

Regional Oral History Office  
The Bancroft Library

University of California  
Berkeley, California

**Alfred Granzella**

**Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project**

A Collaborative Project of the Regional Oral History Office,  
The National Park Service, and the City of Richmond, California

Interviews conducted by  
Nadine Wilmot  
in 2006

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Born in Oakland, but has lived in Richmond for most of life—both parents came from Italy—came to the US through Ellis Island—neither parent was formally educated—father worked as a boilermaker in WWII—shipyards began in Richmond in 1939 to aid in the Lend Lease program with the British—attended Richmond High School, which became very integrated—the population of Richmond exploded, and newcomers came from all over—in high school, different races did not really mix socially—at age 17 decided to join the Navy—spent most of the war as an electrician on an ammunition ship—ammunition ships were present during battles, but stayed mostly out of harm's way—his ship's crew was all white—after Pearl Harbor, thought that the US would win the war very quickly—after the war ended, ship was docked in Washington—eventually made it back to the Bay Area, took a job with Ma Bell

### **Audiofile 2**

Difference between Iraq war and WWII—witnessed the postwar growth of the East Bay—contributed to the buildup of phone lines in the East Bay—diversity in the Bay Area as a result of the war—boilermaker's union

Interview #1: 07-20-06

Begin Audio File Granzella\_Alfred1 07-20-06.mp3

01-00:00:00

Wilmot: Alright, good afternoon. Today's date is July 20<sup>th</sup>, and I'm here for the Bancroft Library at the home of Alfred Granzella. This is interview number one. Good afternoon.

01-00:00:20

Granzella: Good afternoon.

01-00:00:25

Wilmot: We usually start off these things by asking where and when you were born.

01-00:00:36

Granzella: I was born in Oakland, California, on June 16<sup>th</sup> 1926, but my parents lived here in Richmond, and I have lived in Richmond all my life.

01-00:00:53

Wilmot: And were your parents also from this area?

01-00:00:58

Granzella: My parents had been here for some time. Both of them came from Europe. My father came here in 1911 and my mother came here in 1921. They met here and that's when I was born.

01-00:01:14

Wilmot: Where in Europe were they from?

01-00:01:16

Granzella: Where were they from? They were from Italy. My father was from Lake Como, a little town called Pianello del Lario, a very lovely place, and my mother was from the Piedmont area of Italy, in northern Italy.

01-00:01:33

Wilmot: And what kinds of stories did you hear about their coming here? Why did they choose to come here?

01-00:01:39

Granzella: From what I understand, they were very, very interested in the possibilities that were here in this country, that weren't there as far as improving their lives was concerned. The opportunities were here from all of their people that they knew that had come from there.

01-00:02:01

Wilmot: What did they tell you about their life back in Italy?

01-00:02:04

Granzella: Well, they said, from what I understand, they probably had quite a bit of problems in finding enough food and having the amenities of money and other

things that would be expected. There were just no opportunities there whatsoever.

01-00:02:29

Wilmot: Were they farmers? What was their occupational background?

01-00:02:33

Granzella: They both came from what I would say is a farming community. Piedmont area is mostly—it's very similar to Napa Valley, and they do have a lot of vineyards. Since then, they've gone into alfalfa and a lot of other things, from what I understand. But it's a very productive land for that.

01-00:02:53

Wilmot: And Piedmont, that's where your mother's from?

01-00:02:56

Granzella: That's where my mother's from. Where my father came from, I understand there was quite a silk industry taking place in that area, where they would weave. They'd bring in, I guess, the silk from the cocoons and they would weave it or make the threads out of it that would be woven into silk cloth.

01-00:03:18

Wilmot: So they came here as adults?

01-00:03:22

Granzella: Yes, my father was 18 and my mother was 22.

01-00:03:28

Wilmot: And did they come in through—you said they had family that had told them about the opportunities in America?

01-00:03:36

Granzella: Oh yes, my mother's sister was already here, and I think that was the ability that she had to come here, when, in corresponding with her sister, her sister made arrangements to get her over here.

01-00:03:53

Wilmot: Did they come in through New York?

01-00:03:56

Granzella: Yeah, they came through New York and we've looked into Ellis Island and found the name on the list, and even down to the picture of the ship that they came on.

01-00:04:07

Wilmot: So would you tell me your parent's names?

01-00:04:11

Granzella: My parent's names were—my father's name was Edward John Granzella and my mother's name was Mary Bruno.

- 01-00:04:19  
Wilmot: Mary Bruno, that was her maiden name.
- 01-00:04:21  
Granzella: That was her maiden name.
- 01-00:04:23  
Wilmot: And what's the story of them meeting?
- 01-00:04:27  
Granzella: I'm not quite sure, but I know that in the Temescal district of Oakland, there was a large contingent of Italian people who would gather in their groups and they would have their *festas* as it were, where they would have food and dancing and so on. They met at that time. That's from what I understand, anyway.
- 01-00:05:00  
Wilmot: How would you describe your mom and how would you describe your father? What kind of people were they?
- 01-00:05:08  
Granzella: Well they were very normal people, I would say. Not very—not extroverts or anything like that. He always seemed to find work somewhere, and he did just about everything that he possibly could with the education that he had.
- 01-00:05:25  
Wilmot: Which was?
- 01-00:05:27  
Granzella: And my mother was the same way. She brought my sister and I up, and then after my sister was in high school, she went to work. She was quite a seamstress and she had done a lot of work at home along that kind of thing. She was a very small person. I've never known her to weigh more than 103 pounds. She was very active. Both of them died at 91 years old.
- 01-00:05:57  
Wilmot: Wow, great. You're blessed with a long life.
- 01-00:05:59  
Granzella: There were eight years difference between my mother and my father.
- 01-00:06:07  
Wilmot: You said your father took many different types of work with his level of education. What was his level of education? How far did they both go?
- 01-00:06:15  
Granzella: Probably third grade or something like that. He was 18 when he came over here. I don't know many things about what he did prior to when he married my mother. I know he worked in a hotel business, but I do know that what I can remember—he used to drive a delivery vehicle for a dry-cleaning and laundry. Then in World War II, he was a boilermaker. He wanted to

participate in that, and later on he worked in a janitorial field when he got older, because he had to have an income. The interesting part about him is that we used to have the Richmond-San Rafael ferry and he was on crew of the inaugural run from Richmond to San Rafael. He worked for them. And then, of course, he went off to other things. And then, when later in life, they were trying to find people that fit into the job, knowing that the bridge was being built, so he went back to work with them. So he was in the last of the ferry runs between Richmond and San Rafael.

01-00:07:43

Wilmot: So he really witnessed and participated in the growth of the Bay Area in a really significant way.

01-00:07:48

Granzella: Oh yeah, he was always very interested. Although he came from a foreign country, he was a true patriot as far as the US was concerned. You couldn't say anything bad about our country.

01-00:08:03

Wilmot: And your mother, did you know how far she got in terms of schooling?

01-00:08:08

Granzella: Probably the same. I don't think it was anything more than 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade. At that time, a lot of the kids went to work right at that particular time. They found work for them, instead of going to school, from what I understand. So they didn't participate in any higher education at all.

01-00:08:33

Wilmot: So they met in Oakland but had you in Richmond? Is that right?

01-00:08:40

Granzella: You mean Oakland

01-00:08:41

Wilmot: You were born in Oakland?

01-00:08:42

Granzella: Yeah. I was born not at a hospital. I was born by a midwife. They took me to right at 45<sup>th</sup> and Telegraph, and it was upstairs, and they pointed it out to me. My mother went in, and she was pregnant, and had me, and got out, went home, came back here to Richmond where we lived on 22<sup>nd</sup> street.

01-00:09:09

Wilmot: So they had set up their married household in Richmond after leaving Oakland?

01-00:09:13

Granzella: Before, yeah.

01-00:09:16

Wilmot: Is your sister older or younger?

