

Tony Cuzzo was interviewed in 2001 by Kristin Swanson and Roy Mustelier, new owners of the former Cuzzo family home and store at Ninth Street and South Carolina Avenue SE; Nancy Metzger of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society was also an interviewer. This transcript was reformatted in 2016 by the Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project and includes street addresses in the Project's usual style. A link to this transcript was added to the Overbeck website, <http://www.CapitolHillHistory.org>.

Interview with Tony Cuzzo

Interview Date: March 25, 2001

Interviewers: Kristin Swanson
Roy Mustelier
Nancy Metzger

Transcriber: Nancy Metzger

Side A

CUOZZO: I lacked two months of being 27 years on the police force and I left then because my brother got killed in the store.

METZGER: I remember reading about that.

CUOZZO: That was back in 1968.

METZGER: So awful.

CUOZZO: Yes, it was. I was working just about four blocks from there.

METZGER: So you were at the First Precinct?

CUOZZO: Number 5. Yes. Fifth and E [Streets] SE. I spent my entire career there.

MUSTELIER: It was so close. My god.

CUOZZO: So close, yes. It happened in the evening around three o'clock. I was out there when one of the fellows told me. He said, 'Tony, there's been a shooting at the store.' I thought to myself, I bet one it's one of those drivers that come in delivering. But it wasn't them; it was my brother.

METZGER: What was his name?

CUOZZO: Charles. He was sitting on the counter; a man came in with a gun, pulled it in front of my kid brother. My brother gave him the money in the drawer, only had about \$20, \$30 because we never kept any money in there. This brother of mine he decided he was going to go take the gun away from the man. The man fired one shot and that was it. So after that we had to close it.

SWANSON: Was it someone you knew?

CUOZZO: No. Just a stranger that came in. He disappeared so fast that nobody saw him.

SWANSON: So he was never found?

CUOZZO: Never found; they never closed the case. I knew the policemen worked on it.

METZGER: I'm sure. They just didn't have enough clues.

CUOZZO: Well, you see there were so many back fences he could get over. They just couldn't catch him.

MUSTELIER: I have a simple question—how is Cuzzo pronounced?

CUOZZO: Well the Italian pronunciation is “Cutzo.” We always said “Cuzzo.” That was the way we had it. Do you need some light? [Kris is videotaping the interview.]

SWANSON: Did you find any pictures?

CUOZZO: I can't find those pictures but I'm still looking.

SWANSON: I heard your sister had a photograph album? Amelia, was it?

CUOZZO: It might be in the stuff I've got downstairs. I've still got some stuff from the store downstairs. I haven't had a chance to go down there and look.

SWANSON: If you find it ...

CUOZZO: I'll look for it. She had a lot of pictures.

Well, where do we want to start—at the beginning?

SWANSON: Yes, that's an idea.

CUOZZO: We moved over to that store in September of 1917. My dad was a huckster and he still had his horse and wagon. He opened the store and parked the horse and wagon in front of the store all day long. Later on, after he got rid of the horse he got a Model T Ford. He was driving that and going to the market in that. I worked in the store with him, stocking shelves and cleaning up, doing various things that had to be done. Back in those days there was no refrigeration. We had ice boxes. We had a big walk-in box. The front part was fitted up with a tray that you could put ice in. The ice man would have to put a 300-pound block of ice and cut it into three sections, walk in there and climb up a little ladder while the ice was still on his shoulder, and slide it into this tray. There was a drain there that led into a 50-gallon water barrel. Every day that barrel had to be dumped. That was one of my jobs—pumping the water out and dumping it out in front of the store.

We had an awning out there. It was a pole built that would take a drop awning. It would go out maybe about ten feet and then it would drop down for about three feet. It was all shaped by the rope—pull it up in the evening when the sun went down. You would pull it up and it would stay in the back. We used that for years.

METZGER: Did it have the name of the store on it?

CUOZZO: It didn't have the name of the store on it. We did have display windows with signs in there with our name. One of the signs read 'Groceries and Provisions' and other said 'Meats.' They were still in there when I left.

MUSTELIER: There are remnants of one but it is broken ...

SWANSON: glass neon

CUOZZO: Yes, glass neon sign.

MUSTELIER: D. Cuzzo Groceries but that's probably not even the first one.

CUOZZO: Well, we only had the one in there.

METZGER: Was that right in the beginning?

CUOZZO: No. We didn't have them put in until maybe about ten years after the store was opened.

Both of those display windows were too hot to put anything in it. A lot of the companies would send men around to trim them with paper and different things. We had one particular outfit—a tea company out of Baltimore. They came over and the tea at that time came in little square tin cans. They put up a pyramid display and in front of it they put a coffee pot and in fact I've got the coffee pot right here. They gave us about three of them.

MUSTELIER: The black and gold one?

CUOZZO: Yes. You dumped the tea in here and the little filter would keep the tea back. They would set that little display in the window and they would put their crepe paper around it and all. It made a beautiful display. And then a lot of times the cigarette people used to come around and put cigarette ads in and leave blank cartons of cigarettes in the window. Of course, they'd give us a carton of cigarettes. One time I think Gold Medal Flour came along and painted a sign on the side of the store—where that fake doorway is. There used to be a sign there—"Gold Medal Flour Eventually, why not now?"

Of course back in those days things were different than what they are today. We were able to keep chickens in a coop in front of the store. They were live chickens. We had a trash barrel that we used to put

all our trash from the street and the store. Any time somebody wanted a chicken, they'd take it back to the trash barrel, take the head off and let it flop in the barrel. Then they would take it home and dress it and do what they wanted with it.

SWANSON: I was planning on asking the Historical Society if I could have chickens in front too.

SWANSON: You could do a sculpture ...

SWANSON: A big chicken bronze

CUOZZO: One of my jobs every other day was cleaning the coop out. We had a regular wall scraper that we used to have to scrape and wash it all out. The Health Department back in those days wasn't as strict as they are today.

As things went on, we had high shelves in there. I would help to stock those. I would have to stand in the vegetable bins to get to some of the shelves on the top. We had a little arm contraption that had a wire with two jaws on it and a handle at the bottom so that the jaws could close when we went to grab it. That's the way we used to get everything off the top.

Originally right after you went in the door on the left-hand side, about five feet from the door, there were some bins that we used to keep black-eyed peas and lima beans in the first bin (with a separation in it). The next two bins we'd keep the bread in; another bin we'd keep the flour, loose flour; another bin we'd keep the loose sugar. We didn't have packaged stuff; everything was put in bags. We had little scoops that we'd scoop it out with. I've still got some of them I think downstairs. We had candies in there that we couldn't do much with so we got two glass display cases—one for candies and cakes and one for cigars and cigarettes. They were all glass—glass on each side, glass on the front and glass shelves. They just rested against each other.

