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Gary Mormino: My name is Gary Mormino. Today is April 3, 1980. It's my pleasure to be talking with Mr. Maniscalco. What's your first name, Mister—?

Joe Maniscalco: Joe.

GM: Joe. Giuseppe?

JM: Giuseppe.

GM: Giuseppe Maniscalco, at his cigar shop on Seventh Avenue. Mr. Maniscalco, why don't we begin? Tell me something about the old country.

JM: Well, when I came to this country, I was a kid. I was about seven years old.

GM: Right.

JM: In 1910. My people—my parents had brought me here. I was a kid. And then—

GM: How old were you? What year were you born?

JM: In Italy.

GM: What year?

JM: Nineteen aught-two.

GM: Nineteen aught-two. Where were you born in Italy?

JM: Alessandria della Rocca, *Provincia di Agrigento*.

GM: Got some pictures here I think will bring back some memories, pictures of the old country. When is the last time you've seen those?

JM: This is Alessandria?

GM: Yep.

JM: Okay, let me—do you want me to look now?

GM: Fine, you can do it now if you want. Whenever.

JM: Yeah, this is the church.

GM: Mm-hm. *La chiesa*.

JM: This is *la piazza*, what we call *la piazza*.

GM: Right.

JM: All right. On the here, on this end—or even the other end, but I think it's this end, whichever one, (inaudible). They had water—

GM: Fountains?

JM: Fountains.

GM: I've got some pictures of that.

JM: Let me see. There, that was once a water fountain. Yeah.

GM: Yeah.

JM: This was right in—this is where I was. But it changed.

GM: Right. Well, what did your father do in the old country?

JM: My father was making—like I told you yesterday, he was making lime.

GM: Lime, uh-huh.

JM: Yeah. He used to go in the mountain, one mountain, used to break the mountain, and then work on it and make lime.

GM: Right, right. Did he live in the city?

JM: Yes, sir.

GM: Right.

JM: He was born and raised in the city Alessandria della Rocca.

GM: How about your mother?

JM: Same thing.

GM: What was her maiden name?

JM: La Barbera.

GM: La Barbera, right.

JM: *Providencia la Barberra.*

GM: Right, right. What do you remember about growing up in Sicily? You were born in what year? Uh—

JM: Nineteen hundred and two.

GM: Nineteen aught-two. What do you remember about growing up in Sicily?

JM: Well, the only thing is that when my father was working, you know, I used to go to school that day. And, after school, the fellow with the wagon, they used to come and pick me up and take me where my daddy is. So I spent some time—I'd spend night up there with him.

GM: Right, right. How would you help?

JM: I couldn't help. I was just a kid, and I couldn't do nothing there.

GM: Right.

JM: I couldn't help my father.

GM: What were the mountains like?

JM: Oh, big. Let me see the pictures; maybe you got them in there. You see, the mound was—we named it Greco Morto.

GM: Greco Morto? The dead Greek?

JM: Yeah. The dead Greek, *morto*. That's where the mound was.

GM: Oh, right.

JM: That's where it was. It was a big mound, all white rock.

GM: Right. Remember this picture of the *comune* Molino?

JM: No.

GM: You don't remember that?

JM: I don't remember this.

GM: Okay.

JM: Why should I say that I remember when I don't?

GM: Right, right. You said you went to school in Sicily?

JM: Yes.

GM: What was school like in Sicily?

JM: Oh, school was good. I was a young kid, and we went to school all day. And then by two o'clock, two o'clock or two-thirty, we would go on home and stay home. I was a kid, and you couldn't—the only time I went out was when I had to go out with my big brother or my big sister, or either my daddy.

GM: Right. Do you remember any of the religious celebrations?

JM: Oh, yeah. They had a beautiful celebration there. San Giuseppe and la Madonna della Rocca, you know, this is the biggest.

GM: Describe the festival.

JM: Oh, it was so beautiful. See, they used to—I was a kid, and I remember when they used to take this *Madonna della Rocca* [statue]. They used to take it, and have like a

parade, you know. People go round and people throw money at it. And then you had all kinds of things right in *la piazza*. You can buy sausages, ice cream, all kinds of stuff. That's one week or so. Then they had the bands; they had the bandstand, and everything. The bandstand was right across to the church. See, the bandstand was close to the church. And they used to go in there. And then, they had the fireworks on the—where the pond is. That's where the pond is, and every time the fireworks play, they had the church. At the end, the firework, they light the church. And then they had to—you know, the last one when they started blowing and all.

GM: Right, right.

JM: And then after that, nothing more that I see, till I remember now.

GM: Right, right. Well, why did your father come to America?

JM: Well, my father never did want to come to America.

GM: Your father or brother?

JM: My father. But I had my uncles here. My uncles, they wanted to bring the last sister they had, and that was my mother. I had four uncles right here: my uncle Sam, my uncle Peter, my uncle Joe, and my uncle John. They want to bring the family there, and we came here. That's why. One of my uncles, Sam, came to Italy to serve as a soldier. Because when you leave Italy, you know, you've got to do that. So he stayed about three months, a soldier, and then they discharge him. So then when they discharge him, we came to this country.

