

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

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LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Wheatley, ON

NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: Grace Tomasicchio

NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Travis Tomchuk

NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER: Lucy Di Pietro

TRANSCRIBED BY: Louanne Aspillaga

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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 has not edited this transcript for errors.

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UniversityofToronto, immigration, immigrant, immigrants, OrderSonsofItaly, ConventSchool

ABSTRACT

Grace D'Agostino was born Maria Grazia Cecilia Tomasicchio on December 29, 1932 in her family's home on 21 Division Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Grace was one of seven children born to Italian immigrants, Maria Rosa (Rose) Maiorana, and Giuseppe (Joe) Tomasicchio. Grace's parents and her uncle first arrived in New York City in 1912 aboard the ship, *America*, before moving to Toronto. Grace explains that her parents had a good life back home and were both educated, and that their reason for immigrating was different than other "typical" immigrants. According to Grace, her father wanted to break away from her grandfather's control and moving to America where the streets were "paved in gold" seemed like a good option. However, the young newlyweds arrived to face hostility where signs read, "No Italians" or "Italians need not apply." After a fruitless job search and the unfortunate death of their first son, the Tomasicchios moved to Toronto shortly after.

On June 10, 1940, Grace was seven years old. She remembers being in her family's store, Select Linen, when two plain clothes RCMP officers, came in looking for her father. They arrested him and escorted him in their police car to the family home, which they recklessly searched. Grace recalls the family visits to the Exhibition Grounds to see her dad during his detainment stage, and how she testified at her father's trial to try and have him released from Camp Petawawa. Grace talks at length about her family life and her school experiences before, during, and after

her father's internment. She also says that after her father's release he became a mean man and his love for opera singing ceased. Grace firmly believes that her experiences during what she calls the "concentration times" shaped who she is today, for example, her lack of trust in people and her defensive personality. Lastly, she explains that her decision to have a big family and to relocate to California is a result of her experiences during the Second World War.

INTERVIEW

GD: Grace D'Agostino, interviewee

TT: Travis Tomchuk, interviewer

LDP: Lucy Di Pietro, interviewer & videographer

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 0:00:12.4]

TT: This is Travis Tomchuk. Um, it's July 21st, 2011. We're in Wheatley, Ontario and I'm interviewing?

GD: Grace Tomasicchio D'Agostino.

TT: Um, my first question is um...when and where were you born?

GD: I was born uh on December 29 [Raises eyebrows] 1932 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. At 21 Division Street. [Smiles]

TT: And was that uh, a family home?

GD: That was a family home because uh there was--there had been so much prejudism against Italians that uh, my father would not allow my mother to go to the hospital. Because unfortunately my sister who was nine months old at that time, had uh died, as soon as as my mother took her to the hospital.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm mmm.

GD: Uh they [Says pointing to her right ear] lanced, uh the boil she had behind her ear. And she died. And so ever since then, we never went to any hospital. We always had the doctor come to the home.

TT: Hmmm.

GD: So.

TT: And um, who helped with uh, with your birth?

GD: Well, wa--I had a uh, a doctor. His name was Copeland - Dr. Copeland. And uh when I was born uh, I was born with uh--well in those days they used to call it like a veil. And I was smothering and uh the nurse who was present, I don't know her name, uh she was uh, intelligent enough to realize that there was something the matter that I wasn't breathing. And she [Makes hand gesture] tore it off just on time. And uh, the old wives' tale was that anybody born that way, was supposed to become wealthy. [Says while shaking her head] Well, I'm here to tell you that that didn't happen. [Smiles and chuckles softly] [LDP and TT chuckle softly in the background]

TT: Um, so what, what exactly is, like 'had a veil' as they would have called it?

GD: [Says while hand is moving over across her face] Well, a piece of skin that covers your face and it, uh, uh, it, it, didn't, uh doesn't allow you to breathe properly and uh so. My mother was uh, uh, my mother was 41 when I was born because she gave birth to uh seven live children but only um, my two brothers um - one was born in 1917 and the other born in 1913. So a lot of time had elapsed between...their births and my birth but I did have brothers and one sister who died. One of, one of the brothers died when he was two and uh, so there wa--there was a big difference. I grew up having three fathers [Pause] So um... [Nods and looks off to her right]

TT: And, and that would be your older brothers you're refer--

GD: --My older brothers, yes, yes. Uh, his name was uh Vito. Uh, we used to call him as a nickname, uh we called him 'Titeen' [sp?]. And uh his wife called him 'Vex' so he had about 16 different names. And my other brother was uh called Joe, so. Of course, my mother called him Pepine, which is uh a nickname for Joseph.

TT: Um, okay so, um tell me some more about uh, about your family, your uh father, your mother.

GD: Okay, my mom and dad--uh my mother, let me put it this way. My father came from the city of Bari...in Italy and uh, my mother uh very close to Bari. It, it's actually uh right now it's part of Bari. Uh, it was Palese and it was right on the water. So is Bari right on, on the Adriatic and uh, my dad was uh, [Exhales] I believe he--what, wait a minute, uh [Squealing noise in the background] they came in 1912 with her brother and they came on the ship called the 'America.' So uh, my dad had been born in 1890 so that would have made him 22. Well actually not yet 22 because his birthday was uh is in December also, so he wasn't yet 22 and my mom

wasn't yet 21. [0:05:07.9] And my uncle was 23. So uh, they came...uh they had all been educated. Okay. My mother had spent uh, um years in a convent school uh but then her, her dad died when she was 11 and uh her mother remarried and that was the end of the convent school. And my, my uh uncle had studied to be a priest. And my dad, had studied uh, he had at that time, he had uh, uh a high school education and his uh, his trade was he can make scales. Because his mother owned a scale, uh factory, in Bari - the Mongelli Scale Factory. So they were a little bit different than the ordinary immigrant, because they did not come, um, for the same reasons. Okay, they didn't--they weren't--they had a good life in Italy, okay, but my dad wanted to show off to his dad 'cause his dad, uh, trie--was controlling him. And he tried to show off to his dad that uh, he uh, he was gonna make it on his own. And after all, the streets were paved in gold. And uh, they found out quite differently because when they arrived in New York, uh there was--and they ca--they can uh understand English okay and understand to read English. There were signs all over the place, uh "No Italians" or "Italians need not apply" uh to get a job. So the first night, my, my mom was pregnant with uh, with uh her first baby, and uh, the first night--and she was very light complexioned, okay. So what they did was they made a sign for her and it said on the sign, "No speak English." Okay. So they sent her in with this sign and she showed it to the clerk and uh, he thought she was Scandinavian or whatever you know, and he gave her the room. He gave her a room. And my dad and my uncle went up the fire escape and the room was so small. It had like one single bed and uh there was no room for my uncle to sleep, so they took one of these really thin mattresses and they put it underneath the bed. And he slept under the bed.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

GD: So and my dad and my mom in this [Makes hand gesture showing size] little wee bed, you know. So um, uh, as time--well then uh they finally m--uh as time went on, they finally made it to Mulberry Street, where all the Italians were. And uh, people wonder, Well why did they all live together? Well, they all lived together because you know there was a community there and

uh they certainly were not welcomed. They had two strikes against them. One was the fact that they were Italian and the second one was that they were Catholic. Okay, so that, that was uh, that was a big deal. And uh anyhow, my dad started hitting the pavements to get a job and [Says while shaking her head] he could not get a job, my uncle could not get a job. And uh, anyway, so uh, the--my mother finally had the baby and uh they were uh, you know they didn't know anything about babies and that. Nobody to help them so my mother was feeding--she had lost her milk and she was feeding the baby whole milk and uh, the baby died.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

GD: Uh, um I think he was three months old and he's buried in uh New York City. And uh, so then they decided that they were going to leave New York City, and maybe you know uh find it better somewhere else. So um, now they had two choices; one of them was to come to California, to go to California, and the other one was to go to Toronto. In Toronto, my mother's mother was there because she had remarried after her husband had died and they, uh she and her new husband had been living in Toronto. [0:10:00.1] And so, uh, they, they decided, my mother you know said, well her mother was there in Toronto, at least she'd know somebody. And uh, so they decided to move to Toronto which my father, for the rest of his life he regretted the fact that he did that, because they were giving land away in California. Okay, so um...anyway um, and he would have been--he loved the United States. And uh loved the [Makes hand gestures] Statue of Liberty and all that stuff, you know. So anyway um, they decided to go to Toronto, and then um, uh, my t--uh--their um, six other children were all born in Toronto. So um, now my dad and mom, both of them learned to speak English right away. We, we spoke Italian at home but the reason for that was because they thought that if uh you knew 16 languages, the more languages you knew, the better educated you were. It wasn't a fact at all, "We're gonna talk Italian now!" And that's you know, that's gonna be it, we're not gonna join the culture. Uh, so, we spoke Italian at home but they quickly learned to read English

and write English. My mother could write in English and um, my dad got a job at--well first of all at, at the beginning he couldn't find a job. Okay, so...my, my mom and he moved to uh Welland...Ontario. Well at the t--because there was a scale-making factory there and my dad uh, had heard of this. And this guy, this owner, had said that he would hire him. So they moved to Welland. And uh...[Exhales] okay so they were doing great in Welland. Okay they had this little house and everything else and uh, and my dad was working and uh, pretty soon he was approached by the Black Hand.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

GD: And uh basically, they, they wanted a part of his salary, okay. So he said, [Says while shaking her head] he wasn't going to give them [Says laughing] his part of his salary. No how. So um, they--he--they were playing cards/chords [?], he was playing cards/chords [?] with the band who were the big wheels in the Black Hand. And these guys started to uh, it, li--you know, uh started saying, "Hey, you know. Enough is enough now. You've got to kick in. You want--you need to protection." And blah, blah, blah. And my father said, "No, I don't need any protection but they weren't going to hear anything of it. And they were going to kill him. And my mother was in the house, and, and uh, and uh, I believe they had - well they, they might have had my brother, Vito, because he was born in 1913. And uh, so my dad looked up and he saw this light bulb [Says while pointing up] hanging from the uh ceiling from the ceiling and it was hanging over the thing. So what he did was he...banged on it and it made the place go in darkness. And basically uh my mother was aware of what was going on. She was already--they left everything!

