

J. MORAN: The following is an interview with [Ray Crescenzo] an Italian born Duluthian. The interview took place in [Mr. Crescenzo's] home at 436. 5, 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue West on December 17<sup>th</sup> 1979. The interviewer is Jaqueline Rothview Moran a local student of history. [Mr. Crescenzo] where were you born?

CRESCENZO: [Unintelligible - 00:00:34] Italy.

J. MORAN: And what year...?

CRESCENZO: [Unintelligible - 00:00:39].

J. MORAN: And that's in southern Italy?

CRESCENZO: South eastern that would be.

J. MORAN: Right. And what year were you born?

CRESCENZO: 1896.

J. MORAN: 1896 and that makes your age?

CRESCENZO: By age six in March, March 31<sup>st</sup>.

J. MORAN: Okay and what was your father's occupation in Italy?

CRESCENZO: He was cultivator, land owner, land share.

J. MORAN: And when did you come to the United States?

CRESCENZO: 1910.

J. MORAN: When you were 16?

CRESCENZO: I was 16 March 31<sup>st</sup>. I left Italy April 8<sup>th</sup>, landed in New York April 25<sup>th</sup>, boarded a train from there went to Spokane, Washington arriving in Spokane, Washington the second day of May. It took seven days across the country.

J. MORAN: I see. Now, did you come with your family or did you come alone?

CRESCENZO: I came alone with an adult that would guarantee my existence in the country so I wouldn't become a public child. I think they call it [guard] tour.

J. MORAN: I see. And why did you come to the United States?

CRESCENZO: Well, since infancy I was always told by people that had been here that this was the country where things could be attained or life could be attained without too much effort. And that was my purpose of coming

here. I was thinking of coming here since the age of 12, but being that you had to become 16; that was the legal date, the legal age that could be used in the passport providing that you had somebody that would guarantee that you wouldn't become a public child.

J. MORAN: I see. Were your parents upset that they might not see you again?

CRESCENZO: Yes, very much so. In fact I had a hard time convincing them to give me the permission to emigrate out of Italy at the age of 16.

J. MORAN: Did you ever see your parents again then before?

CRESCENZO: Never.

J. MORAN: You never saw your parents again?

CRESCENZO: No, never saw them again.

J. MORAN: Did your parents ever want to come to this country?

CRESCENZO: Well, they were pretty old, in their later days, and their family would like to have come here. And they were share croppers, that's what I was telling you before, and poor.

J. MORAN: Now, you said that you travelled directly...

CRESCENZO: From New York.

J. MORAN: From New York to Spokane, Washington?

CRESCENZO: That's right

J. MORAN: Now, how was it that you -- so you travelled on a flat car?

CRESCENZO: No, no not there. On a passenger coach.

J. MORAN: I see.

CRESCENZO: The immigration train what they called it those days.

J. MORAN: The immigration train, I see.

CRESCENZO: They went over whatever the road was more passable or where it's all taken up.

J. MORAN: I see. You must have paid some sort of a fare to travel?

CRESCENZO: Yes. I paid \$50 from [unintelligible - 00:04:30] to Spokane. Two hundred and fifty lira then was equal to about \$50.

J. MORAN: I see. So, the fare included cross country transportation in this country?

CRESCENZO: Yes.

J. MORAN: I see. And what employment did you find at Spokane?

CRESCENZO: I didn't find any. Went to Oregon later as I can recall. It's **[unintelligible - 00:04:52]** which is about 300 miles from Spokane. That would be west -- sorry, south west. **[00:05:04]** And they were constructing railroads then, what they call the Oregon trunk. It's just construction, railroad construction adding **[unintelligible - 00:05:17]** and blasting the tunnels and so on.

J. MORAN: Were you employed in gangs or how...?

CRESCENZO: In gangs.

J. MORAN: You were employed in the gangs. Did you go then to some agent, some sort of labor agent?

CRESCENZO: A government agent in Spokane who for a dollar a piece each gives a **[unintelligible - 00:05:38]** fare. They give you a **[unintelligible - 00:05:39]**, what they call it then. And we had to walk from the railroad station we had to walk 20 miles to get where we wanted to get because this was a new development, you know, and you had to go right across the country **[unintelligible - 00:05:55]** and coyotes and jack rabbits and rattle snakes just like desert.

