

SPEAKER 1: The following is an interview with Dr. Henry Fishetti, a Duluth physician of Italian ancestry. The interview took place on February 13, 1980 in Dr. Fishetti's home at 225 North 26 Avenue East. The interviewer is Jaqueline Rothview Moran, a local student of history.

J.R. MORAN: Dr. Fishetti, where were you born?

FISHETTI: I was born in Duluth, Minnesota in Sixth Avenue West, behind the courthouse.

J.R. MORAN: May I ask in what year you were born?

FISHETTI: I was born October 22, 1909. I might say that I was born at home. People will sometimes ask me, "Well, how come? How come you were born at home?" I like to make a little joke of it and say I was born at home for the simple reason I was so attached to my mother. I didn't want to leave home at such an early age.

J.R. MORAN: That's very good. Where were your parents born?

FISHETTI: My mother was born in the town of [Invicta] about 25 miles inland from Naples, and adjacent to the small town where my father was born; a town of [unintelligible - 00:01:33] and neither had been to each other's hometown.

J.R. MORAN: Okay. We'll get to the meeting between your parents in just a few minutes here. What was your father's occupation in Italy?

FISHETTI: He was a cabinetmaker.

J.R. MORAN: Why did he come to this country?

FISHETTI: I'm sure the reason that most of the time -- not only my father, but the rest that came to this country -- was that they thought they could better their lot in life. What they had in Italy was a standard of living that was very low. The chance for bettering oneself was very poor. About the turn of the century is when all the reports came from the United States that this was a land of tremendous opportunity, of tremendous wealth and the average European was thinking he could better his lot.

J.R. MORAN: Why did your father come to Duluth then? Was he encouraged to come by friends or relatives here?

FISHETTI: The reason that my dad came to Duluth, I'm sure, was by reason of the fact that he was preceded here by his cousin, Captain of Police Anthony Fiskett. Also, my father's brother had preceded him here. When the average Italian left Italy for the United States, he went to the place where either a member of the family or some friend had preceded him.

J.R. MORAN: Your father's brother was here in Duluth also?

FISHETTI: Yes.

J.R. MORAN: Now, we'll get to the story of your parents' courtship and marriage. I know that's an interesting story.

FISHETTI: My father came about the turn of the century. He worked as a cabinetmaker out in [Scotland Graff] for a while and then, when he saw that you could make a better living with a small store as his brother had been, he thought well, maybe he'd better do the same thing. So, he did start a small store and a restaurant and a tobacco shop and sundry items. After he had done rather well, he bought a home. He decided that maybe it was time for him to get married. He met his future wife, and my mother, through the same Captain Fiskett who was a cousin to my dad and who, on being approached on the subject of marriage by my father, mentioned to my dad that he knew of three sisters in Newark, New Jersey who came from the town adjacent to my father and that he would be very happy to introduce my dad to these three sisters from Newark, New Jersey. This was done through the intermediating correspondence between Captain Fiskett and my father and the three sisters. **[00:05:08]**

After going to Newark, New Jersey with Captain Fiskett and meeting the three Bellefonto sisters, my dad became quite attached and quite attracted by the smallest of the three sisters, my mother, whose name was Agnes Bellefonto. You see, the romance started not in Italy. They had never been to each other's hometowns, but it was promoted and vetted and maybe engineered by a relative, Captain Fiskett. After

several trips out east by train, which in those days took a two or three day deal each way, my father and mother ultimately got married in Newark. An interesting facet of this is that many years later I found a bundle of letters tied with a blue ribbon which my father had saved. These were the letters that my mother had written to my father during their correspondence courtship. Reading these letters -- they were of extreme interest to me, especially the last one, which was a very sentimentally written and a very well written letter from my mother to my dad accepting his proposal of marriage. The letters were numbered, one, two, three, four, five, six, et cetera, and the last one was not numbered, but on the envelope was written, in my father's handwriting the word "accettazione" which means acceptance. In other words, this was my mother's letter to my father's proposal; her letter of acceptance, and the subject matter, the way it was written, was so impressive to me that that's a very, very touching moment in my life because it consisted primarily of these few basic statements. That my mother was very flattered to think that a gentleman like my father would think that well of her. She liked him, they seemed to get along fine, they had common interests, they both came from the same part of Italy. Then, the last paragraph was especially well written to the effect that if he thought that well of her and that highly of her, despite the fact that she would be leaving all her family and relatives in New Jersey and going way out west -- Minnesota, in those days, was considered almost wild Indian country -- that if he felt that much of her, then she was perfectly willing to accept his proposal and hope for the best.

