

Anna Jao: My name is Anna Jao, today is July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Right now I am having an interview Nick Catricala – we are at his home. Nick Catricala, originally from Italy and year he is 63. And now living in Canada since 1964. Hello Mr. Catricala, thank you for accepting my invitation for this interview. I hope you are doing fine and if you don't mind is it okay to start interview right now?

Nick Catricala: No problem Anna, thank you for asking me.

AJ: Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? How did you decide to immigrate to Canada?

NC: Well it's a long story, I did not decide to come to Canada. My mother, at the time, decided to come to Canada. She had a brother here and she wanted to join him. So automatically, me her and my sister have to go along and come to Canada. My father died, when I was twelve, so at that moment the only thing we had to do was just stay together. But if we're staying together, we have to immigrate here in Canada.

AJ: So, when you moved to Canada, I mean you were growing in Italy, have you experienced any culture shock when you were younger? I mean when you come to Canada...

NC: Well the first culture shock that I experienced was when I moved from my little town going to a big town, and from a big town, or a city, I went to another country which was Germany. So the shock to come to Canada was not great because my shocker was already done in Germany. I had to adopt to the new way of living, new language, new, well new everything...because that was my first job as a young man. So when I came to Canada the shock was even worse because I happened to come on a very hot day in July in 1964 and I never experienced that kind of heat, it was very humid heat and I would sweat in the shade. So that was very shocking, then other shocking part was that I did not recognize any of the food that they were selling in the store. Almost 90% of the food that I saw, it was new to me. But I was hungry, so, I tasted the bread, from a whole English bread I made a sandwich. So that was a shock and the other shock was mainly, was the language. The language because nobody understood what I was saying, and I could not understand what they were saying. Plus at that time, there was still some culture diversity here and they did not accept very well the Italians. The Italians were not accepted very well...so many stores you would go on in there and they would not treat you as a normal person. They were joking with you, and make it look like they don't understand what you had to buy. So you just have to adopt and that's how I started. It started that I was here with no money, no job and no language (laughter).

AJ: So how were you were here?

NC: I was here when I was eighteen.

AJ: Ah, so, did you go to school right away or you actually jump directly to work? I mean you cannot speak English right?

NC: Yeah, yeah. Well it was jump in directly to work, like I said earlier, we had no money. And the idea of coming here was to have a better life, meaning, working and making money and having a better life. So schooling was not an option at that time. Well I end up going to school five days to learn English, but it was too slow for me, it was like a waste of time because I wanted to learn what I needed to learn to go out and get a job. So school, was always, it was not on my mind so I was always looking for a better job to make more money so I had no schooling whatsoever here in Canada.

So how did you manage to find a job if you cannot actually speak English?

Well first it was some friends, or distant relatives, that assisted me, to take me here and there to find some work, anything. I mean they took me everywhere but after a couple of weeks without luck then I had, for myself, to do something. Those weeks were happened when I learned over that everybody was asking for experience and for you to speak English. W Italy, I had no experience and I had no English language to speak. Most of the experience was because I was young, I just come out of school in Italy, I had no working experience in Italy or anywhere else, just a little bit in Germany but no experience here. But they want Canadian experience and they want me to speak English, well I couldn't.

AJ: How did you feel at that time?

NC: Well I, at that time, I thought was okay now I came here with my mother, I fulfilled my obligation, so now I want to go back to Germany and go back to Germany and work there. Because there I already felt better. But I had no money to buy the ticket to go back (laughter), so I got stuck, okay well, I gotta stay here 'til I have the money to go back. But, it never happened because then I involved into finding a job, which I did find a job and the thought of going back fade away for a little while.

AJ: So when you come here, where did you live? Did you live in Toronto? Or where did you move first?

NC: We stop to Halifax with the boat, with the Transatlantic, I don't know what you call it, boat I guess, and from there with the train we went to Montreal. I believe it was 3 or 4 days travelling with the train in those days. And when we went to Montreal, apparently my mother didn't want to stay there for some reason, so she wants to continue to come to Toronto because Toronto was close to Niagara Falls where her brother was. In her mind, when she's close to her brother everything's going to be fine, well it didn't work out that way. But that's how we ended up in Toronto, and that's where we stayed and that's where I've been since 1964. I've been either right in Toronto or the GTA and that's where I've lived since then.

AJ: So how did you, when you are growing up from Toronto, when you are 18, and you're finding a job, did you get married? Did you get married right away or how did you describe the experience when you are meeting people here?

