

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

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**LOCATION OF INTERVIEW:** Pickering, ON

**NAME OF INTERVIEWEE:** Aldo Bacci

**NAME OF INTERVIEWER:** Melina De Guglielmo

**NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER:** Louanne Aspillaga

**TRANSCRIBED BY:** Lisa Kadey

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**PROJECT NOTE:**

**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 have not edited this transcript for errors.**

**ABSTRACT**

Aldo Bacci was born October 28, 1924 in Detroit, Michigan. In this interview, Aldo talks about growing up in the Italian communities of Detroit and Toronto, and his family's experiences as Italian-Canadians during the Second World War. Aldo's father, Ruggiero Bacci, served in the Italian Army, and came to Canada at the age of 17. Ruggiero was a member of the Fascist party, and he remained in close contact with Italy while he was in North America. Ruggiero was also a prominent member of many Italian organizations, including the Casa D'Italia. Aldo recalls riding home on the streetcar in June of 1940 and seeing a man reading a newspaper with a headline declaring that Italy was going to war. Ruggiero was at work at the time when he was picked up by the police. His wife had a nervous breakdown because of this, and although Aldo had just finished Grade 9, he had to quit school and start working. The day his father was released from his internment, Aldo was conscripted into the Canadian army. He describes his experiences in training. Aldo also describes the types of discrimination that Italians faced at the time, from

ethnic slurs to the store windows of Italian shopkeepers being smashed. To close the interview, Aldo talks about his family life after the war, marrying his wife, Fran, having children, and starting a construction company with his brother.

**INTERVIEW**

**AB: Aldo Bacci, interviewee**

**MDG: Melina De Guglielmo, interviewer**

**LA: Louanne Aspillaga, videographer**

**LB: Linda Brankston, niece**

**AL: Alda Lund, daughter**

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 00:00:10]

MDG: Okay, this is Melina De Guglielmo interviewing Aldo Bacci on May 25, 2011 in Pickering, On--Ontario, at his son's home. Okay, so, um, please state your full name and, um, when you were born and where.

AB: My full name is Aldo Bacci. I was born the 28 of October, 1924 in Detroit, Michigan. And for five years, I didn't speak any English, only Italian.

MDG: So, that was important to your family that you were speaking—

AB: Well, my father was an immigrant. In 1922, he came to America.

MDG: Okay.

AB: He met my mother and they got married in 19, uh— you, uh, yeah, you got the thing from the paper, wh—what date did they get married?

AL: The year you were born.

AB: They were quick. [Laughs]

AL: It's June 24.

MDG: So, your dad, uh, was originally from—

AB: From Tuscany.

MDG: From Tuscany.

AB: Yeah.

MDG: And he—and he came to the U.S. first.

AB: No, no. He came to Canada. How he got into the U—U.S., I don't know. [Laughs]

MDG: Oh, okay.

AB: Because, uh, what I know—I used to know him as my father, but a lot of people used to call him Sam, and I couldn't figure this out.

MDG: Okay, and why—

AB: Because—

MDG: —did they call him Sam?

AB: Because, uh, when he went, went to the United States, he wa— got there illegally, like a hundred—a thousand other Italians. And he—he needed to get a job. He got a job, he worked for, uh, Dodge Brothers (ph). There was no Chrysler corporation yet. Ah, they had nothing to pay, the, the Rouge River plant, there's a Rouge River over here [Laughs] in Detroit.

MDG: And—and what made him want to move to, to Canada?

AB: Well, because he was a—it's a long story, starts—

MDG: Sure, go for it, and start from the beginning

AB: It starts with World War I.

MDG: Okay.

AB: And at 17, he—he joined the, uh, Italian army. [Crying]

MDG: Uh, no problem.

AB: Third Alpine Division, *Terzo Alpini*. And after the war was over, the two main Communist parties of Europe were Italy and France. And in Italy they were trying to take over. So, they used to send them, the *Carabinieri* to quell the Royal Riots, or whatever was going on. But they used to get beat up.

MDG: Oh, no.

AB: [Laughs] So then—then they turned around, and they sent a group of *Alpinis* with them. Now, the—the *Alpinis* were told not to load their guns, but my father told them, here. They loaded their guns, 'cause, uh—there's a story, I don't know how true it is, but there's an Italian city called Spezia in Tuscany.

MDG: Uh-huh.

AB: It's—it's a naval re—a naval city, a naval resort. And there were six cadets coming home on—on furlough. The Communists caught up to them, and I think they killed one to two. And one kid was trying to come up the wall, and he put his hands on the wall, and they cut his hands off. Good people. But the—the—the *fascisti* made him pay because they caught this guy, and they cut his hands off, and they put a be—they killed, they killed him. Now—

MDG: And so your dad was part of this group, or he saw this going on?

AB: No. He—he lived in the hometown.

MDG: Okay.

AB: But because my grandfather had—he was a—a butcher—

MDG: A butcher?

AB: Butcher. He supplied meat to four towns. He also was a [unclear; 0:03:51.8 *alimentatore*], he sold all kinds of stuff, uh, beer, wine, food. And my father used to be fighting with the Communists, and half the people were Communists, and my grandfather kept saying to him, “You gotta stop ‘cause you’re, you’re ruining my business.” My father says to him, “You know what? You think more of money than you do of the country? I’m going to America.” When he came to Can—Canada, he landed in, uh, Quebec. And his ship was called Cozerta (?), I remember he told me that.

MDG: Mm-hm.

AB: And he had a piece of paper with an address on it, and it was on Ontario Street. ‘Cause he had an aunt lived there. She was married to a guy called Tullio DeMachi (?). And, uh, he kept showing to people this paper. They kept pointing. [Points finger] So, he walked from Union Station to, uh...Ontario Street and then up the street to the address, and then he went and found his, his aunt. But there was another guy with him, too. Uh, I can’t remember the other guy’s name anymore. All I know, the guy killed on a motorcycle in Toronto.

MDG: Oh.

AB: So, that—that was it, then now—now, since he—he—since when they used to send the group of, uh, uh, the ca— *Alpini* with the police. Now, when they used [unclear; 0:05:13.0] they started to talk to the police.

MDG: This is back in Italy now?

AB: In Italy, yeah.

MDG: Yeah.

AB: And he finds out that the, uh, the, the police, the Carabinieri were getting four times the pay that he was getting in the army. He wasn't stupid, eh? [Laughs] He, he made an application and they had a si—a test. He passed the test and he became a Carabinieri.

MDG: And just to get this on tape as well, this is—you're talking about Ruggiero Bacci (ph).

AB: Yeah.

MDG: That's your father.

AB: My father.

MDG: Yeah. Okay, so then he came over to Canada, and—

AB: Met my mother, and we—they got married and, uh, I was born in Detroit. And two years later, uh, my brother was born in, in Detroit.

MDG: Your brother Alfo (ph)?

AB: Alfo, yeah.

MDG: Alfo Bacci. Okay. So, what do you remember about growing up in Detroit, do you remember—

AB: Not too much. All I can remember—I had a—my, my, my mother, my mother's family, uh, were called Deni (ph). And they—my grandmother had five daughters and two sons, but she also had given birth to two more boys that died in birth, childbirth. So, she had nine—she would have had nine children altogether.

MDG: Wow.

AB: But her, her family came from, uh, Tuscany, too, a town called Cune. And it's, uh, it's up north of—a little farther north of—like, our town is only 800 metres above sea level. Her town is 14,000 metres above sea level. [Laughs] Uh, and I—I went there a few times because every time I went there we had to make a trip to go there. My father was—was no real navigator, eh, Linda? [Laughs] He says, 'Take this road.' I would take this road, and—and then I couldn't go any farther, 'cause the road, like [Gestures, brings his hands together in a narrowing motion]. So, I had to back up and go round and then I'd stop and I—I—I used to actually stop and ask people. Guys don't no—normally do this. [Laughs] And they told me there's another—another road, you go another way. So, I went up the other way and I got to my mother's hometown and I had, uh—her, my grandmother, uh, my Deni family, her name was Matriah (?).

MDG: Okay, wow.



AB: And one of her—one of her, uh, relatives was a—an engineer. He built a dam, and they had the turbines for making, uh, electricity. They were—

MDG: Oh. And, and, and, and, um—so, your mom’s family decided to come straight to Canada. Or, they, they—

AB: Oh, yeah, no, they came here. They came here, yeah.

MDG: And settled in Toronto?

AB: Yeah.

MDG: Yeah.

AB: Now, my, um—one of the Deni family—

MDG: Yes.

AB: His name was Alberto Deni. He was known as the king of—of Italian immigrants in Montreal. If you go to Montreal, Mount Royal in the centre of Montreal, there’s a church at the top of the hill. It’s called Oratory of St. Joseph. You go in there, you see a big stained glass window, “In Memory of Alberto Deni”.

MDG: And this was your—oh, I guess, an ancestor? Or was it—

AB: I used to call him great, great-uncle.

MDG: Oh, great-uncle?

AB: And he had a—he had a house, like, a mansion in, uh, Montreal. It has the wall all around it. It had a gate, as I remember. ‘Cause I didn’t go there ‘til 1936. There was this plaque on the wall, this was the residence of the original—residence of Alberto Deni. ‘Cause they used to have horses and buggies in those days, and they had a gate, and they had—his stable was part of his estate. And this guy made a lot of money. He died in 1913, a millionaire.

AL: Now, he brought immigrants from Italy to work on the railroad, right?

AB: Now, he had a lot of money, so—now, he had a wife and two sons in the hometown in Italy, in, in Cune. She wouldn’t come to Canada. She refused him. Don’t ask me how he did it, but the church annulled the wedding so he could marry his French-Canadian, uh, bookkeeper. And he had another eight kids with her. [Laughs] Didn’t hear, they didn’t hear, hear about, uh, <0:09:47.3> having kids. And we, we—every time I used to go to Montreal, I used to go visit one in particular. Her name was Evelina (ph). She was the nicest of all these girls. Girls, they, they were [unclear; 0:09:59.8 away]. [Laughs]

MDG: So, this is all your—all your mom’s family? This—

AB: All my mom’s family.

MDG: Okay. And so mostly Montreal and Toronto.

AB: Yeah.

MDG: Okay. And so, um, taking you back to your early childhood, uh, growing up with your brother, what was that like, having, uh—having a brother?

