

NORTHERN MICHIGAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

not very informative
ITALIAN-AMERICAN COLLECTION

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DEVINE BARASA MARY JANET(Interview conducted 4/23/82 Ishpeming)

Indexer: Faye Oja

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Janet Barasa Devine Interview Ishpeming, MI 4-23-1982

JBD: This is the picture of my grandfather and his first son ? Barasa and his son Bernard who later became a judge in Chicago. This a picture of the two Markenney boys Napolen and Charles, thats ah ? father.

RM: Right oh

JBD: And I this I think is a picture of the Shevado family but you can easily identify it because I believe there are seven girls there although the baby may be a boy

RM: Oh, Oh, Oh, No No, No No, you know what this is ok this is the Lisa family from Calumet,

JBD: Is it?

RM: Yes, she is still alive she is 98 years old, Angela. And they had seven girls and one boy and these two were born in Italy and they were from Kidma San Martin Kanadese and he was the council up there, he was the first council 1895.

JBD: Wasn't the mother ?

RM: Uh huh.

JBD: Really ?

RM: What's interesting the eyes of the girls and the mother come out in her today.

JBD: They do?

RM: Yah.

JBD: All the the families say I look just like my grandmother.

RM: Oh really?

JBD: The whole family says that.

RM: Yah so this is a Lisa. And we got a picture of this.

JBD: Well now this family I can't identify.

RM: You want to mark this?

JBD: Yes, I think we'd better cause um.

RM: What's interesting is why would you have this picture?

JBD: See my father kept, they knew them, they were freind they must have been.

RM: See because he came up in 1873, I think.

JBD: Well I think these people were all friends.

RM: They all came very early.

JBD: They were very close. All these people.

RM: There was also a Lisa who ran a bakery in Negaunee.

JBD: I know that one. But I don't think that is the same family.

RM: Not the same family?

JBD: I don't think so. Ah this is the two Degara girls. I know them by the picture. Ah this one is Lucy and Katherine. Ah they had only two daughters. And ah now this family I can't identify but they are obviously ah connected there.

RM: Uh huh, want to keep the things, you know as we go through some of these like this one all of a sudden it comes together.

JBD: Now this one I can't identify I think it may have been my oldest aunt. This is my father's picture.

RM: Do you mind? Well wait a minute ah here it is. Now your freind now this is Burasa March 25, 190something Louise Vaso.

JBD: I don't think I recogize that name. Daso, Daso I don't know who she is. That iws my father's picture.

RM: Now who was...

JBD: Because my father was a third child.

RM: And he is Peter? OK so there were three children?

JBD: Six

RM: Six children.

JBD: Three girls, the girls there is only one girls alive, and she is Carmen, the others die very

young. Forty-three and in there forties. Now I had a awful lot of these kind of papers. But I gave them to, I gave most of them to my Aunt Carmen because, well mmy fathers you see my father was the last one up here they were all gone and when the family died, he got all the papers and he saved them. There are some in Battle Creek and my sister has some of them and I had stacks of they made agreements with the Marquette countless numberless agreements and I gave them all to Carmen, because uh of the, my uncle brings children, Pat children see now there is one, that is typical. With the Marquettes they made these agreements. But ah most of them were...

RM: This goes on just different things of property.

JBD: That's what made it about that they would buy like ah two forties and they would agree not to sell without the other one. That's mainly what the agreements where about.

RM: Well this was with Paul, Napoleon, Charles.

JBD: Yah

RM: This, might have been made after he died.

JBD: My grandfather?

RM: Well wait a minute, no after Marquette died.

JBD: He died about 1918, yes that man, well they had there were stacks of those and I gave them to my Aunt Carmen because they had no significance. They had an awful lot of these, too that I gave to here they were tax deeds that they got you know for tax sales of property.

RM: Oh I see they bought property through these.

JBD: And they are all hand written.

RM: Stocks update, 48 acres, city of Marquette, 1087, so they own property down in Marquette as well.

JBD: They own property all over, they just grabbed. They had government grants and tax sales that they bought and they just bought. And apparently Mr. Marquette and by that time you see my grandfather was a son in law they just bought all kinds of property hoping that it would iron ore on it.

