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Joseph Apicerno

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Oral History Interview
with
Joe Apicerno
June 28, 1978
By Henry J. Marciano

Interviewer: Joe, how are you doing?
Interviewee: Fine, fine thank you.

Interviewer: Joe, were going to ask you a few questions to start off this interview, about your family, your parents. Can you recall what part of Italy they came from?

Interviewee: Yes, my mother and father came from Naples, surrounding Naples. My father came from a town called Carinoa, and my mother came from Roccamonvino. That's about, that's like a suburb of Naples, you know, I was never there.

Interviewer: Did they ever talk about what conditions were like?
Interviewee: Yes, my mother would say there was no electricity when she was, when she you know left to come to this
country. Things were very, very bad. And my father naturally was the same thing. He had to work, farmer, and ah, and life was struggling. And that's why my father came to this country at the age of 19. My mother was about the same age. They met here, see.

**Interviewer:** Do you recall any beliefs that they had, any religious or superstitious beliefs that they held?

**Interviewee:** Well, they, my mother would once come out with, I don't know how you would say this, the evil eye, where she would drop this oil into water and you know, they call it Malocchi. That's the only belief as far as superstitions that I recall.

**Interviewer:** Were they religious people?

**Interviewee:** Oh, yes, devote Catholics.

**Interviewer:** And so then religion must have played an important part in your upbringing when you were a boy.

**Interviewee:** Yes, sure.

**Interviewer:** How many children were in your family?

**Interviewee:** We were four boys and two girls, with mother and father you know eight, a family of eight.

**Interviewer:** Do you recall any stories or folktales your parents told you about Italy?

**Interviewee:** Yes, about the bandit some bandit there, that would help, like a Robin Hood, he would steal and then give to the poor, then he would flee into the woods and
stay there. Now, whether they were fairy tales or...

Interviewer: Did they settle originally on Federal Hill when they came to this country?

Interviewee: They both settled on T St. when they came here. This goes back to 1906. That's when they came here.

Interviewer: Why do you think they settled in Federal Hill in particular?

Interviewee: Because it was a community, an Italian community, mostly they, all the people from Italy would stay in certain sections like paisans, you know. Now the R would stay around T and R and P St.; that was their neighborhood, see, and they kind of settled there, see.

Interviewer: So in other words, the neighborhood itself was sectioned off into the different regions of Italy where the people came from.

Interviewee: Right, right, that's right.

Interviewer: That's interesting.

Interviewee: That's very interesting.

Interviewer: Where were you born?

Interviewee: I was born in Providence.

Interviewer: On the Hill itself?

Interviewee: Hum, hum, T St. That's where I was born.
Interviewer: Can you recall any things about the Hill when you were a boy growing up on the Hill what was it like?

Interviewee: Well, I could go back as far as remembering when the firemen were being pushed by horses. I was only a boy. And when there was a fire and you'd hear these horses trampling down, you know, and life wasn't too good. We had cold water flats. And I went to the Night St. School. And things were just touch and go, you know, because things weren't that great.

Interviewer: What about education? Did your parents put any emphasis on education?

Interviewee: They did. Well, they did as far as I was concerned and my brothers and sisters but during the Depression I had to leave in the third year of high school to go out and help.

Interviewer: What high school did you attend?

Interviewee: I went to Central.

Interviewer: Central High School. And what Junior High?

Interviewee: Kenyon, no Br Junior High. I went to Kenyon and then Br from Br I went to Central.

Interviewer: What kind of work? You mentioned that your father was a farmer in Italy. What kind of work did he do when he came to this country?

Interviewee: My father was very mechanically inclined. He worked most of his life. He was a car inspector for the
New York-New haven Railroad. But when he first got here he got a job in the U.S. Rubber Co. right on Eagle St. And he always held good jobs. Very good jobs.

Interviewer: Did your mother work at this time?

Interviewee: My mother never worked. My mother couldn't read or write either. That's another thing. My father was very...my father spoke good English, he wrote Italian, he spoke Italian and he even wrote English because the job he held you had to know English, see.

