

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

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LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Ottawa, ON

NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: Paula Mascioli

NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Cristina Pietropaolo

NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER: Cristina Pietropaolo

TRANSCRIBED BY: Melinda Richter

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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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ABSTRACT:

Paula Mascioli talks about a portrait of her grandfather, Leopoldo (Leo) Mascioli, when he was interned at Camp Petawawa. Paula's uncle, Antonio (Tony) Mascioli, was also interned at the camp. The portrait is dated August 1940 and signed by artist and fellow internee, Vincenzo Poggi. Paula says that the sketch is important to her because it is the only tangible memento she has of her grandfather's time in the camp, apart from the letters that he wrote to her father. Paula says the

sketch is a good example of the kinds of people that were in the camp and how they used their skills to pass the time, entertain each other, and help each other out. In the camps, there were artists, writers, carvers, and cooks. Those internees who were literate would help others write letters to their families back home. Paula has her grandfather's letters which feature three different styles of handwriting but always included his signature at the bottom. She suggests that a supportive community evolved within the camp. She also notes that the sketch shows a different side to her grandfather, a softer side that is not apparent in photographs.

INTERVIEW

PM: Paula Mascioli, interviewee

CP: Cristina Pietropaolo, interviewer, videographer

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 00:00:11]

[Text: Paula Mascioli. On the sketch of her grandfather Leopoldo Mascioli created while he was interned at Camp Petawawa]

[PM is sitting in a chair holding a sketch of a man wearing a hat]

CP: So you are...

PM: Hi. I'm Paula Mascioli and I was born in Timmins, Ontario but I currently live in Ottawa now.

CP: And how are you related to this project?

PM: Well, this is, uh, a portrait of my grandfather, Leo Mascioli. And he was one of the internees, uh, during the Second World War, he along with my great uncle, my great uncle Tony. So I am Leo's granddaughter.

CP: And, so, can you tell me about this? Like when, just, um, what, what it's made of or how old it is or—?

PM: Well, it's sketched on what looks like a piece of cardboard, which is a little bit unusual. No paper so maybe this was all that they had around in the camp at the time. And, uh, the date on this is August 1940. Uh, the artist, uh, obviously another internee, uh, Vincenzo Poggi And he addresses it to my grandfather, uh, "*con stima*," which I understand means "with esteem," or "with pleasure," I guess is the English equivalent. Um, this had been hanging in our family room for years. And, um, I really thought nothing of it. It was a sketch of my grandfather and, uh, the likeness of it was, was quite good. Um, you can really tell that it's, it's him. So this Vincenzo Poggi, you know, really had a good hand and a good eye. And, um, it wasn't until I really developed an interest, uh, in the internment, um, that they both, uh, lived through, um, that it caught my attention. And then I looked on the back of it [turns the sketch around] and in my dad's handwriting it says, "August 1940 at Petawawa." Then I realized, 'Oh gosh. This is that sketch that a lot of internees had done, uh, while they were interned, uh, in the camp.'" So then, of course, I took a greater interest in it.

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[fades in a 00:02:32]

CP: Okay. So, so it was hanging in your family home. How did you—Did you, did your mom give it to

you or how did you come to keep it?

PM: Yes. I asked my mom for it, um, particularly when I started, you know, getting involved with the, uh, uh, Villa Charities, uh, Columbus Centre project. Um, I realized that this was actually, uh, probably the only tangible and physical memento, if you want to call it that, that we have of his actual time in Petawawa, uh, apart from his personal letters, uh, that we kept, that he wrote to my dad. And, um, it's well done as I say, the likeness of him is very real. Uh, so I see this as a positive thing that he took away with him, maybe the only positive thing that he took away with him from that experience. So it's become valuable because it's, it's, it's from there, whereas everything else was just notes on paper. Mind you the letters are very real too, but, um, uh, this was done by another internee and, uh, I like the fact that he's got a little half smile on his face. That tells me that he was obviously at ease with the artist, that he was comfortable posing for this.

CP: Yeah. Yeah. It's funny how an image, even though you've got those details of writing on the page, but an image can trigger so much more.

