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MALIO J. STAGNARO: THE SANTA CRUZ GENOVESE

Interviewed and Edited by
Elizabeth Spedding Calciano

Santa Cruz
1975



"The Mayor of the Wharf"
Malio J. Stagnaro
in his office
May 1973

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INTRODUCTION

The half-dozen interviews comprising this volume on the life of Malio J. Stagnaro and the origins and development of the Genovese fishing community in Santa Cruz were started in November, 1971, and completed in May, 1972. The research, interviewing, and editing were completed by Elizabeth Spedding Calciano when she was head of the McHenry Library's Regional History Project. The unfinished manuscript was left to her successor, Randall Jarrell, to complete for publication.

The interviews were conducted by Mrs. Calciano in the old Stagnaro Company office on the Municipal Wharf. Comfortably ensconced in his crowded office, Stagnaro sat at his desk during the sessions, flanked by file cabinets and adding machines, surrounded by family photographs and memorabilia. Occasionally the conversations were interrupted by business calls or visitors seeking information on the Stagnaro fishing boat schedules or obtaining fishing licenses whose requests were handled with dispatch by Stagnaro, or his niece, Gilda. Often the sounds of barking seals and the cries of gulls filtered through the windows adding authentic audio effects to the interview tapes.

Mrs. Calciano found Stagnaro to be an excellent

interviewee: candid, willing to answer almost all the questions posed to him, very open, and possessing a clear understanding of his role in this oral history collaboration.

Malio Stagnaro was born in Santa Cruz in 1900, the son of Cottardo Stagnaro I, the first Genovese fisherman to settle here. He has worked for most of his life as a commercial fisherman on Monterey Bay, and in recent years has headed the operations of the Stagnaro family's seafood restaurants and sports fishing cruises on the Bay.

Known locally as the "Mayor" of the Wharf, Stagnaro is in an exceptional position in helping to document two mostly unchronicled chapters of Santa Cruz history -- the development of commercial fishing in Monterey Bay and the history of the Genovese fishing colony. From childhood. Stagnaro worked alongside the older members of his family, gaining familiarity with all phases of the fishing industry and a knowledge of the various ethnic fishing colonies up and down the Pacific Coast.

He talked easily and thoroughly about the old fishing fleet, from the period which witnessed the days of the old lateen sailing craft to the lampara launchers and deep-sea seiners. Stagnaro's recollections cover the everyday working life of the fishermen, the "share" system of payment, the primitive navigation methods used by the old-timers in their diminutive sailing craft, and the backbreaking physical toil of the work in the days before

the introduction of mechanized operations. The business end of commercial fishing is also discussed in detail: the wholesaling, retailing, and distribution methods, and the changing economics of the industry.

Stagnaro also presents interesting facts concerning the depletion of the once-rich fishing grounds of the Bay, which less than a century ago the eminent ichthyologist, David Starr Jordan, had compared in variety and quantity second only to San Francisco Bay.

The lengthy narration depicts a century of Genovese life beginning with the Stagnaro family's origins in their ancestral village of Riva-Trigoso, near Genoa, and the extreme poverty and lack of opportunity in the old country which determined the eventual migration of some sixty fishing families to Santa Cruz by 1912.

Cottardo Stagnaro I -- the narrator's father -- was the first Genovese to arrive here; in 1874, at fifteen, an already seasoned and well-travelled seaman. When his Italian sailing vessel anchored alongside the Wharf to replenish its water supply, young Cottardo jumped ship and soon found shelter with the Fred Perez family, one of the first commercial fishing families working out of the north part of the Bay. Within five years the hardworking young man had his own boat built - the ultimate ambition of each fisherman - and was in business for himself. Shipping out to pay his passage, Cottardo I made periodic trips to his home village where he married Maria

Zolezzi, who remained in the homeland until 1899, when she crossed the Atlantic in steerage with her thirteen-year-old son, Cottardo II - the narrator's older brother - and came to Santa Cruz.

Cottardo I, as patriarch of the Pacific Coast Genovese fishermen, was mostly responsible for the immigration of his relatives, in-laws, and village friends, who encouraged by his reports of fishing conditions here - and often aided financially by Coattardo I - came over in a steady stream.

Stagnaro's recollections are a rich tapestry of the daily home life of the families in the early years. The role and contributions of women and children to the family enterprise are thoroughly enumerated: the women's endless tasks of cooking, preserving foods, vegetable and herb gardening, sewing clothes and fisherman's apparel, making and mending fishnets far into the night; aiding sick neighbors, and always, waiting for the safe arrival of the men from their fishing trips.

The document also presents a portrait of early Santa Cruz life, city and county government and political figures, and a fascinating glimpse of the Prohibition activities which flourished here: the gambling, speakeasies, and bootlegging along the isolated beaches. Stagnaro discusses the hardships faced by the fishermen during the Depression as well as by local businessmen and the banking conditions which prevailed.

The narration also includes portions dealing with the development of the tourist industry and the construction of the Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor. The World War II period touches on the

brief internment of the Pacific Coast Italians, and the valiant contributions to the American war effort made by the native-born sons of the Wharf fishermen.

The transcribed interviews were edited for clarity and continuity by Mrs. Calciano. Stagnaro also made a careful perusal of the manuscript and his pertinent suggestions and comments have been incorporated into the finished narration. The interview tapes have been preserved in the Regional History Office, and a portion of the tapes is available for those who might like to listen to the conversations. The frontispiece photograph of Stagnaro was taken by Alan Donaldson of the University's Instructional Services.

Special thanks are due to Estrella and Malio Stagnaro for their help in assembling the photographs used in the volume, and for their time in answering many questions on the Genovese dialect and Stagnaro family chronology.

The photograph of the lateen sailing craft was reproduced from an original on deposit in the Special Collections Room of the McHenry Library.

This manuscript is part of a collection of interviews on the history of Santa Cruz County which have been conducted by the Regional History Project. The Project is under the administrative supervision of Carl Wensrich, a University Librarian and head of the Reader Services Division.

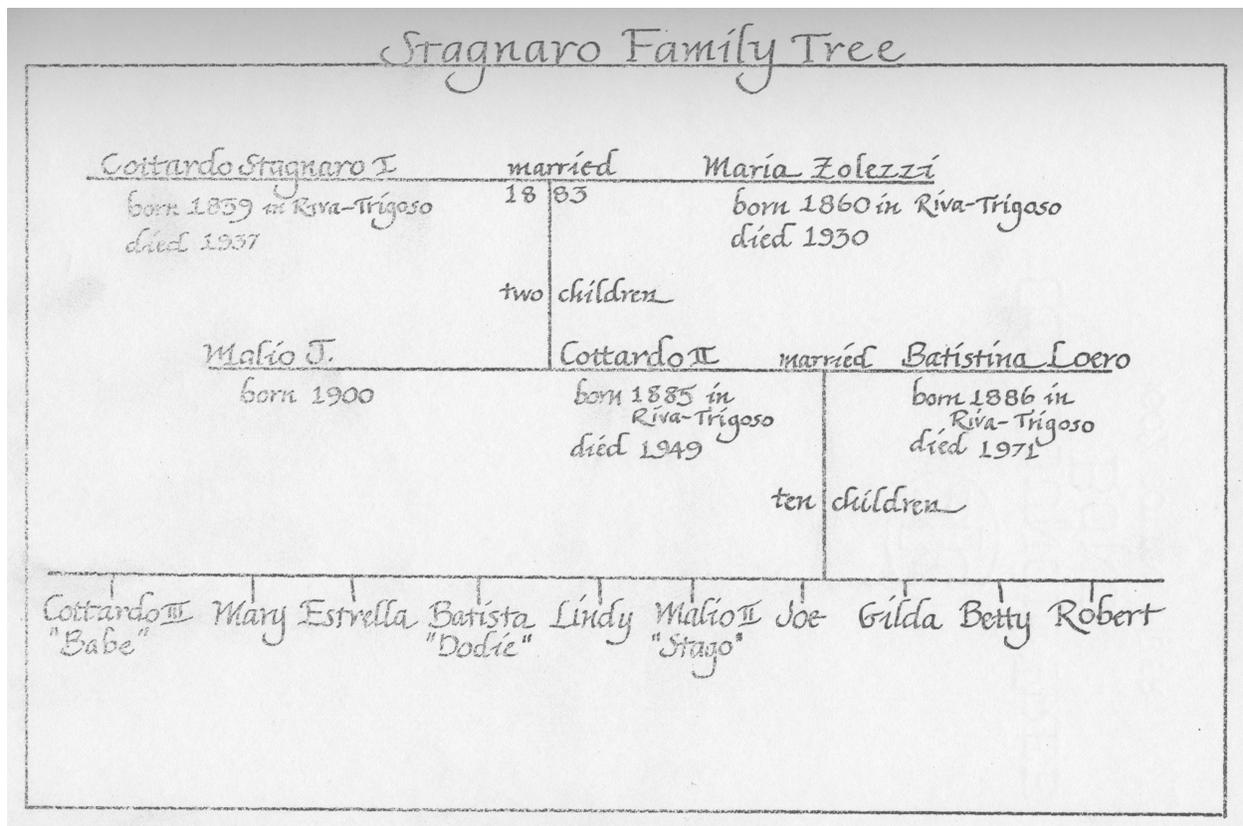
Randall Jarrell

June 1, 1975

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THE GENOVESE ARRIVECottardo Stagnaro

Calciano: Where did the Stagnaro family come from?

Stagnaro: From Genova. [Genoa] From a town called Riva-Trigoso.

Calciano: Is it very far from Genova?

Stagnaro: Well, I'd say from the main part of Genova itself, I'd say it's about 15-18 miles. Of course when you drive from Genova to Riva-Trigoso, you horseshoe back and forth -- that's what makes it....

Calciano: Is it on the coast?

Stagnaro: It's on the coast, right on the Italian Riviera I'd say.

Calciano: Is it somewhere near Rapallo?

Stagnaro: Right by Rapallo, yes. You're only maybe four, five miles from Rapallo at the very most, if that far.

Calciano: Your father was the first Stagnaro to come here, wasn't he?

Stagnaro: My father was the first Stagnaro that came. He came here in 1874.

Calciano: When had he been born?

Stagnaro: He was born in 1859.

Calciano: He was pretty young when he came.

Stagnaro: Very young.

Calciano: How did he happen to come here?

Stagnaro: Well he was aboard an Italian sailing ship, and they had come around the Horn and were on their way to San Pedro when they ran short of water, and they came into Santa Cruz and secured alongside what they called the railroad wharf those days to get water, and he took a walk and never came back to the ship.

(Laughter) He liked it here; he liked what he saw.

Calciano: What had the ship been carrying? What kind of ship was it, do you know?

Stagnaro: Well they were on their way to San Pedro to load with lumber and leather to take back....

Calciano: Well why were they this far up on the coast? Had they been up north and were going down to San Pedro?

Stagnaro: Yes. On their way to San Pedro.

Calciano: I see. Did he stay here permanently right from age fifteen, or did he travel around a bit?

Stagnaro: Well, he stayed here permanently, more or, less permanently right here in Santa Cruz, and Mexican people by the name of Perez who were on the wharf at that time took him into their home.

Calciano: Oh they did?

Stagnaro: And he started working for them.

Calciano: They were the main fishing family at that point.

Stagnaro: At that particular time, they were the main fishing family at that point.

Calciano: I was wondering if your father had any trouble getting into the fishing business, but apparently he didn't then.

Stagnaro: Well he stayed with them for about five years, and then in 1879 he had a boat built of his own and started his own business -- selling fish to them. And also another family had come in by the name Faraola.

Calciano: Oh yes, I've heard of that name.

Stagnaro: Yes. The Faraolas.

Calciano: Where were they from?

Stagnaro: They were Italians; Mr. Faraola himself was an Italian and Mrs. Faraola was of Mexican descent, Spanish and Mexican descent.

Calciano: Were the relationships between all these families quite good, or were they fierce competitors?

Stagnaro: Well they were ... quite competitors in those days, I'd say. Quite competitors.

Calciano: Do you think Perez minded your father going into business for himself?

Stagnaro: No. Because he sold his fish to them and made them happy, and he sold to the Faraolas.

Calciano: I see. Had your father been a fisherman in Italy, or from a fishing family?

Stagnaro: He had fished and sailed also. He had traveled quite a bit. In fact he started going out to sea, believe it or not, these sometimes are hard stories to believe, but he started going out to sea at the age of nine.

Calciano: Oh my! (Laughter) As a cabin boy? Or as a fisherman?

Stagnaro: Well, as a cabin boy, a dockhand, working; you see his father died when my dad was very young. My father was only six, seven years old, a very poor family, which most all of the families were around there at that particular time, and he had a mother and also a widowed sister at that time, who had been married young, and also three other sisters, and he was more or less the support of all of them, which he was.

Calciano: Incredible!

Stagnaro: Yes. Incredible. Really incredible. But he had gone to South America and all through the Mediterranean and many places, Greece and Turkey and places like that, you know, and Tripolitania there they call it, and a lot of North Africa and places like that.

Calciano: Quite an education.

Stagnaro: Yes. Incredible. And he was very interesting to talk to, believe me. He had a lot of good sea stories he told us all his life.

Calciano: Did he ever talk about the conditions on the sailing ships at that point?

Stagnaro: Well he talked about the conditions, and they were wet from morning, noon, and night ... they never were dry or had any dry bunks or anything like that. But it was their life and their living, and they enjoyed it.

Laughter) That was it. That was their life.

Calciano: Did he seem to have respect for the captains he sailed under, or had they been rather mean people?

Stagnaro: Well ... it seemed like he always had respect for the captains as well as the crew members ... and like he said, a good many of the Italians from his own town, when they went to South America, they left ship there and some were married men and never went back home.

Calciano: Oh really!

Stagnaro: They fell in love with South America and also the women there and never went home, back home to their families. Quite a lot of them.

Calciano: Would the wives think the men had died, or did they know that they just had stayed in South America?

Stagnaro: Well they just stayed in South America they would hear indirectly. Some of these ships would go to and from, and the families would hear, and they even had children, but they abandoned them. But my father never liked South America, because he always thought it was too, kind of a very wild, wild country at that time. The people were, you know, killing one another and things like that. They had no respect for law and order, and he never cared for that ... for those countries at all.

Calciano: So Santa Cruz seemed a rather peaceful place to him, I guess.

Stagnaro: Santa Cruz was peaceful, and he stayed here.

Calciano: Did he ever talk much about his impressions of Santa Cruz at that period when he was very young?

Stagnaro: Well he just kind of liked the area, and I think this area here kind of reminds me, because I've been back there, and I think it probably hit him the same way, I don't know ... it's something like Riva-Trigoso where they come from.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: Whether it was that, or what it was ... but it looked good to him (laughter) so he just stopped, and that was it.

Calciano: (Laughter) Now how did he and your mother meet and get married?

Stagnaro: Well I guess they knew the families back there; they knew the families, because he had sailed with my mother's father.

Calciano: Oh!

Stagnaro: As a little boy. You see, my father from 1874 to 1883 made three or four trips back there. And on one of these trips when he went back there, then was the time they got married. I think they got married about 1883.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: 1883 -- the records are still in the Catholic Church in the home town.

Calciano: And then she stayed there for a while?

Stagnaro: Oh she stayed there until 1898, and brother Cottardo was born in 1885. They came here in 1898.

Calciano: During that fourteen- or fifteen-year period, how often was he able to see his wife and his son?

Stagnaro: Well, he went back there, during that fourteen-, fifteen-year period, he went back there, oh, several times, three or four times I'd say, before he decided to bring the family here. He made several trips back home to Italy. He'd go to New York, and then he'd work

his way aboard an Italian ship and go back to his home, Genova, and see his mother and his family.

Calciano: You said that your father sailed with your mother's father; was your mother's father a captain, or a cook, or just a regular sailor?

Stagnaro: My mother's father was more of a ... he was a sailor himself, but my father when he sailed with my mother's father (laughter) he was more of a cabin boy.

Calciano: Did your mother's father sail all the time as a profession?

Stagnaro: He sailed the Mediterranean all the time. Sailed it all his life.

Calciano: On the big sailing ships; not as a fisherman.

Stagnaro: No. They weren't big sailing ships those days, but they were sailing ships anyway.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: But not as a fisherman, no. Just picking up cargo and things like that. I don't think my father and mother's father fished too much; I don't think my mother's father fished ... he always was actually a sailor.

Maria Zolezzi Stagnaro

Calciano: Did your mother ever comment about it being difficult

having her husband sailing the seven seas?

Stagnaro: Well, it was difficult for them, but he'd always send money back home, and my brother Cottardo got a pretty good, as good an education as you get up to his age at that time because he could read and write Italian very, very well, and he had a very good head and was a good mathematician and everything. He was a very brilliant man, believe me he was. And he got an education back there that was about fifth or sixth grade education, and he started school in this country and went through the sixth grade here, and then he went to work.

Calciano: Did you say your father sent for your mother and Cottardo, or did he go over and escort them back?

Stagnaro: No, they came on their own.

Calciano: How did they manage the language barrier?

Stagnaro: Well it was hard for them, but they got by. Calciano: And got a train all the way out here?

Stagnaro: Got a train out of New York all the way, all the way here.

Calciano: Did your mother ever talk much about her train trip out here from the East Coast?

Stagnaro: Not too much on the train trip. They landed in New York, my mother did and my brother, on February 22,

1898 ... they never forgot that date, because it was Washington's birthday.

Calciano: Oh. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: And they had quite a time even on the island there.

Calciano: Ellis Island?

Stagnaro: On Ellis Island, yes. Ellis Island.

Calciano: How long did they have to stay on Ellis Island?

Stagnaro: I guess they were through customs one or two days there.

Calciano: Did your mother-ever describe her trip, her sailing voyage to you?

Stagnaro: Well they came over here, and I guess they came over third class ... or down in the bilges, probably, those days, you know. They brought all those immigrants in; they brought them here just like they would bring cattle, in the same way.

Calciano: But she never talked much about it?

Stagnaro: Well, how seasick she was and sick and all that, and of course, you know, it was kind of hard for those people to leave their families back there. Of course my father told her at that time that they'd be in this country maybe six, seven years at the very most, and they never did go back.

Calciano: That's kind of sad.

Stagnaro: Yes, it was sad. I've seen her shed many a tear myself, you know. She'd be there thinking of her people, and many a time I'd see her crying ... I knew that was what she was thinking about.

Calciano: Oh my.

Stagnaro: When I was just a little boy, "Mama, what are you crying about?" "Oh, thinking about my mother and my father and my brothers and my sisters" and she shed a lot of tears, I know that.

Calciano: Did she get any trips back in those years?

Stagnaro: Never went back.

Calciano: Never!

Stagnaro: Never went back. They stayed. They many times talked about going back, but they never went back. The first six, seven years she cried, because she missed her home back there and her people, but they got away from poverty; they got away from hunger; they got away from I guess you could call it even tyranny, and after seven, eight years she got used to it ... she didn't feel like going back again, but it was rough on her.

Calciano: I bet it was.

Stagnaro: She was very homesick, very homesick. And it was quite lonely for her because you see there were no Italians

here then, and up here where we could start living, right up at the top of the hill where the family home was, practically right there where I was born, there was some Mexican families; that's about the only friends that they had, so it was quite a lonesome life for her.

Calciano: Do you think that she would have come if she thought she was coming here permanently?

Stagnaro: I doubt it. I doubt it. But after she was here six, seven years and in the meantime, you see, some of my father's sisters and their family started getting over here, migrating over here, and then it wasn't quite so lonesome for her.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: But to begin with it was a little rough.

Calciano: Just to get the family straight in my mind, how many more children did your mother have?

Stagnaro: Well, there was my brother, Cottardo. We had an age difference of about I think it was fifteen years of age, and then I had another brother born who passed away when he was three or four years of age.

Calciano: Oh. He was older than you?

Stagnaro: He was younger than me.

Calciano: When was he born?

Stagnaro: He must have been born about, oh say around 1902, and he passed away about 1905.

Calciano: And you were born when?

Stagnaro: I was born here in 1900. I was born right here in Santa Cruz.

Calciano: And she hadn't had any children in Italy that she lost?

Stagnaro: No children in Italy except Cottardo.

Calciano: What type of person was your mother?

Stagnaro: Well mother was the type of person, strictly Italian, spoke practically no English. They didn't have very much of an education, little bit, but not too much. They came from ... well, real poverty, the worst kind of poverty I guess. She saw, like everybody else from there, many a hungry day while they were back in Riva-Trigoso, and she was a very industrious woman, very industrious. She could do most anything with a needle. She made all my father's clothes that he wore on the boats; she made his shirts, and she knitted, hard-knit with the steel needles, made all his underwear and socks and shirts, and everything but the trousers and shoes and hat I guess, and she could do anything. She was a lady that brought in a good many of the Italian

children of the Italian fishermen's families into this world -- she was what you call a midwife, and she was always in big demand. And they used to buy the raw wool and make their pillows out of the real raw wool, wash it and rewash it and be nice and white and clean, and then I can remember they'd comb it out and make pillows and mattresses, and a good many of the Italian women of the Italian colony that was up here, a good many couldn't do those things, but one would come over and do the housework while Mama would do a good much of the sewing and things like that.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: And not only that, she made all the fishnets. She made fishnets and made raincoats and made aprons.

Calciano: What did she make the raincoats from?

Stagnaro: Canvas. And then soak them in linseed oil; she'd take them and soak them in linseed oil, and that would make them waterproof; she made the raincoats for the fishermen, she made fishnets for the fishermen, she made the aprons for the fishermen. And Mama tried to give you and teach you the best principles in the world, you know, to live right and religion too; had to go to church, had to go to ... you know, we were

Catholics, and we had to go to communion and confession and church on Sundays.

Calciano: Your mother sounds as if she must have been a very bright woman even though she didn't have the education, because she seemed to be doing the difficult tasks I would say.

Stagnaro: Yes. Mama ... oh, the proverbs and the things that my mother knew was just unbelievable, just unbelievable. You would never believe it that a person that didn't have at least a high school education would have as much sense in their head as what she had.

Calciano: Great.

Stagnaro: Yes, she was really a fine woman. Even if I say so (laughter) she had a good head.

The Sixty Families

Stagnaro: My dad was known amongst all the fishermen as the patriarch of the Genovese fishermen of the Pacific Coast.

Calciano: Yes, because he was responsible for everybody coming.

Stagnaro: He was very responsible. About the turn of the century he started bringing his sisters and their husbands here, and they became fishermen.

Calciano: Had the brothers-in-law been fishermen in the Genova

area, or did they learn here?

Stagnaro: They had been fishermen in the Genova area, yes; they were fishermen. My father brought his three brother-in-laws here, and they in turn brought their relations here. So then between 1900 and 1910, I'd say, we had a colony of I'd say about 60 Genovese families from that area.

Calciano: Sixty?

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Oh my heavens!

Stagnaro: And they all lived more or less on top of the hill, and a few lived in the flat, what we call the flats -- down around Laurel and Myrtle streets -- a few lived there, but the majority of them lived right on top of the Bay Street-Laguna Street--Gharkey Street area. So finally they owned their own homes and then these fishermen, too, became individual businessmen, and as they went along, they bought their own boats and sold their fish to the different places here on the wharf here.

Calciano: Now of these sixty families that came over, how many of them were directly related to your father and mother by marriage?

Stagnaro: Well directly by marriage, I think the Ghios, the Loeros, and the Bregantes.

Calciano: And the rest of these were friends and acquaintances?

Stagnaro: They were friends and acquaintances, more or less friends and acquaintances.

Calciano: And did he pay passage for the Bregantes and the Loeros, or did they raise their own money and come over.

Stagnaro: No, I think my dad brought them all in here ... paid their way over.

Calciano: Not all sixty families?

Stagnaro: Not all sixty, no.

Calciano: But all in his family?

Stagnaro: Yes. And then some of his brother-in-laws brought some of their in-laws in, you see. And then the others in turn would bring their relatives in.

Calciano: So among the sixty families, there were a lot of intermarriage ties.

Stagnaro: Oh yes, oh yes. A lot of intermarriage ties. A lot of intermarriages of the children, you know, of the families. They married right into the different families ... that's it.

Calciano: Now your mother and brother came to the United States

in 1898.

Stagnaro: Yes. 1898.

Calciano: Yes. And then how many years was it before the sixty families were all here?

Stagnaro: Oh, they started coming in here right after the 1900s about 1903, '04, '05 along in there, and by 1910 and '12, they were mostly all here.

Calciano: Did they come in groups, or did each family come separately?

Stagnaro: Well they more or less came separate. Sometimes maybe two families would come. And sometimes you know, their husbands would come first, you see, and then they would send for their families.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: That's the way it mostly was ... that the husbands came here and made the money to bring the families here. That's the way it operated.

Calciano: Do you remember the arrivals of some of the families?

Stagnaro: Oh, they'd get together and kiss each other and love each other and, my, do anything to help each other ... oh my! A big event. It was a big event. Have them for dinner you know ... four, five days in a row, till they got settled and everything ... oh my. Big preparations were made. Oh yes. Very friendly, very

friendly.

Calciano: Would they come here on the train from San Francisco,
or....

Stagnaro: Oh, some people were on the train....

Calciano: ...or did they come by coastal steamer?

Stagnaro: No, they'd come on a train, come on a train; the
trains run those days, you know, and everybody would
be waiting at the depot for them. Waiting for the
people from Italy. Usually the people back there, when
they knew they were coming (because they're all the
same town), they would give little things to bring,
like for us, you know. Maybe my aunts or my cousins
would send me a little sweater or a little something,
a little gift of some kind.

Calciano: Did your mother's mother ever come over?

Stagnaro: No.

Calciano: But all her children came?

Stagnaro: Not all of her children, no. Some of them didn't come.
I think my mother had just one sister that came to
this country besides my mother. And my mother had
quite a few sisters. But only one sister came. Then
she went back. She died back there. And it was

Colletta; Lala Colletta, we called her. In Genovese, "aunt" is lala.

Calciano: Oh I see.

Stagnaro: We don't say zia. Zia's the real pronunciation, but we always called them the dialect, see, and "uncle" is barba, like the barber. But that's the dialect again. That's why a good many of the dialects made fun of the Genovese dialect, see? Actually the pronunciation of the real Italian is zio or zia. (Laughter)

Calciano: Yes. So you can tell where somebody's from just by their speech.

Stagnaro: Yes, oh yes.

Calciano: How many were in your mother's family?

Stagnaro: Oh, my mother had quite a few sisters ... I don't know myself, but I think she had, she had two brothers, and one of her brothers died quite young, and her other brother was a Mediterranean captain of a ship, and in fact he was the Captain of the port of Genova for many years. A well-known, highly respected man. Big in maritime. And then she had five or six sisters.

Calciano: Why did none of her sisters come over....

Stagnaro: Well, because their husbands, they worked; they were all sailors; they were aboard Italian ships, and they

just didn't break loose. My father would try to encourage them to come, but it couldn't be done.

Calciano: But they were more sailors than fishermen?

Stagnaro: They were more sailors than fishermen, right.

Calciano: And this aunt that came, she wasn't married when she came?

Stagnaro: This aunt was married.

Calciano: She was? Did she bring her husband?

Stagnaro: Her and her husband came here. He was a fisherman. Fished out of San Francisco. He didn't fish down here at all.

Calciano: Did he go back too?

Stagnaro: They both went back. Died back there, yes.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: They did very well financially. And she worked. She was ... well my aunt was like my mother. She was a very capable woman, and she made a lot of things that the fishermen would use ... oh, things like aprons, you know, out of canvas and where they put them in linseed oil and waterproof them, and she made them for all the fishermen in San Francisco. And she worked also for what was known then as Fontana Cannery, which

later became Del Monte. That was how the Del Monte Cannery started.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: Right there at San Francisco. Del Monte Packing Corporation started right from where the old cannery is there on Fishermen's Wharf. That was a cannery, and all these Italian women, they all worked there, and my aunt worked there. Oh, they went back very wealthy back home.

Calciano: Now the Italian women here in Santa Cruz, did they work just in the homes, or did they also go out and work?

Stagnaro: Well they worked in the fish cannery on Washington Street when it was here.

Calciano: Did very many of our sixty families go back to Italy?

Stagnaro: Very few. Very few. Most of them all stayed right here. Very few if any. I don't remember any of them ever going back to live back there.

ITALIAN LIFE IN SANTA CRUZ

Housing and Utilities

Calciano: Where did your father live during the years before he brought your mother over?

Stagnaro: He lived in a little shack right up here on top of the

hill. In fact a barn you might as well say ... not even a barn.

Calciano: Did he just build it himself or rent it from somebody?

Stagnaro: He just rented it for \$3, \$4 a month.

Calciano: Sort of like those old cabins we have up on the University? [Old ranch workers' cabins near the campus entrance.]

Stagnaro: Sort of like those little shacks, like that, and not even as good as those.

Calciano: (Laughter) And then when he brought his wife and son over, where did they first live?

Stagnaro: They first lived up here on Lighthouse Avenue in a little old house. They rented there.

Calciano: Is that where you were born?

Stagnaro: No, I was born on Day Street, just about two houses from where the family home is now. There's a house on the corner, an old house, and then the Ghio's bought it, my cousin Cottardo Ghio bought that, and he built a new house, but I was born on that property there.

Calciano: So the house that you were born in isn't standing anymore?

Stagnaro: Isn't standing anymore, no.

Calciano: And then as the other Italian families came over, they

started buying or renting around this area?

Stagnaro: They started renting, even from my family -- one time we had, oh, seven, eight homes ... houses for rent. They rented from my people even.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: They were nice comfortable homes; there was nothing wrong with them at all. They were comfortable homes, well built, and electricity put in, and toilets and bathtubs put in as they went along.

Calciano: Was the electricity in right from your earliest days, or....

Stagnaro: No, no.

Calciano: About when did that come in?

Stagnaro: I'd say ... oh, I'd say we probably didn't get electricity into our house until about 1912, along in there, maybe as early even as 1910.

Calciano: And did you use it just for light bulbs, or did you also use it....

Stagnaro: Just for lighting. Just one globe, one string on the cord where you turn the light on.

Calciano: You probably remember that pretty well.

Stagnaro: Oh very much so. I remember having the coal-oil lamps and the wooden stove very much. I remember the coal-

oil lamps, 'cause I used to be the chimney cleaner for the lamp. (Laughter) I used to clean the chimneys for my mother when they'd smoke up, you know.

Calciano: No wonder you remember those. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: And trim the wick for her. Fill it up with the coal oil, you know; everybody had the coal-oil can. In fact I remember when the Standard Oil Company wagon would come around, all they sold was kerosene.

Calciano: It would go around from house to house?

Stagnaro: Go from house to house to peddle kerosene.

Calciano: Oh!

Stagnaro: Oh yes. Everybody had them. That was all they had. And you go to the grocery store, you could buy it there and put it in the gallon can or two-gallon or whatever you had, and so you bring it home.

Calciano: And what did you use for heat?

Stagnaro: Heat, the best heat I remember, they would heat the stove, the plates of it, you know, the covers of the stove; you get those hot, wrap them in newspaper, put them under your blanket -- that was your heat.

(Laughter)

Calciano: So it was just the one stove? You didn't have....

Stagnaro: Just the one stove. That was it.

Calciano: And when did sewers come into that area? Well first, when did running water come?

Stagnaro: Well, running water, we always had running water. I don't remember a time that we didn't have running water at our house. And everybody had the outhouses. And the sewer ... I'd say that we probably didn't get sewers till about the same time we got electricity -- 1910, '11, or '12.

Calciano: Do you remember when your neighborhood first began to get telephones? Was it a big thing or not?

Stagnaro: Well, they probably didn't get any telephones in the house till about 19 ... oh ma^ybe 1925 or '30. I don't think any of them had telephones before then.

Firewood

Calciano: Where did your mother get her firewood?

Stagnaro: The firewood ... when the rivers there would come down, we'd all go down to the beach and carry the wood home. That's where we got most of our firewood; it came from there.

Calciano: You could get a year's supply from a winter storm?

Stagnaro: We'd get a year, two years' supply even. Let it dry. We'd take it and saw it by hand. As we got rich (laughter) -- I'll put it that way -- we'd get a man with a saw that'd come over and saw it over at the house. But when we were poor, we cut it by hand. (Laughter)

Calciano: Cut it by yourselves?

Stagnaro: Yes. It was good exercise. We had our own big saw, and we had a sawhorse and sawed it. That's what we did.

Calciano: It takes a lot of wood to run a wood stove.

Stagnaro: Yes, a lot of wood. But we used to get a lot of wood, you know; a lot of wood come down from the river ... the rain would bring wood and the beach was full.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: Then when we had a horse, a horse and wagon, we'd fill up that wagon or carry it up on our backs.

Calciano: Oh. So it was an advantage in many ways to have several strong sons in a family.

Stagnaro: Yes. It was; you bet it was an advantage. In fact my uncle's kids, the Ghios, there were seven boys; they were hard-working boys. Boy, they'd fill up all the families. The Bregantes only had three girls, so the Bregantes would be working over to the Ghio's house,

you know; they were all cousins, and my cousin would bring up the wood, carry it by back, poor kid.

Calciano: Goodness.

Stagnaro: Yes. See, there was Mary Bregante and Louisa and Alma. Mary is Mary Carniglia now, and Louisa is Louisa Guidici, and Alma married a man named Rapalli. There were three sisters; we had to take care of them, but we always took good care of them.

Calciano: That's nice. What type of things could that family do to reciprocate?

Stagnaro: Well, we all worked together; we all worked together. For one thing and another, you always reciprocated. The Loeros the same way. My father's three sisters, I think I told you this, were the Loero family, the Bregantes, and the Ghios, the Stephano Ghios. There's a good many with the same name, but still no relation to one another.

Calciano: Oh. Like Smith or Jones?

Stagnaro: Yes. Like Smith or Jones. Same thing.

Calciano: So not all the Ghios around here are your Ghios?

(Laughter)

Stagnaro: No. No. No. Just like you have four Stagnaro families, and none of them are related to one another.

Calciano: Now that surprises me.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Because it wouldn't seem to be that common a name.

Stagnaro: Yes. It is a very common name. The word "Stagnaro" comes from the word stagnino which means tinsmith.

Calciano: Oh.

Stagnaro: You see they were the tinsmithers, and that's where the name came from.

Gardens and Herbs

Calciano: Did your mother garden much?

Stagnaro: Oh yes, oh very much. Oh they all had their gardens. She had a garden up to a year or two before she passed away; they grew their own garlic, had their own onions, they grew all their own different herbs.

Calciano: What were the particular ones that they liked?

Stagnaro: Well, they had what they call *persa*, I don't know what they call it in English. (Laughter)

Calciano: Parsley?

Stagnaro: No, no. They grew parsley; they grew their own basilico; basilico is pesto ...that's sweet basil.

Calciano: Basil, okay.

Stagnaro: Then oregano, and then they had ... for another one, I can't even think of the name of it.

Calciano: Rosemary, maybe?

Stagnaro: Yes. Rosemary.

Calciano: Thyme?

Stagnaro: Thyme, yes. Thyme, rosemary, oregano ... they grew all of that; all the Italian women, oh, they all had that.

Calciano: Did your mother often grow flowers, or was that a....

Stagnaro: Very little flowers, very little. Some, but not much. Maybe a few geranium plants and that would be about it. They went more for their gardens.

Calciano: Yes. I was wondering whether she did not grow flowers because she had to use her energies for her vegetables....

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: ... or whether she just didn't care much one way or the other?

Stagnaro: No. They liked them, but they saved all the space they could to grow vegetables.

Calciano: Did they grow peppers?

Stagnaro: Peppers, yes.

Calciano: Did they grow very well here, or not?

Stagnaro: Yes. No problem at all.

Calciano: What about tomatoes? Did they grow them, or did they

buy those?

Stagnaro: Tomatoes ... oh yes. They grew their own tomatoes, and they bought a lot of tomatoes. In those days the vegetable wagons used to come around the houses, so it was nothing for one of the Italian fishermen to trade a little fish for a box of vegetables.

Calciano: Barter. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Yes.

Chinese and Italian Commercial Gardens

Calciano: I've heard of a garden known as the Italian gardens; whoever ran it would peddle vegetables. Is this the one you bought from?

Stagnaro: Well there was several; Righetti and Righetti's dad, they peddled vegetables here for many, many years.

Calciano: Were they out on King Street?

Stagnaro: Righetti? Well he had that place all along the river where that redevelopment is now, mostly. He had all that where the courthouse is.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: That belonged to the Righetti family for years, and then Johnny, when he had the Santa Cruz Hotel, I think his father put it up for him for to help him in the Santa Cruz Hotel, and things went bad, and he lost

that property. So there went a half million dollars or more to them if they could have held on.

Calciano: Yes. Were there also Chinese vegetable peddlers when you were young?

Stagnaro: Well I remember the Chinese people myself ... I remember them, but I don't remember them peddling vegetables. But I remember the Chinese raised them, because I used to go past there to go to Laurel School. I went to Laurel School practically all my life ... till the 7th grade; that's as far as it went, and then you had to go to Bay View. if you lived on this side, you went to Bay View to come out of the 8th grade, which. I did. And walking down by the railroad tracks -- I used to walk the railroad tracks, from our house down the railroad track to go to Laurel School -- and I do remember the Chinese vegetable people raising vegetables there.

Calciano: But they didn't sell in your area that you remember?

Stagnaro: No. They didn't sell in that area. I think they didn't peddle. I think they probably just sold to the grocery stores those days and places like that.

Calciano: Now I'm having trouble visualizing exactly where the gardens were.

Stagnaro: Well it was right down here where the Neary Lagoon is.

Calciano: Oh, okay.

Stagnaro: On this side, see. The other side, you got the sewer plant now, but they were on this side where there are several buildings built in there; they were there then.

Preserving and Cooking

Calciano: Did your mother ever do any canning, or was that not part of the Italian tradition to can food?

Stagnaro: Well, they didn't can so much ... they dried; they used to dry their tomatoes, you know. And then they took tomato puree, and that's how they made their conserva ...they made a regular paste, a regular tomato paste.

Calciano: How did they make it?

Stagnaro: You see the way they made their conserva, they got the fresh tomatoes, and they'd break them; they'd break them all up ... they'd break them all up, and they'd put them in the barrel, see, and on this barrel they had a little spigot ... you know tomatoes are quite a bit of water, and every day they would drain the water from the spigot so it would run off.

Calciano: Oh!

Stagnaro: And then they'd get most of the water out of the

tomatoes, and then they used to have -- I don't know what they call it [making circular motions with his hands].

Calciano: Oh, a ricer or a mashing type thing....

Stagnaro: ... it's very fine, fine. They would throw away the skins and the pulp of the tomato; they'd throw that out, and conserva would go down and fall in a bowl, and then they would take the conserva, and they would put it in white flour sacks and tie it up and then sun dry it.

Calciano: They tied it up?

Stagnaro: It's a regular puree, see.

Calciano: Would they hang them or just lay them out in the sun?

Stagnaro: Well, they would hang them ... hang them up.

Calciano: What ... from a clothesline?

Stagnaro: Clothesline, or some kind of a pole or something, you know.

Calciano: How long would they sun dry it?

Stagnaro: Oh, they'd sun dry it till all the water was out of it. It was just a very thick paste.

Calciano: Would it take a day, five days....

Stagnaro: Oh, it would take longer than that, I believe. Longer than that. Then you'd have this nice puree which ...

well I'd say was about the texture of ... well it'd be a little heavier than mayonnaise, I'd say. Something like that. Then they put salt in, and then they would put it in crocks, and then they had their tomatoes all winter long and going into the different foods.

Calciano: It never spoiled?

Stagnaro: Never spoiled. Not the way they put it up. They would salt it with salt to preserve it and put olive oil on the top, which worked very nice; I don't know why they put the olive oil there, but it kind of sealed it, I think, from getting moldy or something.

Calciano: Was it similar to the paste we open up and get out of a can now?

Stagnaro: It's something more or less like you get out of the can now. In some Italian stores I think you can buy it.

Calciano: Buy conserva?

Stagnaro: Buy conserva, yes. And then they used to take tomatoes also and slice them; then they'd put them out on boards; they had boards, and they'd put them out and lie them in the sun, and they'd put salt on them and let them dry, let them sun dry, and the sun would get the water, 'cause you know tomatoes have 70, 80, 90 percent water I guess.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: And they would sun dry them, and then they put these in crocks with salt, and then when they wanted these tomatoes, they'd soak them in water overnight and change the water three or four times, and then they'd have their tomatoes that way, too.

Calciano: For making sauces and things?

Stagnaro: Yes. They'd make a tomato sauce, which all these old Italian women did, all of it ... they'd stew their tomatoes and they'd boil them, then they'd, oh, they'd put basilico ...sweet basil, you know.

Calciano: So the women mainly did salting and drying ... not necessarily canning jars of jelly and tomatoes?

Stagnaro: No, no. No, they didn't jar; they didn't can, or very little. And then they used to go out and get some sort of a ... they called them erba, herbs. They would get them out in the fields those days it was a green. You know we used to eat a lot of those greens there.

Calciano: They just grew wild? They didn't grow them in their garden?

Stagnaro: They grew wild. No, they grew wild; you'd go out and get them ... it was kind of a dandelion, I think, but we ate a lot of those, and I always enjoyed them, too. I really enjoyed them.

Calciano: Did your mother make her own pasta?

Stagnaro: Well, she made tagliarini at home, made the raviolis at home ... but the spaghetti, they bought it; they used to buy from the wholesale Italian grocers. They used to come down here from San Francisco, and they would take the orders, you know, from all the Italians, call on all of them, and they used to ship them down either by boat or by train.

Calciano: So she'd get several months supply?

Stagnaro: Oh several months supply. They all did; they all did. Big cheese and spaghetti and hardtack, sailor's hardtack, and we still eat them at home. Galletta, we call it.

Calciano: How do you eat that?

Stagnaro: Just eat it hard, just like that.

Calciano: Instead of a roll or something?

Stagnaro: Yes. It's hardtack, hard bread -- fishermen's hardtack; you can soak it if you want, but we don't.

Calciano: Is it a salted bread?

Stagnaro: Well I guess they put a little bit of salt in the making of it, but it's not very salty, not salty, no. But the Plaza Grocery has it.

Calciano: Oh they have?

Stagnaro: Yes. Ask for galletta, the hard bread.

Calciano: I will. I'll ask for it.

Stagnaro: The British call it pilot bread.

Calciano: I buy a lot of things there when I do Italian cooking, but I usually buy the sourdough bread, instead.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Did your parents ever make sourdough down here, or is that just a San Francisco....

Stagnaro: Not sourdough, but they made bread; they had their own ovens outside and made bread.

Calciano: The ovens were outside?

Stagnaro: Yes. They had the brick ovens, a good many of the families all had the brick ovens, and they would heat them up with wood and get them red hot and then put the bread in and close them up and let the bread cook in these ovens.

Calciano: But did they also have a wood range inside the house?

Stagnaro: They had a wood range also inside the house.

Calciano: And would it have an oven in it?

Stagnaro: It would have an oven also. They had the wood stove which is what they cooked on for many, many years; it's all we had at home.

Calciano: Why would they also have ovens in the backyard?

Stagnaro: Well, for their bread; they liked to bake them in these old brick ovens. I guess it was the custom that they had back home.

Calciano: Are any of the ovens still left?

Stagnaro: Not that I know of, no.

Calciano: That's too bad.

Stagnaro: Yes, yes.

Calciano: Were there any foods that they couldn't get from the Italian wholesalers here that they really missed because they'd been accustomed to them in Italy?

Stagnaro: I think that they got mostly everything that they wanted from the Italian wholesalers, and of course the folks back home, our relatives, every year would ship dried mushrooms, and I'm the type that can eat anything in this world but dried mushrooms.

Calciano: You can't eat those?

Stagnaro: Can't eat any dried mushrooms or I get an old-fashioned bellyache. (Laughter) Funny thing. I can eat anything, and I do eat anything else. I can eat anything of all countries of all nationalities. It doesn't make any difference, but I am allergic to dried mushrooms ... fresh mushrooms, even, is no

problem, but dried mushrooms, that's an old-fashioned bellyache. Isn't that funny?

Calciano: What kind of an Italian are you -- no mushrooms, no wine. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Yes. Very poor, very poor. I say I am a poor Italian because I am no pasta eater; brother Cottardo lived on pasta -- shows you the difference. Ravioli, spaghetti, with brother Cottardo, two, three times a day, no matter, for breakfast, lunch, or dinner, and my nephews all the same way, but me, I'm the poorest pasta eater that God ever put on this earth.

Calciano: How funny!

Stagnaro: Yes. I don't like raviolis,; maybe I'll eat three or four; spaghetti, maybe three or four, but I think what turned me against it was because when the Italians are making their gravies, they use those dried mushrooms, and using the dried mushrooms, I'd always get a bellyache, see?

Calciano: Yes, yes, Sure.

Stagnaro: And we finally discovered what caused it ... it took seven years for us to get this old bellyache solved, and finally we came to the conclusion that it was the dried mushrooms and it was. But then what they used to make for me when they made pasta, which was only on

Sundays, when we got prosciutto, let's say, or Christmas and maybe Easter for raviolis, they'd always make my gravy with no dried mushrooms.

Calciano: What were some of the foods you had quite frequently?

Stagnaro: Minestrone every day. Every day. Minestrone and polenta.

Calciano: Oh, you had polenta?

Stagnaro: Oh, lots of polenta cooked many different ways.

