This is Lynne Bowen interviewing a number of Cumberland citizens at the Senior Citizen's Lounge in Cumberland, on February 02, 1984.

LB: I am talking to Dorothy Graham and Mary Conti, but Mary, you say your proper name is Marie, and last name Conti and your maiden name was Bono. Dorothy Graham, your maiden name was Maxwell. O.K., now we have been going through a bit of Dorothy's antecedents here. We made some notes, and we will refer back to your family as we go along, but, Mary, your father came out here with a group of Italian miners, or did he come by himself?

MC: Now that I couldn't tell you. I think he came out, he had a sister Mrs. Scavarda, and he came out.

LB: Scavarda?

MC: Yes. All his brothers and sisters are all gone now.

LB: Yes, but his sister was here before him was she? And she came out as a married woman?

MC: Now that I wouldn't know.

LB: You don't know that.

MC: She came out to marry Mr. Scavarda, her name was Bono you see. She came out and she ran a sort of a boarding house right in the corner where the chinese restaurant is. They had a grocery store and a boarding house, and my dad lived with her and then my mother came out and they got married.

LB: Was she running the boarding house - was her husband still alive at that time?

MC: Oh yes, he ran the grocery store.

LB: Oh I see, he wasn't a miner?

MC: No. I don't know now, but that is all I can remember, he ran the grocery store.

LB: What was the name of it, do you know?

MC: I don't know whether it had a name or not to tell you the truth. It was right on the corner there, and then after the fire, it all got burnt.

LB: Which fire?

MC: Oh, the big fire in 1933.

LB: O.K., the corner of Dunsmuir and ??

MC: Second I guess.

LB: Your father came out then because his sister was here, as far as you know?

MC: I guess so.

LB: Was he a miner?

MC: Yes.

LB: Had he been a miner in Italy?

MC: Now that I couldn't tell you. He must have been.

LB: You don't know?

MC: They didn't have mines where he was, they had farms.

LB: Most of the Italians were not miners before they came out. It interests me what made them choose to come to a mining area. Did he ever say anything to you about that?

MC: He came from the Northern part of Italy.

LB: Well there might have been another kind of mining there, because of the mountains.

MC: I don't know of any mines there. I don't think any of them worked in the mines before they came out here.

LB: A lot of the people I talked to say that their fathers didn't particularly talk about their work or anything. Would you say that about your father? Did he talk about what he did?
MC: I guess they never talked too much.
DG: I don't think they did.
MC: Not too much. They talked when they went out with the men, but I guess around home they didn't talk too much.
LB: I guess everybody was doing the same work and they didn't think it was anything remarkable. They didn't know that we would all be interested now.
MC: Yes, right.
LB: Now, as far as you, you don't know whether or not your father knew your mother in Italy before he came out here?
MC: Because my mother was born in France, and she lived there until she was twelve years old and they went to Italy. She only had one brother. On my father's side there were seventeen, I think in the family. They had two or three sets of twins. I don't know just how many there were, but there was a lot.
LB: Was your mother Italian?
MC: Yes.
LB: What was her maiden name?
MC: Cherritti.
LB: They are so musical. The names are so musical.
MC: Yes.
LB: So, do you know what year she was born?
MC: I did use to know, but I just can't remember now. She was 19 when she came out here.
LB: In 1898 did you say?
DG: How old was she when she died?
MC: 93
DG: And how many years was it since she arrived.
MC: Now that I have to remember. We lost her birth certificate. We had it, but we don't know where that disappeared to. It had everything about her on it, but I don't know what happened to it. It was all crinkled, all folded over, all split.
LB: Oh yes. But your sister was born in 1898 so she came out sometime before that.
MC: About a year or two before that.
LB: They were Catholics were they?
MC: I would say about 1893.
LB: That early?
MC: No, no.
DG: Was she born in 1898? Was Maggie born in 1898?
MC: Yes.
DG: Well, maybe 1895 then.
MC: Who?
DG: When your mother came here. So she was born about 1870?
LB: 1876?
DG: She was quite a bit older than my mother, and she was born in 1885.
LB: Did your mother speak English?
MC: Oh yes. There were lots of women out here that could never, ever learn. But my mother could speak just like we did.
LB: How many brothers and sisters did you have?
MC: There were nine in our family.
LB: And you were...
MC: The fourth.
LB: The fourth. Did you come from a large family, Dorothy?
DG: Five.
LB: Was it pretty common to have large families?
MC: Oh yes, most had large families,
DG: Four or five.
MC: and then after they gradually got smaller and smaller.
LB: I am trying to push back before 1900 in Cumberland's history. If anything occurs
to you about being told about the very early mines, but basically #1, #2, and #3,
#4, #5, and #6 opened in the late 1890's, but .. What about the presence of the
Dunsmuir family?
DG: I don't think they were around here. They had someone always living in their houses.
Beaufort House was up where the school is now. Wasn't there one family, Savage, that ran
things.
MC: I think so, yes.
LB: Well now, your husband's family, was there not a superintendent..
DG: My husband's father was the Superintendent of Canadian Collaries here, but he didn't
come here before about 1917. So, their history is not as...
LB: We should have talked to you two years ago about that. They just arrived to come and
manage the mine?
DG: Yes, because he lived in Nanaimo and worked for the Coal company there and then he lived
in Victoria and that is where he became connected with Canadian Collaries.
LB: What was his first name?
DG: Thomas Graham
LB: O.K., Mary, we have got to get back to this father of yours. Did he work in the mines
all his life?
MC: Well, after he came out here he did. He died in 1916.
LB: At quite a young age?
MC: Yes - 48. He got a poison and it killed him.
LB: In the mines? In a mine accident?
MC: They couldn't prove that it was in the mine, my mother never received any compensation
or anything.
LB: How did she raise her family?
MC: Well, like everybody else - worked. We all went to work when we were 12 years old.
LB: What did she do?
MC: We had cows which we milked and sold the milk, and she sewed and she did a little bit
of everything.
DG: It was an older son which took on the responsibility of the father.
LB: Any did he go into the mine?
MC: Yes.
LB: What mines did your dad work in - do you know?
MC: #4 mine I think.
DG: Yes, because #6 was closed by then.
MC: #6 was closed in 1903 I think.
LB: Did they, were there a lot of Italian miners.
MC: Yes. There was an Italian community way down at the end of the camp.

