh, who else in the family who I can find? They--did--at---families in Florence by the...another coal mine in town [Clears throat] And uh [Pause]

MR: [In the background] Patty.

ER: Patty. Patty Muise, uh the mayor's son. [Clears throat] He went up. He was uh, he was uh, into the trucking uh, military with the trucks [Clears throat]. Patty went. Anybody else? [Says mumbling] Victor? Victor wasn't in the--, no he wasn't in the army. No, that's it, that's it I guess [Clears throat]. [Unclear] Brother in law and cousins. [Clears throat]

NS: So to finish up this period, um do you remember the time or the day when your father was released from the camp?

ER: [Exhales] I don't remember the day. No, I don't remember the date if you're looking for a date. That's--

[1:20:08.6]

NS: Can you say anything that you can remember about--

ER: No, I don't remember that. [Clears throat] I remember Pop coming home. [Makes noise indicating surprise] [Clears throat] We're glad to see him. We all crowded around and uh, [Clears throat] he was happy to be home. And start telling about the camp, you know, life--what life was like so that's about it.

NS: Were you given notice before that he was coming home or--

ER: Oh yeah. No, no, no, no. Hmmmm mmm.

NS: [Unclear]

ER: When we--we knew he was coming out.

NS: Yeah.

ER: Yeah. So that took the edge off it. Like--not--it wasn't a surprise when he walked in through the door. [Clears throat]

NS: Um, can you describe your father the first day of him being home? Was he different or did he have to--

ER: He was quiet. He was quiet. Uh, business. He had to get back on his feet in business again, uh...No, [Unclear] but he was always a quiet man.

NS: Did he live the same life he had prior? Did he just get back to the same thing?



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ER: Same thing, yeah. Oh yeah, no change.

NS: He had no trouble with it?

ER: Nope. [Unclear] Outside, I kept working. I'd turn my paychecks over to him. You know, I mean he was the head of the family. I was staying home. Oh what the hell I didn't need the money anyhow you know [Laughs]

NS: Um, what about the wider community? Did they accept him back?

ER: Yeah. There was no, no, there's no problem whatsoever. It didn't take too long to get back on his feet again.

NS: And things just went normally after that--

ER: Yeah, same--

NS: --with his job?

ER: Same, same. Back to the old team. [Clears throat]

NS: Um, did he ever talk to you about life in the camp? And like, did he ever give you his thoughts on it, like whether it was justified or?

ER: [Pause] I think he could understand it why he was put in the camp, yeah. Uh, [Pause] I don't--I can't...I, I can't see him like with any like resentment about it, okay. It was a thing that happened. You know, things happen. Life is the way it is and you accept it and

you take it as it comes. He was gone for a good two years. We had correspondence, ah...but two years isn't that, isn't that long a time anyone think of.

NS: And what about yourself sir, I mean you've touched upon this, but in the years since, there's been a great debate about what happened during this time. And, and, have your thoughts fully formed on this or have they changed or...?

ER: [Pause] No, I would imagine my thoughts are the same and...I can't see...now and then, someone starts to put in for money or something. You'll find that in that thing I gave you, yeah, there are a couple of little clippings out of them, should thank Pancaro for that. [Sniffs] Ah, but we never ever felt that, "Hey, you owe us." You know, no, no.

NS: Um—

ER: Although, anybody who wants to give me money [Says laughing] I'll take it! But--

MR: [Laughs in the background]

ER: No, not, not really. See, when I, when I worked--life is funny. You know, I get this business of secret. I worked for two and half years past 65. And even when I retired, I still got called back and I [Laughs] I told, "Alright, I'll go and do it. But I don't want--you pay my expenses, my plane fare, and my room and board, but I don't want any money!" [Clears throat] Lo and behold, in comes a goddamn cheque and they won't take it back. So, so, so [Says starting to laugh] I cash it. They got it back anyhow in [Says laughing] income tax! [Says laughing] It put me into a different category! [Laughs] Oh, what the hell! [Laughs] But uh, life is--you know I been retired, what 20 years? [Clears throat] [Sniffs] Life is good! I got everything I want! [Sniffs] [Clears throat] Uh, we don't need

anything! [Sniffs] And ah, ah, I got no money worries [Sniffs] I opened a garage to, to a BMW car. [Laughs] I got a workshop with all wood-working tools in it. Uh, I got all the equipment that I'll ever need. You know, I just bought a goddamn snow blower because I used to use a shovel for the exercise [Sniffs] and the damn snow blower cost me the price of a used car I guess, three thousand five hundred. [Laughs] I used it once and then I, and then I had to get someone in to get to shovel my driveway 'til I recover, you know. These are the funny things in life, but, but life, life is good. [Sniffs]

NS: Thank you very much, sir.

ER: Oh you're [Laughs] bored you to death! [Sniffs]

NS: No, no.

LA: And if there's anything else that you wanna to mention, before we sign off? Uh--

NS: Yeah, has this experience--

LA: --final thoughts?

NS: Yeah, and I, I'd like to ask, has this experience uh brought any new thoughts to your, er [Mumbles, unclear] position on it?

ER: La--[Exhales] How can I put it? [Pause] The war years, I spent as a coal miner, and even beyond the war year, that my father got [Unclear] [Clears throat] Then you struck out more or less, you got married, you struck it on your own. And every time that you made the move, you hit paved earth. So I can look at all the jobs that I had, I enjoyed



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them. And I often tell the wife, "I can die tomorrow and [Says laughing] I'm satisfied!"  
So, so it's been pretty good.

NS: Well, that's great. Thank you very much sir.

LA: Thank you.

ER: You're welcome.

[Fades out 1:26:03.8]