GM: Right.

JM: They brought us—the uncles, they brought us here.

GM: How did you get to Palermo?

JM: I went by wagon.

GM: (inaudible)

JM: (inaudible)

GM: How long did it take?

JM: Oh, I really don't remember. But it took about a half a day to get there.

GM: Yeah, what was Palermo like?

JM: Oh, beautiful then; today I don't know, because it was seventy years ago.

GM: Mount Pellegrino? Right, right.

JM: And I remember in Palermo, they had that statue out there. You know, the horse and all; they had that statue right on *la piazza* in Palermo. I remember that, because that was, I think, was close to where the ship was. Then from there, the ship was named *Venecio*.

GM: *Venecio*, right.

JM: The ship that brought us to the United States.

GM: What do you remember about the voyage?

JM: Nothing. The only thing I remember about the voyage—I had a girl with me, you know, a little girl friend. She's still living, and she is here. We both used to play in the ship, and that's the only thing.

GM: How old were you when you came, again?

JM: I was seven years when I came, about seven years. I was seven years when I came here to this country.

GM: Right. Where did the ship land?

JM: In New York.

GM: What do you remember about New York?

JM: Nothing. I don't remember nothing.

GM: Statue of Liberty, you don't remember seeing that? Ellis Island?

JM: No. The island where they—you know, once when you get there, they take you to the island to examine you: your eyes and all, like that. They examined my eyes.

GM: Right, right. Do you remember that at all?

JM: Yes, I remember that. That's what they call *la batteria* [the Battery] in New York.

GM: *La batteria*.

JM: Yeah.

GM: Right. What's it translate?

JM: Uh—the island, like you said.

GM: Ellis Island.

JM: Yeah.

GM: Right, right. How did you get to Tampa?

JM: By train. It took three days and some to get to Tampa.

GM: Is that right?

JM: Yes.

GM: What did you think of America as you were traveling?

JM: Well, I was a kid. The only thing that I did when we got here—we had a lot of people right here on Nineteenth Street and Sixth Avenue; they had the old station, Ybor City Station. And all the people that come from the old country, they all get off there. And this was like a parade. When they know that people from the old country are coming, at night when the train comes, you see hundreds of people in there, receiving you, to find out how the family is getting along, and what they're doing, and what they are all doing there.

GM: That's nice. Who was here to greet you? Anyone you know?

JM: Who?

GM: Did you know anyone who was here, when you came to Tampa, besides your uncles?

JM: No. My uncles, yes, I knew my uncles. But I was a kid when they left there, see? When my uncles left, I was a kid, a baby—you know, two or three years old. And they all left and they came to this country.

GM: Right. What did you think of Ybor City?

JM: Great. I've lived my life here in Ybor City since I came from the old country.

GM: What was it like when you came in 1910?

JM: Oh, when I came here, it was a peaceable thing, the best thing in the world that I ever saw, and I've been around in the country. I never saw people so friendly. You used to sleep with the door open in the night. The people in the street at night—music, serenade, and the people—everybody at one or two 'clock in the morning, go out on the porch, hear the people playing the serenade, they come by, and all like that. Oh, was it terrific then. And everybody would invite them in to eat or drink, or something.

GM: Right, right. Where did your family live in Ybor City?

JM: When we came, we live right here on Tenth Avenue.

GM: Tenth?

JM: 2014 Tenth Avenue.

GM: Is that where the interstate [Interstate 4] is today?

JM: No.

GM: No?

JM: No, no, no. The interstate is in Fourteenth [Avenue], I think, Thirteenth [Avenue] or Fourteenth, something like that.

GM: Right, right. What's there today?

JM: Huh? Palm [Avenue]. Today is, you know, the new Palm Avenue, where the college is now.

GM: Right, right.

JM: I used to live right there on Tenth Avenue. It used to be Tenth Avenue where I was then.

GM: What was it like to grow up in Ybor City as a young boy?

JM: Oh, I grew up nice.

GM: What kind of memories do you have?

JM: Oh, well, I used to go to picnics. I used to shine shoes. I used go to town, the old courthouse, shine shoes, get up early in the morning and come back late at night, to bring four or five dollars home to the people. And we used to live with that kind of money in them days.

GM: How old were you when you begin rolling cigars?

JM: Not even thirteen.

GM: Not thirteen. Gee.

JM: Not even thirteen [when] I learned how. I went to school and my father—I used to make a lot of play hook. When you've got a bad company, you make a lot of play hook. Out of nine months of school, I only went two months. So, my father said, "You don't go to school. I'm going to take you to so you can learn to make cigars."

GM: Right.

JM: When I started learning, I went to (inaudible) and I stayed two weeks, and they put me and my brother—my older brother, he was working as a cigar maker, and he took me out there to be an apprentice in the cigar factory Arguellas Lopez.

GM: What was the factory?

JM: Arguellas Lopez.

GM: Right. What was your first salary, do you remember?

