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NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: Honourable Dolores Holmes

NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Raymond Culos

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Please note that all interviews have been transcribed verbatim. The language in this transcript is as it was provided by the transcriptionist noted above. The project staff has not edited this transcript for errors.

ABSTRACT

The Honourable Dolores Holmes was born in Vancouver, British Columbia in 1929. Her father, Angelo Branca was also born in Vancouver, on Mount Sicker in 1903. Dolores Holmes followed in her father's footsteps and became a lawyer at her dad's firm after graduating from law school in 1952. The majority of this interview surrounds growing up and life in Vancouver: community dances, catholic school, and the family grocery store. Dolores explains how her father Angelo proposed to her mother, Viola Millar. She also talks about her paternal grandparents, Fillippo and Teresa Branca and remembers stopping by to visit her grandmother every morning before work with her father. Angelo Branca was forced to report to the RCMP as well as submitting his minutes from the Sons of Italy meetings. Dolores briefly explains the difficulties that the Pasqualini family faced during Mr. Pasqualini's internment. The end of the interview focuses on Dolores Holme's marriage to her husband, Patrick, her legal career, and her five children. She also explains that during the early part of World War Two, her father joined the Canadian reserves.

INTERVIEW

DH: Dolores Holmes, interviewee

RC: Ray Culos, interviewer

RC: Now this is Ray Culos in conversation with the Honourable Dolores Holmes. Former Judge in the BC Provincial Court. And today is Friday, May the 20th, 2011. [train in background] Judge Holmes, can I ask you please uh—

DH: Raymond call me Dolores.

RC: Okay.

DH: Or Doto.

RC: Okay, thank you very much. Dolores, could you please uh, tell us uh, where you were born, when? And uh, and if uh, and if you uh your name that was given to you at birth.

DH: Okay, um, I was born in Vancouver, St. Paul's hospital. And my name was Dolores Rose Teresa. Which was, I think there was a movie star that my mother really liked at the time named Dolores Del Reo. Because other than that, it's just out of the blue. And then I was named after my two grandmothers. One was Teresa and one was Rose. [nods and looks at the camera] That pretty well takes it. Grew up in the east end. Um, went to um grammar school there to grade eight. And then uh, at our Lady of Sorrows and then we moved to ah Dunbar. Because my dad wanted my sister and I to go to the [convent] of the Sacred Heart. Which is ah, a religious sc— group of religious nuns that have a girls school. And um, so we moved up there and uh. But you know uh, we always maintained strong ties to the east end. I consider myself more an east ender than a west ender.

RC: So you still maintained friendships and contact with people?

DH: Absolutely. [nods] Most of my friends come from the east end. Well, you know that Raymond.

RC: Yes, I do. And ah, your parents, could you give us—

DH: Yes. My, my dad was born on Mount Sicker, which is just outside of uh, Campbell— not Campbell River around Courtney. In the mountains. 'Cause my grandfather had um a general store at one of the mines on I think it was called Mount Sicker. Um, so my dad was born there. My dad was the uh, third child born to my grandmother and my grandfather. And um, they stayed there for a couple of years and then they came over to Vancouver and they bought some farm property. Uh, I can tell you where it is now but I don't know what the streets were then. It's just off where the Burnaby ice rinks are. You know down on that kind of flat, just off the freeway. Uh, they had property there. And they belonged to St. Helen's Church. And that was really, the only, type of recreation there was. And there was ah, large group of people that used to walk up from where they were to St. Helen's. Which was a good way. But families walked so that, um one of the families that went were the Braidwoods. And um, Tom is is also a former Judge of the Court of Appeal as a matter of fact. And his mother and dad grew up with my mother and dad. Um, in that area of, of Burnaby. And they talked—they used to talk about how on Saturday nights there'd be uh a dance or something at the school that was on. Uh, the um, what's the name of the highway that is the old highway New Westminister?

RC: Grandview Highway.

DH: Grandview Highway. Grandview Highway just off uh, down a bit from ah I can't think— remember the name of that street now. The— Boundary. How dumb can I be? [says while rolling eyes] Um, and they would talk about walking, families walking up to go to this Saturday

night party and then everybody walking down. And it seems amazing now because there are hills. [nods]

RC: And what year do you think that would have been?

[4:33.4]

DH: That would have been probably about um, before the First World War, uh because my mother uh, my mother had two sisters who were married to two linesmen with the BC Tel. And they lived out near Boundary Road and the Grandview Highway. And so, my mother used to come up with her mother to visit ah, her sisters. And that's how they all started together, but then as I say the only place was this Saturday night party or whatever you want to call it at the schools. So, everybody got together about that. But you know it's funny because um, my mother comes from Olympia and she met my dad at these Saturday night parties. And um, I forget when it was. Her family was here and her, my grandfather was a German National. So, after the First World War began he had to go back to Olympia. Which is where they were and so, they moved down and I think my mother was probably around 14 at this time. And it, it's really funny because you talk about um, things following through. Tom, you know Tom Braidwood, uh he became a lawyer. A couple of years after I did. And we both worked in my dad's firm. And every time his mother and dad remained friends with my mother and dad. Until they died which was you know long periods of time. And I think Pat, my sister and I grew up with that were you know you had friends and they stayed friends. You may get new friends, but these friends were always in the background so to speak. And we've talked about that any number of times because I know him like I would know a brother. And he knows everything about me and probably things that he wished he didn't know. [laughs] But it, it's interesting how the relationships have come through. Because now his sons are friends of my sons. And it's it you know everything old kind of keeps going, which is great when you look at uh everything you all of a sudden keep maintaining contact with.

