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Porco, Ettore

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Interviews: Brian Purnell , Peter Derrick, Larry Porco

Interviewee: Ettore Porco

Brian Purnell (BP): Well thank you, uh, thank you for letting us be here, Mr. Porco. Appreciate it.

Ettore Porco (EP): Well, umm, it's so little to - I mean I feel that I'm - it's so little. I mean I'm comfortable, and so.

BP: Well today is January 23, 2009. Umm, Brian Purnell and Peter Derrick from the Bronx Historical Society are conducting an interview at the Workmen's Circle Multicare Center on Eli Avenue and Grace Avenue in the Bronx. We're going to speak to Mr. Porco today about his life in Italy and his experiences in the Bronx. And if we could start – if you could please say and spell your first and last name.

EP: My first, my first name is E- double T- O-R-E. Second name is just P-O-R-C-O. Just the way it sounds.

BP: And what is your date of birth, Mr Porco?

EP: 1-15-15

BP: You recently celebrated a birthday.

EP: Yes I did.

BP: Alright

EP: Yeah

BP: We're gonna start with some biographical questions - just about your life and build up to how you came to the Bronx.

PD: Right, and some of these questions were suggested by your grand-nephew, so I'm basically asking questions that he thought would be interesting.

BP: Who is also here, Larry –

PD: Yeah Larry.

BP: Larry Porco is also here.

PD: Larry, Larry Porco.

BP: If you want to participate please feel free.

PD: Yeah yeah you - feel free. You can participate also.

LP: I'm a member of the Bronx County Historical Society myself.

PD: Good, so where were you born in Italy?

EP: Well, the best way to give to you is Southern Italy.

PD: Southern Italy?

EP: Calabria

PD: In Calabria, ok.

EP: In Calabria.

PD: Ok.

EP: So, in the province of Cosenza.

PD: Cosenza?

EP: Cosenza, si.

PD: And what was it – did you come – did your have a, did you have a large family in Italy?

EP: Oh yes, we did – we were - I was the tenth.

PD: Tenth? And how many children did your mother finally have?

EP: Ahh, ten.

PD: Ten, so you were the last child.

EP: I was the last one, yes.

PD: And when did you come to America and why did you come to America.

EP: 1933.

PD: 33, so you were -

EP: In the Depression time

PD: Yeah, so you were about 18 years old.

EP: I was just before, just before my nineteenth birthday.

PD: Before your nineteenth birthday?

EP: Yes.

PD: And you came here because there was no work in Italy or you thought you could –

EP: Well, I was on the farm, so

PD: Oh, ok.

EP: We never, we never were short of work.

PD: Right.

EP: But the farm didn't – didn't bear enough fruit for us to –

PD: Right.

EP: To steady

PD: So did you come to America by yourself or did you come with your - with other members of your family?

EP: No I came by myself.

PD: And did you make the decision to come here by yourself? I mean was it a family decision or was it just -

EP: No, no, no no no – that must have been – since I was so young – that must have been a family decision.

PD: And did you have, already have relatives in America at the time?

EP: Oh yeah, well my oldest brother was here.

PD: Oh your oldest brother was here. So you already had a brother who had come – and he had come to New York?

EP: He had come to New York.

PD: And was he living in the Bronx? Is that how you came to the Bronx?

EP: Yes, yes I went to his house.

PD: You went to his house. And where did he live?

EP: 1589 Hollywood Avenue.

PD: Hollywood Avenue?

EP: Yeah, It's right across the street from my house now.

PD: Oh ok.

EP: Where I, where I would be living if I was out of here.

PD: Right, and Hollywood Avenue is in the East Bronx here. In the Pelham area or – well we can, we can look it up.

EP: Hollywood avenue is a – yes it starts not too far from the Throgg's Neck Bridge and comes all across until it reaches my house and then it has no place to go because where my house is built is solid from one corner to the other, so -

PD: So it's a dead end. So it's a quiet neighborhood.

LP: It's Middletown road you live on. 3013. It's between uh – I know it's right off of Crosby - the intersection of Crosby and Middletown.

