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Mr. Costantino Pierantonio

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: Okay. Now, I can get sound to pick up everything. This is an interview with Mr. Constantino Pierantonio of 1721 Elm Street Wilmington, Delaware.

Mr. Pierantonio: That's right.

Interviewer: Okay. Mr. Pierantonio, where were you born?

Mr. Pierantonio: In Italy.

Interviewer: In what part of Italy?

Mr. Pierantonio: Abruzzi.

Interviewer: In the Abruzzi. Okay. Now, what part of the Abruzzi? What was the name of the town where you were born?

Mr. Pierantonio: In San Salvo.

Interviewer: San Salvo?

Mr. Pierantonio: San Salvo, yes.

Interviewer: San Salvo. Now, what big city was it near?

Mr. Pierantonio: Vasto. Vasto is *[inaudible]* [0:00:38]. We lived in a court house, you know. There was a *[inaudible]* [0:00:43].

Interviewer: So Vasto was the biggest city near you.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. The *[inaudible]* [0:00:49].

Interviewer: *[inaudible]* [0:00:50]. Okay. Now, what year were you born?

Mr. Pierantonio: 1903.

Interviewer: 1903?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. January the 18th.

Interviewer: January the 18th. Now, in Italy, what did your father do?

Mr. Pierantonio: Farmer.

Interviewer: Your father was a farmer?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, sir.

Interviewer: Did he have his own farm?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes.

Interviewer: He had his own farm?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes.

Interviewer: What did he grow on the farm?

Mr. Pierantonio: Wheat, corn, all this -- cereal or whatever you call it. Beans...

Interviewer: Cereals, grains.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: All right. Now...

Mr. Pierantonio: The most is wheat.

Interviewer: Mostly wheat.

Mr. Pierantonio: The most is wheat, yes.

Interviewer: What was the wheat used for? Making flour?

Mr. Pierantonio: Flour. Sure. They made a flour -- the flour, I mean, whatever you call them. He made flour and they were great with it. And then what was -- some **[inaudible] [0:01:36]** put the crop we wish to sell, some of it. But the people or whatever we **[inaudible] [0:01:41]**.

Interviewer: How about the corn? What was that used for?

Mr. Pierantonio: Well, each town there's a big **[inaudible] [0:01:46]**. We -- fairly done with it.

Interviewer: Was the corn -- but you never ate the corn yourself.

Mr. Pierantonio: What we're able to do with one year whether -- about a year in a **[inaudible] [0:01:59]**. And we use to mix after the corn flour and extra wheat flour.

Interviewer: To make bread.

Mr. Pierantonio: I think it was 1913, if I'm not mistaken, roughly around that year, you know. And that's the only time we ever mix because wheat was enough. We have enough for about a year, you know. Everybody in Italy, I remember we have enough. And that's the only time we have to mix the flour from the corn and wheat.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well, the corn is not generally use in Italy for people. Mostly for stock.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Did you got to school in Italy.

Mr. Pierantonio: We did. We did.

Interviewer: How old were you when you started?

Mr. Pierantonio: I was six. I had about three, four months school. Then my father and that was the end of the school. I was working in the farm then, and have been ever since.

Interviewer: Well, it sounds about 1909, then.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes.

Interviewer: And you started school in about three months and you had to quit. And you worked the farm then.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you have any brothers or sisters who helped you?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. And we had the **[inaudible] [0:02:57]**. Five brothers, one sister but all the other four brother -- they all died and I was the only left of the five.

Interviewer: I see.

Mr. Pierantonio: And my sister still live in Italy. When my father passed away, she was two months old. And then she still survived and I'm the fourth of the five brothers.

Interviewer: You were the youngest...

Mr. Pierantonio: No. I was the fourth. The fourth of the brothers. My sister, she was two months old when my father passed away and a brother mine was still two years old -- the young one. He died about two years ago in South America.

Interviewer: Did all of your brother leave Italy?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, yes. The two died in Trenton, New Jersey.

Interviewer: In Trenton, yes.

Mr. Pierantonio: The oldest and the second one. And the third and the fifth died in South America.

Interviewer: So the three of you came to the United States and two...

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. And the two went to South America.

Interviewer: Where in South America did they go?

Mr. Pierantonio: In the Montevideo, Uruguay.

Interviewer: Uruguay. I see.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes.

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

Mr. Pierantonio: Well, I did not think of it myself. My second brother, he decided for all of us. We *[inaudible]* [0:04:10] home then except the oldest one and the second one, they were here. And in 1921, then sent for all of us. Me, my two brothers, my sister, my mother. But my mother, she won't leave there. She was scared coming with the ship, you know.

Interviewer: I see.

