

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series

Robert Massaro interview

Conducted by Adina Langer

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Transcribed by Adina Langer

Born in 1971, Robert Massaro grew up in New Haven, Connecticut, near the home of his grandfather, Patrick Massaro, a World War II veteran. Massaro enjoyed hearing his grandfather's tales of immigration from Italy and heroic service on the 11th Hospital Train during the war. After his grandfather's death in 2012, Massaro became the custodian of his grandfather's most prized World War II souvenirs and the stories that went along with them.

Full Transcript

Interviewer: Today is February 26, 2018, and I am here at the Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University with Robert Massaro for a Legacy Series interview during which we will remember his grandfather, Patrick Massaro who served in hospital trains during World War II. My name is Adina Langer, and my first question for you is, do you agree to this interview?

Massaro: I do.

Interviewer: Great. Could you please state your full name?

Massaro: It's Robert Eric Massaro.

Interviewer: And what's your birthday?

Massaro: My birthday is 4/22/71.

Interviewer: So, before we talk about you and your life, I'd like to go back a bit further and talk about your grandfather. What was your grandfather's full name?

(00:58) Massaro: His birth name—he was born in Italy—was Pasquelleno Massaro. And once he'd come to America, and he actually changed it. There was not a lot of Italian people around where he was, and there was a lot of Irish, and he actually changed it to Patrick growing up.

Interviewer: So, can you tell me more about where and when he was born?

Massaro: He was born in 1918, came to America when he was four years old. His father came first, and his mother came four years later with him, and he grew up in New Haven, Connecticut.

Interviewer: Where in Italy was the family from?

Massaro: They were from Benevento, which is right outside of Naples, about a half hour away from Naples.

Interviewer: So, he came over when he was four.

Massaro: Correct.

Interviewer: And they settled in New Haven. What was that time like? What was their neighborhood like when he arrived?

Massaro: My great-grandfather got a job—a sponsor, actually, for the railroad, and that's how they arrived in New Haven. At that time a lot of immigrants were moving to that area. It's funny that there was a lot of people from Benevento—my mother's side of the family is from Benevento also. My stepmother's side is from Benevento also. A lot of people from Benevento immigrated to that area of Connecticut.

Interviewer: Were they a religious family?

Massaro: Actually, I was thinking on my way over here about how my grandmother was going to be a nun before she met my grandfather. So, my grandmother was very religious. They were in the same church for maybe 50 years.

Interviewer: Was there one catholic church that the Irish immigrants and the Italian immigrants—they all went to the same church?

Massaro: Correct. At that time yes.

Interviewer: And so, how big was his family?

Massaro: He had seven brothers and sisters. One remained in Italy. When my grandmother came over, the oldest—she later immigrated to Canada. And that was seven total.

Interviewer: So, what drew them to the United States?

Massaro: I'm assuming just the opportunity for work, with my great-grandfather getting that sponsor in Connecticut for the railroad. I'm assuming that period of time there was a lack of work in that part of Italy, so they immigrated to America.

Interviewer: And your grandmother, was she a homemaker?

Massaro: She was a homemaker. Correct.

Interviewer: What were their names. I meant your great-grandmother.

Massaro: Great-grandmother? Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah, your great-grandmother and great-grandfather. What were their names?

Massaro: Micheal and Louise.

Interviewer: Massaro.

Massaro: Correct.

Interviewer: And did your grandfather tell you any stories about how the Depression affected his family?

Massaro: I know it affected him greatly. Growing up during the Depression. He was very frugal. He went to war and came back, and he bought his house, and he paid it off in one year, in 1952. He remained in the house until he passed away. He was 96 when he passed, but he paid off that house in one year. But very frugal, always concerned. He told me a story about how the builders aid, "You have the money. Why don't you just build a bigger house." He said, "That's all I need." And he was fine, but, and even the lawn mower, he bought in 1952. After he passed, I found a receipt for the lawn mower. He always told me it was 22 years old. I found a receipt. He bought it in 1952, and this was about seven years ago! So, he used the same lawn mower. Just kept fixing it. But it changed him and my family, as far as being frugal and conservative. You know, in hard times you learn a lot about yourself, and kind of how to live, so—. (4:33)

Interviewer: Was your great-grandfather able to keep his job at the railroad?