INTERRUPTION

JM: Anyway, I told him I wanted a barrel of molasses. O.K., he says, John I'll bring it.
So inside there, in the bottom, he brought his truck and he unloaded it. Of course
molasses is very heavy. Well it hit on the side. Well, there was molasses all over
the yard, six inches deep. He says, what are we going to do now? So I said, well we
JM: have to get it out of here Alec. So he went and got a load of gravel and he covered it up - by God he was good with a shovel.

MC: How many loads of coal a day did he shovel?

DG: 24 tons of coal a day he shoveled on and off the trucks - he was 64 years old.

LB: Your father?

DG: He was still doing it when he was 64.

JM: I never saw anyone who could work a shovel so good.

MC: Everybody down the alley used to say oh, I guess old Alex will be down there.

JM: When you mention coal, down there, the other day I paid three hundred dollars for oil for a month - no not a month - 30 or 40 days. Well years ago, I used to get 5 ton of coal, and we put it in our basement and that lasted the winter - that was $25 - that was delivered, and shoveled off.

MC: He got a dollar for hauling that coal and shoveling it off and on.

LB: Your father sold coal

JM: No.

MC: He delivered it for the Canadian Collaries.

LB: Oh.

MC: He got a special rate outside of his wage.

DG: Three dollars we paid and one dollar for hauling.

JM: Oh yes, Royston is three miles away. What made you think I was born in Italy?

MC: I don't know, but somebody was born in Italy. Was Silvia born in Italy?

JB: No he was born in Austria. This is a passport - you've heard of Frank Joseph? Remember he was out from Hungary? That is a copy of it. That is my uncle, they came over here in 1886.

LB: Oh my goodness, okay, just to add a new participant in this conversation, we now have Mr. John Marocchi, has joined us, his name is spelled Marocchi. You were born in 1900?

JM: 1896.

LB: 1896! I have cheated you. You were born in Cumberland or Union Bay?

JM: Cumberland, but they called it Union.

LB: Oh they called it Union, alright. So you were born down in the camp?

MC: There was no Campbell then.

LB: No, but down in the camp?

MC: They whole thing was just Union. The town was built after.

LB: Am I right in assuming that there was no town?

MC: No.

LB: It was all down there. When did it stop being called Union?

MC: I think it was about 18... , when was Cumberland incorporated? 1898? Around the same time?

JM: I think so, but we could find that out. Stevens, he has all the history.

LB: Now John, you have given me a photocopy of a passport - this is your uncle's?

JM: Yes.

LB: And, it is from Austria. Was your family but lived in Austria?

JM: They lived on the Italian border. You've heard of Queroh?

LB: Yes.