J. MORAN: And how long did you remain in that job?

CRESCENZO: I remained there till I -- the man that guaranteed my **[unintelligible - 00:06:12]** got sick after three days, and the first day I haven't seen him. I never knew where he was and when the foreman discovered that he wasn't there he told me to go, but I had -- that I had no more employment there. The only time they **[unintelligible - 00:06:37]** a young fellow especially as long that was. Especially physically and didn't have the strength to do hard work. They didn't need me anymore, but when he was there I carried water, done some work and for \$2 a day, \$10. So, when he went away didn't have any more use for me.

J. MORAN: So, what did you do with then?

CRESCENZO: Then I travelled from one place to another. I got a job on the stock range, livestock range in Prineville near Prineville, Oregon. That's pretty

close to **[unintelligible - 00:07:22]** about 20, 40 miles to where I was. And couldn't speak the language in my journey so the only one that I could talk with was a Mexican. I talked Italian and he answered in Spanish or Mexican and I understood a percentage **[unintelligible - 00:07:40]** so they lead, and he was the one that assisted me. I was there about four months.

J. MORAN: And where was this in?

CRESCENZO: In Oregon, same stadium, Prineville, Oregon.

J. MORAN: Were there gangs of immigrants just wandering the roads looking for work at that time?

CRESCENZO: Not too many. It was 1912. In 1910 or 19 -- part of 1911, 1911 they completed these constructions and **[unintelligible - 00:08:16]** and then election in 1912. It seems so everything closed. There was no more employment out west and were very few that were working. So, the best thing was to -- a person could get employment on these farms. A lot of farms in Oregon. Some bills were **[unintelligible - 00:08:44]**.

J. MORAN: So, now you were what 14 years old or so?

CRESCENZO: No, I was 16. Well, I was 16 and 17 that I worked. Now see, I worked there in the summer. I would take their livestock in the mountains and I worked with sheep and cattle, horses and so on, but I worked in those gangs. But then when they bring them down to the valley they group them. In other words the herds or the bends, what they call the sheep, mules and lamb bands are limited to a number when they go to the ranges. And the government owned the land in the mountains in the summer time and you can only have, for instance, 1100 -- 11 use band or 1600 feet without the lands. So, when they bring them down they group them and naturally they lay off the extra help out there that get **[unintelligible - 00:09:57]**.

J. MORAN: **[00:10:00]** All right. Now, what was your next employment?

CRESCENZO: Well, my next thing was I had studied through the **[unintelligible - 00:10:10]** dictionary when I was in **[unintelligible - 00:10:12]**. Some of

the time you were alone, you didn't see anybody for days and I had studied English, but I couldn't talk it. I could write it but not talk so I had both Italian and English dictionaries. So, anyway then I went from one town to another and get tough jobs sort of dish washer, waiter something, whatever I could get. For years I did that. Six years.

J. MORAN: Now, did you find any doors closed to you at this time because you were an Italian immigrant and because you did not speak English very well?

CRESCENZO: Many.

J. MORAN: You did?

CRESCENZO: Many.

J. MORAN: Now, how many years was it before you came to Duluth?

CRESCENZO: Hibbing.

J. MORAN: You went first to Hibbing?

CRESCENZO: Yeah. I had a cousin there who was a very dear friend of grandpa.

J. MORAN: I see.

CRESCENZO: Yeah.

J. MORAN: And what year was that? Can you recall?

CRESCENZO: 1916 I think. I went there from California and I **[unintelligible - 00:11:20]**.

J. MORAN: Pardon me?

CRESCENZO: At **[unintelligible - 00:11:22]** that's when I came under the gypsy and a **[unintelligible - 00:11:26]** guy.

J. MORAN: I see.

CRESCENZO: Yeah.

J. MORAN: All right. Now you were in Hibbing there in 1916?

CRESCENZO: 1916 August 15<sup>th</sup>.

J. MORAN: I see. Now, did you find work in the mines?

CRESCENZO: There was a strike there then.

J. MORAN: That's right there was.

CRESCENZO: So, I had to wait till September 4<sup>th</sup> when the strike was handled because in the west you had to carry an IWW card to get work and I had

one of those cards although I didn't want the companies to know that I had it because they wouldn't hire you if you had a card. But anyway I -- then I worked in a restaurant for two weeks till September 4<sup>th</sup> with Franco -- Frank Demarco's restaurant.

J. MORAN: Now, you say that you had an IWW card, was the IWW involved in any particular field in California?

CRESCENZO: Well, all over the west, actually the state of Washington. They had **[unintelligible - 00:12:29]** union.