NC: Well that's a long long story, but I can make it up in a certain way. When I first started to look for jobs with my friends or distant relatives, they took me different places so I started to learn more or less what was happening here in Toronto. I learned how to use the streetcar, so finally one day I decided to go hunting myself. So first I learned to ride the streetcars to know where I'm going so I can come back home and it worked very well, so the second or third day, I happened to go to a place where I noticed there was some Italian people working there. And so I started asking questions in Italian, you know, "I'm here from, I'm from there and I'm looking for a job." One guy says, "you know, there is a job, and you can sweep the floors in this big store. I says "no problem I sweep floors, I know how to do that, I don't need no language, no experience, you know, I can do that." So the guy find me the job and he guide me to go through all the paper work and all that. I don't remember anything. He was kind enough to do all that for me, and he show me the way, and it happened he was coming from the same town where I was born.

AJ: So you have a lot of the same background?

NC: So then we started talking and there was fine to start a job, and I believed in a few days I started the job and I worked there for probably a year before I moved on to a different job inside the same store. They call it Honest Ed's and that store is still there after, 50 years, it was there about 10 years before or 20 years before that. And that store was a store all immigrants used to be familiar with, because now we have dollar stores and we have all kinds of different stores, but at that time, that was the only store that

you could have gone in there and buy yourself clothing for ten dollars and go to work, you know, you'd buy a few shirts, a few pair of pants and a few pair of shoes for ten bucks.

AJ: So what's the name of the store? Is it still there today?

NC: Yeah, yeah, the name is Honest Ed's and it's still there today.

AJ: Is that in downtown?

NC: Yeah, it's right downtown – I would say midtown because it's by Bathurst and Bloor. I used to live just about five, six blocks away from there so it worked out very very well. And after I did the job as a cleaner I move up to do a different job inside the store which was to set up things on the shelves.

AJ: It must be very different, when you were there maybe 40 years ago, and compared to now? What is the city, did you see much changes?

NC: Well it was 45 years ago, or a little bit more...yeah it was totally totally different, it was sheer luck that I ended up in that store because it was easy for me to listen to English language. And somehow, I started to pick up a few words here and there plus people, because I was always hanging around in the store, I would talk to people, either Italian or English. Now how you speak English? Well, they speak English so you just make it look like you understand and they keep [...] and you somehow pick a word here and there and I would know what I was saying. Many times they were asking me, "where is the, where you sell hats?" and I would send them all on the fourth floor because that's what I learned, I learned to say "fourth floor." So, every time somebody would ask me something I would send them to the fourth floor. So slowly, the language started to be, like to be part of my daily life, the English language.

(12:00)

AJ: So at that time, I presume, is not much entertainment, like we have today, what did you do for fun besides working [...]

NC: My focus at that time was basically, mostly, working and if, right away, after I got that job, I find out that you can work longer hours, so I asked to work longer hours, as long as I could – sometimes, I used to work seven days a week because they needed people so I volunteer to do the work. My focus was to work, no fun, but then after a while, I would say, for the first year I didn't have that much fun except work and moving because we moved about 6 or 7 times (laughter). Yeah...

AJ: So when you were working hard, how much do they pay per hour?

NC: That time I started, it was 75 cents an hour I believe...and I went up from 75 to about 95 by the time I finished.

AJ: Do you much how much at that time when you buy meals, how much it costs?

NC: I don't remember the meal, because I never ate in a restaurant in those days. I used to eat always at home...I remember going shopping, um, we could go and do a whole week's shopping, me, my mother and my sister and we would spend about 18-20 dollars.

AJ: Ah, so you so you making about 75 cents and if you go shopping for a week it's about 20 bucks...

NC: Something like that yeah yeah...

AJ: So at that time, I mean there's probably car around downtown, did you guys besides travelling by streetcar, what else did you guys use?

NC: I walk, I used to walk every day. I never knew how to get a streetcar to get to work because it was only about 6, 7 blocks...and then every time I would have to go someplace, over there you start to meet people and we become friends and they would live in different places, but it didn't matter how far they were there were always people or friends in the area. And in those days, the only thing we knew was just to walk over to the friends, you would not get a streetcar to go anywhere or a bus, you would just walk.

AJ: So how did you eventually, actually move all the way up here, from downtown to Woodbridge...

