

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Italian Immigration

Personal Experiences

O. H. 1174

ANTHONY PANZA

Interviewed

by

Frank Mancini

on

October 12, 1988

## ANTHONY PANZA

Mr. Panza was born in Introdaqua, Italy in the centerportion of the country. Mr. Panza came to America at the age of sixteen. He received the idea of coming to America from his father who had made several trips to make money before returning to Italy. His father had worked at a quarry in Lowellville and at Sheet and Tube. Mr. Panza had attended four grades of school in Italy. If he had wished to continue school, he would have had to find transportation to a larger city that offered continuing education. Since there was no industry in Italy in which he could work, he left to find work in America. Mr. Panza also cited the attraction of having spending money as he had noticed in so many people that had adventured to America and returned to Italy. Mr. Panza had originally intended to make some money in America and return to Italy. He changed his mind while working in America.

Mr. Panza arrived in America on December 4, 1920. He did not go through any immigration center. He arrived off the train in Youngstown and told the Italian taxi driver to take him to his uncles house. His uncle did not have room for him to stay permanently at his house. Mr. Panza then went looking for a job. Mr. Panza found a job, although the manager of the railroad tracks along Southern Boulevard in Boardman was hesitant about hiring him because of his age. He needed a job desperately and told his Italian boss this upon receiving the job. At first, Mr. Panza would spend only enough money to survive. He made \$.40 an hour

and paid \$4.00 a month to live in a boarding house. The lady that rented him the room also washed his clothes and ironed them. Mr. Panza went looking for a new job and found one at General Fireproofing. He would work there until he retired.

Mr. Panza felt that learning the American language would be the key to settling in the United States. He learned English in night school at the Christ Mission Settlement on Boardman Street. He met other immigrants there. Mr. Panza felt he learned to communicate English in six months. He was hurt when he did not understand Americans talking English. He constantly wondered if people were talking about him. He carried a pocket dictionary with him everywhere he went. Mr. Panza also forced himself to learn English by staying away from Italians. He knew he would rely on Italians to talk with other Italian immigrants. He tried to mingle and talk with Americans as much as possible.

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YSU Italian Immigration

INTERVIEWEE: ANTHONY PANZA

INTERVIEWER: Frank Mancini

SUBJECT: language, work, immigration

DATE: October 12, 1988

M: This is an interview with Anthony Panza for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Italian Immigration, by Frank Mancini, at 64 Stanton, on October 12, 1988, at 5:00 p.m.

Okay, where are you from in Italy?

P: Abruzzi, that is like the county, but the name of the village is Introdacqua. Do you want me to write it down?

M: Okay. I-N-T-R-O-D-A-C-Q-U-A is that in the north or the south?

P: That is the central part of Italy.

M: Center part. Is it by the water?

P: Yes, by the water and mines.

M: How old were you when you came to America?

P: Sixteen years old.

M: What do you remember about your family in Italy, how they made a living, what did your parents do?

P: Well, my father made several trips over here, but then back there they had a piece of land here, a piece of

land there and that is what they did here, they cultivated the land.

M: They were farmers?

P: Not exactly farmers, but they had a little piece here and a little piece there. My father made quite a few trips to this country.

M: Why did he come here?

P: He came here for money.

M: For money.

P: That is why I came here too.

M: Did he work here?

P: Yes, he worked here.

M: Then he came back to Italy?

P: He came home again, then I got the idea of coming over here myself.

M: I see. When your father came over where did he work at?

P: Republic Steel, Sheet & Tube, then he also worked at a quarry in Lowellville.

M: Did you go to school in Italy?

P: Yes.

M: In Italy?

P: Four grades that is all. That is all that we had at the time.

M: Four grades and that was it and you were done?

P: Then I was finished.

M: Do you remember what it was like to go to school in Italy?

P: Yes I remember. I remember we used to go in the morning to school, especially our second school teacher he was a son of a gun.

M: Oh yes.

P: If we didn't know our lesson he had a stick this long, he made you put your hand like that and if you didn't

know the lesson the way you are supposed to know, he would smack you two or three times.

M: On the hand?

P: Oh yes. He used to beat the hell out of you .

M: Oh yes?

P: I was afraid of that guy.

M: Oh really?

