



*Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens:  
Memories of World War II*  
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**NAME OF INTERVIEWEE:** Leonard Pennachetti  
**NAME OF INTERVIEWERS:** Ernesto Virgulti  
**NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER:** Spencer Johnston  
**TRANSCRIBED BY:** Melinda Richter  
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**ABSTRACT**

Leonard Pennachetti was born in St. Catharines, Ontario on July 15, 1954. His grandfather, Giuseppe

Pennachetti, was born in Fermo, Marche, Italy on August 19, 1891 and was interned at Camp Petawawa during the Second World War. Giuseppe came to Canada in 1914, returned to Italy in 1922, married, and then came back to Canada that same year. Giuseppe started a concrete block business in his backyard (1 West Street, in Thorold) where he made concrete blocks by hand. He was arrested after the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) found dynamite in his barn. Giuseppe used the dynamite for clearing farmers' land (one of his other occupations) but the RCMP saw him as a threat. Giuseppe was held at the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) grounds in Toronto before being taken to Petawawa. He was interned for about a year. His wife, Maria, kept the business going with the help of her sons during Giuseppe's internment. After Giuseppe's release, sons, Primo and John, served in the Canadian Forces. Once they returned they convinced their father to buy machinery to take their business to the next level. The business became very successful. The family bought land in Beamsville, thinking that the government was going to expand the canal in Thorold and they would have to move the concrete business. The canal was not expanded onto their land and they decided to turn the purchased land into a vineyard. Leonard helped his grandfather in the vineyard and ended up going into the winery business, eventually opening Cave Springs Winery.

## **INTERVIEW**

**LP: Leonard Pennachetti, interviewee**

**EV: Ernesto Virgulti, interviewer**

**SJ: Spencer Johnston, videographer**

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 00:00:10]

[Text: Leonard Pennachetti. Grandson of internee Giuseppe Pennachetti]

EV: So, can you give us your name, date of birth and place of birth?

LP: My name is Leonard Pennachetti. I was born in, uh, St. Catharines, Ontario, on, uh, July 15, 1954.

EV: Okay. And the name of the internee?

LP: Uh, my grandfather, Giuseppe Pennachetti, was, uh, an internee during the war.

EV: And when was he born?

LP: He born in, on August 19, 1891 in Fermo, uh, which is in Marche region of Italy.

EV: And do you know when he came to Canada?

LP: Yes, he came to Canada in, uh, 1914, uh, first as, as a single adult, um, and lived in Thorold, here in the Niagara, uh, from that point until 1922 when he went back to Italy, married my grandmother, Maria, and then they returned to Thorold in the same year.

EV: Okay. So he married in Italy and then came to Canada. Um, and did he have children before he came or did they have—

LP: No.

EV: —were all his children born—

LP: All of their children were born here in Thorold.

EV: Okay. Uh, well, what did they do here? What was their occupation?

LP: Well, he—My understanding is that he came—When he first came there was work in construction of the Welland Canal. I'm not certain about that but that, that was one of the things that we were told, um, growing up. And, uh, beyond that he, um, he ended up doing odd jobs, I know, like, part of the story prior to the war, of course, was the D, D, Depression years. I know that he never, um, collected whatever the welfare—

EV: Relief.

LP: —employment that they provided you during the uh, uh, um, Depression years. Uh, he did odd jobs. I know that it, it connects to the story of the internship actually. He did things like in the winter time going down to Lake Ontario cutting blocks of ice and, and selling them in the days before refrigeration for, uh, ice boxes and I think in residences. That sort of thing. He, he collected firewood. Sold firewood. Um, odd jobs like that, uh, but then he started, uh, a small, really backyard business in Thorold, um, with a partner, initially, which was, which involved manufacturing on a, on a small scale, um, uh, concrete blocks. So making, um, individual masonry units in a, in a fairly primitive way with a, with a small, uh, block machine which would involve moulds and, and hand mixing and the uh, uh, concrete and then, and then pressing the blocks out and I think the way they dried them, they just dried them naturally in the sun. So he had that business, um, during, I guess, during the years leading up to the war.

EV: Was that in, um, not around his home? Did he have another—?

LP: Well, I think the business started, um, in a location near his home, not far from his home but I guess sort of a commercial location and it ended up in his backyard, literally. Um, and that's where it was, uh, when the war broke out.

EV: And how many children did he have?

