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Interview with Mr. Antonio Ciconte, Italian immigrant, 1524 Sycamore Street, Wilmington, Delaware, on February 17, 1968 by Francis J. Fierro.

Q Now, Mr. Ciconte, you have no difficulty in understanding English, correct?

A Yes, understand the English no much, [inaudible]

Q O.K., fine. I would like to do the interview in English because most of the people who'll be using the tape probably won't understand Italian. I understand Italian, [repeats self in Italian], so that if you can't think of how to say something in English, you say it in Italian, then I'll say it in English and you can say, "Yes, that's what I said," or "No, I don't mean that." [Asks if he understands in Italian.]

A Yes

Q [Speaks Italian, apparently repeating what he has just said above.]

A [Answers in Italian]

Q [Says something else in Italian] All right. Where were you born, Mr. Ciconte?

A Gerocarne [sp], Calabria, region of Catanzaro.

Q Gerocarne. Now, this is in Calabria, right?

A Si, Calabria, province of Calabria.

Q O.K., there are three provinces of Calabria.

A Reggio, Catanzaro, Cosenza, [inaudible - Italian].

Q Reggio is right in the toe, right?

A Reggio is in the end of Italy.

Q At the very end of the toe.

A Across the Strait of Messina, Sicily.

Q Across the Straits of Messina, right across from Sicily, and Reggio is right in the toe. And Catanzaro is right next to it.

A Next to--and Cosenza, which you know [inaudible] . . . Napoli.

Q In other words, Cosenza is closer to Naples, right?

A Cosenza, yeah.

Q Right. So you had Reggio, Catanzaro, and then the last one is what?

A Cosenza.

Q Cosenza, right. O.K.

A That's Reggio, Catanzaro, Cosenza . . .

Q And you came from . . .

A Gerocarne [sp] -- I mean Catanzaro.

Q Catanzaro, right. Now, what year were you born?

A 1884.

Q In 1884. Now, when you were a young boy, a little boy, in Italy, what did you do every day? What did you use to do, what kind of work?

A When I started to be working?

Q Well, let's say when--say before you became six years old. Did you ever do any kind of work?

A Oh, a six-year-old can't do nothing.

Q There's not too much, but could you ever work on a farm?

A No, no farm for me. I was--my father was a barber and my grandfather was a barber.

Q I see. So everybody in your family were barbers.

A Yes. And shoemaker and tailor.

Q You had shoemakers, tailors, and barbers.

A Well, I got an uncle tailor and one a shoemaker. My grandfather--he was 104 years old, he was born 1805, died 1909.

Q Your grandfather was 104 years old.

A Yeah, and he worked 'til the last day.

Q And he worked 'til the last day.

A Last day. When he died, I was in this country. I got married in 1909, he died in 1909.

Q I see. When you were a little boy, were you learning how to be a barber in your father's shop?

A When I was 10 years old, I started studying with my father, I learn to barber.

Q I see. Did you ever go to school in Italy?

A Yeah.

Q How old were you when you started school?

A I started about seven or eight. You know, I thought about the school over there. We go to school when the winter come, wintertime, you know, September, October, November, you know, 'cause we need money, you know. We didn't have much money. We go out and pick olives, you know? But it was free, you know, they'd pick it up every Saturday.

Q In other words, the ones that fell were free and you'd take those?

A Yeah, when they started to pick up all the olives, you can't go in and get olives, because the owners, they take all the olives. Well, when they finish and get all of 'em, then they say clean, anybody clean anything left, you know.

Q Oh, in other words, in the olive harvest season, the owner of the olive trees, he would harvest all the olives. And after he finished, he would let people come in and take whatever they wanted, whatever dropped on the ground, whatever was left in the trees.

A You find it, it's yours.

Q Right. And you used to do this just before the wintertime.

A Yeah. No shoes in the wintertime.

Q Yes. No shoes in the winter. That was very difficult. O.K., now you went to school in Italy, right? You started when you were about seven years old.

A About six, seven years old.

Q Six or seven.

A But some Italians don't go to school.

Q But there were times you didn't go.

A It wasn't forced like they do here. Some of 'em [inaudible] . . . there was not even about 25 or 35% who could read and write at that time.

Q Not even 25% of the people who could read and write. Now, how long did you go to school, how many years?

A About three or four years, when you go and when you no go.

Q In other words, you were enrolled say for about three or four years, but sometimes you'd go and sometimes you wouldn't go to school.

A Yeah, nobody forced.

Q Nobody forced you to go to school. You just went if you wanted to. When you

went to school over there, did you have to wear a uniform to school?

A No.

Q How about books? Did the school give you books or did you have to . . .

A No, you had to buy.

Q You had to buy 'em. Was it a public school?

A Public school.

Q Yeah, it wasn't a church school?

A There wasn't no church school around, no.

Q It was a public school.

A There was no church schools in Italy at that time. I don't know if they got now.

Q But there weren't any then.

A They was all public schools.

Q I see. Now, when you finished school, you were about ten years old, right?

A I went and started work with my father.

Q And you started to work.

A I started--learned the trade with my father.

Q You started learning the barbering trade.

A Study every day--watch what my father had to work--he shaved, haircut.

Q Well, at first, what did you do, just stand there and watch your father?

A Yeah.

Q Did you ever get the chance to shave anybody, or . . .

A I tell you when I start. My father want a lather man, you know, I lathered--soap, you know?

Q You used to lather 'em up.

A My father went outside to talk with somebody from another town, outside the barber shop--he forget I was lathering that man, no. I come in, I get the razor, I started shaving. I shave from ear to ear. I did a real nice shave, you know. And after that I started to shave all the time.

Q I see. In other words, the first one you did good.