RC: Yes. And you mention your mother coming from Olympia?

DH: Uh hmm.

RC: Um, and your father, grandfather rather being a German National. Um, what was that uh, your mom's maiden name?

DH: Millar.

RC: Yup.

DH: Millar, yup. [nods] She's, she was one of seven. And, and they settled in Olympia. The house my grandfather was a stone mason. And uh built things like the—well there's still some of the streets in Olympia that have Millar and it would be 1910 or something like that, uh and but they— well actually my first cousins are are the remainders of that firm. They still do, now they're into general construction. In Washington. But they do very well at it.

RC: So her first name is Vi?

DH: Viola. Marguerite. Uh hmm. [nods]

RC: And your dad's full name?

DH: My dad's full name was Angelo Ernest.

RC: Branca.

DH: Branca. Uh hmm. That's right.

RC: And uh so, was he born around 1903?

DH: Dad I think was born in 1903 and on the Island. Vancouver Island. [nods] So, they moved over here I think around 1910 because my Grandfather opened um, a general grocery store on Main Street. Round the 500, I think it was the 500 [unclear] Yeah. In there and ah, the building is still there. And a couple of weeks ago the Sun had an article about Toesies. Did you see that?

RC: I did eh. It's just a block away.

DH: Yeah. And actually he when my grandfather died and my mother— my grandmother decided that she couldn't, and none of the boys were here because I had an uncle in the airforce—or not, no in the police force rather. And my other uncle wasn't old enough. So and my aunt had died by this time. So my grandmother decided to sell and Toesie bought everything out of it. Uh hmm. Yup.

RC: I see. Now, what your grandfather and grandmother's names?

DH: Okay, my grandfather was Phillip, Phillippo. And my grandmother was Teresa. Uh hmm. Both of them worked in this store. Um, my grandfather did all of the travelling cause he would go to Italy and get the stuff. Go to California and get the grapes. And my grandmother ran the day to day part of the, of the store.

RC: Your dad delivered some groceries?

DH: My dad delivered groceries, yup that's right. All of the boys did.

RC: And uh,uh..

DH: Uh hmm.

RC: The, the family home in those days was not that far away from the store.

[9:40.5]

DH: No, my grandparents lived bought— came in from the, from Burnaby and bought a house on Prior. The corner of Prior and Heatly. Not too bad, not too far from Benny's Grocery and your family were around there. And what's really interesting about that is when I retired and I retired because my husband was sick and I had a, lot of banked time that we were planning on when I did retire we would take a trip. And um, I all of a sudden that wasn't going to be in the cards so I had a lump sum of money I thought well, I should look around and if I can buy something. So I went back and I'm driving home that day and I thought, I'll go take a look at grandma's house. So I did and I'll be darned, it's for sale, and it's one of those houses in, in that area of town where they're, they're built right to the confines of the lot and they're not straight on the lot so the house, back end of the house hits the boundary line and the front end is all up. Anyway, it was for sale. It is in bad, badly in need of repair. And I thought, well, I took the name of the real estate salesman and I thought okay. And then I thought I'd go by Cambridge Street where I grew up, and I'll be darned if that house isn't for sale. And so, I'm thinking, right next to it. Do you what ah, the houses the used to call them sister houses where one would be the plan would be this and the house next door would be the reverse [motions a mirrored layout with hands] so that, that the front doors would be on the same side but the outside would—. Anyway, the house next door to our house on 2559 had been redone. And it sounds awful; it was in dark green with purple trim. But it looked right in sync with a re-done, renovated house of that era. So anyway and our house is for sale so I think okay, I'll take that now and I'll phone. So, I phone the first one of the house on Heatly, and that was going to require a lot. And the price of that was \$900 thousand. And then I thought, oh, that's way over what I had thought, and I thought well I wonder what Cambridge is. Cambridge was \$800.

RC: Wow.

DH: And I thought to myself, I don't know how people can afford to live in any place like that. And you know, people think of those as being uh, areas that aren't quite up to what they are

in— well certainly not like Shaunessey but the west side of Vancouver has houses that old, but I thought that was really quite and indication of how the areas have changed. Uh hmm.

RC: When uh, you left high school, did you go to UBC? Straight away?

DH: No, I, I went to um, I went to a religious school and it was called the um, Lone Mountain and it was run by RSCJs that were the nuns that had ah, the convent at Sacred Heart. Went down for my first year and uh, I really liked it, but it was— I missed my family too much. Even though my dad came down every three months just to make sure I'm okay. [nods] Yeah, it was interesting, yeah.

RC: Uh, when were you uh, when did you go to the bar? When were you—

DH: Okay, well I went into law school in ah 19— ah just a second, I graduated in 1952 and my class was the last of the classes with the large number of veterans. Remember they used to have a school on 4th Avenue called Sea View? And the purpose of that was for any returning veterans that wanted to go to university. Uh, the government would pay for it, but they had to get their schooling up to where they could pass the entrance exams. And ah, law was uh, you could in after two or three years of arts. If you went in after two years, you just got your law degree. If you went in after three years, you got a BA and a law degree. Uh, I had two, two and a half years. I had just about finished my third year. Arts and there wasn't really anything I wanted to do because I'm terrible at mathematics, and I can't make change properly and you know all these things. And there was in medicine I can't stand blood. So I'm thinking, well, what am I going to do? My dad said, dad never pushed anything like this. He said, "Why don't you try to law school?" And of course in those days, women didn't go into faculties like law or medicine. Those were male faculties and it was dominated. So I thought— and he said that they wanted, they wanted females to go in. So, I, I go in. I apply and I'm accepted. And the first day in law school, I just about died. There was over 200 men. I mean veterans. And there could have

been 70 ah, students that have 3rd year arts, you know that had gone straight. So they would be quite young. And uh, there were four women. I mean, that was a shocking knowledge. That I was going to be sitting through this with, with, nobody. Because there's nobody you know. So, anyway, I did go into law school and I did the first year, but it was, there was I think two other women that dropped out right off the bat. And you had to pass all your courses. Or you couldn't go on. You had to have the complete.

