

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

DATE OF INTERVIEW: May 2, 2011

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Hamilton, ON

NAME OF INTERVIEWEE: Phyllis Morreale and Rita Morreale

NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Nadia Mior

NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER: Vikki Cecchetto

TRANSCRIBED BY: Lisa Kadey

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ABSTRACT

In this interview, Phyllis Morreale and her daughter, Rita Morreale, describe living in the Barton and Sherman area of Hamilton during and after World War II. Phyllis' father, Luigi Mascia, was interned at Camp Petawawa for 22 months. Phyllis was engaged to be married, and when Luigi was arrested, she had to postpone her marriage. In order to get Luigi out of the camp, Phyllis' mother had to pay a large fee, which Rita and Phyllis describe as extortion. They talk about women with large families who were left with nothing after their husbands were interned, and describe the experiences of Italian-Canadians who had to register with the government every day or every week. They also talk about the discrimination Italians faced during that era, when it was difficult to get a job or buy real estate in certain areas. After the war, Rita describes how members of the Italian community began to build up the construction industry in Hamilton. They both describe how Luigi and the other internees rarely talked about their experiences in the camp after the war, preferring to return to their lives as they were before. The Morreales also show a portrait of Luigi that was painted by fellow internee Vincenzo Poggi while he was interned.

INTERVIEW

PM: Phyllis Morreale, interviewee

RM: Rita Morreale, interviewee

NM: Nadia Mior, interviewer

VC: Vikki Cecchetto, videographer

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 00:00:09]

NM: Okay, so my name is Nadia Mior and, uh, I'll be doing the interview today. We are at the house of Rita and Phyllis. Okay, so, we've got this consent form signed and everything.

RM: Mm hmm. [Nods]

NM: We'll just start off with some—just some personal background questions—

RM: Mm hmm. [Nods]

NM: —for you ladies. Um, so, could you give us your full name?

PM: My—

RM: Your full—

PM: Phyllis Morreale.

NM: Oh, Phyllis Morreale.

RM: Rita Claire Morreale.

NM: Okay. [Whispering in background, unclear] And were you born in Hamilton?

PM: Yes.

RM: Yes. [Nods] Both of us were, yeah.

NM: You were both born in Hamilton.

RM: Yes, mm hmm.

NM: And what part of Hamilton were you born?

PM: East end.

RM: Barton and Sherman area.

NM: Barton and Sherman.

RM: Mm hmm. [Nods]

NM: And then you moved here?

RM: Uh—

NM: Did you spend most of your time there?

RM: My mother was—when she was married at St. Anthony’s Church, her and my dad lived there for—well, that, that was her home, that was her birth home. And then I lived there till I was about five, and then we moved to the east end of Hamilton. [Points to the left] But mainly she spent the most part of her life at Barton and Sherman area.

NM: Barton and Sherman.

RM: Yes. [Nods] Which was predominately Italian.

NM: Yes, a lot of immigrants, they lived there.

RM: Yes, yes, very much so. [Nods]

NM: So, tell me a little bit about, uh, your family at the time, during the war. [Whispering in background, unclear] Um, how many in your family? How old were you?

PM: Well, there was my mother and father and my sister, who passed away. And my father was a horse owner and a liquor salesman. And, uh, we were a very active family. And then, uh, when Italy declared war, they barged in, two of them, practically bor—uh, uh, broke the door down. And my mother and I were getting supper ready, and they barged in, grabbed my father, and, uh, went to the desk and searched through the desk looking for papers here and there. We thought, What’s going on? You know, it was a shock.

RM: There was no warning. There was no warning. [Shakes head]

PM: We, we had no idea what was going on.

RM: No.

PM: What was the idea? And they took my father away.

RM: They took them all down to Toronto.

NM: To Toronto.

RM: And they boarded them on the train to Petawawa.

PM: And then when we went to Toronto, there was four of us in the car, my aunt, my mother, and another friend whose father was taken away, and, uh, we sat in the car, and they were marching them up and down like animals.

NM: Hmm.

PM: It was horrible. It was a horrible sight to see.

RM: It was a travesty.

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: And we all started to cry in the car.

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: And we tried to wave, but it, it, it was just, uh, a horrible sight...

NM: I imagine.

PM: ...to see those good men being dragged around like animals, you know.

RM: And a lot of them didn't have any political—some of them, you know—

PM: So there was really not—

RM: —were almost illiterate. They worked at Stelco.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: They, uh, they didn't have any political aspects whatsoever. They might have had an Italian newspaper. Well, if they didn't speak English, of course they had an Italian newspaper in their house.

NM: Sure. Mm hmm.

RM: But it was, uh, just that it was, uh, it was a travesty, and they just picked on—

PM: They took—

RM: —certain people. Some of them were businesspeople, most of them were just pure ordinary men and that was it. [Shrugs]

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: That was it. No rhyme nor reason, there was no rhyme nor reason. So...

PM: You know, they took fathers away that had nothing to do with, with, uh—

RM: Yeah, it was just a random thing.

PM: Uh, you know, they were just hard-working people.

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: Raising their family. They were left with nothing.

VC: [Whispers] Excuse me.

NM: Now how old were you at the time when they came for your father?

RM: Nineteen forty-two, so you would have been—

PM: Well, I was 20.

NM: You were 20.

PM: And I was planning to get married, and I had to postpone my marriage.

NM: Oh boy.

RM: Yeah. [Nods]

PM: Oh yeah, we had, uh, had the date and all, and we were planning my wedding. And I had to postpone it.

NM: Wow.

PM: Now you want to know about how I went to Ottawa after? Should I tell them that?

NM: Sure.

PM: Well, then, after about a year, uh, a Canadian agent, who we were not told his name, we had—just had to call him Mr. Mac. And, um, he said, uh, “You can come to Ottawa with me.” And we got on the train. My mother and I had no idea what was in store for us. We just said that this was going to be our way of getting my father released.

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: So my mother and I spent a whole week at the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa...

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: ...and we were greeted by two men at the station. And the gentleman, the Canadian agent, that’s all we knew him as is the Canadian agent, left, and he said, um, “I’ll see you in a couple of days.”

RM: After you paid them. You had to pay them.

NM: Of course.

RM: So, if you didn't pay, your men didn't get out. [Shakes head]

PM: Yeah.

RM: So the men that didn't have anybody to cough up the dollars and do all the paperwork, they stayed there for the duration. My grandfather was there for 22 months.

NM: Twenty-two months.

RM: He was in Pa—Petawawa, yes. [Nods]

PM: So then, um, uh, a week later, he knocked at the Chateau Laurier door, I—at our room, he came to our room. And he said, "Your father will be home in a week." And my father was home in a week. But it costed us a few dollars.

RM: [Nods] A lot of money.

PM: And they weren't the only ones that paid. There was a few others. My uncle after, uh, uh, paid to get out. I-it was a scam, it was. It was a scam.

RM: It was an extortion. It was extortion.

