



**Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens:  
Memories of World War II**  
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**NAME OF INTERVIEWEE:** Lawrence Lamentia

**NAME OF INTERVIEWER:** Melina De Guglielmo

**NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER:** Krystle Copeland

**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**

Lawrence Anthony Lamentia was born in Toronto on January 5, 1925. His parents came to Canada in the early 1900s (mother 1908; father 1903). His father, Domenic Lamentia, owned a store in the Pape

and Danforth area, and then ran a fruit store around Parliament St. and Carlton St area. In 1937, Domenic moved his store to Bloor St. and Sherbourne St., where it remained until 1970. Domenic's wife, Michelina Lamentia (née Lo Presti) [?] died when Lawrence was young. Lawrence's brother, Joe, went to live with an aunt who raised him as her own. Lawrence and his other brother, Peter, lived with their father in the Pape and O'Connor area, along with an uncle.

During the Second World War, around late 1943/early 1944, Domenic and his brother received a letter from the Ottawa RCMP (Royal Mounted Police) ordering them to report to the police as they were considered enemy aliens. When the Lamentia brothers arrived at the local police station, the Chief of Police, a friend of theirs, ripped up the letter and told them to go home. However, Lawrence's father-in-law, Marco Missori, was interned at Camp Petawawa and was not released until 1945. In 1944, both Lawrence and Peter were called to serve in the Canadian Army; Lawrence was stationed in British Columbia, protecting the western shoreline against the Japanese. He talks briefly about the treatment and internment of Japanese Canadians. Lawrence also talks about his experiences in the army, drinking with friends and breaking the rules, as well as the fun times he had after the war with his wife, Tina Missori Lamentia, and friends. He says that his wife's family was torn apart during the war; for example, Tina's sister, Kathleen, was stranded in Italy and hunted down by German soldiers. After the war, Lawrence returned home to work at this dad's store until it was sold, and then worked for Dominion grocery stores for 21 years. Lawrence ends by speaking about the time during his service when he was almost hit by a bullet. The interview ends with Lawrence describing a wedding photograph and talking about his war medals hung on the wall.

## **INTERVIEW**

**LL: Lawrence Lamentia, interviewee**

**MG: Melina De Guglielmo, interviewer**

**KC: Krystle Copeland, videographer**



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[Title screen]

[Fades in at 00:00:11]

[Text: Lawrence Lamentia. Son of enemy alien Domenic Lamentia. Son-in-law of internee Marco Missori]

MG: And then where, where were you—Sorry. Where you were born and when.

LL: Well, full name?

MG: Yeah.

LL: Well, it's Lawrence Anthony Lamentia, but I don't use the Anthony for, I don't know why. Uh, and where was I born? In Toronto.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: In the East end. I guess, Dad had a store and I guess, yeah, in the Pape and Danforth area years ago. But I was born January the 5<sup>th</sup>, 1925. And, I guess, about four years old and Dad bought a house up in the Pape and O'Connor area. And that's where I lived, I guess, until I was, mmm...25, I guess. I left home and took up my lovely wife and we found our own place.

MG: Hmm. And what's your, what's your earliest childhood memory?

LL: Oh...

MG: Or what, what's your favourite childhood memory?

LL: Well, what can I say?...It wasn't the long walk to school everyday. I guess one of the happiest days is, uh, one of my dear old aunts came and stayed with us one winter. She lived up north, came to Toronto. In the after, every afternoon we got home, 4:30 or something like that from school, 'cause school, I think we went to school 'til 4:00 back then. In the wintertime we come home and the dear old aunt in the wintertime, knowing how cold it was and our fingertips usually were white by the time we got home, she always had a nice cup of tea waiting and a biscuit waiting as soon as we get in the door.

MG: Right, so she, she stayed with you for a little bit?

LL: Yeah, she stayed that, that one winter with us. [scratches his face and rubs mic] She lived up north but she stayed one winter with us because she was my mother's older sister, not the oldest, but an older sister.

MG: Oh, what was her name?

LL: Her name?

MG: Your aunt's name?

LL: Oh, it's Rose Patalgia[?].

MG: Mmmhmm. And you're in, in the house—Well, who lived with you in your, your home?

LL: Oh, you mean who did I live with? Uh, my father. My grandmother moved in when my mother died...and looked after the house, the cleaning, the cooking and being from the old, the old country, from, uh, Termini Imerese.

MG: Hmm.

LL: She moved in after Mom died. [brushes mic] I was only six at the time my mother died. Grandma moved in, took control of the house and raised, looked after, uh, my father who at this time was widowed, uh, or a widower. And an uncle, who was single. And my older brother and I.

MG: And what were your parents' names?

LL: Well, my father was Domenic Lamentia. And my mother was, uh, Michelina. She was a Lo Presti before she became a, a Lamentia.

MG: Hmm.

LL: But Mom died in May the 14<sup>th</sup>, 1931.

MG: Wow.

LL: I was only six. So...

MG: And were, were they recent immigrants or, or, um...?

LL: No, I think my grandmother and my mother came to Canada in 1908, I think.

MG: Wow. Very early.

LL: Yeah, they were 1908, but I don't, I don't remember the name of the ship. But anyway—

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: —that's when they came. My grandmother came with her family—

MG: With her family.

LL: —back then.

MG: So your mom, I guess, grew up mostly in, in Canada.

LL: Yeah, she was, uh, I think Mom was about 12 years old when she came to Canada. I think—I, I don't know. I didn't see—I saw a copy of the manifest, uh, from the ship that they came on and where they landed in Ellis Island but I, I don't remember anything other than that.

MG: Hmm. And your dad? When did he come over?

LL: Dad came in...uh, 1903. He was born in, in Termini.

MG: Which is, uh, Termini's where?

LL: About 18 km from Palermo.

MG: Oh.

LL: I think [motions with his hand] I think it's west. I'm not sure. But it's about 18...18 or 20 km from Palermo. And Dad was born over there in '98. But by that—My father's mother was already here in Toronto.

MG: Oh, how was that, uh?

LL: Well she came in, uh, the mid-80s. 1880 something. '88 or '85. Something like that. But all my

Dad's brothers and sisters were all born here in Toronto. My dad was the only one born in Italy, in Termini, 'cause Grandma went back to, uh, Termini to get rid of her bergindia[?].

MG: Oh really!

LL: You know what that is?

MG: No!

LL: It's her possessions, whatever she had over there because she was established here.

MG: Okay.

LL: So Dad was born in, in Termini and he stayed there until he was five years old then he came to Canada. He did all his schooling and everything and he never had any desires to go, never had any, never wanted to go back to Italy.

MG: Never.

LL: No. He had no desire to go.

MG: Wow.

LL: Didn't—

MG: So when he came here where did they live?

LL: Oh gosh. A number of places. Uh, they had a store and a living quarters at, uh...Oh, it was on Queen...between Bay and York.

MG: Oh yeah.

LL: And that's, Grandma had one store that was next to the old Casino Theatre that used to be on Queen Street.

MG: Okay.

LL: And then from there, to my knowledge, uh, I think they had a store at, what is that? Uh, Queen and

Sh—Queen and Bond Street, where now the hospital is built.

MG: Okay.

LL: And then from there I think Grandma, she went to, uh, Queen Street East and Booth Avenue. She had a store in there, a store and apartment above. And apparently while she was there there was a big, um, a building on the corner. It was a, a movie theatre. And apparently she had one of the first five cent picture shows or moving picture shows in Toronto. [smiles]

MG: Wow.

LL: So I don't know if it was five cents then but I know a gentleman I met years ago, he said, "Your grandmother threw, throw me and my gang out of the, out of the Saturday movies more than once because one kid would have a pop bottle, he'd go and redeem it, get five cents and he'd go and buy a ticket [MG laughs] to go into the show then he'd open the side door and let his buddies in."

MG: Oh no.

LL: So Grandma, I guess from all the noise the kids were making, Grandma knew that only one paid, she'd pick the rest of them up [motions with his thumb behind him]. Tell them to go.

MG: Oh my gosh. Wow.

LL: That's a way back but the old building's still there.

MG: It's still there.

LL: It was turned into a, it was turned into—it's now uh, an apartment building.

MG: Oh yeah.

LL: Apartment building. That's back, well, that's back a lot of years.

MG: Mmmhmm. And what was your grandmother's name?

LL: Uh, that grandmother was, um, she was Agatha Gratsiano, before she became a Lamentia. And Gratsiano apparently is a popular name over in Termini.

MG: Hmm. Right.

LL: But that's, that's, oh God, that's a lot of years.

MG: That's a lot of years ago.

LL: Oh.

MG: Amazing history though.

LL: That's a lot of years, a lot of years.

MG: Uh huh. And, and growing up were you in a, in an Italian neighbourhood?

LL: No. No. We were strictly mangiacake.

MG: Oh, okay. [laughs]

LL: Strictly. There was—No we didn't live my, we didn't live in the old Italian neighbourhood back then was around, um, Bay and Elm Street, or Elm and Chestnut or Edward and Chestnut.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: Or what is it? And then there Manning and Claremont. All that was—

MG: There's the two main—

LL: Yeah, that was a—

MG: —areas. Yeah.

LL: —the biggest, big Italian concentration was around Edward and Bay, in that area where the bus terminal is?

MG: That's the Ward, right?

LL: Yeah, the Ward. Exactly.

MG: And then—

LL: The Italians were on one side and the Jews were on the other side.

MG: Yeah.

LL: Used to fight like hell during the week but weekends they were together and if, if, uh, Senor Gratsiano had, was sick with a cold Mrs. Schwartz was down there with a pot of chicken soup.

MG: Hmm.

LL: And vice versa.

MG: I see.

LL: That was back, that's a way, that's a lot of years back too.

MG: Hmm.

LL: Well we had, we had friends that lived down in that neighbourhood but, in that area, we never— Dad's store was at Pape and Danforth. And he went north from there to, uh, Pape and O'Connor, bought a house.

MG: And did your dad have a store when you were very, when you were young?

LL: Oh yeah, he had, yeah he had a store on Danforth. Uh, on right across from Holy Name Church. And then with my uncle that lived with us, they took over another relative's fruit store that was at, uh, Parliament and Carlton Street.

MG: Okay. And it's your dad's brother?

LL: Brother-in-law.