J.R. MORAN: Do you still have these letters?

FISHETTI: I've got them. I don't know just where they are now. I misplaced them for a number of years and I was just sick.

J.R. MORAN: Other than the courtship itself, would these letters reflect the lives of the two in the Italian communities at all?

FISHETTI: No. It had nothing to do with that. They were fairly personal letters written about the thoughts between them.

J.R. MORAN: After your parents married, then they came to the home that your father had already purchased.

FISHETTI: Yes.

J.R. MORAN: This, actually, is an area about seven or eight blocks from the heart of the area known as Little Italy, was it not?

FISHETTI: Yes. My father had bought a house on Sixth Avenue West, behind the courthouse, and it was a five family flat or apartment house. He lived in one with his mother and sister, whom he had brought over from Italy after he had been here some time and had made enough money to do so. So, actually, my mother's first experience in Duluth and her first home after being married was something the average housewife now would never think of doing, and that was moving in with not only her new mother in law, but also her sister in law. [00:10:19] When I think of the circumstances, it must have been a very difficult thing for her to leave all her relatives and friends, come to a totally strange part of the world and, not only that, but to live, not in their own little home, but in a family environment of in-laws.

J.R. MORAN: That, of course, was more common.

FISHETTI: Oh, yeah. I know. It was a necessity, also.

J.R. MORAN: How about the other units? Were they occupied by Italians?

FISHETTI: No.

J.R. MORAN: They were not?

FISHETTI: No.

J.R. MORAN: I mentioned before that that home was some distance removed from the Little Italy, the area known as Little Italy. Was there any particular reason why your father moved closer to the Northern Italians in Duluth at that time?

FISHETTI: Yes, there was a reason, but it had nothing to do with living near Italians or otherwise. His little restaurant and store was at the bottom

of Sixth Avenue West and [unintelligible - 00:11:24] Street so it was really two blocks up the hill, so he bought a place that was within walking distance of his place of business.

J.R. MORAN: Would you say that your father was more prosperous, in general, than most of the -- let's say -- the Southern Italians?

FISHETTI: I think he -- if you measure prosperity, it would be relative prosperity. I think he did well enough to support his family in a fairly comfortable way, but only because of the hard work and long hours. He would open his little store and restaurant at 8:30 in the morning and stay until midnight seven days a week. So, really, he did a remarkably wonderful job of supporting a family on 10¢ or 15¢ lunches and cigars and tobacco and watches and pipes and so forth. We were comfortable, yeah.

J.R. MORAN: How about relative to other Italian merchandizers and businessmen in the city? About comparable?

FISHETTI: I think they all did fairly well. There were a number of the -- oh, it must have been about a couple dozen of the Italian Americans rather evenly distributed between the Northern Italians and the Southern Italians that went into business. I'm thinking primarily of some that were four or five in the grocery business, some were in the restaurant business. They all wound up, as you might say, lower or middle income -- lower middle -- low middle income group of people, from an economic standpoint.

J.R. MORAN: It would seem that the children of that group of businessmen have prospered to a greater extent than perhaps the children of some of the laboring and working class Italians.

FISHETTI: Well, I suppose that would be right because if the father was reasonably successful in business or whatever his occupation, then the finances were there to send probably the oldest son to a college education.

In the average Italian family, the oldest son was the one that was concentrated on from the standpoint of education and was kind of looked on as the one who would be the one to perpetuate the family name.

J.R. MORAN: Was your father an educated man?

FISHETTI: No. My father had gone through the usual elementary grades. In the times that I was in my father's hometown and had a long talk with the principal of the school, who was a member of old family friends, the education to sixth grade at that time corresponded to almost the same as a high school education as we have it in this country. **[00:15:02]** From a standpoint of native intelligence, my dad was, I think, above average.