PM: [Shakes head] It was a—just—

VC: Who was your uncle?

RM: Sam Bart—uh, well, my Uncle Sam, Sam [Sabatino] Bartolini—

PM: Sam Bartolini.

RM: Sam Bartolini, yeah. [Nods]

PM: Yeah, that was my uncle.

RM: [Nods] That was his uncle, yeah, yeah. But they, like I said, they took people that had just no—well, Ollie [Osvaldo] Giacomelli was only 18, I mean, when they took him. I mean it was ridiculous.

[00:05:58]

PM: Well there was families that—

RM: And—

PM: —were left with—

RM: They were left with nothing. [Shakes head]

PM: —a few dollars—

RM: They were left with nothing, yup. [Shakes head]

PM: —no food. And then when my father came out, Christmas Day, no word of lie, we put in a lot of food in the car, and we delivered groceries to different families that we knew were in need.

RM: [Nods] Yeah.

NM: Wow.

RM: See there was no assistance at the time. [Shakes head]

NM: Yeah.

RM: There was nothing.

PM: They took fathers that—

RM: The had to help themselves. Mm hmm. [Nods]

PM: —were just hardworking men, had nothing to do with—

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: —politics or, uh, uh, you know—

RM: And if they happened to belong to the social club, like, in those days you had the Trieste Lodge, you had the, uh, the Casa d'Italia.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: They seemed to focus on those because they thought they were, like, [makes air quotes] political, but they were social clubs. But they were [makes air quotes]—they thought they were

political clubs. And they seemed to focus on, on people that belonged to these social clubs
[makes air quotes] apparently, you know.

RM: Mm.

RM: And of course too a lot, lot of date—a lot of times in those days, um, a lot of the
businessmen, they, um, they were sending money back to Italy. Because—not to support any
cause, to help their families.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: And I think that seemed to be sort of a—they just felt that it was a political thing, and you
were sending it to support [makes air quotes] *le Duce* [sic].

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: Which was not true. They, I mean, they had families that were destitute in, in Italy.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: And then the ironic part of it is, um, we had Italian boys, like Alfie [Alfonso] Borsellino was
one who was there fighting in Sicily. Uh, he wasn't the only one, and yet his parents had to go
and register. Some registered every day, some had to register every week. So what was wrong
with that picture? [Shrugs with hands out to the side]

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: It was just a travesty. It was just a travesty. [Nods]

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: Certainly it wasn't as bad as what they did to the Japanese, but that's not the point, you know.

NM: Still... Oh, yes...I was going to get to that. Um, so, when your father was taken away, how did you manage? Do you remember? What was, what was it like without your father there?

PM: Well, we survived, you know, 'cause we had relatives, aunts, uncles, uh, friends, and we just carried on a-as a family the best we could. You know, and worried a bit. But we were like—we had women whose husbands were taken, so we kept in contact with one another, you know, we, um, socialized and did the best we could.

RM: They supported—

NM: Yeah.

RM: —each one supported themselves, really, in a lot of cases—

PM: You know.

RM: — in a lot of cases.

NM: Were your family—were they nearby? Or—

RM: Well in that contingent, in Barton and Sherman, they were all Italian.

PM: Oh yeah.

RM: And all the families lived next door to one another.

NM: Yeah.

RM: Yeah. But I mean, some of the women had five and six children, were left with nothing. They were left with absolutely nothing. You know, and I mean, they just had to, they had to survive. Some of, some of the kids had to be pulled out of school because they had to support—

PM: That's right.

NM: They went to work?

RM: They had to find work so—they had to find work on the farms and stuff like that.

PM: Yeah.

RM: Um, and, um, they had to—you know, they had to survive. But I always—my comment was, where was the Catholic Church in all this?

NM: Yeah. [Chuckles]

RM: But, uh, you know, I mean, the priests certainly didn't help them. I remember one, uh, fellow saying if it hadn't been for the United Church that was next door to his house—they were the ones that made sure that, uh, they had groceries on the table and shoes so the kids could go to school. And he said, "My only contact with the United Church," he said, "I used to go over there and play basketball with their kids." But he said, "Where was the Catholic Church?" You know, they still expected—if they were living on 10 cents a week, they still expected that—[points with finger] for the nickel to be put in the—

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: [Places hand on chest] That was, that was my feeling on—when I read about everything that was going on with it. They didn't come, they didn't come and help these people. They didn't come and help these people. [Shakes head] And a lot—in a lot of cases, much like in my mum's, mum's case, it was a lot of my father's, um, English friends that had been in business—like, because my father's contacts with being a liquor salesman. And they, they were the ones that, that stepped forward and, and gave them money and gave them help. But you, you gotta understand, too, the Italian concept to—like, a lot of them were scared. They were scared.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: They didn't want to be associated because they were scared. It was an act of survival.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: You can—in any kind of that, any kind of that situation, it was an act of survival.

NM: Hmm.

RM: So they sorta kinda kept, kept their distance. [Holds hand out in front in a stopping gesture] And then, then afterwards—

PM: We, we had a church two doors away from us, the All People's United Church.

RM: [Gestures hand toward PM] All People's [unclear] Mission, yes. [Nods]

PM: And the minister and his wife were the first two to show up.

RM: Yup, yup. [Nods]

PM: "You need help?"

RM: Yup. [Nods]

PM: Because I was going to that church at that time.

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: And, uh, "Do you need help, do you need this, do you need that?"

RM: Yeah. [Nods]

PM: And our English businesspeople, like, that my father knew, were the ones that all showed up and asked, like, you know—

RM: If they could help. [Nods]

PM: “Do you need anything? Do you need money? Do you need...” you know.

NM: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

PM: They were very good. They were the first ones to show up—

RM: Yup. [Nods]

PM: —and offer their, their help. There was, um, a Ja—uh, Jewish fella that owned a ginger ale company and they were going to foreclose on him, and my father helped him to keep the company going. He never forgot. [Wags finger]

NM: Oh, that’s nice.

PM: He came to our house, and he put 300 dollars or four—whatever, I just forget.

[00:11:04]

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: And, “Rosie, you’ve got to take this.”

RM: That was, that was my grandmother’s name.

NM: Was it.

PM: Exactly what he said to my mother.

RM: Yup. [Nods]

PM: “Rosie, you—if it wasn’t for your husband, I wouldn’t have my company today.”

NM: Oh, that’s [unclear].

RM: Yeah. My father was—my grandfather was one of the very lucky ones just because of the fact that he was in the business.

PM: Yeah.

RM: He had some very, very good friends that... [Nods]

PM: Yeah.

RM: But a lot of the Italians didn’t—they just had—they didn’t have anybody. [Shakes head]

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: They didn’t have anybody.

PM: See my father was liquor salesman for Cosgrave’s Brewery [Cosgrave & Sons Brewery Company] in Toronto. And Mr. Cosgrave showed up when we heard about it, you know. And, uh, he offered help. And it, it—they were great. They were great.

RM: [Nods] Mm hmm.

PM: We had wonderful friends...