- A Yeah, and then my father come in and take the razor from my hands.
- Q He took the razor away from you?
- A Yeah, because the guy thought I'd cut him.
- Q He was afraid you'd cut the customer, huh?
- A Since that time I got the idea I like shaving, you know. I shave a little bit at a time and started to work for myself. My father died 1903--falled down and got killed--and [inaudible] the barbershop. And who'd pay me? Who no pay me. My mother come to me, she says, "Son, this is no place for you. Why don't you go to America?"
- Q Your mother told you she wanted you to go to America. This was when, 1903?
- A 1905--no, 1903 my father died.
- Q Yes, your father died . . .
- A In November, one year, two months after my father died, I started coming to America. It was 1904 my mother told me, said, "This place is no good for you."
- Q What made your mother think that you should come to America?
- A Because I work and they don't pay me, nobody.
- Q Nobody ever paid you for cutting their hair or shaving them. Did your mother have any friends in the United States?
- A She had a sister. My mother come in here in this country. She died in 1927--come in 1920, she died in 1927.
- Q Oh, then your mother did eventually come here.
- A And my brother.
- Q Now, when your mother said you should come to the United States, she already had a sister here.
- A Yeah, yeah, she had a sister over here. It was a little--New York, you know, what's the name, Bronx.
- Q In the Bronx? Um hmm. Well, she used to write to your mother and told her it was much better here than in Italy, is that it?
- A Oh yeah. No, it was my brother went from here in Italy--you understand? He was come in 1913, 1920 he went in Italy.
- Q Yeah, I know, but I'm talking about when you came here. You came in 1905, right?
- A Yeah. It take me--I left Naples 12th day January and I reach over here 2nd day February.

Q You left January 12th . . .

A January 12th, I come in here . . . no, it was pretty near first of March.

Q Almost the first of March when you got here. It took that long.

A January the 20--I remember the boat started on fire, too.

Q Really? Well, before we start talking about the trip across, how did you leave your little home town where you were born? How did you leave to go to Naples when you--did you walk, or take a train . . .

A Train, we take a train.

Q Where did you get the train?

A Near my hometown.

Q What was the name of the town where you got the train?

A Soliano [sp?]. That's about 15, 20-minutes walk.

Q From your hometown. And so you walked to the train station and you got the train for Naples.

A And there was over there--went to the horse and a coach. And we went to [sounds like Pisa Calabria], that's where I had to go to get a train. . . . take us seven hours to go there.

Q Oh, in other words, you walked to Soliano and you got a horse and buggy.

A Yeah. There was nine of us we come here altogether.

Q I see. Uh huh.

A And we got three buggy and we got off at Pisa Calabria over there, the train that goes to Naples, you know.

Q Pisa Calabria? And then after having gone there from Soliano in a horse and buggy, you took the train.

A And there we get the train, yeah.

Q Right. And the train took you to Naples.

A Yeah.

Q Do you remember how long it took the train to get to Naples?

A I left 8:41 in the evening, it was about seven or eight o'clock in the morning.

Q In other words, it took you about 12 hours, right? About 12 hours to get to Naples. Now once you got to Naples, was the boat there ready and waiting

for you?

- A The boat we had to wait about two days to come. Then when it come, the company send a man with the coaches--you know trunk they take like that, they carry suitcases and the people. The people was [inaudible] too, you know.
- Q Yeah. Was this the first time you ever left your hometown?
- A First time I left my hometown.
- Q That's the first time you ever left your hometown to go to another town.
- A No, no. All the time in my own town.
- Q That's what I'm saying. You'd never left your hometown before, this was the first time.
- A No, no, no, no.
- Q This was the first time. O.K., now when you got on the boat, what kind of a boat was it, was it an Italian boat?
- A Italian boat. Leguria [sp].
- Q Leguria.
- A Leguria, name of the boat. It got sunk now. In the Second World War they sunk that boat
- Q It was sunk in the Second World War?
- A Second World War, yeah.
- Q And it took you almost a month to cross. From the twelfth of January . . .
- A Twelfth of January, all of February, and then it was about the second or third of March when I reach Wilmington.
- Q When you reached Wilmington it was the second or third of March. Did the boat stop anywhere between Naples and the United States?
- A The boat? I told you, January the 20, the boat went on fire. It stopped [inaudible - sounds like "Holland, Ingsa Holland"]--you know what I mean?
- Q In Holland? Uh, let's see. You left Naples. Did you stop anywhere in France?
- A No, no.
- Q Did it stop in Gibraltar?
- A Oh yeah. It pass Gibraltar, keep on going.
- Q And you kept on going. And where did it head for after it left Gibraltar,

do you remember?

- A [Inaudible] . . . America. We stop at Isla de Faial [sp?], we want to fix our boat, you know? Got the coal--Isla de Faial, it belong to England.
- Q The Island of Faial, and it belonged, you say, to England.
- A It belonged to England. That was on January the 20.
- Q Oh, that was on the 20th of January. That wasn't in the Azores, was it?
- A Huh?
- Q That wasn't in the Azores?
- A The boat you mean?
- Q Well, where you stopped to get the coal. That wasn't the Azore Islands, was it?
- A It was an island and we get the coal, they fix the boat, everything.
- Q Yeah. And there you took care of everything. Now the boat had caught . . .
- A About a couple of days, after they fix the boat, again we come to America. It take about three, four days more.
- Q I see. Now, when it got to the United States, when the boat got to the United States, where did it land, in Boston, New York or Philadelphia?
- A The boat that come from Italy?
- Q Yeah, the boat that came from Italy, right.
- A In New York.
- Q In New York.
- A Bureau of Immigration, you know the examination and immigration is in New York.
- Q Right. Now, you went through the exam. When you got off the boat, did they hold you anywhere?
- A They examine your eyes . . . but in Naples, before we get the boat, we had to say same thing in New York. You know what I mean? And well, whatever they said in Naples, I said in New York the same thing.
- Q In other words, they just checked to make sure that you told the truth in Naples about yourself, that you weren't sick or anything else.
- A Doctor's examination, examine your eyes, examine everything and there's a man at the desk with a big book was mark everything and all that, you know what I mean? And that was free. Took me in the United States. Then as

soon as we went to the boat, they going to New York. It's in New York, you know, it was an island in New York, you know.