P: You would learn from him because of fear, if you didn't know it he was going to beat you.

M: Yes. It was okay and nobody would say anything like today?

P: I would go home and I would tell my mother that my teacher smacked me today, she would say that I must have done something wrong, or maybe you didn't know your lesson that is why he smacked you.

M: You had the same teacher the whole time?

P: No.

M: New teachers?

P: We had one for first, second, third, and fourth grade. Then we finished and that was it we didn't know what to do over there because there was no school. We could have gone to a higher school but I had to go to another city.

M: Oh, another city yes.

P: I didn't know where I would get the money for transportation.

M: Right.

P: Room, rent, and all that was hardly possible. Then I got an idea in my head, I said what kind of future is over here for me? There was no industry no nothing in our little village. I remember that people used to come home from here, they were dressed better, I used to see them spend money more freely than I would, because I never had any money. So I got it in my head to come over here. Then that is how I did it I went and applied for a passport, and then I came over here.

M: Do you remember any kinds of games that you played as a young boy in Italy?

P: Hide and seek. We didn't have things like a baseball or anything. Maybe now they have it but then, maybe the kids run around but that is all.

M: Did you work at all in Italy when you were young?

P: Well, I did some work on the land. Sometimes I went there and did what I liked to do and I did it, but I was never employed anywhere because we were too young,

M: So, then you left to really find money in America, you came over because there were lots of people coming back and they had lots of money.

P: Yes.

M: When you first left Italy did you plan on staying in America?

P: My idea was to come over here at first, and make enough money then go back home. Once I got here and I saw here what the difference was I didn't want to go back. Although I did go back four different times.

M: Four times?

P: After I was married.

M: Did you get married in America?

P: Oh yes. Right here in Youngstown.

M: In Youngstown, did you have friends or relatives that came over?

P: I had an uncle that lived on the East side, but he didn't care. I will tell you how I got a job at sixteen. I got a job on this railroad track over here.

M: Oh yes, right here on Southern Boulevard?

P: Yes. How I got that job, the lady that I was rooming from, she said to me, "You are only sixteen years old (it was the 1920's), and there are people over here that can't get jobs. How are you going to get a job?" I said, "I don't know." She said, "I will tell you what I will do for you." I said "What?" She said, "The guy next door he works for Youngstown Southern. I am going to talk to him tonight, to see if he can talk to the foreman and see if he can hire you." I said, "Do that yes, because I want to go to work?" She did, she asked the guy, so the next evening the guy came home and he said "Yes, the foreman said for you to come out." When I went there I will tell you that when he

saw me he told that man, "I thought that you were going to bring in a man, but you brought a boy over here." It happened that the boss was Italian, so I could understand him. His name was Steve and I said, "Steve, I need a job desperately I have no money, I have nobody here, I don't know what to do. What am I going to do if I don't get a job somewhere?" I said, "You see these guys that you have over here." He said, "Yes." I said, "You hire me and if I can't work as good as them then you can always fire me." He said, "Okay." So I went over there and I worked three months. The wage was only \$.40 an hour. In other words I made \$16 a week. Sometimes I made more because I worked overtime, maybe there was a break some place and would work two, three hours overtime maybe a little bit more, but any how I worked two, three months and I wouldn't spend any money unless it was absolutely necessary. Just the bare things to live, and I couldn't buy anything. While I worked two, three months and I saved some money, because I had this fear that if I don't work what am I going to do? So, finally he said one afternoon he said, "I am sorry but I have orders to lay off two men so I have to lay you off." I said, "Hey if you have to lay me off well then lay me off." So, he laid me off, and I looked for about four or five weeks then one day the old man didn't live to far from where I lived, and I saw him coming over to my place where I lived. He said to me, "Are you working anywhere?" I said "No." He said, "Do you want to come back?" I said, "Sure." I went back and I worked a couple of weeks then he said to me you know, "This job is not a good job for a young boy like you." I said, "Where am I going to get another job there is no job anywhere?" He said, "Things are starting to pick up, you go look some place else, if you find all right, if not you don't come back." I said "All right then tomorrow I won't come." So I went to General FireProofing and it must have been one hundred people there, but for some reason that guy picked me. He pointed to me and said, "Come on in, what do you want?" I said, "I want a job." He said, "What can you do?" I said, "Nothing that you do over here because I have no experience." He said, "You are the boy that I am looking for." I said, "Fine." So he made me sign papers you know and said, "You go and see the doctor." So I went to see the doctor and everything else. So, this guard he took me where I was suppose to go to work, he took me there and I found two girls there and the foreman said, "You work with these two girls over here." I said, "What am I going to do with these girls?" He said, "You see all these things over here (all the trimming that went on the desks and the filing cabinet and all that), you wipe them off and hang them on a rack then the conveyer will pick them up and take them in the tank where there is a.... You put a quarter of lacquer, and it keeps from getting tar-



