

BRUNETTA (MAZZOLINI) GRAHAM & MARY (MAZZOLINI) DUNN

- Wayne: I'm Wayne Summers along with Myrna VanEpps and today is April 8th, 2019, and we are interviewing Brunetta Graham at her home in DeWitt. Why don't you start off by telling us a little bit about when and where you were born?
- Brunetta: I was born in St. Johns, Michigan, and went to St. Joe's [Joseph's] Catholic School for eight years and then graduated from there and went to high school, Rodney B. [Wilson]. Here's my sister.
- Wayne: We'll invite her over here too.
- Brunetta: This is my sister, Mary.
- Wayne: We're from the historical society. So you can maybe add some things.
- Brunetta: Yes. She might be able to add--. Let's see, where was I?
- Wayne: We're just starting and she was just talking about where she was born. Were you born in your home or--?
- Brunetta: I was born on Swegles St., I think. The house is still there.
- Mary: Swegles?
- Brunetta: Yeah.
- Mary: It wasn't Lansing St., was it?
- Brunetta: No.
- Mary: I was born on Lansing St.
- Brunetta: You were born on Lansing St. Do you remember Goldie Brooks? Well, the house next to hers, that's where I was born and those days you didn't go--. The only one of our family went to the hospital was my brother because my mother had pneumonia when he was born. Other than that we were all born in the house and Doctor Foo was the attending physician. Do you remember Dr. Foo? Nice gentleman.
- Wayne: Your parents were born in Italy, I believe.
- Brunetta: They were from Tuscany and their towns were just like 20 kilometers apart but they met in Michigan.
- Mary: Alma, Michigan.
- Wayne: They immigrated separately?
- Brunetta: Separately. My mother was like 18 when she came over and my father was 17, something like that. His father had a business where they made statues for Catholic churches. So he immigrated first and he came over and he established a plant in Cleveland.

Mary: Cleveland, Ohio

Brunetta: It's still going. I don't know if they make statues anymore but they make other things. It's called the Mazzolini Artcraft Company.

Mary: I was there when I was a little girl. They took me through it.

Wayne: What were these made out of? What was the material?

Brunetta: Well, like a statue.

Wayne: Was it like marble or plaster?

Brunetta: What do they make statues out of?

Mary: It's a marble. You know, when you buy a statue or something, that's what they're made out of.

Brunetta: It's not marble. It's something else.

Wayne: 'Cause some statues are like bronze or--

Mary: No. They were painted.

Brunetta: If you dropped it, it would break; whatever that material is. [ceramic]

Mary: They have a big thing that you put all of that in and then it will come out as a form.

Brunetta: But anyway, my father didn't like Cleveland. He had an uncle living in Ionia so he went up and worked for his uncle. He made the remark that he wished he could meet an Italian girl 'cause he didn't speak English very well.

Mary: --and she didn't either!

Brunetta: They told him, "Oh, there is a girl who just moved to Alma. We can arrange for you to meet her." Here, their towns were just like 20 miles apart.

Mary: Oh, longer than that.

Brunetta: And that's how it all started. Isn't fate funny?

Mary: She worked for millionaires. My dad had an old truck so they asked him if he wouldn't park the car down a couple more blocks.

Wayne: Now, I think they had a rather large family. Is that correct?

Brunetta: There were five of us.

Wayne: Would you review their names and maybe a little bit about each one of them?

Brunetta: The oldest boy, Leroy, in World War II was a marine and went to Guadalcanal and all those islands. Horrible, but he survived.

Mary: All the bad islands, 4 years.

Brunetta: Then my brother, Joe, and then my brother, Donald. Donald had the bar downtown

Mary: Bruno's Bar.

Brunetta: Bruno's. Then I came. I'm the fourth and then Mary.

Mary: I was the baby.

Wayne: The baby of the family.

Mary: I hated it. Now I like it. What is this, an organization or what?

Wayne: We're with the Historical Society of Clinton Co. How did your parents end up in St. Johns?

Brunetta: That I'm not sure. My father went to Ionia first--

Mary: -- and always went through St. Johns.