MG: Oh, brother-in-law.

LL: Yeah, brother-in-law.

MG: Hmm.

LL: The two, my two uncles, my dad's two brothers already had their, they were running their Grandma's store on Queen Street.

MG: Oh.

LL: And, and, yeah, and then Dad took over the store at Pape and Carlton for a lot of years and then the, uh, I guess it was, yeah, it was my dad's brother-in-law that owned it. And he saw what a success my dad and uncle have made of the area in the store—

MG: Hmm.

LL: —He took it, he wanted the store back. I guess, cut the lease, or whatever, or ceased the lease and he took the store back so that Dad, my dad and my uncle went and relocated at, um, on Bloor Street. On Bloor and Sherbourne. And they were there from '37 until 1970 when Dad finally retired and sold the property.

MG: Wow. And, um...growing up, did you have to help out with the, uh, with the—

LL: Yeah, we always in the store.

MG: Yeah.

LL: You worked in the store. If you were able or if you were, even if you weren't able you worked in the store. Period.

MG: Yeah.

LL: And it was a seven day, seven day affair. Not, uh, you know, six days or five days. You were there from dark to dark, a lot of the days. On vacations you were there from, well you might say, “Dark to dark,” because those days you had to go to the terminal to get your supplies, your fruit and vegetables. So you worked dark to dark.

MG: The terminal, uh—

LL: The food terminal.

MG: Okay!

LL: You had to go, but the food terminal wasn't, it was, the food terminal came in later years after the war.

MG: Okay.

LL: The orig, the original food terminal was right where the Sony Theatre store, section is?

MG: Hmm.

LL: That was the original food terminal.

MG: Oh.

LL: Then they, then somebody, I don't know if it was the government. I guess the government got involved and had the prop—They bought the property out where the food terminal is now.

MG: I see. And what was your dad's, uh, store called?

LL: Ah, it was Dom and Tony. Because my father was Domenic and my uncle was Anthony.

MG: Hmm.

LL: And that's what everybody, all their customers from that, where they had the store at Parliament and Carlton, that's how they got to know both of them.

MG: Hmm.

LL: So they just, when they moved up to Bloor Street then they put, just put Dom and Tony on it, on the store.

MG: And so it was you and your brother at, at home? Just the, the two brothers?

LL: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, it was just my older brother. My younger brother went— [sighs] Ah! Poor Joe.

MG: Hmm.

LL: He went to live with an aunt when my mother died.

MG: Hmm.

LL: And the aunt had two grown, her, she had two boys and they were teenagers and my brother was only 4 years old and not knowing who Mom was or who Mother was, uh, he got attached to the aunt and the aunt got attached to him so she adopted him sort of.

MG: Oh.

LL: And he lived with, he lived with all his, with her until she passed away.

MG: And your brother's name was Joe?

LL: Yeah. Yeah.

MG: Your, your other brother?

LL: Peter.

MG: Peter.

LL: Yeah.

MG: And so you were the middle.

LL: I am the middle one.

MG: The middle one. Hmm.

LL: They always told me I was supposed to have been the girl. But I [laughs] Dad had three boys. [laughs] No girls.

MG: Well he must have had a lot of help around the store then.

LL: Well, yeah, they all well, he had the place at that, the store at that time he had some hired staff.

MG: Hmm.

LL: Hired help. He never had enough help. But you made do with what you had and, to accomplish the ends—

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: —so to speak.

MG: And so where did you go to school when you were, your first, I guess, elementary—

LL: My elementary? Oh. A portable. Holy Cross on Mortimer and, Mortimer and Greenwood.

MG: Hmm.

LL: Portable with a pot bellied stove and an outhouse out the back...in the wintertime. And then, uh, I graduated from grade school. Then I went to St. Michael's.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: St. Michael's College school that back then was on Bay Street, Bay and St. Josephs. But I fin, I graduated from school and I, well, I hadn't made up my mind what I wanted to do and, uh, then end result says, "Fine, you come work in the store." So I worked in the store—

MG: Hmm.

LL: —until I...was employed by the government...war years, war time.

MG: Hmm. So leading up the war years, what was the, I guess let's say in the, during the Depression years, so like the 1930s.

LL: No, oh.

MG: Do you remember what, what, uh—

LL: [shakes his head]

MG: —or moving towards the war years, what life was like everyday. Were you guys affected by or was your family affected by the, the Depression?

LL: No, I wouldn't say so.

MG: No.

LL: No, because having a store always had, we always had food on the table.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: We were never short of food.

MG: And do you remember, uh, Italy entered the war in 1940, June 10, 1940.

LL: Mmmhmm.

MG: Do you remember sort of the week leading up to that and if, if, uh, you sensed any sort of change in the, in the atmosphere in terms of the Italians and the—

LL: No, I, I really can't say. But I think, I'm trying to remember. I think there was a bit of friction being created between the, uh, uh, the English or the Canadians and the Italians at that time. I think there was a bit of friction being built up.

MG: Hmm.

LL: Then of course when Italy went into the war then the, uh, the friction really exploded.

MG: Yeah. And where were you at, at that time?

LL: When Italy went into the war?

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: Oh, that was '40. I was, I was working in the store. '40, because I was out at the—Yeah. I gradu—  
No, wait a minute. I was going to high school in '40.

MG: Hmm.

LL: I was going to high school in '40. I graduated in '42. Yeah, I can't say there was any static at, uh, [shrugs]

MG: At school?

LL: At school.

MG: Do you remember the day when—Do you remember June 10<sup>th</sup> and maybe the day when England declared war? If there was any—

LL: [shakes his head]. Mmm.

MG: —news or.

LL: No, no, no. I don't. No, I don't remember anything. I mean they didn't, [shrugs] they didn't throw mud at us or anything like that. But, uh, I don't remember anything. Just that I guess the news broke out and that they went in the war against the allies and that [shrugs], I don't know. I guess we were kids and didn't think anything of it.

MG: And did your dad belong to any Italian Canadian groups—?

LL: No.

MG: —or—No.

LL: No, no, no, no. He didn't really bother with any of them.

MG: I guess he was probably pretty busy at the, at the store.

LL: Yeah. Well, he never had time because you're up early in the morning, going to the terminal to get your supplies, so he never had time. By the time he got in at the end of your day and had your dinner, eh—

MG: Yeah.

LL: —you were, uh, exhausted.

MG: Yeah.

LL: You'd put in your day.

MG: And how about you and your brothers? Would you ever go to any Italian community—

LL: Mmmm. [loud white noise in background] No, I don't think so. I don't remember. The only thing we ever went to was, uh—

[fades out at 00:16:38]

[fades in at 00:17:07]

LL: No the, the only thing we did is, um, back in our teen years we went to the odd party or function that was, uh, oh...I guess it was the C.Y.O. back in those days at, uh, Mt. Carmel Church. Our Lady of Mt. Carmel on Simcoe Street?

MG: Oh yeah.

LL: Well, that was the Italian parish back in those days.

MG: At what's the C.Y.—What's C.Y.O. stand for?

LL: Catholic Youth Organization. So we used to go to the odd dance down there that was, the C.Y.O. was connected to the Italian church, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church. That was the only thing we did. We never went, we never got involved with the Casa D'Italia that was on Dundas and Beverly. We never went to any of those functions. So I mean, the only thing we associated with was anything that went on at, at the, at the Italian church because we were, I think we were all, all three of us were baptized at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church. So we, and the family, uh, never went to Mass down there on Sundays but there was always a big, um, oh, Sicilian celebration for Good Friday. That, you know, Good Friday sessions.

MG: Right.

LL: Um, great religious, um, sessions.

MG: Parades and stuff like that?

LL: Good Friday night. They always had a priest that preached in Italian. They always had all the women out with their handkerchiefs and a box of Kleenex, crying their eyes out...with his preaching. But he was, he was very good. So then we all, being kids there was always a great process, procession like they have now at, um—

MG: College Street.

LL: —St. Francis Church on, uh, Good Friday?

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: Well we used to do that at the, at Our Lady of Carm, Mt. Carmel Church on Good Friday evening.

MG: Mmmhmm. And was that basically your only interaction with the Italian community?

LL: Yeah, yeah, I'd say so.

MG: Yeah.

LL: I'd say so.

MG: And what—Did you hear about, uh, the people being picked up and taken to camps? Internment camps?

LL: Well we heard about it, we knew, a lot of friends, personal friends of my dad's were taken to camps.

MG: Really?

LL: Oh yeah.

MG: And what...In and around your area? Where you lived, or?

LL: No, not where we lived because there were no Italians where we lived—

MG: Yeah.

LL: —and not even around the store area but they were, well, I mean the, the Italians that were taken to internment camps, they lived all over the city. They, a lot of them, some of them had fruit stores in the east end, some of them were in the west end. There were, a lot of the, um, immigrants from Termini went into the fruit business.

MG: Yeah.

LL: And they were, they were located all around the city. So some of those men were picked up. And men that, uh, wouldn't say, "You know what?" without a mouth full of it. And they were just picked up and herded off like cattle to, uh, interment camps.

[00:20:05]

MG: And do you the names of any, any of your dad's friends that were picked up?

LL: Oh yeah. Ah...One man, um, Joe Leo was one of them. Um, can't think of his—I think Piccininni was the other, another one. He was in the banana business. And I think his name as Joe. Um...oh...uh...I'm racking my brain here...Uh...I know some other men there but they weren't friends of Dad's...He knew, he knew some other men that went to camp but I, I'd be rattling my—

MG: Yeah.

LL: —rattling my brain trying to come up with names. The only other name that I know that was in the interment camp was my father-in-law.

MG: Oh.

LL: He was there for years.

MG: And what was your father-in-law's name?

LL: Marco Missori. And I think the reason he was taken to camp because at one time he was a secretary for the, uh, oh, what was that group that were worked out of the Casa D'Italia?

MG: For the, uh, for the Order of the Sons of Italy?

LL: Yeah or the other group.

MG: Uh, well there was like different, uh, uh—

LL: There was different groups that—

MG: Yeah.

LL: He went to the—

MG: So, it could have been the Depolarize? Maybe he was part of the Dopolavoro, or the Order of Sons or, um...There was a few groups.

LL: Was, yeah, there was one group that was they thought was a associated with the Fascists from Italy.

MG: It might have been the Order of the Sons of Italy.

