

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Niles, Ohio

Personal Experience

O.H. 1682

MICHAEL PATRONE

Interviewed

by

Dr. June Ladd

on

December 14, 1993

L: This is an interview with Michael Patrone for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Niles Project, by Dr. June Ladd, on December 14, 1993.

Mike, would you give me the name of your mother.

P: Angeline. Her maiden name was Russo.

L: Do you know what age she was when she came here? Was she a young woman in her twenties?

P: I say she was about her mid twenties.

L: What could you tell me about how she came here? Did your father come first? Did she come later? What can you tell me about their immigration to here?

P: My father came over first. He came over in 1902.

L: He came alone then?

P: Yes.

L: Did he come with any family members?

P: No family members.

L: How did he learn about the employment opportunity at Niles Fire Brick?

P: He learned it through friends.

L: They were friends?

P: They were friends from the same village called Bagnoli.

L: Do you know if your father knew your mother before he left?

P: Yes, he knew.

L: Was the marriage arranged or was there an understanding?

P: He was here and then he went back and married her and brought her over.

L: You do not know if they had an understanding, or engagement?

P: I imagine they had an engagement.

L: Off hand, do you know when he returned?

P: 1907. That is when my mother came here.

L: During the five years that he was here, 1902 to 1907, was he saving up money to return and to bring her back?

P: Yes, he was working with the fire brick.

L: How many children were in your family?

P: There were ten that lived.

L: Were there some still births or miscarriages?

P: Yes, about nine.

L: Nine live birth, nine miscarriages. Do you know all the names of the children in your family that survived?

P: Yes, my oldest brother is named Nelson. The next one is named Joseph. I am number three. Number four is named Lawrence. Then comes the girls, Roselyn, Mary Anne, and Connie. I have another brother whose name is Dominic. The last one is Clara.

L: I have got eight so far. It is a large family.

P: Anthony, then I have another sister. Her name is Clara.

L: Do you know when any of these individuals were born? Do you know when Nelson was born?

P: He was born in 1911.

L: Then you are 79.

P: I was [born in] 1914. My brother Joseph was born in 1912. Lawrence was next. He was [born in] 1915.

L: With these, what we could do is print out a list later and see if we could track them down, or if you could remember later.

P: I have them all at home on a big board.

L: Well, why don't we do that.

P: I even have the actual birthdays. I keep that where I have the telephone.

L: You won't mind sharing that with me, the actual birthdays?

P: Oh no. I will share anything.

L: That will be terrific. . Are any of your brothers or sisters living?

P: They are all living except one. This one here, Joseph passed away.

L: Did your mom and dad talk about why they came to Niles, or why they chose to leave Italy and come here?

P: Well, there was not much back there in Bagnoli, just agriculture and farming. They loved farm life. There was not much chance of making a better living.

L: They specifically came then so he could work at the Niles Fire Brick Company?

P: Yes.

L: In Italy, what family members remained behind?

P: I had an aunt over there and an uncle. That is about all.

L: Let me ask the same question in a different way. Your father, was he the first one within the Patrone family to move over here.

P: Yes. He had a sister.

L: Did he have any brothers?

P: No.

L: If I understand the pattern right, it is mostly the male relatives who told other male relatives, then they moved over.

P: Yes.

L: So he had no male relatives to move with him.

P: No.

L: Do you know if your mom and dad, before they were married, talked about her coming over with him later?

P: They mentioned it now and then that they talked about coming over.

L: Do you think your mom had played a roll in making that decision?

P: Oh yes, she must have. She was very enthusiastic and aggressive.

L: Was she?

P: She was the boss.

L: What kind of things did she boss in the family? What kind of decisions did she make in your family?

P: She operated the whole family business, we called it. She took the kids to the store, clothing, shoes, whatever they needed.

L: So in terms of buying things for the family?

P: She did all the business.

L: She bought the shoes, the clothes. Did she decide what was bought for food?

P: Yes.

L: What other things did your mom boss in the family, discipline?

P: Oh yes.

L: Did your mom ever say, "Well wait until your dad gets home"?

P: No.

L: What kind of things didn't your mom boss? What things did your dad have the final decision on?

P: He left everything up to her because she knew how to manage what was coming in as far as weekly expenditures.

L: Do I understand this right, as far as the family budget, she made the money decisions?

P: She did all the buying on credit. She made sure they paid the time that they gave her.

L: Okay, she made time payments for the family. I hope this does not sound too personal. Did your father just hand the paycheck over to her?

P: Yes.

L: The whole paycheck?

P: Yes.

L: Sometimes married couples now have allowances that they give each other. Did he get any money for his own personal expenditure?

P: He got just enough that maybe he would come up here to the club and socialize with his friends. He very seldom went out and bought his own clothes. She would go out and buy them for him.

L: I do the same thing for my husband [laughter]. I buy his shoes, I buy his suits, I buy his coats. This isn't too unusual, even today, is it?

P: No.

L: Where did you live when you grew up in Niles?

P: You won't believe this, but I am 79 years old and I am still at the same place I was born. I was born at 235 Langley Street and I live at 242 [Langley Street], right next door. I own 235. I own the homestead.

L: That is terrific. Do you know if your mom and dad, when they came over here, did they rent a house to begin with?