AB: It went real good, 'cause my mother had a—an older brother. His name—oh, let me think. They called him Leo, but his name wasn't Leo. I found out his name was Elia (?). Everybody called him Leo, and—and he got married in Detroit. I remember the wedding. I was about four years old. He got married on a golf course. And... [Laughs] she was Sicilian. Everybody who was Sicilian was considered to be mob. Actually, she—actually, her, her father was mob. And, uh, she couldn't have any kids. They would—they, they took her to the doctor, she couldn't have any kids. So, he left her. He takes off and he goes to—to another uncle of my grandfather's, another great-uncle. He had a flower shop in L.A. One of the guys that started the Rose Bowl Parade.

MDG: Interesting.

AB: [Crying] Excuse me.

MDG: Oh, no problem.

AB: Ah.

MDG: Okay, so, at what point did your parents decide to then come back to Toronto?

AB: Well, in 1929, the Depression hit the United States first. Now, my mother was born in Toronto in, uh, 1898? Yeah. 1898. She was born in Toronto. She grew up in Toronto, but always

with—amongst our own people. ‘Cause those days, you, you didn’t go—if you married a Polish girl, you’re, you’re dead. [Laughs]

MDG: And what area of Toronto was the—was the Italian area, where the family—

AB: Oh, that time we lived, we lived at 255 McCaul Street, downtown Toronto. Anyway, I came from there, my grandfather had a barn in the backyard. He had this car that he brought from Italy. It was called [unclear; 0:12:23.3]. I don’t know if you ever saw it, I [unclear; 0:12:25.5] a picture where it had a b—big back and people used to sit up high, uh, like a old-fashioned car. And he not only had to buy the car, he had to bring over the, the guy that drove it and his wife, because he was a mechanic. Anything happened to the car, nobody else could fix it. So, you bring the, the driver, he was the driver and mechanic. And he brought his wife over. She went to work for Tim—Timothy Eaton in the house as a servant. And, uh, that’s all I can tell you.

MDG: And so you—when, when you came back to Toronto, did you move in with your—

AB: My grandparents.

MDG: —grandparents?

AB: Yeah.

MDG: Your, your mom’s parents?

AB: Well, that’s how it was in those days.

MDG: And what were your grandparents' names?

AB: Deni.

MDG: They were Deni? And—

AB: Her—uh, her maiden name was Matriah.

MDG: Matriah. And your grandfather?

AB: Oh, his name was Septimo (ph). He was the seventh son. [Laughs]

MDG: So, growing up in Toronto, having come from Detroit, growing up in Toronto, what was that like in this city?

AB: Oh, I don't remember that much about it because I, I—except that I used to get in a lot of trouble.

MDG: Oh.

AB: A lot of trouble.

MDG: Uh-oh. And did you go to school in, in Toronto?

AB: I'm trying to think. No, I started in Detroit. But when I went there, I was five years old for the kindergarten. I couldn't speak English. Well, Detroit—Little Italy in Detroit was like going

back to Italy. Everything was Italian, everybody was Italian. 'Cause that was in the twenties. Immi—immigrants by the millions were coming from Italy.

MDG: And, and upon coming back, um, to Toronto, where did your parents then find, find work?

AB: Well, my, my grandparents had a house at 196 Peter Street (ph). I called it a hotel, because there were at least 30 people living in that house.

MDG: Oh, really? Who was living there?

AB: Family. Uh, my mother had—my grandmother had five daughters and two boys. Some got married and bring more family. It's like my, my place sometimes. I say, "Nonno gotta go to sleep." I say, "Some of you guys don't sleep." Yeah, a—and, I couldn't get over it because this was a duplex. Like, side by side. And on the second floor they had knocked a hole through the wall, and you used to go from one house to the other house.

MDG: Oh, wow.

AB: And the other house belonged to one of my mother's sisters, uh, Marfiza (?). Her—that was her name, but then we called her Margaret. And she was married to a guy called Osvaldo Tamboso (?). They came from Spilimbergo, which is up in north Italy somewhere. I never went there, but his daughter, Joy, went—took a trip to the whole—to the old country, and went to the hometown her father was born in, in Spilimbergo.

MDG: And, and what was the first Toronto school that, that you attended?

AB: St. David.

MDG: St. David, and where—

AB: Now, that was on the north side of College Street. South of College Street was Little Italy. Oh, we belonged to St. Agnes parish, the only church in the world that had a pool hall under it. [Laughs] Pool hall, a snack bar, and a jukebox.

MDG: So, there would be social events, or, or—

AB: Oh, yeah. We had—the priests were, uh, Franciscan, Franciscan fr—priests. Father Ricardo, and Father Bellow (?). But we had an Irish priest, I don't know how he got in there. [Laughs] His name was—we used to call him Fa—his name was Father Patrick Crowley (?), but we used to call him Father Chicago. Because in those days, you couldn't dance on Sunday—Sunday. Toronto was controlled by the, uh, Masonic orders, Masons. You couldn't do anything on a Sunday except pray or—

MDG: So, your Sunday would be—you would have to go to, to church or mass?

AB: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

MDG: And then you would go down to the, to the—

AB: Church, yeah, you—my father never went to church.

MDG: No?

AB: No, he worked hard, he used to sleep on Sunday morning. But he would say, “You and your brother, go to church with gran—your mother—grandmother.” And we had to go to church with—with Nonna. But I—

MDG: And what did you think about that?

AB: Huh?

MDG: What did you think about that?

AB: Oh, [Laughs], I got into trouble over that. Because it—well, on the way to church, I always went ahead of them, way ahead of them. And the cl—on the way to the church, there was a pool hall, which we would just hang around. So, I, I would go in the pool hall, and there’d be a gang of us in there. And I’d wait for church to come out, because I wanted to go home and eat, eat a good meal. [Laughs]

MDG: And how old were you about, about the time that you remember going to the pool hall and hanging out there?

AB: Oh, any time after I was—after eight, eight, nine years old.

MDG: So, did you develop a lot of friends on your street?

AB: Oh, yeah.

MDG: Yeah? And were they mostly Italian?



AB: Mostly, mostly all Italian. We all would—

MDG: Do you remember any of their names?

AB: Uh, Lily Mofambi (?). Another family was DeSantis (?). Another family was, uh, uh, Alfispatici (?). They come from R—Frosinone (?). So, I, I drove all over Italy. Every time I went today, I, I rented a car and I drove. People thought I was crazy. I had to pay those buggers back. [Laughs] 'Cause I was going into Pisa one day, with my wife, and there was a big line of traffic trying to get out of Pisa. And they, they, they got a gate, like, you know. So, I'm trying to get there ahead of them, and my wife says, "What are you doing?" I—I says, "I'm going in." She says, "You won't make it." "Yes, I will." Crunch. I made it. [Laughs] I, I—years later, I went over there, I had my—her two sons [Pointing beside him], J—Jason and Josh. Heh, and I kept hitting, hitting things and they kept, "Nonno, you're cra—" I says, "Don't worry about it." They said, "What are you doing?" I said, "When I get to the—oh, well, when I get to take it back, I'll give them the steering wheel, and tell them the rest of the car's out in the parking lot." [Laughs]

MDG: So, very much a free spirit, then?

AB: Hmm?

MDG: You're very much a free spirit.

AB: Oh, yeah.

MDG: So, um, in—um, taking us back again to the, uh, early childhood upbringing, your dad went to work for what company when he—

AB: He worked for a Florentine lamp company which was owned by a—a *pizon* of his. Now, *pizon* means a real guy who came from the same town, eh? Because everyone calls an Italian a *pizon*, but they're not. You have to come from the same town. And his, his name was, uh, Jacobo Magi, he owned Florentine lamp company and Tuscan Manufacturing.

MDG: Okay. And what would your dad do for, for him?

AB: Now, he used to make lamps. You know, the tall lamps. And they used—had these metal bases on 'em. So, he had to buff the—uh, a buffing machine, buff 'em. He was always getting sick.

MDG: Oh, why?

AB: You know, they—and then my brother and I, we started a, a contracting firm of our own. It was called Willow Construction and, uh, we decided to bring my father so—make him work with us and so he could take it a little easier. He wouldn't work for us. [Laughs] So, we, we, uh—oh, how, how you say it, we, we made it a limited company. We, we, we—what do you do when you—

AL: Incorporate?

AB: We incorporated a limited company, and we made him president. Then he'd come to work for us, because he was the boss.

MDG: Because he was the boss. So, that was important to him, being the boss?

AB: Oh, yeah.

MDG: Yeah? [Laughs] Really?

AB: Oh, yeah.

AL: [Laughs]

MDG: So, um, going into, uh, close to the wartime, and, and so the late twenties and the—sorry, the late thirties, um, what was it like growing up in Toronto in that time, during that time?

AB: Well, uh, I was cl—I told you, the, the church had a pool hall and all the kids who—from that area, they always hung around together because we were all Italians. And there were a lot of Italian picnics.

MDG: And—and in terms of of—of The Order Sons of Italy, and being your dad's—

AB: Yeah, belonged the Sons of Italy.

MDG: Uh-huh.

AB: My father belonged to the Sons of Italy, *ex-combatientes*, veterans of the First World War. And there was about 200 Italians in Toronto that belonged to the first regiment in—during the second—First World War, and they wanted to—'cause [Laughs] Italy fought against Austria-Hungary, which was, uh, associated with Germany in the war. And Austria-Hungary were the

southern front of Germany. Now, the Italians were fighting with them, and my—I had this uncle, I tell you, this uncle from Spilimbergo, he was in the artillery in the regular army. ‘Cause most of the kids said they grew up in [unclear; 0:21:35.5], always went—or, like, America—American kids became, uh, uh...marines. Italian kids in the mountains all became *Alpini*. I— [unclear; 0:21:50.3] train of thought.

MDG: So, your dad—this is World War I, now.

AB: World War I.

MDG: Okay. And, and into World War II, when you were, when you were, um, I guess a 13—12 or 13—

AB: When I finished my, uh, uh, grade school—grade—uh, those days, there was no grade eight. It was senior fourth.

MDG: Okay.

