



Citation for this collection:

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Mr. Amerigo Bonvetti

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: This is an interview with Mr. Amerigo Bonvetti. Where were you born?

Mr. Bonvetti: Italy.

Interviewer: Do you know where in Italy you were born?

Mr. Bonvetti: Bellante.

Interviewer: Bellante.

Mr. Bonvetti: Teramo.

Interviewer: Do you know – could you spell that for me?

Mr. Bonvetti: B-E-L-N – B...

Interviewer: B-E-L-A-N...

Mr. Bonvetti: T-E, Bellante.

Interviewer: So the spelling is B-E-L- L-A-N-T-E?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what was that in Ter...?

Mr. Bonvetti: Teramo.

Interviewer: In Abruzzo?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah, Teramo Abruzzo. That's a province.

Interviewer: Teramo then, T-E-R-A-M-O, right, Teramo. Okay, fine. And that's in Abruzzo?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. What year were you born?

Mr. Bonvetti: January 1904.

Interviewer: 1904. What did your father do in Italy?

Mr. Bonvetti: I guess a farmer.

Interviewer: He was a farmer? And how old were you when you came to the United States?

Mr. Bonvetti: Nine years old.

Interviewer: You were 9 years old, so that would make 1913 that you came here.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did you ever go to school at all in Italy?

Mr. Bonvetti: I think I did *[inaudible]* **[0:01:17]** how long, I don't remember.

Interviewer: You don't remember?

Mr. Bonvetti: But I remember one time there are a bunch of kids go out and taken a walk. I did remember that.

Interviewer: You just have like think memories of, you know, flashes of what happened when you were a child? Do you remember much about Italy?

Mr. Bonvetti: Very little.

Interviewer: Very little. Do you remember coming to the United States?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yes, sir.

Interviewer: Do you remember how you came to United States?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yes, by boat.

Interviewer: By boat. Now, I don't expect that you would remember the name of the boat, but...

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah, I do remember that.

Interviewer: You do remember the name? What was the name of the boat?

Mr. Bonvetti: Ancona.

Interviewer: The Ancona, A-N-C-O-N-A. Is that an Italian ship?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Now, where did you live in Italy from?

Mr. Bonvetti: I think it must have been Naples.

Interviewer: Naples. You don't remember how you got from Bellante to Naples, do you?

Mr. Bonvetti: I think it must have been by train, but I don't remember.

Interviewer: You don't remember. Okay. Do you remember how long it took to get from Naples to the United States?

Mr. Bonvetti: No.

Interviewer: Do you remember what it was like aboard ship at all?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Could you tell me what the...

Mr. Bonvetti: I was *[inaudible]* [0:02:26] I used to sleep with my mother.

Interviewer: And what was it like? How were the conditions aboard ship?

Mr. Bonvetti: Just like – what do you call them, the...

Interviewer: Bunk beds.

Mr. Bonvetti: ...bunker beds.

Interviewer: About how high were they stack? I mean, how many?

Mr. Bonvetti: Two.

Interviewer: Two?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Two. Did you have a room or a cabin all to yourself?

Mr. Bonvetti: No.

Interviewer: About how many people are in the cabin?

Mr. Bonvetti: I don't remember. There was quite a few.

Interviewer: **[inaudible] [0:02:52]**. It wasn't just a small cabin but it was probably a whole big apartment? Is that it?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: And there were all women and children in there?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you remember what the conditions other than that were like aboard ship? Was it pleasant aboard ship? Do you have enough to eat?

Mr. Bonvetti: I couldn't tell you.

Interviewer: You don't remember that?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: You don't remember whether or not they're all Italians there or whether it was mix Italians, French, Greeks.

Mr. Bonvetti: No, I couldn't tell you.

Interviewer: That you don't remember. Okay. Now, when you first land in the United States, you assumed that you landed in New York but you're not sure.

Mr. Bonvetti: I'm so sorry. I think we landed in Philadelphia.

Interviewer: In Philadelphia?

Mr. Bonvetti: I'm not sure either, but I think it was in Philadelphia.

Interviewer: Why did your father – did you come up with your father and your mother?

Mr. Bonvetti: No. My father was here.

Interviewer: Your father was already here.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah. And just me, my brother and two sisters and my mother.

Interviewer: Were in Italy – were left in Italy?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: In other words, you came over because your father sent for you?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah. My father – and I had a brother.

Interviewer: You had a brother here also.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah. He came 1907 I think.

Interviewer: Now, why did your father come to the United States?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, that's a pretty hard question. To answer, I think he couldn't get a better living over there. I guess came over here and get a better living.