J. MORAN: In any particular industries?

CRESCENZO: Well, now that was mostly in the logging.

J. MORAN: Mostly in logging.

CRESCENZO: Yeah, logging. See the agriculture employees weren't organized, but mostly in logging and railroading too.

J. MORAN: And you were coerced into attaining this card, you couldn't find work without it?

CRESCENZO: Yeah, that's right, that's right, that's right.

J. MORAN: So, you came here in 1916. Before we get to that, had you heard -- well let's see now. You came to this country in what year?

CRESCENZO: 1910.

J. MORAN: 1910. Now, it's not likely at that time that you would have heard of the 1907 strike **[unintelligible - 00:13:15]**?

CRESCENZO: No, no, no, no, no.

J. MORAN: Did you hear any of the history of that strike later when you came to this state?

CRESCENZO: Yes, I did slightly. They were referring back to -- when they talked about the going strike at the time, the current strike at the time they were talking about 1907 when they I think the American Federation was then. I don't remember.

J. MORAN: That was the western federation of miners?

CRESCENZO: Western federation of miners, that's right.

J. MORAN: And there was an Italian leader who came to Minnesota, Patriolla, who was affiliated with the WFM at that time.

CRESCENZO: Yeah Patriolla, I remember the name. I remember the mention of his name.

J. MORAN: When you arrived here in 1916 did you hear of or were you familiar with a man by the name Herman Antonelli, a merchant in Hibbing?

CRESCENZO: Herman Antonelli, yes. He was associated with the Italian mercantile grocery store.

J. MORAN: Now, in 1907 it was Mr. Antonelli who advised the Italians in Hibbing not to support the strike, and it seems that the majority of the Italians went along with him and did refuse to support the strike. Is that something that you've ever heard?

CRESCENZO: No. That I wouldn't know.

J. MORAN: Okay.

CRESCENZO: I know the Italians supported the strike in 1916.

J. MORAN: They did.

CRESCENZO: A lot of them, but not **[unintelligible - 00:14:48]** but some of them did.

J. MORAN: But the majority of them did strike?

CRESCENZO: Yeah.

J. MORAN: The strike.

CRESCENZO: The most -- those that were in **[unintelligible - 00:14:56]**.

J. MORAN: **[00:15:00]** How did the majority of the residents, including the Italian residents, feel about the IWW and about **[unintelligible - 00:15:06]**?

CRESCENZO: Well they didn't feel very good about it. Later when the **[unintelligible - 00:15:12]** you know, what he was and he had a woman with him. I've forgotten her name now.

J. MORAN: He has **[unintelligible - 00:15:20]**.

CRESCENZO: He had a woman with him, and then he had a man with him by the name of Clint who was hanged in Montana on a small -- one of those small trees. They hanged him out there. I remember **[unintelligible -**

**00:15:42]** Flynn or Flynn. Flynn. I don't remember the name of the woman though.

J. MORAN: Did you meet Elizabeth Gurley Flynn?

CRESCENZO: Well, that was the one that was **[unintelligible - 00:15:55]**.

J. MORAN: Well, she did make a trip to the range. Yes she did.

CRESCENZO: Yeah.

J. MORAN: Actually there was very little criticism of her. The Duluth newspapers, for instance, who were constantly criticizing the IWW and were supporting Oliver Iron did not criticize Elizabeth Gurley Flynn.

CRESCENZO: She was a friend of **[unintelligible - 00:16:19]**. I think that's the one. She traveled with him. That's when he travelled with her because I remember her in Montana.

J. MORAN: Well, she was an IWW organizer who evidently did travel around the country in support of the various strikes and so forth. Do you have any reason to believe that Italians in general were reluctant to support strikes during the immigration era?

CRESCENZO: Yeah, they were reluctant in some cases because the wages were so miserably small that any time off work they couldn't support their families. They didn't have any reserves. **[Unintelligible - 00:17:11]** were limited to probably \$100. Some had \$100 in the bank, they had big families. Most Italians had big large families and they couldn't afford to go on a strike.

J. MORAN: It's probable that the Finish people, for instance, did not have as large families as the Italians did and of course they were very active on the labor movement **[unintelligible - 00:17:41]**.

CRESCENZO: They were very active. They were the ones that were IWW **[unintelligible - 00:17:43]**, the only ones that retained the membership after the strike was over.

J. MORAN: A great many of them were **[unintelligible - 00:17:51]**.

CRESCENZO: Yeah. The Italians didn't.