J.R. MORAN: You mentioned once before that your father was an agent for one of the shipping lines.

FISHETTI: Yes. All of the Italians that had little businesses between **[unintelligible - 00:15:30]** Street, and I can think of three or four families, there were two or three Italians who were business people across the street from the Union Depot. They sold railroad tickets, they even sold steamship tickets and my dad also sold them. He was not a specifically appointed agent, but gave this service to the Italian Americans who wanted to either return to Italy or who wanted to send passage to some other member of the family whom they wanted to get over. It was kind of a service to their customers.

J.R. MORAN: Did the shippers or the railroad agencies seek these Italian businessmen out or did they solicit these jobs as agents? Do you know anything about that?

FISHETTI: I don't know how that came about, but I suppose the businessman saw an opportunity of providing a service and also making a little profit on selling a ticket. Another thing that the business people did, those who were literate and who were in business, they would sometimes be

asked to send money back to Italy and sometimes even to write letters to those who were not literate.

J.R. MORAN: So, your father did act as a banker at times, then, for other...?

FISHETTI: Not really as a banker, but as an ombudsman in corresponding or communicating between those in Italy and those who were here.

J.R. MORAN: I see. But he did not hold money for...

FISHETTI: No.

J.R. MORAN: ...the Italians?

FISHETTI: No.

J.R. MORAN: Or anything of that nature.

FISHETTI: No, he did not act as a banker.

J.R. MORAN: How about as a ticket agent? Was it ever the case that the local agents might have encouraged immigration in any way or did they simply sell the tickets?

FISHETTI: I don't think that they were actively engaged in promoting ticket sales. I think that they sold the tickets only because there was a certain percentage of their business that was amongst the Italians, either coming over from Italy or going back to Italy for a visit or sending money back, but I think it was just brought in to providing a service and that was how that came about.

J.R. MORAN: I see. You mentioned that Captain Fishetti, or Captain Fiskett as he was known, was your uncle who was a Captain in the Duluth Police Department. What year was that? Do you know?

FISHETTI: I would say that Captain Fiskett joined the Duluth Police Force about 1890. There is a picture of the Duluth early police force hanging in Grandma's salon, and the Duluth police force consisted of about eight policemen and in the front row there's a picture of old Captain Fiskett sitting down. He's an ordinary patrolman and I would say that would be about 1890.

J.R. MORAN: He was not a Captain at that time.

FISHETTI: No. He rose to the rank of captain and was captain of the police force for almost 40 years. Between the old captain and his son, Ralph, they had a total number of years of service on the Duluth Police Force of almost 100 years.

J.R. MORAN: He actually began his law enforcement career here in Duluth, he was not an officer in another town?

FISHETTI: No. When Captain Fiskett first came over from Italy, he went to the area of Bayfield, Wisconsin and just worked in the stone quarries there.

J.R. MORAN: It actually was rather unusual to have an Italian immigrant -- was he Italian born?

FISHETTI: Sure he was.

J.R. MORAN: Yeah. This actually was very unusual to have an immigrant Italian on the Duluth Police Force. Actually, there were no other Italian policemen on the force for years and years and years. In fact, very few in the entire century.

FISHETTI: Yes.

J.R. MORAN: Is it true, for instance, that he took the local Italian lawbreakers in hand and warned them that they'd answer to him if they ever erred again?

FISHETTI: **[00:20:05]** Yes. He was highly respected by the local Italian town, and he would intercede for those that he thought needed some intercession. He would counsel families. Many was the time that he would prevent some young Italian boy or some Italian adult from going astray by just giving them good advice. I know he was very well self-educated, but he had gone to school when he first came over, and Captain Fiskett could write impeccably and beautiful calligraphy with excellent grammar and he spoke Italian without an accent, which is quite an accomplishment when you come over as an adult.

J.R. MORAN: He spoke the English language.

FISHETTI: Yeah.

J.R. MORAN: Without an accent.

