

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

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NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: Marie A. Prospero (nee Squigna)

NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Melina De Guglielmo

NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER: Krystle Copeland

TRANSCRIBED BY: Lisa Kadey

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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

Marie Prospero describes the experiences of her Italian Canadian parents who lived in Toronto during the Second World War. Her father, Nazzareno Alfonso Sguigna, served in the Italian Army in the First World War. He immigrated to Canada, leaving a wife and son behind. During the Second World War, Marie's father was arrested by the RCMP and taken to the nearest jail; Marie's mother took his First World War medals and argued with the RCMP to release her husband. However, the medals were never returned to the family.

Marie's uncle, Luigi Squigna, came to Canada at age 16 and worked on the railways. He was interned for the duration of the Second World War. Towards the end of the war, Marie's half-

brother, Ezio Vincenzo Sguigna, was called up into the Canadian army. He went through six months of training, but was let go because of his Italian birth. Throughout the interview, Marie also describes the social events of Italian Canadians in post-war Toronto, such as picnics held at Lambton Park. She shows family pictures from her photo album.

INTERVIEW

MP: Marie Prospero, interviewee

MD: Melina De Guglielmo, interviewer

KC: Krystle Copeland, videographer

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 00:00:10]

MD: So, this is Melina De Guglielmo on October 4th, uh, 2011. And I'm in Toronto, Ontario. And first, I'm going to ask you your full birth name.

MP: Marie Antoinette (?), uh, Julia Squigna. [Laughs] The Marie Antoinette is like the Italian Marie Antonietta (?).

MD: Uh-huh.

MP: It's all one, it's supposed to be. But I—

MD: And were, were you named after anybody, or—

MP: Yes.

MD: Yeah?

MP: That's a story. [Laughs] Yeah, I was named after my father's first wife—

MD: Oh.

MP: —and his sister, both of who were deceased.

MD: Yeah.

MP: Yeah.

MD: And what, what is your birthday?

MP: January 28th, 1939.

MD: Okay. So, um, maybe we'll start a bit about your family.

MP: Mmm.

MD: Um, so your parents names, and where they were born—

MP: Mm-hm.

MD: —and how they came, uh, to settle in Toronto.

MP: Right.

MD: Yeah.

MP: Okay, um, because they're—my mother's family's least involved, I'll mention them first.

MD: Sure.

MP: Uh, her father came fr—and mother came from Italy separately in the first ten years of the 20th century. Uh, her father was called, um, Giu—Giuseppe DeCecco (?) And her mother was Louisa Donofreio (?).

MD: Mmm.

MP: And they married here, and had 12 children.

MD: Wow.

MP: My mother was the second-oldest, and her name was Lena (?), and, uh, she was born in 1914. And they lived, uh, around, uh, uh, Beaver (?) and Dufferin.

MD: Oh.

MP: Which is, uh, yeah, right near Dufferin and St. Clair.

MD: Yeah.

MP: Yeah.

MD: Wow.

MP: And then my father was born in 1989 in Italy.

MD: Oh, 1889.

MP: 1899.

MD: Oh, 1899. [Laughs]

MP: Sorry, got all the eights and nines mixed up. In Italy. And, um, he worked—uh, was in the First World War. As a young man, he was called up when he was 17 years old.

MD: Mmm.

MP: And to the Italian army. He was in Bersaglieri. I—if you've ever seen the pictures, they run, and they wore plumed hats and swords. And I'm—tried to get pictures that I had seen of them, but nobody kept them. Unfortunately, we didn't have one. And in—he married in Italy, and, uh, his wife, uh, had a baby in 1925. And she had tuberculosis. So, uh, he came to Canada. Three of his brothers were already in Canada.

MD: Mm-hm.

MP: And—having come earlier in the, in the century. And he came here to make money and send it back for her medicines. Still, she died in 1929. And his son was left there with his mother. And his mother worried, because this boy had no parents alive, and the fascists were—because he was an orphan, there was a great possibility he would be taken away.

MD: Wow.

MP: They'd already been enrolled in some Fascist organization, so she kept writing to him, "Come and get your son, come and get your son." Unfortunately, money was very tight during the, uh, Depression. So, what he—they—he did, they bought a ticket for my mother, because 1933, he met my mother and he married her.

MD: Oh.

MP: And they were living in—

MD: And this is in Toronto?

