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Mike Picchioldi Oral History Interview

Ally Morgan, Interviewer

Maryville Heritage Museum

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Ally Morgan (AM): My name is Ally Morgan I am a student at SIUE, and I'm working on an oral history project and I am sitting in the Maryville Heritage Museum with Mike Picchioldi, who is going to be answering some questions for me. So Mike, where did you grow up?

Mike Picchioldi (MP): I actually grew up in Maryville here, um, my grandparents owned a confectionery store and I hung out at their store a lot so I get to meet a lot of people and know a lot of people growing up when my grandparents retired, my parents took it over for a short period of time, and so I worked at the store, and you know grew up here and played here.

AM: Okay. So you've lived in Maryville a long time, have you ever lived anywhere other than Maryville?

MP: I did. I was, um, on the fire department here in Maryville, and until 1991, I got hired by the fire department in Edwardsville and I had to move there in 1993, so since 1993 I lived in Edwardsville. But Maryville's always been my hometown, so, I came back and I joined the committee for the Heritage Museum, and it got to the point where the committee if they had questions they would ask me because I had the answers, so eventually they elected me chairman of the committee.

AM: Okay, so I'm guessing you went to Maryville grade school?

MP: I did, I went to Maryville grade school that was on Donk Street originally and then they built the other Maryville school and they decided to change the names to Maryville East and Maryville West. So I went to Maryville East until 4th grade and then Maryville West until 6th grade, and then I went into the Collinsville High School System.

AM: Okay. You mentioned Donk Street. Tell me a little bit about it got its name.

MP: Okay Donk Street runs the length of the entire old part of Maryville, and it's named after the Donk brothers who owned the mine that was in Maryville in the early part of Maryville's creation the mine was the big employer and there wasn't very many streets and one of the streets that ran from North to South was named after the Donk brothers because they had Donk Brother's Mine Number 2 which was in Maryville.

AM: Now is the rumor true that they thought about the naming the town Donkville?

MP: Ah, we've heard some some different rumors that they had talked about um, you know different names and such, but ah, the town is actually named after Mary Crone who was the wife of ah the developer of the town basically, and ah, he named it after his wife, Mary.

AM: Okay. Different story than I have heard. So what made you decide to be on the Board of Trustees for the museum?

MP: Well, Maryville had their centennial in 2002, and um, my parents at that time were on the committee ah, that helped with the Maryville Centennial, after the centennial the museum was open for a short period of time and then it kinda declined off and a lot of the committee members quit or they had a couple pass away, so they decided for some reason it just didn't seem like this was a priority anymore, um, I get to talking to some people that were part of the committee and I decided you know I had some stuff to donate to it, and I came up and donated and talked to 'em, and they said "Well you know show up for a meeting." So I started coming to meetings, and then like I said after about ah, two or three meetings they said: "Why don't you join the committee?" and I said "well, I you know I'd like to but I don't live in Maryville anymore, I live in Edwardsville." and they said "Oh that's not a problem, so I joined the committee and then after about 3 or 4 months like I said they'd have questions about stuff and I would have the answers for 'em, and they said: "We need to make you chairmen of the committee." So, since then I've been the chairman.

AM: Okay. So as a child growing up in Maryville, what are some of your favorite stories maybe from your grandparent's store, your parent's store just hanging out with your friends?

MP: Well, it was a totally different um, life. Ah, in fact I had just posted some stuff I have a Facebook page that I created called "Memories from Maryville" and I posted a lot of old pictures and facts and data and stuff about Maryville. My grandfather was an avid - amateur photographer and he took slides so he has a huge slide collection he passed away in 1980, and last year I decided that I was going to start digitizing it. So, I started digitizing these slides, there's over 50,000 individual slides and about two-thirds of the way through, and, posting these pictures it just reminded me of what a simpler life and what a fun time we had growing up in Maryville. The kids always came together as I said I posted a story about the Maryville Homecoming. The Maryville Homecoming has been going since 1938. As a kid, I remember we would come up and we would help the firefighters wash and wax the fire trucks and get em ready for the parade for the Homecoming, and you know our lives revolved around the parade. You talked to people, and you know, Maryville Homecoming came you had to have a new outfit to wear to wear to the Homecoming.