nished. I said, "Okay fine, this is an easy job." So, I did that for four, five, six months then I said one day to the foreman, "You know I don't like to work all the time with these girls. I would like to go someplace where they make more money." They didn't make too much money over there. He said, "You stay here until there is an opening, as soon as there is an opening I will get you another job." I said, "Okay fine." Another two, three more weeks and he came over and he said, "There is an opening there do you want the job?" I said, "Yes." Making fifteen cents an hour more, that was a lot of money back in those days. So I took that job and I stayed there, I worked at GF for forty-seven years.

M: Forty-seven years?

P: Forty-seven years. You know in those days you didn't earn much money, but in those days I used to buy suits at Richmonds, a suit with two pairs of trousers for \$18.50.

M: Wow.

P: You could buy shoes for three dollars in those days. \$1.50, &1.75, \$2.00 that is how it was. You didn't make much but you didn't pay much for everything either, you could buy steaks in those days for 20 cents a pound. It wasn't easy in those days.

M: Yes. Did you have a place to stay when you first came over?

P: Well, I went to my uncle and aunt over on the East side and I said to him, "Where am I suppose to stay?" He said, "Well don't have any room for you, but there is a lady up there and she takes borders go talk to her." I asked her, "Do you have a room for me?" She said "Yes." I said, "How much?" She said, "Four dollars a month." I said, "Okay."

M: Four dollars, wow.

P: She used to wash my clothes for four dollars a month

M: Plus wash your clothes?

P: Yes, and iron my shirts and everything for four dollars a month.

M: Where there other immigrants that stayed there?

P: I stayed there for a good while, then something happened to her and she said, "I am sorry but I am going to have to let you go, because I don't feel good and I can't do the work that I should do you better go some

place else." So I went to another place and I stayed with her for awhile and then I married her and that was it.

M: Wow, and then when you first came over did you have to go through any immigration centers?

P: No.

M: No where?

P: When I came here I came here to learn English. They used to have a school downtown on Boardman Street. It was called The Christian Mission Settlement. I used to go there in the evening for classes. I went over there for a couple of years, but after I was here for six months I could speak English as well as anybody else that was here.

M: Six months, wow.

P: I used to carry a little dictionary with me, it was a tiny one with Italian and English, and if I heard a word that I couldn't understand I would look in the dictionary to find out what it was. I had no problem with the English language, no problem at all I learned right away. In fact my teacher down there was surprised she said, "How did you pick up English so fast?" Well I said, "I wanted to know what the people were saying, they could be talking about me and I wouldn't know about it, I want to know what the hell they are talking about."

M: Yes. Those first couple weeks or so when you came over and you were a little bit scared because you didn't have a job?

P: Sure I was afraid, not scared, afraid because if I didn't have a job how was I suppose to eat? There were no such things like where the poor people go...

M: Welfare?

P: Welfare. There was no such thing as welfare in those days. If you didn't have money in those days it was your tough luck, but I thank the good Lord that I didn't have to go anywhere I always managed myself.

M: Did you ever think about going back?

P: I'd go back, but not to stay. I wanted to go back to see the family, and see how it is. I did go back four different times.

M: Four times.

P: Yes, and I like it. The country is beautiful when I was there as a young boy, it is all together different. At that time there was nothing there.

M: Did you hear any stories when you were in Italy and have any aspirations of making it rich with all these American dream stories that were happening where people were going from "Rags to Riches", did you have that impression or did you just want a good job?