JM: That province belonged to Austria-Hungary. The first world war, when they finished up that province was given to Italy - divided up the spoils. That piece of land, they gave them that province.
LB: I see, now Mary you were saying that you thought your father's family came from Queroh.
MC: No, no, no.
LB: Didn't you?
MC: Turèêen.
LB: Turèêen, oh alright. Now my German is not very good, but I do see Fräœ Joseph's name in here - Fräœ Joseph the first
JM: It is bilingual, there is English and Italian. I have the original at home.
LB: Okay, now this is your uncle's passport - Giovani Marocchi.
JM: Giovani means John.
LB: Yes. Okay, now I wonder what this next thing is. Is this an occupation or something?
JM: Can you read it out to me, your eyes are better than mine.
LB: There is no English, there is"guerinaheim."
JM: Maybe it is Italian - I can read a little bit of Italian.
MC: Giœualiæare
JM: I will have to look up in a dictionary to find that out.
LB: I can look it up in a dictionary.
DG: Maybe that was his profession.
JM: Baker's were working at that time.
LB: They were baker's?
JM: Yes.
DG: You could smell they ten blocks every morning. All over town.- Marocchi's bread!
LB: Now there is a date on here that says 1866 - would that have been his birth date?
JM: That would be his birthday - 1886 when they came over here.
LB: Now it says, Stature Ordinariae and then it says Rotundo. Do you think it means he was fairly round.
JM: They were farmers, they only worked in the baking on the side.
LB: If someone described me as rotundo, I would think they would be saying I would be overweight - don't you?
JM: Yes, round - like a barrel.
LB: That might be a description of him?
JM: They wrote pretty good in those days didn't they?
LB: Yes, beautiful! Now did your father and his brother come to Canada together?
JM: Yes. That's another thing - how did... you see in 1986 when they left, how did they know to come? That is something I would like to know, but I never will.
LB: Why they came?
JM: Well how did they cross the continent?
DG: They came around the Horn.
LB: No, they could have come on the CPR.
DG: When was the last spike of the CPR put in?
LB: 1885.
DG: Oh, I see, because when my mother came out, they came around the Horn.
LB: Now Mary, your mother came across Canada on the train, or across the States? Because some people came across the States.
MC: I think they came across the States.
DG: Some of them came by covered wagon.
MC: Up to New York I think, and then down.
LB: So as far as you know, your father and uncle came on the CPR then?
JM: That is a question that I will never know the answer to.
LB: Did they ever talk about that trip?
JM: Yes and no.
MC: They maybe let the odd thing slip - they said how many days it took them to come over on the boat.
LB: Do you remember?
MC: No. They were way downstairs in a big room.
JM: You know, when I went over there with my brother, of course I was travelling with the CPR, it was beautiful, you had your own bed and everything, but when I went with my brother in 1911 we left Cumberland your aunt, she had to come back because her boy was shot.
LB: That was her son?
JM: No.
MC: My father's sister.
JM: Anyway, we had to pack our suitcases, we had cheese, salami and bread, it was terrible, you had to sleep on the seats, there was no..
LB: Was this on the train?
JM: On the train in 1911.
LB: Did your uncle and father come out here and set up as baker's?
JM: Yes. They worked in the mine, Number one mine, and my uncle broke his leg there. After that him and my father started up their business. I think they used to make 10 or 15 loaves a day.
MC: Well we won't say anything about the bootlegging they used to do. I always used to say there was more bread on our bill than there was anything else.
JM: Two for a quarter.
LB: But it was written down as bread?
MC: Yes.
LB: Okay, this is the big family business here? The bakery brewery?
MC: Yes.
JM: We sold beer too. There was no liquor vendor in those days.
MC: There was a prohibition.
JM: But when you mention about bootlegging, remember old Tommy Baker? His wife, she used to like beer too, so she would order two or three bottles of beer and she used to say, "don't mark down beer, mark down tomatoes." Old Tom got the bill and he would come to me and say, "Hey Johnny, did we eat all those tomatoes?" I let the cat out of the bag, and oh there was an awful row. But that's gone now. Tomatoes didn't work. But beer was cheap in those days.
MC: Yes, two for a quarter. Those quart bottles..
JM: The little ones were four for a dollar and a half.
LB: Was that bootlegged brew?
JM: No, no, we had a brewery in Cumberland at one time. They used to send the beer up once every Thursday from Nanaimo.
DG: Rifle Brothers.
LB: And it would come up by boat?
JM: No. It had to come to Union Bay, but
MC: Charmer
JM: It went a long way in a long time.
LB: Okay, now I have to try to sneak you back to before 1900 again. Did your uncle have a permanent disability from his broken leg? A limp?
JM: No.
LB: He didn't have a limp or anything?
JM: No, well a limp you say, well not much, he would limp a little bit, you could barely notice it. We had good doctors out here. They used to live in Campbell's old house.
JM: One was Gillespie, he was after. This was before Gillespie.
MC: I have seen the name in the museum over there.
LB: What was your father's first name?
JM: Giovanni John, my father's name was Louis.
LB: Your uncle was Giovanni?
JM: Yes.
LB: And your father was Louis?
JM: Yes.
LB: Now did they marry local girl?
JM: No, my father came from the old country with Annette, then my father died, then my uncle married his brother's wife, my mother.
LB: Your father died young then.
JM: Yes. He was very young, I don't think he was forty-five. You see, one day, we used to go out and get hay - we had a horse - and coming around the church, he was on top of that load of hay and when we started to go around the corner, the load of hay fell off, and he fell down and landed on his behind. After that he went to Wyoming to a doctor to try anything.
LB: Do you know what year your father was born?
JM: I've got all that information at home.
DG: Here it is here. One was 1866 so he must have been close to the same age.
LB: Was he older or younger than your uncle?
JM: I've got it at home - I didn't know what you were going to do here.
DG: Was your father younger than John?
JM: I think he was older, but I can't say.
DG: It would be one year one way or the other.
JM: Yes. I think he was older.
DG: 1865 then.
LB: So there are three people here and two of them are Italian, is that some kind of reflection of how many Italians there were in Cumberland?
JM: There was quite a few.
MC: There was a big community.
LB: Why is that? Did some come and then it became a good place for others to come to? What do you think - because they weren't miners in Italy.
MC: No.
JM: No, mostly farmers.
LB: Interesting to speculate how they ended up here. Of course there would have been a bit of farming here.
JM: There wasn't much around here at that time.
MC: And there wasn't much where they came from. Same as the British people. Why did they leave Britain? - there was more opportunity here.
LB: I've read a book about the early days of Comox and Cumberland and there are stories about how terrible the road was between here and Royston, basically I guess, between here and Courtenay and Comox. Do you remember that road?
MC: It was a cow trail.
DG: I think it was that way all the way to Nanaimo. I have heard of people riding a bike to Nanaimo to have a tooth pulled.
LB: Riding a bike!
DG: Yes. Now I don't know how true it was.
LB: Well I suppose if he couldn't wait for the boat. The boat came up every two weeks or something.
JM: The roads were pretty rough, because I remember your brother, he used to drive taxi, and one day he said to Johnny that he made a good trip today, I went to Nanaimo in four hours.