EP: That's right, yes.

PD: Ok and uh, when you came here did you already have a job or did somebody get you a job? What was the first job that you did?

EP: The first job I did, I think I was shining shoes.

PD: Oh.

EP: And I remember that somebody, a customer, said to me, "If that's all you can do, go back to Italy." [laughter] You know - why should stay here?

PD: Right, right.

EP: So, but you don't know anything – what you can do or you cannot do.

PD: Right, right.

EP: So you got to give it a little time to learn something.

PD: Yes, and had you gone to school when you were Italy to learn a trade?

EP: No, no I had not gone to school.

PD: No.

EP: Well I was a, we were farmers.

PD: You were famers right.

EP: So we had enough work to do -

PD: Right, right.

EP: But not enough income.

PD: Right, right. But you went to school – to elementary school there to learn to read I guess.

EP: Yeah.

PD: Yeah.

EP: Oh yeah, an Italian school.

PD: An Italian school.

EP: Yeah, oh, yes.

PD: And when you came to America did you know any English or did you have to learn English?

EP: No, I started from scratch.

PD: Started from scratch.

EP: Yeah.

PD: And did you go to school or you just picked it up from – just from - talking to people.

EP: Well, I did, I did go to school - night classes. They used to have those night classes then. I don't think they have them anymore.

BP: They have them in some places but not as much as they used to have.

EP: No, no at the time they used to have them quite often.

PD: Well lots of people, including my father who came in 1949.

EP: And I used to, I used to walk from my job to where the school was.

PD: So after this man told you that you shouldn't be a shoe shine man anymore, what did you decide to do?

EP: Oh I don't know, I don't. That detail, sort of escapes me.

PD: Well, what –

EP: But anyway, what I did start doing was - well my oldest brother was proud of me and really – and he said “No, no brother of mine is going to shine shoes” so - and I remember that he gave me some sort of a job but I don't remember what.

PD: What business was he in? Was he in construction? Or was he -

EP: No, no, no. No he was just a – a very resolute man, a very bright man. And he was the oldest of the family.

LP: That's my granPDa, Peter.

PD: That's your granPDa?

LP: In fact we have a tape done with him – with the Lehman Institute.

PD: Oh yeah yeah yeah, Lehman did a bunch of oral histories in the 1980s.

LP: Tabitha Kirin.

PD: Yes, yes yes she still lives in Riverdale actually.

LP: Really? Near me probably – yeah I have that tape too – on a cassette.

PD: Yeah, well we would like to get a copy to go along with this.

LP: Absolutely.

PD: It would make sense to have two people - to have the tape. So you were living with your brother then?

EP: Yeah.

PD: That tape recorder is pretty good

LP: Sensitive, ok.

PD: It's amazing what they do with little things nowadays.

LP: Secret agent stuff.

PD: Secret agent stuff. Did you find it hard to get used to living in America? I know my father find it very hard. My father was from Europe and he always had this thing about America.

EP: No I did not. I did not. Maybe the fact that I went to live in my brother's house – that helped - both ways. It helped me with my English, it helped me with my Italian.

PD: So was the neighborhood you lived in mostly Italian people also?

EP: No, no. No, I went to live – Hollywood Avenue – 1589 Hollywood Avenue.

PD: And that was mix of all sorts of people – a very – the normal type of Bronx mix.

EP: Yes, yes, yes.

PD: And when did – yeah when did you come here again? You said 1933?

EP: 1933

PD: Right ok. And you went to night school to learn English.

EP: Yeah.

PD: Did you have a girlfriend when you were in Italy? He, he asked me to ask you that.

BP: Some of this stuff is confidential.

PD: That's alright. But you got married here in America. You met your wife where – in the Bronx?

EP: Yes, I met my wife in the Bronx.

PD: So was she also Italian?

EP: Yes.

PD: Yes.

EP: She was from the province of Matera.

PD: Matera?

EP: It's a little further up from Calabria.