FISHETTI: He spoke English beautifully without an accent. He continued to correspond with me until a short time before he died. He corresponded with me during my service years when I was in the service and he was very highly looked up to by me. I thought he was a wonderful guy.

J.R. MORAN: It's unusual that he was able to attain this position at a time when in the Duluth Police docket or the records of the arrestees and so forth, Italians were still being referred to as dagos.

FISHETTI: Right. Right. But, although Captain Fiskett was a small man physically, he was a dynamic man. He was fearless. He was even wounded once in the line of duty. He inspired respect. It was not a matter of his size or his general appearance, but he was a very high grade man. It's coincidental that an internationally known police officer in New York City whose name was Captain Fiaschetti, F-I-A-S-C-H-E-T-T-I, came from the same part of Italy. Now, whether he was related or not to the local captain, I do not know. But, it was a coincidental happening that there would be two police officers with about the same name and one very well known internationally and the other one just very well respected locally.

J.R. MORAN: That's interesting. All of these Italian street gangs that we've heard so much about, were you a member of the local red setter gang or any of those?

FISHETTI: No. There were no Italian street gangs that I knew of. There may have been some groups a little to the west or that Italian enclave that was on Little Italy. There were groups of kids, but whether they had names or not I do not know. I do know that we would once in a while have a so-called "rumble" or a little fight up by the observation playground that we used to call The Rocks. We'd go up there and there'd be a little warfare between the first street gang of Slovenians and the Norwegians and so forth. They'd go up and...

J.R. MORAN: So, there was some ethnic makeup of the gangs or would you say it was more of a geographic?

FISHETTI: I think it was geographic. Whoever happened to be in that area, you automatically, if you wanted to be one of the boys, you just fell in.

J.R. MORAN: How about your own education? When did you graduate from medical school?

FISHETTI: 1936.

J.R. MORAN: And you started practicing when?

FISHETTI: Yeah, I did -- I interned at St. Mary's in '36. [00:25:04] And then in the year of 1937 I ran the county hospital, which was known as the Hearing Hospital, and was merely the old county jail that have been converted into a 90 bed hospital by the county to take care of the indigent or the so-called welfare patients. A very high percentage of people were on relief in those days, and so the county in an effort to get the most mileage out of their medical dollar, started three county hospitals. One in [Buhl], one in Virginia and the one in Duluth, which was known as The Hearing.

J.R. MORAN: When was that opened?

FISHETTI: The Hearing Hospital was the old county jail and was where the National [Tee] is at the present time on Six Avenue East and Third Street. In fact the National [Tee] store rests partly on the foundation of the old Hearing Hospital. I volunteered to take that after being kind of coaxed to it [unintelligible - 00:26:15] clinic, and I ran the Hearing Hospital for a year. The year was 1937 for \$100 for board and room. Before that, I took care of that 100 bed hospital, I ran the dispensary three days a week. I did -- all the tonsils that were done in Duluth that whole year were done by me because the county wasn't paying for tonsillectomies and adenoidectomies during The Depression. Sometime after that, I roughly approximate that maybe I had done, in that year at The Hearing Hospital, maybe about \$35,000 worth of tonsillectomies for \$100 a month in board and room.

J.R. MORAN: So, your clientele at that time definitely was not limited to Italians.

FISHETTI: No.

J.R. MORAN: It was all...

FISHETTI: What a year that was. Work.

J.R. MORAN: What was your motivation for becoming a physician? Was this a particular dream of your parents?

FISHETTI: Well, yes. I had encouragement from my folks, but I had an idea when I was just a young guy going to the Jackson School and to public schools that maybe I wanted to be a chemical engineer for a while. Where that came from, I don't know. But I found out in taking high school chemistry that maybe I would do a little better at something outside of chemistry because my weak subject always was mathematics. Chemistry and mathematics somehow seemed to go together so I dropped that idea.

In fact, I took high school Latin for the simple reason that I associated medicine with Latin and I found out as soon as I became a doctor that all you'd have to know is a couple of dozen Latin words.

J.R. MORAN: It was a prerequisite at that time, wasn't it?

FISHETTI: It was. A foreign language was.

J.R. MORAN: Could you give me a reason at all for the fact that so few of the second generation Italians in Duluth, in fact, none other than yourself, entered the medical profession?