Mr. Pierantonio: And then my brother got mad and he wrote back to mom and he says I have *[inaudible]* **[0:04:33]** the one of the brother. So then I was still the one who called her and *[inaudible]* **[0:04:38]** asking me he says, "You want to go?" I said, yes. And I left 1921.

Interviewer: In 1921 you came here.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. And then -- excuse me. And after that -- then another brothers. They could have come in and more but they closed the immigration for the United States, you know. And they went to South America a couple of years after.

Interviewer: I see. And that's the reason they went to South America?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, before this, when did your brother who was in the United States come to the United States?

[0:05:00]

Mr. Pierantonio: When was *[inaudible]* **[0:05:02]**.

Interviewer: Your brother who was already here, the one who sent for you, when did he come here?

Mr. Pierantonio: I can't recall but I was too young. I used to remember like a dream. I could remember the year. It would have been no more than 1913, '14, something like that.

Interviewer: And that's when he came here?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yeah.

Interviewer: I see. Okay. Now, I want to ask you a few other questions for this.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, yes. When did you want?

Interviewer: Okay. Now, your father you say died when you were six years old. That was around 1909.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes.

Interviewer: And you had to stay home to help work on the farm.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes.

Interviewer: Now, how was your life in Italy during that period of time? Now, from the time you really start to take over the work on the farm up until the time you came to the United States or better yet up until the start of World War I. What was it like?

Mr. Pierantonio: Well, I tell you -- if I explain to you, I guess you have an idea roughly. The farm work, years back, it ain't like it today. See, anything *[inaudible]* **[0:06:10]**. We used to work maybe 14, 15, 16 hours a day. We have a couple piece of ground a farmer *[inaudible]* **[0:06:20]**. They want to get off early in the morning and to get there by daylight.

Interviewer: In other words, you had to get up while still dark.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. And to get there as soon as it's daylight and the *[inaudible]* **[0:06:32]**. That was a really rough life -- a farmer. It ain't like today especially in my old town -- a small town there are no machinery. We had a couple of mule and the rest, we will do by hand.

Interviewer: What sort of work did you do everyday? Did you cultivate...?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, yes. The ground for wheat and the corn and other things and all that stuff.

Interviewer: And this all of course is done by hand?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. Well, there are some there we can't go with the plows. It ain't like over there. They have this wide area where *[inaudible]* **[0:07:03]** like it is and we can go with the plows with the clean air. We had to go do it by hands.

Interviewer: By hands. So you don't have about 12 inches *[inaudible]* **[0:07:09]**.

[Cross talk]

Interviewer: Now, what sort of things did you eat? What was your diet like in Italy at that time?

Mr. Pierantonio: Diet?

Interviewer: Your diet. The things you ate. What did you eat for breakfast, lunch or supper?

Mr. Pierantonio: Well, I tell you, we didn't know what diet it was over there. No. We ate -- we never eat breakfast. One thing I know -- but any time for now **[inaudible] [0:07:31]** we eat bread and then some salami when it would get there. And then we had a big **[inaudible] [0:07:38]**. My mother she cooks spaghettis of course, some pizza, whatever, anything else.

Interviewer: Did you ever have any lunch during the day?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. Around 10 o'clock.

Interviewer: Around 10 you had lunch?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yeah, over there, around 10 o'clock.

Interviewer: In other words, you went all the way long really without eating anything.

Mr. Pierantonio: Well, I've gotten used to -- look, I come in here, still actually **[inaudible] [0:08:01]** yet for breakfast.

Interviewer: You still can't eat any breakfast. No, you're just not accustomed to it.

Mr. Pierantonio: That's right.

Interviewer: Okay, fine. Now, when World War I started in Italy, that was when -- in 1914.

Mr. Pierantonio: 1914.

Interviewer: Was there any big change in the way you had to live?

Mr. Pierantonio: Well, you see, the only change I could remember because during the war, the government, they used to take over the wheat we had to feed the army. But it pays. They pay whatever it cost, you know. It used to give you enough -- your own services, serve to somebody else. The government did that. The **[inaudible] [0:08:40]** House, they will to interview American family in how much a week they **[inaudible] [0:08:44]** so much -- will leave you so much, the rest of the government takes.

But as far as I know, no change at all. People work the same.

Interviewer: You work everyday pretty much the same such as before.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. Right.

Interviewer: Okay. Fine. Now, did this same situation exist all through the duration of...

Mr. Pierantonio: Up to 1921.

Interviewer: Up to 1921 and that's when you came to this country.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes.

Interviewer: All right. Now, I want to ask you a couple other questions in relation to how you came to this country. Did you have to go anywhere to have papers made out and get your passport and so forth.

Mr. Pierantonio: No, no. It's my hometown. My hometown, we have a representative.

Interviewer: You had a representative there and he took care of everything.