PD: Up from Calabria. Ok so southern Italy but a little further north of Calabria.

EP: Right

PD: Ok, and did she- did she work also? Or did she – was she just a housewife? What did she do?

EP: Actually, she didn't work, no. She was just a housewife. But we had five kids.

PD: You had five children.

EP: Yeah.

PD: So when did you get married? [pause] Late 1930s?

EP: Well I came in 1933. [pause] You got me there.

PD: Well we'll ask Larry. We'll - that's – yeah ok – but that's – ok - but you started having children. Do you remember when your first child was born?

EP: Yeah my first child - is Peter - was born. Yeah I remember now. My first child was born [pause] 19-

LP: After the war?

EP: What is it?

LP: It was after the war, right? I was born in 50 -

EP: No it was before the war,

LP: It was be- ok.

EP: In 1944.

PD: Ah during the war.

EP: I think – I think I had my child in 1944.

PD: Well I was born in 1944 and my name is Peter so [laughs] so we have two Peters from 1944. Your son's - first son's name was Peter?

EP: Yes

PD: Yes. Good. And then you had four other children after that. Did you have all boys or all girls –

EP: No, I got - I got one daughter. And she's a professor. She graduated from Caltech which was a good university.

PD: Yeah a very good university.

LP: You might know her. She's – she's very famous in astronomy circles. Carolyn Porco – she's on PBS a lot –13 – channel 13. She did a lecture at the Hayden Planetarium a few years ago. She came and lectured, yeah.

PD: Oh really? Well the head of the Hayden Planetarium is from the Bronx also.

LP: Well he went to my high school.

PD: Oh he went to your high school.

LP: Bronx Science – it's Neil Tyson. He was two years behind me.

PD: Yes, yes. So what about your other children? You have three other sons then?

EP: Well yes, I got three other sons

PD: And what - what's their names?

EP: Eliot [laughs] My wife was stuck with Eliot Ness.

PD: Yes I was going to say this. Everybody thinks of Eliot Ness when –

EP: Eliot Ness and Ricky Ricardo. So when the twins were born -

BP: Oh twins.

PD: Oh they were twins, ok.

EP: They were – yeah – they were twins. She called one Ricky and the other one -

PD: Eliot

EP: Eliot

PD: So is that - that was a T

EP: Because she was

PD: I know why. I watched TV at that time too. You watched Eliot Ness and you watched I Love Lucy.

LP: The Untouchables.

PD: Yes, and what was your last son's name?

EP: The last son – the two – the twins.

PD: Yeah

LP: Well they were the youngest.

PD: They were the youngest, ok. What about – there is another son. What was his name? You have Eliot and Peter and Ricky –

EP: Dominic.

PD: Dominic ok. So your last son's name is Dominic.

EP: Yeah

PD: Which is probably your third child.

EP: Yeah it is my third child, yes.

PD: And where did you meet your wife? In the Bronx here?

EP: In the Bronx yes.

PD: And just by family connections and stuff?

EP: Sort of, yes.

PD: When you came to America did you make friends with other people in the Bronx and where you worked and stuff?

EP: Well I – I did – I guess I did yes.

PD: And what was your - you had a number of jobs – what was your most – what job did you like the best?

EP: Ah that's -

PD: It's a hard question.

EP: It's hard for me to tell you right now.

PD: Well your grand-nephew is interested in finding out so [laughs]

LP: You worked in restaurants didn't you?

EP: Mostly yes.

PD: Yes

EP: Mostly I worked in restaurants. I know I worked at four years in one place on Brook Avenue between 140th and 130 – no. You know I still remember the address - 260 Brook Avenue was right a – half a block above 200 - 138th street.

PD: Ok so that was – cause that's the main street on route 38 street in that area. And that's where – the subway goes -

EP: Yes. That's right. Yeah, yeah it was -

PD: So you worked in a restaurant over there?

EP: Yeah

PD: Italian restaurant or regular? Or regular restaurant?

EP: Ah what's – regular

PD: Regular.

EP: Regular, yeah.