Polenta cooked in the oven with the tomato sauce, very good, or the plain polenta, you would eat that with what they call baccala and stoccafisso -- that was the salted cod. In fact we're going to have some for lunch today, salted cod and polenta, 'cause I was in San Francisco today, and I bought some and stockfish, too -- stoccafisso, we call it. It's a hard fish; I think it comes out of Norway and Sweden. It dries hard, and you've got to take the back end of an ax and you pound it, then you cut it, then you soak it in water for two or three days to let it....

Calciano: Reconstitute or whatever.

Stagnaro: Yes, yes. And so Gilda and I are going to have boiled baccala today; they fix it with olive oil, salt and pepper, and polenta on the side.

Calciano: I've heard so much about polenta, and yet I've never tasted it, because it doesn't seem to be a dish that people make that much now.

Stagnaro: We used to call it Garibaldi cake. (Laughter) They made the polenta; then there's another polenta that they boil that they mix cabbage and beans and fix the polenta like that too. Then you could eat it that way or they slice it and they fry it a lot.

Calciano: Yes, I've heard of that.

Stagnaro: Fried polenta with cabbage and Italian beans. And good. We get hungry for it, you see.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: Get hungry for these different dishes now.

Calciano: Yes, these things of your childhood.

Stagnaro: Yes, we do.

Calciano: Did your parents ever make any sort of a version of the pizza?

Stagnaro: Well my sister-in-law did, later on she did. But to begin with, no.

Calciano: It wasn't part of your area.

Stagnaro: No, no. Not a part of our area at all. But later on, as we grew older, my sister-in-law made a version of the pizza, like you say. But that I think was more of

a -- actually pizza started off on the East Coast before it ever came out here, 'cause so many of the East Coast people used to tell me ... don't you ever have pizza around here? Any pizza places? And well I wouldn't even understand, and I was quite elderly already -- probably in my 25s and 30s, 35s, and 40s even. And I didn't even know what they were talking about.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: But I know now. (Laughter)

Holiday Food

Calciano: When a non-Italian thinks of Italian food, he thinks of spaghetti and then he thinks of pizza, and then he thinks of spumoni ice cream....

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: And yet I wonder if spumoni ... is that sort of a recent addition too, or did you ever get spumoni when you were a child?

Stagnaro: No, never spumoni. No spumoni. In fact we never knew what spumoni was.

Calciano: What about just regular old ice cream. Did you have that very often?

Stagnaro: No. No regular ice cream either. Very little ... at

home. No. None. Let's put it that way.

Calciano: (Laughter) I had the feeling that it was not....

Stagnaro: And of course every Christmas we would have this Italian panettones that you can buy now.

Calciano: What's that?

Stagnaro: That's the Italian's bread made with eggs and pine nut seeds, and it's got all the fruits in there and pine nuts and raisins. You can buy it. The Parisian bakery here, they make it; they have it here.

Calciano: What kind of desserts would you have during the rest of the year on weekdays, or did you have dessert?

Stagnaro: We just didn't have any desserts; didn't have any dessert.

Calciano: And at holiday times, did they do much making of Italian cookies and so forth, or weddings?

Stagnaro: No. Weddings they always went for the almond sugared, the hard almond sugar.

Calciano: Was it marzipan?

Stagnaro: No, it's hard, sugared over, and an almond in the middle of it.

Calciano: Oh, a Jordan almond. And that would be one of the traditional wedding items?

Stagnaro: That was, and still is today ... still the official wedding candy. And then they have another small candy,

I think it comes mostly from Italy; it's not much bigger than this [drawing a picture], and inside it has an anise seed. And that's your baptismal candy.

Calciano: Just for the tape, I'll say the anise seed candy is about the size of a pea, apparently.

Stagnaro: Yes. About the size of a pea. Right. About the size of a pea.

Calciano: With a sugar coating.

Stagnaro: Sugar coating. And an anise seed in each, and how they do it is beyond me. We still get them. Relatives send them. They graduate, there's a wedding or a baptismal, they send us these candies over here.

Calciano: Well, how nice.

Stagnaro: Yes. You bite, you get that nice anise, though many people don't care for the taste, you know.

Calciano: I like it, but a lot of people don't, right. What about cake? Would they have a wedding cake?

Stagnaro: Oh, wedding cake ... big wedding cakes.

Calciano: Now, would the mothers make these or buy them?

Stagnaro: No, no. Buy them, oh yes. Big wedding cakes, always went for big cakes. Six, seven layers up high.

Calciano: Oh my! (Laughter)

Stagnaro: They'd go all out ... they'd spend every dime they had. They'd even go hock their wool mattress.

(Laughter)

Calciano: I was wondering, which were the big holidays for the Italians?

Stagnaro: The big holidays would be Easter, Christmas, weddings, and baptismals. (Laughter) Then we go all out.

Calciano: What would you usually have in the way of food for Easter and Christmas?

Stagnaro: Well, we always had everything we could possibly think of. They'd make the raviolis and cook a lot of chicken, and later on came the turkeys....

Calciano: But not when you were young?

Stagnaro: Not when I was young, no. Mostly chicken.

Calciano: Roast chicken or stewed chicken, or what?

Stagnaro: Well, roast chicken and stewed chicken, you know, made a cacciatore ... and made the gravies with the chicken too, you see, make the gravy with the chicken, and you'd eat the chicken after you made the gravy -- served two purposes, see.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: It'd make a nice gravy out of that and pour it with that meat, put a chunk of meat in with the chicken, or with anything else to make their gravy....

Calciano: Now when you're talking about gravy, are you refer-

ring to the red sauces as well as....

Stagnaro: The red sauces, always red sauce, nothing else. Always tomato sauces if you want to call it that.

Calciano: Did they serve ham or lamb very often?

Stagnaro: Very little.

Calciano: Was it because they didn't like it, or because it was too expensive?

Stagnaro: Well I just think they just didn't ... our people, they just didn't have lamb. The Slavs are great lamb eaters, see. But our people are mostly veal and beef; a lot of veal.

Calciano: Yes. What veal dishes would they make?

Stagnaro: Well they make veal; roast a nice veal; they'd stuff it with nice Italian dressing ... they'd make what they call a veal pocket -- you get it from the ribs, I think, and they used to make a pocket out of it. You know, get the butcher to make the pocket....

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: They would stuff that pocket. Robbie fixes it at Malio's there occasionally.

Calciano: Oh? I should try it. What do you call it?

Stagnaro: Stuffed veal. Robbie does a good job on it too. He

learned from his mother.

Calciano: Did they ever make baraciuola? Where you wrap the little strips of meat around stuffing and cook it in sauce?

Stagnaro: Well they would take the stuffing and wrap the cabbage around it, and wrap string around it, and then they would more or less boil that, put it in boiling water, and then you unwrapped your cabbage, and you have your cabbage and the same dressing as you would stuff the raviolis with.

Calciano: Now that would be a special thing? That wouldn't be just Wednesday night when you came home for dinner?

Stagnaro: Oh no, no. That would be special, all special.

Calciano: And did you ever have roast beef just as a roast, or did you usually....

Stagnaro: Occasionally you had a roast beef; mostly on the weekend you would have the roast. They would take the big pot; they would make the gravy for their Sunday dinner, and prosciutto maybe once a week on Sunday, and you'd have the chunk of meat with a lean piece of meat, a lean meat usually cut off the rump of the beef, and they would take that beef, maybe weigh from three to five pounds, and they would make the gravy, and then you'd slice your meat, and you'd eat the

meat, see? You'd get the nice flavor of the sauce and then put a hole in it, and put the heads of garlic all through it so it'd flavor it up, and occasionally you'd get a whole chunk of garlic....

Calciano: Oh! (Laughter)

Stagnaro: ... you'd know you were eating garlic then. (Laughter)

Calciano: Did they serve fish on holidays much?

Stagnaro: Not much fish on holidays. That was the other six days of the week. (Laughter)

Wine

Stagnaro: You know how the Italians, they all made their wine and everything else, but my mother, she was the prohibitionist of the family. (Chuckle)

Calciano: Oh she was!

Stagnaro: Yes. Where my dad was just the opposite ... they all liked their wine and liked their liquor, all of them.

Calciano: Typical....

Stagnaro: Typical sailors, typical fishermen

Calciano: Worked hard and....

Stagnaro: ... worked hard, they just needed that little stimulant, but she....

Calciano: Yes. I never thought of an Italian precisionist!

(Laughter)

Stagnaro: Yes. (Laughter) We have one in our family, I'm telling you.

Calciano: Well I wanted to ask you later on, but I'll ask now, did your father make his own wine?

Stagnaro: We made our own wines, yes. We made our own wines for years and years, and the fishermen families all had their wine tanks that they made their wine in, and they used to buy their grapes.

Calciano: So one person in each family would make it, or would one family sort of make it....

Stagnaro: Each family would make their own wine, the majority. Now my father and one of my uncles, a Bregante, Mary Carniglia's father, why they made their wine together; they jointly made wines for two families. And say they made 900 gallons, they would divide 450 gallons apiece, which there was 50 gallons to the barrel, would be about eight, about nine barrels a year, so they used to divide.

Calciano: Was it always the red wine, or did they also make white?

Stagnaro: Well, a little bit of white, not too much. Mostly it was the red. Mostly Zinfandel. Mostly Zinfandel wine.

Calciano: My husband is very far removed from the old country,

but he recalls once he went to his grandfather's house when he was eleven and his grandfather proceeded to get him drunk on home brew wine. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Yes, yes.

Calciano: My husband remembers it as being very strong.

Stagnaro: Well I think when we get them drunk, I think they cured a good many of the Italian kids. As young kids, probably some of them at the age of eight or nine, maybe, had a little wine and drank it when their parents were not looking or something and got drunk on it, and after that probably wouldn't take another drink of wine. None of our generation here, second generation that was born here, or third generation, none of them drank any wine; they hardly would want it even on the table.

Calciano: Oh really?

Stagnaro: If it was set on the table, they'd move away from it.

Calciano: Oh my.

Stagnaro: 'Course as they got older, then they started drinking after, you know. (Laughter)

Calciano: Oh, okay.

Stagnaro: They did start drinking water, but then they started drinking liquor ... let's put it that way, like any

kid, you know.

Calciano: But now as adults they don't care particularly for wine?

Stagnaro: Not too much. Not too much. Yes, it's a funny thing.

Calciano: Because many of your other food preferences you carried on and you all still enjoy the Italian cooking.

Stagnaro: Yes. Oh very much so. Very much so. But we got to be very poor wine drinkers; we're no boon to the wine industry, I'll tell you.

Cigars

Calciano: Would your folks have cared if you'd smoked when you were in your teens?

Stagnaro: Well I think they, although my dad smoked, smoked all his life, and my brother smoked, but I never have. Never did smoke in my life, but I think they would have resented it if I'd smoked before I was 21 years of age; I think they would have.

Calciano: Did the kids smoke much in high school at that time?

Stagnaro: I'd say moderate ... not as much, I don't think, as they do now. No. I think they were more athletically minded, and they didn't smoke too much. Some of them

did, you know, a few, a small percentage, but nothing I don't think like they do now.

Calciano: What did your father and brother smoke?

Stagnaro: Well it was mostly what we call Italian cigars ...
Toscano cigars.

Calciano: Oh. From Tuscany?

Stagnaro: Well they got the name from Tuscany.

Calciano: I see. What is a Toscano cigar?

Stagnaro: Well it's a very strong tobacco, and it's pre-wrapped and a very thin cigar. Sometime if you get a chance, go into United Cigar Store and tell them to show you a Toscano cigar. You'd like to see a Toscano.

Calciano: Okay.

Stagnaro: See what one looks like. And they cut them in half.

Calciano: They do?

Stagnaro: They cut them in half, 'cause they're hard to draw through. Quite a few people still smoke them. Filipinos smoke them a lot ... they're strong, a strong tobacco.

Calciano: Are they imported or made locally?

Stagnaro: Well, they're made locally. They make them in San Francisco.

Calciano: Was there any cigar making going on in Santa Cruz when

you were a boy?

Stagnaro: Oh yes. Yes, there was a Jack ... Jack and Joe I think they call it ... Jack and Joe's cigars were made locally, then they moved to San Francisco. They still may make that cigar. It was made by Jack Mano and Joe Demicheli. Made them right there on Pacific Avenue ... had a nice business; they were cigar makers themselves.

Calciano: Were the Chinese making cigars, too, at that time?

Stagnaro: Not that I know of, no. The Chinese were never cigar smokers; they smoked their own Chinese tobacco, and they smoked their water pipes. They'd have these water pipes; they'd put the tobacco in, I remember, and they would light them and the smoke would come through water.

Calciano: I see.

Childbearing and Health Care

Calciano: Oh, when we were talking about the Italian children drinking wine, it made one wonder, did you kids drink milk as children or not?

Stagnaro: No. No. No milk.

Calciano: What did you drink?

Stagnaro: Well, after you got to be ... you drank wine, maybe it

was three, four years of age, and then you drank water, that's all.

Calciano: But you drank it up to three or four years of age, you say?

Stagnaro: Well wine to three, four years of age, then we weaned ourselves off of it.

Calciano: Oh, that's interesting. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: And usually the Italian mothers those days would nurse a baby till he was practically walking.

Calciano: Yes, that's true too.

Stagnaro: I know that my mother said that I was one kid that kicked it off before I was even nine months ... nine months old.

Calciano: Oh. Quite young.

Stagnaro: In fact she said I was even walking at the age of nine months.

Calciano: Oh my.

Stagnaro: Yes. I was very early. But she also nursed one of the Perez babies, Fred Perez. He's still alive¹ in fact he's three months older than I am. His mother died of childbirth. She was Irish herself. But Mr. Perez was Spanish descent, Mexican. But his mother died, and my mother used to breast feed him for months and months;

she breast fed him on one nipple and me on the other.

(Laughter)

Calciano: She must have been glad when you decided to quit.

(Laughter)

Stagnaro: Yes. But Fred and I always felt very close to each other on that account.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: Yes. Always been a close feeling ... we grew up together as kids. Always good friends, good friends.

Calciano: You mentioned that your mother was the midwife for the Italians.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Did she learn this in the old country, or did she just learn by doing over here?

Stagnaro: Well, I tend to think that she more or less learned it in the old country and carried it on over here. She brought all my cousins into this world. All my relations and never lost a case.

Calciano: Very good.

Stagnaro: It was unbelievable, but they did it.

Calciano: Would she receive any sort of payment or thank-you

* Ed. note: Fred Perez died in early 1973.

gift or whatever?

Stagnaro: Well, there was no payment or thank-you gift; they would just help one another in various things that had to be done. That's the way it was. There was no pay, only friendship, and doing something, and they would just all swarm over ... one of the old Italian things, the Italian families have when a baby was being born, why it was a big thing, and it was nothing to see fifteen or twenty of the Italian women swarm over to help.

Calciano: Oh, really?

Stagnaro: Because they had their babies at home those days.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: And who'd do the washing, who'd do the cleaning and sweep the yard, who was doing the cooking, and oh my God, they used to, they were in bed, they wouldn't let them move, the lady that had the baby, she couldn't move for eight or ten days, be very quiet, you can't do any work, and then after she got up, they'd still go over there for another two or three weeks ...

Calciano: Oh, how nice.

Stagnaro: ... till they were really on their feet and felt strong enough to carry on their own work. That's what

they did.

Calciano: That's great. Now your mother just had three children, but your brother's wife had how many?

Stagnaro: She had ... well I think she had ... well she had ten living. And I think there was a couple in between there. I think she had a total of about thirteen children.

Calciano: Was this fairly normal, or was that quite a large amount for the Italians?

Stagnaro: Well I think it was normal with some families. Now the Canepa family here, fisherman family, Robbie who is our chef here, there're still twelve living; there's twelve living in that family. And brother Cottardo was ten, and the Leibbrant family, you know, Mrs. Murphy, 'course they weren't Italian, but they had ten children those days, and the Bregante family my cousin married, there was only three girls, see, one, two, three girls in that family, but my cousins the Ghios, they had seven boys in that family, and the Achille Castagnolas, there must have been six or seven or eight there, and the Stagnaros down on Laurel Street, was about six there, so they had some six, eight to ten children ... most of those Italian families.

Calciano: When you talk about sixty families, you're talking

about a lot of people, aren't you?

Stagnaro: Yes, yes.

Calciano: Did very many of the women die in childbirth?

Stagnaro: There's only one that I knew of that died with childbirth here, and she had a doctor.

Calciano: Oh!

Stagnaro: She had a doctor, the only one, and her name was Castagnola, she was the mother of Renee Castagnola who is Al and Bob Castagnola's mother. But then she died, oh, I think Renee's mother must have died around the 20s, along in there. By then it was time to go to the doctors, you see.

Calciano: They were very strong women.

Stagnaro: Very strong. They had no problem. They did a good job, I'd say ... did a very good job.

Calciano: Well now were you children taken to doctors for vaccinations and so forth as youngsters?

Stagnaro: None. No vaccinations of any kind and no, very little, maybe the measles and the mumps and that was it.

Calciano: You mentioned your brother died young....

Stagnaro: Yes, brother Cottardo died at sixty-....

Calciano: No, no. The one who died at three or four, age three or four.

Stagnaro: Oh yes, Roberto. Yes. Well, we were living in San Francisco at that time, and he died from pneumonia, actually.

Calciano: Oh. I wondered if there were very many child deaths when you were young, or was that period over and pretty much....

Stagnaro: Well there weren't too many child deaths. I remember one ... the Castagnola's little boy; he died at about five or six of cancer. I can remember well ... you see I used to be more or less the interpreter for a good many of the old Italian families those days.

Calciano: Yes. The reason I was asking, when I go through the newspaper clippings of the period earlier, the 1870s and '80s, there are a lot of children dying of diphtheria, or measles, or some sort....

Stagnaro: Yes. Well a lot of the Mexicans died, but the Italians had, I'd say in this area here, they had very good luck with their children, very good luck.

Calciano: That's great.

Stagnaro: Yes. Now my brother, they lost a little girl; she had picked up some kind of a fever ... her name was Gilda; she was born previous to this Gilda, and then Gilda was born and they named her after the first Gilda. Now

she must have been around three, and she picked up some kind of a fever of some kind, and they just couldn't stop it. I don't think the doctors those days even had ... I don't know what year she died; must have been around '25 or '6 along in there, '27; she just picked up this fever, and they just couldn't stop it, and she died from whatever kind of fever it was. But a real healthy kid, though, healthy. Be out there playing games, playing baseball, every kind of game, football, everything, this kid.

Calciano: Did your mother have many home remedies that she liked to use?

Stagnaro: Well they had some home remedies they used to use, you know. They used the olio di ricino -- that's castor oil. (Laughter)

Calciano: Oh dear! (Laughter)

Stagnaro: They had castor oil, they had citrate of magnesia, they had the old bottle of castoria (laughter) ... and that was about it.

Calciano: But she didn't cook teas, and make home brews....

Stagnaro: Well, we had, yes, we had tea and camomile; they call it camomilla.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: If you were sick with a cold or something, they would put you to bed and put the old mustard plaster on you and camomilla and tea and keep you well covered and rest in bed ... oh, the Italians, especially with their children, I tell you, they were great for their kids. There are no families in the world, in my opinion, that go all out for their children like the Italians ... really.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: Mostly these Italian fishermen, when they used to come down from San Francisco, they'd come down, they couldn't get here fast enough, get here and have me call up their families in San Francisco ... they never asked how their wife was, but "How's the children?" And they'd only be gone eight or nine hours. "How are the children; how are the children?" (Laughter)

Calciano: I was wondering when the first Stagnaro was born in a hospital?

Stagnaro: It must have been the third generation. The fourth, maybe. Third one, anyway. But they all helped each other; they were friendly with each other, and who did the washing, and who did the cooking, who did the gardening, who made the nets and so on.

Sewing and Net making

Calciano: They made the nets?

Stagnaro: The women made the nets. All the old Italian women used to make the nets for their husbands. And the ones who didn't know how to make nets, why they would come over and do the washing and do the housecleaning, and the ladies that knew how to make nets would make the nets for the various fishermen. And I tell you, you should see the mattresses they made out of wool, and no cold could get through there. It was all lamb, pure virgin wool. And the pillows the same; you were always warm in bed.

Calciano: That's good.

Stagnaro: Always warm in bed. I don't remember feeling cold.

No heat, no nothing in the house, never.

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Today I would, I think.

Calciano: Yes. But you were prepared for it then.

Stagnaro: Yes, you were prepared. You were just used to it, and you didn't have it, you didn't miss it. You didn't think about it. But if it was extra cold ... Mama at one time would get, like I said, a plate off the stove that you cover the stove with, and she'd wrap a

newspaper and stuff it between the sheets, you know,
and the sheets were all made out of flour sacks.

Calciano: Oh they were?

Stagnaro: Yes. Your pillow cases were made out of flour sacks.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: The girls' bloomers were all made out of flour sacks
when they went to school. They made all their panties,
all made out of flour sacks. (Laughter)

Calciano: That was making use of every scrap that they had.

Stagnaro: Every scrap that they could; everything that they
could get.

Calciano: Right.

Stagnaro: And they were great with the needle, great with the
needle, and crochet, and they could do anything with a
needle, those women.

Calciano: Did they also have a regular sewing machine to work
with?

Stagnaro: Later on they got sewing machines, yes. They got
sewing machines.

Calciano: But when you were young and your mother was making
these things, it was all by hand?

Stagnaro: All by hand, all by hand. Every stitch by hand.

Calciano: And working with canvas you mentioned....

Stagnaro: Oh yes. All by hand. They had a kind of a thing to

protect their palm, and they had the needle and shove it in so it wouldn't hurt their hand. The Italians call it guardamano, which means "guard the hand," you see. Guardamano, they call it.

Calciano: Very good.

Stagnaro: And they made all the nets, you know, all the nets were made all by hand in those days. They didn't make them by machine, and they used to make nets for everybody. Like the ship chandlers used to come down here and bring them the twine and everything and set them up, and they'd make the nets.

Calciano: They would sell them to the chandlers?

Stagnaro: The chandlers would pay them so much a net for them, make so much a net. They called them so many meshes deep, so many meshes long ... and they knew what they were doing. And all the nets were made by hand. All the nets. Even after machinery came in, they made them by hand.

Calciano: Was this a good source of revenue for the family, or was it a very small....

Stagnaro: It was a big source of revenue. It wasn't bad. It all helped.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: They made eight dollars a net; eight dollars those days was big money.

Calciano: Oh, that's a lot back then. How long would it take to make a net, though?

Stagnaro: Well they'd knock out a net maybe in a week, 'cause they'd work on it night and day. They'd cook and give the baby a bottle of wine, put him in bed (laughter) and make nets. Every spare time, make nets. And they'd stay up late at night making nets. And the kids, they got a little bit older, you see, what you'd do, you have what's called a ... the needle to make nets, you know ... you fill it up with so much twine....

Calciano: Oh, sort of like a shuttle?

Stagnaro: Yes. It was a shuttle, that's what it was exactly, a shuttle. We called it an aguglia, a needle they call it in Italian. And fill up that shuttle. They had different size shuttles and big like this, and this big, you know. You have to throw that knot.

Calciano: How big were the shuttles?

Stagnaro: Well, it depended on which kind of mesh you were making. If you were making a net for small fish, like sardines or smelt, you would use a small shuttle, maybe a one-inch or 1 1/4 inch shuttle. If you were fishing barracuda, you'd use a two-inch or 2 1/2 inch

shuttle -- about 2 1/2 inches. And if you're fishing sea bass you'd use even up to 7 or 7 1/2 inch shuttle.

Calciano: Did your mother make all of these types of nets?

Stagnaro: Oh yes, oh yes. She made all kinds of nets.

Calciano: And did your father use all of these types, or did she make some that were just for sale?

Stagnaro: Oh no, no, he used all kinds of nets; five or six kinds of nets. I used to be able to make nets ... I was good at it myself. When Ma would be making a net, I would go up there and make nets, and the other Italian kids ... just throw that knot around and phoom, bang, boom. God, I had an aunt, she was a whiz at it. She'd work at it night and day. Night and day she'd make them. Stay up all night till four o'clock in the morning.

Calciano: With a coal-oil lamp?

Stagnaro: Yes. Four o'clock in the morning. My aunt ... one of my father's sisters, she was terrific at it.

Calciano: Now which one is....

Stagnaro: That was Celestina. She was a Loero.

Calciano: Some families of that period made their own soap. Did yours by any chance?

Stagnaro: Yes, some made their own soap, and some of us had ...

there was a little soap factory up here that made soap, and we used to buy it from them.

Calciano: Oh. So you would buy your soap?

Stagnaro: Yes. Buy soap, yes. Some made their own soap. Used to save all their fat and make soap.

Calciano: Some of the Italians, or just ... I know that some of the non-Italian families did, but did some of the Italian families make soap too?

Stagnaro: Yes, some made soap, but there was a soap manufacturer right up here on the hill, right here at Columbia Street it was.

Calciano: I never knew that.

Stagnaro: In fact one of the boys is still alive here.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: They were German; and he made soap up there. We'd buy it; it was just about made out of grease and lye ... that's about all it was made out of.

Calciano: (Laughter) But it worked.

Stagnaro: But it was a good soap in those days; it worked.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: And bathtubs. You didn't have no bathtubs.

Calciano: Oh yes. What did you do? Saturday night baths?

Stagnaro: Just heat a little water, lucky if you would get a

Saturday night bath in, or the ocean would be more of our baths, 'cause us kids from the Italians, we'd be in this water morning, noon, and night, rain or shine.

Calciano: Really?

Stagnaro: Every day of the week.

Entertainment

Stagnaro: This was our beach, this Cowell's beach here. And nobody came to that beach except us Italians.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: They wouldn't use it ... they used the beach over here [pointing to the Boardwalk beach].

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: But this little beach, there was just a few of us kids from the top of the hill up here ... that was it. All the Lindquists, they were the American people, or they were Swedes actually, Walter Lindquist; he still lives here in town, and the Hill family, and us Italians, and that was it.

Calciano: How nice to have your own beach.

Stagnaro: Yes. We had our own beach. It was the best beach there was.

Calciano: You learned to swim then in the ocean?

Stagnaro: Oh yes. All like fish.

Calciano: Funny, I tend to think of fishermen as not being that interested in swimming, because they have to be out on the water all the time in their work.

Stagnaro: Yes. You'd be surprised how many that didn't know how to swim.

Calciano: Did not know?

Stagnaro: You betcha. The old Italian fishermen, yes.

Calciano: But you kids were different?

Stagnaro: Oh, we were down there swimming like fish.

Calciano: Well that's good. What kind of games did you play?

Stagnaro: Well we played most of the games they played in school. Those days they played marbles for keeps; they played where you spin the top and put tops in the circle, and you'd come down and try to knock them out of the circle. Played tops for keeps. And we used to have a game, which was kind of a rough game, used to have what they used to call a pom-pom-pull-away, and we used to play kiwi with a stick, played baseball, oh, lot of baseball ... we didn't even have the price to buy a baseball. Played baseball, yes. We played those games at school, though; that's what they played at the school.

Calciano: When you came home from school, were you expected to work, or did you just mess around after school?

Stagnaro: Well, you never did much work around the house as kids, and we had a little group of boys, we played baseball ... baseball or, as we grew older, naturally we'd come down and the work was more interesting; come down and work with our people.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: Help with their nets and things like that.

Calciano: Did school start and finish the same time as it does now?

Stagnaro: I think it started about like it does now ... you'd have your summer vacation and ... about the same I'd say, Elizabeth, the same. I guess I told you that when I was in the third grade, there was kids chewing tobacco and shaving already in the third grade.

Calciano: Oh really! They hadn't been able to get much schooling so they were still at that point?

Stagnaro: Still at that point, still at that place, that is right.

Calciano: Were they mainly children of immigrant families, or were they mainly farm children, or....

Stagnaro: A lot were immigrant. Mostly immigrant families ... I guess we're all immigrant more or less, when you come right down to it, but they were more Americanized than most of us.

Calciano: I was wondering why they hadn't got their schooling? Were they farm kids, or were they lumbermen's kids, or....

Stagnaro: Kids that just didn't go to school; worked I guess, and were fourteen, fifteen years old and in the third grade.

Calciano: What type of entertainment did the Italian families have? I mean was it just the family feasts, or....

Stagnaro: Just the family. It was the only entertainment they had.

Calciano: You never went down to the opera house?

Stagnaro: No, no, nothing like that at all.

Calciano: So for the Italian mothers, it would be the things like the weddings and so forth that were....

Stagnaro: That was their entertainment. And work.

Calciano: Working together; talking together.

Stagnaro: Working together. Raising children and bringing the children up and work with each other. They kept busy,

and they seemed to be very happy. They seemed to be very happy. You never heard them complain.

Calciano: That's great.

Stagnaro: Never heard them complain, I'll tell you. Never did. Oh, they were happy women. 'Course when the old Italians get a few extra drinks, then they all thought they were Carusos (laughter) if you call that entertainment, you know. Visit one another, sit by the gallon of vino there and salami and cheese and then they start singing. That was their entertainment.

Calciano: That reminds me ... I was going to ask you whether they had sea songs that they sang at all? Was it just at night that they'd sing, or would they sing out in the boats?

Stagnaro: Oh, they'd sing in the boats all the time.

Calciano: Did they?

Stagnaro: Oh yes! Oh yes. You had to sing, even if they had to sing and compose it, they were singing. They'd sing and compose ... tell them to sing it over again, they wouldn't know what they'd been singing! (Laughter)

Calciano: Wouldn't know it? (Laughter) That's funny.

Stagnaro: Oh, it was funny. Real funny. Yes.

Calciano: Do you remember any of the songs? I mean were there any that were repeated over and over again?

Stagnaro: Well I don't remember any of their songs ... some of the songs I sang, like "Venni Su" and "The Moon in the Middle of the Ocean," I learned and those I sing. I sing every once in a while at some of the ... like at the Rotary Club when Christmas comes along or a few things like that, or Sons of Italy, or something like that. Have a little fun ... we get a little bit gay you know, at night. (Laughter)

Calciano: I'll have to have my microphone there sometime.
(Laughter)

The Church

Calciano: Did you go to Holy Cross Church?

Stagnaro: We went to Holy Cross, right.

Calciano: I was wondering, I know on the East Coast, in the town where my husband's family is from, there are three or four Catholic churches -- one is the Polish Catholic and one is Italian Catholic and so forth....

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Even in Watsonville there are three. Was there ever any movement here to get the Italian Catholics in one church and....

Stagnaro: No, never was any move in here that I know of to get the Italians in their own church. No. Maybe they

should have tried, but not that I know of, we never have. 'Course I don't think we've got the real amount of Italians; maybe we had them, but the real, the old Italians that came from Italy here, we don't have today as many as we had say fifty years ago.

Calciano: Yes, if this were going to have taken place, it would have taken place fifty or forty years ago.

Stagnaro: Yes, fifty years ago, yes.

Calciano: All the fishing families were Catholic, and all went to Holy Cross ... did any of the sons ever become priests or any of the daughters ever become nuns?

Stagnaro: No, no. None of them.

Calciano: Did the families try to get to church every Sunday, or was it more relaxed?

Stagnaro: No. Some of the ladies went to church ... the men didn't. The men didn't. (Laughter) They weren't too popular with the priests, Elizabeth, believe me they weren't. Maybe some of them went, and a lot of them didn't. But they were too busy at home with their children and everything else and busy fishing. Every time there was a funeral or something like that, you could be sure that the priest would rake the Italian fishermen over the coals, 'cause that's the only time

he'd ever see them.

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: In those days the priests were not like the priests today. They were really ... what would you call them -
- bigots?

Calciano: Narrow-minded?

Stagnaro: Oh, very narrow-minded. But still the old Italians made the kids go to catechism and get their communion and get their confirmation no matter ... no matter how rough it was, we had to go through it; we all went through it.

Calciano: Yes. The name Cottardo interests me ... is that an unusual name?

Stagnaro: A saint.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: St. Cottardo.

Calciano: What about Malio?

Stagnaro: I've been in every church; I've been in every synagogue, every temple in the world including the Taj Mahal; I still haven't been able to find St. Malio.
(Laughter)

Calciano: Well who picked the name?

Stagnaro: Well I think the name came from my godfather in San

Francisco; he had a son named Malio, and he spells it like I do. But I think they meant to call him Mario. Mario is quite a common Italian name -- M-A-R-I-O; it's a very common name.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: And I think maybe when he went to school it was misspelled M-A-L-I-O, and then I think I got it the same way. (Laughter) But I've met Italian people whose last name is Malio.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: I have met Italian people, their last name is Malio, same as my first.

Calciano: Now the English will name a child for the last name of another person ...

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: ... but the Italians don't tend to do that, do they?

Stagnaro: No, they don't, no. Usually Italians' names are all saint names, right down the line. You look at the Italian calendars with all the saints, you know, in the church there ... every day has got a saint's name, but I've looked them all over, believe me I have, and I'm still looking for St. Malio.

Calciano: Who would decide the name of the baby when it was

born? The mother, or the father, or together?

Stagnaro: Well, I think more or less they did together. A good many of them, you know, they would name them after themselves, or sometimes they would name them right after the godfather.

Calciano: And you said that when a child would die, they'd often name another child that name.

Stagnaro: Another child ... they'd follow the name, yes. You see, one time we had three Cottardos in our family. And pretty soon we ran out of Cottardos. They all passed away.

Calciano: Oh.

Stagnaro: Babe was one of the last was named ... he was Cottardo; he dropped dead at the age of 41 with a heart attack.

Calciano: Oh dear.

Stagnaro: Wonderful boy, I tell you. Worth his weight in gold. And then we had no Cottardos, but a year later after Babe died, Stago had a son and named him Cottardo, so we've got a Cottardo now. He's about 20 years old ... going to the University of California up here. You know Anne, his mother, maybe. Do you know Anne Stagnaro up there? She's the head nurse up there.

Calciano: Oh. No, I don't.

Stagnaro: She's quite a person ... you should meet her sometime.

Calciano: Yes. I'd like to.

Stagnaro: Their daughter graduated from up there last year.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: Janet graduated and now Cottardo's gone up there this year.

Funerals

Calciano: You said that baptisms and weddings were big occasions ...

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: ... but funerals weren't particularly. Or were they?

Stagnaro: Well, funerals, oh my, they went to funerals too.

Funerals and rosaries and flowers and things like that all very much so. Oh my! They'd go out for funerals, but they were different ... they never have had many nights like the Slavs where everybody is invited and they have drinks and eat everything after a funeral ... the Chinese do the same thing. But the Italians, they didn't. At the end of the funeral, everybody went their own way ... let's put it that way. Any time there was a death, in those days, you know, they

didn't go to the mortuaries with the dead; they kept them at home.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: And you had the watch at night going right around the clock. They would never think of leaving a dead person without someone in the room at all times. And they'd come there, maybe a group would come and stay till 9:00 o'clock; next group would come and stay till 12 or 1 o'clock; the other group would come and stay till 4 or 5 in the morning; another group would take over from 5:30 till 9 ... right around, all the time.

Calciano: Very similar to the Irish tradition.

Stagnaro: Very similar to the Irish tradition, yes, very similar to the Irish tradition.

Calciano: But the Irish, at least the stories you hear, they tended to make it into a party.

Stagnaro: Well the Italians to a certain degree had a party. They'd have the gallon of wine on the table there, you know; they'd drink wine, and they stayed up with the dead, and they'd go in the kitchen and there was always plenty of food there to eat and plenty of booze to drink, there was wine and liquor, because all the Italian families always had alcohol. And they knew how

to use it; they didn't abuse it; they didn't get drunk.

Calciano: And their friends would be there throughout that day?

Stagnaro: Some would leave early and go to bed. Old folks was there, and they'd start telling sea stories and fish stories and talk about home and talk about anything, you know, talk about their families back in Europe, and it's all good kinds of discussions they used to have.

Calciano: When did the tradition of having a wake begin to die out, or did it die out?

Stagnaro: Well, they still go down there, but like everybody else, they leave them at the mortuary parlors now days. I think it started dying out about 19.... My dad died in 1937, and we had him at home. 1937. So I think it started dying out right after that ... about 1940, say.

Calciano: The War might have brought changes?

Stagnaro: Yes. The War and everything else started changing ... things started changing. But my dad, we had him at home, and he died in 1937.

Calciano: Did he just die of old age?

Stagnaro: Just died of old age ... past eighty.

Calciano: Do you have any occasions now where a large number of the Genovese gather as a family, or are they....

Stagnaro: No. These families married; they kind of drifted around. No. Very seldom visit one another like the old days, you know. Even my cousins ... every time I see them, "Why don't you stop by, Malio, why don't you stop by?" Mary, the other day, I was riding a bicycle, and she stopped me, she stopped and she said, "Why don't you come by the house and see us?" I said, "Mary, I'm always busy. Here I'm riding this bicycle to get a little exercise, and then I got to get home and rush back to the pier." She said, "Why don't you come by?" (Laughter)

Calciano: It's the same story everywhere, isn't it?

Stagnaro: Yes, it's always the same these days. Maybe someone dies here, we're all there at the funeral parlor, all down at the funeral parlor, we see more people when somebody dies, at a rosary, than you see for maybe five years, Elizabeth.

Calciano: Yes. Yes.

Stagnaro: Then there were winemaking deals, you know. We used to have a get-together and making wine; we'd all help one another making wine and have a little wine festival

like amongst ourselves, and it's all gone; it's all gone.

Calciano: That's kind of sad.

Stagnaro: It is. It is. All too busy. Everybody's too busy. And then they got their families, they got their grandchildren, great-grandchildren. I hardly know any of my second cousins and third cousins. "Have you met so-and-so's daughter or husband?" "No. No." Never see them; never see those kids grow up, or anything. It's all gone. Those nice deals we had when we were young, like Mary says, Mary Carniglia's a pretty smart gal herself ... and she says, "Malio, it's all gone. It's all gone."

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: God, when we were kids, we was always at each other's house. Always. I'd be up at their house and they'd be down at our house, and we were together all the time. And happy. Very happy, Elizabeth. There always was a piece of stale, maybe a piece of hardtack or a piece of stale French bread on the table and a piece of salami, and a piece of cheese ... that was it ... we were happy, very happy.

Marriage

Calciano: When we were talking about weddings, did the families care that their kids marry within the Italian community, or did it not matter?

Stagnaro: Well I think....

Calciano: I'm talking about when you were very young.

Stagnaro: I think when I was very young, it was in the Italian family ... in fact, they made the matches.

Calciano: They did?

Stagnaro: They'd come to your house and say, "My son is interested in marrying your daughter," and that was it. Then they'd speak to the daughter, and then as a rule they always accepted it. It's a funny thing. Later on there was a change. In the third generation, let's put it that way, it changed completely.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: But even my generation ... I remember my people asking me if I wanted to marry a certain girl, and I said, "No." (Laughter) It just about killed them.

Calciano: (Laughter) You were the first?

Stagnaro: Nobody'd ever said no, but I got a little educated. (Laughter) I saw things in a different light.

Calciano: But that was hard for them to understand?

Stagnaro: Yes. Hard to understand. My brother, I'm sure that's

the way it was with them ... they made the matches there in the family. It was that way with the Oriental families and people like that, all the same way. And they still do it some.

Calciano: But with less and less success as each generation goes along.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Well it was the old way of doing things.

Stagnaro: It was the old way of doing things, yes, the old things. And it always worked out right. I've never seen any divorce, and they were all happy and very devoted to-each other.

Calciano: Were they happy, or did they just not feel like they had the alternative of divorce?

Stagnaro Well I think they were very happy. Most of them were happy families, yes.

Calciano: That's good.

Stagnaro: Happy kids, happy families, everything, yes. And I've never seen my people, you can see they all got along well, everything was very nice, and the husbands were very devoted to their wives, very devoted.

Calciano: They made good husbands.

Stagnaro: They worked for the family. Made good husbands, good

husbands.

Calciano: Do you think this is true of Italians in general, or just the Italians that happened to be here?

Stagnaro: Well I think more or less maybe the Italians that were here ... you know, they were away from home and everything else. I guess back there they had their problems like any other place, but they were good, they were very good. It was just good family life, you know, good family life. I can even say it was hard family life....

Calciano: It was hard, but you all pulled together.

Stagnaro: But today, you know, today you'd call it hardship naturally because, gee, live under those circumstances ... do what they did then.

Learning English

Calciano: Did your mother ever learn to speak English?

Stagnaro: Very little. And the reason why a good many of these Italians didn't learn how to speak English was that they didn't mix with anybody. They didn't have an opportunity to learn how to speak English. They didn't have radio, they didn't have television which are very educational I know because many of the Italian women who have come from Italy right now, it's unbelievable

what they pick up. It's unbelievable what my sister-in-law that just passed away here, the kids' mother ... see, she was strictly Italian, too....

Calciano: But she did learn the language?

Stagnaro: Oh, she learned how to pick it up tremendously when television came in.

Calciano: But not until then? She'd been here thirty years or so?

Stagnaro: Oh thirty, forty years.

Calciano: And then she started learning?

Stagnaro: Then she started to learn, right.

Calciano: Oh. (Laughter) That's interesting. Had they not particularly listened to radio when radios became prevalent in the '30s?

Stagnaro: Well they didn't understand it; they didn't understand it. We had a radio very early at our home. We had a radio very, very early at our home, and you know how it is. She had nothing but children, and raising her children, and at home we alwa^ys spoke Italian and that was that.

Calciano: What do you speak now when you talk with Gilda or....

Stagnaro: We speak Italian quite a bit, quite a bit. Speak it in the business quite a bit.

Calciano: Well what about your grandnieces and nephews -- do they all know the Italian, too?

Stagnaro: Very little, very little. 'Cause you see most of the kids all got American wives and speak no Italian at all. But they used to pick up a little bit with their grandmother and one thing and another that we used to try to teach them.

Calciano: Well it's the same thing that's happened to my husband. He never was taught Italian, and it would be lovely to know it, but....

Stagnaro: Yes. Great. I think it's great, because when I was in Italy, and I think I told you this before, I have an ear for any dialect; just you're born with it.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: Gilda's got the same ear, but the rest of the family, nothing at all, they're blank; they can't even speak anything hardly.

Prejudice

Calciano: I have the impression that on the East Coast Italian was not taught to the grandchildren, because the parents' were really trying to break away from the old country, and the old ways, and they were trying to....

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: I don't know that this is true necessarily in my husband's family, but I had this impression ... that. there was no effort to teach Italian, and I wondered if....

Stagnaro: Well I feel on the East coast ... I think that the nationalities were kicked in the teeth -- I'm going to use that expression -- a little bit more. They called them Dagos and Wops and Guineas, and there was some of it here, but not as bad, I don't think, as it was for the people whom I've talked to from the East coast. And the Irish were banged down in the same manner, too. I used to have a very dear friend who was 100% Irish, put 41 years in the Navy, he was a commander, passed away here; he was my commanding officer, and he used to tell me how they used to kick the Irish in the teeth back there where he was born. He says, "Hell," he says, "We were worse than the Italians." (Laughter)

Calciano: It's true that each successive wave of immigration that came in there was really at the bottom of the ladder and got kicked and....

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: And I haven't sensed this in California, or at least in our area, with the exception of the Orientals and the Mexicans who did run into a lot of prejudice. But

I was wondering, you've actually lived as an Italian immigrant, although you were born here ...

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: ... and whether your family felt that there was....

Stagnaro: I always got along wonderful at school, and kids were always great to me and everything else ... and I guess we got in a little fight with some kids or something else if they ever called me a Dago or anything like that.... (Laughter)

Calciano: But it wasn't a....

Stagnaro: Didn't know what it meant or anything else those days, but, gee, I went to high school and had the greatest of respect at all times here and grammar school the same way; I couldn't ask for more respect, and the teachers were always wonderful. In fact they, I think they went a little more out for me than they did for the rest of the kids because knowing I had to speak Italian at home and go to school and learn the American language, the English language, and the teachers were always very good.

Calciano: Did you know any English before you went to school?

Stagnaro: Not a word. I could speak Mexican.

Calciano: Now that's interesting.

Stagnaro: Yes. I could speak Mexican very well.

Calciano: Because your neighbors were Mexican?

Stagnaro: My neighbors were Mexicans.

Calciano: Do you remember a sense of bewilderment the first few days that you were at school, or....

Stagnaro: Well, I don't quite remember. The only thing I remember is the teachers ... one teacher in the first grade, she was always saying, "Malio, you've got lots of courage." I didn't even know what the word "courage" meant. (Laughter) Had lots of courage. (Laughter) Miss Miles. She lived here till she was about 90 years of age, I guess, before she passed away, but whenever she saw me, she says, "You have that courage and determination."

Calciano: She was Miss who?

Stagnaro: Miles was her name. Miles. Lulu Miles. They used to call her Miss Lulu, that's the first grade; we didn't call her Miss Miles; Miss Lulu was her first name.

Calciano: Were you one of just a few Italian children at that point? It was not till several years later that there started to be lots of Italian children in the school?

Stagnaro: Yes, very, very few. And of course some of my cousins were going to school then, but they were a little bit

older.

Calciano: Oh, they had come over earlier?

Stagnaro: They had been born in Italy, and then they started going to school too, you see.

Calciano: Yes. I'm glad to have this confirmed, because I had always had the impression that there wasn't quite as much prejudice around the California area....

Stagnaro: No ... I never found any prejudice at all. In fact I think the kids would go all out, out of their way; I know when I got out, I'd be invited to parties that probably a lot of other kids never got invited to. Whether they felt sorry for me, whatever it was ...

