YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Italian Immigrants in Niles, Ohio

Personal Experience

O. H. 1402

MICHAEL J. PATRONE

Interviewed

by

Matt Butts

on

February 6, 1990

Michael J. Patrone was born on November 19, 1914, the son of Louie and Angeline Patrone. His father immigrated in 1902, returning to Italy to marry Michael's future mother. He and his wife then turned to Niles, Ohio where they took up residence on the East Side.

Mr. Patrone grew up at 235 Langley Street, with nine brothers and sisters. He attended Niles McKinley High School, graduating in 1932. After working for Niles Steel Products and Niles Tin Mill, Mr. Patrone attended the University of South Carolina, achieving his Bachelor of Science degree in Education in 1943. He then taught in various public schools in Northeastern Ohio until his retirement in 1970.

Currently Mr. Patrone resides at 242 Langley Street in Niles, Ohio. He spends much of his time doing history research and vegetable gardening. He is also a member of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church and the Bagnoli Irpino Club of Niles.

O. H. 1402

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Italian Immigrants in Niles, Ohio

INTERVIEWEE: MICHAEL J. PATRONE

INTERVIEWER: Matt Butts

SUBJECT: immigrants, Italians, Niles, Niles Fire Brick, education, employment

DATE: February 6, 1990

BUTTS: This is an interview with Michael J. Patrone for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Italian Immigrants in Niles, Ohio, by Matt Butts, at 242 Langley Street, on February 6, 1990.

Could you tell me a little bit about your childhood and your family background?

PATRONE: My childhood . . . I was born next door, at 235 Langley Street. [In] my younger age, I was a newsboy. At age six, I started selling newspapers for the city of Niles. I did that for about ten years. That helped to offset some of the income that my parents needed. I figured that I'd go out for football, so I gave up my newspaper route. I passed it onto my younger brother. So, we kept the route in the family for a good thirty-five years. I delivered the morning paper. [It was] the Cleveland Plain Dealer. I made a half a cent on each paper.

I had a route of about twenty papers. They were mostly well-to-do people on the south side of Niles. One of the customers I had was Mrs. Margaret Waddell. She was an outstanding woman. Her husband was the owner of the Waddell Steel. This is where the Thomas House is at at the present time . . . on Brown Street.

When I went out for football, I had an injury that I had to carry for the rest of my life. I was lucky to come out of it alive. It was a neck injury from a head-on tackle. I managed to put that on the back burner. It was as if it never happened. I kept on going. Just keep going. . . .

I graduated high school, and I got my first job in Republic Steel Corporation--Niles Tin Plate Mill. I worked there [from] 1934 to 1937. I worked 1934 to 1937, [and] I worked at the Niles Steel Products; then from Niles Steel Products, I went to Republic Steel, [in] the Tin Plate Division. From 1937 to 1940, I worked as an operator there, Mesta wide shear operator. I saved my money and I figured, "Well, it's time for me to go to college." So, I had enough money to take care of me for the first couple years. When I was in college, I got myself a job, a side job, to have some extra income. I finished my four years in three and a half years, because the war came up. So, I went to summer school, but I managed to my get degree. [I got] a Bachelor of Science in Education. I majored in chemistry. I never taught my major field. I taught mostly [subjects] in the field of science; electricity, vocational electricity. My last eight years, I put in at Howland in woodworking for seventh and eighth grade kids. I retired there in 1970, so I got credit [for] about 16 1/2 years in education. I had some, about four or five years in industry.

I had this rooming house that kept me busy. But, that's about where I'm at right now. I invest a little bit in real estate. I think I did alright. I'm happy.

B: Did you graduate from Kent State, and was it Niles McKinley High School?

P: I got into vocational education. When I was up there in Ashtabula, I had to take these courses in order to be certified, so I went to Kent State. I had to teach industrial vocational education courses. That's what I took over there at Kent State. Then, I went also to Akron [University]. I had some courses that I needed. I think it was more academic--Ohio History. When I was teaching shop up here at Howland. That's where I had my extra credits. All told, I figure I had about a hundred. . . . I didn't have enough to have a master's [degree], but I did get a lot of extra credit in the field that I was teaching. But, I never got what you called a. . . . I never had tenure. With all that jumping around, you just can't get tenure too well. I kind of mixed business, industry and education together.