NM: That's good.

PM: ...in that department.

VC: Were you able to communicate at all with your father in the camp?

RM: [Gestures toward PM] My mom says she doesn't remember.

PM: What? [Asks RM]

RM: Uh, when he was in camp, did you ever receive letters or contact—

PM: No.

RM: No. [Shakes head]

PM: I, I don't remember.

RM: She doesn't remember.

NM: Yeah.

PM: We got that picture. [Points off camera] Like, you saw that picture, didn't you? Yeah.

RM: [Nods] Yeah, we had the picture that was sent.

PM: I, I really don't remember whether—

RM: Whether there was any contact.

PM: —we were in touch.

RM: Yeah.

PM: I, I just can't recall whether we were in touch or we got a letter or what.

RM: Yeah.

PM: You know.

RM: There might have been, but she just can't—

PM: My father came home a week after when we were told that he'd be home in a week. And, um, we always had relatives, aunts and uncles drop in, you know, Italian-style.

NM: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

PM: You always had family. And, uh, and my boyfriend was there also. And all of a sudden, no word of lie, we heard, "Hello."

NM: Oh. [Chuckles]

PM: And it was my father.

NM: Oh wow.

PM: And we all, we all just stood there. [Holds hands out to the side] We couldn't be—you know, and it was pretty late at night.

RM: There was no warning.

NM: No.

PM: It was pretty late at night.

RM: No. [Shakes head]

PM: And we were, you know—oh, the tears. [Gestures with hands]

NM: It must have been something.

RM: It was, it was. [Nods]

PM: And the—and then the next morning, all those that you hadn't seen, that were a little bit scared—

RM: Started to show up.

PM: When the word was passed around Sherman Avenue that my father had come home, we had the house just steady all day. [Sweeps hand back and forth]

RM: Yeah. [Nods]

PM: All day.

NM: Now was he one of the first to come back to that area?

RM: Tony Oliver—

PM: No, Mr. [Antonio] Oliveri.

RM: I think Tony Oliveri was one of the first.

PM: And that was a shock to us because to hear that somebody was released—

NM: Yeah.

PM: —and we thought the others, but then when we heard—

RM: You had to pay a lot of money. [Nods]

PM: —what—how he got released—

RM: A lot of money. [Nods]

PM: —then we were approached.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: Yeah, yeah.

PM: They, they went to people that they figured had money. [Gestures with finger in the air]

RM: Yeah. [Nods]

PM: That's who they att—went to.

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: It was a scam. It was a scam.

RM: And there was probably informers, which probably nobody ever talked about. But I'm sure—I have no doubt that there were finger pointing, and, you know, I mean that's—again, that's an act of survival.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: You know, and, uh—

PM: Yeah.

RM: The—from what I understand, from what they did at the camps, there, there was very little for them to do. Benny [Panfilo] Ferri who was a, a bandleader, I think he kind of started a band, and there was a choir. And, you know, I—Petawawa's way up there. [Gestures with hand]

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: So I don't really know what type of work, if anything, that they, that they did. You know [shakes head], I—when they came out, I don't think—they really didn't talk about it.

NM: Oh, okay. I was going to—

RM: Um, it was—

NM: —ask you—

RM: Yeah.

PM: Yeah.

NM: —how much did your dad say?

RM: I don't think they really talked about it.

PM: No, no.

RM: I think it was, it was gone, let's get back to our fractured families, let's get them back to our lives.

NM: Yeah. Did any other internees talk to your father or grandfather?

RM: [Looks to PM and shakes head] I don't know, I—

PM: Did what? [Asks RM]

RM: Did any of them, did they ever talk—[shrugs] like, who knows whether they talked amongst themselves about the camp. Uh, we really honestly don't know. [Shakes head] I think also, too, there was also probably a stigma of shame.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: Of course, through no fault of their own. But they just wanted it—let's, let's—it's been done, let's get it over with, let's get on with our lives, you know.

PM: Yeah, because the children don't really know much about it.

RM: No, no, no. [Shakes head]

PM: The children haven't got a clue of what went on or what we're talking about.

RM: If I told my daughter, she wouldn't have a clue what I was talking about. When did all this happen? You know.

NM: Yeah.

PM: It kind of, it kind of—

RM: They, they haven't got a clue. They kept it quiet. They kept it very quiet. [Nods]

PM: Yeah, yeah.

RM: Yeah.

PM: Yeah.

RM: Yeah. Unless—like you say, Vikki—it's now come out now because all these people are passing, you know, passing away. And then a few years ago, they wanted the apologies. I think they expected at one time that they wanted the compensation much like the Japanese. But the Japanese, they confiscated everything. They put husbands, wives, children, like, David Suzuki's family, I mean, it was certainly not [waves hand outward]—but it was just the way it was done. It was just the way it was done. [Nods] It was a travesty. It really was a travesty. But, um—

VC: Was any, uh, was any, uh, property—

RM: Confi—

VC: —confiscated from you?

RM: Not to my knowledge, no. [Shakes head]

VC: Was there anything...

RM: None. I don't think any property was confiscated. [Looks to PM]

PM: No, no, no. [Shakes head]

RM: No, no.

PM: No, nothing.

RM: Basically I think when they came into the houses, they were just looking for, uh, books, newspapers, anything like that. And, and they also knew that a lot of these people, much like my grandfather, was in a position that were sending money back to Italy, not to support the political movement or the Fascists, they were there to support their, their, their families, their families.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: I mean, they had, they had families over there. My grandfather had three brothers, and they were all in Italy. [Nods]

[00:16:03]

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: Yeah, and that's why they were sending money back, you know, so.

NM: Yeah.

PM: [Clears throat]

NM: Did your mother work at the time?

PM: No, my mother never worked. [Shakes head]

RM: No [unclear]. [Shakes head]

NM: Did you work at the time that they were—that your—

RM: No. [Shakes head and looks at PM]

PM: Me?

NM: Yeah.

PM: No.

RM: No, no. [Shakes head]

NM: No.

PM: No.

RM: My father went, went to work at, um—my father was from the Northend. He was a Sicilian.

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: [Coughs]

RM: And he worked at Sher—at Wallace Barnes, which was just down the street on Sherman Avenue. And he was one of the very first Italians to be hired. And the ironic part of it is, his foreman was a German.

NM: Oh! [Laughs]

RM: And they became very good friends. [Laughs] But yeah, yeah, it was, it was quite the—and then of course, too, I think when it—what—when a lot of the Italians did get out of camp, a lot of them went into construction because after the, the war, we had a big boom.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: And that's when a lot of the Italian builders Frances-[James] Franceschini, uh, Dufferin Construction. There was many of them that, that got into construction because there was the, the big boom. And some of them did go back to Stelco; some did go back to Dofasco. Um, I don't think I ever heard of anybody actually losing their, their jobs.

PM: Well some of them were taken out of, uh, the steel plant, Dofasco.

RM: Yeah, right out of the building. Oh, they walked right into the plant and took them away.