Interviewer: He came over here to make a better living. Okay. Now, when you first arrived here in the United States, we'll assume that was in Philadelphia that you landed, did your father and your brother meet you with your brother and sisters?

Mr. Bonvetti: I don't remember.

Interviewer: You don't remember that? Do you remember where you went after you landed in Philadelphia?

Mr. Bonvetti: I remember here come down in Pennsylvania railroad station. We got out planet car *[inaudible]* **[0:04:35]** and had – we happened to meet here with a conductor which knew my father and he let us off right Ethan *[phonetic]* **[0:04:43]** Lincoln, somebody's house which we know.

Interviewer: In other words, you got a train in Philadelphia?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yes.

Interviewer: By yourself. Where did you have a tag on like your destination?

Mr. Bonvetti: I think my answer to that is I don't remember either.

Interviewer: You don't remember. But you got on a train in Philadelphia...

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: ...you came to Wilmington, and as you got off the cabby, you got off at the Pennsylvania station?

[0:05:02]

Mr. Bonvetti: Pennsylvania station.

Interviewer: And you got off, you got to Charlie and took you to Ethan *[phonetic]* **[0:05:08]**.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah. We met a conductor which knew my father and he took right to us.

Interviewer: And so you going to *[inaudible]* **[0:05:12]** like...

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: And did you father have a house of his own then?

Mr. Bonvetti: No, he was living – boarding with some people.

Interviewer: He's boarding with some people. Now, after the family got here, did he get a house of his own then?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: What kind of work did you father do here?

Mr. Bonvetti: I think he was a laborer.

Interviewer: He's laborer in the construction gang?

Mr. Bonvetti: I guess, I think all around.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, what are your earliest recollections of United States when you first arrived here in Wilmington?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, myself, I like this country.

Interviewer: What were your impressions? I mean, I know you liked it but, you know, how when you first get here, you look around, you see things, a lot different things that you have – you were used to before. Do you remember what your first impressions were?

Mr. Bonvetti: Maybe the first time I will see the colored people.

Interviewer: This was...

Mr. Bonvetti: Myself.

Interviewer: This was probably the most last thing impression that one to make – the thing that made the biggest impression. How did you feel when you first saw them?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, no reaction at all.

Interviewer: No reaction. I know that some people I've spoken to say that when they first saw them, they're scared. They've never seen any colored people before. Okay. Well, this impressed you a lot then?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Was there anything else?

Mr. Bonvetti: No, I was just small. I've didn't...

Interviewer: Okay. Now, when you first got here, did your father and your mother has thought you going to school here?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did they put you in school? Do you remember where you started school?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yes.

Interviewer: Where was that?

Mr. Bonvetti: Number 11.

Interviewer: Number 11 school.

Mr. Bonvetti: Public school.

Interviewer: Yeah. Public school, and where was that located?

Mr. Bonvetti: 19th Scott.

Interviewer: 19th Scott. Now, that today is part of Padua *[phonetic]* *[0:06:55]* Academy, right?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: So you have this *[inaudible]* *[0:06:57]* school.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Now, what was it like for you when you first started school and not knowing any English?

Mr. Bonvetti: It's pretty hard.

Interviewer: It's pretty hard in what way?

Mr. Bonvetti: I don't understand the language.

Interviewer: You didn't understand what they said to you and you couldn't communicate with any of them?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah. You will need somebody else to translate it.

Interviewer: So there are some children there that were – spoke Italian and spoke English...

Mr. Bonvetti: That's right.

Interviewer: ...and they would translate it for you and whenever someone said Italian to you and vice versa, right?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Were there many Italian kids in the school at that time?

Mr. Bonvetti: I think there were.

Interviewer: Yeah. But you didn't have any trouble talking with the young kids. So your problem is mostly with the teachers, is that it?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah. With the young kids, I guess you don't have any problems about it.

Interviewer: Yes. Did you ever have any problems in school when you first came here other than the language problem?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah, I guess. There are some time I didn't understand till you got somebody translate.

Interviewer: I know. So it's just a language problem.

Mr. Bonvetti: That's right.

Interviewer: They treat you all right, didn't they?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, in the school, were they mostly Italian children or not Italian children? Do you remember that?

Mr. Bonvetti: I guess, there was all kinds.

Interviewer: There were mix of pretty good and you really don't remember this?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yes.

Interviewer: How long did you stay in school?

Mr. Bonvetti: I went to school about four years.

Interviewer: About four years. And after that, but you had *[inaudible]* **[0:08:23]** about 17 then?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah, I started in 1914 in January and I quit 1917 – no, 1914 in January and I quit 1917.

Interviewer: You quit in 1917.