PD: And what did you do in the restaurant?

EP: Well I was a waiter.

PD: You're a waiter.

EP: Yeah

BP: Do you remember the name of the restaurant?

EP: Paradise Bar and Grill.

BP: Paradise Bar and Grill.

EP: Right.

LP: There's probably a housing project there now.

BP: Right.

PD: Did you ever go back to Italy to visit?

EP: Yes, 1984

PD: Just once?

EP: That's it. Only once.

PD: Only once.

EP: Yeah

PD: Did you find Italy was a very different place when you went back?

EP: Well yes. Yeah it had become more modern.

PD: Yeah, but do you think Calabria really changed a lot?

EP: No, I don't think so.

PD: Still poor?

EP: Yeah it is. Still poor. Still the poor – the poor section of Italy

PD: Yeah yeah I've traveled to Italy. I've been north and south and there's a big difference.

EP: Yes

BP: When you went back you went back by plane, or by boat?

EP: By boat.

LP: In 1984? You went back by boat? The last time you went to -

EP: Oh no wait a minute...

LP: You came here by boat in thirty- three

EP: three

LP: You said the Roma, you told me

EP: The Roma yes.

LP: The ship, the name of the ship, but you went back there by plane I would imagine in 1984.

EP: Yes I did because I remember the – the flight – whatever who

PD: Yeah, Pan Am or TWA

EP: Whoever it was, I think it was TWA cause was the airline to travel then, these days. So I remember the – the loud speaker advise us that there was a sort of a stormy weather on our left or right – whatever back then – and said we going to stay clear of that so -

PD: So they went around it so was it -

EP: Sorta went round.

LP: No, it was a plane.

PD: Did you have any – did you find when you came here and you were working, that you had any trouble with people discriminating against Italians.

EP: I – strangely enough, maybe because I went into family - into

PD: Family business

EP: Family business that's all or whatever, I never found this discrimination. I never felt discriminated against because I was Italian. I might have been and I didn't pay attention to it – I don't know.

PD: And that area where you worked, where the Paradise is, is now a largely Hispanic neighborhood. When – did you see Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics coming in there.

EP: Not in those days.

PD: Not in those days. And this was in the thirties and forties.

EP: That's right, yes.

PD: And what was your reaction later when large numbers of blacks and Hispanics started moving into the Bronx? Was there any tension between groups or anything?

EP: No, never. Never, never met with anything like that.

PD: Yeah everybody says the Bronx was a sort of peaceful place. Brian has asking – has been doing a lot of oral histories of people who grow up in the Bronx in the last thirty, forty years. So I'm going to let him star asking you questions if that's alright with you.

EP: Yeah that's fine.

BP: I was wondering if Mr. Porco, if we could maybe go back a bit. What – what was the farm like where you grew up as a child?

EP: A farm big enough to support the family. But because – the one thing missing up there – cause this was halfway up the mountain – was the irrigation, water so that you could irrigate your – your -

PD: Crops

EP: Whatever you planted so -

PD: And what did the farm grow? Corn, wheat, olives?

EP: No, no. It grow – it grew up everything that you could plant in the dirt – anything.

PD: Mostly vegetables?

EP: Mostly vegetables, yes of course.

PD: And you had chickens and -

EP: Yeah we had all those – we had all those – we had all the domestic animals that it is possible to have on the farm.

PD: Right.

EP: We had the cows – not too many. We had chickens, we had all - all of them.

BP: Sheep

EP: Sheep, yeah we had sheep yes.

BP: Any horses?

EP: No, but we – we had donkeys.

BP: Mules.

EP: Yeah mules.

PD: Donkeys and mules. Did your family own the land or did you rent it from somebody?

EP: No, no we owned. My father owned.

PD: You owned the land. So the problem was that the land couldn't support so many people so people had to leave to go to New York or other places.

EP: That's right. That's right, yes.

PD: That's very common.

BP: Did your family – well as a boy – you were – you were a young man when you left, nineteen years old. But as a boy do you remember the type of work that you – what was your responsibility as a boy on the farm?