[15:53.6]

So, there was a couple of professors, one that, that didn't excite me. And I failed. So I, I thought— now I'm getting mad because I thought, well you know I should be able to do this, it's just reading. So that summer, I, I my dad said, "what are you going to do?" And I said, "Well, I'm thinking of going back." He said, "I'll help you, but if you fail, you pay me." And so, that was ah—

RC: [unclear]

DH: That was cause you know I'm talking about \$200 a month for working at Woodward's on weekends. So, um I did pass I got through that. And there's two other women that were in that bench both went, all three of us went to the court, to the law courts and there was, we maintained most of our relationships so that any of them are still alive. We still meet every five years and we had one meeting. One of us was honoured at the alumni dinner for the law faculty a couple of weeks ago. And so, there's one of us that is really great at keeping all of us in touch and so he phones and he says, uh "Morley's getting this award and I think we should all go to dinner." So, we all go to dinner. [laughs] And you know we're the old, oldest bunch in the room. There's nobody else. Because the veterans were all five years older than I was. So, if they're alive they're generally quite... Anyway. That was, that was the story and then when I graduated I went into practice with my dad. Stayed there and did my articles there. And ah, dad

as you know did a lot of criminal law. Um, so he could— there was two students. Dave Comparelli and myself. And uh, Dave was a year ahead of me so he would kind of take me along and show me the ropes which was great. It was really great. Uh hmm.

RC: Isn't there a story about your uh dad doing articles and uh, [unclear] but before that his dad wanted him to, to be involved maybe as an engineer?

DH: Yes, that's right. My, my grandfather wanted my dad to be an engineer. So dad went to UBC and was an engineer. He was in the year, you remember they had a walk and they walked from where they were out to the, it's called the great trap or something like that, anyway he was something like that. And people that went out to that. But at the end of the uh year, he decided that maybe he'd go into law. So he went to um, the law society and got all the papers and got himself articulated. Uh, the name of the man that he articulated through I can't remember right now. But anyway, he did his articles that way. And then in the meantime my mother would come up. I don't know if I told you this part, this is really funny. My mother would come up to visit her sisters and this is, we're talking about the 20s now. And uh, she'd meet my dad. So my dad took quite a shine to her. And one, one time she was up and he took her out someplace and ah, he kind of indicated to her that he was sweet on her and would she be interested? And she said, "Angelo, you know you got to face up to it, you're never going to amount to anything." [laughs] And my mother and dad want me to marry somebody with a good, solid reputation. So, she says, "I, I just don't think that there's any future for us." And so, my dad comes back and he could really [turn it] so he goes to my grandfather and he's out and in articles now and he goes to my grandfather and asks if he can borrow a thousand dollars. Which was a lot of money in those days. So, then he and you remember Attilio Brandolini? They were great friends, so my dad says to Attilio, "Brandy, want you to go down to Olympia with me. I want to propose to Vi." Well he says, "Well Angelo, you don't..." And they had a car somewhere and so the two of them go down and my dad and Brandy take my mother out. And

they're out having dinner someplace and my dad says "Viola, he said, you told me that I wasn't going to vote—to amount to anything. Now, he says if I were to amount to anything, would you be interested?" She says, "Yes." He says okay, brings out his bank book, shows it to her, and says there's a thousand dollars in it. Doesn't know that he'd borrowed it from my grandfather, and my mother looks at it and she's pretty impressed. So she says, "Alright. We'll, we'll, we'll talk about it." So, he closes the book, they get organized and after my mother died, my sister and I found all the letters that my dad wrote to my mother, together with the letters she wrote back. My dad was great at writing. He wrote about everything. And told you the time of the day and what it was like. That was what he wrote to her. Her letters were "Dear Angelo, thanks for the letter. Everything is fine here. Love Vi." And it was just so completely the opposite, but they fitted together very well. She understood him and he certainly understood.

[21:39.4]

RC: So, in the family there's two children?

DH: Yup, myself and my sister. Uh hmm.

RC: And are you the older?

DH: I'm the older. Uh hmm.

RC: And uh, when were you born?

DH: I was born in 1929. [nods]

RC: So, at the time you went to practice with your dad. In your dad's office.

DH: Uh hmm.

RC: What was the clientele like at that time?

DH: Well the clientele were mostly well, all of the Italians came to dad because he was the only one that, that spoke English well enough and understood what was going on. And, and when I first started going into the office, the war was on. So, uh, Italians had some problems that— well you know about it better than I do. Um, but he took an active part. In trying to keep them on the straight and narrow so to speak so that when, and, and he kind of became, with your dad two people that could speak English well, knew the customs and could help them and I don't think your dad charged anything and I know my dad didn't.

