

FATHER FRANCIS B. PELLEGRINO

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An Interview By

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THE FOLLOWING IS AN INTERVIEW WITH FATHER FRANK PELLEGRINO ON NOVEMBER 27, 1971 IN SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH. THE INTERVIEWER IS PHIL NOTARIANNI.

PN: Father, to begin with could you please tell me when and where you were born?

FP: Yes, I was born February 18, 1927 in Helper, Carbon County, Utah.

PN: Where were your mother and father born?

FP: Well, my father was born in Italy. John Pellegrino was born May 30, 1902 in Province of Catanzaro, southern Italy, Calabria. He came to this country in 1919, arrived on Thanksgiving Day, 1919 in Ellis Island, New York. He was seventeen years old. My mother was born in Sunnyside, Carbon County, Utah, on the 8th of December, 1910. My mother's name is Josephine Angelina Migliaccio.

PN: Could you tell me why your father came to the United States? Did he ever relate this to you?

FP: He was the youngest of the family, the youngest boy of the family, and he was too young to be drafted in the First World War. Three brothers were in the service. He had a brother here working in Utah, my uncle Bruno Pellegrino, and he came to live with him and his wife in Castle Gate, to work in the coal mines.

PN: What conditions existed in Italy that forced him to come over?

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FP: Well, economically they were very, very poor. My father tells me that it was very difficult to eke out an existence. It was just rural, agricultural livelihood and he could see no future in working as kind of a hired hand on property that didn't belong to them. He didn't have any future there like getting married and raising a family under those conditions. There was no future to it.

PN: Where did he stay when he arrived in Utah?

FP: Well, for a while he lived in Ophir-Stockton, Utah, near Tooele. He lived there with his brother Bruno Pellegrino and wife. His wife was of Italian parentage, too. Rose Rigga was her maiden name. The Rigga family from the west side. He lived with them for a while. I think then they lived here in Salt Lake for a while on the west side. My uncle worked for a streetcar company or whatever it is here in Salt Lake. An old man by the name of Manuel Campana got them the job, the old man Manuel. My uncle then worked in Park City for a while and then the prospect of making more money, the idea of getting rich quickly appealed to them so they moved to Castle Gate, Carbon County, went to work in the Castle Gate coal mine. They moved down there and had a home, my uncle and his wife, and my dad lived with his brother

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and his sister-in-law.

PN: Which coal company did they work for? The Pleasant Valley Coal Company or Utah Fuel?

FP: It would be Utah Fuel, let me think now. I don't think that it was Pleasant Valley. In those days it was--you see Castle Gate and Kenilworth are combined together now. So it would have been the old Castle Gate number one or two mine.

PN: Utah Fuel.

FP: It must have been Utah Fuel.

PN: What type of treatment did they receive from that particular company at that particular time?

FP: Well, there were no labor unions. I don't think the labor unions were established this far west. They needed their pay of course. There were not too many safety regulations as you will find out later as I tell you what happened. Very little, in fact. They went to work and they worked five or six days a week.

PN: Excuse me, what year was this that he went to work?

FP: Oh, this would be 1922, '23, 1924 in the mines.

PN: Was he involved in that 1922 strike in Carbon County?

FP: Yes, they were involved in that strike. They were involved in the strike. None of the violence actually, but I am not sure how they were involved. They were certainly on the side of the working men to

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demand better conditions I suppose.

PN: Your father, did he ever relate to you any of the instances?

FP: Not about the strikes. He was too new at that time. He couldn't speak English very well. I don't think that he was too involved, but they talked about violence in the different mining camps where there was actually violence. Like up in Kenilworth, I suppose, maybe Hiawatha, Wattis, even East Carbon and Sunnyside where the coal mines were, and Moreland. Let me see where some of the other places were. There was violence between the Italians and the Greeks. Pro and con, those that were for management, I suppose. The men at work used to call them scabs; I know that and the working men who were trying to unionize and demand their rights, as you know. The foreigners, they were the foreign element.

PN: Could you describe to me some of the instances that your father might have related to you concerning the treatment that he received while in Carbon County from the non-Italian residents there?

FP: Well, you see we lived in--I was born in 1927. Should I mention the explosion at all first?

PN: I will sort of guide you along.

FP: So in 1924, two weeks before the big explosion on

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Saturday morning, the 8th of March, 1924, many of the single men were laid off. I just recently spoke to a man who was there. A man by the name of Taylor, Jim Taylor. Jim is the janitor out in Tooele, St. Marqurite's Church in Tooele. He is a convert to the Catholic church from Mormonism. Father Sullivan just received him into the church. He is a very fine man about my father's age. He was laid off at the same time my father was laid off at the mine. He remembers very, very clearly what happened. Most of the single men were laid off. Then two weeks later they went into the mine. They knew that this black dust was there and all it would take was a spark to blow things up and that is exactly what happened. Through some reason of the lack of safety, the safety element or whatever it was, the shift went into the mine and there was an explosion early in the morning. And at least 179 men killed including my two uncles. My dad's brother was Bruno Pellegrino who was thirty-four at the time and another by the name of Bruno Mascara(?). An uncle by marriage, a great uncle by marriage married to my grandmother's sister. They were both killed. The bodies were burned beyond identification. They began to bring them out. I heard my father tell this, and my mother, too. She was

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young. They used canaries, they used white mice to go into the mine because the gas was so powerful. One man, an official, was killed; the gas actually killed one of the first to go in there. He was brought out and he died. It was days before they could actually bring these people out. They brought them to a temporary morgue in the amusement home in Castle Gate. Then it was a matter of identification. It was only by the means of dental identification, rings, watches, any personal effects, medals and that is how my dad tried, but he couldn't find his brother. It took a man by the name of Tony Fortorerro who was from Dad's home town who actually made positive identification and then his wife was living here at the time and he was brought up here for burial. The rosary, the mass were all from Cathedral parish. He was buried at Mt. Calvary. Then she died about four years later. She had a heart condition. In the meantime my father, in 1925, the next year, having known my mother's people from the old country, grandparents, married my mother on June 20, 1925. Then I was born in 1927. We lived in Helper until '32. In '32 because of the Depression we went to move to Kenilworth. It is a mining camp. It is about four miles northeast of Helper. It was one of the finest

