

Daniel Brandi
Narrator

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Hoosick Falls Historical Society
Interviewer

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Hoosick Falls Historical Society
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Q: Would you please state your name and where you live?

DB: My name is Daniel Brandi and I live on 97 Church Street, Hoosick Falls, NY.

Q: How long have you lived in Hoosick Falls?

DB: I lived there since 1920. I was six years old when we came over from Italy. There was my mother and my four brothers. My father was here a year before that. When he earned enough to send us over we came here.

Q: I see –tell us a little about your life—you know that you remember—during your teens and stuff.

DB: Well, when I was 12 years old I started apprentice for shoe repair on Elm Street from John Handakas and I used to watch Bob Eberle go take his music lesson across the street on Church Street in the basement of [unclear] house. He did that and then afterwards became a celebrity.

Q: How old are you before we go on?

DB: I am 85 years old.

Q: And, now you were 12 years old and you took your apprentice. What happened?

DB: I was 12 years old and went to John Handakas when I took my apprenticeship there on Elm Street.

Q: Were you going to school?

DB: I was still going to school. I was going to the Main Street School where the American Legion is now.

PL: What happened then?

DB: I remember being in first grade. My father moved over on East Hoosick up on that hill there. We were there about a year. It was so cold and windy there. My father drove us on a bobsled to school most of the year. Mrs. Wallace was our teacher. She used to

put me and my brother by the radiator to thaw out. When I went back to my seat I fell asleep.

PL: What about the language barrier? You spoke Italian when you came over. How long did it take you?

DB: I was six years old. It wasn't much. I was 6 years old so we spoke very little. We never went to school over there in Italy. We hardly spoke regular Italian there at all. It was easy for us to pick it up— it was no problem— because I was six years old. It was almost a year after they started school.

PL: So, now we got you apprenticed.

DB: Well, apprenticed, then I started and afterwards I worked for John Handakas. Then I started up in my house with a shoe repair shop right in the front room. I moved to Elm Street because John Handakas then sold and went back to Greece. And I bought what he had there from Peter Pappas, who was his brother-in-law, I bought the stuff there and then afterwards the draft came and I got drafted.

PL: How old were you when you got drafted?

DB: I was 26.

PL: You were 26 and you got drafted? In 1941 was it?

DB: Yeah I got drafted in the winter of '41. They gave me three months to close shop which I did and then I went into the service.

Q: You went into the service. Give us a little story about your service.

DB: I took basic at Camp Croft, SC, near Spartanburg it was. From there, we went to San Francisco.

Q: Were there any guys from Hoosick Falls with you?

DB: No, I was the only one. And I went to Frisco from there. We were shipped out there. We weren't there long when Pearl Harbor was attacked. We were supposed to go to the Philippines so we went on board ship. We were in Hawaii two weeks later on September 21st. And I was in the infantry at the time. Then they shipped me to the quartermaster and I didn't want to go. They said you go, so I had to go. I think that was a break for me because the old outfit I was in got wiped out. I saw a guy afterwards who was getting discharged and he said most of them got wiped out.

PL: So it was really a godsend the way you got put into quartermaster?

DB: From there we shipped to [unclear] in the Marianas Island until we got discharged. Well of course, my sister Mary died then and they sent me home. Later on I was discharged.

Q: So you spent four years in the service?

DB: Yes.

Q: When you were in Hawaii did you bump into - I know the 105th went to Hawaii.

DB: Oh sure, they relieved us on the beach—our outfit from Hoosick Falls—they relieved us there—I saw them every day, most of them.

PL: Oh, so you saw Tony Marmoski and all those guys.

DB: I had Christmas dinner with them— they said come on over and I had Christmas dinner with them over there. And it was a beautiful place, that island before this happened. It's not the same now. I've never been back but they tell me it's commercialized like any other city in the United States.

PL: It is—I was there twice and I can tell you it's really commercial.

DB: At that time it was beautiful. It was different.

PL: All right, so then you got discharged from the service and you came back to Hoosick Falls?

DB: I opened up my shop where the liquor store is now and I stayed there for five years. Then I moved up to my other place where I just retired from. A beauty parlor is there now.