NC: Well that's another long story, because my sister always wanted to better, I moved, like I says we moved 6,7 times [...] downtown and the reason we moved was because the first place was from friends in their own home so once I started to get a job we started to rent. And when we started to rent we used to have a room on the attic in the third floor of a house and then we would have some kind of kitchen which was just a stove right beside the laundry tub in the basement close to the furnace so that was our living quarter. And, then that was not very acceptable especially because we were three people, so then as soon as some money started to coming in, so then we went out and look for a place, a better place, so then we find another place which was another room and a kitchen but was a little bit better but the people, they were not very friendly so it did not work out. So some friends asked us to go live with them to their place, and that did not work out either after a couple of months then we had to move again. And, anyway, in the first year was moving a lot but finally we found a place which was, down there, they used to call it a flat at that time, but it was a self-contained apartment in the same house. It would be down in the first floor, it would be in the owner's living, and then on the second floor people used to rent. It normally was a living room, a bedroom and a kitchen. So that was good enough for us, because my mother used to put a blanket in between the room and divide the room in two so I would sleep on one side and my mom and my sister would sleep on the other side. So, we did that for probably a year, a little bit over a year, a year and a half and at that time, as I was working at the big store, I met someone who was working in a machine shop and I did have some experience in a machine shop before I came in here. The only reason I could not find a job was because I could not find a place that they would hire me without speaking English or without experience. So I asked this friend, why don't you let me talk to the boss to see if I can get a job there, because there was more money, the money would be from 95 cents, because at that time I was making 95 cents an hour. It would go to a dollar ninety-five I think, or a dollar eight-five or something like that, to me it was a dollar an hour more so I said "I wanna go there." So I went there talking, no he talked first and he introduced me to the owner, and the owner said "bring him him." So the first time I could, which was about two or three days later, then I went and talked to the owner. And it happened that he was German and I knew how to speak a little bit of German at that time and it happened that he speaks very good Italian, he was a translator during the war so I had no problem explaining to him what was my background, and my background was working with machines. So somehow, he liked it, me, and asked me when I wanted to start and I started within two weeks. Because I had to give a week notice to the other place, and so I start there to work, and that's when it happened for me to see a little bit of extra money. And when I see that extra money, I started thinking, my mother suggestion and pushing, I started thinking about buying a house. Now, a lot of people, they were here for years and they never thought about buying a house. They were always living in these flats, whatever they call them, but because we had so many bad experiences in the first year, then [...] we think we have to find a way to buy a house on our own. And, so anyway, between my mother saying "we need to buy house," between me making a little bit extra money, and between me getting introduced to the way of living here in Canada more than before. Actually, I wanted to say that I was doing very fast, I was learning very very fast because after a year and a half I could already communicate with people. Yeah, so, what was I saying, yeah, when I start to think that way, to have that kind of thinking, I started to ask around "how do you buy a house? Where do you buy a house?" and this and that. Somehow, I got the

idea, the idea was that you have to make money, and you have to earn enough money, and you have to find a place you can afford to buy then you can buy it...

AJ: So when you buy your first house, do they have a long, what we have now in the bank?

NC: Somehow, I started to use some creativity which, that was part of the way I am at that time...when I find out how you buy, I went and asked the boss where I used to work, the owner of the company, I says "listen, I'm working here, you like the way I'm working here, I like to work long hours, I need some help." Because, it was something actually like, they asked me to go to the bank and get a loan but I could not get a loan because I didn't have no credit. Now I know what it is, but at that time they just said "no, we cannot give you money." So the only way I could get to buy the house was through help from people who know how to so I find a real estate which was from the same town where I come from and he says there's no problem for me to get to buy a house so long as I have some money to put down and then he would arrange for me to get a mortgage. Which I did not know what it was a mortgage, the only thing I knew was that somebody would give me the money to buy the house and I would have to pay back. Well I already knew that type of pay back, when we came here we had to borrow the money to come here. We borrowed the money for the ticket to come here and we borrowed the money from an organization which is associated with the Roman Catholic Church do they loaned us the money and every month when we came here, as soon as I started working, we would have to pay them back. So I already was used to this system, that you borrow money, you do whatever you have to do and you pay it back monthly. So when I was told that you borrow the money to buy the house and then you pay monthly, the concept was very easy in my head because I already done it for almost a year. But at that time I had no money, we had no money, so I asked around many people and everybody knew what was happening so nobody upfront come up with the money.

AJ: So how do you ask your boss to lend you money?