RC: At that time, during the war, when [unclear] actually when, when Italy declared war on Britain and France. There was a need for uh, the community, the Italian community to swear allegiance to Canada.

DH: That's right.

RC: And my dad was involved.

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

RC: Do you have a story relating to that? Uh.

DH: All, I don't remember the— at the beginning, but I remember what happened when I got there. And I got started working at the office sometime in the 40s. While the war was still on. But, what it, what I remember about it are people that I've known all my life but don't realize couldn't understand or write English well coming in and they would say to my dad, "Angelo, Mr. Branca," they always called him Mr. Branca. "Um, can you read this to us?" And dad would tell them what it was. And then, he'd, he'd help them. Either he would say he'd write it for them or he would tell them how to write it. And I think your dad pretty well did the same thing.

RC: Yes, uh, uh, I think that there's a story that blends the two together. Uh, uh, in terms of the Pasqualini family. Your, your dad— granddad, Santo and my father wrote some letters.

DH: Yes.

RC: And Santo was interned.

DH: Yes interned that's right.

RC: And ah, there's a feeling today that there was an injustice done to some of the Italians.

DH: Yeah.

RC: Do you have an opinion on ah, ah, on that?

DH: I think that, that for some of that that's justified. But I think for, generally the people that were rounded up were rounded up because they weren't, weren't ah smart enough to give the right questions. I have no doubt that none of them were involved. I think the people that were involved with the consulate and I think it was Brancato, wasn't he...?

RC: Ah, Brancucci.

DH: Ah, Brancucci was the one that was the head. And I think that there was a certain number of Italians that came to thought it was [pause] important to be close to the consul. I'm not saying that's right or that's wrong, but I think that they followed him blindly. And I think that your dad and my dad saw what was happening to ordinary people. Wasn't it Mr. Pas, Mr. Pasqualini that was the baker?

RC: Uh, yes.

DH: And there was a perfect example. I mean he wasn't at all interested in any kind of politics. Nor were most of them. But he got taken up. I think they lost the bakery as a result of that. And I know that Lina and Lino had a bad time as did Mrs. Pasqualini. But I think that that's where your dad and my dad kind of took it on themselves to get them all together and this is what we do, this is what we say, and kind of took the lead so that they weren't left out in left field and would be caught in this net that was drawing closer. I, I've never I think my dad at one time told me, he thought that he was on the list. And I have no idea what that meant. I don't know if that meant there was a list of people that they were investigating, but uh, I am more— I'm pretty sure that, that they investigated him. Because he was, he was not going quietly, nor was your dad.

[26:18.5]

RC: That's right. My dad uh, was required to go and register with the RCMP and to ah, to give up the, the books of minutes from the Sons of Italy society.

DH: That's right.

RC: The Italy society. Uh, and I think your dad ah, because he was so prominent in the community. Probably was recognized as being an Italian.

DH: That's right.

RC: As opposed to a Canadian of Italian origin.

DH: That's right. That's right. [says while nodding] And I think the other thing that helped. My dad was friends with the party in power. The members from Vancouver Centre. Which, which I think when they started to organize that group, I think he did that with that point of view of

pushing that— 'cause I don't remember a lot of people being interned after they, they signed that.

RC: Yes. That was the uh, Canadian-Italian War Vigilance Association.

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

RC: And uh, I believe what happened there is your dad called them together at the--

DH: Oh, the Silver Slipper.

RC: The Silver Slipper, yeah. Of Victoria.

DH: Yeah, that's right. That's right.

RC: Your grandfather I believe had a lot to do with um, the Silver Slipper being constructed.

[unclear]

DH: Yeah, they, they I think the Sons of Italy were already in existence. And for whatever reason my grandfather decided to organize the group of friends that he knew. And they formed um, the Comfort— not the [Comfortolanza]

RC: The Bennet—

DH: The Bennetta. And uh, there was the Sons of Italy already in existence. And um, they just formed that and then they bought the property and didn't they build it?

RC: They built it as well.

DH: Yeah. I, I think they ran into financial difficulties after a while. And lost it. But you know I can remember as a kid, 'cause everybody took their children to these dances. Or, banquets. And I can remember going, going to that and when the dances were all of the chairs remember

were along the outside, or the perimeter of the room. And you'd sit there and nobody, you'd wonder is somebody going to have to come, come in and ask me to dance? And then am I going to have to dance with him? You know. It was, it was different. Yeah.

RC: [unclear]

DH: It was different that way but when, when there was a dinner everybody went. Nobody would take care of the kids so they came with you.

RC: That's right. It was a real social event that included everyone.

DH: Uh hmm.

RC: Uh...

DH: It was much like the picnics.

RC: The picnics, yeah.

DH: Uh hmm.

RC: Well, I think ah it's true to say that unfortunately it was the great depression, that dictated the financial problems that the—

DH: Yes, that's probably it.

RC: They sit there and ah, however, ah, many of ah, the Italians would ah, have their receptions. Their receptions there when they got married or—

DH: Yes, that's it. That's right. That's right.

RC: And it was a place that everyone knew.

DH: Yes, that's right. The other one that had um, a hall is ah, Mrs. Benetti's [unclear] and she had that place. She had the rooms upstairs, and then she had a banquet hall down— and it's on Pal and around He— Campbell.

RC: [unclear]

DH: Around there yeah.

RC: I think ah, Nino, Nino [unclear]

DH: That's right. Rosina.

RC: Rosina. And ah...

DH: And ah, Nino Sala.

RC: Nino Sala. Yeah.

