

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

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**NAME OF INTERVIEWEE:** Antoinette Palmeri

**NAME OF INTERVIEWER:** Joyce Pillarella

**NAME OF VIDEOGRAPHER:** Adriana Rinaldi

**TRANSCRIBED BY:** Emily Rondel

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Antoinette Palmeri was born in 1929 in Montreal. Both of her parents were born in Italy. Her father, Vito Palmeri, immigrated to Canada when he was 16 years old, leaving both his parents behind in Salemi, Italy. He travelled back to Italy often to visit his aging parents and when he was in his mid-30s his parents advised him to take a wife. It was during one of his last trips to Italy that he met his wife, a seamstress. They married and came to Canada where they settled in Montreal. The couple had two children Antoinette and Frances. Antoinette recounts her early years of attending a school run by both American and French Canadian nuns, where she

received a trilingual education. She also speaks of the various neighbourhoods in Montreal. She highlights the Italian customs she grew up with and the various Italian activities and associations she both participated in and knew of, such as the *balillas* and the Casa D'Italia. On June 10, 1940, two RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) came to the door during dinner to arrest her father. The family was in the middle of dinner and was allowed to continue eating as the officers waited patiently. Her father was first taken to Bordeaux jail and then transferred to Petawawa where he remained for two years. In his absence the family struggled to make ends meet, with Antoinette's mother working as a seamstress and washing clothes. The family received no relief despite their pleas to the government. Antoinette believes that it was her father's association with fascism that led to his arrest. Upon his return her father spoke little of the experience, only telling a few stories of how the internees would take to practical joking to pass the time. Even in her later years Antoinette does not know many of the details surrounding her father's internment as the event was never discussed in public, even amongst of families of the interned.

#### INTERVIEW

**AP: Antoinette Palmeri, interviewee**

**JP: Joyce Pillarella, interviewer**

**AR: Adriana Rinaldi, videographer**

[Title screen]

[Fades in at 00:00:10]

JP: —good? Okay, it's, uh, June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011. My name is Joyce Pillarella and I'm interviewing Antoinette Palmeri, her father was Vito—

AP: Palmeri.

JP: Pal...

AP: Without the I. [Raises one finger in front of her to indicate letter "I"]

JP: Palmeri.

AP: Yes.

JP: Excuse me, thank you. Okay, so I'm—

JP: It's okay. [Smiles]

JP: —interviewing Antoinette Palmeri.

[Woman speaks in background, Palmeri]

JP: *Si, cosi ho detto*. Alright [laughs], so Antoinette, why, why don't we start? Tell me, um, where you were born and where your family's from?

AP: I was born in Montreal. January the 14<sup>th</sup>, 1929, at the Royal Vic [Victoria] Hospital. [Laughs].

JP: And your father came from Italy?

AP: [Nods] Yes, he was 16 years old when he came from Italy.

JP: And you still had family that was living in Italy?

AP: [Shakes head] Not, not, no.

JP: When he came?

AP: Oh, when he came? Yes, he had his mother and father.

JP: Yeah.

AP: He had no brothers or sisters, anyways, so... [Smiles]

JP: And, um, how many people are you in your family?

AP: Two.

JP: There's you and your sister?

AP: Frances, yeah.

JP: Frances, your sister. Okay. Uh, tell me about, uh—where did you grow up in Montreal, what neighbourhood?

AP: Uh, my God. [Looks up thinking] North End. [Gestures with hand] North End of Montreal.

JP: Near, um...

AP: Oh...

JP: Near Little Italy, near Mile End?

AP: Near what?

JP: It was near Mile End that you lived?

AP: Well, they used to call it Mile End at that time. I don't know. But, uh, the surroundings, yeah. Always the same place, from one street to another. [Gestures with hands]

JP: And what was it—what were the—what was the neighbourhood like when you were growing up—

AP: A few, a few French, English, and a few Italians, yeah. [Nods]

JP: Yes. And it was—but there were a lot of immigrants that were living there at the—

AP: Well, immigrants [shrugs shoulders and thinks]...maybe when my father came I guess. The same time. But it was mixed, English, French, English, Italian.

JP: You were—on what street were you born?

AP: Alexand—well...on Grand Avenue.

JP: Okay.

AP: And after we moved to Alexandra. And from Alexandra, we moved on Wiseman, in Parc-Extension. And after from there, we sold the house and we went to Pierrefonds, the West Island [gestures with hand].

JP: But, uh, when you were living in Parc-Ex, uh, which, like, which church would you have gone to and what school would you have gone to?

AP: [Unclear] to Italian church. Notre-Dame-de-la-Défense [gestures with hand].

JP: So the Italians in Parc-Ex were connected with the Italians—

AP: Uh, yeah.

JP: —in Mile End?

AP: But my sister went to—she belonged to the Fra—St. Francis of Assisi. She used to go to school there. See I went to the Italian...mix. We had the three of them, French, English and Italian where I went to school. [Counts on fingers]

JP: How did it work out? Like how was the curriculum set up?

AP: [Looks inquisitively at Joyce]

JP: [Says louder] How was the curriculum set up, in school that—

AP: Well, we had, um... Let's say the uh [pauses to think and gestures with fingers]—not the first grade, even kindergarten we'd say Italian. And after little by little was Italian, French, English. [Gestures hand in horizontal motion]

JP: So you were doing classes in—

AP: Oh, yeah we had half, half a day Italian and, uh, half a—[shakes head] no, Italian—we had Italian all day long, that's at the beginning. The kids, we had the first communion and after we grew up and we went step by step. Lets say, um, we had French, half a day French and half a day English. [Gestures with hands] And the nuns of St. Francis, they were...nuns.

JP: Yeah. [Unclear]

AP: We had American nuns. We had Canadian nuns. [Gestures with hands]

JP: That's amazing because you were really quite ahead of your time.

AP: Yeah. [Nods]

JP: At that time—

AP: Yeah, yeah.

JP: —to be doing trilingual—

AP: I don't know what goes on now though. [Gestures with hands]

JP: No.

AP: But before it was, uh, we had English...nuns from, from the States, from New Jersey, and French Canadian ones from Montreal, you know. Or surroundings.

JP: Was religion part of the curriculum back then?

AP: [Nods] Oh yeah, Catholic, yes, Catholic.

JP: And you had to go—and you went to Madonna della Difesa?

AP: [Nods] Yes, yes, yes.

JP: What do you remember from that church?

AP: Well, I remember when, uh, the firemen came over and, um, blocked [Benito] Mussolini on his horse...on the ceiling [speaks while looking up at ceiling and then nods]. Because my class was just facing Dante Street, so we could see. [Motions with hands parallel in front of her]

JP: Oh, it's true, you were able to see from the window there.

AP: [Nods] Yeah.

JP: And the firemen came.

AP: [Nods] Yeah, and we didn't know, we were kids, we didn't know. [Shrugs] And the nuns wouldn't say a word. [Waves hands in "no" gesture] [Shakes head] They wouldn't say what was happening. But when we went home, we were starting to talk about it, and then that's what happened. They [unclear], they blocked Mussolini on his horse.

JP: Wow.

AP: And after, well, they came back and they took them off. And it's still there.



JP: Yeah, yeah.

AP: Yeah.

JP: Um—

AP: I think—

JP: —what [unclear]—what, sorry?

AP: Oh, who, who was the uh, painter, uh, um... [Places hand on chin in thought]

JP: [Guido] Nincheri.

AP: Nincheri. [Raises hand in air]

JP: Guido.

AP: Guido Nincheri, yeah. [Nods]

JP: Yeah.

AP: He was the one. [Nods]

JP: Did you know him? Did you ever meet him?

[00:05:23]

AP: [Takes in big breath] No. Never did.

JP: Was he—he must have—was he talked about in the Italian community at the time?

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

JP: Not in—

AP: Not in school. That was out of the question.

JP: Did the nuns ever talk about, uh, just the history of Italy and [unclear]—

AP: [Shakes head] No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. It was just school.

JP: And what kind of activities, what did the girls do? Like you walked to school, you walked back—

AP: [Nods] Yeah.

JP: What kind of activities did the—

AP: Well, we had gym, gym.

JP: And, um...

AP: And with the nuns, the American nuns, when it was St. Patrick's [Day], well they showed us how to dance. Yeah. [Gestures with hand and nods]

JP: Oh, 'cause the nuns were Irish.

AP: [Nods] They were Irish, yes. They didn't speak a word French—

JP: And—

AP: We had to learn.

JP: Who taught French, [unclear] French nuns?

AP: Uh, Canadian nuns.

JP: Canadian nuns. Um, tell me about your house, what was it like?

AP: Who? My—

JP: Your house, yeah, when you were growing up. Like in Parc-Ex, what was the house like?

What did you—

AP: Uh, no, I wasn't brought up in Parc-Ex. I wasn't brought up in Parc-Ex.

JP: Oh, that was afterwards.

AP: [Nods] That was after, yeah.

JP: Well, when you were a little girl, like, uh—

AP: Well, we had Italian people next door [gestures to her right]. French Canadian. English. They were all mix—

JP: Did your father have a garden in the back? Or...

AP: [Nods] My mother had it. And my father had it on the other street, past, uh, Jean-Talon.  
[Nods and gestures behind her]

JP: What was it like an empty lot?

AP: [Nods] Yup, yup, uh, all lots. But now it's all...[gestures with hands] built now.

JP: So—

AP: In the back of this—the house we had a, a garden.

JP: Yeah. Did a lot of Italians do gardens back then? Do you remember?

AP: [Nods] Yeah, yeah, they did, they did, yeah.

JP: Yeah.

AP: Well, they had big families you know. They need a garden.

JP: The garden was almost a way of sustaining, uh—

AP: [Gestures with arms in approval] That's it. [Nods] Yeah.

JP: It wasn't a, a pleasure garden.

AP: [Shakes head] No, no, no. Well, I mean not a pleasure garden, but still, you know, we had good food.

JP: Yeah.

AP: Good vegetables.

JP: And, um, what did the, um—again grow—like growing up—this is still like before the war. Um...what did the Italians do to socialize? Like how did your family socialize with other—

AP: Well—

JP: —friends?

AP: —it all depends. [Looks up at ceiling in thought while speaking] Some of them gathered and, uh, played cards, you know, and that was it. It's the only thing they had.

JP: And what did—what would the mothers do?

AP: Well, they played cards also. Some of them they played cards too, yeah. [Nods]

JP: And did—

AP: They had groups, you know. One night come here and the other night you're somewhere else.

JP: Did they do a lot of, uh, *la visita*?

AP: [Nods] Yeah, well, yeah. Well like the [Severo] Biffi used to come for lunch or supper, you know. Oh yeah.

JP: And people would—would you bring something to the house? Like how was it? Did they make some food bring it?

AP: No no, not necessarily because uh, my godmother was French from France, and, uh, she'd rather come to our place and eat Italian food.

JP: [Laughs]

AP: [Laughs] That's Sandro's mother. And Sandro loved it. And Mr. Biffi loved it also.

JP: Yeah, yeah. But when, when the Italians socialized amongst themselves did they—I'm just curious like how they did, how they would do—what were their rituals of *la visita*? Was it like—

AP: Uh—

JP: —one day I come to your house and the other—

AP: Well, not every night. No, maybe once a week, you know. Play cards and, uh, neighbours.