AM: [chuckles]

MP: You know it was a big deal and businesses would close, and everything to allow the fire department to get as much money as they can because they knew that was for the betterment of the fire department which meant it was a betterment for the village. So the businesses even the the bars and taverns closed until later on in the night after everybody spent their money at the park then they would open up and let people come in for the evening, so, you know that was a fond memory I have of growing up is that everybody pulled together and when the Maryville Homecoming rolled around, everybody you know, participated my grandfather ran a cake stand for god I don't know how many years, probably 30 years, and every year, you donated cakes, one for each night, and they would have hundreds and hundreds of cakes because the people in town would spend the 40 cents 50 cents for a box of cake mix and make a cake and then bring it to the park for the firemen to make money off of and it was that was all pure profit for the fire department. So, there was a lot more pulling together um, as a kid personally, we played

baseball, during the summer we played baseball every day, there was a baseball field on the school ground up here on Donk Street we played at our or behind the Mother of Perpetual Health Catholic Church there was a softball diamond back there and we would play on there but it seemed like from sun up to sundown, we were either playing baseball or if we didn't have enough people we'd play Indian Ball or we'd play Pickle Wars or something. Um, they also had a ah, black top area at the Maryville school, and as kids we would play street hockey on there and all the kids would come together and we'd run around and we'd play street hockey and we made our own goals, so we were either doing some kind of sport, or riding our bikes, um, we had a bike tag that we'd play and all the kids would play it in the boundary was the east side of town, from 3rd Street to up Donk, all the way to Division Street, and you'd just play bike chase, one person would take off and hide, and everybody else tried to look for em, was kinda like a hide and seek game and ah, we would play that for hours and hours and hours and hours and then the streetlights would come on and everybody'd go home. So, that's kinda the simpler times we had growing up.

AM: Right. Okay. What was your favorite subject in school when you were in Maryville?

MP: Ahm, I was not a big fan I didn't like math, I didn't like reading, ah, science kinda interested me but I just felt like the way the teachers were trying to present it was too dry, when I got into junior high, they we had a science teacher who was more hands on experiential, and he would show us things and that peaked my interested more and I really enjoyed the science aspect of school, but, everything just kinda seemed too boring to me.

AM: [laughs] So what was your favorite part of school? Lunch, recess? [laughs]

MP: Recess was always fun because you got to meet and play and talk with your friends that were in different classrooms you ah, you'd go to school you'd see em on the bus, but then you'd be in different classrooms and you'd never seen each other until the end of the day again, when you had recess then you were able to at least mingle and interact with your friends.

AM: Okay, um, so, what did your - par- grandparents sell in their store?

MP: Um, they actually had a confectionery plus a um, gas station. And my great grandfather actually started the store, and it was originally on Donk Street where the Maryville American Legion building is now which used to be the Maryville Post Office, just a little south of Donk and Main Street. And they had their original building there, and they he had a blacksmith shop and a confectionery but they sold everything they sold miners clothing, they sold ah, the hard hats, the miner's hat's with the carbine lamps ah, the lunch pails everything that the miners would have used they sold in the store plus everything else, dry goods, and canned goods, and ice cream that they hand dipped and all that stuff.

AM: Okay, so, you talked about a little bit about the museum how long has it been around? [voices in the background / echoes]

MP: Ah I know they started this around 2002, and they were doing the - yeah we can pause a minute. [to other person] She's doing an interview for school so [voices]

AM: We had a brief interruption once somebody came into the museum so Mr. Picchioldi is going to go

on and tell me how long the museum has been around.

MP: Ah the village started a committee in preparation for the 2002 centennial for the village, so the museum pretty much has been around since 2002, the only occupants of the museum prior to the ah, to the start of the museum was the fire department was still here, in 1994 they moved into their new building so this building pretty much sat abandoned, ah, as storage for stuff until they decided to convert it to the museum around 2002.

AM: Okay. How many exhibits do you have? Or how many items do you have in the museum?