P: I just wanted a job that made a good living, before I came over when I was a small boy we hardly had anything over there. There was no such thing when you got up for breakfast you get cereal, you get this and that, nothing. If food was left over from the night before you heat it up and eat it otherwise you wait until they cook something and then you ate it.

M: Were there any government officials that hassled you at all because you were... did you have to fill out any forms?

P: After I became of age that I was suppose to serve the country over there for the military, they sent me papers over here. I ignored it because I was over here in another country, so I ignored it and didn't even bother to go and see the counsel in Cleveland. They told me in the papers to go and see the counsel in Cleveland, but I didn't go, I didn't do anything.

M: These papers came from Italy?

P: Yes, these papers came from Italy. I don't even know how the hell they got my address, because I went to my mother and said, "Did you give my address?" and she said, "No." I said, "How the heck did they get my address?" Any how I got those papers that told me that I was suppose to report to the counsel in Cleveland. I never went anywhere.

M: What year was that?

P: 1926.

M: What year did you come over?

P: 1920

M: 1920.

P: I got here and arrived in Youngstown on December 4, 1920 just before Christmas. It was funny when I got off of the train, the B & O by and Mahoning Avenue. I went down the stairs and said, "What the hell?" I saw noth-

ing outside but the taxi there. I said to the taxi man "Take me and show me the address because I have never been in here and I didn't know one word of English" . I showed him the address that I had and he said, "Okay, get in." On the way over he started to talk to me in Italian. He said, "Where do you come from?" I told him that I came from so and so place. Fruit that my uncle is with, so he took me over there and I asked him how much do I owe you and he said, "One dollar." so I gave him one dollar and that was it. Lucky he was Italian, I didn't know anything.

M: Did you mix with a lot of Italian immigrants when you first came here?

P: Did I meet them?

M: Well, did they stay around you and live around you?

P: Yes, there were quite a few around here.

M: Were there any other immigrants from other countries?

P: Oh yes, from every country, German, Italian, Rumanian, all kinds. The only nationality that I didn't see to much of here was the French people, they don't come here, I never see any French people over here. Quite a few German, Rumanian, Russian, Polish all kinds of people. They used to come to school when I went to school downtown at the Christ Mission. They used to come over there at night to and come to school.

M: Did they live around you too?

P: No, see I lived on the East side and mostly the Polish lived on the West side.

M: West side, Polish.

P: Some of the German lived on the lower North side, but mostly Italians on the East side. Scattered all over the city.

M: They sort of stayed in their little groups right?

P: Yes, amongst themselves because you know they could understand each other, they knew the language, they could talk and discuss things.

M: Did you learn any of their language?

P: No, but I didn't want to stay amongst the Italian people. It wasn't because I didn't like the Italian people, but if would mingle with these people all of the time they would keep talking to me in Italian all

of the time and I would never learn the language. I want to go places where I have to talk English.

M: Right.

P: What helped me when I got the job at GF was those girls would talk to me in English and I couldn't talk back to them in Italian, so I had to do the best I could to talk back to them in English. That is what helped me.

M: So, you wanted to sort of get away from the Italian click?

P: Not because I hated it.

M: Right.

P: I wanted to get away because I wanted to learn English, I didn't want to talk Italian everyday then I would never learn. That was the reason.

M: What ways was America different than what you expected?

P: It was a lot different in those days, because back then there was hardly anything in those days and over here more things than what we had for instance, we didn't have a bathroom over there or anything in those days, but when I came over here the house that I was living in had a bathtub and all that. The only difference that I found was that we had electricity over there and the house that I lived in here didn't have any electricity.

M: Really?

P: They had gas. Every time I would go and light the match, I would even tell the landlady what the heck is wrong with the people here, you are suppose to be ahead of us, and where I come from you had electricity and over here you don't even have electricity over here.

M: Wow.

P: She said over here we don't have electricity this is what we have, but they had telephones and everything and at that time over there we didn't have any telephones there. They have it now, but they didn't have it then.

M: Right.

P: That is the difference that I found over here. Everything over here was more advanced than there and that is why it was better than there. It is not easy when you come over and you don't know the language, you don't know anything. In fact with the way that they

taught me to write over there you could lift up the pen when you write a word and no one would say anything, but over here when I started to go to school, once in a while a teacher would smack me with a pencil on my hand and I would wonder what she did that for, and a guy said that it was because you lifted up your pen when you weren't suppose to. You were supposed to complete the word, "Oh is that" it I said. That is why she was smacking me with the pencil.