TT: [Says faintly] Okay. Left everything! Furniture, clothes, and everything and uh they, they went back to Toronto. Okay, so [Chuckles] they weren't having very much good luck. And in Toronto though, my, my uh eventually my dad got [Clears throat] a, uh job working as a milkman for the City Dairy. It was located on uh Spadina. It's no longer there now [Clears

throat]. Anyhow, first he started off as a milkman and uh okay, my mother uh got a job at Eaton's [Squealing noise in the background] and she could make a man's suit from scratch.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

GD: So she worked in the uh suit department making these men's suit, oh 11 hours a day, six days a week for pittance. Okay, but they managed to survive and uh...my mother worked there for about 11 years before I was born. And my dad started to work himself up so then he convinced these people at the City Dairy that what they needed was to get all the Italians in Toronto to um, to buy milk from them, okay. [0:15:16.3] So what he did was he, he sai--he told them, he said, "Look if I start um my own route, uh you know, will you allow it?" And they said, "Okay, let's see what you can do." Basically. And he started his own route, he went to--travel to all the Italians and got their uh business for the City Dairy and uh and pretty soon he was making like pfftt, like uh, a lot of money. Okay - well, a lot of money for those days. And uh so in 1919, they decided they were gonna--they were gonna go and try their luck back in Italy because um, they couldn't get used to the weather in Toronto. It was very different than Bari. Bari was like, you know, the, the climate was--they didn't, they didn't have snow or anything like that. So they went back and at the time, they had three children - three boys. They went back and they stayed for a very short time, because my brothers evidently did not like it. They did not like what the bread looked like, it was dark bread and you know blah, blah, blah. So they wanted to go back home to Canada and so, they went back to Canada and he was able to get his job back. Because nobody else can do that job! [Chuckles] You know, so uh, anyway um everything was going okay. Well, everything wasn't going okay I mean [Squealing in the background] we were always considered, second class citizens. [Squealing in the background] Okay we were never--I have never in my life and I'm 78 years old, I have never called myself a Canadian. Because there were two types of people; there were Italians and there were what we called Inglese, which meant everybody else was an Inglese. Okay, um. I guess the, the people

who were a little bit below us were the Jewish people the--in those days in Toronto there were signs over, "Gentiles only." The Jews couldn't go to uh Lake uh Wasaga or uh Lake Simcoe or any of those places. Anyhow, we were a step above them. Okay. Um, anyway uh but growing up, I, I just thought we ate E--Italian bread and my friends ate English bread and [Chuckles] and I knew that we ate Italian food and uh they ate English food. Um, it wasn't Canadian. Canada didn't come into it. I never had that affiliation...you know. Never was able to, because they never allowed us to. We were always Italians, or dagos, or W.O.P.S. So um, anyway, uh [Exhales] on uh...June 9th, we had a summer uh, uh [Squealing noise in the background] exactly what like what Vince was saying about his summer place - we had a summer place also up in Thorn Hill.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

GD: [Squealing noise in the background] And uh my dad was uh...up uh, he was listening to the radio and uh, it came on the radio that um, Mussolini declared war on England. And uh I didn't know who--I, I did know Mussolini, I'm sorry uh because I was a little kid and my fa--my parents had taught me to make that [Brings hands to her face] face like Mussolini had so, so they would say, "Ok Gracie. Like an Italian, make the face." And then I'd go [Scrunches face] like that you know. [Says laughing] I'd make this face. That's all I knew about Mussolini [Chuckles] but anyhow evidently, Mussolini uh, [Says laughing] Mu--Mussolini was important but he wasn't important to me! Anyway my dad said to me, he says, "You know, co--come here. I wanna tell you something." Like an Italian. He said, "I don't want you to be scared because uh [Squeaking noise in the background] I'm going to be going away for awhile. Okay, I don't know how long." So [Makes a confused face] I didn't know what the heck he was talking about. The next day was June 10th and Mussolini did declare war okay--on England. And uh, we had a linen supply at--oh excuse me, I have to backtrack. Okay. [0:20.17.6] Um, the City Dairy was bought out by Borden's Company. Borden's Company came in and they fired all of the upper echelon which

my father, because he had this route, was considered like upper echelon. Not that he was a manager, but he managed his own route. So they fired them all and my father was left without a job, okay. So what they did was they started a linen supply business. Okay. And this could have been maybe 19...oh must have been in 1937, yeah. Uh, 1937. Okay. Pretty soon though he was doing better than he was doing at the, at the uh...at being uh the sales uh rep for the Italians, because he convinced Borden's to get all our linens. And we had a linen supply business, okay, where, they, they would provide linens, uh uniforms, towels, uh things like that. They would bring them back and uh, they, they were taken to the laundry. Before they were taken to the laundry, they were mended. And my mother would sit at her sewing machine, on Spadina Avenue, that's where their store was, right across from the City - well what used to be the City Dairy - and she would do all of the mending. Okay. So--and they were doing great because um, it--uh he convinced Borden's to, to uh get his service and he was collecting 300 dollars a week just from that one, one uh customer. So uh, I mean you know, uh he, he was buying his sister's fox furs and, and all this stuff and I even had a [Says while touching her left chest] little fox little guy. I didn't know what it was. I didn't know it was--bad because I used to play with it at church and make the mouth go all over the place. [Laughs] Anyway, okay, so um...backtracking. Um, June 10th, we're at the store. [Squeaking noise in the background] Now I had to go there because um [Pause] I was still in school and I was going to Lansdowne School - I have a picture to show you - right around the corner, okay. I was in kindergarten and um, but the school year wasn't over yet, okay. But for some reason or other, June 10th, it must--I, I don't remember what day that uh fell on that year, but anyway, my dad was out doing some business and it was only my mother and, and I who were at the store. And um, mother was on [Makes imitating hand gestures] the machine and uh all of a sudden, two--well they seemed to me like um, Man Mountain Deans, like big tall guys came in. Really, I mean with the scowls on their face know, know, you know. Uh,"Giuseppe Tomasicchio?!" And my mother said, "Uh, no, he's not here right now. He uh, he's doing some business, but he'll be back in about ten minutes." "Okay! We'll wait! We'll wait in the car!" And uh, I said to my mother, "Who

are...?" She said, "I don't know." Anyhow, my dad walked in, and um, ten minutes or fifteen minutes later and he walked in. And uh one of the guys said to him, um--they were Mounted Police. Now, I had always pictured Mounted Police on these horses with these red uniforms. These guys had plained suits on. Okay. That was very big disappointment. [Chuckles] Anyway, um, they said to him um, "You are--you Giuseppe Tomasicchio?" And he said, "Yes." He sai-- they said, one of them said, "You are under arrest." And my dad said, "On what charge?" And he said, "Ask Mussolini." Okay. And then he said, um, "Now, you live at 21 Division Street. We're gonna go there. We're gonna go there!" Okay, I mean really nasty uh you know. Not, [Says in a mocking singsong voice] "We're gonna go there." [Laughs] Okay so um... [0:25:10.4] My mother and I walked back to Divi--it was just around the corner and uh...and by the time we got there [Exhales]--they drove and they drove my father in this police thing with the thing in the back there. Anyhow um, by the time we got there they had already started on the house. [Says while shaking her head, eyes closed] I am telling you, I, I can remember, I, I was seven years old, I never saw like hatred coming out of people like these two guys. They had ripped the place apart. They took the pillows apart, cut the pillows with their knives [Makes slashing gesture] and all of the feathers were all over the place. Okay. It's like they went on a rampage! And uh, now my mom had this little gun [Puts hands together to mimic size] that was this big, okay. And that was the only thing that she had from her father and uh, as I said before, her father died when she was 11. And she treasured this little gun. There were no bullets in that, you know. But it wa--had a little pearl handle and everything. And she said to me, like she took me over in the corner and she said to me um, "Gracie, take, take the gun and take it to Mr. Roberts." Mr. Roberts was a friend of my dad who worked at the--he worked at uh Borden's, okay. Okay, so I took the gun and I ran all the way around and uh to get there and uh...oh when I got there with the gun and I'm--Mr. Roberts was in this [Says while raising hands] little cubicle. Uh, he wouldn't take the gun from me. And uh he said, [Says while shaking her head] no he didn't want to be involved. This was a friend of my dad's [Rolls eyes] - he didn't want to be involved. And I said, "Mr. Roberts, I don't know where to take this gun. I, I don't know what to

do with it." I mean, I was seven! You know. I don't know what to do with it and uh so he finally took the gun, okay. And um, I ran back home and then um, they um [Pause] they took my father and uh my mother said, "Well, were--where--ca--how are we going to see him? Or, where, where are you going to take him?" And uh they said um, "The Exhibition." Okay. "And you can see him when we let you know." So they took him and um...uh...eh--then my brothers who were working they--my brothers worked in our business and they worked uh delivering, making deliveries and everything with the trucks that we had. They both had come home and uh ss--you know, "Well, where's Pa?" And he's gone so my brothers went to the police station, the local police station and they didn't know anything about it. And uh finally um, a couple of days later we were notified that he was at the Exhibition and if we wanted to see him, um, we had to come on a certain date and it was on a Sunday and then maybe a couple weeks you know until I guess they had, that they had them all set up. So um, we waited and uh, we finally went. Okay, now. You couldn't talk to him because what we saw was - it impressed me so much - what we saw was these men, you know um, marching, [Says while making hand gesture] marching up and down at the, the Exhibition grounds. Okay. Up and down. Um...[Raises both hands] far from us. Okay and then uh, and uh, uh soldiers with a--Canadian soldiers with uh bayonets, with uh you know with their big long--what, what are they? Bayonets or guns? I don't know what the heck they were! But they were you know they were shoo--they were ready to kill if one of them was ready to escape. And uh, anyway um, eh--so my, my brother went up to one of them and said, "Well, when, when do we get them to talk to him?" And they sai--they said, "Okay, you'll get to talk to him in a few minutes. Ye--he'll show you where his place, where his place is." Okay. [0:30:08.8] So uh, we got to t--so we got to talk to him. They--the Italians were all on uh the cement. They were given one blanket. Basically they had been stripped and uh then allowed to put their clothes back on, you know and uh...But um, they had, had arrested a priest and uh soldiers were--had been making fun of this priest because he had no clothes on. And uh, my father got up and, and put his blanket, his blanket around the priest, until he was able to get his cassock back on. And uh, they slept on that blanket and that blanket covered

them, okay. And uh, he was there for three months. Every Sunday we were allowed to go watch the march up and down and, and though--we weren't allowed to go inside anymore. But my father could like very quickly, I mean it was--it wasn't long that he can actually talk to us, you know. And uh, so then uh, he told, he told us that uh they were going to take them uh to Petawawa. Petawawa was out in the uh forest of Northern Ontario, four hundred miles from Toronto, in a desolated place! There was nothing else around uh there. And they had built two camps - one for the Italians and one for the uh Germans. And um, now they had not--at this point, they, they had, had not been charged with anything. None of these guys! With the--you know had been charged with anything. They just took them! And uh, so, and we, we couldn't see him the whole time he was gone and when he was in Petawawa. Okay so they took him up there. And then, uh--then in the meantime...they were trying to conscript my brothers - both of them. And uh, I, I mean it, it, it just didn't make any sense, now that I look back. They took--put their father in the concentration camp. My father and mother became British subjects right away. Nineteen twenty five, they were British subjects. It didn't matter at all! You--they'd--you could have been born--a lot of them were born in Canada, okay. And they uh, they tried to conscript my brothers. And my mother, I mean, you know, in those days women didn't drive trucks. So we would have been penniless and as it was, okay, Borden's dropped us as a customer. The Italians that we had as customers with the linen supply dropped as completely. Okay because they were afraid, because my dad was you know in the concentration camp. And uh, uh, eh--we had these [Makes hand gesture showing size] huge windows on our store. Uh, the store was on the corner of Spadina and some little street. But these huge green windows okay and every night they were broken.