LL: That's what they—That was the, uh, the feeling that they were in cohorts with Italy and they were relaying information from here to the enemy.

MG: Hmm. Did you, did you know your wife at the time?

LL: No. No, no, no, no, no. I didn't meet my wife until, oh, 1948.

MG: Oh okay, some years later.

LL: I didn't know her before that.

MG: And, and how long was your father-in-law taken?

LL: Where, in camp?

MG: Petawawa. Yeah.

LL: Uh, he didn't get out of camp. He went in, I think he was in there about four years.

MG: Wow.

LL: I think he got out of camp in...uh, '45, I think. After the war...when they finally let them out. Yeah. |—

MG: And, and throughout the, back to your family, and then maybe we'll talk a bit about when you met your wife and you learned about what happened to her father. Um, in your family during the war

years were, were you affected by them? Was anybody in the military at the time or drafted or?

LL: What, during the war?

MG: Yeah.

LL: Well, my brother and I both went. I went down in '43 to volunteer for the air force. And I guess lucky for me and for where I was, uh, volunteering for air crew, an air gunner, when I went down that day to sign up they told me they were filled up. I says, "That's fine. I won't be back. If you guys want me, come and get me." So my birthday's in January and I got a letter to, from Ottawa, to report for military duty in April. April in '44. That's when I went in and my brother went in...I think my brother went in before me. He went in in March, I think.

MG: This is Peter?

LL: Yeah, my brother Peter. Yeah, Joe was too young. Yeah, we both went. And then during that time, my father, my uncle, both got letters from Ottawa RCMP to report to the local police station to be photographed, fingerprinted and catalogued and the whole darn bit.

MG: After you were, you went to sign up.

LL: Just before we went and—

MG: Oh, just before.

LL: —just, just before he went in the army.

MG: Right.

LL: So my father went, at that time, where we lived was East York. It wasn't Metro Toronto like it is today.

MG: Yeah.

LL: So they went to the local police station in East York and they walked into the police station and my uncle knew the Chief of Police.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: And they went, they went, they went to the police station on a Friday afternoon, which is a busy day at the store.

MG: Hmm.

LL: So I know real well. I got the story after they came home. They walked into the police station and the Chief says to my uncle, I won't use the words, [laughs] "What are you fellas doing here?" So my uncle spoke up and said, "We got this letter from Ottawa to report to the police station for such and such and such." "Oh," the Chief says, "Is that right?" My uncle said, "Yep." The Chief says, "Where's the letter?" So he handed the Chief the letter and he says, "Oh." [mimes ripping up the paper and throwing it out with his hands]

MG: He ripped it up.

LL: He says, "You tell those SOBs in Ottawa if they, that they watch—" he says, "Tell them to come and speak to me because I know exactly where you are." He says, "Forget it." So they never heard another thing.

MG: Never heard another thing.

LL: Never heard another word.

MG: Was it because they were Italian? Did the letter, do you—

LL: Well yeah, my, they were both Italians. Both my father and my uncle were born in Italy.

MG: Yeah.

LL: They had no association with any Italian organization but, I guess, being the Italian background, anybody who was an Italian was considered an enemy. So that's why they—I guess the government wanted to keep track of them. But the—

MG: And you went to, when you went to go sign up for, uh, the air force did they bother you at all—

LL: No.

MG: —that you were Italian?

LL: No, no, no. They were just—

MG: They thought that—

LL: They were just happy to see a live body. But they were filled up. I says, “Well, that's too bad. I won't be back.” Then I got the letter to report, so I couldn't do anything about it. So I did my, I did my three years '44. I finally got out in August of '46.

MG: And were you sent overseas?

LL: No, we were ready to go over but they said, um, I don't know. I guess our...group or regiment went—We were sent out West to get ready for the Japs. So we were, I was out there...'44. We left Toronto middle of November when they got that big snowstorm. I don't know if you ever heard about it. The city was snowed in for three days.

MG: Oh really?

LL: There was nothing moving. Anything that was moving was on skis or a sled.

MG: Wow.

LL: In those days they still had horse-drawn wagons that delivered the bread and the milk and the ice. So that's the only thing that got around was the horse and wagon, or the horse, horseless sled they used in the wintertime.

MG: And that's when you left.

LL: I left the day, we left, our outfit left the day of the snowstorm.

MG: And how'd you get out?

LL: We left that day. We got out—

MG: You got out before.

LL: Yeah. The snow just started to fall when we got out. We got out by the old CN train. Canadian National train. Travelling in [unknown] cars with soot that deep in them [shows depth with his fingers]

MG: Oh my gosh.

LL: We got out the west and we were getting ready for the Japs. Then when the, I tell everybody when the Japs heard we were coming, that's when they threw in the towel. [smiles]

MG: [laughs] So it was right around the time when...

LL: Well we got out, we went out there November '44—

MG: Yeah.

LL: —and then the Japs threw in the, they quit after the United States dropped the atomic bomb on them in, what was it? July '45?

MG: Mmmhmm. Wow.

LL: Yeah.

MG: And was there any word about the Japanese internment camps and, and what was going on with those?

LL: By that point in time the Japs were, uh, they were the—West British Columbia was heavily populated with Japanese population. They were, uh, farmers and fishermen. And I don't, some of them might have been tied in with the lumber industry. But the farmers grew, um, top quality merchandise. The fishermen fished the oceans and they knew more about the west coast and British Columbia than the Canadian government did because they knew where they could, in case of a storm—

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: —they knew where, what cove, or how far away it was so they could be sheltered until the storm blew over.

MG: Oh wow.

LL: And...Ottawa didn't know that. So anyway, after that when the Japs declared war on the Allies, the Japanese population of British Columbia was all herded like, into a, well the place we stayed at was

like equivalent to the Exhibition here.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: It was the Exhibition Palace there or Exhibition grounds at, in Vancouver. And they were all herded in there like cattle. They slept on straw mats on the cement floor. Because when we got there that's where they put us. But we had cots to sleep on.

MG: Uh huh,

LL: But they, they had just moved the Japanese out from there and brought them all inland into Ontario and, um, Manitoba. Ontario and Quebec.

MG: To keep them away from the shoreline.

LL: Hmm?

MG: [louder] To keep them away from the shorelines.

LL: Keep them away from the west coast. Yeah. 'Cause they thought, I guess, they could be on the west coast they could relay information over to Japan. They figured, I guess that's what—

MG: That's what they thought.

LL: That's what they probably were thinking but they were all, um, ordinary, hard-working people like, uh, the rest of the Canadian population. They weren't, uh, destructive or anything like that. But they were just plain, ordinary people.

MG: Hmm.

LL: But they were herded, they were herded around like sheep. Exactly.

MG: And would your, what did your dad think about you, uh, going off to Vancouver?

[00:30:00]

LL: Uh, well he knew I was, he knew I was in, he knew I was in the service so, you had to go wherever they sent ya.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: So I mean I don't, I don't think it...I don't know what his feelings were but he was always glad to hear from me if I—I used to write him letters all the time. Never, never, he never used a telephone. But I'd always write, wrote him letters and he'd write me a letter back, but just—

MG: Would he, would he send you care packages...or?

LL: One time he sent me a care package because at that time when I was in, um, we were in, we were stationed in Vancouver believe it or not. That's where we had our big base supply. And I teamed up with one of my, uh, oh, army buddies, who happened to be Italian. And he was, allowed at that time to, uh—He was looking, he was supporting his mother on his army pay. He had no father. He was supporting his mother on his army pay. And he was living at, at home with his mother, being still part of the armed forces. So he always said to me, he says he knew, he says, “My mother wants to invite you over for dinner. Instead of eating army food and eating that kind of,” I won't say it, “Mom wants to invite you over for a nice Italian dinner but she can't get this, can't get that, can't get the other thing to make dinner.” I says, “Oh,” I says, “That's very nice. Let me see what I can do.” So I wrote my father a letter and I said, um, told him who it was, “Art wants to invite me, Art and his mother want to invite me over to their place.” They only had a small apartment—

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: —wasn't much bigger than this room. And, um, “Art and his mother want to invite me over for dinner but she can't get cheese. She can't get anchovies.” And, uh, whatever else. Oh and tomato paste. And something else. So I just wrote that, put that in a letter to my dad. So a few, some time had passed and Dad sent me a letter. He says, “Be on the lookout for a package.” So a few days more I got a, a message where I was during my, uh, oh, my routine job there. I was in the warehouse. “Lamentia go up to the orderly office. There's a package for ya.” “Okay.” So I hustled up to the orderly room, picked up my package. It was a carton about ye. [shows size with his hands] And I opened it up and there was a note inside. Then there was the tomato paste, the anchovies, the cheese. And everything was in there, some pasta. And then, uh, Dad had sent, he said, “These are for Art, to take to Art's mother so she can get dinner, prepare dinner for you.” “Okay.” And then there was, on the letter he said, “There's a salami and something else for you can share with your buddies.” So that night we got some of my buddies together, Art included, and um, oh, Phil, uh, Phil Ken, oh, what the heck was his name? Anyway, other pisan got together, some mangiacakes. So we took the salami, we went into the bar, the canteen, ordered up a few beers and we had a, we had a party. Then I gave all the other, I gave all the other food to Art. So he took it home. He had no trouble getting it out of camp. 'Cause you

couldn't take parcels or packages out of camp.

MG: Hmm.

LL: But it was something that came in the mail, so they said, "Okay." and Art took it home to his mother. Two days later I was over having, uh, a real Italian dinner. Fresh cooked pasta, nice sauce and she cooked the, his mother cooked, uh, fried up an eggplant, meat balls and, oh, the works. We had everything.

MG: So that must have been the night of your life, huh?

LL: Oh, that was a great night. That was a great night. Plus the fact, another interesting fact, you'd be walking around camp and you go, you'd holler "Hey Pisan." You'd see, I'd see Art walking down the roadway. "Pisan." So all of a sudden there'd be four voices come out and four guys out there, "You called me?" [MG laughs] I says, "No. I'm calling Art." [laughs]

MG: Wow, so that was the nickname you guys had for one another, Pisan.

LL: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

MG: That's great.