FISHETTI: Well, I think it was really a matter of economics. My generation came along so that they would have had to go away to school during that decade from 1930 to 1940, which was the so-called Prolonged Depression, and I'm sure that that was one reason that there weren't very many others of my age in Duluth that went into a profession.

J.R. MORAN: Excuse me. I think we better break. /AT/ /cw/

J.R. MORAN: Now, before we changed our tape we were talking about the dearth of Italians in the professions locally. Was your education financed exclusively by your father then?

FISHETTI: Yes. He had the means to put one of us through college and I was the only male and the oldest so he thought that I could go to school.

J.R. MORAN: How many children were there in your family?

FISHETTI: I have two sisters, two younger sisters.

J.R. MORAN: This a [unintelligible - 00:00:37].

FISHETTI: [Unintelligible - 00:00:40].

J.R. MORAN: Did you serve in the Second World War as a physician?

FISHETTI: I was in the service in 1942 and came out in '45. I was 33 when I went in, about 36 when I came out, and I had been deferred for some time because I had the public health service appointment here as the main physician and that made me [unintelligible - 00:01:12]. But being single the procurement to me for the local physician decided that well because I was single that I should go, so I went with the coastguard.

J.R. MORAN: Was there any discrimination against Italians in the service or your level I suppose as an officer you probably...?

FISHETTI: No, no. In fact...

J.R. MORAN: I thought that at the time that Italy was still one of the axis powers that made no difference at all?

FISHETTI: That made no difference. In fact a lot of the coast guards went on the East Coast; a lot of the servicemen on the East Coast were Italian American.

J.R. MORAN: In your early years of practice in Duluth I know that your clientele was not exclusively Italian, but did most of the Italians prefer to patronize an Italian physician?

FISHETTI: I think that's particularly true of the immigrants, the 1st generation, and it followed in a high percentage of cases that if the mother and father went to such and such a doctor that the second generation would automatically go to the same physician. That's why of the Italian Americans in town that I took care of, I took care of a lot of the immigrants and I also took care of a lot of the first generation or second generation?

J.R. MORAN: Yes, the children of the...

FISHETTI: Of the second generation. But the Italians in town were cared for by three Italian American physicians. One was Doctor [Versolini] who preceded Doctor [Bianco] and myself. Doctor [Bianco] was in Gary and I was down town so there were three Italian physicians in Duluth in the history of the town.

J.R. MORAN: Now, Doctor [Versolini] was Italian born? He also...

FISHETTI: Yes. He came from Northern Italy.

J.R. MORAN: And he received his medical education in...

FISHETTI: In Italy.

J.R. MORAN: And Doctor [Bianco] was from the **[unintelligible - 00:03:30]** and he was a second generation. So, you remain the only second generation Italian from the Duluth community other than the two **[unintelligible - 00:03:39]** boys who drowned?

FISHETTI: That's right. And there was [Alviaceli]. [Alviaceli] another **[unintelligible - 00:03:48]** brother, older brother of the two that drowned is still living and who practiced in **[unintelligible - 00:03:55]** for a number of years as a family doctor then took the specialty of dermatology and has practices in Arizona ever since.

J.R. MORAN: I see. Now I didn't know...

FISHETTI: His name was Al.

J.R. MORAN: I see. I didn't hear about him. How about discrimination against Italians in general in the past and today is it something that you ever noticed a difference?

FISHETTI: Well, I know that there's been a lot of discrimination in the past, but I have not seen discrimination against Italians in those -- not any open discrimination. Nobody discriminated against my mother and father, I'm sure of that, and certainly nobody has discriminated in any way against my generation. There may be references sometimes to the slang names **[unintelligible - 00:05:04]** such as the use of the word dago and wogs, and expressions such as that, but that's about the only evidence of any discrimination I would think.

J.R. MORAN: How about when the immigration **[unintelligible - 00:05:17]** Act was passed in 1924, were you old enough at the time to take notice of that at all? Can you recall any action locally?

FISHETTI: No, I don't recall that. See I was only be about 15 years old **[unintelligible - 00:05:29]**.