P: Yes.

L: Or an apartment?

P: They rented a house down on Pratt Street. That is the street adjacent to Langley Street.

L: I am not spelling that right am I?

P: L-A-N-G-L-E-Y.

L: I guess I did have that right.

P: Okay, they rented at Pratt Street. Do you know anything about the cost of that or how long they were there?

P: The rent?

L: Yes, the rental price.

P: I would say they were between fifteen and twenty dollars a month.

L: So they rented on Pratt Street. It was a three room apartment. Was it owned by Niles Fire Brick?

P: No, private individuals. The Fire Brick had quite a number of homes.

L: At any time, did your family live in company homes, that you know of?

P: No, we never lived in a company home.

L: Do you know what time approximately they moved from Pratt Street to Langley? Did they go from renting to owning?

P: They had a home built on Langley. This is a brick home that is right there now where I was born in 1914. They built the house right before I was born.

L: My dad did the same thing. Just before my twin sister and I were born, he built a three room, brick ranch, then found out they were having twins. It was really too small, but it was already being built. So, it was built the year you were born. You still reside near that.

P: Yes, right next to it.

L: You own this home.

P: It does not meet the code requirements today.

L: So you cannot live in it?

P: Back then it did have 115 volts at 30 amp capacity. They did not have refrigerators. They had the ice box. They did a lot of the laundry by hand. Then they finally bought a

Maytag washer, one of those agitative types.

L: Was that a big expense for the family?

P: Yes.

L: Did your mom buy that on the credit, on time payments?

P: Yes.

L: At what year did people cease to live at that house? It is still in your family. You own it.

P: My dad was the first one to leave. He had to go to a nursing home.

L: Around here?

P: Yes, Shepard of the Valley. He was in there five years.

L: Then your mother remained in the house?

P: She got ill and she had to be taken into the hospital. She had a bad liver, then she died of pneumonia in the hospital.

L: You told me before they started the tape that they both lived to a very elderly age. Your dad lived to be [what age]?

P: Ninety-six and three quarters.

L: Okay, and your mom?

P: Ninety.

L: Tell me about what your mom might cook for you and your family. Did she continue to cook traditional dishes? Did anything change as a result of living here in America?

P: When my mother got here she made friends with people.

L: What can you tell me about that?

P: She learned about mending clothes and so forth.

L: Did she know anybody here when she arrived as a young bride?



P: No, I do not think she knew too many. She did not take long to make friends.

L: She was a person who made friends easily?

P: Yes.

L: Of the friends that she made, were they female relatives of other Niles Fire Brick workers?

P: She made friends with mostly all Niles Fire Brick workers.

L: Sisters, wives, anybody who did not work at Niles Fire Brick?

P: Some of the Bagnoli people worked at other industries, too. Republic Steel Corporation in Warren, the Mahoning Valley Steel, Waddell Steel, Brier Hill Steel, Thomas Mill. One of the oldest ones there was Thomas Mill. He was up there at what they used to call the Falcon. Now it is R.M.I. Titanium.

L: You were responsible for that?

P: Yes.

L: Yes, I saw that huge plant.

P: I figured Martha needed a sponsor, so I called the P.R. man at the R.M.I. Titanium Company. I have not met him yet. With a ten minute conversation, I reviewed the history of his present day company, all the way back to where it originated.

L: You probably told him things he never even imagined.

P: Yes, all the way back to the Thomas Mill, 1902. When he got all that he said, "I want you to be a sponsor for this project that Martha Pallante is on. I will have a sign made." I said, "What is the sign going to cost." He said, "I think it will be about \$100.00." I said, "I will tell you what you do. You put us down for a sponsor. Maybe in a week or two she will get a check for \$100.00." I have not got the check yet.

L: It is in the mail. We were talking about your mom and her friends. What type of things might she do with her female friends?

P: Most of them belonged to Mount Carmel Church.

L: The Woman's Society there?

- P: Yes, they had the Woman's Society Immaculate Conception Society. They would meet there at the meetings. They all had their family ties with the church. All their kids were baptized. Then they had confirmation.
- L: So let me see if I understand this right. You think that when your mother socialized with her female friends it was mostly through the Woman's Society Immaculate Conception within the church organization.
- P: Yes, then they go see one another at their homes. That was a big thing, whenever you give birth to a child. The custom back then was they would bring a live chicken to make soup.
- L: They would make it there at the house of the woman that just had the baby?
- P: Yes. They would bring the actual chicken.
- L: Did they bring the other ingredients?
- P: They would bring other things, too.
- L: Would they come as a group or one woman?
- P: One at a time.
- L: What might they have with the chicken soup?
- P: You mean how they prepare the chicken soup?
- L: You said goodies. What other goodies might they bring you?
- P: They would bring cookies, fruit.
- L: Did this custom have a name? Did the woman call it something?
- P: They did not call it anything. It was something they did to show their respects as a friend.
- L: Do you know if this is a custom that they practiced in Italy and they brought it over here?
- P: I would say so. They would do it more there in Italy. Living in Italy where they lived was one or two rooms. Underneath the house they raised animals.
- L: Did your family do any of that here? Did they raise livestock on the side, chickens?

P: I used to go after clover for her. She raised her own rabbits.

L: Did she eat her rabbits?