JM: My first salary was—they used to pay me—after six months, they used to pay me two dollars a week.

GM: Two dollars a week.

JM: Then I started working, making cigars and all like that; then I started making fifteen or twenty dollars a week as an employee.

GM: Right.

JM: But it took me two years to become a cigar maker, to become an employee.

GM: Who were most of the workers there? Were they mainly Cuban or Spanish, or Italian?

JM: They were Cubans and Spanish and Italians.

GM: Who made the best cigars?

JM: Well, they had some good Italian cigar makers at that time, and they had bad ones. They had Cuban good cigar makers. They had Spanish good cigar makers. But most of the cigar makers—most of the good cigars, the Spanish people was making them cigars.

GM: Right, right. How did you manage to get a job? Did a friend recommend you?

JM: No, I just go in there and ask and see. They don't want to get me as employee 'cause I was making cigars, and my cigar, they used to sell it. But they never paid me as the employee, because this is all piecework. And then, I quit there and I went to another factory, to Perfecto Garcia [&] Brothers. So, I got a job in there where I was making twenty-five, thirty, forty dollars a week. So that's when—

GM: Right. Right.

JM: Then I went back to Arguellas Lopez, because then they wanted me back, so I could work in there, you know, and make it as an employee.

GM: Right. When you began working, did they have a reader?

JM: Yes.

GM: A *lector*?

JM: Yes, they had a reader, and we used to hear all the news going on in the country. We used to get the news, what's happening in the city of Tampa, and the area, Tampa Bay area. You used to hear it all. And then they used to give you news from all over the country, and then they used to give news from—foreign countries' news. And then after that, the reader started about ten o'clock in the morning—I mean, nine o'clock. At ten o'clock, they used to read one hour, read all the news, and then they come back and read some more news. And then, about two o'clock, he started a novel. And you couldn't hear a pin drop when that man was reading.

GM: What kind of novels did he read? Do you remember any favorites?

JM: Yeah, I remember. (inaudible), a lot of them things. I can mention (inaudible), *Don Quixote*, you know, all them things. They used to read plenty of them. One finished, and then, he used to bring ten or fifteen different stories, books, and then let the cigar makers decide which one they want.

GM: Right.

JM: So we used to vote on which one we want.

GM: Right. Do you remember any favorite *lectores*?

JM: Yeah. [Manuel] Aparicio.

GM: Aparicio.

JM: El Mexicano [Francisco Rodriguez]. Jaime—we used to call him Jaime le Disco; you know, he was a cross-eyed man. And then, we had (inaudible). We had some good readers.

GM: Do you remember Onofrio Palermo?

JM: Onofrio?

GM: Onofrio Palermo?

JM: Onofrio?

GM: Palermo. *Un lector?* No?

JM: Well, we had an Italian, Pasquale (inaudible), his name was; we used to call him Pasquale (inaudible) then. He used to be a reader in the factory, too. Then he kind of lost his head, and they took him to Chattahoochee.¹

GM: Yeah. Were the readers radicals?

JM: No.

GM: No?

JM: No. But the best that you could get today, the readers, when they read the novel, like Aparicio, the *Mexicanito* [Wilfredo Rodriguez] and his father, the old man El Mexicano. He used to read in the Regensburg [Cigar Factory]. You know where the clock factory is? He used to read in there. And there was nine hundred and some people in there, and he never had any voice or noise, or anything like that. His voice was so strong that he fill up that whole place.

GM: Right. Were you ever involved in any of the strikes?

JM: Yes, sir. Many times. When we got in 1910, after two weeks, I think it was, they had the Seven Month Strike. I was a kid, but I remember.

¹To Florida State Hospital in Chattahoochee, the state's first hospital for mental illness. It was originally constructed as a prison, and was converted into a hospital in 1876; it remains in operation as of 2009.

GM: What do you remember about that?

JM: Oh, they had fights on Twentieth Street and Tenth Avenue.

GM: What kind of fights?

JM: Between the laborers and the strike breakers.

GM: Right.

JM: They had all that back then.

GM: Was your father able to get a job?

JM: No, my father never made cigars.

GM: What did he do?

JM: My father, he was working in a farm.

GM: In a farm?

JM: Yes.

GM: How did the strike affect him?

JM: Well, it didn't affect him much, because he was making—in them days, he was making a dollar to a dollar and a quarter a day.

GM: Right.

JM: It didn't touch my father at all, because—and then, after that, my sister—she was the oldest, she's still living; my sister Mary, she's still living—[and] my brother Benny that had learned the trade, the cigar industry. So they went to work, and started to take care of the family. Then when I grow up, like I said, I went [to work in the cigar industry], too, and I learned the trade, too.

GM: Right. Getting back to the 1910 strike, do you remember anything else about it, as a young boy?

JM: Oh, the people, they was—they didn't know that we had a strike, the way the people took care of each other. And then, you can thank the Italian people that had the business—grocery stores, wholesale house—they used to give the food to the people, you know.

And then, when the strike settled down, a lot of them paid back what they owe, a lot of them didn't. But we got along fine during that strike.