Interviewer: Was he the typical Italian father in the sense that he ruled his household with an iron fist?

Interviewee: Well, he held us under control. I took many a beating, I'd tell you that.

Interviewer: Do you feel this attitude should still prevail in Italian households?

Interviewee: Yes, I think it was a good attitude. I think he was a good father.

Interviewer: Was there any kind of discrimination towards Italians at that time, like your father when he looked for work.

Interviewee: Yep, my father many a time would get into fights. They'd call him W and all kind of names, especially on the Hill with the Irish, you know. And they were fighting all the way.

Interviewer: At the time when the Italians first moved in originally Federal Hill was an Irish community.
Interviewee: Irish community, and they, my father was up there at the time fighting with them you know, most of the time.

Interviewer: Were there any particular strongholds left on Federal Hill by the time the Italians moved in where the Irish still tried to control?

Interviewee: Yes, we had an Irish, not a strong one, we had a couple Irish families lived on G St. named Higgins and they were very nice people, and they were there right up to I'd say till we moved out in 1942.

Interviewer: What was the sense of community up on Federal Hill? Did families try to help one another out?

Interviewee: Very... we were like a knit... like a one family. Now we lived in a a 3- family house and there was a 3-family house in front of us. Well, especially in summertime when it was warm, you know, everybody would get together and when somebody would make something they would send some food upstairs or send it down or vice versa. Everybody would help one another. If someone was sick they would go and help. I know I remember my mother was a sickly woman and many a time she would be in bed and people from the front neighbor, you know, from the front house would

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come over and bring food, and oh, I'm tellin you, talk about hospitality, it was great. There was a feeling you don't get today. You don't get that today.

Interviewer: You don't get that today at all. What were the Depression years like on the Hill.

Interviewee: Oh, the Depression were rough. I remember, I couldn't get a job. And when I first, then I went b.. you know I was trying to get a job then I saw that I couldn't get a job, I went back to school. And I put in two more years of schooling, you know, And then I happened to get a little job and I decided to help out the family cause just my father with eight of us, you know, and my father at the time he was earning $29 a week, that was big money in those days. So I got a job in a jewelry plant. I was earning $16 a week. It helped out and that's how I got started, you know, into jewelry. But I remember people standing in line on Knight St. People that they knew there was r... there was a little relief but they were standing in line just to get flour, and a few things, odds 'n , you know, staples, you know, they would get something like that. It wasn't like relief
they pay you, they send you money like today. No way.

Interviewer: What about the Churches. Did they try to help out at all?

Interviewee: Some times, but I never heard of it.

Interviewer: What about Federal Hill House? Did they ever try to assist?

Interviewee: Federal Hill House at the time the only thing I remember they ever did for the community, they... we would go up... you don't remember the old Federal Hill House. Well, there was a roof was all fenced in and we would go there summers and play, you know, volleyball and basketball, whatever, you know, you'd go up and down and then downstairs... they were helpful in that way. But as far as, you know, oh and they had sort of a clinic for the real poor, you know, that couldn't afford a doctor, they would go there and they would take care of them. In fact I think Federal Hill House was very very good at the time.

Interviewer: What about the business district? What was it like?

Interviewee: Oh, tremendous. It was, I'd say, on a Friday night, and Saturday, you couldn't move on Federal Hill. There's so many people that would go shopping.
Business was soaring. Everybody was doing business. Push carts on Balbo Ave. which is DePasquale Ave. now. And they would be loaded with push carts and every store on both sides of Atwells Ave. down to the Holy Ghost Church were humming.

Interviewer: Was there any reason why they changed the name from Balbo to DePasquale?

Interviewee: Well, the war had something to do with it. You know when General Balbo and uh... Then, Judge DePasquale he passed away, I think they switched over. He lived nine years.

Interviewer: Can you give me a little bit more on who this General Balao was? I don't know my history...

Interviewee: General Balao was one of the a...a general in the Air Force, during Mussolini's regime. He was considered one...a top pilot. And I remember as a boy, he and 24 Italian bombers flew from Italy to Chicago World's Fair. 1936 I assume I...I'm pretty sure it's '36, and was fantastic landing over Lake Michigan and the papers played that up big. He was a hero then, at that time.