Massaro: To be honest, I'm not sure. I know my grandfather went to the seventh grade and went to work after that, but one of the things he did during the

Depression was—they made parks around Connecticut, and highways they worked on.

Interviewer: So, he joined the Civilian Conservation Corps?

Massaro: Yes. I believe that was it. Yes.

Interviewer: So, he would have been a young teenager.

Massaro: Correct.

Interviewer: And did he tell you much about—had you ever seen the house where he grew up?

Massaro: Actually, I have not, which is funny, because I lived near there in New Haven, but I never went to that area, but I should.

Interviewer: Was it—did it remain an immigrant neighborhood?

Massaro: No, it changed over time. That town changed drastically over time, so—.

Interviewer: And, so you mentioned that your grandfather went up through seventh grade.

Massaro: Correct.

Interviewer: What was his schooling like? Do you know much about that?

Massaro: Actually, I do not. Unfortunately.

Interviewer: Did he tell you any stories about what he did for fun when he was a kid?

Massaro: He enjoyed—I know one thing—singing. He was a very good singer, which, when he got older he would start singing again. But a friend of his, they would use a boat, and they would go out along the shore. We grew up on the water. And they would sing. He would sing, and his friend would play, I think, the guitar. And they would tell them to come in closer to shore, that they wanted to throw in money into the boat. And he wasn't looking for money. He was just looking to sing. Another thing he had an interest in when he was very young was carpentry, which he loved until he died. He was 94 still making things out of wood for people. But he told me a story about a boat. He would go and sketch a boat in the window in a shop. And the man saw him one day and said, "What are you doing?" He

said, “I want to make that boat at home. I just want to sketch it out.” And he made the boat. He had lighting in it. I’ve seen a picture of it before. When he went off to war, his sisters fell on hard times. They actually sold the boat on him. They told him it was in a fire in the house, but he believes that they actually sold it, so—But throughout his life he worked as a carpenter, for 39 years making gun stocks for Mossberg Firearms¹. (7:04)

Interviewer: And, do you know when and where he met your grandmother?

Massaro: That is a great question. I do not. I believe they met when they were about 15 or 16 years old.

Interviewer: They went to the same church?

Massaro: In New Haven, I’m not 100% sure, unfortunately.

Interviewer: But they were together by the time the war started—.

Massaro: Correct. Correct. They were married.

Interviewer: What was your grandmother’s name?

Massaro: Marge—Margaret.

Interviewer: What was her maiden name?

Massaro: Comiskey.

Interviewer: And, what was her background? It was not Italian—.

(8:07) Massaro: It was Irish, actually. Her parents immigrated from Ireland. The year I do not know, but they immigrated from Ireland.

Interviewer: And do you know much about how he and his family and friends would have known much about what was going on in the world? Did they have a radio?

Massaro: During the wartime, or pre-war?

Interviewer: Yeah— pre-war.

¹ Mossberg Firearms is still around today. <http://www.mossberg.com/>

Massaro: I don't know, actually. I don't.

Interviewer: Did he tell you any stories about learning about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Massaro: No—he—no. I know that, you know, kind of those years he wanted to go to war. He wanted to enlist. His company kept deferring him, that he didn't know about—Mossberg Firearms. And right around that time my grandparents got married. My father—my grandmother was pregnant with my father, and he didn't—he wanted to go, and then he found out my grandmother was pregnant, and then he wanted to wait until my father was born to go. And so he was able to go. He was 27 years old, and then he was waiting on my father to be born, and then they said, “you've got to go now.” So, he left.

Interviewer: So, at that point had he enlisted, or was he drafted?

Massaro: He enlisted.

Interviewer: But, um, so where did he train? Do you know much about his training?