Calciano: Well I think it's partly your outgoing personality. You were probably making friends as fast then as you are now.

Stagnaro: ... make friends at school, it was just great, just great.

Calciano: So when you talked about the Italian women never having much chance to learn English, it was really just because they were too busy and didn't have a chance to get out. It wasn't that they were....

Stagnaro: Too busy ... they didn't have a chance.

Citizenship

Calciano: When did your father become a citizen?

Stagnaro: He became a citizen about 1912.

Calciano: And did your mother ever become a citizen?

Stagnaro: Well, she automatically became a citizen through my father.

Calciano: Oh. I thought you said when De Witt wanted to move the Italians back, that the old women were not citizens.

Stagnaro: Yes. Those were my aunts, see.

Calciano: They were not citizens?

Stagnaro: They were not.

Calciano: Because their husbands had not become citizens?

Stagnaro: Because they didn't become citizens.

Calciano: Oh, I see. Now why did your father become a citizen?

Stagnaro: Well, he just happened to become one. He was talked into it, and he became a citizen. There was no problem. He had friends, and one of my uncles also became a citizen ... Mary Bregante's father the same way. But my other uncles never did. Like Uncle Stevie or Uncle Loero; they didn't become a citizen.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: And none of the other fishermen, the old fishermen, none of them became citizens. Then things got tough,

you see, Elizabeth, as time went on, things got a little bit harder and harder all the time. At one time all you had to do was go to court and you became a citizen in those days, Elizabeth. There was no problem whether you could read, write, or anything else.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: You became an American citizen. 'Cause they were anxious to make citizens out of these immigrants.

Calciano: It is interesting that your father and two uncles did and the rest didn't. I wonder why some did and some didn't?

Stagnaro: Well, they just didn't. Just didn't ... and then things got harder as you went on -- you had to know a little bit because you had to answer some questions.

Calciano: The ones who did become citizens, were they independents or Republicans or Democrats?

Stagnaro: They were mostly Republicans ... Republicans.

Calciano: Any particular reason?

Stagnaro: No reason at all. Because those days I think ... there was very few Democrats around till Roosevelt got elected. There wasn't too many Democrats around, Elizabeth; everybody registered Republican.

Calciano: When your father first came here, did he use banks much? Did he trust banks?

Stagnaro: Oh yes. Oh yes.

Calciano: I wasn't sure, you know, because some of the people coming into the country ... they weren't quite sure if they liked banks or not, but your father just went right into using banks?

Stagnaro: We've got the bankbooks, even, where my people banked with the three banks here many years ago. I think I've got the bankbooks here.

Calciano: Before the turn of the century?

Stagnaro: Oh yes, before the turn of the century, yes.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: They didn't trust one bank alone.

Calciano: (Laughter) That's smart.

Stagnaro: Say they had \$600 ... they would have \$200 in the County Bank, they would have \$200 in the old Farmers and Merchants Bank, and \$200 in the City Bank ... that's what they did. Because I looked at these bankbooks, and it's quite interesting.

Calciano: That's pretty shrewd, too, because banks could fail in those days.

Stagnaro: Yes. Yes. In those days, though, they didn't put all

their eggs in one basket. Oh no.

Education

Calciano: Now you were allowed to go through high school. Was this unusual, or did most of your friends....

Stagnaro: Well it was a little unusual I'd say. I'd say it was a little unusual, because most of the others all went to work to help the family.

Calciano: How were you able to....

Stagnaro: Well ... I think just more or less the family was kind of self-sustaining, and I think it was more within me, inside of me, to keep on going ... to go for school and go for education. And if I'd been smart enough at that time and knew what it was all about, you know, 'cause you just had to push yourself, 'cause the people didn't do it; I'd of went to college if I'd of known, if I'd of known, you see, because I remember an English teacher whom I took English from for four years, Mrs. Sanderson, she cornered me one time when I was just getting ready to graduate; she said, "Malio, why don't you go to college?" "Well," I says, "Mrs. Sanderson," I says, "I have a brother who has ten children, and he needs my help, and we have this

business, and I feel I should...." (I don't think I'd have done any better.) But, "I think he needs my help, Mrs. Sanderson. You know, he's got a big family and my mother...." (My father's health wasn't the greatest; his legs kind of gave out on him. My dad was not in very good health, and my mother wasn't in good health either) and I says, "I think I should go help the family." And she says, "You have all these recommendations for college, and I'd like to see you go, because you've been such a good student." Well, I explained to her ... so I'll never forget that. But I wish I'd had a little more education. I wish I could have gone a little bit more, but....

Calciano: Would you have done something else other than the fishing business if you'd gone on?

Stagnaro: God only knows, God only knows. The fish business was a good ... in those days it was a very good business.

Calciano: It's been good to you.

Stagnaro: It's been very good, very good.

Calciano: Now you said that your brother had had a pretty good education in Italy.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: I wondered, how did he get more education than some of the other Italians?

Stagnaro: Well you see he went there, and when he came here, my father sent him to school here, and my brother spoke very good English....

Calciano: I didn't realize he'd gone to school here, too.

Stagnaro: Yes. Oh, yes. He went as far as the sixth grade in this country. Then he went to work, you see.

Calciano: Well I guess what I was asking ... was your father more interested in having his kids get some education than some of the other fathers, or not?

Stagnaro: Well I think ... yes, I think he was.

Calciano: Because it seems strange that both of you went on....

Stagnaro: Yes, my dad believed in education. And brother Cottardo ... my mother believed in it. Oh my mother believed in it very much, although they had very little education, very little education.

Calciano: Could she read at all?

Stagnaro: Very little. Couldn't hardly read or write.

Calciano: And what about your father ... could he read and write?

Stagnaro: Just sign his name and mama the same way. They could write their name.

Calciano: They couldn't read or write Italian either?

Stagnaro: Read or write Italian, no.

Calciano: Well then why was your mother a believer in education?

Stagnaro: Well, it just came to her I guess that it was the right thing to have. 'Cause her brothers had a pretty good education, where she didn't have it, you see.

Calciano: Oh her brothers did get a good education?

Stagnaro: Yes. Oh, one of her brothers, my uncle Tomaso, had a good education.

Calciano: He's the one that became....

Stagnaro: Captain.

Calciano: Yes. Well then her family can't have been quite so poor as some of the families, or....

Stagnaro: No. Her family was always better off than my father's family. Even right today my father's family in Italy, they're still as poor today as they were a hundred years ago, Elizabeth. They never worked or tried to push ahead; they just didn't. I don't know why. They didn't, and even here they didn't push ahead like they should.

Cottardo II and Malio

Calciano: Was Cottardo the motivating force behind the family?

Stagnaro: Well he was quite a motivating force, he was, yes. Yes, Cottardo was a good motivating force.

Calciano: You said once that you and your brother Cottardo made a good combination because you were very outgoing and made friends easily and....

Stagnaro: Yes. Well brother Cottardo and I were two different persons. He was ... it was really a very good business combination, 'cause he was strictly for the family and the business and I was just the opposite. And people would say one is the cash register of the business, which was me, that brought in the business, and brother Cottardo, he was the safe because he took care of the money!

Calciano: Oh. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Being Genovese and born in Genova, why he knew how to hold onto the money.

Calciano: Well what was your father like? Which one of you resembles him more?

Stagnaro: Well father was more I'd say like Cottardo -- any of those people born in Genova, why they're pretty close people with the money. Course I was spoiled. I came in and was born in a different era and money started flowing in freely, and especially when I got in my teens, why the money was coming in very fast into the family, and I couldn't grab it and spend it fast enough for me. (Laughter)

Calciano: (Laughter) I notice Gilda's always very outgoing and warm.

Stagnaro: Yes, very outgoing. But she's a lot like her father when it comes to hanging on to the dollar. She's like her dad. (Laughter)

Calciano: A good businesswoman, too.

Stagnaro: Yes, she takes right after her father, which makes for good business people, because like I said, this business would never have existed without either one.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: Even in my younger days, when I was just a kid, say in my twenties, people would tell us all the time, "Malio, this business would never go without you or your brother," because they knew that if I got hold of any money, why it went to the four winds.

Calciano: (Laughter) I don't quite believe that, but....

Stagnaro: Well it's the truth, though, it's the truth. And we always loved this country, my brother the same way, especially my brother; he used to say, "God bless this country, Malio. Ever since we've come here we've had no hunger in this country, no hunger." Brother Cottardo always said that. In fact when we heard the Star Spangled Banner play at home, he stood up. He respected it.

Calciano: Because he remembered the old country?

Stagnaro: He remembered the old country. He certainly did.

THE SANTA CRUZ FISHING FLEET

Lateen Sailboats and Their Successors

Calciano: I wanted to ask you about the fishing business in the early years....

Stagnaro: The fishing business in those early days, say from the 1900s on, I'm going to speak 1900 to about 1910, most all the fishermen in those days they worked a lot with what we call lateen fishing boats. They were sails and then they also would row them ... and they were boats, that were, oh, from 18 to 24 feet long, with about, oh, 6 to 8 foot beam on these boats, and....

Calciano: Were they stable?

Stagnaro: Oh, very, very stable those boats ... very stable. They were mostly all built by boatbuilders in San Francisco, and they would sail them down in this area here.



Lateen rig boats, circa 1906, viewed from Railroad Wharf. Also visible are the old Sea Beach Hotel on the right and the St. James Hotel, later Il Trovatore.

Calciano: Were they the type of boat that they'd used in the Genova area, or were they an American....

Stagnaro: They were the same type of boat they would use mostly in the Genova area. In fact, all over Europe they're still using them ... in France and Italy and Greece; when I was back there in 1961, I saw the same types of boats that we used to use in those days here.

Calciano: And did the Perez family and the other early fishermen who were here before the Genovese use that style also, or not?

Stagnaro: The Perez family, they used different types of boats. They didn't have the Italian type of boat at that particular time. Later on they had some built. But previous to that they used just makeshift rowboats you'd call them.

Calciano: How far out did they have to go to get their catch in that period?

Stagnaro: Well in those days they did most of their fishing I'd say in the bay here, Monterey Bay, which is an imaginary line from Lighthouse Point, Santa Cruz, to Point Pinos, Monterey, which has always been known as Monterey Bay. In those days this bay had so much fish and so many different species it was just unbelievable and was acclaimed even in those days by David Starr

Jordan, who was probably one of the finest ichthyologists, or whatever they call them, as the finest fishing bay in the world with more varieties and species than any other bay in the world. And the fish they used to catch was just unbelievable, but they didn't get much price; they brought in a lot of fish in tonnage, but their price was very limited, and the dealers those days used to steal us blind, let's face it. They brought in a ton of fish, they probably got paid for five or six hundred.

Calciano: Oh my goodness.

Stagnaro: And if they made \$10-\$12 a week in those days, that was it; it kept their families agoing.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: But they ate a lot of fish.

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: If a person couldn't eat fish, like I tell people, we would have starved.

Calciano: That was your crop.

Stagnaro: Yes. That's why I'm still a seafood eater. I love fish. (Laughter)

Calciano: That's good.

Stagnaro: There were the lateen boats and there were special boats that fished sardines. They were called lampara

boats.

Calciano: How were they different from the lateens?

Stagnaro: Well they were different because they came later on; they had engines in. You see the lateens, they used the lateen boats, but then they started putting engines in them....

Calciano: About when?

Stagnaro: Starting about 1907 and '8 and '9 they converted them from a sailboat and put an engine in them.

Calciano: Was it designed so you could hang an engine in it?

Stagnaro: Well they fixed them so they could put engines in them. They fixed them and had carpenters, boat carpenters, that fixed them so you could put a shaft and an engine in and still use the same boat, oh yes.

Calciano: So it worked?

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: But then later they just felt like switching to different boats altogether?

Stagnaro: Well yes, as they went on, then they got bigger boats, different boats, engines, you know, and they went from gasoline to diesel.

Calciano: About when did the diesel start coming in?

Stagnaro: I'd say the diesel engines started coming in around, oh, I'd say that we started using diesel engines here around in the '20s.

Calciano: Does anybody have an old lateen boat around, just saving it as an antique piece?

Stagnaro: I don't think there's lateen boats around ... there's pictures around that you can get of the lateen sailboats ...

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: ... and even that boat that we have in the bar at Malio's, that little replica we have; I don't know whether you've ever been at the bar in Malio's....

Calciano: No, I always go into the food part; I'll have to go look in the bar.

Stagnaro: Oh yes, we have quite an interesting picture of that mural in there, see? [Handing the interviewer a color postcard]

Calciano: Oh thank you. I have walked in to see the mural sometimes.

Stagnaro: We've got a lot of names on the back there of some of the old fishermen that would be interesting to you.

Calciano: Good. Yes. Thank you.

Stagnaro: You see this here ... see that's a picture of the old

lateen sailboat there.

Calciano: Yes. They're such a graceful looking boat.

Stagnaro: Oh, they were.

Calciano: I read somewhere that a traditional sign of a fisherman having died was putting a lateen sailboat up on the sand so it would creak as the waves came in and out. Do you remember anything like this?

Stagnaro: No. No.

Calciano: I can never tell whether these things are made up or whether....

Stagnaro: No, I don't remember anything like that. And with the lateen you always got back home, I tell you. They used to sail them, and they always got home. The only tragedy that I know of was one of the fishermen was fishing sea bass, and they drift, you see, they drift at night, you drift with the tide, and....

Calciano: Oh, you stay out all night?

Stagnaro: Yes, they stayed out all night when they fished sea bass, see, in those days.

Calciano: Oh.

Stagnaro: And still do. And you drift, you drift with the tide, and the tide would take them up, and the only tragedy they had, one of the Italian fishermen and a man named

Wise, I remember, I knew his brother well --I didn't know his first name -- Ben Wise was his brother and lived here for years in Santa Cruz, and they got drowned over here at the Lighthouse Point.

Calciano: They went aground?

Stagnaro: They drifted in there and went aground.

The Fishing Grounds

Calciano: Why did they go at night for the bass?

Stagnaro: Because they can see the net; they can see the net in the daytime, so you go at night. And even if there's the light of the moon, you don't catch much fish, 'cause they can still see the net.

Calciano: Is that true of other kinds of fish, or were other fish dumb enough to swim into the nets in the daytime?

Stagnaro: Well ... more or less they fished the dark of the moon, and when there was a light, a big moon, they'd stay home. Just like sardines ... now sardines are a phosphating fish, and maybe out here you'd see a big school, and it's just like a big bunch of fire out there.

Calciano: Oh!

Stagnaro: And you rush to that fire with the dark of the moon.

With the light of the moon, you don't see that.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: And then they would put the nets in, the purse seine nets, and scoop up these sardines.

Calciano: Well where did I.... Well I guess I got the daylight idea because the fishing fleet in San Francisco, the people go out early in the morning to fish, don't they?

Stagnaro: Well, they go out early in the morning for sport-fishing or the rock fishing, which is different because you're fishing very deep, you see.

Calciano: Yes. I had always thought that you all got up at four in the morning and went out.

Stagnaro: Oh, many a night the old sea bass boats, it was nothing to see forty, fifty of the old lateen sailboats taking off and racing for the fishing grounds down at the lower end of the bay below Capitola there.

Calciano: I was going to ask where the good fishing grounds were.

Stagnaro: That's where good fishing grounds was for sea bass, you see. In fact they still fish there. In those days the bay was literally covered with species of fish

that you hardly see up here anymore.

Calciano: Like what?

Stagnaro: Like tuna. We had tuna here those days; we had barracuda here; we had the yellow tail here; much more sea bass than we see now. And most of these fish, they worked their way from Mexican waters up to as far north as Santa Cruz, and even as far north, I'd say, as Tiburon.

Calciano: So we were just at the northern edge of the....

Stagnaro: Just about the northern edge. And the fishing fleet got bigger in San Diego and San Pedro and in Santa Barbara and new methods of fishing and new types of boats, and they would see these schools of fish, and they didn't give that fish a chance to get up in these areas, because you see these fish have certain monophosphorous in their scales, their skin, and they would take these schools, and if they didn't get them in San Diego, they would hit them in San Pedro. If they didn't hit them in San Pedro, they would hit them in Santa Barbara, and the fish didn't have a chance anymore as time went on.

Calciano: That's interesting. So it's not really over fishing of our bay specifically, it was....

Stagnaro: No. It was not our over fishing, no, it was not our bay fishing; it was south of Santa Cruz.

Calciano: Why were the best fishing grounds in the bay out from Capitola? Why there?

Stagnaro: Well I think there was a certain feed and temperatures or something of the water. Something that's hard for us to understand, but even to this day, even to this day, that's where we catch those fish. At the lower end of the bay down there off what's more or less called the slide or the sand hill area ... you'll see a sand slide there ... they call it "The Slide" and we call it the sand hill area, and the old fishermen, Italian fishermen, used to call it Montagna di Sabbia which means Sand Mountain, you see. Montagna's mountain and sabbia's sand and they just call it Montagna di Sabbia; that's what they used to refer to it. They would put their nets, see; they would put their gill nets and then they'd drift; they would drift with the tide and catch these fish in their gill nets.

Navigation

Calciano: Well now at nighttime with no moon, how did they go find that area?

Stagnaro: Well, you see, they'd leave here in the afternoon and they would find it; all they had was a small compass and a watch ... they'd time themselves and guess.

Calciano: If they got fogbound in the morning, how did they get home again?

Stagnaro: They always got home, and many a morning, believe me, they were fogbound.

Calciano: I know they always do, but....

Stagnaro: But you see they would fish that fish in the months of July, August, and September when we had the fog in that time of the year.

Calciano: Well how did they keep their sense of direction?

Stagnaro: They had it; it was born in them. It was right in them.

Calciano: So you never had a case of somebody going off in the wrong direction?

Stagnaro: None whatsoever.

Calciano: That's interesting.

Stagnaro: Yes. They were sailors; they were sailors.

Calciano: Well now you're a sailor. Do you feel you've got this ability too? If you're plopped in the middle of the bay, do you know about where you are and can get home?

Stagnaro: Home, yes.

Calciano: Well what do you do? Do you look at the water, or....

Stagnaro: You just think and think and you look at the water ...
in fact one time my dad was asked, "How do you know?"
and he said, "Well, Malio, I stick my hand" (this is a
joke, though) ... he says, "I put my hand in and taste
the water, and I know what direction to go." (Laughter)
That was the answer I got from my father.

Calciano: You know you must have told that to somebody else who
didn't know it was a joke, because I read it somewhere
as being the honest-to-God way he did it. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: You did? (Laughter) It was all instinct, that's all.
All instinct.

Calciano: Was there a fishing area out in the bay that was known
as Twin Peaks? Because of under ocean mountains or
something?

Stagnaro: That I never heard of.

Calciano: Okay.

Stagnaro: Of course in the bay here, you know, we've got a spot
out here, it's the canyon, we call it the canyon; it's
over 6000 feet deep. You see it on the charts. I'm
sorry I haven't got a chart. I always get a lot of
charts and people come and borrow them and then don't
bring them back anymore.

Calciano: Oh dear.

Stagnaro: Of course you can get them from the U. S. Geodetic Survey.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: But we've got a trench at the lower end of the bay that's over ... I know it's a good 6000 feet.

Calciano: How far away from here do you have to be before you start needing to use the charts?

Stagnaro: Well we use the charts very little. We use them very little, because we know how to travel. If I'm making a trip from here to San Francisco, or if I wanted to go to Monterey or someplace, we just go and just take off and go. But for San Francisco Bay, and then you wanted to find an area where to go to, which is a very big bay as you well know, then naturally we use the charts.

Calciano: Did your father and your uncles, did they know how to read a chart if one was given to them or not?

Stagnaro: I doubt it. But if they wanted to go to a place, they'd find it.

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: I doubt they could read a chart, because they couldn't even write hardly. He had no education. My father

could just write his name and that was it. And my uncle was the same way. They knew how to count money....

Calciano: Well now wait ... oh, your uncle, yes ... it was your brother who got the good Italian education.

Stagnaro: Oh yes, my brother had a good Italian education, and he had a good mind too. And he also went to school here some. Got a sixth grade education, but I'd put him up against anybody, mathematics or anything. My brother Cottardo really was sharp. A lot better than me, and I had a high school education. He only had a sixth grade education, but boy, that guy was sharp, really sharp. Shrewd. The Genovese are known for that as you probably know. They say that if you get a Genovese in business here and a Jew here and an Armenian here, that the Genovese will break the Jew and the Armenian.

Calciano: Really?

Stagnaro: They're known as the greatest bargainers of all times. And they're known for their honesty. And paying their bills.

Calciano: That's nice.

Stagnaro: Even in Genova if you didn't pay your bills, they've

got a certain section of Genova, I don't know if you ever read that book, but they call it Mala Paga, which means The Bad Payers.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: They put them in a certain section of Genova. All the bad payers are in that section. They're known for that. That's one thing, these poor old Italian people, they struggle. Like I said, they only made \$8, \$9, \$10 a week those days, but those people paid their bills. They paid their bills.

Calciano: It's nice to be able to be proud of....

Stagnaro: And they had good credit. In those days they used to buy everything wholesale. Their groceries they would buy more or less from ... people would come down here from San Francisco, wholesale grocers, Italian wholesale grocers. They would buy their olive oil by the case and maybe get a year's supply and got credit. They buy their spaghettis, and whatever they needed, the cheese, the formaggio they bought, and they would send it down by American Railway Express or even by steamer at that time.

Calciano: And then how often would they settle up their bills -- once a year, or....

Stagnaro: Once a year or every six months.

Fishing in San Francisco

Calciano: A farmer will sometimes have good years and bad years depending on whether his crop fails or not. Were there cycles like this in the fishing trade?

Stagnaro: Oh yes, oh yes. Oh, you had your cycles. There were your good years and your bad years. And the main fish actually that they made a little money would be... well we had no harbor facilities or anything, and a good many of these fishermen would fish in Santa Cruz during late spring and late summer and then they would go and fish in San Francisco. They would fish the bay.

Calciano: For fish or for crab?

Stagnaro: For fish. Mostly for fish. They would fish the bay. 'Cause those days you could fish, now you can't; it's all sport fishing, but those days you could fish salmon in the river, Sacramento River; you could fish shad and striped bass. Those fish were commercialized.

Calciano: And they'd leave their families here and go and spend the season up....

Stagnaro: No, they'd take their families to San Francisco.

Calciano: Did you ever go up there with your family?

Stagnaro: Oh yes, I went to school there at times, and in fact

when the earthquake hit in 1906, my father had come to Santa Cruz to get set up for his seasonal fishing business here, and we were in San Francisco when the earthquake hit, and we lost contact with my dad for I don't know how long. I was only six, not quite six years old, but we lost contact for several weeks.

Calciano: What part of San Francisco were you in when it hit?

Stagnaro: We were in North Beach, or Italian town they call it; all the Italians would be in North Beach. The waterfront, yes. And you see then when the fire hit, we moved the lateen sailboat; we went from San Francisco, because some of my uncles were in San Francisco, we went to Sausalito.

Calciano: Who sailed it? Did one of your uncles sail it or did your brother sail it?

Stagnaro: Yes, it was just a short distance, they sailed it or they rowed it ... I really don't remember.

Calciano: Could your mother have sailed that boat if she wanted, to?

Stagnaro: No, no. She was not a sailor type. [Shakes head]

Calciano: She wasn't even a good passenger?

Stagnaro: She was not even a good passenger. She always got seasick. (Laughter)

Calciano: I read somewhere that your father when he was young, I gather it was before he got married even, would go up to San Francisco to fish the crab season. Now you think this may be wrong, or not?

Stagnaro: Dad never fished ... they never fished much crab in San Francisco, no. They did fish the bay for fish.

Calciano: Well that's probably what he went up there for ... somebody got it mixed up.

California Fishing Colonies

Stagnaro: Some of the Sicilians, they fished the bay. You see this is the way the fishermen are ... it's funny how they went from different areas. A lot of people ask me.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: Now San Diego you got the Portuguese, with a dribble of Genovese fishermen and a few Sicilians. Then when you came up to San Pedro, you got the Slavs with a few Genovese and a few Sicilians, very few. Then when you came to Santa Barbara, you got Genovese in Santa Barbara. And in Monterey you had one time over 2000 Sicilian fishermen in Monterey when the sardine industry was at its height.

Calciano: Yes, yes.

Stagnaro: Across the bay we have the Genovese in Santa Cruz with one Sicilian, Portuguese, and we had the Uhdens here, the Uhdens and Googins -- as commercial fishermen.

Calciano: What descent, what name is that?

Stagnaro: They were more or less, well I think German descent -- the Uhdens and Googins; I don't know myself. But they were here in the early 1900s fishing -- commercial. And then we had Antone Silva Piexoto, the Portuguese fisherman.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: And the Genovese.

Calciano: And then in San Francisco there were....

Stagnaro: In San Francisco you got the Sicilians with some Genovese.

Calciano: We skipped Half Moon Bay. Was there much fishing in that area?

Stagnaro: Nothing in Half Moon Bay.

Calciano: Okay.

Stagnaro: But San Francisco you had the Sicilians came there and you had some Genovese families, permanent, fishing out of San Francisco those days. And then as you went further north, then you hit the Russians, the Norwegians, and the Swedes and the Danes around the

Seattle area.

Calciano: They were used to the colder waters....

Stagnaro: The colder water. They landed up in those areas, and that's just the way these people settled.

Calciano: Your father was responsible for the Genovese colony here. Were any of his relatives in the Santa Barbara colony, or is that a different....

Stagnaro: That was different, different.

Calciano: Now your family was from the northern part of Italy.

Stagnaro: Yes, way north.

Calciano: Were there very many Napoli Italians in this area, or Sicilian Italians?

Stagnaro: Very little I'd say, very very little.

Calciano: What about the Italians working in the lumber camps here ... did they tend to be from northern Italy or not?

Stagnaro: Well I'd say they're not so much northern Italy, no. I'd say they're more along the Tuscany area. I think the Locatellis are Tuscanese ... I think.

Calciano: So there weren't a large number of Sicilians here at all then?

Stagnaro: Here in Santa Cruz, very few Sicilians, very few. Here on the wharf for many years we only had one, one Sicilian here, whereas in Monterey, they're Sicilians,

right across the bay. One time you had at least two thousand there.

Calciano: Now would the Genovese from here and the Sicilians from there get along with each other?

Stagnaro: Oh very much so, very much so.

Calciano: Because sometimes there is sort of rivalry between....

Stagnaro: We get along much better with each other than they do with themselves probably.

Calciano: Oh really? (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Well we noticed when we were in Italy that the northern Italians had very low regard for southern Italians, and I wondered if any of this prejudice carried over among the....

Stagnaro: No. No, we didn't have that prejudice, didn't have it at all.

Calciano: Oh, another question -- they are actually Swiss, but everybody living around here calls them Swiss-Italians....

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: I wondered if there was much overlapping between your group of Italians and the Swiss up the coast? Did you

get together much at church or anything, or was....

Stagnaro: Not too much, no. Very, very little. Very, very little.

Sardines

Calciano: When we were talking about the types of fish changing, well you explained one reason they changed was that they got fished out further down the coast, but I also wondered if you'd noticed the currents in our bay changing much, or the temperature of the water here changing much over the years?

Stagnaro: Remains about the same. About the same all the time. Our temperatures here seem to run between 56 and 60 degrees maybe. We took temperatures ourselves; my niece Gilda, she took temperatures here for Stanford University for many years.

Calciano: Oh!

Stagnaro: For the Hopkins Marine as it was called.

Calciano: Where would she take them? Just off the pier here?

Stagnaro: Right off the pier. Every day, took temperatures. See here in Monterey Bay here we get a ... I think your Alaska current and your Japanese current meet 30-40 miles off of Half Moon Bay up here and coming into the

bay you see you get a touch of the Alaska and we get a little warmer waters here in Monterey Bay here; you get a touch of this current of the Alaska with the Japanese current.

Calciano: So you have several....

Stagnaro: Yes. The two currents come together fourteen, fifteen miles I guess, sixteen, say, off Half Moon Bay where the two currents start coming into each other gradually, and they go further and the Japanese takes over from the Alaskan. That's why you get warmer, much warmer waters as you go south of Point Sur.

Calciano: Oh, I see. And do you find different fish in the different currents or not?

Stagnaro: Well you find different fish in different currents, yes you do.

Calciano: When you were talking about the fish getting fished out further south and not reaching Monterey Bay, do you think this is what happened to the sardines or was the sardine situation a different story?

Stagnaro: Sardines were just overly fished.

Calciano: But not necessarily just in our bay? You think that those, too, were caught further south?

Stagnaro: Well the biggest industry for sardines was Monterey,

although you had some canneries working in San Francisco, but those days at one time the whole coast was more or less literally covered with sardines. But as time went on, the boats got larger, the nets got larger, bigger nets, and then there was the destruction also of the sardine because you see the canneries wanted an eight-inch fish or over, and if the fish averaged below eight inches, then the fish would be dumped over the side. The canneries wanted eight-inch fish because they didn't make their money from the canned sardine, but they made it from the byproduct which was the oil and the fertilizer, the fish meal.

Calciano: Oh. So it wasn't those little ones that you open up in a can that they wanted?

Stagnaro: No. No, they wanted the big stuff. At one time there was probably around twenty fish canneries there on the Monterey side particularly, and we figured it was a twenty million industry just went to pot. And we predicted it.

Calciano: You mean you could see it coming?

Stagnaro: Oh yes. We predicted that.

Dragnets, Gill Nets, and Seines

Calciano: Did you ever do much fishing for sardines?

Stagnaro: Ourselves, no.

Calciano: Why?

Stagnaro: Well, because we were interested in ... we kind of missed the boat, I'd say, seeing that we didn't. And we were fishing other fish, and we had dragboats; we used to fish sole, and things like that, and....

Calciano: Now what is the difference? I've read these various terms: dragboat fishing, flat-bottom and fishing barges, deep-sea barges ... are these four different kinds of boats, or two different kinds, or....

Stagnaro: Well, we used to have one kind we used to call the dragboats; used to have dragboats ourselves.

Calciano: Now is that a flat-bottom boat, or....

Stagnaro: No, no. They're all round-bottom boats, regular boats.

Calciano: What makes them a dragboat?

Stagnaro: Well because you use what you used to call a dragnet, and that's where they got the name.

Calciano: So any kind of boat can pull a dragnet and be called adrag....

Stagnaro: Any kind of a power boat that pulls the dragnet.

Calciano: Okay.

Stagnaro: Then you see when you dragnet there was the paranzella

net, called paranzella -- that's a dragnet which drags the bottom for sole, for flat fish.

Calciano: Ah!

Stagnaro: See, you fish them right on the bottom -- 40, 50, 60 fathoms.

Calciano: Oh my.

Stagnaro: See? And the net gets sole, sand dabs, and a few halibut.

Calciano: Now did the older fishermen, your father and that generation, did they use dragnets or not?

Stagnaro: They used the dragnet; they used the drag even with the lateen sailboats and get the wind and drag a small dragnet. But there was so much fish in those days that they wouldn't have to go very far out.

Calciano: That'd be quite something to haul up a net from 40, 50, 60 fathoms, wouldn't it?

Stagnaro: They used to haul it up by hand!

Calciano: Oh boy.

Stagnaro: All by hand.

Calciano: How many people would be in each one of these lateen boats?

Stagnaro: Well, when you're dragging up by hand, of course I'm talking about when we had the engines in the boat, we used to have six and eight men, and if you had a net

full of fish and mud at the same time, you would pull when the swell would go down, then you'd catch the slack, and when the seas would catch it again, you'd take another bite, and that's the way they'd pull.

Calciano: Oh! That's smart. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: All hard work. All done by hand. We didn't have winches.

Calciano: You didn't have winches?

Stagnaro: Later on we put winches and big booms on the boat, and we had winches and it was all done by winches.

Calciano: But you said there were six or eight men in the powerboat back in the....

Stagnaro: As late as 1915 and '18 we still did it by hand. Although some of the boats, even in those days, had winches already.

Calciano: And back when it was just the lateen sailboat, were there six men in a boat also?

Stagnaro: About six ... four to six men I'd say. Course they used smaller nets, too, in those days; then as we went along we got bigger nets, and when we got winches we got still bigger nets. It was all done by power --now it's all done with hydraulic power.

Calciano: Now what was the kind of net that you said you used for getting sea bass -- a gill net?

Stagnaro: That's a gill net.

Calciano: Now how do these two differ ... I mean obviously the one is on the bottom of the ocean and other is in the middle.

Stagnaro: Well a gill net is an up and down net, and you got the lead line on the bottom of the net and the cork line up here.

Calciano: And you catch the gills....

Stagnaro: And the fish come in and they get tangled up in the gill yes. They get caught in the gill. Now with dragnets, it's just like ... it's a big long net with a big mouth, you see ... (Mr. Stagnaro sketches a diagram as he talks.) You see in a dragnet you had what we call a sack, and then here you would have the sack where the fish go down, and here you have the wings of the net come in this way, see, and you use two boats, and one pulled here and pulled it, just a solid net, just come around like this see?

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: And this net would just scrape the bottom ... anything on the bottom was caught in the dragnet, you see, would go in that net and come to the back and you would pull the net up. And then on the bottom of the

net you used to have what you call a purse string, and you'd loosen it up and all the fish would drop out, or you would scoop them out with scoops, see. We had the purse string after we got the winches, but before we didn't have the winches, you would have to have little scoop nets, what we called scoop nets, which was just a little net, a scoop like this with a long pole....

Calciano: Would the net still be in the water then?

Stagnaro: The net would still be in the water, have to be. Yes. And then you would scoop the fish out.

Calciano: And the two boats would have the ends attached still?

Stagnaro: Well then the one boat would get it.

Calciano: Oh? You would....

Stagnaro: You see you had two boats, then we would pull the line over to the one boat. And there'd be only one man on the one boat at the time, and five, six, seven, eight, nine men all on the other boat.

Calciano: Hauling it in?

Stagnaro: Hauling it in. To do this with one boat, they have to use what they call an otter rudder ... it's a new method that they use, and they have this big rudder and that keeps the mouth of the net wide open, and that's where the fish.... They're still fishing that way right now, but they only use one boat; they still

use the dragnet. We have none of that going on in Santa Cruz area right now, but San Francisco they drag, out of San Francisco, and from there on to Seattle they have very extensive dragging.

Calciano: Why don't you drag here?

Stagnaro: Because the bay is clean.

Calciano: Oh. There aren't many fish?

Stagnaro: No fish.

Calciano: So when I eat sand dabs in your restaurant, I'm eating San Francisco sand dabs?

Stagnaro: You're eating sand dabs coming from San Francisco. In fact, after I talk to you, I'm going to order sole and sand dabs. We used to catch them here. Get a lot of it out of Seattle and out of Astoria, and we fly it in. And the fish is just as nice as if we caught it here.

Calciano: It is?

Stagnaro: I'd say even better. (Laughter) Northern fish, colder waters and everything else, very good quality ... very good quality fish.

Calciano: Are any of the fish I eat here caught in our waters.

Stagnaro: We catch salmon, lot of salmon; still catch quite a few salmon ... although we had a bad year this year [1972] and a very good year last year. And we had a very good salmon season here last year and people,

boats came from all over the coast to fish in here and get the fish. The boats nowadays will follow the fish from one end of the coast to the other.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: You see they all got radio telephones now on their boats, and heck, if they catch the fish in Santa Cruz, all the people's down here, and the fish get caught here, pretty soon they're on the phone why they're getting the fish off Fort Bragg, boom, the boats all take off and they go to Fort Bragg ... they even go in Oregon, as far as Oregon and Seattle ... the Seattle boats do the same thing. A good many of the fishing boats nowadays have refrigeration on the boat. And you know we used to do a lot of crab fishing in this bay here. The crabs are all cleaned out now, but ... have been for the last twenty, twenty-five, thirty years, but there used to be lots of crabs we caught here.

Calciano: How did you fish for those?

Stagnaro: Well we fished them differently here than any other place on the Pacific Coast. Elsewhere they used hoop nets let's say, baited hoop nets, and crab nets also. But 'here in this bay the old-time Italian fishermen used gill nets to fish crab.

Calciano: Was this dungeness crab?

Stagnaro: Yes, dungeness crab ... all dungeness crab. Used to be a lot of crab fishing. And we used to sell them here on the wharf for three for 50 and take your pick. Beautiful crabs. There'd be a whole barrel of them and you could pick out whatever three you wanted .. 3 for 50¢, take your pick. And the fishermen. at that time they got about 50 or 60 a dozen for their crab, maybe 75 at the highest. Now they sell for \$3.50 a crab on up.

Calciano: Yes. Oh, I've got two other questions about nets ... there was another kind of net or maybe it's one of these same ones -- a seine.

Stagnaro: Then you used to have a seine, beach seine, in the old days which they don't use any more, which are prohibited.

Calciano: The seines were just used from the beach?

Stagnaro: We used to get one boat, then we'd throw the seine off and then get a bunch of men who would pull the seine in on the beaches, but they don't use these beach seines any more because they're prohibited. In the old days you had this dragnet that the Italians call the paranzella net, and then fishing sardine, you had the

lampara net, which is a different net again, which is more of a surface net you see ... it's like a dragnet, but it works on top of the water instead of going to the bottom.

Calciano: What did it catch?

Stagnaro: They caught the sardines.

Calciano: Oh.

Stagnaro: See, it's a lampara and so they call it the purse seine, the purse net. In fact the tuna fisherman, they don't hardly fish hook and line any more ... the big tuna boats, they're purse seiners now.

Calciano: Why are seines allowed out in the ocean and not allowed on the beach? Why are they prohibited?

Stagnaro: Well because the seines are ... we don't use the seine. The seine was more or less a beach net that you dropped it off the boat, and then you get your lines on the beach, and then the people on the beach would pull in and have a kind of scrape ... it worked like a dragnet, more like a dragnet.

Calciano: When was it outlawed?

Stagnaro: Oh, I'd say it was outlawed about 1915 or '16.

Calciano: Why did they decide to outlaw it? What were the reasons?

Stagnaro: Well, sportsmen, because the people fishing off the wharfs and piers didn't have the....

Calciano: I thought that might be it, but I wasn't sure.

Stagnaro: Yes, yes. That's it, yes. Conservation; it was good conservation.

Calciano: Did I interrupt you when you were listing the various kinds of nets that are used? You mentioned the surface net ... were there any others that you wanted to mention?

Stagnaro: No, that's about it.

Calciano: Did the Italians ever use hooks and lines?

Stagnaro: Some of the Italians also did hook and line fishing. If you had a dragboat you did just dragboat fishing, but some of them did hook and line fishing. The dragboats were bigger boats -- they were thirty-five to sixty feet long, whereas the fishing boats were twenty-six to thirty feet let's say. And those were the boats that they would use for hook and line fishing.

Calciano: How many hooks would they use at a time.

Stagnaro: Oh, they'd use 1500 to 2000 hooks at a setting. The way they did it, they had what was called a fishing basket, and they tied their lines to the basket. The

basket was just to keep the hooks from getting tangled. And then all of these lines would have many, many hooks on them. They were called set lines ... the Italians would call them pamati. They'd set out their lines with a buoy on one end and then they'd take their boat and go over aways, dropping the line as they went, and then the other end would be fastened to a buoy. Then they'd go back to the start and would begin hauling in their lines and taking the fish off the hooks. Sometimes a shark would cut the line in half so then they'd have to go to the other end and start from that side. Sometimes the shark would cut it in two places, so they'd end up loosing a few hooks.

Calciano: How far out would they go if they were doing this kind of fishing?

Stagnaro: Well they'd fish in about ... where the water was about 50 to let's say 75 fathoms.

Calciano: And the men who did this kind of fishing were part of the sixty families?

Stagnaro: Oh yes. Genovese. Yes. They'd catch rock cod and black cod or sable fish as it's called. Originally that fish was called candle fish, but it wasn't too salable under that name so then they changed the name to black cod or sable fish.

Calciano: Just for marketing purposes?

Stagnaro: Yes. Just for marketing purposes to make it more salable.

Calciano: When did they do this kind of fishing?

Stagnaro: Oh, the season for this was from ... well the winter months. It was a winter type of fishing... from October 1st until the salmon season started, say until April 1st.

Safety

Calciano: When the men were using their lateen boats, did they ever get so many fish in their net that they had to not haul some of them in because they'd be too loaded?

Stagnaro: Oh, many a time. Many a time. Just throw them away; you couldn't sell them anyway, so they would throw them away. If they caught them nowadays they would all be salable.

Calciano: Did it happen ever that the boats would get swamped and sink?

Stagnaro: Never did. No, never ... some of the sardines boats swamped at times, yes. They would overload them and swamp them, yes. Yes, many a sardine boat was lost by

being overly loaded. Big boats, too -- big boats, eighty-, ninety-foot boats with a hundred and fifty, two hundred ton of fish aboard.

Calciano: Oh!

Stagnaro: And maybe they'd spring a leak, or maybe a valve in the engine would let go, a water valve, you know, sucking up the water from the other engine, and maybe they'd spring a leak or get loose or get some salt water corrosion, and many a good big boat loaded with fishes was swamped.

Calciano: Did your family carry any life preservers or anything on their boats in the old days?

Stagnaro: In the old days they used to carry life preservers, yes, they did. They weren't the best of life preservers compared to nowadays. The life preservers they carried in those days are outlawed now.

Calciano: Oh really! (Laughter)

Stagnaro: They used to be canvas with the cotton and full of dry tules.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: They used to take the tules and dry them, and that was a life preserver. The Coast Guard would never pass that type of lifejacket now.

Calciano: Were fishermen very often swept overboard and had to

swim back to their boat?

Stagnaro: Well occasionally there'd be someone probably swept overboard, but we didn't have any tragedies to amount to anything here in the bay here, or even fishing out of the bay. The fishermen were very, very careful and ... I mean they didn't walk standing up, they used to crawl when the weather was bad. That's one of the first teachings I got from my dad. That when you go from the bow to the stern or from the stern to the bow, he says you crawl on your hands and knees. You know when the boat sallies, or there's a quick chop, you can go overboard very quickly. But when the boat is going, sometimes before you can make a turn to pick you up, you're gone.

Calciano: Ooh!

Stagnaro: And it could happen just that quick.

Calciano: It's amazing that you haven't had any tragedies with the number of families sailing and the number of trips over the years.

Stagnaro: That's right.

Calciano: I was thinking ... oh, about a couple of years ago was it, there was a sailing race coming down from San Francisco to here....

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: And a very sudden squall came up, and boats overturned like crazy and people were lost....

Stagnaro: Yes, people were lost.

Calciano: Now did your fishermen get caught in squalls like that, or did they sense them coming?

Stagnaro: They got caught in a lot of squalls and a lot of storms. Lots of times they didn't think they'd ever get back in. All the old Italian women were down here crying and weeping and praying and wondering, and then pretty soon here you'd see a little speck on the water, and they'd be coming in.

Calciano: Oh, my.

Stagnaro: There was no harbor here for many, many years, and Santa Cruz was a very bad area, especially with the south wind. The southwesters and the southeasters, due south. They'd get you out there in sunshine like this, and all of sudden from out of nowhere a storm would come in and you had a wide open bay here. But we were always very, very fortunate. God was always with us; let's put it that way.

Calciano: Well that partly answers my question, because I wondered if the experienced fishermen could sense these things coming, but the weather....

Stagnaro: Most of the time you could, but once in a while you'd get a freak storm. It would come from out of nowhere, from out of nowhere. It's just like I say, just like a beautiful sunny day, you never expect it, and all of a sudden the wind will come up, and there would be a, well a gale, a good gale force.

Calciano: Would they try to make it to port right away, or was it better to ride it out in the ocean?

Stagnaro: Well they would try to make it or go to Monterey. You could go to Monterey. Many a time instead of coming to Santa Cruz, they would go to Monterey, and we'd anxiously be waiting for those telephones to ring that they got into Monterey safe. You see, Monterey is protected from the south wind, so you'd go to Monterey.

Calciano: And would they do this back in the sail and rowing days?

Stagnaro: Yes, you bet they did.

Calciano: But there was no telephone to alert the poor mothers and wives.

Stagnaro: No, no phones at home or anything.

Calciano: That was a hard life.

Stagnaro: Yes, it was. Very anxious and many a tear. And lots of

prayers. All the old Italian women had all the room covered with pictures of the Lord and all the saints. And they still follow it. Still follow it. Even some of the younger generation. All the Sicilians in Monterey, they still have their different saints of the sea you know ... they still have these boat parades and things like that, and they have all the priests come and benedict all the boats or whatever you call it, and once a year, they still do it.

Calciano: Is this done up here too?

Stagnaro: Not so much in Santa Cruz, but the Sicilians are great for it. And San Francisco, they have it every year; every year, they have that. Now Genovese from our town had, they call it Madonna del Buon Viaggio, that's the saint of ... viaggio is travel, and buon viaggio is good travel.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: And the Sicilians have another saint, and also they always believed big in Saint Anthony. San Antonio.

Calciano: Who was the saint of good travel?

Stagnaro: That was Madonna; there was a lady saint ... Madonna del Buon Viaggio. That was a great belief; they still believe. In fact they got a church in our hometown,

Riva, that's the name of it: The Church Madonna del Buon Viaggio.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: So they believe in her. And in fact I'll tell you something that happened: a bomb, a five-hundred-pound bomb, came right through the roof of that church in World War II and didn't explode.

Calciano: And didn't?

