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TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW WITH

Giovanni DiMondi
and
Irma Burwell
(daughter)

106 West 7th Street
New Castle, Delaware

Interviewed by
Francis J. Fierro
Summer, 1967

Transcribed by
Irene H. Long
Winter 1968

Where were you born?

Born in Carapoli.

Carapoli?

Carapoli.

Where is Carapoli located?

Abruzzi.

Abruzzi?

Yeh.

A, what year were you born?

1892, a...a...March the fourteenth.

March fourteenth, 1892. As a child did you go to school in Italy?

Well, I went about year.

About one year? How old were you when you started to go?

When I started to school was nine years old.

You were nine years old?

Yeh, I wasn't ten.

And you went to school one year?

One year.

What did you learn in school during that one year?

Learn in school? I just started a makin' numbers.

Just the numbers?

Numbers.

Did you learn to write or read a anything like that?

Well, a..a... I can't finish my name.

A little bit, O.K. You were nine years old when you started and you went one year only, right?

One year.

What ...a..did you do any a other kind of work before you started school or...a..what.....

I was work on the farm.

You worked on a farm?

Yeh, take care the sheep.

You took care of sheep. You were a shepherd then?

(Laughs)

O.K. fine. And how long did you a work as a shepherd?

Work on a....on a shepherd, I work about, about sixteen.

Till you were about sixteen.

Yeh.

And did you do anything else during that time?

Yeh, then a I went a Rome.

Then you went to Rome?

Yeh.

Why did you go to Rome?

Eh, wan' try and make some money.

O.K. And what a sort of job did you get when you went to Rome?

Well, I was a workin' a grape....cut the grape vine.

Cutting grape vines?

Yeh, cut the grape vines.

A...how long....why did you got to Rome? Did somebody bring you to Rome or did you.....

No, no I got the train and went up there.

You decided all by yourself to go to Rome?

Yeh, yeh.

Did you know anybody else from your town?

No sir, no sir.

You didn't know anybody from your town who went to Rome?

Nope.

You just decided that you were going to go to Rome and you went?

Yes sir, I went.

O.K. fine. You stayed there about one year?

Were there about one year....about...a..nine months.

About nine months, and after that nine months what did you do?

Eh, I went home. I, I make, I make a little money.

Uh huh.

I made a little money and I ask my father I want to come this country. I was seventeen years old.

Uh huh. Now why did you decide that you wanted to come to this country?

Well, everybody -----out they going to America, going to America, going to America, going to America. I'm going America myself, too.

O.K. fine. So because you heard a lot of people talking about going to America, you decided you wanted to go?

Yeh.

All right. Now did you know anybody in America?

Yes, I had a brother.

You had a brother here?

Yeh.

And he used to write home and tell you about what America was like?

Yeh, yeh.

Now you were in your home town when you decided to leave, right? How did you leave your home town and where did you go to catch a ship to come to the United States?

Naples.

You went to Naples?

Naple.

Now how did you get to Naples?

With the train.

With the train? Did you have a train station in your home town?

Yes sir.

Oh, there was a train in your home town?

Oh, right close anyhow, 'bout half hour.

About a half hour? How did you get to the train? Was - did you walk?

I went a to the post, horse.

With a horse?

Yeh, with a horse.

What was that, horse and wagon?

Yeh, horse and wagon.

What was it like a stage coach?

Uh huh.

O.K. fine. Now...a..you...a.. what was the name of the town where you got the train?

We say it, Tortoreto.

Tortoreto?

Tortoreto.

Yes, Tortoreto, O.K. Now you caught a train then you went straight to Naples?

Yeh.

Now did you catch the ship as soon as you got to Naples?

Eighteen, June.

The eighteenth of June?

Yeh.

But when you arrived in Naples, was the ship in the port?

Well, a next day.

The next day. Where did you stay then the one day that you were there?

Well, we stay there. We find little room in there. There was 'bout fifteen, twenty people.

Uh huh.

You sleep like...a..a...a like a sheep.

You sleep like sheep, right. And then you waited till the....the...till the next day and you went aboard ship?

Aboard ship.

Do you remember the name of the ship?

Mendolza.

The Mendolza??

Mendolza.

Was that an Italian ship?

Yeh.

Now when you got aboard ship, what were the conditions like?

Well, they had a live cow in the a....ship....they had live a cow in a ship.

Really?

They a kill a cow everyday with feed the people.

They carried their own livestock?

Yeh.

To feed the people?

Yeh. Them day they have no refrigeration, them day.

Yes. Now in the quarters were you slept, were - was everybody mixed together? Were they just men or..a..everybody together?

Well...a..that's just a men was one place, one place and women 'nother place.

About how big was the compartment where you stayed?

Oh, it was 'bout, 'bout sixty people.

About sixty people.

One a top the other.

How high were they stacked?

Two high, one here - one here.

Just two?

Yeh.

That wasn't so bad.

(Laughs)

Now how long did it take you to get from Naples to the United States?

Seventeen a day.

Did you stop anywhere along the way?

No sir.

Straight and you didn't stop?

No sir, right across.

Seventeen days?

Right across.

And you went right straight to, to a.....

New York.

New York. Now when you arrived in New York, how were you met? Did the government a meet everybody there?

Well, a everybody had to - they had to go one line

in there. They had to answer questions.

Did they give you a physical examination?

Well, look a the a eye.

And that was all?

That's all.

They just look at your eyes?

Eyes. Where you go and somebody's give you if you want them in there take you on the train, they put you on the train where you got to go.

Oh, you didn't have, your brother didn't meet you?

No.

O.K. So now where were you going to go from a the Port of New York?

I went a Beth, Pennsylvania.

Beth, Pennsylvania?

(MRS.B.) Beth.

(FR) Beth, Beth, Pennsylvania.

Yeh.

Why did you go to Beth?

Cause my brother was there.

Oh, your brother was there.

Was in there.

Now when you got to Beth, Pennsylvania, what did you do? Just get on a train and go?