AB: Because senior first, they had junior first, senior first, all the way up to eighth. Then in grade nine, my father made me—I didn’t want to go, I wanted to go to Central Tech. [Points in front of him] ‘You gotta go—you gotta go to the best Ca—Catholic school in— [Laughs] in Toronto.’ But he had—he had other things on his mind. This was a boys’ school, no girls. [Laughs]

MDG: So, which school was that?

AB: De La Salle Oaklands—uh, yeah, Oaklands. It was a—originally it was a big, uh, Irishman estate, O'Connor (ph) estate. It was on, um, Avenue Road just below St. Clair. Big estate. Now, when you went there, you—on one, one day a week, on a Monday, you had to wear a uniform. You had your choice, either go in the band or in the cadet corps. I took the cadet corps, my brother took the band [Laughs].

MDG: Oh, really? And why did you choose that?

AB: Well, he was three years younger, so he had come in afterwards. 'Cause I only went to the high school one year, in grade nine. Then, Italy broke out, and that was it. That was the end of the education.

MDG: Wow. So, um, June 10, 1940, which is the famous day when, when, uh, Italy declares war.

AB: 1940, uh, I had just finished my exams for grade nine.

MDG: Mm-hm.

AB: And I worked like a bastard for my father. You know, I had to bring home good results, or I'd—he make me pay for it. And I stood always in the top ten of my class. [Crying] A lot of years. I was coming home on the, on the streetcar from De La Salle, and the guy opens the paper, and it says Italy declared war. Now, my father told me before, a long time before that, Italy will have to go to war. It will have to go to war. But what he didn't tell me is that they'd have to hook up with Germany. And the reason for that being, when Italy went—decided to go against Abyssinia, who, who do you think put the, uh, sanctions on Italy? Canada. At the, at the [unclear; 0:24:41.1] made them put the sanctions on Italy, and, uh, [unclear; 0:24:46.8].

MDG: So, you're riding home on the streetcar, and—

AB: I see a newspaper, and I see Italy went to war. And I knew that was going to be trouble. 'Cause my father was a [unclear; 0:25:01.3 *segretario politico del Fascio*], *Fascio* was called [unclear; 0:25:04.8]. [Speaking to someone beside him] And, and you, you got a paper, didn't you? I went to the cemetery. What was the guy's name, the professor?

AL: Car, um—Carboni (ph).

AB: Carboni, yeah. I don't know what year. I can't remember the year. He gave you the date, too.

AL: He did. I'd have to look it up.

AB: I can't remember the date, but the—this guy, he was—he was the political secretary of the *Fascio*, and, uh, he died and there was a big funeral for him. And I had to go to the funeral home to hold the [unclear; 0:25:45.9] with the, uh, *Fascio Principe Umberto* (?) on it. And it was—I know it was in February, 'cause I had a short—we wore short [unclear; 0:25:55.3], and it was cold as hell.

MDG: So, you would have to dr—you—you would have to do this regularly on—as part of your dad's, uh—as part of the young—

AB: Well, because my father, being a fascist from the old country, the—and this guy was the head of the Fascist Party in Toronto, in Canada, actually. And, uh, he was a, he was a professor of something. He had something to do with the Conservatory of Music for Ontario. Carboni, I

remember now. [unclear; 0:26:31.0] Now, I, I got a picture at home somewhere, about this—  
not, not me, there's another kid with an Italian flag. Now, I think the kid, his name was, uh,  
Ger—Gerardo Catanacci (?). 'Cause the two brothers, they belonged to the same—we were all  
dressed like Ballila, you know.

MDG: Ah. And what would you have to do?

AB: Hmm?

MDG: And what would you have to do as a Ballila?

AB: Well, we had what they call [unclear; *adonata* 0:26:57.5], which is like, a call—like, a call to  
arms in, in St. Agnes hall. 'Cause they had the church, and we had the pool hall, the—but we  
also had a hall there. And, uh, you used to line up in a straight line, and you'd go *uno, due, tre,*  
*uno, due, tre.* All the number one guys, you had to make a step forward and one backwards,  
and the other guy, three could be going step [Gestures] the other way, and step forward. So,  
they'd wind up with three guys in a row, and th—that would—that formed the, uh, line, and  
they started marching all around the hall and singing Italian songs.

MDG: Well—do you know, or do you remember the songs?

AB: Uh...like, don't ask me to sing. [Laughs] Uh...one of the songs was, uh, a, a Alpini song, like  
the—[unclear; 0:27:55.6]. And they had a song called the [unclear; 0:27:59.4] It's a some, uh—  
you're asking me tough questions [Laughs]

MDG: You don't have to answer any questions that you, you, you know, you don't feel comfortable with.

AB: No, oh yeah.

MDG: Yeah, don't—

AB: We never did anything wrong, like, you know. But I could see you now, uh, Italy had sent, uh, a couple of guys over here to teach us, teach us Italian, and um—and a matter of fact, the teacher that told—taught us Ital—taught me Italian, was a little woman [Gesturing]. Donachella (?) or something like that.

MDG: And she would teach you language classes, so—

AB: Yeah, grammar and all that, you know. No, no, nothing political, just language.

MDG: Just language. And what, what other activities were there?

AB: Hmm?

MDG: This was—was this all at the Casa D'Italia?

AB: Uh, Casa D'Italia came a little later, er, this was before the Casa D'Italia. 'Cause this, this—we used to use everything in St. Agnes hall. Might—

AL: Is this when you were in a band?



AB: Hmm?

AL: I remember you—there's a picture of you and Uncle Offo (?) in a band, a little band, and you all wore dark shirts.

AB: Yeah, well that was—Italy afterwards sent, uh, the entire instruments for—to build a band in Toronto. The—our bandmaster was Frank Busceri (?). For that, he'd wind up in a camp.

[Laughs]

MDG: Oh no.

AB: Ahhh.

MDG: So, so this band wha—what would you do? You would play at local—

AB: Well, you know, we were supposed to play. Now, the Royal March, the Italian Royal March is a very hard thing to play. Now, we never could get it. So, when the—when this guy, this big professor come here for purpose, this guy from the Italian government, his name was Sarrache (?), he was a high, high Fascist—

MDG: Oh.

AB: —came to Toronto. And we were supposed to play the Royal March. [Laughing] The Royal March goes ba-ba-ba-boom, and da-da-dum, da-da-dum, da-da-dum [Singing]. And he, he made a, he made a comment [unclear; 0:30:00.1] sound like a funeral march. [Laughter] Well,

what are you gonna do? There was only one guy in the whole band could play it proper, and he came from Italy.

MDG: Oh, but did they give you lessons on the—or did they just provide the instruments, or—

AB: They provided the instruments, Franck Busceri—I used to take lessons from Frank Busceri, ‘cause I used to play trumpet. And he, he was my teacher. Most of the kids, most of the kids in that—in the area that came from southern Italy automatically played mu—music, no matter what, what instrument. ‘Cause they’re very musical people. One of the best sax players in Toronto is a guy by the name of Albert Cucolucchi (?). And I went in the army, and some army guys came from Na—Nanaimo, B.C. And they were talking about this guy, he’s a tan—fantastic, uh, tenor sax player, his name is Albert Cook (?). Same guy. Ah.

MDG: So, um, okay, so, taking it back again to the day that Italy declares war, um, what happened in your, in your family on, on that day?

AB: Uh, first of all, my mother had a nervous breakdown. She went into hospital for a while, I don’t know how long, I can’t remember.

AL: Didn’t she phone you first?

AB: Hmm?

AL: Didn’t she phone you and tell you to burn the black shirt?

AB: Oh, yeah. [Laughs] She phoned me and told me, “Take all the black shirts and burn ‘em.” And my father used to have the *fascio* things on the collar, so I took those, too, off and I put ‘em in a wall. The house we we’re living in at that time was 10 Macu (?) Avenue. I pu—I cemented them into the wall. [Laughs] Someday [unclear; 0:31:37.2].

MDG: So, your dad was at work at the, at the time?

AB: Oh yeah.

MDG: He was working?

AB: He didn’t come home, you—they picked him up right here, right from the factory.

MDG: Wow.

AB: Him and Mr. Magi (?), too.

MDG: They picked up his boss, as well?

AB: Yeah.

MDG: Wow.

AL: On June 10? Is that the day that—

AB: Hmm?

AL: On June 10 is the day that—

AB: June 10, yeah. They arrested, in the Province of Ontario, 770 Italians. Some of them were kind of criminals they couldn't arr—arrest. They put 'em in jail with the, with the rest of them. And, uh—

MDG: And, and, and where did they take your dad?

AB: Hmm?

MDG: Uh, where did they take him that day?

AB: Exhibition, Horse Palace.

MDG: And were you able to go down and see him, or—

AB: Oh, the only reason we could see him, we'd go down there and stand along the sidewalk, and they, they would let them come out and mark—uh, for walks, uh, marching, yeah. And when, uh—they're all in their—they had two young guys in their—Orlando (?) boys, uh, Roy Orlando who was—later on became an architect, and who was the other Orlando? Ito, Ito Orlando (?), who later on was, uh, an engineer for Boeing, in California. Helped deve—develop the—what they call the vertical ta—plane where they [Gesturing] wings were this way, and the airplane was straight up, and then—

MDG: Mmm.

AB: He helped develop that.

MDG: Wow. And so, and the Orlando boys were, were—you, you saw them—

AB: They were *fascisti*, too. See, uh, wha—a *fascisti* organization was—you, you went and you were the Sons of the Wolf. That was the little kids. Then you became a Ballila, and then you became a van—a vangaur—a *vangaurdista* (?). That's the third, like, uh, like, uh, different grades of, like, scouting.

MDG: Oh.

AB: It was supposed to be a scout club.

MDG: Hmm. And what would you get from—it would just be opportunities, or what would you get from going up the ranks?

AB: Like, now, now, there's like—look back on it, they were preparing you to put you in the Army. 'Cause you—like I said, you—one, two, three, one guy—and the first thing you know, you've formed a, a, a troop of three guys, three guys, three guys. We walked—always marched around the hall and sing. That's all. And, uh—

MDG: And, and what did, um—so, your mom suffered a nervous breakdown.

AB: Yeah.

MDG: So, she was—was she placed in the hospital?

AB: Yeah, she was in the hospital for a while.

MDG: And what happened to you and your brother during that time?

AB: Well, we lived in with my grandparents.

MDG: Mmm.

AL: But you had to quit school after Grade 9 to go to work?