MP: In Toronto.

MD: Yeah.

MP: And so he, uh, they—he—they bought a ticket on time, and he had to stay here and work to pay off the ticket, but she went to Italy to pick up his son, who by now was 11 years old. And, uh, they, uh, came back, uh, in the middle of a winter, got iced in in the St. Lawrence between Quebec and Montreal, and, uh, finally made it to Toronto. And my brother by then was 11 years old, and very quickly became Canadianized.

MD: Wow.

MP: He was, you know, gung ho. And, uh, just before the war, like when the war started, um, my uncle had been interned at the beginning of the war, my Uncle Luigi, which was the oldest brother in the family.

MD: On your dad's side?

MP: On my dad's side, Luigi Squigna, and he was kept in the internment camp throughout the Second World War. But, uh, one cold winter night, the RCMP came knocking on our door.

MD: Mm-hm.

MP: And, uh, took my father away. Temporarily, they took him to the nearest jail, which wa—we were living on Winona Drive (?), and the nearest jail was on Oakwood, not far away. Well, my mother collected his medals and went there in the middle of the night and argued. And she was a feisty little woman, really talked, and she was really Canadian.

MD: Mm-hm.

MP: And she argued and argued, and by morning they, they let him go. But they kept the medals, we never got them back. And basically, it's a very simple story.

MD: Mmm.

MP: But that's the story.

MD: And he—these medals, he had earned them—

MP: During the First World War, because in the First World War, the Italians were allies of, uh, Britain and France. And, and so basically it was a different scenario from the Second World War, when the Fascist [unclear; 0:06:05.6] came in and were on the other side, as it were.

MD: So, you having been born, um, in 1939, probably don't remember yourself the events happening, because—

MP: No, I, I—because we lived on Winona Drive, uh, um, I guess from about '33 to '45.

MD: Mm-hm.

MP: And I would have been six years old when we moved. So, I remember the house and I remember, you know, things, but I don't remember the precise event. I just heard about it many times.

MD: Yeah. So, would your dad speak openly about what happened to him?

MP: Oh, yes.

MD: Yeah.

MP: More my mother, because my dad was more retiring, and less of [unclear; 0:06:50.5], but she talked about it many times.

MD: Oh, okay.

MP: Okay.

MD: And how about your uncle Luigi who was interned? Um, do you remember, um, what his family had to go through during the time he was taken away, or have you heard stories?

MP: It was a very strange story. And it's their story, so I don't know if I have the right to tell it.

MD: Yeah.

MP: But his older son had moved to the United States, and was in the, uh, American Navy throughout the Second World War.

MD: Wow.

MP: But that made no difference. As I said, my uncle had been very, um, prominent kind of figure in the Italian community and belonged to a lot of clubs, and things. And I don't remember all of that.

MD: Yeah.

MP: But, uh, for some reason, I guess, you know, he—they, uh, they interned him.

MD: Yeah.

MP: And he didn't get out until the end of the war, mm-hm.

MD: And how did your aunt and, and I guess your cousins get by?

MP: Well, uh, she had one other young son at home with her, and those were the times when you, you just made do. And she had other brothers and sisters, and sister-in-laws and brothers-in-law.

MD: Yeah, wow.

MP: And, uh, she was also a wonderful lady. She lived to 102, and all alone at home and taking care of her garden. So, she was a very strong personality. I've often said that about, you know, Italian-Canadian women. We're never little quiet, uh, you know, uh, their husband told them what to do. Very few of them. They were all pretty outspoken and strong ladies, that I remember.

MD: And, um, so your, uh, your half-brother that came in 1933, right?

MP: Six.

MD: 1936.

MP: Mm-hm.

MD: Um, did he have to—did he ever speak about any memories about this time period, 'cause he's a bit older than you? Or—

MP: He was also a very quiet-spoken person. [Laughs] I do know that he was—I—because I have a picture of him in the, the Canadian Army, that they called him up into the Canadian Army. And six months later, they let him out. He went through training, but they didn't send him overseas, and they let him go because of his Italian birth, yeah. So, there were so—uh, things that went on that weren't consistent, let's put it that way, during the Second World War.

MD: Yeah.

MP: Yeah.

MD: And you, having grown up ar—you know, uh, probably gone to school just shortly after—

MP: Mm-hm.

MD: —the war had ended, or even during.

MP: Yes.

