

ORAL HISTORY T-0261
INTERVIEW WITH JOHN FAVIGNANO
INTERVIEWED BY JERRY REIDY
IMMIGRANT PROJECT, ITALIAN
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REIDY: To begin with, let's go back to your father in Sicily and something about his life and his parents and everything.

FAVIGNANO: My father was born in 1890 in the small town of [Puerta Nico?] and this is a short distance from the capitol of Sicily, which is Palermo. Now my father, my father's people, his father and all came, actually came from a small island off the west coast of Sicily by the name of Favignano Island, known as [Isle E Favignano]. My father was born in Puerto Nico and he stayed there and went to school there and when his father booted him out to learn a trade as a barber. Now he started in this trade as an apprentice as most [?] do in Italy, approximately at about the age of five years old. They, uh, he started learning the trade. Now usually, by the time they reached twelve years old, they're a qualified journeyman to take out on their own. So he worked as a barber in Italy then for two years on his own and finally when he was fourteen years old he persuaded his father to give him the money, he wanted to come to America and like he had wild dreams and he heard stories about America and prosperity and money was easy and so forth and so on.

REIDY: Did he correspond with anybody? Did he have anybody over here that, you know, was writing to him? Or were these just kind of stories that were going the grapevine or something?

FAVIGNANO: No, he didn't have anybody over here. I mean no relations at all over here. He came over here more or less on his own and he sailed in through New York and at first it was kind of rough, he spoke no English and tried to get a job as a fourteen year old was almost an impossibility, see. So he got along fairly well by going door to door and letting people know he was a barber and he'd cut their hair or shave them. I mean, whatever he did and he seemed to have done alright. So he finally got old enough he finally convinced somebody to give him a job as a barber and in that way he got started and he finally worked his way on down to St. Louis and he got very well acquainted with a family by the name of LeVasco. And he more or less adopted their name for quite a few years which in later life, I'll tell you it caused him quite a bit of trouble because a lot of times he used the name of LeVasco and when we started school we had to go under our birth name, which was Favignano, and there was a lot of crisscrossing and mix up about it, you know until we convinced him that he should drop the name completely because it was legal for him to use it. Of course, I like all foreign Italians he was just as hard headed as concrete because you just didn't explain nothing to him, see. And, uh, anyway, getting back, he got to St. Louis and he worked as a barber then for quite a few years and he finally met my mother and they were

married in St. Louis here and he bought a grocery store which was located at that time on the northwest corner of Levington and Biddle, that would be right across the street from St. Joseph's Catholic Church and it was catty-cornered from Carr Square Park at that time which was located on the corner of Tenth and Biddle. And right catty-cornered from my father was the old Fourth District police station on Tenth and Carr. That's where they got the name of Carr Square, Carr Street.

REIDY: Was this a predominantly Italian neighborhood mostly at that time?

FAVIGNANO: No. It was well-known as, uh, the neighborhood at that time was famous. It was known as Kerry's Patch.

REIDY: That's Irish.

FAVIGNANO: No, it wasn't Irish. It was predominantly foreigners: Jewish, Irish, Italians that were just a mixture of all immigrants basically and it did have the name of Kerry's Patch.

REIDY: This is about when? What? What time?

FAVIGNANO: This is back around about 19...well, we lived there about 1917. I was born on the corner of Levington and Biddle in 1917. That's fifty six years ago and my father had a grocery store at that time and like most old Italian people they all dabbled in bootlegging. I mean, I, you can talk to any of them and they might tell you they didn't but I know for a fact that at least 90% of them did, see. And, my father did at the same time, too. And the fact is, uh, the neighborhood was so wild back then with gangsters, at that time you had the crooked gangsters, the union gangsters, just different mobs, see. And there was a lot of killing and a lot of shooting and us kids at that time were just kids, me and my older brother, at that time my father had a bodyguard that was with us continuously and I always remember his name was John. He stood about six four and he weighed about 200 pounds. He was a man mountain. We never had nobody that ever came near us as kids but he was right with us all the time.

REIDY: He was just with you the kids?

FAVIGNANO: Yeah. That was his job, just to stay with us continuously.

REIDY: Right, I mean what was the purpose of this?

FAVIGNANO: Well, like I said, my father dealt in bootlegging and he never knew who was going to try one thing or another he was like Italian, they're overprotective of their kids, that's all. That was their first thing in life, their children and ask for nothing. The children were first. But we paid more attention to our body guard actually than, we were more scared of him than we were of our father and mother because he laid the law down to us, see. And the same thing we were taught, then these kids, we seen a lot of killing. I've seen a lot of killing in my day and we would always fall and when we heard a lot of shooting we'd hit the curb and the gutter until everything was done and over with, see we'd get the hell away from there. But it was violent back then, I mean it's worse, there isn't much educated back in those days since we didn't have radio. We weren't wealthy enough to have a radio. And, of course, television wasn't even thought of then. Of course, I remember back, of course, I remember

when the house we lived in we only had gas, see, had a gas fixture on the side of the wall just like your lights here, you know. And we had a jet with a mantle on'em and we had gas light, see. Of course, rest rooms were never heard of. You had the little privies out in the back yard that was all brick. Your back yard was all brick and you had a privy for each flat, well, what was known as a cold water flat, see.

REIDY: Did you, you didn't live in a house, you lived in an apartment.

FAVIGNANO: Well, we lived in a flat.

REIDY: Flat.

FAVIGNANO: Yeah, it wasn't an apartment, it was just a flat. I mean, they might be two stories, three stories, you know and they set right on the sidewalk and these steps are in the back where you went upstairs, above the floor you lived on, see. And they were known as flats. There were two family flats, four family flats, six family flats.

REIDY: To go back a minute, you said that this area that you lived was all these foreigners that lived there then...

FAVIGNANO: Yeah.

REIDY: ...did they, was it like inter-mixed or different families on each block or different nationalities, or was there like one group of people like the Italians or the Jews or something that tended to dominate a particular.

FAVIGNANO: No, they were all mixed. They were all mixed. It was all mixed nationalities and immigrants. There were no separate bunches like, later on in the years as, as, as they branched away from there and the neighborhood broke up the Jewish predominantly went west along Easton Avenue towards Wellston, the Italians went over to South Kingshighway, which is known as Dago Hill and became famous as the Hill. The Germans went further South on down to Grand Avenue and they found it all separated but at that time it was just a mixed group. Of course, back then you seen very few colored. The colored were all across the river on the East side. Of course, I remember that when I was a boy they had the big race riot there in East St. Louis and oh, it was a mean slaughter over there. I remember the colored even swimming the river to get away from there and getting over here. That's when they started migrating across the river, see. And that's, at that time, that's when my mother forced my father to sell his store, see, to get out because she was afraid of the colored, see. And, well, while we lived there, I started at the Patrick Henry School, which was on Tenth and Biddle and, of course, as I said before there was no, they had no bathrooms in the home. I always remember the first thing you did when you got to school in the morning was you went down in the basement and you took off your clothes and you had to take a shower. The teacher would take you down there and she would stand there while you took your shower, see. Then after that she would comb your hair with a fine tooth comb, looking for lice. And [?] some of the families had lice in their hair and every morning [?] had fine tooth combs and mother would comb your hair and send you out with lice to school, see. And it was a continuous fight for lice in the kids' hair back in those days. I don't know why. And today you never hear of it, see. You never hear of a kid having lice in his hair. But back then there

was my mother [?] every night, see. She'd take her white comb out of her purse and put on the table [unintelligible] and she combed it, see, to see if they had any lice in their hair. And every once in a while, she'd find one, see. Over at the school they'd do the same thing, they always checking for lice. But you got your bath at school. The only bath you got at home, I mean, was on a Saturday night when your mother put the washtub on the stove and she heated the water and you took a bath in the kitchen in the washtub, see. There was no bath tub. It was a thing that you got used to and back in those days you didn't have no furnaces, you had a stove in the kitchen and a stove in the living room. Let me tell you, the only time you had fire in the stove in the living room in the wintertime was when you had company. Otherwise, everybody stayed in the kitchen during the winter That's as far as you got, the kitchen. When you'd go to bed at nigh time we would heat you would take a blanket and heat it, see, and wrap it around us and run like hell for the bedroom and dive in the bed and cover up the head and everything else until you got warmed up. Because we were like ice, you know, there was no heat in them. They didn't make no fire in them. You couldn't waste heat in a room that you didn't use, see. And when you was sleeping you was covered up and you didn't need no heat. But, boy, when you crawled into a cold bed at night, when it's down to freezing, I mean it's cold. Of course, back in those days it was predominantly all these, it seemed like in every flat the water would freeze in the winter time. I don't care where you lived, the water would freeze up in the winter time because you had no controlled heat, see. So your pipes were all in the basement downstairs and there was no heat down there all your...at night time you always turn it on and let the water run slow, all night long, you see, so it wouldn't freeze up.