Yeh, get on a train and go right straight to Beth, Pennsylvania.

You didn't have to change anywhere?

No.

Right straight. Did your brother meet you in Beth at the train station?

Yeh.

And did you stay with your brother when you got to Beth?

Stay with my brother.

Was your brother married?

No.

He wasn't married. Did he have a house?

No, he was board with somebody.

He was boarding with someone?

Yeh.

Now, and you went to board with the same people?

Same people.

Now, what were the conditions like there?

Well, uh.....my chicken house was better than what's a, what's a I was sleep at.

Your chicken house was better than where you slept in Beth?

They had a coal, they had a soft coal.

They had a soft coal stove?

Next, next morning was all black.

All black soot all over.

Yeh, was black all over.

How many people were sleeping in the same room there?

Bout a eighteen of them.

About eighteen of you in one room?

Was big room, eighteen.

Eighteen people all at the same time? You all slept at the same time? Did you find a job as soon as you got here?

After, after three days I went a work.

What kind of word did you do?

Shovel coal.

You were shoveling coal? Where?

I shovel coal on the carts, on the, on the cars.

On train cars?

Yeh, train cars.

And you were shoveling by hand?

Yeh.

How long did you work there?

It was three years.

Three years? What was the pay like?

Fourteen cents an hour.

Fourteen cents an hour? How many days a week did you work?

Six days a week.

And how many hours?

Sometimes seven days a week for make a twenty dollars labor every two weeks.

How many hours a day did you work?

I work a ten hours a day.

Ten hours a day, six days every week?

Yeh, and you had to work one double shift to make a twenty dollars every two weeks.

You got paid once every two weeks?

Yeh, them two weeks get a pay.

What a.....

They pay me gold.

They paid you in gold?

Gold.

And what year was this now?

Well, was a, was a, mine was a 1911 - no, 1910, 1910.

1910?

Pay me in gold. 1911 start pay by paper.

Now, a, when you were in Beth, what did you do when you weren't working? What did you do during your off-hours, your recreation? Did you have any recreational ...a...activities?

I was go around the farm and buy eggs - eight, nine cents a dozen. Take a home. Go around the farm, you know, buy eggs, buy chicken.

When you lived in this boarding house, did you have to bring your own food for the lady of the house to cook for you?

Yeh, he was cookin', he was cookin' for me.

And she would for everybody in the house?

Yeh.

But everybody had to supply his own food, right?

Yeh, his own food.

How much did you pay for room and board in this house?

Four dollars and a half a month.

Four dollars and a half a month?

Month.

Now, this house would supply you with bed and food - well not food, you supplied your own food - but this was it. She used to do all your laundry, did she?

Yeh, I had to wash a myself.

You had to wash it yourself? You had to take care of your own laundry?

Uh huh.

In other words, all she did was cook for you?

That's all.

And make your bed?

Yeh.

And that was it?

And the house, the house was belonged to the...the company was belong to the house.

Oh, the house belonged to a...a.. the company. What company was this?

Eh, Cement, Keystone Company.

The Keystone Company. Now, after you worked there three years you decided to go somewhere else. Where did you go?

I went a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Why did you go to Pittsburgh?

Well, I had a cousin over there. He write to me. He say that a lot of work over there. I went over there try to make more money.

Did your brother go with you?

No.

He stayed in Beth?

He stay in Beth.

Now, when you did get to Pittsburgh, did you find a job right away?

Yes sir, next day.

The next day?

With whom did you find a job?

A scrap mill.

The scrap mill. Was this for scrap iron?

Uh huh.

What did you do there?

Well, you pick 'em up a scrap and put, put 'em in cart and ----- put 'em cart.

And a how long did you stay there?

A....'bout, 'bout two years.

Now, while you were there, did you room in the same kind of a house as you did in Beth?

No, over there was different. I was payin' fifteen dollars a month. It was furnished with bed sleep, wash a clothes, and I buy the other stuff.

So you paid fifteen dollars a month in this other place, and they used to furnish you everything?

No, not the food. Was washin' clothes, furnished the bread, you know.

Oh, wash the clothes, they furnished the bread.

And a, a room.

And room but you had to furnish the rest of your food. Now, they paid you ..... you had to pay fifteen dollars a month there? How much did you make there?

Well, I was a makin' ninety a ninety....a...a...it was a sixty-eight cents an hour.

Sixty-eight cents an hour. So that's quite an improvement over fourteen cents an hour, isn't it? Quite an improvement! How long did you stay there?

Bout, 'bout a close to two years.

About close to two years. Now, when you were there, did you have any kind of recreational or social life other than working?

(MRS. B.) Pop didn't.

(FR.) Didn't you play cards with your friends?

No, no, you know what I mean, I was a boy, you know what I mean. Old, old people was a playin' in the club, you know what I mean. I don't want to mess --- no how.

Uh huh.

Just walk around, you know what I mean. You get a couple friends in there, used to walk around, go in to eat, things like that. And talk, that's all.

Uh huh. Did you go to a movie at that time? There were silent movies at that...a...were there silent movies at that time?

(MRS. B.) He had movies.

(FR.) Yeh, in Pittsburgh did you got to movies at that time?

Oh yeh.

There were movie houses? It was all silent movies though? Were....course they were silent movies. Now...a..from Pittsburgh where did you go?

Pittsburgh I had a cousin....Ba...Baltimore.

You had a cousin in Baltimore?

And he was work Standard Oil Company.

Uh huh. He worked for Standard Oil Company.

Yeh, he was with Standard Oil Company and he write to me that he was puttin' big building near the Wash room(? - Washington) it was called. And, uh, I write one time and he says he got any job for me. I comin' over and, and for....'bout.... 'bout two months he write to me back. He says, "You want to come over," he says, "you, you get dollar and quart' an hour over there Baltimore, Standard Oil Company."

For Standard Oil, they wanted to pay you a dollar and a quarter an hour?