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of the mining camps, but it was a camp. A company store, theater, confectionery, a Jackson family was in charge. They were the superintendents. There were two or three brothers. They were fine people. They were English, Episcopalians, probably masons, too. There was a company doctor, Dr. Robertson. I remember this well. I started school in this little mining town. I was only five. I started first grade in school. I went to school there for five years. Some of the conditions--I can give you a picture of the conditions in Kenilworth. My dad had worked in several of the mines. After Castle Gate, that had sort of frosted him on the coal mines, the terrible danger of the coal mines, although when I was born he was working at a place called Heiner or Peerless, New Peerless. He had worked at Spring Canyon for a while and a couple of the other mines. Well, then he got out of the mines and decided to work for the railroad. He then began to work on the Denver Rio Grand Western Railroad. He worked on the section first of all. That is because of the depression, because of the rent, the tight money situation they decided to move to Kenilworth where they were rent free in a little railroad home. My brother was a little younger than I, two or three years younger

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than I. There was just the two of us. We lived in sort of a--well, it was almost a railroad house, small railroad house. We lived for five years in this mining camp. My dad working not in the mine, but outside of the tipple area cleaning railroad cars for the D&RG. We lived here for five years sweeping off the coal and cleaning. He was never in the mine actually. We witnessed there through many of our friends: Greeks, Italians, Austrian people, Hungarians. We witnessed the power of one of those. It is sort of portrayed in the song. Not "Big John . . . [I owe my sole to] the company store"--what is the name of that song? It is a coal mining song, the story of this one day going deeper and deeper in debt and no richer and no poorer. Okay, we used script, this I remember very well. We actually used script money. It was the actual means of exchange that we used. They had a free show on Thursday night for the whole camp. The company owned the store and the hospital including the company doctor and all. Everything was under control unless you had a car to get out of Helper to do your shopping, or unless you had say a little farm house, where among friends you were completely dependent upon the establishment there. The men, I don't think were unionized at all,

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okay.

PN: What was the difference between the way you were treated by the, lets say, Utah Fuel Company and the Rio Grande Railroad?

FP: I don't know if the railroad was actually unionized at the time, were they?

PN: No, I don't believe--

FP: I am not sure. They were pushing for unionization which came a little later. Well, I can't see too much difference except that the house that we lived in belonged to the D&RG Railroad. We were rent-free, that I can tell you. We had no rent to pay for five years. This I know. It was built onto. It was an actual railroad car. The kitchen and our bedroom was a railroad car. It was moved from the tracks and brought up into town and made into a very nice little bungalow. You would never know. We were rent-free, the lights were a minimal fee, the water, I don't think we were even charged for water. Just cold water coming into the house. That and no telephone in the house. We did have a small radio. We did have a car, a small car, an old Model T or A. That was the idea of economics, I would say that, Where the people worked for the fuel, or the coal company, paid rent. There was a minimal rent of \$35.00 a month or \$25.00.

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The homes were all owned by the company in Kenilworth and they were paying rent. They ran up bills. They had charge accounts at the store, The Mercantile.

PN: What type of treatment did they receive from the coal companies, from the management?

FP: Well, in this particular camp--and now this is what-- I'm, of course, a little prejudiced here. We were led to believe that we were living in the jewel of the camps. Really physically, geographically, the town was named after a castle in England by the name of the Kenilworth Castle. Three towers. The town was very well situated and had a very fine group of people, about 800 people. A nice school, a very fine school, and in it a library, the confectionery candy store, the Mercantile, post office, the clinic and little hospital. I would say that they were pretty well treated considering although there was now-- looking back, I can see tinge of prejudice and bigotry on the part of the powers, you know, although they were kind people. I must say the Jacksons were a very fine family. They were sort of affluent. They were the ones that had the capital, you know. They were capitalists sort of.

PN: Did your father ever relate to you any incidents of mistreatment that occurred to him at Castle Gate?

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FP: The only thing at the time of the elections, the time that Al Smith ran for president.

PN: 1928.

FP: There was terrible bigotry against the Catholic church, against the Irish people, Catholics in general. Posters were put up. They would put up posters pushing Al Smith. Then the counter, what was the opposition would put up some pretty rotten posters about the Pope, the church, Catholics, foreigners, things like that.

PN: What effect did this have on the Italian population in Castle Gate?

FP: Well, I think that it sort of strengthened them in their own conviction. Basically dig in and do your thing, acquire as much money as you can. I suppose buy a home, educate your children, and--

PN: Do you think that his might have been an impetus for them to become more Americanized or to manifest their own nationality in an American way?

FP: In a sense it was a defense of their own patriotism in a way at the time and their own religion. Although they did have a love for the freedom and the opportunities of this country. I mean, basically it would revert to--they all had that idea that maybe we will make good and go home. But many did not. My

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father did not want to go back to Italy. Basically, it helped them to be better Americans, eventually, once they became citizens, learned to read and write, educated their children, and became part of the American scene.

PN: Did most of the Italians at the time that your father was in Carbon County become American citizens?

FP: A great deal of them, yes. My father became a citizen in the '20s. A great deal of them did. My own uncle was an American citizen and fought in the First World War. Uncle Ben Pellegrino was killed in the explosion, and he was an American citizen. He was in the First World War.

PN: He was in the First World War for Italy, right?

FP: I don't think so, I think as an American.

PN: As an American?

FP: Yes, because it is on his grave here, at the American Legion, American soldier for this country. He had come over earlier than his brother. See, if he was thirty-four. My dad was only nineteen years old. He was quite a bit older, but he fought for the United States.

PN: I see. Was he a resident of Carbon County when he was drafted into the service?

FP: Either Carbon County or it could have been Tooele

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County, it could have been Salt Lake County or even have been Park City. I am not too sure exactly where. I would suspect Salt Lake here or Tooele before Carbon County. He went to Carbon County later, after he came home from the service after the war.

