

BUTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

MEMOIR of JOHN SCOFIENZA

INTERVIEWER: RAY F. CALKINS

June 27, 1979

MEMOIR OF JOHN SCONFIENZA

1

Interviewer: Tell me about your parents.

Narrator: My dad come here in '94, the time of Cleveland. He was the the President. There was a panic. In '94. He come up from San Antone, Texas. He worked in a brewery. His two brothers were here. They were twins. They were three years older than him.

Int.: What was his name?

Narr.: My dad was John, John Sconfienza. And his brothers, one was Frank and the other one was Biagio. They were the oldest. They come from the Old Country and then my dad came after.

Int.: Whereabouts in the Old Country did they come from?

Narr.: Locana, Italy. That's northwest Italy, close to the French border. Up in the Alps. They were here in the baker shop in Meaderville. That was the east side of town, down where the Pit is now.

Int.: Did your father work there?

Narr.: Well, when he come here at that time there was a panic. Cleveland was the President at the time. There was nothing to do here. In fact, him and his cousin, they walked, went down here to the Big Hole, up from the dam where we get the Butte water. To the Dewey Flats, there. There was a mine there so they went down, rustled a job. The two of them walked and they had fifty cents between the two of them. They walked down there and from there they went to Melrose. That's about eighteen--twenty miles south yet, closer to Dillon. They was up to Hecla. They got work at the mine at Hecla. His cousin got on because he had experience. He worked in the tunnel there, the St. Gotthard tunnel between Italy and Switzerland. My dad, he never worked in the mines. He was

bunking with his cousin at the company boarding house there. He was chopping wood, sawing wood for the Chinese cooks at the mine, at Hecla, eighteen miles out of Melrose.

Int.: Where did he go from there?

Narr.: Then he got a letter from his brother. Things was picking up here and so he come back to Butte, or down to Meaderville.

Int.: And then what?

Narr.: Then he was working in the baker shop. He was helping the brothers out. Then in 1900 or at the end of '99 he went back to Italy and he got married.

Int.: What was his wife's maiden name?

Narr.: Her name was ^{Giovanna} Jenny Tomasi. They come back here in 1900.

Three couples, Mr. and Mrs. Mondelli and Mr. and Mrs. Carlos Savant. That was in 1900, May. They worked in the baker shop there and in 1902 my uncles left Butte and went to Red Lodge. East of there near Billings. At Bear Creek in Red Lodge, a coal mining town. My dad and this Charles Savant, they bought the shop from my uncles. They had the baker shop there until my mother died in '44. My dad died the first of June in '29. She continued to--she died in '44. My brother died in '54. 56

Int.: When were you born?

Narr.: I was born in 1906. I was the third one of the family. My older brother John was born in February of 1901. Then my older brother Frank was born in 1902. I was born in April, 1906.

Int.: Where did you live when you were a child?

Narr.: Down to Meaderville. Until '64, I think, was when we moved up here.

Int.: What was Meaderville like when you were a child?

Narr.: It was a mining camp, a settlement of the Italians. There was

English and a few Irish but it was predominantly Italian. And English. Over in McQueen Addition, that was English and Slav.

Int.: I suppose none of the houses had indoor conveniences.

Narr.: No, not at that time. We got ours in the late '20's. When the W.P.A. in the '30's, then everybody connected up with the sewer and that all went down into, down at the end of Lincoln Avenue, there was a sewer disposal there. We connected up with the Company box, used to drain from the engine room and went down just a block below our place and we connected to the sewer box in these. That went down to Silver Bow Creek.

Int.: Where did you go to school?

Narr.: Down to Meaderville at the Franklin School.

Int.: You didn't go to Holy Savior?

Narr.: No. Well, I started at the Holy Savior. What happened, I raised my hand. I had to go (laughs).. The Sister shook her head. I don't know what was the reason. ~~Then coming out just before lunch, coming down the steps, I made a mess (laughs).~~

Int.: And didn't go back?

Narr.: No, I didn't go back ~~because, hell, I dirtied my pants. Then old Father Pirnat come down and here I was back in the baker shop there in the old wash tub, taking a bath in the old wash tub. We had no bathroom or anything. In the old wash tub (laughs).~~ He begged me to go back and I said, "No, I'm not going and that's it."

Int.: How old were you then?

