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Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Piccioti

Interviewer: Mister and Missis Piccioti, first of all, let me start with this – what I would like to do is find out just where you came from in Italy, where you were born and so forth. So could you tell me where in Italy you were born?

Mr. Piccioti: I was born in a town in Atessa, Atessa, A-T-E-S-S-A province of Chieti.

Interviewer: Okay, what part of Italy is that in?

Mr. Piccioti: That's the central.

Interviewer: In the central part?

Mr. Piccioti: Central part.

Interviewer: Okay. What was the biggest city close to the town that you were born?

Mr. Piccioti: The biggest you mean?

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Piccioti: The big city from my province, the territory – as the biggest and broad [inaudible] [00:00:53] that's the territory, that town is small. Now the territory expanded [inaudible] [00:00:58].

Interviewer: [inaudible] [00:01:01]?

Mr. Piccioti: Yes, but the territory not the town.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Piccioti: The territory extended so much all over but the big – in Italy [inaudible] [00:01:13].

Interviewer: Okay. What year were you born?

Mr. Piccioti: I was born 1898

Interviewer: 1898?
Mr. Piccioti: 13th of October.

Interviewer: Now, what did your father do in Italy?

Mr. Piccioti: My father was a tinsmith.

Interviewer: He was a tinsmith?

Mr. Piccioti: Yes.

Interviewer: What did a tinsmith do in Italy during that period of time when you were still in Italy?

Mr. Piccioti: Well, sometime made those – what do you call those - [inaudible] [00:01:46].

Interviewer: Did you go to school in Italy?

Mr. Piccioti: [inaudible] [00:01:58].

Interviewer: What sort of a school was it?

Mr. Piccioti: Well I finished high school. After high school, I went to north Italy to try school.

Interviewer: The school that you went to in your own town, was it a religious school?

Mr. Piccioti: No.

Interviewer: It was a public school?

Mr. Piccioti: It was a public school, yes.

Interviewer: A public school. Did you have to pay the public school in those days?

Mr. Piccioti: No.

Interviewer: How about your books? Did you have to buy the books?

Mr. Piccioti: No. They gave you books and other things.

Interviewer: They supplied everything?

Mr. Piccioti: Except the [inaudible] [00:02:35] if you want.
Interviewer: So if you wanted the books, to keep, you had to buy them.

Mr. Piccioti: Yes, but they gave the book free.

Interviewer: they gave you the books to use. So you didn't have to worry about that.

Mr. Piccioti: No.

Interviewer: Okay. Mrs. Piccioti, were you born in the same town?

Mrs. Piccioti: No, I was born in the northern part of Italy. I was born in [inaudible] [00:02:52], it's close to Switzerland, in about one hour from the time we go to Switzerland. And I went to high school there. I went to what they call professional school. They call it professional school where you learn language and you learn, like I took up sewing. And I graduated from there.

Mr. Piccioti: Called preparatory because your school was...

Mrs. Piccioti: I was going to go to college. I was supposed to go to college. And then the war broke out. I was born in 1902, December 11, 1902. And I was supposed to go to college, but the war broke out, and my brothers went in a service, and my father – said they couldn't afford to send me away to college, so I didn't go.

Interviewer: What did your father do?

Mrs. Piccioti: My father was a carpenter.

Interviewer: He was a carpenter?

Mrs. Piccioti: Yes.

Interviewer: Was he a carpenter or a cabinet maker?

Mrs. Piccioti: Well, I would call him a cabinet maker more, because he used to have – he used to make like these – working like that chair piece.

Interviewer: Pieces of furniture, then.

Mrs. Piccioti: Pieces of furniture because he had all the machinery. And then of course, he would do something – carpentry work.
Interviewer: Did he also designed furniture? It seems that most Italian cabinet maker goes through desing.

Mrs. Piccioti: Yes he did. Yes, he did because we had all the furniture like that home that he made, you know, all design, all work.

Interviewer: Hand carved?

Mrs. Piccioti: He had a machine.

Interviewer: Oh, he had a machine like...

Mrs. Piccioti: He had a machine for carving yeah.

Interviewer: Alright, I see. Okay. Now, mister Piccioti, when did you first start thinking about coming to the United States?

Mr. Piccioti: At that time, I went to the private school, to [inaudible] [00:04:39] to study, I was called in the Army.

Interviewer: What year was this?

Mr. Piccioti: About – when I was called, I think it was around '17 I think.

Interviewer: 1917?

Mr. Piccioti: It was world war.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Piccioti: I went to...

Mrs. Piccioti: I didn't know you then.

[0:05:00]

Mr. Piccioti: Well not exactly that. So I went on the army and I was discharge in 1920.

Interviewer: What's the...

Mrs. Piccioti: You were discharge in 1819.

Mr. Piccioti: 20.
Interviewer: What did you do during your period in the army?

Mr. Piccioti: On the army, while I was – what you call, [inaudible] [00:05:27]...

Interviewer: Morse code?

Mr. Piccioti: Morse code with the [inaudible] [00:05:34] and I time, I was flying with the light and day time, sometimes fly on the sun...

Interviewer: I noticed with the reflector...

Mr. Piccioti: Yes.

Interviewer: Now what did – did you actually get into combat during a...

Mr. Piccioti: Yes, I was in a combat.