- M: How long did it take you to communicate in English pretty good?
- P: Oh, after I was here six months I could communicate with anybody.
- M: With anybody. What customs did you keep in America when you ... did you keep any Italian customs that you had? Maybe food?
- P: Mostly food. I liked Italian food that is why, but other than that nothing.
- M: Could you find the Italian food in America?
- P: Oh yes, it was easy to find. The wholesale houses on West Boardman Street that were Italians also, Marini's do you know them?
- M: No.
- P: They had a wholesale house, and I used to go down there.
- M: Did you try American foods?
- P: Oh yes, I like American foods also. Sometimes when I go to a restaurant I don't look for Italian foods.
- M: Were there any of the other ethnic foods that you tried?
- P: No. I have never eaten any Polish foods, mostly Italian or American.
- M: What kind of people did you work with, were they Americans, immigrants?
- P: There are some immigrants, but mostly people born in this country. The department where I worked I think that I was the only one that was an immigrant and a lot of guys didn't even know that I was an immigrant until I told them myself. When I told them they would say, "How come you don't have an accent?" I would say, "I don't know why I don't have an accent, I don't want an accent anyway."

M: So you learned so quick that they couldn't tell?

P: They couldn't tell until I told them myself.

M: Wow. So did you find any examples of prejudices against you because you were an immigrant?

P: No.

M: At all?

P: No.

M: So, they didn't hold anything against you because you were an immigrant and maybe taken a job of another American?

P: No. In fact the foreman that I worked for he treated me very well, I had no problem.

M: Did you ever hear of any of the other immigrants running into problems with maybe for example, the KKK when they became big?

P: All from what I read in the paper.

M: From the paper, but you didn't experience any?

P: No.

M: Were there any ways in which you missed Italy, anything that you missed in Italy?

P: I missed some of the culture in Italy, because there are some good things that I saw after I went back to the country. Things that I saw like Michelangelo, Leonardo, Bertichelli, and all of those guys what they all accomplished was almost unbelievable that they had done. I really admire those people. I went to Florence you know, and I saw all the works that they did and it is fantastic, especially the work of Leonardo the Last Supper and all that. That is really something. Then the Leaning Tower of Pisa that I saw and a lot of things. I was up in Venice too, the Grand Canal with the Gondola a lot of nice things over there.

M: Did you have any relatives or friends come over and stay with you or that wanted to come over from Italy?

P: Well, I had my brother who was here, two brothers.

M: He came after you?

P: One came before me, one came after me. I had a sister that lives in Struthers.

M: Did they come to the Youngstown area?

P: She lived in Youngstown and then moved to Struthers, but she came after I did.

M: Did you keep in contact when you came here?

P: Oh yes, I kept in contact with my people all of the time.

M: Did you write, or call?

P: I kept in contact with my mother and father back home and I had one brother that is still over there who is a retired school teacher. I call him once a month sometimes twice a month, because it doesn't cost that much. He was here at one time about eight, nine years ago.

M: He came to visit?

P: He came over here to visit me.

M: Did you fight in any of the wars?

P: Worse?

M: No, the wars?

P: Oh the wars no, I was too young.

M: Too young?

P: The first World War that broke out in 1914 and I was ten years old and the second World War I was too old. Not that I was too old, I was only thirty some years old but I had three children.

M: Right.

P: So, they told me to stay and work in the plant that makes things for the government. Well, I told them that I was working at GF making planes over there, so they told me to stay their... turn into a watercraft so I said if you don't stay their you go some place else and get a different job that is not for the wars purpose you would go to war. So I stayed their. I had three children and I didn't want to go to war.

M: Right.

P: I said who is going to take care of these kids.

M: Were you concerned at all because America was sort of fighting the Italian military?



P: It didn't bother me at all.

M: It didn't bother you at all?

P: No, because we didn't tell Italy to go to war on us along with Germany.

M: Right.

P: No, that didn't concern me one bit. I said they started it not us.

M: So you weren't afraid of anything happening in Italy?

P: No I didn't know, but they did go over to where my people lived.

M: They did?