MC: That was good.

LB: That was in a car?

DG: Getting in all the sand holes was bad.

JM: You would sit there.

MC: Sometimes you got out and pushed.

LB: I wonder what Union Bay was like, really early on.

MC: Well that was the place the coal went.

LB: There would have been a lot of ships calling in there.

JM: Oh yes.

LB: Certainly there would have been opium in port if the Chinese were here.

DG: A lot of the men from Campbell would go down to visit those ships and have a heck of a good party.

LB: Now that is what I thought might have happened. There must have some interesting people on those ships.

DG: Yes.

JM: In those days, they didn't have oil, you used coal, and those ovens were hot.

LB: So, Little Union camp here, I suppose when you were born there was just a Union camp.

JM: In town. Well no, I have a picture, I must have been born in the house we had there Mary, because I have a picture and my father is holding me in his hands, in his arms and my mother and uncle together. I must have been not quite two, so that picture was taken in 1896, no 1898. So I must have been a year and a half.

LB: And where is that house?

JM: It burnt down in 1933.

MC: 1933 was the big fire.

LB: Was it this end of town?

JM: Behind the Cumberland hotel.

LB: Was it a nice house?

DG: It had a bakery shop.

MC: The other part didn't burn.

JM: They all burnt except the store.

DG: Because my mother was in the house next to the bank and it blew up the bank.

LB: To start the fire, that's right. Would your father have built that house?

DG: They started the business, so I imagine they built it.

LB: What about him? He was a carpenter?

MC: He was a carpenter, and old Tom Ripley.

JM: I found an old picture of Tom Ripley.

LB: Tom Ripley, was he another character?

DG: Well, he was sort of an old bachelor - a carpenter, wasn't he?

JM: Tom Ripley? - yes, he was a member. You know the Anglican church? - the first house there - he used to live there.

LB: Oh did he?

JM: You see, I am going further back than you are Dot.

DG: Well you are older.

LB: You know, I am wondering, I am intrigued to think about why your father came to Cumberland in 86.

JM: Well he came here to work, I guess.

LB: Because Dunsmuir didn't start here till 89, but there was a Sam Cliff, the union coal company, were trying to get things going before that.
DG: I would say that some of these fellows worked for the Union Coal Company before Dunsmuir took over.
MC: ... but they didn't have enough for that.
LB: Were there?
MC: Before any...
LB: In Cumberland? - or say Comox perhaps?
DG: No, none of them went to Comox, they all lived down here.
LB: And there were lots of miners here before Dunsmuir took over?
MC: There must have been, because in 1898 the school was built.
LB: Dunsmuir started here in 1889, but if your father came in 86 then there must have been quite a bit happening here before that.
JM: What was that?
LB: If your father came here three years before Dunsmuir started here, there must have been quite a bit happening here then.
JM: Well, when did Dunsmuir come here?
LB: He bought out the Union Coal Company, oh I think early in 1884 or something, but he didn't do anything with it until 89. He, as a matter of fact, Robert Dunsmuir, the father, wasn't interested in this coal field, but his son was.