P: She knew how to take care of them.

L: Did she sell any of the rabbits to other people?

P: Family use. She used to hang all the chickens she killed. She would cut the neck right off, down in the basement.

L: Did you watch?

P: Yes, she used to put her feet on it, nothing to it.

L: Stretch the neck out?

P: Yes.

L: Then she would just pluck it and everything?

P: That was it. I am telling you the truth.

L: You had rabbits that she cooked. I assume that she would also skin those and dress them?

P: Yes.

L: So she dressed all her own meat for the table. Anything besides chickens and rabbits?

P: Yes. Anything else she needed she went to a butcher shop.

L: Did you ever go with her to the butcher shop?

P: Yes.

L: What kind of things might she buy there?

P: She bought all her pork. She would make her own sausage. She made her own leaf lard. They called it leaf lard. That leaf lard was solid. Then you cut them up and cook them in large kettles.

L: You render them down into liquid again?

P: Yes, then you put it in a big crock. You want a scoop to start your cooking with. You buy lard in the container. This was pure. She always used pure olive oil, too.

L: Did she have to import that?

P: No, she would buy it here.

L: Was there any grocery store that specialized in imported Italian Olive Oil, or anything like that?

P: We had a grocery store up here on Mason street. They called it the Mary Basizle Store.

L: Was she from Italy?

P: Yes.

L: Was she from the same villages?

P: Her husband was.

L: Do you know if Mary helped run the store? Was she there behind the counter?

P: They started over here on Pratt Street, then the moved up here on Mason Street. The two places are still there.

L: When your mom went to the grocery store, did she also have an account there?

P: Yes.

L: I know from what little bit of work I have done already with the payroll that the men were paid twice a month. Did she settle up her accounts?

P: She settled them. She had other incomes, too.

L: What were they?

P: All her sons. They were all news boys. You did not get that news boy story I had?

L: No.

P: We just had our 70th anniversary. 1922 we had the group picture.

- L: You were a news boy also?
- P: I was a news boy at seven years of age. I was selling them on the streets of Niles. I lost money during the Klu Klux Klan. Everybody had to be home by 9:00. I am used to staying out until midnight.
- L: Selling papers?
- P: Yes.
- L: The money you earned, you gave it over to your mom?
- P: You better give it to her. She was waiting for it.
- L: She was waiting for it at midnight? When did you get paid?
- P: She was waiting for the money regardless. The one where we brought in the most money was the Sunday paper. You make a cent and a half on the paper and you sell about 240 Sunday papers. That means your bringing home about \$3.50.
- L: What would that \$3.50 buy?
- P: It would buy plenty because you would get a dozen eggs for five cents.
- L: Did your mom ever give you a part of this money?
- P: Yes, she gave us 50 cents.
- L: Was that a lot of money?
- P: Five cents would get us an ice cream cone or a bar of candy. Ten cents would get us in to see a movie picture show or Tom Nicks.
- L: Did your mom ever go to the movies?
- P: Buck Jones, you do not remember those cowboy pictures.
- L: I remember hearing about them.
- P: Gene Autre.
- L: Would your mom ever go to the movies?

P: No. She just did not have that kind of time.

L: She sounds like she was very busy. When the radios became popular did you have a radio?

P: Yes, we got a radio.

L: Did she ever listen to it?

P: We had a Victrola.

L: What things might she have done?

P: She used to go to showers, weddings.

L: Was she interested in plays or lectures, anything like that?

P: My dad and mother, neither one had any education. They only school they went to was when they were preparing themselves to get their citizenship.

L: What kind of school was that?

P: They had class over at the high school. They teach them what questions they would be asked.

L: Did your mom and dad find that difficult.

P: Yes, that was hard, but they both got it. They both got their papers.

L: Did they ever talk about studying for the naturalization test?

P: My mother was always saying, "I am a citizen. I passed the test."

L: Sounds like she was very proud of that. Do you know when they became citizens?

P: It must have been 1950.

L: Do you know why they wanted to become citizens?

P: It meant something to them from the standpoint that they got a certificate they had been in school.

L: This kind of suggests to me that they wanted to belong, to call themselves American

citizens. Did they express any of that, this kind of commitment that here was their life?

P: I say that being a citizen, you had more privileges. They liked to go to vote.

L: Was that hard for your mother because women did not vote?

P: No, it was not hard for her because she had people that were running for office that she knew.

L: So she voted locally.

P: And of the president of the United States.

L: Did she take any interest in state elections?

P: Not too much in state elections. The president is what I know.

L: Was there any president that she particularly liked?

P: She always like John F. Kennedy and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

L: My grandmother went all the way down to Pittsburgh on a train to shake his hand.

P: Is that right?

L: Yes, after one of his elections.

P: We had Michael Kirwan, Congressman.

L: Let me see, your mom and dad had no formal education. They went to citizenship school somewhere in the 1950's. How did your mom feel about you getting an education or your other brothers and sisters? Was that important to her?

P: She was on us all the time, "You have got to go to school. You have got to get an education."

L: Did she give you a reason?

P: She said, "You will be better in your life. You will be able to compete in the world."

L: As far as going to school, did she push you to going beyond grade school?

P: Yes.

