**W. Bryan Pizzi II, Esq.,**

Grandson of Elvira Serafina Josephine Gattone

& Fiorendo Antonio Pizzi



**W. Bryan Pizzi II, Esq.,** is the grandson of Italian immigrants from Abruzzo and the son of Wilson B Pizzi, one of the first Italian American doctors in Washington, Pennsylvania.

W. Bryan’s grandmother, **Elvira Serafina Josephine Gattone**, emigrated at the age of three with her parents and two siblings from San Martino, Chieti, Abruzzo, to Connellsville, PA, in Fayette County, in 1886. The Gattones acquired land by the Youghiogheny River and established themselves as growers of gladiolas, which they transported and sold in Pittsburgh’s Strip District, some 50 miles away.

In 1913, W. Bryan’s grandfather, **Fiorendo Antonio (Frank Anthony) Pizzi**, a native of Palumbara, Chieti, Abruzzo, emigrated to Connellsville after a brief period in London. Fiorendo was a master tailor who apprenticed in Rome beginning at the age of 11.

The Pizzi and Gattone families knew each other in Abruzzo and there had been some intermarriage between the families. Now in close proximity to the Gattone’s in Connellsville, the outgoing Fiorendo married the more reserved (and slightly older) Elvira. Fiorendo established himself as a tailor in Connellsville and later in Lakeland, Florida, where the couple retired.

Fiorendo and Elvira raised five children in a home that combined Italian and American customs. Intent on ensuring the success of their American-born children, the couple stressed the importance of higher education. They urged their oldest child, Wilson (Bryan’s father) to become a doctor, and all four of their daughters to become nurses.

Although Fiorendo and Elvira hoped their son Wilson would marry an Italian-American woman, Wilson broke with tradition and eloped with a Connellsville girl, Merne Haggart, while he was a student at the University of Pittsburgh.

Upon graduation from Pitt Medical School, Wilson set up a practice as a general practitioner in Washington, PA. Despite his professional credentials, Wilson – as an Italian American -- encountered discrimination among the doctors at Washington Hospital. Wilson faced this discrimination with a strong will to fulfill his destiny as a physician and to raise his family with pride in their Italian heritage. Over his decades-long career in Washington, PA, Dr. Wilson Pizzi was beloved among patients of many nationalities and backgrounds.

“He was very compassionate. He never turned anyone away. It didn’t matter if they could pay or not pay,” recalled his son.



Master tailor Fiorendo (Frank) Pizzi in his shop in Connellsville.

Dr. Wilson and Merne E. Pizzi

Family of **W. Bryan Pizzi II, Esq.,** b. 7-13-1944, Washington, PA

**W. Bryan Pizzi II’s Father**:

Wilson B. Pizzi, b. 2-18-1918, Connellsville, PA; d. 2-1-2003, Washington, PA

**W. Bryan Pizzi II’s Mother:**

Merne Elizabeth Haggart, b. 3-8-1919, Connellsvile, PA; d. 9-26-1998, Washington, PA

**Wilson and Merne’s date and place of marriage**:

7-16-1938, Oakland, MD

**Wilson and Merne’s Children:**

 Janet Pizzi McConnell, b. 11-3-1939, Connellsvlle, PA; d. 6-27-2010

 Wilson Bryan Pizzi II, b. 7-13-1944, Washington, PA, m. Mary Sue Keirs

 John Preston Pizzi, b. 12-3-1950, Washington, PA; d. 2-2-2015

 Deborah Pizzi Campbell, b. 10-7-1952, Washington, PA

**W. Bryan Pizzi’s spouse:**

Mary Sue Keirs Pizzi, b. 9-29-1944, Gridley, California

**W. Bryan and Sue’s Date and Place of Marriage:**

11-10-1962, Winchester, VA

**W. Bryan and Sue’s Children:**

 Jennifer Elizabeth Pizzi, b. 8-25-1971, Washington, PA

 W. Bryan Pizzi III, b. 4-14-1975, Washington, PA; m. April Wilson; son Marcus Pizzi, daughter Mackenzee, son W. Bryan Pizzi IV, daughter Maleah

 Rebecca Merne Pizzi Lear, b. 3-1-1979, Washington, PA; m. Jay Lear

**W. Bryan’s Occupation:**

Attorney

**Sue’s Occupation:**

Homemaker

**W. Bryan’s grandparents who emigrated from Italy:**

 Fiorendo Antonio (Frank Anthony) Pizzi, b. 12-3-1894, Palumbaro, Chieti, Abruzzo; d. 2-29-1976, Lakeland, Florida. Emigrated to U.S. 10-28-1913. Became U.S. citizen 3-5-1920. Occupation: Master Tailor.