Interviewer: I see. And then because of Mussolini's regime that's probably the reason for the change of the name.
How were Italians looked upon during the First World War...not the first but the Second World War period when men went and fought in the war? How were Italians received in the army?

Interviewer: You mean like being Itlo-Americans?

Interviewee: Yes, being Itlo-Americans.

Interviewer: They uh...we were received very good...I think the only ones that were pushed around were the Japs and the Germans. Because America is say uh, we have a great Italian population, and uh, you know uh, we were treated good. I mean, I served four years in the Air Force and can't complain.

Interviewer: Do you think that the esteem of the Italians rose after the Second World War?

Interviewee: Oh yes, in fact I think the Italians today are rated top-notch. I mean they're in everything you know?

Interviewer: At the time my father mentions that on Charles St. there were certain organizations that went around collecting, they used to call it La Mana Nera or The Black Hand. Was there such a thing on the Hill also?

Interviewee: There was but we could never prove it. See? They I mean I heard stories where if a business man would
prosper, he would get a letter with a black hand. They'd demand money. Either that or you know; they would prey on their own kind until they got into other things then they left them alone. Then they went into the bigger things which is really today the Mafia.

Interviewer: What did most of the people on the Hill do for work? What kind of work were they involved in?

Interviewee: They were involved as laborers mostly and in jewelry and a you know, fruit peddlers and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Speaking about the fruit peddlers, I understand that there used to be pushcarts on Balbo Ave. Can you give me a little description of what that was like?

Interviewee: Yes, you would go there and there would be pushcarts on both sides of the street with big, big covers in case it rained. They would sell any kind of fruit and vegetable you can name, and reasonable. And you go there on a Saturday night, you get bargains galore.

Interviewer: Were there any big festivals that took place on the Hill?

Interviewee: Yes, I remember the Holy Ghost would have three or four every summer, you know, and they would...on Knight St.right near Holy Ghost they would have a band
concert there and they would have pushcarts. They were selling all kinds of exotic nuts and fruits, all of that and they would have on Gesler St. the day before they would have what you'd call the grease pole. They would have a big pole all greased up and on the top of the pole they would have a $20 bill, an Italian ham, capacol, and they would take chances at climbing and naturally full of grease you would slide down and naturally the wise guys that would get it would send the first few up there to rub the grease off and they would go up there with their hands full of sand and they would climb up. It was a lot of fun.

Interviewer: Were there any papers to write and distribute information to the Italian community, to the people who that wouldn't speak English.

Interviewee: At the time there was no paper but there was Antonio Vachon. He was just like the Voice of Italy. He would tell all the news. Every Italian family in Federal Hill would have Antonio Vachon for the news, if they wanted to know the Italian news, especially with during the war with Mussolini, when he went into Ethiopia, you know and from then on, you know, he was like a kingpin here, Antonio Vachon.
Interviewer: Before the war years, how was Mussolini viewed by Italian-Americans in this country.

Interviewee: Like a hero.

Interviewer: A hero. And then what changed their attitude towards him?

Interviewee: Well, what changed their attitude is when he hooked up with Hitler. They had a club, an Italian club right on Federal Hill called the Compardente. In other words it was more or less a Mussolini type. And as soon as Italy went into war on the side of Hitler they just closed that place right down. And all the members that belonged to that club, everyone of them were checked out by the F.B.I. and they couldn't have a radio. Oh yes, they went through a lot.

Interviewer: What about recreational facilities? Did they exist?

Interviewee: None. None whatsoever. I used to go to Valley St. Park to play ball. We didn't have a park on Federal Hill. Or Garibaldi Park, there was a little one that was broken down.

Interviewer: Isn't Garibaldi Park where there used to be a comfort station?

Interviewee: Yes, yes but that used to be way in the back. See,
now there's a parking lot there. It used to be on West Exchange and Cedar St., around there, see. But as far as recreational facilities they were bad. They had one park and we went to Valley St. park to play ball.