GM: Right. What was the first strike you were involved in?

JM: Nineteen—when I was—

GM: Yeah, when you started working as a cigar maker.

JM: Well, the first strike that I was involved in was—see, the cigar makers, they never was satisfied—

GM: Why is that?

JM: —in Arguellas Lopez. Because of the kind of material

GM: What was wrong with the material?

JM: The material did not fit the work. And a fellow—just one crazy guy, he don't feel like working—he go up where the reader is. "Fellow workingmen, we can't work this. We've got to go on strike!" And they throw everybody out.

GM: *Para la calle.*

JM: Yeah, *a la calle*. And then we'd go out, go to the Labor Temple—the old Labor Temple, not the one they got today, the old one. It used to be on Eighth Avenue between Sixteenth and Seventeenth Street. That's where they used to be, and that's the old temple. Then they build this—well, I've been in many strikes many times. Then in 1920, we had the Ten Months' Strike.

GM: You were involved in that? You were working then?

JM: I was working, but I went in strike, and I went to work at the phosphate mine.

GM: At the phosphate mine?

JM: Yes, sir.

GM: Did you have trouble finding that job?

JM: No, sir, because they want people to work in the phosphate mine, and the railroad, too.

GM: Where was that? In Mulberry?

JM: Fort Meade, Mulberry.

GM: Were you involved—there was a strike out there too, wasn't there?

JM: No. Not that. No.

GM: That was earlier?

JM: No, that's earlier. Then we used to make three dollars a day.

GM: Did many Italians go over to the mine?

JM: Most was Italians.

GM: Is that right?

JM: Most was Italian, because Italians, they want to work. They got families to take care [of], see? And most of the workers were Italians. (tape warps) Well, then we—

When I was working in the phosphate mine, I was in the mine, inside the mine. Inside the mine, working in—first, when I started, I started in the track, railroad. I used to be—I used to [put in] spikes. And then, I went to the mine, working on the mine, in Tiger Bay quarry. One night—because we had to shift every two weeks; every fifteen days, you'd change shifts, from day to night, and night to day. And one day, while we was working, I was in—I think I was in about forty feet deep, you know, in the phosphate mine. We had a big explosion. That's when them three boys died. They was fixing, fixing dynamite. They smoking, they had a lot of cases of dynamite, and they throws the cigarette.

GM: Were they Italian?

JM: No, Spanish boys. They all was Spanish boys. Nice young kids.

GM: Did many Cubans go there and work?

JM: Yes, plenty of them, too.

GM: Cubans, Spaniards, and Italians.

JM: Right.

GM: Right. Did you live over there?

JM: Yes, we did. We used to come with the truck. They used to furnish the truck to come home every week. We had our own club, they give us houses to sleep, beds, you know.

GM: Right. How was Ybor City affected by the 1920 strike?

JM: Oh, well, many affected in 1920; it affected Ybor City. Ten months of strike affects lots of people, you know; it's ten months, and the people got tired in 1910 with that seven month strike.

GM: Right. Was there any violence?

JM: Huh?

GM: Any violence?

JM: No, there was no violence. But there was—you go to the Labor Temple, you find one of these—he wants to be God, you know, he wants to be leader, he wants to be this.

GM: (inaudible)?

JM: Yeah.

GM: (inaudible)?

JM: Right.

GM: Right.

JM: And I never did go, because I don't like to mix with them guys or nothing. When the strike was settled down, I went back to work. But like I said, I went to work in the mine.

GM: Now, when you were a young boy in the labor movement, do you ever remember a guy coming here named Panepinto, Lorenzo Panepinto²?

JM: Oh, that was before my time.

GM: That was before your time?

JM: Yes. Lorenzo Panepinto was before my time. No, sir.

²Panepinto (1865-1911) was a teacher, union leader, and socialist in Santo Stefano, Sicily, whose political and philosophical views influenced many of Tampa's Italian immigrants.

GM: Was he a *socialista*?

JM: Well, I don't—I heard it, that he was a *socialista*, Lorenzo Panepinto. He came from Santo Stefano.

GM: Was he popular among the workers?

JM: He was real popular, because I heard his name many times. Many times I heard it.

GM: Right.

JM: I heard people, you know, like Professor Maniscalco. Peter Maniscalco, Professor Peter Maniscalco. He died now, you know. He's my cousin. He used to know all the history about Lorenzo.

GM: Where did he teach?

JM: He didn't ever teach. He was a professor in Italy. (phone rings) When he came here—

(talking about phone) Oh, it's not here.

When he came here, he got a job as a secretary of the Italian Club.

GM: Is that right? Did he ever—

JM: But Mr. Dinore, Vincenzo Dinore, was the secretary for the club for years, the Italian Club. And he used to say history—you know, talk about history. He used to mention a lot of times [Giuseppe] Garibaldi, Lorenzo Panepinto, all those people, he would know the history; you know, they read so much, and they used to tell lots of stories about it.

GM: Right.

JM: About Columbia, and all that. See?

GM: Right. Did he ever leave behind any books or anything?

JM: What?