RM: I see cause I noticed going through the deed book down in the court house I was trying to find when they first showed up. And Marquette first showed up in 1867 starting to buy property. And then Burasas, I never found the first time but I sort of knew when he was here. I was trying to trace back when they arrived.

JBD: I have got one deed a copy of one deed, now that is my father's birth certificate, 1883. See

he would be 99 if he lived.

RM: Yah, ?

JBD: ? that's why I wanted the original copy. And this what year would this be?

RM: This was Marquette, so it would be 1875.

JBD: They did an awful lot of that horse trading. Where do you see the date?

RM: Right here 1875, quarter after ten in the morning.

JBD: Uh huh and all hand written it isn't something?

RM: Now see what I did when I found the ? so the Barasa then have relatives in Spain did they say where they were located.

JBD: My cousins would know but I wouldn't they went. My cousin Katherine and Buddy went with ? On that trip.

RM: Now this is the cousins that live in Chicago, Ok I'll have to get addresses on them.

JBD: Oh yes I'll give you those. Ah let's see now I came to the United States in 1864 and went ? Massachuttes.

RM: That's when they working on the railroad?

JBD: Yah, I want to write this down because ah. There was a building there where the post office is and was turned off and the saloon was in the basement of that building.

RM: Oh I see. Did they live in the building?

JBD: Ah no he lived in the next, his house was next door. And all the houses on the other street there well there must have been a dozen houses. And the next block up the Marquette's owned most that block.

RM: Where St. Paul's church is?

JBD: Where St. Paul's church is they own most of that block.

RM: And then what did they do, did they own houses that they rented out?

JBD: Uh huh they wered all rental properties. Ah that house next to St. Paul's church that was Napoleon Marquette's house. The house next to that, Bill's father didn't live there but he owned it and rented it. And all the way through there.

RM: I see. Now there thing in the paper, a newspaper clipping, that said that there is a city building in Negaunee that was were Marquette got his house.

JBD: Well maybe that was before time.

RM: Yah that would have had to come down by 1915 I think, that is when they put the building up. Some fell and he died in 1900.

JBD: Yah then you see Barasa own all a cross the street.

RM: So then?

JBD: With no security just there word and they always paid. That they were, they trusted eachother and they always paid nobody got left out. And I think lent that man thousands of dollars to get him started. And my father said they always did that if an Italian wanted five hundred or a thousand dollars to buy a peice land he go to the rest of the group and they would just take it out of their pocket and give it to him. No deed no security nothing.

RM: And then we have in 1889 they got involved in the Barasa Iron Mining Co. Now do you any thing about that, about the company?

JBD: Uh, yes and this the property that we still own.

RM: And then a company I guess was started to work the mine.

JBD: Yes that's right, uhm, and then they went, ah yess I can tell you a little bit about it now, it is coming back to me. They went down ah they sunk a shaft ah they went as far as their money would go. the iron ore awfully deep there in that ? They never reached it, I forget how many...

RM: The first time they supossedly got into quick sand and swampy soil. And then they had to move in 1897 they sunk a new shaft and that was in solid ground. And then through the 1890s the reports we saw said that everybody hoped that this would be a big strike. Then I though it ended in 1890 but a student came in and said that in 1893 they took out 1800 tons of ore. In 1906 t was still operating. So when did the mine close down?

JBD: In what was it? 18what. The way the family has told me is that they simply ran out of money it was going so deep the shaft was going so deep that simply couldn't keep going.

RM: And they couldn't get to the rich ore before the money ran out. So they were still operating in 1906, now.

JBD: That was there big hope you know. But they just didn't have that they spent an awful lot of money on that they had a tremedous offer from of one of some company and they didn't sell. Which they should have done.

RM: Yah they seemed I noticed they were hoping that it was going to be.

JBD: That is a peice of property was the apple of my grandfather's eye. He built a little cottage there and on Sundays the family that was were they went and spent Sundays at a picinic in his little cottage. The whole family they'd go with the horse and buggy and spend the whole day there. And it was just like as if we went to Lake Michagome or something else. That was there outing for Sundays.