Mr. Bonvetti: I went to work, never went back to school.

Interviewer: You went to work. Now, where did you go to work?

Mr. Bonvetti: I were around different side trees, Bancroft, paper mill. My friend *[inaudible]* **[0:08:47]**.

Interviewer: Do you remember what your first job was?

Mr. Bonvetti: Bancroft, I think.

Interviewer: Bancroft. Do you remember what the pay was back in 1914?

Mr. Bonvetti: I think it was \$0.25 an hour.

Interviewer: \$0.25 an hour. Yeah, that was pretty tough. Now, how about the hours, how many hours a day did you work?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, I didn't work really longer because I didn't like it.

Interviewer: But do you remember what the – how many hours a day you...

Mr. Bonvetti: I think it was eight hours.

Interviewer: Eight or ten.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: You don't remember which. You think it was eight?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah, I think it was eight.

Interviewer: Was it five days a week or six?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, I didn't stay out long at those.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. Why didn't you like working at Bancroft?

Mr. Bonvetti: It was a little bit tough.

Interviewer: Little bit – what kind of work did you do there? And that's a textile.

Mr. Bonvetti: It's textile and you *[inaudible]* **[0:09:33]**.

Interviewer: In other words, you're dying in or selling?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah, you get the thing *[inaudible]* **[0:09:38]** that form that coming out in the shades, so I'm wet.

Interviewer: Yes. And you had to take...

Mr. Bonvetti: I'm just waiting and then throw down, so we'll take up when they pull that out.

Interviewer: Yes. Okay. I understand. Now, after you left Bancroft, do you remember where you went?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, I went to the Morraca shop *[phonetic]* **[0:09:58]** swords.

[0:10:00]

Interviewer: That's a...

[Cross talk]

Mr. Bonvetti: Swords Morraca *[phonetic]* **[0:10:01]** shop.

Interviewer: Where was that located?

Mr. Bonvetti: 4th in Greenhill.

Interviewer: 4th in Greenhill? Of course, it's not there anymore.

Mr. Bonvetti: No, it burned down.

Interviewer: And how long did you work there?

Mr. Bonvetti: I worked there a couple of time, not for long.

Interviewer: Do you remember what sort of work it was or what it was like?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, I was running out at one time there.

Interviewer: And what else did you besides running *[inaudible]* **[0:10:25]**?

Mr. Bonvetti: Then there was work with the *[inaudible]* **[0:10:31]** skin putting the dye on it.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. And that sort of thing?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you remember what the pay was there?

Mr. Bonvetti: I think I would make about \$40 a week.

Interviewer: About \$40?

Mr. Bonvetti: I guess it was before the war or right after the war.

Interviewer: Right after World War II?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh, that would be around when, around 1920 then?

Mr. Bonvetti: About 1920, '21.

Interviewer: The pays had gone up considerably?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, since before the war. How did the war itself affect you, World War I?

Mr. Bonvetti: World War – well, the first war, it didn't affect me, I was young.

Interviewer: How about your family, what effect did it have in your family?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, no effect at all.

Interviewer: Do you remember during the First World War when a lot of the young Italian men went back to Italy and gone to the army?

Mr. Bonvetti: No.

Interviewer: Do you remember any of that at all?

Mr. Bonvetti: No.

Interviewer: You don't remember any of that? I mean, a lot of them were draft in from – you know, they got paid first to get back and so...

Mr. Bonvetti: I don't remember.

Interviewer: What was the feeling with the Italian people around here in general about the war?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, I was young, I didn't...

Interviewer: You didn't really pay too much attention?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah. I didn't pay much attention.

Interviewer: I want to ask you something else before we go on. What were the houses like before World War I, the houses that most of the Italian people lived in?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, the house, didn't have much electricity.

Interviewer: But didn't have any at all, did they or...?

Mr. Bonvetti: They have from places.

Interviewer: There were some.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: And most of the people have what, gas lamps in the house?

Mr. Bonvetti: No, oil lamps.

Interviewer: Oil lamps. Oil – how about central heating, did they have centralized heating in those days or?

Mr. Bonvetti: Very few.

Interviewer: Very few. What was the most common type of heating that anybody had in their house?

Mr. Bonvetti: Coal stove.

Interviewer: Coal stove? Where was that generally located?

Mr. Bonvetti: In the kitchen.

Interviewer: In the kitchen. That was what, but the only stove in the house, right?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah. Stove and gas, and generally have a gas.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. So, okay. So there wasn't any central heating in those days?

Mr. Bonvetti: No.

Interviewer: How about plumbing? What was the plumbing like if there was any?