Doll' and quarter.....so...

For what kind of work?

Start - I was help a bricker layer.

As a bricklayer's helper?

Yeh.

And this was a dollar and a quarter to start?

Yeh, yeh.

And this was back in what year?

Yeh, it was a, I believe 'bout 19, 19, 1913.

1913?

Yeh.

So you decided to go to Baltimore then?

Baltimore.

Now, when you went to Baltimore a, with whom did you stay?

Well, I stay with one friend mine, you know, friend my cousin.

Yes.

And I was right with him, you know what I mean, because he was in there couple years; and I was 'pose to stay same place he was stay.

So you stayed with a friend of your cousin's?

Yeh.

Did your cousin stay with him also?

Yes.

A....now was this friend of your cousin's married?

No.

He, did he have his own home?

He just had house in there, just a had a house. Four, five boys and four, five younger people, he had this house his own.

He bought a house and he had some of his friends staying with him?

Yeh.

And you paid him rent?

Yeh.

And how much did you pay him rent?

I was pay him five dollars a month.

Five dollars a month?

Yeh, and I was cookin' myself.

And you used to cook for yourself?

Yeh.

Did everybody cook for himself?

Yeh.

Since you didn't have a woman there?

Everybody cook for hisself.

Everybody cooked for himself. And, of course, I imagine the living conditions were somewhat better. You probably had more room to yourself in the house, too.

Oh yeh, much more room.

Now, how long did you stay working for Standard Oil?

I stay with Standard Oil 'bout thirteen months.

About thirteen months?

Yeh.

Did you learn the bricklayer trade there?

Yeh.

Now, during this time in Baltimore, did you, um, have any social activities there, any recreational activities? Did you then play any cards or go to movies or.....

Oh yeh, they was play cards in there, my a, my cousin. And my cousin was a play cards in the club, you know, with all on younger people in the club.

Well, what club was this, the Sons of Italy Club or something there?

No, no, that was Irish.

Oh, it was an Irish club?

Irish club, but lot Italian used to go in there play cards.

I see. You play cards and get drinks and so forth.

Yeh.

Did you a ever a have any ties with the Church during this time?

Oh yeh, I went to church.

A....

I went church, I went church every Sunday when was in Baltimore.

Did you ever go in Pittsburgh or in Beth?

I never went Pittsburgh in church. We're too far away.

You were too far away. Now....

I had no car.

O.K. Now, in Baltimore when you went to church, was it an Italian parish?

No....Irish.

How were you treated there?

Well....I do the same thing way other people do.

Did there have an Italian Mass? Were there.....

No, no, no Italian Mass at all.

Were there a lot of Italians in Baltimore?

Lot. They, they g...in a.....big city. I was out of, I was, I was out a town, see. I was out a town.

You were out of the town?

Yeh, out of the town, called Allentown(?).

Allentown?

Yeh, why there Baltimore it was all Italian, Italian church in Baltimore.

And there were Italian parishes in Baltimore.

Yeh, oh yeh, plenty of them.

In this little town where you were staying, this town near Baltimore, were there many Italians?

Oh yeh, was quite a few.

But they didn't have an Italian Mass in the.....

No, they didn't have Italian church.

But they didn't even have one mass during on Sunday in Italian?

No sir.

Nothing. O.K. so you just went to the a....church as they were.

That's all. Church a like everybody else I went church.

O.K. now, when a you decided to leave Standard Oil, did ....you...a....

I leave a.....

This was about thirteen months?

I leave a, yeh, I leave, I want a leave, I want a come a New Castle. And the boss where I work for him, I ask for my - he no want a pay me. He say, "If you go, you got to New Castle," he said, "you come back, you come back and work over here again."

Uh huh.

See, he no want me to leave.

He didn't want you to leave.

No.

Now, this was when - in 1914?

Yeh.

And he did, he didn't.....why didn't he want you to leave - because you were a good worker?

I was good worker, see.

So he didn't.....

I work steady, good work. He didn't want me to leave.

Uh huh. But you decided to leave anyhow. Why did you want to leave Baltimore to come to New Castle?

Oh, over here was makin' more money yet.

Well, how did you know they were making money here?

Cause I had the..... another friend, one man had a friend over here. He write to him...and a, and I come with him.

Now, when you came here, what kind of work did you do?

When I come over here after two weeks they give me job foreman.

As a foreman?

Yard foreman.

Yard foreman but where were you working?

I was round the yard in there. I load the shells and put the shell in the, in the room, put the shells in the car, you know.

What was this - a powder a factory or a, a shell factory?

Yeh, yeh, load 'em up the shells.

Oh, you were loading a.... bullets in the shells.

Yeh, yeh.

And they paid you very good for this?

Well, I was makin' dollar sixty five.

It was rather dangerous work, wasn't it.

Well, it blew up one time and a I run away. (Laughter) But...a... two, three men lost their life, but I no lost mine.

O.K., well, how long did you work in, for this powder company?

Well, a....time the war was finished.

Now, a, during the war, when the war a started, were you ever drafted or anything? You were not drafted?

Well, I was a draft, I was a draft but I had, then

I got married.

Oh, you got married?

Yeh, I got married in 1917. I got married.

Yes.

And I was a workin' powder mill. They put me on.

And so they didn't draft you?

No.

Why they considered this - what, essential work?

Well, it was a danger work and a, you know, I was a foreman in there. One time I was a box with the help, another time I was a foreman, another the..... and all the different jobs, see.

Uh huh.

And that's a why the boss was a like me, you know what I mean. He sign my paper.

So that you didn't have to go into the army?

Yeh, no army.

Right. Now, what were conditions like in this company before World War One? How were you treated as an Italian? Did you ever notice any discrimination against you because you were an Italian?

Only thing I can't say nothing.

You can't say that you were ever discriminated against?

Noooooo.

Nobody ever treated you....a...a.....differently than a other poeple?

No sir!

You never noticed anything like this?