MD: Well, what year did you, you begin, um, let's say, elementary school?

MP: Uh, actually, I started early. I, I was five years old, which would have been 1945, I think. Right? No, '40—yeah.

MD: Forty—

MP: Yeah, it would, it would. '39—[Laughs]. Anyway, uh, uh, and I was put into Grade 1 because I could read and write, and, uh, I, uh—but it was a different world.

MD: Yeah.

MP: This was post-war times, and Italians had their own problems. I mean, you were called a wop, and, uh, it was just not easy. It was a very Anglo community, and, uh—but, hey. You know, Unless you made trouble, you didn't get in trouble, let's put it that way. I remember, uh, uh— this is diverging, but one of the boys in my class was German, from a German family. And they used to dress him in jodhpurs. I don't know if you know what jodhpurs are. They're like, uh, riding things. And he got teased so much. [Laughs] But it, it was a different world as I said, you know.

MD: So, it was a predominately Anglo community?

MP: Oh my goodness.

MD: Yeah?

MP: Nine—in the 1940's?

MD: Yeah.

MP: It was, really. The Italians got together. They had their clubs, and, and, uh, the clubs were very busy, and they had dances and parties and things, but—

MD: Um, which clubs did your family—

MP: Well, my father belonged to the club at—um, Marcheijohn (?) Club, because my dad was from Le Marche, from Porto Sant’Elpid—actually, he was born in Sant’Elpidio a Mare, which is the house on the—uh, the town on the hill, the walled town, uh, medieval town on the hill. And then there’s the Porto, which is right on the, on the coast and is a more modern city. But, uh, no, it, uh—he was a—and he was very Italian, and he was very proud of being Italian. He spoke of it a lot, yeah, mm-hm.

MD: A lot. And did the—did he belong at all to the Casa d’Italia?

MP: He probably did. Actually, I have some shares from a, another club that he—ah, I, I should have, uh, probably got paid off for when they closed it. But I, I just [unclear; 0:11:57.2] I forgot about those. They’re somewhere.

MD: They’re somewhere.

MP: They’re in my—probably in a [unclear; 0:12:01.9] because they, they would donate money to, uh—um, Bran—Brandon Hall (?) was bought by an Italian club. And everybody bought shares to get the money to build it. It was—and I can’t remember the name of the club, but I know when they dissolved it, like, and they sold the property, people were being pared—paid for—but I di—at the time, I didn’t know.

MD: Yeah.

MP: I heard much later.

MD: Yeah.

MP: But anyway, no, he belonged to the Marchijohn (?) club.

MD: Club, yeah.

MP: Yeah.

MD: And do you remember going to dances or *festas* when you were—when you were young?

MP Yes, I mean, I—but, uh, oh, the big one was down here at, um, uh, the Humber River and Dundas, there's a park. I don't know what it's called, if it's called, um, Lambton Park. Anyway, there's a hill. And they used to have—the Italians clubs would have their picnics. And they'd have races and things, and you were on the banks of the Humber River. And people would go swimming. And you could sit on the hillside, and then they would have the greasy pole. You know what—they'd have a huge telephone pole set up, and they'd grease it down, and at the top they'd put a prosciutto.

MD: [Laughs]

MP: And the young men would compete to climb this. And of course, because it was greased, they'd fall down, and fall down, and fall down. And it made for a lot of laughs.

MD: Oh.

MP: And eventually somebody would get the prosciutto at the top [Laughs]

MD: Wow.

MP: That, I remember that really well, and that had to have been in the '40s, because by the '50s, things got a little different, you know?

MD: Changed. Do you remember, um, all the other Italians, I guess the post-World War II, coming into Toronto?

MP: Oh, oh, well, well—

MD: And—

MP: —like I said, my husband was one of those.

MD: Yeah?

MP: He came, I think, in '53. And, uh, all my cousins, my father sponsored them. And they came around 1950. And we would—they would live in our house temporarily until they—

MD: Could get on their feet.

MP: Could get on their feet, yes.

MD: Oh.

MP: There were quite a number of them. And they all did very well. They were such hard workers. And, uh, also, like, when my dad came from Italy, though, in 1925, he had to work on a farm for a year. He wasn't allowed to come to Toronto to live. Ym, um, that was part of the immigration laws at the time.

MD: Wow.

MP: Yeah.