Mr. Pierantonio: You only had to go to -- I will go to Rome and to get the stamps on it from the town *[inaudible]* **[0:09:30]**.

Interviewer: Yes. But this representative, was he a representative of the Italian government of the ship line?

Mr. Pierantonio: The ship line.

Interviewer: Oh, the ship line.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Now where did you leave Italy from?

Mr. Pierantonio: Naples.

Interviewer: From Naples. How did you get to Naples?

Mr. Pierantonio: Well, we go by train.

Interviewer: Was there a train station in your hometown.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes.

[Cross talk]

Interviewer: You just got the train there and went straight through to the Naples.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, sir.

Interviewer: You don't have to change anywhere.

Mr. Pierantonio: No, sir.

Interviewer: Okay, fine. Now, when you got to Naples, was the ship that you come across on in port -- was it in port or did you have to stay in a hotel overnight waiting for...

[0:10:04]

Mr. Pierantonio: Oh, we had to stay a couple of days. See, *[inaudible]* [0:10:06] at that time, you know. There was no *[inaudible]* [0:10:09] there had been here before me, now two, three times back and forth and there was *[inaudible]* [0:10:16] now. Now if you ask me which hotel we stayed, I don't know.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything what it was like?

Mr. Pierantonio: No. The only thing I remember, we got -- following the booking from a station *[inaudible]* [0:10:28] across to the port, you know. We load all our luggage and this buggy with a horse -- this man *[inaudible]* [0:10:35] with the horse. So we *[inaudible]* [0:10:39]. This other couple, a friend of mine that have been here before says this fellow is go run away with it. So we are called to stop this fellow.

Interviewer: He's going to steal all your luggage.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yeah. That's what we thought because it was another -- the horse, you know, ran away from us. And two days after, we board the ship Dame Pesalo [0:11:01] *[Phonetic]* ship.

Interviewer: What was the name of it again?

Mr. Pierantonio: Pesalo, P-E-S-A-L-O.

Interviewer: Pesalo.

Mr. Pierantonio: It was the last trip that came over here. They just wrapped it.

Interviewer: Really?

Mr. Pierantonio: Really. It was the last trip.

Interviewer: Did the ship come straight to the United States?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Did it stop any place at all?

Mr. Pierantonio: No, no. Wait a minute. Yes, in Algeria, we stopped.

Interviewer: Algeria in Oran?

Mr. Pierantonio: Algeria.

Interviewer: Oran, Algeria?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did it stop in...

Mr. Pierantonio: So one day stop there. It took us 14 days from Naples to by Algeria and then we come to New York April the 6th.

Interviewer: You didn't stop at Gibraltar, did you?

Mr. Pierantonio: No. No.

Interviewer: You came right -- and you got into New York April the 6th?

Mr. Pierantonio: April the 6th, yes.

Interviewer: Of 1921.

Mr. Pierantonio: 1921.

Interviewer: Now, when you got in New York, what was your first impression?

Mr. Pierantonio: Well, I don't know what -- see, I see all these machinery, you know, on the port. There were all *[inaudible]* **[0:11:52]** but not a lot of ships. I never see my own town as well. I never been in a way *[inaudible]* **[0:11:58]** our port. I've never seen one before. And I asked this friend of

mine, I said, "What are they doing with their tent up in the air?" He said, "They *[inaudible]* **[0:12:08]** all the stuff from the ships coming in and going out there." I don't know what it was.

Interviewer: And was there any other sort of reception for you when you got in with the Salvation Army band there?

Mr. Pierantonio: No, no. It wasn't much being *[inaudible]* **[0:12:25]** it up.

Interviewer: Not much at all. When you got off the ship, did you have to go through another physical examination?

Mr. Pierantonio: I don't think so. No, because we'll go through the dock and the physical exam happened before we leave, see. Nobody about those in New York.

Interviewer: Okay. Did your brother meet you in New York?

Mr. Pierantonio: No, he didn't. He didn't come over because, you know, as I was *[inaudible]* **[0:12:49]** many times back and forth. So they took me directly to Philadelphia.

Interviewer: Your brother was in Philadelphia then.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Now when you got to Philadelphia, did you go right straight to your brother's house?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes.

Interviewer: Did he have a house at that time?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, he had.

Interviewer: Was he married?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. Two boys.

Interviewer: So he got married in the United States?

Mr. Pierantonio: Oh yes. Yes.

Interviewer: Now, when you went to live with him, did he have a job waiting for you or anything like that?

Mr. Pierantonio: No. You see, them days, it wasn't *[inaudible]* [0:13:21]. But I think job kind of scarce. I don't know how to explain to you or not because -- was he here 1921 already?

Interviewer: I think he came in '21 or '23.