- L: What did she expect?
- P: She wanted to see the report card when it came in. She wanted to know from the school if any of the kids were playing hookey.
- L: Did you ever play hookey?
- P: No.
- L: Why?
- P: We got tied to the point that we had a responsibility of delivering and selling news papers. After school we had to go down and get those papers and deliver them. Then in the morning, too. We had morning routes.
- L: With that big fifteen cents out of your papers, you could not play hookey during the day?
- P: No.
- L: Would your mom have found out?
- P: We got to the point where we were competing right in the classroom. You get interested in your subjects. Your not going to be able to do your lessons if your absent. It would set you back.
- L: When you came home with your report card, what type of things might she say about your performance in school?
- P: She always felt happy because of the fact that we were doing real good.
- L: Did your parents have any ideas about what you should do when you grow up? Did they have expectations?
- P: No, they had no idea. When we finished high school, that was a great day. Some of us had to go to work and get a job right away.
- L: Did you have to go to work?
- P: Yes, I had to go to work with Republic Steel Corporation. I was 25 years old when I was a freshman.
- L: Does that mean that your school years were interrupted?



P: Right.

L: What happened that you were not going to school on a regular basis? What interrupted you going to high school?

P: I graduated high school.

L: How old were you when you graduated?

P: I was nineteen.

L: You were 25 years old and a freshman in college?

P: Yes. I went to work in the industry before I went to college.

L: Did you pay your own way through college?

P: Yes.

L: Did you go locally?

P: No. I went to the University of South Carolina.

L: Why there?

P: I had a brother that went there. He was a great football player, the one that passed away.

L: Joseph, right?

P: Yes.

L: Was he there at the same time you were?

P: He was there two years before me.

L: Did you stay with him when you went to college?

P: Yes, on campus.

L: Did you share a room or anything?

P: He was in a special dormitory for football players.

L: Did you play football?

P: Yes, I did a little bit.

L: Did you play for Niles McKinley High School?

P: Yes, I had an injury and played for Niles, a neck injury.

L: Did that cut short your high school playing?

P: Yes, but then I still went out and kicked extra points for South Carolina.

L: Did you get any type of help from the university, scholarships, financial aid?

P: No, I paid my way.

L: Did you work while you went to school?

P: Yes, in a clothing store in Columbia.

L: What type of help did you get from your mom and dad while you were going to college?

P: Financially?

L: Yes.

P: Not too much. She would send us goodies and so forth.

L: Any of your favorite recipes?

P: She would send us provolone, pepperoni, foods that would not spoil.

L: She probably sent them by mail.

P: Yes.

L: Were your mom and dad able to come and visit you in South Carolina or were you able to come home?

P: No, my mother visited South Carolina when my brother Tony got married. There were four of us that went to South Carolina. There was one named Tony. He got married, so she went down to Atlanta, Georgia. My other brother Joe who passed away, he had a

business. It was more of a restaurant business. Collegiate Inn we called it, right on the campus.

L: Did he start that before he graduated?

P: After he graduated.

L: Did he cook Italian food?

P: They cooked in the South what they called grits. They did not use too much spaghetti sauce.

L: You told me that your mom prepared her own dressing of livestock chickens or rabbits. When she cooked meals, did she cook traditional Italian recipes?

P: This is all the Bagnoli people, they all use the same recipes, a menu for the week.

L: Did she do her shopping weekly?

P: Say we start the week on a Monday. Monday's we would call and make nice good Italian soup. We would use Beef Bone or a chicken. She wanted to make sure that everyone's digestive system is functioning real good. Most kids will get headaches because of constipation and so forth. She took care of that.

L: She wanted to clean out their systems.

P: Right, with a lot of vegetables coming out of a garden. That was another thing she had.

L: I am just curious a little bit about this weekly menu. Did she cook a soup every Monday then?

P: Yes, it would generally be Monday.

L: Did she have a specific type of dish she would have Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday?

P: Tuesday, we would mix in a little bit of pizza. We always made pizza in the outdoor oven. More likely around Monday would also be laundry day.

L: What might she have on Wednesday?

P: Wednesday would be Pasta Fagolia, potatoes and beans with a little meat in it.

- L: The rest of the week do you remember?
- P: Thursday, that is a special day.
- L: Why?
- P: They all had their spaghetti with meatballs, ravioli.
- L: What happened on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday then?
- P: Friday would be pizza day, or fish.
- L: Saturday?
- P: Saturday would be something like Wednesday.
- L: Would Sunday be a special meal?
- P: Sunday would be another Thursday.
- L: Do you know why she had a weekly menu?
- P: Well, she did not have it in writing. She could vary it a little bit. The vegetable garden played a very important part. All your vegetables. You have got your greens, cabbage, broccoli. Pizza with greens, that was terrific.
- L: What else might she grow in there?
- P: She raised her own celery, carrots, and potatoes. Tomatoes was number one.
- L: What type of tomatoes do you remember?
- P: She always made round tomatoes so she could peel them for canning, Marglobe Tomatoes. That is one of the best tomatoes.
- L: She used that for her sauce?
- P: She would peel them and can them on an open kettle. She would can about 2,000 quarts a year. All kinds of tomatoes and peppers.
- L: Did you have a fruit cellar?
- P: A fruit cellar and wine cellar.