PM: You know.

NM: Yeah.

RM: Oh, yeah. [Nods]

PM: And some of them were in the army—

NM: Yeah.

PM: —when their father was taken away.

RM: Yeah, yeah. [Nods]

PM: You know.

RM: Now some had to register every day—

PM: Yeah.

RM: —some had to register once a week.

PM: Yeah.

RM: What that was all about, I don't know. I never could figure that one out.

PM: Yeah.

RM: What the reasoning was. But like I said, these people, these parents had boys over in Italy fighting. And yet, their parents over here had to go and register every day.

NM: Mm hmm.

VC: Was your, was your father ever declared officially an enemy alien when they, when they—
was there any papers that indicated that he—

RM: If there was, we probably never saw them.

VC: Okay.

PM: Hmm? [Leans toward RM]

RM: Who's to say, who's to say? I mean, Mounted Police can have files on everybody, and you'd never know, I mean—

NM: But you didn't—

VC: You were never—

NM: —told—

VC: You were never—

RM: [Shakes head] I don't think they were ever told.

VC: —given a letter saying that—

RM: No.

VC: —your father was declared—

RM: [Looks to PM] Did gramp ever have any papers that—when he came out of camp?

PM: No, no.

RM: There was no papers, no nothing.

PM: No.

RM: If he did, he probably never—

PM: No.

RM: —showed them to anybody. I mean, I don't know.

NM: Right, yeah.

RM: I don't really know, yeah.

VC: Now you talked about a portrait.

RM: Yes, yes.

VC: Um, did you want to, to show us that?

RM: Most definitely, yes. This portrait was painted in camp, and was sent to my grandmother.

Excuse me. [Gets up and walks off-camera]

VC: We'll just hit pause.

NM: How is it?

VC: I think it's great.

RM: This was an oil painting, and the fella that did it is a name [man] by the name of Foggio [Vincenzo Poggi]. And that was when they were in camp.

NM: Oh wow. Do you want to show it to the camera?

RM: Mm hmm, most definitely.

NM: And we'll have a [unclear].

RM: [Camera is bumped] Oh, I'm sorry.

NM: That's okay.

RM: There we go.

NM: That's okay.

[Camera is repositioned so it is focused on RM and painting]

RM: [Holds painting on lap and presents to the camera] Now it was painted by—it says there, Foggio [Poggi]. And it came, uh, to my grandmother...wrapped up like that.

NM: When did she receive that?

RM: When did she receive that? [Asks PM] Mum—

PM: I can't really remember.

RM: All we know [unclear].

[Camera pans to include PM in frame]

NM: [Unclear]

PM: I just can't remember.

RM: We've always had it, and then my father, I think—we just had the rolled up thing, and my father years and years and years ago eventually framed it. [Taps nails on glass]

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: And, um, it was painted by this Foggio [Poggi] person.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: And, um—

VC: [Whispers] Did you want to—

RM: [Holds portrait up to camera]

NM: So—

VC: Was he also an internee?

RM: He must have been.

VC: Mm hmm.

RM: I would, I would assume. [Shrugs] I would have assumed.

NM: It was done in Petawawa?

RM: It was done—that was in Petawawa. [Leans to look at painting from the side] That was in the camp. That was in Petawawa. Which was an old barracks, it was an old army barracks at that time.

NM: Yeah.

RM: Yeah.

NM: Did you, um—what else did you hear about the camps, like, what, what did they do every day? Or what, what was it like? Did you ever hear about that?

PM: Well, did, uh—

NM: Do you know what they did to keep busy?

PM: I, uh, d—really don't know. Uh, they marched and they painted.

RM: I don't know whether there was such a, a thing as a labour camp.

PM: [Clears throat] And, uh—

RM: They lived in the barracks. Uh, like I said, Benny Ferri had the music and the choir, but I don't really think there was a heck of a lot, um—

NM: Hmm.

RM: Maybe ch—I mean, who knows? [Shrugs] Oh, sorry. [Adjusts sitting position to get into camera frame] But I—but who knows?

NM: Yeah.

RM: You know, I mean, we don't—

NM: Not much was said.

RM: We don't, we don't—not, not much was said, no, not much was said.

PM: There wasn't much talk after they came out. [Gestures with finger in the air]

RM: Yeah, they didn't want to talk about it. [Shakes head]

PM: There—we didn't really talk about it or discuss it.

RM: Yeah.

PM: It was done, it was done, you were home.

RM: Yeah.

PM: Let's start living like—

RM: And in, and in those days, too, people probably—it wasn't—it was like the Jews during the Holocaust. Look at how many years it took them to finally come—sit down and write the, the memories out, which were horrific, of course. But I think with the Italians, they just wanted to forget about it. [Shakes head]

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: Nobody wrote anything down, nobody kept papers, nobody kept any memorabilia.

PM: No.

RM: It was just something happened, it's gone, let's get over with it. Let's get on with our lives, yeah. [Nods]

NM: Now did your father seem himself as you remember him before he went to camp?

RM: He didn't change much, did he?

NM: Did he change any?

PM: Hmm? [Leans toward RM]

RM: Grandpa, when he came back out of camp, he didn't change much? [Shakes head]

[00:21:05]

PM: No. [Shakes head]

NM: Did he seem different?

PM: No, he went on. My, my father was—

RM: He was very resilient. My grandfather was very resilient.

PM: You know, my father was only 15 years of age when he came to this country.

RM: Yeah. He was very resilient, very resilient.

PM: Didn't know a soul.

RM: Yeah.

PM: Didn't know a soul.

RM: Yeah.

PM: You know, he left his suitcase at the station, and walked to an address that he had. And, and he worked his way up to become a well-known—I've got pictures of him in *The Spectator*, a well-known liquor salesman—

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: —and a well-known horse owner. We owned horses at Woodbine racetrack.

NM: Oh, good.

PM: I practically lived at Woodbine racetrack.

NM: Did you?

PM: And, uh—

RM: He was very, he was very resilient. [Shakes head]

PM: —he, he really worked his way up to—

RM: Yeah.

PM: —you know, uh—

RM: He, uh, bamboozled into things. [Laughs]

[PM, NM and VC all laugh]

RM: I gotta write a book.

NM: [Unclear]

RM: No, he did, he did. I mean, he, he started a grocery store, like he said, with an orange and a banana and a tomato.

PM: Yeah, right. [Nods]

NM: Wow.

PM: He lived in a boarding house—

RM: But that's how, that's how he, he li-lived, yeah.

PM: —in, um, Oshawa.

RM: He spent one week at Stelco, and he says, "That's not for me." [Shakes head]

NM: Wow.

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

RM: I remember. [Nods]

PM: He said, "No, that's not for me."

RM: He said, "When they closed those gates, I knew was in jail."

PM: And he always said, "I opened up—

NM: Oh wow.

PM: —first grocery store.” ‘Cause we ended up with three. [Holds up three fingers]

RM: Yeah, yeah. [Nods]

PM: We had one on Sherman Avenue. [Starts counting on fingers]

RM: Yeah.

