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Transcribed Interview With

JOHN GAMBACORTA
819 WASHINGTON AVENUE
NEW CASTLE, DELAWARE

Interviewed By

Francis J. Fierro

October 5, 1967

Transcribed By

Carolyn F. Fierro

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All right now, the way the machine is now set up you can be heard. Anything you say will be recorded. O.K., starting right now.

Where were you born?

Poggio San Vittorina, Provincia de Terramo.

Poggio San Vittorina, Provincia de Terramo?

That is right----Poggio San Vittorina, Provincia di Terramo.

In what year?

24 June, 1899.

In 1899?

That's right.

What did your father do in this town? How did he earn a living?

A farmer----he was a farmer.

Did he own his own farm?

No.

He worked for someone else?

That's right. It was like sharecropping---- half and half.

Did he get paid in money?

No.

Did he have to pay the landlord in money?

No. Divide up the crop----whatever we raise.

In otherwords, he paid him in what he produced.

Right. Well, half and half of what he produced.

Right,now, what did you do as a young boy?

Well, helping. I mean I work on the farm helping whatever I could. You know----whatever.

You worked out in the fields?

Yea, in the fields with the rest. Yea with the family. I mean with the father. Yes.

Did you go to school in Italy?

Yes, I went to school four years.

For four years----now in those four years did you cover three years of schooling in those four years or did the school at that time have five grades, four grades, three grades, or less?

That had four grades, and I covered the four grades.

What would you say those four grades were equivalent to here?

About----I say the fifth or sixth grade.

The fifth or sixth grade?

Something like that.

Now, how old were you when you started school?

Seven years.

You were seven years old?

That's right.

And so you were eleven years old when you finished?

Uh huh.

While you were going to school, did you do any work after school? Were you apprenticed to anyone?

Before you go to school and after school. We used to get up 5 o'clock in the morning.

And you worked on the farm?

On the farm until 7 and go to school 8 o'clock, and then when school was over you went back to work until sundown. That's right.

Now, when you finished your schooling at age eleven, what year was that? Do you remember offhand?

Well now, I have to figure that out now. I went seven years----eleventh year----four years in school----eleven years.

Do you remember the year? You told me what year you were born, but I forgot.

The 24 June, 1899.

So, it would have been about 1910 that you finished

school.

Uh huh. Eleven years, right, about 1910.

What did you do then after you finished school?

I worked on the farm until I was drafted in World War I.

What year were you drafted?

I was drafted----I was sixteen years old. Let's see now, what year was that? About 1915----1915 I was drafted in the Army.

Now, when you were drafted in the Army, where did they send you?

They send me to Rome to training, and after three months we were shipped to the front lines.

Where did you serve----on which front?

The Italian front with the----I fought against the Germans and the Austrians.

Now, this was in Northern Italy?

Northern Italy.

O.K., fine. Now how long did you stay in the Army?

Four and one-half years.

Four and one-half years. When you got out of the Army, did you go back to your home town?

That's right---right back on the farm---right back on the farm.

When did you start thinking about coming to America?

Well, soon I went back home. You see----you know we fought, and it was a sacrifice. It was really rough. So when I got home after the war was over; well, I was back in the same place and I wasn't satisfied. I didn't accomplish anything. You know what I mean? I fight war. When I get back home I got \$5 suit for discharge, and that's all we got. So I figured it really wasn't just right, so I figured to come over to this country and finally made it. And I came over in this country in 1923, October 1923.

O.K., now after the war when you got back home, you decided you wanted to come to the United States. O.K.?---or someplace. O.K. Did anyone tell you about the U. S. or did you decide for yourself that this was the place you wanted to come; and if you did, why did you decide on the U. S. and not some other place?

Well, we thought the U. S. really was the only place to go. Of course, we could have gone maybe into Germany. I could have went someplace else, but I always thought the U. S. was the best.

Did you hear other people speak of the U. S.?

That's right----talk about it from the other people. That's right.

Did you have any relatives or friends from your home town?

Friends, no relatives----friends.

Friends from the same town you came from----

That's right.

----that you came from were living in the U. S. and they would write letters home telling how it was over here. Is that it?

Well, not much of that. Most of the time we heard talk ----different people been in the U. S. that came back and forth that used to be, and I heard so much about the U. S. Yes.

Did you have any idea as to what you wanted to do when you came here?

No. None at all.

You just felt that you wanted to come here to seek a better life?

That's right.

O.K., now, when you left your home town, how did you leave? Did you walk when you left? Now I will assume

that there was no train station in your home town.