- L: Did you have wine with every meal?
- P: Just about.
- L: What type of wine that she might make.
- P: They make the Mucatel Wine. Mostly it was Zinfandel. That is a port wine from California.
- L: Did your family grow the grapes?
- P: No, they came from California.
- L: Did you have any of your own fruit trees?
- P: We had a Black Cherry, a Pear tree, and Italian prunes. We also had grape vines. It was something like Ohio grapes. It did not have a high sugar content. You could not make a real good wine out of it. Sometimes we tried.
- L: Would you mostly just eat those grapes or make jelly?
- P: We would just eat them.
- L: What type of things would your mom do when she canned the fruit?
- P: She would can apples and peaches open kettle. She would never use a cold pak.
- L: When she would be canning the tomatoes, or cabbage, or anything like that, did she have you and your brothers and sister help her or did she do it by herself?
- P: Yes, you have got to have help. When you start canning in the neighborhood of six to eight bushels of tomatoes and peel tomatoes and puree, you have got to have help.
- L: How many days did you think it would take her?
- P: She made another thing, too. She made what they call a paste. She would dry this on a platter in the sun for so long. You did not can this. She would just leave it out in the open. She would put the bay leaves on top and air dry it. It only takes a teaspoon. You just lay it in the frying pan and dissolve it. It made a rich sauce.
- L: When she had that platter out there and it was dried, did she store it in anything or it just stayed in the platter?

- P: She put it in a little crock. Then she put olive oil on top.
- L: And the bay leaves on top?
- P: Yes, to preserve it. Then when you add a little bit of water to that it made a sauce. You cooked your peeled tomatoes. After they cooked, you would cook your paste first. That was a sauce. That way, say you put a quart of peeled tomatoes, a quart of puree, and some of that paste with the Brazoli and the meatballs. You let that thing puree right in. The best spaghetti sauce in the world. You lay it on top of that and make it on the top, too. Did you ever hear of a polenta?
- L: No, what is that?
- P: That is a corn meal. You lay that on a platter with your sauce and all that. You put the rich spaghetti sauce on the top and a mound of cheese over the top of that. She used a lot of cheese.
- L: Was that her favorite?
- P: Yes.
- L: What about Parmesan?
- P: At that time, they did not have that.
- L: Mostly Romano then?
- P: You would get a big chunk like that. You have got to have all that for a family of twelve. We had a big round table downstairs in the basement. We had our kitchen and dining room in the basement.
- L: Was that typical?
- P: The kitchen, too, was in the basement.
- L: Was that normal or how most houses were set up?
- P: That is the way this house was built, European style. The homestead I call it, 235 Langly Street.
- L: Your mom and dad picked that European style because it was what they were familiar with?

P: Yes, they never lived in a ranch type house. They never lived in a modern home.

L: Where were the bedrooms?

P: There were two bedrooms on the second floor on the top side. One was a big room. That was where all the boys stayed. The six boys slept in that room.

L: How many beds did you have?

P: We had two big double beds and two single beds that fit in that room.

L: Did you have any room for dressers.

P: The closest closet they had back then was just made for one suit or one dress. You have to see the old time homes built in 1914. I had a beautiful one I sold up here on South Street. That was the one my parents bought, but they never lived in it. She bought it for the kids. They invested for their kids. The oldest son lived in it first.

L: So they bought a house so as you got ready to move out you had a home to move in to.

P: Yes.

L: Did you ever live in that house?

P: No, I never lived in it, but I was the owner. I had to take it off their hands. Being a bachelor, I am a little better to be able to afford and invest in real estate.

L: Did you do a lot of investing in real estate?

P: Yes, I had bachelor's home for 30 years, Home for the Homeless. I still have some of the beds that I saved from the fellows that lived there. Old furniture, I had a sign in front of my house, The House of Antiques.

L: Where did your sisters sleep?

P: They slept in the other room on the second floor.

L: There were four of them, right?

P: That was a smaller room. They had two beds in that room.

L: Two double beds?

P: Yes.

L: Where did your mom and dad sleep?

P: The slept downstairs in the front room. The front room was supposed to be a living room. They made that the bedroom.

L: Did you have a formal dining room like what they used to call a sitting room?

P: We had a living room. They made what was supposed to be the kitchen the living room. The kitchen was down the basement.

L: If you remember, were there any friends that followed your dad from Italy to Niles? Did he encourage anybody else to come here?

P: I had an uncle that came over on my mothers side.

L: Anybody else?

P: Then my dad had a nephew. His nephew was named Pallante. He is up around New Jersey.

L: Are those the only relatives on your mothers and fathers side that you can think of that came?

P: That is right.

L: Did your uncle have a wife? Did he bring a wife over?

P: Yes, he was married, both of them, the nephew and the young one.

L: Did your mom help the wives adjust in any way? Do you remember?

P: They visited and accommodated them over here.

L: I do not know if you can remember this or not. When the uncle or nephew came did they temporarily live with you?

P: They stayed there with my parents.

L: Then moved out later when they had money?