Narr.: I was in the first grade. Six years old. So, I didn't go back ~~and then to top it off there the same thing happened to my oldest daughter. She was coming home and was two doors away from~~

~~the house. We were in this house, two doors was the alley where they used to come from school and the Sister wouldn't let her go. She held it too long and she dirtied her pants. (Laughs.) Jesus, I was so damn mad I was all set to go up and raise Cain with the Sister. Then, the Father was still there, the one when I was there. So, I didn't go or anything. Between her and my wife going up and raising Cain and this and that, I stayed home. But I was mad at the Sister. Sure, there's some, they go ahead, you know, there's some excuse, but mine was a legitimate--I couldn't hold it any longer. But I done it as we were coming out the steps in the front. I didn't have a chance to go down in the basement to the restroom. So, I knew I'd dirtied my pants and I took the back way and come down to Meaderville. Then about noon time I didn't get back in the classroom and Father Pirnat come down to find out what was the matter. Here I was in the tub there, washing up. I didn't go back. So then, I had to work in the baker shop. My dad had the baker shop after, him and Savant, they had the baker shop and then Savant quit and he went to Walkerville. My dad bought his interest out, so him and my mother they went ahead in the baker shop. As we kids got old enough to work in there, we had to help out. There were no girls in the family and we had to rush home at noon time and help. My mother had two or three brothers there and a couple of cousins and all living in the same family and I had to rush home and set the table and help her with the dishes. Before I went back to school, at lunch time; then after school I had to rush home, help clean up in the baker shop. And my brother.~~

Int.: What other things do you remember about your childhood?

Narr.: At ten years old I started putting bread in the oven. See, my dad was slowing up, he didn't get a chance to finish the oven and here the bread was already baked and he had to pull it out with the old peel. My oldest brother, he didn't like to work in the shop. He done more the outside work. On the wagon, with the horse and wagon, delivering. I was the inside. My dad got to slowing up and at ten years old my mother said, "Let Johnny put the bread in the oven." Which I liked. I went ahead and I learned to put the bread in the oven. I had to get up on a box to reach them out of the oven. Before I knew it I was on the peel there, putting eleven loaves at a time. You start off with five and get down to three, two, one. Start in the corner and then you work in the center and in the center you get three or four lines, well, a full peel. Then you'd have to cut down as you're coming in the corner. Cut down from eleven to nine and seven, five, three, and then when you get in the right corner you'd have a shorter run, less bread on the line in order to fill your oven right.

Int.: How many loaves did you bake at a time?

Narr.: Well, it all depends how the business was. On Monday you start out with two sacks or maybe three sacks. Tuesday you cut down. See, Monday everybody would be out of bread and you'd sell more bread. Then on the weekend you'd make a little extra to carry you over for Sunday, Sunday being a holiday. You'd have to make a good deal more bread.

Int.: Was there any machinery for mixing dough at that time?

Narr.: No.

Int.: All hand work.

Narr.: All hand work. ~~We used to get up, my dad well, it was all~~
~~hand work.~~ ^{My dad} Made your own yeast.

~~Int.: Keep it going all the time?~~

Narr.: ~~Oh, yeah.~~ Kept you going all the time. You're never through
 in the baker shop. There's always work.

Int.: How far did you go in school?

Narr.: Well, I went as far as the eighth grade and then I went to
 Business College. The reason I went there was because there was an
 Italian teacher and because he was Italian---. I wanted to go to
 High School and play football but the folks, they couldn't see that.
 You were just foolish to play football. So I went to Business College.
 In fact, in the seventh grade the teacher she flunked me because I
 didn't go dressed up. I figured I wasn't any better than the others
 and I went with my copper-toe shoes. In them days to save your
 shoes the parents had to put the copper-toes on to save the shoes.
 I went with my copper toes and a new pair of overalls. I didn't go
 dress up. She flunked me. There were three or four of us were
 flunked for not dressing up. We wasn't going to be sissies (laughs).
 We were tough guys. I went to Business College then because there
 was this Italian teacher and his folks and my folks were from the
 northern part of Italy, close to the French border. He was smart.
 Then when I went up there the teacher she was going to night school,
 taking up typing so I had good grades all year long, good passing
 grades. Passed all my tests but she flunked me. Miss Jackson in
 the Grade department and Giovanetti, he was the teacher in the High
 School department. They had her come in and they had my report card
 there, good grades all the way through. So I told them the reason
 she flunked me was because I didn't go dressed up. So I told them,

"I'll pass a test here," and she give me a test, so I wouldn't have to review the seventh grade. I said, "I'll try it," and so she gave me a test and I passed it.

Int.: So in the end you got passed.

