

*informative about
Soo, Canada*

NORTHERN MICHIGAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

ITALIAN-AMERICAN COLLECTION

OH-82

PEANOSI, Leno (interview conducted 8/3/83 in Sault Ste. Marie)

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Interview with LENO PIANOSI, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.
August 3, 1982.

Parents came from Pesaro on the Adriatic Sea; borders were open to Canada and closed to the US; dada was a stone mason by trade; they were looking for farmers in Canada or people to work in mines; he came and signed to work on a farm; worked his way as a mason for the Algoma Steel Mill; came in the very early 1920's (1921-1922); after the WWI; in Italy the fascist party was becoming strong; his dad was not interested; uncle in NY came in quota; dad came because he had relatives in Timmons and went to SSM, Ont by quota also; dad came a year prior to ma coming over; she came with daughter 1½ yr old; on boat for 30 some days; luggage fell around in steerage class; worked off indentureship thru relatives; landed in Montreal with the Fr language; very tough; taking trains to SSM;

Social activities; community in Soo Ontario; around the steel mill; lives in tenement houses; there were no cars; community known as the West End; adjacent to it was the Finnish community; you'll find a lot young at that time its who could speak Finn; Pianosi spoke Finn; spoke Finn and Italian in the different houses as kids; he learned wood carving from a Finnish lumberjack; born 388 Albert Street; dad was a hard worker; built the home and did well until he Depression and then lost everything; then to a 3rd story apartment; Depression ruined them; they had more fun then; parties once a month, men in kitchen playing cards women in living room talking; maybe five families with all of their kids; during Mardi Gras had parties; to someone else house; kept heritage; Marche; then the closeness of being Italian was important; it did not matter if you came from the same neighborhood; north and south Italy fought each other; industrial vs rural; south was poor outside of the resort areas; in Soo, Ontario it put people together; during that time at a party: Italians made their own wine; each one brought a bottle AND THAT WAS THEIR Saturday evening out; very few bars in the West End; very few old timers patronized them; they had their own wine; very few taverns had wine until a few years back; activities kept as a group; first watermelons came on July 1; people waited for them; 25¢ a head; quiet a few trucks delivered wood and quite a few houses burned wood; Riconeroni near our place; put benches on the truck and take families out blueberry picking; picked for 2 days and then they were canned; once a yr it picnic: very seldom went by water; usually went to a farm: big Italian picnic; everybody cooked for these; every put everything out; the culture was kept there because of the language barrier; discrimination; up to 1939 this was common; terrible discrimination; on the street; one of the big reasons why he left Canada; 1939 Leno was 12 yrs old knock on door; Luigi his father belonged to the Canadian Legion; Louie you have a 30 odd 6 and a 16 gauge shotgun; Italy was the enemy; you have to register once a month; he was a Canadian citizen at the time; tremendous impact made on Leno; first chance he would get out; her brother a prisoner of the Canadian in sort of a way; discrimination on jobs, if you were a Jones you got the job if not you were a Pianosi you did not get the job; all postal jobs were Eng or Scottish; mail carriers and all civil service jobs- Italians never got into to these jobs; I can remember one top day everyone of the families make sure that the kids go to college; there a few more doctors, lawyers they did exactly what the Jewish people did and sent their kids to school; discriminated against as they will go without meals to make sure their kids are going to school; "I don't know of a family today who does have a kid in college." it is done automatically: dentist and a doctors; they continue this today;

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The Werst End had super ball teamd- it had its good times and its bad times; ball tam a hockey team; It team plays the Eng team; ball park was filled due to prejudice; kept crowd there; it went on in the schools discrimination; it jappened for the Finns and the French; how in schools: in our schools we were fortunate; Anna McCray was a helper of the Italians; she as down at th courts and would represent the kids; he would be able to translate; McFadden School; teachers did not want to go up there because it was known s a tough area an industrial area; sher boguth the shin pads and jerseys and mothers put the names on ; school board always found some omoney to pay ofr th therese things; there was also St. Mary;'s School right in the West End; 99% Itains were Catholic and attended Holy Rosary Church now OL Mt Carmel'; brought up the stinga of the Mafia; terruible term theyw ere never in Marquette; in exitsence. Families are very close; get to together every week even today; they all visit with their kids; affection and closeness.