Stagnaro: Didn't explode. So they think that's quite an omen there.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: And they still have the history of when my mother and father got married there. The dates and their baptismal records all kept there. Mary Carniglia can give you a lot of good information too. She's my first cousin. She's a brilliant girl, a very good mind, very good mind. Yes, you talk to Mary; she can give you a lot of good information.

Calciano: I'll remember that, thank you.

Harbors and Docking Facilities

Calciano: Do you dock your boats in the yacht harbor now, your fishing boats?

Stagnaro: Yes. We dock them in the yacht harbor, we do.

Calciano: Where did you used to dock them before the yacht harbor?

Stagnaro: Well, years before they had a harbor at Moss Landing, we docked them in Monterey.

Calciano: Every day?

Stagnaro: No. No. Not every day. No. (Laughter) When weather got bad, we'd run over to Monterey. When we got a bad weather report, and then we'd run because Monterey is protected for south wind, where here we have no protection. We're wide open here for south, southeast, and southwest winds, and that's the wind that brings in your heavy storms here. So whenever there were any south winds of any kind, we would run over to Monterey. And during the winter months, off season, we'd go to Monterey, and we had a docking area or marine railway they call them, marine way, known as the Monterey Boat Works which was run by a Mr. Siino, Angelo Siino ... he's now deceased. So that's what we did with our boats, Elizabeth.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: Then when Moss Landing came in, then we ran our boats to Moss Landing.

Calciano: Now when was that?

Stagnaro: Many a night I got up at two, three, four o'clock in the morning with my nephews and had to take the boats all over to Moss Landing or to Monterey.

Calciano: When did Moss Landing come in?

Stagnaro: Moss Landing came in, I think Moss Landing came in around 1946, '47, along in there ... '45, '47 ... just about during the War. Exactly, just exactly, I really don't know when Moss Landing came in.

Calciano: And back before the turn of the century when you didn't have power boats, you just had the sailboats, what would you do with those?

Stagnaro: Well we also had davits on the wharf those days, and we used to put the boats up on davits. And we had davits on the old railroad wharf, and they'd pull the boats up on davits.

Calciano: Did your boats get too big to pull up, or why did you change to running to Monterey?

Stagnaro: Well when the boats got ... we had some pretty big boats that we could pull up, that we pulled up on davits over here on this pier, but then when we got bigger boats, then we'd run to Monterey, 'cause they were too big for the davits to handle.

Calciano: And if it was just a regular night, not a storm coming

in or anything, would you just tie up to the pier?

Stagnaro: We'd just tie up to the pier. We'd anchor either off the pier, or we would tie to the pier, see. They would drop an anchor in those days; we'd drop an anchor say, oh, a hundred feet out, then we'd back up, come astern with the boat, then we had a line from the wharf that would tie the boat here. Then we'd pull them up on the anchor; then we had what we call a straight up and down ladder; that's the kind of ladder you climb up and down, a straight up and down ladder, something like a Jacob's ladder they call them, although a Jacob's ladder is made out of rope, and this was made out of wood. That would take you out of the boat. And you'd go down, you'd pull your boat in, then you secure your boat out far enough so it wouldn't come underneath the dock, or underneath your ladder. So it was quite a deal. Then when we would pull up the boats ... of course you used to pull them by hand, pull them up end for end. We had hand winches we used to turn on each side, two or three fellows. And then from the hand winches we came with hydraulics, and then we came with electric winches on the wharf here.

Calciano: Then you stopped using it altogether. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Then we stopped using it altogether, of course, with

the incoming of the harbor. You see the city still has got a set of davits down here. Probably you've seen them over here. And they have an electric winch there.

Calciano: When the fishermen went out for fish, you said they'd go out for a night for sea bass and so forth ... now if they didn't get enough, would they stay out a second night, or would they come back in?

Stagnaro: No, they'd come back in. Always come in the next morning; they would come in and leave the next afternoon. You see in the afternoon you've always got that tradewind ... you got a northwest wind, so they'd drift way up and then they would row in the morning. In the afternoon with the northwest wind blowing, they would sail down to the fishing grounds; beautiful sight that used to be -- see thirty, forty lateen boats taking off practically the same time. In fact they used to have a lot of fun 'cause they used to have races with each other ... who'd get to the fishing grounds first, or second, or third. (Laughter) See who had the best sailboat or was the best sailor, had the best skills. Oh, they used to have a great time.

Calciano: Instead of a yachting race, they had a practical one.

Stagnaro: That's right.

Calciano: Did they sleep in the boats during the night, or did they come in and sleep in the daytime?

Stagnaro: Oh they slept right in the boats.

Calciano: They did?

Stagnaro: Oh yes.

Calciano: Was there any type of fishing where they'd stay out for two or three days?

Stagnaro: Not here. Not here at Santa Cruz, no.

Tanning Nets

Calciano: And you said that they didn't fish for sea bass during the moonlit nights. Was there any type of fishing they did then, or did they stay home?

Stagnaro: They just stayed home and mended their nets those days, and they used to tan their nets to keep them from rotting. You see, for sea bass they used to use linen, linen and Italian hemp, for sea bass fishing. I told you about the tanning processes of the nets, didn't I?

Calciano: No. You mentioned the tanning, but....

Stagnaro: They used to get the tanbark which is an oak bark, and the tannery ... it was quite a big business for them. They would grind this in little chips. Then we had big

vats, big vats, say oh six by twelve, and underneath these -- they were made out of redwood and were leakproof and on the bottom would have metal, and they would set on bricks; then we used to stow wood in there and set it afire and get this water boiling, and they would throw the bark in there and call it tanbark and would let it boil, make a liquor, let it boil maybe four, five, six hours. And then we would get these nets, and we had a hoist fixed up and would dip them right in these vats and tan the nets. That would keep the nets from rotting.

Calciano: How long would they stay in the solution? The nets.

Stagnaro: Well you would dip them and put them in the solution maybe five minutes.

Calciano: Oh, is that all?

Stagnaro: That's all. And lift up and let the solution drip back in and then lift another net and put them in. And then you put them out to dry and that would keep them from rotting. And see they would work on this during the days they wouldn't go fishing, they would take care of their nets. Every so often, you know, the week or two, or three weeks, they would tan their nets.

Calciano: Oh, they would retan and....

Stagnaro: They would tan and retan ... oh, yes.

Calciano: Oh! I thought it was just a one-time thing.

Stagnaro: No, no.

Calciano: Oh. Okay. Well, do you still do that?

Stagnaro: Not too much anymore. Some. But now you see they're using mostly nylon. They're different than using the cotton. See then we were using the cotton twine and linen twine, and we were using Italian hemp. We used to refer to the twine as a sack twine, which was more of a hemp also. That's what they used. Now they're using nylon. I think they do put it in some kind of solution, but it's a one-time deal, and that's it.

Calciano: When did you switch over to nylon?

Stagnaro: Well they switched over to nylon after World War II.

Calciano: Where were the tanning vats located?

Stagnaro: In the backyards of the fishermen's homes.

Calciano: Did the women make the hemp nets up until the time you switched to nylon, or did you at some point start buying the cotton and hemp nets?

Stagnaro: Well, the women were making nets, but starting about, oh, I'd say maybe in the '20s or early '30s or late '20s, then they started manufacturing nets by machinery, and the women still made nets ... the old time ones still made nets some because many fishermen,

they liked the hand knot more than the manufactured knot. So they still made some nets.

Calciano: Do you have any of those old homemade nets left, or any pieces of them?

Stagnaro: Nothing anymore. We had a lot of them, but we gave them or loaned them and gradually ran out.

Calciano: Oh dear. I know in the English language there are a lot of sailors' and mariners' expressions like, "Red sky in the morning, sailors take warning" and so forth....

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Did you have a whole lot of Italian sayings?

Stagnaro: Yes, they had some of those phrases too, yes. They did.

Calciano: But none that come to mind offhand?

Stagnaro: Well, they used to have rainbows, you know, and cloudy weather, and they always believe in that ... oh they could always ... I told you about when they see that light they believed in that; they thought they'd see a light, you know, or it was imagination or whatever it was, was a kind of a warning telling them to come in.

Calciano: No. I don't know about this. What kind of light?

Stagnaro: Well they'd see some kind of a light ... I forget even

what they called it those days.

Calciano: And they'd think it meant a storm coming up?

Stagnaro: Yes. Kind of meant a storm coming.

Calciano: Was it the way the sky looked, or....

Stagnaro: Well I think it was some kind of an optical illusion or something like that.

Calciano: But you were never taught to pay attention to that light?

Stagnaro: No, I never ... but I heard of the old-timers ... they used to talk about it, and my mother and dad, they'd speak about it, and the old fishermen, they'd get together and talk about it. I forget what they call that thing.

Calciano: Do you recall any fishing rhymes or adages?

Stagnaro: No. They would sing songs, but they didn't have adages. And they'd compose their songs as they went along. Anything that would make a tune out of it and kill time.

Calciano: Did they have to learn new things about weather when they started fishing on the Pacific as compared to fishing in the Mediterranean?

Stagnaro: Well I think they knew their weather; they knew their clouds, and they knew how the clouds traveled; they knew how the sea traveled. They knew their south winds

and their north winds, and they knew. I think weather conditions were about the same thing. Only thing is that you probably had to learn that here you're wide open for south winds and Monterey you were protected. Monterey is not protected for north winds, and here you're protected from north winds.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: It all comes natural I think; they're natural to those old-time fishermen or sailors.

Calciano: In the early days when a number of the fishermen were Portuguese and then the Italians arrived, was there much rivalry as to who were the better fishermen?

Stagnaro: There was always a rivalry amongst the fishermen ... always. Who was the best fisherman, who caught the most fish, and who made the most money. They fished for blood, I'm telling you. They fished for blood.

Calciano: Did you feel that the Portuguese were good, or did you feel that the Italians were more skilled or....

(Laughter)

Stagnaro: Well there was a question. One night one would catch more fish than the other, and they all worked hard at it. They all fished to beat each other. And even to this day they do that, even to this day.

Calciano: Partly, I gather, because your living came from it,

but also, it just was that it was fun to try and....

Stagnaro: To see who was the best fisherman.

Calciano: Yes. That competition.

Stagnaro: Right. My dad, he fished always to beat anybody or everybody. He had that in his blood; boy he worked at it; he worked at it.

The Second and Third Generations

Calciano: How old were the boys before they were expected to go out fishing with the men?

Stagnaro: Well they started going out nine, ten years of age. Helping their fathers. They automatically would go out and start working with their dads.

Calciano: And had they done jobs on shore before that, or....

Stagnaro: A little, but not too much. Mostly around the wharf and boats.

Calciano: Now when you were little and were helping out with the family business, selling fish and so forth ...

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Was this just considered part of your responsibility to the family, or were you paid so much an hour to do this?

Stagnaro: I didn't get paid any. All the money went in one pool; everything went into one pile. You didn't get any. If

you were a little kid, if you got a nickel, you were lucky.

Calciano: Well as the sons would come up in the family, at what point were they allowed their own portion of the pay?

Stagnaro: Well I know some of the kids up till the time they got married, 24, 25, the money all went into one pot at home.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: And when they did get married, maybe the family had a little money, they'd give them three, four, five hundred dollars, and that would set them up. But the money all went in one pot. That's the way it was. Gosh, if you made a quarter you took it home.

(Laughter) And I notice these Chinese people today. I've got a Chinese boy working for me now. When one of those kids makes a nickel, a dollar, whatever they make all goes to the mother. They follow the same customs that we did. Same thing exactly.

Calciano: Then by the time you started getting into the third generation....

Stagnaro: By the time you got a third generation, things change, and by the time I got, say when I started going to high school, of course things got good here. You see,

it was the time of the First World War, and here in our business we were making as high as a hundred dollars every day in this business, and that was money those days. There was no income tax and money got coming in fast. When I got 21 years of age, my people bought me a \$4000 automobile.

Calciano: Oh my! So you were doing well. (Laughter)

MARKETING THE FISH

Peddling

Calciano: When your father first came to Santa Cruz, how did the fishermen sell their catches?

Stagnaro: In those days there were no markets on the wharf and they used to peddle fish around Santa Cruz and go as far north as Pescadero and go to Watsonville with horse and wagon, and they'd go even as far as Hollister and sell their fish.

Calciano: Oh my! Now how many hours did it take to get to Hollister?

Stagnaro: Well I guess ... I have no idea, but I presume it took them probably twelve to twenty-four hours.

Calciano: The roads weren't too good in those days. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: No. The Perez family used to peddle fish and deal it for years. Freddie Perez ... now he sold fish as a

peddler ... he wasn't active in the business here, but he sold like in Hollister, and he peddled fish up to I'd say two years ago.

Calciano: Oh!

Stagnaro: His grandfather was in the business; his grandfather got killed ... got hit by a train down here.

Calciano: Oh dear.

Stagnaro: It hit the wagon, and then his father was in the business, and there were two brothers, there was the Perez brothers; they were big men; they were men who weighed 250 to 300 pounds ... big, big.

Calciano: I don't usually think of the Portuguese as being that big.

Stagnaro: Yes. (Laughter) So then they passed more or less out of the fish business. I think John, Abbie, and Jim always peddled fish; they peddled and did very well, very successful, and John Perez had a business down at the wharf here I think as late as ... oh, well, I'd say as late as 1940 anyway, John Perez. Up till 1940 he had boats. He owned boats and let others do the fishing on a share basis, and he had a retail market there on the wharf. In fact, he was the first one.... After he left here and went to Monterey, he came back

here in 1914, and he had the first place of business on the municipal wharf, and we followed him. We were number two, 'cause we left the old railroad wharf then and come over to the municipal wharf here.

Calciano: What were the most popular fish, the most easily sold in the early years?

Stagnaro: Well it depends who you sold to. Now the American people always liked salmon and sole, and the Portuguese people or the Italians, they liked the rock cod more or less than they did the other fish.

Calciano: It's got a little bit more flavor.

Stagnaro: Yes. They liked the rock cod, 'cause they cook them differently. They used to cook them more or less European style, and then they enjoyed them; and the American people more or less frying, that was their way of cooking, fried and baked, I guess. Whereas the Italian or Portuguese, they cooked them, boiled them, and they used olive oil and salt and pepper and lemon, or they made a tomato sauce, which all these old Italian women did, all of it.

Calciano: Were there any kinds of fish that were caught then that were just dumped back in the water because they were not popular?

Stagnaro: Tons of them. The fish were popular, and the fishermen

would bring them in, but you couldn't sell them, and so after you had them a few days, you would dump them over the side, tons of fish.

Calciano: Oh dear.

Stagnaro: I took tons of fish; thrown away. Course nowadays, we'd be very happy to have them.

Calciano: Yes. Was anything else peddled door-to-door when you were a boy besides fish?



Circa July, 1910. An unusual tuna catch by Joe Loero (not pictured). Pictured from right to left are eight commercial fishermen who worked out of the Railroad Wharf: Cottardo Stagnaro, Charlie "Pie" Carboni, Domenico "Sunday" Faraola, Lawrence Zolezzi, John "Tick" Faraola, Stevie Ghio, Manuel Ghio, Arthur Googins. In the far right corner is the old Sea Beach Hotel. The rest of the people are party-boat customers and tourists.



Circa 1935. Cottardo Stagnaro in front of the C. Stagnaro Fish Company on the Municipal Wharf.

Stagnaro: Oh I think there were many, many things peddled those days from door-to-door, Mrs. Calciano. I knew Ed Huddleson ... he and his wife, they started putting up green beans, and she would fix them up in her ovens and he would peddle them. And he turned around and bought the Seabright Cannery out here, and then he had a big, big cannery in Oakland. He got to be one of the head people at Stokely's. Just by peddling. They peddled vegetables those days, not only fish. All the vegetables were peddled from house to house. Most of all the old Italian vegetable peddlers -- they raised their vegetables like carrots and lettuce and parsley, and they peddled from house to house.

Calciano: When did the peddling begin to die out?

Stagnaro: Well I think peddling started to die out about ... well, with the starting of this municipal wharf ... about 1914, although Fred Perez peddled fish as late as a year or so ago. And of course when we started selling fish on the wharf here, then people started coming to the wharf and driving out to the wharf, but it was gradually.

Calciano: And did other forms of peddling die out about that time, or later?

Stagnaro: Other forms of peddling started to die out also.

Calciano: About that time?

Stagnaro: About the same time, I'd say.

Calciano: Was there ever a fish cannery here in those days?

Stagnaro: Yes, there was a fish cannery here. We had two of them here. In fact at one time we had a fish cannery that started here on the wharf, and then they moved up on Washington Street. This fish cannery started about 1915 or '14, and it ran until about 1920.

Calciano: What type fish did it can?

Stagnaro: It canned all sardines, just sardines.

Calciano: So that was not an outlet for you if you had too much rock cod, or too much....

Stagnaro: No, no rock cod. No. That was just only for sardines.

Cleaning and Icing

Calciano: I read somewhere that in the very early days when they cleaned the fish, that they'd put them back in the basket and swoosh them down under the pier to rinse them off. Is this just a story, or was it really done?

Stagnaro: No, it's the truth. That's what they would do. They had buckets, you know, they had pails and buckets, and they would have a line on the bucket and would drop the bucket over the side, fill it up with water and pull it up and rinse with the water. They used to have

a tub, kind of a wooden trough, like we have a bathtub over here now that we wash our fish in, and in those days they had some troughs that they'd wash the fish in.

Calciano: You said the fishermen just sold the fish by wagons. They didn't try to get the fish up into the San Francisco or San Jose markets?

Stagnaro: Well, eventually, in the 1900s I'd say, which I can remember myself, mostly those days the big market was in going to San Francisco by Wells Fargo Express, by train.

Calciano: Was the fish iced?

Stagnaro: The fish would be iced; they used to ice them, and ship them in boxes that weighed from 150 to 200 pounds, fish boxes, and they would send them to San Francisco more or less to A. Paladini who was the big fish dealer in those days, although there were some others, and they did ship to some others, too, and they would ship on consignment, see, and maybe you'd get paid for what you sent them, and maybe you didn't.

Calciano: Oh boy.

Stagnaro: Lot of work and no money, see? And sometimes they even had to pay for their own expressage up there; they

would bill them instead of to the dealers that you would send your fish to.

Calciano: That was the best deal they could get was on consignment?

Stagnaro: That was the best deal they could get.

Calciano: Had they cleaned the fish down here?

Stagnaro: Well more or less they'd ship them round. They wouldn't clean in those days, clean the fish and then....

Calciano: "Round" means head and tail on, and....

Stagnaro: Well head, tail, and entrails in, yes. That's what they refer to in the fish business as round.

Calciano: For local consumption, when you peddled around to the housewives in the area, did you clean them, or were they round also?

Stagnaro: Well the fish peddlers at those times would clean the fish and more or less sell them to the housewife whole. Fillets were unknown, actually. I'd say unknown.

Calciano: Did your family give the fish to somebody else who took them on the wagon....

Stagnaro: They sold to someone else, and then my brother started selling fish around town with the horse and wagon. And they would sell these fish around; they'd blow a

fishhorn you know, they'd be on these wagons, had it covered, and they'd blow their fishhorn and the women would come out with the men and come to the wagon and buy their fish. And they would trim them and clean them there a little bit, trim them, but they didn't fillet ... the fillet came later.

Calciano: And the steaks came later?

Stagnaro: Even the steaks, the people who bought them would have to steak their own.

Calciano: Yes. You recall the type of prices they got? Did they sell by fish, or by pound, or....

Stagnaro: Well they sold by pound; they had a scale; they put them on the scale, and.... I don't know how accurate the scales were those days (laughter) because it was just a little hanging scale they'd hang in the wagon and ... oh, the scales worked, but fish sold around six, seven, eight cents a pound.

Calciano: Was this the more profitable way to sell ... sell as much locally as you could?

Stagnaro: Well it was a much better, more profitable way to sell because you got ready cash; you got cash right away you know. (Laughter) And it helped. Because when you shipped, like I said before, why you didn't know whether you were going to get paid for your fish or

not.

Calciano: Right. That was bad.

Stagnaro: Oh yes, it was bad.

Calciano: Where did you get the ice?

Stagnaro: Well ice more or less came here from the Union Ice Company; it was in business here selling ice at that time.

Calciano: And the fish on the peddler carts, were they iced also?

Stagnaro: Well at times you would ice, yes. And if you went any distance, you would ice.

Calciano: Would it depend on what kind of fish you were selling that day, or the length of the trip?

Stagnaro: If you went from here to Pescadero or from here to Watsonville with the horse and wagon, you would ice, you see. Or from here to Hollister; and in those days, you see, there were quite a few Portuguese farmers around, and they're great fish eaters, and they'd get a lot of business from the Portuguese people. And they also, they had a run used to go as far as Los Banos and in that vicinity, over in that area there's lots of Portuguese.

Calciano: You mentioned that the fish peddlers would blow a fishhorn ... what exactly does a fishhorn look like?

Stagnaro: Well it was actually a foghorn.

Calciano: Oh!

Stagnaro: See, it was a foghorn that they used on the boats those days. It was a mouth horn. It's a regular foghorn that they used on boats.

Calciano: I see. And they carried it for the peddling too?

Stagnaro: And they carried it for the peddling too, yes.

Shipping to San Francisco

Calciano: You mentioned selling on consignment; did you ever sell your fish in the San Francisco area yourselves?

Stagnaro: Yes, we had our own boat, and they used to run it from here to San Francisco and haul fish from here to San Francisco. The Faraolas had that boat. Sunday Faraola had a boat, and he would haul fish from Santa Cruz to San Francisco. His real name was Domenico, but everybody in America called him Sunday, and his boat would leave here late in the evening and run up to San Francisco with fish, then come back the next day and load up again and go back.

Calciano: When did they start doing that?

Stagnaro: Well they were doing that in ... as late as, oh, I'd say 1913, '14, along 1915 there.

Calciano: That's when they started or finished?

Stagnaro: They started there say about 1912, and probably finished about 1916, '17.

Calciano: I see. They just did it for a few years then.

Stagnaro: Yes. They did it for a few years there. And the they used to ship by ... most of the fish went by Wells Fargo those days, by railroad.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: And about 1914 then we started trucking the fish over the hill.

Calciano: Using other people's trucks, or did you have your own trucks?

Stagnaro: Well we started first with our own truck, running from here to San Jose. And then other people were doing the trucking for us. And then the various fish companies themselves in San Francisco had their trucks, but they had some branches here on the wharf, and they used to send their own trucks down. At that time we had branches from the San Francisco International Fish Company, which was Joe Alioto's father's fish company, the mayor of San Francisco now, his father's name was also Joe, and then we had the California Western Fish Company here, and we also had the A. Paladini Fish Company one time on this wharf, and we had the

Standard Fisheries ... they were outside fish companies ... they had branches here.

Calciano: Were the branches just one man who would buy and sell, or....

Stagnaro: Just one man who would buy, and with a helper probably. He would buy from the commercial fishermen and load their own truck and send to their own headquarters in San Francisco.

Calciano: I see. And then was the fish shipped out from San Francisco, or was it all used in the metropolitan area there?

Stagnaro: Well most of the fish they used in the metropolitan area, because San Francisco has always been a big fish user, a big user of fish, and later on in the years we began picking up the southern California, the Los Angeles market.

Calciano: And would you ship by railroad down to there?

Stagnaro: Ship by railroad, by railroad.

Calciano: Because ships would be too slow?

Stagnaro: Yes, and by that time, along in the twenties, the steamships were out of business ... I'd say by 1923 or '24. They kept hauling lumber here up to that time. I think most of the other coastwise steamers who were bringing supplies like groceries or whatever it may

be, they were out of business by around 1920, '21. The railroads and the trucks ... that's what put them out of business. And the fish companies see, had their own fish trucks, so they were hauling all their own fish. In those days you had big tonnages of fish which you don't have now.

Calciano: What was the last ship that regularly stopped here? Do you remember by any chance. (Pause) It doesn't matter.

Stagnaro: No. The first ship that landed here was the Roanoke.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: The first one when this wharf [the municipal wharf] was completed -- it wasn't quite completed -- there was a ship came in called the Roanoke. But the last ship that came in I don't recall.

Calciano: Were there any shipwrecks of these big steamers in your time, your boyhood years?

Stagnaro: Not during my time, no. No shipwrecks. There were some previous.

Calciano: Do you know anything about them?

Stagnaro: Not too much, no. Only thing I know, in a low tide right off the pier there used to be over here, if enough sand washes off the beach, why that ship went on the ground right over here, and you could still see some of the ship's ribs and things like that.

Calciano: Oh really! Do you know about when it went aground?

Stagnaro: I have no idea. It was way before my time.

Retail Markets

Calciano: When you were talking about the fish dealers, you mentioned that prior to 1900 the dealers really used to cheat you.

Stagnaro: Yes, cheat, that's right.

Calciano: Now were these local dealers, or were these San Francisco dealers?

Stagnaro: Well these were mostly local dealers at that time ... local dealers.

Calciano: Were they Italian also, or were they....

Stagnaro: Well they were mostly Spanish and ... Spanish descent. The Italians actually started coming in on their own really on the larger scale where they started merchandising their own catches ... we started our business, but we just used our own fish and most of it local and things like that, and when we did sell, why we got nothing for it, and even when we shipped to San Francisco most of the time, you shipped on consignment and got nothing for it. But I'd say we started coming into our own about when we came on this pier, about

1914. We were really independent then. But when we were like on the railroad wharf, you see, the Faraolas had more or less control of it, and you had to do most of your business through them.

Calciano: Did they sell mainly locally and to tourists, or....

Stagnaro: Faraolas -- they had a market for many years locally, and they ran horses and wagons and had men working on there peddling fish around the town. And they also had a retail market on the wharf. And also on the old wharf at one time we had another market there which was the Jackson and Kent market, which....

Calciano: That's local people?

Stagnaro: Yes. Yes. J.A.P. Jackson and Lewis Kent. They were two partners, and they also on the old pier had a boat with a motor in it, and they used to take people out salmon trolling, and there was also the Uhden brothers who had a boat, although they didn't have a market or an outlet for the fish they caught; they sold to other dealers, and they used to take out people for salmon trolling in the bay, and also we had the man named Arthur Googin who had a boat with a motor in it, and he used to take out salmon trolling parties.

Calciano: Now this is all off the old railroad wharf?

Stagnaro: This is all off the old railroad wharf, yes.

Calciano: When was that torn down?

Stagnaro: Oh that wharf must have been torn down around ... as a wild guess, I'd say around 1927 or '28.

Calciano: Who owned it?

Stagnaro: The Southern Pacific.

Calciano: When were the tracks removed from this wharf?



Circa 1913. On the beach between the Railroad Wharf (on the right) and the Municipal Wharf during construction. A group of Italian fishermen mending sea a bass (gill) nets. From left to right: Cottardo Loero, Achille Castagnola, Tomaso Ghio, Lapanino Ghio, Jacimo Stagnaro (not related), Cottardo Stagnaro I (father), Taraloto Stagnaro (not related), and Dante Canepa.

Stagnaro: The tracks were taken out here in about 1934, '35 ... they used WPA help at that time, during the Depression.

OTHER TYPES OF FISHING

Abalone

Calciano: Was there much abalone fishing done here?

Stagnaro: Not too much. More on the other side of the bay.

Calciano: Was it done by any particular ethnic group?

Stagnaro: In Monterey, the Japanese originally. The Japanese, and I think there was some brothers named the Porter brothers originally about the start of commercializing abalone, sliced abalone.

Calciano: Did you eat it as a child much? Was it very popular, or....

Stagnaro: Well as a child we always got abalone; it was given to us by different fishermen, or something like that; we always had abalone at home. I never cared for abalone as a child. I like it now, but as a child I just didn't like it, the too sweet taste of it myself. But we always had abalone, cause you could go to the rocks at low tide and you could pick them up all over. Get them yourself.

Calciano: How nice.

Stagnaro: Oh yes. My mother would go down at low tide and pick up abalone. We always had abalone at home. It was nothing to go over to the Lighthouse Point and get all the abalone you wanted. Nobody knew what abalone hardly was in those days, in the early days. Abalone didn't start getting popular till about 1910.

Calciano: What made people start liking abalone around 1910?

Stagnaro: Well they found that there was a very fine fish and people would get abalone and fix it at home, and then Jackson and Kent, who had a fish market on the railroad wharf, they started preparing it and selling it prepared in their retail fish market. And then gradually in Monterey there were two brothers known as the Porter brothers, or three brothers they were, and they started hard-hat diving for abalone, and it gradually got to be quite a popular dish. And where they started selling about 25¢ a pound prepared when we first started in, it's selling right now around \$6.00 a pound wholesale.

Calciano: What a difference. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: If you bought a ton, you'd pay around \$5.75 or \$6.00 a pound for abalone.

Calciano: My goodness.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Do you know anything about the Chinese fishing colony that was here in the early days?

Stagnaro: Not too much. Not too much.

Calciano: Did they mainly do beach net fishing....

Stagnaro: Well they did beach netting in those days a little bit, but not too much. I don't know too much about the Chinese actually.

Whaling

Calciano: Did anybody ever tell you anything about whaling done in this area?

Stagnaro: Well ... not the early whaling, except my father told me some, a little bit, which wasn't too much. It was some Portuguese used to live here on Lighthouse Avenue, and they used to work as whalers, old Portuguese fishermen.

Calciano: Did they work as shore whalers, or did they process the whales out at sea?

Stagnaro: They caught them out at sea, and they used to haul them, to shore, I think; originally they hauled them to Davenport.

Calciano: And then these Portuguese at Lighthouse Point....

Stagnaro: Yes, they lived at Lighthouse Avenue here, and at that time they took the whales up here off of Davenport.

Calciano: Did your dad tell you this, or somebody else?

Stagnaro: No, my dad told me this. He knew them. In fact, when my mother first came here from Italy, that's the house that they lived in where these Portuguese fishermen originally lived.

Calciano: What were the names of the Portuguese ... do you remember?

Stagnaro: I don't remember.

Calciano: Okay.

Stagnaro: I don't remember. And then of course when they had the whaling station down here, and very successful, around in the twenties there was a whaling station, a complete station, at Moss Landing. And they had these Norwegian whalers, let's call them, or fishermen, they worked out of Moss Landing, and they used to anchor their boats here in Santa Cruz. And then they brought some two or three whale boats from Norway, they brought them here and they were very successful and made a lot of money down at that whaling station in Moss Landing.

Calciano: Why would they anchor their boats at Santa Cruz?

Stagnaro: Well, it was safer anchoring here at that time. They

had no harbors nor anything else, and it was more convenient. They would haul the whales in down there, and then they would bring their boats and anchor here, and they lived here. They had their families and they lived here.

Calciano: I thought you said this wasn't a very good port for safety.

Stagnaro: Well ... in good weather it's a good port, and if there's any bad weather, go to Monterey, Elizabeth.

Calciano: I see. Same as your other....

Stagnaro: Same as the others. And these boats were big boats -- well, I call them boats; they weren't ships, but they were big boats -- regular whale boats with the harpoon guns mounted right on the bow, and they were all steel boats made in Norway; they were built expressly for whaling purposes.

Calciano: And were these people from Norway themselves?

Stagnaro: They were all Norwegians and Swedes.

Calciano: Do you remember any of their names?

Stagnaro: Oh yes. Larson and Anderson, yes.

Calciano: Are any of their families still here?

Stagnaro: None of their families are here. Most of them are all dead, those people, although some of their wives may

still be alive. But some of those old whale fishermen, I think most of them, all passed away, all dead. Then they went from here to Eureka.

Calciano: When did it phase out in this area?

Stagnaro: Oh I think it phased out around the late 20s, early 30s. It was quite a business. Killed a lot of whales. They brought a lot of whales in here, Elizabeth, a lot of whales. Used to get so many at times, they used to just anchor them out here, because when they harpoon them, see, what they would do when they pull out the harpoon, they would put an air hose in there, and they would pump air so the whales would float, see. And sometimes they would keep them out here three, four, five days.

Calciano: Oh!

Stagnaro: You could smell them all over Santa Cruz.

Calciano: Oh dear. (Laughter) Terrible.

Stagnaro: And when the east wind would. blow, you could smell the odor from the whaling station at Moss Landing into Santa Cruz here.

Calciano: You could?

Stagnaro: Yes. Those days they wasn't using whale meat then for dog food or cat food -- later on they started using it

for cat food -- and all they were using was the blubber those days.

Calciano: Throwing the meat away?

Stagnaro: Yes. Throwing the meat away. In fact they were selling whale meat in many places, because whale meat looks more like veal or -the color of between veal and beef.

Calciano: Oh. And they'd sell it as what?

Stagnaro: They'd sell it as whale meat. They sold a lot of it.

Calciano: And who would buy it?

Stagnaro: The public. The American people, whatever you want to call them. Los Angeles was a big area ... sold a lot of whale meat in Los Angeles. I never eat any myself, but (laughter)....

Calciano: Were they able to sell most of their meat, or.....

Stagnaro: Well they sold quite a bit. There was quite a bit on the fresh fish market.

Calciano: If they were able to sell it on the fresh market, why did they decide to make cat food out of it instead?

Stagnaro: Well then I kind of think the people kind of started losing interest in buying whale meat, and then they went to dog food and cat food. I think it was more profitable than selling it on the fresh fish market.

Calciano: It was?

Stagnaro: Yes. Selling it as dog food and cat food. It got to be big business. It made Dr. Ross a very wealthy man in business, too, because he was the first user of it.

Calciano: That's interesting.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: You said you could smell it all the way up here. Was it the processing or the meat rotting, or what was the smell?

Stagnaro: Processing, meat rotting, carcasses laying around, and everything like that.

The Old Man of Monterey Bay

Calciano: I've heard that there was in the ... I guess it was the '20s, '30s, '40s, somewhere around there, something called the Old Man of Monterey Bay.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Do you want to tell me what that was, or wasn't?

(Laughter)

Stagnaro: Well, quite a number of fishermen saw that. What it was, I don't know. And it was down here at the lower end of the bay.

Calciano: Was it a sea serpent, or....

Stagnaro: It was a kind of a sea monster, is what it was. It was a sea monster or a sea serpent. And it was down here at the lower end of the bay, and quite a number of the

fishermen saw it and came quite close to it. And in fact the -- I think we still have it; Gilda may have it someplace -- we had Tommy Thompson draw a sketch and a cartoon and we called it The Old Man of Monterey Bay.

Calciano: I'd like to see that.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Did very many people know of it, or was it just the fishermen....

Stagnaro: Well just the fishermen knew of this, and it was talked about, and I think Cottardo Ghio, my cousin, Cottardo Ghio who's still alive and in good health and everything else, and he came quite close to it one time. But when he did, no one had a camera aboard their boat unfortunately to take a picture of this. And I can remember a man, fisherman, we had here named Bill Totten, who was a commercial fisherman, and one day he was out there, and he got so scared that he came home; he saw this thing, he says, "Guess what I saw? I saw that serpent or that monster out there." And oh, he was scared to the death of it. Came right home as fast as he could get in here.

Calciano: Oh! (Laughter)

Stagnaro: But they haven't seen it for quite a number of years.

Calciano: Yes. I had the feeling it was the 1920 through 1940 period, but ... does that sound about right?

Stagnaro: Yes. Yes, very much right. The Old Man of Monterey Bay.

Calciano: But did the public never get interested in it the way they do in the Loch Ness Monster? Did this one get in the papers?

Stagnaro: Oh yes. It got in the papers. Oh yes. It was quite a talked about thing, The Old Man of Monterey Bay.

EARLY SANTA CRUZ IN GENERAL

Coastal Steamships

Calciano: I wanted to ask a little bit about the activities on the wharf in the early years other than just the fishing. We've mentioned the coastal steamers a bit; were there a lot of cargo ships that used to do business here?

Stagnaro: Yes, we used to have coastwise steamers come in here and drop off merchandise, I guess you'd call it; supplies for different places. They'd ship like to the different grocery stores here. Groceries and wheat they would bring in here. And also we had lumber ships

come in and bring the lumber, unload lumber, off this wharf. And that kept on for, oh, maybe up till 1925. And also at one time we had a railroad track that ran the full length of the pier, and they used to bring in actually trainloads of cement from the Santa Cruz Portland Cement. Company, and they would bring the cement from here and unload it and put it aboard the ship and ship by ship.

Calciano: When you said they brought in wheat, was it the whole kernel wheat, or flour, or....

Stagnaro: Well, it was flour they'd bring in, the whole kernel wheat and barley and stuff things like that; they used to feed horses in those days.

Calciano: Oh, I see. I was wondering if we had a flour mill, or....

Stagnaro: No. This was for grain supply stores that would sell grain and hay and things like that. And we ourselves used to receive things -- like the fishermen all bought wholesale from the wholesale grocers of San Francisco, and they would ship by ship.

Calciano: Was it fairly equal? I mean would the ships unload about as much as they'd load on, or did they mainly....

Stagnaro: Well they would unload and also load on.

Calciano: What other things went out besides cement?

Stagnaro: Lumber at one time. Some lumber also went out of here, redwood lumber.

Calciano: Did the cargo ships land at other ports between Monterey and San Francisco?

Stagnaro: Yes. They were what we used to call coastwise steamers; they were nothing big, they were just little steamers. I forget their tonnage; maybe 150-ton, 200-ton steamers; they weren't nothing big, and they would load and unload. I think they went at least as far as Eureka and came into San Francisco, down the coast to Santa Cruz, and then they'd go to Monterey, and then I think they'd probably even go south as far as San Pedro, San Diego.

Calciano: They wouldn't stop at Moss Landing though?

Stagnaro: Not at Moss Landing, no.

Calciano: Or any other place between here and San Francisco?

Stagnaro: No.

Calciano: Was leather still shipped out by ship, or were they using other means when you were a boy?

Stagnaro: Well I don't remember them shipping out too much leather. They may have. This was quite a means of transportation in those days, and they probably did from Kron's tannery up here, they probably did bring

leather down, but I don't remember leather too much.

Calciano: Well they might have switched to railroads or something.

The Cowell Wharf and Cowell Ranch

Calciano: And then I guess Cowell, did he....

Stagnaro: Cowell had his own pier. The Cowell pier.

Calciano: When you were young, was he using railroads, or was he using boats?

Stagnaro: No, when I was young he was using his own pier. It was running right off that little point where the Sea & Sand Motel is now. He had a pier that ran down, and he also had a big warehouse on that big empty lot that's still up there empty. At one time there was a big warehouse there, and it was back in there where you come down from the kilns, from Cowell's up there with the lime, and I can remember they would come down from Cowell with the oxen-driven and also horse-driven big wagons with maybe six or eight horses or six or eight oxen and would haul down Bay Street, right down Bay Street, because we lived on Bay Street, and still live there, and it was all dirt then, a big dirt road. And they'd come down and load the warehouse, and then they would load it on these little trains, and when one was loaded, it would go down to the pier and have 20 empty

ones up. That's where they used to work those little flat cars. Small, nothing big or anything like that, but that's the way they would do it.

Calciano: You mentioned both horses and oxen ... were they using them at the same time, or was it that when you were very young, they were....

Stagnaro: They would use them more or less at the same time.

Calciano: When did they switch over to trucks, do you remember?

Stagnaro: Oh....

Calciano: Or did they?

Stagnaro: Well I ... no, they didn't. Not that I remember; they never did for hauling the lime; then he kind of closed these kilns here, up here, and then he had these kilns up in Felton there where they made lime up there. Then I presume from there they did haul them by truck.

Calciano: Do you remember about when he shut down the ones at the base of the University?

Stagnaro: Well, I'd say around maybe ... this is kind of a wild guess, but I think around maybe 1910 or 11. Right in that area there, say, one way or the other.

Calciano: And so he always shipped by ship from the campus kilns? He never switched to railroads from....

Stagnaro: He never switched to railroad, unless he did there when he went to Felton.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: He probably could have shipped by railroad out of Felton.

Calciano: Do you remember when he stopped using his wharf?

Stagnaro: Well, his wharf kind of ... they stopped using it, and it got washed out in a big storm, I think about the same time that he moved from up here ... about 1910 I think, '08, '09, '10, along in there.

Calciano: Did you ever hear much about the Cowell Ranch, or think much about it?

Stagnaro: Well the Cowell Ranch, as a boy, well, from where we lived up on Bay Street there, it was right up above, you know, and I knew Mr. Cowell as a boy, yes.

Calciano: What did you think of him?

Stagnaro: Liked him. Thought he was a fine man. He was good to his employees. And I used to watch them, because I used to be friendly with the people that ran the old warehouse that was up here, the old Cowell warehouse.

Calciano: Who ran that for them?

Stagnaro: Well, Mr. Morgan ran it for a good many years, and before that, Mr. Lorenzo ran it for them. But Mr. Morgan had a boy named Alex, and Alex and I was the same age and went to school together, and I'd be over

there all the time when I wasn't working at the wharf. And Mr. Cowell used to come down and see him all the time, 'cause he managed this up here, and he was good to Mr. Cardiff, Mr. George Cardiff, who managed it later for him, and Mr. Vierra, after Mr. Morgan died, was there. Mr. Cowell was real good to his employees; he was a good man.

Calciano: Some of the townspeople didn't like him a lot. Was it because he was a powerful man, or....

Stagnaro: He was a powerful, he was a rugged, tough individual, he was. He was a good leader. But the people that worked for him stayed with him for years and years and years. And he took care of his people. I don't know if he paid them enough or anything else, that I don't know, but the rates that they paid those days, I guess he paid the same, same rate, if not better even. I don't know.

Calciano: Did you know any of the Italians and Portuguese men who worked in the lime and....

Stagnaro: Oh yes, yes. A good many of Italian ... mostly Portuguese, but some Italian. Mr. Ricca, I remember him. He worked up there for many years for Mr. Cowell. Many years. Good many of those old Portuguese.

Calciano: Were you ever up on the ranch?

Stagnaro: A few times, yes. Went up there with Alex to look for blackberries up there, wild blackberries.

Calciano: Were the townspeople more aware of the Cowell Ranch or less aware of it than some of the other big ranches like the Wilder Ranch and the ... I mean was it just another ranch, or was it....

Stagnaro: Well I think it was just the Henry Cowell Ranch or lime kiln ... it was known more as the lime kiln than it was as a ranch.

Calciano: That's true.

Civic Leaders

Calciano: You know, the students at the University are always interested in how the city functioned: "Who ran Santa Cruz in the early days ... 1890s to 1910 period?" How would you answer that?

Stagnaro: Well, I think it was when we had a mayor form of government, as you know, and elected commissioners, and it was run by them, and I think it was more or less run by uptown people.

Calciano: Would it be ten families who were....

Stagnaro: Maybe five, maybe five.

Calciano: Five families?

Stagnaro: Five. Five or six families probably run the town in those days.

Calciano: Could you name some of the families?

Stagnaro: Well ... I hate to name them because I'm afraid I....

Calciano: Might offend somebody?

Stagnaro: Might offend somebody, yes. Just say it was run by five or six of the places on Pacific Avenue, that's the way I'd put it.

Calciano: Was the mayor a figurehead person, or was it a powerful office at that point?

Stagnaro: Well I think the mayor's office was quite a powerful office at that point. It was. We had good people then. They were elected by the people ... your commissioners and your mayor was also elected ... an elected mayor. The people had the power to change him, and I remember one time when Mr. Stikeman told me, he says, "Malio, as long as you're in business," (he was in the grocery store business himself on Pacific Avenue) and he says, "Malio, as long as you're in business, never run for public office, because since I've been elected," (this was about six months later) he says, "since I've been elected as a commissioner on the city council," he

says, "I've lost fifty percent of my business."

Calciano: Heavens!

Stagnaro: So I thought he gave me some pretty good advice.

Calciano: That's interesting.

Stagnaro: (Laughter) I'll never forget that advice that I got from him. And another good advice that I got was from an old newspaperman was, "Malio, never get in a fight with a newspaperman." (Laughter) "Because they can always crucify you."

Calciano: Right. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: So that was another good piece of advice that I got. I got that from Mr. Kiff and Mr. Brentlinger.

Calciano: Was the advice that was handed out not related to anything, or were you about to take on the local newspapers?

Stagnaro: No. It wasn't related. That was just advice that they give me as friends. We became friends, and that was good advice.

Calciano: Who were the judges in town in the earlier years? Were they very important people or not?

Stagnaro: Well they were very important people and powerful people. The ones I remember was up in the Superior Court: Judge Lucas Smith and Judge Knight and Judge

Lucas and Judge Atteridge. The Superior Court judges. And then we had Judge Houck of the Justice Court ... I think it was Houck, which I was very friendly with 'cause we had Justice Court, you know, what they call the Justice of the Peace Court.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: And then we had a Municipal Judge, Judge Springer, later on. They formed a Municipal Court here, and Judge Springer, I think, was the first judge in that court.

Calciano: Did they play a larger role in the town affairs than our judges do presently, or was it about the same kind of relationship?

Stagnaro: I think they played more of a part than the judges nowadays; the judges now don't have, you know ... they're very quiet and everything else, and I think the judges then played quite a part, much more of a part than than the judges now. The people looked upon them with much more respect.

Calciano: That's the feeling that I had, but I didn't know.

Stagnaro: They respected you as a Superior Judge ... you were the power. And the district attorney was very powerful, very powerful. 'Course these days we've got a very good district attorney, Peter Chang.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: I think we've had some very weak district attorneys ... very, very weak.

Calciano: You mean in the recent past.

Stagnaro: Yes. The past years. Going back when there was district attorneys like Ralph H. Smith, and George W. Smith....

Calciano: Now were they good or bad?

Stagnaro: They were great district attorneys. Oh, they were great prosecutors. And they took pride in their work and their prosecutions. They took a pride in presenting cases before a jury and were very proud men. They were fighters. They were looked upon with very much respect.