SWANSON: You know, I'd love to hear about your family—your brothers and sisters and your father, your mom.

CUOZZO: Dad and Mom worked while we were at the school. When I was going to grade school I used to take a pair of skates and skate around and pick up ten or fifteen grocery orders every morning before I went to school. I'd bring them back and Dad and Mom would fix them up, then Dad would start out with the horse and wagon and deliver them. Then he got the Model T Ford and delivered with that. I did that even when I was going to high school. A lot of our business was delivery. We delivered all over the neighborhood—went down as far as the Navy Yard as far as 13th Street Southeast. All the customers interested called in their order. I'll never forget the phone number was 3385.

SWANSON: We found the old post card about changing the phone number. It was changed to Washington something ...

MUSTELIER: Washington 3. It was sent to D. Cuozzo and was with a one-cent stamp for a card. We found it just by chance behind one of the radiators.

METZGER: What was your father's first name?

CUOZZO: Domenico. My mom was Elvira.

METZGER: And they had come over when?

CUOZZO: Dad had come over first. Then later on my mother came over. She had a rough trip coming over but she finally made it. They were married in St. Dominic's church. Then he had the huckster wagon. I still remember him telling us about it. The stable then was behind St. Peter's Church. That's where he kept the horse. He'd work in the summer time. In the winter time he wouldn't do anything but go over and clean the stall out and keep the horse fed and everything. He and a buddy of his used to go down shopping on Seventh Street; they'd spend the day shopping and then go home and feed the horse and all. He finally got rid of the horse and parked the Model T Ford in front of the house. He used to go to market and I used to go with him. I'll never forget when he went to market—market at that time was over on Constitution Avenue, starting at Ninth Street NW. It was a red brick building, similar to Eastern Market, where they had a lot of stands. The next couple blocks were commission merchants—they had stuff shipped to them and then they sold it for commissions. A couple more blocks after that was the Farmers Market. It was a busy place. Where the Smithsonian is now—that's where we used to park the trucks when we used to go shopping in the commission merchants and the farmers' market.

METZGER: So that was Central Market.

CUOZZO: That was the Central Market. My dad would start at one end and price things as he'd go along. He'd do it at the Farmers' Market; they'd bring him the first produce. He'd go around pricing all that. When he was ready to buy, he'd go to a place and ask the man how much. The man would say 'A dollar and a half.' He'd say, 'I've only got a dollar and a quarter.' So one day, I piped up and said, "Dad, I've got another quarter." (laughter) After we left there, he said, 'If I go around saving these quarters, that's our breakfast. Don't you interfere.'

SWANSON: He learned you how to horse trade.

CUOZZO: That's where I got my start.

He kept the store. He used to go out on delivery. Where the condominiums are across the street, that used to be a church—Grace Baptist Church. There was a colored janitor over there. Every time my Dad would have to go out and deliver, he would come over and stay with my mother, as protection. One day, he came in and asked my mother, ‘Give me a dozen of the black hen eggs.’ My mother said, ‘How am I gonna tell whether the hens were white or dark?’ So he said, ‘Where’s your eggs?’ He went back and picked a dozen of the biggest eggs in the box. My mother laughed.

Back in those days we didn’t keep eggs in the refrigerator; they were out on the floor. Stuff was so fresh back in those days. We used to buy eggs from the farmers when they would come in on Saturday. We’d buy two or three cases of eggs and let them set out. They never spoiled. It was the same way with chickens. They would kill and dress chickens but they didn’t eviscerate them. They would lay them out on a table at the market with one cloth over them. We’d go over, raise the white cloth up, pick out the chickens that we wanted and put them in the bag and take them home and put them in the refrigerator.

We had some good times there. It was a lot of work. We’d open up at 7:00 in the morning. When I was going to school, I’d go with Dad to market and come home and unload the truck; then change and go to school. When I went to high school, I did the same thing. Even after I went to work at the police ... I started to work at the American Oil Company back in 1930, graduated from high school in 1929. In 1930, a friend of one of the boys I graduated with came down and said, ‘Tony, you want a job?’ My mother said, ‘Yes, get yourself a job, Tony. Then you can help out here too.’ So he got me a job with the American Oil Company. They had an office down at 133 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, on top of an old store, a three-story building. I went to work for \$75.00 a month. I worked 12 years with them and got up to \$135.

My sister, the one that married a fireman, told me one day she was going to go down to the Civil Service and get an application for her husband to join the fire department. She said, ‘Do you want one for the Police Department?’ I said, ‘Yeah, I’ll try.’ I filled the application and got a call for the examination. I took the test at McKinley High School, if you know where that is. They filled that school completely two days in a row with applicants. That’s how many took that test.

MUSTELIER: What year?

CUOZZO: 1940—early forties. So I took the test, got my results. I was 542 on the list. At that time I was going to St. Peter’s Church and one of the fellows I was working with on one of the fairs they had down there. I told him I took it and he said, ‘Let me know when your result.’ When the result came in (this was November), I told him I was 542nd on the list, ‘I can forget about it.’ He said, ‘Tony, you’ll be called by March.’ I said, ‘Dalton, you’re crazy.’ Well, sure enough in March I got a call. I went down for my

physical. They measured me. I was 5'7-3/4"; I had to be 5'8". I was 20/20-2 for eyesight. At that particular time we had a customer that worked for an ophthalmologist; I was talking to him. He said, 'Tony, come on down. I'll get my doctor to examine you.' So I went down and he checked me out, and he says, 'It's perfect.' Well, I'll try it again. So I went back to the clinic; they still said it was 20/20-2. I said to the clerk, 'For those two little letters I missed you're going to keep me off this job?' He said, 'Come down to my office on Saturday morning and I'll examine you again.' So I went down; he checked my eyes and shook his head, still the same thing. 'Well, let me try something.' So he put another chart on the wall; told me to close one eye and start reading; then close this other eye and start reading with the other one. He shook his head and said, 'You did better with this chart that's harder to read than the other one.' So he passed me. Then I went up for the final physical. My sister's father-in-law was a police lieutenant at that time and he spoke to the officer that was at the clinic, weighing in and measuring in. So when I went up, he took my weight. It was 185. He measurement and came down—68". From then on, I went right on through, passed everything. I served a year and a half out on the street, then started working inside because they knew I could type. They got me an inside job and I stayed there my entire career.

SWANSON: Until '69?