B: The high school that you graduated from, was it Niles McKinley?

P: Yeah.

B: Can you tell me something about your parents and your family growing up?

P: Yeah. My dad came here in 1902. He applied for work here at the Niles Fire Brick. . . . His first job was to dig the foundation of this place right here. This is the original office of John R. Thomas. [He dug] the foundation, here and in the back, with a pick and shovel. That was his first job, first test, and they all were satisfied the way he was working. They said, "You have a lifetime job with out company." [There were] no written tests. Neither one, my mother or my dad, never had any education. They never went to school. All they could do was speak Italian. My dad put in 44 years with the Niles Fire Brick. They had ten children all together. [They had] six boys and four girls. They raised them at 235 Langley. It had two bedrooms for the kids and one bedroom for themselves. They utilized the basement. That's where they had the kitchen, dining room, laundry room, [and] also their fruit cellar. Everything was down in the basement.

My mother, she was quite a worker. She did all the canning every year with the garden vegetables. She had enough canned goods to put her through for the winter. That would be pretty close to 2,000 quarts of vegetables we raised in the garden. She preserved her vegetables by the pickling method, crocks and so forth. She baked her own bread. That's the story I gave Grace Ellison, an outdoor oven. I don't believe you ever saw that, but I have that story. Grace thought that was good.

My mother would . . . she'd use 75 pounds of Cerasota Flour per week. She'd make all the bread that she needed for that week. She also baked Italian pizzas right in the oven, the outdoor oven. It was something like a beehive kiln. That's the way it was built. She would use for kindling . . . we would get these railroad ties. At that time, they didn't have creasot in the tires. We cut them up in three pieces and split them. One tie would be enough kindling for one heat. It would take care of that week's baking. So, she did that for about . . . I'd say a good twenty years from what I can remember. Then she left the outdoor oven and she went to baking on the inside gas stove. With no schooling, I was surprised that she was able to remember all of the people that she did business with and how much she owed. She made sure that she paid

them all. Her credit was 100 percent. [It was] terrific. Whenever she'd go into a store with the kids, they'd just always welcome her in. They's say, "Well, Mrs. Patrone, don't worry. You go ahead and buy whatever you need for your kids, and we'll put it on the book." That was something. She dealt with some of the prominent business places in town: Shaker's clothing, Bahm Brothers' shoes. And they all remembered her. The Shaker brothers. . . . The Shaker is now [an] attorney. Mitch Shaker is a judge. They all remember my mother.

B: What were your parents' first names?

P: My dad is Louie, and my mother was Angeline. I think I put that on the application. They didn't get to see what you call too much social life like we have today. My mother never smoked. Most of her social life was by going to weddings or showers of her close friends. That's it. She'd go to church, Mount Carmel Church. She was a worker. She was always out there in that garden. She could hoe and harvest. [She could] harvest the vegetables, and not only that, she knew how to put them up in Mason jars.

B: Did the Niles Fire Brick company utilize a lot of Italian immigrant labor?

P: Yeah, they had mostly Italian. Some of the others were of Polish descent and Hungarian. Some were of Irish descent. We, the Bagnoliese were from Italy. John R. Thomas was from Wales. The others that they got came up from Kentucky. They were good workers, too. They came up here and helped out.

B: What town in Italy was your father from?

P: Bagnoli. Bagnoli Irpino. The providence is Avellino. I never got a chance to get there to see it.

B: Do you recall when your father, your parents, came to Niles? Did they know somebody here when they came?