Interviewer: Why did people move out of Federal Hill?
Interviewee: Well, I'll tell you, we moved out for the reason that we were living in a cold water flat. There's no bathroom, just a toilet and no bath or you know, to wash up, or you want to take a bath so we moved out, and went into a better home naturally that had all those facilities.

Interviewer: Where would people go to take baths?
Interviewee: You had to go once a week, I would go to the Garibaldi park where the bath house was. Everybody would go there. There was one up Silver Lake, right on Pocasset Ave. you know where the Electrical School was, right near C and there was a Protestant Church which is down now, going down on Knight St., they would give showers. You know, I mean you could use their facilities on a Saturday.

Interviewer: You mentioned the Protestant Church on Knight St. I understand that at one time a Black minister tried
to take over that Church in years that had passed...

Interviewee: Yes, I heard something like that. I don't know too much about it. But I heard that, but he didn't succeed.

Interviewer: What was the attitude of Italians towards Blacks?

Interviewee: Well they would uh, my opinion uh, they would like to you know associate with them but they don't want to live with them.

Interviewer: Because I've noticed when I go up there, there's this sense of feeling this is strictly an Italian community; they don't want anyone else.

Interviewee: I mean, they'll be cordial, you know they can sit down and have a drink but I don't think they want to live with them.

Interviewer: I see. So when you graduated, when you went to high school, then you got out and you got a job, with a jewelry firm, what did you do after that? Did you stay in jewelry forever or...

Interviewee: I stayed in jewelry until this day. I went up. I started to climb and after about ten years, I became I learned how to set tools, you know progressive tools and stuff like that and then I became a supervisor, and that gave me a nice you know, I did all right, I got married on it, I raised a family
on it. In fact, I had a tremendous job when I left here, when I retired, you know.

Interviewer: Do you think Federal Hill would be a good community to this day to live in?

Interviewee: Yes, there's some nice houses up there now. People done their, made their houses over boy they're beautiful inside. I've been in quite a few of them. But I don't know of the business up there. It's dying, I think it's dying out.

Interviewer: Do you think the new revitalization project on At-wells Ave. will help?

Interviewee: It will help. I think it's going to help.

Interviewer: You think that will bring people back into the neighborhood? If you had an opportunity, let's say you were offered a piece of property where you could build a house would you relocate to Federal Hill?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Why?

Interviewee: No, because I got the taste of the suburbs you know and that's it. I'm more country like and I have my little garden and I like to cut grass and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Is it because all the houses are close together?
Interviewee: Yes, they were very, you know, one on top of the other.

Interviewer: Well, Federal Hill has some of the oldest houses in the city and in those days the city planners believed in putting houses close together like that. Suppose now there's a movement up on the Hill called New Homes for Federal Hill. They've helped to build some new homes.

Interviewee: Yes, I've seen some of them. Some of them are on Grove St.

Interviewer: Suppose they had it so that they could extend people's property, sort of like a suburban-type setting. Do you think then people would move to the Hill more?

Interviewee: Oh, I think so, sure.

Interviewer: Do you think there's a need for double deckers and even triple deckers up there?

Interviewee: No, I think when you start going into double deckers and triple deckers, that's what people want to get away from. We lived in a triple decker and we got away from that, you know. And then we went into a two-family house which was my father's house, you know. And then eventually we all moved
out, and everybody, my brothers and sisters they all bought their own, built their own home and now we're all spread out throughout the state.

Interviewer: Going back to the old times, do you remember any local characters, were there any local characters on the Hill?

Interviewee: Well, there were a few but not that I remember. You know there were a few characters that were strictly Italian or strictly Mussolini and boy you couldn't say a word about them. In fact, I knew one fella, he's an oldie, I don't remember his name now, he's dead now, he's an old-timer. He had a dog, he even taught his dog to say, "Do Mussolini" and he would go up and the dog would put his paw up. Yes, I saw him, I remember seeing it, sure as I'm living.

Interviewer: Does any events of life on Federal Hill stand out in your mind, do you recall anything in particular?