MD: And where did, and where did he—did he stay with his brothers that were already here?

MP: No, when—after the year—

MD: After the year.

MP: For one year, they had to find a farmer that would sponsor him. They sponsored him, but then a farmer had to give him a job for a year. He had to work on a farm for a year. You weren't allowed to go directly into the city. And, and then his brothers were in concrete and drain, and they, they got jobs there. And very shortly after, he set up his own business.

[0:15:00.0]

MP: He was, uh, like an entrepreneur. And he did very well. And then in the, in the 1940's, he started to build houses, post-war.

MD: Oh yeah.

MP: He built a lot of little two-bedroom bungalows. Streets full of them on Briar Hill (?) and Ridell (?) and all that little area. And, uh, near Dufferin. And, uh, but he died ver—quite young.

MD: Really?

MP: Well, he would've died 1967. He was, uh, 68 years old.

MD: Very young.

MP: Mm-hm.

MD: Gosh. And, um, when you were growing up, um, did you ever experience any discrimination or—for being Italian?

MP: Um, I didn't personally. I did hear about, you know, like, some of my uncles and some of my—they—you, you didn't didn't, you, you—if you were quiet and minded your own business, you didn't have any problems. But if you were the kind of outspoken person, yes, you would.

MD: Yes?

MP: You'd get it. You really—you know, they were, uh, um, people were, in general, pretty good. I went to school, uh—the district I went to school in, and I went to public school because the sa—uh, the Catholic school was far away. Um, the kids were half-Jewish, and half-Anglo, and uh, a few Italian de—of Italian descent. But mostly it was, um, you know, a quiet and simple school. Very—Briar Hill Public School. [Laughs] I hear they're gonna close it down, it's too bad. [Laughs]

MD: Oh, yeah.

MP: It's still an old-fashioned school. They still have the sign at the doors, because the boys and the girls congregated on either side. They still have the sign in stone above the, the doors.

[Gesturing] Boys, girls.

MD: Wow.

MP: Yeah. [Laughs]

MD: And, um, h—how has being from an Italian family, and also being from an Italian family that settled in, uh, I guess what would be called the first immigrant wave—

MP: Mm-hm.

MD: —how would that—did that shape your life as a Canadian-born—

MP: I think it made you more Canadian. Really, I mean, my mother's family, like, that were all born here in Toronto, in the early part of the century, they really—they knew some Italian, and they did—but they never went back to Italy, they, they really wanted to be Canadian. They were very Canadianized. And the people that came after the Second World War had stronger ties to Italy. They were—they, you know, uh, they weren't as anxious to become Canadianized, let's put it that way.

MD: Yeah.

MP: But, uh, there's more of a—we're Italian-Canadians rather than Can—you know what I mean?

MD: Yeah.

MP: Canadians, yeah.

MD: And do you think that's just, uh, that's because of the pressure that—

MP: Yes, it was—

MD: [unclear; 0:18:07.5]

MP: —the pressure in, in the early days. I mean, you, you didn't have the, the freedom to be Italian that you did afterwards, yeah.

MD: Yeah. So, did that make you happy, when there were more Italians and maybe it was easier to—

MP: Oh well, it, it was all kind of like a family thing, because I had so many cousins and coming from Italy, and, uh, that's why my Italian developed, because they were all around. Uh, whereas previous to that, like, at my grandmother's house, my mother's parents' house, they, uh, usually spoke English. My grandparents might have spoken some Italian, but all the family spoke English. Whereas once the second wave came, they spoke mostly Italian at home, yeah.

MD: Yeah. Wow. And what did your, what did your mom do, um, for, for I guess a living, or, or did she [unclear; 0:10:06.4]?

MP: Well, before that—[Laughs] before she married my father, she worked in a date factory, prin—pitting dates, as it were. [Laughs] And then after she was married, well, of course, in that

generation, even my generation, you didn't go out to work. And, uh, but my father had a business. When my father opened his business, she took care of all the paperwork. She did all the phoning for ordering things and delivering. And she learned to drive very quickly, like in the '30s. She was, she was one of the few women in our social circle driving a car. And so she drove people around, and she—as I said, she was a real go-getter. She was a very good businesswoman. We—really, even after my father died, she was very good with money and business, so.

MD: Oh.

MP: She was a tough little cookie.

MD: And did you have any other siblings, um, at home?

MP: No, that was it.