Interviewer: Could you describe some of the action you were involved in?

Mr. Piccioti: Well I was in action a long time for flying [inaudible] [00:06:05] we would stay down there for quite a few days. And we can't move because of the shooting everywhere. We'd come out of there, and the food that we left for four days, left food was no longer there. Thirsty.

Interviewer: You never quite appreciated food as you did in that day. Now when you were discharged in 1920, did you go back to [inaudible] [00:06:42]?

Mr. Piccioti: I stayed back to my hometown. And from there, I had to settle on a little town – I went back to my wife's town.

Interviewer: Did you meet your wife while you were in service?

Mr. Piccioti: Oh yeah, I met her when I was in the army.

Interviewer: Then you married while you were in the army?

Mr. Piccioti: Yes.

Mrs. Piccioti: He came up to my hometown he was in service. And then we got married and then that's it.

Mr. Piccioti: So when I wasn't out of time, I was [inaudible] [00:07:16] artillery.

Interviewer: You were in the artillery.
Mr. Piccioti: Yes.

Interviewer: You had test in artillery...

Mr. Piccioti: And I was up – private, I was in command – men of [inaudible] [00:07:32].

Interviewer: Now when you went back to Chieti, and settled all of your private business, what did you do after that?

Mr. Piccioti: Well in that town, I took the train and after I went back to my hometown, I left town.

Interviewer: And what did you do there?

Mr. Piccioti: Well I stayed there because they had a business too, you know, they had a store, like a general store, they sell liquor, clothes, everything. In fact, they still have the store today.

Interviewer: [inaudible] [00:08:10]?

Mrs. Piccioti: My brother. My father passed away in 1918. He passed away, so we then we had a store, a general store, and my brother took over later. When started my brother, and then he kept on and he still has – he's about 76 years old.

Mr. Piccioti: Does he have – his sons on the store with him now?

Mrs. Piccioti: Yes. He has a son.

Interviewer: When did you first start thinking about going to the United States?

Mr. Piccioti: Well I'll tell you, I was going to stay there on Italy, but I have my brother and my sister here. And so there's relative – on this country. So I told them I accept it. And my sister and my brother sent me to – after the [inaudible] [00:09:12] the response is fast...

Interviewer: They sponsored.

Mr. Piccioti: That's right.

Interviewer: What did you do in Italy just before you came in the United States? How did you earn your living?
Mr. Piccioti: Well – my living because I was first to go to school, after school hour, I actually got to the barber shop, [inaudible] [00:09:37] because down there, you’re going to work while you were small, after school, but my father – and I said my life on the town was nothing to work for food [inaudible] [00:09:56].

[0:10:00]

Interviewer: Now after you had – gotten back after – you had received word from your brother in this country who was calling you to the United States. What did you have to do to make arrangements to come to the United States.

Mr. Piccioti: Well first thing, I have to get call – data from the Italian Justice department, [inaudible] [00:10:24]...

Interviewer: You had the clearance?

Mr. Piccioti: Yes, the clearance. That was going to take quite a few months when I can't – I done those from my wife's town because there was a lot of influence, my wife with the people there, and I [inaudible] [00:10:45] in one month. After one month, I had to have the passport. So I went down to what they call [inaudible] [00:10:57] at the province. And I met a very nice gentleman I think coming from the [inaudible] [00:11:07] no he's not here what do you want? I said [inaudible] [00:11:13].

So he took my name and I think it was fair to him. By about the 15 day, he got a passport.

Interviewer: Now after you have received your passport, where did you go to embark for the United States?

Mr. Piccioti: Before I embarked for United States, I had to make – for the boat to come in there. [inaudible] [00:11:53] in other town, he took care of everything there. Then, after that, [inaudible] [00:12:04] after that, we went back in our hometown and I got my tickets. I left Italy 24th of April, 1921.

Interviewer: The 24th of April in 1921?

Mr. Piccioti: And I reached United States in the 13th of May, was so bad, the boat going backwards instead of going forward. We took 18 days.
Interviewer: Really? 18 days. Now how did you get from the town where you were, to [inaudible] [00:12:45]?

Mr. Piccioti: First, from their town, we went to [inaudible] [00:12:50] town about 60 kilometers, no – yeah, far away. We took a train.

Mrs. Piccioti: We went by bus at the end because we don't have a train after my hometown.

Interviewer: They did have bus service there.

Mrs. Piccioti: Yes, we always had bus service.

Mr. Piccioti: Those place have...

Mrs. Piccioti: We have a very touristic place, we have lavatories, summer and winter. So we took a bus to [inaudible] [00:13:15] and then he took a train to Milano, and we slept one night in Milano and then we took the train to Geneva.

Mr. Piccioti: So in Geneva this was on...

Mrs. Piccioti: Two days until we left.

Interviewer: You stayed in Geneva for two days.

Mrs. Piccioti: Yes.

Mr. Piccioti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Where did you stay in Geneva? Did you stay in a hotel?

Mrs. Piccioti: I don't remember – do you remember the name of the hotel?

Interviewer: But you did stay in a hotel?

Mrs. Piccioti: Yes, yes.

Mr. Piccioti: Yes, a very nice hotel.

Interviewer: What were the conditions like aboard the ship?