LL: That was at the, the, the, that was at that camp. I think too that camp we had a...yeah, it was that camp, we had a mangiacake, uh, cook. He was, uh, Sergeant cook. He was from the old, from England somewhere. But he was our, he was the head cook. And he, uh, he finagled the books and he was allowed—You're allowed at that time, in the kitchen, the army kitchen, you're allowed to draw rations as they call it, for so many men.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: So he, uh, he always told me he sent in rations for 100 men. So we were only 65...in the, in the, uh. Not that, we weren't a regiment at that time. I guess we were an oversized, two platoons, two squads. So there were 65 men, he was drawing rations for 100. So we, we always had, uh, better, a little better meals than what they were getting at some of the camps.

MG: And what was the name of that camp?

LL: Oh, that was, um, oh, uh, Base ordinates number 11. Base ordinates about number 11.

MG: What—

LL: In Vancouver.

MG: What would you have to do everyday, in the camps?

LL: Well we were supplies the other troops, other, uh, regiments that were up and down the west coast. There was camps at Prince George, Prince Rupert, Prince George, uh, there were some camps over at the island, on Vancouver Island at, uh, oh, the Esquimalt. It was Navy. Army there. Uh, we had troops up in Vernon, B.C. There was army, Canadian troops all over B.C. that were gearing up to, to go and, uh, fight the Japs. We were, we were base supply. So we supplied them with everything but, uh, ammunition and food.

MG: Hmm.

LLL: Um, motorized equipment, clothing, that type thing.

MG: Wow. And do you remember the last, well, when the war was over? The day that peace was declared?

LL: When the was was over? Well when the Japanese threw in the towel I think, uh, to put it quite bluntly, I think all the guys that were on staff at number 11 base were drunk for three days...[MG laughs] That was July and then, uh, I was, I left, I was shipped out of Vancouver in...January '46. And we were supposed to be going to, um, patrol the Alaska highway or German occupation. So I said, "If I have a choice I'll take the German occupation." I said, "I'm not going up to Alaska to freeze my ass." I says, "I'll take the German occupation." By that, because if I was in Germany, if I get leave I'll take a trip to Italy.

MG: Yeah.

LL: But we ended up in Camp Borden in the middle of the winter, middle of, what was it? January the f—It was the middle of January, anyway. It was 30 below. We ended up in Camp Borden.

MG: Wow.

LL: And still up to your, past your knees.

MG: Wow.

LL: Though we came from a sunny climate out in British Columbia. But before that in, well that was in January '46. I didn't get out of the army until August of '46. But then when we, we got, oh, a few of us guys found out we getting getting down we got to Long Branch to be discharged from our military duty. So that was on, uh, I think it was a Wednes—Wednesday afternoon. We were leaving Camp Borden by train. Because the train went right into, into, uh, hmm. Yeah there was a separate line that went into camp. And we saw one of our buddies was going into, he was on, uh, driver's duty. He was duty driver for the day and he was driving the camp commandant into Barrie for some kind of, um, official business. So we told him, "If you're going into Barrie, go into the liquor store and get us a couple bottles of whisky." He says, "Okay. No problem. I'll be dropping the old man off and such and such a place. I'll have time." So anyway, back in those days the liquor stores were closed on Wednesday afternoons. And he couldn't find a beer store open. We had lots of beer. So he ended up in, at that time it was London Winery Stores. So he went into London Winery Stores and he comes, he comes out with, uh, um, oh what the heck was it? Six bottles of sherry. Couldn't find any whisky so he said, "This will do." We had six bottles of, uh, it was sherry. So I think there was four of us. I think there were four or six of us. So we drank two bottles of sherry before we left camp. We knew we were leaving Borden and 3:00 in the afternoon, coming into Toronto, going into the Horse Palace. So we drank two bottles before we left camp. We drank the other four bottles on the train coming down from Camp Borden. [MG laughs] Then we got off the train at the west Toronto station. You know where that is?

MG: No. What street?

LL: Uh, it was in the general area of Dufferin and Queen. Across from the D—Across the road from the Gladstone Hotel.

MG: Oh yeah!

LL: Used—There was a railway station there.

MG: Oh yeah.

LL: So the train stopped there and we got off the train, walked into the Gladstone Hotel and we had a few, had a few beers.

MG: It was, it was still a hotel back then?

LL: Oh yeah, yeah, it was still a...

MG: A hangout place?

LL: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. It still had a separate, uh, men's, uh, beverage room and the ladies beverage room. We went, of course, into the men's beverage room. We got all tanked up on beer and then we left. And I, I got on the street car and headed home to where my dad lived, at Pape and O'Connor area.

MG: And do you remember the reunion, seeing your dad after so long?

LL: Well yeah, when I was at Camp Borden I used to sneak out of camp as often as I could on the weekends—

MG: Yeah.

LL: —uh, Saturday or Sunday, mostly Sunday. And, uh, I'd hitchhike, hitchhike a ride down to Toronto and found my way to my dad's house. So I'd walk in on a Sunday and Dad always cooked Sunday dinner. I'd walk into the door and he says, "What are you doing here? You have a pass?" I says, "Yeah, don't worry, everything's okay." Well he says, "Go wash up, sit down." He says, "Dinner's going to be on the table in a few minutes." But he always, that was always his first question, "Do you have a pass?"

MG: [laughs]

LL: Never did. [laughs]

MG: He wanted you to follow the rules.

LL: Used to hitchhike, hitchhike a ride. I'd always get picked up by a transport driver coming down to Toronto. It's close to, you know, drop off. I always took the train back. Because you couldn't hitch a ride back at night. On Sunday night hitch a ride back. The military police were always on the troop train or the train going back to Borden, checking to see if you had a pass and if you didn't they, you were arrested for whatever and—And and, lots of times, like we, we'd take turns hiding in the washroom because they never bothered to check the washroom on the train in those days. And then the guy, the guys who had a pass he says, "Okay you guys can come out now."

MG: Wow.

LL: Then the funny thing is, one of my dad's good friends was in the army, was military police. So [laughs] a couple of times I ran into him on the train.

MG: He'd probably have a good laugh.

LL: He had good laugh. He just, he just walked past me. He sort of winked and walked past and...And then after I came out of the service he, he was working as a salesman at the wholesale food market. So different times when my dad used to do business with him, different times he'd, he'd, uh, make a joke with my dad and says, [points] "This is the guy. This is the guy. Always riding the train, going back to Borden without a pass."

MG: [laughs] Wow. And, and what, how did you, how did you pick up, uh, your life when you got back to Toronto? What did...where did you work?

LL: Well I went back and worked with my dad at the store, up until he sold it in '70. And then I hung, took a holiday, shall I say, uh, for a bit, and then, uh, one day he went and, I'm think, yeah, we had our house. My wife said to me one day, "Why the heck don't you go out and get a job?" She says, "You're under my feet all day long." I said, "Okay dear." So I took my son who was quite young at the time. We went, got in the car, went for a drive. Went downtown and at that time Dominion stores, which is now Metro, had an employment office on Bloor Street between Yonge and Bay.

MG: Oh.

LL: So there was a parking spot there. And I knew, back then when my dad had the store on Bloor Street there was a Dominion along the same block. So I knew some of the guys who worked in the Dominion stores. So I thought, 'Well, I'll stop in the Dominion office just to see what's going on and what's what.' So anyway, I went in, asked the young lady, the receptionist and she goes, application form, if they were hiring and she says, "Oh yes." So she hands me the application form. She says, "Fill it out and when you do give it to me when you come back." I says, "Okay. Fine." So I hand her the, uh, the documents I'd fill out. She looked at it and she says, "Oh Mr.," uh, I think his name was G, "would speak, like to speak to you...Do you have time?" I says, "Oh yeah. I got lots of time." So anyway, I got in the office and had an interview with Mr. G and he said, oh this, that and the other and looked it over, saw my past experience in the produce business. And I don't, I forget what day that was, what day of the week that was but anyway, he said, um, "You can report, um, Monday morning at 8:00 at one particular store." I says, "Well, thank you very much sir," I says, "but, uh, I'm planning on taking a two week vacation with my wife and my children."

MG: Hmm.

LL: "Oh, when will you be back?" I said, uh, "I'll be back," it was Civic Holiday weekend, I said, "I'll be back the Tuesday after Civic Holiday," which is the first Monday in August?

MG: Yeah.

LL: He says, "Fine, 8:00 Monday morning," he says, "you report to such and such a store." So I was hired and spent, I worked for Dominion for, I guess, 21 years.

MG: Wow.

LL: And I got a department manager—

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: —department manager's job with Dominion stores, until I reached, hit the magic number and, "Here's your gold watch, the pink slip and the golden boot and don't bother coming back."

MG: And, and now, let's take it back earlier. Where did you meet your wife?

LL: I met my wife, believe it or not, well my brother married his wife and my wife at that time was first cousin to my, my brother's future wife.

MG: Oh, is that right?

LL: So my wife and I were, she was a bridesmaid and I was an usher. So they teamed us up.

MG: And what was her name? What was your wife's name?

LL: Tina. Tina Missori. Her father, it was her father that was in the interment camp.

MG: Hmm.

LL: Yeah, so we met in, uh, my brother was married in June of '48. That's when we met. And then, uh, we sort of, well, we dated for three years and then we finally got married, no two years. And we finally got married in October in '50.

MG: Mmhmm. What was your wedding like?

LL: [leans forward]

MG: [louder] What was your wedding like?

LL: Uh, what was it? We had, where the heck did we...? We were married at Our Lady, um, at, oh, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on Simcoe Street. We were b, we were married there. Then we had our reception at the, uh, we were going to have it at the King Edward Hotel—

MG: Mmm.

LL: —'cause, uh, my wife's uncle was a musician. Oh, he was in the internment camp too.

MG: What was his name?

LL: Frank Passari. And his son, Frank, one of his sons Frank, his was the, uh, young fella that organized the Four Lads...the musical group.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: But anyway, uh, we were going to have our reception at the King Edward Hotel but at that time there was a strike, uh, the musicians union was on strike. So we couldn't have music—

MG: Yeah.

LL: —at the, at the King Edward. So we went to the Royal York and we had our reception at the Royal York Hotel.

MG: Wow.

LL: And uncle Frank played at, played, supplied the music at the Royal York.

MG: Wow. That's great.

LL: So that was, and then we hiked off that night and went to Buffalo, took two weeks off to go on our honeymoon.