J. MORAN: Do you feel then that perhaps the Finns had a history of labor activity in their own country before they came to this country?

CRESCENZO: Well that I wouldn't know. I only think that they were more independent in Finland than they were in Italy but why **[unintelligible - 00:18:12]**.

J. MORAN: Do you have any knowledge of any organized labor activity in Italy around the turn of the century or prior to that?

CRESCENZO: No, there was very little then, but it became after 1910, from what I read then, that they did organize and they had a strong union in Italy now. But the communists, I don't know if I would say communists either because they're compared to the members of the union they got an upcoming to neither rule.

J. MORAN: Okay. Well, before we get into the present situation in Italy, let's go back to this country at the turn of the century. Now, we place you in Hibbing in 1916. When the strike was over then you did find employment in the mine?

CRESCENZO: Yes. I worked for the **[unintelligible - 00:19:15]** mining company for a while then I went to work for an underground mine. Captain gave me -- that was total hard work for me. The captain gave me a job underground cleaning up. By this time I could speak English and I could read and write it. I learned it by myself naturally without pictures, but the pronunciation I got that by being with other people, by being away from the Italians.

J. MORAN: So, you did not actually work as an underground miner?

CRESCENZO: No, no. I just -- I wouldn't know what you would call it. Just cleaning up and then **[unintelligible - 00:19:58]** on the motor, the electric motor that had the cars and loaded the cars and then dumped them and it was elevated off the bottom from each mine shaft where there were miners. **[00:20:16]** They would dump in this and in the hopper, and then from that hopper we would take it and take it over to the main hopper that conveyed it upstairs, up above the ground.

J. MORAN: Did you have any reluctance to work under in the mine?

CRESCENZO: No. I liked only I had quite a habit of not staying too long in any one job.

J. MORAN: Did you find that others of Italian ancestry were reluctant to work underground?

CRESCENZO: Well, most of them even if they were reluctant it paid more. They worked by **[unintelligible - 00:21:01]** so much the town, yeah so much a town and they made more money. They made \$5, \$6 a day when the open pit mines were paying the highest was 2.75, and then they work eight hours and outside we worked 10 hours. So, that was the difference

J. MORAN: Did the miners feel that they had gained anything by the 1916 strike?

CRESCENZO: Well, they went from two and a quarter to 75.

J. MORAN: So, there was a slight pay raise?

CRESCENZO: It was 50 cents.

J. MORAN: But there was no change in the contract system?

CRESCENZO: No, no contract. There was no contract. They didn't have a contract with the company.

J. MORAN: So now weren't they paid by the amount of oil that they loaded in a given day?

CRESCENZO: On the ground, yes, but not an open pit. And that was an increase. There was an increase there that so much per ton. I don't remember what it was the number. It was comparable to what the open pit mine.

J. MORAN: Now, the miners were charged. In fact one of the strike grievances was that there was favoritism shown in the signing of various gains of ore and so forth. Were any of these problems remedied? Did they make any gains of this nature after the strike or as a result of the strike?

CRESCENZO: Well, they progressed a little better in everything in general. But I don't know of any particular item, I don't know, but they did get benefits because that's probably the money combination **[unintelligible - 00:22:50]** wasn't any more trouble, but with money **[unintelligible - 00:22:54]** in comparison.

J. MORAN: Do you feel at all that radical labor movements such as the IWW, do you feel that the reforms that they advocated were necessary in that era?

CRESCENZO: Well, not as bad as they put them. However, those years if you weren't in the favor of the company, if you said one word that offended the company you were fired. That's proof.

J. MORAN: But you feel that they were too radical?

CRESCENZO: Yeah, they were too radical.

J. MORAN: How about the AFL in any of the various jobs that you held across the country, was there any AFL involvement, any organized labor?

CRESCENZO: All the time that -- it was when I worked with the state for the last 20 years we had a union. Before that there was no union.

J. MORAN: But that was when you worked here in Minnesota?

CRESCENZO: In Minnesota yeah. Not any other place. There was no unions outside of the IWW to control out west, and along the [unintelligible - 00:24:08] and several other [unintelligible - 00:24:10]. They didn't think to build those railroads.

J. MORAN: I see. Now, then you're working in Hibbing in 1916.

CRESCENZO: Yes and then I left there because it was too cold and I went to Kent city and tried to find [unintelligible - 00:24:34] Kent city. Then came back there when it go 27 below zero.

J. MORAN: So, you worked a very short time in Kent [unintelligible - 00:24:43]?

CRESCENZO: Yeah.