JP: And what would you do with your, with the friends, when you went to do *la visita*? What would the girls do?

AP: No, well we were in, uh, in our rooms and playing with dolls and all that, you know. [Shrugs] That was our activity.

JP: Um...when your, when your father was here, did he, uh—I'm not sure if you would even know it—but would he have to like some of the money, did he have to support his parents in Italy?

AP: Oh, he used to. And, um, he was the only one left. And once in a while he used to gather a little money and go back to see his parents.

JP: Oh, he was able to go and visit them.

AP: [Nods] Yeah.

JP: Where in Italy—

AP: He crossed, he crossed seven times. And the last time, he was 38 years old, and the parents says, "Well, this is gonna be the last time that you're going see us. We are getting old. So you better get married. Choose a girl and get married." So that's what happened.

JP: How old was your father when he got married?

AP: Thirty-eight. [Furrows brow and rethinks answer] 36 or 38, something like that. He was old. [Nods] My mother was young. My mother was 23.

JP: Where did he meet your mother?

AP: Uh...my grandmother, the girls, they used to sew shirts...in the house, you know. At that time in Italy that's what they used to do, you know. And, uh, so my grandmother says, "If you want shirts, let's go and see these people." So he went to see these people and he met my mother. Well they made—they used to sew shirts. And that's what the cause of it, the marriage, and buying a shirt. And...

JP: Oh, how nice. And he married her in, uh, Italy?

AP: [Nods] Oh, yes.

JP: And then he came back with her?

AP: But before leaving he went to Eaton's and he bought all his outfit. [Nods] And we had it until we moved. With satin label uh, lapels and all black and gloves and hat. [Touches lapel of jacket to show where satin would have been]

JP: Oh, *molto elegante*.

AP: [Nods] Yeah. That's, uh—he left here to get married.

[00:11:04]

JP: Oh, he went with the intention to get married?



AP: [Nods] Yeah, yeah, because now he was getting old and his parents were very old. So they told him, he says, "The next time you come you won't see him anyways, you won't see us."  
[Shakes head]

JP: What was the name of the *paese*?

AP: Um... [Sighs heavily and rubs face in thought]

JP: Or what, uh, region?

AP: Salemi, *provincia di* Trapani.

JP: Mm. And so she came back here, your mum?

AP: [Nods] Mm hmm. And she never came back because the war. We had the war after.  
[Gestures with hands]

JP: Yeah.

AP: And after the war, after 25 years, she went back to see her parents. That was the last time she saw them.

JP: Wow.

AP: Yeah.

JP: Um, when you were growing up were there, um, what kind of associations were available for the Italians to join? Like were—there were political association, there was Casa D'Italia—

AP: [Gestures with hand] Well, the fascism and the Casa D'Italia. That was the only thing there was at the time.

JP: That was what attracted and brought the community together?

AP: [Shrugs] I guess, yeah.

JP: What kind of activities would—

AP: Well, we had, we learned, we learned Italian there. We had professors from Italy. But when the, the war started, everything finished. [Rubs hands together to indicate things being over] The professor had to go back.

JP: So what activities were you involved in as a child?

AP: Well, there was a gym. We had gym and we had Italian lessons.

JP: And, uh, the organization? Like the group for the girls...it was called what?

AP: *Balilla*.

JP: And so what was your uniform like?

AP: Well, we had fun because, uh, we had gym, you know, boys and girls together. But it was very nice.

JP: [More loudly] What did you wear?

AP: Oh jeez, it was a black skirt and a white shirt. Did we have a tie? I don't remember. Something like—that was the, uh, the costume.

JP: And what days, like did the, the *balillas* get together?

AP: Once a week.

JP: Oh, on a Saturday or...

AP: Saturday we had the Italian lessons and I think after school we had the gym. Boys and girls.

JP: And what was the Italian lesson like, do you remember enjoying it? Do you remember anything—

AP: [Nods] Oh, yeah, we had fun. I mean—we had fun.

JP: Did—were they just—did you sing, did you read, did you write?

AP: Oh no, we had to, we had to write, yeah. There was a, the gym professor... Mazzarelli[?], I think. I'm not sure. [Shakes hand in uncertain gesture] He used to be good. Nice chubby man. [Holds arms wide at side to show large size] And we had, we had to bend down, believe you me. [Laughs]

JP: [Laughs] He wanted to make sure everybody stayed in shape. [Laughs]

AP: [Smiles and nods] Yeah.

JP: And, um, do you remember any of the books? Did they give them to you? Was all—

AP: No, we had, we had books, yes. No, I don't remember the books. Uh, we had them, but when we moved they threw them all away. Nice books. Nice books. Italian.

JP: They were all free, everything was free?

AP: I think so, we had a few free books, yes, It's the Italian... Well... [Shrugs]

JP: Did they ever offer you a chance to, uh, to participate in the groups that were going to Italy?

AP: Yeah, but the war exploded in 1940, 1941 and that was it. [Cuts hands in the air to indicate finality]

JP: What did, what did, uh—what was the—

AP: The *balilla*.

JP: Yeah, but what did they offer the, the little girls?

AP: Yeah, to go on, on the trip. [Nods]

JP: To go to Italy?

AP: But we, we didn't know—to, to Italy, but we didn't know where. But after the war exploded and that was it. The professor had to away, eh. He couldn't stay.

JP: I gu—were you looking forward—like you had a chance to—

AP: [Nods] Yeah, yeah. We were looking forward, but [shrugs]...went down the drain.

JP: Yeah. Did you know any other people that had gone in that group?

AP: No, no, no, no. Oh, the old ones. But [shrugs]... Old people, yeah, the, the old generation before us.

JP: They went.

AP: They went. But... [Shrugs]

[00:15:07]

JP: And what other activities would you have—were, were going on at the Casa D'Italia? Did you ever go, uh, go there with your father? Were there dances? Were there—

AP: No, we used to go dancing a group of girls, you know. By ourselves. When we grew up anyways.

JP: Yeah. Where did you go for these dances?

AP: Casa D'Italia. [Gestures with hand]

JP: Casa D'Italia.

AP: Mm hmm. [Nods]

JP: So—

AP: It was not too far away.

JP: 'Cause you could walk there.

AP: Uh, yeah. [Nods] Uh, well, it was far. We took the, the, uh, the tramway at the time.  
[Chuckles]

JP: On Jean-Talon. [Laughs]

AP: [Nods] Yeah. The tramway.

JP: Did the church organize any activities also? Or social activities?

AP: Well, I don't know. I never participated in the church's things because I was far away from the church.

JP: Mm.

AP: Too far away. And I didn't. [Shakes head] I used to go to church there, but I never [shrugs and shakes head]... It was too far away for us to go over there. It was a long walk or take, uh, the, the streetcar at that time.

JP: Do you remember, uh, Cosentini's [Emanuele Cosentino] band? Or—

AP: [Nods] Yeah.

JP: —or Dieni Gentile's [Gentile Dieni] band?

AP: Yeah, yeah. He used to live on our street. The professor. Emanu—I think it was Emanuele Cosentini.

JP: Emanuele, that's right, yeah.

AP: [Nods] He was—lived uh, not far from where I lived on Alexandra Street. Yeah.

JP: And, uh, and tell me about the—

AP: Well, he used to—all the procession he was the one. You know? [Shrugs] Cosentino band.

JP: And did they also play at Shamrock Park or...

AP: [Shrugs] That I don't know. No, I don't think so.

JP: But you remember the processions?

AP: Oh, yeah, yeah. Mm hmm. [Nods] We had to be in a procession.

JP: Oh, you had to be—

AP: [Nods] Mm, yeah.

JP: Was it because of your church or school?

AP: [Nods] Church. Be-because of the school. [Says with emphasis on “school”]

JP: So what—where would the procession take place?

AP: Well, it used to go around. [Makes circular gesture with finger] Dante, Saint Zotique, all the surroundings you know.

JP: Did you enjoy that?

AP: Uh, sometimes, not all the time, because you know we had to be there and uh... We were far from the church.

JP: And did they, uh, did they wear the black shirts in some of these processions?

AP: No, no. We had—

JP: [Unclear]

AP: —our white dress and white veil. [Gestures to wearing veil]



JP: Oh, for the, for the girls. What about the band, how was the band dressed?

AP: [Shrugs]

JP: Do you remember them wearing the blackshirts?

AP: No, no, no. Not the blackshirts. No, no. I don't remember that the blackshirts. [Shakes head]  
Maybe, maybe. [Shrugs] I don't remember that.

JP: I know it's hard 'cause you were a little girl, so... [Laughs]

AP: It was Cosentino, the band Cosentino.

JP: And then um, the uh—did you remember them playing ever like *Faccetta Nera*—

AP: Oh they, they had to. [Nods] Yeah, they were—they did, you know. They had a stand not far from the church, you know. But that was...not too long. It... [Makes face and then makes gesture of hands going down drain]

JP: Yeah, then it...

AP: Stopped after.

JP: It stopped.

AP: [Chuckles]

JP: [Long pause] The Italians in the neighborhood at the time, how were they treat—

AP: Very few, very few.

JP: No, but how were they treated from the—by the Canadians?

AP: [Shakes head] Oh, very—were, were not too sweet.

JP: Mm.

AP: No, they weren't nice. [Shakes head]

JP: Why do you think that is?

AP: Because they had—at the door, they used to sell—oh, how do they call them at that time?

[Looks up at ceiling in thought] To help Canada to fight. [Closes eyes and thinks]

JP: Oh, were they like the bonds?

AP: [Nods and places hands in front of her] At the door, so you could know that they were Canadians.

JP: I don't understand.

AP: Well, they used to buy Victory Bonds.

JP: Yeah.

AP: And they had them on the door sometimes. [Gestures placing paper on door]

JP: They would place them at the door?

AP: [Nods] Yeah, yeah. To show that they, uh, they had bought a bond. Not everybody, just French Canadians. Some of them, not all of them. [Shakes head and shakes finger]

JP: And so that's how you knew the houses that were Canadian.

AP: Yeah, yeah. Well, we knew them from way back [gestures with hands] because well we had a few English, a few, uh, Canadian.

JP: But Italians didn't buy the Victory Bonds.

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

JP: Was there a reason that—

AP: No, no.

JP: —they didn't buy the bonds?

AP: Well, I mean, why we should, why—first of all, we didn't have the money. [Nods and smiles] Never mind the Canadian Bond. Let the Canadian fight! We had no money [Laughs, throws

hands up in the air and touches head]. I don't know much it was, 50 dollars 25, I don't remember, but we had no money for that.

[Clapping noise in background]

JP: So do you think that—so, um, I mean the reason the bonds weren't there on the Canadian—on the Italian homes—

AP: [Gestures with hand] Helping the government, the Canadian government to fight, you know. [Shrugs] Help the soldier.

JP: I wonder if the Ital—I guess, I guess I wonder how the Italians felt? Like whether the Canadian wa—participation in the war, if it was their participation or if it was the Canadian participation? I wonder how much the Italians felt part of that Canadian fight? [Says with emphasis on “part”]

AP: [Shrugs] I don't know.

JP: The Italians that were here, like did they feel that that was their fight or was it Canada's fight?

[00:20:02]

AP: Well, they had to go. They had to go and fight. Uh, they were called, eh. The boys were called at a certain age they had to, uh, go to the service.