AB: Oh yeah. Well, I, I quit school because they, they arrested my father, there's no money coming in to—but my mother [Laughs], god bless her—my father had a real good job in the States. He was making good money. My mother could save everything. She always had these little books. You remember those little books, little black books? She'd mark every dime that came into the house and every dime that went out. Sh—I don't think she had a real good education, but she was a good bookkeeper. And we, we, like, when we, we came to Toronto in 1939, yeah, 19—1929, 1930. We came to Toronto, she had 5000 dollars in the bank.

MDG: Wow. In the bank, or she would keep it cash?

AB: No, no, she had it in a bank. Two reasons. My father didn't share the money, he was—he'd pilfer a few bucks to go play the horses. [Laughs] Eh? He loved the horses.

AL: Mm-hm, yeah. Um, when did you buy the property on—in North York? When—

AB: Well, he, he bought that three acres on that land, uh, 1930 or '31. I—i—in that period, '30 to '31.

AL: So, what happened to that land?

AB: Mmm?

AL: What happened to that land, when he was taken?

AB: Well, i—it was three acres, is—on, uh, what then was called Petawawa, and now it's called Luton Drive (?). And, uh—

AL: That's a coincidence.

MDG: Yeah.

AB: Huh?

AL: What a coincidence it was called Petawawa.

AB: Yeah. Well, I wound up there, too. [Laughs] Ahh.

AL: So, when Nonno was taken, what happened to the land? Did, did Nonno—

AB: They never [unclear; 0:35:50.9].

AL: They never—

AB: He, he had in my—I don't know if you remember the little two Muchachi (?) built on there?

AL: I do.

AB: He, he would do anything <0:35:59.2> some family for eight dollars a month.

AL: Hmm.

AB: And they, they, they took eight dollars a month, that's all. They didn't take the house.

MDG: And they didn't freeze—did they freeze any other bank accounts or—

AB: Not that I—not to my knowledge.

MDG: No? So, your mom was still able to, to have some money set aside?

AB: Oh yeah.

MDG: Yeah. And so—

AB: 'Cause then later on, my father borrowed 25 hundred off her to buy the three acres of land that were on L—uh, on L—what was called Petawawa then.

AL: That's before the war, by the way.



AB: Yeah.

AL: Yeah.

AB: This is just—yeah, it was before the war because he had a gentleman by the name of Vonny (?), he was a carpenter, put a little two room, two room frame shack house with plaster and everything, had a kitchen and one bedroom, that was it. And we used to go up there in the summer.

MDG: Oh, that would be your summer place? And, and so, um, while your dad was away, you were working. And where, where was your—where did you—

AB: Well, first of all, you couldn't get a job.

MDG: Oh.

AB: No matter where you went, applied, as soon as they heard you're Italian, forget it.

MDG: Yeah.

AB: And some, some were even ig—ignorant enough to call you a wop and they—"Get the hell out." [unclear; 0:37:14.2]

MDG: Was there a lot of discrimination back then?

AB: Oh yeah.

MDG: Yeah? So, you—

AB: I had, had a friend of ours, he had a food store on Gerard (?), his name, Bernardi (?), they even smashed the windows of his store. Ah, hey.

MDG: Wow. And, and so, uh, when you began to work, who, who wound up give—giving you a job? Or how did you find work?

AB: Well, like I tell you, i—i—my father had, uh, another *pizon* of his. His name was Primo DeNicci (?), he owned a company called DeNicci Art Manufacturing (?) where they used to make statues.

MDG: Mm-hm.

AB: Plaster of Paris statues. He gave me a job.

MDG: Mmm, okay.

AB: Five and a half days a week.

MDG: And—

AB: For five bucks. Six, six dollars, excuse me, six dollars, big, big deal. So, I gave my mother the money, and she let me keep a dollar for whatever—I didn't smoke, I didn't drink, so I didn't really need any money. But we lived in a flat, in a flat, belonged to another *pizon* of my father's.

MDG: Mm-hm.

AB: Who was married to a cousin of my mother.

MDG: Okay.

AB: And that was 10 Lakeview Avenue. And we had a flat on there, and the flat was 20 dollars a month. So, five dollars a mo—a week from me, that paid the rent.

MDG: Oh. So, you paid the rent and your—was your mom out of the hospital at this point, or—

AB: Well, she was—she didn't stay there that long. She would come out and then—we used to go shopping always i—in Little Italy. There was one, two, three, three Italian stores. Facini (?), Richo (?), Ferniani (?). And there was another one up, uh, uh, the street here, on Clinton. I can't remember their name anymore.

MDG: Mmm. And, um, so, just—so, during the war—and were you, um—did you write letters to your dad while he was—

AB: Oh, yeah.

MDG: —he was away?

AB: First two letters I wrote, I wrote him in Italian. [Laughs] He wrote me back, don't do that no more, 'cause—he says, they, they, uh, uh, it was all cut up because they, they, they were scrutinizing all the mail he was getting.

MDG: Mmm.

AB: So, so I write in English. He learned, uh—you know how he lear—learned English?

MDG: How?

AB: By checking the newspaper in—in—because most of the words were remade from Latin, and he could speak—he knew Latin, so from that, he figured it.

MDG: Oh.

AB: He'd read the racing [unclear; 0:39:40.7 form]. [Laughs]

MDG: And, and, uh, how long was your dad away? And, and did—actually, did you ever go visit him?

AB: I did. He d—my mother got, got, uh, permission, I can't remember what it was, 1942? '40..yeah, so, '42. It was a cold day in the winter, and they—we, uh, went up there to, uh, Petawawa. I froze both my ears because the cab driver got stuck in the snow. And we—I—we saw, but we couldn't, you couldn't touch him, you could just talk to him. And he was, he was in reasonably, uh, happy. 'Cause, uh, 'cause when he was in the camp, lot of the people in the camp were *ex-fascisti* down home. And he, he still had a bit of power. And [Laughs] and barrack, barrack number five, the police couldn't arrest some guy, so they put them all in there, all together. So, my father, pe—he put all the criminals in barrack five, and he had this, uh, Sicilian, uh, doctor, uh, Sansone (?). And my father says, "You've got to be a doctor for barrack

five.” He says, “But they’re all criminals.” He says, “They’re your people.” [Laughs] “Why do you keep arguing for? Go.”

MDG: And, uh, and how long was your dad away?

AB: Three years.

MDG: Three years.

AB: They—he came home early in 1943, and that afternoon, I got the mail, I had my army call to go into the Canadian army.

MDG: Wow. So, do you—uh, what, what happened the day your dad was released? Did you know he was coming home?

AB: Yeah, he knew he was coming home. And—not—he—the reason why he had such trouble coming home—he could have come home earlier, but they asked him about the—“What do you think about Italy and Canada on the—” He s—his answer was, “Italy is my mother.” [Crying] “Italy—Italy is my mother, Canada is my wife. I—I can have another wife, I can’t have another mother.” D—for that, bingo. And I did the same stupid thing. ‘Cause they, they called me into the army, they, they question you. They have, like, a psychiatrist type, to find out what your mentality was. Because they used to check me, because—uh, I got to tell you a whole story about this. I was in the canteen one day, and this guy comes up to our table and says, “Are you Aldo Bacci?” I said, yeah. He said, “What’s your problem, comrade?” [Laughs] Like, comrade, what are you calling me comrade for? This guy was a communist. His name was George White (?). And I said, “What are you calling me com—that for?” He says, uh, “Someday I’ll show you.”

So, one day he says, "Come with me." 'Cause we had to go clean the office of the headquarters. So, I went in there. He opened the safe that belonged to the colonel. And he told me, in Toronto, they had places where they were teaching these communists how to open safes and how to open doors. And he took out my documents, and put them on the table. And at the bottom of my document was a big red stripe. It says, "Not to be allocated to any sensitive unit."

MDG: Hmm. Wow. And when was that?

AL: Because of your father?

AB: Hmm?

AL: Because of your father?

AB: No, me. 'Cause my, my, my documents in the army, and when, when—uh, Roger, my older son wrote to the government for my, uh, uh, my...documents, they sent him those documents. I, I, I looked at it and said, "That's not my document, I don't see the red mark."

MDG: Wow. So, they might have removed it, or—

AB: Yeah, but they were, uh, I, I won't say they're stupid, but they used to keep asking people wha—what I was doing, what I was reading, and so forth. 'Cause th—this communist guy got me into a lot of trouble. Because he gave me a lot of pamphlets, you know, and I didn't read any of them. So, so I was in the artillery, and then I got hurt, and then I was—they changed me, changed my—me to, to the Engineering Corps. When they did that, I had these pamphlets, I

gave them all to the barber in, in the camp. Th—the colonel sat down and started reading [Laughs] “Where’d you get these?” “Bacci.” “Holy geez.” [Laughs] Trouble started for me.

MDG: Oh. A—and where were you stationed? In—

AB: I was stationed in tha—in originally started off with me stationed in, uh, Prince Edward Island. My basic training was in Prince Edward Island.

MDG: Mm-hm.

AB: It was, uh, Beach Clove Inn (?). I had a picture, I didn’t bring it. It was an old hotel. Uh, three or four storey wooden hotel. And they put four guys in two double bunks. And, uh, a sink, but the washroom was way down into the hall. And for, for the fire escape, we had a rope that hung out the window with knots on it so you could slide down. There was no fire escape there. And it it ever got on fire, goodbye. There was about—I think there was, there was about 400 of us, fr—from Toronto to Prince Edward Island. It took almost two days to get there, ‘cause we, we took a train, we wound up in New Brunswick. And then we took the ferry from New Brunswick over to P.E.I. And in P.E.I., you got on another train, and they took us to Charlottetown.

MDG: And what, and what did your parents think of, of, you know, your dad coming back from the internment camp, and then his son being asked to go and fight for Canada? Wh-what did they think?

AB: Well, you gotta remember Canada had two w—two armies.

MDG: Mm.

AB: I was a clinsc—conscript. I was conscripted. The called us the zombies, 'cause we wouldn't fight. We wouldn't fight for—go to fight. All the people that fought in Can—in Can—Canadian army for war services like Air Force, Navy, and Army that fought overseas were all, all volunteers. So, when the war wi—near the end of the war, they had 80,000 men trained in what they called the “zombie army.” [Laughs] And, uh, they had lost a lot of men, you know, during the f—during the war. So, they had to refill the regiments up. So, they signed what they call an Order in Council in the government, and they took the conscripts and they sent you overseas.