Q Ellis Island?

A Yeah. We was over there.

Q Right. Well, they closed that down now, you know.

A Yeah, I know, but you had to go in a boat to go in New York, you know.

Q Right. In other words, you had to take a ferry boat to get to the mainland from Ellis Island.

A Then from the other boat, we took a train--no, wait a minute. We went to the station there, you know, in New York, and we come to Wilmington. We went to the B&O station there in New York and we get off at the P&O station over here in Wilmington.

Q Right. At DuPont Street and Delaware Avenue.

A A lot of snow on the ground.

Q Well, I imagine so. You got here--well, it was March, but there was a lot of snow on the ground, huh? How about that.

A Had no stockings, I didn't have no underwear. I have a suitcase, I have a bag [inaudible] . . . There was a cousin of mine come before me and he was supposed to know the roads, you know, the streets over here. We went to Delaware Avenue--when it was Washington Street, there was a monument over there, you know, a statue, 10th and Washington? And my cousin when we reach over there, "Come on, we got to go this way." We went to Front Street, you know. 10th and Washington, we walked to Front Street.

Q In other words, from the P&O station you walked down to 10th and Washington and then you turned right and walked straight down to Front Street.

A Station [inaudible] . . . you know, the . . .

Q Where the B&O station used to be? Yeah, I know where that used to be.

A Yeah, that's where we get off. From down there we walk Delaware Avenue straight to March Street. When we reach Washington Street, there was a statue over there. My cousin remembered that statue and he know the way, go back, and we walk over there, to Front Street.

Q Why did you go down to Front Street?

A A friend of mine live over there.

Q Oh, you had a friend that lived there.

A I come with his address, too, you know. He's a friend, but I had to put him a cousin.

- Q I see. Now, when you went down to see this friend, did he give you room and board?
- A I was [inaudible] over here, room and board. He stayed in a room, too, hisself. There was a lot--about 15 or 20 people who live in that house.
- Q I see, um hmm.
- A And the owners, they cook for you. You had to buy the stuff and they cook for you, beans, macaroni, meat--no greens, I never eat no greens like that, 'cause we never buy the green and they cook the green, you know. We had beans and macaroni or carne and macaroni, that's all.
- Q And that's what you ate, beans, macaroni, or meat and macaroni and that was it. Never ate any vegetables, huh? O.K., now. When you first got here, what did you do about getting a job when you first landed? Now this was in 1905.
- A I wanted to get a job as a tailor or barber.
- Q You were a tailor and a barber.
- A I was 20 years old when I come over here. My cousin can't talk English and they give him a job. And I went to Pennsylvania to work for here--you know the elevator--over here, the track, I mean the station? You know the train that goes on the top of it. Before it was done--that's when they built it, when I was here. I was work there.
- Q Oh, in other words the track used to be--where, at the Pennsylvania Railroad? It was on street level.
- A Yeah, on the street. And now they make it high, you know.
- Q And they had to raise it up.
- A From here to go to Edgemoor, make it high.
- Q In other words, they started at Edgemoor, from Edgemoor down to Front Street, elevating the . . .
- A No, they come up from the station over here, they go to Edgemoor, you know? That's all.
- Q In other words, they elevated that whole track, and you worked on that.
- A I went to work about six, seven days altogether.
- Q You worked there about six or seven days?
- A For the [inaudible] people, make cement, you know, for the wall. And I carry a lot of cement, make [inaudible], you know? And then some friend of mine was living in the same place, they was working over there, too, you know. Some time the people--not all the people was living there, few--he was working [inaudible] . . . you know the paymaster, they mark it and see how many people work, like they check your name and everything, you know? Some people, after they get their name, go home, they want to work

over here at pulp mill.

- Q In other words, what some of them used to do, you had the paymaster, who wrote down the name of everybody who reported for work. And some of these people, after they had their name written down, would leave the job and they'd go work somewhere else.
- A They go to the pulp mill.
- Q At the pulp mill?
- A Yeah, where they make the paper over here. Next to the Gas House.
- Q Do you remember the name of that pulp mill?
- A That's the name, pulp mill.
- Q The pulp mill. It's not there anymore, though.
- Q No.
- Q Where was this located, the pulp mill?
- A You pass the gas tank, you know, gas tank--gas . . .
- Q No, I . . . yes, you can tell me.
- B [Unidentified female] Where was this located, down the highway here, like when you go down to Tommy's?
- A You go down to Tommy's, down Maryland Avenue.
- B Maryland Avenue, yeah, which is no more . . .
- A You know, that gas tank, you could see from here.
- B Yeah. I don't think we have that--from here you could see the high black thing.
- Q That's not the one at Delaware City is it?
- B No, I don't think--I think it was down here someplace. I could see it myself, a big high . . .
- Q Was it near the Marine Terminal?
- A Wait a minute. Madison Street.
- Q Oh, on Madison Street.
- B Foot of Madison; yeah. See, this is all leading down to Maryland Avenue, which is no more--are you from Wilmington?
- Q Yeah, I'm from Wilmington.