P: Yes, but they didn't do anything to them. My mother told me after I went back that the Germans were here, but they were good they didn't mistreat us or anything. She said that they were real good to my father because he was old.

M: This is the Germans?

P: Yes, the Germans. She said that they were good to my father. They used to bring things over there because during the war they couldn't get food. You couldn't go to the store and buy the way that you had wanted because their wasn't any to be bought. So the Germans used to bring cans of meat and things like that to my father. Well, I said that was one good thing.

M: Did your parents say anything about the Americans? She said that they weren't bad either.

P: Well, there were mostly English not to many Americans.

M: So it really didn't concern you?

P: No, what could I do over here? Maybe the young people probably, if they would get funny or smart, they would smack you around. My mother and father they were old and they didn't bother them. In fact they helped them as much as they could. She said that sometimes they used to bring them some cans of meat and all that other stuff, so they weren't bad. When I went back, I was shown the buildings that were hit by the enemies.

M: Right.

P: Bombs and things like that and they had to rebuild everything with the American money.

M: Any stories that you would want to tell or talk about as far as making the transition from Italy to America, say anything from one hundred years from now if you had to tell someone what it was like?

P: Really I would like to tell them that I found America to be very good to me, because when I came over here what I did here I could have never done over here because there was no possibility to do it. Over here I found work and was employed and could do anything that I wanted to do. I could have never done it over there because there was work over there, no plans, or anything.

M: Did you get home sick at all?

P: No, I never got home sick. I came over here with the idea that I wanted to better myself, which I think that I did. I was never home sick. I went back because I wanted to see my mother and my dad because I would have probably never have gone. I wanted to see them and I went to see them twice before they passed away. Then after I retired I went a couple of more times because I wanted to spend some time there with my wife then seven years ago I went back again and she didn't want to come and I went myself. I spent six weeks over there. I went to see all of the friends that I went to school with, I went to their place and had grapes and everything else and figs and I filled myself up. Everyone was so friendly.

M: Is there anything that you couldn't get in America that you could get in Italy, everything you could find?

P: You could get anything you want over here.

M: Anything?

P: Sure, I never had any problem. You can have anything that you want if you have the money to buy it.

M: Most of the people and your friends that you have associated with in America they were mostly Americans?

P: American and a couple different nationalities. I got acquainted with them at work.

M: Right.

P: At work we became pretty good friends and then they died, but until they died we got along good. They didn't have to be Italian. If you associate with the

right people it is all right. My idea was like this all of the time. When I would associate with people when I was young and I found out that they were not the type that I wanted them to be, I walked away from them.

M: Right.

P: I didn't stick around, because I didn't want to get into any trouble. My idea was always not to get into any trouble, nothing! My father told me to stay out of trouble as long as you possibly can, because once you get into trouble it is hard to get out.

M: Right.

P: I had that in my mind all of the time. He said to me, "Help someone if you can, but don't hurt anyone because if you hurt someone it will be on your mind all of the time."

M: Were there any examples that you could think of where people helped you adapt to America?

P: Well, the people that were here for me gave me a few pointers, but then I would pick it up myself. I was more interested in everything. You know I would buy two, or three newspapers when I first came over here. At that time they were only three cents a piece. I used to buy the Vindicator, the Cleveland Plaindealer, and the Pittsburgh Post and on Sunday I used to buy the Reader's Digest or the magazine that was before the Reader's Digest. I don't think that there was a Reader's Digest when I came over here, I think that it came later. I forget what the other magazine was, anyway I used to do a lot of reading because I wanted to learn the English language. I wanted to learn how to read, write and I did. I can read and write as well as anybody else. I could read what I want to read I can do all that. I am not a smart man because I didn't go to college, but for any ordinary man like me I can get by and not have to ask anybody to come and help me or do this or that. I understand what they are talking about.

M: Right. Do you keep any of the customs with ...

P: Then they found out that people liked the Italian food and in every restaurant that you go you find Italian food.

M: Right.

P: I don't care if it is Youngstown, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, I have traveled to quite a few cities in the United States and have found Italian food anywhere. Sure California and any place. When I was there I had

no problem of getting any Italian food.

M: Right. Anything else that you want to talk about?