Massaro: Unfortunately— I could look it up with the paperwork that I have, but off the top I do not know.

Interviewer: Did he tell you any stories about his buddies, or his cohort before he was deployed?

Massaro: Mainly he spoke about his sergeant. That they spent a lot of time in the hospital train— that they would stay up at night. He did a lecture when I was in college in '94— at the school I went to – the French class asked him to come in and speak about the war. What he enjoyed most about being there was helping, and fixing, and working on the hospital train. That's what he wanted to speak about. He found an old stereo. He ran wiring into each— they were actually cattle cars that they made into a hospital train— he found speakers, put them in each car, would play records for everyone. He said he cut doors from each cattle car, going into the next one, and took the old boots— kind of like these [holds up boots]— took the leather and made straps and hinges out of the boots, and made doors to go into each car, so the nurses could go from car to car to help the patients. He found fireplaces and put them in each car. Actually, the picture that I have of him with everyone from the hospital train, there's

about 70 men there, and you can see the smoke stack coming out of the fire, out of the car.

(11:01) Interviewer: So, let's talk more about that. He was originally assigned as the cook? Is that right?

Massaro: Correct. He went into the military. He worked in a bakery in '36, as a kid. And I still have a tool that he had that he wrote "Bond Bakery 1936" on, and I don't know if I showed you that, but that's a fun thing that I knew that he got it from there. So, he knew how to bake, and when he went into the military, he was a baker. And they said, "We don't need bakers, we need medics." And they said, "You're a medic now." And that's how he became a medic.

Interviewer: So, he was a medic, he had his training as a baker—

Massaro: Correct.

Interviewer: — and as a carpenter—

Massaro: Correct.

Interviewer: Because he was already working for the firearms—

Massaro: Correct.

Interviewer: —company. So, he was assigned to the 11th Hospital Train?

Massaro: Correct.

Interviewer: And where were they deployed?

Massaro: I want to say from Virginia. I'm not 100% sure. I have it, but off the top, I'm not 100% sure.

Interviewer: And this was 1944?

Massaro: I believe so.

Interviewer: And so, what was this hospital train like? Can you talk about how he described it?

Massaro: Old cattle cars. I remember, you know, at the Battle of the Bulge in '44 in Belgium when his sergeant told him to drive the hospital train to France, towards Paris. Do you want me to—?

Interviewer: Yeah. Start up. Tell us about that. It's a great story.

Massaro: OK. He was in a train trestle that day. He said they pulled into a small town in Belgium. He said it was very airy. There was a light snow that day. It was Christmas Day. And they were trying to blow up the train that day. And I just reminded myself in the article— it was 142 buzz bombs that were fired at the train that day, and I know that was my grandfather counting, because he instilled that into me— to count everything. And he was the man that was very detailed-oriented with that, so there was 40 other men hiding that day. They were trying to blow up the train. There was 250 patients on the train— men, women, prisoners of war— that were waiting to go to the hospital in Paris. They waited several hours. The two Belgian engineers left. (13:30) Because they knew they were going to blow up the train. And his sergeant, that he was very close to, told him, “Massaro, you have to drive the train.” He said, “I'm a medic. I don't know how to drive a train.” He said, “Well, if you don't drive the train, these people are going to die. They have to get to that hospital in Paris.” He said, “Try driving it, and we'll go from there.” So, my grandfather said he put it in gear to go, and he said he kept bucking the cars, because they were linked together. And he said, “I guess it was kind of like a standard car.” They were bucking because he wasn't used to driving a train. And he said the men were just groaning in the back from the shaking of the train, and so the sergeant said, “OK. I'm going to get you going. I'm going to jump off. Go towards Paris on the tracks.” He said, “You have to go through at night. And no headlight. They'll see the headlight. They'll blow up the train. And when you put the coal in the stove, put it in real fast. Close the door real fast. They're going to see that glow of the stove, and they're going to blow up the train.” So, the sergeant got him going. He said, “Good luck.” And he went off towards Paris in the night, with no headlight to see. So, he didn't know what was ahead of him. The sergeant told him, “You'll go over a 300 ft. bridge. And once you go over that bridge there will be a shack on the right-hand side. You'll go a few more miles and see the shack. There will be a soldier there that will take that train into Paris because there are a lot of exchanges in the tracks—” And I actually have a map— the original map that he had that had every stop that they made to pick up the wounded. I forget how many stops it was, but he has a map of that. But he took the train into the night. He said that he stopped in a tunnel during the night, because they were trying to blow up the train from above. Waited and got the train going again and then went