- P Oh, then you know the territory.
- A He had the place, that gas tank there, they call it the pulp mill.
- E You had to pass that tank there in order to get to the pulp mill.
- Q O.K. Fine. Is the gas tank--can you still see it down there?
- A Yeah, you can see it. You can see it from here.
- Q O.K., it's right down at the foot of Madison Street near the Marine Terminal, isn't it? It wouldn't be too far from it, would it?
- A I mean, after they pass there, they go to the pulp mill.
- B That's right--he understands.
- Q And what did these people do, show up at the end of the week to get their pay?
- A Yeah, they get a pay over there, they get a pay over here. You know what time they [inaudible - person "B" is talking at same time]
- B Should he be talking like that? See, this is being marked on here . . .
- A I understand that.
- Q That's perfectly all right. This is interesting. You see, this adds . . .
- B This shows you people had to try to make a little extra money, I guess.
- Q Yeah. Beg, borrow, or steal. Now, these were Italians, right?
- A Yeah, Italians. And I done it myself. The first day, I done it myself. I went to the pulp mill.
- B Papa. That's recorded. You didn't do anything . . .
- A I done it myself--he want me to talk like that. I done it myself. I went down there to try to get a job, too, like them people.
- E Oh, that's different.
- A You know the difference, when I come back that day--I no work down in the pulp mill, I stay home. [Inaudible] . . . people coming, I went down there. Maybe somebody called the man and told him I was no working. From the top--I was all the way down in ditch [inaudible] I went down there, they get mad. [Inaudible] . . . my money. I lost the job. You understand? I wasn't no how to work--I try to do the same thing as the other people, get two jobs.
- B Don't tell these things, Papa.
- A I want to talk--that's what he want.

- B I don't want that. You weren't a cheat. I don't go for that.
- Q No, certainly. But this is how things were then, it was a little bit difficult.
- B He was ignorant of everything . . .
- Q This is it exactly. O.K. Well, now, the people you lived with were all Italian, right? Now, what was the life like in those days? It certainly wasn't a very easy life.
- A Most of the life of that people was pick and shovel.
- Q Most of them worked on construction, pick and shovel.
- A There was a tailor. There was a shoemaker . . . different--painting, some like that, but they mostly was pick and shovel.
- Q This was what just about everybody did. In other words, the Italians were getting the worst jobs.
- A Yeah. I mean a farmer from Italy, pick and a shovel, that's all he know. He's no barber, no doctor, no priest or nothing.
- Q Now, you were living down here on Front Street then, right?
- A Yeah.
- Q Were they mostly all Italians at that time in 1905?
- A Well, Italian, there were no much colored people. Most of the Italians, Scott Street, Union Street.
- Q Yeah, that's where most of the Italians lived. How about Madison Street, were there many Italians down on that street?
- A A house here, a house there, in a block maybe they'd have three or four family.
- Q Yeah. Not too many, huh?
- A No.
- Q Most of the Italians were still up on Scott Street and Lincoln Street and in that general area. O.K., now, you of course had to pay for your room and board. Now, once you finished with this job with the railroad, what did you do then? Where did you go to work then?
- A My cousin, he was working in [inaudible], Morocco Shop--he been work before, too, before he went in Italy.
- Q All right, now the Morocco Shop, that was a leather shop, right?
- A Leather shop, on Front and Monroe.

Q At Front and Monroe.

A He got a job for me, \$5.00 a week. Then I got a raise 25¢ a week--made \$5.25. After I work about five or six months, they raise me a quarter.

Q Now, how many days a week did you have to work for the \$5.00 a week.

A Well, I worked Monday to Sunday.

Q Six days a week. How many hours each day?

A Well, we finish, six, seven o'clock--they started work 7:00 in the morning, 6:00, still finishing up.

Q In other words, you worked maybe twelve hours a day.

A Sometimes.

Q And sometimes more?

A No, no more, but that much. Then I got a job on the stretch machine, I make \$10.00 a week.

Q What was that, staking out the skins, stretching them out?

A Yeah, they stretch, you know what I mean?

Q O.K. How long did you stay there?

A About a year.

Q Five years?

A About one year.

Q One year. Now, your cousin tried to--well, your cousin got you that job there, right?

A Yeah.

Q Now, had you learned how to speak English after you were there for a while?

A I can't talk English.

Q Uh huh, did you ever go--now, you were a barber and a tailor, right?

A In the old country.

Q Did you ever go into barbering and tailoring in this country?

A I went to work a barber and then buy a barbershop in 1906 . . .

Q In 1906 then you went into barbering.

- A I bought a barbershop at Front and Madison, had two chair and went to four chair. And I didn't have enough chair, I move next door, and I put six chair in. It was at 621 and I moved 619.
- Q In other words, you had two shops.
- A One shop. I move one
- Q Oh, you just moved into a bigger place.
- A Yeah, more room.
- Q How many barbers did you have working for you?
- A When I was at 619
- B 619 Front Street he was.
- Q On Front Street, 619.
- A 619 West Front Street, I have about three barbers and three apprentice boy--learned the trade.
- Q So you had three barbers and three apprentice boys and you had six chairs.
- A They no have barber school like now, you know. They want to learn to barber, they go to a barbershop and learn.
- Q In other words, they learned under a master barber, this is how they learned. Now, when you got into your own barbershop, did things start looking better for you?
- A A little bit at a time.
- Q Little bit at a time. Were you married then?
- A I got married in 1909. I come 1905, got married in 1909.
- Q Uh huh. But in 1906 you had your own shop?
- A Yeah.
- Q Now, could you tell me some of the things that happened to you or happened to the Italians between 1906 and 1909? Now, you say you got married in 1909, right?
- A Yeah.
- Q O.K. What things were happening during those three years? Does anything stand out in your mind?
- A Well I think I was working in the barbershop, that's all. I worked for a tailor two weeks and I didn't even get a pay--at 5th and French, that's it, that's where I worked.

Q You worked for a tailor for two weeks and you didn't get paid for it. All right . . .

A They were Italian people, too.

B Excuse me. Before you got into your barbershop, you worked in the bowling alley, too, and on the railroad tracks.

A I went to the bowling alley after the [inaudible], I went to work for the bowling alley.

Q What kind of work did you do in the bowling alley? Setting up pins?

A Pins. \$2.50 a week.

Q \$2.50 a week.

A From 12:00 to about 2:00 in the morning. \$2.50 a week.

Q Now, what was your relationship with other people like? Now, when I say . . .

B Did you get along with the people?