PN: I see. Could we go into a little bit about the prohibition period of 1920? I know that this was a direct cultural clash between the Italians who were used to consuming wine and liquor for their meals. You had a prohibition situation in Utah--well, in the whole country. Could you describe to me some of the incidents which you are familiar with that occurred in Carbon County concerning this prohibition?

FP: Yes, they all used to make their own wine, the Greeks, the Italians, the Austrian people. I suppose everybody in the area made theirs, too. Of course I wasn't born until later, but I have heard them tell this.

PN: I am sure you have received some stories about this. This is the type of thing that I would like to find out.

FP: Okay, my own grandfather--to get back a little bit--my own grandfather Anthony, Tony Migliaccio, and my grandmother lived in Mercur to start with. They lived in Mercur and had a saloon, actually, in Mercur,

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Utah, and Ophir. Then if you read the files in the Tribune you will find one-hundred variations that the town burned. The town of Mercur burned and that is when they moved out. They just about lost everything. They had a saloon, an old western saloon. You know that they were foreigners. From there they moved to Sunnyside. My grandfather, my mother's father worked in a saloon as kind of a cashier or, I suppose, in a way as a professional gambler. In Sunnyside he worked for a Nick Tangaro. Worked along with him, my mother's father. He was a good man. He was honest and I suppose that he made good money. Oh, there were in the course of their marriage, the marriage of my grandmother and grandfather, three children born. My oldest uncle, Pete Migliaccio, my mother Josephine, and my uncle Dominic Migliaccio. Okay, when my mother was five years old, my grandfather died. My real grandfather died. They were living in Sunnyside at the time. They might have just barely moved to Helper. My grandfather went into partnership with a Jim Martell, James Martell in Helper.

PN: The name is familiar.

FP: So they set up--they were partners in a bar business. Prohibition comes along a little later. My grandfather died in 1915. He died of asthma. He was

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only a young man, thirty-four years old. He died in Colorado. He was taken back and buried in Helper. He was buried in Helper Mt. View Cemetery. My grandmother remarried my step-grandfather James Vincent Bruno about 1916 or '17. He was from the same part of southern Italy. He had a son from the old country. His wife had died. He married my grandmother with the three children, my mother and two brothers. Then another son was born, Henry Bruno, who died later at 16 years old. He had a heart condition. They set up their home and all in Helper and did very well. Grandpa worked for the railroad. He had a very good job. In fact, he was kind of foreman or boss. I think he was instrumental in getting my dad and mother in the situation they had in Kenilworth. The home, rent-free and all, to get them from the D&RG. I think he helped. How he did it, he was not amazing, he was ---?--- but pretty well versed. There was a whole section of Helper that is homesteaded in a way that is called the Bruno Acres where he and his brother set up. They went into the sagebrush there and homesteaded. They built their homes, brick homes, stable brick homes, raised their families and all. Okay, along comes prohibition in 1920?

PN: 1919, it was officially.

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FP: Okay, I know that they made their own wine at home. I know--whiskey, rather--whatever they were making. I like to brag about this, priest that I am. I have had oldtimers tell me this. I have met an old man at the hospital, Holy Cross Hospital, Charlie Barber. He said, "Your grandmother is the only one that was not caught by the authorities in making her own homemade brew." She washed clothes, she cooked meals for some of the Italian bachelors that had their own little hamlets over there by the cemetery, or by the park. Would make bread and sell the bread and she would make her own homemade, I guess, whiskey is what you would call it.

PN: Moonshine.

FP: I think what would happen is this. My grandfather was a good provider, but there were three stepchildren and she in order to compensate, to supplement money, made this homemade. I had my mother tell me that they were warned. They knew where the stuff was kept, but never to sell or give it to strangers no matter who came in. My own mother tells me that one day she was kept home from school because my grandmother had to go to town, across the tracks and downtown for shopping or to the bank or something. The others, I think, Uncle Don and Uncle Pete were in school.

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Grandpa was at work on the railroad. My mother was kept home to watch the house, to guard the place. It was on Janet Street. They knew the revenuers were in town. The authorities were in town from Salt Lake, I suppose. They had been warned. The house was locked and she sat on the porch. Well, this one fellow came up to question my mother. He says, "I just need a little, a sample is all." He was ready to give her \$10, \$15, or \$20. I don't know what it was, gold pieces. "No," she said, "We don't have any in our house. This is one thing we don't have." "Oh," he says, "I know for sure that your mother Mrs. Bruno certainly has some of the best whiskey here in town. We know that." She says, "I don't know that. As far as we are concerned we don't have any. We have no whiskey in this house." Even though she was timorous and out of human respect she was a bit afraid, she was more afraid of her mother because grandmother had warned her, "Don't you dare open the house to anyone even if he is friendly, bribes you, offers you money or what." That is what happened. In the meantime grandma heard downtown that they were in town so she rushes home and finds the man talking to my mother on the porch. My mother was just a girl. They had never got into the house. They broke up the whiskey bottles

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of booze all over town, but they never found whiskey in Mother Brunc's house.

PN: Where did they keep it?

FP: Well, it was hidden in the basement. It was hidden in the cellar. She had it in all kinds of places. She put it in places that sort of are unmentionable, too, I would rather not get into that. They were so very personal.

PN: How did they manufacture it? How did they make it? Did she have a still in her basement?

FP: She must have had a still. I think that she had a still in the basement. I know the area. It was like a dirt cellar but very well protected and locked and all. It was a fruit cellar along with homemade sausage and all this and all that. The booze was hidden away.

PN: Did a lot of the Italian people make it in Carbon County?

FP: Yes, they did, and the Austrians and the Greeks, too. Even the Irish, there were Irishmen. Oh, yes.

PN: Did most of them make it for their own home use or did they make it to sell?

FP: I would say that the majority made it for their own use. I would suspect that, but there were key people that sold it for their own profit, I guess. Not

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everybody sold the stuff, no. No, there were--I don't know how to put it exactly.