REIDY: Uh huh.

FAVIGNANO: [?] as you went along because you had no way of keeping it from freezing otherwise. But I remember many nights or days going down there with my light and paper and holding them on to the pipes trying to thaw the pipes out, see, to get water. It was a deal, I mean it's...Anyway, after we left Eleventh and Biddle we moved over on Twelfth Street and we lived in a flat there. Of course, the colored was moving in at that time we had a dog. My mother, she had a dog called Blacky. And that was the meanest dog that ever lived. He hated everybody. But he never attacked anybody, as long as you left him alone and don't come near our flat, see. And he would lay there and he would never turn his head towards you unless you started for the door. And I watched the dog catcher try to catch that dog. But he had a knack. He never was caught once in all the years the dog would roam that neighborhood. And I seen dogcatchers try to catch him but he had a way that he would go and he would stop and they almost got to him, see, and while they were running he would double back and he would trip them, see. He would trip a dogcatcher every time and one time he went and tripped and they were putting new curbs along Levin street there and he tripped one of them and the guy split his chin wide open, see, wound up in the hospital. But finally one day they all get up and they come to the hospital and they told my father if that dog ever had pups by any other dog if he would promise to give them one they would never bother the dog again. They wanted one of those dogs. But Blacky was well known and well liked by the neighborhood, see. He never attacked nobody and never bit anybody, never bothered anybody. He just didn't bother our house or come near our house. And they didn't bother him. But he hated dog catchers. He, uh. . .

REIDY: How well did all these people get along with each another? I would think that all

these people with different nationalities and speaking different languages basically there'd be some kind of antagonism between them.

FAVIGNANO: Well, no, not exactly. You'd be surprised how well people will, uh, infiltrate with one another and they'd start learning the language. Of course, your different verbs, I mean, uh, your broken English, broken Italian, broken German, and your broken different languages, you know. Uh, there was nothing, any time, they got along real good unless they got mad at one another, see. And they were just involved, it always seemed like my father, the madder he got the less English he could speak, see. And us kids knew it. When we grew up, when he got really angry, particularly Italian, when the English get tired they get cold and say get away from me, see. But the madder he got the less English he spoke and that was the way with most of them, see. When they got mad they couldn't talk with one another. Because when they started talking in their native tongue it was like talking to a brick wall [?] one another, you know. But when they kept cool they could master quite a bit of the English language. But I think all foreigners as far as I could ever remember, as they became excited and mad they seemed to lose their talent for speaking English at all. It just seemed that their native tongue come to them right away, it's natural, it's natural to them and they use it more often.

REIDY: Did they maintain the kind of ethnic customs like, you know, festivals or something like this?

FAVIGNANO: No.

REIDY: Religious services?

FAVIGNANO: Well, you had your churches, I mean, your different churches, you had your Jewish synagogues and you had your Greek synagogue, you had your Catholic Churches and there was even different Italian churches down there. And there was never no festivals or any celebrations. The only celebration in every neighborhood was the fourth of July. And then the city would put up a big fireworks display at the park right across from the police station, oh, it would be a gigantic display there at Southampton Park and there would be big fireworks, you know. And in the other half of the park the people would set and they would have a big Fourth of July celebration.

REIDY: Uh huh.

FAVIGNANO: And of course, back in those days, too, they would have movies in the summer time for kids. They had good movies where they would show 'em on a screen, you know. Of course, they was no talking pictures back then and as far as anything, that was all downtown, see. But you take a lot of your customers, I think, started in later years as people got used to the country and it started prospering they started having like on the Hill now they have Hill Day every year now which is a big festival every year and it's something you see and it's of course, a lot of Americans go over there and they go walking around and see different things but, you see, like even on the Hill, John, it's a split deal even among the Italians. [?] The FBI and the ABI, what is known as the FBI is a Foreign Born Italian and the ABI is an American Born Italian. So you've got two factions on the Hill anyway, see. There's an American born and a foreign born, the Italians.

REIDY: Is there any kind of antagonism between them?

FAVIGNANO: No, there was never any antagonism between them but it seems like in all the sports it's always the American against the foreigner, see. When they played baseball or when they played boccie, where they rolled the balls, you know...

REIDY: Uh huh.

FAVIGNANO: ...and it's not no real anger or anything. They get along very well. The Italian people get along very well together. You see, but they have a code among themselves that they don't fight. They might have an argument or something, see, but they keep away from any violence as much as possible. You don't see as much violence at all.

REIDY: It's not more important to be American born Italians than foreign born Italians?

FAVIGNANO: Oh, no. Oh, no. They respect one another. I mean...

REIDY: Did this happen, was this happening also when your father came over? Did he ever mention anything about that?

FAVIGNANO: No. Back then, no, there wasn't much about it but this all came up in later years, see. There wasn't any...but, of course, you take it back to when my father there wasn't many American born Italians there to begin with, see. They were very few and far between.

REIDY: Did he ever talk about, I've read about northern Italians always tend to separate themselves from other Italians because northern Italians kind of came first.

FAVIGNANO: Well, northern Italians.

REIDY: Looked down upon the southern Italians, the Sicilians...

FAVIGNANO: Yes. You take your northern Italians. They're not like your southern Italians. There are not two Italians. You see, in the northern part of Italy there are so many different countries, so many different times, you know, you could be part of like [?Triesta]. That's been independent, its bound to Italy, it's been bound to so many different countries up there it just goes around in a circle, see. And, uh, like a personal friend of mine, he comes from up there and his name is [George Chuckold] and he's been in this country approximately about fifteen years. Now he speaks Yugoslavian, he speaks Italian, he speaks universal Italian and he speaks German, I mean, it's just because he, there was so many mixed people up there, you understand. And actually the fact's known that most of the Italians there are blue eyed and fair haired, see. Where the Italians from, you take from Rome south, they have dark hair and dark eyes. You ever see those light haired Italians, I mean there just isn't. But, it's, you see in Italy, you take those that come from the north and you take the ones from the north and they speak their native tongue up there, they come from the south, and you bring those two together they can hardly understand one another. The tongue changes so much that it's, uh, it's different altogether. There, I mean, their slang is different and everything else. And they have what they call the universal language, see, the universal Italian language, which you learn in schools and that, see. And like the [?] he speaks the universal Italian language, so he speaks

the northern Italian language, see. Of course, he knows quite a bit of the slang of the southern part, too. But it's, not everybody, not that they fight so much one another, the northern kind of look down on the southern and, of course, as far as the southern is concerned, they look down on the northern. They just don't...not that they fight or anything, they just, it's there. You got your north and your south and it just seemed to prevail that your just one country. But you see, in Italy your country is kind of different than here. Here we have what we call the states. Over there, it's provinces, see. And I mean, Naples is here and you got the Naples province; they got Rome and the Rome province. That's the area all the way around, a certain area around it, see, comes under the control of that city. And these provinces are all individual, see. Which is just like our states, see, only they're just not United, see. And I think, myself, and of course it's my opinion, they fight so much against one another, you know, in the country itself. To me, Italy is approximately about, I'd say, at least fifty or many years behind our times. And, it, uh, same way when I was over there in '46. Those people over there was till using the type of bulb that we used twenty five years ago. The clear, what did they call that, the incandescent bulb? You could see the wires. It was the same type bulb that they were still using electricity. And their electric bulb held up longer. They'd burn out pretty fast. They're just that far behind. Of course, they don't have the convenience we have and contented? They're contented. You see, over there even, like we have what you call pasteurized milk. Over there the farmer comes around with a cow and he milks the milk for you right in front of your door, whatever you want, so many liters. And that's the way sell their milk.

REIDY: Can we...I want to talk about, uh, crime in the Italian community. You mentioned this earlier, I guess I could go back to that, and we can talk something about particular types...

FAVIGNANO: Well, crime among the Italians is...there's no crime among the Italians. I mean, oh, they might steal this or steal that, but as far as actual big deals go... like, they used to talk about the gangsters and the hoodlums and the racketeers. Well, to me, a racketeer, the police department will arrest them and hound them to death. But you stop and think, just what damage does a racketeer do to a normal citizen? He never robs nobody. He never kills the ordinary citizen. They might kill themselves, you know, their own group. They don't believe in the hold-up. They believe in easy money. Such as thinking about gambling. They got the theory that a fool and his money are soon parted. And this idea that they're going to go out and help them part with it. Not by violence. They don't believe in it.

REIDY: Do you think that to a lot of Italians crime was like a way of getting to the top, you know, making a fast buck, and, you know, getting the prestige.