- P: They came, but then they went back. They did not come to stay permanently. Only the one in New Jersey stayed permanently.
- L: Did anybody else from Italy ever come over to visit your mom and your dad, or your family?
- P: They would have always friends, people they knew. Other people like that from Bagnoli. They would have their relatives come over. When they hear about that they would get to see one of them.
- L: Were you present when any of your other brothers and sisters were born, the ones that came after you?
- P: Yes, I was there.
- L: Did your mother have them midcase?
- P: Yes, she had them midcase. I would say all her children. She never had a child in the hospital. The doctor came over, you know how he carries his little suit case. The doctor comes in with a suit case.
- L: A little medical bag, yes.
- P: We see that and they would tell us, "The doctor delivered the baby in the suitcase. That was the way the baby was born.
- L: Did you believe that?
- P: Well, we did not know.
- L: Did the midwife help your mother during pregnancy, but the doctor actually delivered the baby?
- P: The doctor would visit in case there were complications.
- L: Do you know if your mom had any complications? Did she ever talk about any difficult births?
- P: Well, she did not give you too much information on the ones that she had. She had twins and all that prior to the ones that lived. She did not give you too much information about that. She did say that she had nine other children that she lost. The only one that I had to go to a funeral was my little sister. She got pneumonia and died. My other brother had Multiple Scirosis. I did not go to his funeral. At that time, I had my dad in a nursing

home. I was like a male nurse. Five years, I would take him, pick him right out of the bed, put him in the wheel chair, take him to the restroom, feed him, and take him outside. I would give him a chance to get outside and get fresh air.

L: The family helped you out?

P: Yes, we had team work, my brothers, my two sisters. That meant a lot to him.

L: Since your mom was elderly, too, was she able to do anything to help you in taking care of your dad?

P: Well, I was right close to him then so I helped. I would go over and check on him all the time. Anything he needed. That mean a lot to him.

L: How old was your mother when she could not keep gardening?

P: She kept even when they were not able. They had a boxed seat on the back porch to see what was going on in the garden. Do you know what I mean, a box seat? They would tell me what to do.

L: Did you do it?

P: Yes.

L: Did you do things right?

P: They know I did it right. Right at the present time, I have succeeded in my garden. I never get knocked out.

L: Did your mom teach you everything she knew about gardening?

P: I went beyond that, a vegetable garden book.

L: Was the gardening mainly your moms job or did your dad help with her?

P: They both worked. My dad did the hard work, turned the ground. Everything was done by hand. There was no power tools like a tractor. All their plowing, all their cultivating was done by hand.

L: Did your family ever own a car?

P: Never had a car.

L: Did your mom walk to Mount Carmel to the church?

P: Yes.

L: Did they ever drive with anybody? Did they have friends that had cars?

P: My sisters got to the point where they were able to drive a car, all but one. Mary Ann cannot drive. She depends on her daughter.

L: She never chose to learn how to drive?

P: No, I mean her husband right now drives. She was always pretty close with her daughter.

L: We talked a little bit about the pay check and your dad handing it over. I noticed when I was reading through some of the payrolls that there were times where a sister or wife might come and pick up a payroll check. Is there anything you can tell me about that? Under what circumstances would that happen?

P: That was true.

L: They would know over in the payroll that a sister would pick it up?

P: Yes, more likely my sisters would go down when my dad was working a double turn. He worked triple turns, 36 hours.

L: Straight?

P: Yes.

L: He did not sleep?

P: Once he got the kiln, cleaned and fired. You have what you call a couple hours break.

L: He would sleep during break?

P: He would lay down and take a rest.

L: So let me see if I understand this. A sister or wife would go down and pick up a pay check if the father could not bring it home.

P: Yes.

L: Your mother would never just go down to pick it up?

- P: I do not think my mother would go down to pick it up because she could not write. If you had to sign something that would verify that you picked up the check you have to sign who picked it up. That would be the proper procedure.
- L: When she had to sign some type of a document, maybe for one of the kids to go into military service. How would she sign her name? Could she write her name?
- P: A lot of times she would just use the "X".
- L: Did any of your brothers ever go into the service?
- P: Yes, five went to the service.
- L: How did your parents feel about that?
- P: Well, they were glad to see you in a uniform.
- L: Did anyone serve in a war?
- P: Yes, I had the one in the Marine Corps, Iwo Gima. Tony was an officer in the Navy. He was training in South Carolina, R.O.T.C. He was an outstanding student. He had a perfect score on navigation. He could do whatever duty he wanted to, so he picked air craft. He is the most intelligent member of the family.
- L: You told me there were three or four of you at South Carolina.
- P: Four at South Carolina and one at Arizona State.
- L: Did all of you get a college education?
- P: Five of us got our degrees.
- L: Your parents were supportive of that?
- P: Yes.
- L: Did they urge you to go to college?
- P: Yes.
- L: Did they expect you to?