CUOZZO: Until '69. That's when my brother got killed. I had a captain at that time that said when I came back to work, 'You go to the clinic.' I said, 'Just leave me alone; I'll be all right.' He said, 'Well, I'm ordering you to the clinic.' I said, 'If that's an order, I'll have to go.' So I went to the clinic and the doctor talked to me, 'Take two weeks off.' I never took time off; I wouldn't take it off because I had a job there that I wanted to keep up to date with. So he put me off for two weeks ... so I went back again ... They finally retired me on disability. I said, 'That's OK. I need disability pension anyway.' [Note: ellipses in this paragraph reflect personal medical information that was not included in the transcript.]

I used to collect money for the Police Credit Union. I was one of the collectors over there—for the hospitalization, for the relief association, an organization that started because insurance companies would not insure policemen back in those days. We had a deputy chief that was interested and he worked for one of those stock companies that dealt with stocks for court-approved trusts. We had \$444,000 in that outfit at that time. He said, 'We've got to do better than this.' We had 2% bonds. He and I went down to the Treasury and removed the bonds. We put the money in the bank and started investing in stocks. Each person paid \$2 a month for 30 years and at death, the beneficiary got \$1500. When he started that fund that's what it was but it kept growing and growing because of his investments. After you paid your 30 years, you didn't pay any more. I had over 50 years in it. I stopped paying. Instead of my beneficiary getting \$1500, right now we're getting over \$8,000. It's so solvent, that if a catastrophe happened, everybody that's a member would get paid off.

METZGER: That is something to be proud of ...

CUOZZO: That was one of the reasons why I didn't mind working for the police department because I enjoyed my stay there. I worked hard but I enjoyed it. And then working with the store and all ... I used to go over because my two brothers were in service. I was still in the department; I got deferred because of the job.

Getting back to the store, I would have to do my work 12 to 8. I would get off at 8 o'clock in the morning and go and pick my Dad up and take him to market because he couldn't drive anymore. He had stopped driving. I'd take him to market, do the shopping, come on home and I'd stay at the store until noon. I'd go home. (I lived there across the Sousa Bridge right there on Minnesota Avenue.) I'd go home and sleep until about four or five o'clock, then go back to the store and finish up with them because I used to keep the books and all. I did that while my two brothers were in service. Then when they came back, I still went to market because Dad got bedridden and he couldn't go to market. I used to do the marketing, go to the wholesale grocery and get all the staple goods that we needed. Then I would come home. Sometimes it would be seven o'clock and I had to be at work at 7:30. I had to go over across the bridge, change into uniform, and get back. But my bosses—the captain—never bothered me because I always stayed there until four or five o'clock in the evening. Whenever I got done, that's when I went home. So they never bothered me and I had a job where I didn't have to attend roll call. So I would go in and start my work and get all my work done. A lot of the stuff had to be typed—we had to file six and eight copies, which would require typing it twice.

SWANSON: When you were a child at the store, were you the oldest?

CUOZZO: I was the oldest of the children. I had an older sister but she died when she was 14. There were six of us, including her.

SWANSON: What was her name?

CUOZZO: Susan. In fact she and I were making our confirmation at the same time, when she got sick and couldn't make it. I was in school; she got sick and was taken to the hospital. She had a complication of diseases and I never did find out what caused her death. She had hair that went all the way down her back. I still remember her. When she died, at that time, they had policemen directing the traffic at Eighth and Pennsylvania Avenue. They notified him to go and tell my mother that my sister had passed away. She went into shock. She got so hysterical that they had to call the doctor that lived about four houses down from the store. He came up and gave her something to settle her down. He had to give her so much she got high blood pressure from it. We had a customer who had a brother-in-law who worked with a funeral director. She was there; she was there at the hospital when my sister died. So when she came over,

she asked my father if he wanted her to call the undertaker. My father said, 'Go ahead.' She died at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and that afternoon at 6 o'clock that undertaker had her body laying on the couch over top of the store, without being embalmed. They embalmed her the next morning at the house. He had her laid out like she was asleep on this couch. I can still picture her.

METZGER: Was she at Providence Hospital?

CUOZZO: The old Providence, yes. That was in the early 20s. She was the oldest of the six of us, and then me, my sister Amelia, then Florence, then Charles and my kid brother Dominic. Dad raised all six of us there.

By the way, where that kitchen is today, that was nothing but a frame shack. There was no bathroom there. The kids had to take a bath in the kitchen. Of course they had the coal range in the kitchen and then they had Latrobe heat in the dining room.

[SPEAKER UNCERTAIN]: Often they were just on the first floor and then they had grates so the heat would go to the second.

MUSTELIER: The outhouse—was it always there?

CUOZZO: It was always there. It was the only thing we had. You didn't go to the library when you had to go to the bathroom. We had that reconditioned once or twice, I'm not sure.

SWANSON: There's a big [industrial] muffler behind it.

CUOZZO: Well, that was sitting where the spring, when you sat down, the water went into this tank. And then when you got up, it released that water to flush the commode.

SWANSON: It still goes down into the sewer doesn't it?

CUOZZO: Definitely goes to the sewer, it's connected to the sewer.

METZGER: Apparently there were quite a few outside toilets, usually attached to the porch. The question has always been why didn't the water freeze?

CUOZZO: It didn't freeze; I don't know why, but it never froze.

METZGER: Which doesn't make sense because our pipes freeze sometimes.

CUOZZO: Well, I think what it was, the water was on the bottom. When you sat down on the commode, the water filled up. When you got off, it flushed so the water was always underground.

METZGER: Where did you go to elementary school?

CUOZZO: Where I went is where the Hine Junior High is now. At one time there were three schools in the lot. One was Wallach; one was Towers (that was the lower grades), and then there was Eastern High School on the side. I went to Towers, then I went to Wallach. I finished the eighth grade at Wallach in 1926. That was the year the new Eastern High School was opened. So they turned the old Eastern in to Hine Junior High School. I was the first class that went in there and completed the full three (?) years in there. I remember that too because the history teacher made me the historian so I had to write the history. I gave about a 15-minute speech from memory; I had it written on paper. Back in those days, you had to memorize. So I had a 15-minute speech as the historian of the class of 1926.

MUSTELIER: Since you moved into the house, what changes were made to the house?

CUOZZO: The original building is just like it always has been. It was back in the kitchen where this frame shack—that's all it was, a shack. We wanted to knock it down and rebuild it. We went through a hassle with the government. They said that we couldn't rebuild it; we could remodel it. So we got this contractor and got a permit to remodel it. What the contractor did was build a new one on the inside and then tore the old one out. As I told Kris, that kitchen has a sub-floor on it in case we could ever build on top of it. We wanted to build an addition there but they wouldn't let us because they said it interfered with the air in the neighborhood. I don't know where they ever got that idea. But it's all set in case anybody wants to rebuild on it.