- 01-00:09:19  
Granzella: She's five years younger.
- 01-00:09:21  
Wilmot: Was she a hospital birth or a midwife or home birth?
- 01-00:09:24  
Granzella: She was a home birth, also, in Richmond.
- 01-00:09:28  
Wilmot: That's really wonderful. Why do you think they chose to come to Richmond? This was before the war—significantly before the war. Why do you think they chose to come to Richmond?
- 01-00:09:42  
Granzella: Well, my father had a brother over here that got here before he did. And he had corresponded and said that there was more farm over here and there was an opportunity for him and so on. And he came over with another brother and their uncle or something. My father was pretty sharp in a way because when they got off of Ellis Island to catch a train to come to the West Coast, they were quite confused because they didn't speak English and couldn't read the signs. But he went up to a police officer that looked very German and asked him where the next train left for San Francisco was, and he was very helpful to them because he talked to him in German. My father knew a number of languages that he picked up just enough to be understood. In Europe all these countries are very close. He got here five days before the rest of his party got here. He was thinking all the time.
- 01-00:10:57  
Wilmot: And how did he know that Richmond or even the Bay Area was where he wanted to be in California? Why not Nebraska or Pennsylvania? What was the draw factor for coming to the Bay Area?
- 01-00:11:12  
Granzella: I think it was mostly because of the people who had arrived here before and corresponded back with them. I remember he might say that from the village from where my mother came from, they didn't all come to California because they spoke of a relative who went to South America and to Australia. I do know about the Australia ones because my uncle had gone and found them, and they actually took a trip out here, and we met them. They became very much involved in the sugar industry. They had sugar cane fields on the east coast of Australia. The ones in Buenos Aires were on my father's side, but again they had people who had gone there and wrote back and said, "There are opportunities here." So that's where they went.
- 01-00:12:13  
Wilmot: And in your home growing up, how would you describe that home on 22<sup>nd</sup> street in Richmond?

- 01-00:12:19  
 Granzella: Well, we often talk about that as I speak a dialect of Italian called Piemontaise, and that's from the Piedmont area. That's all we spoke at home because my mother, at that time, it was only a few years that she had been here. She didn't speak very much English. I picked mine up at the school, the other kids around the neighborhood. I had absolutely no trouble when I got to kindergarten and first grade and so on. I do not ever recall having any problems as far as language is concerned.
- 01-00:12:56  
 Wilmot: And you spoke Piemontaise?
- 01-00:12:58  
 Granzella: Piemontaise.
- 01-00:13:00  
 Wilmot: How is that different from other dialects? What makes it—were there different ways of pronunciation or intonation?
- 01-00:13:05  
 Granzella: Yeah, it's like we have southerners and they change their wording a lot. Italy was comprised of a number of localities. It's only been a country since 1860, I think, so all of these areas had their own language. It was common, in a way, but from what they tell me, when people talked, they knew where they were from. Whether they were from the southern part or the northern part or in-between.
- 01-00:13:46  
 Wilmot: So what was your home like there? Was it a three-bedroom house or two-bedroom house?
- 01-00:13:52  
 Granzella: Oh, it was a two-bedroom house, a very nice house. It's still there and it's still an attractive house.
- 01-00:13:58  
 Wilmot: What was the neighborhood like?
- 01-00:14:01  
 Granzella: At that time—it's not quite like that now—but at that time it was an excellent neighborhood. It was only two blocks, three blocks from grant school, where I first went to school, first through sixth grade.
- 01-00:14:17  
 Wilmot: Did you have fruit trees in your yard?
- 01-00:14:20  
 Granzella: No fruit trees.

- 01-00:14:22  
 Wilmot: Did you remember who your friends were, playing? Like, your neighbors who you played with?
- 01-00:14:29  
 Granzella: Oh, sure.
- 01-00:14:31  
 Wilmot: Where were they from?
- 01-00:14:33  
 Granzella: The people right behind us, they were from Austria. And there were the [Murins?] from across the street, and I don't remember—when they came they were like English or Irish or something. The Great Houses across the street, they were also, I think, English. This was not in a location—where I grew up—where they all spoke Italian or German or Polish, like you'd find in many locations. This was real US of A, actually.
- 01-00:14:40  
 Wilmot: A real mixed neighborhood.
- 01-00:15:00  
 Granzella: Very mixed neighborhood. I remember the two old men who used to live next door, and they had bottles and they'd build ships in the bottles. Beautiful things.
- 01-00:15:19  
 Wilmot: And in your home, did your mother cook special dishes that you remember at any time?
- 01-00:15:27  
 Granzella: She was an excellent, excellent cook. She always had good food on the table and I, as a *primo filio*—when you talk about the first son, that's the one who gets it all, and I was never neglected as far as anything like that was concerned. I used to go to school with sandwiches with probably mortadella or some other kind of salamis and that sort of thing. Sometimes I'd trade off with some of the other kids—this is in the middle of the Depression, you know, and they had two pieces of bread with Thousand Island dressing on it, spread like that. [laughs] I'd trade them for that because I didn't know any better. But we did very well that way.
- 01-00:16:30  
 Wilmot: And during the depression, which you mentioned, was your family—did your father manage to maintain employment during the Depression or did you feel the squeeze, or no?
- 01-00:16:44  
 Granzella: He did, and where he was working at that time at the height of the Depression was at the Richmond brick works. That was a *terrible* job. Making bricks not the way they make them today, but they had to go into the kiln to get the hot

bricks out, and his hands were always so rough and everything because of handling these things. And the pay was very, very meager, but that was where he had to work. That's all he could find.

01-00:17:17

Wilmot: And your mom at that time was a homemaker?

01-00:17:19

Granzella: Just a homemaker and, like I say, she took in as much as there was people available. She used to make wedding dresses and gowns for a whole bunch of bridesmaids. She did very, very well with that. Not that she did very well monetarily, or anything like that, but she made some beautiful things.

01-00:17:43

Wilmot: Yeah, she was an artist. A fine crafts person.

01-00:17:47

Granzella: Very good, very beautiful.

01-00:17:49

Wilmot: So where did you go for high school?

01-00:17:54

Granzella: It was during the war, during World War II, because when I was sixteen it was 1942. So the city here had just changed completely because of all the shipyards that were starting. And there actually was a shipyard started in about 1939 when they had the Lend Lease program with the English. They were building ships allegedly for ourselves but leasing them off to them, or whatever they did to avoid going directly to war—until 1942, of course. So, at that time, I was going to Richmond High. I went to Longfellow Junior High School, which is gone now. Then, at the very end there, the Roosevelt Junior High school burnt down so you had to take all of those kids and put them somewhere else, and many of them came to Richmond High. So I was going to school for something like two hours a day. It wasn't very much at the time, so consequently, when I got to be close to my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, which was going to be after I graduated, I didn't want to go into the Army, so I joined the Navy. I went to San Francisco and enlisted.

01-00:19:29

Wilmot: So you finished high school and then went into the Navy?

01-00:19:33

Granzella: No, I was through with high school. I got my diploma but I left before the graduation ceremony.

01-00:19:40

Wilmot: Okay, can you tell me a little bit about high school? Richmond High School at that time, was it an integrated school? Were there people of all racial backgrounds there?

- 01-00:19:54  
 Granzella: It had become a very, very integrated school because all of the people were coming in. We went from—when I spoke of watching the shipyards come in, we were only about 23,000 here in Richmond, and it grew into 120,000 so you had people coming in from all parts of the country to work here.
- 01-00:20:21  
 Wilmot: Was there tension between the old-timers and the newcomers? Were there tensions there?
- 01-00:20:27  
 Granzella: We didn't have time for that. I don't recall. It was like a wide-open city, but there wasn't enough naturally, homes; there wasn't enough rental space and so on. There were a lot of difficulties as far as finding accommodations for the people, but they—we survived.
- 01-00:20:55  
 Wilmot: Also were there Japanese and Chinese Americans at your high school?
- 01-00:21:00  
 Granzella: Very much so. Some of my fierce competitors were from the Chung Mei Home, and this was a Chinese orphanage or some kind of school up in El Cerrito.[ed. for more information on the Chung Mei Home, go to this link: [http://elcerritowire.com/live/new\\_single\\_archive.shtml?oid=270&archive\\_section\\_id=4](http://elcerritowire.com/live/new_single_archive.shtml?oid=270&archive_section_id=4)] And they had all their students into the public schools, and they were very good. And one of the classes that I was very much interested in was mechanical drawing, and they were very competitive. I had a heck of a time staying ahead of them.
- 01-00:21:30  
 Wilmot: So this was your academic competition you're speaking of.
- 01-00:21:34  
 Granzella: That's right.
- 01-00:21:36  
 Wilmot: And were you a good student? Was that a place where you liked to excel?
- 01-00:21:41  
 Granzella: Oh yeah, I was a very good student.
- 01-00:21:43  
 Wilmot: Yeah? And speaking of which, what were your parents' attitudes around education for their children?
- 01-00:21:50  
 Granzella: Non-committal at that. I think, there, probably, with more guidance I would've gone further in college than what I did and continued on, but at the time that I went to school there were courses that were college prep and the others that were for more vocational activity. And so I took a lot of the vocational activities, but it did include a lot. You had to have the other subjects like

English and Music and Arts, and so on. But the math and some of the things that I picked up in the shop areas was very, very helpful to me.