- P: No, one thing about my parents, they never pushed us. We did it on our own.
- L: Were very proud of you.
- P: Yes. My brother Tony got a college scholarship through the Navy. My brother Joe got a scholarship for his football ability.
- L: You worked.
- P: Yes, I worked and paid my own way through. It was tuff. You have to learn how to manage money selling newspapers.
- L: Did the girls work?
- P: One girl worked, Mary Ann. She worked at the Niles Steel Products. That is located in the Russia Field of Niles.
- L: What did she do there?
- P: She worked on the presses. There was quite a few women working there. I did not get to know the Press Department. I was over on the other side with the metals. The only one that I knew was the superintendent, Evor Williams. He was from Mineral Ridge, somewhere in that area.
- L: What did your other sisters do as they got older? Did they help around the house?
- P: Wait a minute. I take that back. I had another sister that worked in the Niles Tin Plate Mill. Concetta we called her. Do you know what she is doing now? Her husband passed away sometime ago. I never thought she would be able to do a thing like she is doing. She is a director of plays sponsored by the senior citizen center. The last one she had was Travelling U.S.A. She got 86 people to take part in the plays. She writes her own script.
- L: Do any of your sisters remind you of your mother?
- P: Mary Ann.
- L: In what way?
- P: Heavy.
- L: Do you cook a lot of things your mom made?
- P: Everything.

- L: Do you make the sauces and things she used to make?
- P: If you see that front room you will find out. I got cases of what I canned this year. I got pureed, 1990, 1991.
- L: Do you make concentrated sauce also?
- P: I do not go to that extent because of that fact that I buy the little cans. I want to make it real heavy.
- L: It is a lot of work.
- P: I use a two quart system. One peeled tomatoes and one pureed. I have the basil. I use basil when I can tomatoes.
- L: Can you describe that process of how your mom did the laundry.
- P: She had a Maytag washer. She had two rinse tubs right on the side. When the cloths were done she would take them to the ringer and then put it in the one rinse tub. Then she would have it where she passed it to the ringer again and then into another rinse tub.
- L: Do you know why she had to rinse it so much?
- P: She used quite a bit of soap, Octagon soap.
- L: Something you bought at a store?
- P: Yes, and Clorox.
- L: She did laundry every Monday?
- P: Yes.
- L: Was there any such things as woman's work and mens work, things that just women did and things that just men did?
- P: Yes, women did all the work in the house. Cleaning and cooking, not as much, but the men did all the outside work.
- L: Is there anything a man might do in the house to help out?
- P: Things like repair leaky faucets. That is home maintenance. I did all the home

maintenance.

L: Would your father ever help with dishes, change a dirty diaper, or anything like that?

P: Yes, I saw my dad help washing the dishes when the family was gone. When the family was there the girls would do it. They knew what they had to do.

L: Did you ever have to do any type of women's work, like wash dishes or anything like that?

P: I did not mind doing that. I even took the wet clothes outside to dry. I took them hung them on a line. We did not have a dryer. When the bad weather came outside, you could not hang clothes. You had to hang them down the cellar.

L: Did it take longer to dry that way?

P: No, because we had a coal furnace.

L: Who lit the furnace?

P: My mother lit the furnace.

L: Would she be the first one up in the morning?

P: Yes. She had to light the furnace. She had to go out and light the outdoor oven.

L: The outside oven?

P: Yes.

L: Did you have an oven inside?

P: We had stoves.

L: Like a wood burning stove or gas?

P: At first it was a coal stove. She could do baking, too.

L: Did your mom ever do any type of work that earned money? Did she do sewing or take in boarders, maybe bake?

P: The only thing my mother ever sold was braided garlic. There is a difference, the male and the female garlic. The male garlic had a stem that comes up. The only thing you

could do with them is bundle them. Now the female garlic is the one you could braid. She used to have 21 heads on a braid back then.

L: Was that a good amount?

P: Yes, that is the most I have ever seen, compared to my eleven.

L: Does that mean she was better at braiding?

P: No, demand is much greater now with eleven heads of garlic on a braid instead of 21.

L: So in order to sell she had to give people 21.

P: Yes, back then they did more home cooking.

L: Yes, they did do more home cooking. Do you know what she got for a braid of garlic?

P: A braid of garlic back then, she was getting 75 cents.

L: Who might buy it?

P: Most of the people that did cooking at home. It didn't have to be just Italians. It could be anybody.

L: So she might not just sell it to Italian neighbors and friends, but other ethnic groups then?

P: Yes. She gave some as gifts to people she knew. A lot of that too goes with reciprocating. "You do me a favor, I will do you a favor." This fellow hung a sign up here. This one fellow says, "Mike, do you know where I could get some good home-made wine?" I say, "I know where you could get it. Do not worry Gene, I will see that you can get it."

L: Is that good home-made wine from your cellar? Did you make some?

P: No, we have some here at the club.

L: Is Reciprocating something that you learned from your mom and dad? Did they practice that?

P: I got people that came down there and brought me a lot of goodies. They would give some to me because I am so generous and gave them fresh vegetables from the garden. I received these pound cakes, zucchini cake and zucchini bread. As a matter of fact, the last two years I broke the record in the garden on zucchini's. The last year I had 400, nice



small ones like that. This year I had 500.

L: Does your garden take up a lot of time?

P: It takes time if you want to do it right.

L: How did your mom find time? Laundry sounds like it took her the better part of the day. Then she cooked soup. How did she find time to do a lot of the work that she did? Did she have a schedule?

P: She had her spare time. She was either knitting, making sweaters.

L: Crocheting?

P: Yes, crocheting and making sweaters, too.

L: What else might she do in her spare time?

P: Sewing, she had a little sewing machine with a peddle. She gave it to her best friend. I wish I could have gotten it.

L: What type of things do you have that were your mom and dads?