Narr.: Yeah, see, I finished the eighth grade at the Business College. She failed me in the 7thA to go into the 8thB and she failed me there and I told her that was the only reason I knew. She was in the Shorthand department and they called her in the office, between the Rice brothers and her, Molly Jackson. She was the teacher of the 8th grade. I didn't try to put anything over on her or the school. I said, "I'll take a test," and she give me a test and I passed the test so I went in and started in on the 8th grade. I wasn't in the 7th grade any more. I went right into the 8th grade. So I finished there and then night school. When I finished the 8th grade I went in and took up bookkeeping. I went to night school because in the day I had to work in the shop. When things quieted down in the shop I went to day school. Then I took up shorthand and typing. I wasn't good in typing. I was slow. But my shorthand, I could do the shorthand all right. But the typing held me back. I had too many fingers. (Laughs).

Int.: You were flunked out of the 7th, then you went to Business College. Then did you go back to the 8th grade at the Franklin?

Narr.: Oh, no. See, I went like my mother and dad figured, I'd better go to night school and catch up. But then they got busy and I had to work in the shop during the day and I had to go to night school. As long as that didn't interfere with helping at home, all right. I kept agoing. Then, in fact, I had a chance, I went down to the old

Continental Oil. They were hiring kids so I went down and filled out an application. My brother, because he was the oldest, didn't want me going out to work. Then he decided he wanted to go to Bakers School. And he went back to Minneapolis at the William Hood Dunwoodie Institute there in Minneapolis. I didn't get to^{go} work. Back in the shop. What I should have done was went back to the Bakers School myself. With him, he knew the baking and that and I couldn't depend on him 'cause he was a fly-by-night. We had our difference. Because of him being the oldest he thought he was right. He knew everything. Me, the youngest, I didn't know nothing. He had the Old Country idea. There the oldest knew everything, right or wrong. He was right.

Int.: When you were out of school, then, you stayed with the baker shop?

Narr.: I stayed until during the Depression and, in fact, the bakers at that time, they were the first hit. Nobody working and the Government doling out the flour, everybody was baking their own bread. The baker shop, we were small, and we were the first hit. Then when Roosevelt got in and everybody was on the dole, you couldn't blame them. And, in fact, people were getting the flour. In fact, I was bootlegging flour. People couldn't bake bread or didn't know how, so, all right, I'd take your 25 pound bag or two, take it home, the folks would bake it and give them bread. They done the work and we traded or bartered.

Int.: When did you first start delivering bread with a truck?

Narr.: My dad got the first truck in 1916. In fact, I was one of the youngest kids driving truck in the State. In '16. I could just barely reach the pedals. I got in and then my dad learned to drive

the truck. It was harder for him, well, he was getting up in his age. Learn shifting and that. I could shift but my brother, 'cause he was the oldest, he wanted to go out on the truck. I had to work inside. Then I started to tend bar in '34, right after the beer come back in. I started to tend bar because there wasn't enough for the two of us in the baker shop. He was doing well. He went to school and he could bake and everything, so he stayed in the shop, there, and I went out on my own. There wasn't enough for the two of us, and my mother, she was a good baker herself. She worked in the shop. She was a hard worker. Dad died in '29 and she kept it up and she died in '44.

Int.: Did you make your own wine at home?

Narr.: Yes, we made our own, in fact, I even made some here but what the hell, the price of grapes went sky-high and to make wine you've got to take care of it. You can spoil a lot of it. Just like anything else, you've got to take care of it. Even after it's made.

Int.: What kind of wine was it? Was it a dry wine?

Narr.: Yeah. Red wine. Zinfandel. Then we made some wine, it was a natural sweet. It was a sweet wine. It was better than Port. I forget the name of it.

Int.: Did you ever make any grappo?

Narr.: No, but I've seen it made. In fact, when I was delivering bread I was kind of an official taster. (Laughs.) People, you know, "Taste this, taste this." Well, hell, taste it, I'd taste it but a lot of it, I'd spit it out right away. It was so strong.

Int.: Did you ever see any stills blow up?

Narr.: No, I never seen any blow up, it was after. I've seen that. When I was on the truck and I was driving, I wasn't supposed to be

drinking. That's when I got the appendix, I swore, because I won a bet down at the gas station, Wyoming and Mercury. I'd fill up twice a week. On Tuesdays and Fridays. I'd fill up fifteen gallons. I made a bet with the gas station attendant there and then we went across the street. I won the bet. Went across the street and had a drink and that was down in the rough end of town, in there. Just below the Stockman Bar. The old rough part of town, in the old days. I had a drink there and you'd swear you were biting on a piece of rusty iron. I spit it out, I didn't swallow it. That was on a Friday afternoon and the next morning I woke up with an appendix pain. I was trying to tell the doctor. He says "Appendix," and "I know," I says, I was heaving, "I can taste the shot of whiskey I drank yesterday." I didn't want my mother to hear it. That was because I was just twenty-one. I'd have caught hell. I went Saturday and I was operated on Monday afternoon at 4:30 for a ruptured appendix and in two weeks I was back out on the truck. After I was operated on and then nine weeks later I got the same pains all over again. I was operated on again. That's when they cut the appendix out, the second operation.