[Cross talk]

Mr. Pierantonio: Well, it was kind of -- not so much depression we went through in '29 and '30 or '32, '33. But there was very little -- the jobs were very scarce. So I couldn't find no job over there and I threw some place out there, they provide to me a job in Greenport, Long Island and worked in the railroad, the Long Island Railroad, the tracks.

So I left for *[inaudible]* [0:13:55] a while and then I had my two brothers *[inaudible]* [0:13:58] and then the job started picking up in 1922 and '23 and then the road -- they go back there because all the new jobs started picking up. You know, then they say there was no union, you know, we got to go to Philly with the boss, you know, gain *[inaudible]* [0:14:11]. And he liked it there. Oh, now, you got to include the office on the union.

So there are days -- if you -- *[inaudible]* [0:14:22] good friend who was shackled with a gang before we know, he's fighting something else and they gave it to a friend or relative.

Interviewer: Yes. Okay. This is how you can work then.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yeah.

Interviewer: So in 1921, you came to Philadelphia, right up to New York, Long Island.

Mr. Pierantonio: Maybe a few months after.

Interviewer: Yes. Now how long did you stay up there before you came back to Philadelphia?

Mr. Pierantonio: Maybe a little over a year.

Interviewer: A little over a year?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yeah.

Interviewer: And how did you live when you are up there? Did you rent a room?

Mr. Pierantonio: No. We had some *[inaudible]* [0:14:52] a boarder.

Interviewer: You board with them?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yeah.

Interviewer: Room and board and you pay them every month and they did your laundry and everything else and fed you and so forth.

[0:15:01]

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, taking you back to Philadelphia, where did you go to work?

Mr. Pierantonio: I went to work in construction work, a fellow contractor, you know, to building a house. And I've worked with them for quite some time. But I really never had a job that's steady, you know, maybe build a house in two to three months and then *[inaudible]* [0:15:22].

Interviewer: What sort of work did you do with the contractor?

Mr. Pierantonio: Well, you got to make something more of a *[inaudible]* [0:15:32] you know. There's a language, you know, *[inaudible]* [0:15:36] of course.

Interviewer: How was the pay in those days?

Mr. Pierantonio: Oh, 20 cents an hour, 25, 30 cents an hour. Lucky you got job two. Yes, indeed. Of course, the cost of living was very cheap, you know. You can buy a lot. Justo and I will sit there, if you get *[inaudible]* [0:15:56] an hour now and you go to a store you buy a tropical fruit *[inaudible]* [0:16:00]. And you can buy that fruit and *[inaudible]* [0:16:03].

Interviewer: Yes. Okay. Now, the people you work with, are they mostly all Italians?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, you know, on account of the languages. See how you know they are talking. They were born here but it was *[inaudible]* [0:16:18].

Interviewer: Yes. They understand Italian.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: All right. Was the contractor an Italian also?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, when you worked for the railroad, was the same situation mostly, all Italians working there?

Mr. Pierantonio: Well, the *[inaudible] [0:16:29]* for me wasn't the most that work to, you know, the Long Island Railroad. Even with *[inaudible] [0:16:34]*. Probably on Long Island.

Interviewer: Long Island.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. So mostly, Italians are there.

Interviewer: What did you do when you weren't at work?

Mr. Pierantonio: Huh?

Interviewer: What did you do when you were not working?

Mr. Pierantonio: Well, I didn't have *[inaudible] [0:16:47]*. You can't go down. Of course, everyday, I go *[inaudible] [0:16:52]* like that day, you know. And besides on those *[inaudible] [0:16:56]* during my younger days and they take care of their buddy when he was scared, you know.

Interviewer: Yeah. So there was no dances...

Mr. Pierantonio: No, no. I never care for it. At least, with Julio and I never forget the -- the Indian and cowboys, you know. I never missed that if it's in port.

Interviewer: So this is what you like most then, the movies.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yeah. A little *[inaudible] [0:17:20]*, you know, a lot of *[inaudible] [0:17:21]*.

Interviewer: Okay. How long did you stay in Philadelphia working?

Mr. Pierantonio: From 1923, I came back from Long Island until 1927.

Interviewer: So 1927. So it was about four years.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes.

Interviewer: Were you still single then?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: And then did you come -- what did you do then in '27.

Mr. Pierantonio: 1927, I come over here and had to work. I used to work with a contractor over there in Philadelphia. And then the architect, the one *[inaudible]* **[0:17:51]** they both totally served lock -- this ground here across from DuPont School. What do they call that place? It's Western Hills, isn't it?

Interviewer: Western Hills, yes.

Mr. Pierantonio: And then we're going back and forth right across, you know, from Philadelphia to here. So not *[inaudible]* **[0:18:08]** to name but they will swap so then I began for him. He says why we got to go over there and you go end your service -- sent for people when there's nothing illegal. We've got family. We got to go back to Philadelphia tonight. So I won the contract *[inaudible]* **[0:18:20]**.