FAVIGNANO: Yeah, making a fast dollar, prestige, and also, it's easy money. To me, I don't think the Italian loves work too much, most of them. Of course, as you know, the Italian people are a hard working people. I mean, if you go back through the years, most of them when they come over they worked digging ditches. I mean, the Gas Company hired them, the telephone company hired them, as laborers because they were a hard working people. And they would work. And they were dependable. They don't believe in laying off or being sick or they don't, they're not ill all the time. They are a healthy, strong people, see. And they just don't believe in [?]. Of course, the younger group you have the minority that they want easy money. They don't want to work for it, see. They want take it any way it would come. Not

that they're a violent people or, actually, will harm any individual citizen. They might fight among themselves, their own gangs or kill off one another, you know, to gain more territory to make more easy money, but if you were stupid enough to give them your money, I mean, they were there to take it. And they fought for this. I mean, they had gang wars for it, which major gang violence. The same thing which prevailed during the prohibition, that Capone rackets. You're into rackets, it's easy money. And he wanted bootleg them for people who wanted to buy whiskey. That's easy money. Prostitution, which was back in those days white slavery. Prostitution, they know prostitution will go on and on for as long as there is difference in sexes and you cannot stop it, see. And they believed in the oldest profession known and it's easy because they would go to a prostitute regardless and they just believed if there was a prostitute, they would reap some of the money for themselves, too. And they kept it under control, see.

REIDY: How did the... let's get down to particulars, how did the St. Louis Italian community look at all this? I mean, did they just kind of turn their backs on the crime or the racketeering or did they just think that as long as it doesn't effect me...

FAVIGNANO: That's the attitude: as long as it don't effect me. They want, just want to live with it because they seem to have the general attitude that you couldn't stop it, see. It was going to be there regardless, see. They took the attitude they had that these things were, will always be, and you might try to stop it, you might curb here but it'll come up some place else. It's just not...it's the same thing as if you tried to stop a man from breathing, see. And as soon as he gets away from you he's going to start breathing again.

REIDY: Uh huh.

FAVIGNANO: So, I mean, you can curb it here, maybe for a week or two, but there will come up, come out some place else.

REIDY: You said that your father was involved in bootlegging, right?

FAVIGNANO: Yeah, he dabbled in bootlegging, like most Italians.

REIDY: Was this just like part-time or was he...

FAVIGNANO: Back then, John, I was young and I didn't know too much about it, how much he went into it. I know he did, see. This is, I'm talking about back...of course, in later years he dabbled in it a little bit, see. Like I told you, I remember getting the alcohol and watching it color [?] Of course, this was only a small percentage then, see. And, of course, I was older then and I knew more or less what was going on, see. But the period I was talking about before when I was five, six and seven, eight years old, see, I didn't, as a kid, I didn't pay too much attention, you know to what was going on. I'd seen some of the tuff that was going on and that stuff stuck with me and, of course, I never thought just how much was going on. It never bothered me.

REIDY: Why did he get out of it?

FAVIGNANO: Oh, I think my mother warned us to go ahead and get out of it before the first kids got too old to understand what was going on, see. And he finally got out of it altogether

and he left the grocery store and he sold that out. In fact, he give it away for what he got for it. He even went to work for the Jewish fellow, the barber again. The fellow's name was Marcus. And, uh, he worked for him for quite a few years. Then he opened his own barber shop on Garrison Avenue, right in the heart of a Jewish neighborhood. And that's...he opened his own, he went in business for himself and at that time we were living, let's see, we was living there on [Glasgow?] on the third floor flat. And I was going to [Glasgow?] School then and then he bought a dry goods store right next to his barber shop and that's what my mother ran for a while and finally she gave it up because she didn't like it. She told me that dry goods stores at that time were for Jewish people, see. And she didn't like the dry goods.....she said it used to be run by Jewish people and she didn't like it at all. She wanted out of it and finally my father sold it. And then at that time we moved into the county. And we moved out to what was known at that time was Jennings, Missouri, right at the end of West Florissant. At that time West Florissant ended at Jennings Road. And from there on out it was a wagon trail, I mean, if you went out any further than that, you got up that way two or three blocks and got caught in the rain, you didn't get back, see.

We lived on [Gannet] Avenue. I was nine years old. I was going to the [?] school. And that's, uh...getting back to it, my little brother was 13. And that's when he took his first venture at driving. My dad had just bought a brand new model T Ford, you know. And he had it out in the yard and Sunday morning he was sleeping late and my brother got up and he got the key and took the car out. And about a half an hour later I was home when he come in and the front end was all mashed in. I said, "Man, what did you do?" He says, "I couldn't stop. My car hit the back of a big truck." And I says, "What are you going to tell pop?" He says, "I ain't gonna tell him nothing, you're going to tell him." I says, "What am I going to tell him?" He says, "tell him I was messing around and I ran into a post." At that time my mother used to have a big post in the middle of the yard on which she used to tie her clothes line on. He says, "Tell him I ran into that post!" And he went out there with a hammer and started beating on it, you know, and said, "You go tell him yourself." And once my father woke up, boy, he was fit to be killed. A brand new Model T Ford all banged up and he only had a chance to drive it to work once. So that finally blew over and things settled down but my brother never drove no more after that for quite a few years. And then, of course, things started getting a little, at that time things started on a downward grade. At that time we moved back, my father moved his barber shop to 5702 Easton Avenue, close to where the Jewish people were migrating to. And we moved at that time behind the barber shop. We lived behind the barber shop there for a few years. And I started, that's when I started at the Arlington School. And they went along slowly then and finally the Depression hit. My father moved his shop up then to 5558 Easton Avenue. And that's when he bought the family home then on Wells Avenue, at 5567 Wells. He bought the home there right near the Depression. I think at that time he had an enormous, large lot there on Wells Avenue. And it was divided in two and there was a little three room cottage on the back. And I tell you how things were back then, he bought the whole lot, two houses all, at \$1800. Of course, that was a lot of money, see, uh, back then, because even during the Depression, when I worked, I got very good position in 1938. And I was only making \$13 a week. Of course, most people...it was ridiculous, top pay at that time was about \$14 a week. And, uh, he bought the family home and everything went along good there. He cut, of course, things got bad and he cut prices of hair cuts. At that time, hair cuts were 15 cents, a shave was 10 cents. Of course, we always had food on the table. We didn't live like kings, but we ate regular and we always did have clothes, but like he always told me, he always told all of us, as a barber, if you got a trade, you'll never go hungry. He says he proved it himself when he came over when he was

fourteen and he lived and started out, see. Oh, he prevailed on me for years to become a barber. And I thought about it and when I come out of the service in 1946, uh, but when I was inside, my wife would stay at the family home with my mother and father, because I had two children, before the war broke out. And I thought I'd do him favor so I told him I would go down there and enroll in [Moreland?] Barber College just to make him happy, see. And he told her, says, "If you go to college, if you'd like to stay here while you go to barber college, I'll pay all expenses and everything else because he always wanted one of his sons to be a barber. But I went down there and there was so many GIs who tried to get on there on the GI Bill that they had a waiting list of six months. Yes, that was in 1946, [Millard] Barber College had a waiting list of six months. So I come home and told my father the deal was off because I couldn't sit around and wait six months. Of course, he was very unhappy about it, I mean he never did like the deal. That was the closest any of his boys ever came to being a barber. Four of us boys altogether and then my sister but none of us ever turned out to be barbers. Yet, we led a good life, I mean, always made a good living. We never went without anything. Of course, we never had watch you call a whole lot, see.

REIDY: Could you tell me something about two more major subjects I wanted to get into: one of them was the Catholic Church and the influence, you know, it had on the community, for instance, was there any distinction between different groups, did the Polish Catholics and the Italian Catholics have a different church, or did they both use the same church, and, uh...

FAVIGNANO: Well, there was only, at that time, there was only, downtown, there only known two or three churches. Catholic churches. There was the orthodox, the Greek Orthodox, and the Roman Catholic. Both Catholic churches. Your principles are just about the same and I could just say, of course, I've never been into the Greek Orthodox Church. But I think they have their own head of the church they call the partridge or something like that and we have the pope, see. But I think in the last few years, it's, they have more or less come closer together. But I mean the fundamental parts of the church was the same. I mean...

REIDY: What I'm trying to get at is the different Roman Catholics, you know, like certain groups when they first came over, the Italians would have their own particular church and the Polish had their own church and they were predominantly a Polish congregation...

FAVIGNANO: No, no, no, John, because back then you were all with the same church. You see, the Mass was said at that time in Latin. I don't care if you were Polish, Italian, Greek or what you were. It was still said in Latin. And the Mass was in Latin and English, see. That was so you could follow the Mass. So therefore that's why the Catholics always only in the last few years came over into the English. They always said it in Latin. You know. Catholic means Universal, see. And therefore no matter where you went, the Mass was always the same. I don't care what country, what language or what it was, it was always in Latin. So it didn't differ no matter where it was who went.