Int.: What did they do in the first one?

Narr.: They just opened me up and sewed me up (laughs). Because the pus, the gangrene, was all localized. It wasn't that soft stuff or anything 'cause at that time there was three of us within two blocks operated on for ruptured appendix. There was me and another kid and another girl. She lived three blocks from us and the boy lived across the street and about a block down, north of us. They were operated on a couple of times. They had good doctors. I had the two best gonorrhoea doctors in town (laughs). Then when I had the

(in 1975)
surgery here, I had enough of it. I had the doctor over here and he found out what was bothering me. What the hell! What got me was that he was taking x-rays down here and I had a funny hunch all the time that I might have cancer. In fact it will be five years ago Labor Day, see. Then I got tending bar, and I was working extra and I went down to the Country Club for the Labor Day weekend and I went up to be examined, checked up, 'cause I was just working extra. I worked forty-one years tending bar. I figured I knew what I was going into after not working steady. I was up in age and I knew what I was going into 'cause the Labor Day weekend is a rough one. I worked it. Twelve, sixteen hours. Then the doctor over here says, "Come back in three months" and I didn't go back in three months. I was feeling all right. So he didn't like the idea, come back at Christmas time. I went ahead. In fact, I walked out of the hospital up here. The doctors wanted me to sign. I says "Sign what?" I wouldn't sign it. I'm bull-headed. I'm Taurus the bull, born in April. He was red-haired and we went the rounds. I got out of bed, and told the wife, "Get my pants, get my clothes. I'm going home." See, the hospital's just up here. They tried to talk me into staying in. I said "No." I wouldn't sign anything else. So then I figured I'd go back to Rochester. Which I did. A good thing, 'cause things over there, anything happens, they're so far ahead in everything. I went back in '28 after I had a hernia on the appendix incision. I caught ^{lobar} ~~labor~~ pneumonia, not ether, but labor pneumonia back there after I was operated on. In '28. They fed me oxygen for sixty hours. I always said if I got a chance to come back, I'm coming back. In case something happens. Well, this thing come up and the doctor, well he found out so I went back there and took the wife with me. I was determined to go alone and finally after I come out of the hospital

up here I called my oldest boy, called the oldest daughter. She was living in Salem, Oregon then. The oldest boy's in Seattle and the youngest boy, he lives next door. Told him and then I called the youngest daughter, she lives in Anaconda. Then the oldest boy he gets on the phone and he calls the youngest one, over here next door and he said, "Don't let Dad go alone. You go with him," or he'd go from Seattle. I was all set to go on Saturday night. I had my ticket bought and everything. So then the youngest boy comes in and he said, "Johnny says not to let you go by yourself." The wife wanted to come. I said "No, no, I'm going by myself." Bull-headed. So finally I says "O.K." Then I couldn't get the wife together on the same plane so I said, "Well, we'll leave the next day." Sunday. We could get the two of us. So we left. (~~But then, like it is, if anything goes wrong you're equipped.~~) *omit*

Int.: Well, to get back to Meaderville, when did the night clubs start in there?

Narr.: Well, it started in the early twenties.

Int.: Who was first?

Narr.: The first one started was Angelo ^{Pera} Pera. He started the ^{il} Travatore. We were making bread sticks. Then they started there in the ^{il} old Travatore. After, there was the Rocky Mountain, they started in '31.

Int.: That was Teddy's place.

Narr.: Yeah. Teddy's. He started in '31 just a few doors down the street there from the Travatore. He started across the street and then they moved down to the Rocky Mountain. There was Pete Antonioli and Teddy in there. Then the Golden Fan started down the street.

That was in '33. See, the Rocky Mountain started there the second of July, '31. Then we burned out there the second of July of '40. Nine years to the day. We were down two weeks and then after, he moved down the street, to the Golden Fan. We were burnt out there, up above, for two weeks. Then when we opened down there it was two weeks after. Then we run there until he closed up in '61. February of '61. Then I worked extra, here and around, that's why I didn't get much Social Security. 'Cause I lost a lot of work. A lot of time I was off and then working part time. Then a lot of that, if I'd known, kept working, but, sure, you're out of work and lose out. (Social Security don't go in.) Then when it come time to retire, in fact, I went up three times. Every time I got a different answer. In fact, I was figuring out for my wife, to see what she gets in case something happened to me. I was 64 then and, in fact, they had the thing here and I signed it but then you've got six months to make up your mind. In fact, I had \$1,040 and then I got my last check, like today, being \$1,500 and so I went out, we were in this house here. I went up and I says "here." I wrote out a check for a thousand and that and I says, "Here. I'm not taking it. Because I'll be 65 in April and I'll wait a few more months and I'll take it then." A good thing I did. When I started there I was only getting \$150 a month. What the hell! What's the wife going to do? It's a good thing I didn't have long to wait. I had the thing, carried it around for quite a while. What I figured on, taking early retirement then and what made me take it then was because the woman at the place where I was working cut me down. I was working three days one week and two days the next week. There were two of us splitting the work up. So I said "To hell with it." She cut me down, she was going to work. I says, "O.K."