J. MORAN: What kind of work did you do?

CRESCENZO: I worked in the car shop, Burlington Car Shop. It's 12 miles out of Kent city, the railroad yard.

J. MORAN: And was there any union activity there?

CRESCENZO: Yeah, but [unintelligible - 00:25:04] to it. The railroad was pretty well organized so far as the switch man and engineers, conductors, but we laborers wasn't organized yet. Laborer organized very late.

J. MORAN: I see.

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J. MORAN: Now, we were talking about your brief employment in Kansas City. Now, was it from Kansas City that you came to Duluth?

CRESCENZO: Came back to Duluth.

J. MORAN: Came back to Duluth?

CRESCENZO: Yeah, came back there. I went -- I came here from California.

J. MORAN: And you went to Hibbing.

CRESCENZO: Went to Hibbing.

J. MORAN: And then you went...

CRESCENZO: In fact I came here from California to Portland, Oregon. Took the boat out of Sans Francisco. There was a boat there then. There were two boats northern Pacific and great northern passenger boats. Great **[unintelligible - 00:00:38]** used to go from there to Astoria, Oregon, then the rest of the way I was on my own. I didn't have any more money either. I only had \$8 to pay the fare, so from there on I was on my own. But you see I worked along the way. It was the month of July and there were on the river beds all over the way. They were **[unintelligible - 00:01:04]** they were harvesting the second or third crop in July. I think it was the second crop. The third crop they get it about the end of August, **[unintelligible - 00:01:13]** September. And that they could understand words so I paid my way. In other words I had enough money to live on till I got here.

J. MORAN: Okay. Now, you're talking about your trek across the country from...?

CRESCENZO: Across the country, yeah. Coming across Washington, Montana, out of Idaho, North Dakota and then into Minnesota.

J. MORAN: Now, when you came back to Minnesota, when you came back to Duluth, what year would that have been?

CRESCENZO: When I came to Duluth?

J. MORAN: Yes, when you came back the second time to Minnesota?

CRESCENZO: The 27<sup>th</sup> of February, 1917.

J. MORAN: In 1917. And you came into Duluth?

CRESCENZO: No, I went back on the range and worked in the mines again.

J. MORAN: Again after you left Kansas City?

CRESCENZO: Yeah.

J. MORAN: You went back to the mine again?

CRESCENZO: Yeah, yeah.

J. MORAN: Now, I know that you served in the First World War [unintelligible - 00:02:20] shortly after that.

CRESCENZO: Well, that was 1918, the beginning of 1918.

J. MORAN: And you were in Hibbing at that time or...?

CRESCENZO: I came back to Hibbing. I was east. I went east to New Jersey, New York and New Jersey for about three months, then I came back here again.

J. MORAN: Again?

CRESCENZO: Mm-hmm.

J. MORAN: You enjoyed travelling around, I take it?

CRESCENZO: I beg your pardon?

J. MORAN: You enjoyed travelling around just kind of living a vagabond life?

CRESCENZO: Well, I enjoyed it then, yeah. When I look back now it looks pretty rough.

J. MORAN: So, you came then back from the east and you came back to Hibbing again?

CRESCENZO: Came back from the east and I came back to Hibbing.

J. MORAN: And to the mines?

CRESCENZO: Yeah. I worked in the mines and I was piping then, piping steam showers so that they had water as they [advanced].

J. MORAN: Was there such a thing as the Italian labor boss, the padrone in the mines at that time or that was pretty much based on...?

CRESCENZO: Well, they were, you know, the same thing hailed through, out west. They'd pick an Italian that was rough to be the boss and he'd have a gang who knew something about the work but he'd almost kill these laborers in order to make a name for himself. That was the system then. He'd go and recruit. He'd go in the city, for instance, out west and recruit

these people that were not working and take them, take a whole gang with him. He had passes on the railroad for them and then he was pretty well paid by the company, but he would be a slave driver, and that's what **[unintelligible - 00:04:18]**. They had a few Italians that were good, but a lot of them, you know, were just **[unintelligible - 00:04:27]** laborers, you know, to make a name for himself or themselves.

J. MORAN: So, the padrone was still active in the second decade of the century then?

CRESCENZO: Oh yes. It wasn't a padrone, but they acted as such. They didn't call them that, but they acted as such.

J. MORAN: So, at that point they were more a foreman actually?

CRESCENZO: Yeah, foreman, yeah.