P: No, I think that is about all. I think that there is a difference now because of the way it was when we worked for thirty-five and forty cents an hour. When you get fifteen, sixteen, seventeen dollars an hour that is a difference you know.

M: What about the during the depression?

P: The depression was pretty tough, but I happen to be lucky. Sometimes I would get a couple days off a week, but I always managed to get a paycheck every payday. See I would get a couple days off, then go back. Our department was shut down for a couple of days, but then it would open up again the following week we would go back. I was never laid off for any length of time.

M: So you made it through there pretty good?

P: Oh yes, I did all right. I worked all of the time, then I found out when my kids grew and they wanted to go to school and you know when they grew it costs you more money because they want to dress better, they want to do this and that. I went out painting a house because what I wanted for my family I didn't think that I had enough money. So me and another fellow got together, and we bought ladders to paint the house and pretty soon people would call everyday to come and paint a house. We were busy all of the time.

M: A lot of work then?

P: After I used to come home from work at 3:00 me and the other fellow we would come home get a sandwich and go out and paint and then come home at night and then we ate. We did all of that, then I got tired of that and said that I didn't want to do that so I quit. See when you are not educated you cannot demand a high paying job. How are you going to do it, you don't have the education or experience.

M: Did you encourage that with your kids to get a college education?

P: Oh yes, but only one went to college, Joanne.

M: Joanne?

P: Yes, she is in the laboratory in Akron, Ohio. The other one is a hairdresser and my son works in California and is doing all right.

M: So, you pretty much avoided speaking Italian around your kids, so they grew up speaking American, they didn't speak any Italian?

P: No, I felt that they weren't going to go to Italy because they were over here and they were going to live here so what is the sense.

M: Right.

P: Maybe it is okay to learn the Italian language, but they didn't and I didn't press them to much.

M: Do you speak Italian at all now?

P: Oh, I could speak Italian if I wanted to.

M: Do you speak it at all?

P: Well, if I met someone, otherwise who are you going to speak with? Their is no one, even these people that came lately they don't know the English to good, but they speak English and smash it up, but they speak English also. I meet a lot of people who don't speak the best of English but they speak with me all of the time. I know they butchers language but they talk to me in English. One day I met a lady and she was looking for an insurance office over on Market Street and she was talking to me in English and I knew that she couldn't speak English and I told her why don't you talk to me in Italian I can understand you. She kept it up in English, I said okay there is the office over there on the corner of Market and Feron there is Stein house, I forget the name something like that. He has an office over there. She was looking for that office, and I said here is the office over here. I said, "Why don't you speak to me in Italian. I can understand you." She kept speaking in that broken English.

M: She wanted to learn English, like you did?

P: Yes, but she was an old lady.

M: Oh.

P: For me it was different because I was a young boy and I wanted to learn. I said if I am not going to learn, I want to go back. I wanted to learn what people were talking about that is why. That is why I would buy all of those newspapers and read all of the time.

M: What were some new things for you that you didn't have in Italy that were new in America, like maybe sports?

P: I liked sports and I used to go and watch baseball

games, football games, but I don't go anymore now. Boxing I used to enjoy all of that, but I don't go any more.

M: They didn't have that in Italy?

P: Well, they had boxing over there, but not like over here. They didn't have any baseball or football over there.

M: Did it seem funny at first the new sports?

P: Well, when you first you come over here things are different and you say what the heck is going on? Especially when you can't understand. It is rough, but then once you learn the language. . .

M: Then the language is the key?

P: Oh yes, that is the main thing. You want to learn the language so know what people are talking about, because you hear someone talking and you don't know what they are saying and it hurts. So that was the first thing that I wanted to do, learn the language.

M: So that was the only barrier and once you felt you learned English, you could become an American?

P: Sure, once I conquered that...

M: The rest could be easy.

P: I could speak with anyone.

M: Right.

P: So that is what I wanted. I have been here since 1920, sixty-eight years.

M: Sixty-eight years?

P: That is a long time.

M: Yes.

P: All of my life has been spent in the United States. I was only sixteen when I came here.

M: Do you consider yourself an Italians, or an American-Italian.