JP: You must, you must have known Italian men too that were called, Italian boys that were called to go to the, uh—

AP: [Nods] Oh yeah, they had too. And some of them were hiding. And the MP were going after them. They were going all over, even in the theatre.

JP: To look for them.

AP: [Nods] Yup. 'Cause they were deserters. They didn't want to go and fight. I don't blame them. [Shrugs]

JP: Why would the—why should—well, how come you don't blame them? Because what? I'm just curious like why?

AP: Well, uh, maybe they, they, they—maybe sent to Italy and fight their own people, I don't know. It must have been—

JP: They did.

AP: —something. That's it, that's why they didn't want to go.

JP: And some of them had, uh, family members that were interned at the time? And they—uh, and yet they had to go and, uh, fight?

AP: Oh, the Italians, I don't know. But I knew a French Canadian fellow that was wounded and he died, yeah. He enrolled in the service.

JP: I guess, I wonder did the enrollment into the service divide the communities? Because there was also the French—remember Camillien Houde?

AP: Yeah.

JP: He didn't want the—

AP: Oh no, no, he was against it. [Shakes head]

JP: Yeah.

AP: He was against it. And that's why he was against it and he put, was put in—

JP: In Petawawa.

AP: —in prison, in Petawawa. That's why. [Shrugs]

JP: Yeah.

AP: He said, "Don't enroll. Don't join the army." [Shrugs with arms out to the side]

JP: So that must have divided Montrealers at the time because you had, you had Camillien Houde, who was telling the French Canadians don't enroll. I guess the English Canadians wanted to enroll.

AP: Well, the English was always, yeah, patriotic. [Nods]

JP: [Unclear] fight.

AP: [Nods] Patriotic.

JP: The Italians—

AP: Well, they didn't want to go. No. [Shakes head]

JP: The Italians were like the French—

AP: No, no.

JP: —they didn't want to go. I don't know about the other ethnic—

AP: They were afraid to fight against the Italians.

JP: Their own people.

AP: Their own people, that's why.

JP: So, that must have cau—created divisions within the city, within the groups?

AP: Oh yeah, yeah, there was, there was. But... [Shrugs]

JP: Because then you have like the families, families that are against—

AP: [Nods] Yeah. Mm hmm.

JP: —each other [unclear] on this ideologies. Right?

AP: We had the blackouts...during the war. I don't know if it was once a month or once a [sighs]...blackouts. The lights were all off. [Long pause] The blinds had to be all down...in case of the enemy that come in. I think it was once a month, I don't remember. Once a month I think. They called it the blackout. Put all the blinds down [gestures to blinds coming down] and there was the siren you know, in case of emergency. Not to go out. Well I was a child at that time. I remember that. In case of the enemy, that... [Wiggles fingers in the air trying to come up with the answer]

JP: Was any of this explained to you in school? Did the nuns—

AP: No, no.

JP: —explain what was going on?

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

JP: So how did the kids learn—

AP: Not school. [Shrugs] It's at home. We, we knew it at home. When they used to say, well tonight it's a blackout. All the blinds have to be out. No lights. And the siren used to go full speed. In case of, uh...the enemy. Oh no, in school there was no, nothing like that. No. [Shakes head]

JP: So, um, are you okay, do you want to take a break or do we...



AP: It's okay, no. [Takes a sip of water]

JP: Get a glass of water?

[People speaking in the background, unclear]

JP: Um...

AP: As long as I don't go to jail for all this. [Laughs]

JP: [Laughs] Antoinette, it's your story. This belongs to you. Um, so let's, let's start off with, um, let's go to 19—June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1940. The week before...leading up to it. Bef—the day—uh, June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1940 was the day that, um, your father was arrested, but let's—I just want to start about a week before. Did you have any indication that—

AP: [Shakes head] No, no.

JP: —I know you were a little girl, so you had no idea what was going on?

AP: [Shakes head] No, no.

JP: Did your father—did your, did your father have a blackshirt? Do you remember?

AP: [Looks down in thought] Maybe he had, I don't remember. Maybe, maybe he had. Could be. I know that my mother—the Italians were gathering the gold to send to Italy and she gave her wedding band. Her gold wedding band.

JP: Who was—

AP: That I remember. [Gestures with finger] Uh, I don't know how and [throws hands up in the air]—this I remember.

JP: You remember because you saw your mother do it?

AP: [Nods] Yeah, well yeah.

JP: Where did she bring the band?

AP: We—I don't know. There must have been an association that was taking care of that...all the wedding bands. And my mother gave her wedding band, a gold one, 18 carats, to Italy. To, I guess they didn't—Italy had no [gestures with hands to indicate nothing], Italy had nothing.

[00:25:22]

JP: Yeah, they had no money, you're right.

AP: Yeah, so that's the gold that they sent. And after she—

JP: And your mother told you this though?

AP: And after she bought this [gestures to ring on her own hand] and I took it. She had this.

JP: How nice.

AP: Yeah.

JP: And your mother told you about that, that she was giving her—

AP: Well, we heard it you know. My sister doesn't remember, but I remember saying, uh, Italy needed gold, so. I don't know where my father—uh, uh, maybe at the Casa D'Italia they brought it. There was—must have been the office there, I don't remember now.

JP: Was—

AP: Because I was—

JP: —your mother happy about doing that, when she told you? Or she was just—she did it?

AP: [Shrugs] No. [Picks up glass of water] Well, she gave it away, she gave it away. [Takes sip of water and puts down glass] That I remember.

JP: Do—uh, and again, before June 10<sup>th</sup>, anything else you remember? Anything like, uh, about Gentile Dieni or, uh—

AP: Well, he was in—

JP: [Unclear]

AP: —he was in the band, Gentile because of the church, you know. He lived across the street from the church. But my cousin knows one of the girls. [Raises hand to forehead in thought] 'Cause my, my cousin is a teacher and I think one of the Gentile daughter is a teacher too.

JP: Mm.

AP: He got two daughters I think. [Raises two fingers]

JP: So, you're in school, the week leading up to June 10<sup>th</sup>—June 10<sup>th</sup> I believe is a Monday—um, and you come home from school that day and what happened? Like how did the whole thing—

AP: [Shrugs] Oh, got home, my father came home with the, with the paper. And I guess he knew something was happening. So he was reading the paper and that's what happened. [Shrugs] We wer—we were having supper.

JP: And what happened, the, the two—

AP: Well, the doorbell rang and two uh, detective came with the badge. [Motions holding badge in one hand] 'Cause we lived on the second floor. So they came up and showed the badge and he says, "Mr. Palmeri?" Yeah. My father says, "Yes, I'm the one". He says, "You're under arrest". So, um, I think it was in June, if I'm not mistaken. Was it June? And, uh, no, no he says, "You can have your supper, finish your supper." And he says [shrugs]. So we had supper, very fast [waves hand in a fast motion] because he was getting nervous. We were, we were having supper and not having supper at the same time, we didn't know what was going on. So, uh, he said, "Can I take a jacket and a hat?" He said, "Yeah, take a jacket and a hat." And they brought him in the car.

JP: So when they came, you answered the door?

AP: I answered the door. And I said to my father, I says, "There's two men at the door." He says, "Let them in". He knew though.

JP: He was—was your father's reaction shocked, calm or—

AP: [Shakes head] He knew something was going on.

JP: And you, you could read that by his reaction?

AP: Oh, well yeah. [Shrugs]

JP: Like he didn't act surprised?

AP: No, no, no. He just pretended nothing. He—they said, "Have your supper." We, we had our supper, not even I think, we didn't finish the supper that night. And he left.

JP: And your mother?

AP: Well, the same thing you know, she was stunned.

JP: Did, did she ask any questions?

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

JP: She was quiet.

AP: Yeah. Well, what question could you ask? [Long pause] You're a prisoner...of what!?

[Laughs]

[Fades out at 00:28:53]

[Fades in at 00:28:54]

JP: Okay, no, I want to go back to that—the, um, the dinner table. The scene at the dinner table that night. So your father was eating. Do you remember what you were eating?

AP: [Shakes head] I don't remember.

JP: But it was all quiet?

AP: Oh yeah, without a sound. It must have been spaghetti, I don't remember, it could be, spaghetti, yeah. Not a sound came out of my mouth, or my mother, or my sister. Not even my father. He says, "Okay." So he kissed us and he went.

JP: And your reaction when you saw—

AP: [Shakes head] Well, you couldn't say mu—couldn't say much.

JP: But did you start crying in front of him or—

AP: Uh, no, no because we didn't know what was happening, maybe he would have come back the next day, we didn't know. But in the long run though yeah, yeah. Because we didn't have no news, we didn't know where he was.

JP: And where did the, uh—the, the two police officers did they just stand there?

AP: They were, um, detectives.

JP: Detectives. Did they just stand there in the kitchen while he was eating or did they go—

AP: No, no, they waited. He says, "Take your time."

JP: But they were—stayed in the kitchen with you?

AP: [Nods] Yeah, yeah.

JP: They didn't...

AP: [Shrugs]

JP: And they stayed quiet? They didn't—

AP: Oh yeah, no, no, not a word.

JP: They didn't explain to your mother—

AP: No, no, no.

JP: —what was going on—

AP: "You're under, you're under arrest."

JP: They said that?

AP: That's it. "You're under arrest."

JP: Did you even understand what that meant as a young girl?

AP: Oh yeah, he was a prisoner. [Shrugs]

JP: So after—

AP: Under arrest, he was a prisoner.

JP: After he left the house with the two detectives, what did your mother, how did your mother come to grips with this?

AP: [Sighs heavily]

JP: What did she say to the two det—

AP: We were wondering why, we didn't know why. And in the long run we knew it because after all we had no news. [Clears throat]. No news at all. And, uh, it was said that they were in Bordeaux jail. So my mother and the lady Miss, Mrs. Pozza, they went to Bordeaux jail and they had just left...that morning.

JP: How many days after did they go to Bordeaux jail?

AP: [Shakes head] I don't know how many days, I can't remember.

JP: So she didn't know anything, your mother had to find out—



AP: Oh yeah, they went there—

JP: —[unclear] other people?

AP: —they went there and they said, “They’ve, they’ve left, they’re not here anymore.”

JP: Did they tell your mother that he had been sent to Petawawa?

AP: [Shakes head] No, no, no, no, no. We knew it when my father was in Petawawa, that he, he wrote. They has these folding letters and, uh, it was marked: prisoner of war 365. The num—his number was 365. I’ve still got, um, one of the letters. Mm. It was a folding, you know. You coul—everybody could open it.

[00:31:40]

JP: Right. And how did your mother—what did—how did your mother explain it to you? After like a few days and you—

AP: Oh, there was no explanation there because, uh, daddy’s gone, he’s gone and we’re gonna hear from him, we’re gonna hear from him. [Shrugs] And after from one person to another, we knew that they were prisoners of war.

JP: How did you find out that? [Emphasis on “you”] Did you find out—

AP: Well—

JP: —through girlfriends in school?

AP: No, no, no, no, no, no, no. I had no girlfriends around. People around. Mrs. Pozza. Her husband was taken at the same time as my father. Next door—well, two doors.