MG: Was Buffalo the place to go for, for honeymoons back then or?

LL: Well, a lot of people went to Niagara Falls but I said, "We're going to Florida."

MG: Oh nice! So you went to Buffalo then—

LL: Yeah. We, well it was the first night. I wasn't, we hadn't, air, uh, airline service wasn't like it was today—

MG: Yeah.

LL: —to Florida. So Dad said, "You can have the, you can use the car and take the car and go on your honeymoon." So that's what we did. Buffalo was the first night. 'Cause it was a long day. So I had, we had, I had made arrangements for, what was it, stayed at Lafayette the first night.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: And then we took off from Buffalo, drove to New York 'cause I had a cousin who was in the, uh, uh, she was a nun in with the, uh, Marino Sisters—

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: —in, in Austin, New York where Sing Sing Jail is. And the convent was across the road from the jail...or close to the jail. So we spent the day with my cousin then we took off and headed to Florida. Then we had, um, the weather forecast, there was a hurricane coming, going to hit Florida.

MG: Oh no.

LL: So anyway we got, got to Florida and got all the predictions for the storm coming and people prepared and the whole bit. So we were there. We spent, uh, I guess, the second day we were there when the, the hurricane hit. And that was the worst hurricane they had. In 1950, the previous, the worst hurricane they had before that was 1926 when the winds were so strong and there was this big yacht out in the harbour, Miami harbour, and the winds, the hurricane winds were so strong they pushed the, the yacht right up on the dry land.

MG: Oh my gosh. So you toughed it out. You stayed.

LL: Hmm?

MG: You had the car. You could have come back. You didn't want to...

LL: We couldn't drive. They told us to stay off the highways. So we were, [shrugs] we just stayed. And we stayed, I don't know, quite a few days after the storm because even the next two days after the storm...they were suggesting that you don't go out and drive in the streets because there was fallen wires, live wires.

MG: Right.

LL: And, um, well all you had to do with the car is drive from here to that wall [points] and you could fill the trunk up with fallen coconuts. Coconuts and palm trees were laying across the road.

MG: Wow.

LL: And then some of the ani, the alligators got out of the uh—

MG: [laughs]

LL: —out of the park. There was a park not far from outside of Miami. Granton Park was still there.

MG: Hmm.

LL: And the storm did so much damage that the ali, some of the alligators got out of their pens.

[00:50:07]

MG: Well, I'm sure—And, and would they come and attack?

LL: No, they didn't come into downtown but they were roaming around in the park area. So you were warned to stay away from that area.

MG: So that's a memorable honeymoon.

LL: Oh yeah, because at that time we were, we had, we stayed at the, um, oh...oh...[thinking] famous hotel that was downtown in, right downtown Miami in those days. Uh, it was ten floors and we had a room up on the tenth floor.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: So when the hurricane hit the floor was going like this. [swaying motion with his hand] And I said, "Oh." I was still a pretty good drinker back in those days, having learned that from being in the army. And I figured I had too many scotches and they were taking effect. My poor wife says, "This room is shaking. Let's get the heck out of here and go downstairs." I says, "We go downstairs," I says, "we'll be the laughing stock 'cause we'll be the only people down in the lobby."

MG: Hmm.

LL: She says, "I don't care." She says, "Let's get dressed, get our shoes on, go on downstairs." So we were the last two down in the lobby. Everyone else was in the lobby. All the top two floors were shaking.

MG: Uh huh.

LL: In the meantime the wind was so strong it blew the doors open and broke the windows and there was water and sand coming in the hotel lobby and the main floor.

MG: Oh dear. Wow.

LL: So when the wind died down they said, "Okay." I guess we went back upstairs." And then we got, the next morning we turned on the radio—

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: —and what T.V. there was in those days, and got the, uh, the run down of the, of the damage from the hurricanes.

MG: And, and, uh, when you got back after all this, all this, where did you settle in, in the city? Did you move back in with your dad? Did you—

LL: Oh, no. We got our own apartment.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: We got an apartment. Oh, a fair size apartment over, uh, a store, right around the corner from where my dad lives.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: So we took it over. The man that owned the store was a friend of my uncle's and he said, "I've got an apartment upstairs if the kids want it." He says, "It's theirs." So he says, "But they have to do the, they'll have to do their own decorating."

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: "It's as is." So I said, "Okay, fine." So, we went up to take a look at it. I says, "It's handy to be near my dad's. He can pick me up in the morning when we go to the—"

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: "—food terminal." So we went in, the place was a mess...like you wouldn't believe. And my wife says, "You're not, we're not moving in here. Forget it." Well back in those days apartments were hard to come by, unless you wanted to sign a lease, a three or four, a three or a five year lease. And they wanted a first, first month's rent and the last month's rent on the lease, uh, in advance plus \$100 deposit on the key. But this man said, "Well," he says, "this is what I'll charge them a month, but you have to do your own decorating." So, my father-in-law, God bless him, being in the business that he was in, uh, he had a lot of, um, well he used to, with his, uh, the fact that he was a notary public [brushes mic] and in the travel business, he made a lot of these, uh, immigrants that were here, came out after the war, just after the war. He made out these pregudas[?], so this, the rel, the relatives could come to Canada.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: So I mean, he knew, he was doing business with, uh, guys that were in the...construction business, uh, painters, wallpaper hangers, tile men. So they all, some of these guys owed him money.

MG: Wow.

LL: So anyway, wherever we wanted done in the apartment he says, "I'll get a so and so. He'll come." So we had, we decorated the, the apartment the way we wanted it.

MG: Yeah.

LL: The landlord come up. He couldn't believe the transition. So we stayed there...about 50, 50, '53. That's when my wife was pregnant with her daughter.

MG: Hmm.

LL: And the so-called friend of my uncle's at that time, we didn't, when we took the place we didn't sign a lease or a rental or any documents. And back in those days it was rental restrictions, um, government restrictions, that if a landlord owned a, an apartment, uh, the only reason he could, uh, have a tenant ejected—

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: —if he was going to rent the property out to an immediate family member.

MG: Wow.

LL: And that was sort of an unwritten law. So anyway, uh, we had been there, in there...uh, it was January...It was December or January '52 or '53 anyway. I went down and paid the rent and he says, "Oh," he says, "I guess I—" And at that time landlords had to give tenants six months notice, advance notice, like to vacate.

MG: Yeah.

LL: So I went down, paid the rent and he says, "According to government regulation I take it I have to give you six months notice to vacate." He says, "I want possession of the apartment." And I says, "Okay, fine." So anyway, I knew at the time that he didn't want it for any immediate family because he didn't have any immediate family.

MG: Yeah.

LL: And being, he was a druggist and he had this assistant that lived a way out some place and he wanted his assistant close to the shop so he could, he could take more time off. So he wanted the apartment for his assistant.

MG: Wow.

LL: So I mean, we couldn't, couldn't argue because we didn't have any paper or anything...to, uh, prove it. So anyway, I said to my wife, I says, "Okay. We paid him. We've got six months notice to get out. After we did all this work." I says, "Well, I'm not going to stay here for six months and give him another six months rent." I says, "Let's go and find a place." So we went apartment looking, hunting

and then we got in touch we a real estate agent and looked at houses and this and that and resales and some of them, the places were pathetic. You wouldn't believe.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: Both apartments and houses.

MG: Oh my gosh.

LL: So, uh, we went with this real estate, we had, agent we had, he says, "Well, this new development," he says, "over such and such an area, around O'Connor and St. Clair." I says, "Well, let's go and take a look." So we went and looked in this neighbourhood and there was, uh, four homes. Yeah, it was four homes and two around the side, six, that this contractor built. And ours, the one, we went and looked at this one in particular. As soon as we walked in we said, "This is it." So we, I had money saved up from my army pay. So we put down a downpayment and took out a healthy mortgage and we bought the house.

MG: Wow.

LL: So we lived in that house for...44 years.

MG: Oh my gosh.

LL: Then we left, we moved here in '97.

MG: And how many children?

LL: Just—

MG: The daughter...

LL: I just have two. A daughter and a son.

MG: Yeah. And your, your daughter's name and your—?

LL: My daughter's name is Michaelina Mary.

MG: Oh.

LL: After, she's name after her two grandmothers. And she lives in Barrie.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: She's now a retired principal. And my son was Mark Domenic, named after his two grandfathers.

MG: Hmm.

LL: And he lives out in Northeast Scarborough.

MG: Hmm.

LL: He's up in the Oriental section. [laughs]

MG: And, um, when, when, uh, you met your wife, did your dad ever talk to you, sorry, your father-in-law ever speak to you about, uh, what happened to you during the war years?

LL: No.

MG: No.

LL: No. No. He wanted, I guess, I guess, at that time he wanted to forget it.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: I guess. I don't—He never mentioned anything. The only times, maybe we were sitting around on a Sunday evening after dinner and they used to joke about something that happened with this pisans while they were in camp, but I mean that was, that was it.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: I mean, I think...I don't, I think they had some freedom and they were able to, uh, um, work in the shops. They had a wood working shop there and I forget what else they had, but, and they were allowed to do their own, prepare their own meals because Mr. Piccininni and Mr. Leo and who was the other man? Oh, another man that used to...I'd go in and cook, uh, cook up the meals for these guys.

MG: Wow.

LL: And they were a lot of, they were all from the Toronto area, so they sort of knew each other. So they, they, I think they had, I don't, I don't know. The only time he was mistreated, I think, from what I heard, what my wife told me, was when they went in and knocked on his door and just took him away, out of the house, in front of his two children, in handcuffs.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: And took him to the Don Jail, which was a—

MG: What, what happened during that time to your wife and to her mom and, and...?

LL: Well, my wife's mother passed away in—

MG: Oh.

LL: —mid '30s. But he had, they had, my father-in-law had his, uh...a house down in the old Italian neighbourhood, around, um, Mansfield and Claremont. Mansfield and—

MG: Yeah. Claremont.

LL: Mansfield and Manning.

MG: Manning and, and Claremont, I think they meet as well. Or, no, Mansfield. You're right.

LL: Mansfield's east and west and Claremont runs north and south, where the California veal shop is.  
[laughs]

MG: Yeah. [laughs] Yeah.

[01:00:00]

LL: Yeah, he had a house and, uh, he had his office in the same building so they just, police came in and took him away in handcuffs and threw him in the Don Jail.