MP: Well, the museum is kinda in a fluster right now, we had some mechanical issues and then we had a water leak this past year, the floor was very bad, two years ago, so they decided to, um, completely resurface the floor so all the displays and exhibits had to be removed from the rooms so they could redo the floor so when they did that, that they took all the artifacts and such that we have out of the cases and moved em to another part of the building upstairs, well then they got the floor done, and decided that the air conditioning wasn't working so there was no air conditioning in this, so it's we'd come in here to work and it would just be sweltering and we'd open the doors to the old firehouse to try get some airflow, but am, so then we decided we would set up a temporary display for last year's Homecoming, and then ah, this year we were going to start developing you know how we wanted to set the displays up because we wanted to set up for different aspects of the village life, ah farming the community, the churches, the businesses, and then we had a big water leak in here and it flooded a portion of the building, so once again we had to move display cases and such out of the way, try to take care of that and got that fixed up we're trying for a community development grant. So, if we get that grant which they're anticipating that they are, [voices] oh. - So if participating in this community development grant which is going to be a big ah disruption to the museum also, so, we didn't want to spend a lot of time fully stocking all the displays until we find out exactly what's going on with that, and cause we didn't want to carry everything down from upstairs, put em the cases, and then having to move everything again, so, we decided we would just stay in a state of flux until we decide you know, what's going to happen with us. Um, we're in the portion of the museum right now that up until this past winter was the police department. This was the old police department building. They moved out prior to 94' also, but, this building had been used for storage for the public works department so this section of the building was an absolute mess, over the last two months they cleaned this place up, and decided that we would use this for a temporary display area until the main portion of the museum could get ah you know back to normal. So, we have some displays in here which is just a kinda sampling of what the museum has, we have a some items from past Maryville Homecomings, we have some of the mining and train items because the train used to go right through the area the village by the mine, and they played a very important part to this you know the village becoming what it is, there's ah baseball which was a big item for Maryville. Maryville had a big baseball community, up to 16 professional baseball players came from Maryville, ah, we have some items we round the fire department because once again the fire department and the Homecoming played a very important role in the village, ah, and then we have some items from of the local businesses, some farming items, ah, apple button, and bullion kettle, a thrashing machine, so just some of the items of life growing up in ah the village of Maryville is on display here, ah we just decided we just wanted to do a little sampling so that people could see what kinda items we have and what we're looking for.

AM: What is your favorite item in the museum?

MP: Um, up until recently, ah, I either had seen or had experienced some items of the museum in particular um, one of the items which is my favorite is that we have a 1958 sea grey fire engine that's in the museum that was the Maryville Fire Department's engine it was purchased entirely from proceeds raised from the Maryville Homecoming over the years so leoneit was there - the first motorized apparatus was from 1939, so from 1939-1958 they had one piece of motorized apparatus in 1958 they got a top of the line Seagrave Fire Engine that was like the best at the time, it was like considered the "Cadillac" of the fireman apparatus, so that's piece was originally a backup backup on the fire department when I was in on the fire department in the 1980s, and we decided well, let's fix it up and make it more of a showpiece so the fire department worked all together we stripped it down we ah, polished or not polished but sanded and got it ready for preparation for painting one of the members of the fire department, Kirk Mueller owned Muller Auto Body and he painted it entirely for free so we had this 1958 Seagrave upgraded in the 80s ah we took it to the Saint Louis Fire Show that they had in September they had a parade and a fire apparatus show and it won first place in its division back in the 80s and ah when the fire department moved, they decided to let it be on loan to the museum, and it still runs it leads the parade every year, and that's pretty much a really nice showpiece of the museum is this fire truck.

AM: What made you decide to be a fireman?

MP: Ah, growing up, in Maryville, I had two grandfathers that were both volunteer fireman in Maryville, um when I was about 10 year old, I started running on fire calls with my grandfather, and if we were at home they lived right next door and if - back in those days in the 70s, they had a fire siren that alerted the volunteers that there was a fire so any time day or night if there was a fire the well lemme get back to how that goes, there was a button here at the firehouse that rang the siren, every night at 9 o'clock, somebody would come up here one of the firefighters was assigned for certain amount of time and they'd come up and they'd ring the siren at 9 o'clock and that notified everybody that it was 9pm. So did they did that every night well eventually they got a timer that they put on and that would go off at 9pm but during the course of a fire, the fire department in Maryville had a fire phone assistant so a couple of the taverns in town had fire phones, a couple of the business in town, my grandfather and grandmother's confectionery store, ah Leoni's in Maryville they had fire phone because Mr. Skip Leoni's was on the fire department my grandfather was on the fire department so they had these fire phone there wasn't a full time police department, as far as having an actual police station, ah, at the time, so if the fire phone rang, one of the firefighters or somebody there at the taverns would answer the fire phone and get the information where it was somebody would bring the information and come up to the firehouse and they'd blow the siren, and then they'd wait for somebody to show up and they'd tell them where the fire was and such. So, when I was about 10 years old, whenever the siren would go off, I'd run over to be with my grandfather and whether he'd be responding from the store or whether he'd be responding from home, I'd jump in the car with him and I was in charge or turning his blue light on which all the firefighters had these blue lights to notify you know the traffic that they were a firefighter and I'd ride to the fire with him in his car, so, from about 10 years old up until I was 18, I did that with my grandfather until he retired. Well then, ah, when he ah, retired, it was just a kinda come up here and hang around and see what was going on when you heard the siren, well when I was 18 years old then I joined the fire department and became a member of the fire department in November of 1980. Ah, and I was really ah, pretty much into it, I took as many classes as I could and ah, took trainings and such and in 1984 I was actually promoted to fire chief so I was 24 year old and I was Fire Chief for the fire department in Maryville. And uh, I had never had aspirations of being a career firefighter I went to school to be an architectural designer, I got a degree in