P: The way my dad got here. . . . He told me the story. Don Pallante. . . . You know, the one who's the principal here, Don Pallante. His grandfather. . . . Don never got to see his grandfather. As a matter of fact, I never got to see my grandfather, either. So, Don Pallante's grandfather was named Lawrence Pallante. He was one of the first ones that came over here. That was about 1894 or 1895. So, when he came right out of Bagnoli Irpino, he came right here to work. When he came over, he brought the message back that he had the job with the Niles Fire Brick and that they needed more men to help them work around their plant. He

said, "What's the price of getting more of the Bagnoli people down here?" So, he mentioned the word, and my dad got word of it, and he said, "Well, I'll take a chance. I'll go over there and see if I could get a job with them." He come over to. . . . [With] Lawrence Pallante's recommendation, he got in over here. Then, when he got in, he had others come over. He'd go back. He went back to marry my mother. He was here in 1902, and he went back in 1907. He went there, got married and brought her over. [It was] 1907 when my mother come in. So, they figured the best place that they could get. . . . They were down here on Pratt Street, but they didn't stay there long. Maybe about . . . I'd say about six years, because I was born in 1914, and I was born right here. So, they had this house built. They said, "We're going to build right here, close to work." My dad could walk to work. He'd carry his own lunch. It was really handy for him to have that convenience. This is where they settled, and that's where they stayed. They never moved out of here.

B: Do you recall any of the other men that came over with your father? Did they return to Italy?

P: Yeah, we had them where they'd come, and they'd go back for vacation; and then, they'd come back. When they retired they went back. When they retired from the Niles Fire Brick, I knew some that went there. But, most of them stayed here, because once they had offsprings, their families, they wouldn't go back. We didn't have too many. I remember one. I remember two that went back. I remember one that was sent back because he came over. . . . What would you call that? Illegal immigrants. [He was] one I remember. They sent him back. It was too bad. He was a good worker, too. [He was] a nice fellow.

But, as you can see, I can name. . . . Let me have that list. The ones that came from Bagnoli, Italy. . . . (Reading from list.) [They were] Brutz, Buccino, Caputo, Sena, [and] Clemente. This man is Don Pallante's uncle, Dominic Clemente. Joe DiPasquale, Patty Gatto, Ralph Guaci, Nicastro, [and] Joe Pallante. Don's father was a foreman.

B: For Niles Fire Brick?

P: Yeah. So was Dominic Clemente. Louie Patrone, my dad. Infante. That's just to name a few that I got in here. Those were the ones I got from Bagnoli. A lot of the other Bagnolis that came in. . . . I left one out that I think should have. . . . I don't think I have him in here. I might have put him down here. This man right here, he just passed away. He was about 97 years

old. He was on the same boat that my mother come over on. He told me about it, Dom Sena. Some of these people . . . they didn't all work at the Fire Brick; some of them worked at the steel mills. Some of these people were business people, business merchants.

B: As far as the Italian community . . . did it remain, reside at the East Side [and] primarily around this area? Could you name some streets?

P: Yeah. Most of them resided here on the east side of Niles. This is Langley Street. There's Pratt Street. There's East Park Avenue. There's Walnut, then you go down into the Russia Field. This is all steel mills back here, of Niles. Then we have Anne Street [and] Belmont [Avenue]. You've got Olive Street--that's back in the back here. Up here, this is where most of them were at, off of Robbins [Avenue]. [They are] on the right side of Robbins Avenue going up towards McKinley Heights. [On] the right side, you got all of them from down to Erie [Street]. . . . You got Erie Street. You got Wood Street, Cedar, Fulton, Belmont, Bently, Gilbert, Ambrose, Summit, and Hartzell Avenue. All toward the right side going east, southeast were mostly all Italian. [It was called] "Little Italy."

Then, the other side of the avenue were mostly the English and the. . . . They were more of the well-to-do. They came from England, Scotland. . . . That's about it on that side.

B: Did the Italian community have it's own merchants? Was there a street, like a market area, that was primarily a. . . ?