NC: Well, when you're desperate there's certain things that come to you which you cannot explain, I was desperate because I went back to the friends that I knew were friends and none of them would give me any money and then I went to the relatives and none of them would give me any money. So then, I had this idea, I says "the boss knows me and I'm working there everyday, and I'm doing a good job and he's, you know, he's happy with me, maybe I ask him to lend me the money" Because all the money I was making was just enough to eat, to pay the rent, and to send the money back to Italy because we had loans to pay in Italy and to pay the loan for the trip over here. So I did not have any extra money to save and put on the side. So I went to the boss and I said "listen, I'm working here and I'm doing good money, and it's enough to pay everything that I have to pay and thank you. But I want to buy a house, and to buy a house they ask me that they want, you know..." I believe it was at that time, \$500 to put it down and I says, how about if you lend me this \$500 but I'm going to pay you with overtime that you give me so you make me work overtime and all the overtime you get paid every month until you get your \$500 back and I believe that he charged me some interest but at that time I had no concept to understand if it was an interest but that's the way he turned around and he says "yep, you just tell me what kind of house you buy and give me all the details when you're ready and I give you the money."

AJ: So how long did you work for him?

NC: I work about, at that time it was about, probably 7 months...

AJ: And you pay off all loans?

NC: Well I pay up, but no right away, I did pay, like I work with him after another two years. So at that time, when the time came, he lent me the money so we moved to the house and as I worked there I

started making more money. I start at \$1.65 I believe, or one dollar ninety-five cents but slowly within three months, I was supervising the place so he gave me 20 or 30 cents more an hour just because I was supervising the place. And then plus I was making the overtime and at that time I used to work mostly at night, I used to start at 5 o'clock and finish at 2 o'clock. So what happened is that I find another job to do part-time.

AJ: That's long hours...

NC: I would work say from 1 to 4 in the afternoon and then at 5 I would go work over there until 2 o'clock...and that was part-time almost every day. And then I had another job that I would work, sometimes Friday night, sometimes Friday, Saturday and Sunday...and that job was to serve food in the hall, in a wedding hall. On Friday would be some stag party, like people that would have party before they get married...so they used to, I used to work there. And at that time I used to get about 10 dollars a day, and whatever you would do it was 10 dollars. And ten dollars, hey, it was better than nothing, and it was good, because 10 dollars in my mind was half of the week's shopping so then I become very good at that, so the guy started to ask me to work on Saturday. And on Saturday would be 20 dollars...and because it was all day, from 8 o'clock in the morning until 1 o'clock in the morning, like it was a long day but it was 20 dollars, I would eat there, you know, to me it was good because I would eat, I would make money and I would have fun because it was always with music and people around. So that was my entertainment...

AJ: [...] (26:30)

NC: Yeah, well I did a lot of work, a lot of jobs and I move different places. I always worked to make more money, to have a better job, but in the meantime I was always spending too, I learned to buy a house and I did buy a house then that house was downtown, and it was big but we seemed to not have very good luck in renting, we rented to three people and all three people...One person, paid one month, and then didn't pay for two months and then they left. Then we get another person, never pay any money and stay there for another two months and then the third one was making so much troubles in the house that we figured out that we are not very good to rent houses so we have to find a house that we can only live in ourselves. So because I was making money, it was 1966, by 1966 I bought not only I bought a house but I bought a car for \$500. And because I needed to go back and forth to work and because I was working in different places, you know overtime and part-time. So then a car was essential, but really, I needed a car because I was a young man and I wanted to have a car. So by doing that, I start to see that Toronto was big, but outside Toronto was even better so at one point in 1967, early 1967, I was up at a place they call Finch & Islington, at that time it used to be like park, bushes or in the country, but I noticed they were making some new houses. So I enquired to the same person who sold me the first house, I enquired, "how do you get up there?" and he said "you just buy a house" and well I said "well I have to sell this house." So anyway, we sold the other house with him and we bought the other one so the house that I bought first was \$13,000 then we sold it for about, no it was \$11,000, and we sold for \$13000 and then we bought the other house outside for Toronto, like on the north side of Toronto, right on the north side, it was around Finch & Islington, we bought that house for \$21,000 or \$18,000. So it was a newer home but it was just a home for one family, they call it a bungalow. So, that's how I moved out of Toronto, I moved out there.

AJ: So, who lived with you? Your mother and your sister?