It was all, it was all, always get along good with everybody. I was get along good with everybody.

Now.....did you notice any big difference after World War One?

Oh yeh, was a different.

What sort of a difference did you notice?

Well, put a, you know what I mean, people was a more, was a more, was a more together.

People were closer.

Yeh, were close.

And a in what way were they closer? Could you be a little more specific?

Well, you know, you know, you get a, get a, a..... this country wasn't....a...before....it was now.... get a close close all the time. Get, you know, more friendly....all the people, you know, people know one the other.

Do you mean that people were more friendly, people who were not Italian were more friendly with you or just the Italian?

Oh, they were, oh, they - even the American people more friendly ten, fifteen years ago, twenty years ago.

In other words people were a little more outgoing?

That's it.

O.K. Now, after a you a decided to leave the powder mill, now did you leave the powder mill or did the powder mill shut down?

Shut down.

It was shut down?

Shut down.

What year was this, 1919?

Well, was 1918, between 1918, 1919.

What did you do after the powder mill shut down?

Well, I was, I was, I was go back my trade, cement finisher.

O.K. Now, I want to back track just a little bit. What year did you get married?

1917.

Where did you get married?

New Castle.

In a, in a church?

Yeh.

A Catholic church?

Yes.

What was that, St. Paul's?

Yes.

O.K. Were there many Italians in Newark, a, New Castle at that time?

Oh, was was few, few, good many.

A good many?

Good many Italians.

Did they ever have an Italian Mass at this church here?

No sir.

They never did?

Never did.

How did they treat Italians at the church here?

Well....little rough.

A.....how do you mean a little rough?

Well, because, you know, between....Irish arrogant Italian, I never, never get along good.

Uh huh. Were they the parishioners who treated you roughly or the priests?

Well, the priest, the priests sometimes all right, you know, sometimes he treat you good, sometimes, you know. Depend on how he feel.

It depended on how he felt?

Yeh.

All right now - you went back to working as a cement finisher after the powder mill shut down?

Yes sir.

With whom did you work? Did you work for yourself or with a company?

No, I was work with company and I work with 'Sabatina and I went a work with 'Sabatina fourteen half years cement finisher.

You worked for...a...Ernest DiSabatino and Sons?

Ernest DiSabatino fourteen and half years.

Now, you worked with them fourteen and a half years. Did you work a only for them during those fourteen and a half years?

Yes sir, I was doing works little bits side for me.

Uh huh.

You know, I had to work little bit on the side.

What sort of work did you do a on the side? Did you take little contracting jobs?

Well, -------the-----brush and house, do some cement work, you know.

And this was the sort of work you did?

Yeh.

Now, during the period up to 1918 had you ever taken out citizenship papers?

Not a right away.

When did you take out citizenship papers?

It was 1940, wasn't it, Annie, 1940.

1940. O.K. Now, let's go back a little bit again. Let's go back to a when you went to work for DiSabatino. You did nothing but cement finishing there, right? Did you start your

own business during this time when you were working for him?

Well, they were two Depression. I was work for a over duPont's building for DiSabatino. The work came pretty scarce through the Depression and Paul (?) Sabatino come to me. He say, "John" - I wasn't make much time, I was make about one day, two days a week and - "John," he says, "I ain't got much work, "he says. "I got couple more cement finishers, I got to give them some work." And....a...they lay me off through Depression.

Yes.

They lay me off and I told Paul DiSabatino, "Paulie, I ain't going a work for nobody any more." "What's you going a?" "I'm going a work for myself."

And you started to work for yourself then?

I work for myself.

How....

Through Depression.

Was it hard to get work a during the Depression?

I had a plenty work.

You had plenty of work during the Depression?

I had plenty work.

What kind of jobs did you do?

I was doing, oh I was going farm puttin' all the ----- you know-------house-----cement work, sidewalk, all like that.

You put in sidewalks, you put in stanchions - for what, milking cows and so forth?

Yeh, for the cow where trough for the cow to eat.

Yes.

Put -----stanchions, everything ------ house.

A....did these people when you did this work, did they pay you in money or.....

Oh yeah, oh yeah.

They all.... they didn't pay you in merchandise and....

No, no, no, they pay me money. I done what I....you know....I....I done one for Governor Buck.

For Governor Buck, you did a job for him, too?

I did one of biggest jobs, big job him. I was work there couple months.

Did you have anybody working with you?

Oh yeah, four five men work.

You had four or five men working with you at that time?

Yeh, yeh.

And this is how you started your business then?

Yeh.

During the Depression you started your business?

Yeh, my business through the Depression. I went a Philadelphia. I go dump truck and cement mix.

And...a...you just ....with your dump truck and your cement mixer, you went into business.

Went into business.

And you started making all.....

Then, then, I start, then I start a bid 'gainst 'Sabatino with cement.

Uh huh. And you were bidding against DiSabatino then?

'Gainst 'Sabatino.

And you were taking jobs or you were getting jobs from him?

Job from them.

Now, during all this....a...that you went into this business for yourself, where did you have your a office?

Wellll, I had a office right in the house. Course

I ain't got three, four men them day and haven't many book anyhow.

Uh huh.

There was no, you know, ...a...bookkeeping them days. Nobody had no bookkeeper them days.

So you...a....just stayed for yourself doing your own work like that?

Yeh.

Could you just go ahead and tell me how you progressed in your business and the kind of work you did? Will you tell me the sort of work you did and just tell me about your business and how your business grew?

Well.....

You just go ahead and tell me about it.

The business grow and I started 1919, I started I bought hand a machine. I started a makin' a blocks by hands.

You bought a hand machine and started making block by hand?

Yeh, I had a two men make block and I would pay 'em four cents a piece they make 'em.

You paid four cents a piece for every block they made.

Yeh, every block they make. And my a....myself when it was like on Saturday some day I had a little bit job to do, cellar thing like that, little building, I was goin' lay a block myself, own block.