DH: That, yeah. That's right. They used that as ah, as a hall to be rented out. And showers were there or weddings. Actually, my wedding shower was there. [nods]

RC: Ah.

DH: You know.

RC: So, ah Nino or course ah, was ah one of the chefs. In the ah...

[30:06.2]

DH: That's right. [nods]

RC: Of the community.

DH: That's right. [nods]

RC: And Rosina was...

DH: Was [Ricquetta's] niece.

RC: And she was a debutant, wasn't she?

DH: That's right. Yeah.

RC: Lovely and [unclear] or ah, the queen contest.

DH: Yeah, that's right. I've got a picture somewhere of all of the girls that ran for that.

RC: Oh.

DH: Do you remember that? All dressed up to the nines. And Rosina was chosen.

RC: Yes.

DH: Uh hmm.

RC: Yes, I think that was when uh, oh just before the war because everything stopped right at that time.

DH: That's right.

RC: And that may be of interest to uh, all of these wonderful occasions that you've referred to. Uh, the queen contest that [unclear] occasion. It all stopped because of the war.

DH: That's right. That's right. Uh hmm.

RC: So, following the war then, uh, and your dad became uh, well he built his practice didn't he before...where he was focused just on his practice.

DH: That's right. That's right. And he wasn't interested in running. I think he ran for, for the parks board. And got in on that, but you know it requires a lot of, of ah, determination and giving up of your own private time. And dad had little enough as it was.

RC: Yeah.

DH: So, um, and I think my mother had something to do with that.

RC: Well, wasn't it ah, your mother that said ah, "you have to be home for dinner on Sunday?"
And—

DH: That's right. "You have to be home for dinner every night, and you have to be home for dinner in the afternoon on Sundays." And he did that. When I, when I worked there, he'd and my grandmother lived at 2nd and Main. We would leave in the morning at 7:30. And we'd go down and we stopped at my grandmother's for coffee. Every single morning. She had it all ready. Oh, there's something funny. [says while lifting finger] I got to tell you about her. She had a mortgage. And this is typical I think of ah, older Italians my grandmother's age. And ah, this is after my grandfather died and the building had been sold. And so, she had given x amount of dollars to my dad to invest. And so, my dad gave a mortgage in her name to um, one of his clients and I think she got, I forgot what the amounts were but she got approximately 125 dollars a month. And it, it just seemed to be endless. So I can remember going down one morning with my dad. And she, you know it was ah right [motions buildings side by side with hands] the house back windows faced north, so she could see the mountains. So and, she used to sit there and she would read the paper. Or whatever else was going on. And um, so this morning we go down and I see the receipt. Written on, in receipt of the money. And it's got 100

and 25 dollars and it's has less interest. To, to such and such a date, which was to that date. And that subtracted from the amount, and the balance to be applied against the principal is the net balance. What I say is the net balance, she thought that on. So anyway, I see it there and the next morning when I come back it's still there. I think it's still there and I said oh "didn't Mr. whatever his name is come in?" Oh, she says, "No he didn't, I made a new one out." She got another one made out the next day with one day's interest subtracted. [says while laughing] And I'm thinking you know, no wonder she lives so long. Cause died at 97, if you're worried about this at 80, what are you going to do. Most people would say, oh well, just forget it. But not grandma. She, changed the whole amount.

RC: Isn't that amazing?

DH: Yeah. Yeah.

RC: By this time she's already in advanced years.

DH: Oh, yes. It's before she moved to West Vancouver. My uncle Jon had moved down and they were living over there, and my mom and dad had moved and were living over there. So it was easy for everybody rather than ah, the other way.

RC: They were right there as you said around Terminal— no 1st Avenue and Main—

DH: Yeah, that's right.

RC: Uh, she lived alone up on—

DH: She lived alone on the piece of property there was a small two bedroom home. A cottage really. Right next to it. And they had the back garden was I mean there was a walkway down one side was ah, the renters and the other side was Grandmas. Which, made it easy too. Because she was a widow.

RC: Yeah.

DH: She had a daughter. And she made sure that grandma was alright. Uh hmm, yeah.

[35:00.1]

RC: And, going back to your dad ah, ah, as a youth— well, actually not as a youth I think he was ah, probably 30 when he won the amateurs. The Canadian Amateur—

DH: That's right. Amateur middleweight.

RC: Championship.

DH: Right.

RC: Uh, do you have any recollection or a story to relate? How did he get involved in boxing do you think?

DH: He always was involved in boxing and running. I don't know when he became a lawyer, there used to be a police gymnasium, and so he would go over and train there. And got, now let me think I don't think I can remember the name of the policeman that he eventually beat. For the championship, but that's how it all started.

RC: And the coach is that [Paris]?

DH: Yeah.

RC: That's [Paris]. Yeah. And ah, so ah I think that was 1934.

DH: That's right. Uh hmm.

RC: And ah, that must ah. Of course you were just a child so you probably—

DH: He, he took my sister and I and my mother to every match we ever went to.

RC: Oh, I see.

DH: Yeah. So, you know, people would say something when I was at University about boxing and how terrible it was, and I opened my mouth and of course, what didn't really endear me to a lot of people. [laughs]

RC: That's a wonderful story.