RM: Now did he do anything any farming out there or anything?

JBD: He planted some potatoes and my father planted potatoes there too. And um when I was young and there was the depression my father put in a bunch potatoes and we got all kinds of potatoes out of there. For the whole family. And the groung was good. And of course it is a marvolous mushroom patch. And if you like dandilions it is the greatest place in the world for dandilions. I always went there. And I'd go with my father and pick and usually I haven't gone in the last few years cause my husband isn't well. But I could easilu eat a bushel of dandilions.

RM: Let's see, then we have ok

JBD: Now uh let's see Paul has a daughter still living in Florida, I do have here address. And Duncan died very young, they say he committed suicide, so I don't know I just get the idea that you know that uhm I don't know.

RM: Now these three tend to show up in pictures.

JBD: Now Paul's daughter that lives in Florida he died very young and he left Marshala and a son Paul and that son died at eighttteen and Marsella lived then with the Barasa and they raised her. Carmen raised, by that time my grandmother was dead. Carmen raised Marsella.

RM: Now how long did your grandmother ? you know it was years you said you lived till she was fifty-two so when did she die?

JBD: I don't know the year she died but we could figure that out from the time that she was married and the time she was born you have that. So it is on the tombstone down in the cemetary yah that's right.

RM: I think I have it I think I have her..

JBD: It is on the tombstone there.

RM: 19 yah someplace I have the, Ok how bout the other's the other brothers.

JBD: Well Charles thats Bill's father he died um I suppose in 43 yah and Napoleon died young he had cancer he was only 58 and of course Paul died young and Duncan died young.

RM: Now in terms of ... oh and the others did and they had children.

JBD: Duncan never married.

RM: Now with the Barasa's did now who were all the children?

JBD: You mean of my Uncle Bernie ok.

RM: Yah his brothers and sisters. We have we had Maryanne.

JBD: Well there was um, Aunt Josie was I think she was the oldest Joshephine and then there was Bernerd, and next comes my father Peter, and then Carmen, then a son called Paul, I not sure is Paul was younger or older then Carmen, but it doesn't really matter, and um then ah my Aunt Babe, what was her, Saraphine, she always hated it that's why we called her Babe, her name was Saraphine and that's the six children.

RM: And Joshephine was named after her mother?

JBD: No her mother's name was Maryanne. Maybe her grandmother, possibly. Uhm I think it possibly that um the grandmother Marquette was named Joshephine.

RM: Yah ok that's where it comes from.

JBD: I think now that is possible. They were beautiful women, here's my Aunt Joshephine. And she died when she was forty-two. And my Aunt Babe died when she was forty-eight. I don't how Carmen managed so long.

RM: Do you know when Bernerd died?

JBD: Yes, he didn't die so long ago, let's see, my father Peter died in 1962. And my Uncle Bernie died somewhere close there. Uhm all I know it was probaly a couple years after or a couple years before, I don't know exactly. I can always find out from my cousins. And then Paul died somewhere around aout 1955 or 56 I'm not sure when it was.

RM: And then what did they ? want to do here?

JBD: Well huh she do anything she got married, she had three husband. And then Bernerd was a lawyer and then my father was a plumber. He was in the plumbing business when he was younger later on he didn't do that. Later on he built a gas station and he ran that. And that's right across from the playgrounds in Negaunee.

RM: And then Paul?

JBD: Uhm Paul was in the war and he was injured and he had a government pension and he never really did very much you know after that he wasn't quite well.

RM: World War 1

JBD: Yah right. And of course Carmen she went to Chicago and she married a man called Bonsly. And Babe married Dr. Hiraas and they lived in Negaunee he was dentist there. Hiraas.

RM: Now you remember things that your father could have told you about you know his father. For instance did your father speak Italian?

JBD: Yes

RM: They spoke Italian.

Janet; Uh huh and my Aunt Carmen speaks Italian very well, my Uncle Bernie spoke very well.

RM: And then did you?