architectural design went to work for a business that ah did ah large doors for aircraft hangars and banks and cold storage and I hated it. I hated sitting with a tie on behind a desk doing drawings. So, I applied for some fire departments in 1991, and I was hired by Edwardsville and became a career firefighter, paramedic, and worked there 21 years, and put 16 1/2 years years on in Maryville and so, my grandfather's ah both grandfathers who were firefighters were pretty much the inspiration of what got me interested in the fire department.

AM: So what would you say was your most memorable fire call?

MP: Ahm, I'd have to say that it was Alfonzo's Pizza. Alfonzo's used to be located just north of the downtown area and ah, it was called Schiber ah, not Schiber Court. It was ah little plaza just to the north of Bobby's and the Red Apple and that's where Mike Palucchi started his Alfonzo's Pizza. But we had a big fire in there one night, ahm, and Alfonzo's was pretty much destroyed so they vowed to rebuild so over the course of several months they started to rebuild and they were almost finishing the process and a plumber's pipe caught the building on fire again, and it burned down for the second time from its present location was.

AM: Wow.

MP: So we had two fires at Alfonzo's Pizza over the course of a couple years and completely destroyed the building just because of the way the building was made it was hard to enter to fight the fire, and by the time we could get somebody into the building, because of you had one door in and out, by the time that we could get somebody into help with interior firefighting now that it was already into the roof and such and it was we were able to save the buildings and the businesses on either side, but Alfonzo's was pretty much destroyed. So, that was that's one of my most memorable fires that we've had.

AM: Okay. Alright. Um, do you have children?

MP: I do. I have 2 stepchildren and 1 daughter who's a sophomore in high school, I have a son and his wife and 2 daughters that live in Columbia, Illinois he's a CPA for the farm burea of that area of Illinois, I have a daughter and her husband and her husband and son that live in Edwardsville and she's a CPA and works for Skefoll and Nicholas over in Saint Louis, and like I said my daughter who is 15, she's gonna be a sophomore at Edwardsville High School, and three grandchildren

AM: Okay so, oh wow, Congratulations. So, what does your wife do for a living?

MP: My wife is the trial court administrator for the third judicial circuit of which includes Madison County and she works in the chief judge's office in the Madison County Courthouse.

AM: And how did she feel about you being a fireman?

MP: Well, she pretty much just had to suck it up because when I met her, I was already a firefighter in Maryville and ah and already in Edwardsville I started in 91, and got married in 99 so so I was already a firefighter when we met so she knew how it was and you know, there was times where we'd go to do something and I had to leave because I was going to a fire or something else.

AM: So what's the difference in being a volunteer fireman and a paid fireman? What - like how did that differ for you? Other than the pay, obviously.

MP: Welp, yeah, you know fire doesn't differentiate between whether you're a volunteer or for a firefighter, fire burns the same way regardless, it's all about the amount of time you spend training and preparing yourself ah there's some volunteer fire departments Maryville one in particular they're very good department as far their training goes, getting their people ready and prepared to fight fires they allowed them to go outside of the department to do trainings they had some guys go up to Champagne Urbana this past June to take some training classes up there which are always beneficial, um, so they they have a very good training program. The only real difference is you're getting paid to do a job, and you're volunteering to do a job, but in regards to do you fight fire differently? No. Do you die the same way, yes. It's just's that you've got some people that do it for love of the community love of being a firefighter and then you've got some that do it because it's their job, but you've got some people that are paid to do that don't love it as much doing the job as volunteer firefighters. You've got some volunteers that don't love it as much as career guys, so I mean it's it's not a whole lot different than some other jobs it's just that when you have a small community you can't afford to pay for 15, 20 career firefighters to be there all the time. So, there's a little bit of difference in regards to ah, you know one gets paid and one doesn't but as far as the fires go, it's just pretty much the same, and you've got guys that are professional fire fighters that are volunteering and you've got professional fire fighters that are paid.