EB: No not really. Responsibility like –

BP: Like what was your job? Did you milk the cows?

EP: There was no – there was no particular job. You just – you just - there was work to be done and you did it. That's all you did.

BP: Did your family, was you family a member of a particular parish.

EP: I – in those days they would be but I don't remember now.

PD: Do you remember going to mass as a boy?

EP: Oh year I remember going to mass with my mother. Yep, and I remember that I used to try to sneak around where my mother was and all of the sudden I'd look up and see there was a strange women there. So I got [inaudible] looking around for my mother. Yeah so I remember that.

BP: Did – did – so did all the children go to – did all of your brothers and sister – did everyone go to mass together?

EP: No, no that – that never happened. We went to mass when it was convenient. In other words we didn't go.

BP: You didn't go every week?

EP: No, no.

BP: Did you make your sacraments as a boy in Italy?

EP: Yeah, yeah all the sacrament of a First Communion – and all – all of them.

LP: Confirmation.

EP: Yeah Confirmation, all of them.

LP: Did they have altar boys there at mass? Servers to help the priest?

EP: Yeah they had altar boys, yes.

BP: Was there ever any talk of you or any or your other brothers becoming a priest? Was that something that your –

EP: No, no. Nobody ever suggested it. Nobody came up with it.

BP: Did your father go to mass too or was it something that your mother did?

EP: No, no. Well my father went to mass too. I cannot remember

BP: Well it doesn't – it sounds like your family was practicing Catholic but not overly religious.

EP: No, no that would be an accurate description.

BP: When you came to the United States and lived with your brother did – did he attend mass regularly? Was there a parish or a church that you and your family would attend or -

EP: No, no there wasn't.

BP: But when you were married were you married in a Catholic church?

EP: Yes

BP: Was the – was the church community – was the parish community – was that something that was a part of your own family when you had children and your wife? Was that something that you raised your children in?

EP: Yes, yes was part of my life yes.

PD: And did your children go to parochial school? Catholic school?

EP: You know...

PD: Did they go to public school or Catholic school?

EP: Well that's something I can't give you a clear answer.

PD: Ok.

LP: Did you have to pay the tuition or not? [laughs] Was there a tuition bill?

EP: Well, there was for the one here. Yes I had to pay tuition bill.

LP: Oh cause the public school you don't pay.

EP: That's right, yeah.

BP: When you came to America did you come through Ellis Island?

EP: No, I never stopped at Ellis Island. My father came to take me right off the boat.

BP: Your brother, your brother came?

EP: My father

BP: Oh your father was here too?

EP: My father was here yeah. Why that's why - that's why I got here.

PD: When did – when did your father come?

EP: He got to make –

PD: Oh ok, so your brother came here but your father came here before?

EP: No, my brother came here and pressed my father to come over here to show that he could become a citizen and get me and my younger brother – there was another brother who was just a couple of years older than I was – to

PD: And what was – what was the older brother that was here – what was his name? Peter?

EP: Peter.

PD: And then the second brother that you came here with what was – what was his name?

EP: Well my second brother was Dominic.

PD: Dominic ok. So altogether, how many - of all the people in Italy who were in your family who came over here? Everyone eventually came over? Like your father came over here and you came over here and your brother. Did other relatives come over with you?

EP: No.

PD: No.

EP: No didn't come over with me

PD: I mean after.

EP: After, after might have been but I don't remember.

PD: You don't remember.

LP: But your father actually went back to Italy right? He never actually stayed here. Is that true?

EP: No never stayed here. He was – he was – no he had children here and children in Italy so he was swayed.

PD: That's actually very common. I know a number of Italian families where some children were born in the United States and some were born in Italy and it was very common to go back and forth.

LP: What is your father's and mother's name?

EP: My father's name of course was Porco.

LP: No, no, the first name.

EP: Oh Guitano.

LP: Guitano.

EP: Actually that's what they used to call him but his name was also Stanislaus – Stanley.