PN: You mentioned that they had sausage and things of this sort. Did the Italian people get together and make these things.

FP: They did. They did for the killing of the pigs and the following as it was. They went home fed these groups of families, even relatives, or in the neighborhood would get together to slaughter the hogs and make the sausage and everything, the lard. I have seen them make the lard in big tubs and all. The making of the wine, actually when prohibition was over we helped our parents trample the grapes in the basement in the tub. The fruit, the wine fruit to make the wine, sausage, lard--we used to put the olives--they used to cure the olives in crocks. We used to go for pine nuts, and mushrooms; the mushrooms were favorite things, the mushrooms.

PN: What type of social activities did the Italian people participate in?

FP: Not too many social activities, except for the men going to the bars downtown. There were a few theatres in town. A couple of movie houses.

PN: For instance, I will give you an example. In Bingham Canyon, Louis Nicolletti was explaining to me that

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they used to get together on a Saturday evening and dance and things of this sort. This is the type of activity that I would like to have you relate to me.

FP: Okay. If there was baptism, or a marriage, or birthday we would congregate either in groups of the family or neighborhood or a particular group, maybe paisani from one place and they had their little concertinas, their little squeeze boxes, accordions, mandolins, banjos, even actually banjos. This I remember. They used to sing and dance and enjoy food and drink. Sing songs from old Calabria and do dances--the Tarantella. That I remember as a boy, especially around the holidays and that, you know.

PN: Do you remember any of the beliefs, or if you want to call them superstitions, that were prevalent in Carbon County among the Italians when you were a small boy or that your father has described to you?

FP: Well, I can tell you this. This is when I was just a small child. This is faith and a little superstition thrown in. Whenever it rained, whenever it stormed, thundered and lightnined, I can remember my grandmother who is illiterate. She is eighty-four years old now. They had a great belief of sacramentals like the power of holy water, reminiscent of baptism, waters of baptism. Basically

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there is faith here--blessed palm, olive branches, the crucifix, little statues, figurines, holy pictures. I remember my grandmother going out actually with the little--it was like a little basket. They were woven into little baskets on Palm Sunday, blessed palms. They dipped that into holy water making the sign of the cross. Blessing either the porch, the house, or the garden, the animals, the chickens, the domesticated fowl to prevent any harm, fire, or being struck by lightning. Actually it was just a very real thing. I remember that. Saying prayers. For instance, these are basically faith. We will go into the superstition in a minute. Any harm to the eyes, any little malady, a little prayer to St. Lucy [Santa Lucia] for the eyes. Or the blessing of the throat, St. Blaze for the throat. They seem to have saints for every occasion. We still have St. Christopher for traveling. St. Anthony, if something was lost, any article was lost, any animal, money, whatever it might be. Something was lost, pray to St. Anthony, the patron saint of lost articles. A great faith in the Christmas and Easter liturgy. Holy week seems to take on a tremendous meaning. The idea of not playing the radio, say on Good Friday, dancing or things like that. Fasting and abstaining from meat on

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Fridays.

PN: In fact, if I could qualify that I can remember my mother, she would not even cook anything that was even from a meat product such as eggs, lard, or butter.

FP: Yes, that is right; any of the products from these. Okay. We had a belief, I think it came from the old country--I don't know actually where it came from. We had a belief--we said these prayers from where we were without a reason--six Our Fathers, six Hail Marys, and Glory be to the Father six times and all that to the Trinity, in honor of God and Mary and for the Blessed Trinity, for protection, for protection of the soul and body from any malady. I suppose the power of the world, the flesh and the devil from temptation, evil, we used to carry on our persons tied, sewed up in a little leather or cloth container almost like a wallet, a thing that was called holy letter, a santa litra. It was a letter. All it was was an inscription of Christ on the cross. The emblems of the crucifixion, and then a letter that was supposed to have been revealed by Christ to some saint, some saint in the old country describing the acute sufferings, the very intimate sufferings, how many blows he received on his back, how many crowns

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actually, how many thorns in his head, how many drops of blood he lost. It was in honor of passion of the death of Christ, but it was suppose to be a miraculous letter. Not this individual one that we wore, but the original. It had something to do with the passion of the death of Christ. So basically religious, but a tinge of superstition.

PN: Now, this article was brought over then.

FP: Brought over--well, actually we would send for them. They would be sent. They were on a leather, not a leather, but a cloth parchment beautifully done, ornamented.

PN: Is this southern Italy?

FP: The south, Calabria.

PN: Calabria.

FP: The south. Again, when a child was expected in a home. These are holy people, very devout people from--some were Calabrese and some were from Abruzzi, from Bari or Foggia. I remember a family by the name of Piano, Michael and Agnes Piano. She was a very, very devout woman, a very holy woman. She raised a large family. They were neighbors to my grandparents. My mother was expecting me when she was pregnant, and her own daughter was expecting a child at the same time. She brought over these relics, several relics

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of saints and especially the scapular. The scapular is a little cloth article worn on the back and the chest. It has two little strings. It is a miniature of the habit worn by Carmelite sisters, religious persons in religious orders like the Franciscans. This had a very powerful, great protection against any kind of malady that would come to you or any sort of misfortune. Basically faith, but there was a tinge of superstition there. This was placed under the pillow of the mother when she went into labor so that her child would have a happy delivery, but faith in almighty God and in Mary. The power of Mary. They used to pray to our Blessed Mary for a happy delivery and to a saint and martyr, was Santa Liberata her name, for a happy delivery. This was invoked, they're actually invoked. Sometimes they would say the liturgy of the saints in the home of the midwife; if the doctor was available, fine, or whoever was helping with the delivery of the child. This was basically deep faith, but some superstition.

PN: How do you think that these superstitions developed?

FP: Ignorance and I would say faulty education, faulty education on the part of so many that were illiterate.

PN: Do you think that the role of the priest in southern

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Italy to sort of integrate the superstition with religion accounted for some of this?