LP: He had four boys. Uh, uh, my, um, my uncle, Primo, was the oldest, uh, hence the name. [EV laughs]

LP: Uh, my father, John, was next. And then, and then, um, my uncle Ennio, uh, who was, who went by Andy here in Canada. And then they had a, a younger brother Lou, who's their only, who's the only surviving son alive today. There was a daughter born, um, I believe after my uncle Lou, I'm not sure. [EV clears throat] Uh, but she died, uh, within days of, of her birth. So four boys in the family.

EV: And can you tell us how, to the best of your recollection, how life was like during the years before the war.

LP: Well—

EV: The neighbourhood...

LP: Yeah. The, I mean, the, the kids were born in the '20s and my father was born, I think, in 1924. His brother, his older brother would have been born in somewhere around '23, something like that. Um, so they, they learned Italian at, at home. They didn't learn English until they went to school. Um, I think my grandmother must have been a stay-at-home mom as would have been the custom in those days. But she was certainly involved in, in, uh, the business as well. Um, and, um, they would have,

you know, grown up in—That part of Thorold became a little bit of an Italian enclave. West Street, which is on the, uh, west side of the old part of Thorold, uh, most of the families on the street were Italian. And, and, uh, so I think it was a fairly, um, [EV clears throat] homogenous neighbourhood of, of Italian immigrants. Um, all more or less, um, the children more or less the same age growing up together and, and, uh, uh, I think from different parts of Italy, not, not only the Marche, from, from various parts of Italy.

EV: They always stayed in the same neighbourhood or home?

LP: They did, um, really up until, uh, the '50s. Uh, there was, uh, the original home was number 63 Albert Street. Uh, and then they, they built a house across the street on which is 1 West Street, still there today. Both of those homes are still there. And, um, it was, it was in the backyard of 1 West Street, which was really, in those days, on the edge of town. There really was no, um, development beyond that point so they were, they were living on the edge of town. West Street was probably called West Street 'cause it was the western edge of Thorold. And, uh, uh, [EV clears throat] so in the backyard it was really open fields, um, and that's where the business was located.

EV: So in addition to the concrete blocks, um, what else did he do, uh?

LP: Well, I, as I understand it when, when, uh, that business got underway that was his main business. I think he also, um, did excavation of, of, uh, home foundations. I guess there were many cases where, where homes were retrofit with basements and the blocks were used to create, um, you know, the walls in the basements of these homes. So he would literally, uh, by hand, excavate, um, lower the, the floors of existing homes. I suppose, jack them up and lay the blocks around the perimeter to create a basement. Uh, so that was, I know, one of the things he did. I can remember as a child driving around with him and he'd point out houses in St. Catherines that he had done that to, where he had

done the excavation of the basement and provided—I'm not sure whether that would have been prior to the house being built or sometimes as retrofits. And I know that my, my father and my uncles helped him in that, uh, in that part of the business as well. But the primary business, I think, was the actual manufacture. But by hand, I mean, manufacturing is putting it [EV laughs] putting it more elegantly. It was really, you know, kind of a what we today would call a cottage industry at most.

[fades out at 00:07:58; fades in at 00:07:59]

EV: Okay, so do you know what happened when Giuseppe was arrested and, uh, can you describe the scene? Was it an evening, uh, or day?

LP: Not sure what time of day it was. It was probably during the day because my father told me this story and, and of course I'll never forget it. Um, I remember when he told me the story. It was on my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. I was in Port Deluise in a restaurant and I just was shocked, um, by the whole thing. But, uh, uh, anyway. What happened was my dad was, um, at home at the time and, uh, no, I don't—For some reason I don't think my, my, uh, grandfather was around, um, or maybe, maybe he was in the house. But, it was my dad who, who met the RCMP who showed up in the yard. And, uh, rather than going and asking for his parents they said, they asked my dad, “Where does, where's the dynamite? Where does your father keep the dynamite?” And my father, being a kid and being deferential to authority, they were, they were cops, you know, he, he, uh, and he knew where it was, uh, he took them up to the loft in the barn, which was behind the house and showed it to them. Well, on the surface it sounds like, 'Well, what the hell was he doing with dynamite?' Um, uh, as it turned out there's an explanation for that. As I mentioned before, he was, uh, he used to cut wood and sell it for, I think for fuel wood but he also used to do, um, land clearing, uh, as part of that. So he would contract with farmers to clear fields for them, uh, and the only way, in those days, they could move the stumps of trees after they, they cut the trees down was to use dynamite to blow the roots out of the ground