REIDY: What denomination was the priest and what nationality?

FAVIGNANO: Of what?

REIDY: Of your church when you were young and lived down in Kerry Patch?

FAVIGNANO: Now that I don't know.

REIDY: You don't remember his name, right?

FAVIGNANO: I don't remember that. I was only five years old. I don't...too many names I don't remember, John, back then. Uh...I was known as Roman Catholic but my wife was known as, she was a convert. When I got married, I got married in 1938. Well, I got married on the spur of the moment. We went out one day and was living with my wife for a couple years, see, and we were trying to get married in June, so this was in May and they [?] get married at night. And at that time, in the West End, just a couple miles from here it was known as West Slate and that was right where Natural Bridge and St. Charles Rock Road come together. And right across from West Slate was marriages, George R. Heart, the marrying justice of the peace. And he did a landslide business. You could walk in there and he had the rings, he had everything, see. Well, they [?] us to get married and we stopped that night and there was about four or five couples, and we got married. In fact, I even had to borrow from somebody there to pay George R. Heart with and I had to buy the ring there to get married with. I was married there on May the 23rd. The reason why I'm hesitant there, John, is I have two dates there. I was married on May the 23rd and I was born on May the 24th. I was trying to figure out which comes first, see. And when I got married on May the 23rd and my father was, oh, he was all up in the air about it. Not against my wife, he always, he always, he cherished my wife. He thought that there was nobody in the world like my wife. But because we got married by a justice of the peace, he didn't speak to me. He wouldn't look at me or even talk to me. And so after about sixty days, I mean about three months, I'll say, I got to talking to my wife and I says, "Look, things are not getting any better." I says, "Pop hasn't said a word to me, see." And, uh, papa don't speak at all... let me get back to something here, John. I refer to my father as poppa. We called him poppa, poppa. In Italian language, poppa means father. And that's the reason we called him poppa. We didn't say father or dad, we said papa. Well, anyway, she says, "Well, what do you suggest?" And I says, "Well the best thing to do is, you take instruction and we'll go to see Father Daly." Father Daly it was at St. mark's Church on Academy and Page back then. I says, "Let's go over and see him and we'll talk to him." So we went over to see Father Daly and we talked to him and Father Daly started to give my wife instructions. And, uh, of course, after the first couple of instructions we went to confession and he married us [in a priest's collar?] But she continued her instruction and turned Catholic. As soon as he married us, I told my father, I says, "Well, we got married." And he says, "Well, what do you mean?" I says, "Father Daly just married us." From then on, everything was rosy. And he started talking to me and he recognized I was married, see. And before he said I wasn't married. The justice of the peace don't marry you. It just don't happen.

REIDY: He went to, you were telling me one time about when your mother married your father she lost her nationality...

FAVIGNANO: Yeah, like I said my, let's see, my father arrived in this country approximately at about 1904. He was fourteen. Seven years later he married my mother. That would be about 1911. Back then, they had a law that prevailed that any American citizen that married an alien automatically lost their citizenship. Of course, my mother never knew anything about it at that time. Of course, my father didn't either, see. But anyway, at that time when my mother married my father she lost her citizenship unbeknowing to her. But she

went along all throughout the years. But I think it was about 19...this happened in 1911, see. And in about, I'd say, 1950, I'd say about 40 years later, she went as a character witness for a Jewish woman who had applied for her citizenship papers. And after the preliminary questioning by the naturalization board they wanted her to answer some questions and finally the man told her, "Well, you can't stand up for this woman. You're not a citizen yourself. My mother looked at him and said, "What do you mean, I'm not a citizen?" She says, "I've been living in the state of Missouri since the day I've been born. I haven't even been to Illinois. She says, " I was born in Jefferson City and I have never been out of this state." She says, "I got to be a citizen." And they set down and they explained to her that at that time, that when she married she lost her citizenship. And she asked him at that time, she says, "is that still effect now?" and he says, "no." Now, when an American marries an alien, the alien becomes an American citizen automatically. It's reversed. She goes, "So that makes me a citizen." They say, "No," he says, "You still lost your citizenship and you're going to have to apply for citizenship here to become an American citizen. "We joked with her quite a bit about it. I often told, I'd say, "Well, mom, behave yourself. If they catch you doing anything they're going to deport you, see. So I says, "Where they're going to deport you to, I don't know, but they'll deport you. They'll deport you to Jefferson City," I says, "That's where you came from." But we kidded quite a bit about it and finally we got her citizenship papers. But they told her that she didn't have to apply for her first papers, she just applied for the second paper and become a naturalized citizen. But then we had trouble because when my mother was born, the record was sent to Jefferson City but they had a fire there and all the records was destroyed. Oh this was right around the turn of the century, see. And we had a hard time proving that she was born. We had to look around for people who lived there and we had to hire a lawyer to dig and dig and dig and finally they got proof and she applied for citizenship and she became a citizen then. As soon as they told her she was safe they couldn't deport it no more. But it was a comical thing. We often kidded her about it before she got her papers. [?] came out the service. We were all four in the service. I had, uh, oldest brother was in Patton's fifth army and my youngest brother was in New Guinea and the brother next to me, Raymond, was in the Aleutian Islands. And I was the only one at home, see. Of course, I had, I was a foreman at Curtis Wright at that time. Of course, I was married and had two children before the war even started, so I had a 2B classification. So after bickering and talking to my wife and talking I told them I says, "Look," I says, "I got my three brothers over, my brother-in-law who was in, he was on the invasion of Iwo Jima, and he lived through that. He was in the Marines. I says, they're gonna come back and I'm going to listen to those stories all my life, see. I said, "This ain't gonna work." I says, "Their kids are gonna be telling my kids what their fathers did and their fathers, so finally I told her I was going to quit my job and give up my 2B classification. So I went in and talked to the personnel man at Curtis Wright. I'm trying to think of his name. I knew his name very well. I don't recall it right now. I told him just what my intentions were so he told me, he says, "Well, John," he says, "Don't quit your job," he says, "Let's just let the 2B classification go and let them draft you and that way you still maintain your status with the company, see. Your job will still be here when you come out of service. So that's when it was done. My 2B status was removed and within two days I had a notice to report to the draft board already. Exactly two days! That didn't leave no time.

REIDY: Did your father ever become a citizen?

FAVIGNANO: My father, yeah, I, I started to say all his boys did [unintelligible] so I went

in the service I went to Italy. I went to Europe. And I was the last one to come out. I was the last one to go in and the last one to come out. So after we were all out, then we went to my father and we said, "Now, you get your citizenship papers." But during the whole time the war was going on he was curtailed?] because he was an enemy alien. He was Italian and we was at war with the Italians, He was an alien enemy and I mean, any idiot can tell you that you couldn't even go to the bathroom unless you made a report that you was going to go to the bathroom, see. You couldn't do nothing. And my father loved to fish. My father would go out to the river bank and he would sit there for hours and never move. Never caught nothing, but he loved to fish. And that used to kill him, see. I mean, if he had to go fishing he had to report where he was going, when he was going, when he was coming back and this and that and the other. Finally, we says, "Now it's time to apply for your citizenship" and we went to take out his papers. And he took his papers out in 1946. And by that time he had already been over here forty-two years, see. Of course, my father always spoke broken English. He never spoke English real good. But he could speak English and he could read English. He loved to read the paper and he loved to argue. Politics was his baby. My father was in politics from the day that I could ever remember. He couldn't vote because he wasn't a citizen but he was in politics. He knew every politician and they knew him. And he controlled them all out there in his ward just like he was a, a, a, a, what'd they call 'em?...a ward [hero?] boss, see. Everybody came to him. And that's what got me started into politics. I became a precinct captain of the first precinct in ward 22 when I was 21 years old, when I started voting. My brother was a precinct captain in the same ward in precinct 2, see. And at that time I went to work for the city, I was the superintendent of the coroner's office. My brother was deputy sheriff, which he still is today, see.

REIDY: How did you get this job? Was that...

FAVIGNANO: Political appointment. It was just a...

REIDY: ...patronage type job.