Brunetta: -- and he liked it. I don't think he liked Ionia. He saved up his money and I think he bought that building, if I'm not mistaken, for like \$400. This was like, what, 1910—11, you know. In property, I don't know what the values were then.

Mary: Not much. Nobody had anything.

Brunetta: I don't know, but he bought that and it's my nephew [Dean Mazzolini] now has the bar going in this same building.

Mary: When my dad retired, then my brother took it over.

Wayne: Why did your dad--was he in the restaurant business before that or did he just decide to go into--

Brunetta: It was just something that happened. He was uneducated for one thing, you know. He liked to cook and he met my mother who was a wonderful cook and they opened up the restaurant. That's how things happen, I guess. I don't know.

Mary: When 27 made the highway north, that sapped a lot of the business in the restaurant. It hurt a lot of restaurants. That's when he sold the restaurant to some Jewish people. Then the war broke out and the gentleman that had the bar from my dad, he said, "I can't take the bar." So he brought my dad the money, what he had, and my dad took over the bar and that saved my dad.

Brunetta: See, my father never sold that business. He always kept it.

Wayne: So he just kind of had a manager?

Brunetta: He just took it over.

Mary: He leased it out, you know, and so the gentleman had to go to the war.

Brunetta: When I was a little girl that store was just a soda fountain, you know. They sold lunches and ice cream and things like that.

Wayne: It started out--

Brunetta: It didn't start out as a bar.

Wayne: It wasn't a bar originally. It was more ice cream, soda--

Brunetta: Ice cream, lunches.

Mary: When did it start to be a bar then?

Brunetta: I think during the war. Just before the war he changed it to a bar.

Mary: 'cause I remember a little. When I was five years old, I can remember the bar.

Myrna: Was it Bruno's Wonder Bar at a time?

Brunetta: At one time. Do you know how it got that name? My mother almost killed my dad. My dad was having the front painted and the painters told him, "Bruno, there's no name for the bar." And then he said, "Well, I don't know. Why don't you make one up?" So that's how it ended up the Wonder Bar. We all laughed and teased him.

Wayne: Was the food originally Italian at all?

Brunetta: No. It was just hot beef sandwiches and hamburgers.

Wayne: So it was a very American menu.

Mary: When my dad and mother moved to St. Johns and they lived in St Johns, he walked home at night carrying a chain because of the Ku Klux Klan. They did not like foreigners. They did not like Catholics. So he would walk home at night carrying a chain just in case they tried to get him.

Brunetta: It wasn't the Ku Klux Klan. It was another clan, similar, and they were headquartered in Lansing, but they weren't called Ku Klux Klan. They were called something else [The Black Legion].

Mary: Well, Dad said it was Ku Klux Klan.

Wayne: I know there certainly were Ku Klux Klan active in this area.

Brunetta: They were going to blow up St. Joe's church and they got caught. Isn't that something? You just don't expect that in a little town in Michigan.

Mary: I went to the bar when I was little and there was two men in the bar in a booth all dressed up with a suit, tie, and everything. They were talking to my dad when I got there so I sat down and listened. My dad says, "I have no need for that. I'm sorry but I don't want it." I think it was mafia.

Brunetta: They came from Detroit. Could you believe things like that happened?

Mary: You don't know, but you've got to say the right thing.

Brunetta: But they never bothered him. Well, it was a small town. What are you going to do in a--

Mary: -- anything was money, they were after ya.

Wayne: Did you work in the restaurant then?

Brunetta: In the restaurant? Yeah, when I was a kid I --

Mary: I did the bar. Dad showed me how to pour a glass of wine, give it a nice, you know, thing and--

Brunetta: You mean a beer.

Mary: A beer, that's what I meant, a beer, and not too much of the froth but not too tall so it would be even.

Wayne: How old were you then when you were a bartender?

Mary: Oh, I was in my teens.

Brunetta: You never worked in the bar, well a few hours. She never worked—

Mary: --a few hours. I was a soda jerk at Richard's Dairy. Remember Richard's Dairy? I made 25 cents an hour. I worked there about six months and I was thinking about maybe I could get something better and Mr. Richards says, "Mary, if I gave you a raise, would you stay longer?" I said, "Yeah, I would." "How about a nickel raise?" So I stayed there completely a year. Then I went and sold shoes at Merit [Merit Shoe Co.]. I sold shoes there all the way through high school, \$1 an hour.