DH: Yeah, it's really quite funny. Uh, how, how uh. But he really was very proud of that. And actually when we moved up to Dunbar. Do you remember the house we used to have on—

RC: [unclear]

DH: Yeah, that's right. They had, we used to have a garage that came in from the lane with a big one. And it— I mean who had two cars in those days. So, we had one car, and then he'd put up his, his, ah you remember that big bag that you punched with and then there was a smaller one that was on the roof. And he taught the boys from Vancouver College that were in, in our district. They'd come over and he'd teach them how to defend themselves. How to hit and that kind of thing. So it was really quite interesting. Um, a propos of that, oh after I can't remember, dad was dead at this time and I'm someplace downtown meeting somebody. And this man comes to talk to me and he says are you um, Dolores Branca. And I say "Yes, I said I'm not Branca anymore but that is me." He says, "was your dad Angelo?" And I said "yes." And he says, "well my name is" whatever I can't remember the name now, he says, "I'm one of the boys your dad taught, used to teach how to box." And I thought you know that's pretty nice.

RC: Very nice. Uh, he used to um referee matches in Augusta...

DH: That's right, that's right. [points to RC]

RC: I, I did that on personal interest because he, he ah refereed one of my bouts... [unclear]

DH: That's right. That's right. That's right. That's why he was involved in that, that group of boxers. Do you remember there used to be a night— that's kind of gotten into something that used to be a...[unclear]

RC: Yeah. [unclear]

DH: Yeah, that's right. Uh hmm. Yup.

RC: So, um, your dad became a QC, well actually was a KC when you—

DH: That's right.

RC: Can you explain what KC is?

DH: That's ah, ah it's a King's Counsel. Now, it's a QC, a Queen's Counsel. And what it indicates are people who— it's only applied to criminal lawyers. And it goes to people that have exemplified the values, the best values of the law profession. And, and I think it refers to, first of all, knowledge. But, secondly I think it refers to the fact that the people that get that usually do a lot of pro bono work for cases that need counsel but perhaps can't afford it. Because there was no legal aid in those days. Now it's gotten to be anybody that goes to court. And that's okay, but it kind of I, I it doesn't seem to have a lot, oh, I wouldn't— oh, maybe I better not say this.

RC: Yeah.

DH: But, I uh, it doesn't have a lot of prestige attached to it, such as what it had attached 40 years ago.

RC: Well, if I recall correctly, your dad offered uh free advice on Saturdays at the office.

DH: That's right.

RC: And ah, that's perhaps the way he was able to do things.

DH: That's right.

RC: And I think you would work on Saturdays.

DH: Yeah, most of us would, went down. It was more relaxed, you didn't get as dressed up as you did on days that you'd go to court, but you'd go in and it was always busy. You know.

RC: And ah as your dad ah, ah, became uh more recognized, wasn't he uh, called to the bench ah quite early in—

[40:03.8]

DH: Yes, he was called, now I don't remember the exact date. But he was called to the, it was when um...

RC: What year was it, 1960?

DH: Yeah, in the 60s and he was called to the Supreme Court, which is the trial court and he was there. He went up the same time as ah, [puts hand on forehead] his name has just escaped me. The man that went with him was the Jewish lawyer.

RC: Oh.

DH: He became the chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Uh, that's really bad. Wipe this one off there [says to the camera and laughs] I'm in deep shit here. Yeah.

RC: Isn't that awful.

DH: Anyway, they went, the two of them went at the same time. And um, then about three years after the trial where dad went to the court of appeal.

RC: There's ah, a wonderful story of your dad defending uh,

DH: Oh, I know the one.

RC: A young man and then ah meeting him in the court.

DH: That's right.

RC: The Supreme Court.

DH: At the beginning of the war, there were four young men this is after the December bombings for the of, uh, that Japan went and got involved. Um, these four young men decided to rob ah grocery store, uh, did. And in the course of it, the man who owned the grocery store fought back, happened to be Japanese. And um, the man that dad represented, which was Hughes. Um, was charged with 1st degree murder. With one of the other chaps. But he's the actual one that shot him. So um, after it had started. The trial had started. Um, 'course no money, nothing at all. Um, he had gone and it was the trial was set for the pre-trial hearings. And at our house the doorbell rang one night. And my mother went to answer the door and there's this lady standing there and she asked if Mr. Branca was there, and my mother said yes, and she said "could I see him please." And it's, it's Robert Hughe's mother. She comes in, she has no money and she says, tells my dad what's happened and asks him if he'll take it. And he says—She says "I can't pay you at once, but I will pay you whatever you'll charge over the years." So, he looked—he said he's look into it. Went back and on the following Monday. Dave Comparelli was the lawyer, went over to get the particulars from the Crown. And they came up with and dad came up with this idea that uh, you had to have premeditation for 1st degree murder. And uh, so he, he went to the Court of Appeal on it. And ah they bought the argument.

And so it went to the Supreme Court of Canada. And I can remember this cause it's the first time dad ever went to Ottawa. And you know, I don't remember, I think he went by plane but I'm, I'm not sure he'd have had the money to go by plane. Anyway he went back and argued it. And by George, he won. So it was a new trial and on the new trial, uh the two of them plead. And he was given 10 years I think. [nods] And when he's on the Supreme Court as a trial Judge, there's two men that come before him on a theft and uh, dad doesn't recognize them. But it's put over for a week because of something. And when it comes back the Sheriff comes to tell him that they found, one of them had killed himself. And it turns out to be Robert Hughes. Who's dad life he had saved.

RC: Oh, that's amazing isn't it.

DH: [becomes emotional]

RC: And he left a note too didn't he?

DH: Yeah, left a note. [nods] Uh hmm.