GM: Maniscalco?

JM: No, I don't think, but I don't know.

GM: Right. What was the cause of this 1920 strike? What was the cause?

JM: No money.

GM: Who won?

JM: We lost.

GM: Right. When did you come back to work, then?

JM: After ten months.

GM: Right. Where did you go, the same place?

JM: I went to the same place, yes.

GM: What were making then a day?

JM: Then, I used to make thirty, thirty-five.

GM: Dollars a week? What kind of money was that?

JM: That's great. Today, like you making \$220, \$250 dollars a week—with the money you used to make in them days, the 1920s and the thirties [1930s], you used to take care—with fifty dollars, forty dollars, you used to take care of family of six or seven.

GM: Yeah. Were you working during 1931, during the 1931 strike?

JM: Thirty-one [1931]?

GM: Do you remember that strike, 1931, over the *lector*? There was a big strike then, wasn't there?

JM: In thirty-one [1931]?

GM: Yeah, you don't remember one?

JM: No, not that I know of.

GM: Do you remember any other bad strikes?

JM: No, that's the only strike that I know that last long.

GM: Right, right.

JM: But then they had a little strike, you know, like that strike—

Side 1 ends; side 2 begins

GM: In a restaurant? Nineteen thirty-five?

JM: Yes, sir.

GM: In which restaurant?

JM: I was cook.

GM: Where?

JM: Downtown, a small place.

GM: Uh-huh.

JM: Not washing dishes, cook, as a short order cook. Then I learned the trade good, and I work in the big restaurants.

GM: Right.

JM: Like, I've worked in Seabreeze [Restaurant]. I worked in a lot of good restaurants downtown. And I stayed about—I got tired of cooking, and I went back to making cigars.

GM: Did you?

JM: And I went to Perfecto Garcia.

GM: What year was that?

JM: Well, Perfecto Garcia, I went in that, and Perfecto Garcia, I worked about—I think was about thirty-five to thirty-eight years I work in that factory.

GM: Yeah. Listen, I'd like to come back sometime and talk to you again. I've got to rush off now, and I'll come back another afternoon, and we'll sit down for another half an hour, okay?

JM: Good. Whatever you say.

GM: *Mille grazie*. I appreciate it.

Pause in recording

GM: I'm talking with Mr. Maniscalco again, and we were enjoying this picture of the Italian Club picnic.

JM: Yeah.

GM: What kind of social activities did you do in the old days?

JM: Well, I was working for the—I was in the gymnasium when I joined it. I was about thirteen years old when I joined that.

GM: The Italian Club?

JM: The Italian Club. We used to be across the street.

GM: Right, right. I was telling Pat that the old building burned. What was the original Italian club, L'Unione Italiano?

JM: L'Unione Italiano (inaudible).

GM: Right, what was that like? Could you tell us?

JM: The way the club was?

GM: Mm-hm.

JM: It used to be a building, like it is up there, but it used to be nice. We had the inside; we'd have the bar, like we've got it up there. In the back, we used to have a gymnasium.

GM: Gymnasium?

JM: Gymnasium. And we had a bowling alley, table pool in there. And up the stair, we had the theater.

GM: Right.

JM: Beautiful theater; we used to get the *operetti*, you know, from New York; they used to come down. This one here, local boys, we formed a theater, you know, to work them; we did a lot of operas. It was nothing but the young men, you know.

GM: Right, right.

JM: (inaudible) used to be Cacciatore. Joseph Cacciatore used to be baritone, and (inaudible) was the president of the club, and then he became secretary of the club.

GM: Were the plays in Spanish or Italian?

JM: Italian, all was in Italian.

GM: What happened to the original Italian Club?

JM: It burned.

GM: It burned. Do you remember what year?

JM: Yeah, it was in—I think it was in 1915 or sixteen [1916].

GM: Right.

JM: Then we build this.

GM: What happened? Do you know the cause?

JM: No, I don't. I really don't know.

GM: Do you remember when the building burned? Were you here in this area?

JM: Well, I was here in the area, yeah.

GM: Yeah.

JM: But I don't remember exactly when it was. You know, I know it burned. And then from that, we fixed the building in the inside, and then we build this one.

GM: How did you build the current Italian building? Could you describe the process?

JM: Right here, you mean, on the end of the corner?

GM: Right.

JM: Well, that was in 1916, I think, or seventeen [1917], when it was built.

GM: Right.

JM: As I remember, that year, we had a picnic in Palmetto Beach. We was building this. It took, I think, a year or a year and a half to build it. We had a picnic, and during that time we had the parade, you know, from West Tampa to Palmetto Beach. And I was one of them who'd run. I got second place.

GM: Did you?

JM: Second place.

GM: You were jogging before it became popular. (laughs)

JM: Well, I was in the gymnasium, you know, working out there, because we had all of that for the members, see? And every year, they used to have some function. The (inaudible) was Dominic Greco.

GM: Greco, uh-huh.

JM: Greco.

GM: Right. Is that of the Kash 'n' Karry Grecos?

JM: No. No.