Interviewee: I remember we were all happy. We were a happy bunch. There were a lot of things going on. Especially during Depression, we didn't have any money but
there was big fights and we'd listen to the radio and we'd go to the beach on weekends you know with a truck. They would charge us a quarter and take us to Goddard Park and then take us back at the end of the day. We'd go together. Everybody was together. I mean, it was one happy community.

Interviewer: You said you don't see this anymore this sense of community. Why do you think that's changed?

Interviewee: Because people are getting up in the world. They made a few dollars and they all want to keep up with the Jones..I can see it.

Interviewer: Do you feel that if you take a walk up on Federal Hill, there's still this sense of community?

Interviewee: No, you don't see anybody up there now. I would walk up there on a Saturday night, you had to dodge people, you couldn't walk on the sidewalk, You go up there now on a Friday and Saturday there's no one. That's how bad it's gotten.

Interviewer: What do you think could help to cause these problems that the traffic of people is no longer...

Interviewee: Well, I think it's the uh, like my mother and father they passed away and the others, you know, the old timers, they all died. And the sons, they've moved out and they don't go back, that's what it is.
Interviewer: What about City Hall? Did the city ever try to improve conditions on the Hill when you were there for the people?

Interviewee: Never. We had a Mayor at the time, was Mayor Dunn, he was there for years I remember. Oh, I remember one character on the Hill. They called him Nick. He weighed about 560 pounds. And he went down to see Mayor Dunn one time, they had to put him on a truck. In fact, there's still pictures in the Rhode Islander came up with a picture of him the other day.

Interviewer: Joe, did you belong to any kinds of clubs or leagues on the Hill?

Interviewee: Yes, I belonged to, well the club dissolved now, the San Bernardo Club. That was a society with my father and all the paisans was in and then the sons would join and we kept it up until it dissolved after all the old-timers passed away.

Interviewer: I think I recall that. If I'm not mistaken I think that's on Courtland St. Because I remember passing by once and seeing a sign that said San Bernardo Club. What kind of Societies besides that one existed on the Hill?
Interviewee: Oh, all kinds like the A society. And all the different you know, R they had their society. Oh, I'd say there were numerous societies.

Interviewer: What about your parents? Did they belong to any societies?

Interviewee: Yes, my father, and my mother belonged to her society, with women, you know? They all belonged to some form and that's when they had the saints; when the saint of ah, like La Madonna del L that's a R one. When that day came they had a big procession and a big time.

Interviewer: What about St. Joseph's Day? Was it a big event?

Interviewee: Oh yes, St. Joe's was always, March 19th, as far as I can go back that was always a festive day---zeppole, from way back.

Interviewer: Can you describe what the zeppole are for non-Italians listening?

Interviewee: Yes, it's a round shape as a doughnut filled with white or yellow cream, and they would doctor it up with a cherry on top.

Interviewer: What about like pastry shops and ice cream parlors? Did any exist in those days?
Interviewee: Yes, DePasquale Ave., Balbo Ave. at the time, they had four ice cream parlors, one after the other, Modern Ice Cream, New Creamery, gee I don't recall the other one and you'd go there and they would give you a cone of ice cream as big as life for a nickel. My father would take us with a Model-T Ford when all the kids were small drive us up there and drive right in and he would go in there and get ice cream for all of us. And they were really heaping full cones, big, five cents.

Interviewer: Were there any famous people to come out of that neighborhood at the time you were living there? Do you recall any famous people?

Interviewee: Well, in my neighborhood I grew up with, well I wouldn't say famous, but one of them, I used to live right next door to Don Rogers Ruggieri, he's the announcer for WEAN and his brother was Fabian H he did, he spoke Italian fluently, he was with Antonio Vachon. He's in Washington now and...

Interviewer: What about doctors, politicians?

Interviewee: Oh yes, lot of politicians and doctors. They were all in the neighborhood, like Dr. C, there was Dr. Romano there. Course there all gone, you know. And D, the lawyer.
Interviewer: Did your father belong to any political clubs or anything?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: How about yourself? Did you

Interviewee: I belonged to the 13th Ward Republican P

And the President at the time was the retired Judge Thomas Paolino.