MDG: Wow.

AB: Didn't take me.

MDG: No? So, so what happened towards the end of the war? Did you get to go home, or—

AB: Well, I, I got out of the army in 1945, October, 1945. And I went in there, I think it was either the end of '42, or the beginning of '43, I don't remember. I was in there all of—part of '43, I was in there all of '44, and in '45 'til October, and then I got my discharge. They give me a hundred dollar cheque, go home. That was your clothing allowance.

MDG: And, and, so, coming back to Toronto then, what, uh—where did you go? Wh—did you go back to your parents'—uh, your grandparents' house?



AB: Well, we lived in my grandparents' house. Uh, we lived there 'til 1938. '38, we moved to 10 Lakeview Avenue, where this other *pizon* of my father, uh—his name was P—Pietro Morandi (?). And he was married to a cousin of my mother. And these two women hated each other. [Laughs] Battle royale over.

MDG: A—and so, tell me about, um—so, after the war, after 1945, how old were you?

AB: I was 16 in when—the war broke out. I wasn't quite 16, uh, 15 and a half. Then, uh...19...when the hell did war break out? 19—

AL: '39.

MDG: '39.

AB: Uh...

AL: In 1945, you would have been 21.

AB: Hmm?

AL: You were 21 when you got out of the army?

AB: I guess so.

AL: You were born in '24?

MDG: So, you're—you were 21 years old, you came back to Toronto, discharged from the army, and, and how did you start your life up again? Did you find it—

AB: Well, uh, first of all, it, it was hard to find work, 'cause they hated Italians. And my, my father, h—with his [unclear; 0:48:25.8] the, uh, veterans of the First World War, they wanted to go to the [unclear; 0:48:30.2] in Toronto and present a wreath. Now, in Italy, the armistice with Austria came on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, not the 11<sup>th</sup> of November. The 4<sup>th</sup> of November. Austria was defending Germany, they were—the southern border of Germany, Austrian-Hungarian. And Italy fighting them, uh, fighting—uh, I had this uncle, I told you, came from Spilimbergo. He was in artillery. He says, "We used to shoot one—one cannon," and he says, "Austria, they shoot four back." When the Americans came in in 1917, there was all kinds of ammunition. [unclear; 0:49:13.4] shot ten back. And then you've—they, they've caused the Austrian-Hungarians to sue for peace on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 1918. So, that if the whole southern border of Germany opened. The Americans had come into the war, and that was—

MDG: And, um, so where did you meet your wife?

AB: [Laughs] Well, they know the story, anyhow. We, we, we had a gang, a gang of guys, all, all Italian boys from the, uh, old neighbourhood. We went to school together, and we—some of them served in the army, too, but, uh, not in the same unit as I did. 'Cause I was artillery. And [unclear; 0:49:59.1] he had a—you're, you're—gun—the gunner, and your number. Didn't have a—he didn't have a name, he had a number. Every, every time he looked on the, on the bulletin board, look for your number, 'cause there was no name. It's still—it's imprinted in my head.

MDG: What number?

AB: B634286.

MDG: Wow. And so, and so you remained friends with a lot of the, the people that you were in the army with?

AB: Yeah, well, we, we, we lived in the same neighbourhood, more or less, and we'll—just—we didn't live in Little, Little Italy, because Little Italy started from College Street South. We lived north of College Street. We were foreigners. [Laughs]

MDG: [Laughs] So, what would you do for fun? And then—uh, you know, an evening out, for example?

AB: We went hunting every Friday night with the, the different dance halls.

AL: [Laughs]

AB: And I, I—huh?

AL: How did you meet Auntie Fran (?).

AB: We went to Pallais Royale (?). We used to go there every Friday night. Bertinallci (?) was the band, they were the best bands in Toronto. And I walk in the door, and there's like, little—three steps up to the dance floor. I spotted this girl with the—on the wall, and bingo, it hit me like that. So, I started to go across the floor to ask her to dance, and somebody beat me to her. She turned him down, so I turned around, went back. And one of my gang, he was a Sicilian guy by the name of Johnny Lima (?). He called himself Lima [Pronounced with a long 'E'], it was Lima

[Pronounced with a long 'l'] —he called himself Lima [Pronounced with a long 'l'], it was Lima [Pronounced with a long 'E']. He said, “What’s wrong?” I says, “She’s stuck up, she don’t wanna dance.” So, just to show me off, he goes over to ask her to dance, and she danced with him. So I, I went over and grabbed her girlfriend, who later was, uh, uh, Auntie Fran’s maid of honour. And, uh, we danced, danced, danced. And when they used to play, like, so many numbers, then they, they’d stop and then before they’d start another set. Now, we stop in the middle of the floor. So, I said to Johnny, “Hey, this one’s yours, that one’s mine.” And that was it [Points to his forehead]. [Laughter].

MDG: So, uh, how, how long did you date? Did you date—

AB: Two years. We went together from 1948 to 1950. And we got married in 1950. And w—like, we, we—Fran and I had to pay for our own wedding, more or less. Even the family had no money, because the money that my mother had, that was—usually came from the States. When she was up in, um—buying the land and some other things, I don’t know.

AL: She gave some of it to Auntie Margaret, who spent it.

AB: Hmm? What?

AL: She gave some of the money to Auntie Margaret to hold for her?

AB: Oh...yeah.

AL: And Auntie Margaret spent it?

AB: Yeah. Well, that...there's a lot of stories, a million stories.

MDG: And so you were a newlywed in, in Toronto, and wh—what was it like being a newlywed?

AB: It was fun. [Laughs]

MDG: It was fun.

AB: Well, we lived with my mother. My—now, started off with my mother, with—my wife was Irish, not even Catholic. My brother...who used to have a gang of guys he'd hang around with, some of the guys used to work in a clothing business. And they came there one day, and they said, "Look, we've got these tickets to this dance at, uh, Columbus Hall." A union dance. So, we go, and my brother says, "I ain't going." And I said, "Why?" He says, "Those Italian girls are all like this [Flexes his muscles]." He says, "They look like football players." [Laughs]

MDG: And, and—

AB: You know, one of the girls was the g—the woman that married Johnny, uh, L— Johnny Lombardi (?). Lena (?).

AL: Yeah.

AB: She was a good looking girl.

MDG: And so you would all hang out at the Pallais Royale regularly, and, and—

AB: Oh yeah.

MDG: Yeah?

AB: Well, you had two places to go. The Pallais Royale or the Sea Breeze (?). Sea Breeze was an open air dance floor on the beach. And there was a, a guy playing his trumpet there, a real good trumpet player. Uh, I, had his, had his name, uh—he was Macedonian, but he didn't use his Macedonian name. Because you know, Cana—the Canadian people really didn't like us, we were all foreigners. [Laughs] Ohh.

MDG: And how was, how was your family, you marrying a, an Irish girl?

AB: Oh.

MDG: What did they think of that?

AB: Let me tell you, my brother...[Gestures] sa—her mother got together, and they got married. Now, her—my—their family was called Conforce (?). And they were Catholic, originally. But during the Depression, nobody would—could, could give them work. He had a good friend of his, he was, uh, Dominic DeStazze. Dominic DeStazze belonged to the M—Masonaria (?), Masons. So, he got talking to their family, he got them jobs, and they became Masons, too. 'Cause we used to go to the, the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, I—for the—when the picnic, the [unclear; 0:55:16.9] people, the, the—

AL: Orange.

AB: —Masons would come down—

AL: Orange people, you're talking about—

AB: Orangemen, Orangemen. And all, all the guys, they would go on the sidewalk, we would boo them. Little did I know, little did I know she was going to be my sister-in-law. [Laughs] And she was—they weren't Catholic, either. They—they were Protestant. They'd be [unclear; 0:55:38.2] Masons. And my mother used to work in a, in a—it was called Cook Clothing (?). They used to make men's suits. She was a seamster [sic]. And she a lot of, lot of, uh, Italian women working there. And they used to say to—"How can you get along with two daughter-in-laws that are not even Italian?" And, uh, my mother said, "You wanna fight? You fight every day." You want to have a [unclear; 0:56:06.7]. And they, they got along real good, all, all the time.

AL: They all lived together in the house.

AB: And, and then her, her, her, the Conforce family used to come to the house—uh, we, we called it the farm, then. It was only three acres, but we called it the farm. They used to play cards. And, and the women [Laughs], Mrs. Conforce, she was lucky. She'd be playing cards in the—in [unclear; 0:56:32.0], her, her house. You see. "You don't know how to play." She said, "Yeah? Well, I got the money." [Laughs] And, and they did. Now, we—sometimes we would take a walk. We'd walk down the field, 'cause we had 750 feet on the, that street, 130 feet. And you'd walk around back, and then come—they used to go for walks, him and Pietro. Pietro was called Fescetto (?) 'cause he was always whistling.

MDG: Oh. And, and, um—actually, I wanted to show the photo of, uh, you and Fran. If you want

to just hold it up for the, for the camera. [Image of Fran and Aldo Bacci held up to lens].

AB: My, uh—

MDG: Can you see it okay?

AB: I got, I got a, a grandson, real, real smart. It's my youngest daughter's oldest boy. His name is Adam, and he's doing some work for me. He did—uh, he used to do the floor at the cottage.

AL: Mm-hm.

AB: And he comes to me, "Nonno," he says, "I met this girl." I said, "Yeah?" He says, uh, "Yeah, but she's Irish." I says, "Grab her." [Laughter]

MDG: And, and, so how—um, did you have children right away, or—

AB: Oh, no, not right away, no. I waited two years. Then she was born [Gesturing]. And two years later, my wife was pregnant again. I can't figure out how it happened. [Laughter] And she had—she gave me a son, my oldest son, Roger. Then—

MDG: Na—named after your dad?