MG: In the Don.

LL: And at that time, from what I, he was, they were sort of, uh, from what I gather, sort of, um, rough

treated. Not, it was because they were enemy...

MG: Yeah.

LL: —so-called enemy. And then I guess from there they, uh, shipped them off, the gang of them up to Petawawa.

MG: Oh my gosh. And so your, so I guess your wife, her mom had passed away.

LL: Her, my, yeah, well she went to live with her aunt up in, um, Willowdale. And they had, I don't know what their relationship was. Uh, I'd have to...Oh, it was an aunt anyway, through marriage, that she went to live, 'cause the aunt had grown children but they were, well they were well grown at that time. And my wife and her brother were still, I guess, teenagers at that point. So they went up to, and I think my wife was still going to school back then.

MG: Hmm.

LL: But they went and lived with an aunt up in Willowdale.

MG: Oh gosh.

LL: So they—

MG: So they were left alone. They just—

LL: Yeah.

MG: The RCMP pulled the dad away.

LL: Yeah, yeah.

MG: Oh my gosh.

LL: Yeah, they were out on their own and they went to live with the aunt and...Uh, the aunt had...a daughter and a son that still lived at home. They, her other children were, yeah, a daughter and a son. Jenny and Tony. The other ones were married. So then father-in-law got out of camp in '45 and then he, he got a job at the, uh, King Edward Hotel through a friend and, and—

MG: He didn't reopen the notary...?

LL: He did. But he took a little while. He went to work at the King Edward Hotel and he got some—

MG: Money.

LL: —finances. And got reestablished and he went back into the real estate business and insurance agent. And back to his being a notary public. So after he, the war was, it was '46...Kathleen came home in '46.

MG: Kathleen.

LL: Middle of '46. That was the, my wife's older sister.

MG: Older sister.

LL: Yes. She got stranded in Italy during the war.

MG: Oh my goodness.

LL: She went there in, just before Italy went in the war in '38.

MG: Uh huh.

LL: My father-in-law wanted her to work in his office, to learn and, uh, to read and write Italian.

MG: Oh.

LL: So he sent her over there to school. So while she was there Italy went in the war and she couldn't get back to Canada.

MG: Oh my gosh. Was she with family or, or...?

LL: Yeah, well she had, my father-in-law had, uh, still had family in, uh, just outside of Rome. So when, I don't know what schooling they did all while the war was going on but she stayed with a family in, uh, in Rome and then, uh, yeah, she lived in, she lived in her hometown, her father-in-law's hometown. Then she got out, she left the hometown because the Germans were coming. And they were looking for a Canadian girl that they heard about.

MG: Oh my gosh.

LL: So they, uh, I guess the underground got her and snuck her out one night. And, uh, after the Germans had gone through the town they took her into Italy, into Rome 'cause my father-in-law had a nephew who worked in the Vatican as a papal secretary. So she went to live with them in Vatican City 'til she came home, back to Toronto.

MG: Wow. Because the Vatican City wasn't occupied.

LL: No. Vatican City was a independent state.

MG: Independent. Yeah.

LL: Back in the war years.

MG: Oh my gosh.

LL: Yeah, so that—

MG: So when the Germans were coming after her she was—

LL: She was in the hometown of Monte Compatri which is outside of Rome.

MG: Yeah.

LL: Don't ask me which direction but it was all farm country. And the word got to my, uh, I guess, my wife's uncle who had the farm and he, he grew grapes and he made wine and he sold wine in Rome, in the city. But somehow or another, uh, they got word to the uncle that the Germans were coming. So they were looking for this, they knew there was this, they had heard there was a Canadian girl in the village, in the town. So they wanted to find her and, and give her so-called, uh, protection. But anyway, uh, when uncle heard the Germans were coming he took Kathleen, and as I know and you know they have grottos in those—

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: —where they make the wine? And the grottos aren't straight rooms like this [shows with his hands], they go like this [motions downwards], sloped underground.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: And that's where they have the big casts where they age the wine? So anyway, and it's all candlelight. So anyway, the Germans came into the farm and they, they, um, they were looking for food and they took what they wanted in the way of food and they wanted to find the Canadian girl. So uncle said, [shrugs] you know, "No lisso[?!]"

MG: Right.

LL: But in the meantime Kathleen was down in the grotto behind one of the big wine kegs, casts. So they said, went through the barns and all over the place, the house, looking for her. And they said, "What's here?" "Well there's a cantina." My uncle used to sell, uh, to the pisans in the, in the town. They would come and have a, a litre of wine and they'd play cards there all afternoon. And they said, "What's down there?" He says, "Well that's where we age the wine." But the Germans wouldn't go down there. 'Cause they were afraid if they went down they weren't coming back. They wouldn't go down the grotto because there wasn't—

MG: It was dark.

LL: —there wasn't electric lights.

MG: Yeah.

LL: They wouldn't go down. 'Cause they were remembering what happened to a, a platoon of Germans. They were patrolling the streets in Rome one night. German—I don't know if you know that story.

MG: No.

LL: I can't remember the name of the, the, the, the, uh, it's a historical site, memorial site still in Rome. German platoon was, they had, there were, everything was on, [motions with his hands] right on the time. Everything was precise.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: Every night at 9:00 this German platoon used to go down through the streets in Rome. They went in this neighbourhood looking for whatever, patrolling the streets. So the Italian, uh, partisans were,

you know, at this time they were against Germany.

MG: Yeah.

LL: So the Italian partisans this one particular night they knew where the German patrol was, 9:00 every night, where they were. So they had garbage cans on the streets.

MG: Uh huh.

LL: They put bombs in the cans, in the garbage cans. When the German platoon went down—

MG: Yeah.

LL: —they ignited the garbage cans and blew up and killed the whole, killed the whole German squad.

MG: Wow.

LL: Thirty-five plus the commander.

MG: Oh my gosh.

LL: So when that news got back to headquarters, German headquarters, the German officer in charge, I think it was Goering or one of those other honchos, he says, “I want revenge. Ten for one.”

MG: Wow.

LL: So the German, another German squad, they went in through the streets in Rome and they picked up ten for men, ten for one. Thirty-five German soldiers killed, ten civilians got killed for one German.

MG: Hmm.

LL: And there's 350 people buried in this site in, in Rome, or just in the Rome area. And they took everything, men, women, children, priests, everybody's—. So they wouldn't go down that grotto looking for my sister-in-law.

MG: Wow.

LL: Because they figured they would never get back up.

MG: I can't imagine the trauma that, that—

LL: Aw, she was a, she was a wreck.

MG: That's must have...Mmmhmm.

LL: She was a wreck for the longest time...until she got over it, got back home. And even after she got home and got with her own family and relatives she was still, uh—

MG: Shaky.

LL: —jittery.

MG: Hmm.

LL: But that was, that was her experience.

MG: I can't imagine. So your wife's family was basically torn apart in—

LL: Oh yeah.

MG: —the war years.

LL: Yeah, I mean, it was bad enough losing the mother.

MG: And then yeah, Dad's taken away.

LL: And then Dad taken away and going to have to move in with strangers, you know.

MG: Her sister's back in Italy. Wow. Oh my gosh.

LL: Oh yeah, that was...history of water over the bridge.

MG: Yeah. And did your wife ever talk about that time period later on...herself or...?

LL: No. Other than that, uh—

MG: Other than that.

LL: —she lived with her aunt. She was a lovely lady.

MG: Yeah.

LL: But that was it. She had other aunts and grandmother here but they were, they lived out in this end of the city. But the, the aunt up in Willowdale was, shall we say, younger and more agile than the other grandmother and her great aunt. So she lived with the, the family up there in Willowdale.

MG: Hmm.

LL: She was a nice lady too. Lovely lady. But.

MG: Many years.

LL: That was it.

MG: Yes.

LL: But you're talking about during the war years.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: Earlier about what my, well, I guess my father and my uncle didn't really suffer any hardships during the war, uh, with, like, some of the other pisans with their fruit business. I mean, they had their plate glass windows were smashed and their windows were soaped and their put sugar in the gas tanks or slashed the tires or called them a dirty wop when they walked on the streets. That type of thing. And they didn't like the, ah, what shall I say? The mangiacake population wouldn't go in shopping in their stores.

MG: Hmm.

LL: And my dad never endured any of that because, uh, Dad's customers and clients were sort of, uh, uh, well to do people and professional people.

[01:10:07]

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: And, uh, they sort of rebelled about shopping at my dad's store because he was Italian and they considered him an alien. And this one nice lady customer of my father had, and her husband was a member of parliament in Ottawa.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: But he was spending a lot of time in Ottawa during the war years and a lot of these, my dad's customers all belong, they lived up in the Rosedale area.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: And lower, lower Rosedale which was upper Jarvis Street back in those days, was not like Jarvis Street turned out to be but it's getting more civilized now. But anyway, they all, a lot of them went to the same church and this lovely lady got up, one of their ladies meetings that they used to, uh, they got together and they tried to raise money or, and prepare things for soldiers' comforts and that sort of thing. And she, this one meeting they, she, this lady got up and she, she had the nerve. She was a...so I say, uh, not a bossy type, but she had a strong way about her.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: And she just addressed the ladies group and she just told them, uh, quite bluntly, says, "I don't know why all you ladies aren't shopping at Domenic's store. Domenic's my friend. We've been business, I've done business with Domenic when he had the other store down on Parliament and Carlton—"

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: "—for years. He's no enemy to the country." And, uh, she got up and give 'em proper hell, I guess, at the meeting. And then in summation says, "Besides that Domenic has two boys in the army."

MG: Hmm.

LL: "So what's that tell ya?" And a lot of these wealthy people had their sons in the army but, um, some of them were overseas and a lot of them were here and they all got commissions as soon as they got in the army. And, uh, my brother and I were just ordinary foot sloggers. But anyway, they, uh, they slowly started coming back. And then when I was home on furlow, I used to go and work in the

store and, like, a lot of the customers were, “Oh, you're home. You're home.” I says, “No, I'm just here on leave. I gotta go back.”

MG: Hmm.

LL: “I gotta go back.” They go, “Where you going now?” I says, “I have no idea...Don't know what we're doing.” So anyway, they, a lot of them, they all came back. They all came back. And I guess, well, I don't know whether they were apologetic or not but...they all came back.