PM: One on Barton Street, and one in Milton.

RM: He’s, you know—

PM: And then my father sent for his brothers.

RM: Yeah.

PM: And they all took over each grocery store.

NM: Oh wow.

RM: Yeah.

PM: You know. And my father always said—oh, the story is this. In Oshawa, the man that had his store had a little gate with a gun beside it. [Gestures with hands to indicate size of gate] And

that's how he served people. And my father said, "This isn't right." So my father opened up a store with one banana, one orange, and one apple.

NM: Oh, wow.

PM: We grew up with that story, yeah.

RM: That was, that was [unclear].

NM: Oh, wow.

RM: Yeah, yeah. [Nods]

PM: Yeah, we grew up with that story.

NM: That's wonderful.

RM: Yeah.

PM: And then my father ended up having three grocery stores. [Gestures with three fingers held out]

RM: Yeah. No, he was very, he was very resilient, very resilient.

PM: Oh yeah, it was wonderful.

RM: Like you never heard my grandfather, um—‘cause I lived with him until I was about six—
but my grandfather never was down. [Shakes head]

PM: No.

RM: He was never negative.

PM: That’s right, that’s right.

RM: If the—my grandfather said it was fate. If it’s going to happen, it’s going to happen. That’s
the way he was.

PM: Yeah, yeah.

RM: If it’s going to happen, it’s going to happen.

PM: Yeah, yeah.

RM: You know, you know.

PM: Yeah.

RM: Yeah, you know—

PM: He used to say, “Look around you.”

RM: That’s right. [Nods]

PM: “Look around you, look at the people that are down and out.”

RM: Yeah, yeah. [Nods]

PM: “Look at the people that need help.”

RM: I had—you know, the ironic—

PM: “Be grateful with what—for what you’ve got.”

RM: And the ironic part of it, uh, out of that Barton and Sherman area, uh, we came out with a lot of doctors, lawyers, judges.

PM: That’s right.

RM: And they all come from very, very—

PM: Yeah.

RM: Because in that area, there was mostly Italian, a lot of Polish people who had it just as rough. And, uh, you know, we had John Lorenzo[?], John Japeka[?], I mean, there was a lot of professionals that came out of that area, out of very, very poor circumstances.

PM: That’s right.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: You know. Like the whole family would work to send one kid to school and become a doctor or whatever, you know, they, uh, they very much pulled, pulled together. And then, um, the Italians, like, the *Furlans* [*Friulans*], the *Abruzzesi* and that seemed to, um, go into that Barton and Sherman area, whereas the Sicilians all were up in the Northend, as—we talked about that before, yeah.

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: [Nods] Yeah.

NM: Mm hmm.

VC: Getting back to your, your father when he came back from the camps, um, did he associate with any of the other internees here from Hamilton after he came back?

PM: Oh yeah. Mr. [Francesco] Zaffiro and, uh, Chester Capponi's father was a good friend of my father, he used to come—

RM: I think they still kept it up, yeah. [Nods]

PM: They all came to our house.

RM: Yeah, yeah.

PM: Mr. Zaffiro used to come every week and, um, we were, like—oh, drop in all the time, oh yeah.

VC: And do you think they talked about the, the—their experiences?

PM: Not really. Not really. There wasn't really a lot of discussion, there really wasn't. That's why, like I say, the children of today don't really know what went on. I think it was something that happened, and they wanted to forget it. [Gestures with hands]

RM: They wanted to forget about it, yeah.

PM: They didn't [rolls hands in a circle]—I don't ever remember my father ever wanting to talk about it, really.

RM: Talk about it, no.

PM: Eh, Rita?

RM: [Shakes head] No, they didn't.

PM: You, you, you know.

RM: No.

PM: It was done, it was done, it's over.

RM: Yeah.

PM: Let's get on with our life.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: Yeah, yeah. [Nods]

PM: Yeah.

RM: Come back; put the fractured family back together again.

PM: We lived in a wonderful neighbourhood, wonderful neighbourhood.

RM: Yeah. Well in those days you never locked the doors.

PM: And the—I think the Massasi[?] boy was taken. And he was in the army, and they had a grocery store just on the corner from us. Did you here about the Massasi[?] boy?

VC: No.

PM: Yeah.

NM: Massasi[?].

PM: Yeah, I think, um...

RM: I don't know what happened to him. [Shakes head]

PM: One of them was taken.

RM: Yeah.

VC: Okay.

PM: Oh yeah.

RM: But... So it was just—

PM: Goes a long way.

RM: It was just something that happened, and it was a travesty, and there was no rhyme nor reason for it, there really wasn't, you know. And I think we had a big contingent here in Hamilton, Toronto, Montreal had a big contingent. Sault Ste. Marie, I think, had a big contingent, 'cause a lot of them worked in the mines.

NM: Mm hmm.

[00:26:06]

RM: And then I think there were a few from, from out west. Now, as you said, Vikki, there were three or four women that had been interned and—which we never really—I never knew, knew about.

PM: My sister's father-in-law was crippled, crippled. Wha-what was the— [Turns to RM]

RM: It's Mrs., Mrs. Del—Mr. [Antonio] D'Alessandro (?).

PM: D'Alessandro.

RM: Yeah.

PM: Geez, you think I could think—and, um, the poor man was—walked like this— [Hangs arms down in front of her]

RM: Yeah.

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: Legs crippled, and they took him.

NM: Oh, wow.

PM: Of all people.

RM: Yeah.

PM: We were shocked. That was my daughter—

RM: There was no rhyme or reason.

PM: —my sister's father-in-law.

RM: Yeah.

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: D'Alessandro, Mr. D'Alessandro.

RM: Yeah.

PM: It was a shock to take a man like that, that could hardly walk [Sirens heard in background] and, uh, practically cri—well, he was. He was bent over and his legs were bent. It was a—it was sad, it was sad.

NM: Mm hmm. We'll wait till— [Chuckles]

RM: Wait till the sirens...

PM: Oh, we get that all the time.

RM: I'm sorry, when we live to the city, it's—

PM: You get that all the time.

RM: Yeah. [Smiles]

NM: But the camera likes that sound. [Laughs]

RM: [Laughs]

NM: It sounds like they're coming here.

RM: Could be. They have [unclear] few times. [Laughs]

NM: [Laughs]

RM: Just hope the smoke alarm doesn't go off. [Laughs]

NM: [Laughs] That's all we need, eh.

PM: Oh dear.

NM: So did your father find work right away after when he came—when he was released?

PM: No, we went into the grocery business.

NM: Oh, okay.

RM: He opened up a grocery store.

PM: Because, um, a liquor salesman, there weren't anymore, because in those days, you didn't have a hall with a liquor license. So you hired a liquor salesman. And I still have girls saying to me, "Oh, when I got married, your father supplied my wedding with the liquor."

NM: Wow.