Mr. Bonvetti: They have – they have plumbing. Inside toward the tub.

Interviewer: Would you – was this rarity though rather than the ordinary thing? Would you say most people did not have...

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, as far as I remember, they had inside the and also outside, with running water.

Interviewer: Yes. In other words, a lot of house in those days but the only running water in the house was maybe in the kitchen, you know, or someone has a bathroom upstairs...

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: But there's no toilet upstairs, just wash basin and a bath tub, but no toilet. The toilet was outside. This was a lot in places, but...

Mr. Bonvetti: In *[inaudible] [0:13:21]* is they had a toilet inside and...

Interviewer: And this was prior to World War I.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, right, of course, you lived in house most of the time. Could you tell me about the various jobs you had in chronological sequence and what the most of them were like.

Mr. Bonvetti: When I was young, I was about 15, I was working railroad.

Interviewer: Which railroad then?

Mr. Bonvetti: B&O *[phonetic] [0:13:50]* railroad.

Interviewer: B&O *[phonetic] [0:13:51]*.

Mr. Bonvetti: *[inaudible] [0:13:53]* foreman and actually give me a job. I was bigger my age and got a word it.

Interviewer: So you're working on a truck, is this...

Mr. Bonvetti: It's track.

Interviewer: The truck. What sort of work did you do?

Mr. Bonvetti: Labor.

Interviewer: Labor work. What was that moving out all tires, putting on new tires?

Mr. Bonvetti: New *[inaudible]* [0:14:08] everything.

Interviewer: Yeah, so the...

Mr. Bonvetti: Blow the *[inaudible]* [0:14:11] everything.

Interviewer: Knows about everything. Were they mostly all Italians on the...?

Mr. Bonvetti: Most of them *[inaudible]* [0:14:18].

Interviewer: How long did you stay there?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, I wasn't there very long because I didn't – really didn't like it.

Interviewer: About how long – could you – do you remember about how long?

Mr. Bonvetti: A couple of years, I guess.

Interviewer: A couple of years. Where did you go after that?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, I worked different places. I got paper mill down under the *[inaudible]* [0:14:40].

Interviewer: What paper mill is that? Do you remember the name of it? It's *[inaudible]* [0:14:45] today, isn't it?

Mr. Bonvetti: No. *[inaudible]* [0:14:47].

Interviewer: By the zoo, wasn't it...

Mr. Bonvetti: It's under bridge – we were by the bridge, under the bridge here.

Interviewer: Yeah. I think that was *[inaudible]* [0:14:57], wasn't it?

Mr. Bonvetti: No, *[inaudible]* [0:14:59].

Unknown voice: It's under the Corporation of America.

[Cross talk]

[0:15:03]

Interviewer: Is that what your *[inaudible]* **[0:15:04]**?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. And how long did you stay there?

Mr. Bonvetti: This was about 1919, I think during the war, then from there, I went to the Swords Morraca *[phonetic]* **[0:15:15]** shop.

Interviewer: From there, you went to Morraca shop *[phonetic]* **[0:15:17]**.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: And from the Morraca shop *[phonetic]* **[0:15:19]**?

Mr. Bonvetti: Then the Morraca shop *[phonetic]* **[0:15:21]** burned down.

Interviewer: Uh-huh?

Mr. Bonvetti: I was out of job.

Interviewer: Was it very hard to get another job?

Mr. Bonvetti: That's when my brother took me to *[inaudible]* **[0:15:29]**.

Interviewer: Who did you work for then?

Mr. Bonvetti: Sabatino.

Interviewer: Sabatino, this is Earnest Sabatino and Son?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Is that how you learn to train with?

Mr. Bonvetti: I started with them but then I left everyone to the Cantara *[phonetic]* **[0:15:44]**.

Interviewer: Cantara *[phonetic]* **[0:15:45]**.

Mr. Bonvetti: Same Cantara *[phonetic]* [0:15:46].

Interviewer: And how long did you stay with Cantara?

Mr. Bonvetti: I stayed there a good while. I learned my *[inaudible]* [0:15:50].

Interviewer: Now, what was the pay like in the construction?

Mr. Bonvetti: Oh, I started for \$7 to \$8 a week.

Interviewer: And how days was that – how many hours a day was that?

Mr. Bonvetti: Sometime *[inaudible]* [0:16:05] I got to put device on the job.

Interviewer: Now, you didn't count the hours?

Mr. Bonvetti: No.

Interviewer: You just stayed there until they tell you to go home?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Is that it?

Mr. Bonvetti: That's it.

Interviewer: And how many days a week was it?

Mr. Bonvetti: I used to work there five I think, no, six as I started, as we're going along, five and a half then it went to five days.