MG: Hmm.

LL: But after I came home permanently they were all glad to see me back. A lot of them were, so much so that some of them were invited to my wedding! [laughs]

MG: [laughs] Wow. That's great.

LL: Back then.

MG: So how do you, looking back on those years because I'm sure it was also scary, it must have been scary for you at times, knowing you could go overseas or, or, uh, you weren't sure where you were going to wind up or...

LL: [shrugs] We didn't know where we were going. I mean you, if a sergeant made you come in and said, “Jump!” you said, “Yes sir, how high?”

MG: Yeah.

LL: And that was it. Plus the fact, I mean, that was, well, late teens, early twenties. I think, um, most of us [clears throat] I think most of us, uh, got a drinking habit and every night if we were free we were in the wet canteen.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: Drinking a few beers and a few more. I says, “Well, we don't know. We're here today. We might be gone tomorrow. And we don't know where we're going tomorrow or what's going to happen, so.” You, you didn't—

MG: So that's how you—

LL: You, you, you just did whatever you were told. Period.

MG: Hmm.

LL: And they, we had another saying, uh, "If the damn thing moves, salute it. If it doesn't move, paint it." [smiles] 'Cause all, you always saluted when an officer went by so we always said, "If it moves salute it," so. [laughs]

MG: Hmm, hmm.

LL: So you always had, when you were in basic camp you always had joe jobs to do.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: You were, uh, hauling the garbage or working in the kitchen or peeling potatoes or that type of thing. So they always, you were always busy. You had hours after you were free.

MG: Mmm.

LL: You could roam around the camp and lots of, uh, the camps I was in, they always had movies every night. And some different times they'd have live entertainment.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: In the, in the drill hall. But it...you were under supervision all the time/

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: So I mean...at one point your life wasn't your own.

MG: Mmm.

LL: Not really.

MG: I guess you would also stick, would you stick together with the other, with the other, uh, soldiers, with the...?

LL: Yeah, in our, in our free time we always hung, hung out together. But when I left the army all my buddies we all left out on the west coast because they were all...they were, uh, Western boys.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: They lived in Calgary, Edmonton or Vancouver.

MG: Mmm.

LL: I never saw, there wasn't, I didn't team up with anybody in Toronto, from this area. No. That's...a lot of water over the bridge.

MG: Hmm. Are there any other stories that you'd like to share with us today about those years or about anything that you think might be...looking back?

LL: No, I don't know what I can tell ya.

MG: Hmm.

LL: Don't know what to tell you. Lotsa...mmm, I don't know what I could tell ya. Don't want to tell you a whole bunch of lies. [laughs] No. Well, one good happy, more than happy occasion, after we all come back out of the service—

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: —we used to get together about, uh, once every two weeks and go down the Royal York Hotel. The, um, oh...What was that ballroom at the Royal York? Oh. Anyway, back in those days the Royal York wasn't licensed. So what you could do was sneak a bottle in of whisky or alcohol—

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: And, um, what you had to do while you were having your alcoholic drinks you had to order, we called a rubber sandwich and a, and a soft drink. So it was a stale cheese sandwich made who knows when and, uh, ginger ale, Coke or whatnot. So we always got big bottles of Coke or big containers of Coke and we had a bottle of whisky on the floor. You couldn't have it on the table.

MG: [laughs] That was the rule? You just—

LL: Yeah.

MG: —couldn't have it on the table.

LL: No. You could bring it, you could bring it in. There...well somehow or another you got it in. I don't know whether you were allowed to bring it in or not but—

MG: Yeah.

LL: —you always had it hidden. And it was always on the floor. I mean, it wasn't on the table exposed.

MG: Yeah.

LL: So every, every time we went to the Royal York there was always one of us—

MG: Who had a—

LL: —who had more to drink than the others. But we always made sure he got home.

MG: Yeah.

LL: And then one night it was my turn. I had too much to drink, well only because, um, oh, I haven't got a picture of it.

MG: Hmm.

LL: My wife and I went to the Royal York this one particular night and I had a nice suit, no room for a bottle. So I had a mickey and I said, "Well, it won't fit in my pockets." So I says, "Here, honey." I says, "Put this under your arm and throw your wrap over it." She says, "Okay." So she's got it under her arm, we're walking and we parked, I parked the car, we were walking through the lobby of the Royal York Hotel and this damn bottle slipped out from under her arm.

MG: Hmm.

LL: Hit the, hit the marble floor and broke, naturally, into a thousand pieces. She says, "What do we do?" I says, "Nothing, let's just keep walking."

MG: [laughs]

LL: So we got into the...The Imperial Room! Royal York Imperial Room.

MG: Yeah.

LL: And Louis Genetta[?] was the maitre d'. Uh, so we get into the, uh, Imperial Room, we told the rest of the gang about our dilemma. "Oh, what a pity, have a drink. What a pity, have a drink...What a pity, have a drink." [mimes handing out drinks] So, I had a belly full of booze like you wouldn't believe.

MG: [laughs]

LL: And I had parked the car at the parking lot at University and Wellington.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: And we walked out of the hotel to get in the car, I drove my wife...We weren't married at this time. No, we weren't married yet.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: I drove the car home, or I drove her home to where she lived at Bayview and Eglinton. And, uh, I says, "Let me come in. You make me a cup of coffee. I'll be alright." Well she didn't know how to boil water...at that point. So anyway, she made a cup of instant coffee and you could have melted the spoon in it, it was so strong.

MG: [laughs]

LL: I says, "Let me sit here for a minute." So she says, "You can't sit here. If my father comes down and sees you with all that alcohol in you he'll be wondering what kind of a boy I'm going out with this night. You go home." I says, "Okay." So I got in the car, drunker than a skunk.

MG: Hmm.

LL: I drove home from Bayview and Eglinton to where I lived with my dad at Pape and O'Connor. There was no traffic at that time of the day, or night. Drove across the Lee side bridge. Parked the car, I put the car in the driveway. In those days there was about this much space [shows with his fingers] on either side of the car, going up the driveway. I put the car right up the driveway and in the garage, close the door and went in and—

MG: Ha!

LL: —flopped into my bed. Then I woke up the next morning, I was hung over like you wouldn't believe.

MG: Mmmhmm.

[01:20:08]

LL: And then it dawned on me. I was a real ass. I could have killed that nice girl I was out with. I could have killed somebody else. I could have smashed the car. I could have done this. So I phoned my lovely wife at the time and apologized for being such a jerk. Then we just picked it up from there.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: And that's when I, from that night on I cut my drinking back.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: I got booze in there, eh? [points off screen]

MG: Hmm.

LL: It's there. I know it's there but I, I have no desire to go over and—I don't.

MG: Hmm.

LL: I'll have a drink or a couple of beers with somebody but I, I just cut my drinking right out. I says, "I could have killed somebody that night."

MG: Yeah.

LL: If the cops would have picked me up, I still would have been in jail.

MG: [laughs] Well you have to get to a point, I guess, where you, you really realize.

LL: Oh yeah, you had to—Well, that's like an alcoholic. You had to realize you need help.

MG: Yeah.

LL: So I said, “Before I get to be an alcoholic—”

MG: Hmm.

LL: “—and do that again,” I says, “that's it.”

MG: Right. Wow. Interesting stories though about Toronto and the, or those days and—

LL: Well, we had another incident—

MG: —the Royal York Hotel. Fancy.

LL: We had another incident one night with my brother and his wife. At this point in time my wife and I were married. [clear throat] There was this man. He owned the, well, I guess he was well known. I won't mention any names, but he was connected, uh. He had an illegitimate business but he was a good friend of my, my uncle and my father knew him.

MG: Yeah.

LL: So he had one son. That one son was getting married. [clears throat] So he says, “I'm going to throw a big party.” The King Edward Hotel, the big dining room that the King Edward has. So it was a sit down dinner. [clears throat] My brother and his wife and my wife, the four of us were included in the invitation. My father, my uncle and my aunt. Dad never married, remarried, but Dad was invited. So we had a table and I think we were six. But on each table had a bottle of the best booze you could buy at the liquor store at that time. Alco, uh, um, whisky, um, wines, whatever you wanted, vodka, the whole, the whole thing, rum.

MG: Hmm.

LL: And as soon as that bottle was empty there was another one right there.

MG: Right.

LL: So that particular night my brother had a snoot full of booze and I, I, I wasn't feeling too much pain either. And the park, the car was parked right across the street from the King Eddie. Up Toronto Street

there used to be a big parking lot. Back in those days police headquarters was on Toronto Street. So we come staggering out of the hotel and we're making quite a bit of noise. We're talking loud and the whole bit. So we get to the car, my brother says, "Where's the car?" I says, "Right here." So we were making so much noise. There was a cop walking across the parking lot, going into the station reporting for duty and he hollers over, you know, "Are you fellas alright?" I says, "Oh yes, we're fine." "You able to drive home?" I says, "Oh yeah, I got the keys right here."

MG: [laughs]

LL: My brother, my brother, poor brother, he'd had, he was really gone and out of it and I was, I wasn't feeling too much pain.

MG: Oh my gosh.

LL: So the cop just kept on walking. I says, "There's another night we would have ended up in—" [laughs]

MG: [laughs]

LL: "—in the clink."

MG: Wow.

LL: That was it.

MG: That's crazy.

LL: A couple of fun nights when we were wild and [brushes mic] wild and wooly.

MG: Yeah.

LL: Or, I guess, you might say lacking some grey matter at the time, I guess. [laughs]

MG: Sounds like a lot of fun though.

LL: Well yeah, well back then you sort of made your own fun. This is before you had big T.V.

MG: Hmm.

LL: You made your own fun.

MG: Yeah.

LL: Plus the fact when we had the house on, when we had our house there, uh, we were all, when we first moved into the house, in the area, there was mud up past your knees. There were no sidewalks, no roads. And earlier in the Spring in the year you were knee-deep in mud. But we moved in, uh, we moved in January, into the house in 50, '53. We moved, we bought the house and bought, moved in January. The ground was still frozen so we had no trouble getting the truck in and out.

MG: Yeah.

LL: The moving van in and out. But after when the ground went and thawed and we had oil furnaces back in those days, so if any house ran out of fuel, well they had to have a, the fuel, the oil truck couldn't get in. It would always get stuck.