TT: [Says Faintly] Hmmm.

GD: Okay. A--e--You couldn't call the police and say, "Help us" because they didn't care. It was, it, it was just awful. And now at this point, I had started first grade, okay. And uh...in first grade,

there was a little boy, his name was Benny. He was the only other Italian kid. The kids were mainly uh Jewish and English and uh...the first thing the teacher did was she put Benny and me in the back of the room and uh just ignored us for the, for, for I mean she [Says while laughing] she just ignored us! You know, and we weren't part of the class at all! And uh, then I'd go - Benny didn't have the problem because Benny's father wasn't in the concentration camp - but I'd go outside at recess and they would stone me, okay. Throw rocks and everything else. Well I soon learned that when recess came my mother was still at that sewing machine you know, sewing away and [Clears throat] I would run home. And uh, and then my mother would have to take me back to school every darn day that happened, okay. I didn't want to be stoned. [Scoffs] So, uh anyway uh, then this one time uh--now my--we didn't have any money okay. [0:35:18.8] Alright so, finally one day two Canadian soldiers come to the store and they say to us, "Well you know what, uh..." - my mother, not me - "um for a kickback" - now I'm telling you in my own words, I'm sure they didn't use tho--this kind of uh--that kind of language. "For a kickback we will bring your husband food." Okay. And uh, because the food that they had for them was just uneatable. Okay. So my mother used to pay these guys and they--she used to uh, like send cans of peaches you know, and uh, like all canned stuff that uh...and uh, and they wou--and they would slip them to uh--you know they had a nice little business going. But my, my mother you know was one of the main people--and that was another expense! Okay, these guys were coming every week and then, before you know it--now all of his letters to her and vice versa were all like in code. And uh, she [Stutters] he couldn't tell her anything about the camp at all. Ah, if he said anything you can see where they had [Makes hand gesture] ss--uh--ss--uh you know e--erased it. They put papers over it where you--you couldn't uh slip off. And the same thing with her afterwards he you know the--uh, they found out that uh they, they, they, they couldn't correspond. They couldn't phone uh you know so uh anyway uh, finally my parent--uh my mother went to our lawyer, Dave Goodman, and uh because they finally charged my father with being uh in the Dopolovoro. Okay. Dopolovoro was an Italian club that was a um a social club, okay. My father never went there after work because the words "Dopolovoro" mean

"after work." But he never went there after work. But they would have dances and they would have this, that, and the other thing and they would build statues of uh, Jo--John Cabot [Raises right hand] some place you know, who was an Italian explorer. Or Christopher Columbus and that they would feed the ba--the uh the children, the orphans in Italy and do stuff like that with the money that they collected. Well, they, they, they uh, thou--I don't know whether they were fascist or not, I really don't. Bu--but my, my dad was a commendador [?] from Italy, uh he was--first he got the chevalier thing. But he got it from the king of Italy, it had nothing to do with Mussolini, because he would not have accepted it from Mussolini, okay. So uh, anyway, uh they charged him with being a member of that, they charged him with being a fascist, and there was a third charge...I don't know Joe's got it in his letter - my brother, Joe, well that's another story. Anyway uh, okay. So the first day of the trial, ay-uh, uh we were there. Uh they--we were allowed to go and my mother took me. And uh, I could hear like the, the judge had this [Makes hand gesture] big, big white wig on and he was sitting [Raises both hands up] way up high uh the just--uh he looked like God to me. Anyway uh, I remember what his que--the judge was asking him, my dad questions, which I thought was kind of strange and one of the questions--well [Says while laughing] now I think it's kind of strange, at that time I didn't. But um, one of the questions uh that uh, that he asked was uh, "Now you went to Italy in uh 1933..." And my father said, "Yes." And uh, "Why did you go to Italy in 1933?" And uh, my father said uh, "Well, I--Your, Your Justice" or whatever the heck they called them. Um, he had a Scottish accent so my dad said to him, "Have you ever been back to Scotland to visit your family? I went to visit my family." His mother, his father, his sisters, and his brothers were all there [Chuckles], you know. [0:40:13.5] So um anyway, uh evidently ha uh the lawyer, Dave Goodman, had told my mother that the trial was not going well. It was not going well for my father, okay. Um [Pause] they couldn't prove that he was a fascist but he couldn't prove that he was not a fascist, okay. So um, so the, the lawyer gets this bright idea that I should testify. Now I was like this big [Holds up right hand to show height] and uh I should testify because this would show them the uh, the condition in our home, what went on in our home, I guess they thought he had a pipeline to

Mussolini. Anyway um, okay so the day came that uh I was going to testify and man, I was so scared. I mean, you know, just the whole--uh I mean it was horrible. And uh Dave Goo-- Goodman picked me up and put me on the table, because I was so little I couldn't even sit in the chair, put me on the table and um. So uh, I, I guess it was the crown attorney - now I know it was the crown attorney but I didn't know then - comes over to me and he says um, "What's your name?" And blah, blah, blah and uh, and then he said um [Pause] "Who do you want to win the war? Italy or England?" [Says while shaking her head] I had no idea what he was talking about, okay. You know uh, I knew that my dad and my brothers used to listen to the shortwave to see what was going on in the world and that but I had no idea. So, I, I reasoned, okay, my father used to say all the time to my mother, if she tried to make something different other than pasta on Sunday and Thursday - those were the days. Now on Thursday if she tried to slip in something different, he would say to [Says while chuckling softly] her, "I ate pasta--" we never called it pasta--macaroni "--in Italy on Sunday and Thursday and I want macaroni here in Canada on Sunday and Thursday." So I reasoned that...it must be bad to eat uh macaroni. Okay, that's a bad thing to do! And I said to myself, well, I knew Italians ate that because my friends didn't eat that so they weren't Italian. So I figured, okay, that must be bad and maybe I shouldn't--that's why they arrested him. [Says while laughing] Be--because he ate, he ate macaroni! You know. So I, I said in a whisper, [Whispers] "England." My mother, I thought she-- and my brothers, okay. I thought they were going to die from relief. They hugged [Says while laughing] me so much when I was finished you know that um--anyhow, and I--then, then I started thinking to myself, Oh, this is great. Now, I'm going to be the one who's getting him out of here. [Laughs and says while laughing] Well, it didn't happen that way! You know. It didn't happen that way. And these, these trials cost our family a fortune. He had two trials and he was found guilty in both of them, okay. He was found guilty in both of them. So! Okay, we, we had no idea uh how to get--my family had no idea how to get him out of there. Um, anyway, um...So, one day, this guy who had been a big wig in the City Dairy, okay, his name was Ritan [sp?]. He was a colonel in the Canadian army. [Says while shaking her head] Now my family did

not know that. He came to the store to talk to my dad, he was a friend of my dad's. So he comes in and he says to my mom, "Where's Joe?" They used to call him Joe because Giuseppe is Joe in English. So my mother starts telling him well he's up in Petawawa and uh, and he said, "What? At Petawawa?! What's he doing up there?" Blah, blah, blah. Well he says, "Don't worry." He goes to Petawawa, he goes inside there and he says, "You have somebody here, Giuseppe Tom--Tomassichio / Joseph Tomassichio?" He said uh, "I'm gonna vouch for him." The next day, my father was home. He did it, okay. [0:45:43.5] Now, when he came home then he told us what went on in this concentration camp, okay. The first day, they um, they came--and now the soldiers all had bayonets all the time. They were always--they--if they went to the bathroom--well especially my father because the first day, they said, [Says pointing her finger around] "Well what job--what, what, what do you want to do? Do you want to work in uh, do you want to work cleaning over here? Do you want to work planting radishes or [Says while chuckling] whatever?" And my father said, "Well how much are you going to pay me?" And they said, "You're not going to get paid!" And my father said, "Then I'm not going to work!" So uh he used to lie in his, in his uh cot all day long and guarded by four soldiers. If had to go to the bathroom, the four soldiers went with him, okay, but he never worked there. And uh he was saying what the food was, a lot of these--there was like this uh--in the morning they had like this porridge that didn't have any sweetener or anything on it, I mean it was just--And if, if you complained, the soldiers would spit in it and say, "Now eat it." You know and uh, and he said that uh, on the way, on the way there, there were uh trucks of Germans and the trucks of Italians. The Italians were first, the Germans were after them. And he said the Italians were sitting there, he was so ashamed because they were sitting there scared to death and the Germans were all singing German songs to top of their voices - although they're probably still there! [Chuckles] Anyhow, but uh, he s--you know he said, "The only time in my life that I'd preferred to be German than Italian was at that point." But um, it, it was terrible and they had no idea how long they were going to be in there. There was nothing around it! Okay, no stores--no nothing! It was in the middle of this forest. And [Scoffs] in the winter time, the snow was six