END OF SIDE ONE OF TAPE

LB: .... your father and uncle mined.
JM: Well, I don't know, I couldn't tell. Ever since I was a kid, I remember them having the bake shop. I was about six years old when my father died, so that was pretty young.
LB: Number one mine has been a little hard for people to pinpoint where it is.
JM: Right down behind China town.
MC: They have a model of Cumberland over there now that you can press a button for Number one mine, press a button for Number two mine and a light shows up.
LB: Oh really. But can you go out there and actually see where it was?
MC: I don't think you could go out there and find it but you can on the model.
DG: How does it work, do you put a quarter in?
MC: No.
JM: Let me answer that question. When I was in Verona, Italy, in the big museum, no not a museum, it was a fortress and you put a lire in and you could have it.
MC: Mr. Edward Walker, a gentleman, retired in Union Town, better known as Cumberland, died at the age of 77, March 17, 1902.
JM: Who was that?
MC: Edward Walker, my mother's grandfather. So I knew there was something in here.
JM: Which Walker? Was he related to Nick?
MC: Hily Walker and Tal Walker were and Mrs. Perry, they were all the same family.
JM: Well Nick Walker, he had a, what do you call it, a cutty? He was a big shot in those days.
MC: I think he was, I think he was Tal Walker's son.
DG: I just wondered if it might say what year Dunsmuir came to Cumberland. There is somewhere that I read it.
JM: Which one is that Dot?
DG: I am talking about Edward Walker, he came here with Robert Dunsmuir. You see, he worked with Robert Dunsmuir.
LB: But he must have come up here on his own, up to Cumberland.
DG: Who?
LB: Edward Walker, he went to Fort Rupert with Dunsmuir.
DG: And then he went to Departure Bay.
LB: That's right. And then he worked in Departure Bay until Dunsmuir opened up here?
DG: He worked for Dunsmuir in Departure Bay.
LB: Oh that's interesting.
DG: Yes he did.
LB: But then he ended up here for the last days of his life?
DG: Yes. While everyone was at the post, he came with another young man Robbie Dunsmuir. The two men became working partners at Fort Rupert.

INTERRUPTION
DG: Well he was president, he took over.
JM: What did he do?
DG: He was a construction man. He moved down to Minto.
LB: What was the significance of Minto, when did that get started?
DG: It was a farming community. This is where we bought most of our fresh vegetables.
LB: Because I know that some of the people who were interviewed about the big strike said that when they were kicked out of the company houses, they went down to live in Minto.
MC: Yes, down to the beach at Royston, they lived in tents for two years.
LB: Well I knew about Royston.
JM: They went to live in Minto, because they were put out of their houses in Cumberland, because my wife was one of them - her father I mean - they had to go down to the beach. That was 1912 wasn't it?
MC: Yes, 1912 to 14. So this is why a lot of these people came to Cumberland after the next big rush of people. They went to England and brought a lot of these people out to work in these mines. They didn't know they were coming out here to strike break, because some of them never lived it down.
LB: There is still a lot of bad feeling in Nanaimo about it.
MC: In Lantzville and Ladysmith, it was really hot.
LB: The labour situation here, early on, do you know anything about it, what it was like say at the turn of the century?
JM: The labour situation - it was bad there for awhile, they were fighting. The Mounted Police, I remember one time, Jack McLeod was mayor of the town and, what did they call it, something when they take over,
LB: Read the riot act?
JM: Yes. They read the riot act. So of course up in the ground there, they had about two hundred soldiers, and one night, of course they had to eat, so I had to go up there with bread, my brother and I had a basket of bread and this fellow came along with a gun and he said, "Halt, who goes there?". I said, "the man with the bread." I didn't like that night.
DG: I would have backed down too.
JM: Advance and be identified, he said, well I said, here is the bread.
LB: John, think back when you were a little boy going to school, what did the union look like, the camp?
JM: Well, of course, for awhile there was, some of the houses are still down there.
LB: I know.
MC: Some of the original ones have all been remodeled.
LB: That painting and everything would have been done later?
DG: Oh yes.
MC: They painted them that dark red.
LB: They painted them a dark red.
MC: Some of them are still the same colour.
DG: He fell asleep on the railroad.
LB: Did the train run over him?
DG: No.
MC: Paris, they called him.
JM: Paris, do they mean Paris?
LB: What happened to him, you two guys are talking about him?
MC: He fell asleep on the railroad tracks a friend came along and took his arm off.
JM: And then there was another one, remember Dominic? You know one time, the Italians called him paulanka, did you see him?
DG: No, but I heard about him.
JM: Anyway, his arms, he couldn't use his arms very well and I went down there one day to see if he wanted any bread and he had this big corn meal, it was soft, and he liked this Roguefort cheese, and Roguefort cheese, when it gets through it gets wormy and maggots. I went in there one day and those things were jumping on the table and he took a piece of cornmeal and he would hit them. That's the truth!
LB: Was he a miner?
JM: Well he was, but then he got too old.
LB: I see, so that was why he couldn't move his arms. Well he was still getting his protein. you shouldn't waste anything, you know.
JM: What was the name of that guy? You know, Paris' house?
LB: Were these people who lived in the camp?
MC: I just can't remember.
JM: Because I called at the door, rapped at the door and no answer, but I could hear a gurgle - the strike was on then - and I thought that that didn't sound good, so there were policemen all around then so I went and called a policeman and said that there was something wrong in there. He knocked the door down, and here was this guy that had cut his throat. So right away they got the doctor and they saved his life. Then he went to Nanaimo and he got six months jail for that. Then he came back to Cumberland and he bawled me out for calling the police.
LB: You never did find out why he had done that?
JM: Well I don't know, but some people commit suicide, I don't know.
LB: Were there a lot of Italian people living in the camp.
JM: In the bottom
MC: They had a big hall. Remember the big parties they used to have.
LB: Was there a hall down there?
MC: Right down the end of the camp.
LB: Oh really.
MC: It's not there now.
LB: Where the dead end is?
DG: Right there.
MC: Back behind china town, they had the Italian community.
LB: The Italian community hall - or the Italian community people, district?
DG: They all lived down there didn't they?
MC: I didn't live down in the camp.
DG: No, but most of them did.
JM: Another good story my uncle told me about a fellow in Cumberland - this Italian boy came to work, and when they came here they didn't have any money, so he had to have a pair of pants, a pair of shoes and a bucket and things weren't cheap in those days, so he went over to Sam-Elias', and he got a job and he wants a pair of shoes and a bucket so he got them, but he said that he would pay you as soon as I get paid. Well, that was okay, so one week passed, two weeks passed, three weeks passed and nobody came in. So this fellow, the storekeeper, he came over to my uncle and he said, "do you know this fellow?" "Yes," said my uncle, he said, "He promised to bring in the payment and he hasn't come yet." My uncle said, "give me the slip", so he gave him the slip and he looked on it and on the slip was Giovanni Parto, which means tomorrow I'm leaving. He said, "you'll never get paid now." He started to laugh, and the shopkeeper asked what was the matter and my uncle said that he had signed his name Giovanni Parto, and in Italian that means tomorrow I'm leaving.