FAVIGNANO: Patronage. It was patronage at that point. Which mine was and so was my brother's. And, of course, I stood with the city and at that time I lived on Page Avenue, see. When we came out of service, after my father had his citizenship papers, four of us boys went together and we bought a house on the corner of [Culler?] and Wells. We got a four family flat. We all went in together. And we paid ten thousand five hundred for that. If I remember right. And we fixed it up pretty good and then coloreds started moving in and we sold it. Right away. And we got 16,000 dollars for it, see. Made a pretty hefty profit on it. Well, then me and my brothers they all bought out, but I stayed there and my oldest brother, he wasn't with us on the deal. There was just two of boys and my sister. My brother already owned the house right next door to my dad's house, see. He bought a house right next door to her and that's where he lived. And he had us stay at his ward, same as I did. So I moved into an apartment house at 5606 Page and, of course, after it had become predominantly colored and they tried to break in a couple times, my wife was too scared. She says, "You stay, I'm leaving." She says, "I'm moving out, way out." So at that time I had to [yoke?] my city job and we moved out here into St. Ann's. And that was about ten years ago. And that's when I applied to the post office and went to work for the post office. But it's not been too bad out here. I don't know. We spend quite a few days on the Hill. We go back to the Hill quite often visiting. I have friends over there and we like to go over there. We always enjoy ourselves.

You know, the Italian people is a funny people, John. There hospital, I mean, they can't do enough. I mean you can walk into an Italian home and the first thing they do is start putting food on the table. They want you to eat. Eat. eat and drink, see. And I mean you, well, the only time, the reason why the wife do so much for you and they say "Feed you," "Feed you," she says, you walk away from there feeling like a stuffed turkey, which you do. I mean, like just a few minutes before you came this [Joe Checker?] called, I told him next Sunday I was going down to a social down at Azura, Missouri. That's about seventy miles south of here. A priest I know down there very well's got a country parish down there and he invited us down. So I called this [Checker?] and he wants to go along, see. And he says, "Should we take him food?" and I says, "We'll buy food down there." And he says, "I'll take some salami anyway. I'll take some salami and bread and you do the driving." Salami, cheese and bread, see. They got a have that food, see. He's scared that he isn't going to get enough when he gets down there I guess. I don't know. But he's a character.

REIDY: You're in politics. Is this predominantly controlled by the Irish or the Italians?

FAVIGNANO: No. Unh uh. When I was in politics it was Irish because at that time I lived in Wellston. And our committee men at that time was a constable in St. Louis and was a well-known Democratic leader, was Matt O'Neal. And he held control of the strongest Democratic ward in the city, see. And he was known to have the most powerful ward in the city. He was out there for years. Matt O'Neal was. Matt O'Neal's real job was, he was business agent for the bricklayers in St. Louis. Real nice fellow, very likable. He was Irish. He was up there near St. [Elmo's?] church.

REIDY: Was there any type of thinking along the lines that there were ethnic voting blocks? That you had to appeal to a particular type of group to gain their support like, you know, like appealing to the Italian community or appealing to the Jewish community or something [in ward?]

FAVIGNANO: Well, I'm going to tell you, John. Now I say my father he was always close to the Jewish people. And my father could influence the Jewish people to vote any way he wanted them to.

REIDY: How did he do this?

FAVIGNANO: Just talking to them. I mean, they looked up to him and they were only Jewish people and they didn't know too much and they'd do whatever he told them. And I mean most these Jewish people, you give them a sample ballot and they'd follow it to it a "T" because, you know, they didn't read English and back then I don't think there was too much education on split ballots or too much valuable about the politicians, you know. They had straight tickets, I mean. Straight Democratic or straight Republican. You vote Democratic, you voted Republican. I mean it was just the way it was. But today your split ticket is becoming very popular. I mean there is no such thing as a straight ticket any more. Very few people vote a straight ticket. They seemed to have picked up their own ideas about their candidates. And they read the papers and they, of course, they read a lot of stuff in the papers, and they pick the candidates they want regardless of who they are. I mean, as far as Democrat or Republican, I don't think it makes too much difference anymore.

REIDY: Was there a lot of use of patronage to influence voting? You know, like...

FAVIGNANO: Not where I was at, no. I know there was a lot of it that prevailed throughout the city at different times, but I heard of it, I mean, of course, I was never around any of it. I was never a part of getting that easy money.

REIDY: For sure. Was there like what you would consider a political boss of St. Louis when you were in politics?

FAVIGNANO: No.

REIDY: Who kind of controlled the city?

FAVIGNANO: No. No. Hell, no.

REIDY: How about ward bosses?

FAVIGNANO: You always had your ward bosses. I mean, that was your committeeman. He was. . .he liked to talk. He was what was known as a ward boss. A ward [heel?]
[unintelligible]

REIDY: I was thinking more in terms of a kingpin who kind of controlled everything.

FAVIGNANO: No. Not when I was in. Before then, I don't know. When I was in, no. Our committeeman was elected by popular vote of the ward as was the alderman. Each ward had their alderman, you know. He was elected from the ward. Of course, our alderman we picked out from among our own precinct captains. We'd vote on someone we wanted to put for our alderman for our ward and then we would run him with the committeemen, see. And, of course, the only alderman we had in St. Louis at that time in our ward was Al Harris, see. And he was a well-known Jewish lawyer. Al was a very likable fellow, very, very likable. Of course, Al knew the ropes, he was a trooper and therefore. To me a lawyer is as good as he is known. He knows the people, he can get a lot done. If he is not well-known, he can't get nothing done. And I always did believe this and, of course, I may be wrong but I might be right. It's something that's hard to say. Of course, I was around lawyers all my life and, but his, uh, when I came out here, time when I moved out here, he was coroner of the county here and, of course, since then, he was one himself. He was a coroner and he himself wished for legislation changing the coroner out here, that the coroner should be a certified doctor, you know, a medical doctor, even though it did cut his throat, see. And, of course, I don't know why. To me, I could see no point in that. Because you have the pathologist that does the autopsy and he gives out the reports. Now your coroner holds the inquest, which is like a court, see. And, of course. Ray Harris, is a long-known lawyer and he had been a judge before, a county judge, see, and he was well-qualified in the position he held, even though he wasn't a doctor. But as long as you have your findings from the pathologists, which are medical doctors, you have, coroners might have four or five different doctors, pathologists, that does autopsies for them, see. And they come in and do the autopsies. And the city would pay them or if it's the county, they would pay him. And now Mr. Harris, and I think now he is a crime investigator for the county, now. He goes out on murder cases and that but he's still a lawyer. But he eliminated his own job, see. I mean, he thought it was only right and

the way it should be. That's the kind of a guy he is, regardless. It was a good paying job as a coroner. He sacrificed it but he thought that it should be the way it was finally set up, see. Of course, myself, I never did agree with it that way. I could never see what advantage and what advantage it had. I mean, as long as you got a pathologist to give you the findings, of course, though the difference would be that a coroner that is a medical doctor would understand more of the findings and the medical terms than a lawyer would, you know. I mean, they would be more, they would have more meaning to him, see. But politics is changing everyday. It's not like it used to be. Back in those days we had the precinct captain and he had maybe four or five workers and you paid them. I mean, the ward boss would come around, he would give you, he'd say, "John, how many organizers?" and I'd say, "Well, I got four workers." He'd give me twenty bucks and I'd give each five dollars for hanging out ballots, you know? That came out of the committee's central fund. We didn't ask anybody to work for nothing, see. Of course, the precinct captains worked for nothing, of course, we all had city jobs, see. But you see I was a precinct captain, John, for quite a few years before I took a city job. But I liked it to the extent I like the politics. I mean it was turmoil and I did it because I liked it, nit because I had a city job. I had to. At that time I was selling life insurance. I didn't want no city job. Because, this way, unless it was coming up, I mean, Mr. Harris, aldermen, or Mr. O'Neal, would come up and they would come to the house and say, "John, how's you police?" and I'd say, "It's OK, don't worry about it. It's all under control." But once you take a city job they take after each other. So finally I took that city job and from then on out, you go to them see. They don't come to you no more, you go to them. They got you by the thumbnail, see. You're working for the city, got a city job now, you tow the mark. That's one thing I didn't really want to get in to, see. Of course, it wasn't just like I expressed it. It was a feeling you got regardless. But the other way around, I wasn't indebted to them. Once you get a city job, you're indebted to them.

REIDY: Right. Did they, uh, there was quite a lot of that going around...

FAVIGNANO: Oh, yeah. They always tried to give you, your precinct captain, the workers, these patronage jobs.

REIDY: Did they ever do other things, oh, I've read like earlier, in New York City, the first immigrants coming over they would do things like get on coal for the winter and people would have food baskets and things...