Calciano: You said you didn't want to list who ruled the town, but could I ask who were the civic leaders and the people who tended to get things done ... not necessarily the big powers, but....

Stagnaro: Yes. Well, like Mr. Leask used to be quite a man for the town; Charlie Canfield was quite a man for the town, and Duncan McPherson of the Sentinel, Fred's grandfather ... quite a man those days, and Williamson and Garrett both were quite men on Pacific Avenue there. And Charlie Towne ... Charlie Towne and Charlie

Klein, they were quite progressive, and of course Fred Swanton did a tremendous lot for this town. Fred Swanton.

Calciano: I wanted to ask you about him.

Fred Swanton

Stagnaro: Fred W. Swanton was quite a man.

Calciano: Do you remember him?

Stagnaro: Oh, very much so. He served as mayor, I think several terms as mayor. He was the man that brought the Casino to Santa Cruz, and the man who brought the first electric lights to Santa Cruz ... he's the man that brought the first streetcar system to Santa Cruz, and he was a dreamer and a thinker and a promoter.

Calciano: Yes, everyone uses the phrase "promoter" with him ... which kind of seems accurate.

Stagnaro: Well you hate to use that sometimes, you know.

Calciano: But he really did promote?

Stagnaro: Yes. He really promoted things, he did. He knew how to do it.

Calciano: What was his key to success?

Stagnaro: Well really out of all these things, he himself wasn't too successful financially. He'd promote them and probably go into one thing and then go into another

and lose the money and promote another thing and lose his fortune again.

Calciano: I guess what I meant was how did he manage to convince people to put money into things.

Stagnaro: Well he was convincing ... he was a good convincer. And towards the end he even convinced people to put money in a gold mine up here in gold mine country.

Calciano: In what? The Mother Lode country, or....

Stagnaro: The Mother Lode ... the Mother Lode.

Calciano: Really?

Stagnaro: In fact I had money in that mine myself.

Calciano: He convinced you. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Yes. But we came off fairly good by selling the property and the timber.

Calciano: Did he just have a gift of gab, or would he have statistics to show, or....

Stagnaro: Oh, he had a gift of gab and the statistics both. I think he was a great man personally. A lot of people won't agree with me.

Calciano: Well I guess his reputation was tarnished in the Ocean Shore Railroad thing ... that was the one big flop I've heard about.

Stagnaro: Well yes. But I don't know how far he was in that. I

don't know whether he was in that Ocean Shore Railroad ... how deep ... whether he was in that or not. I don't know.

Calciano: Well why do you think some people wouldn't agree with you? What reasons would they have for not thinking he was a great man for the area?

Stagnaro: Well, a lot of people thought he was nothing but a promoter and that's it, that he never was successful. He'd promote things and then ... but I think he was great for the town.

Calciano: Was he a big man, or small, or....

Stagnaro: Well he was a kind of a small man, wasn't a big man, tall man or anything -- about my size, but he was a go-getter; he was a great thinker, I'll tell you. I think he did a good job as mayor for this town ... very good job. Did a lot of good things. And a lot of people on Pacific Avenue, people that I mentioned to you, they were fighting him the hardest. He wanted to put a municipal power plant here one time, right down by the river. Getting the power from the San Lorenzo River, and oh, they fought him tooth and nail. 'Course who fought him then was the Coast Counties Gas and Electric Company backed by all the big power companies all over, because they didn't want to see anything

municipally owned in that character. They didn't want to see anything like that.

Calciano: He lost that one?

Stagnaro: Yes. He lost that because it came to a vote of the people. But they spent thousands and thousands of dollars to defeat his proposition.

Calciano: On what other things did he lock horns with the....

Stagnaro: Well he locked horns with anybody, because they were all fighting him, you know; these certain amount of people would be fighting him all the time. A certain group, they always wanted to keep the control, see, and he more or less had his own ideas.

Calciano: Was there any government scandal in the early years....

Stagnaro: I don't think there ever was too much government scandal in Santa Cruz that I know of, Elizabeth, no.

Calciano: The families that ran the area ran it pretty well then, I guess.

Stagnaro: They ran it very well, very well; they were trying to progress this town and Swanton was trying to progress the town in his way. And sometimes a good many people thought that the town wasn't progressing enough, which it didn't. Santa Cruz was a sleepy hollow, you know,

for many, many years. In fact, we didn't start taking hold here probably till 1955 or '60. Maybe it was better the way it was.

Calciano: (Laughter) Yes.

Stagnaro: 'Cause we had a natural environment, still; we're starting to lose what nature gave us.

Calciano: Did the County Board of Supervisors have very much effect on what happened to Santa Cruz in this area, or was it mainly the city that you were speaking of.

Stagnaro: Mainly the city that I was speaking of, and not so much the county. I don't know too much about the county, but they always had a Board of Supervisors, and I think they administered more or less the county business like it's administered now, but on a smaller basis ... all good solid men. We had a very strong sheriff in Sheriff Trafton ... tremendously strong sheriff, and sheriff for many years, and all your county officers were in office many, many years.

Calciano: Were they by and large good, or were there really some....

Stagnaro: I thought that by and large very good, very good.

Calciano: Because you never know with the elected officials; just because you can get elected doesn't mean you know

how to run a very good town.

Stagnaro: Yes. Yes. I think they handled the town and ran the county offices those days to the best of their ability.

Newspapers

Calciano: Was there ever any Italian language newspaper that your folks read?

Stagnaro: Well from San Francisco they had the Voce del Popolo, the Voice of the People and the Voce d'Italia, the Voice of Italy. They had an Italian newspaper they ran for years and years up there.

Calciano: And would they get it sent down here regularly, or just....

Stagnaro: Yes. Come down by mail.

Calciano: They subscribed to it?

Stagnaro: Subscribed to it, yes. They didn't read much, you know, Elizabeth, but my sister-in-law, she's the one, and my brother Cottardo would read the Italian paper. They loved the Italian paper, my sister-in-law and brother. They read the Italian paper.

Calciano: Did they also get one of the local papers?

Stagnaro: Oh yes.

Calciano: Which one did they get?

Stagnaro: Also myself. Well we always took the News and the Sentinel both at our house, and I was big for reading the papers. I think I got most of my education reading. We always subscribed to the San Francisco Examiner and the Call-Bulletin, and the two .local papers. And even as a little kid, I was crazy about the sport pages. And then I got to reading the editorials and then got interested in the stock market as I grew up in my twenties ... and as a boy, the sport page, oh....

Calciano: Oh yes. My son heads for the Green Sheet [the San Francisco Chronicle's sports section].

Stagnaro: Oh, I guess I was like your son; I could read the sport page about the fighters and the wrestlers and baseball and football and golf ... I love any sport. I'm a great Raider fan, and I have season tickets which nobody can get hardly. You can't get them today hardly.

Calciano: Really?

Stagnaro: And I go to all the Raider games all the time.

Calciano: Was the Surf still printing when you were young or not?

Stagnaro: Yes. The Santa Cruz Evening Surf ... Arthur Taylor who was mayor here one time ... A. A. Taylor. I remember him very well; he was a little man. He was less than five feet tall. But he was smart and a fighter. He fought the McPhersons ... they used to have some great editorial fights. You probably can go in the archives and get some of those.

Calciano: Yes. Did your family subscribe to that paper too?

Stagnaro: The Surf? Yes.

Calciano: Was one of the papers generally Republican and the other Democratic, or were they both conservative or both liberal?

Stagnaro: I think they both ... well both more or less conservative, I guess they were. I remember as a kid. Of course the McPhersons have always been Republicans. Always been I think ... Arthur Taylor, I don't know. I can't say whether he was a Democrat or a Republican, but I think they were Republican.

Calciano: What were their fights over in the editorials?

Stagnaro: I can't say; I don't even know myself; I was too young.

Local Politics

Calciano: Do you think people were more or less party-oriented in the earlier days than they are now?

Stagnaro: Well I think they were very party-oriented, and they used to be ... the political battles were tough battles, and especially mayor and council were hot-fought affairs which they haven't got that any more. The mayor's appointed, and the councilmen elected, and there don't seem to be the political enthusiasm and battles that we used to have those days -- they were hard fought and bitter.

Calciano: Did you take part in some of them?

Stagnaro: Oh very much so. Oh yes.

Calciano: Do any come to mind?

Stagnaro: Oh, district attorney fights, many district attorney and mayor fights and oh God, yes. Oh, we'd take sides and that was it, and then they were bitter. Real bitter, Elizabeth.

Calciano: When you say bitter, was there dirty fighting as well....

Stagnaro: Well it was dirty fighting and everything else. They really ... they had banners up and down Pacific Avenue, cars, parades, and banners on your cars, and you fought it out. I took part in them 'cause that's my hobby -- politics. I love politics.

Calciano: Well now would these usually be two members of the ruling group fighting each other, or would it usually be one was a ruling group and the other an outsider trying to get in?

Stagnaro: Well I think it was ruling groups more or less than outsiders trying to get in. The outsiders didn't try to get in.

Calciano: But even with....

Stagnaro: Just like county offices those days, battles, like the treasurer or the assessor or the sheriff, hot battles, I'm telling you. Hot battles. And mayor fights and council fights were really something. You wouldn't believe it. You just wouldn't believe it.

Calciano: Well, what were the issues? Did the men have different policies they wanted to put in, or was it personalities?

Stagnaro: Well, I think it was more personalities than it was anything else. I liked you and I'd fight for you, and that would be it. This guy, he'd like this guy, and he'd fight for him and that would be it.

Calciano: So it wasn't a feeling that the city was going to go down the drain if the other guy got in?

Stagnaro: No, no, it was nothing like that. It was just more of a personality battle than anything else. Oh we had

some hot fights in this town. Really hot fights. Signs and posters and letters and everything else you could possibly think of. They say politics are dirty ... well they were rough -- rough, and tough, and dirty.

Calciano: Why would the men run if they were opening themselves upto....

Stagnaro: It's just like Mr. Stikeman, like I told you a little while ago. He ran for office and got elected, and six months later he advised me never to run for office because he lost 50 percent of his business, and it broke him.

Calciano: It did?

Stagnaro: He had a very thriving grocery store on Pacific Avenue.

Calciano: So the jobs themselves were not particularly lucrative?

Stagnaro: No, they weren't lucrative at all. Unless they got money from under the counter.

Calciano: That's what I was wondering ... in big cities you sometimes got graft money.

Stagnaro: In those days they got graft monies, yes. I think there was graft money those days. But people made

money on ... say if you were buying ten ton of sewer pipe, why maybe you made a little money ... I think they did. My own opinion. I don't know.

Calciano: You don't know.

Stagnaro: I never saw it. But I'm going on what happened in other cities where other mayors got caught up with, or constables, or whatever they were.

Calciano: But you don't have the feeling that that's one of the reasons men here ran for the office, though, or do you?

Stagnaro: No. I think they ran more or less because these men were good men who had businesses, and they worked hard in their own business, and I think they probably had the city at heart and ran thinking they could do some good for the city, and they did.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: Look at the wharf here. This wharf was started in 1912, and it was the members of the city council at that time who proposed it and put it up to a vote of the people. And then it was administered by the commissioner of public works. And then you had your commissioner of public health and safety, and there were four commissioners those days and the mayor.

Calciano: It seemed to work pretty well?

Stagnaro: Worked very well. In fact I liked that system better than I do the present. I'm not crazy about the city manager form of government at all.

Calciano: When did the city manager form come in?

Stagnaro: I think it came in here ... I think it came in after World War II. Bob Klein was the first one we had here.

Calciano: Did everyone feel that the time had arrived for the city manager form of government, or was there a big battle to get it in?

Stagnaro: Well it was a vote of the people ... the people voted it in, Elizabeth, so they figure that the other system, I don't know, they thought that type of government was like the old horse and buggy days, and so the people voted it, so that's it. But personally I like the other one, 'cause it was a good fight, and you voted for a man, and you voted for your councilmen, which you still vote for your councilmen now, and the mayor is appointed, but the city manager is....

Calciano: He runs the show?

Stagnaro: He runs the show, and then not only that: he uses this as a springboard to land a bigger job in another city.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: You see, we've had two, three, or four city managers

already. And usually they destroy the town, they leave, and we're still here.

Calciano: (Laughter) So you don't want to have....

Stagnaro: I told that to Pete Tedesco one fight he and I got into. I said, "Pete, I'll be here when you're gone."

Doctors and Hospitals

Calciano: When we were talking earlier about the Italian fishing families, one thing I wanted to ask was in the years before health insurance and so forth, what happened to a man and to his family if he was injured in the boat and was laid up for several months?

Stagnaro: Well, they just had to take care of themselves. That's the way it was.

Calciano: Do you remember this happening to any families?

Stagnaro: Well, one or two of the fishermen were hurt out in the dragboats, and I think when they did get hurt that compensation or something started taking care of them, but if they were individual fishermen who got hurt, there just was no coverage at all. They had to take care of themselves.

Calciano: Were the sixty families closely enough knit that they'd rally around a bit or not?

Stagnaro: Oh definitely! Oh yes! Oh, they would never let each other down. Oh, no! They all came to the rescue.

Calciano: So if a man did get hurt say in 1900 or so....

Stagnaro: They always took care of each other. They really did. If they got in any kind of trouble, they always took care of each other.

Calciano: We talked a little bit about the fact that the Italians didn't use doctors for childbirth, but I was wondering about accidents and so forth. Did they use doctors....

Stagnaro: Oh yes. Oh yes. Used doctors for accidents ... broken arms, or cut a finger, or had blood poisoning or something like that. They would use all their home remedies as much as they could, you know, and they did. They used their home remedies; they believed in them. But they would go to the doctors, oh yes.

Calciano: Did they go to a lot of different doctors, or was there one doctor that pretty much was the one that the sixty families went to?

Stagnaro: Well, they more or less got to going to one doctor that would ... well, two or three, you know. There wasn't too many doctors.

Calciano: Who were they? Do you remember?

Stagnaro: Well those days was Dr. Phillips and Dr. Cowden, and

Dr. Piper who was very popular with them ... Dr. Piper; Dr. Gates was popular; Dr. Cowden was popular with them. And then before them there was a Dr. Congdon and Dr. Morgan. They were really the early doctors here; they were practicing, and Dr. Bush, old Dr. Bush, and there was a Dr. Clark; they were here before those other doctors.

Calciano: So the Italians went to them every once in a while?

Stagnaro: Enough. Enough. Oh yes.

Calciano: Was Dr. Allegrini the first doctor to speak Italian who came in, or.... I guess I just have heard that some of the Italian-speaking people started going to him when he came to town because he could speak Italian.

Stagnaro: Italian, yes.

Calciano: Now was this true for your group of Italian families, or were these other Italians?

Stagnaro: Well, Dr. Allegrini was about the first modern doctor and Italian-speaking doctor. But some of the old Italians stayed with their old doctors even. Those doctors gradually passed on, and then they switched, started to switch over to him, 'cause he started getting to be well liked, got to be popular, and you know how Dr. Allegrini is ... he's got a pretty

charming personality, and he started winning one right after another, and if you go to his office right now, you'll see thirty, forty, fifty old men and old ladies waiting in line to see him up there. I get a kick if I go to his office and see the way he handles these old Italians. I tell you, it's really great. (Laughter)
He's got nice ways.

Calciano: That's good.

Stagnaro: They start feeling better right away. He knows what's wrong with them before they even come, and he talks to them a little bit and makes them happy.

Calciano: Did your group of families ever use County Hospital much, or did they use the Sisters Hospital, or none of the hospitals....

Stagnaro: They used the old Mission Hospital. Oh God, they wouldn't go to the County Hospital ... you couldn't bring them there dead!

Calciano: It had a bad reputation?

Stagnaro: Well no ... they just didn't believe in charity.

Calciano: Oh, it was the charity ... that's right.

Stagnaro: They didn't believe in that. Oh, no, no, no. They'd go to the hospital, and they'd pay through the nose.

Calciano: Now you said old Mission Hospital ... which one do you

mean by that?

Stagnaro: It was on Mission Hill. There was a hospital there above, just above where the Catholic Church is.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: It was there for many years. The Mission Hospital out here was quite a place ... it was an old wooden building, but it's been since torn down completely. And there was a sanitarium -- used to call them hospitals then -- it was the Seabright. There was two hospitals here. And then there was this big old house up here, it was a hospital, Cowden and Phillips made their fortune in the old Lynch home up here where the Clear View Auto Court is. That was built by the Lynch family, or Hannah family.

Calciano: Was that the Hanly.... no Hannah, you said.

Stagnaro: Well, then it got to be Hanly later, because Mrs. Hanly had that big old house up here which still stands.

Calciano: All right. Now she had this Lynch one or a different one?

Stagnaro: The Lynch and later on she built the Hanly Hospital.

Calciano: Well now who ran this Mission Hill one?

Stagnaro: The Mission Hill was run by ... I think by the Roger family here. And the Seabright Sanitarium I don't

know. I don't know, but Dr. Gates and Dr. Piper more or less used the Mission Hill Hospital and Dr. Cowden and Dr. Phillips were partners and had this one up here, and Dr. Dowling had the Seabright Sanitarium out here. Hospital.

Calciano: About when was the first modern hospital built?

Stagnaro: Well that was the Hanly Hospital up here.

Calciano: Yes. Opposite the Dream Inn.

Stagnaro: That was the first modern hospital that was built.

Calciano: And then was it pretty soon afterwards or not that the one down on Soquel Avenue....

Stagnaro: Oh much later.

Calciano: Much later?

Stagnaro: This was the only hospital here for many, many years. And then the Dominicans came in when Mrs. Hanly died, or even before Mrs. Hanly ... she was a nurse, Mrs. Hanly; she used to run baths at the beach down here, salt water baths.

Calciano: And they bought from her?

Stagnaro: They bought the hospital up here. Then they had this one on Soquel ... of course ... no, they didn't build that originally, the hospital up here on Soquel. Originally a group of us built that hospital; we were

involved in that ourselves.

Calciano: You were?

Stagnaro: Yes. We bought some stock. Dr. Piper and Gates, a few doctors got together and built that and sold stock. But they could never make it pay. They never had the right management, and it was rough going there. And then the sisters came in and bought it and bought the stock and paid one hundred percent what we had invested in there. And they wouldn't take any stock as a gift.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: 'Cause some of us, the stock was no good to us anyway, we felt. We wanted to give it to them. No, they wouldn't accept it. They paid for it.

Calciano: Did they buy the Hanly one first, or the Soquel....

Stagnaro: They bought the Hanly; I think they bought the Hanly first.

Calciano: Now why did Gates and the other doctors decide to build the one on Soquel?

Stagnaro: Well there was a need for a nice modern hospital. And then I think they just came up with the idea of a modernistic place which was a necessity. The town was growing slowly then, slow, but it was a necessity.

They built this hospital, but the doctors didn't make any money when it was under doctor management at all. They had rough going there.

Calciano: I've been having trouble finding out very much about County Hospital. It was a poor farm at one point, and then it was a hospital or it was both ... do you know anything about it?

Stagnaro: Not too much of the County Hospital. We used to have a man out there for years named Ben Crews that managed that hospital a good many, many years. I tell you who could probably give you more than I can on that would be Allen Horton, who used to be the County Treasurer at one time. Allen could probably remember more of the County Hospital than I do.

Calciano: I'll remember that. Thanks.

World War I

Calciano: How did World War I affect the wharf area ... did it have much of an effect or not?

Stagnaro: World War I had no effect at all except we started getting a big demand, a bigger, larger demand for the fish. And we got better prices, and we started making money.

Calciano: Aha! (Laughter)

Stagnaro: As fishermen. We started getting our prices.

Calciano: Why did the demand go up?

Stagnaro: Well, because they had bureaus at that time, and they were telling everybody to eat fish and conserve the meat as much as possible and eat more fish, the government agencies, and then the demand also came a lot because all these various camps, army camps, were buying very heavy on fish. Navy camps, army, navy bases, and army camps....

Calciano: So it really helped your business?

Stagnaro: Oh it really helped, really helped. We started making money then. That's when we started making money, and not until then. Many of the fishermen started opening up their eyes and knowing what it's all about.

Calciano: (Laughter) Learning the system. Santa Cruz had quite a large number of people of German descent --the fathers and grandfathers had come in the '60s, '70s, and '80s, and I just wondered ... in some parts of the country during World War I there was a lot of harassment of people who had been born in Germany or were descended from Germans. Was there much here do you remember?

Stagnaro: Well, there was a little harassment, yes. There was. The German people ... we had people that accused them of everything in the book, but it was all talk and

hysteria, or whatever you want to call it, because those people I think were just as good citizens, American citizens, as any of us are. And the same thing happened in World War II, and then they even included the Italians.

Calciano: The Italians?

Stagnaro: 'Course in World War I we were on the Allied side, see. And in World War II we were on the opposite side. (Laughter) So there was a lot of harassment. They harassed the Italians as well as they did the Japanese in World War II there for a while.

Calciano: I want to know more about that, but if you don't mind, I'll stay with World War I for a minute or two here.

Stagnaro: Okay. Yes.

Calciano: When you said there was some harassment of the German families, was this mainly just rumor and gossip, or was there actually window breaking....

Stagnaro: Rumor and gossip. Rumor and gossip. Rumors go pretty fast; I learned that in World War II. Rumors and gossip really can go faster than the wireless or anything else.

Calciano: Yes, it's amazing.

Stagnaro: Yes. It is.

Klu Klux Klan

Calciano: Was there ever any Klu Klux Klan activity here?

Stagnaro: Very strong at one time.

Calciano: It was?

Stagnaro: Oh yes.

Calciano: What years mainly?

Stagnaro: Mainly ... Klu Klux Klan was very strong here, I'd say, in the twenties. Very strong activity in the Klu Klux Klan. Because I was going around with a girl who was, her father was a strong Klu Klux Klanner.

Calciano: Oh really?

Stagnaro: And he resented me very much. (Laughter) Being a Catholic and an Italian both.

Calciano: (Laughter) Two strikes against you.

Stagnaro: So I used to get all the lowdown 'cause her father was quite a leader in the Klu Klux Klan, and he used to tell this girl, "What are you doing with that bluebelly?" He called me a bluebelly. But later on we became very, very friendly ... she was a very good-looking girl, Elizabeth, always was a very good-looking girl.

Calciano: Well, what was their main activity here?

Stagnaro: Their main activity was ... well fighting the Catholics, fighting the Jews, fighting with, we only had very few colored here, blacks as we call them now ... very few blacks ... and fighting, and I think they were even fighting bootlegging, I think yes.

Calciano: That's interesting!

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Do you have any idea how large the local contingent was?

Stagnaro: Well, they had quite an active contingent here at that time. I'd say maybe they had a 100, 150 that were quite active, and they were wearing their hoods, you know.

Calciano: They went marching around?

Stagnaro: And marching around and burning some few crosses and....

Calciano: Where did they burn the crosses?

Stagnaro: Around different places.

Calciano: In front of homes, or....

Stagnaro: In front of homes, yes. Oh, they were active.

Calciano: In front of the homes of Catholics or Jews or what?

Stagnaro: Well, Catholics and Jews. Yes. A few colored ... the few we had. We didn't have too many colored people. When I went to high school, we only had two colored boys that I remembered up there, and they had a few before, too, not many. I don't think there was ever over three or four at any one time at Santa Cruz High School.

PROHIBITION

Rum-running

Calciano: Well you know there are four main events that happened in this thirty-year period, 1915-1945, that I would like to talk about today -- the two World Wars, the prohibition era, and the Depression.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: And I guess maybe because it's the most colorful, I'm kind of interested in the prohibition era....

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: And also because it had quite an impact, I think, on our area. Do you remember the local reaction when the 18th amendment was being discussed and was in the process of being ratified? Could you tell me a little

bit about how it affected the town and the people?

Stagnaro: Well I don't remember too much, because at that time I was about ... I guess it came in 1918, wasn't it, when they closed down?

Calciano: Yes, I think so.

Stagnaro: I was about eighteen years of age, and I was too young actually to go into the bars or saloons those days ... what they used to call saloons ... and as far as I can remember, they sold as much of the booze that they had and closed the doors.

Calciano: Did a lot of the established saloons turn into speakeasies, or were the speakeasies started up by different people?

Stagnaro: Later on some of the saloons turned out to be speakeasies. But I think the speakeasies didn't come till about two or three years after the close of them. I don't think around this area anyway; I don't think they started any speakeasies till about 1920 or '21 there. And then you know they do it one town after another, and the papers would write it up, and pretty soon you would have one bootlegger here, one bootlegger there, and some of the old places that had closed down, they started bootlegging.

Calciano: Now you say bootlegging ... are you talking about

buying from the little mountain stills, or buying the liquor that was coming in on the beaches?

Stagnaro: Well I think originally they started buying more or less from mountain stills and from outsiders who would come in and sell, and then they started bringing it in -- the "good stuff," as we'd call it -- from Canada by ship. Now these mother ships would come out and lie out here forty, fifty miles out; then they had fast boats that would load from the mother ship, and they would unload ... I know there was probably lots of booze unloaded on this wharf, I think, and also on the Capitola wharf; Moss Landing was quite an unloading area, and also your beaches on the coast between here and including Half Moon Bay and Princeton.

Calciano: Princeton? Where is that?

Stagnaro: Yes, Princeton-by-the-Sea, as they call it. It's just above Half Moon Bay.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: Where the harbor is up there ... that's Princeton.

Calciano: I understand that quite a lot of the liquor for northern California came in on this Monterey Bay coast area here.

Stagnaro: A lot of it came in on this Monterey Bay area, yes, because it had good unloading beaches and good

facilities to unload.

Calciano: Did a lot of the local seafaring people help with this, or was it mainly outsiders?

Stagnaro: Mostly outsiders, I'd say. The local seafarers, they had no fast boats ... it was all outsiders.

Calciano: I see. It had to be fast boats?

Stagnaro: They had the fast boats, yes. They came up with boats, because we used to ... you know, we had a gasoline station on this pier for fifty years, and we used to load both the rumrunners as well as the Coast Guard here.

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: So we loaded them both with gasoline. We would load the rumrunner on one side of the wharf and the Coast Guard boat on the other side of the pier. We'd be loading them at the same time.

Calciano: Funny! (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Yes, it is funny!

Calciano: So it was the Coast Guard that had the policing responsibility?

Stagnaro: They had the policing of the sea responsibility.

Calciano: And then were there revenue agents or whatever on land?

Stagnaro: They had revenue agents ... you had the prohibition

department, and you had the, oh, the justice department ... they all had men in the field.

Calciano: Did they come down here on the wharf much, or....

Stagnaro: Oh occasionally ... yes, they'd come, but when they unloaded, they disappeared for some reason or another.

Calciano: I was wondering how good the bribery system was.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: The bribery system must have been great. (Laughter)
The bribery system must have worked very good, because there was a lot of unloading. But when there was no unloading, you'd see all these fellows come down here.

Calciano: I see. So they actually unloaded just right on the pier, and....

Stagnaro: Right on the pier.

Calciano: Daylight or at night?

Stagnaro: Mostly ... one time in the daylight. It was one Sunday afternoon, in front of everybody.

Calciano: They got pretty brave.

Stagnaro: I didn't know myself what it was; they said they were unloading salt off this ship.

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: You see, they had all this booze wrapped in sacks.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: You see they put twelve bottles to the sack instead of having wooden cases; it was put in burlap sacks sort of, and they were supposedly unloading salt, and here they were unloading booze at three o'clock in the afternoon, on a Sunday afternoon.

Calciano: How funny! (Laughter) Did they have it in sacks to disguise it, or because it's easier to transport that way?

Stagnaro: Well it was a good way to carry it ... in sacks. They stowed it easily, and it took up less space than would wooden boxes and the dampness and all that the boxes get aboard ship.

Calciano: How did they keep them from breaking and clanking into each other?

Stagnaro: Well, they just stacked it in sacks, and you know how the bottles those days all came in the straw, and the straw well protected the bottle; it was like a sleeve.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: Each bottle had its own straw sleeve then.

Calciano: Once it got loaded onto land, then the people would what ... distribute it around here, or do you think they carried it over the mountain into the San Jose area?

Stagnaro: The majority most of it all was hauled to San

Francisco. The Bay Area, yes.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: You had to be a big-time operator to work this ... you had to be a big-time operator. Those rumrunners, or bootleggers if you want to call them at that time, they had a big investment, and they had a boat that even at that time would run maybe \$25,000, \$30,000, or \$40,000. Then they'd have to have other equipment, you know, plus if they went on and got a load of liquor, it was another \$12,000 or \$15,000, and they had to pay cash before they went up to unload it, and that's the way they operated.

Calciano: So it wasn't just something that you could dabble in?

Stagnaro: No, it was nothing you could dabble in, no. You had to be in the know, and you had to have the connections and the money to finance it. You couldn't be a small operator when you were bringing it from out at sea; you just couldn't be a small operator. You had to be a big-time operator.

Calciano: Why would they come down and unload through the Santa Cruz beaches and piers instead of just into San Francisco? Or did they also unload there?

Stagnaro: Well, the policing up there was one thing ... you had to get through the Gate, but a lot of it was unloaded

in San Francisco too. Oh, a lot of liquor was unloaded in San Francisco. Santa Cruz wasn't the only place, or the Monterey Bay area, or the coast here ... they unloaded a lot in San Francisco; they unloaded a lot in Sausalito; they unloaded of course down in southern California; they had their own operations down there similar to what they had up here. They had a southern California "rummies" they used to call them, and ... but they unloaded them like in Tiburon and off of Tiburon and Point Reyes ... they unloaded all over the coast.

Calciano: Did the grapevine let you know who the big men in it were?

Stagnaro: Well, to me, yes. I knew, myself; I wouldn't like to admit it to everybody and his brother (chuckle), but to you in talking, I knew every big rumrunner there was in San Francisco, yes.

Calciano: How had they gotten into the business?

Stagnaro: Well, just a lot of them fell into it by accident.

Calciano: Were they mainly Italian, or....

Stagnaro: Mostly all Italians.

Calciano: And had they all been in the importing or shipping businesses beforehand, or....

Stagnaro: Well, no, they were in other businesses. They had the

right connections at that time, and that's the way it happened, you know, one friend tells another, and the other one tells another, and that's the way they got into the business.

Calciano: Now were they mostly all Sicilian Italians or
Napoletani or was it....

Stagnaro: Well I'd say the majority ... I know I hate to say
this, but they had mostly, mostly Sicilian, I'd say.

Calciano: Did any of these....

Stagnaro: And Napoletani.

Calciano: Do you think any of these were part of the Mafia or
Cosa Nostra?

Stagnaro: I doubt it. I doubt it.

Calciano: Or later became part?

Stagnaro: I doubt it. They all worked separately and competi-
tively and things like that. Now you take some were
Sicilians, and I can think of some who were not.

Calciano: And then something I'm often asked about ... and I
have no idea of the answer ... maybe you do or don't
... is there any Mafia activity now in this area, the
Santa Cruz area?

Stagnaro: I never in my life have ever known of any Mafia
activity.

Calciano: Do you think that you would know if it did exist?

Stagnaro: If it ... I think we would. I think we would.

Sometimes I wonder if there ever even was such a thing as the Mafia myself.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: I just wonder ... even in San Francisco there, and there's a lot of Sicilians up there, and a good many of them my friends, and we've bought a lot of fish from Sicilian fishermen, and we did a lot of business with Sicilian fish dealers, and I've never known of any existence of any Mafia tendency whatsoever; whatsoever, ever.

Calciano: Did the men bringing in liquor stick pretty much to just rum-running, or were other criminal activities involved?

Stagnaro: Well that's about all that they stuck to were the rum-running activities.

Calciano: It's an interesting era, because it certainly^y fostered a lot of illegal things that need never have come about ...

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: ... if there hadn't been this artificial restraint.

Stagnaro: Yes, there were a lot of illegal things. And buying

off and.... Now they unloaded one night there down at Moss Landing, which is a nice area to unload, and they got fouled up ... they got fouled up between themselves, and even one of the deputy sheriffs got shot down there.

Calciano: Oh, really!

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: The wrong place at the wrong time?

Stagnaro: Wrong place at the wrong time.

Calciano: Did the local law enforcement agencies try to police this, or did they leave it to the....

Stagnaro: Well, the local law enforcement they left it more or less up to the Federals, the Feds.

Calciano: I was just wondering how a deputy got involved in this Moss Landing....

Stagnaro: Yes, well, I guess like we said a little while ago, a little payoff of some kind. And then the others took a little payoff, because they couldn't operate right unless there was payoff, let's face it.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: They couldn't operate without fear, without losing a load, or without losing their boat ... they operated by payoff.

Calciano: Well what would be the amounts of these payoffs? Do you have any idea of the size it took to....

Stagnaro: Oh, it's pretty hard telling; maybe if they brought in ... it depends on how many they paid off; they might have paid off a dollar a case ... if they brought in 500 cases, \$500; or \$2 and \$3 a case, that's \$1500 ... it just depended on how many were in to cut the pie.

Calciano: Would they usually approach just the local people, or would they go higher up in the....

Stagnaro: Well they went up in all from the bottom to the top.

Calciano: I was just wondering which was more efficient ... just to bribe the local people who are supposed to be policing it, or bribe the key people who were....

Stagnaro: Oh, they went right to the top. Right to the top.

Calciano: Did these people get involved in gambling also, as well as the liquor distribution, do you think?

Stagnaro: Mostly all liquor distribution as far as I know, yes, because the people who were in San Francisco, the people who were in the big ... the top ten, that was it. But sooner or later they all got arrested.

Calciano: Oh, they did?

Stagnaro: And they got them on conspiracy you know, the government, they got tighter and tighter, and things went on, and most of them all had to do a little time

or ... mostly all got them on conspiracy more than anything else.

Calciano: I was wondering whether they'd gone through unscathed and were now the San Francisco top families, or whether they....

Stagnaro: Oh, they ... the government let them go so long, but when they cracked down, they really cracked down on them and started breaking them all. That's just what happened; that's the way they all wound up, breaking them all.

Calciano: Then what happened to the supplies of liquor? Did others step in and fill the gap, or just let it die off?

Stagnaro: Well others would step in, and then this all started happening towards the tail end of the rumrunning days. And then when Prohibition ended and liquor came back in, all these fellows were either in jail or broke or their backs against the wall.

Calciano: Oh. While they were doing well, were the profits quite huge would you say?

Stagnaro: Well I think their profits were big, yes. I think their profits were big. Because they had to be. Say they were buying it in Canada; say they were paying

\$40 a case, and they'd bring in 500 cases; they'd make \$20 a case, and they had a profit of \$10,000 a night. And some of those boats were in and out every night.

Calciano: Oh boy.

Stagnaro: So you see it would be nothing for them to clean up a profit of \$300,000 a month. And with that they had ample money to pay off and leave some for themselves.

Calciano: I didn't realize that it was on a nightly basis. I had a vision of a ship coming down once every three weeks or two.

Stagnaro: Oh yes, oh yes. These big ships, these mother ships would be in and out, up and down the coast ... there'd probably be four big mother ships out there that would load up in Canada there, and God, they would have thousands of cases on those ships.

Calciano: And they were safe because they were in international waters?

Stagnaro: They were in international waters, see -- twelve miles out. They were in safe waters.

Calciano: That's interesting. I hadn't realized that they came and sat in those waters.

Stagnaro: And they'd be out where you couldn't see them from shore, and these little boats would run in and out ...

these fast boats you see.

Calciano: Yes. I had more envisioned a little boat skulking down the coast and slipping in, and that wasn't the way it was at all.

Stagnaro: No. No. And these fellows, they all had their beach equipment like sleds and dories, you know. And they would load from speedboats to dories, and then the dories would come right on the beaches, and they would unload and back out again.

Calciano: They would need to be near a road, wouldn't they, in order to get the....

Stagnaro: Well they were mostly all these ranches ... all these ranches had roads. They'd use horses and sleds to sled it off the beach, and they had a lot of good equipment. (Laughter) A lot of good equipment.

Calciano: I'd heard that New Brighton Beach was one of the main beaches.

Stagnaro: Yes, New Brighton was one ... quite a beach at New Brighton to use, and the Rio Del Mar Beach. Twenty years later -- they must have dumped some booze; they got scared and would dump it over the side rather than be picked up by a Coast Guard boat -- and liquor floated on the beach at Rio Del Mar twenty years after the country became legal.

Calciano: (Laughter) After it became legal!

Stagnaro: People would walk on the beach and find cases of liquor floating on the beach and still good!

Calciano: Oh! (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Probably been lying out here in the ocean for twenty years.

Calciano: How funny.

Stagnaro: Yes. Very funny. (Laughter)

Calciano: But from the way you were talking, even though New Brighton and Rio were big beaches, it wasn't concentrated there, it was just all over.

Stagnaro: No, it wasn't concentrated in no one place, no ... they'd move from place to place, you know. They'd say, the old word they used to use if a place was getting "hot," they'd move to another place, see. That was the lingo those days, if the place was getting hot, they would move to another beach, another area. And if they thought this area of Santa Cruz was getting hot, they'd unload off above San Francisco, or below San Francisco, or right in San Francisco Bay.

Calciano: That's fascinating.

Stagnaro: Yes, I used to hear a lot of these good stories, and I knew a good many of these people. I knew the

rumrunners, let's put it that way; I knew the fellows on the boat; I knew the Coast Guard people; I knew people from the Treasury and Alcohol Department those days, and I became quite a friend of a good many of those people. And so I used to hear a good many good stories.

Calciano: The near misses and stuff.

Stagnaro: Yes. We were approached a lot of times ourselves to bring it in with our boats, but nothing doing because we just, you know, my people, they didn't want no part of it ... especially my brother, Cottardo. He was strictly against anything that wasn't legal.

Calciano: It sounds as if some of these....

Stagnaro: He would drink it if he got it, you know, a little bit, to a certain degree. He was practically a non-drinker himself, and we used to be given a lot of liquor from these people, you know, for the family; they would give us all we'd want. Because when they wanted fuel, gasoline or oil ... on many a night I came down at night and loaded the boats up. Many a night I'd come down at twelve, one, or two in the morning, you know, and....

Calciano: How did you know to come down?

Stagnaro: Well, they'd notify me, make an appointment that they

were coming in, and we'd come down and load them up.

Calciano: And the family's profit was legal, in a way, from extra sales of....

Stagnaro: Yes. We profited legally from extra sales, right.

Right. We profited also from the government 'cause we sold ...

Calciano: Sold to them? (Laughter)

Stagnaro: ... sold gallons of gasoline to them, too.

Calciano: What was the main type of liquor that they'd bring in

Stagnaro: They brought in everything that was good liquor - what you buy in the bars and shelves today: all good Canadian Scotches and bourbon, very good. The best!

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: At least if you drank that stuff, you didn't go blind or die from poison like you would out of the stuff that-they'd be making in these mountains.

Local Stills

Stagnaro: Like we used to say ... you go to a bootleg place and get some of this what you call mountain dew or Boulder Creek gin, whatever they used to call it, and these bootleggers would say, "This is damn good stuff, boys ... I drink it and down it goes." The next day you'd pick up the paper, he was dead!

Calciano: Oh!

Stagnaro: From wood alcohol. (Chuckle)

Calciano: Oh goodness. When you mentioned the mountain still being lethal, what makes the alcohol that comes out of stills be bad or good? I mean what gets it so it can kill you? Do you know?

Stagnaro: Well, I don't know, but I guess it's actually the type of still that they use ... whether it's a copper still or something made out of tin, let's put it that way ... and a good copper still, I don't think there was any chance of getting poisoned if you have a good proof alcohol -- say 190, '94, '96, '92 alcohol -- and if they use the copper, pure copper, a real copper still. Whereas some of these people would make it in their backyard; they would make it anyway that they could, and they didn't have the right equipment -- that's what they called wood alcohol.

Calciano: Yes, I'd heard the phrase, and I....

Stagnaro: Yes, and many people went blind from drinking bad alcohol.

Calciano: Oh.

Stagnaro: It affected the eyes as much as anything. If it didn't kill you, you were blinded anyway.

Calciano: Did you know some of these people that got killed, or

would you hear about them, or....

Stagnaro: Well, you'd hear about them ... you'd hear about them.

'Course there was a lot of stills all through these mountains where there's good water available; they had stills all over ... some local and some that were not local.

Calciano: Oh! Were there some....

Stagnaro: Some people from different areas would come down, and they'd find a lot of water and move what they call their pots down to this area.

Calciano: Would those be bigger production units then, or....

Stagnaro: Well, they had production units where they would make 500 gallons every twenty-four hours. Of 190 or better -- had to be 190 or better alcohol. '92, '94, '96. It was practically pure alcohol.

Calciano: And then what would they do? Cut it and....

Stagnaro: Then they'd sell it. They'd put it in five-gallon tins, and they'd sell it, and the people who got it, the bootleggers who got it, would buy it that way, and they would cut it; they would cut it with distilled water ... start making their own booze, as they called it, and bottle it right at home, because you could buy the bottles; you could buy the labels; you could buy

the corks; you could buy everything exactly that's on the bottles today.

Calciano: Through the black market?

Stagnaro: Well they even sold it openly. I remember walking in these stores, and heck, they'd sell the labels and sell the plastic deals that go with the top of the corks ... everything.

Calciano: My goodness! In a hardware store or what?

Stagnaro: Just like a hardware store, different stores, yes.

Calciano: Well, what did they use to produce the alcohol -- grapes or grain, or what?

Stagnaro: Mostly grain, I'd say. The good alcohol. Grain alcohol. That was a good alcohol.

Calciano: Did some of the Italian and Yugoslav farmers who had little vineyards, would they turn their grapes....

Stagnaro: Oh yes. Some made it out of grapes, you know; they call that grappa.

Calciano: And would they sell that, or would they use it themselves?

Stagnaro: Oh, some of them had their little stills and would make grappa right on their own little ranch, and they would sell it, but I guess it paid them.

Calciano: And this would be where you'd run a danger if you bought from the small producer; he might or he might not know....

Stagnaro: Well you might not have if they had a good still; there's no danger if you made it out of good wine, and if you used the proper still; it was the best you could buy actually. Italians love to drink grappa. You see out of five gallons of wine, they can make one gallon of grappa.

Calciano: What does it taste like?

Stagnaro: Well it had a kind of a grapy taste ... I never cared for grappa myself, but the fishermen used to buy grappa before the country even became dry, before 1914, '15 there. I used to do most of the shopping, you know, for the old Italian fishermen. In those days you had wholesale liquor places, and I'd go up and pick it up for them, and they'd say. "Malio, get me a gallon of grappa, two gallons of grappa," and these old Italians used to like grappa; my dad never drank grappa, but we had the fishermen who liked grappa.

Calciano: Can you still buy grappa?

Stagnaro: I think you can. I never see it anymore or anything like that, but I think you can buy grappa.

Calciano: You used the phrase a little bit ago, "Boulder Creek gin."

Stagnaro: Oh yes.

Calciano: Was Boulder Creek the center of....

Stagnaro: Oh Boulder Creek ... there was a lot of stills around that area, and the Ben Lomond area, and the Felton area and the Bonny Doon area especially, the Loma Prieta ... and beside the mountain, the mid-county area.

Calciano: Behind Aptos?

Stagnaro: Behind Aptos and that area there. Oh yes.

Calciano: I had always thought stills were in the mountains because they could hide them, but you mentioned also water was a factor.

Stagnaro: Water was the big factor. If you've got a still, you've got to have a lot of water. You not only need it for your mash, you need it just to cool your still down.

Calciano: I see. Well now would the revenue agents find these stills, or....

Stagnaro: Oh yes, oh yes. Occasionally they'd find them. Occasionally they'd pick one out. They'd pick one up; two would start.

Calciano: (Laughter) Did you ever visit any of the stills?

Stagnaro: Personally I have visited one still.

Calciano: You saw it work?

Stagnaro: Yes. Oh yes, I visited one still, a friend of mine, an Italian. He had it right on his ranch, and people who had the still, they told me to come up and see it operate, so I went up one night and saw it work.

(Laughter)

Calciano: It's really a part of the folklore of our country now -- the mountain still.

Stagnaro: Oh yes.

Calciano: We tend to think of mountain stills as being down in the hillbilly country, but there certainly were a lot up here.

Stagnaro: That's right. There are a lot of them in the hillbilly country, believe me. You know, you'll never stop them all either. They don't try to, because they make it mostly for themselves.

Calciano: Was home-brew wine still legal during Prohibition, or not?

Stagnaro: Well, during Prohibition, by getting a permit you could make 200 gallons. If you had a family, legally you could get a permit from the post office and make 200 gallons, each family could.

Calciano: So the Italian families here just kept on making wine?

Stagnaro: Italian families kept making wine; it was no problem.
Some made it and sold it.

Calciano: Some I imagine made more than their 200 gallons?

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: They made more than their 200 gallons, and they sold it.

Calciano: Because you couldn't ... oh, that was another thing I was going to ask: about the rumrunners -- did they just concentrate on liquors, or was there any wine brought in at all?

Stagnaro: Mostly just on liquor ... some alcohol was brought in.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: Some alcohol brought in, but mostly all good liquor, all good liquor. First because it didn't pay them to try to load with cheap booze of any kind, because it'd take too much space on the ship or on the speedboat or whatever they were using, and it was bulky, and there just was no money in it for them.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: They just brought in mostly all good liquor, all good,

good liquor -- a little bit of alcohol -- not too much alcohol.