01-00:22:32

Wilmot: And so your parents, you said they were kind of non-committal?

01-00:22:38

Granzella: That's correct.

01-00:22:42

Wilmot: They were happy to see you go further than they had gone?

01-00:22:46

Granzella: Well, they felt a high school education was adequate. I mean that's how I visualize it.

01-00:22:54

Wilmot: And your social life in high school, what was that like? Did you ever go to the Plunge?

01-00:23:01

Granzella: Oh sure, I went there as a Boy Scout way back you know, a long, long time before that. And yeah, as soon as I was 16 I had a car and so I used to get around quite a bit.

01-00:23:18

Wilmot: Were you going to dances and parties? Or were there house parties or did you go out for ice cream? Or what types of things?

01-00:23:25

Granzella: We had the school dances. We had a lot of those at time. The sock hops and all that sort of thing. And then we had, what came in when I was in high school was drive-ins. You know, we used to go to the drive-in and get burgers and shakes, and things like that. It was a big deal.

01-00:23:42

Wilmot: Were you much of a dancer?

01-00:23:43

Granzella: I liked to dance, yeah.

01-00:23:45

Wilmot: Yay!

01-00:23:46

Granzella: Jitterbug.

01-00:23:47

Wilmot: Yeah! And in your social life, did you have a group of running buddies? Like your running buddies who you were always running around with? Your friends?

- 01-00:24:00  
Granzella: Yeah. I see them once in a while still.
- 01-00:24:05  
Wilmot: And you still know them?
- 01-00:24:06  
Granzella: Oh, yeah!
- 01-00:24:06  
Wilmot: That's great.
- 01-00:24:07  
Granzella: Yeah. Not very many though. There's a lot of them that moved away. Many of them did not want to stay in this area. And because of my family and that sort of thing is why I did stay in this area. Because my center of activity was here. We've discussed this a lot of times. We could've gone to the Peninsula or Walnut Creek, or even to Marin County was probably a better location as far as living conditions are concerned. But I didn't mind, we stayed here.
- 01-00:24:40  
Wilmot: And socially you mentioned were your group friendships, did they include like friendships with people who were Japanese and Chinese? And was it a mixing socially?
- 01-00:24:54  
Granzella: No, they weren't too many of those that we were meeting with and that kind of thing. No.
- 01-00:25:08  
Wilmot: So there wasn't really a mixing socially in that way?
- 01-00:25:10  
Granzella: No.
- 01-00:25:10  
Wilmot: You were mixed in school, but you weren't necessarily mixed socially?
- 01-00:25:13  
Granzella: That's right. That's right.
- 01-00:25:15  
Wilmot: Right. Okay. And the other question I had for you was you mentioned that your father was a fierce patriot. And I was wondering did he or your family ever face discrimination as Italian Americans right in that time prior to the war or growing up?
- 01-00:25:39  
Granzella: I think we were all very apprehensive. I think *they* were because there had been some cases that we knew about where they moved some of the Italian people out of certain areas in order to be sure that they were not going to

create a problem. And that was kind of ridiculous, but that's the way they did things.

01-00:26:05

Wilmot: So was there that kind of threat that that could happen to your family?

01-00:26:07

Granzella: Oh, sure. There was always that threat.

01-00:26:10

Wilmot: Wow.

01-00:26:12

Granzella: Yeah.

01-00:26:13

Wilmot: So how did you deal with that? How did your family deal with that?

01-00:26:17

Granzella: Just kept our nose clean. We never had any confrontation. There was never anyone that came to talk to us about it. I never heard of anyone that would threaten in any way whatsoever, but the remarks going back and forth, the scuttlebutt that was going on, there was always what people had told other people, that things were happening.

01-00:26:53

Wilmot: So there was a fear there.

01-00:26:56

Granzella: It was critical.

01-00:27:00

Wilmot: Did you father at that time have a perspective on what was going on in Italy?

01-00:27:05

Granzella: That's one of the bad things that came out of the era that they did not correspond like we can today, you know, with not only snail mail, but with e-mail and so on. I just wrote an e-mail to my cousin in Italy. I mean that's how simple it is. So they didn't correspond anymore. I never did meet my grandfather or grandmother, either side, because they never came over here, and I didn't go over there until just a few years ago, quite a few years ago. But so, they weren't getting any kind of information from them whether there was a serious problem or good problem or whatever up until the war. Then when the war started they didn't get any messages in any way of sending. In the case of my mother, there were seven in the family. The three daughters came over the America, and the four sons stayed there. One of them died in the influenza, but the three sons remain there and that's the ones that are now my cousins that I go to visit.

- 01-00:28:26  
Wilmot: That's so interesting that gender breakdown. That the women were sent out into the world to make their way, and the men--because it seems like it would be just the opposite, in a way?
- 01-00:28:35  
Granzella: It seems like it would be, but I think they, I think, saw the handwriting on the wall too. "There's nothing here for me as far as getting ahead." These were small communities that they lived in. This was not the big cities like we're talking about Milan or Rome or Florence or something. It was a very small city.
- 01-00:28:56  
Wilmot: What was the name of your mother's village?
- 01-00:28:59  
Granzella: The name was Castagnole Monferrato and it's near Asti, it's in that Providence. And my father's was Pianello del Lario.
- 01-00:29:12  
Wilmot: Okay. Now back to the war. In wartime, you were a teenager. You were kind of in your late teens. When the war broke, you were maybe almost 20 but not quite.
- 01-00:29:27  
Granzella: When the war broke out in 1941? No, I was 15 years old then.
- 01-00:29:33  
Wilmot: Sorry, my math is not great.
- 01-00:29:35  
Granzella: Yeah, that would be right. It would be 16. Six and six and 12, sure.
- 01-00:29:45  
Wilmot: Sorry. So my question is, what were people knowing about what was going on in Germany as far as the Holocaust and the rise of Hitler? Were people in America like knowing about that or hearing about that?
- 01-00:30:08  
Granzella: We used to keep up with that very much in current events in school, as well as at home. We always had a newspaper, but at that time we weren't talking much about the Holocaust because we were unaware of that. But we did know about when he invaded Poland and they were bombing other countries and how Italy then became an ally with Germany, and then carrying on to war to June 6th. And now I was in the service when June 6th took place. That's the D-Day in France, so we were well aware. We had the shipyards here, so we knew that the ships were not for cargoes, they were warships.
- 01-00:31:00  
Wilmot: Why did you join the Navy?

- 01-00:31:02  
Granzella: I've always had a desire to go in the Navy. I really did. And I always liked the things that you could be working with, rather than digging a foxhole. I didn't want to dig foxholes.
- 01-00:31:22  
Wilmot: So you wanted to be working with different--
- 01-00:31:24  
Granzella: Oh, yeah.
- 01-00:31:26  
Wilmot: --kind of machinery.
- 01-00:31:28  
Granzella: Yeah.
- 01-00:31:29  
Wilmot: Yeah. Where was the office where you went and joined? Do you remember where that was?
- 01-00:31:35  
Granzella: Yeah. I went to San Francisco, went over to the federal building, and down in the basement. And I just walked in there and I said, "I want to join the Navy." I was by myself. I didn't go with anybody at that time and the guy says, "Okay, sit down". And he was a yeoman there and he starts typing out some things. And as a matter of fact, we were just talking about it here recently, when he had put my papers together, he put USNR, which means I was a reserve, but I would go into service just like a regular Navy. But when the war ended, I was to get out. If I was a regular Navy, I'd have to stay in the full six years. So he had put USNR, so that's why I was able to get out at that time.
- 01-00:32:28  
Wilmot: And you were 16. Were you underage?
- 01-00:32:32  
Granzella: I was 17.
- 01-00:32:33  
Wilmot: You were 17.
- 01-00:32:34  
Granzella: I was 17.
- 01-00:32:34  
Wilmot: Okay.
- 01-00:32:35  
Granzella: And then I had to get my parents' permission, and I took the papers back home, and I asked them to sign the papers. I told them a reason why and they understood.

01-00:32:45

Wilmot: And they said okay?

01-00:32:46

Granzella: Oh yeah. Otherwise the next thing I would do is I would have to sign up for the draft, and the draft would take me right away. I'm not going to get drafted; I'm going to enlist.

01-00:32:57

Wilmot: Did you leave behind a sweetheart?

01-00:33:00

Granzella: A what?

01-00:33:01

Wilmot: Did you leave behind a sweetheart?