FAVIGNANO: Yes. I'll give you an example here, uh, just how different politicians work. Now [?] politician in the City of St. Louis was the coroner. Pat Taylor. To me, he was tricky. Not only to me, but to people all over. He was actually [installed] as an honorary Colonel, Kentucky Colonel. Now there are very few Kentuckians that make that Colonelship, unless they're an out-stater, see. Because Pat, he [couldn't?] nothing but just people. To him, everybody was a saint. When we had a big coal strike here, I guess you've heard of it or read of it. Years ago we had a bad coal strike. Everything was shut down. No coal coming out of the mines at all. This was way before gas. Pat Taylor got in the car and he went up to Pennsylvania and went to the head of the union and he told him he wanted to talk to the men. And they called him in and he says, "I am the coroner of St. Louis. I am in full accord with this strike. I believe in everything you're asking for. And I hope you get it, but," he says, "I need coal. I got a hospital down there with children in it, they're sick." He says, "I got a lot people in the hospital that are seriously ill and they need heat." "Now," he says, "I want coal

and I want it for the hospital." He says, "Every piece of coal you put in those cars will go to the hospital. Nobody else." Those miners went to work and gave him all the coal he wanted, see. St. Louis hospitals had coal galore. And he met every carload coming in to make sure exactly where it went. That's just the kind of guy he was. And he got a colonelship in Kentucky for that. Kentucky made him a Kentucky colonel. But he, in hospitals, in St. Anthony's Hospital on Grand Avenue, now that hospital look on him like a little God. He used to go to the hospital and he go through the hospital and anything they wanted he would get for them. Anything he could do for them, he did for them. They looked at him like he was God himself when he come there. Not only there, but Alexis Brothers hospital on South Broadway, see. And the reason why his, uh, St. Anthony's hospital was more, it was a parochial hospital for kids and they dealt a whole lot with crippled children and that was his pet hobby. And he was always going down there. He practically lived down there. And he just became well-known, he just couldn't do enough for the people, see. He was just that kind of a politician. That's the reason he never had trouble getting elected, see. Anybody could go to him, he didn't care if he was black, white. Catholic, non- Catholic, Republican, Democrat, he didn't care who you were. He sat down and talked to you. And he was a popular Democrat. But he just believed in people and he loved people. He just, every raise that the St. Louis Police department got while he was coroner, he got for them. He'd go to Jefferson City and he'd raise the devil up there. And he get them a raise. And the police department, well, they admired that man like no man was ever admired, see. They couldn't do enough for him, see. And I mean they just, the way he went on...cut that off

[tape turns off]

You take [unintelligible] when he was fourteen years old, but when he got there, he never corresponded with his father anymore or his mother. And he lost all track of them and I know they lost track of him. He never knew when his mother died but when his father died he got a letter from the Italian government that his father had died and left quite a bit of property over there and that he was the sole heir. My father always had intentions of going back some day so we told him this. So when World War II broke out and I went over there, he gave me power of attorney. Of course, I was told I couldn't get nowhere near it, you know, in Sicily. So finally when the war ended, I tried to get a furlough to go down there and they turned me down for the reason why that there was no Army installations down there and there was no place I could stay, see. So finally I wrote to the American consulate there and I got a letter back from them saying they were writing to Washington certifying that they would keep me until I could clear up this estate, you know. I could stay at the consulate. But at the time, the OK kid from Washington, writing me a four-week furlough to Sicily with special air transportation that would pick me up and bring me back to my base. The captain called me into the office and says, "Sergeant, I got your papers here from Washington. I also have your orders to go home." So I says, "Well?" And he says, "Well, to take the furlough, you'll have to re-up for a year." I says, "Captain, re-up for a year?" I says, "The furlough you can have." I said, "I can always come back. I'm going home. I got a wife and two kids back there. I'm going home." So I came home. I never had a chance to get down there. I wanted to so bad. I just wanted to get to that island, you know. If there was anyway of sending a letter home, I wanted to postmark it. I [unintelligible] Favignano, see. But I wanted a postmark from that island so bad that...I had everything lined up. I had young fellow, an Italian boy I had picked up who was going to go with me as an interpreter because he could speak the language real good, see. And I was going to pay his way down and everything else, see. But so much time

had went on between the time the war ended and '45 when I got my papers, by the time they had to write to Washington and Washington debated on it and they finally granted it and, by that time it was too late. I couldn't see spending another year in Italy when I figured I could always come back. Of course, at that time I was so young, you know, and I waited all my life to get back there. But anyway, I did find out that the time I was over there that my grandfather had remarried after his first wife died. My father didn't know anything about this. And he had half brothers and half-sisters that he didn't know anything about. But they were living in these houses, see. But the Italian law is that anything accumulated during the lifetime of a man belongs to the children that he has when he accumulates it. So therefore, those houses that he had before he married his second wife, my father was heir. His wife, his second wife, or her children couldn't touch it. They were only entitled to stuff he had accumulated after he married her, see. And, of course, when I got home I give all this information to the American consulate at Palermo. See, they were working on it for me but I was in Pisa, Italy at that time. And they give me all this information, see. They had a letter they got from my father's step-mother and I got home to him and he started corresponding with her. And he started sending them money and we opened a whole new bunch of relatives he never knew existed, see. And he wrote to them and he wrote to them until the day he died, I think. And he never did anything about the house. If they were living in it, he was just going to leave them just the way they were, see. And he never did go back. I know he always did want to go back, but he had, I think he had two half-brothers and two half-sisters. I think it was four altogether he never knew existed. He never knew he had a step-mother. And she was still living at the time I come back and he started writing to her afterwards. Of course, he could write Italian and he could read Italian. And, of course, getting back to a little spice in the story. When I came back from Italy, I, like most young men, while I was entitled to a 90 day holiday, see. I had all my discharge money and I think I could draw unemployment compensation, you know, for six months if I wanted to. So I went down and applied for it and they tried to talk me into taking rocking chair money, see. I said, no, I want unemployment. I paid for it. I want unemployment, see. Which I got. On about the fourth week I was home, I was still sleeping. I was still staying at my father's house. My wife comes there and says, "Johnny, you got a letter from Italy." I says, "Yeah." She says, "Yeah." I go, "Bring it up." And she goes, "No, you go on downstairs. Your father wants you downstairs." So I go down and there's my father, an old Italian at the kitchen table. And he's got this letter laid out in front of him. It's all in Italian, see, I couldn't read it if I wanted to. And he says, "John, I got a letter here," and he says, "it's for you. Ann opened it and it was in Italian and she asked me to read it. Now here's a letter from a girl here in Italy that claims to have known you very well. She goes on to tell you really how much she enjoyed living with you and spending the nights with you and that she's going to have your child." My father, boy he was, and he stood with a smile on his face, see. I'm setting across the table from him and my wife is sitting on the side between us, see. The first thing my father says is, "Well? What do you got to say?" I says, "Pop, what can I say?" I says, "If I tell you it's a damn lie you're not going to believe me because you got your mind made up it's true." And there was picture in there, you know. I says, "I didn't give my address to anybody. Where'd she get my address?" So he says, "She got it from a very close friend of yours. Tony [Farmazano], see. He says, "I know you know Tony Farmazano because Tony is a personal friend of mine over there, see."

SIDE B:

FAVIGNANO: She sent this letter, so here I was and I didn't know where Tony lived but I did what I could do to protect myself so I said, "I don't know what to say." Well, of course, my wife wasn't even talking. You know, if you ever set down and prayed, I did. I prayed and prayed for some way to come out of this. And, lo and behold, boy, the good lord, you talk about your damn fools. I got a letter two days after that. All in Italian. All it had the envelope: "John Favignano, United States Army" and it had my serial number on it. No address, no city, no nothing. [The next thing I] went to the War Department and got my address off of my service record and my serial number and forwarded it on to me. It was all in Italian. I finally said, I said, "Well, who is it from?" [Father] says, "from Tony [Farmasano?]." I says, "Tony?," he says, "Yeah." I says, "How come he gives my address to this guy over here and he doesn't have it himself in his own letter?" [Father] says, "That's right. Either somebody's a damn liar..." I says, "Now, here's my deliverance." So he went to [unintelligible] and says, "Dear Johnny, I hope and pray to God that you get this letter." He says, "I don't have your address. I'm sorry I never got it from you." He says, "I did want to correspond with you and the only thing I could do was hope that you would get it with the serial number on it." And he says, "If you do get it, write to me." He says, "Let me know where you live and everything else." He says, "I sure enjoyed your company over there." [John] gave me a job in our camp. I got Tony a job. He was my age. And he was married and I got him a job and he was forever grateful for it. So, he was a real nice fellow. So we sat down and I says, "Now, dad, let's straighten this thing out." He says, "What's the score?" I says, "I want you to write a letter to Tony in Italian. I want you to tell him exactly what's happened and send him that picture." So [unintelligible] so he sent the letter that he received back with the picture to Tony. And in the letter I put a twenty dollar bill. I said, "Tony, I want this [soobato?] if not sooner. If send it special delivery, air mail [unintelligible] I told him to send it back as fast as he could send it back. I said a twenty dollar bill would cover it all. It was about seven days later we got the letter back. That was my deliverance. Oh, the Lord was with me. Tony starts out, he says, "Dear John," he says, "I received your most welcomed letter." He says, "I was really tickled to death to get it." He says, "Irregardless of the letter that was with it and the picture." And he says, "When I found out my name was used..." He says, "Well, anyways, I tell you, she'll never bother you no more." He says, "Furthermore, she was not pregnant. Furthermore," he says, "this is a girl you never saw before in your life." Then he gives the details of just exactly what happened. He says, "The first thing I did," he says, "I went down to her house and she lived with her neighbors. I went to the door," he says, "And I asked for her and it was her and she [unintelligible] and so and so," and he says, "Well, I'm here representing John Favignano." And she says, "Oh yeah?" [unintelligible] for your money! She asked him to come on in, come on in. So he went in and he says, "Uh," he says I [don't want to interrupt your vacation?] but he says, "I want to know just where did you get John's address from?" And she says, "Well, I got it from a friend of his. Tony [Farmazano]." He says, "Well, great, he says. I'm Tony [Farmazano]." He says, "I hit her the first time, John." He says, "I hit her with my fist right smack in her face." He says, "She went back against the wall [unintelligible] and I picked her up again and I hit her again." He says, "I mashed her face. She's gonna be in the hospital six months trying to come out of it." He says, "I told her if she ever bothered you again, I would kill her." He says, "I told her, I want to know where she had got your name from and I let her go bullshit." He says, "Well, where she got your name from was, well, your little buddy [unintelligible] these old wharf rats? Pasquali was his name. She says she got your name from Pasquali. He told her that you were married and had a couple kids and that you were an easy touch. And he sold her your name and address for a thousand lire. Of