NC: Yeah yeah, we all lived together, me, my mother and my sister until I got involved with a lady which I got married and once I got married then, we started not to live together (laughter). Because there was some friction between my ex wife, now, and my family.

AJ: So did you have any kids?

NC: Well before the kids come the wedding (laughter). Like in 1967 when I moved up here, I already knew this girl because I met her on the first job that I had where I used to be the cleaner, that's where I met her. And then on and off we kept in touch and somehow in 1967 things started to become more serious so I would have to go and talk to the parents and tell them I'm serious and all that. They didn't agree with what I said, so they said to me, go and find good job, buy yourself a house and then come again. Well guess what, in two years that's what I did, I buy a car, I had a better job and I bought a house. So I went back and I says okay, now I have a house, a car and a better job, you know, I'm serious. Anyways, just to cut it short, we got to know each other for four years before we got married. And, when we got married, we move in the same house that I bought in Finch & Islington. That was the agreement, but from the first day that we move in there, she started to make all kinds of noises because she didn't want to live together with my mother and my sister. So there we go, me working again more, at that time I knew how to speak English a little bit more, I knew how to hang around, I knew how to buy more jobs, so from 1 job I had 2 from 2 jobs I had 3, so I was making good money. So then we moved from that bungalow, we moved to another house not too far away from there was more or less the same age, very new, but with four bedrooms. So we have two bedrooms and a kitchen for me, and two bedrooms and a kitchen for my mother. So we moved there, and at that time, between there, we got married and in 1972 my first son was born. At that time, I was in such bad shape, because I was working very hard, and I had a lot of problems with my ex-wife, so I would not sleep. It was a constant fight, I would work during the day for 12-14 hours, then I would go back home and fight with my ex-wife and go back to sleep and she would nag me until the morning. So after a while, I was stressed out so much that I got sick so I could not do work. So I lost a job and slowly I lost the house because I had to sell almost for whatever I bought it and we ended up in an apartment again. We end up right in an apartment...

AJ: How did you get your foot back, I mean how did you get your feet back? Back to work and [...]

NC: See once I went to the apartment, my mother was in one apartment, in one part of the town, and I was in another apartment not too far away. So, at that time, something happened within my mind, which I understood that if I want to succeed, if I want to get myself back into order physically, I had to learn to take care of myself. And, so anyway, after going back to so many doctors, the doctor they told me told me that I could not do this and I could not...there was a lot of restrictions that I could not do. But what I found out was, yes that's what the doctor used to say. But I could do better, in other words, I could train myself to go back and be normal again. And that's what I did, somehow I become strong again and it took about a year and a half before I could go out and find another job, a steady job. In between, I used to work part-time with friends, wherever I could find a job...

AJ: So it must be difficult...

NC: Very very hard, I cannot even explain to you how hard it was. Just what I say, you have to imagine how hard it was...you come here in 1964 with nothing, you work very hard to achieve something, to achieve a certain status in your life, you work hard to buy a house where you like it, to buy a car – thinking that you stay like that for all your life, then all of a sudden, everything is shattered down, it's very hard, especially within 3 or 4 years, it happened twice within 3 or 4 years.

AJ: So how do you settled down in the end, like....

NC: It was a long long battle to settle down, the settling down was in 1973 I think...I dunno, sometime after that, after the moving, me and my ex wife bought a house, a small house, with half of the downpayment that we had on the other house. My mother bought another house, well I bought it for her so we bought two small homes at that time. And my mother could pay because at that time she was

receiving some kind of assistance because when we came here she worked for a little while and then she got sick, and she had to get an operation with her lung so she could not work anymore. She was getting this, kind of, a pension as a widow, because she was a widow and because she could not work. So she used to have a little bit of money, so, because of that we figured out that she could pay the mortgage and I would help her to pay the rest of the stuff. So anyway, we started getting back on our feet like that, and then me and my ex wife we separated because I did not want to go back and get sick again. So when she started to bug me again, then I said, you better go and so she took my son and she went for a little while. So, things didn't work out like that either so we got back together and we were on for another 6 years or so and we got separated again. And, then we went on again for another 6, 7 years, a total of 19 years together and in the meantime we had two kids, and after 19 years got divorced and have been divorced ever since.

AJ: So I mean at that time you were going through this marriage crisis, where did you work? I mean did you still work with your friends or did you work somewhere else? [...]