so that they could actually use it for agriculture. They didn't have Caterpillars to do, to do that kind of work like we have today. So, he had the dynamite for that purpose, so it was a legitimate purpose, um, to have the dynamite but, um, that was all the evidence that they needed. Uh, as, as I was told, by my dad, um, it, in those days, after the declaration of the War Measures Act, um, it sounds like they, they relied on informants and someone must have had a grudge against my grandfather for, for whatever reason. Uh, there was some rumour that he'd had a former business partner that'd had a disagreement and, um, my, my family believed that that former business partner, who was also Italian, uh, may have, um, said to the RCMP that, that he was a fascist and that, and that, you know, he had dynamite in his possession. And so, uh, that was all the evidence they needed. So my dad took them up, showed them the dynamite. They had it and that was it. So they, they, um, I presume, used that as a pretext to, to arrest my grandfather and they took him away. And they didn't, uh, they had no idea where he went. Um, he was gone and, uh, I think it was the intervention of the parish priest at Holy Rosary Church in Thorold who, uh, was able to find out what was going on. And, uh, I know that there was, uh, a, a, a, an Italian doctor in Welland by the name of Scozzafave—

EV: Scozzafave

LP: —who had been taken away.

EV: Yes.

LP: And I think my grandmother ended up befriending his wife, uh, because they were in the same circumstance. Uh, I do know that they, they a, after some time found out that there was a kind of transit camp set up at the CNE in Toronto. And so they all went there because, because, uh, they thought that they would at least be able to see him, which they did, but it was, the way my father described it there was like a fenced-in compound, something like out of, you know, the Soviet Union



or, or you see these films post-war films of, of, you know, camps where people were held prisoners and that's what it was like. And they had, my dad said they had, you know, German Shepherd dogs keeping people away so they, they could see him behind the fence but they, they weren't allowed to go and talk to him. And there was this dog snarling at them. So it was, it sounds exactly like a scene from, from, as I said, you know, the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany or something like that. And, uh, they then that was it. They weren't able to talk to him and they, so they went back to Thorold and, and he was, after that, as I understand it, brought to Petawawa, which is where they all ended up. And, and he spent whatever period of time. As I understand it, it was either just under or just over a year in Petawawa, um, and, uh, completely without contact with the family.

EV: So, at the time of his arrest and subsequent to his arrest he was never given any reason or your grandmother wasn't given, no, none of the kids weren't given any reason for other than the dyn—this dynamite.

LP: This dynamite story, my, it, it sounds—The way my dad told the story it was, that was, that was the evidence they needed. They, they didn't have to make any connection to any plot to, you know, destroy public property or anything. They, the fact that he had dynamite in his possession was sufficient, uh, to allow him to, to detain him.

EV: Yeah.

LP: And so that, um, not sure whether any proce—legal procedures brought ir anything like that. I doubt it. Um, you know, by the sounds of what happened to other people, it's unlikely.

EV: Um, a lot of the internees were members of, uh, organizations like Sons of Italy or some taught Italian. So he wasn't affiliated with any other organization.

LP: [shakes his head]

EV: It was strictly—And, and, and I have heard about this situation with informants. So, you know—

LP: Yeah.

EV: —perhaps it's correct. I'm sure.

LP: Yeah, the—I mean, he didn't—My grandfather was a pretty quiet, unassuming guy. He was not, uh, I mean certainly he wouldn't have taught Italian because he could hardly speak English.

EV: Hmm.

LP: Um, uh, he, and he was a, a simple guy. I mean, you know, he, he was a *cotidiano* in, in Italy, uneducated, um. He may have been a member of s Sons, the Sons of Italy or some local—

EV: Yeah.

LP: —social organizations, certainly the parish, the Holy Rosary and, and their life revolved around that church.

EV: Yes.

LP: It did for the whole time I was growing up and I'm sure it did at that time too. I mean, that, that was, the community was, was very much, um, integrated with the Catholic church.

EV: That's right.

LP: If it was, if they had a social life in some way it was connected back to the church. And it was of course, the parish priest that was able to intervene on their behalf, uh, when my grandfather got taken away. Beyond the church I don't think they would have been very much involved.

EV: Yeah. Um, do you know if he was able to write letters to your grandmother or—

LP: You know—

EV: —did he have any contact?