FP: Well, it's hard to say. I visited there now twice in '58 and 1968 and I didn't notice any problem with the culture there. It was open to music, poetry, reading, to the education of the children in the towns. In those days only a few could be educated. Actually, the elite probably, and I don't think that they were actually; they might have used fear tactics a bit, but the priest was so highly respected more--than say the mayor of the town. He was consulted for just about everything.

PN: Are you at all familiar with the belief that they call the malocchio?

FP: Just a little. We didn't have much of that. The only thing that I can think of, the malocchio or evil eye or to put the spell or curse on a person would be this. The other word that is used is magaria. I am not sure how to translate that.

PN: It's magaria. It would be something to the extent--witchery. Because magar is witch.

FP: Okay, like bruja in Spanish. Okay, witchery. I would say we didn't witness too much of this. Once in a while you would hear someone say they put a spell on that baby. Say that child was born and you saw that

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child for the first time, a new born boy or girl or really a youngster, a young boy or girl. It wasn't so much the older people, it had to do with youth. If a person was not of the highest moral caliber and integrity and they flattered your child too much. They said, "Oh, what a beautiful child, what a handsome child, how nice." The parents immediately went on their guard for fear that some sort of spell would come upon this child, especially if they weren't baptized, if they weren't christened. They were usually christened as babies, as children. And then in order to counteract this flattery on the part of the good well-meaning people, sometimes the godparents, an aunt, an uncle, a friend, well-meaning people would say, "Benedicete" or "Dio ti benedicete" to counteract. "May God bless you." To kind of balance off any type of, they left the way open to, say, maybe the power of the devil. I would suspect that, the power of the devil, flattery, vainglory, or even pride, there was some sort of basic faith. I keep going back to this, but a type of fear or superstition, a fear of the unknown, a fear of, say, leaving the door open to some unknown force, evil force, that might enter in and harm the person or the home, or the possessions or the crops or the

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animals.

PN: You basically feel then, that the faith was sort of intermingled with a little bit of these superstitions.

FP: Basically, the faith was there. I would say that the superstitions were superimposed like a kind of frosting. In most cases the superstition it was like window dressing. You know what I mean. It was there, but basically the faith. Even though there was a lack of--they were illiterate, they were not illiterate as far as the basic truths of faith, like the rosary, and the idea of God as a rewarder and punisher, the power of the intercession of Mary, the saints and angles. The spiritual part, the faith was there.

PN: Could you please relate to me if there were any celebrations on the part of the Italian population on the feast days of saints in Carbon County such as there was in Italy.

FP: Well, we didn't actually carry statues around the way they did. The first little church was in Castle Gate. It was St. Anthony's church, with a little bell. The church--I think that the church burned actually.

PN: Let me interrupt you for just, why don't while we are on this idea about the church why don't you relate to me a little about the Catholic church in Carbon

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County and then perhaps mention a few of these feasts that they might have participated in.

FP: Well, the first priests that actually went down into the area, were itinerant missionaries, you might say, coming and going. I have heard names like Father Bona. I think Father Bona baptized my mother and uncles. There were a few others, some Italian, some Irish, Polish, who would go into an area like Sunnyside or Castle Gate and baptize, massive baptisms. Individual, but many baptisms, and say mass in a home, a particular home or a hall, would marry couples, and actually conduct funerals, like at the time of the explosion. Well, I think the first resident pastor was Monsignor Alfredo F. Giovannoni, the priest that baptized me, in 1927. He was the pastor at Castle Gate, at St. Anthony's church in Castle Gate. He took care of the whole county. Then the church moved to Helper. He built the little church on the hill, the old church by the cemetery. In fact, the actual cemetery was known as St. Anthony's cemetery until 1943 when it was named Mt. View cemetery. The majority of the people that are buried in that cemetery are Roman Catholic. Eighty-five percent mostly Italian, from all parts of Italy. He built the church in Price--The Notre Dame de

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Lourdes, Our Lady of Lourdes--and built the rectory, a school--an eighth grade school, the Notre Dame de Lourdes School. Built the Daughter of Charity in 1927 and their convent and then actually he, at that time, when he was pastor of the Carbon County area it was Price Parish Notre Dame de Lourdes. Helper was a mission. Helper and Draggerton and the mining camps. He said Mass in all the camps. He had at the time in the whole territory of the United States the largest parish in the whole United States. It covered the Uinta Basin, Roosevelt, and Vernal. Moab and Monticello as far as the Green River to the Colorado border, all the way up to say Thistle, Scofield, Soldier Summit, all the way up to the Provo area. So he had the largest parish, okay. He would still go out and baptize and say mass and give communion, marry, and bury people in all of these mining camps. At its height Carbon County had thirty thousand people. About 20 percent Roman Catholic. The Greek population was pretty heavy there, the southern population was Protestant.

PN: Was most of this Catholic population Italians?

FP: Most of it. The majority were Italian. The next largest group, I think, was Austrian or Yugoslav people in the Spring Glen area and in other areas



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PN: Now, would the Italian Catholics participate and intermingle with the Catholics that were not Italian?

FP: Yes, because St. Patrick's Day was kept very highly the 17th of March, it was a holiday. They used to have either a ham dinner or a jigs dinner as they called it, with the cabbage and what is it? I am not sure what you call it. The Italians would get right in there with the Irish on St. Patrick's. That I know. I am not sure of the feast that the Austrian people kept. The feast of the ---?--- on the 7th of July. That was not kept, but the solemnity would be up in Rock Springs, Wyoming. Monsignor ---?--- who had a heavily Austrian parish. The other feast like the feast of St. Anthony, yes, many of the Italians remember the 13th of June, lighting votive candles in their homes to these particular saints; St. Francis, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the 16th of July; St. Peter and Paul the 29th of June; let me think just a minute, St. Lucy the 13th of December. I remember the devotion to saints like St. Barbara on the 5th of December where she is the patron saint of artillery, if you can imagine and a protectress against lightning and thunder so many of the Italians have little pictures, holy pictures, and would light candles, actually, and pray or have a Mass said. If

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they couldn't do it here in this country they used to send masses back to the old country, or votive offerings to a particular place or church where these saints were honored. They had patron saints that were very powerful. St. Francis of Paola, the 2nd of April was a patron of Calabria in the southern part of Italy.