RC: Oh my. So, he, he, he uh. He was a foremost criminal lawyer, and I've forgotten the statistics but it's something like 63 or 64 people he defended.

DH: Yeah, I think so. And he lost wasn't it 10? 8 or 10. [nods]

RC: Yeah, maybe.

DH: Yeah.

RC: I know that he, only two or three went to the gallows.

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

RC: And remarkable [unclear]

DH: Yeah, it is remarkable.

RC: Uh, record. And so, at this point in his life if, if I recall correctly. He's ah being recognized by a number of institutions and Universities. Jewish communities. It wasn't his community, but he had befriended many of them.

DH: Yes, he was...

RC: Do you have a story there about how his involvement with the Jewish Community and I think his involvement with the University in Tel Aviv, I think..do you remember the—

[45:07.9]

DH: Oh, yes. I know, um. Sam Cohen. Was a great friend of his, 'course he was just down the street from our office. And ah, he was very interested in what was going on. And he had a friend from Winnipeg that was also, I can't remember his name, I'm not even sure I ever knew about it. But between the two of them, uh, I think primarily the man from Winnipeg. Talked my mom and dad from going to Jereusalem— and, or to Israel. And he went with them, and they had an absolutely wonderful trip. Everything uh, they did, uh I can remember them talking about. What is the name of that plateau? Where the people, the uh Jews were marooned there. You have ah— they have an elevator or to get up there now. Oh ,you know it's a famous battle.

RC: We're not doing too well here...

DH: [laughs] You're going to have to cut this part out. [laughs and points to camera] Um, God I just...anyway as a result of that, they gave, dad gave a large sum of money to the University there and – the University of [Shevia.] And they then gave him the award.

RC: That's wonderful.

DH: Yeah, it was.

RC: Seems the same, the same grape leaves crossed.

DH: That's right, that's right from the church. Yeah, from the Vatican yeah.

RC: [unclear]

DH: He was ah, you know he didn't make a lot of that but he was a very faithful Catholic.

RC: Yeah.

DH: I was talking to one of the nuns, cause you know one of the sisters at Charity of Halifax where Our Lady of Sorrows and every um, I got involved with the convent where the religious are from France. And we were talking once about the way were brought up and how religion had it's place and nobody thought too much about it. And everybody went to church on Sunday, everybody did this. But one of the things my dad did when he went once was—. He went to mass everyday. And there wasn't a mass early enough at Immaculate Conception. So we all went down, or my mother didn't usually go. But my sister and I or I would go, because I'm on my way to University. To uh, uh, the Church on 10th Avenue on the way out to University.

RC: Yeah.

DH: The name just goes right now.

RC: [unclear]

DH: That's right. Perpetual Help. So anyway, we would go to the 7 o'clock mass there. And he never said anything about it. Never talked about it. But it's funny about uh two years ago, I was talking to some people that belonged, that had been there for years and uh, the man is probably in his 90s now. And we were talking about the priests that were there and how, how very kind they were. And he says, you know I remember your dad. And I'm thinking we'll he's been in trouble somewhere and he needed his help. And no, he says "I remember admiring him because he went to mass every single day during lent." And he says, and this is true because we did it for the five years I was at University. And I remember specifically, 5 years in the early 50s. And I'm thinking, boy who'd ever think that one.

RC: Yes. That's interesting.

DH: You know there's probably not more than 20 people in the church. Because nobody went to the early mass.

RC: That's really quite remarkable.

DH: Yeah, it is.

RC: And he was so busy.

DH: Yeah, yeah.

RC: When you became a Judge, uh, isn't there a story connected to one of your first ah, uh days of conducting the court, your dad walked in.

DH: Oh, yes. [says with hand on forehead] Oh yes. I'm, I'm in I worked in the North Fraser, so it meant that I did work from Burnaby out to uh, and past uh Maple Ridge. So, I'm sitting there and I have no idea he's coming anyway. Uh, I'm sitting there doing the list. And all of a sudden the door opens and in walks my dad. Of course the uh, Sheriff can't believe that dad's there.

And I'm thinking, oh— I was going to say shit. But you'll take that one out won't you [says to videographer]. Okay. Um, I thought, oh dear what am I going to do now. And he just sat there. Didn't say anything. I don't think there was anything else, but it, it gave me a bit of a shock seeing him walk in. And me above him. [laughs]

[50:18.2]

RC: It was a marvelous thing, daughter and father. He was so proud.

DH: Yes, he was.

RC: And he was going to be there to see it.

DH: That's right and we're talking about this courthouse. This in Coquitlam or in [unclear] at the time. Was just a rickety old building. You kind of climbed upstairs. And I remember thinking that's pretty neat that my dad's here. [smiles] Yup.

RC: So, um, how many years did you serve on the bench before you retired?

DH: Twenty, twenty two. Twenty two or twenty three. And I retired because my husband was sick. So...

RC: Was it ah, ah, in your career, uh, did you— did it fulfill all the things that...

DH: It was beyond; I can't tell you how I enjoyed it. The Judges that I worked with, particularly in the North Fraser, were just so great. Good, smart, and all of them willing to work. Because I was the administrative Judge for 8 years. And I assigned them all. There were 16. And you know I could ask them to do anything and they would do it. I had none of the problems that some of the other Administrative Judges doing. Saying well no "I can't do that, I'm on holidays. Or this is my chamber day, I've got something planned." Ah, that was never a problem there. Yeah. It was

really a nice, I, I, I often think of it because until you've been there you don't realize the collegiality and the loyalty that you get.