PM: 'Cause that's the way it was done. Well, then they started building halls, and they started getting a liquor salesman. So they didn't need liquor salesmen anymore. No, we went into the grocery business.

NM: Right, okay.

PM: We had a grocery store just down here on King Street after. [Gestures to the left]

RM: King and Sanford.

NM: Okay.

RM: Yeah. [Nods]

PM: Yeah. My uncles all went back to Italy, so the grocery stores were sold, and then my father reopened one on King Street.

NM: Oh.

RM: Mm hmm.

PM: And then my father started to get sick and started to go downhill. Old age. Yeah, great life.

RM: It was quite an era.

PM: If you don't weaken.

[Speaking in background, unclear]

RM: Yeah, it was quite an era.

PM: Great life if you don't weaken.

NM: Yeah, yeah.

PM: Yeah.

VC: Is there anything else that—is there anything else that you can remember from that time, from, uh, perhaps what your—

PM: Not really, we—I think we covered just about—

NM: Yeah, you've covered a lot.

[Camera pans slightly to the right]

PM: Covered a lot of territory. [Laughs]

NM: You sure did, you sure did. [Laughs]

RM: Yeah, it's unfortunate we don't know too, too much more, but as I said, when I—when they came out of the camps, I just don't think that they wanted to talk about it. [Shakes head]

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: Like I had said, uh—reiterating what I said about the stigma of shame and I think they just wanted to forget about it.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: It happened, let's get on with it.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: Let's get on with it. You know, they weren't—they gro—they didn't want to dwell on it. They didn't want to dwell on it. It was something to be forgotten, you know. And, uh, I think they—that comes from, uh, the Italians themselves, if something bad happens, let's forget about it.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: It happened, we'll deal with it, and let's just get on with it, you know. Well, I mean, I'm sure that if there had been anybody that was very politically motivated or, you know, whatever, that probably more would have been done, more would have been said, but there wasn't, there really wasn't. [Shakes head] And like you say, a lot of people didn't know this until 20, 30 years afterwards. Until you—like right now, they're all, they're all gone, they're all gone, you know. And they didn't leave any, um, any diaries or any kind of, uh, papers that people could go back and, and—there were pictures taken. I think we had a picture of all the men in the Trieste Lodge. Now, a few years ago, the Workers Heritage, uh, they did a, a thing on the, um, on the, uh, the internment, um, at—on Stewart Street. And they had all kinds of pictures of the people in the camps, and what the camps were set up, and, uh, um, that was quite, quite interesting that they got a hold of all those pictures, yeah.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: But outside of that, never heard anything else, no. [Shakes head]

[00:30:24]

VC: It must have been hard not knowing what was going on at the time when your father was gone. You didn't hear from, uh—

PM: No.

VC: —anybody about anything.

RM: No contact.

PM: No, oh no. We, you know—

RM: No contact.

PM: —just carried on, uh—

RM: Yeah.

PM: —there was nearly—really nothing—

RM: Did you ever have any—

PM: Our hands were tied. Our hands were tied. There was really nowhere to go to. No, you know—

RM: Did you ever have any visitors? Like, after, after the camp, after grandpa was taken away, was there anybody that ever showed up belonging to—

PM: No.

RM: —the Mounted Police or anything like that?

PM: No, no, no, it was done.

RM: Nothing. It was done.

PM: It was done.

RM: They just came in and took them away.

PM: It was over with.

RM: Yeah.

PM: Oh yeah.

NM: And then he just showed up without any—

RM: Yeah, broke down the door, and that was it, yeah. [Nods]

NM: Hmm.

PM: Yeah.

RM: Oh yeah. No warning, no warning.

NM: And they didn't say why or what or how? Nothing?

RM: No. [Shakes head]

PM: No.

RM: The only reason was you were Italian, and that was it.

NM: Hmm.

RM: Yeah. And then of course, too, after that, um, it was, it was very difficult for a lot of the Italians to get jobs because you were Italian.

NM: Dis-discrimination.

RM: Very much discrimination.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: I mean, I know for a fact—I lived in Ancaster, that was in the very early 60s, and it wasn't, it wasn't written in stone, but you were practically told, you do not sell your house to an Italian or a Jew.

NM: Oh boy.

RM: Mm hmm. And that's why the Jews all went to Westdale.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: And I had another friend of mine who said, "You know," she said, "my real estate agent basically said the same thing to me." It was just something that was—of course now, I think every race, the Irish in New York, the Puerto Ricans, and now we've got a whole new raft of people that everybody's—

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: —you know, I think every race has been ostracized at one time or another. But I mean if you were Italian, you couldn't get a job. Like, for a woman to get a job at Eaton's was practically—I think Mrs. Sperazine[?] was one of the very first people that was hired. Yeah, it was, it was—it wasn't easy, it wasn't easy.

NM: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

RM: But those were the days when the applications—"What is your nationality?" Now, they can't do that anymore.

NM: Yeah.

RM: It's discriminatory. But in those days, if you were—even if you were an Italian-Canadian, no way. And then I think a lot of them did end up changing their names.

NM: Yeah.

RM: I think that happened.

VC: Was your father, uh, an Italian citizen—

RM: Yes.

VC: —at the time of his arrest or was he already an It—uh, or already a Canadian citizen?

RM: My grandfather was a Canadian citizen.

PM: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

RM: No, they, they—

VC: When did—do you remember when he became a Canadian citizen?

PM: No, no.

RM: No.

PM: No.

RM: Uh, back in 19—he came here, uh...1918, I'm not sure. But back in 1925 or '26, we had a copy of an affidavit, and he went back to Italy, to, uh, see his family. And he actually had to sign an affidavit, that, "I, Luigi Mascia"—I wish I could find that, um, "of Hamilton, Ontario, is"—was

going to go to some—Calabria, or wherever, and would be back—he had to—and that actually had to be notarized.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: But, um, he—both him and my grandmother were, were Canadian citizens, yes. [Nods]

NM: Hm.

PM: Oh, yeah.

RM: My father was born here, that was—

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: —as, as my mother—both my grandmother and my grandfather were born in, born in Italy, yeah, mm hmm.

VC: So it couldn't have been, it couldn't have been the idea that he was still an Italian citizen—

RM: [Shakes head] No, no.

VC: —and therefore that was the reason—

RM: I think the majority of them were Canadian citizens, weren't they? [Looks to PM]

PM: Oh yeah, the majority, oh yeah.

RM: Yeah, I, I think, I think they were Canadian citizens.

PM: No, they were Canadian citizens.

RM: They had been here for a number of years.

PM: Oh yeah.

NM: It didn't seem to matter, did it?

RM: No, it didn't matter, it didn't matter. No, no, it didn't matter. Because a lot of them had been here since the, the 20s and the 30s, so that—I think they, they became Canadian citizens.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: And then in the 50s, we had a whole new surge of newcomers that, that came in and, you know, became Canadian citizens, you know, so.

NM: Hmm.

RM: Like I—

VC: Did your, did your grandfather ever talk to the new ones who came in about what had happened during the war years?