There was. We had.

There was a train station in that same town where you lived?

Yea. Uh huh. Not too far----we say from here to house corner out here----something like that.

So you walked to the train station? Now, when you took the train, where did you go to catch the boat?

Naples.

You went to Naples?

That's right----with the train.

Now, when you arrived in Naples, were you alone or were you with other people ?

There was many people with me. Yes.

There were other people with you?

That's right.

Now, did you have to wait very long before you took the train or the ship before you boarded the ship?

No, a matter of hours.

That's all?

That's right.

In otherwords the ship was there, and you just boarded?

That's right.

Was it an Italian ship?

Yea, the Saturnia. It think it was the Saturnia.

I think they are still using that. It is still
in service.

That's it. It is still in service. Yes.

Now, what were the accommodations like aboard ship?

You mean the conditions of the ship?

Well, not necessarily the conditions of the ship,
but the conditions for you aboard the ship.

You mean if I felt good?

No.

I mean what did they put you in. Did they have
you in a cabin by yourself or with a few other people?

Oh, no, it was a lot of people. Yea. It think it
was twelve of us---twelve of us in one cabin.

All men, I assume.

That's right.

Now, how about the other people aboard the ship?
Were they all Italian?

No. They was----we picked up some at Gibraltar.

Gibraltar?

Yea, Gibraltar. That's right. They stopped there

to pick up some passengers there. Let's see if we stopped someplace else. No, I think that's the only place.

Most of them were Italian?

That's right. That's right.

And in so far as feeding was concerned aboard the ship, how did they feed you? Did they have dining rooms----rooms that you went into the dining rooms and ate or did one person from each cabin go to one area where they put....

and gets meat and gets soup----that's right----and gets his meal. That's right. They put the food in one big container, and they bring it back and they split it up.

So you ate in your cabin?

That's right----ate in cabin.

Now, how long did the crossing take?

How long it took to come over? It took ten days----ten days.

So the only stop you made was Gibraltar?

That's right.

Where did you land in the U. S.?

In New York.

In New York? This was in 1923?

1923, right.

You landed in New York. Now, when you landed in

New York, did anyone meet you there?

No.

How were you greeted when you landed? Were you met by the government officials?

No. More than likely we had the tag. In otherwords I know where I want to go, see, and they put a tag on us just like you ship something, you know. And then, of course, when we got on the train the train took us to here, and I got off at Wilmington.

You came right straight to Wilmington, then?

And then from Wilmington----New Castle.

Now, when you got to Wilmington, how did you get to New Castle?

The train----somehow I don't recall that very well. But the train informed the taxi. I think the taxi took me to New Castle.

The taxi took you to New Castle?

That's right.

O.K., now when you left Italy, you left all of your family behind?

That's right.

What did you have in the way of personal belongings when you came here?

What did I have that belonged to me?

Yes. Did you have money with you?

Well, I have a few dollars left over----a few lire called left over and what I have left over I sent him back to my father right off of the bat. I didn't have too much, but my father gave me a little more than I really need.

In otherwords your father supplied your passage?

That's right.

Now, when you first landed here in New Castle, with whom did you live? Did you live alone? Did you take a room somewhere?

No. I board with a family name Enrico Marinelli.

Yes. I boarded with a family. We know these people.

Excuse me. Go ahead.

Yes. My mother and father know these people, see.

In otherwords they were from your hometown?

That's right. We were related to them----not too much.

A distant relative?

Not too close----relative. That's all it was.

Friend, yes.

Now, when you got here in 1923, did you have to pay

room and board where you were staying?

Yes.

Now, of course, this happened----you started to pay room and board only after you started to work? Is that correct?

That's right.

Now what was your first job?

Railroad.

With which railroad was this?

Section----we work on the railroad. Yes, for first year railroad was that---Pennsylvania Railroad.

The Pennsylvania?

Yes.

Were you working on the tracks then?

Uh huh.

How did you get that job?

Through the same man that I was board with.

Did he work for the railraod also?

At that time, yes.

I see. Now, on the railraod gang with which you worked, were the people there all Italians or Italian immigrants?

Not all of them, no. There was Italian and Irish.

What was the boss?

What was his name? Do you know?(talking to his daughter)

Was he an Irishman? He wasn't an Italian, right?

Now, when you first came here what was the pay like working on the track?

We used to make----what was it----29¢----29¢ hour. I think it was 29¢ hour.

That sounds about right.