01-00:33:03

Granzella: How many? Quite a few.

01-00:33:05

Wilmot: You had quite a few sweethearts?

01-00:33:07

Granzella: Naw, I didn't have any. [smiles]

01-00:33:08

Wilmot: Okay.

01-00:33:09

Granzella: No, I was not vitally involved with anyone at that time.

01-00:33:13

Wilmot: Yeah, you were young. Okay.

01-00:33:15

Granzella: Yeah.

01-00:33:17

Wilmot: Tell me where you went for basic training.

01-00:33:22

Granzella: I went to San Diego. And after that—I have to preface this service thing by saying for me it was almost like going to summer camp. Because I've heard so many stories about people going to boot camps in all the services, are really tragic. And here I went to San Diego in May, and it was just perfect and the conditions were very, very good down there. And, you know we were talking about education where I didn't have the college prep and all that. When I went in for my—what they used to call a GCT test, a General Classification Test. We marched down there, took the test. It was very, very military. So much time, and you had to put your pencil down and walk out. So when they gave us the results of the test, they said I was qualified for any school the Navy had

except officer candidate school because you don't take them from there. And I said I wanted to be a radio technician, which is a forerunner of electronic technician. They didn't have electronics at that time. And they said that school has got a backlog, what else do you want? So I said I'll take electrician, and next Monday I was on my way to St. Louis. And I went to St. Louis for four months and learned to be an electrician. And so I had that period there, then we came back out here to--.

01-00:35:00

Wilmot: What'd you think of St. Louis?

01-00:35:02

Granzella: It's a fantastic city.

01-00:35:04

Wilmot: This is the first time you're traveling outside of California, right?

01-00:35:07

Granzella: I had been out once before. When I was 16, one of my friends and I took a train and went to Nebraska. And that's where his parents came from, and he wanted to see his grandmother before he went into the service too. We knew we were going to go in, so we went there and came back. But that's the only time.

01-00:35:30

Wilmot: Was this your best friend?

01-00:35:31

Granzella: Yeah. He was a very close friend of mine.

01-00:35:36

Wilmot: Okay. And so what was going on in St. Louis? Were you going out at night? I mean, you were a young person. Were you all the time studying electronics?

01-00:35:44

Granzella: Electrician. We stayed in an armory which meant we were in a big hall there, and we were six high sleeping in the thing. And they had all of our food and everything was all taken care of there. And we had a rec room and that sort of thing. We went to school everyday and you had liberties on weekends where we'd go out and see the city and try to meet some women. [laughter] When you think about it, St. Louis didn't have very many sailors there. It's far away from the sea there, and that's kind of an odd thing to see any sailors in there. But we had a good time.

01-00:36:36

Wilmot: And you came back from St. Louis back to San Diego?

01-00:36:38

Granzella: No. Came back here to San Francisco to Camp Schumacher over by Pleasonton. And from there, when they got us all together, they took us by bus

over to Oakland, and then by ferry boat to San Francisco pier, and we got on a ship. And there were 5,600 as I recall now, sailors on there of all different rates—like, I was electrician, and there were probably a motor machinist and fire control, and all that sort of thing—and we got in our ship and we went to Ulithi, which is out in the Pacific. And from there I went on to the ship that I was on. That was a on a draft you want to call it. And then it went to the ship which is the ammunitions ship. So I spent the rest of the war on an ammunitions ship until they brought it back and decommissioned it.

01-00:37:48

Wilmot:

Ammunition ship, and it was floating around?

01-00:37:51

Granzella:

Actually, it was an attack ammunition ship. AE6 is the number of it. And what we would do was we would go out when they were bombarding the islands we'll say, and we would pull up along side of a carrier, and they would put the winch lines together. Well, we're steaming down and they were put bombs into this one. And we might have a destroyer over here, and we put shells on this one. And then along side on the other side they might have had a tanker, and they were taking on oil. So we had what they called a re-arming and refueling the fleet at sea.

01-00:38:39

Wilmot:

So you were like a service station floating up to them.

01-00:38:42

Granzella:

Yeah. We brought it to them. They had AKs, which was cargo. And they would, I guess, furnish them with the food requirements and so on.

01-00:38:54

Wilmot:

Did you ever do this during active battle?

01-00:38:57

Granzella:

This was all during actual battle.

01-00:38:59

Wilmot:

So you were in the middle of these battles?

01-00:38:03

Granzella:

Yeah. We were steaming along side of them. They didn't let us anywhere close to them if there were any danger. When I went to get the ship from where we were in Ulithi, the first harbor I was telling you about, that was a Commander and Service Quadrant 10 that was in there. And I think they had the 5th and 7th fleet in there, and they were all anchored around. Then they put us—there were three of us—and they put us on a boat and we went out and we went and I didn't know what kind of ship I was going to get on. I was looking back and there's all the fleet over there and, 'Why are we going down this way?' And this atoll where we were was just like a lake. We pulled right up alongside two ships that were tied together, and one of them was a Navy ship, and the other one was a merchant ship. And they were taking the

ammunition out of the merchant ship, and putting it into our ship so that we can go out and re-arm the fleet at sea. And they would bring it out and we'd take it out to where it was going.

And so I first went up there—and at that time we used to have our sea bag. We used to carry our mattress, and our hammock, and everything. I was going up the gangway and got to the top and you salute the (inaudible), you salute the ensign. And the next thing I now I'm looking up and there's three bombs tied together, and they're going bang, bang! You know, bringing them down in the ship. They were not armed, so there was no danger or anything. But they were transferring the cargo, and I thought, 'What am I doing here?' It was kind of a eye-opener. But after we were on there, it was very, very nice. Because it was a large ship and a smaller crew, we had very good food on the thing. All of the accommodations were very good.

01-00:41:05

Wilmot:

Who was the cook?

01-00:41:06

Granzella:

Well, they had regular cooks, Navy cooks, and Navy bakers. We had baked goods everyday. And they were very good at the job.

01-00:41:18

Wilmot:

And that's one other thing I was wondering about. Segregation in the military, was this an integrated crew?

01-00:41:28

Granzella:

Not at all.

01-00:41:29

Wilmot:

So it was all white?

01-00:41:31

Granzella:

We only had—we only had—I don't think we had any at all. It was all white. All white. Trying to put together—some of the other ships that I went on. There were some, but we didn't have any.

01-00:41:51

Wilmot:

Yeah.

01-00:41:53

Granzella:

And we used to load in ammunition right over here at Port Chicago. And when I wasn't on the ship, it was before I got on it. But the guys tell me they were coming back for some repairs, and also to load up. And it blew up, so they had nowhere to go. And they actually loaded the ship right here in Richmond. I didn't know it was here at the time, and it might've been around.

01-00:42:21

Wilmot:

And that Port Chicago explosion, that didn't happen while you were around here did it?

- 01-00:42:28  
Granzella: Yes, it did.
- 01-00:42:29  
Wilmot: Do you have a memory of it?
- 01-00:42:30  
Granzella: Yeah.
- 01-00:42:31  
Wilmot: What do you remember about it?
- 01-00:42:33  
Granzella: I read in the paper. We knew that it had taken place. I forgot now it was in--.
- 01-00:42:42  
Wilmot: You didn't feel the explosion though, did you?
- 01-00:42:46  
Granzella: What year? Do you remember? I don't remember that much about it.
- 01-00:42:51  
Wilmot: I think I'm confused. I'm thinking 1945, but I have to go back and check.
- 01-00:42:57  
Granzella: I was already in the service then.
- 01-00:43:00  
Wilmot: Yeah. So I'm not sure I've got the date right.
- 01-00:43:03  
Granzella: I remember reading a lot about it because they did put some of those people, what they called—they said they were mutinous, and so on. And they wouldn't load the ship. I found that quite strange to think about it, because they wouldn't go back to load up the ship, yet they were putting the shells on us and we were going into the war zone! I mean how much more can you be subjected to dangers than we were?
- We only lost one Navy attack explosive ship. I think it was in Palaloo, and the name of the ship was the *Mount Hood* if I recall correctly. And that was because a submarine came in and put a torpedo into it. The only survivors they had were those that were on a boat about 15 miles away.
- 01-00:44:01  
Wilmot: When you joined the service, did you gain friends from all over the country? Was it a learning experience in that way?
- 01-00:44:09  
Granzella: Oh, very, very, definitely. Very, very definitely. Met a lot of good friends, and they were hard to keep in touch with after the many years that would pass. A lot of them you would have, the first few years you send Christmas cards and then you forgot about it. They weren't from local here, there weren't very

many. And I didn't participate too much in the reunions. Once in a while they have reunions, but they were always far away and I didn't have time to go to them.