JBD: No. My mother was French. My cousins, at least my cousin Katherine can speak Italian, her mother was Italian. And of course my Uncle Bernie went to Chicago and he got deeply involved in the Italian community and he fought most of their cases and he even fought cases up here for the Italian people. He fought in one mining case for a family in their ground caved in in Negaunee and the CCI were responsible for ? mined and he came up here and fought that case. Then um most of the things that my father told me about my grandfather were amusing stories you know. Like the time that he sat a wasp out at the farm. Things like that, you know. And of course I remember my grandfather very well you see cause I was the only grandchild around here. Probaly I was only two or three and every time I come to his house he'd take my hand and we'd go down Iron street he'd buy me doll buggy and once a great big velvet bonnet things like that. He must have been quite old then cause he didn't live very long after that. But see if he died in 1920 then I was only seven when he died. And I remember my grandmother too. But of course I was very small. He was a little man with a bad temper. Yes he had a very bad temper. Even ? the wrong way and he'd go zoop.

RM: And he then his occupation was a saloon keeper or?

JBD: Well I'd say mostly he land owner, he owned all these houses and he collected the rent.

RM: He was kind of into a number of things then.

JBD: Yes, uh huh.

RM: The saloon was just a place to kind of hang out.

JBD: Well I think he did make money there.

RM: Well yah, but I mean just kind of an office.

JBD: And um my father always tells always tells me that in that time the whiskey came in barrels. 50gallon barrels and that's the way it was in the saloon. And they all had faucets on them. I don't know that he ever um worked at a job.

RM: At least he started out as a black smith, but then I guess quickly went into property and collected rents.

JBD: Uh huh, that's he did. Because after he died, we the family still had all that propety. They finally divided up the houses among them and each got some. And then of course they all sold them off afterwards. Cause noboby wanted to be satdled with that property was getting old and my father took his he remodled it and made into a nice house and sold it. And some of the others, I don't know what they sold theirs for, but my father got alittle more because he fixed it up.

RM: Do you have any pictures of those houses or anything.

JBD: I don't have any pictures

RM: They might have them in Chicago.

JBD: I doubt that very much. Maybe some old photographer might have them, like ? archiology, they have a lot of old pictures.

RM: I was also wondering if we got to hear about your grandmother?

JBD: No.

RM: ? Sole collection of historical society bought, that they had hundreds of boxes of these glass negatives and they have some catalogs that might be worth going through, you know to see if her name is there.

JBD: Yes. It is possible that ex-husband might have a picture. She collects a lot of stuff too and if you want her addresses I would be glad to give them to you.

RM: OK

JBD: ? going to be up next weekend, they all come up, you see they own a summer home in Little Lake, an island. My uncle Bernie's children and they all come up there.

RM: You see the thing is that I am going to be going down to Chicago.

JBD: She turned Catholic. She was swedish, his mother was swedish. They were very religious poeple and always have been as far as I know.

RM: Do you know where Bernard went to school?

JBD: University of Michigan.

RM: He went to the University of Michigan. Then was he in the Copper, something about him being in the Copper Country because newspapers tend to make him rather a famous personality, though the Calumet news always writes about him. He was from down here but I think he lived up there.

JBD: I don't know that he ever lived up there, but like a tell you, all the Itailians got in trouble went to him. He had a michigan license to practice. He also had an Illinois license. When they got in trouble, he would go to bat for them. As far as I know, when he graduated school, he went to Chicago and stayed there. He married there.

RM: Did he get into politics?

JBD: Yes, he was in politics. He was a judge for a number of years in the state of Illinois. He knew all the famous characters. He bought and owned some land over in Cicero. They didn't live there though. He was well known among the Itailians.

RM: Did you remember any of these people talked about any of the societies?

JBD: My father never belonged to any of them. I think my Uncle Bernie did in Chicago. I think he belonged to Knights of Columbus, Sons of Italy. Those ones up here. I'm sure he did.

RM: Did you ever know them to go back to Italy for trips or anything?

JBD: My Uncle Bernie's family was the only family that did.

RM: Did any of them come over from Italy?

JBD: No, not that I am aware of.
(End of tape)