Interviewer: Whose son is now running for Councilman of the 13th Ward. One thing I notice when you go up the Hill you see a lot of old time men always talking politics. Why do you think Italian men like to talk about politics all the time? What intrigues them about politics?

Interviewee: Well, I really think, during the War, you know, that's what got them started, and they kind of followed Mussolini's era up

Interviewer: Because I notice every time I'm up there and listen to the conversations they are always along political lines. The fortunes of one politicians versus another's and what one has contributed to the community as opposed to another. Speaking about politicians, how would you assess Mayor Cianci's administration towards improving Federal Hill?
Interviewee: I think he'd assume the job. I'm a Cranston resident but if I were in Providence I would vote for him, for the man. I know Cianci, I knew the father, the Dr., he's dead, they only live up here, the mother still lives on Heather St. up here. And I think he's doing a good job; he wants to do a good job.

Interviewer: Would you say that he's made improvements for Federal Hill?

Interviewee: Yes, I think so.

Interviewer: How about accusations that he spends too much time taking care of Itlo-Americans and not enough of other communities?

Interviewee: Well, that's political backlash. I don't think so. I'll tell you he does go to every Wake, that I've been to, you'll see him there. I think it's politics. I think he's trying to impress people.

Interviewer: What about societies today? Do you belong to any clubs?

Interviewee: No. I don't belong to no organizations whatsoever. I just dropped out of it and that's it. I just don't have the time for it. You do a lot of things on your own now, family life...

Interviewer: You're retired now. What do you do in your spare time?

Interviewee: Semi-retired.

Interviewer: Semi-retired. What do you do for recreation now, in your spare time?
Interviewee: The wife and I, we take trips and you know. I putter around the yard. Course I work from nine to three so I don't have that much time.

Interviewer: Have you ever taken a trip to Italy?

Interviewee: No. That's in the future I hope. That's one trip we'd like to take.

Interviewer: What do you think of the political conditions that now exist?

Interviewee: That's what's holding me back. That's what's holding me back. I'm afraid of what's going on there. In fact, I'm not the only one. A lot of people think this and those same lines. Those terrorists--course I don't think they would bother the tourists. But, just the same, you could be an innocent bystander. You never know what could happen.

Interviewer: Do you think Italian-Americans in this country should try to assist Italy in any way to try to overcome these terrorists problems?

Interviewee: Yes, I think they should do it. If they know anything they should go ahead. Especially, my view of the late Aldo Moro, my opinion, in fact the opinion of a lot of people that I deal with, they all thought that he was a great man. They all loved the guy.
did, I really liked the guy. To me he was an honest... trying to get that government together. He was the only man who could do it. And they had to kill him. That's what hurt. There's a lot of people that would like to wipe that terrorist right out.

**Interviewer:** They said that Italians are a hard group of people to organize because of jealousies among them. How true is that?

**Interviewee:** Well, I think when the buck is on the line they'll stick together.

**Interviewer:** So in the times of trouble the Italians will stick together.

**Interviewee:** Sure they will. Getting back to Mussolini, when he sent word here that he needed gold, all the women, in fact my mother was one of them, that sent her wedding band. They melted down I don't know how many millions of dollars that Mussolini got at the time.

**Interviewer:** One thing about Italians, when they came to this country, they worked hard, some of them became successful in business, what was their attitude once they became successful? Did they still try to help
one another or did they just forget their fellow comrades?

Interviewee: Well, some did and some didn't. There were some that made the dollar and they kind of put on the high hat but there were a lot of them that just had money and they would do the same things they did as though they were broke. Very few of them were high hat and showed off; they didn't care for you. Most of them were down to earthy people.

Interviewer: You mentioned that the Hill was split up into different sections of Italian people depending on what regions of Italy they came from. Was there any rivalries among different regions?

Interviewee: No there was no rivalries. They may have stuck together, but as far as being friendly they were all friendly. They're all Italians. They didn't mean to say you came from one part of Italy and I come from the other. When the chips were down they were all Italians.