J.R. MORAN: How about, and this is something I've been asking various Italians, nobody seems to recall the Sacco Vanzetti executions in 1927. Do you recall any local reaction to that event?

FISHETTI: I don't know of any formal demonstrations against it, but I can recall very well the history of the Sacco Vanzetti case and I remember reading about both in the American, the local newspaper, but my father subscribed to the Italian American, the Italian newspaper that came from New York called Il Progresso Italo-Americano, and that was constantly and I think **[unintelligible - 00:06:14]**. I had even formed my own opinion at that time as to whether these two were guilty or not guilty because even in the **[unintelligible - 00:06:31]** there were some uncertainty as to whether they were actually guilty. And of course we -- that was particularly noted in the Italian newspapers in New York. I can remember reading a lot about that.

J.R. MORAN: So, the Italians understood the racial significance of this trial and the executions and so forth.

FISHETTI: I'm sure they did.

J.R. MORAN: Now, I know as a professional man you still did have close contacts with the largely working class community.

FISHETTI: Yeah.

J.R. MORAN: Have you ever discussed or did you ever have any knowledge of the question of Italian immigrants in the labor movement in general or involvement in socialism in that particular era in the 20s and 30s **[unintelligible - 00:07:19]**? As you recall Sacco and Vanzetti were anarchists and this was a period of very active socialist labor crisis.

FISHETTI: Well, I was old enough at that time to have been able to recognize any radical people amongst the Italian colony in town, and I'm reasonably sure that there were none that were anarchists or radical, that were Bolsheviks. Because as I recall about the only element in town that would be related to a radical group was the IWW or the Industrial Workers of the World, which was a labor movement formed after 1918. And it was pretty much accepted that anybody who was a member of the IWW was either a **[unintelligible - 00:08:30]** or in those days they were referred to as Bolsheviks. And I can recall that at 1918 and 1920 the IWW who were also referred to as the Wobblies had their office on First Street across the street from the federal building, and one night an anti IWW crowd just sacked that office and destroyed everything that was there.

J.R. MORAN: What was the day?

FISHETTI: It was about 1920 and so you see there was a radical element in town, but I don't know of any Italians who were actively involved or anything like that.

J.R. MORAN: And how about on the other side of the issue, do you know or have you ever heard of any reluctance on the part of local Italians to support labor unions and strike?

FISHETTI: I don't know. No answers to that. I wouldn't know too much about the Association of the Italians with organized labor for the simple reason my only contact with them as an adult was as a doctor and on a professional basis. [00:10:00] What their affiliations were or the state of their activities with the legal movement there I doubt it's very much about being a foreigner because -- but I would know for sure if there was a radical element and I'm sure there wasn't.

J.R. MORAN: How about support for Mussolini?

FISHETTI: Yes, the local Italians were very supportive of Mussolini at first and I think this is part of a vestigial or residual amount of patriotism that the immigrants had, because after all they had left their native land not over 10, 15, 20 years before. As evidence of their patriotism many of the Italians bought the Italian war bonds of World War One, and I know that a lot of the Italian business people in town had done that. My father did, Mr. [Visconi], the son of the [La Pandas] all bought Italian war bonds to finance Italy's part in World War One. And they also were very much supportive of Mussolini and probably got mixed up with Hitler in World War Two. In fact the -- I think not only Italians but almost anybody will agree that Mussolini did do a lot of good things for Italy, but he nullified it all by the things he did during the latter part of his life.

J.R. MORAN: So, by the time that the United States entered the Second World War any allegiance to Mussolini had probably disappeared?

FISHETTI: Yeah, pretty much so.

J.R. MORAN: In your opinion young local Italians achieved greater or lesser social and economic mobility than various other ethnic groups locally?

FISHETTI: Well, I would say that they did fairly well for the simple reason that most of the Italians or a rather high percentage of Italians were -- made their living in a skill trade. Some were brick layers, they were stone masons, some were proficient in other aspects of the building trade, but the other -- and those others who did well were the ones who were in business. But

between being in business and being members of the aforementioned skilled trades I think they did very well.