In other words right, in other words you'd take your own block and go lay your own block.

Own block.

And build a basement and so forth?

Yeh.

O.K. Well.....

And, and afterwards 1925 I bought, I bought piece a ground. Real estate company wants, wants the money. I ask ----- I want buy a piece of ground, five acres, Seventh Street.

Who was this that asked you if you wanted to buy it?

Real estate.

Real estate. What real estate man was it?

Oh, I forget the name now.

You forget.

But they come in there. Somebody ask me. I was ask for piece of ground, myself because Eliason (?) told them he was going on Sewer Commission. See, he was know and a real estate ask a me twenty-seven hundred dollars for five acres ground. It was all marsh.

It was all marsh?

All marsh and I hasn't got myself seven hundred fifty dollars.

Uh huh.

I, I ask that.

So he told you he wanted twenty-seven hundred and you told him you'd give him seven hundred and fifty dollars for this four acre tract of land.

Yeh, and I leave it go 'bout five, six months. Don't talk about any more. The man who sold the ground, he refused the ground because had too much a debts on the ground. He had too much a sewer lien against.

Yes, he had a sewer lien against the ground.

Against the ground.

And he had a lot of debts on it.

He couldn't - what he wasn't paying his taxes on it?

No, he was give up. Well, he won't sell, you know, and

I bought it off Sewer Commission.

So you bought the ground from the Sewer Commission?

Yeh, for nine hundred dollars and a went a make a deeds, another man had four hundred dollar judgement against. I told this man judgement 'gainst, four hundred dollars, I tell him I give him two hundred dollars He going to sign the deeds "yes."

In other words a man had a four hundred dollar judgement against that piece of ground, and you offerred him two hundred dollars to sign over the ground.

Yeh.

To you, right? And he did it?

Yeh.

O.K.

And that when I start, when I start my plant over Seventh Street.

Did you build the plant yourself?

Yeh, I make a block myself a hand machine and ....a.... built, started this other plant.

And you started the other plant. Now when you built this plant, did you still make the blocks by hand in the plant or did you get machinery to make them?

Yeh, well, I had a make a enough block put the walls up.

Uh huh.

And, and stop a the other one hand machine, stop and start the other one; was make a one block the time. And after three years I got one makes two block the time.

O.K. Now, this machine that made one block at a time, was that a hand machine?

No, no, was power machine.

Oh, power machine, and then after about two or three years....

Two years.

Two years, you got a machine that made three blocks at a time.

Two!

Two blocks at a time. All right, go on.

After three more year, I had one make three.

O.K.

And World War, World War Two, World One, Two, and you know had defense plant down here was make shells.

Yes.

Well.....

What was the name of that plant here that made shells, the New Castle Defense Plant?

And....a...I was going round found out.....I had fifty, 'bout fifty, sixty people, working down there. I was get, I was get a twenty percent off.

Now...a....

I had the people for the government, you know, go round here. People working, man...a...here the people and I pay them..... and he give me money.....turn it over-------.

In other words you would hire people for the defense plant and you got paid a commission for hiring these people for the defense plant.

Yeh.

And did you pay these people?

I pay these people and it, he was...give me....a..... the end of the month give me money back.

Oh, in other words, you paid these people weekly and

and the government, they would pay you monthly for paying these people?

Yeh.

I see now, would you continue then with what...a...

Eh, well, when it finish, when it finish.....and I want a....I want a start build a, build a home, stone home, brick, I went contract business for good

You went ....a...if...when was this during the war or after the war?

After war.

You went in the contracting business again.

And I had 'bout five, six bricklayer work for me.

Well, a, during the war....during World War Two.....

Well.....

Did you have to cease operations in your block plant?

Yeh, I was operation block plant, yeh.

You were still operating the block plant?

Oh, yes, yes.

All during the war?

Yes.

How many people did you have working in the plant at that time?

It was....a....block plant?

Yes.

'bout fourteen.

Fourteen people?

Fourteen, fifteen.

And you had sixty, about sixty, sixty people working in the ...a...

Defense plant.

Defense plant.

All right. Well, you....what were they doing, loading the trucks in the defense plant? (Daughter whispers to father) You can speak up. You can add anything you want to.

Yeh, take, take a shell for the, take a box, fix the box, you know what I mean, box come full of shells, some a time box broke, had a man fix a box again.

Uh huh.

And load all the box in the car. Shells, take 'em off the car.

Yes, in other words, this was loading and unloading, is this it?

Yeh, unloading.

O.K. Now.....

(MRS. B.) Repairs.

O.K. Fine, look, if there's anything you want to add to this just feel free to.

(MRS. B.) No, just they used to repairs to the boxes.

Repair the boxes and everything else.

(MR. D.) Yes, what was their job.

O.K. Now, you went into the contracting business after World War Two ended then. And you were building houses at that time. Were you just building houses or all sorts of buildings?

No, I just do all the mason work myself, you know what I mean.

All the masonry work?

Masonry work.

O.K..... Now, when you were doing this masonry work, did you get the jobs from scratch or did you do subcontracting work?

Subcontracting.

Subcontracting. It was all subcontracting work. O.K. Fine. Is there anything else you want to add because this brings us pretty close. Now, during all this time that you were living here in New Castle, did you ever experience any bias against you, any prejudice?

A.....

(MRS.B.) Is he saying....a....were some of the people against the Italians or for the Italians?

Well, I guess a many people 'gainst them. No how I was never bother anybody no how.

No but I mean.....

'nother thing is, you know, I never take a much from nobody.

Yeh, well, a.... this is obvious. (Chuckles) I think this is clear. But what I'm trying to say.....

(MRS. B.) He was very much in demand by all. He didn't feel it because...he was...very excellent in his trade and he was very much in demand.

(FR.) In other words in a, in a business sense he didn't a.....

(MRS. B.) He didn't feel it, no.

(FR.) He didn't feel anything.

(MRS. B.) No.

(FR.) Well, how about when we get away from the business area for awhile. In your private life.....