LP: —I don't think so. I mean, I, I, I think we would have those letters but he, he was illiterate too, you know. He signed his name with an X. He didn't—

EV: Hmm.

LP: So he would not have been even capable of writing letters, I don't think.

EV: Yeah.

LP: So no, I, I doubt it and if there were letters I'm sure we'd know about them.

EV: Okay.



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[fades out at 00:15:19]

[fades in a 00:15:20]

EV: So, um, how was life like for your family, for your grandfather's family when he was away, uh, in the camp?

LP: Well, obviously hard. I mean, the, he was the main bread winner.

EV: Yeah.

LP: Uh, my, uh, my uncle and my father, my, my uncle, Primo, and my father ended up serving during the war so they would have been—

EV: Really?

LP: Yeah. That was one of the ironies of this story.

EV: [laughs]

LP: I mean, my father told me that, I couldn't believe it, but it was, it wasn't long after he was returned that, uh, they ended up as a, as a, they were both enlisted during the war, the older of his sons. Um, so they were able to obviously, um, get, get involved in helping in, in his absence. In fact, I think that's what precipitated my dad to quit school. Uh, because he, he, uh, you know, he was needed at home and, um, uh, I don't think he got, uh, beyond grade ten in high school and, and that would have been the precipitating event. Because the business needed to carry on. And my grandmother, I mean, the stories were legendary in Thorold. I mean, I grew up, um, for years and years hearing people telling me

when they, you know, when they found out who I was they would tell me stories about how, um, my grandmother would be back in the backyard making blocks, um, in this little machine which I still have, actually. Um, you know and she—So she carried on the business. She would have used her sons to help her. Um, but you know she, she worked, uh, as you can imagine, much harder than she ever had because she had all of the responsibilities of a young family and now the whole business. The kids, I think, probably grew up pretty fast as a result. And, uh, yeah, it was hard. And the other thing was that I know that the RCMP did try to, um, I think they came in, in, in with some forms or papers. They, they, they, they tried to get her to sign the business over to them because she, they, on the, on the pretext that she wouldn't be able to, uh, run it anymore and she just refused to sign anything and, and, uh, and stood her ground and then, and kept the business going. So she kept the business going during that whole period in my grandfather's absence with the help of my, my father and, and my uncles. So yeah, hardship, no doubt, um, but, you know, it certainly was, uh, character building, I think, for everybody. Uh, as far as their social circles went, I've never heard anything negative about that, but remember, I said that it was a pretty tight, tightly knit Italian community where they lived so I, I doubt there would have been much in the way of, uh, recrimination from their immediate, uh, friends and, and associates. Beyond that I'm not, I'm not, I'm not sure. And I know that the, the, the parish priest had intervened on their behalf so again they, they, they got some support locally. Uh, I don't think there was much of a stigma. But again, I, I never really explored that issue with them.

EV: But it was thanks to, uh, your grandmother that, uh, basically this family survived this—

LP: Yeah—

EV: —experience.

LP: —when you think about it, I mean, that business which started out as a backyard, um, you know,

one at a time, uh, punch out a, a concrete block and, and let it dry in the sun business, uh, it, after the war my father and my uncle turned it into a multi-million dollar, multi-location manufacturing enterprise which included not only, uh, blocks but, um, pre-stressed, uh, concrete flooring systems, ready-mixed plants. I mean, it became a very big business. And that's where it started. And, uh, you know, if my grandmother had signed away the business, um, who knows whether that, any of that would have occurred.

EV: Interesting how fate—

LP: Mmmhmm.

EV: —kind of—And what was it—what did it—What was its name after?

LP: Well, it started as Thorold Concrete Block and then it and then it, um, uh, later became General Concrete uh, with, uh, the original plant was in Thorold and, uh, that, that was started after the war, so when my father and uncle got back [laughs] from serving in, in the, uh, Canadian army. Um, they, uh, they, they had the idea to, to, um, take the business to the next level and, and, um, the way my father told the story, there were literally dozens of people across Niagara making blocks one at a time like they were and he had the idea to buy, um, a machine, uh, which they did secondhand from the U.S. that, that would mechanize and, and, you know, produce, you know, hundreds or thousands of blocks at, at—

EV: Hmm.