JP: And—

AP: And everybody was looking outside, you know, to see... [Laughs]

JP [Says softly] Oh no. *Fatto una scena sulla strada.*

AP: What can you do? We were pointed [points with finger] sometimes, but... [Shrugs]

JP: What—I don't understand, what do you mean by pointed?

AP: Well, you know, French people were saying, "Oh, he got arrested" and this that. But what could you do? What could you say? Ignore them.

JP: Antoinette, did you know other girls that had their fathers arrested? Like other girls that were close to your age?

AP: Yeah, in school.

JP: And did you talk with those girls?

AP: No, no.

JP: Not even.

AP: No, no, we didn't talk.

JP: Privately.

AP: No, no, no. We were just in school and that's it.

JP: Like what would stop the girls from talking?

AP: Well, we didn't want to talk about it because first of all we didn't know where they were and secondly, we were kids, talk about what? We didn't know why they were arrested. We didn't understand...why. [Bangs fingers against head] If they were in the fascism or what. You know, we were, we were kids, we didn't know what it was fascism or what. Because there was [Pietro] Citti, there was [Gennaro] Esposito, [Antonio Dieni and Gentile Dieni] Dienis, but we didn't know the sense of it. We were too young.

JP: And, uh, the nuns didn't help the children—

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

JP: —in any way, to explain or to help or—

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

JP: —even privately to say, “Oh Antoinette...”

AP: [Shakes head] No, no, no, no, not at all. Not a word.

JP: Do you think it would have been better?

AP: No.

JP: It was best done this way?

AP: Yeah, because I mean the class was mixed. [Long pause] Not only Italian, there were French.  
[Shakes head]

JP: So this was the best thing.

AP: [Nods] Yeah. Not a word was said. I don't blame them because the class was mixed. French, Italian. So it was better like that because it would have been a big story. [Unclear] being a child.

JP: How do you defend yourself? You can't.

AP: Heh? [Turns ear to hear Joyce]

JP: You can't defend yourself—

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

JP: —from those stories when you're a child.

AP: We didn't know the meaning of it anyways. Why they were arrested? Why?

JP: So then the *balillas* stopped. The Italian lessons stopped right after. As soon as the war—

AP: Oh everything stopped, yeah.

JP: Everything stopped.

AP: Casa D'Italia, there was nothing. Everything stopped. And they sent the professor in Italy, right away. Oh jeez, I think by the first boat that came to Montreal, I think, I don't know, to New York. 'Cause there was no flight at that time.

[00:35:07]

JP: *I grandi capi sono...*

AP: Hmm?

JP: *I capi sono partiti.*

AP: Oh they had to, eh. They were not allowed to stay. The husband, the wife and the daughter, they had a daughter.

JP: So what happened? 'Cause even there were doctors that had been arrested, right?

AP: Well, then, uh, what could you do? [Shakes head] The doctors, I don't know how the wives...handled it, if they had money aside, like [Dr. Antonio] D'Anna, and, uh, I don't know, how they lived.

JP: So I guess, in some ways, because these, these professionals were taken, then at that point even the Italian community is underserved, right? Because all of a sudden the doctors are gone whose gonna, who are you gonna go to?

AP: There was replaced. We used to go to Dr. D'Anna; he was incarcerated. And Dr. Panaccio took over because he was a young doctor, just starting. He took all the customers of Mrs. D'Anna. Panaccio.

JP: Oh, 'cause you went to Laura D'Anna—

AP: Yeah.

JP: —not the husband.

AP: [Nods] Yeah. When he was arrested, the wife transferred everything to Dr. Panaccio. He was a young doctor, very nice doctor. He took—

JP: What was she like Mrs. D'Anna?

AP: Oh. [Raises eyebrows]

JP: Dr. D'Anna?

AP: Well, she was, um, I dunno if she was a...was she a professor? No, I think she was a, um, a pharmacist...or a doctor. Beautiful woman. Beautiful woman.

JP: She was very nice to the people in the community?

AP: Well, I mean, we never associate with her. She was Dr. D'Anna, uh, wife so.

JP: And her husband also was a doctor.

AP: Yeah, yeah, he was a doctor.

JP: Do you remember him?

AP: Oh yeah. Well, we were—he was our doctor, family doctor, that's the only doctor we had.

[Antoinette adjusts herself in chair and rubs lapel microphone]

[Long pause]

JP: Um...

[Fades out at 00:37:13]

[Fades in at 00:37:14]

JP: Okay. So what did you know about your father's life at the camp? How did—*come*—

AP: Oh, they had a good time. They had to have a good time. [Laughs]

JP: How did you find that out? Was it through—

AP: Well, when he came back he told us all the stories, you know. Of your grandfather and all that.

JP: What did he say? What, what kinds of stories?

AP: Well, he says that [Nicola] Germano was selling, uh, um...corns...uh, how did he call it?  
[Looks down and then closes eyes to think] Corns remover. And—

JP: For feet?

AP: For feet. Everybody used to go—they used to send them to Germano and everybody they would line up. [Laughs] I don't know, maybe my father sent them to him I don't know. [Laughs] And he said, "Who, who told you? I have nothing."

JP: So they were like pranksters, they would joke around.

AP: Well, they had to, eh.

JP: And what other stories does he remember—like did he—so like when he told the stories, did he tell them with laughter and fun or—

AP: Oh yeah, there would this—they'd end up with fun because after all—well even with Camillien Houde they had fun too. I think he was even, uh...cutting wood with Camillien Houde, if I'm not mistaken. Yeah.

JP: What did your father do at the camp? What was his activity?



AP: What the heck did he do? [Looks down thinking] He used to wash clothes. So... [Laughs]

JP: That was his job at the camp. [Long pause] And what else did he—uh, what—did he tell you about the food that they ate or—

AP: No, in fact it never came up. I guess...they must have had Italian food too once in a while for sure because I mean they were all Italian, eh. No—

JP: [Unclear] Did he tell you about the gardens—

AP: [Nods] Yeah, people were doing gardens I think. Camillien Houde, everybody had a garden there. So... [Chuckles]

JP: And who was he, uh, bunked with? Do you remember—did he ever tell you? Like who he, who did he share—

AP: I don't know, he never told us. I never knew about it. Never. I know that your father, uh, your, your grandfather was going around *con le lenzuola. Cosa facend'*. [Laughs]

JP: [Laughs] Oh yeah, I think—

AP: At night [unclear] he used to go around...

JP: I think he was acting like he was Muslim or something.

AP: Mus—mus—yeah, something like that. [Laughs] Uh, that's—

JP: [Laughs] Your father, he must, he—did he, um—‘cause then at, at that point like after the war and after the internment, he came out, uh—

AP: Well, he had to report himself twice a month.

JP: Really, eh?

AP: Oh yes, yes. [Nods] At the, um—

JP: [Unclear]

AP: —at the, uh, RCMP. Twice a month.

JP: Twice a month.

AP: [Nods and then shrugs]

JP: And he had to go where? Where was the RCMP—

AP: Jeez, I really don’t know, but he had to report himself at the RC—the, uh, RCMP. I don’t remember where. It must have been somewhere downtown, I don’t know. He had to report himself. As if he was really a...a criminal. [Says with an incredulous look]

JP: And when, when he wrote the letters to your mother did he give any information or—

AP: [Shakes head] Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. No information. No.

JP: They were very standard—

AP: Oh well, it was going through, uh...

JP: The censorship.

AP: The censorship, sure. [Nods] Three-sixty-five his number was, I think. Yeah. Three-sixty-five.

[00:40:42]

JP: And did, um—so basically the information that your mother received was being...um—

AP: Well, he was writing, but there was nothing there.

JP: But it was mostly through neighbours and through others—were—when men, when men were coming back were they passing on information?

AP: Well no, there was only my father on the street and Mr. Pozza. Only two of them so there's not too many information there. Only two of them.

JP: Because the inf—

AP: And Biffi, I don't know when Biffi came out. I don't remember that when Biffi came out.

JP: But so it wasn't the government that provided the information, it was all word of mouth. The only way you could know—

AP: No, no.

JP: —the information was word of mouth.

AP: Oh yeah. Well, that he was ok, and, uh...

JP: Do you remember the Monacos, uh, the bakery?

AP: No.

JP: Or was that too far for you?

AP: I don't know Monaco. [Shakes head]

JP: What stores would you have gone to? Like where would your mother have gone shopping?

AP: There was Latella. It was, uh, not far from our place. Latella. But they had no—nobody—

JP: Was Saint Lawrence too far? [Unclear]

AP: It was near Saint Lawrence yeah, yeah. It was kinda far. But still...we had to survive.

JP: So now tell me about your mom and how she survived and what happened like, did your father have any money in the bank?

AP: [Laughs and shakes head] Oh, they had no money in the bank at that time. Who had money in the bank at that time? Nobody.

JP: So—

AP: No—

JP: —was she given food coupons? How did she—

AP: No, no, food coupons, I don't remember that. Uh, I know that she was a seamstress, she used to sew, and she used to wash clothes for Mrs. Zerillo[?]. I don't know if her...father was Judge [James Duncan] Hyndman. She was not Italian. A beautiful woman. Ohhh! Beautiful. She had a domain in St. Doherty[?]. Beautiful woman. She didn't speak Italian.

JP: And how did—

AP: And she used to bring clothes, my mother used to wash them, and she used to come back and take them back ironed and everything. And I guess she must have paid them, I don't know. It's very vague. [Waves hands near head to indicate a foggy memory]

JP: But you remember your mother working at home washing clothes. Was—

AP: Yeah, sure.

JP: —working before—

AP: No. [Shakes head]

JP: —your father, uh, was interned?

AP: No, no, because we were kids, I mean, you know.

JP: She had to raise the children.

AP: My, my sister was only, um [looks off to the side thinking]...five or six. No she couldn't go to work.

JP: How did you, uh—and so she, she managed to have some work—

AP: Oh yeah, she managed. [Nods]

JP: —through Mrs. Zerillo[?].

AP: Uh, she, she, she managed. [Nods]

JP: And how did you, um, how did you put together the connection with, uh, uh, Hyndman?

AP: [Sighs and begins to shrug] You know—

JP: Because he was involved with, uh—

AP: [Nods] Hyndman was the—

JP: [Unclear]

AP: —he, he was the judge there.

JP: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

AP: And even then, even him said, “These people are not criminals.” Now, I don’t know if it was her father because she was not Italian. [Shakes head and wags fingers] But I—she married a Zerillo[?]. That comes to me, Zerillo[?]. [Touches finger to head] I don’t know what he was doing this Mr. Zerillo[?].

JP: And was she able to get to her father, to help any members in the Italian community?

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

JP: That was too distant.

AP: [Shrugs] She must have helped also, I don’t know. She must helped. She knew Judge Hyndman. And Judge Hyndman apparently says, “These people are not criminals. What are they here for?” [Long pause] ‘Cause that’s a Jewish name isn’t it Hyndman?

JP: Yeah, I think so. I think so. But...[long pause] your father for example...[long pause] would you have considered him a threat to Canada?

AP: [Looks at Joyce with a questioning look]

JP: [More loudly] Was your father a threat to Canada?

AP: No. He came here he was 16 or 17 years old. And he died at 85—84. So he more Canadian than more Canadians. I mean—

JP: What language did you speak at home?