LP: Officially on the birth certificate it was Stanislaus.

EP: I think so.

LP: And the nickname would be Guitano?

EP: Guitano yeah.

PD: And what was your mother's name?

EP: Carmella

PD: Carmella

LP: And her maiden name?

EP: Curatolo

LP: Curatolo

EP: C-U-R-A-T-O-L-O

BP: So do you have any – any memories when you first arrived in America. What was - do you remember what that was like when you first stepped off the boat in the United States?

EP: A haze, like a haze. That's the best ways I can describe it is like a haze.

BP: Could you describe the boat ride from Italy?

EP: Rough, I know it was rough.

LP: You didn't get sick did you?

EP: Oh yes I got sick yes. I was sick from the second day. I was sick before we got to Gibraltar. I was in the Mediterranean when I got sick. Yeah I got sick the last day of the Mediterranean ride and then of course I was sick in the Atlantic. I lost quite a bit of weight.

PD: What month did you come over in? Winter or –

EP: Nineteen –

PD: I know but was it winter or summer or – the rough weather's usually in the wintertime I think.

EP: Yes but this was in November.

PD: November, ok.

EP: Fall

PD: So fall yes.

LP: How long was the trip? Do you remember it took - a week, ten days, or two weeks? You don't remember?

EP: No I don't remember. It must be written someplace in my passport or something but I don't know where those things are now.

PD: Speaking of passports when did you become an American citizen?

EP: It was as soon as my father became an American citizen.

PD: Oh so he came and he became an American citizen –

EP: That's right. And that's why he brought me here.

PD: Oh I see. I see. So he actually came here to become an American citizen so he would have American citizenship.

EP: So that he were to take me and my younger brother over here.

PD: So what did your father do when he came to the United States? He didn't have a farm over here so where did he work?

EP: Actually it was at a shoeshine store.

PD: OK so that's how you got into the business.

EP: That's how I got into the business yes

BP: Was he a – could he repair shoes?

EP: No, no he could not repair shoes. Was funny because I had a friend of mine and he was a whiz at repairing shoes – it was – you know – in the same business shoe – shoe repairing. I remember we used to work there like on Sunday afternoon, make a couple of dollars in tips, and then go out and spend it – you know.

PD: And what did you spend it on

EP: [inaudible]

BP: You didn't go out to bars and stuff like that?

EP: No no no no

PD: Did you go to movies?

EP: Well yeah movies, yes. Movies we did go.

PD: And where you – so you were living – and when you went to movies did you go to movies near where you lived on Hollywood Avenue or down where you worked? Or both places?

EP: Most, most places – mostly I went down where I worked because we used to get – they used to put advertising in the windows – in the store windows and you got tickets for that.

PD: Oh ok

EP: You got -

PD: So in the store where you worked they put the advertising so you got free tickets.

EP: That's right, you got free tickets.

BP: What – did – I'm sorry

EP: Go ahead

BP: Do you remember how much money you made as a waiter working in the 1940s and 30s?

EP: Well I was making very good money as a matter of fact. I was making – was averaging better than forty dollars a week.

BP: And how much – did you own your own home or did you rent an apartment when you moved out of your brother's home?

EP: I think – I think I – that's when I bought my house – when I moved out of his house. I bought it directly across the street.

PD: From your brother.

EP: Yeah

PD: Ok and you and your wife moved into the home and then that's where you had the children?

EP: Yeah that-

PD: And did you live in the same house all of your life then? From then on after - you lived in the same place?

EP: Again, Middletown Road yeah

LP: That's sixty-five years.

PD: Sixty-five years

LP: At least you're there for if your oldest was born there 1944, that's sixty-five years. Yeah that's the place we should go to when we get out of here.

EP: Yeah that's where I would like to go to. It's up and down steps. But I would still like to go back to it.

PD: Yeah, it's your house.

BP: Your jobs as a waiter, how did you get those jobs?

EP: What is – having a connection – like my brother – my brother – my eldest brother was connected with the restaurants. In fact he was a beer salesman.