 Elvira Serafina Josephine Gattone, b. 8-4-1883, San Martino, Chieti, Abruzzo; d. 12-11-1965, Lakeland, Florida. Emigrated to U.S. 1886.

**Fiorendo and Elvira’s Date and Place of Marriage:**

4-25-1917, Elkton, MD

**Fiorendo and Elvira’s Children:**

 Wilson Bryan Pizzi, b. 2-18-1918, Connellsville, PA; d. 2-1-2003, Washington, PA; m. Merne Haggert

 Geneva Maria Pizzi Seifert, b. 3-28-1919, Connellsville, PA; m. Robert Seifert December 1949; children Richard Seifert and Kenneth Seifert; Geneva’s occupation: nurse

 Ardita Livia ChrisTC Pizzi Gattone, b. 8-20-1921, Connellsville, PA; m. Vincent Gattone, b. 11-23-1948, Washington, PA; children: Antonette, Vincent H., II, Elvira Josephine; Ardita’s occupation: nurse.

 Yvonne Pizzi Putnam, b. 7-7-1923, Connellsville, PA; d. 11-23-1983, Lakeland, FL; m. Robert N. Putnam, b. 4-25-1949, Connellsville, PA; child: Robert N. Putnam III; Yvonne’s occupation: nurse

 Norma June Pizzi, b. 6-6-1927, Connellsville, PA; Occupation: Nurse

**Fiorendo’s parents:**

Pasquale Pizzi and Livia D’Urbano

**Fiorendo’s siblings:**

 Atria Pizzi

 Eugenio Pizzi

 Gene Pizzi

**Elvira’s parents:**

Pietro Gattone and Christine Pizzi

**Elvira’s siblings:**

Anthony (Tony) Gattone

 Henry Gattone

**Interview**

**Date, Time and Place of Interview:**

June 19, 2017; 3 pm; office of W. Bryan Pizzi, Esq., 11 East Beau St., Washington, PA

**Interviewers:**

TC Calabro and Dyane Troiano

**Transcriber:**

Caroline DeIuliis

**W. Bryan Pizzi**: My grandfather was Fiorendo Antonio Pizzi. My grandma (laughs) --this is a mouthful --- Elvira Serafina Josephine. Her maiden name was Gattone. Big cat, the gattone.

**Tina Calabro**: And what was their village?

**WBP:** She was from San Martino…a small village.

**Dyane Troiano**: What part of Italy?

**WBP:** It’s Abruzzi, Chieti Region

**TC:** You’re an attorney. Did you have any previous occupations?

**WBP:** Worked in the mill in college. That’s it. (laughs). We all did then.

**TC**: Any military service?

**WBP:** No, I was an army brat.

**TC**: What about your dad’s siblings?

**WBP:** He had four sisters. They were all younger. There was Geneva, Yvonne, Norma, and Ardita. Like the Ardita Fighters,

have you ever hear heard of them? That’s a rebel group in Northern Italy.

**TC:** And were they all born in Connellsville?

**WBP:** Yeah, including my dad. They were all nurses and he was a doctor. Because that’s what Grandma Pizzi said you were going to be. [My dad] got into the Naval Academy and she said, “No, you are going to be a doctor.” (laughs) You listened to your mama then.

**TC:** And what about your grandfather, Fiorendo

**WBP:** He went by Frank Anthony, but Fiorendo was his real name, Fiorendo Antonio.

**TC:** Where did your parents meet?

**WBP:** My mom lived on the Youghiogheny River because her father ran the pump house, what they called it, where the water went from the river to the city. There was a beach on the river. My grandfather went to city hall. I told you he was a character. He leased the beach. He wouldn’t let people on the beach. He charged them to use the beach for years. He put a fence up. So after people had a thinning supply of food, then he would sell food. My mom lived across the river. That is how my dad met her. My dad was like a lifeguard and he would stay at the beach all summer.