AM: So what's the difference between a small community and a big community as far as like the feel of the fire department?

MP: Um, growing up in Maryville the fire department was always a centerpiece of things that went on, um, Santa Claus would come to visit the village ya know on Christmas Eve, well, Santa Claus would always arrive on a firetruck, so the fire truck would come up and Santa Claus would get off the fire truck, and he'd meet with the village kids and hand out a little treat bag and such. Ah, if there was anything going on, as far as, ah, community service that needed to be done, a lot of times the fire department would have their people come up and help and assist with that. In a larger town, of course you got much more things going on, and the fire department is usually busy fighting fires and running emergency medical calls and that and they don't have as much time to participate community wise ah, I know in Edwardsville we try to as much as we could if there was like a subdivision ah picnic or party we try to have a fire truck stop by so that the kids could see it and interact with the community and such. But it wasn't as much as a centerpiece as it was in a small town usually in a small town either you had a family member or you knew somebody who was a volunteer firefighter a lot of the business owners because they were in town all the time, they were part of the fire department because they were here and they could leave their job and come and assist in a fire or something, so the fire department in a small town always seemed to be more of a centerpiece of the village or the town and they participated in the betterment of the town just all all over.

AM: Does the village or the fire department in the village still anything to do with Santa Claus coming?

MP: They do. They have a Santa Fest every year, the museum is going to try to get involved with that this year, um, growing up in Maryville at the intersection of Main and Donk Street they always put a Christmas tree up every year in the middle of the intersection and it would be lit up well after about 3 or 4

years of someone running into it [laughs] after leaving the taverns they decided that that wasn't safe anymore so they put a fire or a Christmas tree lit up in front of the fire house which is the building that we're in. So we're hoping that this year to be able to erect a Christmas tree and have it lit out in front the museum like they used to do back in the 60s and 70s. We've talked to the fire department about their Santa Fest that they have, and we're talking to them about having Santa Claus on his way to the firehouse stop at the museum and have a chair set up by the tree to meet kids like they used to do back in the 60s and 70s and then he'll spend a little time here and then he'll move onto the Santa Fe St that they have at the fire station.

AM: Okay. So you're retired now?

MP: I am. I retired in 2012, um, not by choice I was injured during a training incident, and I had to have some severe major back surgery, so I had 21 years in on the career side, and almost 31 and a half total in firefighting and ah, pretty much the doctor said there was going to be limitations to what I could do, what I couldn't do, and so it was time to move on.

AM: You keep mentioning training and that you've had a lot of training where all did you go for your training? Other than the actual local fire department?

MP: Well besides my ah I have an associate's degree in architectural design, I went back to school and I have an associate's degree in fire science um, I've obtained pretty much every certification through the Illinois State Fire Marshall's office I could and I had took trainings at various departments or through SWIC when it used to be Belleville Area College um, I went to Champagne Urbana to the Illinois Fire Service Institute and took trainings, we had trainings that come into the department in Edwardsville that I'd get certified doing things, ah so yeah I held about 18, 19 different certifications through the state fire marshal's office and such and, so any time I had an opportunity to get something right to be certified I took the chance and went and did it.

AM: Which certification is the one you are most proud of?

MP: Ah, fire officer #3, they ranked they ranked it fire officer #1, 2, and 3, and that was the hardest course was to take there was ah several courses in tactics and strategy and management, and such as that and ah, that took me the longest to get it to that point. That's one that I'm quite proud of.

AM: Okay. Was there one that you maybe needed more than others that you used more the stuff that you learned?

MP: Ah. The fire office with the management and how to deal with ah employees and people and such and some of the tactics and strategies side of it um, that was usually the one that was most beneficial in regards to ah, being an officer on the fire department. Also, we had one for um, fire instructor, which I have my fire instructor 2, which is like one of the highest ranks which you can get to fire officer trainer 1 and 2 so that allows you teach and sign off on other ones ah, proly the one that I worked the hardest at that I was most proud of on out of any of my certifications was with my paramedic certification. Um, we helped initiate myself and several others when ah the department in Maryville here in the around 1982, we started an ambulance service when we were notified by the funeral home that was providing [sic] service to us from Troy, that they no longer wanted to cover Maryville, so we were forced into starting an

ambulance service [name in audible] bought a used ambulance, we all worked together to get it ready, and once again Kurt's auto body in Maryville painted it for us and got in ship shape and we began ambulance service around summer of 1982, um, back around 84 then, we approached the village to go into at the time the state of Illinois had what they called emergency medical technical intermediate which allowed us to do some different things that basic ambulance services couldn't do we could defibrillate somebody that was in cardiac arrest or start IV's or advanced airway techniques and the village agreed that they would you know let us take on that responsibility so we sent guys through training through Anderson Hospital and they got certified at the intermediate level, I was one of the first ones, so we were able to provide a better service to the community, with an ambulance service that helped to save more lives, and then, after several more years, they the department convinced the village to go the paramedic level this was in the 90s and then they agreed so now they got two ALS "Advanced Life Support" Paramedic ambulances that the fire department provides.