Mrs. Piccioti: It was nice.
Mr. Piccioti: Well I found new friends. Some of the people there, but [inaudible] [00:13:52] because between my sister, my brother and people – with us six month on, so you can't go to [inaudible] [00:14:07]...

Mrs. Piccioti: We had to...

Mr. Piccioti: But when we come in, the second class, and it was [inaudible] [00:14:14].

Mrs. Piccioti: We had a nice camping right in the middle of the bunk that they gave us. And we had the bunks bed. And it was really nice.

Mr. Piccioti: Washed and everything.

Mrs. Piccioti: It was really nice and a nice dining room. Of course we were not allowed to go in the class below, we had to stay in our place. We were not allowed...

Mr. Piccioti: So a couple of friend coming from my home town below on there, they can't come in and see the captain. So [inaudible] [00:14:59].

[0:15:00]

Interviewer: Now, this ship that you travelled on, was it an Italian ship?

Mrs. Piccioti: Yes.

Mr. Piccioti: Yes. Regina D'Italia.

Interviewer: Regina D'Italia.

Mr. Piccioti: [inaudible] [00:15:12].

Interviewer: Now, were all the people who were coming to the United States aboard this ship, were they all Italians, or did they have people from other countries in Europe?

Mr. Piccioti: Well, can't tell you that because – on the second class, I think...

Mrs. Piccioti: I think it was a very small boat. It was a very small ship. In fact, I think it was less trip they made because it was old, and then they...

Interviewer: That was the last trip it made.
Mrs. Piccioti: Yes, that was the last trip. We had met people they had [inaudible] [00:15:49] in Italy, ladies from Boston, from Detroit and had gone in Italy for a vacation and they're coming back. And we had friendly ladies, a couple of woman there. But then I met people, we never did make too much because we didn't know – and I had the baby and I did not have time to fool around with anybody you know. So I really could tell you there weren't too many people on, in fact. I mean there wasn't to many people on it.

Interviewer: The ship hasn't even filled in?

Mrs. Piccioti: It was filled below in the third place, yes.

Mr. Piccioti: Yes.

Mrs. Piccioti: Yes, there. They had the second place which wasn't – what did they call it? Class – there was no second place, it was class...

Mr. Piccioti: Class – second and first.

Mrs. Piccioti: They called it [inaudible] [00:16:35] because that is first and second place to get.

Mr. Piccioti: Yes.

Mrs. Piccioti: And that's why we had got such a nice dining room. And the food was wonderful. It was really nice.

Interviewer: Did the ship stop anywhere in Italy?

Mrs. Piccioti: No.

Mr. Piccioti: No.

Mrs. Piccioti: Although we went to Anapoly to pick up some more passengers.

Mr. Piccioti: Yes Anaply, that's right.

Mrs. Piccioti: From Geneva, we went to Anapoly to pick up passenger and then in [inaudible] [00:16:59] was very big that one day, I don't know how many what they call...

Mr. Piccioti: [inaudible] [00:17:07]...
Mrs. Piccioti: ...they went back and instead didn't come ahead you know.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Mrs. Piccioti: Yes.

Mr. Piccioti: They [inaudible] [00:17:12] very good time to eat, no – second class passenger was – my wife [inaudible] [00:17:24]...

Mrs. Piccioti: And he said that if they don't make you sick, it makes you hungry. So I was hungry and it looked like I never had anything to eat in my life.

Mr. Piccioti: By the wave of the ocean, there was – on the boat, it was horrific. I couldn't believe it, yeah,

Interviewer: When you arrived in New York, did you have anyone there to meet you?

Mr. Piccioti: Yes.

Interviewer: His brother.

Mr. Piccioti: I had my brother, my cousin and then cousin and her husband.

Interviewer: What did you have to go through when you got to New York?

Mr. Piccioti: Well it was kind of funny. I [inaudible] [00:18:04] soft fortune. I was the first one to get off on our boat.

Mrs. Piccioti: [inaudible] [00:18:10].

Mr. Piccioti: After the [inaudible] [00:18:13] because I can't speak English, you know what I mean? I had to open up the case, we will close it up – it was the first one to go down the steps, there was my brother, my cousin and her husband. It was the first one to see, the one down in the class, was class [inaudible] [00:18:34]...

Mrs. Piccioti: At the back where they call...

Mr. Piccioti: [inaudible] [00:18:40]...

Mrs. Piccioti: And they used to be quarantine sometime, you know. While we didn't have to.

Interviewer: You haven't been through any of that.
Interviewer: Did they give you a physical examination then?

Mr. Piccioti: Yes. [inaudible] [00:18:55]...

Mrs. Piccioti: They gave you a list – physical examination in general before you go on.

Mr. Piccioti: Yes.

Interviewer: If you're sick there, they won't let you...

Mrs. Piccioti: They won't let you go. That's right, yes.

Interviewer: Now when you got to the United States and you met your brothers and your sisters and your cousins, where did they live in the United States? Did they live in New York?

Mr. Piccioti: Yes. One – my cousin, my first cousin [inaudible] [00:19:24]...

Interviewer: Now...

Mrs. Piccioti: Yeah, but we came straight there one night and we met them and we've been here ever since.

Interviewer: Why did you come to Wellington?