A I get along with everybody.

Q O.K., now, what sort of things did you do when you weren't working? Now, you were a young man, all your friends, I assume, were young men . . .

A Go to moving pictures for a nickel.

Q You went to the movie for a nickel.

A Go to the theater for 20¢.

Q What was this, like vaudeville?

A It was Docstadders [sp], it was at Delaware Avenue . . .

Q Docstadders.

A Docstadders, it was on 10th Street and--10th and Tatnall.

Q 10th and Tatnall. Docstadders.

A Had a fire.

Q That place caught fire, yeah.

A And I went to the Lyceum Theater, went to the Opera House.

Q The Opera House was where the Grand is today, right?

A Yeah, yeah. Docstadders is still there, too. But it's a store, I don't know how they finish it.

- Q At 10th and Tatnall, huh?
- A No, that's 10th and Market.
- B That's where it was.
- Q Oh, Docstadders was at 10th and Market.
- A 10th and Market. Docstadders, the Opera House, 10th and Market, between 9th and 10th.
- Q What, Docstadders was?
- A Between 8th and 9th, I mean, that's it. Between 8th and 9th, still there. They got all the pictures in one place, now.
- B He's talking about the Grand, I think.
- Q The Grand. That was the Opera House, now, the Grand was, you know? O.K., now, when you came to this country, did you use to go to church?
- A All the time.
- Q Now, where did you go to church?
- A St. Peter.
- Q Now, tell me something. Now, you got here in 1905, right?
- A Yeah.
- Q How did they treat you at church?
- A They treat you all right--as long as you put the penny in the basket.
- Q Could you go to any Mass you wanted to go to?
- A Oh, yeah.
- Q Could you really?
- A Oh, yeah.
- Q Did they ever ask any Italians to leave any Mass there?
- A No, nobody asked anything. You wanted to go, you could go. [Tape stops, starts]
- B Put your hand away from your mouth so he can understand you.
- Q That's O.K. I want to ask you one more time, now, about this business of going to church. Could you go to any Mass that you wanted to on Sunday?
- A Only 9:00.

Q Only the 9:00, that was the Italian Mass, the 9:00 Mass.

A During the week, you could come any time to Mass.

Q During the week you could go any time, but on Sundays the Italian could only go to the 9:00 Mass.

A That's right.

Q Now, why was this? Why is it that you couldn't go to any other Mass?

A Through the week, but not on Sunday.

A But not on Sunday. Well, what did they have, the Masses on Sunday were for the American parishioners and the Italian-American could only go to the 9:00 Mass, is that right?

A Yeah.

Q Did they allow you to go to any other Mass?

A Not on Sunday.

Q Suppose you did go to another Mass.

A They'd make you get out.

Q They asked you to leave church.

A They say, "This Mass is for the American people."

Q That's it, and they wouldn't let you stay.

A But during the week you could go every day.

Q Right. Through the Mass you could go to any Mass but on Sundays you could only go to the 9:00 Mass. Did this same thing apply to holy days?

A Holy days, too.

Q Holy days you could only go to 9:00 Mass.

A Yeah, we all go on the holy day.

Q Yes. Then you'd only go to 9:00 Mass, right? All right, now, when you got married, did you get married in church?

A Sure.

Q Did you get married in St. Peter's?

A No, Elkton, Maryland.

Q In Elkton?

- A My wife was from Elkton, Maryland.
- Q You wife was from Elkton.
- A And I got married in a Catholic church there.
- Q Yes, you got married in the Catholic church down there. Well, how was the Catholic--were there many Italians who lived in Elkton in those days?
- A No, not too many Italian. There was a lot of American people going to church over there.
- Q I see.
- A Go any time.
- Q Did they treat--they didn't treat the Italians the same in Elkton as they did in Wilmington, did they? Italians could go to any Mass.
- A Any time. Any Mass, you know.
- Q All right, now, after you were married, did you still live in Wilmington?
- A When I got married in Elkton, October the 4th I bring my wife over here to Wilmington--same day I got married. That's all.
- Q Well, that's it, and you lived in Wilmington.
- A In Wilmington.
- Q Where in Wilmington did you live?
- A 621 West Front Street. I had a barbershop over there, too.
- Q I see, you had the barbershop and your . . .
- A We live upstairs.
- Q Oh, you lived upstairs.
- A Me and my wife.
- Q Did you rent this building or did you own it?
- A Rent it.
- Q You rented it. How long did you stay in that building?
- A I was over there in 1906 'til 1918.
- Q From 1906 to 1918.
- A '18. And I move Fourth and Madison with the barbershop.

- Q I see. Now, during that period from 1906 to 1918, that's a twelve-year period, and during that period of time there were some great changes that occurred. Probably the biggest change and the event which probably had the greatest impact on not only the Italian community but the world at that time, was the First World War. In 1914 the First World War started in Europe.
- A Yeah, I remember.
- Q Now, how did that affect you and your other Italian friends? Because Italy went into the war in 1914.
- A Yeah, 24th day of May.
- Q The 4th of May--24th of May.
- A 15.
- Q And Italy went into the war. What happened? Did many of the Italians go back to Italy to join the army?
- A A lot went back to go in the army.
- Q You didn't go back.
- A No.
- Q O.K. Well, how did you feel about the whole thing? How did you feel about the war, about going back to fight and so on?
- A Well, they--in a way, they really was all together with the United States, Italy, you know, First World War. They was all together with the United States.
- Q Right, the United States and Italy were on the same side.
- A France, England, America--America start in 1917.
- Q Yes, well the United States didn't go into it until 1917.
- A Italy started in 1915. [Inaudible] . . . June the 10th, 1914, First World War.
- Q Yes. Now, Italy got into the war when, in 1915 you say?
- A 1915, May the 24th.
- Q May the 24th, O.K. Now, there are a lot of your Italian friends, I'm sure, that went back to Italy to go in the war.
- A A lot went back to serve in the army, yeah.
- Q O.K. How were conditions here after the United States got into the war? Now we know that before the war started, Italians were treated pretty badly

in this country, there's no denying that. Italians were not treated the same as other people were.