Yea, it was 29¢ an hour.

Now, of course, the wages were very low---extremely low.

Yea.

And, of course, the cost of living was pretty low then also. How much did it cost you for room and board each week?

I think it was----I pay \$20 a month or \$25. I forgot----\$20 or \$25 a month.

About how much did you earn each week? Did you get paid by the week or the month?

Twice a month, yea.

And about how much did you make approximately?

How much would that be?

Well, how many hours a day did you work?

Eight, nine hours a day we worked.

You worked nine hours a day?

Yes.

So, at 29¢ you earned maybe about \$2.50 a day.

Yes, something like that.

Which wasn't too much, really. How many days a week did you work?

Six days a week----six days a week. Yea----yea.

Now, when you first came here, of course you didn't speak English.

No.

How long did it take you to learn how to speak English?

Well, it took me a little while. I forget. We say, maybe----well, a few years. I mean I went to school too a little bit.

Oh, did you go to night school?

To night school, yea.

When you did go to night school, what sort of classes were they? Were they just for learning the language or were they also citizenship?

Language, that's all.

Just language? No citizenship or anything of that nature?

No, no. Oh, well I mean of course it was teaching about getting citizenship paper too. Yes.

So it was a combination of the two?

Combination citizenship and language? Yea.

O.K., now you worked on the railroad, and you went to school? Right? This was in 1923 you started there? Now you worked there for approximately one year?

One year.

Now after you left there, after one year, why did you leave the railroad?

Well, I want to better myself. It was too---- pretty hard work, and I try to improve myself----get something better.

Where did you go after you left the railroad?

I went back to railroad again but the----to the pilot house, Wilmington.

Where was this again?

Pilot house----it's Pennsylvania Railroad Shops.

Oh, the railroad shops.

That's right.

What did you do while you were at the shops?

I went to work as coal passer----get the coal ready for the fireman. They had a fireman those days. Coal passer, they used to call him.

So you used to get the coal ready for the engines, right? How long did you stay there at the shops?

I stay there about seven months, six months. About six or seven months? And then you left there?

And then I went to work for Union Park Motors, yea.

And where did you go to work?

Union Park Motors.

How did you get the job at Union Park Motors?

By working there four hours a day----clean----clean. I worked there four hours a day for about three months, and then they hire me steady.

I see, now what sort of work did you do at first?

Serving gas, wash cars----clean-up man, you know.

Yes. Uh huh. And then you went to what auto mechanics?

And then I went to not exactly auto mechanics----say more than likely kinda charge of the used cars----colored people washing cars. I kindawas the super----super. Then in a little while I was by myself to learn. After I learn,

right away they promote me to overseeing the colored people---
to get the cars ready.

In otherwords, the service department----sort of a
service department.

Well, not the mechanical service. Not the
mechanical service but the front end----was get the car
ready for delivery.

In otherwords getting them cleaned up and ready
for delivery.

Not mechanical work but clean.

Right, I understand.

They used to put bumpers on cars that had no
bumpers.

Oh, I see.

Man that wanted bumpers, they put em on. Well,
I was more in charge of seeing those bumpers was put on.

In otherwords, in those days, if a man didn't
want bumpers, he didn't have to get---

He don't get no bumpers.

Oh, then the bumpers were an accesory?

That's right.

O.K., now how long did you stay there?

About five years----close to five years.

And you were always doing the same work during those five years?

Yes. Close to the end I start to learn a lot of mechanical work too. You see, got so I could adjust brakes. I could tune motor up. I could do a lot of work.

Yes.

Imagine five years in the place, and I got pretty well lined up to paint cars, to touch up. I mean to make look nice. That day we used to have running boards.

Yes.

And the running board was more than likely all scratched up. You know, so we straightened them out a little bit. We put a little bit of black paint and shape it up and make it look like something----recondition.

Right, now when you left Union Park Motors, where did you go?

When I left Union Park Motors, I bought myself a truck, and I intended to haul produce----intend to go into business. But I bought this truck, and it was Miller's truck from the Miller's Furniture in Wilmington. They replace the truck but took the cab and the body off----just----see, those days trucks was awfully scarce. You just couldn't buy none

but Miller's happened to have this one, and he had an old Reo. It wasn't too old but they replace the truck; but they save the body and the cab. They took that off and set it on the new.

In otherwords, when they bought the truck, all they bought was the chasis and the engine.

That's right. That's right. So I bought this truck and I went to work. I put the cab on myself, and I put the body on myself.