Mrs. Piccioti: Because of his brother and sister.

Interviewer: You had your brother and sister here?

Mrs. Piccioti: That's right.

Interviewer: I see. So you came directly to Wellington?

Mrs. Piccioti: Yes. And we went to live with his sister.

Interviewer: You lived with your sister?

Mr. Piccioti: Yes.

Interviewer: Where did she live?
Mr. Piccioti: 23 25 second...

[Interviewer:] So it was – in this area.

Mrs. Piccioti: That's right.

Interviewer: Now, what did you do when you first got here? Were you able to find a job right away?

Mr. Piccioti: Yeah. I find job right away just one of those – I was a barber, but my first job I had as a barber from the barber shop [inaudible] [00:20:19].

Interviewer: [inaudible] [00:20:23]?

Mr. Piccioti: Yeah. And I quit [inaudible] [00:20:25]. You want to know why?

Interviewer: Yes, yes.

Mr. Piccioti: I was – in the bus, my how much paying me?

Interviewer: How much was it paying you?

Mr. Piccioti: 50 cents.

Interviewer: 50 cents a day?

Mr. Piccioti: [inaudible] [00:20:37]...

Interviewer: 50 cents, he paid you. For one week sir?

Mr. Piccioti: Yes.

Interviewer: Well after you left there, where did you go? You said you couldn’t...

Mr. Piccioti: I looked around good job and then I went to...

Mrs. Piccioti: He went to work again in a barber.

Mr. Piccioti: I went to work in a barber shop with [inaudible] [00:21:10] barber shop down – pretty good.

Interviewer: So you worked there as a barber then.
Mr. Piccioti: Barber, yeah.

Interviewer: How long did you stay there as a barber?

Mr. Piccioti: About a year and a half. Next I went to work [inaudible] [00:21:30]. I worked there for a little while too, but I don't care much about the friend – of course we used to work all the time, sometimes go home 12 o'clock in the night, 11 o'clock in the night because the barbershops until they're open. So – I got a job [inaudible] [00:21:50].

Mrs. Piccioti: In Washington.

Mr. Piccioti: Washington.

Interviewer: Washington.

Mr. Piccioti: 5 o'clock in the night, 7 o'clock in the morning. 23 cents an hour.

Interviewer: 23 cents an hour? And this was in what year?

Mrs. Piccioti: Wait a minute, 1924.

Interviewer: In 1924? What were conditions like in United States during that period?

Mr. Piccioti: When we came on – because I had between my sister and my brother, [inaudible] [00:22:23] job, it was very, very tough. But to us, we thank dear lord, we never suffer.

Interviewer: But conditions were rather difficult during that period?

Mr. Piccioti: Oh yes, 1921, yes. Specially when you hear your name at the [inaudible] [00:22:44] it was tough.

Interviewer: It was difficult for the...

Mrs. Piccioti: It was difficult. Like once you say your experience you have when you went to work in that place then [inaudible] [00:23:02]...

Mr. Piccioti: No, no, no. [inaudible] [00:23:07] – because I can't speak much English, but this gentleman up there, this man, I'll give you a chance for a job. About the time we always saw [inaudible] [00:23:38] I worked there. Few days was fine. After that, since I leave my machine, go to the men's room, when I came back, my machine was [inaudible] [00:23:55].
Interviewer: What was happening to you?

Mr. Piccioti: Part of that [inaudible] [00:24:00]. So for one week, it was the same thing. As soon as I got back, all [inaudible] [00:24:11]...

Mrs. Piccioti: Yeah, but you said – you said you think because you were Italian...

Mr. Piccioti: And that's of course, that's why there is.

Interviewer: Did you ever run into any other instances of bias, or prejudice because you were Italian, similar to this incidence?

Mr. Piccioti: Yes. We bought a home 16 35 [inaudible] [00:24:38] Avenue. The house was a very, very bad condition, [inaudible] [00:24:46] was very, very bad. We fixed the house, [inaudible] [00:24:57] and we paint them.

[0:25:00]

So my kids can’t go out, they used to call them what – and the moment you asked, a lot of trouble was [inaudible] [00:25:16].

By this space [inaudible] [00:25:26] the best I could, asked so you will not, I said yes. So I went to see my brother and we went to see [inaudible] [00:25:53]. So another cop went back [inaudible] [00:26:07] by after three months, so our country we are – to think our neighborhood, we started [inaudible] [00:26:16] we fix the house, and I said but 100% between the cleanest – everybody...

Mrs. Piccioti: Well they just – there was no Italian people around the neighborhood. And they [inaudible] [00:26:39]. And of course we couldn’t even speak English much, you know. But after they’ve seen the way we were keeping the place up, and everybody, they were fine. And when we moved away, they were crying because we were moving away.

Interviewer: How long did you stay there?

Mrs. Piccioti: We only stayed there about three years and then we moved in 24 01 with Second street.

Mr. Piccioti: [inaudible] [00:27:08] we had an apartment in there, three apartment.

Interviewer: Were you still were with the DuPont during this period?
Mr. Piccioti: No, I worked at DuPont about two years. I can't stay there and I can't [inaudible] [00:27:20].

Interviewer: Well if your adviser was so bad, yeah, you couldn't even stay there.

Mrs. Piccioti: We couldn't take it, no.