PM: Yes.

CP: Um, and I guess just to finish, um, up with this piece, any other memories that you associate with it or any—? Do you—

PM: Well—

CP: —plan to hang it up, or—?

PM: Oh yeah, eventually it will end up back on my mother's family room wall where, you know, it, it, it

should be. Um, I've just borrowed it for a while. But, uh, what it tells me too, it's, it's just a reminder of what I've learned already is that there were a lot of very talented men that were interned, uh, in Petawawa. Uh, there were artists. Apparently there were three different artists that were doing these sketches, um, during their internment. Uh, many were writers. Uh, I understand some were carvers. Uh, they were cooks. Um, also too they helped each other, I think, to entertain each other, uh, by using their talents. Rather than just sitting around and moping and being bored, uh, they got out there and they did things to entertain themselves and one another. Um, in one of my grandfather's letters he even talks about comedy skits that some of the other Italian internees would put on and how clever and funny they were. So clearly there was a lot of talent and they used their talent while they were there to make the best of things. And this is just one example of that.

CP: Oh good. Okay.

PM: Yeah, it really does resemble him. It's, uh, it's a thinner, uh, Grandpa Leo than in other photos. I have a, a photo here, [picks up a photograph] and older one of him, um, where's he's filled out. I guess even though that they were eating quite well in, in camp, um, it's not the same. And, uh, so he has a fuller face here, but you can see the resemblance.

CP: Mmmhmm.

PM: [puts the picture down]

[fades out at 00:06:03]

[fades in at 00:06:04]

[shot of PM holding the photograph of her grandfather next to the drawing]

[camera zooms in and out]

[fades out at 00:06:20]

[fades in at 00:06:21]

PM: You know, in addition to that half smile that he, he has on his face, uh, which shows clearly that he was comfortable posing for this and at ease with the artist, his eyes are so different from his photographs where he was very posed and, and, uh, and very stiff. [holds up a photograph of two men standing] Here is an example. Um, he's standing there with his nephew and this is such a typical, uh, pose of him, you know, chest puffed out and shoulders very erect and straight and, and, uh, seems like, you know, the, the neck is stiff. There's even a, a gentleness in his eyes when you really study the sketch, showing that he was very relaxed unlike something that you would expect for a man who's interned in a prisoner of war camp in his own country. So there's a different feeling here, a real ease that's really lovely to see. And very different from his posed photographs.

CP: And can you hold that one up again?

PM: [holds up the photograph of the two men]

CP: I'll just zoom in on that.

PM: He's on the left there. [camera zooms in]

CP: Okay.

[camera zooms in and out; PM puts picture down]

CP: And any final thoughts or ideas?

PM: Not really. Um, just that it's great to have a physical, tangible memento from the place itself and from the time—

CP: Mmmhmm.

PM: —other than just paperwork and documents. Uh, although I do treasure the letters that we kept of his. Um, I wish there were more of these but, uh, we have it and, uh, and, uh, we're going to treasure it. [nods]

[fades out at 00:08:23]

[fades in at 00:08:24]

PM: Yeah, I guess in addition to, you know, feeling that there was a lot of talent in the camp and they used their talents to wile away the time and to entertain themselves and each other, I think they also used their skills and their abilities to help one another. Uh, I know for one that, um, my grandfather, uh, wasn't at ease, uh, writing. And all the letters that, uh, he wrote to my father, uh, which my dad kept, you can see that there's about three different styles of handwriting, um, that, uh, appear in, uh, these, these letters over the course of, of time. But the signature is always the same. So clearly, uh, when he wanted to send a letter home he was obviously dictating, uh, his thoughts to someone who was writing it down for him but he would always sign it. So there was a consistent signature on all the letters but about three different styles of handwriting within the, the text. So, you know, obviously they were helping each other in, in, in that respect. And, uh, I know that he certainly tried to help keep everybody's morale up by getting them out to exercise and move around and stay active and stop



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sitting around and, you know, getting down in the dumps. So, I really think that it was, it became a supportive community.

[fades out at 00:10:00]