AB: Uh, m—named after—well, in Italian, he's Ruggiero. But we had to call him Roger, 'cause he had to go to school here. And then, uh, two years after he was born, my wife was pregnant again. I don't know, she—[Laughs] 19—we had a daughter called—we named her Donna. Now, that's another story. Now, I, I—my wife said, "How come you picked me?" I said, "'Cause I took



one look at you, I figured you're good breeding stock." [Gestures] Whack! [Laughter] She used to whack me in the back of the head all the time. Whack! But they—now, I was right, because I—well, we, we were living in Richmond Hill then, I had to build the house in Richmond Hill. There was no hospital in Richmond Hill. So, the first two, I had to take them all the way down to St. Mike's Hospital in Toronto. But in the meantime, they had built a hospital in, uh—

AL: Newmarket.

AB: Newmarket. So, when Donna was—my wife was pregnant with Donna, was a—she says, "Take me to the hospital." I took her to Newmarket, I took her to the hospital. And I went in, checked her in, they put her in a d—gurney, and they took her upstairs. When the gurney come down, the doctor said, "You had a beautiful baby girl."

MDG: Mmm.

AB: Now, Speedy Gonzales, he didn't wait to get to the hospital.

AL: It's Martin, who you met.

MDG: Oh.

AB: We were driving up Yonge Street, and s—she says—I had a, had a ca—a Edsel car. And, uh, she—we're driving up there, and, it was, it was during the winter, 7<sup>th</sup> of November. And I put a kimono over my wife, she was sitting on the front seat beside me, we were going up the l—up to the, the hospital in Newmarket. And she was a smoker. And the pain was so bad, she was

pressing against the door, and she had a cigarette in her hand. And the, uh, kimono got—  
started to smoke a little bit. [Laughs]

MDG: Wow.

AB: I, I got sore, you, you wouldn't believe. So...we're going up there, and she's, "How far is the hospital? 'Cause I—" I said, "About another five minutes, we'll be there." She said, "We better hurry, 'cause my water just broke." Whoa! So, I got a little farther, and she said, "The baby's coming." And she caught the baby between, between legs and held it in her hand. She said, "What do I do now?" I said, "Turn it on its side." 'Cause I knew you have to get m—the mucous out of the throat.

MDG: Wow.

AB: I knew a few things. [Laughs]

MDG: I, I was going to say, I didn't know that. [Laughs]

AB: So, she turned the baby on its side, and it started to cry, which was Speedy Gonzales, my son. And she says, "I'm going to faint." I says, "You ain't got time to faint." So, I get to the hospital, I ring the bell at five o'clock in the morning. Lights all come on like a pinball machine. And five nurses and the gurney come running out of the hospital, and they—"Get out of the way, we don't need you anymore." And, uh, they, they, they got a, a—on the driver's seat, and the cut the cord in the car. Put my, my, my, my...wife on the gurney, and they wheeled her into the hospital. And the nurse had the baby wrapped up. I says, "What did we have?" [Laughter] It was a beautiful baby boy. And he was born needing a haircut. He had, uh, mohawk hair.

MDG: Wow. And so, four children in, in—four children.

AB: Four children.

MDG: And then you lived—and you lived in Richmond Hill?

AB: Yeah, I had built the h—house in Richmond Hill for the family.

MDG: And still working within the construction company you started with your brother?

AB: Oh yeah, well, th—th—this—by the this time, I became a construction superintendent. I, I built close to 2000 homes.

MDG: Wow.

AL: Willow Construction.

AB: Hmm? Willow Construction—

AL: [unclear; 1:02:05.4]

AB: —w—with my brother. Then, then we—I had this, I tell you, this uncle, Tomboso (?). He was a tile setter. So, we, we—in the wintertime, we couldn't pour concrete, so we'd...go into the tile business. Come the spring, we'd go back into the concrete business. Oh yeah. I had a fertile br—brain.

AL: Two—built two thousand houses.

AB: Huh?

AL: Built two thousand houses.

AB: Yeah, two, I built—

AL: Not Willow Construction, though.

AB: No.

AL: That was after you [unclear; 1:02:40.5]—

AB: The various, various companies that I worked for.

MDG: Mmm.

AB: I worked for a company for awhile, it was called the Jasper Construction (?). It's owned by,  
uh—

AL: Before that, you had—

AB: Dopplerini (?) family.

AL: Before that you had your swimming pool company. <1:02:51.9>

AB: Yeah, I, I did a lot of things. I had a swimming pool company. I also had a, a travel business, flying people from Toronto to Florida, put them in a hotel for a week. And because you did that, the government said you had to give them something, so we had to give them breakfast, which was a cup of coffee and a ben—bun.

MDG: Wow.

AB: We did that for a few years, and then we started to go in the Islands, like I, uh—Acalpulco, and the, the—and, uh, the Bahamas.

MDG: Wow.

AB: Trea—Treasure Island. No, it wasn't Treasure Island.

MDG: Paradise Island.

AB: Hmm?

MDG: Paradise Island.

AB: Paradise Island.

AL: That, that was Earl Warren (?) Travel?

AB: Huh?

AL: Was that with Earl Warren Travel?

AB: No, no, Earl, Earl Warren was—you know, we figured you needed somebody to s—front for you, somebody who the people w—would like and respect. So, this announcer, he was a, a disc jockey for CFRB named Earl Warren, a Jewish guy. That's real—his real name was Siegel (?), Earl Warren Siegel. But they only would let him use the first two names because, hey, they were Anglos running the business, and they knew if they put Siegel there, they'd lose some business.

MDG: Wow.

AB: So, they made him use his first two names. And he, he was a good announcer for quite awhile.

AL: Oh, he is.

AB: So, we hired him.

AL: [unclear; 1:04:12.6] works at CFRB.

MDG: Oh wow.

AB: We hired him to front for our, our travel business. Our travel business was called, uh, Trans Canada Travel Services (?), a fancy name. [Laughs]

AL: And then you had Earl Warren Travel, too.

AB: We had nothing to do with Earl Warren Travel. He worked for us.

AL: I know, but the c—business was called Earl Warren Travel, wasn't it?

AB: No, eh, they company that we, we flew under was Trans Canada Travel Services. We, uh—the planes were, uh, were from, uh, some company in Montreal, I can't remember anymore. I should go look at some of the, some of the, the [Gestures] spoons and stuff I stole off the plane, maybe I'll get the name. Ah.

MDG: So, um, so your children grew up in, in Richmond Hill.

AB: Yeah.

MDG: And tell me about life with, with the four—

AB: This one here made me very p—p—very proud.

MDG: Yeah.

AB: And my father's heart was like this. [Gestures] She won a beauty contest, Miss Aurora Trade Center.

AL: Miss Aurora, yeah.

AB: You, you bring that picture. When you were 17, you were something, I'll tell you. Ahh.

AL: [unclear; 1:05:34.4] compliment you.

MDG: Yeah. [Laughter] Takes after her father, then. I've heard from a few—a few of the interviewees that we've had in the office mentioned your, your name, when you were, when you were a young man—

AL: No kidding.

MDG: —as one of the best looking, best looking young guys, yeah.

AL: Oh he was, he was very good looking.

AB: Did you bring the picture down?

AL: No, of you. You got a picture of yourself here?

AB: No, I got this one here, but when I was 17, uh, we took the picture of my grandfather's yard in, uh—

AL: I should have brought it. It's wonderful. They were so handsome.

AB: I didn't have any trouble, I'll tell you. [Laughter]

AL: He had a lot of girlfriends, too, before —

MDG: Lots of girlfriends?



AB: Oh yeah, I had a lot of girlfriends.

MDG: Yeah.

AB: And, and a lot of my father's friends had daughters, and every time that they got together, they'd try to patch me up with them, you know? [Laughter]

AL: The Italians?

AB: [unclear; 1:06:21.3] What are you gonna do? [Laughter]

MDG: Ah, that's funny. So, um, how did, um, how did the—World War Two [Sneeze] and what happened to your dad affect the rest of your life? How do—how did you—how did life change for you, if it did, or, or how did you begin to—

AB: Well, I know why, 'cause I think I, I, I—actually, I used to get in a lot of trouble. My grandfather had tools, and he didn't want me to touch them. So, he put a, a cupboard up with shelves a—and a door on it. But he forgot I have a brain. So, I had a screwdriver, I took the hinges off the door, and opened it, and away. [Laughs] I used a tool. And it used to drive him crazy. [Laughs] He couldn't figure it out. Then somebody gave me a, a model airplane, a little 14 inch model airplane. So, I figured, hey...I could, I could build a—my own plane. Instead of an inch, a foot, 14 feet. I started to build a 14 foot wingspan in the basement of my grandfather's house.

MDG: Oh my gosh.

AB: 'Cause we had a lumber [unclear; 1:07:28.7] My—one of my grandfathers—uh, one of my uncles was a bricklayer. Ardoui Nadini (?). And he—we always had lumber from the construction site in the backyard. In those days, there was no drywall. They used to put a, a strip. [Gesturing] An inch and a quarter by a quarter inch every—and leave an air gap of about maybe a half inch between them, all the way up and down the walls, then what they put—what they called a cement coats of plaster. Then they used to put the white stuff on top.

MDG: Wow.

AB: And then, then they, they started going to the drywall and—one of the best b—drywall companies was a company called Morell (?). Owned by Markham (?)—

AL: So, so what about your airplane?

AB: Huh?

AL: What about your airplane in the basement?

AB: [Laughs] I tried, I, I started, I, I was going to build the, the fuselage. And my brother—my, my brother who was always—he was the, the guy always tell me, “You can’t do this.” I could do it, I’ll show you. He said, “How are you going to fly it?” I says—well, we lived on College Street. And on College Street there was a bunch of Jewish stores that had chickens. They had these—we even had it in the house, the, uh, gas lines going up. And you pulled the little ar—arm out, and it had a switch on the bottom, lit it, and that was the light that we had on the house on Beecher Street (?) in the hall.

MDG: Oh.

AB: Gas light. So, I says to him, “Well, we’ll get a bunch of balloons. We’ll take them down there, fill them up with gas, and put them in the fuselage. It’ll lift.”

MDG: Wow.

AB: Then my brother said, “Well, how they hell will you get down?” I said, “Bring a pin with me and hit one balloon at a time.” [Laughs] I had an answer for everything. [Laughs]

AL: But then he says, “How you gonna get it out of the basement?” [Laughter]

AB: Oh. That’s what Al says, “How you gonna get it out of the basement?” I said, “Don’t bother me.” [Laughter] Then my grandfather—oh, poor, poor guy [Laughs]. Drove him crazy.

AL: But if the war hadn’t broke out, you could have finished high school? But you never did.