course, the cloud was lifted, my father was happy again, my wife was talking to me again, everything was...but you talk about deliverance. Boy o boy...it just showed you just how everything fell right in line. I got the letter from her [?], two days later I got the letter from Tony and all was taken care of. But, you know, shortly after I wrote the letter to Tony, it came in the paper that this going on quite a bit up in New York. Other GIs were getting letters from girls evidently on the same deal, that they were pregnant and wanted financial assistance, you know. And they were even appealing to the government and it was all fraud. We followed it up in the paper after that. I says, hell, I could save them a lot of money, I just send them Tony's phone number and he'll take care of it. (Laughs.) But it was really a comical situation. You know, after we sat down and talked about it, I think [unintelligible] like we do today of this picture of this girl. I mean I wish I could have kept the picture. Tony said she had stuffed a pillow in her blouse and had the picture taken, see. She never was pregnant. And she told Tony, after Tony got through beating her, he made her spell it all out. He said that she wanted money and that a lot of other girls were doing it to, see, and that Pasquale had told her that I would be a good touch because I keep quiet, you know, and most [unintelligible] was Italian and me Italian at that, on top of it, that was a sure thing, see. You know how the whole Italian people are. And she thought she had the thing right down the alley. Of course, she never knew I had a friend over there, see, that could do the checking up for me. But you know, the funny part about it, uh, shortly after I got home, I started proceeding to try to bring Pasquale over here. This was right after I come home now, a few days afterwards. I even went down to the Italian consulate and started papers that I had my father sign that he would be legal guardian, see. Then I found out about all this stuff about him so I dropped it right then and there. He missed himself a trip to America, see, all on account of that deal. My father done signed the papers and we had started proceedings going through, see. And he was, Pasquale was only sixteen years old. I mean, he was, you know, to me he was a nice kid. I mean at first when I got over there I didn't speak much Italian and he was a good interpreter. And he was with me all the time. I mean, every time I was out at camp, he'd was right along with me. Of course. Tony was my age and we became very well acquainted. I stayed at his house quite a bit in Naples, Italy. And he had a brother and a sister and his mother and father had a business in Naples. And, oh, they took me in like a son. I mean they treated me royally. See, Tony was married and he had a wife and I got him a job then at [300?] General Hospital in Naples, Italy, see. He had a pretty good job there. Oh, he was very grateful. I mean I used to go into his house on holidays and they used to take to the family, I mean the Italian, uh...affairs that they have, you know. And it was really, the whole, you see, the American GI was never accepted by the Italian people in Italy. They don't get accepted. And I had a pastor go. . .half of Naples was off limits to the American GI. I had a pastor go up into this area that I told this marshall that these were relations of mine, see, Tony's mother and father I said was my aunt and uncle, see. Therefore I got a permit to go up there. But, you know, you talk about these people not accepting the American GI, I think there was more GIs killed by the Italians after the war than was killed during the war. On side streets and stuff like that, that you never even read about and like my aunt, she took me, not my aunt but I called her my aunt all the time because we became so close, [Miss Farmazano] she took me from the Via Roma up to where she lived. These were all from this area. These were what they call these winding alleys, you know. Actually, the picturesque part of Italy. It is the picturesque part. It's the most beautiful part of Italy you can go to. There are all these winding roads, you know, the streets, see. Only wide enough for a cart, John. And stores right on these things. But she introduced me to all the people, you know, said, "This is my nephew. He's from the States but he's my nephew."

All the people [unintelligible] now whenever you go home from my house at night time, you follow the same light, don't ever change, see. Many a night I'd be coming down, oh, it'd be about eleven o'clock and I'd be walking along, you know, and I'd say, "Giovanni," I'd say, "Ci?" That's all. She always told me to answer. If they mention my name, answer. I was never bothered. But many times they'd pick up, oh, they'd kill 'em just to [unintelligible] out of 'em, John. But, I don't know, I used to always, when I got to town, I always go up to 'em and say I enjoyed myself there and had good times. In fact, we went to a family dance and it was in honor of St. Joseph's day, see. We were setting there and like and Mrs. Farmazano says, "Johnny, ask one of the girls to dance." So, I said, "No. I don't know." And she says, "No, you go ask." So I walked down and I seen a real good looking babe over there so I went over there and I says, "Senorita, [Italian, something lambado], and she looked at me and she says, "No [conceive?]" So I turned around and I walked back and my aunt says, "What's the matter?" I says, "She said [no placebo?]" Holy Christ Almighty! Mrs. Farmazano jumped up and the rest of them jumped up and boy I'll tell you all Hell would break loose, see. And she told, and that was her real aunt, she told her she says, "I don't dance with American GIs." And she goes, "he's not a GI. Forget the uniform. He's family." See. So my aunt goes, "Go up and ask her again." I says, "No, I'd rather not. One time's enough." She goes, "You go up and ask her again. Ask any of these girls, they won't turn you down." But she always told me when I come down never to bring anybody with me. Never bring another GI, just myself. There a funny people, John. The American GI is an arrogant when he's overseas. You know, I heard the best expression of that, a colonel told me one time, we were talking and he says, "Sarge, I want to tell you something. I am watching them draft the meekest of the meek. They are so polite that they scare you. They're so timid, they don't know which way to turn." He says, "I can take 'em and I can put them through seventeen weeks of basic and then send them home." And they'll walk up into the same bar they left and say, "Gimme a goddamn bottle of beer!" He says, "That's how much they change after you put them in uniform and give 'em a little training, see. They think they're Jesus Christ already. Then they go to these foreign countries and they think they are Christ and they dominate these people. They try to dominate them. But you don't dominate those foreigners. They let you go, boy, all you want and they're thinking just how they're gonna get you afterwards. And they do, see. I mean, they'd lay for these GIs and they'd kill 'em. I mean, a lot of them died that way. And they'd find 'em stripped, laying in a gutter some place. And they didn't have the sense to realize what's happening. Like, I, I was driving down Via Roma and I see a bunch of GIs in a jeep and there was some Italian with these damn donkey carts. And this donkey stopped and he couldn't get him going. He [unintelligible] beat that poor man half to death. And I sat down and I wrote a letter. I was so damn mad I couldn't see straight. And I says, you know, I got the impression that since the war ended, I said, I'm still settin' here, that the American GI is still here spreading good will. I not only explained the episode that happened, I said, now, if this is good will, I'd like to listen to the interpretation of goodwill. I says, to me, we're not spreading good will, we're making enemies. I says, your gonna have so many GIs getting killed and you'll find them on the street in the gutter. And I sent this letter to The Stars and Stripes and the Star-Times in St. Louis here. And I was immediately transferred. I wound up in Pisa, from Naples to Pisa, within one week, see. The story was never printed either way, see. They would never print it. [But it used what] I'd seen in Italy, in Naples, see. And I says, "I am Italian." And I says, "I can't see these guys in these uniforms manhandling these old people." I says, "I just don't believe in it." And I says, "Tell those marshals or MPs regardless of who they are," I says, "If we're over here to spread good will, let's spread it, if we're not, let's get the hell out of here and go home." But it struck home. Oh, did it strike home. It must