Did you build these or did you buy these?

I bought. I bought already used, but I set em in there, you know.

Yes.

I set the cab on and I set the body on, and I went to work; and I make two trips. I went downstate one time. I bought a load of chickens way down Bridgeville----way back on that farm, you know. Then I went up to people down there. I never know there was such people. One man had charge, and the rest of em have whip. That's all they doin----watching animals all day long. Then night when sun gets down, they come round home and bring the animals in----the chickens----everything in there. So I bought a load of chickens, and on the way up half of them died on me. They smothered. You know

the summertime and so I lost money on that deal. Then the second time I went down to get a load of peaches. Well, I didn't sell them right away, and the peaches went bad. So I lost money on that trip. So I said to myself----Well that ain't no good. So I put the truck away, and I went to work. I went to work with a contractor. When they built the first road here----1930 when they built the first dual highway here, yea. du Pont built it. It was 1930.

Yes.

Well, there some kind of a road here but not concrete. I went to work there at 40¢ hour and then, of course, right away there was an Italian foreman there. You don't remember his name, do you?(talking to his wife). No, my god, he was a Sicilian. I don't remember his name. So after I was in there for about a week, why this fellow the foreman, he had his wife come over from Italy; and he was look for a home for his wife or a room. So while it was me and my wife, and I think we had Jimmy or Theresa. I think we had one or two kids. That's all. So I said "Well, if you want a room, I got a room". Well he was tickled to death to get a room with people that he know . So right away----so he put me on cement finisher and he raise my pay to 60¢ an hour. And then,

of course, I had this truck, you know. And in those days, we put the forms out in the morning and take the forms and set em. What I mean, at night I used to work 'till eight or nine o'clock to wait 'till the concrete get settled. Then I used to take those men home----the rest of the cement finishers, you know. Then in the morning, I go get em----early in the morning and go to work. So I was making 60¢ hour and plus many hours that I put in that I wanted and get paid for the truck to take those men back and forth. So those days used to knock off \$60 or \$65.

A week?

A week. Don't you think I made a step a little bit.

They paid for the truck?

Yea.

So, worked all that summer, you know. And then, of course, I finished up the work; and I think it around this time of the year----October or November we finished up. Well, this contractor want me to go with him, you know. The contractor was from New Jersey, but I didn't want to go, so, I didn't go, and I went to work with the silk mill.

With whom?

Rayon silk mill. You know.

Oh, silk.

Rayon silk mill right down here to----well one mile down here----right down here to Deemer's Beach, if you know anything about it. It used to be silk mill there--- rayon silk mill. So I went to work there and shift work, see. So, now I bought this piece of ground there that the price of the ground was \$360, and when I see the owner I ask how much she wanted for the ground. She was a lady, Mrs. Mahoney. She said \$360, but I told her. I said "I don't have no cash". She said "Idon't want no cash" 'cause she know I don't have no cash. So I gave her \$20 and that's all I have.

And how did you pay the rest of it?

Well, then you know, I kept working seven days a week. We used to work seven days a week in that rayon---- all week for seventeen years and seven days a week shift work----change three shifts every other week, you know.

About how many hours a day did you work down there?

Eight hours.

Eight hours?

Eight hours, but, as I say, eight hours a day, seven

days a week.

Uh huh.

It was three shifts, see.

Yes.

Now, then I made em all cement blocks. See, I started making blocks. I knew a fellow that had an old machine and didn't use it. I ask him if I can have it, and I made 1800 blocks in about six months or so; and, also I used take care of trucks and this truck---what happened---I used to haul firewood with it. I used to go to Philadelphia and get grapes for Italian people to make wine. I didn't sleep for 22 or 24 hours many times, and started paying---that truck started paying off.

Yes.

Although I had to work with it. I mean the truck itself no good, but I was work with it; and I started to make a little headway, see. I kept the pay from the factory---keep the house going and what cement the trucks spend on this building on this lot, see. I made my own blocks, and I practically put em up myself; and I made room for four cars first. Then I built a little garage. Now I rented it for awhile and after awhile, you know, I started to buy some used cars on the side , which now was

my line. But I mean I know a good bit about it and my few used cars----would tune it up, paint it, make it look nice and sell it. 'Til I work the place started going pretty good. Then 1938 I took Willys franchise. I still was working in the shop. Then in 1939 I quit my job. Then was good enough. I could keep the family going.

Now, when you were working in the silk factory---

Yes.

what sort of work did you do there?

I was press operator. I had a pretty good job.