P: Well, the business section. . . . Like for example, we had what we called our small merchants, grocery stores or barber shops. Yeah, we had our own. For example, you know what a small grocery store is like. We had Mucco's Grocery at one time. We had, right down the street here, down on Pratt. On the corner we had Merola's Grocery Store. We had a butcher . . . we called it more of a butcher shop where you just buy meat mostly or poultry. That was right in a nice area, too. We had another place down on the corner, Burke's Grocery Store. That was a company store. The Niles Fire Brick . . . some of their employees that go there, they got credit for them, and then they would pay. . . . The Fire Brick would arrange to take what they owed the store out of their pay. The store would make sure they got the money. They worked that deal. We had a barber shop down here on Pratt Street. We had them downtown--about three or four barber shops downtown. We had shoe repairs. A lot of these Italian people were shoemakers--we called them. [They did]

shoe repairs. [They'd] sell them too. Actually they made shoes back in Italy. The complete shoes. Over here, the demand wasn't too great for them, but they repaired shoes. [They] put soles and heels on them. We had as many as one, two. . . . There was four that I knew right in downtown Niles. [There were] four shoe repair places. Now, we don't have a one. We have it at the mall. We fixed our own shoes, too. Many times, I put heels and soles on my shoes. They had to last, you know. I had the nails. I knew how to do it.

B: When your father worked for Niles Fire Brick, basically you stated that he started out as a laborer. Did he eventually learn any skills? Did he become a mason with them?

P: No, he stayed, my dad, due to the lack of education. He couldn't go up too high. He would have had the chance to become a foreman, just like Dominic Clemente and Joe Pallante. Dominic Clemente and Joe Pallante, they had some education. They had schooling back in Italy. That's what helped. My dad had no schooling. He was skillful in his work. He knew when the bricks were cooked. It took ten [or] twelve days to cook the bricks, to get them up to the right temperature and cook them. Mostly they were clay and silicate bricks. They were the bricks that were used on the open hearths. He was a worker. He didn't mind working triple turns. Do you know what triple turns is? [There's] twelve hour turns. [He worked] thirty-six straight hours. [He] never came home. We'd bring his lunch to him. You can't leave the kiln. Once you're short of a man, the kiln's got to be fired. It's got to be cleaned and fired twenty-four hours around the clock. You got to keep that heat up. I would say, that was one of the cleanest jobs there, the fireman on the kiln--a kiln fireman. The other jobs were pretty dirty. You had that silicosis that a lot of them got hit with. You know what I'm talking about. They got that in their lungs.

B: Would you say the majority of the people, the other Italian immigrants that you were aware of. . . . Were they also not able to attend school in Italy when they came over?

P: I'd say most of them that came over, they had maybe one, two or three years of schooling, which would be equivalent to six years of our elementary.

B: Do you know any of the specific names of the other industries in Niles, at the time, where a lot of the Italian immigrants worked? Looking at this (list), can you tell me which of these industries held a lot of the Italian immigrant labor?

P: Yeah. They start. . . . In 1924, the Italians were here. They mostly came from the southern part of Italy. They didn't have to come from Bagnoli, but most of the Bagnolis got into the Fire Brick. The other Italians, they had a little more schooling, so they went for the bigger job that paid a little more money; [and they got them], like the Waddell Steel, Thomas Mill, Briar Hill Steel. As a matter of fact, my dad . . . his first job. . . . He got a little experience in the steel mill, too. He worked up in the Loraine Steel Company, up there near the Great Lakes. The Mahoning Valley Steel. Quite a few there worked in there. That's what it was. It became General Electric then it went to J & L. But, going way back [to] 1916, there were quite a few Italians working in there in the cold roll department, rolling. They didn't get too many of the big jobs like foremen, but they were assistant rollers and catchers. It gets sent through the roller, and they catch it on the other side and bring it back and forth . . . the old type rolling mills.