AP: Oh [raises hand in air as if in protest]...it was Italian. It had to be Italian. At the table it was Italian. Out of the table you can speak anything you want. That was—

JP: [Unclear]

AP: —his [unclear]. The goal was this. [Shakes finger in front as she speaks] In, in the house at the table we speak Italian.

JP: Was your father a proud Italian?

AP: Oh yes.

JP: How did he show his Italian—

AP: Oh, he was—the way he wrote—I didn't bring it to you—he had a hand writing, he wrote Italian. Well, he went to school up to fifth grade at that time. So that was...fifth grade at that time it was something.

[00:45:46]

JP: And how did, how, how did he display his, uh, *italianità*? Like he—like one of the things that you told me he, he wanted you—the children to speak Italian—

AP: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, that was a must. That was a must. [Joyce speaking in the background, unclear] That was a must.



JP: Did you listen to Italian music in the house?

AP: Oh no, no, he was not a musical, no, no, no. Not musical at all.

JP: Where did your father work?

AP: Oh my God, he worked all over to support his family. [Throws arms up in the air]

JP: Like what type of jobs did he—

AP: Oh, labourer. [Shakes head] At that time. He came here at 16 years old, he had no parents, but—so he had to...to work.

JP: [Unclear]

AP: [Nods] Mm hmm. He had to work.

JP: And when he was arrested what job was he doing? Where was he working?

AP: Where was he working? Mm, that's a good question. [Looks down in thought]

[Long pause]

JP: But he was working as a labourer.

AP: [Nods] A labourer. And after he went—uh, before—[raises hand to head in thought] down East there was an army thing... [Sighs heavily and shrugs] I don't remember. There was an army thing down East. The army had something, uh—

JP: Maybe a base or something.

AP: A base or shed or something. They were gathering things, I don't know, to send out. That I don't remember.

JP: So getting back to your mom. There are those letters that I, I found for you in the, uh, Ottawa, at the archive.

AP: [Picks up papers from side table]

JP: That I showed you. [Long pause] And they're letters that they're asking for, uh—

AP: Well he had to report twi—twice a month.

JP: But that's for assistance for your—it was written on behalf of your mother?

AP: [Pauses while reading papers] Is this the whole thing, the same thing?

JP: [Unclear] Do you remember, I showed them to you in the kitchen?

AP: [Long pause while flipping through papers] Oh, see somebody wrote for her. This.

JP: Do you want to read it aloud?

AP: [Papers rustling] Uh, “Dear Sirs, I am Mrs. Vito Palmeri, wife of one of the men you have interned at Petawawa, Ontario. I have two children to support and have a, uh, no means of supporting them. As soon as my husband who was interned, I was not given any more relief and I do not know what to do.” That was July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1940.

JP: And it’s signed by...

AP: She wrote... [Reviews paper] She must have signed it, but there’s no signature here. Uh, it was sent to Ottawa. [Flips page] So somebody must have gotten it. Oh yeah no, wait it’s not finished. [Flips pages] Um... “Won’t you please do something to help me?” [Long pause] “At this critical moment, I trust you will let me know of your decision by return. Yours faithfully, Mrs. Vito Palmeri.” And mmmmm [makes filler sound with mouth]. [Shakes head] That’s it.

JP: So she wasn’t given any relief? Like the coupons were taken away from her? How do you—

AP: Oh, we had nothing. Whatever you had worked, but the money that he had worked [laughs] it flew away. He was away for two years.

JP: And the next one is the answer.

AP: And, uh...now this year—what’s this? [Mumbles while reading letter] Oh, enemy ali—aliens, attached to the... [Mumbles while reading letter] “Would you please advise whether there are ma—any funds in your custody respecting the said interned, which may be released for the benefit of his dependents, together with such other particulars, as in your opinion, have a bearing upon the granting of the assistance requested.” [Makes hand gesture to signify nothing coming from letter] We didn’t get anything. “Name of interned Mr....” [Begins to mumble while

reading] “Scale of relief in turn to be given...per week. Food, fuel and clothing: four dollars and thirty cents. Shelter and light: a dollar ninety. Health services required. [Shakes head] Other particulars: nil.” So. [Flips papers]

JP: What do you think of that Antoinette?

AP: *Schifo*. [Laughs]

JP: [Laughs]

AP: Awful. [Looks at another paper and makes a face] Anyways we survived just the same by my mother working. Sewing and washing Mrs. Zerillo’s[?] clothes.

JP: And you were able to stay in school. She—

AP: Yeah. Well, I mean we were just going to grade school. I mean, we didn’t go to high school at that time. My sister wasn’t even goi—my sister was going to school? [Looks down in thought] No. My sister was not even going to school...at that time. Hm.

[Fades out at 00:51:37]

[Fades in at 00:51:38]

JP: You were saying about the Monsignor.

AP: A Monsignor came once [shrugs], to talk to all these families that were the parents, uh, husbands interned. And I got a dress. My sister didn’t get anything. I got a dress. I dunno if it

was the Catholic association that were gathering—I got a dress. [Shakes head] I didn't need a dress, I—we needed food. The dress my mother used to sew. We needed food.

JP: So that, that was what you got.

AP: [Raises arms to the side as if to say “that’s it”]

JP: A piece of clothing.

AP: We kissed his ring and that was it, goodbye.

JP: You kissed his ring and you got a dress. [Long pause] And this was—like they had gathered people he had brought clothing, was that was it was?

AP: If Italian people help us?

JP: No, like they, they, uh—when you, when you got the dress, it was people that were gathered there?

AP: No, no, everybody got something.

JP: Oh it wasn't just for the Italians, that was—

AP: All the Italians, the people that were—the parent—the, the, uh, children and the family that were—that had their husbands interned.

JP: So how did you—how did Italians shop at that point for food if they didn't have any money? Did the grocery stores extend credit?

AP: No, but my mother was sewing, so that's how.

JP: So you had a little bit.

AP: Yeah. Not much because [shakes head]...how much could she charge?

JP: But she had to pay the rent too.

AP: [Nods] Oh yeah, naturally, yeah. We survived. Some of them didn't. The [Giuseppe] Visocchi, do you remember the Visocchi? He was interned too. I think there were five kids in the house, if I'm not mistaken. Five. And she lived Jean-Talon Market...uh...the house, the back of the house was facing The Shamrock. So I guess the lady used to help these farmers, give them food or what and they used to give them food too for the—she had four or five children.

JP: And were—there wasn't any other relief. Like your mother couldn't go to the church—

AP: [Shakes head] No, no.

JP: —for relief—

AP: Church!

JP: —or for food coupons.

AP: No, not that time, no coupons.

JP: And wha—how do you, how does this make you feel? Like you said *fa schifo*. Ma, how does it make you feel when you read this today? Of the correspondence that happened—

AP: It's awful!

JP: —seventy years ago?

AP: We, we lived in misery. Come on, we lived in misery. [Says angrily] It's a good thing that my mother sewed. But we needed shoes, we needed—

JP: —evaluate, they didn't even, like the government—

AP: [Shakes head] No, no, they didn't do anything. They didn't evaluate you. They didn't come over and say, "You got two children, you need this and you need that." No.

JP: So from your perspective it's just, it's all paperwork, but there was nothing—

AP: [Gestures to papers on side table] That's it. *Schifo*.

JP: —the reality what you saw in your house—

AP: *É schifo*, it's nothing. I don't know they spent a lot of money to pay this fellow to write all these things, the stamp and all that, for nothing. [Laughs]

JP: [Laughs]

AP: Now it's a laugh, but it is true.

JP: Yeah.

AP: It's the truth. And I'm not lying because... [Laughs and shakes head] Oh my God.

JP: And I guess your—did your mother talk about it or did she try to basically protect the girls? Like she protected her daughters from this whole thing? Or did she talk about it? Did you see your mother suffering? Or did she say—

AP: No, no. She didn't say a word. She was just waiting for my father to write and to come out. That's it. There's nothing could be done about it.

[00:55:31]

JP: Did you ever get that picture from your father that some of the internees got?

AP: [Gestures to indicate size of picture] Yeah, I have it.

JP: Oh, the [Guido] Casini picture.

AP: [Nods] The Casini picture, yes.

JP: Did you ever get the photograph?

AP: He did, he did sign it.



JP: No, the—there was a photograph that uh, some of—I have like it of my grandfather, where all the men are, are st—standing—

AP: No, no, no, we—I haven't got that. [Says excitedly while waving hand]

JP: You never got that.

AP: [Shakes head] No, I never got that. No, no. I know that your father was—no, I haven't got that. And my father uh, in Petawawa in I think he was washing clothes...I don't know...for somebody. And in washing clothes for these men, these prisoners, they used to write to the wives, that maybe they had money, to send money to my mother or to give it to my father. My father used to send us. My father used to wash clothes.

JP: So that they could send money to your mother.

AP: [Nods] Mm hmm. Mm hmm. I don't know who, whose clothes he was washing, but he did.

JP: So they, they actually worked out some kind of agreement there.

AP: Like that, like that. I know your grandfather didn't work out because... [Laughs] [Unclear] *medicina per i calli*. [Laughs]

JP: [Laughs]

AP: Everybody was in line. I don't know what, what kind of powder they used to give. [Laughs] I don't know. He must have given him something; he was just fooling around, eh.

JP: Yeah.

AP: And I guess they believed it, I don't know. [Laughs]

JP: [Unclear] I guess their, their boots were uncomfortable. [Laughs]

AP: [Laughs] *In tanto vendeva medicina per i calli.*

JP: [Laughs]

AP: Oh when my father used to say that, "Eh, a lot of people used to go." He says, "There were people in line." [Unclear] He says, "I don't know what he was giving them."

JP: That's interesting though, I didn't—I never, uh, of heard that, but how the men worked it out amongst themselves, they even tried to support their wives.

AP: [Nods] Yeah.

JP: Through the help that they did for—

AP: Help each other, I guess.

JP: —other the people who had the means.

AP: Yeah. Help each other, I guess. Somebody maybe had a restaurant or they have a business, I guess that's the way it was.

JP: They would make it more comfortable for—

AP: [Nods] Yeah. And my father used—they used to get money and he used to send it. Well, how much money could you send? A couple of dollars, I don't know. [Laughs]

[Long pause]

JP: And the—when your father came out, do you remember him coming out or were you in school that day?

AP: Oh yeah no, I remember, it was the wintertime, in February.

JP: What was he dressed like?

AP: The way he left. With his [unclear]—with his hat and the jacket and that's it. And a pair of pants.

JP: But he left it was June, it was summer. When he came out—

AP: Yeah, well, just, just the same he left like that. I don't know if he was thinking of something, but that's the way he came. He came out in February, I think.

JP: Yeah.

AP: It was cold. I don't know if they came by bus or by train, I don't know. [Shakes head]

JP: But he—it looked the same. Was he shaven or not?

AP: Or he was shaved yeah. [Nods] Well, he wasn't fat. I mean he wasn't a big fellow, a very tiny fellow, but he wasn't big when he came out of it.

JP: He was still small.

AP: Oh yeah.

JP: I mean, did he have anything with him or—

AP: What did he have? [Gestures with hand] He left with nothing! [Laughs]

JP: Did he ever try to, to have an appearance in court there?