LP: —the same, in the same period of time as they could probably make ten or twenty of them with the old machine. So, they did that and they were very successful and in the period after the war, a

booming economy, uh, they started out in Thorold with, with Thorold Concrete Block. That became General Concrete and they ended up with plants in, um, in, uh, Stoney Creek and, and two in Toronto, um, one in, um, in, um, Morrisburg, Eastern Ontario. So, it was very big business, very successful.

EV: So this was primarily your father and uncle?

LP: Yeah.

EV: Your father's name?

LP: All my—My father was John and his brother was Primo and they were the two, uh, drivers behind, behind that business but my uncle, Lou, uh, their youngest brother al—, was also involved and my uncle, Andy, um, after a long sojourn in the seminary, my grandmother wanted him to be a priest but he never did, um, uh, finish the, uh, uh, seminary so he ended up coming back and also working in the business but the, the primary drivers were my father and my uncle, Primo and, uh, later my uncle, Lou, who was involved in sales.

EV: So when your grandfather came back from the camp, um, how old were your, was your father and your uncle? How, well, how long did it take for—

LP: Well, it would have been sometime in the '40s, I guess, like—

EV: So—

LP: —early '40s and they were born in '20, my dad was born in '24—

EV: So 18.

LP: —so he would have been late teens. Like, I mean, he was, he served in the army so I don't know what the rules were. Uh, but yeah, he would have been around, yeah, late teens, uh, my uncle, Primo, maybe a year, year a half older. Um, that was, would have been their age roughly.

EV: Yeah.

LP: Uh, and then when, when he came back I presume they, they, uh—Well they then went off to the army so he probably came back, uh, and then they got drafted. Ended up, my father ended up out West in, in, um, I think in Kamloops.

EV: Mmmhmm [clears his throat]

LP: He did, um, Morse code, um, sort of in, um, intercepting from British Columbia of the Japanese signals.

EV: Hmm.

LP: And that was his job. I, I guess they sort of put him through a battery of tests and he was a good type—, he could, he could type, uh, fast. And so they streamed him into this program where he could learn Morse code and then he did, he did, uh, that Morse code interception from, there was an army base somewhere up in the mountains in B.C., picking up Japanese signals. He was also fond of telling the story about how they would always pick, get signals from different cities in Japan, like, like Tokyo or wherever. One of the cities was, uh, Hiroshima and one morning he arrived near the end of the war and, and, uh, night shift said they couldn't get the Hiroshima signal. And he said, “You guys



don't know what you're doing. I'll, I'll pick it up." And sure enough, he couldn't pick it up either and of course that was the day they dropped the a-bomb on Hiroshima, so right near the end of the war.

EV: Wow.

LP: So he ended up there. I'm not sure what my uncle, Primo, did during the war but they both were in the army and then back back. And it was when they came back that they, that they, um, talked my grandfather into taking the big risk with, with buying a, an automated machine and setting up a proper manufacturing business which is what they did.

EV: Hmm. And then your father then bought some land, a vineyard.

LP: Well, that came much later.

EV: [laughs]

LP: Um—

EV: While we're here so—

LP: [laughs]

EV: —how'd you get into the, having one of the most successful wineries, certainly in Ontario and, uh—

LP: Well, you know, we, as being Italians, I mean, we always, in that same place that I just described,

just around the corner they built a new house in behind, uh, where that barn was where the dynamite was stored, um, I used to make wine with my grandfather in the garage there and, and, uh, the reason we got into the, the business, I suppose, initially was the, um, the original block plant was expropriated by the Seaway Authority It was located right beside the canal in Thorold at Locke 7. And the feds had decided to reroute the canal so they expropriated all the land along the new corridor that they had chosen. And so my dad had to find a new location for that plant and he bought land in West St. Catherines for that purpose and then it turned out that they never did change the route of the Welland Canal. [rolls his eyes] The federal government.

EV: [laughs]

LP: Um, but, uh, the land that he bought had vineyards on it in St. Catherines and so we got, uh, involved in, um—My grandfather was still alive at the time and he, he decided to turn the—It was an abandoned vineyard. It wasn't—It hadn't been, uh, properly, uh, pruned and, and farmed for many years. And so we brought it back into production. So that was sort of the beginning of our, our, um, agricultural experience, I guess.

EV: Was it here?

LP: It was in—No, it's just down the road from where we're sitting. But we did sell those grapes to Jordan Wines which is a company that started in this building we're sitting in now. So, it's an interesting, uh, intersection in our, our face.