Mr. Piccioti: No.

Interviewer: But where did you go after you left?

Mr. Piccioti: [inaudible] [00:27:30]. It was hard to get, but I finally achieved to get it. A friend of mine got another friend of mine, I got the job. I worked there, I was well liked, and I used to make pretty good – those days I made about $45 a week, I also worked over time.

Interviewer: Really. $45 a week and that is...

Mrs. Piccioti: That it good, yes.

Mr. Piccioti: I used to work 9 o'clock in the night, and sometimes, they'll ask me to work on Saturdays, I worked.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Piccioti: Of course, I wanted to make some money.

Mrs. Piccioti: Those days, a lot of money because when he was working [inaudible] [00:28:14] bringing home, what, $22 a week?

Mr. Piccioti: $18.

Mrs. Piccioti: Well, 18 if you pay the bus.

Mr. Piccioti: That was with the fiber mill.

Mrs. Piccioti: At the fiber mill, yeah. And we were buying a house in the same time, and another, we had two children then – by then we had two children. We were making – you know, trying the best we could.

Interviewer: How much did the house cost during that period of time?

Mr. Piccioti: Well the house, it cost $1900.
Interviewer: Today – for a sense, it doesn't seem like much money.

Mrs. Piccioti: But that was not our money then.

Mr. Piccioti: The house [inaudible] [00:28:49] – they sold again, a few years ago, and I know – I asked some because I want to have a business by local – in my home, how much should I pay for this house? $7500.

Interviewer: $7500.

Mr. Piccioti: But I sold the house again for $3,000.

Mrs. Piccioti: Yeah, we sold it for $3,000.

Mr. Piccioti: [inaudible] [00:29:09] I sold it to $3,000.

Interviewer: How long did you stay in this house on Second Street?

Mrs. Piccioti: 10 years.

Interviewer: 10 years? And where did you go from there?

Mr. Piccioti: Next I bought two more homes down there.

Interviewer: Now you said – during the period when you were living in that house in the Second street, did you always worked with the...

Mr. Piccioti: No. At bank, they have lay off, and I was in fifth in line in one time, and a friend of mine said, Joseph, you should have paid it tonight for the [inaudible] [00:29:46] shows in business. I said, you know, I cannot do it, because I don't speak very well. So I'm going. In fact next day, I went down the front of the building, there's a bank that – the farmers' bank today, second floor, [inaudible] [00:30:02] and this gentleman come in, and then [inaudible] [00:30:11] what can I do for you?

[0:30:17]

And I asked, well, I bought my paper, I showed to him, so I get – application I said you should write because I can't write. Done for me, said, "I will let you know." That was 7 o'clock in the morning.

2 o'clock, he come in to my – to find out what can – I work for [inaudible] [00:30:38] bank company. [inaudible] [00:30:40]...
Mrs. Piccioti: We were there, what, 10 years?

Mr. Piccioti: 10 years.

Interviewer: So you really [inaudible] [00:30:48]?

Mrs. Piccioti: That's right, yes.

Interviewer: Did you find that selling life insurance was much more rewarding financially and otherwise...

Mr. Piccioti: With hard word, good money, I bought two homes, [inaudible] [00:31:03] I took care of my family the best I could. And I know [inaudible] [00:31:08] you have to work.

Interviewer: Alright, now after you left the life insurance business, when was it you left the life insurance business?

Mr. Piccioti: I was in '38, in '38.

Mrs. Piccioti: Well [inaudible] [00:31:26] he was sick and he was having almost a nervous breakdown because he was just doing...

Mr. Piccioti: Too much.

Mrs. Piccioti: Depressions too, you know. And it was very, very bad. So he had to lean back. And then where did you go?

Mr. Piccioti: [inaudible] [00:31:44] people come home to collect an insurance. If you don't be the one that they pay, you're never good. So that and I went to work with [inaudible] [00:31:57].

Mrs. Piccioti: And then he had to quit there because they war broke out, and they even have no...

Mr. Piccioti: Now before that I – what you call – they send me to school in Philadelphia to learn all about business, learning out on – for the [inaudible] [00:32:22].

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Piccioti: After the war came out, [inaudible] [00:32:34] he was a very, very gentle man, he said Joe, I'm about to sell on [inaudible] [00:32:45] so if there's anything you want, call on me and [inaudible] [00:32:57].
So after that, I went to work. I worked then I say about six months at the same time your daddy was there. So I have to make 72 cents an hour. So to 90 cents an hour.

Interviewer: And what year was this then?

Mrs. Piccioti: But you were there during the war, in the second world war.

Interviewer: must have been there.

Interviewer: During the second world war was this.

Mr. Piccioti: So I worked there, then the war finished. The next day. So I said to my wife, well I'll work hard all the time, I work overtime, I'm going to take off a couple of weeks, take a rest a little bit. My wife said, go ahead. So the next day when I got lay off, I was in, said to me, hey what are you doing? Oh I'm taking it easy, I'm not working. You're not working? I got a job for you. I said, oh my god, I want to take a rest a little bit. He said I got a job for you. Go down. I went down there and that's where I started work.

Mrs. Piccioti: You worked there 22 years.

Mr. Piccioti: I worked there 22 years.

Interviewer: What sort of work did you do there?