AP: Oh yeah, but I mean, he we—when he went—he got in court one day, um [looks down thinking]...they said, “How come you were born in Italy?” So he says, “Well, my mother was in Italy. I was born—” [Nods] Yeah, yeah, stupid question, eh. The judge. “How come you were born in Italy?” “Well,” he says, “my mother was in Italy. I was born in Italy.” [Laughs] They didn’t know what to say anymore.

JP: Yeah, now—

AP: They didn’t know. [Shrugs]

JP: They didn’t know.

AP: Because, uh, it was stupid. These poor men, they were kept there for nothing, and “How come you were born in Italy?” So my father says, “My mother was in Italy, so that was I was born in Italy. Where could I be born?” [Laughs]

JP: Your father told you this? But he did try to have an appearance. Was he ever given, uh, he was given time, like 'cause I know there was a court there.

AP: Yeah, I know but— [Shrugs]

JP: —in Petawawa.

AP: [Makes sound with mouth] There was nothing there. They used to tell stupid things, like, “Were you born in Italy? How come?” All things like that, you know. Even the judge shouldn’t have even ask that.

[01:00:37]

JP: And I guess he must have formed strong friendships there right?

AP: Oh yeah, they, they were all good friends. Good friends.

JP: And after, what happened? Like when he came back, when you saw him, did he explain anything right away or did he just stay quiet?

AP: Oh no, no he waited, he waited until—

JP: He waited.

AP: Yeah.

JP: And was he able to go back to work right away?

AP: Uh, no, no. He had to, he had to, um, to report himself twice a month at the uh... [Closes eyes in thought]

JP: The RCMP.

AP: [Nods] RCMP, yeah.

JP: And—

AP: Twice a month. For...[Shrugs] Just to say that he was there, I, I don't know. [Shakes head]  
He was no criminal.

JP: And what happened with work then for him after?

AP: Well, then he had to go and search for work. And he went to work and he started to work.  
But still he had to report, I don't know how many years though. I don't remember.

JP: And what kind of work was he able to get—

AP: Oh, labourer, anything, anything that came along. [Long pause] That's it.

JP: Yeah, it must have been hard too, as soon as you come back. And, um...then *piano piano*  
like, uh, did he start—did he—

AP: Well, he got old and he got the pension. I think he got the army pension, the Italian Army  
pension; it wasn't too much, you know a miserable one. The Italian was very miserable. And

after he got the 65 pension and that's—that was... [Shrugs] And we started working after you know and that's the way we survived.

JP: Well, I guess when your father came back, con—considering that there were other men still away, he may have also got—spoken to family members. You wouldn't know that I guess, you were young. You know what I mean, just to say, *"Oh, tuo marito sta bene."* *Cosi ho dai una notizia.*

AP: Oh, whoever came out? No, no, no.

JP: They didn't even talk—

AP: No, no, no, no, no. Nobody came over.

JP: [Unclear] Maybe they weren't even allowed to. I wonder.

AP: I mean they were even afraid maybe, who knows? Who knows? Who can tell, you know.

JP: Did you feel embarrassed about this when you were a little girl that your dad was away?

AP: [Shrugs] Not really. Even in school, because in school, in my class there were the girls, their fat—there Esposito, there were, uh, Ciiti, they were all interned so [shrugs], nobody had anything to say.

JP: There was nothing, there was no—

AP: No, no, not really.

JP: And even—and with the Canadians you didn’t—

AP: Oh, well with the Canadians we didn’t, uh, talk about that. We, we were pointed.

JP: And, um, after, when your father came back, did you say anything to your friends, like, “Oh my father’s back” or was that still quiet at that point?

AP: [Shakes head] No, no, we weren’t talking about it. We didn’t talk.

JP: Well how—I guess I’m trying to, I’m trying to figure Antoinette like, there was this whole quiet period, right?

AP: [Nods] Yeah.

JP: Like, the men are interned, everybody stays quiet, everybody *fanno gli affari suoi* and they come back, they’re still quiet. Like, how long did it take before the silence was removed? *Più o meno*. How long—

AP: Well, in getting old...we kids got old, understood it was a farce. So that’s it.

JP: So, it took more—after the situation was talked about it, explained it and you understood what had happened, then people—then it became more of a, a public—

AP: Yeah.

JP: —discussion?



AP: People were talking about it, yeah. Not before.

JP: But before that, was it a discussion even within the house? Or even at that point it took a while before that you talked about it in the home?

AP: [Shakes head] No, no we didn't talk about it at home. But we were kids, you know, we didn't know what was happening. We didn't really know—

JP: How did you learn about it?

AP: Well, you're getting older. When he came back, we start to question him and why? "Because I, I belonged to the *fascio*" and this and that. And that's the way...we learned.

JP: Did he have a position in the *fascio*? Did he ever tell you whether he had a position?

AP: No, not really. He used to go to the assemblies, I don't know. Really it was a stupid thing really. It was an association -- let's face it, like any other association.

JP: And at that time, 'cause not today, but in the 30s, to be a *fascista*, what did it mean?

AP: Well, *fascista* means a *fascio*, eh. *Un fascio*. [Gestures with hands coming together] But—

JP: What did it represent to the Italians in the 1930s?

AP: Because it was Mussolini then, but after Mussolini did his [throws hands to the side] and the King did his own [throws hands to other side] eh it went down, so. The *fascista* was buried.

JP: But, for the Italians in Montreal—

AP: But not all of them were in the *fascisma* and *fascio*, not all of them. A lot of them were not.

[Shakes head and shrugs]

JP: But it seemed to have painted the whole community.

AP: Pardon?

JP: It painted all the Italians—

AP: [Nods] Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

JP: —in one group right? And then as time went on, I guess the friends of your father, um...who had been interned also, they would—would they come to the house or would they tell stories?

[01:06:02]

AP: Well, he didn't have too many friends. He didn't hav—he didn't want to have so—too many friends. He didn't want to have too many friends. [Shakes head] Because some of them were nosy, you know, they were not—they wanted to know so many things. And there was nothing to say. They were arrested for what? From the house, to Bordeaux jail. Bordeaux jail. I think Mr. Biffi was at—was interned. I don't know if he went to Bordeaux jail, he must have gone um, to Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean. He was there. [Points finger in the air] I don't know if he went to Bordeaux jail, I'm not sure. He went to Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean. And after his son was teaching there. [Laughs]

JP: Isn't it crazy?

AP: [Smiles and nods] Yeah. That's what he told my dad. He says, "Look at that." He says, "They brought me there," he says, "now my son is teaching there". [Laughs] It was a farce really.

JP: [Unclear] Do you think your father was skeptic? After, after he was interned, um, like was he more private or was he just that type of a person to be private?

AP: Oh, he wasn't a big mouth my father [mimics hand talking with hand]. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. He was quiet man.

JP: Yeah, I remember your dad.

AP: He would argue though, if your grandfather would come you know, but no not, not really. I think the last time we spoke, ah, wait a minute, whose birthday was it? [Turns to someone out of frame to speak]. *Festa di chi era che siamo andata alla festa?*

JP: *Chi era? Zio Frank*

AP: Yeah, yeah, I think—

[Woman speaks Italian in background, (Unclear) *al spozalizio* (unclear)]

AP: *Al spozalizio.*

[Woman speaks Italian in background, unclear]

AP: *Di, di Signore Germano?*

[Woman speaks Italian in background, *Si*]

AP: Okay. And that—

[Woman speaks Italian in background, unclear]

AP: [Nods while speaking to woman off camera] *Quello, quello, quello*, yeah. And then it started you know, with Frank, my father—

JP: Oh, at, um, at, um—

AP: The wedding.

JP: At my parents' wedding.

AP: Yeah.

JP: [Unclear]

AP: There was Frank—

JP: Oh you remember—

AP: [Nods] Yeah, I went, I went, I went to the wedding, yeah. And, uh—

[Woman speaks Italian in background, (Unclear)]

AP: No.

JP: But you invited Antoinette and her dad?

AP: [Nods] Yeah. *Mia madre era malato quel tempo lì* She couldn't go out.

[Woman speaks Italian in background, (Unclear)]

JP: So in some ways you remembered the um, you remember—you, you got the stories by overhearing them.

AP: Yeah.

JP: You talked about with other—

AP: Yeah, yeah.

JP: —people right?

AP: Well, I was, I think I was 10 or something, I don't know.

JP: No, but I'm saying after when you were older like in your 20s, your 30s—

AP: Oh then. We never talked about it though, my father, no, never did. No, that was past, the past, never, never talked about it.

JP: But he—would—but he would if he was with friends who had been interned.

AP: Oh yeah, with Germano yes.

JP: Like with my grandfather, he would, he would, they would talk about it all the time.

AP: [Nods] They would talk. But, uh, he only had Pozza next door. And Mr. Biffi when he used to come to my place.

JP: And that was the topic.

AP: Eh, that's it. I mean not more than that.

JP: That was their topic.

AP: Nope. [Waves hands and shakes head]

JP: But after that, that was it, with others...

AP: I forgot about it and everything. Nothing was...

JP: Did your father ever express any feelings about what should have been done to, uh, compensate the families, like afterwards, you know?

AP: Oh yeah, but I mean—

JP: [Unclear] "Aw, they should have" or—

AP: Yeah, but—

JP: Like what did he want done?

AP: What could he have done?

JP: No, what would he have wanted done after—

AP: At least to help the family. They should, they should have helped the family while he was in.  
But...

JP: And how—what do you think they should have done? You Antoinette, what do you think should have been done, for the families and for the men that were interned? How should they be recognized? How should they be—

AP: They should have done something to help the families, but nothing was done. We couldn't go and knock at the door of the church. We couldn't do that because that was not the church problem.

JP: So it wasn't the problem of the church, it wasn't the problem of the Canadian government, it wasn't the problem of the—

AP: Nobody.

JP: —Italian government.

AP: That's it.

JP: It was nobody's problem.

AP: Nobody.

JP: It was your problem.

AP: Yeah. [Long pause] If you knew how to survive, okay, if not [shrugs]. Like I say, Mrs. Visocchi, well she used to live near the market and her—the front was on—was it Bélanger? I don't remember. But the back of the house was on the market. So she was helped with the people from the farming, they used to bring—I guess vegetable or something. She used to help them out, have them in the house, to have lunch or something and then in return they used to give her vegetable or something for the kids. She must have had four or five kids, she had. Visocchi.

JP: But—

AP: That's the one who's in the States now. And even the brother I think is in the States. There were three [looks down thinking]...no...two, three daughters and two sons, if I'm not mistaken.

[01:11:27]

JP: But basically what you're telling me is that the women *devono tutto arrangiare*.

AP: Oh, if you knew how, okay. If you knew—didn't know how—*sometimes* some friends used to help out. *Comare*. I don't know used to help out.

JP: In the case of your mother—because in a way your situation is—was a little more difficult because you weren't in the heart of the Italian community there—



AP: [Shakes head] No.

JP: —you were just slightly—

AP: [Nods] Out.

JP: —not far, but—

AP: Out.

JP: —there was a—it was a good walk.

AP: We were, we were out.

JP: Yeah, because I remember your house.

AP: We were out of the Italian—

JP: Yeah, that was a good walk, to, to get—it's doable but *non era vicina neanche*.

AP: [Shakes head] No, no.

JP: And like you said, you had the neighbor—

AP: Yeah.

JP: —a door or two doors away—

AP: [Nods] Mm hmm.

JP: —that was also arrested. So, for your mother—

AP: They were the same as us.