AM: Very nice. So, are - are the paramedics in Maryville also firemen or... okay?

MP: Yes. Yeah, they're ah, the paramedics ah that they have on duty are usually firefighters for the village ah there's some that they use that are part time paramedics and aren't firefighters but there are some that are both and ah if there's a fire the guys that are there on duty will you know respond with fire truck too.

AM: Okay. So did you prefer being a paramedic or a firefighter?

MP: Always preferred better being a firefighter. Little more action

AM: Why is that? A little more action? [laughs] okay.

AM: There was something else I was going to ask.... so, do you any of your friends still live in Maryville from when you were a kid?

MP: Oh yeah. Yeah I've got several friends that are still here um, I've got friends that I met when we were in grade school ah back in you know 70, 71, that I'm still friends with today. Which, you don't have that a lot with growing up in larger towns people you know move on, and parents move on, but I've got it a handful of friends that I've been friends with since you know, 1970, 71.

AM: What are some of the craziest things you guys did as kids?

MP: Um...

AM: That you're willing to share?

MP: Um, the this bike chase thing that we used to do the ah one of the rules of this was that you had to stop physically stop the person on their bike, um, so that was pretty much the only rule how you stopped em was up to you - I mean there was times when we you know strung a rope across the road, or we waited for them to come riding down one of the alleys and we threw our bikes out in front of them to stop em, and yeah there was a lot of scrapes and cuts and such so that was that was pretty crazy ahm, you know we'd ah, chase the fire trucks on our bikes sometimes, you know when it was somewhere close to town

and you know we'd help them drag hose and stuff like that so, we didn't never do anything crazy illegal or anything you know, that was just never a thought of ours ya know, our stuff motto [sic] was how could we do something and be adventurous and not get hurt. [chuckles]

AM: So did you guys ever play on the railroad tracks?

MP: Yeah, we played on the railroad tracks we had some friends um, but ah, that lived close to the railroad tracks and they would always jump the rail cars, and ah the one friend of ours, he ah his specialty is he would jump in the scrap cars and he'd start looking for bicycle parts and he would just start throwing them off the train, and after about a mile, he'd jump back off, and he'd go back and he'd start collecting all these parts well then he'd would make bicycles from these parts that he had got off the train, and ah, this was back in the 70s and at one point he had a 15 speed Schwinn bicycle that nobody had ever heard of before and they'd never made a 15 speed - the 10 speed was the you know, the big thing at the time, and he had a 15 speed bicycle that he'd made from scrap parts that he'd get off the train.

AM: Okay. How fast did the train go through town that you could jump on and off of it?

MP: Um, luckily, there was kind of a as the train would come into Maryville, there was a slight incline, so it would slow down a little bit, and it was it was slow to the point where if you were running next to the train car, it you were going at about the same speed so it was easy to grab hold of the rail and run alongside of it and jump on, I was never that adventurous, I never, never wanted to jump on the train car, so...

AM: Okay. I always thought it would be fun [laughs]

MP: It always looked like fun but when you're standing right next to it, and the train's going past you, the fun kinda leaves. [laughs]

AM: Right. Okay.

AM: Um, I have all these questions, and you start talking, and I forget

MP: I know it was through the 70s that the train was still running through here, ahm, but I think it was during the 80s that they they the train stopped running the tracks were abandoned for a long time, and then um, back in the 90s the Madison County Transit District purchased um, the railways and then they ripped em out and put bike trails and such in....running businesses continued village of Maryville, Jim Morgan's barber shop, he's got the ah, continuously running business right now. In regards to that. Um, the village of Maryville would not be around today if it wasn't for the two grocery stores that were in town, Leoni [?] and Sons and Picchhioldi and Sons [?] um, back in the mine was before it was getting ready to close, the mining industry was really starting to slack off and the mines to the advantage of the lack of productions and because the mine was getting mined out basically to lower salaries because if you didn't want to take a lower salary, well then they could just fire you because you know they didn't want to pay a higher salary so a lot of the miners took a lesser salary well the two stores in Maryville, Leoni's and Picchioldi's not only sold confectionery items but then I guess that they had dry goods and they had canned goods, and something that is unheard of today is they offered credit. So the people that brought money because they didn't make as much money in the mines and didn't have enough food to feed their