There was not too many at the Bostwick Steel. Ohio Galvanized, they had some there. The Empire just this year became . . . went to Umpire Steel. Some worked in there, but most of them were at the Niles Fire Brick. They stayed . . . the fathers and the sons. . . . Some of the sons worked there, too. No women worked at the Niles Fire Brick. [It was] too dirty. It was tough, too. You had to have a strong back. The Metal Products, that's right up here, some Italians worked there. Stanley Works, Falcon Steel, see, it became--just right up here, the Empire Steel was at the present sight. It was Falcon Steel, then it became the Niles Rolling Mill, then the Sharon Mallory, then the RMI, right now. That's what's over there now, right up here on Warren Avenue. Here we got the Steel Products. We had quite a few Italians there. Like I said, it was Italians, Hungarians, Pollocks [and] Irish. Then the Republic Steel Corporation, they go more of building products over there. We had the Niles Street Car Company. That was 1890. Like I said, we didn't have too many come over at that time. When it turned into a containers department, that's when we had more Italians working. That's about it.

B: Do you recall anything about the opening of Mount Carmel Church?

P: Mount Carmel Church, I can remember when it was just a house. It was on Robbins Avenue. It was located right at the present sight of the. . . . It's a school there now. It's the school on Robbins Avenue. Not up there on the avenue. This is it, right here, where the church is at. Right over to the side of it, that's

where you go to the rectory where you go to see the priest. That's a school there. Right at that corner was a house. That's were the lawn's at. Right on the side of the church, that was a church. I remember now. The first priest that was there was Father Santori.

B: Previously, did the Italian community go to St. Stephen's?

P: Yeah, there's two Catholic churches. We had what we called the Italians and the Irish. The Irish, most of them, all went to St. Stephen's. The Italians all went to Mount Carmel. That just goes to show you that there was quite a few Irish here at that time. There was quite a few Italians to support two churches. They both had schools with them. Now, with the decrease in the number of Irish and the decrease in the number of Italians that came from across the pond, we have just the immigrants. Well, the immigrants, some will go follow their fathers' footsteps, and some will go on their own. A lot of them moved out of the area, because they were looking for good jobs. That's why we had a decrease in the number of people that attended St. Stephen's of Irish descent.

Now, we have just about. . . . Well, we have some Italians that go there. They [originally] figured that they didn't like Mount Carmel, so they would go to St. Stephen's. Then, we had vice versa. We had some of the Irish and other people [that were] going to St. Stephen's going to Mount Carmel, but most of them stayed with St. Stephens. They liked to hear the Mass in English. Here, it was given in Latin most of the time. Lately, they'd give English. Mount Carmel seemed like it surpassed St. Stephen's, because [of] the fact that we had the Italians and they had the tendency to have more children. The Irish mostly had one or two. The Italians would have four, five [and] six. They might be now. . . . The group of the last decade might . . . the last couple of decades might have changed their number of children. They found out it's quite expensive to raise a child today.

B: In the Italian immigrant community here in Niles, did it maintain a lot of the flavor of the home country?

P: You mean the tradition?

B: Traditions, holidays. . . .

P: Oh, yeah. They stayed right with their traditions. My mother, well all these people from Bagnoli. . . . Most of all the Italians, they'll start out with Easter. Then, they'll celebrate Christmas, [and] then you have the saints too. You celebrate the saint days. [At]

Our Lady of Mount Carmel, they have their festival here once a year. [At] St. Stephen's, they don't have a festival. [At] Mount Carmel, it seems like they have a three or four day festival to raise enough funds to support their church. They do a good job. All of the parishioners help. They donate their service. They got a nice school up there, too.

I have the sisters come here. I raise vegetables for the sisters. [For] the last nine years, I've been taking care of them. I give them all the vegetables that they need. I call them up when I harvest the vegetables. They don't have as many sisters as they used to. Sister Sylvia, she just passed away and Sister Leona, she's in charge now. [There is] Sister Consiglio, Sister Anne, Sister Eugene, Sister Margaret, [and] Sister Benedictine. She was down to visit from the mother house. They have a mother house in . . . Pennsylvania. They have really nice people who do the help. You'd be surprised. They reciprocate too. They bring me down food when the holidays come: Christmas, Easter and anytime they have extra food. Sister Leone, she's teaching science now, sixth grade science. Do you ever talk to the sisters?

B: Not yet.

P: Do you ever talk to any of them?

B: Nobody from Niles.

P: I mean any sisters from [anywhere].

B: Yeah.

P: You do? How do you find them?