SWANSON: Is it cement?

CUOZZO: No, it's regular wood flooring.

METZGER: On the top or on the bottom?

CUOZZO: On the top. On the roof. Of course, while Dad was in the store, he put hardwood floors—maple floor in the store and throughout the house he had hardwood floors.

SWANSON: They are beautiful floors.

CUOZZO: Of course, they need to be refinished. Dad always said that every May he had to do something to fix the house up. But the floors went down. There's good hardwood floors; they need to be refinished of course. Then Dad put that little bathroom in. That back room was one big bedroom. He cut that down and put the bathroom in.

METZGER: So when your family was living there, when you were growing up, what did you have on the second floor? Was it just bedrooms up there?

CUOZZO: The front room was a parlor.

METZGER: and then ...

CUOZZO: Well, that front room took the entire front. Where that little bedroom is, we put that partition in and made a small bedroom out of that. One of my sisters slept there. The master bedroom was where my mother and father was. The back bedroom, before they put the bathroom in, there was two beds there for two of us brothers.

METZGER: Where were the other two girls?

CUOZZO: Two sisters slept up front. My younger brother was born in the house—the one who just died seven or eight years ago. The doctor came to the house. I remember the doctor coming to the house; my grandmother was there and my kid brother was born in that big bedroom.

METZGER: So from the time you had the store, the bay windows were there?

CUOZZO: They were always there.

SWANSON: But not aluminum?

CUOZZO: They were wood and tin like and we had bricked in.

SWANSON: Then the awning came out ...

CUOZZO: It came out over both the windows.

SWANSON: What sort of ceiling was on the top under the awning?

CUOZZO: Well, they had iron poles that went up this way and then poles that way. The awning came down and then dropped. Yes, I remember now. We had the windows redone. The bottom part's brick and then the windows were put in later.

SWANSON: Did they have panes in them?

CUOZZO: No, they were straight glass. One sheet of glass in the front. I'm going to see if I can find those picture down in those boxes I brought back.

SWANSON: The only thing we want to change is the bay windows—but go back to the original with the wood surrounding the window.

CUOZZO: I know we had those put in ...

METZGER: in the 20s?

CUOZZO: probably the 30s.

MUSTELIER: The garage? Was that always there?

CUOZZO: No, that was a wood shed back there. It was the same height as the one next door to it. Dad had that taken out and the garage built. We had two cars in that garage because I had a '31 Ford I used to keep in there. Of course, later on Dad bought a Dodge from some salesman he used to know when he was huckstering—from Bennings. This fellow lived over there—River Terrace is what I guess they call it now.

I used to go with him on the huckster wagon because I used to meet him on New Jersey Avenue. I lived on what they called Heckman Street then but I think they changed the name of it.

METZGER: It's Duddington.

CUOZZO: Duddington Place, that's it. Well, anyway, I lived on Heckman Street and my Dad's route was on New Jersey Avenue. He would start at New Jersey Avenue and C and work all the way down to New Jersey and E. He had almost every customer on both sides of the street.

METZGER: When you're saying 'huckster', you're talking about selling greengroceries?

CUOZZO: Fresh fruits and vegetables. I remember the wagon well. It was a long wagon that had a tray in it that sloped on each side. Each side was partitioned off and underneath was the space where he used to dump his potatoes. He'd put 100 pound bag of potatoes under there. As I say we lived on Heckman/Duddington Place and at 12 o'clock my mother would fix a lunch and I would take it over to New Jersey Avenue to meet him. I would ride the rest of the day with him. We would ride through Bennings, Kenilworth Avenue. Back in those days, there were farmers along Kenilworth Avenue so he would stop at a couple of brothers who had farms there. In the summertime they grew this loose leaf lettuce. They would pack it up in bushel baskets with wet newspaper around the basket. It was real tender and all. They would cover it with newspaper and then wet it. Dad would bring it in with sweet potatoes and all. Dad would buy that from them there, put it on the wagon and then distribute it the next day.

METZGER: So he went from New Jersey out to Kenilworth Avenue? That took a long time.

CUOZZO: He had a long route. When he got to 15th and he'd always put his little money bag under his seat and sit on it, when he went out toward Deanwood and all. He remembers the racetrack that used to be out there at Deanwood and Kenilworth. I remember the buildings but I don't remember any racehorses being there.

METZGER: The Italian community ... I know that there was a group over in northeast that was where a lot of the stonecutters lived. Was St. Dominic's the Italian-Catholic church?

CUOZZO: No, that was Holy Rosary.

METZGER: But you all went to St. Peter's.

CUOZZO: I went to St. Peter's because we lived in St. Peter's parish. I guess I stayed with St. Peter's until after I got married—1937. When my daughter was born, I had to go to St. Francis Xavier then to get permission from the priest to have her baptized at St. Peter's. So, I went over and the priest was sitting on the front porch of his house. 'Father,' I said, 'I'd like to get your permission to have my daughter baptized at St. Peter's because we've been all our life over there.' 'Sure, son. Go ahead, but bring your next twelve over here.' He took an old portable church that used to be at St. David's and took it over to Pennsylvania Avenue and started St. Francis Xavier and then he built his church over there. After I got married I lived about two blocks from there and we used to there to Mass. I used to take the children. Six o'clock in the morning we'd go to St. Francis Xavier. After Mass, we'd go to that little bakery we'd stop and get some hot rolls and some pastry. I'd take them home and I'd go on over to the store and work in my father's store.

METZGER: Stephenson's Bakery?

CUOZZO: No, Stephenson's was down there. That was a bakery—a pie bakery. They had pastries that nobody else had. On holidays, the police department had to send two men down there to direct traffic because there were so many cars there going in and out.

METZGER: Did the Italian community ... Was there still a good number of people? Did you stick together or do anything together?

CUOZZO: Duddington Place—that was an Italian neighborhood. We all stuck together. Now you mentioned the Italians over in northeast. That was around Second and F. The funny part about it, there was another family over there by the name of Cuzzo that were not related. We never knew them. But we used to get calls because I had a sister Amelia; they had a daughter Amelia. We used to get calls back and forth ...

We used to have a couple of Italian families that lived across the street in the 300 block and on Saturday, they would come over and give us their order. Dad would fix them up Sunday morning and take them over then. They would come over and sit there talking, and they'd stay there until 9, 10 o'clock. We'd close the store and say, Come on back and have a cup of coffee before you go home. We'd go back and reach in the store and get a cake or something. We'd sit there and talk until almost midnight. The next morning we'd get up, fix the orders. I used to go around delivering them

METZGER: So that's how you met the Eastern Market competition—by delivering?