AB: I couldn’t finish high school, no.

AL: Could have been—done something else with your life.

AB: Well—

AL: He wanted to be a diesel mechanic.

AB: I—well, in the free time where I couldn't go to school anymore, I went to a night school. I took two, two or three different courses.

MDG: Mm-hm.

AB: First, I took motor mechanics. I gotta find the book, I, I stood first in that. Then I took diesel engines. And the instructor at the diesel—doing the diesel engines could have get me a job at Sault Ste Marie on the locks. But my mother said, “You can't go, your father's not home.”

MDG: Oh.

AB: So, I went down, “What the hell am I going to school for?” Then I took a...oh, I hate, I hate to admit it. I, I took a course on what they call...estimating, construction estimating.

MDG: Yeah.

AB: They, they give you a plan of [unclear; 1:10:17.4], you have to pick how many board pieces you need, and how many shingles and everything, and—but I didn't pass that one. I made one big mistake. The instructor called me and says, “How do you put this place together?” I says, “Why?” He says, “You forgot the nails.” [Laughter]

MDG: That's okay, you did well anyways in construction, right?

AB: Eh.

MDG: You didn't need it. So— [Laughs]

AB: I got no regrets.

MDG: Yeah.

AL: But because you went to work—

AB: Hmm?

AL: Because you went to work, your brother could stay in school, and he finished De La Salle, didn't he?

AB: Yeah, he finished De La Salle.

MDG: Did he quit?

AL: He quit, my brother.

AB: But the old man—

AL: He quit.

AB: —the old man was—he, he, 'cause De La Salle, there was a lot of, uh, rich Italians, had their boys all going to De La Salle. And he wanted you, De La Salle, to—uh, associate with a higher class of people, you know. Instead of, instead of the guys that always park [Laughs] shooting dice. Ahh.

MDG: Yeah.

AL: Now what clubs did your dad belong to? He belonged to, they—

AB: He belonged to, uh, Doppo L'Ouro (?), the, uh, Sons of Italy, Delpini Association, and he—a few—

AL: He was never home.

AB: Hmm?

AL: He was never home, he was always at meetings.

AB: Well, I know—I, I if he—the, the *Fascisti* was for the whole Province of Ontario, or just in Toronto, I don't—'cause a lot of times he went up north to North Bay or something. And, uh, the other towns, you know, 'cause they ha—had other groups.

AL: Oh.

AB: Well, people that had trouble in, in Italy, they'd come talk to him. And he, he would send a, a letter for—in—on their behalf to Rome. And he, he had a typewriter [Gesturing, making 'hunting and pecking' gestures].

MDG: Oh, really?

AB: I can remember, we used to be freezing in that house on Beecher Street (?) and he had this typewriter, oh. Two—[Gesturing]

MDG: So, he was a very passionate man, passionate about Italy and about being patriotic?

AB: Oh, how passionate was he? Like, when, when he, uh—I have a cousin, his name is Ray Moil (?). And he says, uh, to my father, “You have a big pension coming to you.” He says, “Italy needs the money more than I do.” He didn’t want to go for his pension. It wasn’t until two or three years later that we went to Italy together, I took him to Luca (?), and we went to this place, we come home with 22,000 dollars.

MDG: But he didn’t want it?

AB: No. I, uh—

AL: Did he start the Casa D’Italia? With his [unclear; 1:12:46.5]

AB: Oh yeah. Now, the Casa D’Italia, it was uh, uh, expropriated by the mounted police during the war. And my mother had to go, uh, re—she was born in Canada, but she had to go report every month—

MDG: Wow.

AB: —to the mounted police in the Casa D’Italia. She had to go practically through my father’s office when she was in the, in the Casa D’Italia. How they got the Casa D’Italia, eh—‘cause there were various groups, like, the Sicilians had a com—uh, a club [unclear; 1:13:14.4], the, the

Famile Forlan (?). All these various groups, even the, the Tusciani (?) had the [unclear; 1:13:24.1] Ah, I can't even say it anymore. They have a, they have a club in Tuscany, and the *ex combattante*, all these clubs. So, a lot of people, a l—a guy, like Carrier (?), it, it's on your building over there.

MDG: yeah.

AB: And the Bronte (?) family. They went around and talked to all the Italian people, the ordinary people on the street, Italian people, and got them to donate money to buy this house. The house on Beverley and Dules (?) , they bought it for 24,000 dollars, it was, it was like a small castle. It had a, a cupola on top, go up there. We used to go to all the dances, wherever—I think even Johnny Lombardi had a band. He used to play there once in awhile.

MDG: So, it was mostly social? Uh—

AB: It was social, it was a place to go.

MDG: And, so, um, all the Italians would go there frequently, and your dad—

AB: Yeah, they had a bunch of—all these, out in—they had a, a nice garden, but back into the garden, they had four [unclear; 1:14:23.8>] In the basement they had a, like, a little restaurant. It was owned by—run by a guy called Capoleche (?). And they had, they had beer, and they had wine. On the floor they had a big, uh, picture of Mussolini, which I think they've covered up by now. [Laughter]



MDG: And, and, uh, in World War Two, in—during, um, your dad’s internment, what happened to the Casa D’Italia?

AB: It was taken over by the mounted police. That we—became the, uh, headquarters for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Toronto. My mother had to go there e—every month and, and register. Because she married my father, she was considered an enemy alien also.

MDG: Wow. And how about your grandparents on—uh, your mom’s parents? Did they had to—

AB: Well, my grandfather died in 1940. My grandmother died in 1941.

MDG: Oh, okay.

AB: I don’t know how old they were. They were—they’re buried in Mount Hope Cemetery. They used to have a little plaque of a picture of each one, one on each side. I guess my grandfather got mad and threw his off [Laughs], not there anymore. Ah. I, I, I come from a bunch of characters. Like, my—uh, uh, first time I went to Italy in the hometown, we went to the house, and, uh, one of my cousins says, “This house was started i—in the year 1200.” My brother said, “Ask him if it’s still got a mortgage.” [Laughter] [Pointing] Her father. Oh, he was a—they called him the second coming of Bob Hope.

MDG: Yeah.

AB: He had a joke about everything.

AL: I know.

AB: And, and, uh, he loved to drink. And a lot of times, we'd go, we'd go—we used to go to a Concord Tavern (?) on Bloor Street.

MDG: Oh.

AB: And we used to have two aerals in our cars, 'cause we had the business, we had the swimming pool business, and we had to keep in contact with one another. And I used to follow him home, take him to the door, open the scr—screen door, put him in between, ring the doorbell, and run like— [Laughter] Ah, well.

MDG: So, you were very close with your brother?

AB: Oh yeah.

MDG: Yeah.

AB: Well, we were stuck together in the same crib as we were growing up in, in Detroit. My mother had a, a boarder. His name was Rossi (?), I remember him. He had an old Model T Ford parked outside. In those days, the starter was on the floor. So, you had to press the starter be—before the car would start. But you needed a key. Now, he left the car in front of our house, a— and, I had no, no—my, my, my father says, “What am I gonna do with you?” I, I organized a group of kids. One was a kid called—named, Firpo (?). Firpo was a famous fighter from Argentina...that knocked out—didn't knock him out, he knocked, uh—Jack Dempsey out on the rope. And they called it the long count, because everybody was so surprised, nobody started to count right away. Actually, he was out, but they didn't—he was Argentinian, but they were Italians. And I had a gang, a little gang, five, six guys.

AL: Did you start this car?

AB: You couldn't start the car, all the—all you'd do is press the starter.

AL: Mmm.

AB: Vroom-vroom. I drove it for a block until I ran the battery out. [Laughter]

AL: Didn't Nonno kill you for that?

AB: I'll tell you what my father did to me.

AL: What?

AB: 'Cause I was starting fires in Detroit, everything was wood. He hit me, hit me [unclear; 1:18:02.1]. He was cr—I remember, it was Easter Sunday. And my mother had all her relatives over at the house. And I went up in the attic. 'Cause from my mother's bedroom, there was a staircase in the—up in the upper attic. I was trying to start a fire under the eaves up there.

MDG: Oh my gosh.

AB: My father caught me, he said, he said, "You don't want to start a fire." I said...[Gestures] it went in one ear and out the other. "C'mere." Took me upst—and my mother wanted to kill him for this. He took my finger, lit a match, and he—I had a big blister on my finger.

MDG: Oh.

AB: Well, he was right. I was a—

MDG: He wanted to teach you a lesson.

AB: He taught me a lesson, 'cause I didn't touch another match 'til I was 14.

MDG: Wow.

AB: And, when I, when I didn't go to church [Laughs] My brother had to go church, and mother held him by the hand, so he had—and he was mad like hell. So, he come home from church and he—in, in front of my father, he says, “You go to church?” He says, “Yeah, I went to church.” My father says, “Did you go to church?” “Yeah, dad, I went to church.” So, my brother had— [unclear; 1:19:07.7] he paid for it, eventually. Ahh. He said, “What, what colour were the vestments?” [Claps] I picked the wrong colour. [Laughs] Know what my father did? He put his two fingers under my, under my chin, and lifted me off the chair.

MDG: Oh my gosh.

AB: “Don't ever lie to me.” 'Cause he told me, “If you guys get into trouble, if I see your name in the paper, Bacci name in the paper, and you kids did something wrong, the safest place would be the jail.” Oh, he was a tough old—he was a cop.

MDG: Yeah.

AB: Tough.

AL: Now, he brought a lot of people over from Italy, too.

AB: Yeah.

AL: Lot of his nephews, his father.

AB: He brought half his *piazi* (?) over.

AL: Oh.

AB: Brought my grandfather over here, I don't—can't remember—I don't know how old he was.  
It was 1980—'83.

MDG: He brought his dad over?

AB: Yeah. That was the first time I met my grandfather.

AL: '53, '53.

AL: '50—yeah, '53.

AL: It was—it was '53.

AL: 1953.

AB: '53.

AL: Nonno Borgo died in 1954, '53, '54.

AB: Yeah.

MDG: Wow.

AB: Yeah, they called him [unclear; 1:20:03.4>]Borgo, his real name was Dominico.

MDG: Okay.