You operated a press?

Press, yes.

What sort of work did you do with the press? What was the function of the press?

Well, they used to put pulp in there. They put dry pulp. The pulp was about twelve inches long and about ten inches high and about--fit them between the planks, see. Then when you press, the planks come closed and press the pulp out----let the soda come out----pick it up with a can and dump it in some kind of a cart there. Then they take that down to the grinder and grind it. That's how the silk started to come.

Now, you had the Willys franchise, and what year

was it that you got the Willys franchise?

What year did I left?

What year did you get the Willys franchise?

1938----1938.

Uh huh. And how long did you keep that?

Until 1960.

Until 1960?

And that was about the----well, of course, the Willys still does produce the----what the jeep?

Right.

Well, they made cars too. They made station wagon.

But they were all the jeep-type automobiles?

Jeep-type automobiles, yes.

Yes. Now, when you dropped the Willys franchise, did you pick up the franchise you presently have?

Did I what?

When you dropped the Willys franchise---

Yea.

you picked up the franchise that you have right now?

Well, no. I had----I pick up the franchise we have right now there in 1956. But in 1948 I took Kaiser franchise.

Uh huh.

And then I had Kaiser and Willys.

Yes.

And then 1956 we took the Chrysler employment because Kaiser went out of business in 1953.

Right. Uh huh.

That's the reason I----otherwise I would still sell Kaiser and Willys.

I see.

But Kaiser went out of business in 1953 so then there wasn't enough for Willys to live on because then I had men in shop. My boy was coming up, you know. There just wasn't enough money with the Willys franchise 'cause the Willys----it's slow moving.

Yes.

Slow moving----and so I took the Kaiser 1948 'till 1953, but I kept the Willys till 1960----four years after I had the price implement.

I see. O.K. This pretty much brings us up-to-date.

That's right.

But I want to go back a little bit now and ask you some other questions.

Yes.

Now, when you came here it was 1923, right? Now right around that time in Italy, Mussolini was coming into power.

That's right.

What do you remember about his rise to power while you were in Italy.

Well, the only way I'm in this country on account of Mussolini. The otherwise I wouldn't been here. I tell you reason why. See, over in Italy used to be thousand, thousand people on the list to come over in this country. Thousands applications and, you know, wait. So Mussolini, one day he change the law. He said that anybody wants immigration to the U. S. or any other place don't have to go see nobody. Just write to the immigrations office in Naples. So I happened to read the papers. I don't know how the heck it was, and I made an application two or three days after I was called. Ats what I got to say about Mussolini. That's the reason I'm here. Otherwise I guess I never got here.

Now, in so far as Mussolini and his policies are concerned---

Yea.

how did they affect you while you were in Italy?

None at all. I think Mussolini was doing a very good job.

In otherwords, while you were in Italy you thought that he was doing all right?

He was good, yea. That's right.

Now, did most of the people in your area think about the same?

Except some bums----some people, you know, that wanted to live on somebody else. But as far as an honest man who wanted to work at his own business, he was all right.

In otherwords, you had no gripes about him whatsoever at all?

Not at all.

O.K. Fine. Now, when you came to this country---

Uh huh.

were there any organizations that you can think of or you remember that supported Mussolini?

No. I can't, no.

Did you ever hear of the Facist League of North America?

Yea.

Was it very active in this area?

I never pay no attention. Tell you the truth, never

know too much. I just heard about it.

I see.

I never got into nothing but to work when I came over to this country----nothing else.

You never joined any social groups or political groups of any sort?

None at all.

Did you join the Sons of Italy?

Sons of Italy, yes. I was gonna join, but then I didn't do it; although, we fourth degree Knights of Columbus, the whole three of us. You know, Jimmy and Henry----the fourth degree there. Anthony is not yet. As far as the Sons of Italy, I come pretty near joining, but I didn't.

Uh huh.

Now, when you were here when you first got here, I know you worked long hours but what was there in the way of recreation for a young man?

Very little enjoyment in the evening----more than likely saw cross ties as we used to have a good time. You probably don't remember that, but Italian people especially. They all used to go out and get these cross ties at the top of the coal right long side the track. Never

mind about the coal, but these cross ties. We used to go out and get it, and I used to haul em with the truck; and I get paid, but then we used to saw.

What was it now that you were hauling? What was that----close ties?

Oh, cross ties. Oh. O.K. Fine.