[0:35:00]

Mr. Piccioti: 

Interviewer: Okay now, during the period, when you first came to the United States, what sort of activities were you involved in, other than work? Social organizations, charity organizations...

Mr. Piccioti: Well I started on the church. I worked with them at the church. because we work so hard, we've got one year I know so many people you know what I mean?

And my wife went to our main society. She got...
Mrs. Piccioti: [inaudible] [00:36:06].

Mr. Piccioti: She makes most – makes the [inaudible] [00:36:14]. But I make 130, 135 percent of profit. I was active [inaudible] [00:36:23] I was the president of the [inaudible] [00:36:28] Society. I was there almost 10, 12 years president. [inaudible] [00:36:36] Society, I think you know what it's all about.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Piccioti: We take care of the poor, going to house and visit those who are sick and somebody to take care of the food [inaudible] [00:36:48]. So then...

Mrs. Piccioti: Anywhere taking your...

Mr. Piccioti: I was very active – I was in [inaudible] [00:37:00], I was the vice president over at Columbus [inaudible] [00:37:08]. I was president of [inaudible] [00:37:10].

Interviewer: So you were pretty active then.

Mr. Piccioti: Yes.

Interviewer: Tell me something. When you first tried to get into the Knights of Columbus, was it easy or difficult? Because most of the organizations you've been on to, were Italian organizations. A few of – church which was Italian parish, the [inaudible] [00:37:48] naturally an Italian organization, but how about the Knights of Columbus, was it easy to get into the Knights of Columbus?

Mr. Piccioti: [inaudible] [00:37:55]. First, you fill out this application. This application was brought to me from the state of [inaudible] [00:38:07]. So I filled out the application. A lot of people got difficulty in the [inaudible] [00:38:15] to take the first degree. I took the second degree. I took the third degree, so hard. I said myself, [inaudible] [00:28:30].

So you're at – you have here, fourth degree, you know at DuPont, I was called after taking my fourth degree. So they sent me, I remember the last of the fourth degree was [inaudible] [00:38:56] people with it...

Mrs. Piccioti: [inaudible] [00:39:05]?

Mr. Piccioti: [inaudible] [00:39:06].
Interviewer: There was no problem at all. Did you know of anyone who had any difficulty getting in because he was an Italian?

Mr. Piccioti: No. I can't say that. No.

Interviewer: So there wasn't any...

Mr. Piccioti: No, no. I think along that came in, they were scared about because I always was talking about it, but there was no difficulty at all. [inaudible] [00:39:30].

Interviewer: What was the relationship between the people in the Italian community in Wellington and the police, and that's in the 20s? Is there any difficulty, any friction between them at all?

[0:40:01]

Mr. Piccioti: No, it was – everybody was a friend to me and there was – I see the police walk in the streets, everyone was nice. And I know any time I pick up some kids on the streets [inaudible] [00:40:12].

Interviewer: Yeah?

Mr. Piccioti: Yeah. I was very nice.

Interviewer: Now in so far as the representatives in the city council and so forth, did we have – did the counties have their own representatives in the city council? Or did they have somebody else? We're the Italian representing at times or...

Mr. Piccioti: No, no, no. We have everyone, every – word out [inaudible] [00:40:41], he was a very nice man.

Interviewer: [inaudible] [00:40:48].

Mr. Piccioti: Yeah, it wasn't a town. That's all.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, when you first left Italy to come to the United States, [inaudible] [00:40:56] was coming to power in Italy?

Mr. Piccioti: No, [inaudible] [00:41:00]...

Interviewer: But he started to gain power, I mean he started to – well known in the early 20s.
Mrs. Piccioti: The early 20s, yes...

Mr. Piccioti: [inaudible] [00:41:13] I don't know.

Mrs. Piccioti: I don't know.

Interviewer: You we're even aware of his existence?

Mrs. Piccioti: No.

Mr. Piccioti: No.

Mrs. Piccioti: No we didn't.

Interviewer: Okay now, what was your reaction to over here in this country when he started to become well known in Italy and when he finally took power? What was the reaction over here?

Mr. Piccioti: Well some of the people liked him, some not. You know what I mean? No way got – some of the people [inaudible] [00:41:37].

Interviewer: Were there any organizations in this country that supported him?

Mr. Piccioti: Well I thought it was a one on one with him. [inaudible] [00:42:00]...

Interviewer: The North American – as you say...

Mr. Piccioti: Something was going out, but I can't recall it out, you know because I'm getting too old, I can't remember, yeah.

Interviewer: Were they a very active group?

Mr. Piccioti: A little.

Interviewer: There wasn't any difficulty when you saw that?

Mr. Piccioti: No, no, no.

Interviewer: Okay, just a group of people who are enthusiastic about the fact that this man was bringing some pride...

Mr. Piccioti: Yeah that, no.
Interviewer: Okay, now, could you tell me a little bit more now about the way people lived in general in the Italian community during the times.

Mr. Piccioti: It was very happy days. Everybody was happy. You all have a song, it was very nice, everybody [inaudible] [00:42:45] was nice.

Interviewer: What did people have, material things? Today, the big emphasis is on material things. Everybody's got air condition, television, stereo, car...

Mrs. Piccioti: They didn't have nothing, but they were happy just the same.