MG: Yeah.

LL: So they used to have two tractors, one pulling, the other one pushing, to deliver oil to the house.

MG: Hmm.

LL: So in that er, that era, there were six young couples, we were six altogether, young couples and all the ladies we all pregnant at the same time.

MG: [laughs]

LL: So some smarty remarked that...and we always got together on Saturday nights at somebody's house, rolled up the rug if they had a rug.

MG: Yeah.

LL: Moved the furniture out of the way and everybody bring a 12 pack or a bottle of whisky or whatever and—

MG: Yeah.

LL: —throw it in the tub, the beer in the tub and get it cold and roll up, they would roll out the records, put the records on. We'd have a few drinks and a dance. And the girls always brought some kind of food. But when all these six ladies were all walking around pregnant on the side street somebody, excuse the terminology, they said, “That must have been one hell of a wild, wild Saturday night party.” [laughs]

MG: [laughs]

LL: But all the kids were all born within, uh, ten day period.

MG: That's great.

LL: And they sort of, they all sort of grew up together until they went separate ways after their high schooling.

MG: Nice. That's amazing. [laughs]

LL: But we didn't have any money back in those days.

MG: Yeah.

LL: Couldn't even pay, couldn't even pay my mortgage.

MG: [laughs] Yeah. Sure. It must have not been easy to come by.

LL: No. I was lucky for me. I had a friend in the bank where I did my business.

MG: Right.

LL: We went to, went to the same church together and he was bank manager where I dealt. I said, “John, my mortgage cheque is coming through.” I says, “I'm a bit short of cash.”

MG: Hmm.

LL: “Don't worry about it Lawrie, I'll look after it.” So I says, “Okay, I'll be here within a day when I get my paycheque. I'll, you know, square it up.” “Don't worry. I'll look after it.” He always okayed it.

MG: Wow.



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LL: Never had any problems.

MG: That's great.

LL: You can't do that today.

MG: No. Today. No.

LL: You can't do that today.

MG: All these rules, huh? But that's great. Sounds like a wonderful time.

LL: Well, it was.

MG: A wonderful time to grow up and to...

LL: Yeah, I think today's kids miss all that.

MG: Yeah.

LL: I think. Everything is so...

MG: Fast. [laughs]

LL: ...electronically...

MG: Yeah.

LL: Uh, what would you say?

MG: They miss out on everything.

LL: Pounding into their heads and everything is push buttons and this and that and push buttons that. I mean, it's not like, it's not like, like back in our times, I don't think.

MG: No.



*Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens:  
Memories of World War II*  
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LL: I think they're missing a lot of it.

MG: Sure. Yeah.

LL: Missing a lot of that. Anyways.

MG: Well, thank you so much for sharing your—

LL: Well, I don't know if its—

MG: —and—

LL: —its any use to you but—

MG: Yeah!

LL: What can I tell ya?

MG: For sure. I think we're...

LL: I'm still here. I'm still here. Even after my three glorious years working for my king and country at the time.

MG: Yeah.

LL: Then almost getting killed. But anyway.

MG: Oh yeah. You showed me. There's a—

LL: Yeah. It's hanging on the wall. [points]

MG: Yeah. After maybe we'll take a shot of that. But what, you can tell us the story behind it.

LL: Behind that?

MG: Behind what happened at the—

LL: Oh, that day we were...I was in that camp down in, um...Barryfield.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: It was our squad's turn. We were down the rifle ranges, getting practiced up. They were, oh, I don't know. They were trying to find out if they could make snipers out of us. So anyway, it was our squad's turn, um, down in the pits, as we called it, um, because the guys were up at this end of the range shooting at the targets, so our squad's turn was down in what we called the pits. And the targets were moveable on a hinge, on a track thing. [shows with his hands] So we, when they, after they were finished firing at the targets we brought, used to bring the targets down after they were marked at what the guys, where the bullets went.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: We used to haul the targets down and patch up the, the holes and then put them back up again for the next guys. So we were, um, this one squad was up there firing at the targets and the order came out to them to cease fire. So they said, um, "We got the order, bring down the targets." So I was just ready to stand up and all of a sudden this one bullet came—I heard it. It hit the angle iron just over my head. And I hollered up to the officer in charge, I says, I won't tell you what I said, but then I said, "They're still firing up there. I thought they had orders to cease fire." He says, "Well they did have." So anyway, we gets on the intercom. I don't know what the message was but that bullet, that was the only one that, that was fired. And it came and hit the angle iron over my head. And if I'd have put my head up about that high— [shows with his fingers]

MG: Hmm.

LL: —that far up. It would have got me right through here. [points to his forehead] But it hit, I heard it hit the angle iron over my head. We had tin hats on but the—

MG: They wouldn't have helped.

LL: They would have gone right through it. So anyway, I heard it hit the, the iron, the angle iron over my head, the braces that held the target supports. So just as I, at the same instant [brushes mic] I heard this thing fit my foot. It was the, what's hanging on the wall.

MG: Wow. We'll go get a shot of that.

LL: And I said, I said, "My mother was, my mother was in heaven praying for me."

MG: Yeah. She was taking care of you. [laughs] For sure. I can't imagine.

LL: Yeah.

MG: One more inch.

LL: Well that was just about all.

MG: Hmm.

LL: Just about all. But see it's three—

MG: Makes for a great story though, right?

LL: Yeah, that's a true story. It's not B.S.

MG: Yeah.

LL: So that's...

MG: Mmmhmm. We're good.

LL: That's not. I mean, that's a bit...three of the best years of my life working for nothing. And I said—

MG: You weren't paid, uh, at all?

LL: Oh yeah. We got paid but I mean, our pay was a pittance.

MG: Yeah.

LL: As I used to say, "Kept me in beer money." [laugh] Even though our beer was cheap.

MG: Oh gosh.

LL: We had, I was at one camp and believe this or not, going long, this is long before your time.

MG: Hmm.

LL: There was this hotel, I don't know what the hotel's charge now for a beer or a draft beer or bottle of beer. I think it's around \$5.50 or something like that a pint.

MG: Oh yeah, more.

LL: Something like that, I don't know.

MG: Yeah.

LL: But back in those days we used to get, um, a ten ounce glass, draft beer—

MG: Uh huh.

LL: You know, pull it out of the draft.

MG: Tap, uh huh.

LL: At one camp I was at you got 20 for a dollar.

MG: Wow.

LL: But you had to get all 20 beers at the same time.

MG: Oh my gosh! [laughs] So would you share or those 20 were for one person?

LL: No, but you had to carry 20 beers from the—

MG: Right.

LL: —from the bartender all at one time. So you were lucky to find a tray to put your 20 beers on.

[Voice in the background: May I have your attention please, this is Onyx Fire Protection. We will momentarily be starting our monthly fire test]

LL: Oh, checking the fire alarms.

[Starting our monthly fire test. This is only a test.]

LL: They do that once a month.

[This is only a test]

MG: Oh they do it once a month.

LL: Yeah.

[We'll let you know when the test has been completed. Thank you]

MG: There we go.

LL: So I mean, one guy would go up and get 20 beers, [beep] bring it back and there was eight or ten of us drinking beers so I mean, we never ran short of beer—

MG: Wow.

LL: —anytime we were in that canteen.

MG: Oh my gosh. I can't—

LL: And then most places, like other camps it was either ten cents a glass or 15 cents a bottle.

MG: Wow.

LL: For a pint.

MG: Crazy.

LL: So I mean, you had access to all the alcohols. I mean [shrugs] all the guys that were in armed forces all ended up being drunks.

[Voice on speaker: May I have your attention please.]

LL: They were good drinkers.

[May I have your attention]

LL: If they weren't drunks they were good drinkers]

[We will momentarily be starting our monthly fire test. I repeat this is only a test.]

LL: Anyway.

[We'll let you know when...]

LL: That's the fun days. Can I offer you girls anything?

MG: No. I'm alright. Are you good?

[fades out at 01:33:06]

[fades in at 01:33:07]

[Shot of Lawrence's wedding photo. Lawrence is unrolling a large, rolled up photograph]

MG: My goodness!

KC: Here, do you want help?

[Camera zooms in on the bride and groom and then moves over some of the other faces]

MG: That's great. Wow.

LL: That's my—

MG: What a lovely pair of—

LL: —my mid 20s.

MG: Young people.

LL: [points to man standing beside the groom] That's my older brother, passed away two years ago.

MG: That's Peter?

LL: No. That's Joe.

MG: Oh, that's Joe. Your younger brother.

LL: [points to man standing beside Joe] This is my first cousin.

MG: Okay.

LL: [points to next man] And this fellow here was, uh, had a Calderone show, shoes.

MG: Mmmhmm.

LL: He married this—I'm on the wrong side here. [moves to the other side of the photo, which shows the bride and bridesmaids] Let's see where she is. There she is there. [points to the woman standing second from the left] These two were... [points to man standing second to right] that gentleman and this girl became husband and wife.

MG: Uh huh.

LL: And, uh, [points to man standing on the far right] that's my brother-in-law. He passed away last year.

MG: Mmm.

LL: [points to woman standing next to the bride] And this is my wife's older sister, Kathleen.

MG: That's the one that was in Italy.

LL: That's the one that was trapped in Italy.

MG: Hmm.

LL: [points to woman standing next to Kathleen] And this is my wife's first cousin. [points to woman on the far left] This was my first cousin.

MG: Wow.

LL: [points to flower girl in foreground] And this little girl was five years old.

MG: Oh my gosh.

LL: She now lives up in Collingwood.

MG: In Collingwood.

LL: Married and has her own family that's left home, got married.

MG: Well—

LL: I found this the other day. It was—Actually, when I got the new rug laid down in my bedroom, this thing fell out from the...

[fades out at 01:34:28]

[fades in at 01:34:29]

[Shot of war medals in a frame with two photos]

LL: Photo would be full regalia and the other picture was taken at a, oh, a park. It was in, Smith Falls, I think. We were on a convoy...convoy duty...or convoy practice.

MG: Yeah. That's neat and—

LL: That's my, that's my badge up on top there.

MG: This—

LL: The squad that I was with.

MG: Your badge? And where were the medals or how'd you get the medals?

LL: Oh, having served the country.

MG: Yeah.

LL: There's no, nothing for European, European duty.

[fades out at 01:35:04]