EV: So when did you take over this area?

LP: Well, I learned about grape growing at, at that farm which, that abandoned farm which we brought

back into production. My grandfather, I became my grandfather's designated helper. I was too young to work at the, at the block plant and, uh, uh, so he kind of recruited me and I, I mean, I loved being with him so it wasn't, wasn't a hard thing for me to do and I, I—So I got interested in, in grape growing through that experience. And then I—And at the same time was learning about the climate of Niagara and so I ended up, um, uh, talking my dad into buying a better site, a place where we could grow the kinds of grapes that we grow today and that was on Cave Spring Road in Beamsville. So we bought, we bought some land there in, in the early '70s and, uh, we've been doing it ever since. We've been expanding our, our farm operation.

[fades out at 00:27:11]

[fades in at 00:27:12]

EV: —what was on camera, our last sort of sentence was—

LP: Well, I, I said that we, we bought, I talked my dad into buying land on Cave Spring Road in the early '70s and we, we—So we bought, uh, the farm where I live today and we've been expanding our agricultural operation in that area ever since, right down to today.

EV: And, um, what , I guess your dad never, passed away before he saw this winery?

LP: Yeah. My dad died in, uh, 1985 and we started the winery in 1986. Our first vintage for Cave Spring was in, in, uh, '86 and which means that this year we are now celebrating our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of making wine.

EV: Hmm.

LP: Of course before that we were growing grapes for more than a decade.

EV: Yeah. Um, I must ask you about your grandmother because, uh, she's legendary and she was such a remarkable woman. I had the great pleasure of knowing her.

LP: Mmmhmm.

EV: And so during all this, I mean, you said that she was basically the reason why the family got over this, the, the whole internment experience.

LP: Hmm.

EV: Um, and after that, especially in her last, uh, last decade of her life, uh, um, she kept working for the community and, uh, did all sorts of charitable work, making pasta every morning.

LP: [laughs]

EV: Uh, could you tell us a little bit about your grandmother?

LP: Well, she was a tough lady for sure. Um, she, uh, you know, I mean they both came from humble circumstances in Italy, so everything they achieved in Canada was, was, um, you know just far beyond, I'm sure, their wildest dreams, uh, in Italy, what, what they could never have achieved, I don't believe, in Italy, what they have, what they did here. Uh, she, uh, was very strong, I mean, uh, very, uh, stubborn. Um, that would probably have stood her in good stead when my grandfather was away. Um, she was very involved in the community so I, I'm sure that, that was a big help to her during that period as well, I mean, especially the church. So, um, she—And she was really the public face of our

family, always was. My grandfather was not that sociable and, um, uh—So she, she played that role. And, and, uh, that was our, you know, our family was, most people understood or who knew our family, knew my grandmother first and foremost. And, uh, my grandfather was not someone that, that, uh, people would ordinarily, uh, encounter or, or, or, you know, have much of a relationship with. She was the public face. And, uh, she, um, I mean, she, she saw a lot in her life. I mean, uh, that was probably the worst episode but, you know, her, her—The business ended up, um, her, her sons ended up, you know, uh, in a disagreement over the business. That, that would have been a troubling time for her because the business ended up, uh, uh, being lost as a result of that conflict and I'm sure that was a heartbreaking thing for her. But she also saw the beginnings of this business and she was around when we were starting—

EV: Hmm.

LP: —uh, and, you know, as you say, she made pasta everyday. She was incredible that way. In fact, when she died she, she had I don't know how many, two or three freezers full, nests of pasta that she, she, she just—I think it was part of that Depression era—

EV: Yeah.

LP: —saving, uh, mentally that you just, you, you, you just, you could never take anything for granted. So she, uh, you know, had this kind of treasure chest of food. There had to be food, you know, just in case, I suppose. And so when, we were eating her pasta more than a year after she died, I think. It was, was an, an amazing thing that [laughing] there was so much of it left.

EV: But she made it for the spaghetti supper—



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LP: She made it, yeah, actually that, you're right—

EV: That's how I first got to—

LP: Yeah, she would start probably the day after the, the spaghetti supper fundraiser at the parish hall, uh, she's probably start the next day all over again getting next year's batch ready. Maybe they did it more than once a year. I think they must have. Um, but she was always doing it. And that was the purpose. She would, she would just uh, um, do it to raise funds for, as I remember it was the crippled children—There were various charities that they raised money for.