01-00:44:41

Wilmot: Do you remember when Pearl Harbor happened?

01-00:44:44

Granzella: Oh, very definitely.

01-00:44:45

Wilmot: And that was before you were in the service.

01-00:44:46

Granzella: That was way before I was in the service. And I was working at a market and it was a Sunday morning, and I was helping a lady. We used to have a lot of bulk sales, and I was putting beans into a bag to weigh them. And somebody walked in and said, "The Japanese just bombed Pearl Harbor!" And of course, we were very excited about it, but that's it.

01-00:45:14

Wilmot: Did you have a feeling that your world would change as a result?

01-00:45:19

Granzella: No. Like I said, we were studying the conditions of the war and who was doing what, and accomplishments made. And so on, we all felt very, very definitely the war would end very soon because we would just knock them out. But it didn't quite work out that way, but we did knock them out.

01-00:45:47

Wilmot: And were you already in the service when—this would have been in 1942, when the Japanese were interned. How did you see that happen?

01-00:45:58

Granzella: Yeah. No, I was not in the service at that time. And I recall them leaving here. Because we have a big Japanese population around here in the floral industry. I remember the Mayamotos and—I can't remember the rest of them. I know some I went to school with. And they pulled them out and took them to what's the name of the place up in Northern California?

01-00:46:32

Wilmot: They went to Tanforan, Topaz, different places.

01-00:46:38

Granzella: Yeah. I remember one of them and I don't remember the name of it right now. Heard of it being up there.

01-00:46:45

Wilmot: So it was just kind of like a disappearance? Like one day they were at school and the next day they were not?

- 01-00:46:52  
Granzella: We didn't have that close of association with that type of thing, didn't know. We did know that they had taken a lot of them away to what they called the camps. I don't know much about that.
- 01-00:47:11  
Wilmot: Do you know when they came back?
- 01-00:47:14  
Granzella: No. I wasn't here at that time. Well, if I was here at that time, it was pretty chaotic after the war was over and all the servicemen coming back and all that sort of thing. By the time I got out of the service, anyway.
- 01-00:47:29  
Wilmot: Did you remember being like concerned or scared about them going away or did it feel like it was a kind of thing where it was a mandate that—it was war time and this was an important thing to have happen?
- 01-00:47:43  
Granzella: I think that's exactly it. I think that it was one of those things that came about. whether it was the right thing to do or the wrong thing to do, I don't think enough though went into it. I think a lot of those people were just as loyal as we were, except that there might have been one or two that were not. And this is the price that you have to pay. It's terrible.
- 01-00:48:13  
Wilmot: And do you remember when the war ended and the bombs were dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima? Do you remember that?
- 01-00:48:20  
Granzella: Yeah. I was on the ship at the time, and we got reports. You know they have news information for us. And they told us about the bombing of Hiroshima first, and then Nagasaki. And it wasn't much later, and like I said our ship was always detached from any of the other ships that were in a group. And when the war ended, we saw where they were shooting off flares and things like that, all very happy. We were in the Philippines actually, you know it was [Lady?] Gulf. And we just pulled in there. But we didn't do anything like that. As a matter of fact, we just went down to decks because if the war has ended, we survived this long, we're certainly not going to try to lose it all now.
- 01-00:49:20  
Wilmot: With fireworks?
- 01-00:49:26  
Granzella: Oh, everybody—they're on the ship. I mean you just couldn't smoke in too many places where everybody used to smoke.
- 01-00:49:30  
Wilmot: Because it was an ammunition ship.

01-00:49:32

Granzella: Yeah. I quit smoking when I went on it, so that was it.

01-00:49:39

Wilmot: Did you know about the power of those bombs? What those bombs could do? Did you have a sense of that early or not until much later?

01-00:49:46

Granzella: No, we were told that the comparison of, you know, just a regular bomb that we were carrying—our 500 or a thousand pound bombs—as to how big of an explosion they provided in comparison to whether an atomic bomb would provide. It was just enormous. Just couldn't believe it. And of course we started getting a more details on it, and we realized that one bomb you annihilate a whole city. That's what happened.

Of course the controversy is, you know, should we have done that? So if they would have served to save American lives, than it was worth it. And then when you stop to think of Pearl Harbor and why it happened, and who died from there. I've been to see the *Arizona* and all the things like that; there wasn't much support for Japanese people at that time. For us, anyway, because we all had already seen the conditions of war.

01-00:51:01

Wilmot: After the war, did you come straight back to the San Francisco Bay Area?

01-00:51:08

Granzella: Yes. When we came back from overseas, we came back to Washington up in Puget Sound, and they put us in bay up there called Discovery Bay. And they had 14 ammunition ships up there. And what they wanted to do was not to try to bring them in like to San Francisco or Portland, Oregon or Port Hueneme or anything like that. Because it was too dangerous, so they left us up there until they pulled us out one at a time to go and unload, and decommission our ships. So I spent some time up there and then we went back down to San Diego, and then I was on a special crew to go up and get another one from Portland to bring down there. And about that time I was discharged.

01-00:52:17

Wilmot: When you came back was it a very different place?

01-00:52:21

Granzella: Well, I went to college for the equivalent of a year and a half, but it was dynamite with all of the GIs coming back, going to college, and you couldn't get your classes, and it was just a mess. And I said to heck with it, I'm going to go to work. And so I came back I said I was an electrician after all. I'd been trained by the Navy, and I went to the electrical union here in Richmond and the guy almost threw me out of there. He said you want to what? You've got to be crazy, you know. And I thought, "Hey what a minute. I'm a GI. I'm coming back. I'm a serviceman from war, you know?" The guy says, "See that stack over there?" He says, "Those are all guys coming back from the service

and the ones that worked here during the war." There was no way I could get a job there. So I went to work for the telephone company. And I spent 36 years there and it worked out very nicely.

01-00:53:29

Wilmot: What did you do for them?

01-00:53:32

Granzella: I had 17 titles during the time I was with the company. I was on one of those transferred to different locations to learn all the business type of thing. I started out as a lineman, and I went into engineering. And then from engineering, I went on to construction foreman, subway inspector, and staff assistant. Then I was promoted to Senior Engineer, and it just kept always going. I ended up in the state staff planning group in San Francisco.

01-00:54:17

Wilmot: Was this for Ma Bell?

01-00:54:19

Granzella: This was for Ma Bell, yeah.

01-00:54:20

Wilmot: Remember when Ma Bell became PAC Bell and they broke down into smaller—do you remember when all of the Bay Area had a 415 prefix?

01-00:54:35

Granzella: I can remember when it didn't have any prefix. I can go back all the way when we had little letters after the numbers. Yeah, this is for a long time. As a matter of fact, in engineering, I cut over, which meant I changed it from Magneto which you see in the movies where they had to crank a thing. Right here in Pinole, they had a Magneto phone there. And in Crockett, they had a number nine special, and I was the one that drew up the job to transfer those to dial.

01-00:55:11

Wilmot: How do you say Magneto? How are you spelling that?

01-00:55:14

Granzella: Magneto? M-A-G-E-N-T-O?

01-00:55:16

Wilmot: Okay. Thank you. I wasn't sure if it was needle as it N-E-E-D-L-E or not, but yeah.

01-00:55:23

Granzella: No. It's a—when you turn the crank, what you're doing is you're creating a current because of the windings that are in there. It causes an electrical impulse to go all the way back to where it originates, the central office, and it knocks down the little thing down there saying this person wants to talk. So

then the guy would plug it in and say what number do you want? No sophistication there.

01-00:55:56

Wilmot: And I was trying to ask a little bit about when the monopoly was broken up. How did that affect your work with the telephone company?

01-00:56:07

Granzella: That was 1983 and that was Judge Green on his decision that they would break up the Bell system. And at that time, there were a number of changes that were taking place and a number of new innovations that were taking place. And then we suddenly went into a number of different modes of operation reducing the number of people. When I worked for Pacific Bell, Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company as it was really known, there were 120,000 people. I don't think there's a few thousand left, I have no idea. But they're all AT&T employees now. But when they did that, they started asking people to retire and they provided a monetary settlement for them. So I was asked about four times and I was working for a vice president at the time. And he said, "Whenever you want to go, let me know." And so I said, "Okay, okay." And then I didn't go, and then finally one day I could see the handwriting on the wall because I was watching the elimination of people. So I went in and I said I think I want to do it on my 36th anniversary. And he says, Well, go talk to the gal out there and find out all my accrued vacations and days off that I had coming. I said Okay. I went out there and found out, and came back and said Friday's my last day. And that's it.