Q: Can you tell us a little about what you remember when you were younger – hotels and stuff -what Hoosick Falls looked like?

DB: Well, when I was on Elm Street there where the Blue Flame is now there were three businesses there—Bird's Livery Stable was there, Pat Hennessey had a sporting goods store and just this side of it was a barber shop— Marshall's Barber Shop—and then this is where the Handakas' building was. Where the house is now. There was a house between [unclear] and the Blue Flame. That's where he had his business and that's where I was.

PL: And then up on the corner was a restaurant - towards the depot?

DB: Towards the railroad tracks. Well, outside next to the livery stable was Burt's Meat Market, above that I can't quite remember who was there, but later on Jack [unclear] become a resident there because he moved from John Street – that's where he first started. People think he started on Elm Street, but he started on John Street because he lived there once.

PL: Was the American House there?

DB: Oh, yes the American House was there.

PL: Who ran the American House then?

DB: The Wirmusky's.

PL: The Wirmusky's ran it then, too.

DB: Jack Eberle had a place across the track from the American House. He had a barroom there. There was McDonough's Barber Shop facing the railroad track and they

had a barn there and the fighters used to train—the boxers—would train there—each local boxer would train there. I remember that. In the World Series they had a big black board there and we sat across the street and listened to the game because radio at that time—there was nothing else—very few had any TV.

PL: When you look right back, you came before the cars.

DB: Practically, horse and buggy just about going out then. There were very few cars; the horse and buggy days were just practically finished. Just about.

PL: What do you remember about the railroad and the trolleys?

DB: Just about the trolley. Just barely remember. They used to have that barn up there on Main Street. And then there was another place down below the barn on the left there where they had a blacksmith shop where they worked on little carriages and stuff like that. Course, we also lived there by the specialty—from the farm we came down to the specialty. From there we went down to John Street. They got a barroom there now behind there in the back.

I remember back there that Charlie [unclear] there one time. My brother and I were kids and were there fishing and the bear got loose and they went in the back yard. Crisorio thought that was his kid he had down on the ground, the bear did, so he ran out with a revolver— you know he was going to shoot the bear but he fell and broke his ankle or leg. The bear came running down where we were and saw the commotion. We got up and saw the bear running around the house so we ran on the porch and as we got there the people inside pulled us in and the bear ran around the porch and they cornered him in the back chicken coop and they kicked him to death.

PL: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

DB: I had four brothers and one sister.

PL: Were they in the service, your brothers?

DB: Four of us were in.

PL: Four of you at the same time?

DB: Yes.

PL: So your mother was a Four Gold Star Mother as they called it at that time.

PL: I'm trying think of what else you could tell us about Hoosick Falls.

DB: I remember the 1927 flood.

PL: Tell me about that.

DB: That water was all the way up to the shirt shop at the foot of John Street there. Course, the [unclear] had a repair shop there and Crisorio had that long building there where they lived and sold Italian food and stuff like that—the water came all the way up to there. We used to kid the people who used to live down there, get the rowboat out.

PL: Whenever it rained hard, huh?

PL: So we talked about the flood.

DB: The Walter A. Wood was still going then. A lot of people go across there to work.

PL: The Walter A. Wood went through the beginning twenties before they folded up. So you can remember the Walter A. Wood plant?

DB: Just barely. Because a fellow used to work there who lived above us. Course a lot of changes been made since then.

PL: What did you do for entertainment?

DB: You made your own entertainment. We didn't have what they got today.

PL: They had a movie house, didn't they?

DB: They had a movie house. Yes.

PL: Can you remember the movie house next to the armory?

DB: I don't remember that one.

PL: Oh, you don't remember. Cause I read in the literature about that.

DB: Yes, they had one there so they say. That's when they built the other one afterwards there.

PL: They called it the new theatre.

DB: And they had a lot of businesses around town. You walked the street on a Saturday night you gotta watch where you were going or you would run into somebody.

PL: It was that crowded.

DB: The stores were open until ten o'clock on Saturday night. I would be working there for John Handakas shining shoes...