B: Well, usually, anywhere. Probably a funeral or something like that.

P: Well, they're just like any other human being. They're all right. You ought to try it sometime. You ought to see. Sister Leona, she tells me just like Sister Sylvia. . . .

B: Were there any social organizations formed? You mentioned the Bagnoli.

P: Yeah, most of the Italians here, just like Youngstown. . . . Way back, I can remember this club that I belonged to, the Bagnoli Club. Actually, that was built by the Sons of Italy, a fraternal organization [that was] nationwide. That's different than a social club. They built that, and I remember they had as many

as three or four hundred members at one time. They were very active in the community.

B: Do you remember when it was built? Do you know when it was built?

P: I'd say that was . . . I believe it was 1925 or 1927. Somewhere in that time.

B: Is there any other social organizations?

P: Yeah, we have another organization that's called the San Fillippo Society. That's one of the oldest ones. That's still going.

B: Did your father belong to either one of these?

P: Yeah, he belonged to the Sons of Italy.

B: Sons of Italy?

P: Yeah, all his life. The Sons of Italy, due to what we call poor management, it went down. Poor management and money. That will do it. They still have them, though. They had one up in Ashtabula that I know of. They're still going alright. Youngstown's got, I think, [a] Sons of Italy [organization]. They have other organizations up there in Youngstown acquainted with. . . . They got the Arco Club. Ever heard of that?

B: I'm not sure.

P: Arco. The Arco Club's a big club. Then, they got the veterans' club, the VFW. They got the Sons of Sicily. There must be a half a dozen of them up there. The way I got acquainted with them was through boccie, playing boccie. We'd play one another. But, the Sons of Italy, up there, they went down. Then the Bagnoli. . . . The place was empty. They just had furniture stored in it. So, then the Bagnoli Club moved from here and bought that place up there. I took this off their hands. That was [in] 1946. They did all right up there. They had dances and weddings. [They had] a lot of weddings and showers. They did a good job. I remember the weddings they had up there. [They had] as many as seven hundred. [They were] big weddings. I'm talking about. . . . There's no playing around. They didn't have catering or anything like that; they cooked right there. The women would get together and prepare all the food two days prior to the wedding.

B: From what you remember, once an Italian immigrant was employed. . . . You mentioned your father worked

forty-four years for Niles Fire Brick. Was that pretty much the trend of the other men, too? The company that they were initially hired for, they would stay with until they retired?

P: You bet. They stayed right with the Fire Brick. I'll tell you why they stayed with the Fire Brick. The Niles Fire Brick, during World War I and World War II and right up to 1972--I would say . . . those were the two big wars we had. The steel mills in this valley, in the steel valley, Mahoning and Shenango Valley and other areas--I told you where they shipped the bricks. They depended on this Niles Fire Brick. These men were working twelve hours a day, double shifts. You just don't find people on the street and say, "Come on over and work." They couldn't do the job in the first place. So, my dad and all these people who came over had steady work all of the time. My mother raised ten children. She never had to go to Welfare. Isn't that something? That's right. Between my dad's income and the kids going to sell newspapers, she was able to meet her expenses. This went for all the other families, too. Don't get the idea that we were the only newsboys. I have the story on the Niles newsboys, too. You never got to see that?

B: No.

P: Oh, I have that in there, too. I can see if I can get you a story on that. The Niles newsboys. . . . That took me, I'd say pretty close to fifteen years to research that job and make sure I identified all those newsboys.

B: Was it very important, then, to have the added income of the children? How long did they go to school before they started work?

P: You mean the. . . .

B: The Italian friends you were growing up with.

P: My mother and dad had ten children. They all graduated from high school.

B: Was that a common trend throughout the Italian community?

P: Oh yeah. They thought they'd make their kids go to school. They said, "You got to get an education, because we didn't have any. We didn't have that opportunity. If you're going to [get] ahead in the world, you have to get an education." When they got in trouble in school, we had the truant officer come right over at the house, and they'd talk to the parents.

They'd let them know that the kids didn't come to school. When that kid come home, boy, he got it!