Calciano: I was looking through some old law records, and I'd see violations of the Volstead Act, and then I would see violations of the Wright Act. Would that have anything to do with liquor?

Stagnaro: I think the Volstead Act was the United States, and the Wright Act was California.

Calciano: Ah.

Stagnaro: That's the way it worked.

Bootleggers

Calciano: Was there a large dry element in this county, or a lot of wet, or....

Stagnaro: It was wet all the time. You could get all the booze you wanted anyplace, anytime, anywhere. I'd go to a dance, and everybody would say, "Malio, come on and have a drink and try my booze;" then somebody else might say, "Malio, come out and try my booze." You see we had quite a few dance halls around the mountain areas those days. That was the place to have fun, and we'd all go there, and everybody would bring their bottle of booze with them, and everybody would invite you to, "Come try my booze ... come see how you like mine." Everybody had the best (laughter); everybody

had the best.

Calciano: I've heard so many people tell me that they never ever started drinking until Prohibition came.

Stagnaro: That's right. I went to school with kids when I was in high school, and I came from a family that always had liquor at home, always. Because all Italian families had liquor. And when I went to high school with these kids, their families were the biggest prohibitionists ... all dry ... and these kids would surprise me. I'd go out with them, and they'd have their bottles, and how drunk they would get.

Calciano: They weren't really used to handling it.

Stagnaro: Like me, you know; we knew how to handle it; if you didn't drink, we'd put the bottle to the mouth, and never take a drop.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: Never took a drop.

Calciano: Was there much liquor served at parties at the Boardwalk area, or was that too dangerous?

Stagnaro: Well the Boardwalk wide open ... no. But there was bootlegging along the beach. Some of the waterfront there, some of the bars those days were selling.

Calciano: Well now, you say some of the bars were selling, but

there weren't supposed to be bars. What was....

Stagnaro: Well, they were old-time bars that became bootlegging places again. They were revived.

Calciano: Would they pretend to be something else, or were they just wide open and everybody knew about it?

Stagnaro: Oh they ran wide open, a good many of them ran wide open. They used to take what you call a knockover every now and then, and pay a two, three-hundred dollar fine, but the judges were drinking, the district attorneys were drinking, and the prohibition agents were drinking, the Coast Guard was drinking.

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: They were all drinking it. Tickled to death to get it. And many of these guys would say, "Why should I go arrest somebody when I'm drinking it myself?" Quite a few men ... people who were high up in government circles ... big business people. I knew companies in San Francisco -- big companies would buy 500 cases of liquor at a time from these rumrunners.

Calciano: Oh my!

Stagnaro: Just to distribute amongst themselves and have it. And use it for business purposes.

Calciano: It was really a weird law. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Yes. It was a weird law because nobody obeyed it.

Calciano: Right.

Stagnaro: But like you just said, people that never drank before in their lives started to drink! Kids I went to high school with that, God, those people were strictly prohibitionists. My God, I've never seen anybody get drunker in my life as well as these kids that come down from somewheres. Boy, got a surprise, you know.... (Laughter) Have to carry them home and everything else.

Calciano: The speakeasies in Santa Cruz, were they located mainly on Pacific and Front, or....

Stagnaro: You had them on Pacific, you had them on Front, and a few on the beachfront....

Calciano: But it wasn't one of these things where you had....

Stagnaro: You had them outside the town a little bit; you go to Boulder Creek, Ben Lomond, Felton, anyplace you went, you'd find places.

Calciano: Somebody told me that she'd heard that the Pacific Avenue speakeasies were all downstairs, down below the buildings. Do you recall this or not?

Stagnaro: Downstairs in basements?

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: Well they were all over. Some in basements, some on

lower floors, some were upstairs ... they bootlegged from the back door, anywheres, anyplace....

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: They just bootlegged ... that's all. They weren't all downstairs; some were downstairs....

Calciano: But it wasn't a whole catacombs on Pacific Avenue.

Stagnaro: Oh no. They were here, there, and everywhere. I could show you many places where they had them. They had them on Front Street; they had them on Pacific Avenue; they had them in their homes, their houses, you know; in some of their homes and houses people were bootlegging. They had them on Cedar Street; they had them on Center Street ... they were all over. They wouldn't let everybody and his brother in, you know.

Calciano: Oh, you did have to knock and say who you were?

Stagnaro: You had to knock and say who you were and ... or if they didn't know you, out you'd go, you know; they had to be very careful of stool pigeons. But if a stool pigeon would come in, then maybe somebody in the government who was in the police department or sheriff's office or probation department or whatever could be, would notify them, "Watch out for this stool pigeon. He's coming in there; he's wearing glasses; he's got a checkered suit on," or something like

that....

Calciano: The policemen would warn them? (Laughter)

Stagnaro: They would know. The reason I know, I knew all these people.

Calciano: Sure.

Stagnaro: I knew all these people. I was friendly with all of them. I never had a problem myself. I would go to San Francisco and want to go in a bootlegging place and never had no problem ... I'd identify myself, "Why, you can have the place."

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: But a stranger coming to town would have had a little trouble?

Stagnaro: Well a stranger, yes. Definitely a stranger ... they didn't trust anybody or everybody, you know ... got to more or less know who you're doing business with.

Calciano: At the present time when you go into a bar you can order any kind of mixed cocktail; back then were they serving mixed cocktails, or was it straight up?

Stagnaro: Well those days, mostly straight up. I'd say mostly straight up. Or they'd give you a little soda, whiskey and soda ... if it wasn't whiskey and soda, mostly

straight up.

Calciano: And was it usually a bar, or bar plus tables?

Stagnaro: Bar and tables, both.

Calciano: Would they serve food, too?

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Some of them or a lot of them?

Stagnaro: Some served. Some of these Italian places were serving food and had a bar running wide open. I'm thinking of two, three places, now that you mention this.

Calciano: The Garibaldi?

Stagnaro: The Garibaldi ... we went for years there. Great friends of mine.

Calciano: I've forgotten who they are, but I remember the name of the Garibaldi. What about the Swiss Hotel?

Stagnaro: The Swiss Hotel and Panetonis, used to go down to Panetonis, all those people.

Calciano: But now you said that they would get knocked over once in a while ... did these places that were really part of the established Santa Cruz get knocked over too?

Stagnaro: Well, they'd get knocked over to make it look right, yes. Every so often the police department would have to move in on them so it'd look right. Make it look like the payoff wasn't on, see?

Calciano: But it was just a case of a fine?

Stagnaro: It was just a case of a fine and walked out. Or put up a \$200 bail, or \$250 bail and didn't show up and that was it. Forfeit the bail.

Calciano: Would this get in the newspapers?

Stagnaro: Yes. Sometimes get in the newspapers, sometimes they wouldn't even mention the name; even the newspapers didn't even mention the name (laughter) because they used to like to drink too. Nobody liked to drink those days more than some of the publishers of the local newspapers; they were tickled to death to be able to go to a bootleg place.

Calciano: I see the Sentinel now has a policy of no liquor ads....

Stagnaro: Well that was Mrs. McPherson -- Fred's mother. She never wanted to put in the liquor ads, but I've seen them use liquor ads. They used some liquor ads here a year or so ago, much to my surprise. Matie McPherson, who just passed away, she would never allow them. She said, "I'll never allow them to have a liquor ad in my paper," while she was alive, but when she was in a rest home last year, you know, they ran a couple of ads. But I used to say, "Now Matie, we all like to drink a little bit." I used to love to tease her, you

know, knowing her all my life, and we've always been very, very, very friendly. I used to love to tease her ... I'd say, "Come on, run a couple of wine ads."

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: "Now, Malio!" she'd say.

Calciano: Was she actually a dry in her....

Stagnaro: She was a dry.

Calciano: Was there a WCTU here?

Stagnaro: Yes. I think there were some WCTU here in those days, yes.

Calciano: So there was some dry sentiment in town?

Stagnaro: Oh yes. Dry sentiment, because the people who lived next door to my family -- this is good -- every time there was a WCTU drive, you'd see their posters in the window ... they were the Hill family, and still old man Hill used to sneak away at night and come over and get two or three free glasses of wine from my father. And he'd send him home drunker than hell. (Laughter) And still every time there was a WCTU drive, there was the posters in the window.

Calciano: That's funny. People are people, I guess.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Do you think it tended to be the ladies who were dries and the men who were the wets?

Stagnaro: I think it was more or less the ladies then ... I think it was. 'Cause that lady, what was her name now....

Calciano: Oh, Carrie Nation?

Stagnaro: Carrie Nation who went in and broke up all the bars back East there someplace.

Calciano: But we didn't have any local Carrie Nations?

Stagnaro: No, we didn't have any local Carrie Nations, no.

Calciano: That's too bad. It would add a little color to our past.

Stagnaro: Yes. I think my mother could have been a Carrie Nation.

Calciano: That's right. You said she was....

Stagnaro: Oh, she was, oh God, she was like ... she was a Carrie Nation if there ever was one. (Laughter) But always at home; she never objected, you know, but she didn't touch it herself.

Prostitution

Calciano: Did Santa Cruz ever have a red-light district?

Stagnaro: Yes. They had a red-light district here.

Calciano: Where was it?

Stagnaro: Scattered all over ... they had them here on, well right across the street from where the Sheriff's offices is now.

Calciano: Where Albertson's and Longs are now?

Stagnaro: Where's Albertson's and Longs and the Crocker Bank there ... they had the gambling going there, and the red-light district there in Cooper Street they had down there.

Calciano: Well was it pretty well acknowledged that it existed and the police didn't pay it much attention, or....

Stagnaro: Oh yes ... in those days they didn't pay attention to it; the police didn't pay any attention. Like a policeman thought it was all necessary evil.

(Laughter)

Calciano: And in the red-light district, were they free-lancers or was it mainly houses run by madams and so forth?

Stagnaro: Well they were houses more or less run by madams, I'd say.

Calciano: And was there any ethnic group that was mainly involved in that business, or just all nationalities?

Stagnaro: Well I think it was mostly all nationalities. I don't think they took the Orientals in those places ... if the Orientals had to go anyplace, they'd go to San

Francisco. And they ran regular only for Orientals in San Francisco. They had white girls running just for Orientals, but here they didn't take the colored, they didn't take the Chinese, they just ran for white people only.

Calciano: When did the red-light district start to phase out?

Stagnaro: Well, I'd say it started phasing out with the gambling here in about 19 ... well the gambling started phasing out about 1937-38, I think. Things got a little bit tougher then, and I think a few years later -- it probably started phasing out about 1941 or '42 ... along in there.

Gambling

Calciano: Had the gambling places been run mainly by Chinese, or not?

Stagnaro: Mostly all by Chinese, all Chinese. We had three Chinese gambling houses ... what we call Old Chineetown ... that's where Old Chineetown was, original Chinatown; one time we had many Chinese living here.

Calciano: What type gambling was available?

Stagnaro: Well, they ran the Chinese lottery those days ... what they call keno now. And they ran the Chinese numbers and lottery. They'd call off their numbers in Chinese.

They ran chuck-a-luck; they ran ... let's see ... I can't think of the button game where they had the four buttons -- pi gow, they ran that. I think they call it pi gow, and they ran twenty-one, regular twenty-one.

Calciano: What is chuck-a-luck like?

Stagnaro: Chuck-a-luck is dice, two dice in a cage, and they flip it over and what comes up.

Calciano: Oh. But they didn't have regular crap tables, or a crap game?

Stagnaro: No. They didn't have crap tables here, no ... no crap tables.

Calciano: And roulette would not be a Chinese....

Stagnaro: Roulette ... they didn't run roulette.

Calciano: Did anybody run a crap game?

Stagnaro: No. No. The white gamblers weren't successful. People trusted the Chinese more than any white gambling place; they liked the Chinese gambling houses. People love Chinese gambling, and they liked the Chinese, and carloads of people used to come here from San Jose to gamble.

Calciano: Oh really?

Stagnaro: And then San Jose opened up. But regular carloads; they used to run regular carloads just like they run

carloads and buses to Reno now.

Calciano: So it must have been wide open.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Much more wide open than the speakeasies were?

Stagnaro: Much wider open, I'd say, than the speakeasies were, yes. Oh, it was wide open ... just walk in, anybody walk right in. People those days didn't pay attention; they just accepted it, that's all. They thought it was fine. And it brought a lot of business to town, a tremendous lot of business. In fact when they closed the Chinese gambling, the business dropped on Pacific Avenue; the restaurants especially were doing a terrific business, 'cause those people coming over would spend money in a restaurant; if they'd win, they'd spend money in all the stores, you know, and they'd buy gasoline, oil, everything like that. It was big business for the town, just like it is big business for Reno or big business for South Shore or anything like that. It was not that big, nothing that elaborate or anything like that, but they spent a lot of money here. They brought a convention of two or three hundred people a day into Santa Cruz.

Calciano: Were there any slot machines anywhere?

Stagnaro: They had slot machines on the Boardwalk. They had them there when they were legal, yes.

Calciano: At the casino or elsewhere on the Boardwalk?

Stagnaro: Well I think some at the concessions there. Yes, yes, they had some....

Calciano: About when did they become illegal?

Stagnaro: They phased them out, and they had just regular little Penny Arcade machines where you go in ... it was a penny in those days; now it's a nickel I guess. But those days, it was all penny machines there. Yes, Penny Arcade....

Calciano: Penny Arcade meant pennies? (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Penny Arcade meant pennies ... that's what it was.

Calciano: Well now was it before prohibition time that slots were outlawed, or....

Stagnaro: I think when I was quite young the slot machines in California got outlawed. I don't know when ... what year.

Calciano: I've heard that down at Rio Del Mar, the hotel there, you could play slots for years after they had been outlawed.

Stagnaro: Well the Rio Del Mar Hotel, even when they were outlawed they had them. And for many years, even after they were outlawed, many places you could go they had

them in the bars, they had them in restaurants ... they didn't bother to enforce the law at all on slot machines for many, many years. In fact we had them here on the wharf.

Calciano: You did?

Stagnaro: Oh yes.

Calciano: In what? In restaurants?

Stagnaro: In the restaurants. There was a little restaurant here at that time, and they had slot machines, and they had them all around, all around.

Calciano: What was the last big place you could gamble in, aside from Chinatown?

Stagnaro: Well Chinatown, I think; after they closed Chinatown, everything went out with Chinatown, everything went out. Slot machines and all. They really started clamping down, and the Attorney General's office, I think when Earl Warren was in there, Earl Warren was pretty tough, and he decided to close down on this stuff here. And then he went down and smashed those gambling ships off of Southern California down there.

Calciano: We never had any gambling ships here, did we?

Stagnaro: No, we never did. No.

Calciano: I wonder ... I guess there was not enough business?

Stagnaro: Well I think that the money wasn't in this area. And the population wasn't here at that time either. California, you know, they had probably as high as six million people in that area down there, and a lot of money too.

THE DEPRESSION OF THE 1930s

Calciano: The Depression years, of course, began shortly before the prohibition period ended.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: How long was it before the impact of the Depression was felt here?

Stagnaro: Well we felt it ... we felt the Depression right after the crash and probably along in 1930, '31, why then we started feeling the Depression.

Calciano: What were the first ways that it showed in the Santa Cruz area?

Stagnaro: Well, it showed that nobody had any money. The businesses were getting to be in bad circumstances, and what little money all of us had, including ourselves, we lost it practically all in that stock market crash.

Calciano: Oh, your family had invested in stocks?

Stagnaro: Oh yes. We were very heavy in stocks. Very heavy.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: And naturally every Italian followed A. P. Giannini.
He got to be our God.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: And you see he had the Bank of Italy, their stock; and he had the Bank of America Corporation stock; we had Intercoast trading stock, which was A. P. Giannini projects, and they all went up, and everybody was buying them, and we were buying. And we forgot about the fish business thing ... all you had was an adding machine and a radio, listening how the market was all the time. You start neglecting your business, and then boom, when the crash came, it just broke everybody; those millionaires, why they started jumping out of windows.

Calciano: Your brother, Cottardo, you said he had always been very conservative; I am surprised to hear that he had let the family go heavily in the stock market.

Stagnaro: Well, he was very conservative, and of course the stock market was booming and booming those days, and in the papers, that's all you'd read, and naturally everybody would go in, and you're right; I think I was the culprit in the stock market, not Cottardo.

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: And I'd get the adding machine and say, "Well today, Cottardo, we're worth so much; we're worth \$100,000." Tomorrow I'd maybe say to him, "Well, Cottardo, we're worth \$105,000." Or worth \$120,000, you know, after all ... then boom. When the thing came along, why we weren't worth even 65.

Calciano: Yes, it was really a rude awakening for a lot of people.

Stagnaro: Yes. A rude awakening. A rude awakening for a lot of people, and you couldn't sell fish, and you couldn't give it away. We fed maybe 50, 75 people a day we were feeding; there was a regular line that would come out here, and we'd give them free fish ... we couldn't sell it, and we never turned one living soul down ever in our lives, and we were broker than they were.

Calciano: That's marvelous.

Stagnaro: Yes. We were broker than they were. In 1937 we started making a comeback ... about 1937, but for four, five, six years there, it was close pickings.

Calciano: Well, what ... your markets were drying up in San Francisco, or....

Stagnaro: The markets, they couldn't pay, and the big dealers were out of money themselves. They weren't getting any money, and it was rough. But in '37, then things

started swinging for us....

Calciano: Why?

Stagnaro: Well, we started picking up some new accounts in our fish business, and things started breaking; we started making money again. The fish market started picking up, had some good salmon years, and salmon was great, and we started picking up. I can remember one time my brother Cottardo telling me, (it was in the Depression; I forget just what time -- it was just before the banks closed; they had to close the banks) "Malio," he says, "you know, I never had even enough money to pay for our breakfast this morning," (which was maybe forty, fifty cents, was what it was) and I said, "Well, don't worry brother Cottardo; it'll come back; don't worry about it." I said, "I'll get money; we'll get money." And we did. We started climbing up slowly, slowly, and gradually with our boats and our fishing trips and being very careful and conservative, extra conservative, and we started picking up around 1937, I remember. That year we owed the bank, at that time (today it would be not even a drop in the bucket for us) we owed the bank \$16,000. And in 1937 we paid off all our bills, paid off our bank notes, which was \$16,000, and it left us about \$4,000 to operate on, so

we had a \$20,000 year. So we were all right. So we started picking up from then on.

Calciano: Well had you already taken out the money for eating and lodging and so forth....

Stagnaro: We'd taken the money for eating and lodging and everything else.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: We paid off every bill we owed, and it sure made brother Cottardo mighty happy once again. He said, "I'm going to put a...." In those days the old Italians would say, "We're going to put a cross on the wall; get an ax and put a cross on the wall."

Calciano: Well you'd had these good years from World War I and the prohibition era, so your equipment would be paid for and so forth.

Stagnaro: Well the equipment was all paid for, which was good, and then we started climbing slowly, but you see, it just wasn't making any money or making any headway, and in fact we were going behind there from 1931, say 1932 actually, started getting hit, '32, '3, '4, '5, and '6.

Calciano: Your gas and labor was more than....

Stagnaro: Everything ... it was just ... to keep living, you

know, and get living expenses out of it, why we weren't doing it; we were not doing it. And I think everybody was in the same boat exactly that we were in. Everybody.

Calciano: Everybody meaning all fishing families or everybody in town?

Stagnaro: Well, fishing families and other people, other businesses around town in the area. A lot of them didn't survive. We survived, but a good many didn't.

Calciano: I don't want to get too personal about your finances, but did you have trouble getting money from the banks during this period?

Stagnaro: The banks, they wouldn't give hardly any money to anyone, so that's a good question. I remember going into the bank about a day or two before the banks closed ... I went up to the president of the County Bank who was Mr. Sharpe at that time. I said, "Bruce, I've got to have a thousand dollars," which wasn't much. He said, "What do you want a thousand dollars for?" (All our notes and stocks and everything were at the bank; I'd left a note for collateral.) He said, "How much do you owe us now?" I said, "I owe you about \$16,000." Of course we had collateral; we had a \$10,000 note on the stocks for collateral ... at one

time those stocks were worth over \$100,000, over a hundred.

Calciano: And they'd dropped to ten?

Stagnaro: They'd dropped to ten. And I said, "We owe you \$16,000, and you're covered on this note with stocks," and he said, "Well, they may go cheaper," which they did go cheaper. Finally I sold all those stocks to pay off that note, \$10,000. Sold them all. And we had over \$60,000 then of our own money in there. Or 70 or 80. And all that went down the drain.

Calciano: In the bank you had it?

Stagnaro: In the bank in stocks, so finally I sold it to pay the interest; Mr. Sharpe advised me to. He said, "Malio, why don't you sell off that stock and pay off this note?" Because we were paying seven percent interest, which was \$700 a year, but we were hanging on and hanging on, and they give us a chance to try and come back, but we didn't. They didn't; the stocks didn't come back right away those days. So finally I sold; that saved us \$700 a year. I sold and I got about \$10,000; I got enough to pay off that \$10,000 note. We owed them \$16,000, and this was before the banks closed, I forget when it was ... '33, '32 ... the banks closed in a day or two when Roosevelt got in and

called this moratorium, and so I went in, and I said, "Mr. Sharpe, I've got to have \$1,000." "Malio," he said, "I don't loan you and your brother Cottardo money on what you have; I loan it because you're hard workers, and I call it a sweat loan."

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: He said, "It's a sweat loan. You've always been honest; you've always laid your cards for me on the table honestly; you've never lied to me and," he says, "you want \$1,000." He says, "You're sure that's all you want?" He wanted to give me a little bit more.

Calciano: Oh my.

Stagnaro: And I said, "Yes," and he said, "What are you going to use it for?" "Well," I said, "We're overdrawn on my checking account about \$300. We owe you back interest to bring everything up to date about \$300, and we need about \$400 to live on." "That's all you want?" "Yes." So we went to the teller, the president told the teller, he says, "Give Malio a note for a \$1,000."

Calciano: Oh my.

Stagnaro: That's all. But believe me, that \$400 that we had over after we straightened out our check account and paid off our interest, believe me, we put it out in

pennies.

Calciano: Now when you say, "We," how many were living on this \$400?

Stagnaro: That's me and Cottardo and his family. The family which was ten children; the kids were all little.

Calciano: The kids were still little?

Stagnaro: Still all little. You're darn right. And my father was still alive then. My mother passed away in 1930. Of all the times for my mother to pass away is when we were practically broke.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: But it was good experience; it was good experience; something very good to go through, because you see we came in, I did anyway, came in that terrific high rise making money, then the golden twenties, and also during the World War I years where I actually got spoiled; I actually got spoiled, but we made it. It wasn't easy, but like Mr. Sharpe said, it was really a sweat loan.

Calciano: It was.

Stagnaro: And not only that, a very big businessman that's still the biggest firm on Pacific Avenue, he was in there for money and Mr. Sharpe said, "You see that man over

there? Before you came in I had to turn him down and tell him to go get more collateral or something before I could give him any money." He said, "I had to turn him down." He didn't turn me down. And if he had, he would have been justified. So it was just \$1,000, and believe me, that was it.

Calciano: When I asked how the Depression hit Santa Cruz, I guess I hadn't realized that ... that particularly the Italian immigrant people would be into stock so heavily. You tend to think of it as just the moneyed people who'd been around for a long time who would be the heavy investors, so that caught me a little bit by surprise.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: But what I was also wondering was, which were the first big firms to start laying off people and so forth? Or did it come that way? Or was it just a general tightening?

Stagnaro: Well, the Depression hit Santa Cruz I think, actually a little bit slower than it did the East Coast. First it hit the East Coast, then it started hitting the



The Stagnaro Family in 1965

From left to right, front row: Mary Stagnaro, Estrella Stagnaro, Mrs. Cottardo Stagnaro, Malio Stagnaro, Gilda Stagnaro. Back row: Malio "Stago" Stagnaro II, Joe Stagnaro, Batista "Dodie" Stagnaro, Robert Stagnaro.

West Coast later. That's the way I got it, see. And a place like Santa Cruz never had too much work, and it was a resort area ... it hit Santa Cruz a little bit slower. And then we always, even with the Depression, we still get a little business, and we still got some tourists in July and August ... for sixty days, that's all. It was strictly in those days, sixty days, and that was it. Not even that much. Maybe 45 or 50 good days, and we still got a little business in July and August. We still had people taking some vacation coming in here and get their vacation and spend a little money. It wasn't much, but they still brought a little money into the town.

Calciano: Well now, were you people in the tourist business by that time?

Stagnaro: We were in the tourists. We had speedboats running; we had our fishing trips. Plus our wholesale and retail fish market.

Calciano: I read somewhere that you got your first speedboat about '33 or so?

Stagnaro: '33. 1933 was our first speedboat.

Calciano: So I guess this was before you really....

Stagnaro: All promotion. All promotion. Promoted the boat,

promoted the engine, promoted it all.

Calciano: Did you feel that the way to survive the Depression was to get more tourist trade or ... I was just surprised that you moved into something new in such a bleak period, or was it not that grim yet?

Stagnaro: Well it was grim, and I knew my brother's boys were here to run the boats and I went to San Francisco to the Hall Scott Company and promoted an engine from them.

Calciano: Oh, that's what you meant by promoted?

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: You mean you didn't buy it, you just got it?

Stagnaro: I promoted the engine; it was charged to us, but we didn't have to put up cash till we made it.

Calciano: Oh, I see.

Stagnaro: And I went to the lumberyard here and got them to give me the lumber and charged this out, and....

Calciano: Lumber for what?

Stagnaro: We had a boatbuilder here in town named Ernest Philbrick, and he built the boat, and we paid him so much a month on it, and we paid our lumber bill so much a month and the engine so much as we went along.

Calciano: I see. And was it a good investment for you?

Stagnaro: It was a good investment; it started making money for us, yes. It gave my brother's kids work. In 1937 we built another one. So we had two then; by 1937, like I said, we made some money; we started working back on our way up again. The Depression ended pretty much about 1937. That's the year they also paid the World War I veterans their bonus, and that brought quite a bit of spending money into the area.

Calciano: There were a lot of schemes in the Depression like Thirty Dollars Every Thursday and the Townsend Plan. Do you remember those?

Stagnaro: Oh yes. I remember those. I remember those days. Yes, they had all these big schemes and all that. California was, I guess, the big sucker state, but they always voted them down.

Calciano: But do you remember thinking they were crazy at the time, or did they sound good?

Stagnaro: Well to me they never did sound good. None of those fast-money making schemes.

Calciano: Was there a Townsend Club in town?

Stagnaro: Oh, strong Townsend Club ... for years; up till, maybe up till ... I don't know if there's any still left, but up till 7, 8, 9, 10 years ago, the Townsend Clubs were still in existence. Oh yes.

Calciano: Did we have a lot of retired people here then, or did they come in after the War?

Stagnaro: Well we had a few, but not too many, not too many. That was after the War.

Calciano: So the Townsend Clubs -- it wasn't because there were a lot of retired people; it was just I guess that people were interested in it?

Stagnaro: People were interested because they wanted to get something from somewhere. And they were devoted people too. Oh, the people that worked there, and they had their meetings every week or two or three or four weeks ... they had the Townsend Club meeting, and they had their state meetings and their national meetings and they ... yes. I don't know if they're still in existence, but for many years I used to have one Townsend lady on my back all the time. (Laughter)

Calciano: In the early days Santa Cruz had three economic bases: agriculture, tourists, and industry ... and currently it's got the same three, but many of the industries of the early years, the lumbering and tanning and so forth, were pretty much phased out by the '20s....

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: And many of the new ones didn't start until after the War. Now what industries were going during the

Depression period?

Stagnaro: Well we had nothing. We had the fishing industry here; we had the cement plant, which was growing, and we still had the cannery going, and I guess there was some lumbering going, cause some of the finest redwood came out of Santa Cruz County here.

Calciano: But it wasn't as much as it had been in its heyday. A lot of places were lumbered out by this time.

Stagnaro: Some were lumbered out, but the Santa Cruz Lumber Company kept going all the time.

Calciano: Were they hit by the Depression, or were they hiring a lot of people?

Stagnaro: I suppose that they were hit like everybody else; everything practically came to a standstill.

Calciano: The Powder Works was gone by that point.

Stagnaro: Yes. The Powder Mill was gone, and I can't think of any other industry except farming; we've always had pretty good farming in this county.

Calciano: Were the bulb ranches going and the flower production?

Stagnaro: I think so. Worth Brown's people came in later. They had rough going; they had a dairy ranch to begin with.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: The Brown family had the Brown Dairy; that's what they

had, and like everybody else, I know they were hit.

Calciano: Yes, the dairies were hit during the Depression.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: It seemed to phase out a lot of the little individual dairies.

Stagnaro: Brown's had ... I think they called it the Moo Cow. They had a rough go of it, and I think then they started the bulbs later on. It was their father that more or less started it.

Calciano: Well there just really wasn't too much....

Stagnaro: No. There wasn't. There was nothing. There were no jobs here. People had to get out of here. No jobs here at all. You couldn't even give property away those days or anytime till the last fifteen years. We couldn't give property away in this town or county or anything else. You could buy a house and lot here for \$500 anytime you wanted to.

Calciano: My goodness.

Stagnaro: Today you couldn't buy it for twenty thousand.

Calciano: Your family had probably already gotten into some real estate, owning houses and renting to others and so forth by this period, or....

Stagnaro: Well we had a little real estate at that time rented, and it paid \$10 a month ... some of the fishermen.

Calciano: But you've never been big in real estate?

Stagnaro: Never been big in real estate, no.

Calciano: And about when did the retired people start settling in the Santa Cruz area? As far as you can remember?

Stagnaro: Well, ... I think the retired people ... it's always been a bit of an old man's town anyway. (Laughter) So it's hard to say, it's hard to say. "But...."

Calciano: When you say an old man's town, do you mean the young were moving out and....

Stagnaro: The young were moving out, right, and the old would stay. There was no work for the young here. You got out of high school and you had to get out of here to find a job. There was nothing for the young fellows. I stayed because there was something here, because we had the fishing industry. I was born and raised right in it. Most of the kids had to get out of here to find something to do, so as I said, it was kind of an old people's town.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: Yes. I guess most of the retired people we have here now have come here since after World War II.

Calciano: This is the feeling I'd had, but I wanted to see what your feeling was, having lived here....

Stagnaro: Yes, yes.

THE TOURIST INDUSTRY, 1900-1972

The Boardwalk

Calciano: What are your very earliest memories of the Boardwalk when you were a little boy?

Stagnaro: Well when I was six, seven years of age I saw the old casino, and I remember seeing the Sea Beach Hotel burning.

Calciano: When did that burn?

Stagnaro: I couldn't tell you the year. 1912, '13, or '14 ... whenever it was. That's up here where the Casa Blanca is now.

Calciano: Were there rides and concessions on the Boardwalk the way they are now?

Stagnaro: Well, I remember one time they had a smaller dipper than this ... just a little dipper was the roller coaster. And they had games, and they had ferris wheels, and they had a few things going.

Calciano: What did people do at the casino? What was there?

Stagnaro: The casino ... they had the Penny Arcade, and then they had the big dining room up there -- they did big business; they had bars up there, dining room,

dancing, had the ballroom. The ballroom in those days was a very popular place to go; that was it.

Calciano: Do you remember Cottage City at the Boardwalk?

Stagnaro: Yes. I remember Cottage City very, very well. Cottage City, or Tent City they used to call it. Tent City was right there where the Seaside Company has the parking lot now. They had these places built ... they all looked alike; they were just a little bungalow they built with wood, then they had a canvas top. They were built like tents.

Calciano: And they were rented out?

Stagnaro: They rented to summer people to stay there.

Calciano: Just for the summer, or were they....

Stagnaro: Well, mostly in the summer, yes. Mostly all summer live-in.

Calciano: Whatever happened to it?

Stagnaro: Well, it just phased out. Motels and hotels came in, and they got old and then there was a lot of stuff going on that they didn't want going on -- illegal, you know -- prostitution; everything was going on in there, and they kind of cleaned up the area a little bit; kind of cleaned it up.

Calciano: Do you remember about when that was?

Stagnaro: Well I think they probably started cleaning that out maybe around 1912 ... well no ... probably, well, 1920s let's say. I think they might have had them then ... Skip [Littlefield] could give you more on this than I can.

Calciano: Have you noticed changing patterns in the tourists over the years? Did people come down for longer stays when you were a young boy?

Stagnaro: Well I think in the older days, they'd come in with the trains and came in longer stays. The whole Seaside area was more or less the summer area those days, where now I think it's more of a year-round area, although still some of those people who came those days here in the summertime, the families still own the homes out at Seabright ... still own the homes. And they'd come by train, and they would stay either at the motels or the hotels or ... let's face it, they'd come, they would stay.

Calciano: When were automobiles first allowed to park on the wharf here?

Stagnaro: From the day it was built.

Calciano: Oh really?

Stagnaro: We had our trucks and automobiles ourselves.

Calciano: Do you remember the beginnings of the Miss California contest down here?

Stagnaro: Yes. I remember the beginnings.

Calciano: What did you think of it?

Stagnaro: I thought it was great, and I remember dancing with the first Miss America I think she became; it was Fay Lanphier was her name; she was from Alameda. I remember when she got crowned, dancing in the Casino ballroom with Fay.

Calciano: The contest was really another thing to promote Santa Cruz?

Stagnaro: Anything to promote Santa Cruz. The Chamber Manager, he was great on that; I think his name was Cranbourne. He was the one who came up with promoting this idea. I forget what his first name was ... quite a guy, quite a guy ... I knew him well.

Day on the Bay Celebrations

Calciano: Gilda said I should ask you about the Day on the Bay celebrations.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: What were they?

Stagnaro: Well that was quite a deal. Skip Littlefield could

tell you quite a few more highlights on this, but A Day on the Bay was started by ... actually who came up with the idea was Forrest McDermott, the game warden here.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: Forrest McDermott first came down to me with the idea



Tod Powell, sports columnist, San Francisco Chronicle, during a Day on the Bay in 1940, holding conical rattan basket and trawl net used for catching bottom fish such as rock cod.

He says, "Malio, we ought to start bringing people here, newspaper men, magazine men, radio men ... and newspaper people," -- people from the news media, let's say.

Calciano: This was about when?

Stagnaro: Well this started actually before World War II, and it developed where we'd invite all these people from all over the State of California so it'd ballyhoo Santa Cruz. It was all free; we invited them, all the sports, fish, and game writers on the newspapers, at the Casa Del Rey Hotel which was run then by the Troyer Brothers Bill, Jock, and Giff, great friends of mine. They're all dead now, but I loved them, and I know they loved me, so we were very close. And good business boys, oh good, they were real brains; they were very successful. So they gave all the rooms free at their hotel, and we got the fishermen and ourselves to take these fellows out salmon trolling or deep sea fishing, whatever they would choose; we had golfing for them and clamming for them if the tides were right, and we had cartoonists also involved in this, I mean leading cartoonists like Jimmy Hatlo and Tommy Thompson, who was the ghost cartoonist for Jimmy Hatlo. Then the different companies on the wharf

donated all the food for this deal, and the food was a big cioppino dinner where we had about 400 people. And then we had a big musical background which was run by Skip Littlefield. He handled the skit. And then we had the Italian fishermen's chorus singing chorus or solo. We had a big warehouse here at the outer end of the pier those days, and every outfit on the pier ... we had these accordion players, typical Italian, dressed like fishermen, and Skip would come down and rehearse us all.

Calciano: And you were in it?

Stagnaro: Oh yes! Oh yes! I used to sing a couple of solos, and I had a nephew who was a bass singer ... he's dead now, but he was really a terrific singer, and it was really great, and we had a lot of fun. And it went for quite a few years. And then it got to be quite a.... The thing that kind of killed it, so many local people started barging in on the deal, you know; so many people then kind of killed it. But it was a very, very successful deal.

Calciano: About when did it quit?

Stagnaro: Well then you see quite a few of us got into the service -- 83 boys right off this wharf enlisted into the service right at the start of the War, and of

course that kind of took a good many of the boys who was in the show, you know.

Calciano: Sure.

Stagnaro: Because that was what made it ... it was all arranged. Nobody could sing a note ... didn't know a piece of music if we looked at it, but nevertheless it was typical Italian, and you had all these old Italian fishermen singing songs that they could sing, from fishermen songs and sailor songs, and we had an old sailor named Jimmie Bewley who used to be here, and he used to sing, "I blow the man up and blow the man down." All these fisherman chanteys. And these newspapers just took it and think of the publicity we got for Santa Cruz; it was just unbelievable, 'cause these fellows would write their stories, and from one end of the state to the other, people knew where Santa Cruz was, I'm telling you. It was really a big thing for Santa Cruz. It was really something.

Calciano: But it was never done after the War?

Stagnaro: I think we held it once or twice after the War, Elizabeth. In fact the Santa Cruz Rod and Gun Club here threw something like this about a year or so ago ... wasn't like what we had, just as a good many of

the people we had those days and the old wharf fishermen are dead; they're gone. And some of the young ones too. Some of the young ones. I believe Skip has a picture ... if you ever have a chance, talk to Skip someday, and have Skip show you all these pictures of all these fishermen and everything else on the bay.

Calciano: Okay.

Stagnaro: And he can tell you who's still living and who's dead.

Wharf Businesses

Calciano: When did the Cottardo Stagnaro Company first start hiring non-family members?

Stagnaro: Oh, we started hiring non-family members as early as ... oh God ... as early as 1910 or '12 I guess.

Calciano: I didn't realize it was back that far.

Stagnaro: Yes. 'Course we had a lot of relatives, you know....

Calciano: That's what I thought. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: ... and we all had them working, and then we had other people working with us too. Mostly I'd say around 1914 ... around that time there when we started actually ... well even before. I'd say as early as 1910, might have been '09 there, we had a lot of old Italians working with us.

Calciano: But they weren't....

Stagnaro: But not members of the family. They were just old Italians you know, the young Italians, those were the people. To me they looked old, but I was twelve, fourteen, and they were 25; I thought they were old men those days.

Calciano: But they were not necessarily from Genoa?

Stagnaro: Yes, they were right from Genoa. All Genoa ... that's all we had fishing.

Calciano: So they were part of the sixty families?

Stagnaro: Right from the same town, yes. Part of the sixty families; interrelations.

Calciano: I guess when I say non-family, I'm thinking non-Genovese, although that's really not correct. When did you first hire non-Genovese?

Stagnaro: Well, that's ... (laughter) maybe along World War II, along in there. When World War II started, so many of the boys went into the service ... then they started picking up anybody they could find.

Calciano: When did the Stagnaro Company become a real company officially?

Stagnaro: Well, it was officially a company in 19 ... I'd say it was a company as early as 1906 or '07. The company

became a corporation in 1937.

Calciano: That's quite a ways back.

Stagnaro: They made a corporation out of it, a family corporation, which it still is.

Calciano: About what percent of the businesses on the wharf are run by people who are not descendents of the Genovese?

Stagnaro: Well, the fish businesses on the wharf, there's only two of them left now ... Carniglia Brothers and ourselves; they're Genovese. And the restaurants, the Miramar and ourselves, they're Genoveses, too. And Look's Den, they're Italian, Nick is; his wife isn't you know that, his name is Mazzone. And then there's Phariss, Walter Phariss, who has the bait shop out at the end of the pier, and then there's Scontriano, he runs the little restaurant out there, the Dolphin, George Scontriano ... he's been a good many years on the wharf. Phariss' only been here maybe 10, 12, 14 years. He bought that business from a man ... actually belonged to a man named Cartwright who had many, many years in a bait and tackle shop out there. Walter Cartwright had it for a good many years, and then Walter Phariss bought it; he didn't buy it directly from the Cartwright family ... someone else had it for awhile, just a short while, and then Walt Phariss, and

then you got this Ward Noland, they have Flotsam and Ports of Call now. And Ed Twohig down here who has the Santa Cruz Boat Rentals has been here, well Eddie's been here for maybe about 25 years ... shortly after World War II, 'cause I used to be Eddie's chief in the Navy. That's what brought him to Santa Cruz.

Calciano: I see. Now it was just after the War that the Ideal....

Stagnaro: Very fine boy too. And the Ideal Fish Restaurant was here many, many years. That was started by a fellow named Sailor Hansen we called him; he was a fighter, a prizefighter.

Calciano: Italians have it now, don't they?

Stagnaro: Brother Cottardo gave him the first \$1,000 to build his original restaurant.

Calciano: Oh really!

Stagnaro: Loaned him. Now a Genovese family, Joe Olivieri and Angelo Rossi, they're brother-in-laws, and they're Italian, and Genovese too.

Calciano: They've bought it out now?

Stagnaro: They bought it from Goebel. Tom Edwards and Joe Olivieri bought the Ideal Fish Restaurant I think maybe right after World War II from Mrs. Muth and Mrs.

Waterman. They both were widows. And they also bought out George Goebel, who had the Goebel Fish Market at that time, and Goebel bought the place across the way known as the Ship Ahoy. It used to be known as The Anchor to begin with and then it was the Ship Ahoy and now it is the Ideal Restaurant. And the building which is now the Ideal Restaurant, was built originally by a man named Douglas Morrison. He bought that property and built that place and that restaurant was run by a Slav named George Vujovich, who was a friend of Morrison's. Morrison was a very wealthy man. He bought that property on my say-so, 'cause Doug and I were very friendly. I said, "Doug, why don't you buy that land and build a restaurant there?" and he bought it on my say-so. He's from Boston originally. He's a graduate of Exeter University and a football player, very nice fellow ... very wonderful man, a very smart man, and he bought that, and he and George were friendly, and George had a little restaurant in Monterey, and George Vujovich had this restaurant over here, and when Doug died, they went to Douglas' estate, and George didn't get along with the people of the Black and Bell family, so George pulled out, and Bell sold it to George Goebel.

Calciano: So the restaurant business was pretty much non-Genovese for a long while?

Stagnaro: Oh yes. Then there was the little restaurant here on the wharf -- the original Miramar. Now that restaurant there was also financed by us.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: We started two German fellows in there. There was a man named George Seilinger and Ernest Anderle. They ran it till they got fighting with one another. (Laughter) They used to fight like Dutchmen ... German, very German. They spoke with an accent, very heavy accent, and they fought like cats and dogs; it was really something.... And they had it, and then they left it, and then some Genovese people ran it, then the Olivieris ran it, Mrs. Olivieri -- Joe Olivieri's mother. And Amelia was a very wonderful person, and her husband was a fisherman, and she run it a good many, many years. Then she sold it to Mary Carniglia, and Mary Carniglia ran it a very good many years, very successfully, and then she sold it to the Marceneros.

Calciano: How long have they had it about?

Stagnaro: Well the Marceneros had it about ... I'd say they ran it at least twenty years. Mary sold it right after

World War II I think; Mary sold it in '46, so they've had it around 25 years. They've done a wonderful job there, wonderful job. Real nice job. And then you see for a good many years, you know, the early part like I told, we have the Perez family and the Faraolas; they were more or less Spanish and Mexican.

Calciano: And they gradually sold out?

Stagnaro: They gradually went out of the business.

Saving the Wharf

Calciano: You said once that you had a big fight with a city manager to save this wharf.

Stagnaro: Yes. They had a city engineer here who came up that this wharf had served its purpose. And they were going to cut it down here where Twohig's place is, and they were going to destroy the wharf. And he had sold the City Council on this, and I put up this terrific fight; I saved this wharf.

Calciano: When was this?

Stagnaro: This was about six, seven years, ago, eight -- maybe not even that long. And so I put up this big howl and a big fight. And Tedesco was the manager, and Pete Tedesco come down here, and I said, "Pete," I said,

"I'm going to cut your legs right at the knees and drop you right on the stumps; and then I'm going to put your head in the guillotine and drop your head right in the basket. 'Cause I'll be in Santa Cruz when you're gone." I said, "You're not going to cut this wharf one inch, and neither is the City Council, 'cause I'll put an injunction against them, and I'm going to stop you." I said, "This is the biggest asset Santa Cruz has got regardless what that engineer has convinced you and also the City Council." And the papers was full of it ... it was a vicious, a hard fight I mean ... there was no fooling.

Calciano: And what happened?

Stagnaro: And then they offered to sell the pier to me. I said, "We'll buy it ... for a dollar!" They says, "We'll sell it to you," and I said, "We'll buy it, and I'll give it to the people of Santa Cruz." I said, "I'll buy it and maintain it and give it to the people of Santa Cruz." And they was going to cut 250 feet off the end out there. I said, "You're not even going to take one sliver ... not even a sliver that you're going to cut from this wharf ... not a sliver." I said, "This wharf happens to be my life, my love, and I'm going to see that it's going to be here. You

Johnny-come-latlies are not going to cut this wharf, not even one sliver." And they didn't.

Calciano: Why did they want to cut it off?

Stagnaro: Because this engineer had neglected it, and it was getting in kind of bad condition, and he looked upon it that it had served its purpose, and they were going to destroy it and cut it down below here and cut our places out here, and we were going to have about 500 feet of wharf -- that's all they were going to have, instead of half a mile.

Calciano: Did they sell it to you, or did they change their minds?

Stagnaro: No, no. They changed their minds. They changed their minds as public opinion made them change their minds. The people of Santa Cruz got up in arms, 'cause it was on the air, it was in the newspapers every day. There was no ifs or ands about it. We ran full-page ads and gave them our points. We came up with seventeen or twenty points.

Calciano: You don't remember what year this was?

Stagnaro: I just don't remember. You'd have to find out when Tedesco was the City Manager.

Calciano: I was just kind of curious whether I was already here or not, because I would think I would remember this

big a battle.