EV: Yeah. I attended a few of them.

LP: And she recruited all the women in Thorold—

EV: Yeah. [laughs]

LP: —to, to help with that.

EV: I guess it's safe to say that basically she saved the family not, the business as well, but I mean, uh, the family would have never gotten through that period without her.

LP: That's true—

EV: Or without her courage—

LP: Right.

EV: —and strength, you know.

LP: That's true.

EV: Yeah.

LP: That's true, yeah. I mean, it would have, I'm sure, I don't know about any other of the, uh, families who, whose, um, uh, fathers were taken away but certainly in our case, uh, we were, we were lucky to have my grandmother, Maria, um, at the helm of the family. Because, uh...a, a mother with less strength, with less, uh, gumption, you know, could have easily been crushed by those circumstances.

EV: Yeah.

[fades out at 00:32:51]

[fades in out 00:32:52]

EV: Um, did anybody in your family, your grandfather or your grandmother or anyone ever receive an apology—

LP: [shakes his head]

EV: —on behalf of the authorities or the Canadian government for the internment?

LP: No, not that I'm aware of. I wasn't even aware of it until my teenage years but I, uh, no, as far as a know there never any apology or, or rationalization or anything like that.

EV: And do you think the Canadian government, uh, should compensate the families of the internees in any way, whether it's financially or symbolically?

LP: Well, you know, I followed, I, I remember they did something like that for the Japanese out West, if i'm not mistaken and it sounded to me like their treatment was worse in some ways 'cause they were—Maybe there were business con, confiscate here as well—

EV: Yes.

LP: That didn't happen in our case. Um, but, you know, it's one of those tragedies of life. I mean, war is war, I, I, guess, um. We bounced back as a family. I mean, in some ways it strengthened us. Um, the right thing to do, I'm sure would be to apologize. Uh, it's been done in many other cases. I guess I'm a bit torn on the subject because on the one hand I think, 'Yeah, that's the right thing to do.' On the other hand I think, you know, throughout history, I mean, wars have, have—I mean, when I consider even today, um, what families are going through in places like, you know, Afghanistan and or, or all kinds of places in Africa, the Middle East and so on, I mean, we can, we can only count our blessings. Uh, uh, Canada's been, apart from this one episode, a, a great country for our family, uh, to have come to. Uh, that doesn't in any way diminish the, um, um, the injustice of what was done to my, my grandfather. So, um, I guess on the one hand I think, yes it was wrong, it should be, it should be, um, uh, at the very least apologized for. On the other hand I look around the world and I think, uh, we didn't do so badly by Canada. So it's a bit of a, I guess, a mixed feeling that I have.

EV: Obviously a financial compensation is difficult but, uh, perhaps something more symbolic, uh, you know, monuments or that sort of thing, you know, maybe is that, is that in order?



LP: That, I think it, it would, it would probably be a way of, of healing the wounds that a lot of these families, like ours, um, uh, you know, endured. Um, and it's certainly been done in other cases. I mentioned the Japanese out West but also, uh, you know, these, what's going on right now with the, the residential schools for—

EV: Mmmhmm.

LP: —for, uh, Native Canadians and so on. So, it's not as though government hasn't done that in other cases so given that those precedents, it, it would make sense I would think, yes.

EV: Do you have any closing thoughts on the whole issue?

LP: Well, I think the War Measures Act is a, is a pretty, um, Draconian piece of legislation. Um, it was only, the last—It was only used once since then and that was famously by Trudeau during the, um, uh, uprising in Quebec and I can remember at the time, I think that would have been around the time I learned about this story, um, uh, thinking, 'Well, they murder, um, Pierre LaPorte. Um, how do you deal with that kind of an insurrection?' So I can remember thinking that Trudeau did the right thing, um, at that point in time. It's tough to make, uh, those kinds of decisions and the people who make them, um, are thinking of the greater good of the society that they're charged to protect. Uh, and there are causalities, always. I mean, there were, certainly I'm sure there were abuses in Quebec during, during the, uh, War Measures Act period in the '70s. Um, but those are, you know, it's a big, it's a big issue to try to, uh, grapple with because on the one hand you're protecting society at large and very often there are, there's collaborative damage for individuals. And we happen to be among the individuals who ended up with this collateral damage, uh, during the Second World War.

[fades out at 00:37:36]