MD: So, you and your brother [unclear; 0:20:06.0]—

MP: Yeah, yeah. And he was, he was very sweet, retiring kind of person. He died a year ago, he was 84.

MD: What was his name?

MP: Ezio, Ezio Vincenzo. There's a cute one, you know that story that all—everybody in the—the, the children of the children, my grandfather's name was Vincenzo. So, right through the cousins, there was Vincenzo, Vincenzo, either first or second or—everybody's got a little

Vincenzo in there. But the funny part is, once they came to Canada, they were in Canada? They all got called Jimmy.

MD: Oh.

MP: And I've never been able to figure out how you went from Vincenzo to Jimmy.

MD: Wow.

MP: I mean, Vincenzo, you would think Vince, right? Vincenzo.

MD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

MP: Nope. They, they were called Vincenzo, and then they ended up being called Jimmy, so it's a little [unclear; 0:20:56.6].

MD: Wow.

MP: And it wasn't just in our family, like—

MD: No, I've heard that before, yeah.

MP: —one of our neighbours li—like that, too.

MD: Yeah.

MP: And I can't—

MD: Yeah, I've heard that. Um, actually my mom's cousin in the States, his name's Vincenzo, and they call him Jimmy, so— [Laughs]

MP: Yeah. I, I don't, I don't know how they figured that, but yeah.

MD: No, that's too funny.

MP: So, my, uh—yeah, my brother was always very quiet and retiring and, and a very, very sweet person.

MD: Yeah.

MP: Hard-working.

MD: Yeah.

MP: Yeah.

MD: And d—did he wind up going? I know that you mentioned he was called to the army, did he wind up going?

MP: He was, he was in the army for at least six months, and in training. And then they released him, like, he, uh, he was sent home.

MD: Mm.

MP: Because I guess, first of all, they probably didn't need them, because it was near the end of the war. And secondly, because they said because he was born in Italy. But, you'd have thought they'd have sought that—found that out—

MD: Sure.

MP: —before they called him into the army. [Laughs]

MD: Yeah, sure.

MP: Yeah.

MD: Wow. And do you remember any stories of other families, maybe on your street or in the neighbourhood whose parents got picked up?

MP: Uh, no. I have to tell you, I, I didn't know anybody else that, uh, that got picked up.

MD: Yeah.

MP: Because, uh, at that time, as I said most of the, uh, the people that were, uh, the Italians had been here a long time.

MD: Yeah.

MP: Because in the '30s, virtually nobody came. Once the Fascists came into power in Italy, I don't think that immigration to, to Canada was, uh, prevalent at all.

MD: Mmm.

MP: It was in the '20s and, you know, in the first part. There must have been a drive for immigrants in the first part of the, uh, twentieth century, like, the first 10 years, because that's when my grandparents came. And they had no one here. Uh, I don't think you had to have a sponsor, because my uncle, the one I told you about that was interned, Mici (?) Luigi, that was the oldest of the family?

MD: Yeah.

MP: He came when he was 16 years old to work on the railways all by himself. He was very adventurous, as I said he was a different kind of—and he came to work on the railways, and I—he was not called by anybody or anything. And their—the story that is told that he would—they were working on the railways in Northern Ontario, and he got lost in the woods. And he was lost for a week.

MD: Wow.

MP: Must have been in the summer. And after a week, he made his way to Yonge Street, and walked his way back to Toronto. So, basically, as I said, uh, that wave of immigration, I, I'm pretty sure there were Canadian government initiatives bringing people over.

MD: Mmm.

MP: Because both of my grandmother and grandfather, my mother's parents, came at that time.

MD: Mmm.

MP: And, as I said, I—they did not already have somebody here, so.

MD: Did they work, also, for CP Rail, your, your grandfather, or, or—

MP: My uncle, uh, ended up, uh—at the time I knew him, he was wearing—working in the stockyards. Uh, I—at the time, in, in the early days, when—but, uh, by then, he called over two of his brothers, and, um, brought them—uh, they came over early part of century, too, the next two brothers. And then they called my father, like I said, in '25. You had to sponsor somebody by then. But in the first part of the, uh, the first ten years, you didn't need a sponsor. You—I think the Canadian government needed people to work in these—my grandfather, my, uh, my mother's father worked in the foundry at, uh, General Electric all of his life. At, um, Dav—on Davenport, there was a great big, uh, foundry, like, where they...he—there's picture of him we—uh, you know, uh, with the—a foundry has, uh—they mel—melt the metal. And they would make the, uh, the cases for the, uh, refrigerators and stoves and some—and he worked there for 25 years, so. I have a couple little newspaper articles, like, from when he retired and stuff and a picture of him in the foundry.