PD: Oh he was a beer salesman?

EP: And he was connected with the –

PD: Right because he used to go to all the restaurants to sell the beer

EP: And the other brother Louis was younger, couple years younger than Peter. He was a liquor salesman.

PD: Oh ok so you had connections with the restaurants?

EP: Yeah I got connections with the restaurants.

BP: And what was your work schedule. Did you work seven – uh six days a week?

EP: Yeah

BP: How many hours a day

[door opens, female voice] Hello

EP: Hello

BP: So how many hours a day did you work?

EP: I- I don't remember now, but -

BP: Was it long days?

EP: I would say it was long days.

PD: And did you work in that same Paradise restaurant all the time or did you move from restaurant to restaurant?

EP: No I don't think I moved from there because I used to be a sticker and when I went to some place I stuck.

PD: Right, right. That must have been a very popular restaurant if you were making good money too

EP: Yeah, yeah. It was – it was. I was making maybe thirty-five, forty dollars a week.

PD: Yeah, that was good money then.

EP: That was good yes.

BP: Any gangsters used to go and uh

EP: No, no

BP: the mob or used hang out over there?

EP: No.

PD: So who were the customers? Local people? Or did people to come to that place from all over the place?

EP: Local people but people came to that place because they had two good owners. One was a lot of fun. You know, he was an entertaining guy.

PD: And what was his name?

EP: Frank Losquadro. Losquadro.

PD: Losquadro?

EP: Yeah Frank. And the other one was Frank Georgano. That was – that was my brother's friend.

BP: His name was Frank –

EP: Georgano. So that's how I got the job – through him.

BP: And you worked – you worked at the Paradise for as long as it was open.

EP: Forty-five, forty, four years I think?

BP: Forty-four years?

EP: No no no four years.

BP: Oh for four years.

EP: Four years

LP: But didn't you also work at a place up in Longshore Road. Wasn't there a restaurant there that started with a -

EP: Oh in New Rochelle

LP: Yes, started with a T

EP: Trevy, yeah

LP: That's it Trevy. Did you work there?

EP: We owned it.

LP: Oh you owned it, ok.

EP: Yeah we owned that. I remember when I -

LP: With Louis, your brother Louie

EP: Yeah

PD: Oh so after you were a waiter you actually decided to buy a restaurant and open a restaurant?

EP: Yeah that we did, yes

PD: Trevy, Trevy Restaurant

EP: Trevy Restaurant

PD: In the Bronx or -

EP: Number 1 North Avenue

PD: North - In New Rochelle

EP: New Rochelle yeah

BP: How long did the restaurant – how long was it open?

EP: How long was it open?

BP: Is it still open?

LP: I don't know. I don't know if it's still there.

EP: It might still be yes. Yeah but I think – I think it's a different – different set up now

PD: But you sell it – you and your brother sold the restaurant?

EP: Yeah we did.

PD: Yeah when you retired. How long did you work until? When did you retire?

EP: I don't know now. You asking questions that I can't -

PD: What twenty-five years ago or -

EP: I – I can't tell you

LP: I think your brother Louis's been gone since around 1980, 81 around there.

PD: That's like more than twenty-five years.

BP: You've lived in the – You've lived in the Bronx for a long time so how has it changed since you first arrived until now?

EP: Well, the same way the population changed. In those days you didn't see any neighborhoods that were Puerto Rican neighborhoods or Hispanic neighborhoods so – and that changed.

PD: Right, right the whole population changed overtime. Especially that neighborhood on 138th street, that became largely Hispanic right around 1960 I think.

EP: Yeah

LP: That's Mott Haven

PD: Yeah, yeah where Brook Avenue is.

BP: How does it feel to be the last surviving – in your generation – the last surviving person in your line here in America?

EP: Well I am the last – I am the last of – of ten

BP: There's nobody older than you in Italy – on the other – on the other side?

EP: No, there's nobody.

BP: So you're the oldest?

EP: There's nobody older than me no place [laughter]

PD: Do you still have contacts with people in Italy? I mean with family.