So I went up and they took my unemployment. Signed up for that. And, what the hell! She was sorry she done it. She didn't think I'd do it (laughs). Oh, the hell the with! I make up my mind, my mind is made up and boom! So I took the Social Security then Unemployment and Social Security.

Int.: How about the bootlegging during Prohibition down in Meaderville? Was there much of that going on?

Narr.: Well, that was bootlegging days. Everybody was bootlegging. So, I went bootlegging. Fact, liquor was legal in the State but it wasn't to sell it over the bar.

Int.: It wasn't legal to distill it either, was it?

Narr.: No. But as I say, everybody was doing it. I done a little bit of it myself.

Int.: I know a lot did.

Narr.: When I started to tend bar it wasn't legal to sell it. It wasn't even legal to sell the Liquor Store whiskey over the bar. Then, in fact, that's when I started to tend bar. In '33. Beer come back in '33. Whiskey come back after and we could sell the State Liquor Store whiskey but then it wasn't legal. They had to sign a \$1000 tax they had to apply for.

Int.: Was there any bootlegging down there that was a business? Where they hired people to work at it?

Narr.: No, see, beer come back and in fact I was selling beer myself. A fellow had the Great Falls (Beer) agency, then he give it up and me and another fellow took it over and we were selling beer. But then the Mayor, he had Highlander (Beer) and McTaggart, we would get into the joints in town, they had gambling and that. The Mayor put the finger on all of them and I couldn't get it. But I got in on the outside and

that but the Mayor here in town, I was bucking the Mayor.

Int.: Who was the mayor then?

Narr.: At that time it was McTaggart. Archie McTaggart. And Bertoglio. Bertoglio used to live in Meaderville and had a grocery store down there. He had the big warehouse down here. Bertoglio and McTaggart. But I couldn't buck them. They had Missoula and as soon as I took over with Great Falls, they cut the price. It was \$16.50 and they cut down to \$15.50. Hell, I couldn't compete with them. We were starting out and then we hit that sour beer.

Int.: What was that?

Narr.: Well, the pitch wasn't sticking in the barrels. When they pitched the barrels it was blistering. Then the blisters, instead of sealing, it would leave blotches in there and when the beer hit that wood the beer was shot, sour, sour. I was just getting started and I had quite a few barrels in, in fact down here on Montana Street was the first place I had it, and up on Park Street, where the Metals Bank is at there was a bar down in there. I had barrels in there. Before you knew it, every fellow in there "This beer is terrible." "Well, pull it out." That's what I had to do. My partner and I drove to Great Falls and got up there and me, a dumb fool, didn't know anything, but it was experience my dad had. He worked in the brewery in Texas before he come up. I learned from him. Here they just pitched how many barrels that day. We went down to the brewery there and checked them all, gee, here they had two carloads to go to North Dakota, just loaded up and everything. So they got the Government man down and worked some deal and they saved the tax, the stamps. All that was, the pitch wasn't sticking in the barrels. I mentioned that up there and they

went down and here they had 400 barrels there ready for the next day. Well, they had to get Missoula, see, it was a Canadian outfit that had Missoula and Great Falls. So they had to get new pitch from Missoula sent into Great Falls in order to re-pitch the 400 barrels they had there for the next day. I had experience. I learned the hard way.

Int.: Was Meaderville a good place to live?

Narr.: Yes. It was out in the County and taxes was cheap then. Now everything is sky-high, regardless of where you're at. Everything is sky-high. Just like this house here. See, I moved it up from down there, Meaderville. Taxes down there was \$50 a year. Now, up here it's 3-400. In the City limits. Well, you're getting all the City things, you've got to.

Int.: IN Meaderville the people felt like a pretty closed community, did they?

Narr.: Yeah. Yes, that's right. And you could trust anybody down there. You could go away, didn't have to lock your house or anything. Go and be gone a week, six months or a year and come back, everything would be all right. The neighbors take care of everything. You could trust your neighbors. Now, what the hell, it's not in the cards.

Int.: Did you ever belong to the Fire Department?

Narr.: Yes, I did. In fact, I fought more fires out of the Department than when I was in the Department (laughs). In fact, I fought thirty fires in the City.