feet deep, you know. It was uh, it was very, very cold and the place was always cold and uh blankets weren't sufficient that--they, they didn't give him down blankets [Says while chuckling softly] or anything, you know. But I think that the worst part of it is...not so much the um...the physical torture, the mental torture was, because these guys, these Italians knew that these guys were completely in control of them and they can keep them there as long as they wanted. And they had no power, no rights, nothing! Okay. And uh, in fact when my father's father...some--my uncle stupidly told my grandfather in Italy that his son was in the concentrations camp, he clutched at his chest, he fell over, and three days later, he was dead. Because during the First World War, when the Italians were on the side of the Allies, okay, and they were caught by the Turks uh in, in uh, in the war, and they were made prisoners of war, they would uh, the Turks [Says while making hand gestures] would dig these big, big holes in the ground and put the Italians in there with just with their heads sticking out until the ants and the other insects would just uh eat them. And uh, so he thought, it was like that you know and uh he died. Um [Pause] anyway, um, okay, so my dad was in there about a year um, before he had gone in there he was one kind of a person, okay. Now when we knew he was coming out, uh my brother, Vito, and at the time Vito had his son who was uh, a year old, and uh and me, I was eight. [0:50:13.3] I had turned, I had turned eight because my birthday's in December. So I had turned--I had just turned eight when he came out. And uh, we got on the train before the Union Station in Toronto. It was one of the outskirts uh, you know, my other brother had driven us there and to get on the train, to, to take that last lap into Toronto with my dad. And uh, so my, my brother, Vito, and Joey, my nep--uh my nephew, and my myself, we got on this train. Um, I saw my father for you know and uh [Says while shaking her head] he did not know me. He did not recognize me. He just uh, he, he just completely ignored me you know. Uh, he seemed to know my brother, it was the funniest thing. Um anyhow, all the way to Toronto, and then finally my brother spoke up and said, "Pa, this is Gra--Gracie's here!" And he looked at me--now you have to remember this, my father was 50 years old okay and um so [Clears throat] Excuse me. He um [Pause] he did not know me [Clears throat]. Okay. He was totally different person.

As time went on, he was totally different. He was uh mean, uh mean with his friends. Ah he ha-- he wasn't like that before, he was a social butterfly, everybody liked him you know this and that. And uh, he was always singing, he, he was an opera singer, sang in the opera uh, and uh his friends, friends were Tito Schipa, uh were famous opera singers. And I remember once Tito Schipa said to me that my dad would have been great except he smoked three packs of cigarettes a day, you know. And uh [Says while shaking her head] he didn't sing anymore. Uh, it, it was just the atmosphere in our home was totally different and he remained that way 'til the day that he died. Uh, it was just different.

[Pause]

TT: The change that occurred uh with regards to your father, during the course of his time at uh, at Petawawa, um...yet he was still willing to tell or, or share his experiences to the family and then--

GD: --Yes, yes. Uh, now uh, as I told you, my--his father died in Italy, okay. My mother did not know how to tell him. She had to call the priest uh, my father had--Gra--we belonged to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church and at that time uh there was an Irish priest there who was wonderful. His name was Father Dales and Father Dales had to come to our house to uh tell my father that uh his dad had died and uh...Oh my God, it was just awful because see he blamed him--he blamed, he blamed himself that his dad was dead because they had to tell him--"Well how did he die?" "Well, he died when he found [Says while laughing] out you were you know you were in the concentration camp." And uh, uh...he, he uh, yes, he was willing--but it's funny because he wasn't willing to say the things that he did, like we found out about him giving his blanket to the priest from somebody else. Some--from uh these other prisoners who came out you know at various times and uh anyway, I think if it hadn't been for Colonel Ritan [sp?] --You see the, the problem was that my father was a spokesman for the other Italians because uh he

was educated and they weren't. They were, you know, they were from--they couldn't read and write, they had to make a mark. Um, my dad wrote social things in the Italian newspaper um so I think they would have kept him in for the length of whatever it was, four or five years but uh...yes, he was able to tell us how he was treated but not what he did for the others, okay. Uh, he wasn't able to do that. That came from other people. [0:55:09.1] That's why I mean, you know, it wasn't that he was bragging that he did this. But it--he--his personality was different and you know...I started resenting him an awful lot and then he would do like really horrible things that um, that he never did before. Um, I, I don't know how to ex--I don't want to go into that um, but um, uh I never realized that he was different until recently because as a child I started resenting him a lot because I thought you know, he ignored me or he didn't ignore me. And he ignored me except when it was time to do something I wanted to do, then he [Says while laughing] then he did not ignore me. But it just seemed like he didn't have that, that, uh, I, I, I don't, I don't know how to...uh and I, I started being suspicious of everybody. I mean I just, I couldn't get close to anybody because you know um and that was one of the reasons why my, my husband and I left Toronto with our three sons at the time. I didn't want--well both of us didn't want our sons to grow up in that kind of an atmosphere where they would always be Italians and tha--there--that never having seen Italy. I never saw Italy until I was--1983 was the first time I went on a trip there so um...but I was called Italian, you know. And as I said, I ne--I never associated myself with uh, with uh Canadian. Because even to--even today, uh you know the uh, the money and, and everything is English to me. And uh, so, e--even in school we were taught English history, I mean I know English history really well. I don't know a darn thing about Canada, you know. I can't tell you where one province is versus--and I know British Columbia is in the uh...whatever it is [Laughs] I don't want to take a chance [LDP laughs in the background], it will be on here forever. [Laughs then says while laughing] That she didn't know where British Columbia was. [Laughs] Oh, it's out west, I was just teasing. [TT and LDP chuckle in unison in the background]

TT: So, how, you know you talked about the relationship with your father, how that changed, how about for you, your brothers, or your mother? Do you have a sense of whether he treated them differently and if so--?

GD: --My mother, well my mother was always the kind of person uh that uh she was very pleasant. Everybody loved her, everybody. She never had a bad word to say about anything. But uh, but you--if you got her angry uh, she would really blow up. Like for example, one day uh when I was going through this, when they had first ta--taken him to the concentration camp and the school, La--Lansdowne School, which was a public school, uh was treating uh us that way, okay. She--the teacher one day sent me to the nurse, I don't know why! But anyhow, so the nurse starts looking in my hair, right and uh she said she--uh--that, she, she wrote a little note and she attached it to me with a pin [Points to her chest] and she said, "You go home now." And uh, okay [Says while laughing] I was very happy to go home! [LDP laughs in the background] So I go home, my mother takes this little note off me and it said that I had bugs! Well you don't say that to an Italian that you got bugs in your hair because that is very nasty! Okay, so, and my mother knew I did not have bugs in my hair but in those days there was no shampoo, okay. You washed your hair with soap and she didn't ha--she had washed my hair the day before but she hadn't taken the time - because she was so stressed, now that I look back at it, uh worried where she was going to get the next dollar to feed us - um, she um, she um, hadn't rinsed my hair out that good.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

GD: And so [Makes hand gesture] there were the little flakes in my hair and this nurse, oh she was just so high and mighty, so my mother did not say one word to me, grabbed me by the hand and across Spadina Avenue we go. [1:00:15.8] She, she's dragging me all the way and uh goes in and sees where the nurse's office is, goes in and uh, she pushed the nurse up against

the uh, against the wall. And uh she grabbed a hold of my hair and took out one of these little flakes and stuck it under her nose and says to her, "This a bug?! This bug?!" [Chuckles] You know and the nurse had to back down first of all she was scared to death, because my mother was like, she was tall for a woman, she was 5'7 you know and uh, in, in inches [Chuckles]. Uh anyway, um so, she, the--she was that type and her personality didn't change. She was always the same. And now, how did our family life--while he was in the concentration camp, we decided, well I didn't decide, but they decided that we weren't going to have Christmas, okay, until he came out of the concentration camp. Okay, we really liked him at the time, [Chuckles] you know, afterwards we didn't like him so much. But anyhow, at the time, we weren't going to have Christmas, so um, we weren't going to eat in the dining room, there weren't going to be any Christmas presents or tree or anything. Okay. So uh, so we're eating in the kitchen...on Christmas Eve, which is the big thing for Italians, okay. And my brother, Vito, he, he came in with the doll for me. And uh...my mother said to him, uh, she said, "You know we said we weren't going to celebrate Christmas." [Says while chuckling] And he said, "Yeah, but she's gotta have something." So and my birthday was four days later; I never got anything for my birthday [Chuckles] because one thing about my father he was the only one who would not say, "Okay it's--this is for your birthday and for Christmas." He would never say that, it was my birthday was my birthday, Christmas was Christmas. But my brother bought me the, the doll you know and uh...um, it was not a pleasant Christmas.

[Pause]

TT: What happened ultimately to the family uh linen business?

[Pause]

GD: Our business was called Select Linen. When he came out of the concentration camp, he um...he invested, now don't ask me where he got the money, I have no idea. But anyhow, he invested with um three other partners in a laundry so that meant that um my brothers were starting to build our business up again okay because uh you know uh...time had passed so the Italians began to realize that nothing was going to happen to them if they did business with us. And you, you couldn't resist my brother, Vito, I mean he was just a you know, such a, a, a wonderful character that you know uh...My brother, Joe, was more of a studious type, very quiet, and spent his time ah, at the local pharmacy, it was a hangout for kids and uh, in those days. And um, so the--he built the busin--he uh bought--went uh invested in the laundry. The Select Linen was taken to uh the laundry to wash instead of uh taking it to a laundry where they had to pay, okay. And uh pretty soon, uh my dad had uh le--legally uh had worked at that he and another guy were left to be the partners, okay. And uh, my father owned 51% and the other guy owned 49% uh and then things happened in our family that I don't want to go into. And um, my father was forced to sell the laundry and uh, and then uh, he uh began--he sold Select Linen also. And uh they began another linen supply. Again, my mother would work. [1:05:06.6] And we moved up to Thornhill; they sold 21 Division. We moved to Thornhill and uh, and uh, they--our um, our new business wasn't around there. It was, I believe on Elm Street in Toronto, I think it was but I'm not sure. And my brother, Joe, was the one who did the delivery and everything and my dad did the business end of it. Um, and my mother did the sewing and we lived in Thornhill okay. So, that meant that they had to you know, uh, uh, travel to Thornhill everyday. So and it was--uh in those days, now it's nothing but in those days it was, it was far [Chuckles] you know. But anyway, uh, and that went uh, that went on for a little bit and then uh they sold that and uh bought a cab, they bought two cabs just ba--Now my brother, Joe, was single at that time. Okay and so my brother would uh, would drive one of the cabs and they hired somebody else to drive the other one and that went on. My dad had retired, now he had retired at a very early age because he, he had just lost that um get up and go. Everything was like done, like uh, like as if he were a zombie, you know. It, it--he didn't have his heart in it