JP: Yeah. Did your mother and the—your neighbour, did the women help each other?

AP: Oh yeah, well they went to, to Bordeaux jail.

JP: Right, but did the women help each other—

AP: Eh, they had their own families.

JP: *Non si potevano aiutare.*

AP: No, they had their—and Mrs. Pozza had, uh...four kids. Uh, you know, I mean, uh, to each his own, eh.

JP: It was really, it was—you're right.

AP: To each his own.

JP: So even if you lived—do you think that even if somebody lived eh, on Dante Street or somebody lived where you lived—

AP: But, uh—

JP: —it was the same situation?

AP: [Shrugs] Sure. That was, uh, their business. [Gestures to her left] I have my business [gestures to herself] and the lady next door's business [gestures to her right]. [Shrugs]

JP: 'Cause even if you had 10 neighbours, if everybody's, uh—

AP: [Shakes head] Everybody was the same.

JP: Everybody's suffering.

AP: Yup.

JP: How are you gonna help? Who are you gonna help?

AP: [Shrugs] Well, anyways, we survived.

JP: How—what do attribute, like what, what was it that—

AP: It was an experience.

JP: What helped your mother survive? What was it in her that—

AP: Well, she was...a good sewer, she used to sew. And I said she used to wash clothes for Mrs. Zerillo[?]. And she used to co—bring her clothes, she used to wash it and iron and bri—and she used to come, maybe in the week after, she used to pick it up, and bring some more. She was a very nice lady. We never seen her anymore.

JP: You've never seen her.

AP: [Shakes head] When my father came out, it was no more. [Makes gesture to indicate finality] She didn't show herself anymore. See? I mean, she did her duty I guess. I don't know, she was like this with the Judge [crosses fingers on both hands], we don't know. Because she was the one who talked about, uh, Judge Hyndman, I remember.

JP: That's interesting. She was there just when—

AP: She was a nice lady. Ohhh...

JP: But after the war that was it. After—or, or, not after the war, but after your father came out that was it.

AP: [Waves hands back and forth to indicate "no"] Once he came out that was it. She must have said, "I've done my duty". We don't know. That's what we think. "I've done my duty and that's it".

JP: That's interesting, yeah.

AP: She was a very nice lady. She had money, the lady. I don't know if Zerillo[?], she was married to him for sure. And she was dressed, eh. She had a car, at that time, imagine. Well-dressed. Very nice lady. I mean to us she was very nice, but to other people, I don't know.

[01:14:57]

JP: The Italians at that time—when, uh, the men were interned—because there were some families that were better off than other families.

AP: Yeah, but they went down. [Motions both hands in downward gesture]

JP: They all went down.

AP: They all went down. All of them. Dr. D’Anna. My—my godfather Biffi he had to close his office. [Shrugs] Because I think he was in the car, I don’t know—[adjusts herself in chair and knocks something over] Oh my God, what did I do?

JP: It’s okay. No, no, it’s okay, don’t worry.

AP: Uh, I don’t know where he was, if he was coming out of the office...in his car...when he got arrested. We don’t know. I never asked. What did Sandro [Biffi] say?

JP: He was on the street. Coming from a restaurant.

AP: In his car? Yeah.

JP: Yeah. But it’s interesting, you’re, you’re right, at that point, that was the, the great equalizer, it didn’t matter—

AP: Who was rich that time, who was poor. [Raises arms up and down like a scale]

JP: —who was rich—

AP: Everybody was equal.

JP: —what job you did.

AP: No, no. [Shakes head]

JP: In the eyes of the law everybody was equal—

AP: See he was—he used to be an import, he used to import a lot of things. All Italian for—

JP: Did your—Yeah.

AP: Italian.

JP: Did your father after the war—because—was your father a Canadian citizen?

AP: Yeah sure, he came at 16. But the thing was—

JP: So—

AP: —he was called in the army, Italian army, he left and he went to fight four years...1914, 1918, eh. He went to the Italian army.

JP: How did he feel about being a Canadian when he came back?

AP: He didn't say much. He, he was no—he was proud because he loved Canada. I mean, that's what he wanted. He was 16 years old when he came. So I mean if he wouldn't have liked it he would have gone back home.

JP: Yeah.

AP: But back home too there was, uh... [Gestures with hand and laughs] There was this back home. [Gestures with hand and laughs]

JP: And do you remember, uh, Giulio Romano?

AP: [Nods] Yeah. I saw him once—

JP: Why don't you tell us about him?

AP: I saw him once. Mm.

JP: He was a businessman.

AP: Eh?

JP: He was a businessman.

AP: [Nods] A tough man also.

JP: [Unclear]

AP: He had Mario and Giulio.

JP: When you say tough you mean, um—

AP: Well, he was [makes sound with mouth and shakes fist]... Also like your grandfather, you know, when he had something to say he says it, eh.

JP: [Laughs]

AP: [Laughs]

JP: Who else was there that you remember? Do you remember um, *Padre* [Benedetto B.] Maltempi?

AP: I—you know I never seen him. But he used to go to the, uh, Romano's, eh. [Points with finger] He used to go to the Romano. When he...when he got married—

JP: Giulio Romano.

AP: —Maltempi was there and your father was there also. [Long pause] And my friend was there too, the one who gave me all the papers.

JP: Yeah.

AP: 'Cause Mr. Romano's first wife was French Canadian. She was a very rich woman.

JP: And that was the second marriage.

AP: Yeah.

JP: And do you rememb—



AP: She died.

JP: Mm. Do you remember the Dulianis?

AP: Yes, I do.

JP: Which one, [unclear] or Mario?

AP: Mario Giuliano.

JP: Duliani.

AP: Eh, Giuliano he used to have a, a program on Ital—uh [snaps fingers while thinking], on the radio, the Italian radio.

JP: Wait a minute, um, Mario Duliani.

AP: I think so.

JP: Okay, no, I—

AP: [Looks to her right and speaks to someone off camera] *Cosa è Duliani? Era Duliani?*

JP: —two names mixed up. I was thinking like Tony. But yeah, there was, uh, there was, uh, Duliani had *La Verita*...in the 50s. He was also interned.

AP: It was the other one that used to be on uh, on radio.

JP: Oh...you're thinking—

AP: Was it Giuliani?

JP: —yeah, you're thinking somebody else. I don't know the name, but you're right Antoinette.

AP: I don't remember his name.

JP: There was somebody else, you're right.

AP: Somebody else, I don't remember his name.

JP: You're right. Uh—

AP: He had an Ita—he had an Italian program, a long time ago.

JP: Yeah, that was afterwards, yeah.

AP: A long time ago.

JP: Um, I wanted to ask you, was it Lattoni, uh—

AP: Lattoni.

JP: Yeah, Lattoni, do you remember them?

AP: No, I never seem 'em. But I heard about it, my father used to talk about Lattoni.

JP: Yeah, your father would have known them.

AP: [Nods] Yeah. And Mario Lattoni—

JP: Was the, uh, *avvocato*.

AP: Yeah, I think so.

JP: [Unclear]

AP: There were two brothers, eh?

JP: [Unclear]

AP: The father and the son, eh?

JP: *Si*.

AP: Mario and the other one. I don't remember his name.

JP: Yeah.

AP: But... [Shrugs]

[01:19:51]

JP: What do you think people have to know about this? What do people have to learn? What do you want people to learn? What do you want young people to know about what happened?

AP: [Shakes head] They wouldn't be interested.

JP: Mm.

AP: They wouldn't be interested.

JP: Why do you say that?

AP: No. I don't think so.

JP: Why do you think they wouldn't be interested?

AP: Well, do you think that, uh, Sandro's daughter would be interested about the grandfather? Do you think that my friend Jackie...her grandson or her granddaughter would be interested? She wants them to know, if something happens, you know. If they have a—I don't know what—a something shown in Ottawa that Romano, Palmeri, all those names are down [gestures writing names on wall], they gonna go to Ottawa and see, but otherwise they won't. They don't know.

JP: But there's—there are kids that are interes—

AP: And my, my, my nieces [points to her chest] and, uh, my two nieces... [Shrugs]

JP: But they will. I mean there are, there are young people—

AP: Well, maybe if—maybe they will be interested one day, but I don't know, uh, Joyce. [Shakes head]

JP: Well, what, what do you want, like for the ones that are interested? I mean I'm interested. What, what do you—

AP: Well, you're a different generation.

JP: Yeah.

AP: A different generation, like me. My nieces, they never knew that my father was interned. Uh, they don't know that. But I gave them—my father had two, three medals from 1914-1918. I gave it to one of my nieces. I says, you know, they might, they might as well know that he was in the army four years and he suffered. That's the only thing they know. I mean, uh—

JP: But what do you, but what do you, what do you think has to be remembered?

AP: Well, I remember [unclear]. I remember, my sister rememb—remembers because—

JP: Yeah, but what do you think we have to learn? What do you think the young people have to learn from this? What do they have to know?

AP: The new generation?

JP: Yeah, what do they have to know, about what happened on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1940 and before?

AP: Well, they have to know it. If they are interested, why not? But my nieces don't know anything about it.

JP: Do you think it has to be part of a bigger dialogue? In other words, like, if you pick up a history book you're not going to read about this, right? Do you think that it's because it's not part of the big picture?

AP: That's it.

JP: That the problem is there?

AP: That's it, yeah. That's it.

JP: Do you know, like we know about other things because everybody talks about them, right?

AP: [Nods] Yeah, yeah.

JP: You know about The Quiet Revolution in Quebec—

AP: [Nods] Yeah, yeah.

JP: —because people talked about it.

AP: [Nods] Yeah.

JP: But this was a big thing too.

AP: I know. But it's only the Italian; it's only the Italian. [Makes small ball with hands] My nieces don't know anything about that. I showed them the picture you know, "What is it?" "Well..." [Gestures with arms and mumbles] This and that. "Why?" And...that's it. See the new generation, they might be interested one day, but I, I don't know Joyce. I don't know. [Shakes head] We remember a lot of things, we don't forget, but them. Maybe one day they, they gonna ask. I don't know. [Shrugs] I showed my nieces the picture that he was interned, but that was it, no other question was asked. No other question was asked. [Shakes head] So...

JP: How do you feel about the fact that Canadian government just came down like that? And, and just took these men away from their families?

AP: That wasn't—it wasn't right. They were wrong. Because they were, they were not criminals, first of all. They were not criminals. They were all good fathers. Working fathers. Minding—taking care of their families. But...

JP: And if—you know the argument that um, can be made, is that well, the Can-Canada had to show to Canadians that, uh, they were protecting Canadians from, um, possible al—uh, enemy aliens. What do you have to say for—to that argument that they were actually protecting Canada?

AP: Well, our people were enemies of the Canadian people.

JP: Yeah.

AP: They were enemies.

JP: Right. So what do you have to say? Like well we—if the Canad—if the Canadian government did it because uh, it was a way of protecting Canadians. What would your answer be to that?

AP: Why protecting the Canadians? They didn't—they did nothing wrong, they didn't kill. [Long pause] Why?

JP: [Unclear]

AP: And that's the question still again. Why they were interned? They didn't do nothing wrong. Were they afraid that they would do something? They didn't do anything. Even Camillien Houde was in.

JP: Did your father talk about Camillien Houde?