Interviewer: They didn't have anything but they were still happy.

Mrs. Piccioti: They didn't have nothing, but they were happy.

Interviewer: What were the houses like, then

Mrs. Piccioti: Well, they just – I guess, have the necessity that you have to have, you know. Nothing – not too much like everybody has today.

Mr. Piccioti: 

Interviewer: What would you – for example, if you could comment, if you walked into the living room of an Italian family say in 1926, what would you expect to see in the living room?

Mrs. Piccioti: Well, if you walk in there, see there – the little couch and a chair and lamp, a table, and maybe the stove to keep it hot – a coal stove, you know to have some heat, either a kerosene stove because they didn't have no heat system much those days in the house.

Interviewer: Did you find [inaudible] [00:43:52] in the houses then?

Mrs. Piccioti: No, when we bough the house on [inaudible] [00:43:57] it didn't have no electricity.

Interviewer: Just the gas.

Interviewer: We had gas. And we put the electric – and also we put one it was heater, they used to have a heater in the basement and they had a hole in the floor, so hot air, just one, just one piece and that's where we did...

Interviewer: Hot air [inaudible] [00:44:21]...
Mrs. Piccioti: Yes. Each room, that was just in one special place in the middle of the house where we'll draw heat all over.

Interviewer: Was there any heat upstairs?

Mrs. Piccioti: I remember there was only five bedrooms, five rooms, two bedrooms, so the heat would go up to stage two, but it stood between the living room and the dining room and the stairway, so whenever the heat came up, it went upstairs, to the two room, and then we have coal stove in the kitchen because the heat were not going as far as the kitchen. The bedrooms, they were pretty warm.

[0:45:07]

Interviewer: What sort of a cooking stove did they have in those days?

Mrs. Piccioti: Then, we had a coal stove. We had a coal stove, coal stove, yes.

Interviewer: Okay, this is what you cooked on everyday.

Mrs. Piccioti: That's right, yes.

Interviewer: Now, the impression in the 20s, and it lasted Wellington, 30s.

Interviewer: That's right.

Interviewer: What effect did Roosevelt's coming into power, had upon the Italian community?

Mr. Piccioti: Well I don't know because greater work in a song, but not that much because only I was – on 1928, I went in [inaudible] make my living anything like that.

Interviewer: So he didn't affect you personally.

Mr. Piccioti: No.

Mrs. Piccioti: No.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, when World War II started, this was quite a hot caring experience for a lot of Italian-Americans because a lot of the Italians who were born in Italy, had families still in Italy, but here in the United States, they're at war with one another. You may have had some sons who went to the American army...
Mrs. Piccioti: Yeah, we did.

Interviewer: ...you might have had brothers in Italy who had sons in the Italian army. So the possibility existed that they might be facing themselves, facing one another in war situation. How did mostly Italian people feel...?

Mrs. Piccioti: What I think, you just felt bad about it because like I said, you were – now we have become Americans – we feel like we were staying here and have been living here, you know, but you hated that idea to send your son over there to fight, natural, because you know they will fight your own people over there because I have nephews over there, he had a brother over there who was in service, and we have a son there who is in service here at that time.

Interviewer: And your son was a matter of fact was in service because he was born in Italy, wasn’t he?

Mrs. Piccioti: Yes. They wanted him [inaudible] [00:47:18] in service even over in Germany, well, just about a year before the war finished.

Mr. Piccioti: But excuse me, [inaudible] [00:47:27] from Germany and he went in my wife hometown...

Mrs. Piccioti: Yes. But after they have settled the war, still over there yes, he went over to my hometown and he met – in fact he went home in my own house and he slept I the same room where he was born.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Mrs. Piccioti: Yeah.

Interviewer: I guess it must have been quite an experience.

Mrs. Piccioti: Yes it did

Interviewer: I used to have a grandfather there. Well, looking back in your years here in United States, if you were to pick out one thing that you were to describe as the greatest change that you noticed here, could you pick out one change that you would call the greatest change in the United States?

Mr. Piccioti: That change was right after the second world war. That was a big change.
Interviewer: That was the biggest change out of all the time that you've been here.

Mr. Piccioti: That's right.

Interviewer: At what form did these changes take?

Mr. Piccioti: Well, [inaudible] [00:48:29], changed.

Mrs. Piccioti: More prosperity, I think...

Mr. Piccioti: [inaudible] [00:48:34] prosperity and everything changed.

Interviewer: When you say the people changed, how do you mean they changed?

Mr. Piccioti: Well it's not what they call the thing that used to be before – you know what I mean?

Interviewer: Will you say people became more impersonal?

Mr. Piccioti: Used to be more impersonal, independent.

Interviewer: More independent. Would you say they were independent or selfish?

Mrs. Piccioti: Probably selfish.

Interviewer: I'm just to see if we can make a definition, definition, differentiate between the two, independent, or was it that they thought more of themselves and less of other people?

Mrs. Piccioti: I think that exactly what you're saying, they think more of themselves than other people, from my point. I don't know about him.

Mr. Piccioti: Same thing.

Interviewer: When you look back on your time in this country and having left Italy and everything, has there even been any time you wished you had never left Italy?

Mrs. Piccioti: When we first came here, we really had enough of time in getting adjusted. We cried, in fact he really wanted, we wanted to go back again, naturally, we were very much homesick.