[My grandparents] were cousins, third cousins I think. I think [their marriage] was arranged cause he was a playboy and she was like matronly. And he was 10 years younger. When he came here, she was already here. She was three years old when she came to this country. He was 18 [when they met].

**TC:** What brought [your grandmother’s family] here?

**WBP:** I think her parents just wanted to come for opportunity. They bought a lot of land in South Connellsville. They grew flowers and that kind of stuff. And [my grandfather], he thought the streets were paved with gold. That’s why he came.

**TC:** Were they married in Italy?

**WBP:** No. They were married here. My [great] grandma Gattone, my grandma Pizzi’s mother, was a Pizzi, maiden name. I didn’t know that until I saw the graveyard up in Connellsville.

**TC:** So, your grandparents [Gattone] were the first immigrants. They came to the Connellsville area.

**WBP:** I don’t know why.

**TC:** You said they grew flowers.

**WBP:** [My grandmother] had two brothers, Tony and Henry, who I know and were never married. They grew gladiolas, which they harvested and took to the Strip District. So my dad would go with them. He would pick the flowers and drive over two, three in the morning to the Strip District.

**TC**: What year would this be?

**WBP**: My dad was born in 1918. He was probably 12. Probably 1930ish, probably the Depression.

**TC:** How did they get from Connellsville to Pittsburgh?

**WBP:** They had trucks, pickup trucks.

**WBP:** [My grandfather Pizzi] came [to Connellsville] when he was 18, but he got stuck in New York for a while. He didn’t have any money. Actually, he got stuck in London.

[The two families, Pizzi and Gattone,] were related. I think the families knew each other in Italy. That region of Italy is known for music. Each village had a little band. They wore uniforms. I saw [that my grandparents] had all this stuff in the attic. And he couldn’t play, but he pretended he could play because he got girls that way. He liked women. He liked the girls. So he would go to villages [in his area in Italy] and he would pretend. (laughs)

And that’s how he met the Gattone family [in Italy]. He was nuts. He was crazy. And he said one time at the village, kids were listening and they said, ‘He’s not playing.’ He said, ‘I smack them. I smack them. I smack them.’ (laughs) So that’s how the families met. Well, they were related somehow. And I think he thought [the Gattones] had money here cause they owned a lot of land. And knowing my grandfather, he was going to come over.

**TC:** So your grandfather got held up in New York?

**WBP:** Well, he got held up in London for a while. He said two months. He got to London and ran out of money. He said, “They don’t know how to cook.” He said the Italians in London live near Piccadilly Circus. He said, “I finally found an Italian section.” They put him up to work as a tailor for a while. [He] ended up wanting to go to New York. Same thing, he had to work there in sweatshops (that’s what he called them) and he modeled (that’s that picture in New York) and then he got to Philly. Same thing, work went to Connellsville.

**TC:** So he came to Connellsville. Did he meet your grandmother there?

**WBP:** They [Gattones] picked him up at the train station. That’s what he told me. I said, “How did they know who you were?” He said, “They told me to wear a white flower.” But he was too cool to do that. He said, “They think I’m stupid because I have a flower on, so I take the flower off.” (laughs) I said, “How did they know you, Papa,’ and he said, ‘I was the last one there.’ Ah, he was a piece of work. I can tell you many stories about him.

**DT:** He was smart.

**WBP:** He was something….We called him Papa.

**TC:** And you said you thought their marriage was arranged.

**WBP:** I don’t know. No one ever said that. Knowing my grandfather, I’m just thinking cause she was getting older. And no husband. He was a good looking guy. He was real handsome. That’s just my theory. No one ever told me that.

**WBP:** They tried to arrange my father’s marriage. They brought a lady in, but my mom and dad were secretly married. Cause she wasn’t italian. They were Scots-Irish. So there was an issue there, families.