GM: No?

JM: No, it's the florist. They used to have a Greco, Angelo Greco, brothers, used to have the florist [shop] on Fourteenth Street and Seventh Avenue.

GM: Right.

JM: And Dominic Greco was married to one of the (inaudible) sisters.

GM: Right. Right. Did you help in the construction of the Italian building?

JM: Oh, yeah. I was a member of the club, and everybody helped them, went in and build, you know: the contract, the building, all that. After we got through, we started already, furnishing the building, getting theaters.

GM: Right.

JM: Then we put the movie in there, the movie house, and we had the burlesque show—not burlesque, I mean musical.

Gayla Jamison: Is that right? In that building?

JM: Many years ago. We used to bring Italian pictures in there, too.

GM: Uh-huh.

JM: And then we used to get companies from New York to come in here. They used to come here, see? And we used to be in to watch it. Every week you had someone there. Every week, every week.

GM: Right, right. What did you do? Let's go back in time. Let's say it's—you were born in 1902, let's say it's 1928. And it's Saturday night. Tell me what Saturday night was like on Seventh Avenue.

JM: Well, we used to give a dance almost every Saturday night at the club. And we used to come here, you know, during the week. All the Italian people that lived around here, they used to come here and stay at the club, play dominos, (inaudible), you know, and stay till twelve or one o'clock at night. This used to be a paradise, you know. But I remember you see that most every night, you'd see a serenade going on in the street, people playing. This fellow here; give me that picture; I'll show you. This fellow here used to play the clarinet.

GM: Uh-huh.

JM: And they used to serenade in the night. Twelve or one o'clock, two o'clock in the night (inaudible). And everybody waited on the porch to hear them playing and all like that. And mostly they used to be like a family—everybody was like a family. You could sleep in the streets, and your neighbors with the door open, and nobody—they looked after each other. Today, all that's gone.

GM: I think Pam would enjoy it if you tell her what courtship was like in the old days? Dating? (laughs)

JM: Oh, dating. I'll tell you. The dating in the old days—the Italian people, they watch their daughters very, very close.

GJ: Yes.

JM: One of the girls, if she have another boyfriend, say he was Spanish or American, they never—they didn't like it. They wanted to see a daughter married to—or either the boy—married to an Italian girl. People that you know, see. But that switch around, you know. You marry who you please or who you love and all like that. So, the same thing with me. When I got married, I went with my girl—my wife; she is my wife for forty-eight years. I used to be—after two years that we went together, you know, and I knew her like that, I got married.

GM: Describe a date, a typical date.

JM: When I got married?

GM: No, no, before you were married.

JM: Oh, before I married?

GM: Right, what would you do?

JM: Oh, I used to go the beach. Go to the show, you know.

GM: Did you take her along?

JM: Take her with me, but her mother had to go with me. See, the mother chaperoned; the mother was the chaperone. If I didn't have the mother, I had the sister. They wouldn't let her go alone. Then, before I asked her hand—you know, before I'm in the house—I used to be outside in the sidewalk and she would sit in the porch. When the old lady come out, her mother come out, I had to get out. See, all that happened. But then, you know, I told my father and mother that I wanted to get married and "I want you to go and—" So they went out there, and then the old lady said all right, (inaudible) that I—not a year, three months.

During the Depression, it was bad. The old lady wants me to marry; my mother-in-law, she wants me to marry in church. Takes a lot of money to marry in church. During the Depression, you don't make enough money; the family—you know, I had a mother and father to take care of. I had young kid brothers, sisters, and I got to take care of them. I was the only one during the Depression working. So I had to take care of my family, you know. So my father, before he died in 1934, he told me, he said, "Son, I want you to get married, and before I die"—he had an accident, a real bad accident. He said, "Before I die, I want you to get married, and I want to see your son." So finally I got a son, who's forty-six years old.

GM: What do you remember about the Depression?

JM: The Depression was bad. The Depression, I saw all the people line up for a bowl of soup. Thank God to the Italian people who had the stores, you know, they give you credit. Ten months or ten months until the Depression, you know, when Roosevelt come out with the hope. And they started working and giving some to the—but I work all the time, though. I had a job.

GM: Were you making cigars then?

JM: Yeah, I was making cigars. I never was out of a job. I used to make thirty, forty, fifth dollars a week, and the way I used to take that money—I used to take it to my father, all that money. My father used to give me three dollars out of the envelope. And with that, I had to buy the cigarettes, I had to buy my clothes, I had to buy a lot of things. Them days, you could go to the show for ten cents, fifteen cents. You could buy a cone of ice cream

for five cents. And you could go to the show and enjoy it, you know. And I had that money for a whole week.

And then, I used to shine shoes when I was a kid. I used to shine shoes. And I used to walk from here to Ybor City where we used to live, walk right here, coming this way most of the time, and walk downtown to the old courthouse at five-thirty or six o'clock in the morning, and come back about eleven-thirty or twelve o'clock at night, making four or five dollars shining shoes. In them days, a nickel or dime used to shine shoes. So Friday, Saturday and Sunday, I used to do that. And the money I make, I take it home, so I could take care of the family.