J. MORAN: I see. And certainly at that point they were not in charge of providing living quarters and so forth?

CRESCENZO: As what?

J. MORAN: They were not in charge of providing living quarters?

CRESCENZO: **[00:05:02]** No, no, no.

J. MORAN: They were simply then a foremen.

CRESCENZO: No, no. Those were the padrones. It was in the east especially.

J. MORAN: So, now let's see, where are we? We're about 1918.

CRESCENZO: 1918 and I went in the army, was over in France; came back...

J. MORAN: Now, did you go -- excuse me, did you volunteer for the army?

CRESCENZO: I did, but they turned me down and then they drafted me. And I passed the draft the exam but I couldn't pass the other one; the original. But I was **[unintelligible - 00:05:39]** too. Went through recruitment there and they said I had an enlargement of the heart and here I am eighty-six years old still living. They had an enlargement of the head.

J. MORAN: So, you were drafted into the army. Were Italians put in any special regiment or were they singled out for any discriminatory treatment in any way?

CRESCENZO: No. We went -- there was little discrimination in the army, but that was the army itself not the high officers; sergeants, and corporals, and so

on, but I ain't go through it. And of course there was about 10 or 15 Italians that left with me from the range, maybe more, but we haven't left the Navy. Anyway, there was [unintelligible - 00:06:34] from Hibbing and 15 were Italians from Hibbing and for Italians there was a little discrimination on -- it made me mad so when we first started in the boot camp, and I went to the captain and I told him. I said, "This isn't right. We're all here for one purpose. We're mistreated." And he called the sergeant in that was [unintelligible - 00:07:04] mistreating, and from then on he was my worst enemy, but he didn't [unintelligible - 00:07:15]. I always fought for the Italians whenever I could.

J. MORAN: Now, I'd like to explore the history of your duty in the army, but I think we should get back here to the...

CRESCENZO: Well, I was on the [unintelligible - 00:07:31]. I never -- I was never advanced into anything else. Went over to France and we fought in the [Argonne] Forest. I was only in the battle 13 days.

J. MORAN: Now, you did receive some sort of disabilities?

CRESCENZO: Yeah, I was gassed. I was gassed, and they took X-rays of me when I was discharged and they found [unintelligible - 00:07:59] of the tubes, the bronchial tubes. And we were then [unintelligible - 00:08:07] and a big spot on my right hand, on the right hand side of the lung, on the right lung.

J. MORAN: Has this been a great handicap throughout your life?

CRESCENZO: Well it has. If I had to do any hard work of course I couldn't do it when I was well so I couldn't do it, so they gave me [vocational] training. At that time I asked for bookkeeping, management bookkeeping and I spent two years on it. But then they didn't pay any money and the bookkeeping you earned \$70 a month was the most you could get, you know. And you couldn't advance because those -- there were big corporations where there was a chance for an advancement, they had their accountants. You just served on the ledger or something like that, just ledger clerk. But I didn't have a lot of training theoretically. I didn't have

any experience till 1937 when social security come into be. Then I started going to the [unintelligible - 00:09:11] and [read] the laws and so on, but people were panicking when social security come into being. They were afraid to fill out those forms. They could read and write, they could do that without any training. All they had to follow was the lines. But it was good for me. I got moonlighting and made a little money so that I could live a little better.

J. MORAN: Now, after the war then you were trained to be a bookkeeper but you did not take up [unintelligible - 00:09:45]?

CRESCENZO: Never, no. I never practiced it. I went to work for the state because the state was paying \$150 a month whereas bookkeeping with the private industry \$70-75 at the most.

J. MORAN: [00:10:01] Now, in what capacity was your work for the state?

CRESCENZO: I was there for one year in the motor trade, and then later I went in the weighing department because there was the [unintelligible - 00:10:13]. I was employed as a weigher, grain weigher in the elevators.

J. MORAN: Now, was that for the...

CRESCENZO: That's under the supervision of the state.

J. MORAN: Now what specific department would that be?

CRESCENZO: Well, that would be grain weighing department or granular grain inspection, yeah.