NC: Like I says, I was always looking for ways to improve and I want to improve financially, I want to improve physically, I want to improve emotionally. We hat time I only knew that I did not explain. So, between all this commotion, getting separated, working and getting sick and all that I happened to know quite a bit around the area so I learned how to get jobs to pay, so I went from 95 cents an hour, I went to 7 dollars an hour. So, I started to know, I started to have experience, I started to know how to speak English. So, what happened is, sometime in 1966-67 I happened to find a good job, it last for a few years, I went on and make a lot of extra money. Plus, the overtime and plus the part-time job. So, like, see if you go back to what you asked me before, how I got introduced to this country, or what was the shock of this country. See, that shock is still today, because, there's something that happens when you go to another country no matter how long you stay. Is that you always are whoever you are, you don't lose your identity. And, anything else that you do is always different, so, everyday you work towards new things, new shocks in your life, something new, something that you did not know before and but, still keep on doing that. I went from not having money, not having a job to getting a loan to do things around Toronto and to survive. First, you do it to survive then you do it survive better, then you, when you're surviving better, you do it to better you life, then when you better your life you want a better one. That's what I did anyway, that's what happened to me. So what happened is, around 1972 I believe, 1973, I happened to find this job that was totally different than what I was doing before. What I was doing before was a machine operator, and you need to be very precise what you do to the millimetre, or even millicentimetres, I forgot even the measurement right now but you have to do some work that takes a lot of attention, a lot of precision and because of that, and because I did not have a very good life outside the work, I could not perform the work very good because I was getting dizzy, my mind could not handle it so that time when I lost a job. So when I lost a job, that was the second time already I lost a job because of the health reason. So, at that time I started to meet different friends and this friend used to work in construction. And, construction you could make the same amount of money you could make in the machine shop but you did not have to work with your head. In other words, you would just go there, you'd do some work and then you'd go home. So I work as a, I find a job as, I tried different things, I tried to work with steels, it didn't work, it was too heavy for me. I don't have the capability to work hard, so I worked with steel, it didn't work out, I worked with wood, you know to be a carpenter, it did not work out, too many piece of wood that I had to put on my shoulder and I could not work. So then, one guy said, "no you don't have the physique to work in construction but there's a job that you can do, and the job that you can do is use an elevator, you do any elevator that you use in the buildings, and before the building is built you put this elevator on the outside to bring the material up and down. So, the only thing you have to do is learn to use that and bring people and bring material up and down this building." I says, "I can do that." So I went there and as every other job, the boss, the owner started to like me. Why? Because every time, this, they used to call the hoist, every time this hoist used to break we would have to wait until the servicemen would come.

AJ: What is a hoist?

NC: A hoist is like this elevator to go up and down the building. You know, to bring people and workers and material to build the building, the high rise building. So what happened is, that one day, if the servicemen would not be there then everybody would have to walk through the stairs, and if you work 25 floors up, you know it's a long walk. Plus, if you have material, you know, you cannot bring it up there. So, one day as I was waiting there, because I could not do anything else, I checked this elevator to see if maybe I could fix it. And somehow I find out what was the problem, and I fiddled around a little bit and it started working again. So I went to the boss and I said "listen, I don't know what I did but somehow, whatever I did, the hoist works again." And he says [...] (43:11) And what it was, the hoist has some kind of breaks, you go up 20, 30 stories so you need good breaks. So there was one part of the break that was more used than the other one, so it needed to be adjusted to be even, level again. So once I adjusted that, then it worked again. And until, the serviceman came a day or two later. So anyway, the boss started to like me for that and plus I was there everyday, I was diligent, I would be there early in the morning, I would get out the last person at night, never complained, so the guy liked me and when I fixed the thing he liked me even more. So when the time came, after a while you are supposed to go home, like after you bring all the material up, the windows up the building, so then the hoist there's no need for somebody to use it again. So normally, the person who operates the hoist has to go find another job. Well in my situation, the boss said to me, "listen, we need someone to bring the hoist up and down only two or three times a day, but during the day there's nothing else to do so do you mind if you sweep the floor, do some other little jobs in the meantime, then if you do that, you can stay here until we finish the building." I says, "no problem." So I ended up working there for two and a half years...and it was unheard of because mostly in a year you're gone because the building is built but because of the situation, I was there for two and a half years.

AJ: That was something...