PN: Could you relate to me perhaps the role that Monsignor Giovannoni played in, let's say, unifying the Italian Catholics. He was an Italian Catholic priest and I am sure that that meant a lot,

FP: An awful lot.

PN: --to most of those people because he could sermon in Italian, he could hear confessions in Italian. What kind of role do you think he played?

FP: He played a very important role. He came from Lucca, Toscana in Tuscany. He was a university professor and seminary professor. Very well educated with degrees of all kinds, spoke the language beautifully, sang, had musical talent, had an organizational ability, and was a man of great stamina. He was eighty-four years old when he died and going strong. He spoke multi languages and picked up the Italian very well, too. He baptized, I would say, and I don't think that I am exaggerating three, four, maybe five thousand

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Italians in the Carbon County area in his life span as a priest. Which is an awful lot of people to baptize with his own hands. And married hundreds of couples. Baptized hundreds. He was there during the explosion. The day that my uncle was buried at St. Anthony's Church in Helper, my Uncle Ben Mascara, five were buried. He buried five that day, a Mass for five, that were buried at the Helper cemetery. In Castle Gate and all over when there was trouble, he was right there. At the time of the explosion, I didn't mention this, Mitty, Archbishop Mitty of San Francisco who was later the Archbishop of San Francisco, was the bishop of the Salt Lake City Diocese; he came down to visit and offer condolences and sympathy to the bereaved families of not only the Catholics, but the Greeks and all the others. Along with the apostolic delegate to the United States of America, the Pope's personal representative to the Catholics of the North America. His name was Fumacioni Biondi. The apostolic delegate, the Pope's personal representative, Bishop Mitty and Monsignor Giovannoni were the ones who offered sympathy in the Castle Gate area, Helper area at the time of the explosion, which was a real tragedy because there was no family that was not affected in all Carbon County,

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179 men killed. So he traveled, down to Thompson and Sege and Cresent Junction, Green River, to Moab and Monticello, all the way over to Vernal and Roosevelt and did a tremendous job. He did unify the Italians because of this. Like you say his preaching, hearing confessions in Italian, scolding and he had to use force. They did not support him well financially. The Italians, you must get the background to know all this, forgive me, were not in the habit of supporting their priests because they received a salary from the government over in Italy. Well, they couldn't get this mentality better than in America that the United States government or the government of the state of Utah did not support its priests. So it was very difficult for him to obtain funds and, therefore, when he gathered a group at a funeral or a wedding, he would really come through and almost use moral force on their duty and justice to support their priest. He really did a tremendous job in Carbon County.

PN: What type of a reaction did he receive from them?

FP: From some of the men were very, very caustic and critical and there was a very adamant attitude in part of the men. Not all. There were those who supported, but it was mostly through ignorance,

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through ignorance that they did not understand. Because I say you can't run a school, and he started a parochial school in Price. He did a tremendous job for those youngsters bringing these sisters in. At the time of the Depression and all, things were very difficult. It was hard for him to obtain funds, as I say. He built the church in Price and Helper, the school, the convent, the rectory, and really basically planted the church in Carbon County.

PN: Was Catholicism strong among the Italians in Carbon County prior to his arrival?

FP: In groups. In different groups there were those who had the faith that were well versed from the old county. There were those who were anti-clerical. There were those who were ignorant. There were those who were stupid. There were the malicious ones, those who could care less about religion. With all of the bars and with all of the money, the affluence. There was a touch of the Mafia connected with the East. There were for instance in the area, both Price and Helper, houses of prostitution. Things like this he had to combat that. That is the moral corruption part that is absolutely against what the church stands for, any church. So these were the things he was fighting.

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PN: I see. Could you recall your mother ever talking to you about the Ku Klux Klan activity here in Carbon County?

FP: Yes, a little bit of that.

PN: Could you relate some of this to me.

FP: All we remember, I vaguely remember of the Klan's activity, I suppose this would be in the '20s, with the hoods, the white sheets and all, burning crosses actually in Helper on a place called Bunker Hill. It would be East Helper, Northeast Helper. We remember that as children. I think that they did the same in Price area and maybe a few of the mining camps. What they were trying to prove, I don't know. Who they were trying to intimidate I am not sure, but there was activity. In fact I knew one man who was involved in this Klan activity who was a businessman in the town and at night would put on the hood. He was from the south, a southerner.

PN: He was an Italian?

FP: No, no, not a Italian, oh, no, he wasn't Italian. I don't think the Italians were involved in this. This was the Caucasian, the white caucasian, a Protestant of the WASP sort. No Italians involved.

PN: Were the Italians hassled at all?

FP: I don't think so, not as a group, no.

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PN: Do you think that the Klan activity was more directed against the Catholic church rather than the Italian himself?

FP: Yes, I think so. The foreign element. We had very few Negroes, so they wouldn't bother them. There were very few Jews, there were a few Jews in business in Price, very few, but mostly Italian. It was mostly aimed at Catholicism, I would say, and not particularly Italians.

PN: Do you recall any violence being directed towards the Catholic?

FP: No, not of the Klan. No, I don't think so except, oh, yes, as far as jobs went once in a while there was discrimination as far as jobs say in the schools. Actually in the schools.

PN: Discrimination against the Italians?

FP: Discrimination against the foreigner in general. The Italians, yes, because they were the largest group, especially in Helper and some of the camps.

PN: How was this discrimination--

FP: Manifested?

PN: --manifested?

FP: Well, in not letting their children play with the Italian children. They were called Dagos and Wops and foreigners. Or the general title that they were

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included in was dirty Greeks.

PN: This included Italians, too?

FP: Yes, absolutely.

PN: Were they discriminatory against the Italians in any particular way? More so than let's say the Greeks or the Austrians?