CUOZZO: We delivered.

METZGER: That was your niche.

CUOZZO: People would call on the telephone, give us the order, we would fix the order. As a matter of fact, in front of these two glass cases we had for candy and cigarettes, we would put them in boxes and line them up. When we got all that we thought we were going to get, we'd load them into the truck. A lot of the times I would deliver and a lot of times my kid brother would deliver. We'd go all through the neighborhood. In fact, we had one customer, an Italian family, friends of the people who lived across the street. They were running into hard times. So Dad says, 'I'll try to help them out.' They would call their order in. They lived at the D.C. line on Bladensburg Road. I used to deliver that order all the way out there. We lost a lot of money at the store. People couldn't pay him but he wouldn't sue them or nothing. He just wrote it off.

METZGER: Was it really rough during the Depression?

CUOZZO: Yes, it was; it was. But we managed. Dad raised all six of us in the store, for a while. He never had a whole lot of money but he always made sure we got what we wanted.

SWANSON: There was an old black gentleman who said, 'Oh, Mrs. Cuozzo died,' meaning your sister. He said he grew up in the neighborhood. He said all the kids would get candy, your father would give them candy. If they didn't show up at the store, he call their mothers to find out. Everybody loved your Dad.

CUOZZO: He gave me a good start. I can't deny him that. He worked as long as he could. He had two ruptures and he wouldn't be operated on. He had prostate problem. In fact I got called at work one day and I had to take him to the doctor up on I Street. So I took him up there ... But later on he had to go up to Sibley. I used to have to get off of work. The captain would let me go home and pick my sister up. I used to drive her up to Sibley, go back to work, and then pick her up at night. I did that for a long time until he was able to come home. Every day she would sit up there with him. That's why in his will, he left her what he had, because she took care of him.

SWANSON: She was the one who stayed at the store?

CUOZZO: He passed away in 1969. My mother died July 3 of 1968; my brother got killed July 17 of 1968. Dad died June the 21st of 1969. So I had three in one year. No sooner got through paying for my mother's funeral, then my brother got killed. Fortunately we had a good undertaker then. He was over on 11th Street then, in the 100 block. He had his place in the building.

METZGER: The name of that on was ...

CUOZZO: Mattingly Funeral Home. There was a mortuary there and he lived above it. Every family that got there, his wife would take them upstairs and feed them dinner. Instead of going home, she would feed them dinner. They were a nice couple. He was related to this customer of ours that dealt in the store and made the arrangements when my sister died. So when my mother died and my brother died I called him.

End of side A
Side B

CUOZZO: I had two children of my own and my son's daughter has two children, so I got four grandchildren in the past two years. Great-grandchildren. My wife didn't live to see any of them. We were married 55 years when she died.

METZGER: The corner of Eighth and C Streets ... there are new houses there now.

CUOZZO: Oh, yes, that used to be St. Cyprian School. That was a school there. The convent was there—the school was near the alley and the convent was near C Street.

METZGER: I had seen a sign in the alley that said 'St. Cyprian Way' and the St. Cyprian Church was over at 13th and C. I thought it was strange to have a sign here and then I realized there were new houses.

CUOZZO: Yes, the church sold that property and built those houses.

METZGER: Who were your neighborhood friends? Or what kinds of games?

CUOZZO: I didn't have any time. I used to go to the school playground to try and play ball. As soon as I got there, somebody came running and said, 'Tony, your father wants you.' So Tony had to go.

MUSTELIER: Who was your best friend?

CUOZZO: A fellow I went to school with, Ralph Lloyd. He turned out to be an attorney later on. He and I used to pal together. I very seldom went anywhere. By the time I got through working and going to school I just didn't want to go anywhere. I was tired but I was able to survive.

METZGER: What about Eighth Street as a shopping street? From Haines on down?

CUOZZO: Well Haines the Department Store was there and then Miller Furniture Store went in there. There used to be a lot of restaurants from Pennsylvania Avenue, all the way down to the Navy Yard. A lot of restaurants and beer joints.

METZGER: I read in a couple of places that it had a seedy ... rough reputation in places.

CUOZZO: We didn't have much trouble there. When I was in the department, we didn't have much trouble on the streets. Just people getting drunk, coming out and getting boisterous and whatnot. We had the same thing on Pennsylvania Avenue, from Second to Eighth—lot of restaurants and stores and shops in there, on both sides of the street. Sixth Street had a lot more stores, bicycle shops, restaurants, but not many bars. Then from Eighth Street to 11th Street, there was nothing in there because they had that old soldiers home in there. As a matter of fact we used to serve the old Soldier's Home; they used to deal with us. Then on 11th Street down to the bridge. Let's see there was a hardware store on 11th Street, then a High's ice cream store, then a restaurant. At one time there used to be a market on the corner—right at the corner. That was the original store of (I can't think of his name now) but he moved to 13th Street where the liquor store is. He opened up a big grocery store there and he used to do a lot of delivering. He had a fire in there one day. Of course, when he had the fire the health department made him take everything out and take it to the dump. That's when he turned into a liquor store. Then there's the Italian grocery store in the middle of that block—sandwiches now, not much Italian groceries.

METZGER: Did you know that family?

CUOZZO: Oh, I knew them well. The mother and father both. The mother and father, they ran that place and they were strict. When the father died, the mother took over. She was the cashier. She died and the boys took it over. They were my brother's ages. I'll be 90 next month.

SWANSON: When's your birthday?

CUOZZO: April 7. My son's having a big party the Sunday after. My daughter laughed, 'Here I'm retired and you're still working.'

We got a special bonus last week because we had a drive on—refinancing automobiles. The boss said if we refinanced over a million dollars worth, we'd get a bonus. Come Wednesday, they gave us a \$150 bonus. So I says, it's my time. I'll treat all of you to sandwiches from Mangialardo's on Thursday. So they all gave their orders and a fellow went down and picked them all up. So I treated them with part of my bonus.

METZGER: Were subs really a sandwich or something when you were young?

CUOZZO: That's something that they just started. Of course, they make all kinds now. One of the fellows had his on a hard roll like I had; the rest had them on soft rolls ... The bread is what makes the sandwich. In fact when my sister was living, I used to go down every Saturday morning and bring her some stuff. I'd stop by the Italian bakery and get Italian bread. I kinda miss that because I don't go down there anymore. It's a rough neighborhood and at my age, I've gotten a little fearful of going down there,

especially early in the morning. My boss used to like it and a couple of weeks ago he said, 'Tony, I'm going to get some Italian bread.' I said, 'Get me a loaf while you're up there because I'll take it home with me.'

MUSTELIER: Where is it?