Monday morning, he says all this work that are single says they're going to work. Part of it, you have the same worth *[inaudible]* **[0:18:31]**. And we can walk over here as *[inaudible]* **[0:18:34]**. So that was on the same -
- I go with one of them.

Interviewer: Well, now when you moved into Wilmington, what did you do? Find a room where you could stay here?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. And sixth, 519 Scott. My *[inaudible]* **[0:18:52]** 521, next door of the heart. We didn't know each other long. And so I still work with the same contractor. And after while, I got the job but to do -- where did I go from there? Wait a minute? Oh, I still worked with the contractor, Francis Parker Company but I couldn't find a job on the inside in any kind of shop here on *[inaudible]* **[0:19:17]** you know.

So I started to meet my wife and we got married 1928. February 18, 1928.

Interviewer: What church did you get married in?

Mr. Pierantonio: Saint Anthony.

Interviewer: Saint Anthony in Dupont.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. On the top of *[inaudible]* **[0:19:35]**.

Interviewer: Was that in a big church?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. It was just about finish about a year old, I'm thinking.

Interviewer: They just finished.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yeah. And I stood there. During the Second World War where the contractor -- this Francis Parker Company, the next one I worked with, they tell us they can't find their material because the government took them all, you know. This is -- you got to find yourself a job during the war and after the war, he just come back.

[0:20:02]

So from there I went to work Carlin Shipyard for *[inaudible]* **[0:20:06]**.

Interviewer: Carlin?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yeah, I went when we're closed down. And from there, they have a job with the government to build those landing barges. And I worked there about six months. Then they finished the job with government and they close down. They're still open but the youngest one *[inaudible]* **[0:20:25]** come off when I went to *[inaudible]* **[0:20:27]** shipyard.

And I stayed there, I think, 22, 23 months. And then they finished with the government. They *[inaudible]* **[0:20:38]** except the few landing and did repair work. And from there, I went to the Railroad in 1945.

Interviewer: In 1945, you went to the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes.

Interviewer: And you stayed in the Pennsylvania Railroad...

[Cross talk]

Mr. Pierantonio: I *[inaudible]* **[0:20:49]** left June the 7th.

Interviewer: I see. So you were with the railroad longer than you were with anybody else.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. Twenty-three years.

Interviewer: Twenty-three years. Now when you first came to this country in 1921, Mussolini was just getting strong in Italy by early '20s. He's getting ready to take over Italy.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yeah.

Interviewer: What did the people think of him over there? I mean, just -- what do people say there about him?

Mr. Pierantonio: I don't know but I tell you what I -- I used to hear about him. That's the same as *[inaudible] [0:21:23]* over here, you know, to Paris. Some like it, some don't like it. But I wasn't watching the rest of that *[inaudible] [0:21:30]*. When I was 20 years or 22, my mother send me the paper to go *[inaudible] [0:21:42]*. She sent it over here. I told her my mother, "He's got *[inaudible] [0:21:47]* but I never see him no more."

Interviewer: They do have your citizenship papers by the...

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. No, no, no. I didn't have it yet. I think it *[inaudible] [0:21:54]* 1937.

Interviewer: 1937. During the Depression, did you manage to get work all during the Depression?

Mr. Pierantonio: No, no. I don't get no work. I got one day to work. One day work. This contract to build a bridge, a small bridge over the railroad, you know. That old bridge. I forgot what's the name of contractor *[inaudible] [0:22:17]*. I forgot. One day -- because he got *[inaudible] [0:22:25]* to the city. They'll give you a job, you know. So I worked one day to assist him. Now *[inaudible] [0:22:31]* sent for you. They're motivating. I think it *[inaudible] [0:22:36]* because we are going home, you know, and we expected that we have the \$2,500 mortgage here. They don't want to -- *[inaudible] [0:22:47]*.

Interviewer: Were you in this house when that...

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, indeed. We built this in 1923.

Interviewer: And the city didn't give you or the government didn't make any arrangements to get you work or didn't even help you get work that you're looking for.

Mr. Pierantonio: None. Nobody. No city, no state, no government. It's not like today that you get this -- what you call this? Social Security, you know. You get the --

whatever, some of kind of assistance. Because especially when I'm not *[inaudible] [0:23:15]* and when we go over there, *[inaudible] [0:23:17]* home. He said, "What are you able to do?" "Heat bricks." That's what I told Paolo, "You want me to heat the bricks." *[inaudible] [0:23:23]* but you have money to eat.