Int.: How did you do that?

Narr.: Well, I happened to be in town at the time. I was young and curious and before you knew it, I got to looking around and, in fact, the Fire Chief here, old Martin, they were down at the Ryan-Butte fire, down here at the wholesale house. I was just finishing my dinner in

in town, up at the old Walker's Saloon on Park Street, and just had my dinner because I was going home. I figured I'd eat in town and not bother my mother so a kid was in there, he was a neighbor of ours, he says, "There's a fire down at the Ryan Fruit, in the wholesale house." All right, take a ride down there. We went down when it was ^{almost} over. Fact, I got hit with a fire hose, down in the basement. Smoke, that old straw from the banana crates. Went down in there and the Fire Chief asked me, "You acquainted with the place?" I said, "Yes, I'm acquainted." See, the wholesale house ^I used to go down there and pick up fruit and one thing after another and then there was an Italian fellow working down there. We'd go see him, you know, he'd fix us up on fruit--kids. Before you knew it I was with this fireman. He was Pat and then he was calling me "Mike" and we couldn't see. This was before the gas masks. We had a handkerchief up to our nose. But we got down there and I knew when you got the nozzle (and that) you got oxygen because the water was circulating. We put the hose through the floor, in the trap in the floor. We got down there. He was calling me "Mike" and I was calling him "Pat". (Laughs) We had our handkerchief up to our nose and then before you knew it we got hit by the hose coming in from that end. See, they went under the sidewalk there. Then this door I knew ^{about} and, what the hell, we were feeling our way there. I said, "Wait a minute, I'll hit the door." It was just an inch board and you hit it with your shoulder and knock it out. Jesus, I took a step back and I hit it! Before you knew it I was in on the floor. The door swung open and I was on the floor. "Mike, where are you?" "I'm here on the floor." Then we got ahold of the nozzle there, the two-inch hose and then we got oxygen in there. We were all right. The next morning I ^{caught} thought, "Hell." That night reading the paper here, "Firemen, Captain Gleason" the father. He got hit on the head and he was in the hospital.

His son, well, they took him to the hospital, asphyxiation. He got the smoke and he didn't come out of it. Boy, did I catch hell! Six o'clock in the morning putting bread in the oven. "See that?" My mother, she was the law. Holy Jesus, ^{God} "See there, you damn fool? Go out and fight fire, you damn fool," this and that. "All right," I says, "that's enough, Mom, let's forget it. Leave me alone. I've got to put the bread in the oven now."

Int.: The Gleason's caught it on this fire you were on?

Narr.: Yeah. His father was Captain. He was a fireman and his kid was just one of the younger ones on the fire. He got smoked because of that straw on the banans. There was nothing but black smoke. No flame to it or anything. Smoldering. You get a whiff of that and you're done. I was with him on the big hose after, when they got through from the alley, come through and we got in where the fire actually was. Before you know it, it's done.

Int.: Was that the worst fire you ever got on?

Narr.: No, then we had another house down in Meaderville. It was remodeled but in the walls of the old house was old sawdust. I got on the roof down there and with the axe I chopped more holes in the roof. That was the only way you could do it. You had to chop holes so the air would come up. And you'd look down and, hell, when the air got in there and then the sawdust--b-z-z-z it would go up. And then the fellow that owned the house, he told me, "Jesus Christ, what the hell's the matter with you?" (Laughs) ^{said} "You damn fool, that's the only way. You fight fire with fire." So I used the axe. I said, "I had to give it ventilation." He had the house all insured and everything. He had just remodeled the whole thing and then the thing caught on fire. Well, I chopped ^{a lot} more holes in that roof! (Laughs)

Then they moved the house down on the Flat and I moved my house up here.

In fact, when I moved my house here sixteen years ago I was the only one here. There was no Eggers, there was nothing across the street over there. The Clinic up here, it all started after I moved my house up here. We fought another fire, it was on St. Valentine's Day. That was down in Meaderville, across the creek. ^{Jesus} Jesus, cold! Got hit with the hose. I was on the roof, got hit and everything froze on us. Then we had to walk about half a mile back to the house. Then I caught hell! Got home and "You damned fool!" and this and that. Well, what the hell, you're young and full of piss and vinegar.

Int.: When did you get married?

Narr.: I got married in '36.

Int.: What was your wife's name?

Narr.: Ann Guidi. I was married once before that but that didn't take. She's Italian.

Int.: Did she ever work?

Narr.: Yes, she worked at the Rocky Mountain there. She was a check-girl there. She started work in the kitchen. Then she worked at check-girl.

Int.: How was Teddy (Traparish) to work for?