Came to Soo, MI in 1948- nicknamed the "Kid"; treated well; well accpeted by everyone; onm leave one time, crossing on the ferry he was a Canadian inm the American army; immigrant offical you're a Can in the Amer army; "What would happen if Canada and the United States went to war?" You'd be a deserter as far as I am concerned." "Well if you feel that way about it I'd move your office because I am a pretty good shot." Fellow went wild, searched the car and the whole thing.1 I enjoyed the service. I "I can;t remember a time in the 34 years I have been in the United States where I feel I have been discriminate againats." In Canada I was an appreciatice, the first to go to Toronto, first in the class, plaque, brick laying, presented this at assembly. One person from SSM refused to congradulate me and he was English and in the class. This is what they were brought up with. July 12, "King Willy's Day" Wm of Orange, Orangemen on the white horse and parade as far as the Fr church but never into the West End. They would throw small liquor bottle ofrom the horses. As kids they would pelt them with rocks. This was always inbred in you, both were afraid of the other. This continued until education took over. I went home from school no one could help me with my homework. She understood My mom understood quite weel because of TV, she spoke with a accent. I spoke It all the time at home, Finnish with the enighbors and English at school. Few teacher and large classes. My dad would read but the works were in Italian; they would read pocket novels they would pass them; raggtly boos; no cultural books were sold; the books were brought right from Italy; some would come with two books and then pass them; kept going round and round. Old pocket novel, tape on them; read to the kids. We listened to Caruso records; qfather made the klids sit and listen to the Traviatat opera and then they wcould go out and play. Dad trying to induce culture into us. We thought the records were great.

Ice box- people had a little box outside the window; didn't buy that much. Ate macaroni every day and I disliked it. Soup pretty near every day. Breakfast-small meal: boil milk, break bread into it and little sugar and that was breakfast. Got better corn flakes- real treat. Did not eat much more. Teacher would ask the kids what they had for meals; Leno's father gave all the kids a little bit of wine mixed with water; I thought ske was going to have my father arrested. This was when he was 5 years old. Made a fuss, dad was good friends with the principal and gave him a bottle of wine. King Edward School for two yrs in an predominately English and Finnish district.

Glad to get back to the Wset End.

Italians in both Soos: they came the same way; some worked in the mines of Ishpeming, majority came to dig the canal; grandfathers came for the power canal; Jim Rafaele, powder monkey- dynamiting, he brought a lot of people with him, Jim wrote the letters to Italy, did the paper work. Lot of Its could not read nor write. Went to the 3 grades- tersa. which would have been an 8th grade education. Lot from farm areas and could not read and write. Took care of taxes, legal problems. He was the "godfather" on Soo, MI. They could trust him. One of the founder of the Columbus Hall.

West End- section formed the Marconi Hall; there only five original female members and I think only 6 of the men; got together and started a club. A person from this side(US) got them started- ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Louie Vincenzetti (1091 maple, 632-1232) he helped them organize, pooled money, rente firstrented a ha l. Rule- had to be from upper Italy; discrimination in their own ranks; anyone from below Rome could not belong. Even married to someone from the north you could not belong; Alta Italia or. Then they formed the Sons of Italy, Verdi Hall. Two halls- very competeive. Politics one and other way. Presently in Italy the north is alsmost socialist, Torooiino; lower is still fascist. Italians today are very party conscieous. The clubs were formed and built, members did the work.; remember my dad we were just small, dad a rick layer and so were his friends, carpenters. They same thing happened in Soo, MI, brought the enempty lot, dug the basement. All donation labor. To help with finances, Charlie DePaul, gave the money interest free and pay when you could. Eught yrs ag Eight yrs agop redomdeled; younger members are getting the remodeling; let the younger members do the changes. In SoomI the culture is ending because there has been no fur nher immigrartion. No first generetaion are left in Soo, MI. There is in Soo, Ontario. There are a few peple. Same asge as my children- they came from Italy; the cutlrltue us alive and culture be ing rechaged; man 25 yrs old can make salame as good as grandfather; in Soo, MI have 4 salame makers and 15 make sausage. Monthly group gets to gether at the Col hall and they make sausage, divide the cost and the sausage. Make 200 lbs. Send the saussage to widows and others who do not have it. This has been going on for years. This isd a well kept secret because when people hear they are making sausage everyone wants some. Members who do the work. Gave Leno 10 lbs of saussage; surprised, member said it was for the time he wasn't there and Leno was and made it; many people are filtering in learning; many non-Italians are involved in the spsghtetti dinners, 15-20 peopl and 10 are not Italians; they are not Italian. they come to the pparties. they have been there afor yrs.