**TC:** What was your grandfather’s occupation?

**WBP:** He was a master tailor. He went to Rome at age 11 and he lived with a tailor for 7 years. They were the tailor to the royal family. He would go to the, have you seen that castle where the king lived, Emmanuel? He would go there and measure, take clothes, measure, go back to the tailor, and the King Emmanuel’s. But he would go home [to Abruzzo] a couple of weeks per year. He could make suits. He could make sport coats. He could make top coats. He could make a top coat in a day from the cloth. He was amazing to watch. I would watch him sew. Amazing. He would talk to you and thread a needle [just] so. Amazing. So that's what he did when he and my grandmother moved to Florida when I was young. And that’s what he did in Florida, made suits.

**TC:** When he came to Connellsville, did he work as a tailor?

**WBP**: Yeah, he opened up a little shop.

**TC:** Did it have a name?

**WBP:** I have a picture of that somewhere. Well, “The Black Hand,” he called it.

**TC:** So he continue to work as a tailor after they moved to Florida?

**WBP:** Yes, he did that all his life until he died. In fact, he died in his shop in Florida. He was 85. My dad said if someone would have found [my grandfather], he could have lived. But he drank his Cribari. He drank Cribari all day. He liked his wine. If someone offered him water, he would say, ‘Water is to bathe in. You do not drinka the water, you drinka the wine.’

**TC;** Now, you said that your grandparents wanted to arange your father’s marriage.

**WBP**: My dad said he was just a freshman in college or a sophomore. He and my mother had run away the year before. [My grandparents] liked her, but she wasn’t Italian. [My mother’s] mom and dad were more tolerant of that. They liked my dad because he was very bright guy and all that. But the Italian family wanted Italian. So they told my dad that they were going to bring a wife over [for him]. And he told my mom, ‘We’ve got to tell them.’ [My grandparents] had a fit, of course. ‘You have to finish school,’ which he was going to do anyway. He was on scholarships to Pitt. So they had to fess up. Well, once my mom started having children, that changed everything.

**TC**: Youir father, Wilson WBP, was the oldest of their children?

**WBP**: There’s a story behind my father’s name. My grandparents wanted to be Americans. So they wouldn’t speak Italian in front of my dad or any of their children, and they didn’t go to a Catholic Church. They wanted to be Americans. So Wilson WBP was for Woodrow Wilson, who might have been president when my dad was born, and William Jennings WBP, who ran for president four times. My grandmother was real into all that stuff. So I got the same name. My son and my grandson all have the name.

**TC:** I know there was the intention on a lot of people’s part to become American, but also try to pave their way a little more easily by assimilating and adapting.

**WBP:** Oh yeah, that was true. My dad said they would have spaghetti on Thursdays and Sundays, but they would eat steak, potatoes like the Americans did. But they really loved their heritage because my grandfather made wine and did all the Italian things. So it was like a mixer. So I got to see a lot of that growing up. You know as a child, going to their home for big meals and all that.

**TC:** Did your grandfather’s family ever come here?

**WBP:** His father came. It would be my great grandfather. Pasquale, Patsy. I never knew him, but my dad said he came and stayed 10 years. Without his wife. And he helped him. My grandfather got busy with the tailor shop. And he was a tailor; they were all tailors. So he came to help his son, my grandfather.

**TC**: And did any of your grandfather’s siblings come over?

**WBP:** No, just [my great grandfather who] stayed for 10 years. Then he went back. And my grandpap went back once.

**TC:** And what about your grandmother?

**WBP:** She never went back.

**TC:** So your father married his sweetheart.

**WBP:** Yeah, and they lived separately. He was in college. She lived with her mom and dad..

**TC**: Where did he go to college?

**WBP:** Pitt undergrad and then Pitt Medical.

**TC:** You said his mother wanted him to be a doctor. What was his path to that? Was he also motivated to be a doctor?

**WBP:** He was, but he wanted to go to the Naval Academy. He liked science, he liked metallurgy. I guess in the Naval Academy that was one of the majors. So he was accepted and got the appointment, but my grandmother she nixed that. So he got a scholarship to Pitt. And he worked in the summers in J and L Steel for spending money.