any more, you know, so [Clears throat] anyhow, um and I, I um...I was always--I always felt like uh that I was the outsider, okay. And that, um, I was always looking in at, at other people. And I re--I think that, that definitely has something to do with uh, with my experiences you know. When you're not good enough you know, you'd be on the outside you look in, and we'll let you look in but we're not gonna make you part of the group. Even to this day, it's not as, eh, it's not as um evident as it used to be, but even to this day I, I get feelings like that sometimes, okay. And maybe that's why uh, well he's listening, I was instrumental in having five children, because I, um, I felt if I had my own family, big family, I didn't need other people. You know, um, so. And I'm very close, uh, I had uh, I had uh four nephews at one time - two are dead. But I'm very close to the ones who are alive. To me, I tha--I trust family, I don't trust--even my, my good friends, I you know, I don't trust them completely and uh, I, I know that that's a part of uh, of what happened to us. It was just not...[Says while shaking her head] it wasn't right, you know? It wasn't right because Toronto was never in uh, in a place where they were going to be attacked. I mean, you know, I mean think about it how--uh, uh you know even Germany. In fact, when we used to go the movies and you'd see in the newsreels 'cause that was the only way you saw, you saw, um, the news was on the newsreels tha--you know the pictures of it. Uh, anyhow uh and you'd see the uh, the German soldiers marching and you'd see Hitler. I used to get scared to death that he was going to be marching right in Toronto! You know, I, I mean, I had no [Laughs] I don't know how to explain it! I had no affiliation with, with uh Germany or Italy or that side or this. I was on our side, you know. And so were my brothers, I mean my whole family! You know. That, my, my father never wanted--in fact he was mad at Mussolini. He always used to say, "Mussolini should have stayed neutral, he should have minded his own damn business, and done what's Switzerland has always done - stayed neutral!" And uh he you know uh, uh so it, it wasn't you know, uh, eh I, I've never heard them--like what he'd come with the, with the boats coming in to uh New York harbour because that was the way to come in those days, you'd come in New York harbour and uh, he--he'd cry. The tears would roll down his face to see the Statue of Liberty, you know he could not stand to see it because it wa--he got so

emotional about it. They didn't have that--yeah he was proud to be Italian because it--you see the difference between him and also and the others was that he knew of the good things. [1:10:47.0] He knew of the uh, historians, the uh, the uh scientists, the uh the artists that Italy had produced. These other people who were not educated, they didn't know that! All they knew was their little town. You know, in fact, they, in those days, and in fact, sometimes it's a little bit like that today [Rocking chair creaking]. If they can't hear the church bell ringing, [Says while making hand gesture] it's a different town, I mean they're different people, you know. Um, so like for example, there was a group of people called uh the Modugnese. They called my father Barese, which means he's from Bari. Modugno is five miles from Bari, okay. It's almost part of Greater Bari now. But they were Modugnese they were from a different place. And uh, there weren't many Barese in Toronto. That was another thing uh, you know, uh, uh growing up I thought--well I, I learned it was better to be Barese because we came from a city. You know, like Toronto. So um anyway...

TT: And um, you know, this idea that your father, you were saying that your father thought Mussolini should have stayed, stayed neutral and not entered the war. Was that uh, an opinion that he held prior to his--

GD: --Prior, during, and after [Chuckles].

TT: Hmmm.

GD: Yes. And uh, uh he was the furthest thing from a socialist that you could possibly be, okay, because he felt that socialism was not the government to have. And uh, fascism is a little bit different. I don't really know the difference that much except that I know the--ah--that they used to say that Mussolini made the trains run on time. And that was in fact, our youngest son was in uh college at the time, and the teacher happened to ask, "Who could name something

that Mussolini did?" as a joke I guess. And my son put up his hand, he said, [Says laughing] "He made the trains run on time!" And ah, it was kind of a joke in our family! But no, uh you know. Now, when I went to Italy in 1983, okay, my family, my family in uh Bari. I still have--at that time I had aunts - my dad's sisters - who were living and I have a, uh bunch of cousins - first cousins. And um, I remember my, one of my first cousins, who uh I got very close to. He um, he told us that--he told me that when it came time to vote, my grandmother - my dad's mother - she must have been in her late eighties, she insisted she had to go vote for her king. I mean, they--ee--she believed in a monarchy, they, they--even in Italy! Okay. Um, and however my, my uh cousin did tell me, he said that during the war, he said uh that Mussolini would send truck full of Jews to Bari. And then the ships would be there to pick these Jews up. And Mussolini was instrumental in doing that. Not many people know that; that he was instrumental in getting these Jews away from Hitler. So uh anyway, um they just uh you know, tha--they believed in dem--my father believed in democracy. That's why the one, one of the reasons why he came.

[Pause]

TT: And uh, early you had mentioned that um, your father had written for

[GD coughs] Italian uh language newspapers?

GD: The Italian language, yeah.

TT: Do you know, know any of those were called?

GD: Il Progresso.

TT: Hmmm mmm.

GD: Something or other. Il Progresso Italiano.

TT: Hmmm mmm.

LDP: Were they Italian Canadian? Like were they, local papers?

GD: Yes--

LDP: --Yes--

GD: --local. Well I think, I think so. I think they were local.

TT: Local. And did uh, did he subscribe to that paper as well? Or any other Italian language papers you can recall?

GD: No, he sub--subscribed to the Toronto Daily Star and the Globe & Mail in the morning. He read them, I don't know if they subscribed. I don't even know if they had subscriptions in those days.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm. Okay.

GD: But he read the Globe & Mail and uh in fact the, the owner of the Globe & Mail lived up the street from us uh, in Thornhill.

[1:15:48.3]

[Pause]

TT: What else can you tell me about the day your father was arrested? Uh, you were, you saw the condition that the house was in uh after, after the police um, how, how were you feeling um, that particular day?

GD: Scared to death, scared to death. Well, uh any seven year old, if they sees it, then that these guys--and the--these guys were like, they were--they didn't crack a smile or nothing! I mean nothing! It was like they were [Makes hand gestures] way up here and we were way down here. They had all the problem and we, we had nothing and uh...I was scared uh you know. What was going to happen? What were they going to do next?

[Pause]

TT: And, do, do you recall the RCMP taking anything from your family home the--on June 10th, 1940?

GD: [Exhales] No.

TT: [Says faintly] Okay.

GD: I don't, ah, ah, I, I don't, no I don't recall that. Ah, but I don't--what could they have taken?

TT: Right. And so, your father's been taken away and, and so who's left in the house at this point you--

GD: --My mom and myself. My brothers were out.

TT: Okay.

GD: And e--well wait a minute my mom, myself, and my sister in law.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm mmm.

GD: Yeah. Because my brother, Vito, uh lived with his wife. They had the upstairs apartment.

[Makes hand gesture]

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

GD: And uh, uh she was about 19 at the time. And she had a baby - my nephew. And um--I don't remember her being there. She could have been visiting her, her parents uh at that day. 'Cause I don't remember her being there.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

GD: I don't remember any interaction with her whatsoever.

TT: And so your father's been taken away, you know, did you ask your mother what was happening? Or what, did your mother try--

GD: --She didn't know. Uh, yes of cour--yes I did. Ah, ah, ud, ba, ba, when my uh...when my mother asked the po--the Mounted Police, um, "Where are you taking him?" He, he just ignored her. I mean he, he just you know. I--he just, he just completely ignored her. I mean he just...you know um. It, it was like he was uh--they were picking up like uh, a...a co--uh a cow or a bull, an animal! You know, uh you don't explain anything to the family of where--and, and you

don't take into consideration that there's a little kid here. You know um, I was crying you know and I was clinging to his leg. And, and uh saying you know--and he kept saying to me, it, ah, you know uh, "It's gonna be alright. It's gonna be alright." And uh but he didn't know it was going to be alright! I mean, you know, for all he knew, they could have taken him and shot him!

[Chuckles] You know. They had--no--wha--you know when you see these Canadian soldiers with these long guns and bayoney--ba--bayonets, you never know what's gonna to happen. Why would they have these things? Why would they--why would they need to have these--this--these weapons?

TT: And wha--do you recall if your father was [Squeaking noise in the background] taken away in handcuffs? Or--

GD: --Handcuffs!

TT: [Says faintly] It was.

GD: Yes I do.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm mmm.

GD: Yes I do. And I do recall that they had guns [Hands point to other sides of her hips] uh, they--but they didn't--like they had guns here.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm mmm.

GD: Okay. Big black ones.

TT: And when your father got to the CNE ground, did he have--were any of his friends also there? Did he know other folks there?--

GD: --He, he, he knew some of them yes.

TT: Yeah.

GD: He knew some of them. But they weren't all from Toronto.

TT: Hmmm mmm.

GD: Okay he knew the ones that--what--pretty well from Toronto. But he uh, they weren't all from Toronto, I--they were from the outskirts of Toronto. And I don't know, I really--thinking back I don't know how they picked these people. Because a lot of his friends that I know of, our, our friends, um were just as you know, they attended these things too, but uh they were never arrested.

TT: Hmmm.

[1:20:24.3]

GD: You know, they didn't arrest every Italian. So which was interesting. Now why the priest unless they thought he was rounding up all everybody and uh for uh that, that they were going to attack Canada. I, I mean, I just, you know. These--at, at--first of all there weren't that much Italians to do it! I mean, I--you know. At that time, it's not like now, now there's a lot of Italians in uh, in Toronto. In those days, they were a minority. So they wouldn't have never had the power to do that. These guys were acting on emotionalism basically. That's--looking back at it

that's what I think. But it--you know even sitting here, you know, I'll tell you the truth, I'm going to be very honest about it. I said to my family last night, I said um, "You know maybe I shouldn't be doing this." Um, you know, and, and they said, "Oh no, you, you did--you know, you go ahead and do it." And now that I'm sitting here, and talking about it, I'm really getting angry inside me.

TT: Hmm.