A Yeah, they march out of here, Market Street, when they leaving for the war, you know, Italians, American, Polish, everyone. They all was down at Market Street all the time, they seemed like a parade, band and everything.

Q This was when the boys joined the Army and marched . . .

A . . . gonna leave from here, yeah.

Q They would just march, what, up Market Street? Where would they march?

A Yeah. A lot of Italians go in the Army at that time.

Q Well, there were a lot of Italians.

A It was in this country--same time it was in this country, it was over in Italy, too, you know.

Q Yes. O.K., now. We know that before World War I, the situation, the conditions of the Italians were very poor. They were very poor. I mean, there's . . .

A Well, after the war, it started to come up.

Q After the war, the Italians started to improve themselves tremendously.

A Yeah, everybody.

Q Everybody was. Now, did you--insofar as you yourself are concerned, what did you notice about the way you were treated by other people who were not Italians?

A Well, you're afraid to talk. You want to try to no start a fight, you know.

Q In other words, all you wanted to do was just mind your own business, and earn a living, is that it?

A That's it.

Q But did you ever have any friends who were not Italians?

A After I got the barbershop I had a lot of friends, American friends, Germany, Spanish, French, any kind of people.

Q In other words, in your barbershop, you used to get all kinds of people, is that it?

A Oh, yeah.

Q And they weren't just Italians, but they were Irish, French, Polish . . .

A Oh, yeah, oh, yeah . . . American, Polish--more Polish than anything else.

Q You had more Polish customers than anything else.

A Yeah. French, maybe a few, Germany, maybe a few, but Polish I have plenty customers who were Polish people.

Q Were there a lot of Polish people who lived down on Front Street around that time?

A They lived around here, right here, all Polish people in here.

Q And they used to come down on Front Street . . .

A But there was no barbershop there on [inaudible] Avenue. I had my shop right out front of Madison Avenue when you come out from Maryland Avenue, you going to Market Street, you know?

Q Right, I know where that is. And they used to come right down there . . .

A Yeah, that was the only barbershop that was there, near.

Q All right, now, in 1918 you moved, right? Did you move before the war ended or right after the war ended?

A The war was going on when I moved there.

Q The war was still going on when you moved.

A When I moved to Fourth and Madison.

Q Um hmm. Now, I imagine when you moved, what did you do, haul all your chairs and everything out with a horse and wagon?

A With a horse and wagon. No bus, no truck, I mean, just a horse and a wagon.

Q All right, now, why did you move?

A When I move?

Q Why?

A I bought a house at Fourth and Madison.

Q Oh, you bought a house there. Oh, I see.

A And I moved.

Q So you bought a house on Fourth Street, Fourth and Madison?

A Next to the corner.

- Q Next to the corner. So you moved your whole business up there?
- A Barbershop, family, everything.
- Q Right. Now, when you moved up there, what was it like? What was that neighborhood like when you moved there?
- A Fine.
- Q Were there a lot of Italians there?
- A A lot of business people.
- Q Were there many Italians there?
- A Very few Italian.
- Q Very few. Now, when you were in that area, what church did you go to? Did you still go to St. Peter's?
- A St. Peter's. I belonged to St. Peter's.
- Q O.K. Now, this was in 1918. Did you still have to go to the 9:00 Mass in 1918?
- A Oh, yes.
- Q All right, you still couldn't go to any Mass you wanted to?
- A But Father Daugherty [sp?] died and I think you could go to any Mass, nobody say anything anymore.
- Q I see. All right, now, did you ever belong to any organizations such as the Eagles?
- A Eagles, Christopher Columbus . . .
- Q Now, I'm talking about in 1918.
- A Yeah, Eagles, Christopher Columbus, 3rd and Walnut . . .
- Q At 3rd and Walnut, right. That was the Christopher Columbus Lodge of the Sons of Italy, right?
- A It was Sons of Italy--Sons of Italy over here, First Street. It was at 3rd and Walnut.
- Q And that was the Christopher Columbus Lodge.
- A And then they put this lodge in Sons of the Colombo, you know what I mean? [Italian - sounds like "Fille de Italia"].
- Q Sons of Italy. And O.K., this was Sons of Columbus here?
- A Sons of Colombo, Fille de Italia--no, not Fille de Italia . . .

Q Fille de Colombo.

A Fille de Colombo, yeah.

Q O.K., so you belonged to the Sons . . .

A Principe de Napoli . . .

Q The Prince of Naples Lodge?

A It's in Wilmington, yeah. Principe de Napoli, yeah.

Q Did you belong to the Eagles or anything like that?

A Eagles, yeah. 1912, I quit in 1954, '55.

Q I see. So in 1912 you joined the Eagles?

A Yeah.

Q Did you belong to any other clubs?

A That's all, just the lodge.

Q O.K., just the lodge. Now, what were they, beneficial lodges?

A Oh, yeah.

Q They were all beneficial lodges. Did you ever belong to any political parties?

A No.

Q Never belonged to any political parties at all.

A No, no, no, no. No political party. There was no politics, no [inaudible] . . . nothing.

Q I see. O.K. Now, after World War I ended, how did this affect you? Did it affect your business at all? Did business get better after the war?

A Oh, yeah, it started better, yeah. Roger started school to learn to barber, learned to haircut but no shaving.

Q No shaving, yeah. Well, this is what has happened here. All right, now, in 1923, St. Anthony's parish was started.

A Well, the church they finish in 1925.

Q All right, but it was started around 1923, right?

A DiSabatino.

Q Do you remember Father Tucker?

A Oh, mama mia, yeah.

Q What kind of an effect would you say Father Tucker had on the Italian community in Wilmington?

A I think that we respect him better than the Pope.