Stagnaro: Well it was a battle. And when I battle, I battle.

(Laughter) Believe me. I can go from one extreme to the other. From the sweetest guy in the world to the meanest.

Cruise Ships and Party Boats

Calciano: Who owns the Ida cruise ship that....

Stagnaro: We do.

Calciano: It's just to take a look around the bay?

Stagnaro: It's a forty-five minute boat ride or boat excursion, whatever you want to call it. Kind of an educational trip.

Calciano: How far do you go?

Stagnaro: They take them to Seal Rock out here, up to the Lighthouse, take them over there towards the buoy, and take them around and tell them about the harbor, and tell them about the Boardwalk, and tell them about the wharf here. They've got a little mike on the boat and say, "This is Lighthouse Point," and give the names of a few owners of the homes, the nice homes out here, and that's what it amounts to. It used to belong to a man named Henke for years, and then he died, and we ran it and helped Mrs. Henke and were very friendly, and we gave her a lot of help on that and then she got

ill, and she wanted to get out of business, and we bought it; then she worked for us for years, for 15 or 20 years; up to last year she worked with us after we bought her out. But it's not a money-making deal; it's just something to give the people a little enjoyment. And for years we ran speedboat rides.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: For years and years we owned the finest speedboat in the world. Nothing like it. For an ocean-going speedboat there was nothing like it. We sold that boat; it's up at Lake Tahoe, but we used to run from the Seaside Company Pier over there.

Calciano: That pier is gone now?

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: What year was it taken out?

Stagnaro: Oh that pier was taken out maybe now ... say ten years ago.

Calciano: Was that why you quit doing speedboats?

Stagnaro: That's why we quit doing speedboat rides. We were very successful with those boat rides. We made plenty with our speedboats; they'd come, and it was a big thrill ... a tremendous thrill. People would just wait in line on Sundays over there and Saturdays ... why the line would be an hour wait sometimes, you know.

Calciano: My goodness. Of the captains and men running your fishing boats and the Ida and so forth, are they almost all family members, or a lot of them not?

Stagnaro: No. We only have one family member working there now ... there was mostly family members; one time we had ten boats, eleven boats, in the sportfishing but due to death and loss and changes ... the building of Malios meant we had to take Joe and Big Boy from the boats and put them over here.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: So that put us down on manpower. Then we lost a good many of our skippers and....

Calciano: By death, or....

Stagnaro: By death. By death. They were all qualified men. And now the only family member that we have there is Stago. We call him Stago ... his name is Malio like mine. He's Malio H. and I'm Malio J., see, but we always called him Stago. Nobody knows him by Malio don't even know his name's Malio, 'cause we always called him Stago since he was a little kid.

Calciano: Sportfishing with rod and reel apparently came in around about the mid-1890s or so from what I've been able to read.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Does that sound right to you?

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: And I wondered what did the fishermen on the wharf think about it at the time? All these city folk....

Stagnaro: Sportfishing?

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: Well, the fishermen, they took it in stride. They took it as it came, and actually trolling of salmon started in this bay.

Calciano: Back then, or....

Stagnaro: Back, oh, around 1906 or '7, along in there, by a man who was named Jackson, an Englishman named Jackson, his initial was J-A-P Jackson. Four names, I think. And he was in the sportfishing business here for years. He had a little market where he sold fish, and he had a partner named Kent; it was known as Jackson and Kent. And they had a fish market at the approach of the wharf here and the Faraola's had a market at the approach of the wharf. Later on Goebel bought from Jackson after he passed away, from Kent. Then Faraola's was there for many years ... and we were out here on the pier.

Calciano: So it took quite a number of years before the regular commercial fishermen began to also get into the tourist business, as far as I can tell.

Stagnaro: Yes. Before the commercial fishermen got into the tourist business ... we actually didn't get into the tourist business I'd say here till about ... well they used to take them out salmon trolling before 1910 when the motorboats started coming in, but actually the deep-sea fishing didn't start here till about the building of this wharf -- about 1911-15.

Calciano: And are you still going to keep your boat rides, your fishing....

Stagnaro: We're keeping our fishing boats. That's another place we've been hit by inflation; confidentially last: year we lost \$17,000 on the boats. We made a profit here at Malio's of I'd say \$15-17,000; we turned around and lost it all across the way. But we've changed there; we raised our prices \$2.00 already this year; I raised it a \$1.50 here just a month or so ago ... yesterday I went back to the trailers and told them to raise it another 50' and raise the kids \$1.00. It may price us out of business, but we just can't, the boat, insurances and everything ... all the expenses caught up with us, and I hope even with the raise in prices

that we can break at least even ... and pray that we can break a little better than even. So otherwise I don't know what we're going to do. One time we ran out eleven boats; we're down to three boats you might as well say ... we've got four actually, but we've given it all up; expenses are just eating us up alive, so we may be just in the restaurant business. I'd like to keep our boats going if we can. And we're running short of manpower. The thing that worries us again, it's so hard to get a license to be a boat operator ... so hard to get a license to be a skipper and a master of these boats where you take passengers for hire. The restrictions are really, really tough. Really tough.

Calciano: Now when you first went into the business, did they have....

Stagnaro: It was no problem at all. They used to hand you a license. Now what they give you, they give you 40 questions and they lock you in a closed booth ... it's all glassed in; you can't speak to this guy over here. You got to work it on your own. I went up ... the boys and me all went up about three years ago for licenses. I wasn't going to get it, 'cause I don't use my license, but I've had it all these years. So I told

the boys, I said, "Boys, I'm not going to try to even get my license this year. I'm going to forget it, 'cause I'm not going to use it anyway." So they studied for about a month and a half or two and they had an ex-Coast Guardsman helping them, one thing and another, and they studied and worked on them, and they all went up and got it. So the night before the test, it was after dinner and I had a couple of drinks, so when I came home I said, "Well, think I'll read the regulations and I may go up," you know, "I may go up." So I told the boys to go up ... they went up. I got to San Francisco about 11:00 o'clock, so here they were, they was just coming out and here I walk in ... and they were at the Coast Guard Office there in San Francisco on Sampson Street. So I said, "I've decided I'm going to take the examination." So they gave me forty of these questions; they brought me in there and locked me up ... so the kids all waited for me. I said, "We'll have lunch together." I said, "I don't expect to pass." You know, not bragging, but I went through that from my experience in the Navy and all ... I took those questions back, I didn't have one single mistake.

Calciano: Oh, that's great.

Stagnaro: I really showed the kids. (Laughter) I really showed them. I had to laugh ever since. And a good many navigational questions.

Calciano: Oh, there were?

Stagnaro: A good many navigational questions and not one single mistake, so I really kind of poured it onto the kids.

Calciano: That's great. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Yes, I was very proud of that ... very, very proud.

Floods and Tidal Waves

Calciano: I was looking at some of the early articles about the beach, and I noticed that there have been some big floods down here at the beach -- for example, January, 1914, and February, 1926. Were they as bad as the '55 flood, or were they different?

Stagnaro: Well they were different. I think the '55 flood was different, and I think the cause of the flooding of Pacific Avenue was the building of the bridge ... the way the bridge was built. I think it was a mistake there, in my opinion a mistake, that the bridge that they built -- what do they call that now ... the bridge....

Calciano: The Riverside Avenue bridge?

Stagnaro: No. The one closest to the tannery there.

Calciano: The freeway bridge?

Stagnaro: The freeway bridge. The freeway bridge.

Calciano: Okay.

Stagnaro: I was trying to think of the street, but the freeway bridge anyway. See, when they built that, they put those deals right in the river there, and all this debris piled up there and pushed this water ... when the water broke loose, it turned the river and flooded Pacific Avenue.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: That made it a very bad flood, because it hit everybody on Pacific Avenue. By the building of all that debris and holding that water like ... well, like a dike holding the water, and it started rising and pushed the water and the river started flowing away from itself ... from the river itself proper, and that's what flooded all Pacific Avenue. That was the cause of flooding all over Pacific Avenue. But previous to that, I don't think it ever hurt any of the merchants before like it hurt them in '55. I don't think so. Although down around the area around Riverside Avenue or Barson Street ... I know many a time they were flooded, because I know there were

Italian families that lived there when I was a boy; I remember my dad going down and putting a little rowboat out and going to get those families out of their homes.

Calciano: Oh my.

Stagnaro: That's many years ago when I was a little kid.

Calciano: Well now these big floods that I read about, were they caused by ocean storms or were they....

Stagnaro: No, caused by heavy rains, and of course high tides at the right time.

Calciano: But your businesses [on the wharf] would be okay in those kind of things....

Stagnaro: Yes. No problem there at all. Ever since I remember I've seen two tidal waves.

Calciano: I was going to ask you about that.

Stagnaro: There's two tidal waves. My first tidal wave I think was in 1946. That was a fourteen-foot tidal wave.

Calciano: Heavens! What caused it?

Stagnaro: But it didn't bother us on the wharf. It came down from the Aleutians ... came down from an earthquake up there.

Calciano: Fourteen feet -- that's quite a wave.

Stagnaro: Well it flooded quite a bit that time. Because they measured here on the wharf (this was before the Dream Inn was built) and that embankment, I think they measured there about 8, or 10, 12 feet of water, 'cause you could see where the water had been. And then it flooded this area here; it flooded down here, and it flooded across the railroad tracks up here. And in fact there was two men walking together during that flood on Cowell's beach here, and one of the men who was walking perished and the other guy, it pushed him way up high. There was one drowning on that deal.

Calciano: Now what happened to the beach homes on Rio Del Mar if a fourteen-foot wave came in?

Stagnaro: Well, you see that tidal wave didn't quite get the full ... we got the brunt more in this area. A tidal wave is very peculiar -- there's just the rise of water. My brother Cottardo was alive, and he and I were standing across the way talking, and all of a sudden we saw a funny ... the water was acting very peculiar, getting kind of wavy like, heavy waves in the water it had, then we kept on seeing this water rise. He looks at me, and I look at him, and he got white, and I guess I got whiter, because we didn't know what it was, 'cause we'd never experienced it.

And it went up and down it went. You could see it flood the whole beach. And it was really something, and then in it comes again rising and down, and it continues that. And of course it causes terrific tides and undertows is what it does ... this terrific rise and push of water is what it is. Then I saw it again in the harbor I forget what year that was I was at the harbor here.

Calciano: More recently?

Stagnaro: Seven, eight, nine years ago. In fact I was down at the harbor that night.

Calciano: Yes. They had a warning out so everybody ran to the beaches to see the tidal wave come in! (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Yes. That's right. And me like a darn fool went down to the harbor to see how our boats was doing, see. And I saw that harbor just dry out three or four times.

Calciano: Dry out?

Stagnaro: Yes. Completely sucked all the water out on the outgoing of the tidal wave, then come back with a tremendous push and rise of water, and than all the boats would be lying right on the bottom of the harbor. And we had quite a sandbar like we got now and it cleaned up ... and it really....

Calciano: Took care of your dredging. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Took care of our dredging. It did.

Calciano: (Laughter) But that one....

Stagnaro: That must have been in 1962, '63, '64 ... along in there, Elizabeth. I forget the date.

Calciano: Yes. I think it was about 1964. I remember it too. It was only about a foot high they said down by the Rio Del Mar area.

Stagnaro: Yes. It was maybe seven, eight years. Well it's about all because it hit here, but I'd say that tidal wave there was about an eight or nine-footer. 'Cause the water did go up to the roadway on the east of the harbor.

Calciano: It did?

Stagnaro: Yes, toward the Soquel side.

Calciano: In this '63 or '4 one we all had warnings, and we've had warnings lots of other times when a tidal wave might hit our shore but didn't, but in '46 there wasn't apparently....

Stagnaro: No. '46 there was no warning. No, there was no warning on that one at all. And Cottardo and I ... he'd never experienced one, and he was 16 years older than myself, and I never had either. And I want to tell you that it was really scary.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: 'Cause it looked like as if that water was going to come right up to reach for us and drag us right down ... that's the way it looked. Because it just kept rising right up and that was a fourteen-foot rise.

Calciano: And you were standing right on the pier?

Stagnaro: We were standing right across the way there, yes. We were interviewed by the press that time. I was interviewed to give the story and the feeling.

WORLD WAR II

83 Boys from the Wharf Join the Navy

Calciano: [Starting an interview session.] We've got some seals barking in the background today!

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: My secretary and I always get a kick out of listening to the tapes of these interviews because we hear telephones ringing and people knocking on the door and sea gulls crying and....

Stagnaro: Yes, yes. (Laughter)

Calciano: ... and either a dog or a seal barking, I'm not sure which it was on one of the tapes. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: That was seals. Sea lion. We got one, he was barking a

little bit ago.

Calciano: Yes. I heard him when I came by.

Stagnaro: Yes. He's down there waiting for us to feed him. He's been down there over 20 years.

Calciano: They've been coming there for 20 years?

Stagnaro: This one.

Calciano: This one?

Stagnaro: Oh, he's smart. He sits right underneath that hole where we drop all the food down.

Calciano: Do any other sea lions wait there also?

Stagnaro: Well they try, Elizabeth, they try. (Laughter) Every once in a while one will try, but he chases them off.

Calciano: He defends his territory.

Stagnaro: Yes, he does; he defends it very well.

Calciano: I wanted to ask today about World War II. How did World War II affect the wharf area?

Stagnaro: Well, World War II affected the area in this manner: quite a number of the local boys were in the reserves when World War II started, U. S. Navy Reserve, and some were already in the service, because the Navy had come to the boys who were boat operators, and most of them all had been and were ... at that time they came in and they gave them a rating. Like if they were

good, they'd be a third class boatswain's mate (they called them coxswains in those days) or second class boatswain's mate, and if they were mechanics or pretty good machinists they gave them like second class machinist's mate or first class. The Navy had a program, because they didn't want these men who were good boat operators, had boat experience, to be drafted into the Army.

Calciano: (Laughter) Oh, yes.

Stagnaro: And they wanted to get them, and they did prove themselves that they were very, very good, because they all went right up in rate when they went in. And a good many who had signed up before the War started, when the Navy felt things were getting pretty warm, why they more or less asked them if they would volunteer and come in, which a good many did. So we lost some of our fishermen and also some of our market men, because they went in without: being drafted, and they could not have been 'cause they were already in the Navy, sworn in the Navy, and when the Navy requested them to go in, they volunteered and went in before World War II started.

Calciano: How much before?

Stagnaro: Well, I'd say about two, three months. And then right after the War did start, off the wharf here we had a total of 83 men, or "boys" as we call them, from 18 to 24, 25, who were single more or less, and they all went in the Navy after World War II started. They were called because they were in the Reserves.

Calciano: So their talents were pretty much used?

Stagnaro: Their talents were very much used.

Calciano: That's good.

Stagnaro: Because all they had to do was learn more or less what the Navy would call Blue Jacket Manual rules and regulations of the Navy and do things the Navy way, and their talents were very, very well used, because there wasn't a one of them that didn't go way up in rate as you would call it, in rank, and they were very qualified boys, and they all did a very good job.

Calciano: Were most of them used in steering small boats and so forth, or were they put on great big carriers where it didn't matter if they....

Stagnaro: Well some were put on small boats and some were put aboard big ships. Some went to different bases where they handled small boats, and some landed aboard big ships.

Calciano: Well did any of their talent and training from here apply when they got put on a big ship?

Stagnaro: Applied very much.

Calciano: Oh, it would?

Stagnaro: They fell right into it. 'Cause they had it, you see, they had that training, and they came out of good families; they were good workers.

Calciano: What would they do?

Stagnaro: Well they all had a rate, and they followed the work, and they had crews that they were responsible for ... they were in charge of seamen, and they were responsible to their chief and their chief appreciated these kids because they were good kids. These kids all worked; they came from families where they had to work ... either worked with their fathers or there was a lot of work in the fish markets and the fish business on the commercial fish boats and they had that training; it was in them. And they were workers, because none of these boys, 83 of them, ever required the services of the probation officers in this town.

Calciano: That's nice.

Stagnaro: Never had no trouble. In fact the probation officer that was here for many, many years at that time, he

and I were quite friendly, and he used to tell the mothers, "It's just amazing to think I have never had one of these kids that I have had to give any of my services to." And they all came back, none of them got lost....

Calciano: None were killed?

Stagnaro: None were killed in the War, and they all came back in pretty good shape. Now you take my nephew, Stago, here, he was in 26, 27 battles out there, and he came home, he was just a living skeleton when he got home, only weighed 87, 88 pounds....

Calciano: Oh.

Stagnaro: It was the beating that they took out there ... didn't even recognize his own father and mother when he came out of the service; they were up there waiting for him, and ... but he's all right, in good shape now and got a nice family and everything else, but he took quite a beating ... he was running from one invasion to the other.

Malio's Navy Career

Calciano: And you were in World War II, weren't you?

Stagnaro: I was in World War II, and I went in as a chief boatswain mate ... and I went in by request also.

Calciano: This was a few months before Pearl Harbor you went in,
or....

Stagnaro: I went in after Pearl Harbor ... about two, three months after Pearl Harbor. I went in and was a chief boatswain's mate, and the first year that I was at Treasure Island, I was in charge of a school ship where ensigns up to lieutenant-commanders used to come aboard that ship and be instructed ... which was very good for me, and I received a very fine education, because I was actually the commanding officer or the captain of the ship.

Calciano: Oh!

Stagnaro: And the ship was the U.S.S. Santa Rosa ... it was about a ... oh say 100 ton, 110 ton; it was a mine-sweeper actually. And the boys and the ensigns and on up would come up and get instructed in seamanship, boat handling, which I would train them in, and then they would get instruction, the signalmen aboard that ship, they were getting instruction and taught how to read a compass and the polaris, and they got signal instruction and navigation instruction aboard there. And also how to handle boats, how to make a landing, how to come alongside of a dock and how to study their

drifts and their tides -- flood tide and you got an ebb tide and you got a slack tide; you got three different tides that you've got to know, and when you come in to make a boat landing, you got to know what you're doing and how to secure your ship. So it was actually very good for me too; being from the outside, it was no experience for me to handle the boat ... in fact I could handle it like they'd never seen before even if I'm bragging a little bit. Even the Admiral Osterhaus, you would be amazed, he said, "Stagnaro, I've never seen anybody could handle a ship like you can."

Calciano: That's great!

Stagnaro: And a lot of old-time Navy men always used to kid me too, because you see when you go in as a slick arm, you are kind of....

Calciano: As a what?

Stagnaro: As a "slick arm." What they call a slick arm is when you don't have any hash marks.

Calciano: Oh, I see. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Where you don't have any hash marks, they kind of resent it ... the old Navy people kind of resent it, 'cause they've been four, eight years, and you come in

with the same rank that it's taken them eight to twelve years to get, or four to eight, ten, twelve, fourteen years ... why old Navy, they kind of resented it. And when I first went in, I was one of the first slick arms on Treasure Island ... I was kind of resented, too. But on the other hand, they all accepted me very well when they knew that I was a pretty good sailor. They respect a good sailor.

Calciano: You said it was an education for you. Now you were teaching them boat handling, but what were you learning in this same time?

Stagnaro: Well I was learning quite a bit more on navigation and learning signaling, and I was learning the Navy ways ..., how to do it the Navy way.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: So it was a good education for me and fortunate, because it trained me to become a chief warrant officer later on.

Calciano: And that's what you did for the rest of the War?

Stagnaro: That's what I did for the rest of the War. I became boatswain, that's just below chief warrant officer, I was boatswain, and of course then you went through quite an examination. You went before a Navy board

comprised of a Navy captain, a Navy commander, and a lieutenant-commander, and they asked you a good many, many questions, and then you were in direct competition with the rest of the fleet. And at that time, why in six, seven months I was already recommended for higher rank, for boatswain. And then you see, when you're a chief boatswain's mate, then you're living with the chiefs, and you are still an enlisted man. Then when you become a boatswain, then you got to move from the chief quarters and you lived in the officer quarters. And a year or eighteen months or fifteen months later you automatically make chief boatswain -- not "mate"; chief boatswain. If you're a chief boatswain's mate, you've an enlisted man, and if you become boatswain, you start living with officers and start living with people who graduated from Annapolis, a different deal altogether, and when you make chief boatswain, chief boatswain, then you wore the eagle and the full broken stripe, and when you're a boatswain, then you wear the half a stripe like I showed you in the picture up here; you wear the half a stripe and just an anchor, a gold anchor on your cap, see?

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: And then you see I took advantage of a good many Navy schools. Instead of going out and getting drunk seven nights a week, I told them maybe one night a week....

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: ... and I went to all the Navy schools when I was in the service. I went to three navigational schools and one private school that I paid ... 'cause you see I was in San Francisco, I knew this. I said here I come in with a chief's rate. I know it's taken these fellows from not less than eight years, to twelve to sixteen years to earn to be a chief boatswain's mate, and I knew that I had to learn. I slept with the Blue Jacket Manual, night seamanship, under my pillow every night that I was in the Navy ... every night. Then I went to the Spaulding School of Navigation, which was a free school in San Francisco. Then I got ahold of Captain Spaulding, who was a captain, and he'd hold classes at his house, and I give him \$300 ... paid ... and I got to take navigation there, just he and I could talk, or a couple other officers, but we could talk and discuss these things which was great.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: And it was certainly worth \$300 a thousand times over

again, because I got more knowledge there than I did at the school, 'cause the school, there was 60, 70, 80 people at the school ... and a good many women were going to the navigation school.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: They'd go up there ... it was at the Ferry Building, and it was free, and it was paid for by the city and the county of San Francisco. And they had Mr. Captain Spaulding there ... he was the instructor, and it was I forget, two or three nights a week ... then the other two, three nights I'd go up there, we studied the sextant and the polaris, and of course I knew the compass and that stuff there, but it still was good. It was good brushing up.

Calciano: That's interesting, because I thought a man who'd sailed as long as you had might have felt that you didn't need all that technical type of thing.

Stagnaro: Yes. Well it was good because I would have ... well, I would have passed the warrant test even, I think, if I hadn't gone, but by going to school and getting that education aboard the ship, I didn't have any problem of becoming a warrant officer. Because you're in direct competition with the fleet; there was probably two, three hundred people alone at Treasure Island

beside all the bases, because they only make one warrant out of every 25,000 enlisted personnel in each warrant classification, see? So if there's 25,000 make a warrant carpenter, call them, or warrant machinist, or a warrant boatswain's mate, or a warrant electrician, warrant radioman ... each 25,000 men.

Calciano: What competition!

Stagnaro: Otherwise the billets are closed. Then you see these orders all came out of Washington. They say all right now, we need maybe two warrant officers ... so ... and here you got 150, 200 men all competing to be warrant officers, and they selected you. They select you on your looks; they select you on your dress; they select you on your voice, and ... 'cause to change you from an enlisted man to go over here and live with the officers, and it's altogether a different category, because most of the officers over here you're moving with ... they're all men from Annapolis; they're great men, good men. Oh, just unbelievable.

Calciano: Did you have any problems in the switchover?

Stagnaro: Well, the only problem I had was (laughter) ... see you have a private room, you become an officer, you eat four to a table instead of sitting at the regular mess ... it's a different deal, so I told my

commanding officer at that time, his name was Mr. Conlin and Mr. Conlin had 38-40 years, consecutive years in the Navy, and he was tough, oh, he was a tough Irishman, because he came up from the ranks. He was what you call a mustang; he competed with the men from Annapolis, see, when he became an ensign. So I said, "Mr. Conlin, why can't I live with the chiefs?" I said, "I'd just as soon live with the chiefs; they're my friends, and eat with them." I said, "I don't want to go live over there with the...." "No, Stagnaro," he said, "You're in a different category; you're an officer; you are known as Mister, and you can't live with the chiefs." I said, "All these chiefs are my friends." I became very friendly with them, they gave me a great big dinner and everything before I made the switch-over ... they realized and were all happy ... and in the service actually, 'cause there is a lot of jealousy amongst the people who are regular Navy. Oh, they fight for rate; it's unbelievable ... it's how it should be, but the jealousy amongst them is just unbelievable. Unbelievable! And I went through it all. I went through it all. But with me they were very happy because they saw someone from the outside really go right up the ladder and go up fast. In fact

just before I left down south there, when I became chief warrant, I had everything that I wanted. Anything that the Navy had to offer, I didn't want nothing else, because I was happy, and I knew my job, I knew I could do it, and there was no ifs or ands about it, and where I was weak, I knew my weaknesses, and I was down south, and Captain Lafferty, he called me in and said, "Stagnaro," he says, "you know we're recommending you now for lieutenant j.g." "Well," I said, "I have everything I want, Captain," but he says, "If you want, you can refuse it when it comes in, but we felt that you've done such a good job at this base that we couldn't let you go without recommending you to be a lieutenant j.g.," and I was in embarkation when it came through, and I refused. I said, "I'm good enough the way I am, 'cause I know my job." And I wasn't going to get any more pay, 'cause at that time I was getting \$10 base pay more than lieutenant j.g. Although I wouldn't have lost that \$10. You see, they can't cut you ... I'd still have got that \$10, and I'd of been \$10 over most of the other j.g.'s. But it was a lot of fun, was really a lot of fun. I enjoyed the service, really enjoyed it. Even with the bad time when I first got in, because

like I said, being a slick arm, those guys were really cold, oh man, they resent it, but the other poor slick arms that came in after me, they'd come to me crying, crying, because they browbeat you to death; they just browbeat them to death.

Calciano: It's a whole different world, isn't it?

Stagnaro: I used to kid them ... I said, "These hash marks, I call them dumb marks. It took you guys 8 or 12 years to get them; I got them in 4 to 6 months."

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: You know, kidding one another. I used to have a lot of fun with them. 'Cause we became very friendly ... oh ... all those people, they come down and see me all the time, a lot of those old chiefs -- a good many of them are dead -- we became very, very friendly, very, very friendly.

Calciano: It sounds as if you were stationed Stateside during the whole War?

Stagnaro: I was in charge of the U.S.S. Santa Rosa there in San Francisco at Treasure Island, and I was up there fifteen, sixteen, seventeen months when I was an enlisted man, let's say. You see I received my orders right there at the base in San Francisco. Well after

six months or seven I was put in charge of about forty operating crafts at Treasure Island, and with those operating crafts I was training men actually for the fleet ... you're training men for the fleet then. You were training seamen, they were getting their training as machinist's mates; they were getting their training as boat operators, and you were training men for the fleet. When they called they wanted so many machinist's mates, why you had to give them ... then you had to train new ones, and then you had to train quartermasters ... and they called for twenty-five or thirty quartermasters, or they wanted some first class boatswain's mates or second class boatswain's mates, whatever they wanted you had to get.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: So they went to the fleet then. Then you see then when I was a boatswain, then I received orders from ... when you become an officer, then you get your orders from the Bureau, see, Navy Bureau. They want so many boatswains on a certain expedition, why you had to go, or a certain ship needed a boatswain, you had to go. And when I became boatswain, I was slated to go to North Africa for the invasion of Italy, and so I was sent to San Diego to get some amphibious training, and

they call that temporary duty. So they use the men they get there, so they had a bunch, a big group of amphibious boats, so the executive officer gave me what you call a working party of about a 100 enlisted men -- some had different rates; they could have been most anything ... they could have been seamen, they could have been radiomen -- they wanted to use these men and make them work while they were at the base, because they go on into different stations, and they'll be assigned to different duties or to duties that they're supposed to be. So I got 100 men down there, and they had all these boats, and so they gave me this working party, as they call it, and said, "Boatswain Stagnaro, you're going to get a working party; we want you to get these boats and get them in shipshape." So I did. So when I get them in shipshape, why the captain down there at the base and the commodore (he wasn't an admiral, but he was a commodore which is just below an admiral) and he called me in, and he says, "Stagnaro," he says, "You did a wonderful job in putting these boats in shipshape for us and we'd like to keep you here if we can." "Well," I said, "You know that I'm just here on temporary duty and being trained myself for this

amphibious work. All my life I was trained to keep the boat off the beaches...."

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: "... here I land and you want me to put them on the beach." See, that was the funny part of it.

Calciano: Right.

Stagnaro: So then he says, "We're going to do all we can to keep you here 'cause we need you here." So I said, "Well, I like it ... I like San Diego." So in the meantime I get my orders, and I was sent to New York. So I reported to duty in New York there on Long Island, so I went to a kind of a school there, a training school, and they'd tell us that at that time that we were going to have 55% casualties in the landing that we were going to make. Course I wasn't too happy to hear all this, but that's all right, I went along with it and everything else. Then I was there about a month, and I get ready for the invasion of Italy, I get a Bureau notice to report back to San Diego.

Calciano: How nice.

Stagnaro: So that was really music to my ears. I came back to San Diego, and I was in that amphibious training program in San Diego, and then I was at Oceanside for

nearly four years. And then before the War ended, my luck had kind of run out again, and I was up here in embarkation in San Bruno, was waiting to go to ... well actually I was supposed to make three different invasions of Japan and hit what was called those days Hate, Bait, and Deed and Fray (Fray was Pearl Harbor) and was to get thirty days training in Pearl Harbor and November 1st we were supposed to hit Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu, if I remember the names right, and then the War ended.

Calciano: Oh!

Stagnaro: So I had enough points and everything to get out, so I didn't have to go. My outfit still went.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: And they landed in China. They landed in Tsingtao, China, but I had enough points to get out, and there were three or four officers like myself who had enough points, so we got out up here in San Bruno, so we didn't go overseas. I remember the embarkation officer at San Bruno, he and I got to be quite friendly, and we used to go out liberties together and go for dinner and a few drinks maybe, and Lieutenant Johnson, who was old Navy, says, "Stagnaro, I'm going to give you

these orders, and I'm going to show you how lucky you were, 'cause if you wasn't going to lose your head one place, you sure would have lost it in the other, 'cause you was slated for three different invasions of Japan."

Calciano: Good heavens.

Stagnaro: But I enjoyed the service; all the while I was in I had no kicks and no complaints ... I did the best job I could possibly do for them and didn't goof off, and I had a lot of respect, too. Even if I say so, I had a tremendous lot of respect from the captains as well as the admirals 'cause you did a job.

Calciano: You knew what you were doing.

Stagnaro: You knew what you were doing. That's why they kept you there, and anybody in the Navy, if he's your commanding officer and you're doing the job, they're going to keep you as long as they can. 'Cause I remember Captain Lafferty told me at Oceanside, when he was there at Oceanside, he said, "Stagnaro, we did everything in this world to keep you on this base, but the man that's going to relieve you has been overseas 33 months. We've even gone to the admiral, but the Bureau says 'no" ... so you see, the admiral and

everything was here, but it was the Bureau back in Washington, D. C. that issues these orders, and they've got to follow them.

Attempts to Evacuate Santa Cruz's Alien Italians

Calciano: When we were talking the other day about World War I and the anti-German sentiment at that time, you started to say something about World War II and a threat to move out the Italian women....

Stagnaro: Yes. Colonel De Witt, yes. Colonel De Witt issued orders that all the Italians and Germans who were not American citizens....

Calciano: Oh, and Germans too?

Stagnaro: Oh yes, and Germans too, would have to evacuate. And they did evacuate them for a very short period of time.

Calciano: They did?

Stagnaro: Yes. They started to displace some of the Italian people here. Some hadn't become citizens.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: You see my mother had become a citizen due to the fact my father became a citizen. In those days she automatically became a citizen. I don't think that law was changed until after 1920 or '30. I don't know

myself when it was changed, then you both had to go up for your citizenship papers, you see. So some of these women, hell they had three to six kids in the service, and they were going to displace them. So they had that stupid, damn fool General De Witt, who was a complete nut, in my opinion, and I was in the Navy at that time, and I went up to see him, see, and we had 83 kids in the service from the wharf alone, and some of the families had from one up to six children in the service. The Canepa family had six boys in the service. And a good many of these people lived here a good many years, and they didn't become American citizens 'cause the Italians lived in a little colony among themselves, and they weren't really the most educated people in the world. They couldn't get out and didn't learn how to speak too much English ... some did, a few of them could speak some English, but a good many of them couldn't speak no English at all. And I went up to De Witt to try to talk to him, and he just wouldn't listen to any reason whatsoever, to nothing. Everybody to him was an enemy that wasn't an American citizen. I said, "General, these are the greatest people in the world." I said, "They're Italians; they're loyal; they're...." "Well!" he says,

"Why didn't they become citizens?" I said, "General, they never had an opportunity; never had an opportunity to learn; they raised big families, and they stayed at home." "I don't care" and one thing and another.

Calciano: Well where was he going to send them? Back to Italy?

Stagnaro: So finally they were going to displace them; they started to displace them, they did ... from here and bring them inland.

Calciano: Inland, like they did to the Japanese.

Stagnaro: See. Just the same as the Japanese. So I called up Jack Anderson -- you see I've been a Republican all my life, and been very active on the Central Committee; I've been on the Central Committee since '24 -- so I called Jack Anderson, who's a good friend of mine, who was a congressman, and he said, "I'll go to the Executive Branch." So he went to President Roosevelt, and he told him. I said, "Jack, we've got 85, 86 kids in the service and including myself." I said, "This General treated me like as if I'm a dog." So he says, "I'll take it in," and by God, he did. And the next day they were home. I got them all home, back to their families.

Calciano: That's incredible. I've never heard about this.

Stagnaro: Yes, yes. That's the way it was, you know. Hell, they were treating them worse than the Japanese.

Calciano: Well were they going to set up a camp inland, or....

Stagnaro: Well they were just moving them away ... not setting up a camp; they had to get away from the coast. I think six to eight miles ... they didn't want them close to the shore, 'frail they were going to send radios or telegrams or something to allow that. And I had an old aunt here ... I think at that time she was 81 or '2 or 83 ... and to move her from her house and put her in another area, and I don't know how many grandchildren she had in the service.

Calciano: Well now had Cottardo's wife been sent too, or....

Stagnaro: No. Cottardo's wife was an American citizen; her mother was sent, that's just what I was thinking about.

Calciano: Where was she sent to?

Stagnaro: She was sent ... they had to get I think from three to five miles from the coast. I don't remember where....

Calciano: Oh, they weren't sent as far inland as....

Stagnaro: Oh no. They weren't sent in like the Japanese, you know. They were not put in a concentration camp or

anything else, but they had to get away from the coast.

Calciano: Well what about ... this is probably the wrong time to ask the question, but what about the women who had lived in Italy and had not really had a chance to learn the English language and so forth. Did they have mixed emotions when the War came, or not? Or were they 100% pro American even though they were part of....

Stagnaro: Well they were mostly ... the wives, they were very pro-Mussolini I'd say, 'cause Mussolini did a terrific job for Italy. There's no question about it. If he just hadn't got sucked in with Hitler ... let himself remain neutral, then Italy would have come out of this deal one of the greatest nations in the world. But he had no alternative. If he wouldn't have taken a beating from Hitler, he took it from the allies, so it was just one way or the other; he would have taken it one way or the other. Unless he could have remained neutral. They would have moved into Italy anyway. And up to that time Mussolini did a great job for the Italian people, he really did.

Calciano: So they did have somewhat of a....

Stagnaro: Let's face the facts. They're there.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: And I'm not Fascist by any means.

Calciano: No, no. You're talking about his building program and.... Stagnaro: But he did something, he built highways, he built schools, he built universities ... he did one wonderful job, I tell you.

Calciano: Well so when the United States ended up at war with Italy, how did it affect the women and men who had been born in Italy?

Stagnaro: Affect them? They had children in the service here. Most of them had their own sons in the service here.

Calciano: So their loyalties had to....

Stagnaro: That's right. There was no choice... their loyalty was right here with the United States. It couldn't be any other way, because they were well-fed over here and enjoyed life. They all had homes practically, had their own homes, and money and cash in the banks. Why they was living very happily over here. Very, very happily.

Calciano: Well I knew that the men were very much a part of the life of the community, but as you said, the women had been so isolated and just within themselves -- I wasn't sure whether they had a chance to develop an allegiance to their new country.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: They had?

Stagnaro: They all had children growing up, and they had their allegiance right here.

Calciano: You mentioned once that a lot of rumors about the Italians flew around Santa Cruz during the War. Were these just a few wild rumors, or was there very much anti-Italian sentiment do you think?

Stagnaro: Well they were just all wild rumors. I don't think there was too much Italian anti-sentiment at all.

Calciano: Well....

Stagnaro: The only anti-sentiment was De Witt.

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: No anti-sentiment Italian ... I think anti-sentiment German, yes. And the Japanese as we all know. Poor people, they really give them a bum deal.

Calciano: But when the wives who still spoke Italian went downtown shopping and so forth, they didn't run in to any problems?

Stagnaro: No problems, nothing at all. Nothing, nothing at all.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: I told you about George Goebel who was an American

citizen, a very good citizen ... 'course the rumors got around that he was sending radio messages to the Japanese and German submarines.

Calciano: Oh my heavens.

Stagnaro: But it was all talk; and also they had talk that I was selling oil to the Japanese at \$1000 a gallon.

Calciano: Oh! (Laughter)

Stagnaro: And by that time I already had two citations from the government.

Calciano: Oh my heavens.

Stagnaro: Two citations ... I had one from Admiral Greenslade and one from the Navy Department.

Calciano: So this is what you meant when you said rumors could really get around fast.

Stagnaro: Oh, they got around on San Jose ... all over ... these rumors spread like wildfire ... just unbelievable. Unbelievable!

A Japanese Submarine in Monterey Bay

Stagnaro: And then during World War II when I was in the service, a Japanese submarine was out here.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: And I told you they shot at this oil tanker....

Calciano: You didn't tell me about it, but I knew about it. Tell

me a bit more about it.

Stagnaro: They shot at this oil tanker ... the Agwiworld was the name of it; the Agwiworld was an Associated oil company oil tanker. And that particular night we were down from Treasure Island on leave. My two nephews were here -- Joe and Stago and myself -- and Admiral Greenslade called me up personally, also Alvin Weymouth, who was a commander working under Admiral Greenslade in the Port District, and they gave me the message that they wanted to have delivered to the Agwiworld out here. So I got ahold of the chief of police, Al Huntsman, who went out on a boat that night, and I got ahold of a colonel that was down here. The colonel was up to the police station ... they had their headquarters in the police station, and my two nephews ... it was very high seas that night, very high seas, and we had a little fish boat, about a 28-foot fish boat named the Buona Madre, which means "good mother", and belonged to us, so I stayed on the dock, because I had to lower them ... they were hanging on the davits, and I had to lower this boat into the water -- it was very heavy seas and I had to work fast. So they went out to the Agwiworld to deliver it, and delivered this message, and the

message was, "Return to San Francisco full speed ahead as soon as possible."

Calciano: Why couldn't they just radio them directly?

Stagnaro: That's one time in the history of the United States that the communications system was all broken down, and they couldn't communicate, because they didn't want the Japanese submarine to pick up the signal, the communication, or whatever it might have been. And the Japanese submarine was out there charging up their battery, 'cause it was a little hazy, but they could hear them ... you could hear the Japanese submarine motors running out there, the boys did, and Chief of Police Al Huntsman, who is still alive, and this colonel, I don't remember his name, he went out.

Calciano: They could hear the submarine?

Stagnaro: They could hear it, and they were right close by.

Calciano: How did the ship know that your boat was a friendly boat coming out?

Stagnaro: Well they knew it was friendly from the message, and they knew it because the chief of police and the colonel were there to verify it. And I didn't go out. I stayed here.

Calciano: No, but I meant just when it was a little boat coming

out towards their ship....

Stagnaro: Yes. They knew it was authentic, telling them it was orders from Admiral Greenslade. For that deal I received a citation, got a nice citation from Admiral Greenslade. I have it somewhere.

Calciano: Well how nice. I'd read a bit about the submarine out there. People keep challenging me ... saying it wasn't true, but I've got an article about it in my files and now you've confirmed it.

Stagnaro: Yes. And the Agwiworld got up there, and they got in San Francisco Bay, and this submarine had fired on them four or five shots that day and missed them. Fortunately had missed them. But anyone who was walking along the cliff or here on the pier, we were watching the Agwiworld and could see those shots ... we knew they were being shot at.

Calciano: Did they ever find out why the Japanese sub came into Monterey Bay?

Stagnaro: Well they were just here at that time I guess just to destroy the shipping if they could. Big ships ... that's what they were probably here for.

Calciano: But you never heard after the War what was found?

Stagnaro: No, no. Probably that Japanese submarine never even

got back home again.

Calciano: Were some of your boats requisitioned by the Navy?

Stagnaro: Yes. We had two of our speedboats requisitioned by the Navy -- the Seastag II, which was a Seastag, and the Miss Stagnaro.

Calciano: Were these the ones that you'd had built in the 30s for the tourist trade?

Stagnaro: They were boats that we used for the tourists for speedboat rides around here, and they were requisitioned and were taken and used in the islands.

Calciano: Which?

Stagnaro: In the island group, like in the Marshall Islands or any of the islands. You see, during war, aboard the big ships, they'd take any kind of wood constructed boat off their ships, you know, no wood, because if they should come down with a bomb on the wood, the splinters fly all directions.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: And they don't hardly use any ships with wooden decks even, because if they hit it with a bomb, the splinters from the wood fly all directions. So these boats were used in the Gilbert and the Marshall Islands and some of those islands for the officers, or they needed supplies or messages or something like

that, whatever they wanted.

Calciano: These were wooden boats, so they were not....

Stagnaro: They were wooden constructed boats.

Calciano: They were just used for messages?

Stagnaro: Yes. They were shallow water boats, and they wouldn't hit, you know, mines maybe, or something like that.

And they came back. They both were brought back.

Calciano: Well good.

Stagnaro: And we were paid for them by the ... actually the Merchant Marine handled it. The Merchant Marine gives you the first opportunity to buy these boats back at your own price if you think they're worthwhile, but we refused to take them, and we were paid for them ... we were paid. We did have the opportunity to buy them back at any price, but we had other ideas in mind, so we didn't accept them.

Calciano: Were they too badly worn out, or....

Stagnaro: Well, usually the Navy, they bang them up pretty bad.

Cottardo Stagnaro versus the Coast Guard Bureaucracy

Calciano: Gilda and I were sitting talking this morning, and she said there's something, and she can't quite remember the details, but the Coast Guard wanted to do something that interfered with the fishing here, and

Cottardo had to really sort of defend the right of the fishermen to earn their living and referred to the Constitution.

Stagnaro: Yes. They wanted to stop all boats fishing, and even the sport fishing, which was recreation which a lot of people working need a recreation. And he fought that point, and he won.

Calciano: They wanted to stop both commercial and sport fishing?

Stagnaro: They wanted to stop commercial fishing then as well as sport fishing.

Calciano: And he won the right for both?

Stagnaro: He won the right for both, right.

Calciano: Why did they want to stop them?

Stagnaro: Well, they figured it was a hazard for them to go out, and a Japanese submarine could probably sink them, or shoot them or kill them, or ... they had their points, too. And Cottardo fought that the fishermen, we needed food, and we needed fish, and the country needed all the food that they could possibly get no matter where they got it from ... and he didn't think there was that much danger ... was his thinking ... and also the sport people should have recreation which they needed. They needed recreation. And we also took service

people fishing ... a lot of service people went out for recreation.

Calciano: Now who ran the fishing boats?

Stagnaro: Well, they picked up makeshift crews. They didn't have too many of the young fellows, but a good many of the old fishermen were still alive then, the old Genovese; they used them, and they used up whoever they could pick up and got them to work.

Calciano: Was getting gas for your boats a problem?

Stagnaro: Well, getting gas was another ... would have been a problem, but for food they had to give us gas for the boats, and then we had a problem whether we'd be entitled to get gas for the recreation end of it. But they overcame that hurdle too.

Calciano: Cottardo again was the one who fought....

Stagnaro: Cottardo fought that, oh yes. He fought it. I remember one fellow who was a commander in the Coast Guard who was fighting it quite a bit. And (laughter) ... I'll never forget the expression he used to refute what I said ... he said, "One thing I admire about you Dago s.o.b.'s is you're fighters!"

Calciano: (Laughter) Kind of a compliment in one way.

Stagnaro: (Laughter) Yes, he says, "One thing I admire you Dago

s.o.b.'s is you're good fighters!" He'd repeat it every time, and he was a Coast Guard commander. But he couldn't help admire that we didn't give up.

Calciano: Well now, how did you win this? Through the regular Coast Guard bureaucracy, or did you go to your congressman, or....

Stagnaro: Yes, Coast Guard bureaucracy, yes. Right through the Coast Guard ... they handled it mostly through them.

Calciano: So you weren't pulling strings via Congress?

Stagnaro: No, we didn't pull strings by Congress. Only time I ever remember pulling strings was just what I told you.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: On Colonel De Witt. He was a nut. Anybody would tell you.

Calciano: (Laughter)

Stagnaro: He was a nut, that's all. He might have been right in his own thinking, but he was a nut ... everybody that knew him said that.

Calciano: Did the gas rationing & effect the number of tourists that could get here?

Stagnaro: No. We got all the gas we wanted to. We got it straightened out.

Calciano: But I'm thinking of tourists coming from elsewhere.

Stagnaro: Well ... there seemed not to be any problem at all. They got here somehow, somehow. A good many of them worked in these plants where they got C rationing, you see; C stamps they would call them, and they'd come over.

Civil Defense -- A False Alarm up the Coast

Calciano: Were you here enough during the War to talk much about civil defense here or not?

Stagnaro: Not too much. Not too much. The only thing ... one night before I was in the service a rumor got out that there was a fleet of a 100 navy Japanese ships ready to make a landing between Davenport and Half Moon Bay.

Calciano: Wow!