Interviewer: But you managed to hold on to the house during the Depression?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, yes. My wife had two jobs in one day. She washes the dishes in two restaurants because I used to pay the tax because these people have no mercy, you know. They wanted their money *[inaudible] [0:23:46]*. She had two jobs but eight out of one job, eight without a job. Just about a couple dollars a day, you know.

Interviewer: Okay. So it was really pretty tough wasn't it.

Mr. Pierantonio: It was. It was. Very *[inaudible] [0:24:00]*. I think it's *[inaudible] [0:24:02]*.

Interviewer: I was born in '31 and I can remember nothing else.

Mr. Pierantonio: I hope -- I'd like to die than experience another one.

Interviewer: Yes. I certainly don't want to see another one either. Now, when did thing start to get better? When did things start to get a little bit better?

Mr. Pierantonio: Around '33.

Interviewer: They start getting a bit better?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, yes. Very slight. When Roosevelt got elected and the jobs start picking up. It took quite a long time before the *[inaudible] [0:24:34]*. Around '34 or '35, you know, they picked up.

Interviewer: In what way did they start getting better? Do you have any specifics about it?

Mr. Pierantonio: You see, as long as I remember, this brewery up at 5th and Dupont, there's an improvement...

[Cross talk]

Interviewer: Before that it was Diamond State Brewery.

Mr. Pierantonio: Well, all I remember is Kruger. They would have shut down. See, the only *[inaudible]* [0:24:55] when it was about to come back, first thing -- it was a *[inaudible]* [0:25:01] you know.

[0:25:03]

They put the beer back to the brewery and start it on again. And there was enjoyment for all the owners and I don't know whether you know Nick Dibiase I [0:25:09] *[Phonetic]* was a friend of mine and he knows. He was waiting with a friend when they went over the brewery, you know. And it took me and it might his home. And the talk then was there was a job. And they say -- the man had said -- and I forgot who his name was *[inaudible]* [0:25:24]. He says *[inaudible]* [0:25:28] I wasn't at work for a long time. But you talk with the boys coming down -- it was *[inaudible]* [0:25:34] and I'll take care of that.

But before that business -- start their own business, this construction works started work, you know. And they started work here one day or two days and I'm able to -- how do you properly *[inaudible]* [0:25:47]. And then I went to a friend's *[inaudible]* [0:25:51].

Interviewer: So the things just got better.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, when World War II started, the United States and Italy were in different sides. Now being an Italian, you must have had some feelings about all this being from Italy. Just how did you feel about the whole -- certainly, you weren't happy about it but just how did you feel about that?

Mr. Pierantonio: Well, really I was against Italy to go against the United States. I don't like it. I don't like that. Of course, there were friends *[inaudible]* [0:26:24] whatever you want to call it the First World War. I don't see why they don't think Italians *[inaudible]* [0:26:28] a single world war. At least, it would have okay if we had been with the United States. That's the mistake they made -- the government, the Italian government did.

Interviewer: Did you ever run into any problems because of this?

Mr. Pierantonio: No, no.

Interviewer: I mean, are there people who say anything to you about this?

Mr. Pierantonio: No, sir. And then I was serious and then everybody says *[inaudible]* **[0:26:48]**. And I got -- for the government service, you know. So that's how it is. They put more for us because I was American. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Now, you've already told about the jobs you went through during the war then the '45 with the railroad. I want to ask you a couple other things now. Certainly, you remember your father's tough words saying *[inaudible]* **[0:27:12]**.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, I do.

Interviewer: What kind of a man was he? What effect did he have on this whole neighborhood was *[inaudible]* **[0:27:17]**. What sort of man -- how was he respected and what do people think of him? What did he do for the Italian people?

Mr. Pierantonio: He's been wonderful to everybody. He's done wonderful. He's doing the *[inaudible]* **[0:27:31]** time. I don't know how many families he helped out. You know whether he feel a good portion of humanly love and the parents, they will never know -- no money to buy clothes *[inaudible]* **[0:27:44]**. And then my father used to buy that. And sometime during prohibition -- a lot -- I don't want *[inaudible]* **[0:27:52]**.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Pierantonio: How their talking about that. He used to -- a big business with the city hall, you know, *[inaudible]* **[0:28:00]** you know. And he was wonderful to everybody.

Interviewer: So...

Mr. Pierantonio: He can help you any way you want. There was fellow, a good friend of mine. He made some homemade wine, you know, and he had no *[inaudible]* **[0:28:18]** and he asked me if I want to with the *[inaudible]* **[0:28:20]** if I want to ask another. I said, "Oh my goodness, I've been like that." I said, "I'm not going to do it." I said, "Even if you want to give me all *[inaudible]* **[0:28:27]**, I won't do it." So we went over to tell *[inaudible]* **[0:28:30]**. He says, "Father," he says, "I made some wine." He said, "I got *[inaudible]* **[0:28:34]** if you want another." He says, "I could never get somebody with truck but nobody wanted *[inaudible]* **[0:28:38]** about the moving." So his father talked and says, "You go ahead." He says, "If you feel like talking, you just call me." Nobody got hurt. It was a different time, you know.