LB: I love it.

MC: They always tell the story about the one that went in to buy a file from Molly. She said, "what kind of a file is it, is it this bastard file?", and he said, "no, I already have some of those".

LB: Did the Italians that worked in the mines here, did they get their ticket and become coal miners? Were they backhands, or...?

JM: Oh no, they were all good miners.

LB: They would have learned it when they got here?

DG: You didn't need a ticket to work in the mines here, just a good strong back.

LB: No tickets.

JM: No, no, there was no restrictions like there is now.

LB: How far back would that go? In later years did they need a ticket?

DG: Oh well for fire boss and that.

MC: That's right. My brother worked down in the mine and my brother-in-law, and I don't think they had anything.

LB: They were so short of labour, that they would take anybody that they could get?

DG: Cheap labour.

MC: If they wanted to become fire bosses, then they went after a ticket.

LB: Did you ever have much to do with china town?

MC: We used to go to china town get number 5 get down, and number 1 get down.

DG: China town, there wasn't many families.

MC: Originally, they left their wives in China and I think it was like they were saying about the story about Jumbo, they thought he had two different names. Because when one chinaman died another would just grab his documents and took on his name because he was in the country illegally. So you never knew.

LB: Where did they get in illegally - did they come in right at Union Bay?

MC: At the dock shipyard.

JM: Old Jumbo.

MC: A lot of people thought that.

LB: Yes, and I suppose working on the E & N as well.

MC: Probably, and working on the CPR right across the country, and brought in on these boats to Union Bay, jumped ship and...

LB: Yes, that is what I wondered if they had been brought right in to Union Bay.

MC: I am sure that is how a lot of they came.

JM: It was quite a community at one time.

MC: Biggest china town in North America, down to San Francisco.

JM: We used to go down there at night with bread, they used to come on about 4:00
JM: and sometimes it would be 2 or 3, we used to bake, the fire was on the inside, first it took an hour and a half or two hours to heat the oven up.

LB: You built a fire inside the oven?

JM: Yes. So around the furnace, there were always about 6 or 8 loaves that were a bit dark, so I wanted to get rid of the black ones, so I would go down to chinatown and the chinamen would come out and say, "Hmmm, hot bou mann bow". I heard this for week after week, so then I got hold of a fellow that could speak English, and asked him what it meant, and he said, "black bread."

LB: Burnt bread. They bought bread?

JM: Oh yes, they liked it hot.

LB: Did they buy the black bread?

JM: No, well it wasn't what you called black bread, just a little over done, and I wanted to get rid of that first.

LB: Did you give them a good deal on it.

JM: Oh no, it was four for a quarter. That was a good deal, a loaf of bread at Overwaitea is $1.19.

LB: Not good bread either.

JM: Oh I wouldn't say that, it's not too bad, but we had pure bread - nothing put in it. I remember we had venables there for ten years. Flour, water, sugar, malt, nothing. you take a loaf of bread now and they stick all sorts of stuff in it.

LB: That interests me that the Chinese eat the bread, because I would have thought that they would have just eaten rice.

JM: Oh no, they ate rice too. That was their main.

LB: Gee whiz, if you would have taken bread down to chinatown, you must have been selling a lot of bread.