NC: That was part of something they started after because I'm gonna tell you, you mentioned how I survived...You see, what happened because of that I started to learn a lot more because there was a lot of people that were more experienced in life. There was trades, like commerce or electricians, which they had to go to school, this me, I never went to school. So I didn't know certain things that happen when you become educated and so talking to these people I got to understand that if you don't educate yourself you stay the same all of the time. So I thought I was doing good, yes, I was doing good on one side but educationally I was not doing good at all because I was already 22 years or so, 23 years and I had no education you can say because my education was only grade eight in Italy. So when I learned that if you have education you can get more money then I started to become interested. So I did not go to school but I look around and see how can I make the same amount of money of an educated person without the education but still be okay. So I look around and I find out that if you work with the hydro company or the gas company or telephone company, or the transportation company of the city – they're all big big companies and they have big units so that when you find a job in there, automatically you would go from 3 or 4 dollars an hour to 7 dollars an hour or 12 dollars whatever it was only because you're working in there and it doesn't really matter what you do, so once you're in there, the next thing is what else can you do to make more money? So I went and applied to all the four companies, the gas company, the hydro company, the telephone company and the transportation company, so I went and applied to all of them so I knew any day I was going to be off work. So either, I will be find something on myself, or I will have to keep sweeping the floor for the rest of my life. So anyway, I did the application, I went there, you say "how did you dot he application?" I did not know how to speak English very good, I did not know how to read very good. But, I asked people around, "what do you do when you go to this place?" Well they say, in those days it was a little bit simpler than today, they would have one page which you would tell them, who you are, where you live, how they would get in touch with you...and if you had any experience in work, you'd tell them what you have. That's it, that was the application. So anyway, I apply, and then I

waited a few months. Then I believe after two months or three months, the same day I received two notices to go and get an interview, the same day, the same day I received the notice and the same day I was supposed to meet with two different places. One was the gas company and the other was the transportation company. So at that time I had to decide what to get, should I go to this place or that place...somehow I decided to go for the TTC which is the transportation company. The one that they have busses and streetcars and subway here in Toronto. To me that was something better because I see this guy with a uniform and I say that's good "you put that uniform on and you get paid just to drive and I like to drive right." So I said to myself, "you know I think I'll go for that," so I went there and...

AJ: How did you, I mean when you apply there and you say you can speak very little English, can you write English?

NC: No, no...

AJ: So how did you get your application to go through that process?

NC: Well that application was totally different than the other ones. Because the application just to say that you wanted to work was one page, when I went there for the interview they make me fill up about four pages of things.

AJ: Italian?

NC: No, it was English but I didn't understand, 90% I had no idea what they say...

AJ: So what do you put down?

NC: I have no idea how I did it but I, there was a lot of what I know now as multiple questions. Yes or no, or something else, true or false yeah. So I picked up right away that I have to find something here so what I did is that I would go through a page and fill up whatever I could understand, something that I could understand. So I fill up that part and then somehow I would imagine maybe this is okay and that is okay, anyway, I don't know exactly how I did it but by the time I finished, they say come back in 2 or 3 days for another interview and some kind of training. So I said okay, and so anyways, I went back and at that time, more things to fill up with papers and they test me to see if I can do certain things...

AJ: What do they test? I mean like machinery?

NC: At that time, the main thing, because they needed drivers, so when they asked me what I applied for, I said "driver" right. But, at that time it was not driving a bus, it was driving a streetcar. So the first thing that they test was to see if you can go on the streetcar, so they teach us the basics and they let us sit down on the streetcar and they say "you move it then you stop" right. And when I went there I could not reach the peddle, so the peddle to push the breaks and then the gas, and so the inspector, whoever was training, you know he started getting to impatient and annoyed. It was an Englishman, so I was not good to speak or understand English but never mind the English accent it was even worse, it was very hard for me to understand. So anyway, we got into some kind of argument but I understood that I had to reach the pedal. So, he almost give up on me but I started moving that seat in a hundred different ways until finally I'm moving it in a way that I can reach the pedals. So when I reached the pedal, I screamed and I yelled and said "Okay, I find a way" and I show to him "see." And he could not scream anymore because I find a way to use, and then he could not fire, if I could not reach the pedal then I could not be trained.

AJ: So you passed the exam?

NC: And I passed the exam...

AJ: So you just go on to that and eventually you worked for TTC...