P: Well, I am still and Italian, but most of my life as spent in the United States. By birth I am Italian. I would defend the United States, because a couple of times when I went over there some of those guys talk

about stuff. I said, "In the United States we have the freedom the to tell the president to go hell, but you can't do that in Russia or any other place." We can do that in the United States because we have the freedom to do that. Some of those people there are funny, they talk about the United States and say that it is not fair, but they did a lot of good for those people after the war was over the United States came over there and rebuilt the country with billions of dollars. It is a fact and now they have everything down there. Houses just like ours, the same thing, and automobiles all over the place too. They double and triple park everything.

M: But still you think that their is a difference in the way you and I think?

P: Oh yes, I always defended the Americans, you know. I told them in a friendly conversation I told them that if they like the Russians so much to go and live with the them. If you had the opportunity to go to the United States or the Russia where would you go? They said that they would want to come to the United States. Then I said, "Well, what the hell are you doing talking about the United States for?"

M: Yes.

P: Don't talk about our country I said. They said, "Your country, what do you mean your country?" I said, that I had spent most of my life over there and that is why I could call it my country. I told them that I didn't hate Italy, but I spent most of my life in the United States, I also bettered myself in the United States; because if I had stayed here what I have now I wouldn't have over here. So I said that was the difference.

M: Right.

P: I drive an automobile, I've been driving for the last fifty years. I told them that if I would have stayed over there I would have never seen one. Where was I going to get the money to buy one? Over here I had the opportunity to and work and buy one, I have a better house, and everything. What ever I want to do I can do it. If I want to go downtown to buy a suit of clothes, I can do it.

M: Right.

P: Over here if I don't have a job, how are you going to do it? There is a difference.

M: Just one final question, let me mention that we were talking about prejudices, you can't remember any cases

of the KKK at all around this area?

P: I remember them being downtown years ago. One night I was downtown on they were parading there on Federal Street, and I saw them go up and down the street but that was it. I remember when they had KKK over here, but they never bothered me and I don't like the program that they advocated.

M: A lot of times they were against the Italian immigrants and stuff.

P: Against the Jewish, Catholics. They were against some religions that is why I didn't go for that. A person has a right to belong to whatever religion that they want to be, nobody can dictate to me what religion I want to be and I can't tell you what religion to belong to. You invade my privacy when you do that. You have no right to tell me to belong to a certain religion, because it is my business where I want to belong and the same thing with the next guy. I have no right to tell the next guy that he ought to be a Catholic. He would say who are you to tell me whether I should be Catholic or not. That is wrong.

M: What about the mafia any run ins?

P: I heard about it after I came over here. I never heard about it before.

M: Was there any over here?

P: I guess. I used to read about it in the paper that these guys used to bump off each other years ago. So that is when I heard about the mafia, because I never heard about the mafia in Italy.

M: In Italy, but when you came here they got big?

P: When I first came here and I looked in the paper, I said that mafia is an Italian word and went to look it up and then it said that it was hoodalums, you know. I never ever heard about the mafia in my time. I don't know if now that you do, but when I was a boy, I never heard about the mafia.

M: Wow. So it was more of an Italian-American thing.

P: They came here.

M: They came here and they sort of stuck together and whatever.

P: They came from Sicily or where ever they came from organization, but I never heard about the mafia when I



was a boy over there. When I came over here I saw it in the paper then I started to read and listen, and realized what it was. At first I didn't even know what the hell the mafia was.

M: You didn't even know the Italian word of what it meant?

P: No, I didn't know what it meant, mafia in those days. Then when I found out I said oh that is what it is.

M: Wow, that it is interesting.

P: That is right. It is rough when you go to a different country that you don't know anybody, the language, you don't know anything and for awhile it is tough, it is not easy, but thank God that it worked out for me. I can't complain. I never went hungry, I always had a shelter to live in, I never had to go bare foot or anything because it worked out good. I never went to bed with an empty stomach. I always had something to eat.

M: Did you in Italy at all?

P: No, we didn't have as much as we do here, but I always had something. Not that much but... I don't regret that I came over here, because I am thankful that I came over here. if I would have stayed over there, what I have today here I would never of had over there. Even though it is much better over there now than it was. There is much more industry over there now than they had in my time. Yes, that is how it is. I can't complain, I thank the good Lord that it worked out well for me.

M: Yes.

END OF INTERVIEW