**TC:** So his medical practice brought him him to Washinton when he graduated?

**WBP:** Well, he got an internship at Washington Hospital, 1942, during the war.

**TC:** He came to Washington and what did he encounter here?

**WBP:** He encountered some discrimination at the hospital from other doctors because he was Italian. He said they kind of shunned him. There were a couple that didn’t. Dr. McCullough was helpful and Dr. Crumrine. He said they were both very nice to him. They would give him patients. Then his practice was developed around African Americans, Italian Americans, Polish Americans. He did general surgeries,appendectomies, gall bladders. He delivered babies, and had a general practice. Then in the mid to late 50s, he owed the army two years from medical school. That’s when I was an army brat. He became a major in the US Army so we had to move to New York City for two years. Then he was discharged. And then specialties were starting in the late 50s. So he became a specialist. He went to Georgetown, for neurology, that’s a three-year residency to become a neurologist, but he kept his old patients. But any new patients, he only took in neurology, his specialty.

**TC:** Now when you said he “owed” his military service, was that when he was at Pitt? Was he in ROTC?

**WBP:** That’s what it was. In ‘42, when he graduated they didn’t need doctors in the army.They had all kind of doctors. They didn’t have any here. So they said, ‘We will get you after the war.’ They kind of forgot about him until after the Korean War. They needed doctors. That’s when he went. But we came back after two years.

**TC:** And what was the history of Italian doctors in this town?

**WBP:** There weren’t very many. I think was it just Dr. Sposato and Dr. Badiali.

There were two and my dad. And of course later there was Salvitti and Tripoli and all those came along. But in the 40s and the early to mid 50s, there was just him and maybe two others. My dad was one of the youngest.

**TC**: How did your dad deal with the discrimination or process that?

**WBP:** He seemed a little bitter about it, but he developed a very big practice. And the one thing was, I always asked my dad why didn't we live in East Washington because all the other doctors lived there. And he said, ‘I won’t live there, not the way they treated me.’ He said, ‘I want my kids to grow up in a regular neighborhood.’ So we lived on West Prospect, which was a nice neighborhood. The Tucci family lived there. The Nicolella family lived on Prospect.. Most people in that area worked in the glass house [Hazel Atlas]. They could walk to work.

**TC:** So he made a decision to live in a mixed neighborhood and he was not going to subject himself to discrimination in East Washington when he was already facing it in the hospital.

**WBP:** Correct. When you tell people that now they say that’s not true. But I’ll tell you what, we didn’t make it up. I mean, it was true unfortunately.

**TC**: What words would you use to describe your father?

**WBP**: He was something. Very compassionate like, we never turned anyone away. People came to our house bleeding or whatever. He made house calls actually until he retired. He would stop in on his way home and I would go with him. We would go into the country.

**DT:** When did he retire?

**WBP:** Oh, he was 75. He didn’t want to retire. My mom got kinda sick. He had to retire to take care of her, but he was on staff for 60 years over here in Washington Hospital. 1942 to 2002 - that's when he retired, 2002.

**TC:** And you said that he cared for Italian Americans, African Americans, Polish Americans. Did you think that his background led him to want to serve underserved people?

**WBP:** I think. He always was for the downtrodden. He identified with them. I think he grew up kinda not poor, but not rich. He never turned anyone away. It didn’t matter if they could pay or not pay. He was probably kind to a fault almost. People would take advantage.

**TC:** Did he also enjoy some kind of status though because of his being a doctor?

**WBP:** Yeah he did. He was proud. Yeah. And his parents were real proud. ‘Our son's a doctor.’ Oh my God, yeah. They thought he walked on water. And of course he kind of supported them too. He sent them money and you know whatever they needed. His sisters, he helped them through school and his one sister actually had a master's degree in nursing. That was unusual back then. Actually, my grandma went to college for two years.

**TC:** Your grandma went to college?

**WBP:** That was unheard of back then. She went to Oberlin. They must of had family over there [in Ohio].. That was kinda sketchy whether she went for a year or a couple of summers, but she went. She was very bright. She was a real smart lady.

**WBP**: She kinda ran the household. My grandfather was kinda a playboy, a party guy.

**TC:** You said he was very good looking.

**WBP:** He was a handsome guy, yeah.

**TC:** And other words to describe your grandfather?

**WBP:** If he were here, you would be laughing. We would go to a restaurant in Pittsburgh and the whole restaurant would be laughing. He’d be in the kitchen helping, telling them how to cook. He’d be holding court. He had that accent and he was nice looking. So women kinda liked him. And guys liked him. He liked to bowl, shoot pool. He was a character. He was a real character.