Q You respected him more than the Pope, huh?

A Better than the Pope to a lot of people.

Q All right, now, Father Tucker came and founded an Italian parish, didn't he?

A Yeah, he's the one that started--I was at Salesianum [sp?], me and my son and [sounds like "Pasqualedel Campo"]--taking me to go there--8th Street and . . .

Q 8th and West.

A 8th and West, and DiSabatino and one of the sons, we went to Father Tucker's place over there--Salesianum, 8th Street, you know.

Q O.K. Father Tucker taught school at Salesianum School at 8th and West, and he called who--DiSabatino and one of his sons, Pasquale del Campo [sp]?

A He expected me over there, too.

Q You went with Pasquale del Campo?

A [Inaudible] We was good friends. We go to New York, [inaudible], every place. He meet with me every Sunday morning, go down and get coffee, 2nd and Madison.

Q I see. You all met with Father Tucker at Salesianum . . .

A You know why?

Q Why?

A It was what you call [inaudible - Italian] in Washington, he come in, too.

Q The Apostolic Delegate from Washington came, and he met with you, too?

A Yes, and then him and Father Tucker, after it was all over, he come out with the uniform of the cardinal, you know. And he walk in and Father Tucker [inaudible] . . . yeah, I was over there. And then St. Anthony was finished in 1925. Everybody was making money [inaudible] . . . they pay, what they order for the church, they pay for it--my share, you know.

Q I see. Well, what did Father Tucker want to talk to you about when they got you all together at Salesianum School?

A He don't want to talk to me, he want to talk to Del Campo.

Q What did he want to talk to Del Campo about?

- A He talk about the church, they build a new church.
- Q Well, what did he want to do, plan a campaign to get money to build a church?
- A Yeah, to build the church.
- Q O.K., how did they get money to build the church? Getting donations?
- A Donations . . . who got more money--even American people put the money, too.
- Q In other words, you got donations from everybody to build the church.
- A Yeah, I offered \$200.00--I pay 6th and Market, bank.
- Q In other words, that was where you went and deposited the money, at the bank at 6th and Market.
- A No, I get paid 6th and Market--I was belong to National Bank at 5th and Market, 6th and Market where the church [inaudible] . . . everybody took their money to pay.
- Q In other words . . .
- C [2nd unidentified female] Pledges they made, they paid on them.
- Q Oh, they made pledges and paid on the pledges down at the bank at 6th and Market. All right, fine. Now, when St. Anthony's Church was built, did you start going to St. Anthony's instead of St. Peter's?
- A Oh, yeah. I went all the time, ever since [inaudible], I was going to St. Peter.
- Q Oh, you went to St. Peter's, still.
- A St. Anthony's summertime, in other time was far away from 4th and Madison, [inaudible] . . . 6th and West.
- Q O.K. When St. Anthony's started, did you join the Holy Name at St. Anthony's, or any of these other organizations?
- A No.
- Q You didn't? O.K.
- A I was belong to Knights of Columbus.
- Q You belonged to Knights of Columbus?
- A 8th Street.
- Q Now, in the Knights of Columbus that you belonged to, were they mostly all Italians?

A No, no--all kind, any nationality.

Q Any nationality, there was no discrimination at all.

A Lot of Irish.

Q And they accepted--the Irish accepted you in this organization, is that it?

A Yeah.

Q Uh huh. All right, now, in the early '20s, Prohibition came in.

A 1918.

Q Is that when it started, 1918? O.K.

A Wilson put the Prohibition, President Wilson.

Q Well, what effect did that have on the community in general?

A It was no good, I think, Prohibition.

Q It was no good.

A It raised a lot of gang, a lot of people get killed. A lot of people get arrested.

Q In Wilmington here?

A In all the country, all over the country.

Q Well, how about Wilmington right here?

A Oh, here too, yeah.

Q Was there a lot of bootlegging around here?

A Yeah, had bootleggers.

Q Did you ever see anybody that--did they have these gunfights like in Chicago or anything here?

A No, I don't see nobody.

Q Well, it was pretty calm here, is that it?

A Sometimes I heard somebody stabbed with a knife, somebody killed, something like that. I don't know the name or anything like that, but nobody I see with a gun.

Q All right. Now, in 1923 Mussolini started to rise to power, he came into power. How did that affect the Italians here in Wilmington?

A Mussolini?

Q Yeah. What did the Italians in Wilmington think about Mussolini when he came to power?

A They think that it was same thing like another Jesus.

Q They thought that he was a good man.

A Yeah, yeah.

Q They thought that he was a really good man, he was gonna do great things for Italy, is that it?

A Yeah, yeah.

Q Tell me, were there any organizations that were formed in this country to support Mussolini and to publicize him here?

A Nobody supported Mussolini.

Q Over here?

A Nobody supported Mussolini.

Q The Italians, you say they didn't--well, . . .

A You mean sending money, you mean?

Q Sending money and . . .

A No, no, no, no, no. Nobody send money to Mussolini.

Q Did you ever hear of this organization called the Fascist League of North America?

A Fascista's the party of Mussolini.

Q Right, that's his party. Did you ever know anybody who belonged to that here?

A No.

Q I see. Did you ever know of the organization in this country?

A Yeah.

Q You knew the organization.

A There was in Wilmington about five, six, seven in Wilmington. But when the war started, he was against America, [inaudible], you know? And they make the ones no citizens, they take a receipt 'til they get news from Italy, you know? On television.

Q On a radio, you mean on a short-wave radio.

A Radio, television, too.

C No, no televsion.

Q There was no television then.

A No? Only radio.

Q You had to pull the short-wave out of the radio, that's what they had to do. They weren't allowed to have short-wave. If they were not citizens, you could not have short-wave in the house. I think that's what it was. Do you ever remember them having any rallies or anything in Sons of Columbus Lodge, the Fascists? Do you ever remember any rallies there?