GD: You know, because I'm thinking, This shouldn't have happened! It should not have happened! And my brother uh, ss--some character, um wrote a letter in The Sun newspaper, okay. And um, this other guy retorted to this letter. So my brother wrote them - my brother, Joe - wrote them and I have a copy of the letter that he wrote. I believe it was in the 70s, well it says the date on the letter and um, they were, at--they, they, the, uh the Canadians were trying to get the information about this, okay, during this time period and then nothing came of it. So then, uh, I, I believe it was Time magazine in the States. Uh I was living in, in the States at that point, they wrote this big, big article, a story actually, on how wonderful the Italians were treated in Toronto. So I wrote them a letter, you know, and uh really told them the truth, you know. That's not true! Okay, and, I, I explained that they were in the uh--they, they were taken and put in the concentration camps and my father was one of them. I got a letter back - I should have kept it - I got a letter back from them saying that they didn't want to deal with that.

TT: Hmm.

GD: They, they didn't want, they didn't want deal--

LDP: --The magazine?

GD: Yes! Yes. They didn't want to deal with that. You know, so basically...everything was dropped until about um [Pause] about eight years ago, my nephew in Toronto, one of my nephews says to me, "Aunt Gra, they have a book out...uh, evidently this, this professor had written this book about Italians. Uh, he was from McGill University, and uh he had written this book about Italians. I have uh, I have it at home and um, his research was very, very limited and he, he ah, he searched the uh, I guess he searched the archives and based it on, on what the archives said. So I, you know, I, uh and it says in that book that my father was a fascist. So I wrote this guy a letter and he wrote me back and said he was so sorry, he wished that he had known me...before. And before he wrote the book because he had written this book as a thesis and uh he wished he had known me. And uh you know I kind of got angry because I thought, you know, [Scoffs] You don't know what the heck you're talking about! Why, why are you writing this stuff if you know if you base it on one little thing?! [1:25:02.6] And uh anyway, so then, then a couple of years went by, okay I calmed down after that. And uh a couple of years went by and uh, I don't know how--oh I was, I was doing research on my computer and I came up to Italian Studies at the University of Toronto. So I uh, he wa--he, he uh--he wanted to do this about uh the Italian experiences in Toronto, this professor. So I got in touch with him, I emailed him. And oh man he was so excited. So he um, eh anyhow to make a long story short, I wrote what I just told you here, uh I wrote this story of the experiences that uh my family had had and um...uh they published it. It's in one of their uh, it's in one of their oh journals. So and uh, and then just uh what last year my niece in Toronto uh wrote me an email and she said that, that you guys were starting up this Italian studies and uh they wanted people who we--uh were living in those day - the way she explained it. So I got in touch with Meli--is it Melina?

TT: Hmmm--

LDP: --Yes.

GD: Yeah and uh and that's how I'm here with you today.

TT: Hmmm. Um and so we'll go back to the, the time when your father was at the CNE grounds. You had mentioned that he knew some other Italians that were there--

GD: --Yes--

TT: --Do, do you recall the, the names of those people?--

GD: --Yeah, Picci--uh Joe Piccinini, Jim Piccinini, um...oh let me see here, uh trying to think of uh the uh [Pause]. No, I can't recall their--no. That's, that's about all I remember. I'm, yeah no. He knew quite a few of them.

TT: Hmmm.

GD: Quite a few. Now he didn't know the ones that weren't from Toronto. Ah--and he didn't know all the ones in Toronto either.

TT: Hmmm. Um how about uh people like Marco Missori? Does that name ring a bell?--

GD: --Yes, Missori does.

TT: Okay.

GD: Yeah--

TT: --And--

GD: --And uh, the, uh the one uh who's the professor at the University of Toronto. Um in fact uh what's his--

TT: --Oh Molinaro?

GD: --Molinaro was with them.

TT: Okay.

GD: Yeah.

TT: And how, um, how would he have known uh like these two gentlemen? Just kind of curious.

GD: Well, uh--ah--as I said, my father was in the--Molinari was uh, was uh, is a professor now, okay. So he must have been educated and my father tried to associate himself with uh educated people, you know. And uh, yeah, the first--a--anytime we moved into a new community, the first thing he'd do is he'd go to the bank and introduce himself to the manager of the bank and uh, you know, do stuff like that. In fact, uh one of his friends, and, and this is much later, uh couldn't get a teaching job in, in Toronto. Uh, and uh, my dad went to the local high school, Lea--Leaside High School, 'cause we lived in Leaside. And he went to there and he got this guy a job. And uh, I don't know if he's still there to this day, he's probably very old so he's not there to this day. [GD and LDP chuckle in unison]. So uh, he was that type of a person where um, he, he always tried--looked--in fact I remember one time when we were up in Thornhill, uh the king's brother, King George the VI's brother, uh had come to visit, uh Burton. Burton was the uh President of the Simpson Company and he had uh his summer home was two doors down from us. And uh my dad knew that uh, that uh the king's brother was visiting. So that morning, we--he, he had an idea that they were going to ride by on their horses,

because this guy Burton had these beau--beautiful horses, you know. And uh anyhow, he uh, he said to my mother, "Get, get her dressed and uh she's going to be outside with me." So uh, so here I am in my nice little dress and uh I'm thinking, Wha--uh, you know, [Says laughing] What are we doing out here?! Anyway, and he's walking, we had this [Says while making hand gesture] big, long uh cinder uh, uh driveway, and uh he's walking up and down this driveway, he, you know, with a smoking jacket on and uh, [Chuckles] and uh, he wore a cane, not because he needed a cane, but because it was sophisticated to have a cane. [1:30:25.7] And uh, and I'm walking up and down and I got tired, you know and he said, "Just...a little while longer." Now he said to me, "Now, the king's brother is gonna go by here and we're gonna meet him." [Says laughing] A--and I said, "Why?!" You know, and he said, "'Cause you gotta meet people" like, you know, in other words, "You've, you've gotta meet people like that, okay. He's no better than we are." So um--Oh! So finally these horses are starting to come by our house so we walk real fast, get up there. And um, my father uh, knew Burton okay because Burton as I said was a neighbour and uh, so he went up to the king's brother's horse. And uh, he, the you know uh, he said, "My name is Joseph Tomasicchio." Uh, you know and very you know, polite and everything and uh he shook his hand. And he said, "I want to introduce you to my daughter." And uh he lifted me up, and he said to me, "Shake his hand." And I did! [Laughs] And, and, and the--then, you know, and then af--after they were gone, that was it. After they were gone and he, he said you know, um, "You gotta remember. They're no better than us. Okay. People are the same."

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

GD: Okay, so um, but you know what I didn't take that to heart. Because if I had, maybe my life would have been different. I mean, you know, I thought it was some little ritual we did. But, I never remembered these things until much later in life. And when it, it...a lot of the things that happened during those concentration times, uh, made me the kind of person I am, which was not always good. Looking back at it now, I always had like a def--like a chip on my shoulder,

defensive uh, you know type of personality. I'm kind of getting out of it now, that I'm ready to you know, to meet my Maker but [Chuckles]. Um for years, I you know--although I've always been nice to people like you know I've always--I'm a, a school teacher and I've taught for over 40 years um, never had a kid who didn't like me. Uh, or a parent who complained so, I, I find, I'm, I pride myself in that.

TT: And did your, your teaching career begin in Canada or [Unclear]--?

GD: --Yes, it did. It began, uh, my husband was uh - well he wasn't my husband then - we--he was going to the University of Toronto to--and, and he was going to be an engineer, a chemical engineer. And I was at the University of Toronto in Liberal Arts, and I had finished one year. And then, we decided we wanted to get married. And uh, so, I, I remember we were standing at the corner of--getting the bus at the University of Toronto, 'cause I used to meet him for uh, for lunch. And uh, and then, then he said, "You know I, I heard that if you go to Teacher's College, you only have to go one year. Because with all of the education, one intense year, you can be a teacher, and, and you know and get a profession." I--that was the furthest thing from my mind, I wanted to be a social worker. You know, and uh, anyway, um, my father wanted me to be an engineer, or a doctor, or a lawyer. [Laughs] You know, um 'cause he always aimed--he was basically in love with my husband because he was being--he had all these things going for him, he was Italian, he was uh Catholic, and he--the biggest thing was he was gonna be educated, he was gonna be an engineer. And uh anyway im, I went to Teacher's College and uh, I didn't want to be a teacher, okay. [1:35.10.1] And I remember the professor, um we had this class where you had to learn to project your voice. Well, as you can tell I have a loud voice as it is, so I didn't even need the microphone. I said, "I don't need that!" [Laughs, LDP laughs in the background] And uh, they--the professor's name was Dr. Dobson, and afterwards the--he said to me, he says, "You know. You were born to be a teacher." And uh, I'll tell you the truth, it worked out, I couldn't have done anything else. And I have my daughter, she's a high school teacher, and my

youngest son, he's a college professor, at uh Ohio [Unknown man in the background says "Ohio"] State uh University in Columbus. So...and uh we have a son who's a chiropractor. And uh...I won--I wonder if people were--are going to see this, he has his practice in [Says while laughing] Rancho Mirage, California. And our, an--another son, he's uh in the DA's office in Orange County, California.

TT: And, so, you actually taught then in, in Toronto before moving--

GD: --I taught in Toronto. Uh, I started teaching at St. Martin's school, uh in the Cath--in the Catholic schools. At, at that time, they had uh, uh two uh Boards of Education. The separate, which were the Catholic schools, and the public, which were everybody else. Uh, but our education was the same. Okay, uh, wa--like I went to school in the same class with those who went to the public schools. In fact, in uh, okay, so the only thing different is that we had a course in teaching religion, as an extra course. But the first year, I taught at uh St. Martin's uh, you had to go up the fire escape in uh, in the east end of Toronto. And um, uh, tha--I got pregnant then and uh I uh, I was getting sick every morning so I had to quit. And uh, then I had my eldest son, Vince, born in 1955. And uh, then I started uh, uh, then I had my second son, our second son, tw--eleven months later, Chris, okay. And then uh we moved to Port Credit, 'cause we were living in Leaside at the time, we moved to Port Credit and I started teaching at St. Dominic's School. I taught third grade there for two years. And um...and then um, I decided I'm, I was going to try uh out in public schools.

[Pause]

GD: So I had my Ontario Certificate and then uh, we um decided, we had three boys at the time, uh okay, and we decided that we were going to move away from Toronto. There were various reasons, um, so we looked up in the encyclopedia - we were kids. We looked up in the

encyclopedia and it said, "Los Angeles, mean temperature, 70 degrees." So we thought, "Boy that sounds good." [GD and LDP laugh in unison] Make a long story short, we piled the kids up, and it was our third son's first birthday, July 29th, that we left Toronto. And uh, ended up--and Vince was uh a chemical engineer, and um, so we ended up uh in uh, in the uh Southern California area. And uh we lived in a town called Buena Park where Knotts Berry Farm is. And uh, anyhow, he worked for the Purex Company and uh, we had two more children there.