RC: You did all this, while uh, guiding 5 children at home.

DH: Yeah, 5 children. [laughs] Yeah.

RC: Give us the names and—

DH: Oh yeah. My first son is Angelo. Named after my dad of course. Uh, and then uh two years later— they're all two years apart. Uh, my next one is Patrick. Is named after my husband. And uh then my first daughter was Luciana. And then my second one was Maria. And the third one is Teresa. So.

RC: And the law practice in the blood so to speak—

DH: Is there. It does, yeah. Pat became a lawyer and is with my dad's old law firm, or my old law firm and— but doesn't do, doesn't particularly like court work. He doesn't like to be the main focus of things. He's very good at business and that type of thing. Which is where, he, he does it. But it's really neat to see three generations.

RC: Absolutely.

DH: Yeah, we're lucky that way.

RC: And, the generation thing, applies also uh to the Italian community.

DH: Yes.

RC: Your grandfather, your father, yourself and, and young Angelo.

DH: Yeah.

RC: So, you became uh, quite interested in the Ladies group I believe.

DH: Yes.

RC: Here.

DH: Before I became a Judge, I, I, I liked that. Mind you those are the ladies that I'm still friends with. So, it isn't, it wasn't a chore. And it's, it's funny because I feel very close to the people that I knew growing up.

RC: Yes. It makes it so , uh...

DH: Uh hmm.

RC: Nice, because as you said earlier, old friends—

DH: Yeah, are the best ones. You don't there's no explanations. You don't have to say why you did anything or why you made an ass of yourself. You just made it. Everybody goes on with it from there.

RC: I think you were recognized uh, for your achievements uh in 1975 [unclear]

DH: Yes. They gave me the award and then a couple of years, let me think now. Oh, when I retired from the bench, I got it from the, from the from the lawyers group. And then I worked on the Picton Trial. And all of the, all of the team that worked for the Prosecution got the award that year. From the same firm. So it was pretty nice, I've got two of them from them.

RC: Is there, I mean sometimes it just comes, or sometimes you have to think about it—

DH: Uh hmm.

RC: The name of that award when you were working on the, on...

DH: Picton.

RC: Uh, was it ah, ah given by the fraternity, by the law firm?

DH: Uh, you know I've got it up in my in my— can we stop for just a minute? [says to the videographer.]

[Camera fades out]

[55.03.9]

DH: Okay, getting back to those awards, I, I that was really quite an award because the first one when it was given to me as a Judge, um, that's from the general bar. And ah it's usually at the Four Seasons so it's a large luncheon and it's it was very rewarding.

RC: That's wonderful.

DH: And the one we got for the Picton uh, is the same group, and the same luncheon but it just happened it was given, it's usually given in the spring, but this one was given at the end of January. And there was a terrible snowstorm and I couldn't get out of the driveway. So, I couldn't go. So one of the other lawyers accepted it on my behalf. And brought it out.

RC: That's [unclear]

DH: But they gave that to every lawyer that worked on that team.

RC: Isn't that amazing?

DH: Yeah. It was.

RC: And that was over an extended period of time.

DH: Five years.

RC: Five years.

DH: Five years it was.

RC: Um. [pause] I wanted to mention also that the award that you received from [Frontolanza] was the Italo Canadian Award.

DH: That's right.

RC: And then your dad I believe was the recipient two or three years later.

DH: That's right, that's right. He was. He was after he retired. And I got it before I went on the bench.

RC: Well, I, I believe that we've recorded uh, wonderful stories here this afternoon and uh, do you have a general statement that you'd care to make about anything to do with your personal life or your family?

DH: Um, well about the only thing that I can say is I the older I've gotten, the more I've appreciated where I've come from, and my friends. I really find that that's a great deal of solace.

RC: That's wonderful.

DH: Yup.

RC: Thank you very much for—

DH: Thanks very much for asking me. [nods]

RC: Wonderful.

[Camera fades out and back in]

RC: During the early part of World War Two, uh your dad joined the reserves. Do you have a story that's connected with that?

DH: well, I, I and I looked for this picture actually. It's a picture of dad and uh, Italian— Ital— Brandolini. [says with hand extended]

RC: Brandi.

DH: Brandi. Brandolini. Attilio. And uh, there's another one there. There's a picture of the three of them on ah, they go for three weeks for training, I think up at cold stream. And it's just the three of them and I thought to myself old friends. You know because my dad's known them all his life and um, when I thought of it after we spoke before. I thought really everything old is new again. Dads back with the same friends, I'm back with the same friends. Although I don't think I ever really left.

RC: What was his unit, what was it called?

DH: Irish [unclear] and that always struck me as funny. Cause he didn't have an ounce of Irish blood in him. [laughs]

RC: And uh, he did that uh purposely to—

DH: Yeah he did it purposely because it was the beginning of the war and he wanted help to spell the idea. That Italians were in bed with the Germans.

RC: Excellent. Thank you very much. Ah, that's a wonderful story. And that picture, does it, have you located it?

DH: I haven't found it yet Raymond.

RC: [unclear]

DH: Yeah, I will. Dad didn't keep these things in proper order; you know it's like all the pictures that just go for 40 years are all together. All the papers for maybe 60 years are all together. They're all in a carton somewhere, but those are going to be for you Raymond.

RC: Well, I appreciate that. Thank you very much. I am delighted with the...

DH: Good. Good.

[Camera fades out at 59:16.0]

[End of Interview]