NC: And then I end up passing that exam, then I passed the exam to drive and I was doing the training I was learning. They did not know that I did not know how to speak English or write in English. But every time that I need something I would ask in a way that – just like I was ignorant. But really I did not know nothing...So, somehow, either I find the right person or the right day or whatever, everything went good. And, I got the job, I got hired and actually, not only I got hired but there was a simple thing, maybe it's too much, and I have to go now in a little while so I'm going to cut short here. There was some people they knew how to speak English and they had experience driving trucks and they failed and I have to say that I did not fail because I did not know a lot. Believe it or not, for me not to know a lot, it helped me because I would focus 100% on what they want me to do. So I did not have to understand what was there written, I only had to understand what they want and somehow I did. And, that was not the first time, it happened years before when I was Italy the same thing, when I was in Germany the same thing. And when I started to work here, it was the same thing, I had to understand what people want my own way because I could not understand English. And then figure out how to do it so to show them I understood but really I didn't understand. It was a little bit complicated at times, you could smile at me and ask me if I liked to work here but I would not understand you but the way that you smile I would understand that it was something to do with work then I would say "yeah" but I had no idea what you said. And when I say "yeah" you would be happy because you thought that I understood but I didn't.

AJ: So okay, I guess that it is towards the end of our interview. So is there anything that you would like to add, maybe, like somebody's more impact on your life, or would like to say something to the audience and...

NC: Well, I talk mostly (about) my adventures with work okay, and right now after doing so much more, like what I just told you it's not even a portion of one percent of what happened in my life, even in that period of time. I focus on whatever I told you because they were the highlights, in between there's so much more. And, what I can say is for whoever listen to this, or for somebody interested in listening to this is there is something that you have within yourself which somehow you develop along the way. It is there but it doesn't do anything unless you move it, you do something with it, unless you have that eagerness to do, to express it or you have that eagerness that you want to better, to make better. Well, I always had this thing within me which I always wanted to make something better of my life. If I'm sick, when I was sick I never accepted that I was sick, I always look a way to get healthy. When I did not have any money, I always look a way, how can I make money. So that has to be within you, if you don't have it – it doesn't matter how much people are going to do to you, how much help you get, you will not make it. But if you do have that spark within you, then I find out in my own experience, if you have that spark, it doesn't matter where you are or what you do, that spark is gonna assist you to do it better, you make a lot of mistakes, but the mistakes you don't count. What you accomplish, if it's something you, let's say you have no food and it doesn't matter if you're very nice looking, but if you have no food you starve. So in my situation, if I have no food, I look around and see where the food is. I don't care how I look, so that is something that, I would say that everybody should have, and a lot of people, everybody have it. It's just that, are you recognizing it to make it work for you or not. I know people, like somebody that I know, which they just sit there and they hope that something happens, or they hope that things will work out in a certain way. I do that too but not, many times, the majority of time, I make things happen good or bad. The bad ones are sometimes so bad that, there, if I wasn't the way I am, I would give up but I'm not that type of person. So no matter how bad it is, if something has come up next time, I'm gonna fight again to make it good. So, I don't know if that comes because I was an immigrant, I don't know if that comes because I was an orphan when I was twelve, I don't know if that comes because of the situation that I was in my family, I don't know really why. I don't know if I was born with that, but I only know

that if I wasn't the way that I am then I would not make it, just because how I know is that, a lot of friends that I met in 1964, 1965, 67 to about 68. A lot of those friends did not make it in a similar way that I made it, like some people made it because they married somebody that had money so that's why they live in their own home or have their own car, otherwise they wouldn't. Some of them they had hereditary money coming in to them so then they'd settle themselves to have houses and to have businesses. I didn't have nothing, I only had myself, so I only had to depend on myself, so somehow, what I can say is that each one of us have whatever it takes to make it in life but you have to have that spark within yourself in order to be able to go out and make it, and if you have that spark, it doesn't matter where you end up, you're always going to come up with something that is decent that you can live with. So I believe that it doesn't matter if you're in Canada or a different country, now once you live in Canada it's not easy to go to a different country and do the same thing, that's my experience because Canada offers a lot more than other countries. But I believe that if somebody would put me in the same situation I was in 1964 and they would put me in that situation and bring me to a different country, probably, I would do exactly the same.

AJ: (There) is a lot of wisdom in that Mr. Catricala. Alright we are just going to finish our interview here, thank you again for joining us at our interview here

NC: It was a pleasure, it was not a pleasure for me to remember all those things, but it was a pleasure that I could express it to someone now after so long

Well you're doing great, you're doing really good, thank you very much...