over that 300-foot bridge and got to that shack with the soldier on it, and the soldier asked him, “How did you get here?” Those were his first words to him. And he probably— because I kind of have his sense of humor— he probably said, “Well, I took the train.” And he still looked in astonishment, the soldier, and said, “Well, they blew up the trestle. They blew up the bridge.” He goes, “How did you get here?” So, it's not very clear if it was the Americans or the Germans that blew up that bridge. It was behind enemy lines. But the bridge was blown. So—.

Interviewer: So, he must have made it just by minutes.

Massaro: Yes. Just in time.

Interviewer: So, what was life like on that train?

Massaro: My grandfather, like me, enjoyed helping, and doing things, and that's what he did a lot of. He spoke to the French class when I was in college. And that's what he wanted to speak about— was all the things that he was doing on that hospital train. The things he was fixing. He was not a medic. He loved people, and he was very helpful, but he enjoyed more of creating, and working on the train, and speaking to the sergeant a lot. He said they would stay up late at night just speaking about what they could do to improve the train.

Interviewer: Were there other hospital trains too?

Massaro: There was a lot. I don't know how many, unfortunately. There's actually a museum in England that contacted me on some of the information that my grandfather had. In his journal, he had a listing of everyone that was on the hospital train— their phone numbers, their addresses, and that's the only thing they were missing in this museum. It was a World War II hospital train museum in England. And the gentleman asked me for that, and I said, “I have that.” So, I sent it to him.

Interviewer: So, you mentioned that they transported the wounded— both Allies and German soldiers.

Massaro: Correct.

Interviewer: And did he talk much about his interactions with the German soldiers?

Massaro: The only thing— story that I know is I have a dagger at my house that he said he took from a German soldier— prisoner. He said he had it in his

boot. And that's the only time he said, "You cannot have that in here." So he kind of took it and took it home. But it says "Made in Germany," but it's written in English. I think it's a Frogman knife. But it's kind of ironic that it's in English and made in Germany.

Interviewer: And I remember that when we were visiting your home, you showed us a fancy wooden jewelry box—.

Massaro: Sewing kit.

Interviewer: Sewing kit?

Massaro: Yeah. And I always call it a jewelry box, because it reminds me of a jewelry box. My grandmother did a lot of sewing. In Pantene, Paris—right outside of Paris, in France, my grandfather, after the war, he had 12 German prisoners that worked in a carpentry shop for him. There's two gentlemen that spoke some English, Hans and Fritz, that he would kind of communicate through to help the other workers. So, he was very hardworking—my grandfather—and very regimented and oriented with everything. Going back to the Depression, he was very frugal and didn't want to waste anything. The younger American soldiers which were probably 17—could have been 16, 18—they were wasting food everyday. And my grandfather saw this. He said they were driving the jeep and had soup in a big pot in the back, and were just driving fast, and would spill half of it in the back of the jeep. And my grandfather, he said he—I believe he said he yelled at—yelled or raised his voice—but I heard my grandfather raise his voice a couple times, and it's very loud. So, I know if someone's wasting food, and there's people that needed it, he raised his voice. So, he told them, "Do not waste the soup." And what he did was he actually took the soup and told the prisoners of war— at the time it was after the war— he told them one at a time, "go in the room in the back and eat real fast, and get back to work." And for that, he said he could have been court marshaled— put in jail for that act, but they were men, and he did what was in his heart to help other men. Again, it being after the war. And so, the prisoners appreciated that, and I'm sure they appreciated him, because he was respectful to everyone. They made my grandmother— on their own time, [makes quote motion with fingers] he said— this sewing kit box which is dovetailed. They made it by hand. It's a very nice piece that they made—on their own time, he said—but I still have that. That was, actually, one of the first things I ever asked him for. He started, when he was getting older, in his mid-nineties, just getting rid of a lot of stuff. And he told me that story many years before that, and that was one thing

that I did want before I might have gotten rid of it, because it meant a lot to me.