Interviewer: And how about with Cantara?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, the same thing.

Interviewer: About the same thing? Did they – these were Italian contractors, did they have all Italians working for them?

Mr. Bonvetti: Most of them, I think, at that time.

Interviewer: How did they treat their fellow Italian? Did they treat them all right or they just...?

Mr. Bonvetti: They're treating me all right.

Interviewer: But they expect the days work out?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, I guess they did.

Interviewer: Yeah. There – I mean, there's no nonsense about them, right?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, what was the pay like at that time? Well, you told me \$8 a day, but that was when you're starting as an apprentice, right?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: And after you finished your training – rather that was \$8 a week, now, did they?

Mr. Bonvetti: I think we're making about \$1 or \$1 an hour.

Interviewer: It did go to \$1 an hour?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah, I think we're making \$1.

Interviewer: About what year was that?

Mr. Bonvetti: That's on 1922.

Interviewer: And it was about \$1 an hour then?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah, but sometimes I'm getting \$1 or \$90.

Interviewer: When the provision started, how did this affect most of the people you know and how did it affect you?

Mr. Bonvetti: It's like, just like anybody else.

Interviewer: So all the beer garden *[phonetic] [0:17:40]* shutdown.

Mr. Bonvetti: I didn't have anything to me because I was too young to go beer garden *[phonetic] [0:17:45]*.

Interviewer: So it didn't bother you at all?

Mr. Bonvetti: No.

Interviewer: I guess most Italians made their own wine at home anyhow.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah. My father has made wine, made some – for home use.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. So this didn't affect Italians in their home at all because they still have their wine, right? In the early '20s, Mussolini was rising the power in Italy. How did this affect the Italians in this country? What did they say about him? How did they feel about Mussolini?

Mr. Bonvetti: I don't know. I'm not interested about product *[inaudible]* **[0:18:19]** days.

Interviewer: But did you remember when he was rising?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah, I remember.

Interviewer: But you don't remember what *[inaudible]* **[0:18:26]** thing or they think he was a great guy, a good man, a bad man.

Mr. Bonvetti: Oh, he's the same as good for the *[inaudible]* **[0:18:32]** people. That's what I heard. I don't know.

Interviewer: He did lot of good for the...

Mr. Bonvetti: *[inaudible]* **[0:18:36]**.

Interviewer: Really, you don't know what affect and how they think or hear at all?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: How about Father Tucker *[phonetic]* **[0:18:43]** now? For the longest time here, the Italians never had a church. They go to St. Thomas. They go to St. Peter or whoever. They live close to it. Now, Father Tucker *[phonetic]* **[0:18:54]** came here and built a church. Now, he got here around when, 1919, 1920. Started there, working with Italian people.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah. I forgot what year but it was pretty early.

Interviewer: It was around at that time. What effect would you say he's coming here and work the Italian *[inaudible]* **[0:19:10]** the Italian people?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, like it didn't affect, he quieted the Italian people down.

Interviewer: He quieted – in what way would say he quieted them?

Mr. Bonvetti: Build the church and then started going to the church and they quiet down.

Interviewer: Well, what were they like before they had it?

Mr. Bonvetti: They were a little wild.

Interviewer: A little wild, and do you say that?

Mr. Bonvetti: I say.

Interviewer: How did they express this wildness? This is interesting. How did they express it? Now, you say a little bit wild. How did they *[inaudible]* **[0:19:38]**?

Mr. Bonvetti: Oh, I guess, they got more *[inaudible]* **[0:19:40]** and the church is got seems...

Interviewer: The church had an influence on them

Mr. Bonvetti: That's right.

Interviewer: Did – would you say that a lot of them or – didn't go to church before...?

Mr. Bonvetti: I didn't go before, they I went afterwards.

Interviewer: They went afterwards. Now, when you say it quieted them down, what did they use to do before? I'm wondering about how they had to be quieted down.

[0:20:10]

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, it's – the church had *[inaudible]* **[0:20:13]** and club. I think they quit going to bars and have the fights.

Interviewer: In other words, going out to the club and gotten out of a lot of programs and beer gardens and...

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah, that's about it. That's about it.

Interviewer: ...it quieted them down in the sense that when they played ball, they played ball.

Mr. Bonvetti: That's about it.

Interviewer: They didn't fight as much as they used to before, is that it?

Mr. Bonvetti: That's about it.

Interviewer: In other words, it had a sort of a civilizing effect on them and I'd say almost it brought them back in the society, huh?

Mr. Bonvetti: That's right.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, what are the *[inaudible]* [0:20:49] in '29, how did this affect the Italian community?