Yes, and at night we used to saw em. One night we saw three or four and another night we saw em all together, and we have a heck of a big good time. Those days there was very little recreation. We had very little nothing, and I was----every week we used to get together. Sometime I used to have a hell of a----like myself. I was the only one who had a car at the time and brother baptize---- everywhere----always was in it. Couldn't get away from it 'cause there was no car----cause nobody had any automobile. I was the only one that had one, and we used to enjoy that. We had a hell of a big time. I mean it. Better time than we have today----lots better time.

Did you ever have picnics? Did you ever go anyplace on picnics or anything like that?

Oh, well, my kids started coming up, yea. We used to go to beaches, yea. We started taking them to beaches.

Were there anytimes where the people got together in large groups to go to various places to have picnics, and so forth?

No. Not until----most time we used to get one family, two together, but the trouble was nobody had any transportation----because I dealt with used cars.

Uh huh.

Wasn't too much but it was good enough to take you there. Or I used to have that truck, see. Sometime we used to take different people----neighbors, you know. We take not too many. We used to enjoy that very much.

Didn't you used to roast pigs?(daughter to father)

Not much. Never was too much but Guido, was roast pigs, D'ascanis. We used to roast pigs sometime. We divide it up, you know. Leave it among ourselves----Italian people only.

Yes. Tell me something. In the years that you've been here did you ever experience any bias against you because you were an Italian?

Oh, my god. You wanta know something. That's plenty of it.

Well, tell me about it, will you?

Well, yes. When I bought this ground over here,

I had----was three brothers----Loveless, not Loveless----
Tidwell---Tidwell---Tidwell. Was three brothers, see.
And this ground was located where the garage is located now.
Right now. Well there was neighbors on the back and the
sides, see. There was three brothers and a fellow named
Loveless. There was four families there. Well, when I
bought this ground, right away they wanted to know "What
are you going to do with it"? "Well, I don't know".
When I started making blocks, they said"what are you going
to do with it." "Well, I don't know." Well, one was
pretty well snotty. You know, I couldn't even talk too
much, and I tried to explain to him I was making the blocks
that I might build a garage to put my truck in. I had a
truck, see. All right, boy. Well, he was always looking
at me like I was gonna steal something. So, eventually I
put a building up that holds four cars. This Guido D'ascanis,
he's a bricklayer. He helped, Of course I paid him. I done
a lot of it myself, you know. I dig the foundation. Fill it
up with concrete bricks. I used to make blocks. I used to
go down to river to get the sand----not buy it, and I used
to----we used to have a ferry here in New Castle. Used to
cross to New Jersey, you know. They had cinders there, you
see. I mean ashes. So, I get----I go down the river----go

down there and get some of that, and everytime I had a couple spare dollars I buy two bags of cement and mix em to make blocks. But these people want to know what I'm gonna do. So I tell em "I'm gonna build a garage to put my truck in". O.K. They're still looking at me. My god ----mumble, mumble----But I was raising a big garden there, see Francis----big garden. Oh, man I'm telling you I raise all kinda. So the neighbors "Oh, John, you got nice tomatoes". "Sure help yourself". "Ain't you got nice peppers". "Sure, help yourself". You know, just dealing. It's not that I care, but what the heck. I don't know. So I had to get along with them. So eventually I put the garage up, you know. Then I started buying used cars----making little of noise on them. They all looked at me, but eventually I bought the two Tidwells out. Took the houses down. Done away with it, and I bought five and one-half acres ground where them new cars are parked. Now look like---- I mean compared to the way it used to be. It used to be an old mudhole. Now we made, of course----we're putting up some more lights so you can see. The poles are up already. In a few days, we'll have them hooked up, and it will light the place a lot better. And so, yes sir, we had all kinds. And then the automobile dealer, when I took that franchise

with Willys, you know, it was Quillen Brothers----used to be right up at the corner from me. You probably know where they used to be----the Ford dealer up there. Quillen, yea. Quillen, yea. And that time, you know, I went up to get some parts, you know. And he says "Oh, no, by god John", he say. "By the way, a car run out of gas down there. By the way, you know what it was. It was a Willys".(laughter) They used to give it to me left and right. One giving it to me kidding, but at the same time. He thought, you know what I mean, that I'd never amount to nothing, see. But today, Francis, I'm just as good as they are. I don't say any better, but just as good. Thank god.

So things have worked themselves out pretty well. Now, you came here at a time when times were good. In '23 times were pretty good.

Yea, pretty good. That's right.

But, then near the end of the twenties----

Yea.

things got pretty tough.

That's right. That's right. How about a drink of coffee while we talk for a minute?