RM: Well, when you—we had cousins that came, well Emilio Mascia was one, him and his family all came in 19—I can't remember—in 1953.

PM: Yeah, Emilio Mascia. Well, my father sent for them.

RM: They sent for them. [Nods]

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: And, uh, they came here in 1953, and, um, the, the idea of the money that was being sent was to look after them. And then they came here and they had nothing. But, um...they—he probably talked to his brother, because his brother came, was Emilio's father. [PM clears throat] He probably knew what was going on, knew what was going on, you know. I don't know the circumstances of what happened to them when they were in Italy all the time, um, although as I said, my grandfather was sending—much like a lot of the Italians that could afford it—was sending money back to Italy to support. [Nods] And then eventually in the 1950s we—like, I have, I have to be honest with you, uh, my—I can never remember my grandparents living in a house by themselves. We always had boarders. There was always somebody staying there.

NM: Oh yeah.

RM: Somebody comes from Italy...they, they'd stay at my [gestures to the right]—[throws hands up in the air] we always had somebody, you know.

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: That's right.

RM: We, we always had somebody, we always had somebody, yeah.

PM: That's right.

RM: They al—they always had a big house, and there was always somebody that was coming over. And then when the big surge came in around the 50s, that's when a lot of the Italian—the newcomers that came here, um, became the builders because of the boom that was happening in Hamilton, you know.

NM: Mm hmm.

[00:35:49]

RM: Like Mario Cu-Cuomo[?] said, when his parents came, they said, "Oh, come to America, you know, the, uh, the streets are paved with gold."

NM: Paved with gold. [Chuckles]

RM: But he said, "They forgot to tell us that we had to do the paving." [Smiles]

NM: [Laughs]

PM: [Bends over in laughter] Oh dear, oh dear.

RM: [Laughs]

NM: Yes, that's true.

RM: Oh, it's all true. [Mumbles] Yeah, they're paved with gold, but we had to do the paving, you know. Yeah. They worked hard. The men worked very, very hard, yeah, you know. But they were a very close community—

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: —very close community.

NM: That's good.

VC: How do you feel about all of this now that we're, we're starting to talk about it all over again?

PM: Well, how can I feel? I mean, it's done, it's done. I mean, uh, uh...I'm a little bitter about how it happened.

RM: How it happened, yeah. [Nods]

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: You know.

RM: Yeah.

PM: But, uh, life goes on.

RM: Yeah.

PM: That's all. Life goes on.

RM: I think it was a travesty.

PM: There's no use dwelling on the past, life goes on.

RM: Yeah, yeah.

PM: And carry on, and—

RM: Like, people say, what—

PM: Things turned out good anyway after, you know.

RM: [Shrugs] That's right, yeah, that's right. But I mean, uh, my, my-myself doing the reading and research, I feel that it was—it definitely was a travesty. Definitely was a travesty.

PM: Oh, at the time, it was terrible.

RM: It was extortion. It was blackmail. I don't care what you want to call it.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: But it was, it was, it was an atrocity.

PM: Well, especially with parents that were left with young children.

RM: That's right, there was nothing. Those poor people.

PM: It was hard on them.

RM: It was hard on them.

PM: You know, the children were small.

RM: Very small.

PM: That's why I say a lot of them that have grown up today don't really know what happened.

RM: What happened, yeah.

PM: Like, we—well, I was 20, you know.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: But I mean, the Italian community [PM coughs], much like a lot of the immigrant families, you know, like, one guy said, "I guess we were poor." But he said, "You know what? We never knew it, because everybody else was in the same boat."

PM: That's right, that's right, that's right. [Nods]

RM: You know, he said, "My grandmother would send me to—or my mother would send me to the butcher with 10 cents and we'd buy bones and we always had food on the table."

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: That's right.

RM: You know. And he said, "We were poor, I guess." But he said, "We never knew it."

PM: We didn't know it.

RM: Because everybody else was in the same boat.

PM: He, he always says that.

NM: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

RM: Everybody lives in the same boat, you know.

PM: Yeah, he always says that. He says, "We were poor, but we didn't know it."

RM: I mean, yeah. You know, I mean, it was, uh—they were a very tight-knit community in those days.

PM: It was, it was.

RM: Very tight-knit community, very, very tight-knit.

PM: It was great.

RM: Nobody locked doors, everybody wandered in and out, you know. I can remember as a kid walking through the alleyway, going to visit my Auntie Tea[?] and bringing home eggs. 'Cause everybody had chickens in those days. You know, and my grandfather would bring the, uh, the women to the farms, or Copley Noyes [& Randall] where they, where they worked, you know, the seamstresses and that.

PM: That's right.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: You know. And, um—but at that time, too, after, after the war, there were, there were a lot of jobs, you know. Now, of course, certainly not the kind of money paying jobs, but there—the, the boom with the construction, uh, there was a lot of businesses. There—a lot, a lot of them went into tailoring. They were very good tailors.

NM: Mm hmm, Mm hmm.

RM: Uh, the women worked at Copley Noyes or they worked at the farms, and stuff like that. There—they got by. They got by.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: And they—the women were very resourceful. They could make anything out of anything.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: You know, I mean, uh, give them a chicken and a plate of pasta and you had a feast, which was true.

PM: [Laughs]

RM: Well, yeah, you know, and, and I mean and in those days—

PM: It's true.

RM: —I can remember, um, a lot of the Italians always—for some reason, we always had people from Buffalo, and they would come and they would stay.

NM: [Laughs]

RM: I don't know how we fed them, but they would stay.

NM: [Laughs]

RM: Yeah, which was true, they would stay a week, you know. And I often used to say to my grandma, "Grandma, how did you feed them?" "I don't know, plucked a couple of chickens." They, they—yeah, but they were very—not like today. Today's a whole new ballgame, you know.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: But today—everybody was very resourceful, pretty resourceful, you know. And, uh, but my grandfather, being the kind of man he was, he was, he was very resilient, he was very neg—he

was not negative. He was very positive in anything that, in anything that he did, you know. I mean, uh, so, um—for us, it worked out well.

NM: Mm hmm.

VC: Do you remember at all during the, the period that your father was away, having to go hungry or—

RM: [Shakes head] No, I don't think they—

PM: [Shakes head] Never, never, never, no, we were—

RM: They were, they were in a fairly good position.

PM: —always, like—

RM: Yeah.

PM: I—in fact—

RM: I don't think they had the hardships.

PM: —they tell—they say—they called me spoiled brat.

RM: Yeah.

NM: Oh.

RM: *La principessa, la principessa.*

PM: Because I—

NM: [Laughs]

PM: Because I've been spoiled.

RM: *La principessa.*

PM: I've never had to—

RM: No.

PM: —worry about anything.

RM: No.

PM: Like with income or—

PM: That's why she looks so good.

NM: That's right.

RM: [Laughs]

PM: [Laughs]

NM: That's the secret, is it?

PM: No.

RM: But no, they didn't have the hardships like other people did.