Interviewer: So he took care of everything.

Mr. Pierantonio: Oh yes. He was wonderful. You got to love -- I see him not long ago. He was strong. He can even walk.

Interviewer: I know.

Mr. Pierantonio: **[inaudible] [0:28:57]**. My wife and I, some friend of us died. I wanted to see him but they come in.

Interviewer: Well, I saw him about a year ago. And I was in -- he looked like there's a real good...

[Cross talk]

Mr. Pierantonio: Oh, if you see anything I got to **[inaudible] [0:29:09]**, and what are the steps, you know. Somebody got to have to.

Interviewer: Well, he's a pretty old man. He's close to 90 years old.

Mr. Pierantonio: I guess he is.

Interviewer: He's had a very active life. What effects or rather what changes have you noticed in the United States and in the way you live since you moved here, since you came here from Italy?

Mr. Pierantonio: Well, the difference with this is those are better days, you know. First, the job was scarce and the way it was wages was low. It was very low. Not another -- the main thing, the other day as I said before, you take **[inaudible] [0:29:51]** work with somebody, you know, some of the contractor even in a shop.

Now you come along and you got your son and you could defend all the **[inaudible] [0:29:59]** for him.

[0:30:12]

So that was my son -- he would be -- but he'd fire me and I am the son. Now today, everything is unionized, they feel **[inaudible] [0:30:07]**. And today, all these **[inaudible] [0:30:12]** you see there, it wasn't around those days. You do them **[inaudible] [0:30:17]**.

Now all these -- they lie -- all this television and *[inaudible]* [0:30:22]. I'm lucky for one night *[inaudible]* [0:30:24]. But the improvement, I will say 150 percent compared what they use to be.

Interviewer: There's a great change with the way we live today.

Mr. Pierantonio: And then by now, the Social Security, you don't have to bang your head against the wall when you retire and even after a big loss to nobody, you got your *[inaudible]* [0:30:49].

Interviewer: Right. In other words, what would you characterize -- you're talking that there had been a lot of changes. What would you say if you had to pick out one, if you had to say, well, this is the greatest change, do you think you could pick out one thing that you would say is the greatest change since you came here?

Mr. Pierantonio: The greatest?

Interviewer: The greatest change? The greatest way that your life has changed? What has had the greatest effect on you? Could you pick out one thing?

Mr. Pierantonio: I don't think *[inaudible]* [0:31:19]. Well, I don't know what to say. The greatest thing I can say is I don't have to worry about it -- or about the job anymore *[inaudible]* [0:31:32] I have my own pension. And it's a lot different the way it used to be. My wife and I, we're both retired. Everything we -- very beautiful life so long as we're there. Thank god for that.

Interviewer: Have you ever wanted to go back to Italy?

Mr. Pierantonio: Oh, we just got back from a trip.

Interviewer: You went there for a trip?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. And we just got back five weeks ago.

Interviewer: But have you ever wanted to go back there to stay?

Mr. Pierantonio: No. No. That's impossible.

Interviewer: Right. Were you ever sorry that you came to the United States?

Mr. Pierantonio: No, indeed. What for?

Interviewer: In Italy *[inaudible]* [0:32:07].

Mr. Pierantonio: No, indeed. No, sir. I've seen a lot of friends of mine nowadays, some of them *[inaudible]* [0:32:13] mind. I went to my hometown. They still worked on each other's farms when I left.

Interviewer: They haven't changed at all, haven't they?

Mr. Pierantonio: Not all. Well, some of them got an education, some don't. I want to say maybe 50 percent. Probably the parents can't afford to do that. And they're good with charity, they left for the country. In fact, they want *[inaudible]* [0:32:32] a man to live on the road and his brother was in -- they retired as French, some *[inaudible]* [0:32:38]. And whatever a good president was there then whatever is left over, they still work as farmers. I could never -- I left.

Interviewer: Probably the best move you ever made.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, indeed. Yes, indeed.

Interviewer: You know how a lot of people talk about the good old day. They say in the old days we -- this, that and the other. Did you ever think, when you look back on it, do you ever have a desire to go back to the good old days?

Mr. Pierantonio: No. No. I tell you -- well, some of the people, they get this some kind of things and that's why they say, years back. You know why? Because years back, there was more respect than it is today. You take like -- there was no money around them days. In three, four, five, six in the neighborhood, they want to get to the *[inaudible]* [0:33:31]. One night in my house even when in their houses especially with the time and all. And they would have *[inaudible]* [0:33:36].