01-00:57:55

Wilmot: Because you had that much vacation.

01-00:57:55

Granzella: I'm retired. Yeah.

01-00:57:57

Wilmot: You had that much vacation that you would have to leave right away.

01-00:58:01

Granzella: Yeah. Yeah.

01-00:58:03

Wilmot: That's so interesting.

01-00:58:03

Granzella: Well, that wouldn't be my anniversary. I could've stayed longer or something like that.

01-00:58:05

Wilmot: But you weren't taking vacation though. Kind of the way you were working was you weren't taking vacation or sick days basically.

01-00:58:13

Granzella:

No, this was the middle of the year and some of it I hadn't used yet. There were no sick days. There were just vacations and personal days off. I had some carry over from the prior years because I was doing a lot of traveling at that time that year before. I had half my staff was in the Bay Area, and the other half were in Orange County and San Diego. So I was flying down there about twice a week, you know?

01-00:58:41

Wilmot:

How many people worked for you?

01-00:58:45

Granzella:

The biggest organization I had, I had 269. And that was in a supplies operation. I had a district supplies operation. But when I left on the front of the planning group, I only had about 25 people or something like that. There were some in San Francisco, some in Oakland, and some in—not Long Beach—down in Orange County, and San Diego.

01-00:59:15

Wilmot:

Let's stop for a minute while I change all of our recording media.

01-00:59:16

Granzella:

Sure. Okay.

[interview interruption while recording media are exchanged]

Begin Audio Granzella\_Alfred2 07-20-06.mp3

02-00:00:00

Wilmot:

Here. Recording. So you mentioned that you went to college for a year and a half. Where did you go to school?

02-00:00:09

Granzella:

Marin Junior College, now College of Marin I think is what they call it. In San Rafael, well it's actually in Kentfield.

02-00:00:17

Wilmot:

Did you have a plan for what you wanted to study there?

02-00:00:21

Granzella:

Yeah. I had a couple friends that I went over to school with. As a matter of fact, more than that. But one of them did continue on and got his electrical engineering degree, and I was very happy to see him do that. But actually, I left and decided to go to work.

02-00:00:49

Wilmot:

Now, when you think of wartime in Richmond during World War II and the war we're in currently. How do those experiences compare?

- 02-00:00:01  
Granzella: Between Richmond then and now?
- 02-00:01:05  
Wilmot: And just how does it feel different being at war now versus being at war then?
- 02-00:01:11  
Granzella: Well, I think there's quite a bit of difference. I think there were conditions that brought us into the war that we were all pretty much together on trying to win that war and we were, I think, pretty comfortable in the way we were doing things. I think today, with the war in Iraq there, that's not quite the same feeling that people have. I don't think they have the knowledge—well, I shouldn't say knowledge—but their concern over what will happen than if we don't do something with the terror, the problem with terrorism and so on.
- 02-00:01:56  
Wilmot: So you're saying that we aren't all on the same page?
- 02-00:02:00  
Granzella: No, we are not.
- 02-00:02:02  
Wilmot: Going into the Iraq war?
- 02-00:02:04  
Granzella: Yeah. We're having a great deal of differences between people when you talk about that subject.
- 02-00:02:13  
Wilmot: So we aren't all of one mind.
- 02-00:02:17  
Granzella: Absolutely not. I read two newspapers a day and I read all of the letters to the editors and I read the correspondence are writing and that sort of thing, and there's always differences in opinion there; very strong differences of opinion.
- 02-00:02:34  
Wilmot: And would you say another difference is just that there was a draft in World War II and we're not being drafted right now? So there's a way the war doesn't feel like it's right here.
- 02-00:02:44  
Granzella: Well, I don't see it that way. I think that it's if you have enough volunteers, you don't have to have a draft. Why would you have to have a draft? That would be an imposition. A lot of people that, let's say, we're talking about have a great deal of empathy for going to war. So, you know, if you can solve the problem this way, this is the best way to do it.
- 02-00:03:06  
Wilmot: And but what I'm saying though is that people maybe don't have a sense that we are at war in the same way that we had in World War II because not so

many people are gone fighting that war. So we don't feel the people missing in our families and our immediate circles as a way that we may have felt it in World War II.

02-00:03:30

Granzella:

Well, you know that would be controversial because there's so much information that's coming out. I mean, everyday and regularly, so it's not that some people are misinformed. Well, not informed. I don't think that would be an excuse at all. I think everybody knows what's going on.

02-00:03:54

Wilmot:

Okay. Do you know people who are in Iraq now?

02-00:04:04

Granzella:

No, I don't. I don't know of anyone who has been there either. So we haven't been touched by the war in that way.

02-00:04:21

Wilmot:

And then the other thing I wanted to ask you. So you explained that after the war you joined the workforce and went to go work for the telephone company. And I just wanted to ask you to tell me a little bit more about your activities after the war. I mean, presumably, after the war you also had a family. You got married and had a family, and you probably moved from your parents' house and all these things happened. I'm wondering if you want to tell me a little bit about that and your different involvements currently.

02-00:04:56

Granzella:

Yeah. I came back and as I said, I was planning on continuing on to college and I chose not to at the time after I'd been there for a while. So there was no way of getting in the electrician's union which I thought would be a good job at the time. So I went to work for the telephone company as a lineman, which is probably the very lowest particular job you can get. I knew that I could do better, and I would transfer as soon as they got the engineering, and then I was able to make into management and then progressive management. I went all the way up to a district manager. Now at that time, then we became a more I don't want to say sophisticated, but we were going into a more comprehensive market. That would mean that they felt that only college graduates should be into the upper ranks. So I hit what you call the glass ceiling. Where I was at disadvantage. There was nothing the more I could do, so I spent 19 years as a district manager. And did well in all of them, but there was no way that I could've advanced anymore. And so by having all these various jobs I thought was a great opportunity. 36 years, I was absent 3 ½ days, so you know I must've liked my job.

02-00:06:51

Wilmot:

I knew my suspicion was correct that you weren't taking your vacation time. I could tell.

- 02-00:06:58  
Granzella: Well, I took my vacation time, but I didn't take any time off that wasn't appropriate.
- 02-00:07:05  
Wilmot: Okay. Understood. During this time you were also raising a family, is that right?
- 02-00:07:11  
Granzella: Right. When I started out, I was still very, very much working on the outside. And then it became a family that just was very normal, very normal. My daughter graduated from Davis, and my son graduated from Humboldt State. And my younger daughter went to some other college, but didn't finish so she's up in Montana raising horses or something. I don't know.
- 02-00:07:46  
Wilmot: Did your first wife work?
- 02-00:07:50  
Granzella: Some. She did work for a while.
- 02-00:07:52  
Wilmot: What kind of work did she do?
- 02-00:07:54  
Granzella: She was in a bank, a bank teller. She wanted to get out and start working. She didn't work a great deal of time there but that's about it.
- 02-00:08:09  
Wilmot: And you bought this house in 19--?
- 02-00:08:12  
Granzella: 1958.
- 02-00:08:17  
Wilmot: So you've watched this neighborhood change around you. Was this a new house when you bought it?
- 02-00:08:22  
Granzella: Brand new. Yeah.
- 02-00:08:23  
Wilmot: Was it built to your specifications?
- 02-00:08:26  
Granzella: Well, kind of. I had seen the house already built and I wanted one like that one. So the builder, who was a very good builder, he said I'm building another one down there and I bought this one.
- 02-00:00:00  
Wilmot: Was this all pasture when you moved here?

- 02-00:08:43  
Granzella: The road ended right over here where you go out. You go down the street, at the end you have to turn right, well right there, it ended and it then it was just pasture on that side over there.
- 02-00:08:59  
Wilmot: So you had neighbors.
- 02-00:09:01  
Granzella: Oh yeah. These were all built at the same time. He came down the street and built them all. It's a very nice area. We enjoyed it very much.
- 02-00:09:18  
Wilmot: And I also want to ask you about some of your extracurricular activities. The work that you do currently, you are serving as district commissioner, is that right?
- 02-00:09:28  
Granzella: Director.
- 02-00:09:29  
Wilmot: Can you tell me a little bit more about these activities that you're doing now?
- 02-00:09:33  
Granzella: Yes. It's an elective office, and it has to do with the collection of waste water, the treatment, and to deposit it into the Bay as clean as we possibly can. Meeting all the standards of the state water quality control board, and all the other EPA, and so on.
- 02-00:09:59  
Wilmot: And what have you learned? How long have you had that position?
- 02-00:10:01  
Granzella: 20 years.
- 02-00:10:02  
Wilmot: And what have you learned about the Bay Area?
- 02-00:10:05  
Granzella: Well, we've learned an awful lot and I think we're very successful. This district has the lowest rate in the whole Bay Area. We have absolutely no debt. And if you talk about anyone in the public agency, it being debt free as we are, there are very, very few that will do that. We've now won a number of awards as far as our activities are concerned. Nationally as well as state-wide. And we just plug along.
- 02-00:10:40  
Wilmot: How does the commission deal with the growth of the Bay Area? The Bay Area has seen such amazing growth in the past 20 years in particular. How does that impact the work that you do?