Side Two

We have to very careful who cooks; 400-500 people; every palate is didfferent; formula for 20 yrs but it is a standard recepit; Mike Poglese cooks to the formula but varies and he is told about it. Green peppers do not belong. Meatballs do not varry; 300 lbs of meat; seasoning is made by the gallons; once in a while they get carried away with some extra hot peppers; even I would like some extra peppers; start on Tuesdays for Thurs dinner; large pots of sauce; meat balls are made on Tues; browned and refrigereted; sauce has approximately 8-16 hrs of cooking; meat balls go into the sauce for a while;good 7-8 hours with the meatballs; when people ask we do not tell them or we would not be in business; Leno does not know how to do the sauce; Mike Sauro is training someone to do; nicknamed "Fat Mike." he is incharge

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is incharge of the sauces; spaghetti dinner involves 30 people; this is all voluteer; only reibursement is a big party at the end of the year and also you can eat that night; lot of non-Italians and good friends come together; Pat Brighton comes like so many; these are the people you should meet; I tried a year ago; we get leeters challenging us from OH and CA saying they have the best meatballs and spaghtetti; we could have a meatball-spaghetti jamboree;

In the old days this lodge was the best etertainment for the people; now the young people have other forms of entertainment;

Sausage makers: Al Delmonte; also a lot of old timerts who Leno does not know; you had to have a dirt basement which was a perfect place to make sausage and saalme; verrybody had a hog; my aunt raised chickens next to McFadden School; Diplommat Hotel owner had goats; kids would go tend the goats; in the fall the would split a hog; traveling butcher going from house to house; he would do everything right in the basement; Guilio Longherini; he made the best salames and sauasages; Vittori, Jerry was also a traveleing burcher; usualy you had a bhog for salame and sasusage and preciutto;

Come home from school; into the cellar; all sorts of preserves: corn, ebans, br cilli; peaches, plums; dried sasusgae, salame; go down and have a snskacj; whe you thought you were poor you never knew how rich you were; at school you would trade the homemamde bread; families knew how to do with what they had; if supermakerts closed tomorrow there would be starvation; it took a lot of work; after school you worked in the garden; rows of jars; this was the winter larder; to me they are comoiing again in a sense; making head cheese; all home; only thrrew the chicken feet; would trade cornetti bread for Finn bread, family lived in the apt below;1 mutual trade.

Finnish enigbor neighborgood started on Tornot Street; and went to Huron Street and took in 4 blocks: north of that was French with the school. Come up Queen Street where the new Verdi Club is now that area was Croatian and Ukranian; Italian bordered that; Also White Russian; now it has changed; in the process you learned the other labguages; Bordering started this side of Board Street Gore- English and Scottish were onm the other side of Gore Street; Irish mixed in more with the French; never found a completely Irish community; Finns had their own stores; French had pastreis; the language barrier kept people together; I speak dialect Italian- at least three dialects; in Italy twice; don't you think you are a little old to be sopeaking the dialect? in the West End I spoke with people from all regions of Italy and thus you ear could pick up the dialects; at the picnic there were people speaking the dialect; felt good to speak Italian; keeps up with the Italian- puts the It program on Snday radio; lost in Fano- along the beach area;