MD: Wow.

MP: Yeah.

MD: I think that building's been converted to a loft, uh, [unclear; 0:25:29.5]—

MP: Oh yeah, they, they've done some stuff. Because as I said—

MD: Yeah, yeah.

MP: —um, there was a street called Beaver Avenue, and a lot of the Italians lived on it. It's on—
off of Dufferin across from, uh, St. Mary of the Angel Church. And it was a very Italian street. At
the end, there was Beaver bakery, which, uh, was fantastic, the smell of the bakery on that
street— [Laughs] I remember it so well.

MD: Oh gosh.

MP: Yeah.

MD: And was that your family's parish? Would you go to St. Mary of the Angels?

MP: Yeah, well, uh—on a—we, well, until we moved to, um, Briar Hill.

MD: Mm-hm.

MP: [unclear; 0:26:13.6] Briar Hill and Locksley (?), uh, and when I was five, we used to go from
Winona Drive, we'd go down to St. Mary of the Angels, yeah. I made my First Communion
there.

MD: Wow.

MP: Yeah.

MD: Do you remember a priest by the name of Father Ricardo?

MP: [Shaking head]

MD: That was there at the time?

MP: No.

MD: No.

MP: No. I, uh, uh, I was—I went there in, you know, to church. But I was a child.

MD: Yeah.

MP: And, and, uh, my mother and all her family grew up there, and they lived right on the—you know, on Beaver. So, they were just a short walk away. My grandparents were there until my grandmother died and my grandfather moved to—back to Italy, so, yeah.

MD: And I, I'm—uh, I wonder if your—did your dad ever speak to you about, um, Italy and sort of the Fascist Party in Italy and what he remembers about, I guess, their beginnings? Um—

MP: Well, a—actually, no. But the bor—the story I hear about—is about my brother, and I think in that—[Pointing] see that album back there?

MD: Mm-hm.

MP: The second one.

MD: This one?

MP: Yeah. I think there's a picture of him in—there was the—I think it was Califi de Lupo (?) or something, the sons of the wolf.

MD: Mmm.

MP: And that's why my grandmother got where—no he's not in the—they're somewhere, I saw a, a picture of him in his uniform. That—he had been indoc—you know, forcibly made to join this association of young men, of young boys. And that's why my grandmother got very worried about him, that, uh, you know, that she was going to lose him. And she was a, you know, an older lady, and his only—well, she had aunts and uncles, but if you don't have parents, you're an orphan [unclear; 0:28:08.1], really. So, uh—

MD: So, this is him?

MP: That's him, yeah.

MD: Do you, do you mind if I show the camera?

MP: No, no. And that's his mother, the one that died. [Black and white photographs in a scrapbook are held up to the camera]

MD: Oh, this is his mom?

MP: Yeah. Sh—

MD: Wow. And are all these, uh, family photos of early days?

MP: Oh, there's some—they're—these are all early days. This are all pre-1945. Like, this is Winona Drive, and these are all, uh—and, uh, that's me as a baby.

MD: Wow.

MP: Yeah.

MD: I'm actually going show the camera that one.

MP: Yeah.

MD: So— [Scrapbook is held up to the camera, showing a baby picture of Marie Prospero]

MP: I have my parents—a picture from when they were engaged. It's in—which book is that in? In the white one, yeah.

MD: And this is Winona Drive?

MP: Yeah.

MD: So, this is where your dad was, was picked up for the [unclear; 0:29:10.2] night.

MP: Up from—yes.

MD: Yeah.

MP: Yeah. They had, uh, he—they had bought a—it had four apartments, but a, a little store in the bottom. It was on a corner. It was a big house.

MD: I see.

MP: And like, they rented three apartments and sh—and lived in one.

MD: Hmm.

MP: Yeah.

MD: I see.

MP: Yeah.

MD: What great photos.

MP: Yeah. It's hard to keep—I did—that's my parents. I, uh, I actually had a photo exchange hoping to get that picture of my father in his Bersaglieri uniform.

MD: Yeah.