CUOZZO: It's down on North Capitol Street—North Capitol and P I think it is, right below Florida Avenue. It's been there for years. I knew the original owners—there were two brothers and a sister. They used to deliver to the store. One of the brothers was crippled but he used to do the driving and deliver. He'd deliver down by Mangialardo's; they sold it to a French doctor and he's got somebody running it. I'd used to go down there Saturday morning, six o'clock. The door was open and I'd walk right in the back, get the bags, and wait until the bread came out of the oven. That hot bread is very good. Take that home and put butter on it and a cup of coffee and that's all you need.

MUSTELIER: Have you been to Litteri's?

CUOZZO: Yeah, I've been there.

SWANSON: They make some good sandwiches.

CUOZZO: 'Deed they do. I knew the original Litteri's. These are the sons running it now. As long as I remember they were over at the Northeast Market. When they tore down the old Central Market downtown, they split the market up into two places—the northeast part and then the southwest part. Years ago, there used to be a big refrigeration plant down in southwest. There were a lot of meat packers down there. In fact, when we had the store, I used to go down there with my Dad and get meat that we needed for the store. Back in those days it was hanging on hooks. You'd go in there and get a side of beef; they would cut it all up for you in different sections—separate your rounds of beef from your sirloin and separate your neck and everything. They would cut it up in individual sections and load it up in your truck. Then you'd take it home and hang it up in the walk-in box. When people came in, we never had meat pre-cut. We'd go and lift that meat out of the walk-in box, put it on the butcher block and slice what we needed, then put it back into the refrigerator.

SWANSON: How long has it been since you've been in the store?

CUOZZO: A couple of years now. I sold it to this friend of mine who was a policeman. He begged me five or six years before I decided I could sell it. I said, 'Houston, I can't sell that store until my sister and brother moves out. Well, when they finally died, he came over and says, 'You going to sell the store now?' 'Yes,' I said. 'Well, I want it.' 'It needs a lot of work.' 'But I want it.' 'All right, we'll make arrangements.' So I talked to my attorney and he set it all up and I sold it through the attorney.

SWANSON: Well, I sure wish that had been us.

CUOZZO: Sorry I didn't know you.

SWANSON: We are too.

CUOZZO: Because he bought it with the idea of remodeling it into two apartments but I think it was a little more than he wanted to take on, especially at his age. He was building a place down in North Carolina; this was too much for him.

SWANSON: He never did anything.

CUOZZO: I know he didn't do nothing to it. It needs a lot of work. Are you going to live above it?

MUSTELIER: Yes.

CUOZZO: You'll live above it. Well, you'll have to rewire it.

SWANSON: We did already.

CUOZZO: And re-plumb, replace all the pipes. I knew that had to be done. I remember when that place was wired.

SWANSON: The plumber took out the galvanized pipes and they were so thick, just a little pinhole of water could get through.

CUOZZO: We had the electricity put in; everything was BX cable. I can still picture them up in that big dining room with a wire that they put through from one end to the other. They would fish it through so they could hook the BX cable through and hook that stuff up.

MUSTELIER: Before that, did you have gas?

SWANSON: Were there old gaslights?

CUOZZO: There were old gaslights, yeah. I can remember going with the electrician to buy the fixtures that were still in there when we sold it.

SWANSON: We're going to keep those fixtures—they're beautiful.

CUOZZO: The chandelier still there?

SWANSON: Yes. Houston took that gorgeous old cash register. He took everything.

CUOZZO: There had been an old scale there; it was a computing scale but it only went as high as 75 cents a pound. I can remember toward the end when we had the store, T-bone steaks were about a dollar and a half a pound. You'd have to put it on the scale and then double whatever the price was.

We had a big display case by our walk-in refrigerator and that's where we kept the beer that we could sell. We had a hard time getting a license to sell because we were too close to that church. But we finally got the license and we sold beer. The refrigeration case we had, we used to keep all our lunchmeats in that. Then underneath were trays where we could put the beer and sodas. Come Sunday, we had to lock it all up—had to put padlocks on it. My brother-in-law came along and drilled holes through that metal so we could put a lock through the metal so we couldn't take the beer out. We did that because it still gave us use for the top and we could keep our lunch meats. We had a slicing machine. We never sliced meats ahead. You came in and wanted a quarter pound or half-a-pound of baloney or cooked ham, we took it out of the case and sliced it and put it back. Then we ground our own meat. I had to grind that. My father gave that to a fellow that delivered eggs to us. What we would do was trim a lot of the meat and have it ready to grind. It'd be in the refrigerator. A customer would come in and want a pound of hamburger, we'd take the hamburger machine out and hook that up to the electrical current, grind the meat, clean it all out, and put it back in the refrigerator. Then every day we would take the meat grinder apart, clean it all out, wash it all out, put it back together again for the next day's work.

SWANSON: I knew I should have eaten lunch before we came.

CUOZZO: When we had the store we had to have a separate basin to wash our hands.

SWANSON: Oh yes, those are still there.

CUOZZO: And a separate tray to wash the trays out of the refrigerator. Those are still there?

SWANSON: Yes. You have to come visit.

CUOZZO: I'm going to when you get it fixed up. I'll be down.

SWANSON: We're going to have our open studio on June 2—an open house for the neighborhood. We would love for you to come ...

[Conversation about upcoming party arrangements not included.]

CUOZZO: I guess you've taken the plaster out of the living room upstairs.

SWANSON: Not yet, but we will.

CUOZZO: See all that paneling around there? My Dad had that done. It's beautiful.

SWANSON: Oh, the fireplace in the parlor? Tell us about that.

CUOZZO: We never used it.

SWANSON: It's all covered over. Was it in good shape when you covered it? Because we want that fireplace back.

CUOZZO: I don't blame you. The flue and chimney will have to be checked and everything.

[SPEAKER UNCERTAIN]: That was a Latrobe stove, wasn't it?

CUOZZO: That's where the Latrobe stove was, that's right. It wasn't a fireplace; it was a Latrobe in there, that's what it was.

MUSTELIER: So it was gas in there?

CUOZZO: No, it was coal.

METZGER: It was like a stove inset and you put coal in and they would have doors that you could see. Did it have isinglass in the front?

CUOZZO: It had little isinglass doors, yeah.

METZGER: So you could see the fire.

CUOZZO: In the basement did you see that little door that leads to a little ... that was the coal bin. Coal would be delivered to the street; we'd have to bushel basket it and take it down the steps and dump it into the coal bin. I got the idea one day to get a big board to put on the steps. When we got the bushel basket to the top, I slid it down and then carried it over and dumped it into the coal bin.

SWANSON: In the store, was there a pot-bellied stove or something towards the back?

CUOZZO: No.