EP: Not now, not now anymore

PD: Not now.

EP: I don't write to anybody and they don't write to me. But in 1984 when I went there and I was writing to some – some people.

PD: So you visited relatives when you -

EP: Yes

LP: You mentioned that your son Dominic was third born but isn't he older than your only daughter, Carolyn.

EP: No

LP: Carolyn's older than Dominic?

EP: No Carolyn is younger than Dominic.

LP: Right so that would make Dominic the second.

PD: Second ok.

EP: Second.

LP: And Carolyn would be the third. And the twins would four, five.

EP: Yeah, yeah that's right. Yes.

LP: Ok just a correction.

BP: When you- did you – after you bought your home and had your children – did you socialize with your neighbors? Did you have any friends in the neighborhood that your family would socialize with?

EP: No, I don't think so.

BP: No?

EP: I don't think so, no.

LP: Were there gangs at that time in the neighborhood? Were there groups of – I don't know – youths that may have formed gangs like these days there are gangs in various cities?

EP: I know but I – well – I

LP: You don't know

EP: I can't answer that

LP: But you never were involved with

EP: No, never

LP: Fighting, neighborhood fights.

EP: No, no I was never involved with anything like that.

LP: Not like my father who's – Stanley Porco – who's your brother Peter Porco's son.

EP: Yeah

LP: He said he used to always fight the Irish. The Irish and Italian didn't get along.

EP: Well that's true. I mean they didn't get along too good.

LP: The Irish were here first, I think, before the Italians.

EP: Yeah but I don't remember them fighting back – one gang against the other. I don't remember any fights like that.

BP: So you would just wake up, go to work, come home. That was it.

EP: Pretty much. [laughter] Pretty much

LP: No West Side Story

BP: What was it like owning a business, owning a restaurant?

EP: Well that – I don't – I can't tell you just in two words what it was like but it was good to know that you owned it. Was good to know that you were – I was bartending most of the times – that if I save seven – a nickel on a drink -

PD: That was your nickel

EP: Was my nickel, you know. So that was good.

BP: So the tips were not bad.

EP: No the tips were very good.

PD: And how long did you owned the restaurant for? Thirty years or something like that? Long time? Oh was it a long time or –

EP: Well, I don't remember now exactly.

PD: But long time, maybe more than four years.

EP: Yeah

BP: So is the only change in the Bronx that you've noticed is the people? Do you notice any other changes from when you first arrived in the Bronx til now.

EP: Well I know for a fact that the school that I – the night school that I went to – was on Brown Place in New Mount area of the Bronx – 100 and – I don't' – I don't - now I'll get you mixed up to – but I don't know. I got myself lost something – I better stop talking.

[Laughter]

PD: Ok Thank you very much

BP: Thank you

LP: Can I ask you one more question? I want to ask you when you came here – what – you don't remember when you met Anna Clara – your wife. You don't remember the circumstances or when you met her -Was it a blind date or how did you met her? Do you remember?

EP: Wasn't like date I think – I don't –

LP: Was she from the neighborhood –

EP: She was the neighborhood yes

LP: Oh so you knew her already

EP: She lived on 183rd street – 183rd and – near - the main road I'm trying to think.

PD: Arthur Avenue?

LP: Was it Little Italy or was it Webster or Park Avenue or Third Avenue?

EP: No, what's a –

LP: Grand Conours?

EP: No

PD: Arthur Avenue?

EP: What's Arthur Avenue?

PD: Arthur Avenue is where all the Italian restaurants are.

EP: That's right

PD: That area. Did you get married in Our Lady of Mont Carmel church?

EP: Yes

PD: Ok

LP: Oh sure that was her name I think. It's not that close to Pelham but it's near Pelham Parkway, Fordham Road.

EP: Yeah

LP: Eh just curious. Well I thank you for this.

PD: Well thank you very much.

LP: Do you guys have any more questions?

BP: No that was perfect. Thank you Mr. Porco.

EP: Good to meet you.

PD: Good to meet you too.

End