FP: No, I guess if you were from the southern part of Europe whether you were Greek or Basque or French or Italian or Spanish. For instance, I have heard this said, that like in plays, school plays they were very conveniently pushed aside in favor of the American born non-foreign element. Or say on the teams, actually on the teams, until our own young people pushed their way through like say the Negroes have done in the world of entertainment and sports. Until they proved by their brawn instead of, well, and their brains, too, that they could do the job, even better than some of them.

PN: Could this be related in the fact that when some of the more prominent kinds began to secure economic gains that they began to become more accepted in the community because they had money?

FP: Yes.

PN: Do you think that this is a criterion of being accepted?

FP: Yes, money or if they sent their children away to school--let's say sent them to school--to the university or to Wasatch Academy or something like that. If their children were sent away to school. Money, financially, educationally, or position-wise. Like the boss or the superintendent or the sheriff, actually, or say if a man became a doctor or lawyer or school teacher. That carried a lot of weight, yes. That was respected, but not the actual nationality or race or ethnic background.

PN: What type of antagonisms did they have in Carbon County between the northern Italians and the southern Italians, if any?

FP: Well, it was sort of an unwritten thing. There was never a real clash as far as physical. There's honor among thieves and, what is it? Blood runs thicker than water. The foods, for instance, now the southern Italians they may cook with more starches and that, but they are known for better cookery, as far as cooking and baking and all. They always outshined the northerners. The northerners did not spend as much time, say, in food and in preparation of edibles and all that. Now, that I remember definitely. They did make good wine, the northerners. The people from Tuscany, Central Italy, Rome. Their wine was good, of

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course, after the mushrooms, as some of the southerns'. Their bread, I suppose their bread was okay. They used to have these ovens, everybody had the outdoor ovens where they made the homemade bread or rolls.

PN: What proportions of the Italian population would you say were northern or southern? Were there more southerners in Carbon County?

FP: Oh, yes, heavily southern. I would say 65 to 70 percent were from southern Italy.

PN: Now, the Italians that were considered to be more prominent, what section of the country were they from?

FP: The majority from the north, I think, because of education.

PN: Why do you--?

FP: I would suspect that they, as you know the north of Italy is highly industrialized. The south is impoverished and it's heavily agricultural and the land has been depleted. There is just no wealth, two and a half million people in Calabria. But the north, yes, I think they came over with--I won't say more money, perhaps some did--but with more education. They had more background as far as literacy went than the southerners did.

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PN: Why do you think they came to Carbon County?

FP: I don't know. I suppose to enrich themselves, to make more money. They figured this was the land flowing with milk and honey and the gold lying in the streets and the opportunity. The opportunity. I suppose Italy was heavily populated at the turn of the century.

PN: So the northerners, then, you feel came here out of opportunity where as the southerners came here out of necessity.

FP: That is right exactly. I would like to add here, interject this. In 1968, my parents and I went over and we were in Italy for two months. We were in Rome for a month. I have a cousin, a priest over there, pastor, and my dad's older sister. We were in two general audiences in St. Peter's to hear the Holy Father Paul VI. The first was on the 22nd of May. We were disappointed because we weren't too close. So we got tickets to be in St. Veronica's Tribune. It is almost like a bleacher near the Papal altar, the main altar. This was on the 29th of May, 1968. On that day the official pilgrimage from southern Italy was there to greet the Holy Father. About 500 from the south of Italy with nine bishops and archbishops from the whole province of Catanza, Catanzaro, Reggio di Calabria. The Holy Father spent a half hour of

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panegyric in praise of the southern Italians. This is no mean person. He was Cardinal Archbishop of Milan which is the largest diocese of all Italy, in the industrial north. It would match any of our big cities here in America, Chicago, Detroit, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco. The Holy Father, of course, Giovanni Bautista Maria Mantini, a man who is 74 years old now. This is what he had to say in greeting all the people of southern Italy--two and a half million people. He said, "The southern Italians," and he said this in five languages to 70,000 people in the Basilica. "The southern Italians are poor in the things of this world, but very rich in the things of God. They produce saints, they have a deep piety, a deep faith in God. They are close to the earth, close to mother nature, the land, the good things of the earth, and in that way they are very close to God. And we can learn much from their humility, their long suffering, the tenacity that they have, even we might say, their stubbornness. They do have a type of stubbornness, hardheadedness."

PN: I will vouch for that.

FP: They say the southern Italians are the duri capo toste--have got a head as hard as a donkey. So there is a lot of--but I might just add that he went on a

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lot more, but that is basically what he said. Whereas the people from the north, those people that I know are very good people. There are saints from the north, Mother Cabrini, St. John Bosco, St. John Mariani, Pius X, Giuseppe Sarto, many of the great saints from the north. John XXIII, okay, Saltu Amonte from Bergamo. They are a little more sophisticated. They are a little more proud. I don't want to say proud; sophisticated, high drawer, top drawer, high drawer. Because of affluence, education and all, they sort of lorded it over their southern brothers in the south.

PN: Do you think that these northern Italians were able to integrate more easily in the American life than the southern or do you think that they both had their troubles? And if so, why?

FP: I think that they both had their troubles because-- the southerners found it more difficult, I suppose, to learn the language because of the lack of education. I think that as far as language goes, literary, many of the northerners know. That is why you had, for instance, men taking over the bank and the furniture stores with all they learned.

PN: So it was mostly the northern Italians then that began businesses?

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FP: Yes, although later on, the generation after the southerners took their place in the small business stores. Say the bakery, shoe stores, whatever it might be.

PN: This sort of goes into my next question considering education. I know that in 1919 and 1920, they began Americanization classes, Italian-Americanization in Carbon County which Monsignor Giovannoni was a part. Did your father or did your mother ever relate any of these experiences to you which they had in these Americanization clubs. Did they attend for instance?

FP: No, I don't think that my father attended, as far as he got into the labor unions. They did belong to the Knights of Columbus that was associated with. We were in the Stella D'America that would be the Italian-American--

PN: That is another question that I have. Why don't you relate to me some of the activities in these Italian societies. Some of the things that they did, why they organized, and why people joined. Could you do that for me?