See, we was a big family, so I had to—my brothers, they wasn't nothing but kids, you know, and I'm learning this trade. And then when I was thirteen, they take me out of school. All I got was sixth grade in school; I ain't got much education. But they had to take me out of school so I could support the family. Then my father got sick, my mother got sick—my mother used to work making four dollars or five dollars, stripping tobaccos; my father used to work in the farm cutting celery, planting and all like that for a dollar and a quarter, a dollar and a half a day. So you couldn't support a family, you know. So, we had to—the kids, we had to get out and go out and make a few dollars extra, a few dollars for the house.

So then, the boom came. When the boom came, everything started going up. It lasted about a year, you know, 1925, 1926. Then it started to—in 1926, and then it went down completely. And everybody was worried. A lot of people was worried. A lot of people who had a few dollars had invested, and then they went broke. Families who were like my mother-in-law—I remember my mother-in-law. She had six kids, and she raised them six kids because both her husbands—[when] my wife was five years old, her father died in Italy. So, she had a few dollars in the bank, right here in Ybor City Bank across the street where the bank is today. Across the street; they had the bank in there, and then they built this one. And, during this time, when the banks closed, you know, all over the country, you see. And people panicked; a lot of people lost money. A lot of people went broke. So the Depression, that's during the Depression.

GM: Right.

JM: So it happened; all of that in all this time.

GM: Right. The twenties [1920s], during the Depression...

JM: The twenties [1920s]—

GM: Prohibition was big too. Do you remember *bolita* in Tampa, Ybor City?

JM: *Bolita*? I remember plenty about that. People used to control that. A lot of people used to control this *bolitas*. Say that I got a place here like I've got now and had a bar, or some, and I sell *bolita*. The guys could come up and pick up the money and say, "Hey! You've got to give me so much a week." That happened, the change—if you were having an election, it would change. (inaudible) you know, on that kind is the draft all the time (inaudible).

And the guys, they used to kill each other. They used to kill each other all the time. They used to say, "You get out, and I'm going to take the power." And the other guy was jealous of him, he said, "You get out and take the power." So, you know how it is that you—like the sheriff, or the mayor, or whoever it is. The mayor's going to put his man, so that man is going to have the control for everything you get. So, what's *bolita*? It's—people, they used to live on it, a lot of people.

GM: What groups controlled it in Tampa? What ethnic groups?

JM: I don't know. Well, I wouldn't mention no name at all. I wouldn't mention no name at all, because it's not right to mention any names, because that's bad.

GM: Yeah. What about Charlie Wall?

JM: Well, that is—Charlie Wall used to be the big boss.

GM: Right.

JM: He used to run the city of Tampa, the gambling. Understand? Like all the rest of the Italians, they used to run the city of Tampa, too. But I wouldn't mention no names at all, because it's not believed too much.

GM: *Omertà*. (laughs)

JM: Right.

GM: How did the groups get along in Ybor City, the Italians and Cubans and Spanish?

JM: Fine. They used to get along fine. There used to be between the clubs, the social clubs, what we call the round tables. We used to be the Italian Club, the Centro Asturiano, Centro Español, and the Cuban Club. Every year they used to get together. And every function they give, like you say it was—like Sunday, maybe the Italian Club got a picnic. That day, the other clubs have no function at all. The Italian Club the only one to give the picnic. Next Sunday, the others.

Then, we had a sociable dance. The sociable dance that we used to go—usually Italian Club members, they used to go to the Centro Asturiano. The men would not have to pay

nothing. You know, sociable—it was invited, the social, from the four clubs. And each one, every third week, make their own dance. This week you give one, next week, the other ones, then the other ones, then the other ones, then the other ones, see? Pull out to see which one is going to be the first. And picnics used to be the same; everything that went with it all the same.

The way, see, if I mention the name, I ain't going to do it.

GM: Oh, no, don't worry. Don't worry.

JM: Well, I'm just telling you because—there's no—I can mention a lot of names but I wouldn't—who was control, or who got killed and all that.

GM: Now, some people—I was talking to some of the old-timers at the Italian Club. Why didn't the Italian Club ever have a hospital?

JM: The reason why the Italian Club never had a hospital was on account of the groups they had. Because I've been a member of the Italian Club since I was thirteen years old, and I'm still a member of the Italian Club. I've been in the board of directors for years. The board of directors—most all of the function we give, improvements and all like that. I used to do the cooking, all the time. But when you get a club, a group, that fights each other, then you never have anything.

GM: Mm-hm.

JM: See? And the Italian Club could have had one of the best hospitals in the city of Tampa. The Italian population that moved down here could have that, and we have people that would do that. One time I was in the board of directors—it was in the forties [1940s], I think, something like that, forty-eight [1948]. You could buy property for \$6,000. There was a three-story building with a basement. We could buy it for \$6,000, and build a clinic in there. And the clinic would have cost us—to build it up and fix it up and paint it, it would have cost us about \$15,000 to \$20,000. I'm talking about them days when we could buy.