families could come in and get items and put it on credit and then at the end of the month or the beginning of the month they could come in, and make a payment to on their credit. Ahm, I know my grandparents both died and Skip Leonie and his wife both died with people still owing them money because they ran credit for so many years and they died off before these people could pay them off. But if it wasn't for these two businesses offering credit, the village would have disappeared because people would have moved out looking for other employment somewhere else. So, because these two businesses allowed people to buy on credit, not only food items but a lot of kerosene, coal oil, ah tub warm and light their homes and it was offered on credit and that kept the village going.

AM: So your last name is Italian?

MP: Yes

AM: Is that correct? Okay, when did your family come here - to the United States?

MP: My great grandparents came here I believe it was 1900 or 1901, my great grandfather came over several times, ah, by himself and then he and his wife come over and they settled in Spring Valley, Illinois up North for a small amount of time, um, they moved down here around 1910, my grandfather was born in 1908, and they had the blacksmith shop and such ah, that he was running with the confectionary it was called Anton Picchioldi's at the time and then ah my grandfather took it over in 1920 and changed the name to Picchioldi and Sons and so they've been around here since the very beginning of the village of Maryville.

AM: Was Maryville settled by a lot of Italians like Collinsville? Or was it?

MP: Yeah I think that there was a lot of Italians that come into the village there was ah there's still you know there was Picchioldi's and Leoni and Mazzano and Valino, and Velzanno and you know those are all Italian names that lived in Maryville. Um, 2014 I ah took a family trip with my wife and daughter and we went to Italy and one of the places we visited was Locana, Italy which is in the northern Piedmont region of Italy and that's where my great grandfather Anton Picchioldi was born, so we took a walk through the cemetery and the headstones in the cemetery in Locana you have Volinos and Belzanos and Picchioldi's and you know all the names that I recognized from Maryville were also in Locana.

AM: So they all found themselves here together? That's kinda cool.

MP: Yeah yeah.

AM: Okay, so what other industry was there other than the coal mining era and then the two groceries was there anything or?

MP: Well, coal mining was the big industry that was the draw, um, obviously things that came into Maryville to they wanted to basically start businesses that would get into some of that money there was at a time there was 14 taverns in Maryville there was boarding houses, there was prostitutes, um, so, you know where you had these single miners that would come and they would ah work in the mine six days a week and then on Sundays they would visit these prostitutes and go to a taverns and um, yeah, there used to be a movie theater, there was a cannery, there were several bakeries and they were all located within

the small area which they called "old Maryville" which is the region that we're in and they were all you know packed together within that small you know 3-4 block area in each direction. Um, an interesting fact about Maryville is that as you go down Main Street and you cross over the bike trail which used to be the railroad tracks and the part you drive that goes off to the left and that used to be called "Chinatown Road."

AM: I was just getting ready to ask you about that.

MP: So, if you look on some older maps, that area of Maryville is actually labeled Chinatown. And, my grandmother on my mother's side, she grew up in that area of Chinatown and always referred to it as Chinatown. Well, Chinatown got its name cause on, as I was saying, the mines were in 6 days a week, they were closed on Sundays because everybody went to church, and, that was their only day off from the mine, so they would all do their laundry on the same day, well nobody had driers, nobody had washing machines, they would hand wash everything, so after they'd wash it they'd string a clothesline and they'd hang their clothes up to dry. So, in this area of Maryville around the mine there, they had it was almost like a company town, they had these small little houses that were built by the mine that were to house employees. Well, every one of them would have lines out with clothes on it. Well the train started was coming through one day and it was either the president or the vice president of the train line was on the train and they're slowing down because of a slight incline, and they're going through that region, and he said "Oh my gosh, look at all the clothes hanging out on the lines, and it was you know, house to house to house, and clothesline to clothesline and all these clothes hanging out he says: "Man, that looks like a Chinese laundry, there must be a Chinatown there..." and that name stuck for some reason and it's always been called Chinatown and there has been often times where you have somebody's stopped by of Asian descent and wanted to know where the Chinatown region was because they'd seen it on a map, and so, where the museum is currently trying to work with the village to get a sign that's on Parkview Drive that says "Historic Chinatown Road" but we needed to try to come up with some way to differentiate it so that 911 was concerned that it would be a problem, so we've brought back choose a different areas that have had historic signs and such so we finally decided that normally you've got an oblong kind of street sign that we would put more of like a square sign on there that's said "Historic Chinatown Road" or something like that. So we're trying to work with the village to do that.