AP: Yeah, they had a good time there. Yeah. He was in the bush cutting woods and all that. Like everyone else. See he was Canadian? [Shrugs]

JP: And when they were at the camp they all worked.

AP: Even the camp was the same. I don't know if he stayed a couple of months or a year, I don't remember that. May—they had a good time sometimes. Okay, they must have had sad times too because thinking about the families. But in the long run they were all together and they made the best of it. You know. What could you do?

JP: It's really a tribute to their character, eh?



AP: Yeah. See one was fooling around and the other was teasing one. That's, that's the way it went. [Laughs]

[01:25:54]

JP: To pass the time.

AP: [Nods] That's right.

JP: Did you ever, ever have any interest in seeing Petawawa?

AP: No, no. [Shakes head] [Long pause] I had no occasions first of all. But, uh, the number is 365.

JP: What questions are left in your mind today? Like what questions—if you could ask and get answers to questions that were never answered to you about that time and about your dad's internment, what would you want to know?

AP: That they were not criminals. They were not criminals. They were family...father. They were not criminals, like they used to think about it. To bring them Bordeaux jail. They were in Bordeaux jail. They had no uh, belts. They had to take all their belts off and hold their pants.

JP: When they were there at the—

AP: [Nods] At the Bordeaux Jail yes. They were afraid that maybe they would—no, no, they wouldn't have killed themselves. [Shakes head] I don't think so. No. They took away all their belts. So they were not criminals. [Smiles and shrugs]

JP: What—when did you—to, to label them criminal, right—‘cause you’re saying they weren’t criminals—but I guess it’s because they went to Bordeaux jail that people said—

AP: [Nods] They were all criminals.

JP:—that’s what people—that’s what gave them the label, right?

AP: [Nods] Yup. That they were criminals, without doing anything wrong. They, they had their families. They were picked up, some in the car, some at work, some at home. [Gestures to different locations with hand]

JP: Was your, was your father ever told why he was picked up? Did you ever learn why?

AP: Because he was a fascism.

JP: That’s all that was told to you.

AP: That’s it. That he used to go to the, uh—when they had, um...a gather, I guess, in the House of Italy, I don’t know. And seeing that my godfather was Mr. Biffi, he was—I think he was the Secretary, I don’t know what he was there. So that’s why. Everything you know. But that’s all past...and forgotten.

JP: You think—but—

AP: Eh?

JP: —you’re here to remember.

AP: Remember. It's all past. What can you do?

JP: Yeah.

AP: We remembered bits by bits, here and there, you know. When my mother used to go to Bordeaux jail to see if he was still there and when, when they got there, they said they had gone to Petawawa, so. [Shrugs]

JP: How old was your mother at—in 1940?

AP: [Looks up thinking] She got married at 23. What year I don't remember.

JP: But she was a young woman.

AP: Yeah, sure she was a young woman. Yeah, she was—

JP: She would not even have been 30 years old.

AP: No, she must have been 30 years old.

JP: Thirty, yeah?

AP: Yeah.

JP: So she was a—

AP: We were born—Frances and myself, we were born, yeah. [Nods]

JP: Oh yeah, yeah—

AP: We were born.

JP: —sorry, you're right, yeah sorry.

AP: Mm hmm.

JP: Yeah.

AP: What can you do? That's life. [Laughs]

JP: And she had just been brought here from Italy. She was in Italy sewing shirts one day and the next thing you know she's dealing with all of this.

AP: Uh huh. And she went back after 25 years, to see her parents for the last time.

[Long pause]

[Fades out at 01:29:50]

[Fades in at 01:29:51]

JP: Antoinette, um, you worked for Pastene for many years?

AP: Forty-seven.

JP: When did you start with them?

AP: [Shrugs] Forty-seven years, I don't remember when.

JP: Like in the 50s?

AP: I stopped when I was 65 years old.

JP: So what did you do with the company, 'cause I—they were food manufacturers?

AP: I was a stenographer. A stenographer in two languages. And I had one, two, three bosses, they're all dead. [Counts on fingers] Now they're all dead. I don't know who's there now. I wouldn't like to work with the new generation. [Shakes head]

JP: What was it like working in an Italian company then? Was it a—

AP: Oh no, no, I loved it because I stayed there for 45 years. If I wouldn't have wanted it, I would have... [Mumbles and gestures leaving with hand] No, I loved it. And even so, when uh, at 65, I said to my boss, "I want to retire." He says, "I want you to come and work three days a week, only three days a week." So I told him, I said, "I'm getting married." [Starts laughing while talking] So he got up in his chair, he says, "What?" [Says in an angry voice] I said, "Yes." [Laughs] He died the poor fellow. Yup. Now they're in Ville d'Anjou. I wouldn't have gone there anyways.

JP: But that was close to your house at the time?

AP: Oh my God, yes. Uh, we were on Beaumont...Bouvier, uh, St. Dominic[?] and the Louvain. And from there, we moved to Beaubien and from Beaubien, that's where I got married there, I told them I was leaving, he says, "Come three days a week, come on." I says, "No, I don't wanna come, I don't wanna work anymore." So when I told him I was getting married he got up in the chair, he said, "What?" I said, "Yes". Poor fellow he died after, not long ago.

JP: [Laughs]

AP: Yeah.

JP: Um...

AP: Uh, we were—I loved it, you know. If I wouldn't have liked it, I would have gone on somewhere else.

JP: When you, when—I mean—the, uh, the Italian market obviously opened up with a lot more immigration that came in and more and more products that were needed to supply all this growing group of newly arrived immigrants. When you were growing up, the Italian food or the Italian grocers, even when you were a teenager, were there many or...

AP: Oh yeah. Oh, my—

JP: [Unclear] all together?

AP: Yeah, it was Latella, Padullo, there was a lot of them. A lot of Italian—but see the old people died and the new generation didn't take over.

JP: Hmm.

AP: So it died off. And a lot of Greeks now. I don't know if around Ville-Émard there's Greeks. I don't know.

JP: No, it's more—

AP: No, Italian.

JP: It's become—

AP: French, French?

JP: [Unclear] the Italians moved on to—

AP: Okay, okay, okay. Yeah.

JP: Yeah. Um, going back to the time when, when your dad was interned, uh...

AP: Well I was in school.

JP: Yeah.

AP: Went to the Esposito[?]. Yolanda, well she died, Yolanda's father died. Eh, [unclear], I met her once at the hairdresser, uh, she had lost her husband. I don't know, I haven't seen her anymore. She—

JP: Do you ever talk with any of the other women that were friends of yours or women or men, um, who had had a family member interned back then?

AP: No.

JP: Like talking about it now like so many—

AP: No, no.

JP: —years later?

AP: Look at the Dienis, eh, they're, they're in a home now, so. And they're way, way East so I didn't go back to see them. They were too far away.

JP: If they were to do something in Montreal like uh, a plaque or something—

AP: Well, like your mother said, at the church dear, where, um, what's his name, at the front of the church, where is it, um...

JP: *Piazza Dante.*

AP: Yeah.

JP: On Dante Street?

AP: Yeah. I think...they were Italians, that's the only Italian—well, there's a lot of Italians around there that go there now

JP: Yeah.



AP: I think that would be there it would be good.

JP: And, um—

AP: There's Mussolini and there's a...fascism, *il fascio*.

JP: Yeah.

AP: It would be the same thing.

JP: Yeah, that's true. Do you think—were—was your father—you know when you say that—like was your father, after he came back did he have a problem saying that he had been a *fascista*—

AP: No, no, that was finished. [Shakes head]

JP: It was finished, eh?

AP: Yeah. We didn't hear about that no more. It was dead.

JP: It was a dead issue.

AP: Like Biffi used to come to our place, no, no, they never talked about the *fascio*. It was dead, it was no more. Mussolini and Italy went, went down so. [Gestures hands going down and shrugs]

JP: And what about in the last few years and even from the 80s on, there have been some attempts to, uh, by the Italian community here in Montreal, uh, to get some kind of a recognition or to try to get some kind of compensation. Were you aware of any of those, uh—

AP: Nobody got any compensation.

JP: Did anyone ever contact you?

AP: [Shakes head] No, no, no, no. It was dead and that's it.

JP: But even like in the 80s or even recently—

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

JP: —in the last few years—

AP: No.

JP: —nobody's ever contacted you to uh—

AP: No, no, no. Nothing was done, nothing was said.

JP: And how did you feel about that, did you want your story told?

AP: What could you do about it? You cannot go against the government. You know. We're poor people. We couldn't go against the government. [Shrugs] What happened -- happened. And that's it.

JP: But today you have a chance to tell your story.

AP: Well, today, I am coming out with it. [Smiles]

[01:35:42]

JP: How does that make you feel?

AP: Good, good. Reminisce a lot of things. See with my sister, she was six years old and, uh...  
[Shakes her head to signify her sister not remembering] She remembers that he left and that he came back, but nothing else.

JP: Yeah. Is there anything that I've missed that you want to mention or did I not ask you any question of something you wanted to talk about—

AP: No, that was really, that was really perfect. I really enjoyed it.

JP: Oh, I, I enjoyed it even more.

AP: I really enjoyed it, really.

JP: Okay, there's nothing I missed Antoinette or—

AP: [Shrugs and shakes head]

JP: That, uh—

AP: Not really, not really. I still got my last—the last letter my father wrote to my mother.

JP: Oh yeah?

AP: Yeah. And I got the picture of Casini that he... [Gestures to signing picture] It's about—oh big like this [measures out with hands].

JP: And what—do you remember what the letter says?

AP: Oh, he was talking...in a way that my mother had to understand. One day I'd come out with it. I don't know, s—s—meanings that...they knew each other what they were talking about.

JP: So was—there was almost a—an informal, uh—

AP: Something—

JP: —code.

AP: Yeah.

JP: That your mother could understand, like—

AP: Maybe, yeah.

JP: [Unclear]

AP: What, what he meant.

JP: How did you figure that from reading the letter?

AP: Well, growing up, I'd read it one in a while, I say "But this says no head no tails here. You know, I don't understand a thing, you know?" I think it's 365...I've still got the number.

JP: Is that the—what other souvenir do you have from your dad—

AP: It's a folding thing—

JP: Right. And you have that, you said you have the Casini, uh—

AP: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JP: —illustration that he did.

AP: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

JP: Did have—did he ever bring anything back from the camp, like anything made out of wood or boxes—

AP: [Nods] Yes, yes, he did, he did, a lot of little things that we had. He brought us. They would work—

JP: [Unclear]

AP: Oh, bo—little boxes or something like that. You know, yeah. Well, uh, they kept busy, you know? They had to keep busy.

JP: Did you keep those, uh, items?

AP: Well, I kept a few, but afterward the kids, my nieces, they played with it, you know. I gave them away and... Yeah, wooden things. Yeah, that was something.

JP: Okay, I think that's it unless there's something else I, uh—

AP: No, it was very interesting anyways. It was very interesting.

JP: Anyways—

AP: Very interesting.

JP: Thank you so much Antoinette. Thank you so, so much.

AP: You're welcome, it was very, very interesting and I wanna thank... [Smiles and points to videographer]

JP: Adriana. [Laughs] You too. Thank you.

AR: Thank you.

JP: Okay.

AR: You're welcome.

[Fades out at 01:38:27]

**[End of interview]**