**TC:** Your grandmother- you called her matronly.

**WBP:** She was very tough. She had to be because of the way he was. For instance, he would drink wine all day. He would have a glass like this at the tailor shop. She was against all alcohol. So he couldn’t drink in the house. He always drank outside. (laughter)

**WBP:** I mean it was really weird. Like at dinner, no he didn’t drink. He had to go outside and drink. Remember she was a member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

A charter member. Oh, this is a funny story. They had pins they wore, the women. So, she gave him the pin to wear. He didn’t know what is was. She he is wearing it down at the Elks or wherever, he was drinking. And they say, “ Hey Frank, you got an anti-drinking pin”. He would go, “No, one moment”. He used to wear it out. (laughter) He had a great sense of humor. But no matter what the situation, he could make it funny.

**TC**: Now the last name Pizzi, the Italian pronunciation, you would say ‘Pete-Zee.’

**WBP:** Correct

**TC**: Now, can you tell me how that changed?

**WBP**: I don’t know. We always went by Pizzi. Now in Connellsville, they called him (pronounces “Pete-Zee”). Oh you know what, I forgot about [my uncle Gene]. My grandfather’s brother came here, Gene. And he was like movie star handsome. He was carbonari in Italy.

**TC:** A police officer?

**WBP:** And my grandfather talked him into coming over here.

**TC:** Your grandparents gave their children American names, but they didn’t change their last name. In the wording of their names, they kept the mixture.

**WBP:** Yes

**TC**: Did they ever talk about that, about pride in doing that?

**WBP:** They did [have pride]. Through the food, that was a big deal, dinners. Like [my grandfather] grew his own grapes to make wine. And they had the big barrels in the basement, which I remember. And the sugar on top. The kind of sugar that comes up at the top. He would take me down to scrape it off.

**DT:** Did you get the top?

**WBP:** Yeah, It was good. (laughter)

**WBP:** He would sell, you’re not supposed to sell it, but he sold it. It was during the prohibition.

**TC:** And did your father carry that nice combination of the American part and the Italian part?

**WBP**: He was proud of his ethnicity, but [when people talked] about Italians drinking too much, he would have statistics about the French being the alcoholics not the Italians. He would get upset if they were degrading Italians.

**TC:** And he would use facts.

**WBP**: Oh, he would have facts ready. He was well read. He was a bright guy, a smart guy.

**DT:** Did he belong to any Italian clubs or organizations?

**WBP:** Yeah, he belonged to Sons of Italy here. He loaned them money when they built [the building] on Maiden. Then they built the Alpine Club. He was one of the ones who helped lend them money.

**TC:** And once again he was in the professional class, but the majority of everyone else was working class, working in factories.

**WBP:** Like his friends, our friends, like the Andy family, others were his best friends, Patsy, Margaret. The Comfort family, do you remember the Comfort Cleaners? They were there close friends. The West family, they were Italians. They had a shoe store.

**WBP:** And the policeman. He was Italian. I can’t think of his name. When they had a party, they were mostly 90% Italian American, but they weren’t professionals. They were policemen, firemen, factory workers.

**TC:** Speaks so well of your father.

**WBP**: Yeah, he was a good guy.

**TC:** Let’s talk about you growing up.

**WBP:** Well, I’ll tell you how lucky I was. When I got this award, you know that Italian American thing. You had to have someone introduces you. So, I had Franny [Francis King]. And when he got up to introduce me, he said, ‘WBP and I were lucky. We grew up in Happy Days.” You ever see that TV show Happy Days? That’s what it was. We grew up in Happy Days. Not a care in the world. We leave at five in the morning, we were gone all day.

**WBP:** I had two good friends. Franny King was out this door and Billy Flesher was out this door. Bill is a school teacher, retired. Francis and I remained close. We have been together every holiday probably since we were kids.

**TC:** Where did you go to school?

**WBP**: I went to First Ward Grade School. it’s not there anymore. There is an electrical store there now.

**TC:** And high school?

**WBP:** Washington High School

**TC:** Where did you go to college?

**WBP**: I went to Waynesburg College and Duquesne Law School. Washington High School was the bigger school back then. And the town, we would walk up town and go to the movies or whatever. It was just like in Happy Days: simple, safe.