have struck home because they transferred me out of there in a big hurry. I mean they didn't even mess around, see. I had to go to Pisa. And I was transferred to a first aid station. All by myself. I didn't have nobody else. No Army camps, no nothing. There wasn't an Army camp within ten miles of Pisa. I had a store right in town, I had my own bedroom and everything else, see. And that's...well, I stayed there until I come home. I liked it. Oh, hell, I was my own boss. There wasn't nobody that would bother me. I was detached from the General Hospital in Rome and I was detached up to Pisa. I used to drive to. . .was detached to the place where the first aid station was named the town of [Tour De Lago]. That's where it was at, [Tour De Lago]. Then I had to go back to Pisa. There was an installation at Pisa, which, by eighteen Columbia commoners from [Tour DeLago]. I used to have to drive back to the installation to eat. I used to have to drive back, they even give me a vehicle so I could drive back and forth to eat, see. I used drive back to eat and driving back. Drive down and eat dinner, and drive back. I stayed at the first aid station I would come to. Oh, I had the Life of Reilly there. But you see, over there you couldn't leave a vehicle, let me tell you. They'd steal it and dismantle it and they...and they had a garage there in [Tour DeLago] and I went down to see this guy and I talked to him and I says, well, I says, the government isn't willing to pay to keep the vehicle here, I says, but this fellow he had five gallons of gasoline and gasoline was selling for [unintelligible] a gallon, see, in fact, if you could buy it. But five gallons of gasoline to him was, gee, he says. Sergeant, [unintelligible] five gallons of gasoline. That was simple. All I had to do was get five gallons of gasoline in the can from the depot and just left it setting there in my jeep and I talked to the driver, I says, "You see that can there? Take it out. Bring the empty one back. See." That's the rent. That's what I paid my rent for, to keep my vehicle there. But he was tickled to death getting that gasoline. I mean, in American money it was about two dollars a gallon. So that was worth a fortune to him. He was good to me. If I needed a jeep in the middle of the night to go somewhere, I wanted to go somewhere, I'd go down there and he'd get up. He'd come down, unlock, let me in, get the keys. And I could wake him up to put it back again, he never said a word. He was tickled to death. But writing that letter is what did that, you know. I guess I wrote too many letters, you know. Before that, I was down in Naples and, uh, there was another one to the Star-Times and to Star and Stripes and neither one of them got printed. But I was standing on a corner in Naples, Italy, and this I'll never forget either, and the war just ended, you know, and during the war, you know, everything is relaxed and we just got a brand new shave, this must have been a brand new shave tail. He guided me on the shoulder and says, "Sergeant?" and I says, "Yeah?", and he says, "Come along with me." And I says, "OK." He says, "I want you to come along." We had about eight or nine guys following us. So we went and we wound up with [unintelligible] "What's the deal?" and he says, "You're all under arrest, sir." And I says, "For what?" He says, "Failure to salute an officer." And they had us all lined up, you know, and the MPs grabbed us, you know, and I said, "what's the [unintelligible]" and they said, this is a summary court martial, line up right in line now. So finally when my turn come, everybody's been there is guilty, they fined 'em. I forget what it was, see. They were fined a hundred lires, two hundred lires, you know. And there was a major sitting there and finally he says, "Your name and rank?" and I says, "Sergeant Favignano." He says, "You are charged with failure to salute an officer on the street," He says, "Guilty or not guilty?" And I looked at him and I says, "Not guilty." Jesus Christ! He says, "What'd you say?" I said, "Not guilty." He says, "What do you mean you're not guilty?" I says, "Where I come from, you're not guilty until proven guilty." And I says, "You say I failed to salute an officer." And he says, "That's right." And the MP is sitting there and he says, "Raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in testifying against this GI?" The

MP says, "Yes, sir." He says, "What's the charges?" and I says, "Failure to salute an officer on the street and I look at him and I said, "Major, I want that man arrested." And he says, "For what?" I says, "He committed perjury against me," I says. "I've never seen that man before in my life until I just seen him on this chair." It was all of a sudden thing and he turns around and he says, "Is that right MP?" And it was a brand new MP, green as they made them. He says, "That's right." He says, "What did you do it for then?" He says, "Well, he was sent here to testify." And the MP says, "Sergeant, let's talk it over." And I says, "Talk it over, hell. That man committed perjury against me, I want him arrested and charged with perjury." And I says, "I want to follow it through, see." And he says, "Where is the lieutenant who arrested you?" And I says, "I don't know where the hell he's at." I says, "You go out and find him." [unintelligible] and nobody else. And he says, "Wait a minute," and he goes out and he comes back and he says, "I can't find him." And I says, "Well, I can't find him either." And he talked and he talked and he talked and I says, "OK Major, I am going to tell you one thing. The only reason I would drop the charge against that boy is that he's new and he's green." I says, "I've been over here too long. I'm waiting to go home anyway." But I looked at him and I says, "You're smug, buddy." I says, "Regardless of what they tell you to do, you know what you're doing before you do it." I says, "I could put you away for eight years or better for what you just did. And you're not acting orders when you commit perjury." And that major sat there with his mouth wide open. I turned around and I walked and I slammed out of there. I went right back to barracks and I sat down and I looked at all the other pieces of paper and I says, you know, I stood there and this is what I said: "A man could come over here with a clean record and," I said, "Then when you watch of these boys over here going bad." I says, "You come over here with a clean record and fight like hell to keep it clean. But," I says, "You get some two bit officers that will drum up and trump a charge against you. Once a GI gets one mark on his record, them he don't give a damn. Then it goes to two or three or four or five." So I says, "What these officers are doing is really making these guys what they are." I says, "How can a man keep a clean record if you got officers doing what they're doing?" And I gave them the whole story, just what happened to me, see. And I says, "The Provost Marshals in Naples, Italy (thumps desk)." Boy, woooo, that was never printed. Both of the instances happened both together. I mean, that's the reason I got my ass out of there. I said to them, how the hell they kept it out of the Star-Times in St. Louis, I don't know. Because my wife watched out for it. I wrote to her and I told her, watch for it. I guess they would have too much static about it if the general public would read it, see. But those things did happen and I just couldn't see it...maybe, they used to call me fanatic over there. But I mean it was right, John. It just... you do things, you do the way you believe. I mean, I was over there all that time, I mean, I didn't play around with the army. I went in to the National Guard in 1938. That was long before the war was ever started up. And I started and I was a young fellow. The little extra added income that I got every few months that was twelve dollars would help out, you know. I mean, I was just married and three dollars, four dollars more a month was a lot of money. You got a dollar a night, see. And that was a lot of money back in those days. And I stayed with the National Guard clear up in to 1940 when they mobilized the National Guard. They sent them to Fort, to Little Rock, Arkansas. And if you remember right at that time, they called them in for a year. That's when that song came out, "I'll Be Back In A Year And A Day," remember that? They wrote that song, "So long, dear, I'll be gone for a year, I'm in the army now. I'll be back in a year and a day." Well, I was posted at Little Rock, Arkansas for one year. Shortly before we'd been mobilized, I talked to my kid brother into joining. So, of course, your pay back then was thirty bucks a month. I was raising two children see. So I was discharged for the convenience of the army,

see. They didn't want no married men because they didn't have no allotments, no anything then, see. But my kid brother stayed. So that was in November they were drafted. They were mobilizing, it was in November. We went down there and they was getting ready to come back. We went down there right shortly before they was getting ready to come back. Well, it was in December that they went down. That's right. They was due to come back in the middle of December of '41. And we went down and they was already getting there can [?] and started tearing it down, see. And we'd visit my kid brother down there. And he came on back and he told my mother he'd be coming home in a couple weeks and then they bombed Pearl Harbor on the seventh day of December. Well, that put the squash on everything, see. That year, it done extended into four or five years, see. My kid brother, he stayed in. Of course, he was in, well he went into the National Guard in 1939. [unintelligible] he came back in '45. I went back in, like I say, of course, I would have given everything in the world to get back with the old outfit, you know, because I with them so long, I mean, I knew them well, but there was no chance. But the kid brother, he was discharged in '45, yeah. Then he went back into the National Guard and well, that's it. Then when I left the National Guard they founded what they call the State Guard. I went with the State Guard, see. And I was appointed officer. I was appointed lieutenant by governor...who the hell was the governor at that time? [looks through papers]...let's see what's the governor's name was...let's see...honorably discharged...I've been around...honorably discharged...I was made corporal, sergeant, first sergeant... Governor Phil Donnelly, second lieutenant, infantry, appointed by the state. Another honorable discharge. That's the one I got from the National Guard when I went into actual duty. That was on the, let's see, twenty third day of September nineteen hundred and forty. I been there, John. Then I went back on the National Guard again when I came out of the service. Went into the reserves, see. And, uh, let me think...