(MRS. B.) He didn't feel it either because he was still a businessman.

I see.

They treated him as a businessman, but it was the children who felt it.

I see.

Well, not as much as we ourselves in our family because we were a.....in a sense ...a...as I say...treated as... the a businessman's children.

Yes.

Because he's a improved himself, and he's proved himself as a businessman and they accepted that. That helped us a little bit. But we felt it more. We, we felt still a little bit in, in nationality and religion-wise.

You did feel it here?

Yes.

In New Castle?

Yes.

A...could you...a...a...tell me about your ...a..your life? You see the thing I'm trying to get at is your life divorced from the business life.

(MR. D.) Well, ...a...the only thing is a I was, I was pretty good. All the big people in New Castle they was..a..all good friends mine, you know, in New Castle because I doin' lot of work for them I work ------ I was a square man, you know I mean.

(MRS. B.) Honest, he was very honest.

I do work a right. I was square man. Like a Mr. -------- was down here and one time I was down apartment house. I had 'bout, I had job a time a work. I had 'bout fifteen, sixteen hundred dollars worth of work.

Yes.

When they give me it, come the bill, well, I was keep my time and he was keep the time. He was keep the somebody was keep the time for him. When a, when he finished, I give him the bill, it was a two hour a difference.

Two hours difference.

Two hours a difference.

I see.

And he give me five hundred dollar tip.

Oh really?

Yeh.

(MRS. B.) Uh huh.

(FR.) This is...a...speaks for its....

See, you know, uh mean, I was honest man, you know. Always get along all with..... even still the people call me and want to do some job.

Uh huh, O.K., fine.

(MRS. B.) You need a - wait a minute.

When did you buy your first piece of ground to start your business.

Was 1927.

Now that's when you got that tract of land from the Street and Sewer Department, right?

Yeh, yeh, yeh.

For taxes. Now.....

(MRS. B.) It was marsh land.

(FR.) It was marsh land, right. Now, did you drain the marsh?

Well, I fill, I fill 'em up. I drain the marsh. I fill 'em up.

You filled it?

Fill.

In other words you got....did you haul in all the fill yourself?

Yes sir.

Now, a.....when you filled this and you built your block company, what did you name it?

A.....New Castle Block Company.

New Castle Block Company?

No, Delaware Block Company.

Delaware Block Company. Now, was this the only building you ever built as a business?

Yeh.

It's the only one you ever built as a business - the Delaware Block Company?

Yeh.

(MRS. B.) Yes, as a big business, yes.

As a big business, now what did you call your contracting firm for building the houses....and for doing the masonry work?

Well....for mas.....masonry work I didn't have no name.

You didn't have any? You just had your own name, is that what it was?

Just a I have a license and my own name.

That's all - John...a...DiMondi?

John, John DiMondi and Son.

And Sons?

Yeh.

And this is what you called your masonry business?

Yeh.

Now, as the years progress, as your business grew and prospered, did you ever a branch out inot anything else?

No.

Did you ever build any other block companies besides the one that a.....

Yeh, the one down Wyoming.

In Wyoming, Delaware?

Wyoming, Delaware.

And what did you call that one?

Wyoming, Wyoming Block Company.

Wyoming Block Company.

Yeh.

Is that one still in operation?

Yeh.

It's.....when did you build that company?

It was ...a...bout seven years ago.

About seven years, about 1960?

Yeh, 19.....19...59.

In 1959?

Yeh.

Was there any particular reason why you built another block company down there?

Well, you had, you had, a three boy over here. They were too many. I got a 'pand a little bit, you know what I mean. Keep 'em separate.

So this was to keep your sons separate?

Yes, separate.

(MRS. B.) No, not separate. They just wanted to expand.

(FR.) Expand?

(MRS. B.) Expand the business...a...to give more of the boys more.....

(FR.) More of an opportunity.

(MRS. B.) Yes, an opportunity.

(FR.) In other words, each one has his own operation, is that it?

(MR. D.) No, no, they belong all....

(MRS. B.) It's a corporation.

(FR.) It's al corporation. It's all, it's all together?

(MRS. B.) Yes.

(FR.) But they're subdivisions of the same corporation, is that it?

Yes.

So each one had a subdivision?

Yes.

Was there, is there any other ..a..business besides the Wyoming Block and the Delaware Block?

And there's a Readi-Mix, Wyoming Readi-Mix.

Wyoming Readi-Mix also?

Yes.

And this is.....

And there's also a Penn Apartments.

A...where are the Penn Apartments?

The Penn Apartments is, is the a....they bought an apartment house and they also own a big tract of land...a..across from the William Penn, a the old William Penn High School they they ...a..had intended to build apartments there. And that's how the ...a... Penn Apartments, Incorporated got started.

Oh, so the Penn Apartments are in New Castle also?

Yes.

(MR. D.) Yeh, over here Third, Third Avenue.

(MRS. B.) You don't see the building next to the....a..it's the large corner building next to the bank.

Did you get involved in any other business or any other transactions of this nature?

(MRS. B.) No.

How did you find getting the a land? Did you have any difficulty getting the land...a..at all?

(MRS. B.) No....no trouble buying land.

There was no trouble at all buying land?

(MRS. B.) No, no, they always had cash to buy it and that's it.

How 'bout this stock transaction you were telling me? Would you care to go into that at all?

(MRS. B.) The stocks, the Wy...a..the Delaware Block stocks are divided in a.....

(MR. D.) Eh....eh....

(MRS. B.) In a way a the oldest brother owns most of the stock, some of ..a...forty-nine percent of it. A...one boy owns thirty-six percent, and the other one owns the rest of it.

(MR. D.) Seventeen percent.

(MRS. B.) Yeh, and a what they did that for is...a...with the understanding that one can not sell, they have to have two always on, on the board. My father is general manager for life...a..now the Wyoming Block is one....they each own one-third.

(FR.) Now, there was this other stock business that we were talking about?