[Pause]

TT: When you initially began the uh, the interview and you were talking about your, your parents and your grandparents, I just want to get some um again some more for the record kind of information, with uh, uh your father's full name for instance? Like if he had a middle name--

GD: --Okay, well my father's name full--no, he did not have a middle name. His name was Giuseppe which is Joseph in English. Giuseppe Tomasicchio.

TT: [Says faintly] Okay.

GD: Okay, my mother's name was, now we had an odd situation, because my mother and father were first cousins, and uh that was not allowed, but they really fell in love and uh, and uh they were able to get married because uh, my mom had an uncle who was a priest and he married--uh--we're going back to uh, they got married in 1910. So the--my dad was born in 1890 and my mother was born in 1891. So, um, so my mother's name was Maria Rosa Maiorana, in fact, no, ss--yeah, Mairo--Maiorana Tomasicchio. Okay, her maiden name was Maiorana.

[1:40:53.2]

TT: [Says faintly] Okay. And how about the names of your uh paternal uh grandparents and then your maternal grandparents?

GD: Okay, my fa--uh my frat--uh my dad's uh father was Vito Tomasicchio. Okay. And my mo--uh my grandmother uh was uh Cecilia...Mongelli Tomasicchio. And on my mother's side, uh my grandfather was Ni--uh Nico--uh Giuseppe uh--okay we have three names in uh Italian, it's either Joseph, Nick or [GD and LDP laugh in unison] Now it's different but in those days, anyhow, my grandfather's name was Giuseppe Maiorana. Uh, there seems to be a, a difference of opinions whether it's Maioran-a or Maioran-o. Okay, but when they signed on the uh, I have the manifesto of uh the ship that they came on, they came on the American--America. Okay, and they were--where they signed, they signed with an "a." So I don't know. And then my grandmother's name, that's where the first cousins come in, her name was Grazia which is Grace Tomasicchio.

LDP: [Pause] Are you named after her?

GD: It's a matter of opinion, because okay, because actually my name on my birth certificate is Maria Grazia Cecilia...Tomasicchio. [Says while laughing] Okay. Maria was a difference of opinions. My father used to say he'd name me after his sister; my mother used to say she named me after the Blessed Virgin. Now Grazia they couldn't get away with that because that was my mother's mother, you're right. Okay. And Cecilia, now was uh my father's mother, because I had a sister who was, would have been a lot older than me, but her name was Cecilia.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm mmm.

GD: Okay. Because they, they of course the Italian way. The first son is called after the father's father. The first daughter after the father's mother. Okay. The second son is the father--uh the mother's father and the second daughter is the mother's mother. So basically I should have been called Grazia, which I was. Okay, now how did I get the name--now my family used to call me Graziella, which is "Little Grace." Okay, how did I get that name? Because I had a step grandfather living in Toronto...who was married to my grandmother, Grazia, and he started calling me Graziella and to heck with the Maria thing. Okay, you know, so they went along with it and they started calling me Graziella. Nobody ever called me Maria. So they called me--and then Graziella went to Gracie. Even today the people in Toronto who knew me well, uh called me Gra--they still call me Gracie.

[Pause]

TT: Also again for the record, if you wouldn't mind telling us the names of your siblings? 'Cause I know you [Unclear]--

GD: --My siblings were uh, Vito, Vito Paul, no, no, no, his name's not Paul. It's just Vito Tomasicchio. Okay, now my, my--the--these brothers, there was a whole s--there were three siblings who died in between. Okay, so basically uh, the--that's why these two were older than me, okay. [1:45:08.7] Ah, my, my s--the, the one born in 1917, his name was, now this is, this, this is the kind of uh, of uh, sense of humour that my parents had, they named him Joseph after her father, her--my mother's father, Giuseppe, okay. But then they gave him the name Giuseppe Giorgio, which is George, okay, after the king of England, Victor Emmanuel after the king of Italy. So his name--and he used to go around saying, "Giuseppe Giorgio Vittorio Emanuele Tomasicchio." [Chuckles] And they all called him Joe. [Chuckles] So...

TT: Um, and what year abouts did your, 'cause your, your folks were married in Italy, is that correct?

GD: 1910 they got married.

TT: Okay and--

GD: --December 3rd.

TT: Okay. And, and when did they leave Italy and for [Unclear]--

GD: --They left Italy in uh, 1912. In June of 1912.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm. Okay.

GD: And then my brother was born in New York and died in New York and his name was Vito also.

TT: Okay.

GD: And then my mother got pregnant in New York and then my brother, Vito, was born in 1913, so um, uh in Toronto.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

GD: The rest of them were all--we were all born in Toronto. They never had any children born in Italy.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmm. So roughly, how long did your parents stay in New York City before they decided to move to Toronto?

GD: Well my brother was born in Toronto and uh--the--the--they came in 1912 so they couldn't have stayed there very long because he was born in October of 1913.

TT: Okay. And [GD touches her shirt near lapel microphone making muffled noise] when the family moved to Welland do you know what year abouts that might have been?

[Pause]

GD: It would have to be in the [Pause] well wait a minute, Joe was born in Toronto though 1917, 1920, uh maybe about 1915? Something like that.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmm mmm. And how long did they reside in--

GD: [Says while shaking her head] --Not very long, not very long. Because you know, he, he had a job uh obviously with the scale place.

[Pause]

LDP: Less than two years though?--

GD: --[Talking over LDP] Oh yes definitely--

LDP: --your brother was born in Toronto in 1917.

GD: Yes. That's right, that's right. Oh yeah, much less than two years. Maybe, maybe even less than a couple of months.

TT: Hmmm mmm. Okay. Um, and then to just uh move a bit to--oh, I want to know more about uh the neighbourhood at 21 Division Street that you lived in.

GD: Uh, it was a--it wa--it was, un, un next door to us, one side we had a Jewish family. In fact, she's in uh, the, the daughter, uh Rachel was my little friend, she was in my class at school and then on the other side they were an English uh family. And then across the street, they were Hungarian. It was all different nationalities and everybody got along fine. And behind us, [Says while making hand gestures] okay, that would have been more on uh College Street, yeah College Street, okay there was a doctor, a la--uh, actually she was a lady doctor. But we shared the lane, that uh, because in those days, ya--you didn't have your own driveway, you'd come up the lane and then get into the garage that way. So she shared our lane, and um, um, ah, this, this is really bringing back some memories because she's enjoyed my father's singing because he'd always be singing all these Italian opera--operatic songs. And then when he came--when he went in the concentration camp she obviously--so one day, uh, they would send me uh...the, now if you went like beside her home, which was er, the front of it was on uh College Street, across the street was a little uh meat store. So my mother would give me a quarter and you'd buy a pound of ham. So I'm running through there uh to go buy the ham and she came out and she said, uh, "Where's your father? I don't hear him singing anymore?" [1:50:10.4] And I remember, now I used to go around going, [Says in a sing song, child-like voice] "He's in the concentration camp." [Chuckles] So she was like shocked! You know and uh...I haven't thought about that in years. Yeah, she was, she was, uh then she never heard him again, because he'd never, you know, he never sang, uh, uh, he, he never sang for the pleasure of it.

TT: [GD touches her shirt near lapel microphone making muffled noise] And, and the doctor, she was still, like talk to you as her--she--

GD: --Yes! Because uh she knew, she knew our family.

TT: Hmm.

GD: You know. [Nods]

TT: And with--because your neighbourhood was multi-ethnic, um...did anyone treat you--your family different after your father was interned?

GD: Yes. Well, you know, a lot of it was out of fear though. They--really, it was out of fear. Especially with the other Italians; the Italians who were affected but not as affected. They were afraid, you know, uh it was a terrible time for them too. You know, uh--now I can look back and say that now. In, in those days, I, I just couldn't say that because...I mean I didn't know that they, that they had some, you know they could be afraid. Why would they be afraid? But his mother [Points off to her husband] was born in Canada and she had to go and register.

TT: Hmm.

GD: And, and people--she had to go register every month. And in fact, they, they told my mother she had to register and she told them, no she wasn't gonna go register. It's bad enough they that they had him, why should she go register?

TT: Hmm. And after she said that she wasn't going to--

GD: --They didn't bother her.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm. Interesting.

GD: They really didn't.

TT: And it was just your husband's mother that had to report--

GD: --Well, no! All the Italians [talking over TT] If you were, if you were um, if you were uh Italians, and uh you know affiliated with Italians, married to an Italian, it didn't matter, you had to go register.

TT: Okay...Um...was your father or your mother involved in any organizations like Order Sons of Italy?

GD: Yeah.

TT: Yeah.

GD: Yeah, yeah both of them.

TT: Hmmm mmm.

GD: Yeah, but all--everything was social. It was social. I mean uh, we--they didn't have meetings in our house uh that talked about politics. They never talk--they never talked about politics. The only time that they--that I heard my dad ah talk with my brothers about politics um, was um,

wa--was about during the war, what was going on, like you know who--what, what Hitler was doing and how he was overrunning all these countries and, and uh so on.

TT: Um...

GD: Oh okay, at Lansdowne School by the way. When I went into second grade, okay, I went into second grade, the teacher that was gonna have me, happened to be Catholic. And she said to my mother, "Don't keep her here. Put her in a Catholic, uh, convent school." So my mother, that's when I started going to St. Joseph uh--well at that time, they called it St. Joseph College School. It went from first grade all the way up to grade 13, okay. Okay and they had like, that's where the nuns live, it was on uh, uh Brett [?] Alban there, Wellesley, uh they had the whole block. And uh, so when I went there um, the um, the stoning stopped.