They're telling me they used to get -- what they call the pine beer or something. I don't know what they it be now, you know, the *[inaudible]* [0:33:45] is on. And then a couple of times, you know, seeing and dancing -- not today, next door, they don't know each other, you know. They don't speak what used to be. That's one thing.

And the respect -- like it used to be years back, I remember this very well myself. Compared today, it's not 100 percent better what it used to be. It's only 50 percent better than it used to be. So respect the concern *[inaudible]* [0:34:09] in all people, you know, towards the parents, mother and father. Not today. I see this -- well, look, I told you, I've been

raised without a father, you know. I was six years old. And I've been working in the farm all the day, we'll go on wheat and we go outside, a couple of friend of mine around the neighborhood *[inaudible]* **[0:34:27]**.

And my mother said, "Where are you going?" I said, "Well, outside the junk shop. There's a *[inaudible]* **[0:34:33]**." We have the second floor -- when I holler to you at the window, I wanted you to -- did you hear. I mean, don't go any farther. Now, today, 10, 11 o'clock when I used to work on the railroad from a four to 2 hour shift, I was working *[inaudible]* **[0:34:47]**. And I cut through the park and then come up to a private school.

I see the children, 12, 13 years old, 14 year old boys and girls, you know, sit on the school over there.

[0:35:01]

They will *[inaudible]* **[0:35:03]**. And I don't want to see the -- I wanted to see these children have their parents *[inaudible]* **[0:35:09]**, every night, every night. Every night. Now if you tell the boys something, you know, they make a face at you. They call you names. I said, I live in this house, I wish I never been *[inaudible]* **[0:35:18]** here. They went to school. In the summer time, we're going to school down at the Kennedy Park. So all this -- we're doing the society out of everybody *[inaudible]* **[0:35:28]**.

Interviewer: Yes, yes. It was the...

Mr. Pierantonio: It's beautiful, beautiful. Do you know what they're doing? They just *[inaudible]* **[0:35:32]**. Why return the *[inaudible]* **[0:35:35]** ago. If my car was on -- they had all these sorts of better question and make a face at you.

Now, in my day, I said we have been arrested with the father, I've never done anything wrong, you know. I wonder if I ever did. *[inaudible]* **[0:35:52]** over the house and told him all about it. And the -- and my best to pay for. Now today, if you slap a child, the parents are called into court suing.

Interviewer: There's no question about that. I guess -- this is probably...

Mr. Pierantonio: And that's what these people are talking about the years back, the respect the most. The respect. They used to know one another. More and more than today. Nobody had a car them days. We got a about a few,

you know. They *[inaudible]* [0:36:19] along fine. We should go over there for that with a bottle with a book, 25 cents of *[inaudible]* [0:36:23].

So everybody got the car. If you ask -- probably, very, very few -- do me a favor the thing *[inaudible]* [0:36:30]. They don't know what they have to do.

Interviewer: Yes. Things have changed considerably in that regard.

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes, yes. But as far as money is concerned, I would never say that years back was better because -- when I build this house here? 1923, I had the wonderful buddy of mine. I don't know whether you know. I'm talking about Cole.

[Cross talk]

Mr. Pierantonio: His father. He was trying scale *[inaudible]* [0:36:58], you know. This bottle was small and I used to work for him. I had no job, you know. So before we get to the house and there was one, two, three, four -- me, Battani, Salvatore -- four men, you know, four men, we can get a better *[inaudible]* [0:37:15]. Four men who would get ready -- who couldn't get enough money to buy a whisky, the four of us.

Interviewer: Did you go with the four men?

Mr. Pierantonio: Yes. So that's the idea, you see. So it's a lot of difference. Now, these sort of people say, them days was nice. Yes, it was nice. There was more respect but the...

Interviewer: But life was a lot more different.

Mr. Pierantonio: Oh yes, yes. Let's say if they -- you never seen those kind of *[inaudible]* [0:37:45] days, you know. Not at all.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, is there anything else that you'd like to add to what we've already gone over? Do you have anything else you'd like to add to this?

Mr. Pierantonio: I don't think so. I just don't want to sit there -- if the Lord to be us, why then I would go to Florida after the holiday, after the first year for a couple of months. Those are *[inaudible]* [0:38:09]. This year was two months in Italy. We came back August 29 and we went to Florida a couple of months this winter to enjoy ourselves.

Interviewer: Excellent.

Mr. Pierantonio: We've been working for years, right. We've been working like a couple of slaves, you know, to save our money. Not stingy on the food, you know, but we said, we'll throw away all the furnishings. We're thinking about the old age, you know.

Interviewer: And now you can enjoy it.

Mr. Pierantonio: I thank god that we're both in good health. We've got to enjoy ourselves.

Interviewer: Excellent.

[0:38:40] End of Audio