And we never had that. We never had it because—I always did fight to have a hospital clinic for the members of the Italian Club, and they never did do it. Because you get in, you get out, and another man come in. See this fellow here, Mr. Licata? Mr. Licata was the president for twenty-five years at the Italian Club.

GM: What happened?

JM: Filippo Licata. And he was a good president, and he wants everything nice and smooth. Everybody was smooth and nice. And then, (inaudible) come in. Then, you

know, I can mention all the members that have been there. And that's the reason, when you got a group to fight, it's always—you never gain anything.

GM: Right, right. What about politics? Did the Italians ever do anything in politics?

JM: Oh, well, the Italian people were the strongest politicians they ever seen.

GM: Who do you remember?

JM: There was the Spicola family, and the Lumia family. A lot of this—you know, before this younger generation, the father and the old timers, they used to bring the dollar home. Then they come out with the younger generation, they want to go to school. They don't want be cigar makers or learn a trade, they want to go to school. Today, thank God, and I'm proud of what we've got here, the lawyers and doctors, and I think we've got the best doctors in the country, right here in the city of Tampa. Good lawyers, prominent lawyers, good lawyers, we've got the best. Judges, we have judges. And I'm proud today to see a young man come out from college, you know, 'cause today the very first thing they do—if you've got the money to send your kid to college, you send them. Regardless if you've got to be indebted, you want to put them in college. You sacrifice. See?

GM: Yeah.

JM: See, you sacrifice, like my nephew. I got two nephews, both doctors; one is for the head, and the other one is a heart specialist. And the one is the greatest specialist you can find. And this boy here, if you want him to operate, Jack Maniscalco; he's one of the greatest. He's all over the country, known all over the country, the operations this boy's doing.

GM: Right.

JM: And I'm proud to see that, see my family.

GM: Right.

JM: Because his father sacrificed, you know, his father sacrificed; hard work to put them kids in college. And thank God they're a doctor today and they've made themselves a good name. There's one of them is in charge of St. Joseph's Hospital, the heart [department].

GM: Right. What do you remember about Nick Nuccio?

JM: Nick was the best mayor the city of Tampa ever had. For me, he was the best mayor in the city of Tampa.

GM: Why is that?

JM: Not only did he have personality, he had a way to help the people. That man used to get up at four o'clock in the morning, and look around the city, all around the city where you need repair, send people out there (inaudible). What he done for the city of Tampa, no mayor ever did what he did. You can't—a mayor's got a responsibility; he can't do favor to everybody, you know. But he was one of the best mayors.

He was a good city [councilor]—first he was a city [councilor], come out of the city [council], you know. Then from the city [council], he went to county commission. And he stayed county commission all of these years. From that, he became the mayor of the city of Tampa, twice. Nick, he's a wonderful man, and you can't beat that man to be a citizen, run the business of the city like that. He's a great man. But you've got people that do you favors, and then you just turn around and double cross them. And you can't satisfy everything. But Nick was one of the best mayors that the city of Tampa ever had, 'cause he done plenty for the city of Tampa.

GM: Right, right.

JM: See, the McKays, the Walls, and the Lykes, they used to control the city of Tampa. But then, turn around, that control is gone, because the younger generation come out. You people is bossing around the city of Tampa today. The city of Tampa today ought to be the biggest city in the state of Florida, because we had a lot of industry come in here. And they stop them. They stop them, because we couldn't. Today the city of Tampa would have been a million people. A million people could be in the city of Tampa today. But they stopped, the Walls and McKays and the Lykes; they all control the things. Now you've got to do like they say. See?

GM: Do you think they disliked Italians?

JM: No. No. No.

GM: Take yourself. Have you ever been treated badly because you were Italian by anyone?

JM: No, sir. Never. Because I'll tell you the truth. Anybody they used to—if they take advantage of me, I don't care who it was, I'd tell them where to get off, quick! If I had to fight them, I'd fight them. I might get beat, but nobody's going to try, to tell me—if I'm right. Now, if I'm wrong, it's different. Many times we used to go to a dance, you know, like at Sulphur Springs and all like that. They used to put signs in there: "No dogs allowed." That mean no Latins; they don't want no Latins. No Italians, no Spanish, no Cubans, nothing. See?

But the Italian boys and the Cuban boys and the Spanish boys, they used to go in there and fight. "We're American, as good as you are." The reason they used to hate us is because we talk three or four different language. And when we're together like we are now, we talk—say we talk Italian. This man would walk in and say, "Why don't you talk in English when you're a member of this country?" Everybody couldn't talk English at that time. People that come from Cuba and Spain, Italy, they've got to learn the language. They've got to go to school. And the old-timers—so we teach them, you know, and that's what you get.

But we never—there always is a group, like up in New York. You've got an East Side group, you've got a West Side group, right? They always—you don't cross the street. I remember in Chicago, on (inaudible). The colored people on this side of the street, they couldn't cross it. These people were white people, they couldn't cross in there. They had shutdowns there in the stores. They wouldn't let you cross in there.

end of interview