**TC:** How did your Italian American father and grandfather influence your profession or the way you conduct yourself in your profession?

**WBP**: Well, I don’t turn anyone away. If somebody calls me, I try to help. If I don’t do it, I get someone in to do it. And my dad always said a couple of things: ‘It is free to be nice to people’ and ‘it doesn’t cost anything to smile at people.’ So it is kinda what I do. Like if a salesman would come to his office, he would see them, where now doctors don’t do that. He would say, ‘They have to make a living.’ It didn’t matter what kind of salesman they were, he would talk to them. So I kinda grew up like that. If somebody came to our door, he would see them. He didn’t turn any of them away. So, when I was growing up, I was supposed to be a doctor. You could be a doctor, or you could be a lawyer, or an accountant, or engineer. Something where you could work for yourself or you couldn’t be fired. You were encouraged to go into one of those professions. Well (laugh) you didn’t have much of a choice. I mean that was kinda the way that it was.

**DT:** Education was important.

**WBP:** Yeah, like my brother, Preston, was a gifted writer. He was a published poet in Wake Forest, but my father insisted that he go to law school, which he didn’t like. He wanted to be a teacher. He had a law degree and was a public defender. Now, [for my sisters] it didn’t matter as much because my father thought they took up space in professional schools. He said he had one girl in his medical school, one female. She graduated, got married and never practiced. He said a man could have done that and supported a family. So that was how he thought.

**TC:** That was the thinking of the time.

**WBP:** Actually, my law school, out of my class of 120, there were two. Now it is more like half are women. But it is a different world now.

**TC:** So, your choice of law was because you knew you would go into a profession?

.

**WBP:** Well, he discouraged everything else. Like I was awarded a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, which was a pretty prestigious fellowship to Pitt for political science. It was a master-PhD three- year program. I didn’t pay a dime, plus they paid me. It was right next to a Fulbright. Fulbright, Rhodes and this is like third. It was worth a lot of money. So told my dad, ‘I won this thing and I’d like to write and maybe be a professor.’ He said, ‘Well, you won’t be happy because you like nice things. Cause you won’t make a lot of money. But if you want to, why don’t you go to law school for a year? If you don’t like it after one year, I’ll match the fellowship.’ So I thought, ‘That’s not a bad deal.’ So, I went to law school and liked it. It came easy to me.

**TC:** He really wanted you to have security.

**WBP:** Yeah I guess, but that wasn’t a bad deal. If I didn’t like law school, I would get a free masters and PhD through him. And he took care of my wife and me. In other words, we were 18. He didn’t say, ‘Get out of here.’ They paid for us to have a place, got an allowance. He didn’t want me to struggle. Then he paid for Sue to go to school and bought her whatever she needed.

**DT**: That’s awesome.

**WBP**: Yeah, they were good to us.

**TC:** Is there anything else that you wanted to add?

**WBP**: No, except I loved growing up Italian American. And I loved both of my grandparents, but my Italian American grandparents were really more emotional. We would go to dinner at my mom’s grandma, my other Grandma and Papa Haggart, and have a good American meal, chicken, fried chicken…and I loved being there because it was on the river and my Grandpa Haggart was the nicest man in the world. My Grandma Haggart was too.

Then we would go to the Italians and they were yelling, carrying on. Killing the chicken then eating them. You know, I kinda liked going to the non-Italians because it was kinda quiet sometimes. Where the other one's, man, there was always action. They’re fighting and arguing and carrying on. People would get up from the table.

When Sue first saw it, she couldn’t believe it. Cause when we first got married, we went to Florida for a while. So she was exposed to some of that. She’d say, ‘They are going to kill each other.’ I’d say, ‘No, they are not. It is kinda fun. Just enjoy it.’ I feel bad my kids didn’t get to see any of that.

**DT:** Do your children feel the Italian heritage?

**WBP**: My one grandson loved being Italian. Marcus, my son’s son. He wrestled at Waynesburg High School. My wife hates tattoos. I could see [Marcus had a tattoo] -- an Italian flag with Pizzi. So she didn’t notice. Well, he almost beat this kid who was a state champion. The kid pinned him right at the end and he was really upset. So I went over and said, “Marcus, first of all, I think you beat the kid. And number two, you should be happy Grandma did not see the tattoo.”