AB: And, uh, I had a cousin over in Italy. My brother used to say, they got the, the Vatican in the wrong place. According to our father, Vatican should have been in our hometown. [Laughter] And my cousin, Elda (?), she says, "Do they ever re—read Lady, Lady Chatterley's Lover?" He says, "That, that's [unclear; 1:20:26.5]." [Laughter] Ah, so many jokes.

MDG: And, and, uh, when did your dad pass away?

AL: 1996.

AL: '96. May of '96.

AB: '96, he was '96 years old. He was born in 1900, lived to be '96.

MDG: Wow. And after the, and after the war, did he have to—was he able to, you know, um, resume his connection with Italy, or—

AB: No, he—

MDG: —he just—

AB: —he didn't, I don't think he ever went back, after that. I, I don't think he ever went back. He went in—he had to go there in—[Laughs] he had to go there in—he can—uh, something went wrong with his appendix, he had to go, uh, operation in—my mother says, you know, to recuperate, go to Italy for a while. But my fath—my mother wasn't exactly stupid. [Laughs] She had ideas. She sent him to Italy so could renovate the whole kitchen. [Laughter]

AL: He went back many times, though.

AL: He went back many times, back to Italy.

AB: Yeah.

AL: But he never became part of any political organization.

MDG: Any other groupings.

AB: Oh yeah, he had a friend of his, uh, the—Marco Mazzuri (?), I don't know if you ever heard his name. He, uh, he used to have, like, an—a travel agency on the corner of Claremont and, and Mansfield. And he had some c—some cousin or something who worked in the Vatican.

MDG: Oh.

AB: But my father was—my father would fight anybody, uh...going against the <1:22:00.4> Catholic religion. But to say—I don't think he took Comm—Communion [Laughs]. Ah. He had, he had, two, two priests who were really good friends of his, 'cause they were Tusciani.

MDG: Mm-hm.

AB: Father Ricardo, and Father Ballou (?), Ballou.

AL: [unclear; 1:22:18.1]

AL: Father Ricardo baptized me.

AB: Hmm?

AL: And when I got married, I needed my baptismal certificate to be married in the Church. So, I phoned the church, and Father Ricardo was retired by then, but he was still around. And he said, "When she comes to get her baptismal certificate, I want—call me, I want—" So, he came to see me, hugged me, kissed me. "How are your family?"

MDG: Oh.

AL: Yeah.

MDG: Wow.

AL: A very close relationship.



AB: Well, Fran and I got married i—in a church, it was, on Tweedsmore (?) Avenue. But w—we didn't get married right—in, in the church. We got married by the priests, like in the sacristy. Because she, she—

AL: Because she wasn't Catholic? Is that why?

AB: No, no. She took I—lessons to become Catholic, and she says—when the priest says, you can't practice birth control and all this. I said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa." [Holding up a hand] She said, "You don't go to church, why do—why should I go to church?" So, you're right, I, I, I didn't force her to go to church, you go because you—

AL: You sent us kids.

AB: Hmm?

AL: Oh yeah, we all had to go.

AL: You sent us children to go to church, like your father sent you.

AB: I used to take you to church.

AL: You didn't stay, you just dropped us off. [Laughter]

AL: That's right, that's right.

MDG: Uh-oh.

AB: I actu—actually, ‘cause I went to De La Salle, the—De La Salle, the teachers were all—  
uh...oh what the hell, the religious order...

AL: Jesuits, were they Jesuits? Franciscan?

AB: No, no, they were the Chr—Christian brothers. And m—one Christian brother who was  
talking to my brother, and he says, “What’s your brother doing?” You know, my brother said,  
“N—nothing, he just started to work and everything.” He suggests to my brother if I want to  
become a brother or, or a priest, I could go to this place. It was in, in, uh, the south end of  
Aurora, on a north, uh, street that goes across.

AL: Ohh...Bloomington.

AL: Was it Bloomington?

MDG: Oh.

AB: There was a building on Bloomington, that was the—that was all where these brothers c—  
went to school there.

AL: Oh.

AB: They would send you there, you would get an education. He says, “When you get the  
education, when you come out,” he says, “you don’t have to—you, you can refuse to take your  
vows. You got an education, free.”

MDG: And you didn't want to do that.

AB: [Laughs] I had other things to do better than going to church. Ah.

MDG: And, and, so how many years were you married?

AB: 55.

MDG: 55. And what's your secret to a—what's your secret to a long marriage?

AB: We had one rule, that we never go to bed mad. Kiss and make up.

MDG: Yeah.

AB: A lot of times we would start an argument on purpose. [Laughs] No, well, she, she was a damn good woman. And I as said, my, my, my oldest grand—one of my grandsons says to me, "I met this girl, she's Irish." I said, "Grab her, don't wait, if you got half the woman that I had." And I got an—and my youngest daughter, she's a religious kook. [Laughs] I shouldn't say that, eh?

AL: No, [unclear; 1:25:31.9].

AB: Ah, [unclear; 1:25:34.2], ah.

MDG: Yeah. And how many, how many grandchildren do you have now?

AB: Twelve.

MDG: Twelve.

AB: And right now, as far as count—there are 14 great-grandchildren and two more coming.

AL: Three coming?

AB: Three. Josh's g—wife is pregnant, and, and, uh, I'm still waiting to hear from, uh, Heather.

AL: That's right.

MDG: That's great. And is there, is there anything else you want to share with the, with the project, or?

AB: I—

AL: There's one story I don't know if you want to tell. Wasn't Nonno really mad at some flag raising, 'cause some man wouldn't take off his hat? Remember that? You told me a long time ago. He was so passionate that he was mad that somebody wouldn't take off his hat.

MDG: Oh.

AL: Do you remember that story? No?

AB: It might, might have been in one of the, one of the meetings, like, for the Sons of Italy.

AL: Yes, for the Sons of Italy.

AB: Yeah, eh, like, he didn't really have to come to America, 'cause he never worked, worked for somebody else, 'cause [unclear; 1:26:38.8] father had his business, you know, the, the c—the—my grandfather went to Brazil when he was about 14 or 15. He worked for some, some, uh, Tusciana family that had a big herd of cattle in Brazil. And from that, he learned about the cattle business, and the—learned—he used to, he used to kill the c—cow in the living room of his house. It was always a long, big long room. There was this big oak beam across there, he used to bring a—the cow in there. And he butchered them there, 'cause his little butcher shop was room, room off of that. And he would cut out the pieces of meat. I don't know, they didn't have, they didn't have refrigeration. I don't know how—

MDG: Wow.

AB: And he'd have to supply meats to these four little towns. He had a, a baraschuno (?) with a, with a donkey. And he—

MDG: And he'd <1:27:35.9> them.

AB: And across the river, there was a, a, an old fort, belonged to the E—Etruscans. <1:27:43.0>. [Laughs] And he had to go over there, and the, the mule would look over the wall, and it would—straight down [Gesturing].

MDG: Oh my gosh.

AB: M—mule wouldn't m—move. He just about had to kill it to make it move. Ah. I know what it's like, 'cause I, I once rode a mule down the Grand Canyon.

MDG: Oh my gosh.

AB: Well, I did everything.

MDG: Everything. You were very adventurous.

AB: Oh yeah. I, I loved to drive in Italy. [Laughs] I—'cause we used to go, go to our hometown, we'd go up the coast road, and then there was a road going across, going through the mountain to him. And I had my brother, you know, and we're driving. This guy got behind us, he's blowing his horn. Traffic's going like this [Gestures in a circular motion], you know, t—he wouldn't pass. So, he kept this up and my brother says, "Stop the car. I'll go <1:28:32.5>" [Laughter] Yeah.

MDG: Wow.

AB: My brother was a little bit of a toughie.

MDG: Mm.

AB: Not me, I, I would negotiate. [Laughs] Ah.

AL: But your father was the oldest in his family, too?

AB: Yeah, my grandfather—my father's family, there was my father, Lucieri (?), and a, a, a brother, Rommel (?), three boys. And they had three daughters, Biana, Bruna (?), and Orphea (?). Orphea was the youngest girl. That's a picture in, in there. But the two girls died in their teens from TB, 'cause my grandfather had the place where the guys used to come there and play cards, you know. They used to spit on the floor and everything. Then the girls had to go out and sweep it up in the next day. But my grandfather had some—he knew there was something wrong, because he used to—even the, uh, the block that he cut the meat on, he used to put the *varaccina* (?), you know, uh—

MDG: Oh, to disinfect it.

AB: Put disinfectant on it. And he would sprinkle disinfectant before the girls swept the floor, because he realized that somehow...my, my Aunt Orphea, and she was married to a guy called Lou Cachi (?), and they had two sons, Orlando and Modesso (?).

AL: Your dad brought them over.

AB: On, on the week that w—Fran and I got married, they came from Italy.

MDG: And, and him being the secretary of the *fascio* in, um, in Toronto, was it easier for him to bring people over during that time, or was there—

AB: Well, he, he had connections in Rome, you know, he could help people with, with problems they had, because he used to have a lot of problems with people wanting to steal the houses off the houses that didn't belong to them, you know. Like, even our house in, in Italy that was built in 1200, li—living in the house now is a cousin of mine. But she's married to a guy, they

call him foreigner, 'cause he doesn't come from our town, he comes from another town w—in Tuscany, but way over father. N—n—not the same people.

MDG: Wow.

AB: Ah.

MDG: Well, thank you so much. We had a delightful morning with you and, uh, got a lot of information.

AB: Good.

MDG: Um, what we'll do now is we'll actually make you a copy of the, uh, video.

AL: Okay.

MDG: And you'll go through it, go through it together, and anything you wanted edited out or that you don't really feel comfortable having there, um, we'll have Stephanie—who you met when you came to, um—

AB: Any—

MDG: —came to Columbus Centre, she'll, she'll work—

AB: Anything that you think I did wrong, I didn't did it.



MDG: Oh, you did wonderfully. You did wonderfully, very good. And, um, yeah, I think that's, I think that's it.

AB: Yeah, well, the th—uh, I pray every morning to God for her. [Pointing] [Crying]

MDG: Fifty-five years, that's a lifetime. That really is a lifetime.

AL: You're a lucky man to have her that long.

AB: Hmm?

AL: You were lucky to have her that long.

AB: Oh yeah.

MDG: That's great.

AB: She was lucky to have me. [Laughter]

[Fades out at 01:33:10.6]

**[End of interview]**