Narr.: He was all right to work for. He had his good days and bad days. He was a slave-driver. Yeah. It had to be done right and this and that. He was on your tail. "Hurry up. Hurry up." My partner tending bar, Gino, he'd talk back to him. Every other word was a cuss word. He'd get a big kick out of hearing Gino rave. "Gino, you capitalist son-of-a-bitch." "You big shot. You're like the rest." Well, he used to work in the mine. He was a good worker. I never worked with him

in the mine but I worked with him tending bar. He was ornery, a hard fellow to work with. Gino. The other fellows found it hard to work with him but I got along with him. Teddy even said to me, "How the hell do you work with him, get along with him?" I says, "Well, what the hell, I don't pay attention to him. He does his work and I do my work." That's one thing, he was a good worker and like behind the bar at times your end would get all the work, busy, and his end was quiet, he'd help you. Wash your glasses, wipe and that. And that's the way we got along. He'd help me and I'd help him. Anyway, Teddy would say, "How the hell do you get along with him?" "Well, what the hell, don't argue with him, just leave him. He's hot-headed." All right. I'll never forget in the war when Hitler went into Russia. In fact, my father-in-law says, "Hitler and Stalin are just like that." This was on Friday night. "Dominic," I told my father-in-law, I says, "I won't see you now until next week but this is Friday night but don't forget what I'm telling you now." He says, "Hitler and Stalin are all together." I didn't read MEIN KAMPF, the book, but Hitler is against Communism. I says, "That's not going to go." ^{said} I says, "I won't see you again until next Thursday." I was off Thursday and Friday. ^{said} I says, "I'll see you then. I won't be a bit surprised that they'll be at war." Saturday night it come over the radio that Hitler was invading Russia. Then my wife called me up and said, "Did you hear the news?" I says, Yeah," because Teddy says, "You take care of the radio and Gino, take care of the bar." I'd listen to it and then serve a drink there and then people were down with the radio. Then Gino came down. Gee! "What's the matter, Johnny?" So I told him. I said, "Gino, I told you this. They wouldn't get along." He was part Communist, Gino. Because he was born in Carrara, Italy. That's where's all that Italian marble.

That's the most Communistic part of Italy. In Carrara, So Gino couldn't figure it out. And he was against the church. He asked me, "What do you think, the Pope got something to do?" I says, "Well, I don't know but the Pope--and then at the time, that's when two warring nations, how the hell is it a man from a warring nation goes into Rome?" Myron Taylor, his Ambassador and he went to Rome, while Italy was at war with Germany. Gino went down "G-r-r-r, _ hands up in the air. Teddy come back and he asked me, "What's the matter with Gino?" (Laughs.) I said, "he asked me if the Pope had anything to do with the war. I says, maybe. I says, "What the hell! His guess is as good as mine." (Laughs.) He come back and asks me, "What's the matter with Gino?" Then he tended bar. Gino was back and forth. Them's the things that happen.

Int.: Did your family keep in touch with the Old Country?

Narr.: Well, up until my grandfather, ^{who} ~~he~~ died at Christmas time of '43. That was her father. My grandfather on my father's side, he died before my father was born. Back there in them houses, two story, you know, he cut his hand with a scythe and he was up at night; it was painin' him, and walked off the railing and fell down in a wheelbarrow. Broke his back. He lived for three or four days. He died eight days before ^{my dad} ~~he~~ was born.

Int.: Eight days before his birthday?

Narr.: Before my dad was born. My grandfather died before my father was born. I've got pictures where my grandmother had a shrine built where the avalanche come down. It's on their ground. She had this shrine for that. I forget how many people were killed in that avalanche. But it came down, like this was her property, and stopped there. It didn't come over. We've got a picture that shows where

the shrine is at and she's out there in the rocking chair. That was in '22. My dad went back to see her.

Int.: So you didn't have any contact with the Old Country later on?

Narr.: No, it was because--my mother had a hunch. He died at Christmas of '43. That's the last she heard. Didn't hear any more. Then we found out he died just before Christmas of '43.

Int.: Did a good many of the people in Meaderville come from the same localities? Or were they from all over?

Narr.: Well, all over Italy. My folks were up close to the French border. My wife's folks, she's from Tuscany. Lucca. Where my folks come from, they were up there in the northern part and the Queen had their summer home up there. It's close to Nice and Savoy. I kid the wife once in a while, I say, "Well, Garibaldi came from the north and he unified Italy. He went down and got all you folks corralled. All you fellows, and made a united Italy." My oldest boy, he'll be in from Seattle Saturday and we'll have all the family here. We've got two boys and two girls. (Interval, showing photographs.)