P: She baked nice cookies around the holidays, Christmas. They had this one called a pitzel. She made the big dough, more of an egg bread. We baked that in the oven, outdoor oven. We always winded up with about ten or twelve pizzas to start off with. You put the pizzas in first so you get them out faster. We would have that for dinner.

L: How many pizzas would she have to bake to feed a family of ten?

P: Twelve of them would be the average to take care of the member in the family for dinner. We had maybe some left over. Two or three days they're gone. Then she made dehydrated bread, too.

L: What is that?

P: It is rectangular.

L: Is it like a cracker or dry bread?

P: It is baked liked a cracker. It would be hard. If you ran out of bread you cut that down and put a little water on it to soften it up.

L: So it would be like a very crisp bread?

P: Yes.

L: Did she have to mix the dehydrated bread up differently or cook it up differently?

P: No, she would make that at the end. She got all her loaves made. First the pizza comes in, then the baked bread goes in. The last would be the dehydrated bread.

L: When the oven is the hottest?

P: The last would be the coolest. Then you let it stay overnight. The next day she takes them out and they are already nice. The oven would require one railroad tie. Back then we would get the defective ties from the railroad. They did not have any creosol on them back then. We would take them and cut them in three pieces, then split it in about four or five more pieces. Then you would have them made and ready to put in the oven.

L: So she would build it like a triangle?

P: Yes.

L: How would she know what time it would be at an appropriate temperature to first bake the pizza?

P: She knew what time to go out and light the oven, early in the morning. That fire lasted maybe a couple hours. She would be getting the bread ready in the basement. Then she would go out there and check it and clean the oven. She would take the hot ashes out with a rake that she had. She had a big mop. She would run the test on how hot it was. She would throw corn meal in it. If it burned too fast it was too hot. She would go in there and wet it down again with the water and the mop and cool it down again. She might do it three, four, or five times until she got the right temperature.

L: She kept testing it with the corn meal.

P: She put the pizzas in first which she does. She would get them out within a half hour.

L: Did she put all ten in?

P: All twelve at one time.

L: Did she have to circulate them or move them around?

P: She put the pizzas on that pan.

L: Did she have like a big wooden paddle?

P: Yes.

L: Did she have to rotate them as they cooked? Would one side of the oven cook faster?

P: No.

L: So when the pizzas were done was it ready for the bread?

P: Yes.

L: Did she have to test the temperature with the corn meal again?

P: No, it was okay once the pizzas [were out].

L: Did she have to test it to see if it was too cool for the dehydrated bread?

P: No, it would not cool down that much. It was made out of fire brick.

L: Was it made out of Niles Fire Brick?

P: No, just fire brick. The base of it alone, I would say, was one and a half inches, twelve by twelve inches. Then the walls inside was all fire brick.

L: Did your mom and dad buy the fire brick?

P: We get them down at the brick yard.

L: The company would just give it to you?

P: Yes.

L: Are these open ovens used back in Italy?

P: Yes.

L: This is traditional baking?

P: They still use them up there in those European countries.

L: I did not realize that was traditional baking. Do you know if there is any existing outside

ovens in Niles, now?

P: No, I do not know now, but there is one in Youngstown. The judge is retired, Judge Joseph Donofrio. Did you ever hear of him?

L: Yes.

P: He has one at his home. As a matter of fact, Grace and Tom Allison visited and took a picture of it. I found out that Judge Donofrio had this outdoor oven through a friend of mine. She said he made it all out of stone

L: Fire brick would keep the heat in better, wouldn't it?

P: Yes.

L: The temperature is more constant.

P: These are good stones. They are the same things as clay brick.

L: Do you think the Niles Fire Brick was superior, though?

P: Yes.

L: It would be special blended to hold the heat for the steel mills.

P: You have to see these bricks I have got. I will see if you could get one of them, at least one or two.

L: What else might your mom bake in the outdoor oven, bread, pizza, dehydrated bread? Would anything else go in there?

P: She would smoke her sausage. Home-made sausage she would smoke them in front of the oven. She had them hanging up. She would build a fire down at the bottom outside the oven. That is in the front. Then she closed the door and got the smoke. Most of the people that smoke there pork and all that use a special wood, like cherry.

L: Did she use a special wood?

P: I think she used the cherry.

L: Did that give it a different flavor?

P: Yes. Have you ever bought smoked sausage?

- L: No.
- P: Well, you ought to try some of this that they have on the market. Then there is also another one that has their hams smoked.
- L: The outdoor oven, is it in a separate building? You said about shutting the doors.
- P: The outdoor oven had a shed over it.
- L: There is a shed built over the top?
- P: All out of old wood. You could make it out of whatever you want to make it out of. We used to get all our scrap wood out of box cars.
- L: On the railroads?
- P: Yes, it was all oak.
- L: Did they just give you this?
- P: We cleaned the cars out.
- L: So you kind of like exchanged work for this scrap wood. Was the outdoor oven built when your home was built or was it added later?
- P: It was added later.
- L: Did your parents ever say whether or not they could save any money although they were raising ten children?
- P: They saved money because they invested in another home up there on 925 South Street. Back then they paid for it. It does not sound like too much, but you figure they paid \$6,000.00. That was a lot of money. It was a brick home. It is the homestead right now.

End of Interview