B: Was it pretty much a basic trend throughout . . . most of your friends completed high school, too?

P: Yeah, we all did. I can name you a lot of these boys that come from Bagnoli. Like I said, I may have missed a few. I'll name a few outstanding. . . . Frasca. Tony Frasco went to Ohio University. He was an insurance man here in Niles for many, many years, Anthony Frasca. Rocky Biviano, I went to school [with him]. He was my buddy. He passed away not too long ago. He owned Biviano Floor and Tile right up here on McKinley Heights going toward Girard. His wife is operating the place and his son. He's got a son there that's a lawyer, Bill Biviano, an attorney. Look at the offsprings, how they start going. Isn't that something? You don't stop letting your kids go to school. So, Rocky's three kids, one's an attorney; one's running that business up there with his mother, [and] he's married; and another one's in a radio station. [I'll] name a few more.

Let's take the Pallante family. Look at their's. To name you a few, you got Joe Pallante, John, Ralph, Larry, Paul, and Don. Take Dom--there might have been a few more I missed. They had about eight or nine kids. Don Pallante is now the principal at Niles High School. His brother Larry was the athletic director when they had the great football teams down there with Tony Mason. He's retired now, Larry. Ralph Pallante went to Newbury College in South Carolina. He's a baseball pitcher. Larry went to Newbury also. He's a guard. He played football. He got a football scholarship. Paul went there too, Paul Pallante. He taught at Austintown. Ralph, actually was a business man. He operated what's called the United Cigar now, but they had the news stand on the corner. They built that when this urban renewal went on. Look at that just out of that bank. There's another one that passed away. He worked in the steel mills, I think. Don Pallante's father was a foreman, Joe Pallante. Clemente, he's another one. His kids graduated high school. Joe Pallante was a day foreman and Dominic Clemente was a night foreman.

Then there's some of the Irish people: Joe Murphy. They named this park down there. I helped to build this park down there, Tom Murphy's Park. We named it after Tom. That's the son of Joe Murphy. Tom Murphy was a. . . . Well, he was a Youngstown Vindicator newspaper reporter in the Niles area for many, many years. He passed away. [He was] well-liked in the city, so they named the park after Tom.

I could tell you. . . . I've got so much history down here. I haven't really put it all together. I'd like to put it all together some day. I don't know how I could do it unless I get a museum. Just, when I bring everything in the museum, once I lay it up there in different phases, you know, show them everything: pictures, write-ups [and] all that, then I'll put it all together. See those two bulletin boards right there? It came out of the Niles Fire Brick down below before they moved to Columbiana. I helped to dispose of a lot of their material, tearing down. We have another one that. . . . She's a reporter. I'm trying to think of her name.

We had a lot of other Italians too. You want to talk about Italians. We had the Altieros. Let me have that list. I'll show you how those names make me. . . . Al Altabelli's in the real estate business. You've heard of that name. Antonucci, plumber. Joe Antonucci. [He's a] big plumber I'm talking about. [He's] no small plumber, the whole county. [He's a] multi-millionaire. You got the Bernards. They were business people. Bianco, business people. Biviano, I told you. Boccia [was] in wrecking. They tore all these old buildings down. Genie Boccia. His dad was one of the old-time members of the Sons of Italy. He was the last one that died, the last member. My dad was the second to the last member. My dad was 96 3/4 years old when he passed away. Hard work. He beat double pneumonia three times in the nursing home. Why? Because his pores were all open. He could sweat, and how he developed that was at the Fire Brick.

By the way, they never had showers down there at the Niles Fire Brick, either. They carried their underclothes, you know underwear. They carried them with them, with their towels, to work, and they brought them back home to be laundered. They did bring the little brown jug with them, too. You know what that is?

B: No.

P: Homemade wine.

B: Oh, really?