Mr. Bonvetti: That was tough.

Interviewer: It is? But in what way? Well, most of the people out of work?

Mr. Bonvetti: It lasted pretty long *[inaudible]* [0:21:05].

Interviewer: It lasted a long while, but how did the people live when they weren't working and didn't have any money coming in?

Mr. Bonvetti: I guess, out of relief.

Interviewer: How about before relief came then, before they could get any relief? What did they live on that?

Mr. Bonvetti: I don't know. But there's had the relief then.

Interviewer: Right. Did they have the relief from the beginning of the Hoover?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah. The president started in 1929.

Interviewer: But Hoover was president when the crisis start?

Mr. Bonvetti: Was he president then, then he was important.

Interviewer: Yeah, he was president and when Roosevelt came in, then he started this, right?

Mr. Bonvetti: I didn't come into...

Interviewer: Who's *[inaudible]* **[0:21:42]** '30?

Mr. Bonvetti: *[inaudible]* **[0:21:43]**.

Interviewer: I think '30.

Unidentified voice: Roosevelt was '30-'31.

[Cross talk]

Mr. Bonvetti: Because the depression lasted about '29 to '34 or '35.

Interviewer: Well, for *[inaudible]* **[0:21:57]**, I think it lasted about the start of World War II and it's very tough. Well, and they really started to come out of it when World War II started and...

Mr. Bonvetti: You know, I better live in the struggle, go right the rest *[inaudible]* **[0:22:10]**.

Interviewer: Yeah, you did what during depression?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Could you tell me about that?

Mr. Bonvetti: I had a brother in business. He got to pray for me and of course whether they were rising before, they'd helped me out. I'm not making any money but I made a living. And I give it up when Brickland *[phonetic]* **[0:22:27]** was struggling for a while, then tied up again. I was in *[inaudible]* **[0:22:32]** mushroom again for the winter.

Interviewer: You're growing mushrooms only in the winter and you didn't bring any work in the summer.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah. It was about two years, two winter.

Interviewer: And the mushrooms kept you going through the...

Mr. Bonvetti: But the mushrooms then is – couldn't get up money for them.

Interviewer: *[inaudible]* **[0:22:48]** hard to sell?

Mr. Bonvetti: I had \$0.15 a pound and nobody want them.

Interviewer: Really?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah, nobody buy them.

Interviewer: I think it's pretty tough. All right. Now, who started the *[inaudible]* **[0:23:02]** the depression, late '30s and in the late '30s and worst are World War II started in Europe, we didn't get into it to '41. Now, when we finally digging in and we're here in the opposite side from Italy during – the First World War, United States and Italy were on the same side.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: But during the second, they're on the opposite sides. How did this affect the Italian people in the Italian community here?

Mr. Bonvetti: I guess it's – I guess that they don't like it very much.

Interviewer: They were real unhappy about this turn of events?

Mr. Bonvetti: That was in this *[inaudible]* **[0:23:42]** a lot of Italian boys over there.

Interviewer: You know, some people were a little bit disturbed about that you think...

Mr. Bonvetti: *[inaudible]* **[0:23:49]**.

Interviewer: ...because they have a lot of problems there, a lot of *[inaudible]* **[0:23:53]** cheating it on customs.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: And this disturbed a lot of people, do you think?

Mr. Bonvetti: I guess it did.

Interviewer: Yeah. What I supposed this is something you think about. What was it like during the war, during the Second World War over here? Did – were the Italian people maltreated in any way because Italy – where was Italy?

Mr. Bonvetti: No, I don't think so.

Interviewer: Do you think people treated you the same as before?

Mr. Bonvetti: The same as before because, you know, this country, most of them are citizen.

Interviewer: Tell me, did you ever experience any discrimination because you were an Italian?

Mr. Bonvetti: No.

Interviewer: Is there anybody ever treat you differently that...

Mr. Bonvetti: No.

Interviewer: You never have one anything like that?

Mr. Bonvetti: Because I was young when I came over here, nine years old, I think there was no difference when I was born here or right across.

Interviewer: Yeah. Did you ever belong to any political or social clubs *[inaudible]* **[0:24:50]** and when I say Democratic club or Republican club?

Mr. Bonvetti: No.

Interviewer: One like Eagles or *[inaudible]* **[0:24:55]**.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah. Eagles and Sons of Columbus.

Interviewer: You belong to those organizations?

[0:25:00]

Mr. Bonvetti: I belong there for a while then I dropped it.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. When did you go into these organizations? Do you remember how long that was?

Mr. Bonvetti: When I was in the Sons of Columbus, pretty early.