02-00:10:52

Granzella:

Growth is always a particular issue. To have the capacity is a very important feature on this, and we have the capacity. The people prior to 20 years ago when I was there, 30 years ago, had the foresight to see to build to big enough so that we could accommodate this. So we are not built out. We still have a lot of vacant space, and we're just growing, and taking care of it.

02-00:11:27

Wilmot:

When you think about the kind of growth and change that the Bay Area saw in the 1940s, I imagine that when you went away for war and then came back, that Richmond was a very different place.

02-00:11:41

Granzella:

Well it started the week before I left, as you know. If they started building ships in '39 and I didn't go into the service until '44, that's a long period of time for it to grow to be 120,000 people. So it was very, very crowded and very, very congested before I left. Then when I came back, there were still all the housing units that they had built for the war workers and a lot of the areas that were put together with very little raw materials.

02-00:12:27

Wilmot:

You mean as areas that were in the unincorporated parts?

02-00:12:30

Granzella:

Yeah. The unincorporated areas where they would just build shacks, in other words. They had to have some place to live. And because of the activity, the building codes weren't being properly followed and so on.

02-00:12:46

Wilmot:

Did you see the transition of Richmond from a semi-rural place to highly, highly urban place? Like did you see where there was pasture, and farmlands, and fruit trees and then becoming--?

02-00:12:58

Granzella:

No. Because what we were, we were already an industrial area. Because we had Standard Oil, which was a forerunner of Chevron, has been there since 1903. Down in the areas where they had the ship yards were already having businesses and industry go in there and it was spreading out. Santa Fe had a big railroad terminal here. So it wasn't quite like if you'd see Walnut Creek, where they weren't too many industrial areas at all. San Ramon and Danville and all that, that was all farming community. I could tell that would. I knew that changed quite a bit because you figure that I went into engineering in 1941, and at about 1953 I was doing a lot of fieldwork out there. So I knew that there was a place that was going to grow.

02-00:14:02

Wilmot:

You know that's what cell phone planners do now.

02-00:014:05

Granzella:

Yeah.

02-00:14:06

Wilmot:

They go around in different areas and set up receiving what I imagine to be licenses and set up the receiving areas.

02-00:14:16

Granzella:

Yeah. Well, if you make a comparison, now let's go back. If you go back in time, the war ended at about 1945, and then I got out in '46 and I went to work with a telephone company in '47 or '48. And at that time we didn't have the raw materials, or the wherewithal to have all the telephone facilities that all these people wanted. I mean, this was a very small community before the war. They just didn't have all that they needed. At one time at my desk, I had 5,000 of what they call held orders of people wanting telephones just in my area alone. That I was drawing up plans and ordering the cable and putting it on the schedule, but they just couldn't work fast enough. It took us a long time to work out of that. That's like cell phones are now. Getting the accommodations so that you can be heard from anywhere and you know, have a dial tone when you need it.

02-00:15:29

Wilmot:

I imagine too that that must have even really increased exponentially in the 1950s when people were really building all the suburban communities, you know?

02-00:15:37

Granzella:

Well, it had to. You're going back to at a time when we had 8 party lines, and 4 party lines, and two party lines. Do you recall those?

02-00:15:50

Wilmot:

No.

02-00:15:51

Granzella:

Well, if you went down to the telephone company and ordered a telephone, and they would say, "Well this is what you can have. If you want a private line, you'll have to pay this much. If you want a two party, that means you share that line with someone." And you have one ring or two rings, you know? And the other one was four parties, and then you'd have your own ringing system so that you could know that somebody is on it. And if you picked it up and started talking to whoever you're going to talk to, everybody else could pick up and hear your conversation. And this was all part of the lifestyle that they had at the time. So then we went into a situation where we knew that we would have only one line per location, but figure this out without cell phones where you don't need a hardwire to go back. This means you had to have a unique pair of wires going all the way back to the central office for every house. We had two lines here for a long time, but you know a lot of places have more than one line.

02-00:017:01

Wilmot:

So this was about what year when that started happening?

02-00:17:04

Granzella: Well, when it started happening was right after the war we had a tremendous demand just immediately, and we had to work ourselves out of it until we got out to the point where we would be able to fill any order on the given date. That took a long time to come about because you all decide the line that you went back to. You had to have the switching system that would transfer you to wherever you wanted to go in the world.

02-00:17:35

Wilmot: So when did you catch up on that backlog? Was it like years later?

02-00:17:40

Granzella: It was years later. It was actually years later.

02-00:17:44

Wilmot: Wow.

02-00:17:45

Granzella: Some of the areas were quite remote, and so it was very costly. First of all material, everyone in the whole United States was trying to get cable, and terminals, and switching equipment at the same time. So they'd have to allocate it out, and so that's why it took this period of time. Not because they didn't have the worker or the ability to do so, they just couldn't get the material. And the money, they had to finance it all.

02-00:18:20

Wilmot: It's a really interesting way to know about growth.

02-00:18::23

Granzella: Oh, it is.

02-00:18:0024

Wilmot: It's a really interesting way to know about urban growth and transformation just through the phone lines.

02-00:18:29

Granzella: Oh yeah.

02-00:18:31

Wilmot: Yeah.

02-00:18:35

Granzella: Even with the business I'm in now, we have a 8 million-9 million gallons of waste water a day. Well, that sounds good but when you have a 25 year storm, then you have so much water coming in there you don't know what to do with it. Because it's inundating all through the system and you have great difficulty handling it.

02-00:19:01

Wilmot: Well, I wonder how that will change with global warming as our climate beings to change. Well, it's already beginning to change.

- 02-00:19:09  
Granzella: Don't know that one.
- 02-00:19:10  
Wilmot: Yeah.
- 02-00:19:12  
Granzella: Don't know. Will it increase the amount of rain or decrease it, I don't know.
- 02-00:19:18  
Wilmot: I think that rain that we had recently was really unprecedented, the rain we had this year.
- 02-00:19:25  
Granzella: Well, our records go back. We've had some serious rains. And it was 1998, I think it was where we had—we actually have what they call an equalization base, and it holds 53 million gallons—and we couldn't hold it all, and we had to put it into another mode of disposal, controlling it in partial ways, which was not exactly the way that we wanted to do it. But it was a greater amount at that time than we have had in this last year. And I remember. When was it? It was about 4 years ago on that New Year's Eve when I had to go up to the Hilltop pump station when it overflowed. Boy, that was a bad one.
- 02-00:20:20  
Wilmot: You mentioned that Standard Oil was here, or is here or was here and became a Chevron. Did you ever have any experiences in Richmond or even living right here where there were strange like smells coming from the refineries or kind of health issues that you saw that happened as a result of that?
- 02-00:20:47  
Granzella: You know, when people talk about that—when I said I lived on 22<sup>nd</sup> street, that was when I was very little. We did move five blocks down to 17<sup>th</sup> street. And that was between Barrett and Roosevelt.
- 02-00:21:04  
Wilmot: That's where you were a teenager.
- 02-00:21:06  
Granzella: That's where I was a teenager. That's when I went to school in Longfellow and so on. But anyway, right a block away on the Southern Pacific Track—and they were still using steam engines at the time—and I can remember coming in there and you're standing in your drive way and you couldn't see the house because of all that black smoke that was coming out of those steam engines that came out there. It was horrendous. If you had an aversion and all of this. [chuckles] Because they just really huffed and puffed. They used to have some big trains come through, especially during the war and after, you know. And then of course they went to diesel, diesel was altogether different. We had all of those.

I don't recall any odors from Standard Oil or Chevron, either one of them living down there. The thing that I always used to like hearing was the foghorns from the Three Brothers at the light station down there when they used to still run those things off when I was little. And there's gentle chemical out there too, the one that they're now complaining about a lot of time. But maybe it's just because of the wind currents or that. We never had any problem.