(MRS. B.) The, the Readi-Mix is also one-third each.

No, I was talking about the stock here in New Castle.

(MRS. B.) And the Penn Apartments was owned by the three boys, not the three, but the youngest boy was out because he was too young, but he ...a...owns it now. There was the three boys that owned it, but one of them pulled out.

(MR. D.) So, sold it to me.

(MRS. B.) And he had now sold it to my - resold it to my father. So there's just a my....a...there's my father involved in that again.

O.K.

In the New Castle Trust Company at one time they had a hundred and....fifty thousand dollars.

No, sixty five thousand.

No, a hundred and no - wait a minute. They had a hundred and fifty thousand and he wanted to buy ...the stock was open, available.

Now this is New Castle Trust Company? Is this a bank?

This is a New Castle Trust Company, the bank of New Castle before Wilmington Trust purchased it. There was stock available.

Now, how long ago was this?

Ummmmmmm...

(MR. D.) It was 19.....1934.

(MRS. B.) 1934.

(FR.) Right.

And my father had heard about it.

Did he have money in this bank?

(MR. D.) Yeh, sixty-five thousand.

(MRS. B.) He had sixty-eight, sixty-eight thousand dollars.

Uh huh.

Of the money of this hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

Were, was a hundred a total of one hundred fifty thousand in the bank?

And sixty-eight thousand dollars was his.

And he had sixty-eight.

But yet, being....I guess there was a little prejudice there because he was not able to obtain any ....any stock in this bank.

They wouldn't a sell him any stock at all?

No.

Did he have any stock at all in that bank?

(MR. D.) No.

(MRS. B.) No, he could never obtain stock in that bank.

(FR.) Despite the fact that he was probably the major..a...

(MRS. B.) He was the major money holder.

Right, in other words he was the major contributor really to the bank.

Yes, that's right.

You might as well say, and yet they wouldn't sell him any stock there?

That's right.

And they never gave him a reason why they wouldn't?

No.

They didn't give you a reason?

Never gave him a reason.

(FR.) They just.....

(MR. D.) I put five....

(MRS. B.) Everyone....they always held him - try to - they wanted him.....he was a businessman, but yet they always wanted to hold him down. They always gave him the impression, gave us the impression they didn't want you to get too big above them.

I see. Why, who is, who is "them" now?

Well your....your....your bigger...your, your biggest trustees of.....

(MR. D.) Yeh, big, DeKyne(?), Eliason, -------, all together.

(FR.) DeKyne, Eliason and all.

(MRS. B.) All the older, older,.....

(FR.) All the older....

(MRS. B.) Older generation, the ones - a lot of them passed

away now.

I see. O.K. Is there anything else you liked to add to what we've gone through so far now? Any other experiences that you might have had...a...

(MRS. B.) Well, as I say, a my father might not have felt the a....being ..... the prejudice but as children we had.

Could you a give me an idea as to just what prejudice you did, you were, you did experience?

Well...a...an Italian in being of a another nationality, of a nationality, of being an Italian and Catholic, even though we were Catholics, we had to battle your Irish Catholics.

Yes.

Which was I think is....very....

Rather unfortunate really.

Yes.

Tell me something...a...I asked.....

I had, I had trouble as a girl...a...being of a, of Italian...a...my father being a businessman. That is we had prejudice in our own nationality. My father was a businessman and he had..a..proved himself a more than the rest of them. I had a hard time ...a... socially with a the young girls around there. Boys didn't feel it as much.

The boys didn't feel it as much?

No, but I, I have.....

A....you say you felt this prejudice socially and so forth?

Yes.

A....could you be a little more specific about that?

Well..a..they just felt that a...maybe we were a little too high. They used to say, they used to say the expression, "You're

too high and mighty."

Uh huh.

Even though we didn't show it...a...a...that I think as a child I was..a..brought up stricter. Money wise it was stricter. I was on certain allowance and that was it. Where the rest of them as....as a people from average families had more money to spend than I had.

I'm going to ask you a question now in so far as your relation with other people, non-Italians now. This is sometimes a difficult question to answer and to really look at objectively. Did you..a..as a child of an Italian immigrant, were you ever a, did you ever feel personally ashamed to be Italian.

No.

Did you ever feel that a because of the pressures on you that..a..you might of felt that you...a...

No, I hadn't because I've, I also went to as a child I went to school there.

School where?

To school in Italy.

Oh, did you?

Yes, I was never ashamed to be Italian, but I do feel as if some of the ...my friends had...a...

These..a...

You could feel that they, they were ashamed of it. But I had never been. I speak ..a..our language. I've never been ashamed to speak in my own..a..language when I'm out, I'm shopping or any place else. But I could see that some of my girl friends that were - would be ashamed of taking their mothers and speaking Italian, would ask them to speak English instead of Italian where I, I didn't feel this. Feel...as I say did go to school in Europe.

In fact, I was one of the unfortunate ones. When I came back, I couldn't speak English. So I a can't say of ever been ashamed of being Italian.

When did you a....

I've been quite proud of it.

When did you start a school here? How old were you when you started school here?

I was here a two years. I went to first and second grade and they took me out. I had to go to a .... Abruzzi.

Abruzzi?

And I went to a convent school there while my mother went to Rome to have an eye operation. At that time it wasn't proper for young girls to stay home. A...I was the only girl and a... I had to go where my mother went. My brothers had to stay home with my father. My mother went to Rome to have an eye operation and I didn't see her for one year.

What year was this now?

(MR. D.) 1926.

(MRS. B.) 1926.

Uh...your mother...did you go with your mother when she went to Italy?

I went with my mother, but I was left at my mother's home town while she went to Rome.

Who'd you stay with there, your grandparents?

My grandmother.

O.K. Fine. Is there anything else you'd like to add to this now?

(MRS. B.) I would say that as far as your saying...(Whispering)

(FR.) Uh....old man Petrillo who started the quarry, who had the a quarry....