O.K. Go ahead. Back to----we're talking about

predjudice, right?

Why, what I was gonna say now----the bank even. For instance, a car----one day I try to finance the car through New Castle Bank because I dealt with New Castle Bank since I came across. The first dollar I made I put in New Castle Bank. So, one day I had a Willys sold---- a used Willys for \$1000, and I sold it to a fellow named Charlie Emhall. He's an engineer with the Pennsylvania Railroad, and I know him. He's just as good as any man but he said "I'll buy this car, but I don't have enough for a downpayment". Well, I say "Charlie, I know you for so long. That's all right". And it was the truth. So, but couldn't take our car through the finances because the loan is only so much. So I wrote the papers, and I put em in the New Castle Bank and New Castle Bank, you know, call me up. He said "Oh," he said "nothing doing. The car---- his loan is only about \$700 and you want \$1000 for Willys." He said " You know. It's not right". I then----I come and think about----I said "Now look Horace." I said "Now do you going to loan this money on his signature or do I have to put mine on it?" "Oh," he said, "You'll have to put yours on it." Well, my signature was already on the application, you see. But that's all I could say to him. I said "Do you loan

this money on his signature, or do I have to put mine on it. "Oh, you got to put yours on it". "Well," I said "then give me the \$1000." I figure----I say I'm worth \$1000. So I got the \$1000 but Quillen Brothers, no matter how many cars they sell, they just take the papers in. No questions to answer at all. They take the papers in and get the cash. But as I was, you know you're overdrawn. Well, no, no, I mean it's too much. But I said "Do you gonna loan the money on his signature or do I have to put." Well, then give me \$1000." And I got it. I got started to get a little bit on my feet then, see. Just a little bit. But we had a tough life. Most certainly everybody try to hold you back, even now. Although I can't say nothing because we have at least \$40,000 or \$50,000 working capital in there almost all the time today. Of course, still once in awhile--- one day I need \$1000 for the wife----wanted \$1000, but that was not from the garage. That was our own account, not the garage account. A little lady down there told me you have to wait thirty days. You have to put an application in. I said "Is that so?" My wife came home----"Dats what the bank said. Say you gotta put thirty days notice." I couldn't stand that, you know. What the heck. I mean Jimminy Crickets. We do all this business with the bank,

and I have to give him notice too. So I went down to the bank, and I went back there and right away----"Oh, well you know". Sure, what the heck, I mean. Then we started working like tools, but I had to earn it. Sure we had a lot of whatever you wanna call it, jealousy.

Predjudice.

Too much----too much. Still today----but today, why in otherwords, we too far. I tell you what happened. I don'tknow whether I should say this or not.

Go ahead.

But anyhow, Quillen Brothers moved out of where they used to be there. See, when they move out of there they bought the place. They were afraid I was gonna hold of it. Well, who bought it, the bank? No. The Quillen, himself.

I see.

So Gambacorta can't get ahold of it, you know. Least that's what I think, but I'm pretty sure that's true. Well, then of course, that's all right. What you gonna do about it. And I'd have bought it too. I'd have bought the place 'cause we needed more expansion. We needed----we because---- talking about me and the boys, you know. So then, of course, we bought that instead of buy that after this went through.

Then we bought that piece of ground where the used car lot is today. Now we're in a better position than then. If I'd have bought that then, we would have made a mistake.

Yes.

But then again, they were afraid we'd buy it. So they bought it, which they needed. They needed all of it. They built a new place. They didn't need it. So they sold it now. They sold it to somebody else. They sold it to George Lynch. And then, of course, we bought that place down there where we have nice spot there---nice spot. It's a better place than this.

I guess he gets more traffic down there, doesn't he?

Oh, much more because he gets down there what we don't get here. See, down there, he gets Route 40.

O.K. Now, we were talking about the times when you first got here. The times were pretty good?

Uh huh.

But near the end of the twenties----

Uh huh.

the great depression started.

That's right.

How did this hit you?

Well, I was work seven days a week and work with a truck and build my place up. I hardly had time to sleep. I mean I was busy all the time. The depression didn't bother me at all.

In otherwords, the silk factory still----

Oh, yea. That thing operated all the way through.

all through the depression, and you were there throughout the depression?

That's right.

And, at the same time, you were building up your business?

Then I work with the truck.

Now politically, have you ever bothered too much with politics in this country?

No.

You never thought too much about it? Did you ever feel that one political party----

Yea.

affected you business wise, whereas the other one didn't?