[Pause]

TT: You were saying earlier that on June 9th, your father had you know mentioned to you that he might, he might be going away, or something might be happening, et cetera, et cetera, so I was wondering, do you have a sense of why he, he thought there--if Italy had declared war [Unclear]--

GD: --You know, I--my father wasn't uh, uh, looking back now, my, my father was a very deep thinker. Okay and I guess and he could always like, like all of these ideas coming from all over the place he could put things together. And uh, okay, e--you know um, if you read my, my uh, my brother's letter, okay, that and I didn't know what those things meant in those days, okay. [1:55:20.9] My brother says that all of the direction came from White Hall in England, okay. And a lot of the, a lot of the questioning and everything was done by Scotland Yard which my father must have pieced everything together and realized that he was one of--Like for example, if one

of, if one of the Italians was having a problem getting uh, a, a br--a something! You know, just needed help. He would go and help them and speak for them. So he, he must have realized you know, something's gotta happen because that's, that's the way things are. And you know there's a possibility and maybe there is and maybe there isn't but I'm going to prepare her. And I remember distinctly because he uh, he took me put me on his lap and he said to me, like you know, "I don't want you to be scared. But maybe, maybe, I'm, I'm--they're gonna come and get me." Okay, but I still, the next day when it happened, I mean I was so young, that I never--and my mother never knew that he had told me that. I was so young that I couldn't piece together, Oh now they're coming! [Chuckles] You know, it was a completely new experience now.

[Pause]

TT: And whereabouts was your father kept at the CNE grounds? Was there a particular or structure?

GD: [Exhales] Um [Pause] Well I remember it being--oh--I remember it being cement floors. So, I guess the whole uh Exhibition was cement floors.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm mmm.

GD: Right? You know as a kid going to the Exhibition, you're not looking down at the floors. I mean you know, like I was [Laughs] si--like going to the Exhibition I could have been six! And my step grandfather used to take me uh you know 'cause my mother was working in uh, in our business so he would take me. And uh, but, this, this uh, so [Pause] the Exhibition couldn't have been on that year or they must have [talking over a male's voice] skipped it that year or they didn't have it every year, I don't know. But it was an empty building and there were, the

buildings around it were empty. There, there weren't, like there wasn't an office, it was like just like a big barracks. And we were only allowed in there once.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

[Pause]

TT: You--were you able to talk to your father every time you visited uh, was it Sunday afternoons or [Unclear]--?

GD: --For ab--uh--eh--but outside.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

GD: Out--outside would--after they'd start--and, and for some reason or other, every time we saw him, he--they had to march. Okay, and I, the--looking back I don't understand why they had to do that. But then he would be allowed to come over and talk to us for about five minutes. Okay and you know and hug uh, he--he'd hug us and uh kiss us and uh the whole bit. And then uh, and then he was gone! You know, now after, after he--they took him - and he was there three months - after they took him to Petawawa then we never saw him. Except, what--during the court case um...

LDP: Where was the location of the court case was it in Toronto?

GD: [Says nodding] Yes, yes it was. It was--they, they must have brought him from Toronto--I mean from Petawawa.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

GD: To Toronto.

TT: And do you know roughly when the first trial occurred and when the second trial occurred?

GD: [Pause] Maybe in September of 1940. Wha...

TT: That would have been the first [Unclear]--?

GD: --Yeah, yeah. The second one was pretty close to it that I don't remember any details about that one at all.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm. And--

GD: --But wa--we had this lawyer, Dave Goodman, that was my dad's lawyer.

[Pause]

GD: [Opens a folder and takes out some papers] Alright, I'm just gonna read ah, to you some e--
um, excerpts from my, my brother's, uh because this--okay. Alright. Uh, he wrote this, okay,
'Dear Sir,' uh 'a letter appeared in the Toronto Sun dated August 17th, 1988 where' capital 'M.E.
O'Brian, 'those her--his initials, 'chastised columnist, David Frum. [2:00:11.1] O'Brian [sp?]
claimed that Canada did not have concentration camps during World War II. There were
internment camps for Italians and Germans. The' wri-- 'writer also stated that the internees
were nationals of states that were at war with Canada. I would like to ask O'Brian [sp?] the
difference between concentration camps and internment camps. The camp at Petawawa where
Italians were interned had armed guards and barbed wire. The soldiers had guns and were

ordered to shoot in case of an escape. This God forsaken place, 48 years ago' - well that's from 1988 - 'was out in the bush. In winter, the camp was buried in snow and the temperature reached 30 below zero. The prisoners were addressed as POW number' whatever 'I wish to inform Mr. O'Brian [sp?] that not only Italian nationals were interned but also Italians who had British subjects for many, many years and some who were born in Canada. This made no difference. A residence status was judged by the origin of the family.' Okay, um, then he goes on. Okay, um. 'The' uh, uh 'Italian' inter-- 'internees were charged with number one, being anti-British, number two being a member of the Dopolovoro club' - and it brackets it says after-hour club and up - 'and number three, being a member of the fascist party. These were frivolous charges but tragically the internee was considered guilty and had to prove innocence. This was almost impossible to do. It appeared that Canadian policy was dictated by White Hall. Many of the prisoners were questioned by Scotland Yard.' Now you have to remember that my brother at that time, he was born in 1917, so it makes him a lot older than me during uh, during that time. And uh, this is a picture of me in my class at first grade at Lansdowne School and uh, so it really happened. [Chuckles] Anyhow...

TT: Um, you had also mentioned that when your father got to camp they asked him what jobs he wanted to do and he refused to do work without uh, being, being uh paid for it. Was he involved--did he ever speak of like any social activities within the camp where [Unclear]--

GD: --No, they had no social activities.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

GD: No, in fact he did--I, I overheard and I didn't even know what that meant. Uh, the--now this was years after he came out of the camp. I overheard them talking one day and he, he had told somebody that they covered their food with saltpeter or whatever.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

GD: Whatever that was. I think it was uh--I don't know what it was. Anyhow, no, they, they um, they were not given, uh they worked all day out in the field if you know during uh, I guess during the summer uh maybe they grew things I don't know.

TT: Hmmm. Did he ever um talk about uh like people he might have met while he was in the camp or?

GD: Not, not uh anybody new. No.

TT: Hmmm. Hmmm. Um, how about uh...the living conditions? Like where he slept for instance in the camp, did he--

GD: Oh, uh almost on the ground. They had like uh a little mat that uh were, was the uh the bed and uh, as I said, he was always uh, he, he never did without the, uh without these four soldiers with their, uh, with their guns.

TT: Hmmm. And did he--

GD: --Went to the bathroom with them, uh, you know.

TT: Hmmm.

GD: And the--they...he--you know, I, I don't know I, I mean they didn't shoot him or anything but he was afraid that they were going to--But yet he was willing to take that chance because

he was very, he, he believed in justice and if you don--if you don't get paid, why should you work? That was his...[Chuckles]

TT: Hmm.

GD: His idea.

[2:05:00.9]

TT: Hmm. Did he s--were--where he slept what did he have roommates or bunkmates--

GD: --They all slept in one room.

TT: Hmm mmm.

GD: Yeah, well, da--not I, I would imagine not all of them but let, let's say about 60 guys in one room I, you know. Or 50 or 60 and then you know. But they were kept diff--uh separately from the Germans.

TT: Hmm.

GD: The Germans were in a different uh camp, uh different building.

TT: Hmm.

GD: Same place but different building. With barbed wire around them too.

TT: Do you know if he ever have had any interaction with German

[Unclear]--

GD: --No, no there was no interaction. That, that, that wasn't allowed and uh you know and of course, they knew, they were told that if they tried to escape, they were--would be shot.

TT: Hmmm.

GD: So--and where are you going to escape anyhow? You're in the middle of a wood. Where, where are you going to go?

TT: Hmmm.

GD: You know. Um [Pause] So thinking that he was going to be there for the--he could have been there as in his mind for the rest of his life!

TT: Hmmm.

GD: You know and then thinking about his family and thinking how they were going to survive?

TT: [Pause] And you--when you talked earlier about um soldiers approaching your mother and saying they can bring food to the camp, the--these were ss--soldiers who work at the camp or did they have [Unclear]--

GD: --Yes, yes they were directly involved with uh the everyday happenings uh in, in that particular, I would imagine in that particular part. 'Cause they knew my father.

TT: Hmmm.

GD: Okay um so uh, she would--and then she started sending uh stuff, like my dad would write "Well so-and-so needs this" And uh, so she would buy him things and put it in the same package. But everything was inspected.

TT: [Says faintly] Hmmm.

GD: Once it got there okay. It was inspected. And uh, and of course these soldiers had something to do with it.

[Pause]

TT: Was your father active um, you know in any church, uh--eh, local church or any church organization of any sorts?

GD: We were Catholic and we went to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church. And uh in fact when my father was in the concentra--my mother used to love Bingo. And they had a Bingo at Our-- Our Lady of Mount Carmel and she uh, she took me and I was-- she said, "Okay here's a card for you. But you uh you play this card." And she, I guess she never thought about it but--now you didn't get money, you got prizes. And uh, when, we, we went in there I saw this gorgeous doll, okay, beautiful doll. So I'm thinking, Oh I'd like to win that doll. So anyway, lo and behold I got a Bingo and I yelled, "Bingo!" and uh [LDP chuckles in the background] they uh, they realized that I was just a kid and uh, the Father Dale, the priest who eventually told my dad about his dad, he came over and he said, he said to my mother - uh they used to call her Rose - "Rose, we, we can't uh, we can't give her because it's illegal to give her the doll." Okay, so oh man, you know I thought, Man, I got a Bingo and not even, not even going to get nothing for the Bingo! [Laughs]

Anyway, okay when the people started milling out, Father Dale [Chuckles] comes up with--he came over and he had the doll in his hand and he gave it to me.

[Unknown person in the background]: Hmm.

GD: You know, I loved that guy so much! [Laughs in unison with LDP, TT]

TT: Um, with regards to your father's release, did--it sounds like you, you might have had some forewarning that--

GD: --No!--

TT: --that he was coming--Oh--

GD: --No, uh very little forewarning all we knew is the, the uh Colonel Ritan [sp?] uh just said to him, uh, said to my mother, "Don't worry about it." And uh the next thing, she got notice that he was coming home and he was home in three days.

TT: Hmm.

GD: So uh, so he must have had some kind of power. He was in the, he was in the, well I guess, I don't know! I mean, you know, he must have had some kind of power.

TT: Hmm.

GD: And there were guys still there.

TT: Hmm.

GD: I mean some of them were there for four years, five years.

[Pause]

TT: Well I'd like to thank you very much for uh sharing your experiences and your family's experiences with us.

GD: And I'd like to thank you too for coming all the way out here.

[Pause]

GD: Thank you very much and uh I hope it does somebody some good.

[Fades out 2:10:28.2]