(21:12) Interviewer: So how did he communicate with your grandmother during the war. Did he send her letters?

Massaro: He sent a lot of letters. Yes, I have a lot of the postcards. He was shipping a lot of things home. I have a German ammo box that I found after he passed away. I never saw it before. And he wrote his address, you know, going back to Connecticut. But he soldered it shut. Very clean and neatly but put a German ammunition box right in the U.S. mail and sent it home.

Interviewer: Were there other things like that that he sent home to her?

Massaro: He sent a lot of things. Larger things, and after he passed, I would find, going through his property, a lot of things that were signed "Paris '45". The day— there was this one— a letter holder that is marble that says April 24, 1945, Paris, and I never realized he took it home from the war until after I turned it over and was cleaning it.

(22:22) Interviewer: That would have been right around the time of Hitler's suicide. Did he ever tell you about his impressions of the end of the war?

Massaro: Not too much. Again, he focused on the positive of him making things on the hospital train. He was very creative. It came through my father. My father was an artist, and I'm an artist, and it kind of went down— the woodworking we both enjoy. He was more kind of focused on that— the positive sides.

Interviewer: Did he have any strong memories or opinions about President Roosevelt that he ever shared with you?

Massaro: Actually, he didn't. He never did.

Interviewer: So where was he then? Was he in Paris, then, at the very end of the war?

Massaro: Correct. I have the boots here that say the six countries he was in.

Interviewer: Do you want to show them?

Massaro: Yeah.

Interviewer: And maybe if he holds them right in the middle, that might work?

Massaro: [Picks up boots] I don't know if you can, but he was in Scotland, and this is kind of tough to read, I know Germany, England, Luxembourg, and Scotland and England, France and Belgium.

Interviewer: So, these were all the places he was during the war.

Massaro: Correct. Yep. And it says, "My World War II Combat Boots" And then he wrote, "Battle of the Bulge, 1944, Christmas Eve" and they are actually Goodyear soles which lasted. Yeah.

Film crew: Could you hold them up for us?

Massaro: Yeah [Holds up boots higher]

Film crew: Maybe like tilt them to this side.

Massaro: [Holds boots up on his right side]

Film crew: And up a little?

Massaro [Hold them up higher]

Film crew: Perfect.

Interviewer: So, I guess these boots were not subject to being trimmed for the hospital train.

Massaro: Correct. Because they were his. Again, he wouldn't waste anything.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about when you first saw those boots?

Massaro: They were always in his basement. And he— he got to the point where he just thought things were junk when he was getting older, older in age, and he was just more concerned about life than possessions.

Interviewer: So, what was his homecoming like?

Massaro: I know it was great for him, obviously. I asked several people in my family when they were happiest most in life. I asked my father, and my uncles, older cousins. I asked my grandfather, and it's kind of an obvious answer, and he said, "When I came home from war, and I was alive." That was his happiest point in his life. So, when he came home— he could not

wait until my father was born, but he had to go, so my father was born when he was overseas. And he has the same picture that I have. He would drive around with his tricycle in the house, and put it on the tricycle, and look at his father, and ride his tricycle. So, my grandmother went to the train station in Connecticut— in New Haven— to pick up my grandfather when he was coming home. And my father was holding my grandmother's hand, and he actually went off running, and she was yelling, “Bobby! Bobby!” And my grand— father, actually my father saw my grandfather from a distance and just recognized him from the picture, and ran up to my grandfather, and that was the homecoming of that. Actually, when he came back to the country, actually when he was overseas, he had an opportunity to visit Italy. And he wanted to come home so much, because he was gone for so long from my grandmother and my father, that he wanted to come home, so he came home, and they were having a strike on the railroad. So, he had to wait, I believe in Virginia, for a month or two until he could actually get home to Connecticut. (26:27)