Mr. Piccioti: For one month, I wanted to go back. And the only thing changed about the [inaudible] [00:49:58]
Mrs. Piccioti: We really didn't like it [inaudible] of course, I guess...

Interviewer: A completely different...

Mrs. Piccioti: Anybody – yeah...

Mr. Piccioti: It's hard.

Mrs. Piccioti: Very, very hard. Yes, it's very hard to try to get to everything.

Mr. Piccioti:

Interviewer: So that was about the only time that maybe you have even regretted coming to the United States?

Mrs. Piccioti: Yes, I think so.

Mr. Piccioti:

Interviewer: But you know how people very frequently talk about the good old days, you've heard people talk about – how it used to be so good, things were not like they were. Had you ever thought that you would like to have a return to the old days, you know, complete change?

Mr. Piccioti: Well sometimes [inaudible] I wish the old days come back to our time, [inaudible].

Mrs. Piccioti: Either way, it seems to me that these are the [inaudible] or whatever it is, you don't needed [inaudible] as much...

Mr. Piccioti:

Interviewer: Do you think that – talking about we might call the human element as all most and going out of life...

Mrs. Piccioti: they have changed, they have changed positively.

Interviewer: But would you say that?

Mrs. Piccioti: I do. I do. Everything has changed a lot. The human life – somehow, I don't know whatever it is.
Interviewer: What change have you noticed that has come over the Italian people and this country as a whole since you've been here?

Mr. Piccioti: Well [inaudible] [00:51:40] if you come from the other side you can't speak – and it's hard. [inaudible] [00:51:50] today, all the Italian people, they prosper.

Interviewer: How would you characterize the Italians who first came to this country, when you first came here. Let's say for example, the Italians who were here, when you arrived, and the once who came to this country during the same period of time that you came here, if you were to describe them, how would you describe them as a group? Would you say that they were a highly cultured, well educated group? Or would you say that they were as a role, rather, uneducated, very poor?

Mr. Piccioti: They come in any kind. [inaudible] [00:52:28] with a lot of culture, some they're born in the farm, they come in here, they [inaudible] [00:52:35] and not be educated.

Interviewer: Right. And certainly this is not really fault on their own. I'm not trying to – I'm just trying to get a general description of the people who did come, the people who immigrated.

Mr. Piccioti:

Mrs. Piccioti: Well, I think – the majority, in the different part they came from to, from Italy, and also what they were able to do here, to better themselves...

Interviewer: Would you say, most of the people came from Southern Italy who came here...?

Mrs. Piccioti: Yeah, most of them, are.

Interviewer: Most of them, they have relatives, they are few people [inaudible] [00:53:11]

Mrs. Piccioti: I know, I know. I never did find too many people, myself that they came, in fact from my own, around my place, nobody, I have never find any, not in this town, never.
Interviewer: Would say that the people who came from northern Italy when they arrived here, had more money with them?

Mrs. Piccioti: No, I wouldn't say that either. I don't think so.

Interviewer: Would you say that they were better educated than the people who came here...

Mrs. Piccioti: Maybe some of them had more education because there is more education [inaudible] [00:53:42], but I wouldn't say that they have any more money. I don't think so. But by having education, I think they could better themselves quicker because they could pick up quicker, not because they were any better, I don't think so.

Interviewer: This is the very thing I was trying to get at. Now, if you were to characterize, by these people who came, I'm not trying to speak derogatorily, I mean my parents came from southern Italy and everything, but would you say, if you took the massive people as a whole, would you say that they were ignorant?

Mr. Piccioti: No.

Interviewer: Now when we take this term into account, we must first realize this, what we mean by this. I mean relatively, uneducated. Would you say that?

Mrs. Piccioti: Some of them, yes, quite of them, many.

Interviewer: Most of them certainly were hard working people, and well meaning people because they did come here, anyone who came here, came here to better themselves. This is the reason they came, he wasn't ambitious.

Mrs. Piccioti: Didn't have enough opportunity to educate themselves.

Interviewer: Exactly.

Mrs. Piccioti: And not because they were dumb themselves, it's because they didn't have the opportunity because I think that most [inaudible] [00:54:58], they don't have pretty good brains, I mean they could learn, if they really wanted to.

[0:55:05]
Interviewer: Was their attitude in so far as their children were concerned and education for their children. Most of them want their children to go on to college, as much education as possible.

Mrs. Piccioti: I think so.

Interviewer: Or did they want them to go out and work?

Mrs. Piccioti: I think a lot of them, they really thought about giving them education because they – they know it's essential.

Interviewer: Yes. And would you say they are very, very conscious of formal education.

Mrs. Piccioti: I think so.

Mr. Piccioti: In this country, there are opportunities with education.

Interviewer: Okay, is there anything else you'd like to add to this?

Mr. Piccioti: No.

Mrs. Piccioti: No. Is there anything else you want...

Interviewer: Anything else you'd like to say?

Mrs. Piccioti: I'd just say that I really think that like, you said, the Italian people, they are very good workers, you know, and they are smart too, I mean they can do a lot of things than maybe other nationality cannot do, it's just because sometimes they didn't have the opportunity to do.

[0:56:04] End of Audio