JM: Well, I told you when my people started they were making ten or twenty loaves, but when they died, then of course the population was getting bigger, we had two bake shops - one in Courtenay and one in Cumberland. I built them up pretty good. I used to leave Cumberland every morning about seven o'clock with six or seven hundred loaves of bread. I used to go to Courtenay and work my way down to Comox and then to Union Bay n- and also to Fanny Bay. I had a pretty good business worked up.

LB: I bet you did. So did you build it up?

JM: Well I had to.

LB: So you took it over quite small and built it up?

MC: Well they started it.

LB: Yes. Your father started it.

JM: Beg your pardon?

LB: Did you build it up from what your father had started, or was it a pretty big business.

MC: It grew.

JM: But of course, more people were coming. It was nothing to take five of six hundred loaves of bread every morning - I had to. Then the ships used to come in to Comox - Ellis had the store down there and Ball was before him - Clearwater, and what was the other one..

MC: Not the good ship McQuinna.

LB: When was this John?

JM: Oh, I forget, every summer they would come.

DG: Yes, there was quite a few.

JM: They used to park themselves out in the Gulf - and they would want two thousand loaves of bread. Two thousand loaves of bread was a lot to make.

LB: Now, I notice that both Mary and John, your father's started the island.
MC: Yes.
LB: Were your mother's - your mother married her brother-in-law?
JM: Yes.
LB: And your mother remained a widow?
MC: No.
LB: It must have been a fairly common thing, for women to be widowed?
MC: Well look at the explosions they had in the mines.
LB: Yes. Did they basically stay here?
MC: Most of them, yes.
LB: Yes.
DG: They families went away after
MC: They stayed until the town started to die.
JM: I remember one time, my mother and I - I was just a kid - I had a fight with my mother, you know how kids fight, and I said, "I am going to go live with Mrs. Wood. I picked up my shoes and a couple of shirts and went over to her brother's place, and of course it got dark. I was starting to think, "Gee, it is starting to get dark, this is not like home", so I went home again.
LB: Did you say Mrs. Dallas?
JM: Mrs. Dallas, yes.
MC: She owned the Waverly Hotel.
LB: So there was mixing, the Italian people didn't stick to themselves?
JM: No.
LB: It seems to me in the early days of lots of places in Canada, for the women especially, it was so much more pleasant for them to stay with people who spoke the same language and who did things the same way. Sometimes there wasn't much mixing because of it.
MC: Well, I don't know Lynn, are you getting anything?
LB: Oh yes. I am getting lots of stuff, you just wouldn't believe it.
JM: It's hard to know all these things.
LB: It is especially hard trying to do what we are doing now. The last project we did, everybody was talking about their own lives, what they had done, and now we are trying to get people to remember what their parents did. It is much more difficult, because most people's parents didn't seem to talk much.
MC: We just got little bits.
JM: A fellow came from Vancouver to interview me, and he said it was going in the archives in Victoria.
LB: Yes, well that is where this going too. You see what we will do here is, we may make out a sheet of paper on everything that is on the tape and they will cross index it, so that someone that is interested in bakeries will go into the archives and look up bakeries, and find out that there is a tape with things about bakeries on it.
JM: We had one of the first bakeries...
DG: Around here anyway.
MC: Hallidays - when did they start?
DG: Oh after.
MC: Hallidays, they worked for you didn't he.
JM: No.
DG: Oh, he worked for Ouchenbaugh.
LB: That is an Austrian name isn't it?
DG: No it is Scotch.
LB: Oh that's right. Somebody wrote me after the book came out to tell me that Ouchenbaugh was a Scottish name. And most of the miners who talked about them, thought they were Austrian or German.

.../15
DG: Oh no. There was Mr. Ouchenbaugh of Union Bay, he had a very, very scotch accent - strong scotch accent.

LB: Now who is this gentleman?

DG: Well he was superintendent of Union Bay

LB: He was also involved in the Jinglepot Mine in Nanaimo.

DG: Yes. He came from Nanaimo to Union Bay.

LB: I wonder when that would have been.

DG: Gosh, I couldn't say, but his wife was a Kerr, Mrs. Ouchenbaugh was a Kerr.

LB: From here?

DG: And they were from around here and Victoria, and Mrs. Kerr and old lady Graham came across the United States in a covered wagon.

LB: So this is your mother-in-law.

DG: My mother-in-law.

LB: Was your mother-in-law from Cumberland?

DG: No. She was from Illinois originally, and Tom Graham was straight from Scotland. Mrs. Kerr, old lady Kerr, was still a great friend of Mrs. Graham until the day she died. But Mrs. Ouchenbaugh, and I will tell you another family in Nanaimo was Mrs. Ouchenbaugh's sister who was married to McGarrigle - remember that name.

LB: Nanaimo, in the early days or actually right up to about 1930, most of the babies were born at home or in nursing homes - what about here?

MC: At home.

LB: Were you all born at home?

DG: The house I was born in is still there.

LB: Were there midwives or did women help each other?