Interviewer: So, he visited Italy in the middle of the war and then came home, or—

Massaro: He was actually never in Italy during the war, but he had the opportunity to go to Italy to visit. His sister was still there. So, he decided to come home instead of visiting the family and great-grandparents— great-great-grandparents, so—.

Interviewer: And did your father have any siblings?

Massaro: He did have a brother that was in the military also— my father was in the Army also— that passed about 25 years ago, in his 40s.

Interviewer: And so what was your father's relationship like with your grandfather?

Massaro: Kind of distant. I know my grandfather coming home from the war was not always easy. You know, he was a medic, picking up wounded, and the dead, and the deceased, so it was not easy on him. And he never focused on that, and he never mentioned it, so I guess he internalized it. He focused on the positive things, and his contribution.

Interviewer: Do you have any memories— what was your first impression of your grandfather?

Massaro: I was very close to my grandfather. I was very close. He taught me a lot about life. He would like to tell these stories a lot— tell a lot of other stories— and I'd go visit him growing up every Thursday— and I'd go

help him do stuff around the house. And I'd spend— once a week I'd go see them. But we are very much alike— organized, I must say, compassionate— and we both helped a lot of people. I got the frugality from him. He taught me— but he taught me a lot about life, probably the most out of anyone.

Interviewer: So, you grew up in New Haven.

Massaro: Right outside of New Haven. I lived in New Haven seven years. I went to school there.

Interviewer: So, your parents had also— they met each other in New Haven?

Massaro: Actually, they did— yes. They both went to high school there, so that's where they met, in high school there.

Interviewer: What were their names?

Massaro: Anne Massaro, and Robert Massaro. Robert William Massaro.

Interviewer: And do you have siblings too?

Massaro: My sister actually passed about 11 years ago, so I'm kind of the only child right now.

Interviewer: Just your sister.

Massaro: Correct.

Interviewer: So, what do you remember most about growing up?

Massaro: As far as my grandparents?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Massaro: The holidays. Going to see them. I remember as a very small child— five, six years old— the cleanest yard you'd ever see. The neatest— organized, my grandfather was. He, you know, he was frugal, so he fixed everything. If the furnace broke, he fixed it or replaced it. He needed a garage— he built his garage. Then he probably built about ten on the whole street. He was kind of the handyman for the whole neighborhood. His house needed siding— I know he put siding on it. He put his roof on it. He built his garage, built a little room next to it. But he was always busy throughout

his life. He was in his seventies— he was cutting down trees with an axe. He didn't want to stop. When he was 95, he had a nurse that stayed with him full-time. She took him on a road trip for eight hours to Virginia. 95 years old, he had his girlfriend next door that he knew for about 40 years, way after my grandmother passed. Financially secure. You know, he had a good life. He stayed in his home until he passed. And that's what he wanted, so we were happy.

Interviewer: When did his— when did your grandmother pass?

Massaro: 1998. Actually '97, September of '97. She passed.

Interviewer: And when did your grandfather first tell you about his wartime experience?

Massaro: I think all my life, and I never— he'd tell me so much, and I was so young. I never really appreciated it until later. Actually until I did this— until I came to Kennesaw State, and saw the exhibit, and started thinking that all the stuff that we have in the family, the stuff that he gave me from the war— to do something with it for other people, so they could appreciate it. But he told me the stories all my life, and he'd repeat and repeat them, and he'd ask me, “Did I ever tell you the story about the train— the hospital train that I was on?” I was like, “Oh no!” And he would tell me again. And I wasn't 100% listening, and then the time that I was doing the exhibit for the first time, I told him to tell me the story again, please. And so he told me the story, and I had to really think about it— it really connected at that point and time. And I said, “You're a hero, Pop!” And he goes, “No, I'm not.” “Well,” I said, “If you didn't drive the train, and no one drove the train, those people would have passed. You know, they needed to get to the hospital for one, two, they might have went over a bridge that didn't exist.” He goes, “No, I was just doing my job.” I said, “Well, if you didn't do your job, those people would have passed!” And he goes, “I never thought about it.” And he was very sincere about that. (32:17) That the whole time he was just doing his job, what he was told. And that's what he said to me.