Interviewer: What did you like best about Federal Hill when you were a boy?

Interviewee: What I liked best? I liked the...you go on Atwells Ave. you could feel a sense of life on the Hill. Everybody was happy. You would go out there and
you would buy different things...life...what can I say...you felt good when you went there. People would look around, they'd talk to you, everybody was friendly. You go up there now and there's no one there.

Interviewer: What did you like least about living there when you were a boy?

Interviewee: The least? The cold-water flat.

Interviewer: Joe, in Italian life, there are several things which are very important. One is weddings, and another one is funerals. Why do they play such an important role in Italian life?

Interviewee: Well, the old saying is that you meet people at weddings and wakes and that's when everybody congestes and everybody meets different people, especially at weddings. The Italian weddings are something extraordinary. They would have two or three hundred people and different people that haven't seen each other in maybe years and they would meet and they would have a ball. Dance and drink, and they'd go on for...

Interviewer: Do you recall any big weddings that took place on the Hill when you were a boy?

Interviewee: Well, I've seen so many of them that...as a boy I would run after them and throw pennies and I would pick them up and they would go up to Holy Ghost...
and throw rice and pennies together.

Interviewer: What about the Churches? Were there any rivalries among them to try to get parishioners?

Interviewee: No, especially Federal Hill we had three Churches there. We had St. John's, Holy Ghost and the Mt. Carmel and they all seemed to survive. Holy Ghost was about the richest parish.

Interviewer: I've been told that at one time, I don't know how true this is, that St. John's, even though it was a Catholic Church, denied Italians the right to enter because it was predominantly an Irish Church at that time.

Interviewee: Well, it was at the time but I never heard that. I remember I would go to St. John's as a boy, especially around Easter time, they would have Thursday night, you would go visit the Churches and all that. In fact, I've known people that were parishioners of St. John for years when I was there, when I was a kid. If it did happen, it would go back to the early 1900's, I wasn't even born yet. But while I was up there, that did not happen.

Interviewer: Were there any famous priest that tried to do things for the community?

Interviewee: Well, one priest that had a lot of power was Fr.
Parente. I don't know if you ever heard of him.

Interviewer: Yes, I have. But I don't know anything about him.

Interviewee: Well, he was powerful. He had more power with Governor Roberts. Governor Roberts would go to Church at Holy Ghost for years. Politically, you know.

Interviewer: What about present day priests on the Hill? For instance, I heard a lot of talk about Msgr. Cavallaro.

Interviewee: I've heard he's a good man. I mean, I don't know too much about him. Because you see that's Mt. Carmel. I never go that far up. They say he's a good man.

Interviewer: Shortly we're going to be closing this interview. Do you have any last words you'd like to say about Federal Hill? Where you think it's going? What you think the future of Federal Hill is?

Interviewee: I don't know. I think Federal Hill is all done. This is my personal opinion. I don't think the Hill will ever come back. I would like to see it come back to the old time, you know, when the Hill was the Hill... the stories, the people, the stores...

Interviewer: But you don't feel it will come back. Why is that?

Interviewee: Because people will not go up there anymore. They have too many suburbs like oh plazas and malls and
whatnot, you know. They're not going back there.

Interviewer: What about like you mentioned

Interviewee: The parking facilities are bad.

Interviewer: So you think that that's a problem.

Interviewee: Oh, that is a big problem.

Interviewer: So you think they would need more parking.

Interviewee: More parking. Yes, I think maybe if they did that it would start to come back.

Interviewer: What about the specialty shops? Do you think you can acquire a buy, specialty foods and cheeses and things?

Interviewee: Oh yes, that's the best place to go. I hope they don't leave because I still go up there to buy my cheeses and oils, you know, cold cuts in some places, they have good meats up there. There's some good meat markets up there. And I have a long time friend up there, Enterprise Hardware, that I grew up with. The BKnown them for years.


Interviewee: They must be hurting now with that Hill broken up.

Interviewer: A lot of businesses at this point are closing down as a result of the ripping up of the road. But I hope that it helps to improve things there.
Interviewee: But, parking is a major factor.