SWANSON: Because there's this vent; I guess that's for the cooler ... in the corner where the cooler was.

MUSTELIER: It's off to the side where the chimney was.

METZGER: Was it actually in the cooler, or beside it?

SWANSON: It's up in the ceiling.

MUSTELIER: It's in the very corner.

CUOZZO: I don't remember what was in that corner. I'm just trying to think.

SWANSON: Well, the place in the back where the floor was rotted through

CUOZZO: That was where the ice had rotted that completely out.

[SPEAKER UNCERTAIN]: Did that connect to the kitchen would have been?

SWANSON: No.

CUOZZO: I'm just trying to think. I know Dad had the hot water heat put in; I think that was done very shortly after he built the house, because we had heat in the store. In fact it was so hot we had to cut one radiator off.

SWANSON: Which one did you cut off?

CUOZZO: We cut the long one off—the big long one that's over by the window.

SWANSON: In the store?

CUOZZO: We cut that one off because it was so hot.

SWANSON: You could see there had been a radiator but there wasn't one there.

MUSTELIER: The pipes underneath just warmed up the whole store probably.

CUOZZO: Then in the summertime, we had no air conditioning. We had three ceiling fans. I guess they're gone now, aren't they?

MUSTELIER: Yeah. We're going to be putting three back.

CUOZZO: We had three fans—one over the meat block, one over where the cash register was, and one toward the front.

MUSTELIER: Did you have any upstairs?

CUOZZO: No, back in those days we opened the door to try to get air; we slept on the floor a lot of times. There was no air conditioning. We had the fans in there and it kept that place cool. When the women used to come in, they used to stand by the cash register and their dresses used to blow up ...

SWANSON: We haven't started anything on the back of the house yet. We haven't even taken the wallpaper down yet. We've been focusing on the store.

CUOZZO: I had a fellow come in who was supposed to have done some work for me. He really ripped me up and I tell you, I got rid of him. I told him, 'Forget it. Don't do anymore. Just leave.'

SWANSON: In the store?

CUOZZO: In the back at the kitchen. He was supposed to put new tile down, painted it. He didn't do nothing.

SWANSON: It's hard to get through that cement on the floor. Our plumber was trying to replace the galvanized ...

CUOZZO: It's a cement floor back there now.

SWANSON: The galvanized actually works ok back there so we're going to live with it until we do a major remodeling, a long way down the road.

CUOZZO: We had those cabinets and all put in.

SWANSON: Those are sweet. They remind me of my grandmother's kitchen ...

CUOZZO: When my sister was there, she didn't do much. She was afraid to even light the stove.

SWANSON: Oh, the stove works great.

METZGER: Did your mom have a wood stove?

CUOZZO: She had a wood stove when we first started, yes. She had a wood stove with an oven beside it. We didn't have electric irons then, we had to use irons. In fact I've got one down in the basement that I took out of the store. She used to put on top of that fire and get it red hot and then take a pad and then I started doing the ironing. I remember that. A lot of things went on in that store that really stick in my mind. Like one time, I was telling you about those bins we had. We had black-eyed peas in one bin. One of the customers came over and happened to look in there and he picked one of them up and he says, 'Who painted these dots on these beans?'

SWANSON: We hope to talk to you many more times. If you get an inspiration, just call.

CUOZZO: In the store where that doorway was, we had a table there. Years ago, when we first had the store, bananas came in bunches. We hung them up in the back of that bay window. We had a hook up there that we hung the bananas on. As the customer needed them, we'd take a knife and cut the hand off and give them what they wanted. Then later on they began shipping them in boxes—forty-pound boxes. We had a table where that doorway is. I used to set that box on there. There was shredded paper to keep

them warm, to keep them from freezing, especially in winter time. To the left of that is where we used to have most of our canned fruit. Even when we were there the door was locked ...

MUSTELIER: Somebody was telling me that it was probably for loading ...

SWANSON: It was in the store when we bought it; [was it there when] your father bought it?

CUOZZO: Oh, yes definitely.

METZGER: Do you know when it was built?

CUOZZO: Before 1900, I'm sure. Because this fellow had it and he was an elderly man at that time, too.

MUSTELIER: John Edgar Van Horn? Does that ring a bell?

CUOZZO: Van Horn or Robertson. I thought his name was Robertson. Van Horn, I think, was the one that handled the transaction.

MUSTELIER: We went to the city records and found Van Horn and before that was a Roberta Phillips.

SWANSON: It gets very fuzzy back there. I think they just made things up sometimes.

CUOZZO: I know when Dad bought it, it was just a little over \$9,000 and he bought a house across the street—329—bought that later on, he only paid \$3,000 or \$4,000 for that. After he had that house, we had a truck then, and he built a garage in the back of that house so we could keep the truck in that. That was my job when I was of age to drive, at 5 o'clock in the morning walking back in that alley, open that garage door to get that truck out.

METZGER: ... discussion about consent and depositing transcript in Historical Society library ...

CUOZZO: I'll be glad to give my consent. It is a part of history.

METZGER: As you know, everybody has a different thread to this history and I've been trying to find as many threads as possible.

CUOZZO: I used to enjoy the people who used to come in to deliver stuff. A lot of them had different slogans; some of those slogans still stick with me. We had one (I think he delivered rye bread) ... it will come to me. Another company that used to deliver cakes. Oh, I forgot to tell you. When we had the store, there used to be a bakery on one of the houses on Pennsylvania Avenue—902 or 904, I'm not sure. They used to bake pies—lemon meringue, banana, chocolate. They would bring them around to the store and we'd sell them. Another instance just came to mind. There was a German fellow that lived somewhere down by the Marine Barracks. He used to make doughnuts—powdered doughnuts. He would bring them

up in trays about that long, piled that high, all sprinkled with 10X sugar. We'd set that tray on the counter and within an hour or two they were gone. Customers would gobble them up as fast as they got in.

METZGER: Were they yeast doughnuts or cake doughnuts?

CUOZZO: Yeast doughnuts. They were delicious.

METZGER: Do you remember his name.

CUOZZO: No, I don't remember his name now. And then on Sunday mornings, in order to have fresh bread. We had a bakery in the 700 block of 11th Street. The store was in the front; the bakery was over on 12th Street but they were connected. There was an alley between them. On Sunday morning, to get fresh bread and rolls, I used to take my little hand wagon and go down to the bakery and get turnover rolls and bread, load it up in this little wagon and tote it on home so we'd have fresh bread for the customers on Sunday morning.

METZGER: So the store was open seven days a week?