02-00:22:32

Wilmot:

And then finally I wanted to ask, I'm wondering how did people get along when there was all these people from Oklahoma, Nebraska, people coming from the midwest and the south. The influx of new migrants. Did people get along well?

02-00:22:58

Granzella:

We never had any problem with that at all. My friend Mervin was from Nebraska.

02-00:23:04

Wilmot:

Is that the one that you went to go visit his home?

02-00:23:06

Granzella:

Yeah. That's the one I went to visit home. Stewart was from around here, George too. But of course those are the ones who you started out from grammar school and you knew them from them. But all the rest of them that were from there, I didn't have any problems with at all. They have some pretty good looking young women there too. I knew them pretty well.

02-00:23:33

Wilmot:

Did you notice that there was ways that culturally this place changed as a result of the migrants coming in? Like was there new kinds of food places or new kinds of dancing halls, things like that?

02-00:23:51

Granzella:

Well, I'm sure that there were those kinds of changes. I mean, I never had any Chinese food 'til I was I don't know how old. But now we just had that the other night. I mean we just love it. But at what time, I didn't—I mean we weren't quite that diversified. We didn't have any trouble with the—they used to call them Okies or Arkies, or something like that. When we went to work, were there alongside and that was it.

02-00:24:32

Wilmot:

And then with say the African Americans from Louisiana, and Texas, and Arkansas. There was a large influx as well there in Richmond. And how did that kind of change the city?

02-00:24:45

Granzella:

Well, it changed it quite dramatically I think as far as diversity is concerned. I think we're predominantly black, I think, in Richmond. It's probably over 50%, but then now the Latinos are getting in here and there's more of those

than there are the blacks. And the Vietnamese are quite predominant in certain locations too. We're quite well aware of the diversity and all that. I spent ten years on a personnel board with the city of Richmond, and we used to get the charts. Where we're trying to, you know, make sure that we have an equal amount of people in these jobs so that we would have what they call the numbers that would match it, you know.

02-00:25:39

Wilmot: Were these like quotas or--?

02-00:25:41

Granzella: Quotas, right. We had that in the telephone company, too. Even into females going into predominantly male jobs. I was involved very much in that, when we were starting to put, at that point and time, the predominantly male jobs and put females in there. The big one that I had was the supplies operation, and I remember very vividly that particular jobs. We made a lot of moves on that.

02-00:26:17

Wilmot: And what about diversity in the wartime? Do you remember was there diversity around people who are gay and lesbian? Did you see diversity there?

02-00:26:29

Granzella: Didn't even know any of those people existed until what 20 years ago or something. You know they talk about drugs and things like this, I never knew what that even was. I was in the service for the two and a half years. I had no idea, conception of marijuana or any of these other drugs. None. They grown up as teenagers through here, then all of a sudden you find out that that's a very serious problem.

02-00:27:06

Wilmot: And I wanted to return to this one question, which is about your father who worked in the boilermakers. This was during the war. So he was going to the shipyard probably as a middle-aged man.

02-00:27:21

Granzella: Oh, sure.

02-00:27:22

Wilmot: And so he was heading off to the shipyard. Do you remember him going? You were in the service at that time.

02-00:27:31

Granzella: Well, he was working there before I went into the service.

02-00:27:33

Wilmot: He was.

02-00:27:34

Granzella:

Oh, yeah. They were trying to get all kinds of people to work because they had so many jobs, so many functions you know. They built a ship in four days and 57 minutes or something about that. We called and we were reading about that. Rosie's river, the thing over there. So he did not have the skills that a journeyman boilermaker would have, but he was the one they needed there in order to help them and learn the job as a boilermaker would have.

Boilermaker making, you know, pretty big sheets of metal, that is not anything to do, but he jumped in there and they thought very highly of him when he was there. He wanted to get things done there. When you ask me how old he was, if he was born in 1891 and this was 1944-45, let's say '45. 45 + 9 is 54, so he's probably around 54 years old.

02-00:28:38

Wilmot:

He was working hard. And was he a union man? Do you remember your father being proud to be part of the union?

02-00:28:46

Granzella:

Yeah he was union there, yeah.

02-00:28:49

Wilmot:

But did he have feelings about it or was he union because you needed to be a union member in order to get that job? Do you remember how that was?

02-00:28:57

Granzella:

Yeah. He's a union member because he had to be in a union in order to be a union member. He was not a participant of the union activity.

02-00:29:06

Wilmot:

And after the war, did that job at the shipyards transfer him to another job for him that was highly skilled?

02-00:29:18

Granzella:

No. No. No.

02-00:29:21

Wilmot:

Okay. And is there anything else you want to tell me today?

02-00:29:27

Granzella:

No. The only thing that I could add is the reason I said I was part of the West County Waste. I feel that I always have an obligation to serve society and what we do all the time. And I mean it takes up some of my time, but I enjoy doing it and the fulfillment of the thing. When I was on a grand jury, I was a foreman of the grand jury. The judge had appointed me to that position, and actually asked us, the whole jury, to go over for an additional six months because they wanted to change from the fiscal to the calendar year or vice versa. But anyway, when I went to my boss and said I could do that, you know I had this opportunity or this is what they're asking me, he said, "Yeah, you can do anything you want as long as your job doesn't falter from it." So that's how I'd been able to do all that.

02-00:30:23

Wilmot: So this was the grand jury, what was the issue at stake in this? When you say grand jury, is that like a court of law?

02-00:30:31

Granzella: The grand jury provides two things, and one is the indictments on criminal cases or civil cases. And it also provides for investigation of the various parts of the county operation as to whether there are some problems and what should be done about them.

02-00:30:53

Wilmot: And what was at issue for this grand jury?

02-00:30:55

Granzella: For this grand jury, the issues were primarily on the side of providing a new jail. The jail that they had in Martinez at the time had been built in 1903 and it was really old structure. And they had planned on putting the big jail that they have now together. And we kind of forced the issue to make sure that they went ahead with it.

02-00:31:33

Wilmot: Great. Thank you. And I wanted to ask you also, your children. What were their trajectories like? Do you want to say anything about your kids now? Or just that you have three kids?

02-00:31:50

Granzella: Well, there's a good side and the bad side. My oldest daughter is vice president with Visa, and she's got quite a job there. And half of her staff is in Austin, Texas the other half is in San Mateo. And she travels the world. She's got to go to Singapore and London in the near future, and all on business. My son who graduated from Humboldt passed away a year ago.

02-00:32:21

Wilmot: I'm sorry.

02-00:32:24

Granzella: He worked with Chevron, he was in computer graphics for them in San Ramon, and had been there for about 20 years. And he died of lung cancer, and he didn't smoke. It's one of those things that you never believed it.

02-00:32:40

Wilmot: I'm sorry to hear that.

02-00:32:42

Granzella: And my other daughter is living in Montana, and she was divorced and she went up there with someone else, and that's where she is.

02-00:32:52

Wilmot: Okay. And then I want to ask you to close by telling me about your trip to Italy.

02-00:32:59

Granzella:

We had a wonderful time. It was a flight that took us from San Francisco to Heathrow in London, going non-stop. Then we went to Frankfurt, Germany and then we went to Turino. That's three planes and we left at 7 o'clock one night, arrived there at 10:30 their time which is 9 hours difference. But we met with everyone, and we went to a number of locations and had a lot of good food, and enjoyment.

02-00:33:33

Wilmot:

Did you find your family members there?

02-00:33:35

Granzella:

Oh yes.

02-00:33:36

Wilmot:

You connected with them, your cousins?

02-00:33:39

Granzella:

Yeah we took the train to Asti and they picked us up there and we went out to their place, and surprisingly, they have a new home that's out in more or less the country than it would be in the city. And it's a beautiful home. It's just like what we would have here.

02-00:34:59

Wilmot:

And you celebrated your 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in Italy?

02-00:34:02

Granzella:

80<sup>th</sup> birthday in Italy.

02-00:34:03

Wilmot:

And you had a great birthday cake.

02-00:34:05

Granzella:

I did.

02-00:34:06

Wilmot:

Okay.

02-00:34:07

Granzella:

It was remarkable. You want to see a picture of it, I have that too.

02-00:34:10

Wilmot:

I'd love to see it.

02-00:34:12

Granzella:

Oh that's right, I don't. Sorry about that.

02-00:34:16

Wilmot:

Well, listen, thank you so much for talking with us.

02-00:34:18

Granzella:

All right.

02-00:34:19

Wilmot: Okay.

02-00:34:20

Granzella: Enjoyed it.

02-00:34:21

Wilmot: Yeah. Good.

02-00:34:22

Granzella: Good bye.

[End of Interview]