Interviewer: Was there any particular reason why you weren't there long?

Mr. Bonvetti: No, just to get together there as...

Interviewer: Social organization. Now, you didn't go in there because they had sick benefits or...

Mr. Bonvetti: On the Eagle, I did.

Interviewer: The Eagle – the Eagles, you did.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. That's it. What effect the World War II had on you and on most of the Italian people that you knew? What effect would you say it have?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, *[inaudible] [0:25:49]* it got me. It didn't work.

Interviewer: They almost dropped you, but are they a little too old for us?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, it got to us. Well, when by I got it, they dropped to the edge and leave it and I got over.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Well, other than that, what effect did it have on you? And how did it affect your standard of life?

Mr. Bonvetti: Oh, it didn't affect me at all. To me, it didn't.

Interviewer: Would you say your standard of living got better as the war ended or...?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah, I would say they were getting work and made a living.

Unidentified voice: You had to work in a *[inaudible] [0:26:23]*.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah, but it changes and I was a bit quiet in the room and scares. I was *[inaudible] [0:26:27]* ship guard for about three, four weeks. I didn't like it, I left, quit. I think they classified me. When they hates, what that *[inaudible] [0:26:36]* not enough. I still got the card.

Interviewer: All right. Now, if you were to, you know, back on your lifetime, what would you say had been the biggest change that you've experienced since you've been in this country?

Mr. Bonvetti: I don't know.

Interviewer: It's all right to pick out just one thing. I mean, there's changes been occurring constantly. What would you say this biggest change that – you could think, the thing that affected your life the most and so far as changes are concerned?

Mr. Bonvetti: I don't know.

Interviewer: You can't think of anything?

Mr. Bonvetti: I can't think of anything.

Interviewer: Let me see if I can maybe suggest a couple of things. When you first came to this country, *[inaudible] [0:27:28]* maybe you have an ice box.

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: All right. Today, you have a refrigerator. When you first came to this country, you maybe used at all coal or wood burning your stove to cook on in the kitchen, but today, you got gas or electric.

Mr. Bonvetti: Oh, yeah, that's big change in that way.

Interviewer: Yeah. I remember that you didn't have any centralized heating like centralized heating today. You have hot and cold where you didn't have it then.

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, *[inaudible] [0:27:54]* buy ice any other day.

Interviewer: Right. And then you start to buy ice to keep things cold.

Mr. Bonvetti: That's right.

Interviewer: So did it keep that cold?

Mr. Bonvetti: No.

Interviewer: All right.

Mr. Bonvetti: Because the *[inaudible] [0:28:02]* on the floor.

Interviewer: No, *[inaudible] [0:28:05]* into the pan into the ice box.

Unidentified voice: With the transportation, too, over here. *[inaudible] [0:28:09]*.

Interviewer: Transportations also.

Unidentified voice: You were able to travel across country where before you couldn't get anything for.

Interviewer: Of all these changes that are happening, that have occurred, which do you think has affected you the most?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, I don't know. And the car, *[inaudible]* **[0:28:27]**.

Interviewer: So the car is not – when you said car, was it the thing that has been the greatest influence of your life since the biggest change?

Mr. Bonvetti: Oh, that and I remember the first day, it probably had *[inaudible]* **[0:28:41]** they had boarders.

Interviewer: Right. And has household boarders, right?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: So about how many? How about on the floors, can you tell how on the floors?

Mr. Bonvetti: Just bare wood.

Interviewer: Bare wood floor, right. How the walls? What was on the walls?

Mr. Bonvetti: Paper.

Interviewer: Wall paper?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: And that's about it. In other words, the houses were pretty plain and simple, right?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Another thing, how about the diet, the food that you ate those days and what you eat today? Is there much of a change in your diet?

Mr. Bonvetti: No, the same thing because my mother seems to know how to get it right and had to do things. *[inaudible]* **[0:29:19]** we didn't starve.

Interviewer: Now, you didn't starve, I realized that. I don't think any Italians ever starved. I mean, when it came even worse, came to worst, they go out in the fields and pick *[inaudible]* **[0:29:28]** or like pick grains, right? They always found something to eat when things get tough *[inaudible]* **[0:29:35]** just go around and they could find their out in the field.

But I'm talking about the kind of food you used to eat before. Before, maybe you ate a lot of pasta and I think...

Mr. Bonvetti: My mother get a bag of flour and – for the winter. And when winter come along, you get – we have to make macaroni in about 15, 20 minutes.

Interviewer: You had a lot of macaroni, right?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you eat as much macaroni today as you did then?

[0:30:00]

Mr. Bonvetti: No.

Interviewer: How about meat? Did you eat much meat in the early days here?