Stagnaro: And that particular day we had a good many of our fishermen fishing 14, 15, 16 miles out, and if there'd been a flotilla that big, I felt that they would have seen it. So the chief of police called me up to his office, which was Al Huntsman, and there was a colonel and a couple other Army officers there ... and they were getting ready ... he says, "I'm going to detail you with a group of Army men that can handle

explosives (the truck was loaded with dynamite) and they're going to blow up every bridge between here and Half Moon Bay."

Calciano: Good heavens!

Stagnaro: And he says, "This other group" ... they had a little bit of barbed wire, didn't know what they was going to do with it ... "and they're going to put barbed wire and string it along the beaches here in Santa Cruz." So I said, "All right." [in a dubious tone of voice.] So I took off with these men, and we came down here at the pier here, they were going to seal off the wharf and everything, and we came down with these trucks ... we all followed this little convoy of trucks, and we came down and started dropping off the barbed wire and some of these men on this small convoy, and the truck with the dynamite and all, we were going to start heading up the coast. With the old road there was quite a few bridges between here and Half Moon Bay. So we was just about ready to take off for Half Moon Bay and down come a couple of police officers and held us up ... and it was just a false alarm. And we were just about ready to blow our bridges (laughter) ... that's when we was ready. So that was as far as I got with what I would say would be more or less civil defense

and war hysteria and all that malarkey that goes along with some of it.

Calciano: How did they happen to pick on you to help with the bridge blowing-up?

Stagnaro: Well they happened to pick up on me because they felt that I knew the road and knew where the bridges were ... these Army boys didn't know. I didn't know nothing about dynamite.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: Absolutely nothing about dynamite, bombs, or guns, or anything else. Absolutely nothing.

Calciano: But you knew the road.

Stagnaro: Yes. But one thing I'll say ... even when I got to Treasure Island as a chief and they used to send me out on different wild goose chases, and they had to cover them all, 'cause these -- we called them wild goose chases -- and aboard my ship at night, I'd get orders, and we had to get up at ten o'clock, eleven o'clock, and run off to Half Moon Bay. Somebody spotted a dead sea lion or a dead pelican or saw a flashlight or a falling star and right away we'd have to go out and go down. And when I first got out, we were so unprepared that they didn't even have a rifle or a machine gun or anything. All they'd give you ...

maybe they'd give you a shotgun and go look for a Japanese submarine. I said, "Gee whiz." I'd go to the arsenal ... I said, "My God, can't we pick up somebody that can handle a machine gun or something? God, we're going out on this chase here -- we don't know whether it's good, bad or indifferent ..." It would be just a wild goose chase, but they had nothing, absolutely nothing. Then I started to worry. Then I started to worry. I said, "My God, what's going to happen to the United States when here at Treasure Island they haven't even got a machine gun that they can give you to put aboard your ship and you're going to go out on a wild goose chase looking for a Japanese submarine or something like that."

Calciano: Yes. I guess it was....

Stagnaro: So we were really unprepared. Really were in bad circumstances. It's unbelievable the circumstance that we were in at that time.

The Wharf

Calciano: Was the wharf allowed to function pretty much normally then, except for these occasional things that threatened to close it off?

Stagnaro: Well the wharf functioned normally, and they had a group of Coast Guardsmen they brought down here, and

they were more or less in charge, and they used to have a big warehouse here at the outer end of the wharf, and they fixed up quarters there for them, and they were pounding the beaches at night ... the Coast Guard, watching for the frogmen or somebody who would be coming in; they had quite a nice little group here.

Calciano: I remember what I wanted to ask you a minute ago when you said the country was unprepared ... later on weren't there gun emplacements put along our coast here? Somebody told me that there were some on West Cliff Drive or something?

Stagnaro: That I couldn't say. I really couldn't say. Although they had a radio station, oh, for about thirty, forty miles where they pick up, you know, signals and all that. Radar and such things like that. I think you can still see it from the road there. I know where it's at. It's up past Pigeon Point. They had a radar deal they built there later on, and it was well-manned too. And then further up at Point Montara they had a big gunnery, I call it a gunnery school there ... probably a gun emplacement there, that I know. It was a gunnery school, actually, where they taught the men how to handle guns and whatever they handle at gunnery school there. Point Montara.

Calciano: Where is that?

Stagnaro: That's above ... oh ... twenty miles above Half Moon Bay I'd say. Between Half Moon Bay and San Francisco.

Calciano: You had a little Sport Fisher restaurant down here. Did....

Stagnaro: No, at that time we didn't have the Sport Fisher.

Calciano: Oh, I'm sorry. I thought Gilda said it started about '35 or so.

Stagnaro: Well, we had just a little seafood cocktails we had there at that time.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: But we did have a room there, yes.

Calciano: But it wasn't ... so you didn't have to worry much about getting food to the public and taking in coupons and....

Stagnaro: No. No problem. No problem.

Calciano: Did you have a retail fish market?

Stagnaro: Oh, we had our retail fish market; we ran it all the time, yes.

Calciano: And were you only allowed to sell so many fish per person and this kind of thing?

Stagnaro: No, no.

Calciano: No coupons on fish?

Stagnaro: No coupons on fish. No restrictions on it or anything.

Calciano: Oh?

Stagnaro: You could buy all you want and sell all you could sell. In fact the fish business picked up by leaps and bounds; we did a tremendous business here on the wharf selling the fish; you could sell most anything.

Calciano: Because red meat was rationed?

Stagnaro: Yes. Red meat was rationed, so people were eating fish and they were advocating for the people to eat more fish, eat more fish, and save the meat for the boys and things like that. Although they did serve fish in the service too. But they only served fish about once a week in the service -- Fridays.

Calciano: When you came back from the War, what ... well what was the post-war situation on the wharf? Did business change at all?

Stagnaro: Well post-war, we just stepped right back into the business and started right back in the business where we left off and started building a new speedboat right away to replace the two that we had lost, and some of the older Italians had passed away during the War that were fishermen and their boys come back for a short period and they started fishing for just short periods

then ... a good many of them didn't go back to fishing. They went to other jobs.

Calciano: If there hadn't been the War, do you think they would have stayed in the fishing business?

Stagnaro: Well I think more of them would have stayed into the fishing, yes. Yes. But they saw it was a harder life, and they got to an age that they wanted to have families of their own and have their own wives and families, and they knew if they went fishing, they'd get up at two, three o'clock in the morning, go four, five, six o'clock at night, and it wasn't a good family life for them, so they elected to do other work ... other work, which they did.

CIVIC AND FRATERNAL ACTIVITIES

Calciano: You've been on the Republican Central Committee since 1924. Have Republican politics changed much over the years?

Stagnaro: Well, I think it's about the same thing, Elizabeth, all the time.

Calciano: Have you ever gone to any conventions and so forth, or is the Central Committee just a local thing?

Stagnaro: Just mostly local, just mostly local. I didn't have the time; I was invited ... I served a while on the State Central Committee, but I didn't just have the

time. I told you I served on the State Small Craft Harbor Commission for six years. And Louis Haber served for another six or seven years, and he did a great job in getting this harbor for Santa Cruz.

Calciano: But the Central Committee is just an enjoyable thing, not something that you just....

Stagnaro: It's enjoyable, and you meet a lot of nice friends, and fighting for our men, you know....

Calciano: But it hasn't been a big part of your life, then?

Stagnaro: Well, it's been a good part of my life, let's put it that way, a good part.

Calciano: That's nice. Have you ever belonged to any Italian groups or fraternal groups; Sons of Italy or Kiwanis or....

Stagnaro: Oh, Sons of Italy, Rotary, past-president of the Rotary club of which I'm a member. Rotary presented me with that deal right here a while back for 25 years of perfect attendance.

Calciano: Oh, my! Is that it? [Pointing to a plaque on the wall]

Stagnaro: Yes. I'm going to hang it up at Malio's.

Calciano: You must be proud of it. Had you belonged before the War, or did you join in '46?

Stagnaro: No. After the War. '46. I joined in exactly '46.

Calciano: Have you been very active in Sons of Italy?

Stagnaro: Not real active, no. Not real active. I'm a member, and last year they honored me as Man of the Year.

Calciano: Oh! How nice.

Stagnaro: This year they honored Mario Esposito.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: The previous one was John Battistini.

Calciano: Did you belong to the Knights of Columbus too?

Stagnaro: No. I wasn't that good of a Catholic.

Calciano: Ah! (Laughter) I see.

Stagnaro: (Laughter) They had their own collateral, fraternal organizations. I was an Elk and a Moose, and the Native Sons, a fifty-year member of the Native Sons.

Calciano: Oh! Native Sons of the Golden West?

Stagnaro: Yes, Golden West, and the Druids, which was a great Italian fraternal organization.

Calciano: Really!

Stagnaro: The Druids, yes. The United Ancient Order of Druids. U.A.O.D. In fact my father was a founding member of the Druids. But the Italians, they were strong one time. Like most lodges, the lodges aren't as strong, any of them. The Elks are very strong; they have a

membership of over a thousand. But I never was ... it was enjoyment, let's put it that way, but never too active, 'cause I didn't want to (chuckle) get involved in, you know, you keep going then you're on this committee, that committee and ... they get you to work.

Calciano: Yes. It can be a career in itself.

THE YACHT HARBOR

Possible Sites

Calciano: Did you like the idea of the yacht harbor being built here?

Stagnaro: Well I was on the commission for 35 years, on the Port District, one of the original on the Port District Commission, and also before we had a Port District Commission, I worked to get a harbor in Santa Cruz, and we worked with the Chamber of Commerce, Santa Cruz Chamber of Commerce. I was on the Chamber of Commerce committee for a harbor, then we had the Port District formed and I was one of the originals on the Port District Commission. And then I was the first man to be appointed to the State's Small Craft Harbor Commission by Governor Knight, which was a five-man commission at that time. I was on that for six years,

and then I was succeeded by another Santa Cruzan, Lou Haber, so you see I put many years in getting a harbor for Santa Cruz.

Calciano: Yes. Did you always figure on Woods Lagoon as being the place for the harbor, or were there other ideas also?

Stagnaro: Well we thought of many ideas; we thought of maybe making Neary Lagoon a harbor, or having a harbor from Lighthouse Point to the Buoy -- an ocean harbor --we gave that a lot of thought. Then we also figured the sanding problem, which would have been big, and then we gave up this idea. We also thought of the San Lorenzo River, then we threw that out due to all the debris. And then we were going to use the Woods Lagoon. The original thought was having a double deal, using the Woods Lagoon and the Schwann Lagoon, see. Then that was too costly, too much money. Then we concentrated right on Woods Lagoon, which is a wonderful harbor in my opinion ... a dandy harbor, real, real nice harbor. You got a sand problem in any harbor no matter where it is. On the Pacific Coast, if it's a coastal harbor, they all have the same problems.

Calciano: To skip back a minute, you said that Neary Lagoon was

also considered. Why was this decided against?

Stagnaro: Well then you had the expense, the cost ... the cost again.

Calciano: It was going to be more expensive than Woods?

Stagnaro: Oh, tremendously. And then you had the railroad tracks to get out of the way and bridges and trestles and everything else that you had to build, so....

Getting the Appropriation

Stagnaro: You see, we built the Coolidge Bridge through Harbor funds. It was built through us and the railroad bridge also; the new railroad bridge was built through the Port District.

Calciano: You mean down by the Harbor?

Stagnaro: Yes. And the people, they themselves voted the Port District in. And they put a maximum of a ... a 10 maximum per 100 I think... per 100. And to begin with, we only used ... the original members of the Port District Commission, we took all our money out of our own pockets. We went to Washington many trips ... some of the members did; I didn't go back to Washington, but quite a few of them did; they took it all out of their pocket, all these guys. Instead of setting the rate at 10' per 100, which we could have, we set it at

only 5 mils ... only put aside enough for us for postage and stamps, stationery, and stuff like that. And the commissioners gave all their time free. Bill Deans was our attorney; he gave all his time free of charge to begin with, and Worth Brown and myself and Ken Melrose and Mr. Twohig and Jimmy Leask and oh, Al Haber, Don Falconer, and they were the boys that put it over.

Calciano: Who did you have to convince? The Army Corps of Engineers, or the people, or both?

Stagnaro: Well we had to convince the Army Corps of Engineers, number 1, and then to get the money from Washington, Congress there, through the Rivers and Harbor Committee. Once a year you'd be on top of the ladder, the first thing you'd know you'd drop right down to the bottom again ... then you'd have to start pulling yourself up.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: Oh, it was tough; it wasn't easy. It wasn't easy to get the funds, and we finally got them. Finally got them. It took a lot of work and a lot of political action and politicians and everything else.

Calciano: I read somewhere just recently that in 1869, I think, somebody got a little money set aside by the State to

explore the possibility of putting a jetty and harbor in at Santa Cruz ... that was over a hundred years ago. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Yes. Well that's it, so you can see the years and effort that it took. The Chamber of Commerce put a lot of hard work and everybody did. It was teamwork; it wasn't one individual by any means, or just a few of us, even, on the Port District ... it was actually lots of teamwork, a lot of teamwork. 'Cause you see what we had to do, we got about \$2,000,000 or \$2 1/4 million through the Federal, which was a grant or a gift you might as well say; then we borrowed another \$2 million or more from the State, when I was on the State Small Craft Harbor, you see, and then we bought all this land, and then we had beaches. In fact they had to go around and buy all the land all around the harbor, you see; they went around and bought it all from the people. So it was a lot of work to put together; it was one thing after another, and oh, God, the obstructions that we came against, it was just unbelievable, and you never thought that you would overcome them. And then when you thought you would overcome them, then you would get banged down by politics.

Calciano: Was the community behind the harbor pretty solidly or not?

Stagnaro: The community was very solidly behind the harbor. The community was, and like I say, the Port District was behind it, and they voted it in, the people themselves, voted it in. And then us fellows who were the original members of the Port District Commission, we had a gentlemen's agreement amongst ourselves that none of us would profit by being on the Commission. That we wouldn't go out there because we knew what was going on and go out there and start buying all the land and everything surrounding the harbor, which we could have done. But we had a gentlemen's agreement, and nobody profited by it. That was a nice thing about it. I own a home out on East Cliff, but I bought it just ten years ago. And I bought it at auction at that time; it was up for sale at auction, a wonderful piece of property. I had big ideas I was going to build a deluxe apartment, because it was all ocean front.

Calciano: Oh!

Stagnaro: But it's got a nice home on it ... it's not a new one --I always say it's the oldest home in Santa Cruz County. But it's really a nice piece of property, and then I changed my mind, and so I've still got it.

Calciano: Just keeping it as a house?

Stagnaro: Just keeping it as a house. Some day I'll sell it ... it's worth \$75,000, worth at least that much. I've put over \$40,000 in it like a damn fool, excuse my expressions. (Laughter) I could have used that interest on things to better advantage and had more enjoyment out of it. But that's the way it goes.

The Sand Problem

Calciano: The harbor's getting a lot of static in the press now about this sand thing. [The closing of the Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor mouth for part of each winter because of sand build-up.] Do you think that the sand problem could have been prevented by a little bit different design or not?

Stagnaro: No. I don't think so. No matter where you'd be ... and I've had a lot of experience with harbors 'cause you see I was in charge of the harbor for the Navy at Oceanside, California, off of Camp Pendleton when I was boatswain.

Calciano: And you had sanding problems there too?

Stagnaro: Oh yes. Four, five years we had sanding problems there too. And this is not going to be any problem at all once we get the dredge deal solved. They've got a

brand new dredge there now, and like anything new, there's a lot of criticism and ... but I don't criticize anyone, because you take those port commissioners like myself ... they give their time, their money, their effort; it's an unpaying job, and they're doing a great job. They're doing as good a job as they can possibly do. And so's the Army Engineers. And mistakes are made by all of us ... and in this case, they've had some problems, [with the new dredge], but I think they'll overcome all their problems. When they once do. I think it pumps more sand actually than the Shellmaker dredge that they had here. But there's weaknesses and they got to ... that'll be taken care of.

Calciano: Why didn't they put dredging provisions in at the time that they built the harbor?

Stagnaro: Well we did. We set aside at that time ... 'cause you see everything was study, study, study, make a study. And before they built this harbor, they put a temporary ... they used steel pontoons, and they filled them with sand, and the Army Engineers made a considerable study there, and they run them out as far as the present harbor is run out there now, and they made their study. And we left enough set aside in the

building of the harbor, \$125,000, which was to be used for the purchase of a sand bypassing plant², and which had built up through interest, because we had it invested at very fine interest rates through the County Bank, and we did set aside for what they call a sand bypassing plant ... that's what they called it, which is actually a dredge. And of course the Army Engineers, I think they got a little more of a sand problem than they anticipated, but we knew that it was going to have a sand problem. Any harbor, I don't care where it is, and I know, and believe me I've had some experience, has got the same problem. They shouldn't give any static, and in fact they should give everybody a pat on the back ... that's the way I look at it. I think it's [the blockage of the harbor entrance] cost me more money in our family and my business than anybody in Santa Cruz, and I still have no kicks and no complaints, 'cause I know what they have to contend with.

Calciano: I see.

*Ed. note: In May, 1974, while going over the manuscript with Mr. Stagnaro, the editor asked what the \$125,000 had been spent for. He replied: "No, I think they still have the money. When they bought the new dredge a couple of years back, they bought one that the Army Corps of Engineers recommended, and that dredge didn't work out, so the Army moved it somewhere else, and I think the Government reimbursed them. I think they still have the money."

Stagnaro: It's cost us because we own a commercial business. Our boats are there for a specific purpose, to take people out and make money. And we've lost a little time, and we've lost a few ... not much, 'cause we know how to work around the problem.

Calciano: Well now do you dock every night in the harbor, or just when there's a storm?

Stagnaro: We dock there mostly every night in the harbor, although now with the way the harbor seems, the harbor being sanded the way it is, now we come out and, say we went out Saturday -- this weekend. See, we only work Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday in the spring. So we check our tides, and we come out of the harbor on high tide, which we can do ... so if the tide is high in the morning, well we come out that very morning that we're going out, but if the tide is low, like it was this weekend, we came out a couple days ahead of time, and we dropped anchor and we had our three boats out here.

Calciano: I see. You plan ahead.

Stagnaro: It's our business; we plan several days ahead ... we think ahead ... we have to. But we've lost a couple thousand dollars this year in business, but I don't blame them; if we'd had a storm, we'd of lost it

anyway. And if we didn't have the harbor, we'd have probably lost it anyway. I think it's a great asset to Santa Cruz and the county, and I think it's just wonderful.

The Harbor's Value to the Community

Stagnaro: I was looking this morning ... let me show you ... here. Many people don't realize how much money, and even your supervisors that you got here. I think they're waking up to the fact now a little bit, 'cause we're waking them up.

Calciano: They don't realize what?

Stagnaro: They don't realize what that means to Santa Cruz ... the taxation that that brings into Santa Cruz, and the boats ... and here pretty soon you'll have 800 boats in that harbor.

Calciano: When the expansion is completed?

Stagnaro: When the expansion is completed. And all of the boats are taxed ... pay their taxes here. These people come to Santa Cruz, they got to buy gas and oil, they got to eat, they got to sleep ... some sleep in their boats, it's true. But I think it's great. It brings in a lot of business, and of course people in the Port District that owns property over there, we pay a little bit more taxes, but it's increased the value of

their property tremendously over there. Now you know when I first bought this house, I paid \$400 in taxes, and then the property around me started selling at fantastic prices, unbelievable prices. A piece of property that was worth four or five thousand dollars, they were getting \$50-55,000. So the Assessor, they base their assessments on what the property in the area is sold for. They know exactly what a house sells for ... through the title company they know, and I jumped Johnny Seidlinger [the County Assessor]. I said, "For God's sake," I said, "Last year I paid \$400 and this year you send me a tax bill for over \$1200."

Calciano: Whoops! (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Well then he started naming me all these places that I knew what they were selling for, but I never dreamed it would create such an assessment. Boy, I really jumped. But I think the harbor is great, and it's a good harbor ... it's a wonderful little harbor. We've got a little sand problem, but they could grout it.

Calciano: Do what?

Stagnaro: What they call grout. They could go down and grout it with drills and drill right through the rock on the jetties, which is costly, very costly. They did that

in San Diego at their harbor at Mission Beach there. And then they put in water cement (it gets hard in water) and they shove it in by compressed air. And then you seal....

Calciano: Oh, so you've got a solid....

Stagnaro: Then you've got a solid deal then that does solve quite a problem. Instead of maybe dredging once a year, they dredge maybe once every two years.

Calciano: I read in the paper a little bit ago that they were talking about raising the boat berthing prices to make the Yacht Harbor self-supporting, and I think you were quoted as saying that you didn't feel this was appropriate.

Stagnaro: Well, you know, some of the supervisors were talking we should raise it to \$2 a foot. Well, if it's \$2 a foot, they're going to have an empty harbor.

Calciano: Are they?

Stagnaro: Sure they are. 'Cause people can't afford it. Here in Santa Cruz we haven't got the wealth like they got in southern California. We haven't got the big boats. Sure there's boats in there, \$35,000-\$40,000 boats in the harbor, but I think Santa Cruz ... they're going to raise to a dollar and a quarter, and I think that's a good rate. Things have gone up, we know that, and

we've been paying a \$1; \$1.25 is a good rate. And we're comparable, I should think, to the Berkeley harbor. They've got a big expansion program in that harbor. I think they're going to put in four or five thousand boats in that harbor eventually. I remember when they had nothing up there. Absolutely nothing. But the city and the people are all behind it. The City of San Leandro, tremendous harbor. I was on the commission and boy, they were expanding going like a house afire up there.

Calciano: Something else I wanted to ask you ... a rumor that is all around through the hip culture and the student culture now is that most of the drugs in this area are brought in via the yacht harbor. Do you think this is possible?

Stagnaro: Absolutely not! Absolutely not. Drugs ... if there are any coming in, they're coming over by land, not by sea.

Calciano: Why do you say this?

Stagnaro: Well, 'cause I know, Elizabeth, that there's nobody here running anything like that.

Calciano: I was wondering if we have folks that come into the harbor that are really based elsewhere, that just come

in overnight and go out....

Stagnaro: Very little, very little. Now and then we see a wealthy yachtsman who's traveling ... don't even have to be wealthy, just a yachtsman, that's going from port to port, and he's certainly not going into traffic of any kind, 'cause it's easier for them to bring it in by land than by boat. Some might be coming in by boat in other areas, but so small, this would be peanuts.

Calciano: All right. Well, I just wanted to ask you. I figured you'd know as well as anybody.

Stagnaro: That's my own solid opinion.

Calciano: Yes. It's funny how these rumors go around.

Stagnaro: Yes.

Calciano: Because they get said often enough, and everybody assumes that if they hear something four times, it's a fact, you know.

Stagnaro: No. I think that a lot of these people get false propaganda ... we've had it before. We've had it the same way that even that drugs were coming over the wharf here in past years. The sheriff would come down and say, "Malio, do you think that drugs..." He said, "I get these reports," and they'd be fictitious reports. And you get a lot of fictitious reports on

anything like that.

Calciano: About what percentage of the boats in our harbor are owned by Santa Cruz residents?

Stagnaro: That I don't know. But you could probably get it from a lot of other people. People say, well not Santa Cruz people, it's the people coming from San Jose who's deriving benefits. Well those people coming in, they spend money when they come here. Let's not lose sight of the fact that they come here, sure, they got a berth for their boat here; it's nice, a good place to sail and everything else. They can go to Moss Landing ... now the commercial boats at Moss Landing, that's more of a federal harbor down there, stay down there for \$10-\$12 a month, Moss Landing.

Calciano: Is that all?

Stagnaro: That's all. They're not even paying ... I think they pay 35-40 a foot. I don't know the real exact figures right now, but....

Calciano: Do you have to be commercial to be in there, or....

Stagnaro: Commercial, but there's ... well we could go in there with our boats, and then they got a little deal over there on the side where they have the yacht harbor over there.

Calciano: Well why aren't all our boats trying to get in down

there?

Stagnaro: Well because they're full to begin with, and they take care of a ... it's more of a commercial deal, you know; it's not a clean harbor like we got here or anything else. So it's a commercial boat, a fish boat, and everything else.

COMMERCIAL FISHING, 1945-1972

Calciano: You mentioned in one of our earlier interviews about the fishing fleet going up as far as Fort Bragg and so forth. Do any of our boats here join that fishing fleet that goes way up, or....

Stagnaro: Well ... yes. Yes, some of our boats here; course we haven't got too many commercial boats here at all.

Calciano: Right.

Stagnaro: They are all at Moss Landing, 'cause the rates are so much cheaper over there, and so much higher here that the commercial boats ... they do fish from Monterey all the way up to Oregon even.

Calciano: Does the Stagnaro corporation....

Stagnaro: No, we have no commercial fish boats at all any more.

Calciano: Have there been any attempts to unionize the fishing industry?

Stagnaro: Well, attempt to unionize ... yes. But you see a

fisherman is an individual businessman; he's in business for himself. And therefore, being that you're an individual businessman and you unionize, then you're going against your anti-trust laws.

Calciano: Oh!

Stagnaro: So therefore they can't unionize. But they have cooperatives, which is a different way of unionizing, and the fishermen do kind of stick together. It can't be a union; it cannot be union, but they do work together until they get a price, and each port has a ... in Santa Cruz they have a boy named Dod Dodson --- he kind of represents the fishermen; they get together. In Monterey they got somebody. And the people that they have at the head, they kind of meet and they try to get together on prices. You see the salmon season opened here Saturday official ... open April 15 for commercial fishermen, but there's no boat fishing because there hasn't been any kind of a price settlement yet.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: But they can't be union.

Calciano: What about the crews?

Stagnaro: Now the crews ... the crew can belong to the union, yes.

Calciano: Is there a union for them to belong to?

Stagnaro: Well there is a union like ... but you see the boats, they were unionized, like I think the tuna fishermen have a union, and there's no more sardines, but the sardine fishermen used to have their union, but not the boat owners. The owners couldn't belong, but the crews could.

Calciano: Was there much resistance to unionization of the crews?

Stagnaro: None at all, no. No, there was no resistance.

Calciano: Because I imagine it would be more expensive to boat owners if they had unionized crews.

Stagnaro: The fishermen work this way, Elizabeth, you see when they worked on a crew, say you worked on a sardine boat, and say you have 12 working people, men working on the crew, and you work on shares. You don't work on wages; you work it on shares on these boats.

Calciano: I didn't know that.

Stagnaro: Yes. You work on shares. And say I owned the boat ... because we used to own boats, too. Now when we used to let our boats out, we used to give the fishermen, we'd pick up the gas and oil expenses first; then we would supply the nets and all the equipment; and we used to get 1/3, and the fishermen would get 2/3 after the

expenses were taken out, what we consider regular expenses. Now the purse seiners, where they had big investments, these owners, they had \$100,000 tied up in a boat and another \$20,000 in a net ... say they had \$120,000 investment, then maybe he'd get a share for himself, maybe 4, 5, or even 6 shares for the boat and then that's the way they divided it, you see? In other words, if you had say 14 men and the owner ... so there was 14 shares for the men, and six shares for the boat and net ... that would make 20 shares. And if you got \$20,000, there'd be a \$1,000 for each man and \$6,000 would go for the boat and that's after the expenses were taken out.

Calciano: Well then, what good did a union do for the crews? For example the working hours -- you've got to fish when it's in season and when the fish are running, and if you're earning shares instead of wages....

Stagnaro: Yes. Well, they tell them at the union that the owners wouldn't get so many shares, and those are the things that would have to be thrashed out, you know. Instead of getting six shares, maybe they say the owner should only get four shares, or five shares ... you know ... it was always something like that. It makes a job for the union business agents and gives them a living too.

Calciano: Have there been any big strikes? Every other industry seems to strike periodically.

Stagnaro: Well, no big strikes. The big thing was to settle the tunas; the people, they settled their prices with the canneries....

Calciano: It's more getting the prices which the crew and the owner would be interested in?

Stagnaro: Getting the price, see. Say getting the price for the crews on the drag boats ... if they'd been getting 10¢ a pound, maybe say well we're entitled to 12 or 14¢ a pound for certain fish and 8' ... you know, getting the price for the fish. And getting the weights, too, is another thing. Getting the weights is where the fishermen used to be really robbed years ago.

Calciano: You mean they'd say that fish....

Stagnaro: On the weight, yes. They'd deliver maybe 10 ton of fish and maybe they get paid for 5.

Calciano: Oh.

Stagnaro: So they got it so that they would have a man weighing the fish with the canners, and that way they'd get their weight. Maybe they'd take off ten percent for water, which was legitimate, and they would agree to that.

Calciano: Gilda says a lot of boats in here now are commercial fishing boats on weekends.

Stagnaro: Well it's come to that, yes. I can think of a good many people, Elizabeth, today, say they work five days a week and Saturdays and Sundays they're out fishing; fishing for salmon, where they're paying them as high as 84 a pound last year for salmon. Those fishermen are weekend fishermen. They call themselves commercial fishermen, and I kid them sometimes, "You're not commercial fishermen." I said, "You're infringing on the commercial fishermen." I said, "The real commercial fisherman is the guy that fishes seven days a week and paves the way for you fellows, and you fellows come and reap the cream and you call yourselves commercial ... and you get a commercial fishing license, but you're not commercial fishermen; you're either a plumber, you're a carpenter, or you're a metalsmith, or street sweeper, or working for the state, or the city, or county, or ..." ... and then out here, they've got another little business, and it gives them a write-off on their income tax, too.

Calciano: Oh yes, that's right!

Stagnaro: Being commercial fishermen, yes.

Calciano: They can have the pleasure of their boat and make some money and get a tax break.

Stagnaro: Right.

Calciano: When did the weekend fishermen start appearing on the scene?

Stagnaro: Oh, I'd say the weekend fishermen started appearing on the scene, Elizabeth, ten years ago, fifteen. They started ten, twelve years ago.

Calciano: Did they berth down at Moss Landing at that point?

Stagnaro: Some berthed at Moss Landing, some berthed right here in the Santa Cruz Harbor.

Calciano: But then what would they do if a storm came up? They had to run somewhere with their boat.

Stagnaro: Well they run right to the harbor.

Calciano: But I meant before this harbor was built. I was wondering if the harbor was what facilitated the....

Stagnaro: Well I think the harbor facilitated much of it, yes. The harbor has facilitated it, but you have to have it, you know. We had the powerboat clubs down here; they had their davit. They've been here 30-40 years, Santa Cruz Powerboat Club, and those fellows all fish, and they got their own little davit, and they pick up on the davit or some would use Twohig's small boat and use their deal there, and usually, Elizabeth, those

fellows go out with good weather ... good weather reports and weather conditions; storms just don't quite come up that fast that you don't know about them. Once in a great while you may.

C. STAGNARO CORPORATION RESTAURANTS -- THE SPORT FISHER, MALIO'S, AND GILDA'S

The Decision to Expand the Corporation's Restaurant Activities

Calciano: When did you open the Sport Fisher cafe?

Stagnaro: The Sport Fisher, the way it is now, we actually opened that up about eight years ago. Previous to that we only had seafood cocktails in there, not even salads and that was it.

Calciano: And how did you decide to open Malio's?

Stagnaro: Well, I decided to open Malio's because I could see the changes in the fish business itself. I could see the speedboat business was a thing of the past (we lost the pier where we ran the speedboats); our commercial fishing had dropped down, and even our fishing trips had dropped down due to the fact of the influx of the small boats and of the harbor where people have their own boats and take a brother or a cousin or an uncle or a sister out. Our sport fishing

dropped down, so we got to a point where we had lost an income of about \$20,000 a year. Actual income. And I could see that we had lost it and that we were dropping and dropping and dropping. And the prices of fish were going up, too, through the inflation. I guess we weren't raising our prices fast enough in our fish market; our profits there started to go down due to the inflation and the high cost of the imported fish, and even the local fish. So that brought the idea about to open up Malio's, which we opened Malio's about seven years ago this year it will be in October.

Calciano: It's that long?

Stagnaro: Seven years that we opened it up. Then I could see that when we changed over the Sport Fisher, in making it what it is today, more or less a salad room and a little hot food on a very small basis, it was very profitable to us. So I said, "Well, if this fills in the gap over here, Malio's, which is...." The restaurant is a very dangerous business. It's a very close marginal business, and you've got to do business, especially in a place like Malio's, to make it, because all the statistics, which we didn't know at that time, which I learned the hard way since, your profit will run you say between 5.5 and if you're a

terrific good operator and you kind of cheat the customers, why you can run it to 7.5.

Calciano: That's not much.

Stagnaro: Which is not much. So you see you've got to do a terrific gross business. In other words, at Malio's we've got to do maybe between \$500,000 and \$600,000 a year gross business to break even. Then if you go above that figure, then you start making some profit and good profit. Although you do a very good business year-round now. It isn't what it used to be; you do good year-round business in Santa Cruz today due to the growth of the population and your highways and everything else, plus a good reputation ... people come to Malio's from all over. And we have been profitable, but last year when we got the price freeze, we really suffered. We fell considerably. When we got that price freeze, we really took a thumping there for three or four months. We took a thumping, and we didn't have anywheres near the profit we should have had ... not anywheres near.

Calciano: Was your family in agreement on opening Malio's?

Stagnaro: On the opening of Malio's we were in agreement. Open up the coffee shop, they all got mad at me. (Laughter) They felt just the opposite.

Calciano: But that coffee shop was open before Malio's.

Stagnaro: Well, it was open before Malio's. But when I fixed the coffee shop, that was it. They couldn't see it. They couldn't see going from the cold food to hot foods. It was about a \$45,000 expenditure ... that's all that was.

Calciano: Well you've always served chowder there, haven't you?

Stagnaro: No.

Calciano: No?

Stagnaro: All we had was cold food there for a good many years.

Calciano: What I go there for is the good Boston chowder.

Stagnaro: We didn't have chowder or anything. That's when they got mad, when I went to the hot food. (Laughter)

Calciano: That's interesting. And when did you switch to hot food?

Stagnaro: I guess the coffee shop maybe is ten years old. Gilda could tell you better than I can.

Calciano: Yes. She said you added the booths in '62.

Stagnaro: '62 ... it's about ten years then.

Calciano: So the remodeling was done before Malio's?

Stagnaro: Oh yes. That was done before Malio's. In fact that's what give me the incentive to build a bigger one, when

I saw how well we were doing there in a small place.

But this was a big worry.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: But it's worked out. It's worked out.

Fish Supplies and Inventory -- The Fluctuating Market

Stagnaro: It'd better work out, because we have to make it work. out. 'Cause you see what's happened ... one time when you had a fish restaurant, no matter where you were on the coast, you had a little gold mine, but what's happened the last two, three, four years is that the prices of fish are going way beyond the price of the meat. As an example, just go down and see, just check the prices that they get at the fish market there. Now you take a year ago we were buying crab meat for \$1.50 a pound; now you got to pay three, three and a quarter, three and a half a pound, and I'm talking wholesale prices for crab meat. The crab meat down there now is \$6.00 a pound retail.

Calciano: Incredible!

Stagnaro: Or \$5.00 a pound I think. Crab meat's 5 and abalone is 6. Abalone used to buy at \$1.50, \$2.00 a pound ... abalone is now \$4.50, \$4.75 a pound, and try to get it. Try to get it.

Calciano: It's hard to get?

Stagnaro: I'm talking all wholesale.

Calciano: Yes. So that's why it's....

Stagnaro: Prawns used to be \$1.00, \$1.20, \$1.50 a pound. They're \$3.00, \$3.25, \$3.50 a pound. So there's where your seafood prices ... salmon, we paid the commercial fishermen prices last year that a few years ago we were selling retail.

Calciano: Why has it jumped so much?

Stagnaro: Scarcity and demand. Demand. And not only that, you see, the foreign countries ... they got all our money, and they're going out and outbuying us. You take the Japanese market ... the Japanese are outbuying the American Fish brokers.

Calciano: They're buying our catches?

Stagnaro: Well, they're buying some of our catches, but they buy like from Taiwan, where you get a lot of nice, big shrimp and prawns; it's where you get the best quality. The Japanese are outbuying us. And of course the quality is not as good in Singapore or Thailand or Korea, but where the quality exists, they're buying it, and they're paying the price. And the American public's paying through the nose.

Calciano: Once when we were talking about abalone, you said the

price per pound was such and such, and if you bought a ton it would be so and so. Now who would buy a ton of abalone? A restaurant doesn't buy that much, does it?

Stagnaro: I buy it by the ton ... and very glad to get it.

Calciano: You buy it by the ton?

Stagnaro: Oh yes.

Calciano: For Malio's?

Stagnaro: For Malio's, yes. So I've got it on hand. We usually have, let's see, we usually have not less than 60 cases which is 3000 pounds, 50 pounds to the case.

Calciano: This is frozen, or....

Stagnaro: Frozen. It's all frozen. Oh yes. Abalone freezes very nicely and thaws very nicely.

Calciano: I see.

Stagnaro: It takes something out of it ... anytime you freeze a fish, it takes something out of it. There's no question about it. It's always better in the fresh than it is in the frozen, but second choice, because it's seasonal.

Calciano: What is its season?

Stagnaro: Well abalone season's only closed about two months, but then you get a lot of rough, rough weather when the divers can't work, and therefore you've got to

have it on hand. Now, like this year, the season closed January 15th to March 15th. That's your closed season on abalone ... two months. But actually we didn't start to get any abalone until May 15th this year. So you see, if you didn't have the frozen, you'd be out. In fact, we were down to our last 5 or 10 pounds here about a week ago.

Calciano: Good heavens! Well now, if you buy it in season, are you able to buy it fresh, or do you still have to buy frozen?

Stagnaro: Most of the processors, they freeze it, then we buy it frozen. And when we get it in refrigerated trucks, we put it right in our freezers.

Calciano: And how many months does a ton last you?

Stagnaro: Why we used 50 pounds just yesterday alone at Malio's ... Mother's Day. We used maybe more than 50 pounds. So a ton doesn't last too long.

Calciano: One pound is how many abalone?

Stagnaro: Well, it ... see, it comes various sizes. Now we use the large steaks at Malio's, and in five pounds you get about, I'd say out of five pounds you get around 18 slices. In other words, it'll weigh around, oh, about five or six ounces to the slice, the large

slices, which makes a nice portion. You get pretty close, a little bit under half a pound.

Calciano: You must have huge freezers if they....

Stagnaro: Well, we've got a big freezer. We hold 50,000 pounds here. And then I also got 15,000 pounds of frozen shrimp alone in the freezer in San Francisco, at Merchants Ice Company ... this shrimp came from Taiwan; it's the big prawn. The six to eight we call them here. That means it runs from six to eight to a pound. We use them at Malio's. And we just bought it and ran us about \$3.25 a pound. So you see....

Calciano: Wholesale.

Stagnaro: Yes. See my inventory, I'll tell you right out, my inventory here, and I was getting low on some things. Just at the end of April, our inventory in fish alone ... that's what I keep telling the bank ... was around \$53,000 in frozen seafood. All these different species and varieties that we have to have. We have frozen abalone; we have frozen Australian lobster tail, and we carry frozen prawns, we have frozen shrimp, frozen crabmeat, and frozen salmon when the season's closed on salmon, 'cause the salmon season closes from September the 30th to April 15th. And we had a three-week strike; it actually didn't open for practically a

month later. So it's a good thing we had this frozen merchandise, or otherwise we'd have been out.

Calciano: Now when salmon does come in season, are you able to serve it fresh, or do you....

Stagnaro: Oh we serve it fresh as much as possible. We serve all the fresh fish; we just back up the fresh with the frozen. If we're out of fresh, then we use frozen.

Stagnaro: And there's many times you get stormy weather and everything like that, and not to be out and say to people well we haven't got it, we haven't got it, we have the frozen which is good.

Calciano: Most of your fresh fish buying is from where?

Stagnaro: We buy from all over. We buy from all over. We fly fish in from Seattle, comes in right today, and we got it the same night right here. Just as nice as if we caught it right here. We air freight it in.

Calciano: Do they have to refrigerate it to air freight it?

Stagnaro: It's cold. They fix it; they have certain things that they freeze; they have it in kind of a gelatin thing that they put on the fish and keeps it cold all the way down. Beautiful. Beautiful.

Calciano: Is it more expensive to buy the fresh?

Stagnaro: Well, Elizabeth, no, no. It's the same ... runs about

the same. Fish varies very little, very little in price. Sometimes you get a change of 2-3 per pound, 40 5 at the very most. There's a little change there once in a while when there's quite a bit of production, but very little. Fish is a very stable product, whatever you want to call it -- it's very stable. Very little change.

Calciano: Now do you mean all fish, or "fish" as opposed to "shell fish"?

Stagnaro: All fish and shellfish. 'Course last year now, what happened last year, the price of fish last year went up tremendously.

Calciano: Fish or shellfish?

Stagnaro: Especially the shellfish. Shellfish, mostly shellfish. Fish went up a little bit, but we had a 67% rise in the price of shellfish, more or less, last year from the first of July to the end of December.

Calciano: I've seen it in the supermarkets.

Stagnaro: And this is where most restaurants, including ourselves, got in a little bit of a bind, and we didn't show the profit that we should have shown for the work and the investment. It caught up with us. We changed our menu once, but then the price freeze came along,

and we got in that darn bind, and the price of fish wasn't frozen and boy, it really, the profits got away from us. We had a very disappointing profit at Malio's last year. And so did everybody else ... Al Castagnola, the Miramar, anybody else ... we all got caught in that bind. And we didn't rise enough in our prices on our menu to cover these big rises that we had. It was rough.

Calciano: Have you been allowed to compensate now?

Stagnaro: Oh yes. We've compensated three different times this year. We've had to change our menu three different times. We work with our auditors, we work with our bank, and the bank says, "Gee, you've got to make a loan" and they say, "Your profits don't show that you're justified in making a loan." We're coming up with a new coffee shop over here³ where it's going to cost us maybe \$250,000 or close to it for the building alone, and another \$150,000 worth of equipment ... we've got \$400,000 tied in the place of business before you even start. Besides your other hidden costs that you don't dream of even. You've got to be very careful. Sometimes I think we're crazy, 'cause we're all getting older, but it's the love of the business.

It isn't the almighty dollars, it's the love of the business, believe me.

Calciano: Yes.

Stagnaro: We love our business, you know, and our life. We put seven days a week, as I told you, in this business.

Calciano: Yes. I know.

Stagnaro: 12, 14, 16, 18, 20 hours a day, but we love it.

Calciano: Well, that's good. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: See? We're happy in it. That's the main thing.

Actually, we like to be successful, we like to make a profit and all that, but.... [Interrupted by a telephone call from a wholesale fish dealer.]

Calciano: Was that call from San Francisco?

Stagnaro: San Francisco. He's the broker up there.

Calciano: I should have left the recorder on; we'd have gotten a little bit of the real live dickering. (Laughter)

Stagnaro: Yes.

Malio's Mural

Calciano: Another thing I wanted to ask you is how did you

³The new coffee shop, Gilda's, opened in April, 1973.



Malio's Mural

happen to decide to do the mural? It's certainly a conversation piece. [The mural is in the bar at Malio's.]

Stagnaro: Well, Elizabeth, I wanted something different than a mirror in there, 'cause I think people get drunk, start looking at themselves in the mirror, and you get looking funny, and you start looking older, and you start looking uglier, and I've been through some of these stages myself, and I wanted something different. And I talked with the architects, Stevens and Calender, Architects, and they had a boy in there at that time, and he was trying to become an AIA you know ... he was finishing up, you see, before he could become an AIA, and he says, "Well Malio, how about a mural?" I says, "By golly, that's good thinking. And if we do, I'd like to come up with the characters of the wharf." So in looking around, I go to San Francisco, I ran into these boys, and by golly, Elizabeth, if they weren't from Santa Cruz originally.

Calciano: The ones who....

Stagnaro: The Redmond boys. And right away I walked in, and I kind of forgot the name, I never put these things together, and he says, "You're Mr. Stagnaro from Santa Cruz. My father was a very close friend of yours." And

they did the mural for us. So the former Santa Cruz boys went to school with my nephews and went to high school with my nephews and nieces, and their father was a painter, a house painter, and was a great friend of mine.

Calciano: That's great. So they already had an idea of some of the wharf people.

Stagnaro: So I told them how I wanted them with the mustache, and they made a lot of drawings and finally came up with what I wanted. And I had some old time postcards, some old postcards of the casino, of the Leibbrandt--Miller Bathhouse, which is the forerunner to the casino, and the old Sea Beach Hotel that I knew as a boy, and we had the davits and came up with something very nice.

Calciano: You pretty much specified what you wanted.

Stagnaro: Oh I specified what I wanted, yes. Then you see the trademark, which is myself on my brother's shoulders, that was an old original picture.

Calciano: Oh, really!

Stagnaro: So we got that, Elizabeth, and I had those postcards made ... I still got some around here someplace....

Calciano: Yes, you gave me one the other day; I enjoy looking at it.

Stagnaro: Yes.

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A WORD OF EXPLANATION

This index is intended to aid the reader in locating the themes, events, and individuals significant in the life of Malio J. Stagnaro and the Genovese community of Santa Cruz. Entries and sub-entries are listed alphabetically. Some entries are indexed in greater detail than others, according to their importance in Stagnaro's narration or my understanding of Santa Cruz Genovese history. In most cases the categories are based on words used by the interviewee himself.

A list of Italian and Genovese dialect words and their meanings is also included as is an alphabetical listing of all ethnic groups mentioned in the narration. See pages 442-444 of the index.

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