A I don't know. I'd better not answer anything like that.

Q Do you remember when people gave their gold rings in the Sons of Columbus Lodge here to send to Mussolini to fight the Ethiopian war?

A I don't remember that.

Q You don't remember that? There were a lot of people who did this. The women gave their diamond rings, their engagement rings, their wedding rings, and the men gave their gold wedding rings, and they all got the iron ring from them, just a plain iron ring that rusted the first time they got damp, you know.

A The Second World War there were [sounds like "52"] countries against Italy.

Q Yeah, well, there were quite a few of them, there's no doubt about that. I was just wondering if you remembered any of this. You see, this was something to indicate support for Mussolini and for Italy . . .

A No, no, I don't know nobody--I know me, I did nothing. And I heard nobody say, "I send money to Mussolini," I never heard nothing.

Q Well, they weren't private contributions, they were just rallies where they would take up collections and stuff, this was the sort of thing it was.

A No.

Q O.K. Do you remember when Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected?

A Yes, sir.

Q Now, he was elected in the middle of the Great Depression.

A Was a Depression in 1929, it [inaudible] . . .

Q Right. It just sank, right, the bottom fell out of the stock market. Do you remember what the Depression was like?

A I was poor.

- Q I guess everybody was. How did this affect your business? Did it really hurt your business?
- A Yeah, hurts everybody.
- Q Right. I mean, nobody could pay for haircuts.
- A The Second World War, when Roosevelt was President, they started going up, you know. I made good money.
- Q Right. In other words, people started to come out of this Depression with the start of World War II. What did you think of Franklin Delano Roosevelt?
- A He was fine, nice man.
- Q Do you think he was a good President?
- A Yeah.
- Q Do you think he was good for the country and everything?
- A Yes.
- Q Uh huh. What effect would you say that World War II had on you and on the Italian community? What effect do you think that as a result of World War II, the Italians bettered themselves?
- A It getting better and better and better all the time.
- Q During World War II, did anybody ever blame you, almost, for the fact that we were at war with Italy?
- A Well, they make remarks, yeah, they make remarks.
- Q They made some remarks to you?
- A Fellows would talk to you on the street, two or three of 'em together, somebody come in and they, "Get out," . . . they can't talk to me because I was citizen. Especially the people that was not citizen, same like the slaves. They can't stand all together, can't talk on the street.
- Q Oh really, this was during World War II.
- A Yeah. And there was Columbus Day, I remember that, Columbus Day, 12th October, [inaudible - sounds like "George Pecora"], the New Yorker, Roosevelt was the President, you know--him and Pecora make these people be free, but they got to go get the citizen's papers, you know? The ones who was no citizens, make 'em free.
- Q Well, they picked up a lot of people who were not citizens at the beginning of World War II and put 'em in concentration camps, right?
- A Yeah.

- Q Italian people, yeah. And this is what they did, they freed them all, is that it?
- A Freed them all, that's right.
- Q All right, now, you came to this country in 1905. You've been in this country now 63 years. What would you consider, if you would think about it, what would you consider to be the greatest change that you've noticed since you've been here? In all those years, where would you say was the biggest change? [Repeats in Italian]
- A In America? Second World War.
- Q You would say that the Second World War caused the greatest changes in this country.
- A Yeah, that's it. Roosevelt he fix it right, too.
- Q And Roosevelt himself and World War II.
- A Roosevelt, he was in favor of the people gonna make a union, you know?
- Q Yes, he was in favor of people forming unions.
- A Yeah, because they get in a union all together, you know, when they don't earn much, they're not gonna work, you know what I mean?
- Q In other words, he gave the working man pride in himself, encouraged him to form unions, is that it? Right, for strength, for mutual strength. O.K. Have you ever wanted to go back to Italy?
- A I went back there--I no want to go back no more.
- Q What I mean is, have you ever wanted to leave the United States and go back to Italy to live?
- A No, no, no, no, no.
- Q Never. You just wanted to go back for a visit.
- A Just one [inaudible]. Some friend of mine, he just died--Davalos [sp?], a cousin, Tony Davalos--he got a mother still living, 97 years old. He told me last October--September, October--he said, "Next summer, if my mother's still living, we take a trip in Italy and I want to go see my mother." I says, "O.K., I come." When the time come in March, start to make the paper to go in the old country, he tell me, he say, "I can't come because my daughter get married." I went in Italy and stayed three months, me. When I come back, his daughter's still single. I went away and she got married after I come back from Italy, and he no went because his daughter get married. On account of him, I went to Italy, and I stayed three months.
- Q O.K. Have you ever regretted coming to the United States?
- A Huh?

Q Have you ever regretted--were you ever sorry that you came to this country?

A No, no. I was very happy.

Q You were very happy about it. Now, do you know how people talk about the good old days?

A Yeah.

Q Have you ever wanted to go back to the good old days?

A No, no.

Q No. Do you think the good old days were very good?

A Oh, yeah.

Q I was talking to a man the other day, and he said to me, "The only thing that was good about the good old days was the fact that I was a young man." Do you feel the same way about the good old days?

A [Inaudible] . . . this is my country, I like this country.

Q I mean in this country, right here.

A Yeah, I like this country better than over there.

Q Yes, I know that. But do you like the way you live today better than the way you lived when you first came here?

A Oh, yeah.

Q In other words, you wouldn't want to go back to what it was like before?

A No, no, I hope not.

Q In other words, you don't think the good old days were very good?

A No.

Q O.K. Do you have anything else you'd like to add to this? Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

A What else you want me to tell you?

Q Oh no, I just thought maybe you had something else that you wanted to add to what we've already discussed.

A Well, my father was a barber but I didn't have much for it--sometime I eat a piece of meat about four or five times a year.

Q That was in Italy?

A In Italy.

Q Well, I know in Italy there were a lot of people who were born over there and they lived their life and they died, never tasted meat. Never could taste it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]