Int.: It seems to me I remember a story that Teddy Traparish's head waiter disappeared once and they found him floating down the Big Hole. Is that right?

Narr.: Yeah.

Int.: What was he up to?

Narr.: Well, he had a girl down at Melrose. And he was chasing around.

Int.: Just a little monkey-shines.

Narr.: Yeah. Old George. He was a good fellow. He had a heart of gold. He blew all his money.

Int.: How about the gambling down there? Teddy had to pay protection for all of that.

Narr.: Yeah.

Int.: Well, what else went on down there? You never went mining?

Narr.: No. I went mining next door to the Rocky Mountain down there, when I was a kid. I was the youngest one of the bunch. We went down, going down the ladder. And this day we had a 250 foot rope and I wrapped it around my waist and I had a board. Sit down and the cross-bar of the ladder broke. I went down. And a good thing--I just had a funny hunch. I wrapped the rope around the pole. And the kids up on top, my brother and two other kids, three, they let me down. As I was going down they loosened the rope. Then when the cross-bar went down and a good thing, I'm here, the rope didn't snap.

Int.: Was that that old Reins Shaft there?

Narr.: Yeah. Next door to the Rocky Mountain. That's years ago. But what the hell, it wasn't my turn, so there you are.

Int.: How about the '34 strike? Was there any trouble there on the picket lines?

Narr.: No.

Int.: There were pickets out all over.

Narr.: Oh, yes. We went to Livingston. See, we had the d^show down there. They went to Livingston and we come back the next morning. They finished up down there. That was when the Golden Fan was on. We went over, there was a nice group. We went over, took a couple days off. We drove all night and then coming back, we come back the next morning and that was the first day of the strike. Pickets were out and that but there was no trouble.

Int.: That was a tough one. Tough on the miners.

Narr.: Oh, yes. When the miners were out there was no relief for them. But now they can get unemployment.

Then I went to work down at the Smelter. I was just under the wire there because we had to get off non-essential jobs. I was tending bar. So I went down to the Smelter. Never worked in a smelter before or anything. See, I was tending bar and I was on a non-essential job and with my baker background I was in (the Army). 'Cause they needed bakers. You're not going to work for \$30 a month. At that time it was \$30 a month. Leter it went up to \$54. So I took a chance, I went down to the Smelter. I wouldn't go in the mine, 'cause the experience I had going down the shaft up here, that was enough. I never went down the shaft on the cage since. Or even on an elevator. On the elevator if it goes up or down, oof--my stomach--(laughs) that cured me. So I said, "Ill go down to the Smelter. I'll take a chance down there." I inquired before and a medical doctor told me, "Yes, John, with your background as a baker, you're in." And my brother, they offered him a rating, Staff Sergeant, because he had graduated from the bakers school in Minneapolis. But me, what I learned was in the baker shop here. I'd have been in, 'cause my cousin in the First World War, from Red Lodge, he was in and then he volunteered. He went in and he was at Fort Lewis and down in Oregon and down in California but he was a baker, in the commissary. But then with him, he was older and he had more experience in the baker shop than I did. But then, I figured, I'm not going in for \$30 a month. When I went down to the Smelter, between all that hot slag and everything, you didn't know if you were going to get out of it or burned up or what. I'll never forget, the first day he told me to go down and shovel slag, throw it up in one of the big ladles there. Just before that I heard a horn but here, what the hell, it was a crane man overhead. He honked the horn, and I was a greenhorn down there and I kept shoveling, what

the hell. The horn didn't mean nothing to me. Then a countryman of mine came over and shook me. "What's the matter, you?" Talking broken English. "You damn fool," he says, "why don't you be like a farmer when he comes to town? Don't be like a farmer work on a farm." Well, I got the drift right away. When the farmer comes to town, he looks up at the tall buildings. Me, I forgot to look overhead and here's the craneman dumping a ladle of hot matte into the reverb furnace. And he comes over and shakes the hell out of me. I thought, "What the hell." And Jesus, those banjo eyes. He's a southern Italian. So we got over under the converter. Finally I said to him, "What are you, Italian?" Jesus, those banjo eyes went up like that and he turned around. I said, "So am I." He turned around and give me the Old Country kiss and hugged me and that (laughs). He says, "What's a matter, you? Don't you watch the crane?" He showed me, the craneman started spilling from his ladle. He says, "You got to watch out or if not, you get burnt." Well, experience.

Int.: How long were you down there?

Narr.: Thirty-nine months. Didn't think I'd last a week and I was down there thirty-nine months. In fact, towards the last there when they was shorthanded and that, they'd call me up and I'd drive down. On my day off and that, they were short-handed, call me up and I was on my way. Never missed a shift. Thirty-nine months. I got out in '46.

End of Interview