FP: I suppose just for survival and to carry some kind of moral force so they wouldn't be just decimated, sitting ducks. I mean as individuals that they had a moral force in group activity. It wasn't just social.

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I wanted to mention this a while back. We had a KP hall in Helper for social activities. It was the Knights of Pythias, okay. Right. That is what I say. When they saw, for instances, some of their brothers and sisters getting into Masonic lodges and Jobs Daughters and into Eastern Star and that. They figured that this is not for us. This is foreign to us, so we had better coalesce, congregate as far as church, or--

PN: Did they have fraternal organizations in Italy or did they just start these here?

FP: Oh, yes, I am sure that they did. Well, some were to the American scene. Some were just new to the American scene. I am sure that they did have organizations.

PN: So this spirit to organize was not new to them. They just carried that over and established that here.

FP: Right, because the American thing like scouting and all that was unknown for their kids and that. Scouting they had for the children in as far as the church the Legion of Mary or little groups for say the altar boys or the choir and things like that.

PN: What type of activities did these Italian societies participate in?

FP: Well, Columbus Day banquets and they would say march

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on the 4th of July or on days like that, national holidays. On Labor Day they would band together. I remember them with their badges or whatever you want to call them. If there was a dance or if there was a party or sponsoring things for the town, maybe--

PN: What did these badges look like?

FP: Well, they were kind of, to me they were black. They looked like black badges with kind of a little gold emblem on there of some sort. I don't remember them too well. I remember them wearing some means of identification.

PN: Now, this was the Stella D'America?

FP: Yes, I think so. I am not sure what they look like now, but they did have the men and women, and they used to have dances. For instances, there would be a dance or a party at the civic auditorium in Helper or in Price at one of the meeting places, or they would have dinners.

PN: Was your father a member?

FP: I am not sure. My grandparents, yes. My grandparents and uncle, but I don't think that my father belonged to this Stella D'America, although I joined later. I belong to it and the Knights of Columbus. My dad was a 4th degree Knight of Columbus and my brother, too. They had quite a bit of activity associated with the

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church.

PN: Can you recall anything concerning these Americanization clubs that I mentioned. Now, this is rather early, but I was just wondering if your father ever related any of this as Monsignor Giovannoni was a secretary of that club.

FP: Was he? I knew that he was in the Elks or the Kiwanis or the Moose. He was in some of those groups, fraternal groups. And the Knights of Columbus of course. Monsignor was very closely associated with the Capitala and Rinetti families in Price.

PN: This Americanization Club, from the information that I am finding on it, which is very scarce. It sort of drops off around 1920 and then it picks up with the Knights of Columbus. Do you think that the Italians went from this type of thing into the Knights of Columbus? And if so, why?

FP: Because they felt more safe and more secure. It had the approval of the church. They were basically Catholic and they had something that they could step into and feel like they were at home.

PN: Do you think that since the Knights of Columbus was not strictly an Italian organization that they had the opportunity there to integrate with other nationalities?

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FP: Right, the Irish, French, Basque. Yes, absolutely--
German.

PN: Why do you think that this approach worked?

FP: Well, they had something in common, something basic.

PN: So they used Catholicism as a basis?

FP: Yes, plus the fact of the very name, the title. Christopher Columbus, he is ours. He was Italian, he was Catholic, he is one of ours. So why shouldn't we participate in this. It was a means, it was kind of a defense mechanism and also kind of a new departure. It gave them an opening into some sort of activity outside of their homes and their neighborhoods.

PN: You mentioned the Masons. There were Italians in Carbon County that joined this group?

FP: Yes. Joined the Masons, yes.

PN: Could you give me some kind of reason why?

FP: Well, I know of one case, a relative actually. A cousin from Price who during the Depression was given a job at the Masonic hall as caretaker. He was janitor, caretaker and all. That won his whole family over, he and his wife and their children, their sons and daughters. Just because--

PN: Were there any social benefits to be reaped from being a Mason, or economic benefits?

FP: Oh, economic, yes, as far as work goes. And money,

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yes.

PN: How was this?

FP: Well, they were helped by their fellow Masons, they were certainly given jobs. They had preference over those who did not belong to the Masons. And socially they had their social activities, too, just as we had ours. I know definitely--I question this one cousin. She was from dad's home town and was married in the mother church there. She was Catholic. She used to send flowers to the church. I was stationed in Price for a year in '54, '55, as security assistant to Father La Bloc). She used to have Mass said. She would do it, but the only thing is that she belonged to the Masons. But she still had her Catholic faith deep down inside. She said they were good, they helped us when we needed help. The church wasn't in a position to help at that time, the Catholic church. So all Daughters of Charity did a tremendous amount of charity in Carbon County that nobody knows about--known only to God. As far as helping families, widows, orphans, where there was sickness, where there was tragedy. The sisters and priests have done charity, but they don't advertise.

PN: A final question that I hope we can squeeze in. I have come to a basic conclusion that the Italians in

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Salt Lake County were treated a little different than the ones in Carbon County. Could you elaborate on this?

FP: I don't know what you mean. Were they treated better or worse?

PN: Better in Salt Lake County than they were in Carbon County.

FP: They were treated better. Well, I suppose that the ghetto mentality Carbon County was--here you have the railroad and the mines and maybe they were looked down on as a lower type of people and it was a heavily, predominately heavy, gentile county. So that explains a lot given our culture here in the state of Utah, basically. I think Monsignor Bishop Dwyer related that in his book A Gentile Comes to Utah, okay. You see the picture is so far removed, what 123 miles southeast of Salt Lake? It was sort of a ghetto mentality. The idea that we didn't have the communication at the time, idea of rapid transit and travel. We were isolated.

PN: Do you think that the Italians here in Salt Lake County might have conformed a little more easily than the Italians in Carbon County?

FP: Yes, I think so. Like I say the geographical situation there and the illiteracy, a faulty

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education, plus fear, plus just all these natural things force a people into that kind of--

PN: Okay, thank you very much Father Pellegrino.

FP: You're welcome, Philip.

[END OF TAPE]