PM: No, we never, we never—

RM: They were very lucky that they had—yeah. [Nods]

PM: —had, uh—

RM: They didn't have the hardships, you know.

[00:40:24]

PM: Yeah.

RM: And, um—

PM: No, we had a good life, a real good life.

NM: So when did you finally get married? I know you were waiting to get married.

RM: Nineteen-nineteen forty-two, eh? [Looks to PM] May 2, 1942. [Nods]

PM: Yeah, yeah. [Nods]

NM: Forty-two.

PM: Yeah, yeah.

RM: Yeah, 1942.

VC: How long after your father came back?

PM: A year. Oh yeah, because we had already settled a date.

NM: Yeah.

RM: Supposed to—

PM: We made arrangements with them.

NM: Yeah.

RM: Yeah.

PM: The gentleman that owned the restaurant. Uh, what was it called? [Asks RM]

RM: Roberts.

PM: Huh?

RM: Roberts at the time, yeah.

PM: Roberts. And he came to our house and asked if we needed help, because Mr. Roberts was a good friend to a lot of the Italians.

RM: His name at that time was Steve Roberts.

PM: 'Cause the Italians, that was the first hall they rented for a wedding or for a shower.

NM: Mm hmm, Mm hmm.

RM: Yeah.

PM: And he came. And, um, uh, what was I saying? I, I forget.

RM: They were gonna get married in '41—

PM: Oh!

RM: —and you had to postpone it.

PM: And, uh, Mr. Roberts came to the house, and we had to postpone the wedding, but I got married exactly a year later.

NM: Oh good.

PM: Yeah.

NM: Mm hmm.

VC: And your father had come back after—at that time.

PM: Oh yeah. [Nods]

RM: Yeah, yeah. [Nods]

PM: Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

RM: Yeah, yeah. Mm hmm.

PM: Oh yeah. Yeah...

RM: It was, it was an interesting time.

PM: Good memories, good memories. No, really—

NM: Yeah.

PM: —good memories after.

NM: Yeah.

RM: Yeah.

PM: You know, it was done, it was done, and—

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: But I'm sure, you know, there's a lot of people out there if they were still around would, would tell you that—

PM: There aren't that many, though.

RM: That's the problem.

PM: Are there? They're aren't that many.

RM: That things were very, very difficult for them.

NM: Mm hmm.

PM: And the children were young.

RM: Very difficult. Yeah, yeah, you know.

PM: And that.

RM: But, uh, they survived.

PM: Yeah.

RM: They survived.

VC: It sounds like you were in a great neighbourhood, too.

PM: Yeah.

RM: Yeah.

VC: Good support. It was very fortunate.

RM: Yeah, yeah.

PM: Very good, very good, yeah. Good neighbourhood, good.

RM: Well, it just seemed that when they came to Hamilton, they gravitated in those two areas, so you had that Barton and Sherman area, you had the Sicilians up in—and then of course, things have changed. Once the Italians kind of graduated to Stoney Creek in the mountain, then the Portuguese people moved in, you know.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: But—and then of course you had All Souls Church, which was on, um, up in the Sicilian area, and we had St. Anthony's, which was on Clinton Street in, in, uh, in Hamilton, you know, which is where a lot of the Italians went to, you know. But that was my biggest—where was the Catholic Church in all this?

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: So. [Shrugs]

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: But, uh, like my mother said, it was a lot of her English friends that—

NM: That's good.

RM: —that helped them out.

NM: That's nice to hear.

RM: That helped them out, yeah. Mm hmm.

[Cross-dissolve between clips 00:42:42]

RM: Yeah, no, we had the police station right on Barton and Sherman. That's where the police station used to be, so, you know. But, uh, no, it was like you said, it was a very, very good community to, to live in, and, uh, everybody supported everybody else, you know.

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: And I mean, you know, a lot of those women—well, Mrs. Renalli[?] had 11 children.

NM: Oh my heavens.

RM: You know, you, you think, How did they do it? You know, uh, Mrs. Maso[?] had seven children, and—oh my god.

PM: Oh, they did a good job.

RM: [Shakes head in disbelief] And they did it, and they did it.

NM: Yeah, yeah.

PM: Good job.

RM: You know, there was always food on—

PM: Ten children, eight children, nine children.

RM: There was always food on the table.

NM: Hmm.

RM: Their kids were always dressed—

NM: Good.

RM: —clean clothes and, you know, it was, it was a hard life. But they were very—the women were very resourceful, very resourceful. [Nods]

PM: Very, very.

RM: Yeah.

VC: When you, when you say you were across the road from the police station—

RM: Mm hmm. [Nods]

VC: —was that the RCMP or the—

RM: No, that was Barton and Sherman. No, that was a police station. [Nods]

VC: The, the, the municipal police?

RM: The municipal police, yes. [Nods]

VC: The city police?

RM: They were right on the corner of almost, uh, Barton and Sherman on—you know where the Playhouse Theatre is? They were across the road. [Gestures to right with hand]

NM: Okay.

RM: They were across the road. They were there for many, many years, yeah.

VC: Do you remember, uh—or do you remember any of the, of the, uh, Italians having to go in? Do you—would you see them periodically—

RM: Who'd register? [Asks PM]

VC: —having to go in to register?

PM: No. [Shakes head]

RM: [Speaks directly to PM] Did grandma have to register? She had to register.

PM: [Speaks directly to RM] Yeah, grandma had to register.

RM: [Asks PM] Once a week or once a day?

PM: Gee, I, I, I can't remember. [Shakes head]

RM: No.

PM: I-I'm sorry.

RM: 'Cause some did it every day for some, whatever reason, and some had to do it every, every week.

PM: Yeah.

NM: Yeah.

RM: Yeah.

PM: Yeah.

VC: Did, did your mother ever have to go to the RCMP to register?

PM: No. [Shakes head]

RM: Yeah.

NM: Okay.

RM: [Asks PM] Is that where they went to register, was at the, the jail, the police station?

PM: I, I, I—you know, I, I can't say for sure.

RM: She doesn't—no, she can't remember. [Shakes head]

PM: I, I—that's something I can't—

RM: It was a long time ago.

PM: —remember.

RM: Yeah, yeah.

VC: Okay.

RM: What that was all about, I don't know, but—

NM: Mm hmm.

VC: Yeah.

RM: —that's what they had to do, you know.

PM: It was a long time.

RM: The only way I knew about the registration was because my, uh, father-in-law had been in the army with a lot of the Italian, um, uh, boys, and they [unclear], you know, that my parents had to go and register. It just seemed that some would go once a week, and some would go every day. [Shakes head]

NM: Mm hmm.

RM: And what that was all about, I have no idea.

[Cross-dissolve between clips 00:44:59]

[Voices speaking in background. Camera shows portrait of Luigi Mascia painted at Camp Petawawa by fellow internee Vincenzo Poggi. Camera zooms in and out to show various sections of painting]

[Fades out at 00:45:18]

[End of interview]