P: Yeah. That helped to reduce the amount of perspiration so they wouldn't catch cold. Joe Bruno [is a] contractor. Brutz, Marty Brutz, [is a] contractor. You got Campana. Violet Campana was at the Trumbull County recorder's office. She's from the Campana family. Candio, instructor for Niles High School. Carbone's a plumber. The . . . family. They're all educated high school graduates. Savales, Seminaro, Comparato, [is] a

big contractor. Anthony Reigle was our councilman for many years and a business man. Steve Roberts [is] a barber. Carmen DeChristofaro [is a] former mayor of niles. Thomas DeCola, [is a] doctor. Dr. Thomas DeCola [is a] professor. What's this college up here? The last part of the name is Green. Bowling Green. He was a professor [there] for many years. I talked with him. He's also affiliated with the research of the history of Niles. I can get him on the phone. I can call him up right now. There's my friend right there, that phone. That's a hot phone. Matthew. Henry DiMatthew [is a] contractor. DiPasquale, Joe DePasquale. He's got son that's Father Albert right here at Mount Carmel Church. Father Albert DiPasquale, just to give you a few.

So many of them are high school graduates. Some of them are doctors. [There's] Frederica. He's a heart specialist. DeFusco, that's another big name in Niles. Lawyers, doctors. Gunerri, Albert Gunerri, he came from Genoa. He had a confectionery store for many, many years. You might have got some of that in that pictorial history book of Niles.

B: Yeah.

P: The . . . insurance company. The LeMans in the grocery business. [He was] a peddler like, going around and selling apples, oranges and so forth--you know, vegetables. There's so many of them here. The Ragazzos, All-American football player from Niles, Philip Ragazzo. Pete taught school many years over there in Niles. He graduated in my class. We got principals in here. Sebbio, he just passed away. Nick Zamgerelli was a barber. Joe Vigorito [was] a scrap man down here at Grant Street scrap. Tony Tripolli, the Tripollis are in real estate now, Louis Tripolli. Then they had a big plant over here, right up from the tin plate mill where Republic Steel's at, up on Main Street. They were across the street there, and they were over there down there on the South Side. You got the Malones the Macali, Giant Eagle. There's Barney, he's one of his boys, and Gilbert. They're doing real good. We got one up there by the Route 422, the Village Plaza and then the one down here. Gilbert's running the one down here, and Barney's running the one out there. Barney's got his son with him to help him. Yeah. Mucco, Mucco put out some nice boys, business people, the grocery business. One boy's an engineer out of Youngstown.

Yeah, we got all walks of life in here. Mostly tradesmen, carpenters. There's a lot of tradesmen in this town. They came from Italy, and their descendants took over, picked up. Now, the descendants, you see, that's

what counts. If you don't have the descendants, you're done.

B: So most of the immigrants came over with some trade experience from Italy?

P: Yeah, most of them. Look at what the Italians did to Toronto. Have you heard the story?

B: Yeah, I'm pretty. . . .

P: Yeah, they did that thing. They took that over and turned it right around. I'm working down here, now. You take this. This is one of the most blighted areas in the city of Niles, this block right here. Oh my! Six years ago, you couldn't walk down here. They were bombarding my homes. I had two homes down there: a ten room house and a four room house. They just hit those windows hard. [They] ransacked it and everything. I had two more up there, up from it. They did that too. Over there we lost. . . . We had to clear four down here and about five over here, on this street right in here. That's the only thing you can do. You have to clear them in order to cut down the blight. I mean, you cut down the [blight] and you cut down the vandalism. That's where the vandalism. . . . It seems like it grows. These kids, they like a place where they can hide and burn down. I got that all cleared, now. This is the best this place has ever looked. We saved that block. We saved it so far.

B: Is there anything else about the Italian community that you would like to add right now?

P: The only thing I could say. . . . With all the Italian families of today, they all believe in having their children have a good education. The way they want to get it is by doing their homework. If the kid don't do his homework, he's done. He's going to be a failure.

The other thing they teach them [is] respect. It's hard to do. The kids today go to school and we got these schools that's kind of contaminated with dope and with pot and all that. Those kids, you just. . . . You kind of hope [to walk] away from it.

B: Well, thank you very much for your time.

P: Well, it's all right, I'm glad I could be of some help to you.

END OF INTERVIEW