J.R. MORAN: Now, you were a nominal member probably of the new Italian American Club, would that be true to say?

FISHETTI: Yes, I'm an early member. I'm not an active member.

J.R. MORAN: Were you ever a member of the original Italian American Club [unintelligible - 00:13:19] from the beginning?

FISHETTI: No. I was busy either away in college or starting my practice somewhere.

J.R. MORAN: But you are not an active member of the [unintelligible - 00:13:32].

FISHETTI: I was at the beginning yes.

J.R. MORAN: Any particular reason why you're no longer there?

FISHETTI: Well, yes I had some reasons. One was that the -- at the beginning of the organization I didn't feel that it was started in the best way, because it was not immediately open to everybody. It was started by a small group of Italian merchants and grew for quite some time, didn't solicit for their members. They solicited members, but only when they desired that. Another reason that I didn't continue being active was that the -- I hate to be giving negative reasons, but you're asking me about my reasons why I didn't remain active. The meetings it was very difficult to keep discipline at the meetings and citizen Powel [unintelligible - 00:14:52] through the ward and it was difficult to get things done. [00:15:00] I couldn't convince the early club that they ought to have a committee such as, for example, a program committee where instead of just spending a whole evening, arguing and talking all at the same time, to do something constructive in regards to learning something about the Italian language, their heritage, have slide presentations about Italy itself, learn something about the Italian way and...

J.R. MORAN: To this point has the club attempted any of those activities?

FISHETTI: I think yes they have now, and especially since they formed the auxiliary. The Italian American Auxiliary is a vibrant very good organization and I think that's injected a lot of life for the counterpart groups. Also the subsequent officers, subsequent to those of the first four, three or four years, worked hard, and I'm thinking particularly of the present president of the club [Joe Mayer] and they probably become often as **[unintelligible - 00:16:24]** and there's also some order during the meetings now. It has very many activities like dances and parties and celebrations and banquets. So, I think it's a good organization, excellent organization now.

J.R. MORAN: So, you think the club has a future?

FISHETTI: Yes, I think it does. In fact I'm all for it, although I'm not active. I'm not active all for the simple reason that at my age I just don't want a lot of obligations any more than I have.

J.R. MORAN: In the time that we have left, I think we have -- for these 10 minutes, I know that you have some wonderful stories about your family life, your mother's cooking and so forth. Do you suppose you could just kind of ramble on a little bit about your family life?

FISHETTI: Well, yes. We had a good family life. My father and mother got along reasonably well. As I recall the father at that time in the infield of the American family, the father was the patriarch and there was no doubt that he was the head of the household. The family was very close and spent most of their time together, for the simple reason that there weren't many - - as many things that took people out of the home in those days. Not everybody had a car. They only did things as families, this means that **[unintelligible - 00:18:18]** was the only -- was a street car and those very few who could afford the automobile, so that the Italian family or any ethnic family in those days **[unintelligible - 00:18:35]** usually did things as a family and were involved in activities that revolved around the church or some of the Italian lodges or women's sodality and church circles. And another thing, another custom that was followed very much in those days was the

family on weekends and Sundays would visit families. And this was even enjoyed by the younger people, the kids. To do that nowadays would be almost impossible to convince younger people that they should go out visiting with their parents. In those days there wasn't the automobile, there wasn't -- the family spirit was much stronger then. I feel that there is hardly any true family spirit now and that as soon as the young people become adolescent or a little older they go out on their own and that's the end of family life.

J.R. MORAN: Now, when your families would gather for instance on a Sunday, would the older folks engage in one activity and the children in another or? Card games perhaps or?

FISHETTI: Well, there's some -- my family or our family didn't play cards. I know that a lot of Italians are very fond of card playing, but I never saw a deck of cards in our house [unintelligible - 00:20:20]. My mother and father didn't play cards, but I know that when one family would visit another the elders would be in one room and doing other things, and the kids would be out amongst themselves either playing games or out on the street playing baseball. I had a -- I can remember my family life as a young [unintelligible - 00:20:53] being a very happy one and one in which I was very well fed because my mother was an excellent Italian cook. My father was a good provider who spent as much time as he possibly could with us although that wasn't much for the simple reason that being in the restaurant business it was a 365 day a year job and pretty long hours.