DG: They had midwives, because I have an original photostated copy of my birth, we were registered, but never got birth certificates, and I got it a few years ago and the names were on it. The midwife was Mrs. Walker, no relation to us, but another Walker.

LB: And she lived in Cumberland?

DG: Yes.

MC: My mother was always a midwife.

LB: It is interesting that often happened with women who were widowed.

DG: They ended up being midwives.

LB: I wonder if they got paid.

MC: If anything went wrong, they would always come to my mother.

JM: She was the leader.

LB: Was she?

JM: If you were to mention Walker, was there one at Fanny Bay at one time? Any relation?

DG: Well Joe Walker at Union Bay and Tal Walker at Fanny Bay.

JM: There were two boys who went duck hunting one day and never returned.

DG: One boy, yes. Only one went and that was the youngest one - Nicky I think his name was, But Joe Walker's father, Tal Walker, from Fanny Bay, was my mother's dad's brother. And Tyler Walker from the Power House was also another brother. And Mrs. Carry was his sister.
DG: They were a big family. They had a lot of children, but we don't know half of them. She was born in 1903, Mary just had her 80th birthday.

LB: I don't believe that, I think she is lying to us.

MC: Cumberland people are well preserved.

OVERLAPPING CONVERSATION

LB: Okay, why are Cumberland people so well preserved.

DG: That is what Tom Barnet wanted to know when he came up to the Centennial Village. Everybody up there was around 85 or 90 years old.

LB: Did it use to be dirty, was there a lot of coal....

JM: Oh yes.

MC: The dump that burned out at Pigeon Lake for years - you could smell sulphur.

DG: That was why you couldn't keep paint on your houses.

LB: Did it bother, was it strong enough to bother your eyes?

MC: I don't think we noticed it, because we were born with it.

DG: Once in a while it was stronger than others.

LB: Where is Pigeon Lake in relation to

MC: Out Beban Road, where the dump is now.

LB: Okay, maybe between #5 and #7?

DG: Just beyond, close to #5 mine.

LB: So it was a dump from #5 then?

MC: Yes, and it caught on fire and just burned forever. Now there are beautiful trees growing out of it. Now they put the garbage there, so you will never know how deep it was. They say Pigeon Lake had no bottom.

JM: That's right. That's what they said, but they have a bulldozer out there Mary, they burn all the rubbish. Seagulls out there Mary.

MC: Thousands of them.

JM: And the bears come in at night.

MC: Yes, sometimes they get in out backyard. I live on Beban Road.

LB: So are they dumping garbage down into the mine?

MC: No, no, no, ... it is close to where the mine was.

OVERLAPPING CONVERSATION

MC: I have a hole in my backyard that started out that small, and it is that big now, and I'm afraid I am going to slide into a mine somewhere.

JM: Maybe down into #5.

MC: I could.

LB: It wouldn't be surprising.

MC: The first couple of years I just filled it with rocks, the next year there was a hole there and the rocks were gone.

LB: Are there any stories around here about buildings sinking into the mine workings.

DG: No.

LB: I guess that is because the coal is so deep here.

MC: But do you know where Cease and Alec live, just down from the hospital, they used to be able to sit in their kitchen in the morning and hear the men working.

DG: Oh yes. You used to be able to hear the shots going off. Every now and again, a fence post would disappear.

MC: I had an Uncle killed in that mine in the big explosion of 1903, was it?

JM: 1901 or 1902?

MC: 1902 was it?

LB: There was one in 1901 and one in 1903.

MC: Both in the same mine?

LB: Yes.
DG: 03 was the last one, and they closed it up then.
LB: They used it as the return airshaft for #5.
DG: Yes.
LB: It was a very dangerous mine

END OF TAPE
Prior to turning on the tape recorder I gleaned this information from Mrs. Dorothy Graham, Box 157, Cumberland, B.C., who "had nothing of interest to tell" but in fact was a most interesting lady.

Her maternal grandfather was Alfred Walker who was the engineer on the engine involved in the Trent River disaster in 1898. Her mother, Mary Ellen Walker Maxwell was interviewed by the Archives in 1952 regarding this disaster.

Her mother, Mary Ellen was born in Departure Bay in 1884 or 1885 and died in 1958 aged 73.

Mary Ellen was the daughter of Edward Walker who came to Fort Rupert at the same time as Robert Dunsmuir although he came to North America separately from Gatehead, England. He moved to Nanaimo with Dunsmuir and to Wellington after Dunsmuir discovered coal. He died in Cumberland where he is buried. His wife was Selena Sage who arrived in Nanaimo with her parents aboard the Princess Royal. One of her siblings died on the trip over. She too is buried in Cumberland. Their son was Alfred, the engineer.

Mary Ellen married Alexander Maxwell who was born in Scotland and emigrated to Ladysmith.

Mrs. Graham married the son of the Canadian Collieries Superintendent. She is related to Mrs. Martin of Nanaimo (Whittingham and Martin)