J. MORAN: So, then you were there and you eventually worked your way through the ranks, didn't you?

CRESCENZO: Well, it wasn't [unintelligible - 00:10:43]. An Italian then was a rarity that even [unintelligible - 00:10:50] as weigher or a clerk with the state and this part that was discovered in the Twin Cities, but there was very, very rarely. In 1938 the Civil Service Act was enacted and [unintelligible - 00:11:10] they took the test and I did in 1939 -- no 1942. I took a test for what they called [weigher three]. It was a [unintelligible - 00:11:21] group and naturally [unintelligible - 00:11:27] years we established the rules, seniority counted so much and then service in the

army counted for so much and if you were [unintelligible - 00:11:41] you got five more points, but anyway I made it [unintelligible - 00:11:44] and I was paid and I was number two in the exam. Of course the seniority comes up. I am not bragging. Seniority comes last but seniority didn't mean anything before there was civil service. Seniority or ability to perform.

J. MORAN: So, you believe that the fact that you were Italian kept you out of the supervisory position before that?

CRESCENZO: That's right, yeah. It kept me out of any promotion. In fact for a while it kept me out of a job because when they laid off I was one of the [unintelligible - 00:12:25] that got laid off and I was -- I had seniority. I was older than most of them.

J. MORAN: Was this during the Depression era?

CRESCENZO: That was 1937 the time labor took control [unintelligible - 00:12:34]. That is the year I was fired by the Republicans originally and they had [unintelligible - 00:12:43].

J. MORAN: So, you were an active supporter of the Republican Party?

CRESCENZO: Yes.

J. MORAN: Would you say that Italians in general locally supported the Republicans or the Democrats?

CRESCENZO: Originally they supported the Republicans. After 1928 that's when [unintelligible - 00:13:13] Smith ran and that's what [unintelligible - 00:13:14]. Even the Irish supported the Republicans.

J. MORAN: So, it was the fact that he was Catholic not the...

CRESCENZO: But the fact that they all voted against him because he was a Catholic, and then they said, okay, we'll vote for him and this is the last vote that you will get from us, you know. And that [unintelligible - 00:13:36] but there is lot of Italians that are still Republicans. Really it doesn't matter anymore whether you are a Republican or Democrat. They're all the same anyway.

J. MORAN: And would say then that they were avid supporters of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

CRESCENZO: Yes, yes, very, very, very much.

J. MORAN: Let's go back a little bit. Are you familiar with the details of the Sacco Vanzetti case?

CRESCENZO: No. The only thing that I am familiar with, I was an officer of the Italian American Club and we made a contribution to their defense.

J. MORAN: You did make a contribution to their defense?

CRESCENZO: Yeah. Not too large one because we didn't have much of a treasury, but we made a contribution for their defense, yes. So did the Sons of Italy.

J. MORAN: So, there was no fear of supporting them because they were allegedly anarchists and radical labor leaders?

CRESCENZO: Well, you know, have they ever proved them to be anarchists, to have been?

J. MORAN: Well, they themselves admitted to being anarchists. In fact they felt that they were being persecuted because...

CRESCENZO: **[00:15:01]** On account of it. Yeah, I remember.

J. MORAN: Right and not because they had taken part in the robbery in which two employees at the shoe store were killed.

CRESCENZO: Yeah. I think that's putting it right though.

J. MORAN: So there was feeling of support locally for the two?

CRESCENZO: Yeah, there was a feeling of support.

J. MORAN: Can you recall if there was any backlash at all from the non-Italian community at that time?

CRESCENZO: No. The biggest mistake that was made by Italians of Duluth was when they disbanded the Italian American Club because it was during the war and was afraid of being accused of being supporters of Mussolini. There was no sense in that at all.

J. MORAN: Well, actually prior to that time the National Sons of Italy had come out in support of this country and against Mussolini.

CRESCENZO: Yes.

J. MORAN: Was there any support for socialism among any of the local Italians at all in the 20s and 30s?

CRESCENZO: Yes. The [unintelligible - 00:16:09] they were -- there was a couple of [unintelligible - 00:16:13] who's name I can't recall, but they were -- but I -- not that I knew what they were doing. I'll tell you why. They were ambitious and some of them belonged to the church committees but they didn't know how to act. In other words they were made chairman of the committee they couldn't express themselves, and so whenever they acquired a [unintelligible - 00:16:47] from communists or socialists they used to hold meetings in their house because the communists and the socialists couldn't get anybody else to [unintelligible - 00:16:59] for them. Those were the only people, and it raised their importance you know. And so that became associated with the [unintelligible - 00:17:10] and he used to write a paper in the eastern. They were all subscribers. Geez, I forgot what they call that paper now. There is a copy in the library. But in 19 -- when immigration, you know, you remember me telling you I only got the endorsement of the Sons of [unintelligible - 00:17:39] for Italians here in town. I was the only one. I was the only one among all the Italians here that made public speeches in the favor of Italian immigration because there were the restriction. This was in 1924, but the [unintelligible - 00:18:04] didn't make a move [unintelligible - 00:18:06]. I don't know why he did what he did. I don't remember him speaking for anybody, but the trade's assembly I got their endorsement. I even got an endorsement [unintelligible - 00:18:17].