But we would -- I also remember we would take those trips on weekends. We would, as a family, go to the Twin Cities to St. Paul and stay at the hotel for two, three days. I can remember going to the range and staying at the Androy Hotel when the Androy Hotel was first built and we would visit Italian families and [unintelligible - 00:21:41] because there were some Italian families near St. Paul.

J.R. MORAN: You travelled in a train?

FISHETTI: By train, yes. **[Unintelligible - 0:21:48]**. My father thought that when I was an intern at St. Mary's I should have a car, and the reason I should have a car was that I would be able to get home more often, and our family home was only about a mile and a half away from of St. Mary's. So, one day my father said, "I've bought a car for you so you can get home and get around with it now that you're in medical school and so forth." And I was -- I almost fainted when I saw the car that my father bought me because it was a 12 cylinder Packard limousine, a 1927 model Packard limousine 12 cylinders with six wheels, wire wheels sunk in the fender well, the back fender, and with a luggage carrier on the back. I remember when I saw that car that he bought from some Italian, mechanic by the name of **[unintelligible - 00:23:07]**, I couldn't believe that that was going to be my car. This was bought for \$300 and the interesting thing about that car, I was so, so excited to get it, that I asked one of the nurses, "I've got a new car, I got to try it. I want you to see my new car." I said, "I'll take you for a ride." We went along London Road as far as the Lester Park Bridge, went to turn around and I landed up to the running boards in mud without a dime in my pocket. But, that car was very short lived because about two weeks later Sister Patricia at St. Mary's asked me if I wouldn't take the record librarian down to the hospital **[unintelligible - 0:23:56]**, give them a talk on medical records, and then come back. And I was just so **[unintelligible - 00:24:00]** I just packed about eight of them. They had these limousine seats at the back end, so I built the **[unintelligible - 00:24:09]** and it took four quarts of oil down and four quarts back and that's -- shortly after that I got rid of it. Now, actually if I had kept that car, that 27 Packard which is worth about \$50,000.

J.R. MORAN: It's worth a fortune. Yes.

FISHETTI: And I found out later that that car was the car that Doctor **[unintelligible - 00:24:33]** bought when he first went out to -- shortly after he got out to Gary, and the reason he got rid of it was because it was burning oil.

J.R. MORAN: When **[unintelligible - 00:24:46]** to an Italian...

FISHETTI: **[Unintelligible - 00:24:48].**

J.R. MORAN: Sure. How about some of the foods that your mother prepared?

FISHETTI: Well, they -- the foods that she made were characteristic of the foods that are found in the lower half in terms of attention to the favorite foods of those who came from Northern Italy. The people from the south of Italy were long on pasta and tomatoes and their food was more spicy. The food that the northern Italians favored were polenta, rice in the form of **[unintelligible - 00:25:34].** The food that my mother made was excellent and it must have been so because when the local bishop would have an Italian dignitary as a house guest my mother would do the cooking for the bishop **[unintelligible - 00:25:53].** The food that I remember was really the ravioli and the lasagna and some -- there were some Italian dishes that were evidently of local origin and this may be because even some immigrant Italians would not know of certain dishes that may be made in Calabria but were not made in the province of Avellino. There certain local favorite foods that would not be known in different parts of the country. The foods that my mother made I don't think we ever -- even the best Italian restaurant did not have that **[unintelligible - 00:26:54].**

J.R. MORAN: Your mother must have spent a good many hours in the kitchen.

FISHETTI: She did, yeah. My father thought that he was doing my mother a favor when he put in a tile kitchen floor. That was no favor because the Italian housewife spent about eight to 10 hours a day in the kitchen. That's where the Italian housewife did all her work in the kitchen because you didn't have all the modern electro conveniences for one thing, and the cooking and the washing and so forth were all done around in the kitchen environment.

J.R. MORAN: So, the wood floor at least in this country would have been...

FISHETTI: Much easier, yeah.

J.R. MORAN: We're coming to the end of our tape. I'd like to say thank you very much.

FISHETTI: Yeah. /AT/ /cw/