Mr. Bonvetti: In my young days, I didn't eat much meat at all.

Interviewer: Didn't eat much at all. When you did eat meat, what kind of meat was it?

Mr. Bonvetti: Well, I guess, I think kind of a meat you better live at all.

Interviewer: What would you say is rather the most expensive kinds of meat when you were a young man here? Like can you remember?

Mr. Bonvetti: No.

Interviewer: ***[inaudible]*** **[0:30:26]** you say chicken?

Mr. Bonvetti: No, I don't think so.

Interviewer: How about turkey?

Mr. Bonvetti: I don't remember.

Interviewer: You don't – you don't remember which – what kind was. I think chicken was pretty expensive in those days. Chicken is a very expensive meat, much more so it is today. Chicken was much more expensive compared when we're speaking than it is today. Chicken has become cheaper because today, they produced it...

Mr. Bonvetti: They produce it.

Interviewer: ...mass producer wants it more.

Unidentified voice: **[inaudible] [0:30:58]** here in dollar.

Interviewer: Right. It's **[inaudible] [0:31:01]**.

Unidentified voice: **[inaudible] [0:31:02]**.

Interviewer: The chicken industry, right. And have you ever regretted coming to United States?

Mr. Bonvetti: No.

Interviewer: Did you – now, sir, you didn't remember much of it, like, but have you ever thought you want to go back there?

Mr. Bonvetti: No.

Interviewer: Even for visit?

Mr. Bonvetti: No, I don't care.

Interviewer: Never have any desire whatsoever?

Mr. Bonvetti: No, I never had any desire to go back.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, you know, we hear a lot of people talking about what it was like in the good old days, you know, the times that I like they used to be and days and things are bad today and kind of getting worst. Have you ever had a desire to return to the good old days if you could turn back the clock, will you?

Mr. Bonvetti: Anywhere, I would buy it.

Interviewer: In what way would that be?

Mr. Bonvetti: I don't know. Today, you got too much television. You stay in a room, locked in the room all night long.

Interviewer: In other words, this is probably the change that has affected you the most, right?

Mr. Bonvetti: Uh-hmm.

Interviewer: The fact that – when you were a younger man years ago, people used to do more things together and used to see more one another and people were probably friendlier, do you think?

Mr. Bonvetti: We used to go to the park and have a lot of fun and you have four, five fathers together going to the park and having a lot of fun.

Interviewer: How about the older people like your parents, they got together as a neighbors and go out to neighbor's house?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah. They go there and played cards *[inaudible]* [0:32:22] with that.

Interviewer: Speaking about that, but you just enjoyed one another's company, right?

Mr. Bonvetti: That's right.

Interviewer: And this is one thing you don't do today.

Mr. Bonvetti: Today, no. Today, we go out in the corner and you don't see nobody. Everybody's in the house watching television.

Interviewer: Everybody's glued to television.

Mr. Bonvetti: That's right.

Interviewer: So this is probably one of the things that has affected your life more than anything else, the television.

Mr. Bonvetti: That's right.

Interviewer: And the changes in people's relationship one with another. I think I've covered just about everything else. Do you have anything else that you'd like to add to this?

Mr. Bonvetti: No.

Interviewer: Now thinking back of the western life.

Mr. Bonvetti: I don't know. When I came here, I want the *[inaudible]* [0:33:01]. When I reached 21, I went and applied my first paper. And then two year later, I got my paper.

Interviewer: What did you have to go through to get the citizenship?

Mr. Bonvetti: I went to school for three months, night school.

Interviewer: Night school. Could you tell me something about the night school?

Mr. Bonvetti: *[inaudible] [0:33:18]* just about – just I remember a little bit. Well, we had a nice room and the laws of United State.

Interviewer: How many days a week did you go?

Mr. Bonvetti: I think we have two nights.

Interviewer: Two nights a week for what, about three months?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: You don't remember who your teacher was?

Mr. Bonvetti: I did know his name but I can...

Interviewer: His name?

Mr. Bonvetti: Yeah.

Interviewer: His name wasn't Bennett *[phonetic] [0:33:45]*, was it?

Mr. Bonvetti: No.

Interviewer: No. Okay. How was it when you went to the court house and to be sworn as a citizen? What – did the judge ask you a lot of questions?

Mr. Bonvetti: No. He asked a couple *[inaudible] [0:33:58]* time go up and he asked me a couple more and *[inaudible] [0:34:02]* a bit. I said, okay.

Interviewer: So that's all then. Is there anything else you like to add to this?

Mr. Bonvetti: No. Much was said. I don't think I'd...

[0:34:15] End of Audio