They were start the quarry. I was in concrete business and on top of Penny Hill. And they had a big a swimming a pour.

They had to pour a big swimming pool?

Yeh, had to pour floor. All a design and a they had a couple cement finishers and but 'ey didn't know nothing.

Couple cement finishers and they didn't know their job?

And a five o'clock a morning come a knock a my door. He want a me to....for a couple days, week and I had to go in there to help him out.

How....when was a....do you remember what year this was?

It was a....I guess it was 19...1938.

1938, you had to pour a swimming pool.

1938.

(MRS. B.) I have to say this. He, he was an artist in his trade as a cement finisher because he could make designs where not many of them could do. He would a .... he was one to experiment with things such as ...a..color in cement.

Uh huh.

We had a beautiful flower garden. We had a rock garden which not many people had. And a that's how he started, started his colors, would be mixing the colors in the cement to try to get the right colors. And he also built Mrs. Laird's swimming pool down here. And the colors are still beautiful in that pool.

In other words the colors are in the cement in the pool.

Itself, its color....

In the pool?

That's right. It's in the pool. It is not painted. It is colored cement. They asked him to try it and he was always one

to try these things.

And he's the first one that did that around here?

Yes, around the area.

(MR. D.) You know, I going to tell you, I know a lot of people would call me for to do the job....and somebody would said, "At's John a Mondi, li...little high the price but get beautiful work and fast."

(FR.) So...

(MR. D.) I was little high in the price but I was a give fair work.

You used to give them their money's worth?

And quick, quick job.

(MRS. B.) I have to say one thing. He had a his...crew working for him. Many a nights my brother had to stand there by lantern and while he cement finished one a, two and three o'clock in the morning.

(MR. D.) I done sidewalk. I done sidewalk 1916 over Sixth Street. A...Bob, called a Bob Newlan, the boy, a fella was own the house 19....1916. I done the cement work. It's still there. Still got my name.

It still has your name in it, huh?

1916, still a look a beautiful.

Well, now....

(MRS. B.) As I say, my father can't read or write....

(FR.) But he knows his business.

(MRS. B.) But he knows his business.

(FR.) Yes.

(MRS. B.) Yes, I used to say....

(MR. D.) I co...I could figure the jobs quicker than you figure them.

(FR.) Yes, I'm sure you could.

(MRS. B.) As I say, he never had any trouble....

(FR.) But reading and writing never affected his adding the figures and cement finishing.

(MRS. B.) Never, never. In fact he was very, very shrewd. He never signed any papers...a... he can, he's very good judge of character. And..a..a man came in there and a..he's very quick in judging a person. And ninety-nine times, ninety-nine percent of the time he's very accurate.

This is good. Is there anything else we can add to this now? (In an aside) We'll shut this off. (Tape turned off and on)

As far as hobbies are concerned he never had to worry about be....having, going out fetching a hobby as they say today to keep your mind occupied because even in his spare - what few spare, spare hours he has - he has a flower garden. He raises his own chickens; he also has a garden and his garden is so...accurate if you're going down there and in his garden, you'll find everything in perfect order.

Uh huh.

And as I say a he gets done, he might put twelve hours still at seventy-eight years old, twelve hours a day in business - ten hours, twelve hours - but you'll find during the summer months always in his garden.

(MR. D.) Take care my flowers, roses.

(MRS. B.) Flowers and roses.

(FR.) He has a rose garden mainly?

(MRS. B.) Oh, he has everything. He has a green thumb. He put a weed in a in the ground and it'll bloom to a beautiful rose or whatever you want to see.

(MR. D.) I done a graft a trees.

You graft trees also?

(MRS. B.) He does graft trees, yes. And he, as I say as far as good time Charlie is concerned, he's never been, shall we say, a...a..

(FR.) A puritan?

(MRS. B.) No, he's one, he's one to play cards.

(FR.) No.

(MR. D.) One thing is, you know where I live at?

(FR.) No, I don't know where you live. I'm not too....

(MR. D.) You pass 'n there some a time. It's a look at 'em. A bestie lawn, bestie flower garden, flowers and everything.

(MRS. B.) Never had a gardener.

(FR.) Really?

(MRS. B.) Never had a gardener. He 's his own gardener. He takes care of three houses.

(FR.) Really?

(MR. D.) And wan' a see many fig tree,

(FR.) You have fig trees, too?

In my backyard I got 'bout fourteen plant.

Really, boy oh...

Some 'bout ten, twelve foot - ten, twelve foot high.

Do you cover them every winter?

Uh huh.

(MRS. B.) Does his own.

(Whispering)

(MR. D.) --------feed sixty-two chickens.

You have a how many chickens do you have? You have your own chickens, right? How many chickens do you have?

(MR. D.) I got seventy-five, one hundred twenty-five 'bout one hundred fifty.

About one hundred fifty chickens and you take care of them yourself? This is in addition to your business life, you take care of your chickens, you take care of all of the gardening for three houses and you have your own eggs?

(MRS. B.) And he also picks up stray animals.

Oh, really?

He has about twenty cats that he feeds every night. They're not house cats, but he keeps them outside. They....he feeds all the stray animals and he has about three days. He is a great animal lover.

A lover of animals.

And he has been a wonderful father because he has really treated us good, but I have to say this much. Each one of us has only been punished once by my father and we have never been punished again.

Just one time was enough?

Once, was enough. My mother was a....the queen of the house. That's one thing. The house was taken care of by my mother. She had to do all the buying of the house as far as food, clothing. She knew just how much she could spend. She is also, she is a little senile now, but I have to say my mother was a very good, shrewd - my mother was a shrewd business woman. In fact I would say she she's just as shrewd if not shrewder than him.

(Chuckles) And that's saying something, right?

Now, as I say, she owns quite a bit of stocks herself. Every time he made money she just about doubled it.

Really?

Yes.

By investing it in various stocks?

Yeh, uh huh.

O.K.

(END OF TAPE)