AM: Okay, so, they all went to church on Sundays. Were there a lot of churches in town?

MP: There was several churches and the churches were always a big part of Maryville because that's usually where everybody got their entertainment with they'd go to the church service on Sunday morning and then usually in the evening there'd be some kind of a program whether it be some kind of Sunday school kid's program or they'd have some kind of a dance, or they'd have a speaker of they'd you know they'd always do something and a lot of times the fire department would be involved with that also just because that was like the community thing to do.

AM: How about when you were a kid did your parents make you go to church?

MP: They did we used to go to Saint John's Lutheran Church which was in what they called the Pleasant Ridge area of Maryville, which was one of the very first areas of Maryville was ah Pleasant Ridge where St. John's Lutheran Church is which is ah down West Main Street ah, you take it to Pleasant Ridge Road,

so that's where we went to church that's where my grandfather and grandmother on my mother's side went. My dad's side of the family um, were more atheist, my grandmother was raised Catholic but she never was a devout Catholic and she'd only attend every once and awhile, um, so they never really went to church on their side, because grandparents ran the store, and again, they worked 6 days a week well on Sundays was their day to rest, and they did because they were up 5 or 6 in the morning until 10 , 11 o'clock at night running the store and the garage and such.

AM: So what did you do when you worked in the store?

MP: Um, usually stocked shelves or back then, you had soda machines with soda bottles and people would come in and they could buy one bottle at a time or a six pack, well, and they would bring those bottles back and they would get three cents or a nickel or whatever it was at the time in return of the bottles. So, people would come back and they would have you know, Coke and Pepsi and the 7-UP and the RC Cola all this and that in the 6 pack well those bottles all had to be sorted and put in different cases so that when the soda company came back to retrieve their bottles, that they were picking up the Coke bottles or Pepsi bottles, or whatever so they weren't picking up somebody else's body so you had to sort individually sort all those different bottles and put them into the different cases so that was one of my duties that I hated [laughs]

AM: So you hated that, what was your favorite thing to do?

MP: Um, my favorite thing to do was just kinda hang around the store and talk to people and ah you know hear all the stories and you know listen to talk and the grocery store at the time that was kinda the ah, um, clothesline of the day, where people would come in and say "Hey did you hear about this..." that was the social media at the time you know, it was face to face social media so they'd come in and they'd say "Hey did you hear you know so and so's you know uncle passed away or.... " so you'd hear all these rumors and facts and such of what was going on, I vividly remember that. Um, I did like stocking the shelves some of the times you know, it all depended and I was small so I had you know, I did everything up to about 3 or 4 feet and then my parents had to come back and do everything else above it.

AM: So how old were you when your parents closed the store?

MP: Ah that was in 1976 so, I was 14.

AM: Okay - alright. So is there anything else you would like to tell me?

MP: Um, this flier here is the it's titled "The Self-Guided Tour To Historic Points of Interest In Maryville." And this might help you with it - it talks about some of these aspects of the village itself there's a map that shows this is the old part of Maryville here, here's Third so Jim's would be right there, and ah,

AM: So this would be Chinatown here?

MP: Yep. And right about the P's at is where Jim and Janice live, um, so this was considered like the old part of Maryville, um the Lutheran Church.

AM: So where was your grandparent's store?

MP: My grandparent's store was right here at the corner of Main and Center Street.

AM: Okay. I will include this map in my project

MP: So this is 159 right here, and originally that was just a one way road and it had a um, what do you call it... streetcar that would run from East Saint Louis to Edwardsville.

AM: Oh cool

MP: Along this road. And where the streetcar would stop would be up here where Buffalo Park was which is now the "Lake House on the Lake" um, that one used to be called Buffalo Park so, these little numbers here they correspond with different aspects of the village and they tell you you know this was the ah, Interper Railway and such, so this has a little flier has some good historic facts.

AM: Actually it has Chinatown labeled on there I'm on the wrong side of the road.

MP: And this, this was the first post office

AM: The picture on the front?

MP: Yeah

AM: Okay. All right thank you so much for taking your time to

MP: Oh no problem

AM: To share some of this history with me I really appreciate it thank you very much.

MP: You're welcome!