CUOZZO: We closed at 12 o'clock. By the time we got out of there, it was 1:00 or 1:30. Every evening when we closed, we used to sweep the place out, make sure everything was spotless so in the morning we could start right in on business. When Dad was driving, and I was driving also, we'd go to market at 4:30 or 5:00 in the morning. He would buy different fruits and vegetables. We had certain farmers that came in with tomatoes, certain with cantaloupes and certain ones with corn. He would go down and buy it and load it on the truck. There was so much there that I had to drive the truck back home and unload and then go back to market to pick him up with rest of the stuff. And we had all that done by seven o'clock. Then all that stuff had to be set up on display so the customers would buy it.

We had one customer I'll never forget—her name was Gordon. She used to come in and sit over by the sack of corn by the door. We had peas and lima beans in the shells She would take a half a bushel basket and turn in upside down and sit down. She'd tell my father, 'Bring me a couple pounds of peas.' He got the peas and she'd sit there and shell the peas, took the peas out and left us the shells and did the same thing with the corn. She'd shuck the corn. Dad said to her one day, 'What am I supposed to do with all that garbage you're leaving?' She says, 'Your garbage can's bigger than mine so you put it in yours.' Things like that still stick in my mind.

MUSTELIER: So after you got the things in, would your brothers and sisters ...

CUOZZO: Yes, we all helped in the store—serving people, figuring their bills. We had an old adding machine—punch the figures in and pull the handle and you got the total. We had charge customers that

we had little passbooks. Every time they came in and got something we'd just write the amount down. At the end of the week they'd come in to settle up. We'd add it up, they'd pay us, we'd mark the page paid, and go on to the next one. We had quite a few of those. We had one customer who lived up at 308. She had a flock of kids and she dealt quite a bit with us. She ran into hard times and couldn't pay so Dad says, 'I'll tell you what you do. Deal for cash and every week give me 50 cents or a dollar on the bill until it's paid.' She did it. We had another customer that ran up a bill and couldn't pay. They both died and the children knew that Dad was owed that bill. They said, we're going to pay you. Each week they came over and paid Dad something on it until it was paid off.

SWANSON: Good people.

CUOZZO: We had some good times there and we had some rough times.

I used to go over there on Sunday mornings because my brother didn't want to work in the store. He didn't want to work at all.

SWANSON: Which brother was this?

CUOZZO: The one that was killed. He didn't like it at all but he still stayed there. Come six o'clock in the evening, he'd close it off. My Dad never closed it until seven. When I got off the police Department and went home and changed clothes, I went back and sat with him for at least an hour. When they closed, I went down and opened up again. So just for the sake of seeing what I was doing, I kept track of everything I was doing while they were "closed." Come the end of the week, I had enough to pay off some bills. I knew it broke Dad's heart to close that store early so I kept it open.

MUSTELIER: What time did it open in the morning?

CUOZZO: Around seven. On Saturdays it was longer than that. We started at four or five o'clock in the morning and didn't close until 10 o'clock at night. And I mean we were busy until 10 o'clock at night. We cleaned up a lot of stuff that would ordinarily go into the trash. But I opened up on Sunday and we got rid of a lot of stuff, sometimes solely to keep from dumping it into the trash. Of course the money went into the till.

Back in those early days you never kept any records but when I was going to high school I realized that Dad had to pay some income taxes. So I didn't know what to do and the neighbor next door worked up at the transportation building. I was talking to her and she said, 'I go to a man to do my taxes down at the Internal Revenue. Why don't you let me make an appointment for you to go see him. Well, she did and I went down and talked to him and laid the facts right on the table. I said, 'He never kept any records.' He said, 'Well back in those days, you probably didn't have to have any records because the exemptions

were so great. Now you do.' I says, 'But I don't have anything to go by.' He says, 'You go home and starting February the first, keep a record for what you're doing for that month and then come down to see me and we'll approximate for each month. Well, I did and we did all that. He got the form ready for that year. He said, 'Now let's go back three years' so he figured back three more years and got it all done. I used to go to his apartment in the Mayflower hotel ... He figured it all out and got everything straightened out; he signed them. He says, 'Now you may never hear from these but if you do, you let me know.' We turned them in and I never heard any more from them. Things kept going and one day several years later I got a call from the Internal Revenue and they wanted to audit the return. So I had to get the stuff together and I took it on down and left it with them. They checked it all and called me back. He said, 'Well, we've checked everything and we can't find anything but we've *got* to find something. I said, 'What do you mean you've *got* to find something?' He said, 'Even if we find ten cents, we've found *something*.' Anyways he started talking to me and one thing led to another. He says, 'By the way, what do you do when you take food up to the family?' Well maybe I didn't take that into consideration. He said, 'Well, we've got something.' So he started figuring and says, 'Now wait a minute. What do you think, we eat T-bone steaks every day? My mother would put a pot of beans on and put a pound of macaroni in it and she's got a spaghetti dinner for the whole family that don't cost a dollar!' Well, he whittled it all down and I think we ended up that I had to pay them somewhere about \$3000 to clear the whole thing up. But from then on we never had any more problems. I told him point blank—we don't eat T-bone steaks everyday. My mother would take yellow corn meal and make a mush out of it and put tomato sauce on it and we would have another meal

SWANSON: That's a classic Italian meal.

CUOZZO: I haven't made polenta in quite a while but I'm going to make it again because ...

SWANSON: it tastes good.

CUOZZO: I usually try to make a sauce that my mother made. Once a year the kids get after me—they want me to make raviolis for them because my wife and I used to make them. Since she passed on I still kept the tradition.

MUSTELIER: Do you make it from scratch?

CUOZZO: My granddaughter loved them and she went to college in California so she missed them for a few years but she's back in town so I guess I'm going to have to make some sauce and meatballs. I usually make a gallon of it ... I've got the recipe if you want the recipe.

METZGER: Talk about picture of 50th anniversary party of his parents.

CUOZZO: She [his mother] was a great cook. I'll tell you she could cook up anything with no recipes. On Saturdays when we were busy, she would come into the store, slice some Taylor's ham off the roll we had and she'd go back and make some sandwiches. We'd come and eat sandwiches while we were waiting. We had a good business going. In fact I got the book where we used to keep the records. My son's a CPA. He went through that one day and looked at the total for the year. I think it was about \$43,000 worth of business. Daddy, he says, if that store was doing that business today, it would be over a million dollars worth of business. We had a good trade. Towards the end it started to die down a little because the customers moved farther and farther away. The chain stores started to move in. The chain stores used to close on Friday at 6 o'clock. They stayed closed until Monday. Then the little Mom and Pop stores had a chance to make a little money on weekends. When they started coming in ...

METZGER: That was a hard time, wasn't it?

CUOZZO: It sure was.

END OF INTERVIEW