Interviewer: So, what other artifacts did you bring with you today?

Massaro: I brought a knife— a bayonet actually— that my father gave to me. [Holds it up] I don't know if you can see that.

Film crew: Up a little bit more.

Massaro: [Holds it up near his face] Sorry. My father gave this to me about ten years ago. And it was my father's favorite uncle, his Uncle Bill, and I never saw it before, or didn't recall him having a knife, but the interesting part of this—about this—is my uncle, great-uncle, my father's brother, grandfather's brother—sorry—that my grandfather was born in Benevento, Italy. And so he came when he was four. His older sister remained there. The family got back together and my grandmother— great-grandmother— came four years later to the U.S. They had several other children. Billy— Uncle Bill— enlisted for the war and was actually deployed back to Italy, and he actually went back to Italy. He went back to Naples, Italy, where he was fighting, and was hit by a grenade and had amnesia for two months. He was hit in the leg— had shrapnel in his leg for the rest of his life and walked with a limp. But the ironic part is he was fighting where his family was from and still was at the time, and when he had amnesia, he was at a castle, and 1100 room castle right outside of Naples. It was about a half hour away, in Caserta. He was held there for a couple months and then went to the northern part of Africa and recovered the rest there, but actually this is his knife. So, it means a lot to me because of that story, and that it was my father's favorite uncle. So, I'm happy he passed it down to me. He thought he was actually going to put it on E-bay and sell it, and he actually looked up pricing, and I said, “I could never sell something like that.” So—.

Interviewer: So, are there any other stories about your grandfather that you want to share?

Massaro: Not off the top that I can think of.

Interviewer: How about any other members of your family— you mentioned your great uncle—.

Massaro: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Any others who fought in the war?

Massaro: My grandmother's brother actually fought in the war. He was in England, but I don't really recall any others or have any other artifacts. My grandfather was great at documenting. In his journal he documented daily activities. Like I said earlier, he had one on the hospital train. He took photographs, which my cousin has several photograph albums of people. Every photograph he had; he wrote down everyone's name under it— so it was great documentation— where they were located. It helped so much, years later when, since he's been gone, to recognize people and so forth.

Even when he was a child, he made scrapbooks. I want to say in the early '20s, or maybe late '20s. He did scrapbooking, which, kind of, I saw the growth of that, from scrapbooks to his journal, but he loved documenting information. And that helped me, because I do the same thing that I learned from him.

Interviewer: What do you think students should take away from your grandfather's story?

Massaro: I know what I take away. And I don't know if that's for everyone. It probably is, but the story of when he had the German prisoners. And he did something that he could have been put in jail for. As I said, it was after the war. They were men like us all. We are all different. We all speak different languages, but the main thing was the he could have been put in jail, but he knew—it was after the war. They were starving. He said they were very thin. And we were wasting food. And you give that food to someone that needed it. Which—that is the reason why I asked for that box, because it meant a lot from that story. It's not what I love, as far as a box, but I keep it on display at my house. I'm very proud of it for that reason. That he was helping another man.

Interviewer: And do you think that there are any other lessons about World War II and that experience that people should remember?

Massaro: Well, you know, life, and the importance of life, and helping others, and do what's right in your heart. And your family. Because that's when he said he was happiest. When he came home and met his son and was back with his wife. And I read the postcards, and you know how much he missed my grandmother when he was gone. So, the simple things and the little things he carried on for the next 75 years.