I didn't get it.

Did you ever feel when one political party was in

office , they affected your business.

No. Not at all----never did.

In otherwords, you never felt any fluctuations at all regardless of----

No, no, no, no. I figured the only way to get ahead was to get up and go to work.

Right. So this never affected you one way or another?

Neither Republicans or Democrats, no. Although I did fool with the Republican party a little bit. I used to work with a fellow named Jim Ragan, an Irishman, a very good man. He was an oiler. He used to oil the machine. Everytime he come around the presses he used to say "Oh, Johnny. Oh, Johnny". I know him and he know me, see. And he start to say "Why don't you come with me tonight. We're gonna have rally over here at Republican Party. We're gonna put out"----so yea----sure. O.K. We had plenty to eat, plenty to drink there----meet different people. I didn't care if I met em or not. I'm not interested with that. But anyhow, election day come along. He say "Johnny, wanna drive the car for me election day"? He say "You make \$25". "Certainly drive the car for you". That way I got into it a little bit. I got to meet a lot of people. You remember

Herbert Barnes, the colonel of the police force?

Herbert Barnes? I didn't know who he was. I've heard of him.

But you heard of him?

Yes.

Well, at the time, you know what I mean, I got to know him pretty much. In fact he start to come around election day, you know what I mean? Say "Johnny, you see what you could do for me", you know. And I got meet ---- but not to feel it for anything----for little bit I can get out of it----that's all.

Yes.

I never depend on no one at all.

Can you draw any comparisons. Now I know there are great comparisons between the time when you first came here and the present, but what could you during the years that you've been here----

Uh huh.

could you point out any specific time when there were very definite changes taking place?

You mean situation over the country?

Yes. Situation over the country, and how it affected you. Were there any specific periods that you can

point out when very definite changes were taking place. For example, right now, we can point out and say there are very definite changes taking place today.

Yea.

Changes that affect the whole society. Could you go back and pick out any particular---

The way they affected me, you mean?

The way they affected you and society in general.

No never----never. The situation over the country never affect me. If it did, I don't know.

Right. Regardless of what the changes were that were occurring in the society in general, you never felt---

Never felt any different from the politics, whatsoever; but also, I could say this. The way it's been going the last few years----the last we say----I don't know--- we way well four, six, seven years, I think country going in worse direction.

I see, but is this affecting you in any way?

Not at all. Not at all.

Now, concerning the same length of time again, taking the Italian community as a community in this area----

Yes.

taking the Italian people, would you ever say the

Italian people had a spokesman in the community who could voice their needs and their desires? Do you ever think that the Italians ever did have a spokesman around here?

The spokesman-----what do you call a spokesman?

Well, for example, you have today the question of the negroes and the----

Yea.

problem of them gaining equal citizenship--what they call equal citizenship.

That's right.

Now I think we can assume and say without any doubt whatsoever that the Italian when he first came to this country, and for many, many years-----

Yes.

enjoyed something less than second-class citizenship.

Yea.

I think we can say this rather safely in that the Italian was discriminated against and the Italian couldn't get a good job.

No.

About the only areas that were opened to him were the areas in the construction field.

The worst job there was.

Right. The worst jobs there were. Now, certainly we can't say the Italians were satisfied with this even though there were never any problems in so far as social problems are concerned with the Italians rioting or anything of this nature. But was there anyone who could ever speak up for the Italians?

No. But the Italian never complained. The Italian never---we never had anybody to stick up for Italian, not in New Castle.

O.K.

But they never complained---never say. Oh, by theirself, you know, but that's about all. They never got out front and demonstrated or raising hell with the law. They never did. The Italian people took what's coming and made best of it and got on top of it.

Right. In other words the Italians were not satisfied with the station that was assigned to them---

That's right.

but yet they never did cause any problems.

Not at all whatsoever.

They never caused any problems for anyone because of this?

No, sir.

Well, how did they remedy this? How would you say they remedied this situation?

Well, number one, I think it was because they know how to live. I mean they never have too much.

I know, but how did they get to better this situation?

Oh, how did they get to better themselves?

Yes.

Well, just sacrifice, work hard. That was all---- just work hard.

In otherwords, if there was less to be had, they made out with it. They were satisfied. They made out with it. They just adjusted.

They adjust themselves according to their means. That's right.

O.K. Fine. I think this covers just about everything, unless there is something more you would like to add.

No. No. No. I don't know what to add, Francis. Whatever you----

That's enough, I guess. O.K.