MP: And, they—people took mine, put I didn't get his. [Laughs]

MD: Aww.

MP: That—the picture that I was, uh—

MD: Looking for.

MP: —looking for, yeah. It's sad, but that's the way it goes. Yeah, there's, there's my dad. That's my grandparents.

MD: Mm-hm.

MP: My grandmother and her—great-grandmother. They—she also, her mother also came from Italy in the early part of the century.

MD: Wow.

MP: That's her, the Duno—Donofreio.

MD: The Donofreio side.

MP: Yeah.

MD: Wow. And would it be—what, what is this?

MP: That was the family reunion from 1935, '36. That's the DeCecco and, uh, Donofreio families, yeah. [Holding picture of family reunion up to camera]

MD: Wow. That's crazy. [Laughs] That's amazing.

MP: Mmm. [Camera pulls back]

MD: And this is her [unclear; 0:30:49.2 death (?)] here.

MP: Yeah. [Camera zooms in on black and white image of man].

MD: So, um, is it really—well, when did you start collecting these family photos?

MP: Well, this is my mother's photo album. This is—this, my—that was my mother's family. In, uh—I—approximately 1930, because—no, not even, because the youngest was born in 1930, so this would have been about 1928. That was my mom, yeah, yeah. No, this was my mother's photo album, which I got when she passed away in, uh, 1993, yeah, August, been hanging on. That's my grandparents, that's—

MD: [Photographic image of Marie Prospero's grandparents is displayed to camera] So, these are in Italy?

MP: No, they were, they were the ones in, in—

MD: Your mom's parents?

MP: My mom's parents. I have—I do have a picture of my other grandmother somewhere, no picture of my grandfather.

MD: Did you ever meet them, or—

MP: No, uh, my grandfather died young in 1913, and—54, I think he was. And my grandmother died, she was about 84 in 1945. Just—

MD: Just after—

MP: —as the war ended, so actually that—I—let me see the date. [Flipping scrapbook pages]
Oh no, that's—uh, here it is, my dog ate that, isn't that sad?

MD: Oh.

MP: 1946, she died, yeah.

MD: Okay, so this is the—

MP: Yeah.

MD: And this is the only photo that you have of her? [Holding photograph up to camera]

MP: I have one of her and—when she was younger.

MD: So, she took care of your, your brother?

MP: Yeah. It's sad that, uh, it—as I said, they had got that, and I had a little Pomeranian dog at the time, and somehow he decided to eat it. [Laughs]

MD: Oh.

MP: So—but I saved that part anyway, thanks. Anyway, there we go.

MD: Great. Well, thank you so much for—

MP: You're welcome.

MD: —sharing your, your family history with us today.

MP: Yes, yeah.

MD: That was great.

[Fades out at 00:33:12.3]

[Fades in at 00:33:58.8]

MP: —The, uh, paper that came with the medal of war that he received.

MD: Oh, I see, okay.

MP: And that's—you heard the story.

MD: Not fully, I've heard pieces from Mark Comte (?), but—

MP: Oh, alright then.

MD: Yeah.

MP: Uh, what happened was, my, my dad was not interned.

MD: Yeah.

MP: His brother was interned for the entire Second World War.

MD: Wow.

MP: And, uh, partly because he was a different kind of person.

MD: Okay.

MP: My dad was ver—more retiring.

MD: Yeah.

MP: Anyway, they—the RCMP came one night—

MD: Uh-huh.

MP: —knocked on the door in the middle of a cold winter night—

MD: Yeah.

MP: —and took my dad away.

MD: Wow.

MP: They took him. My parents lived on Winona Drive.

MD: Okay.

MP: And they took him to the nearest jail.

MD: Wow.

MP: Which was on Oakwood.

MD: Okay.

MP: Uh, and my mother collected his medals and brought them to the jail.

MD: Okay.

MP: And she was Canadian born.

MD: I see.

MP: Ital—her parents came from Italy, oh, around 1904 or '05. And she was Canadian born. And she went to the jail, and she brought his medals from the First World War.

MD: Wow.

MP: And argued, and they released him in the morning.

MD: Oh my gosh.

MP: But they kept the medals.

MD: Wow.

MP: So, if we had had any medals, they would have been preserved in our family, but—

MD: Oh my gosh.

MP: —they kept the medals and—

[Fades out at 00:35:21.7]

[End of interview]