J. MORAN: And these are all primarily non Italian groups with little or no Italian members?

CRESCENZO: Yeah, no Italians. Well, some Italian members in the legion of course, all those that served in the army, you know. There was 300,000.

J. MORAN: Now, I cut off your last sentence -- rather it broke there when the telephone rang. We were discussing the 1924 immigration [unintelligible

- 00:18:48] and the fact that immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were given a certain percentage of the population [unintelligible - 00:18:56].

CRESCENZO: Restriction.

J. MORAN: Right. Okay. Did Italians in Duluth perceive that this law was directed specifically towards Italians?

CRESCENZO: Did they...?

J. MORAN: Did they feel that the quota law was directed against Italians primarily among all of the new immigrants?

CRESCENZO: No, they understood. They understood that the -- it was the southern Italy [unintelligible - 00:19:21]. A lot of them didn't know.

J. MORAN: But it was Italians they felt not necessarily the Greeks or the Polish, Jews.

CRESCENZO: No, the Italians.

J. MORAN: So, they realized this?

CRESCENZO: Yeah.

J. MORAN: Why do you think that this was so? Why do you think that these so called Native Americans were attempting to restrict Italian immigration?

CRESCENZO: Well, the immigration they thought that the northern were better ... educated and they would fit in the Americans [unintelligible - 00:20:00].

J. MORAN: [00:20:00] More quickly [unintelligible - 00:20:01].

CRESCENZO: Yeah, and then some of these crooks that they were talking about it wasn't true because the percentage of criminals, even though the mafia was nil among the criminals arrivals that committed a lot of crimes. For instance the [unintelligible - 00:20:20] were proved that percentage wise if we had four millions, we only had one [unintelligible - 00:20:20] or one percent that were in prisons. Now, whether they were too smart to get into prison or not, that we can't say. We can only go by statistics and these statistics that I looked up proved that. And you probably read it in the newspaper where I quoted. I had better memory then, a little better knowledge. So -- but anyway they were -- they felt that they were discriminated against and basing the quota on 1890 were a major reason

why they weren't satisfied because the Italian immigration came after that, but they basically restrict in 1890 so as to limit or restrict the Italian immigrants from coming here.

J. MORAN: So, it was a fear that they would not be able to assimilate and there was the crime factor. What about the competition **[unintelligible - 00:21:46]**?

CRESCENZO: Well so far as labor was concerned I think that that was argued in Congress by **[unintelligible - 00:21:54]**. That was specified and nobody denied it, none denied it that the Italians were harder laborers than the rest of the minority. And even the Greeks were hard workers. And that was admitted in the committee, in the congressional committee in charge of the immigration bill.

J. MORAN: Did you ever hear the charge by labor, the **[unintelligible - 00:22:30]** for instance, that Italians were lowering the living standards of the Native Americans by their willingness to accept low wages and lived very stringently.

CRESCENZO: Well, that was an argument in the Congress too. That was an argument in Congress.

SPEAKER 3: **[Unintelligible - 00:22:50]**.

J. MORAN: Let's go back to your job in the grain weighing department. Now you became a supervisor then in 1943.

CRESCENZO: In 1943.

J. MORAN: In 1943.

CRESCENZO: '43.

J. MORAN: Okay. Now, how many men did you have under you?

CRESCENZO: Up to 32, and that was seasonal. During navigation we would have more and during the winter we would have less because of navigation. In other words we needed men on the boat, men to unload cars, to weigh the grain that's unloaded, and then we had to have some **[unintelligible - 00:23:29]** to weigh the shipping grain or the shipments of grain.  
[Pause for 1 minute 2 seconds.]

SPEAKER 3: They don't ask, they are demanding. That isn't right. You see a lot of place, you know, they want [unintelligible - 00:24:55]. That means that their company, whoever own the [unintelligible - 00:25:00]. [00:25:03] They demand what they want or we strike [unintelligible - 00:25:06]. I look at the [unintelligible - 00:25:10] St. Paul [unintelligible - 00:25:11].

J. MORAN: Now, when was this?

SPEAKER 3: This is 1923.