Brunetta: It's so sad to see St. Johns now with empty stores. Isn't it?

Mary: I'll tell you one thing about it that those years taught us how to work. We know how to work and we can see what work has to be done. Today they can't see what has to be done and they don't know how. I'm sorry. That's the way I feel.

Myrna I'm trying not to talk.

Wayne Our job is to ask a few questions and let you do 99% of the talking.

Mary: You got it!

Wayne: How did you and your brother, Joe [Joseph E.] get started in your singing careers?

Brunetta: All of a sudden I could sing, you know. I didn't know I could sing.

Mary: Didn't you go to Michigan State?

Brunetta: Well, when I was like 14 or 15, I went and sang for this teacher at Michigan State and he accepted me as a student. I took a few voice lessons from him. Then, when I graduated from high school, I wrote Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. You could only go there on scholarship. That's all. You couldn't pay your way in and I was given a scholarship. I had to go to Philadelphia to audition. I did and I was at Curtis and it's a very wonderful school. I loved Philadelphia and it was great.

Wayne: Did your brother go there too?

Brunetta: No. He didn't. When he was in the army, he was sent to California. When he was discharged, he just stayed other than come back to Michigan.

Wayne: When you went to Philadelphia, did you take the train out there then?

Brunetta: Sure.

Wayne: All on your own?

Brunetta: Well, the first time I went, I had a girlfriend with me because she had a sister who lived in Philadelphia and we stayed with her sister. After that, I would get the train in Detroit and went straight to Philadelphia.

Mary: One time when I went with Dad to take her to the train in Lansing and so he went and carried her suitcase in the train and all of a sudden the train started to go and I started to cry. I was about 12 and two men came up to me and they said, "What's the matter?" And I said, "My dad's on that train. He's not supposed to be there." They said, "Well, don't worry." He said, "That train is just backing up to get that [coupler], whatever they call that thing."

Wayne: Could you talk a little bit about your singing career then after you graduated from school?

Brunetta: After Curtis, I went to Los Angeles. My brother was out there and I just started auditioning. There was this girl. Oh, she had a wonderful voice. Everything I auditioned for she was first choice. I was always second choice. It happened again. She got first choice for this. It was a radio broadcast--Sigmund Romberg, if you're familiar with him--it was going to be his show **An Evening with Romberg*]. He would be conducting and everything. Well, I was the second choice. As it turned out she got laryngitis. I was called on the day that it was supposed to broadcast. She couldn't sing. Her voice was shot from the laryngitis so I got that show for all summer. It was like 13 or 14 weeks with a big orchestra and everything. It was exciting. It was very nice.

Mary: It was very popular too.

Brunetta: It was great and I stayed in Los Angeles and did a TV show, little things, you know.

Wayne: What television show did you do?

Brunetta: Not a big show. It was all local, not broadcast. At that time you didn't have television. It was just starting. I was a pioneer.

Mary: She'd make you cry, in some of the songs she sang!

Wayne: Well, what were some of the songs that you particularly enjoyed then? What's some of your favorites?

Brunetta: Oh, I don't know. You're putting me on the spot because I haven't thought about it at all.

Mary: What about your opera roles?

Brunetta: I would do some operatic arias but I did not have a lot of opera experience.

Mary: Italian songs.

Brunetta: Trying to think what did I did?

Mary *Ave Maria* was a good one. I could cry on that song.

Brunetta: I won the *Metropolitan Auditions of the Air one year and I would've had to move to New York. I didn't want to live in New York so I turned it down. That was so stupid, do you know, when I think about it.

Mary: Brunetta, how about the guy that was in the army that heard you singing on the radio? Who was that?

Brunetta: They used to announce a broadcast. "This program had been recorded for our boys overseas." This young man came into the bar and talked to my brother and he said he was in the Korean War. He was in a dugout and they had the radio on and they heard me singing.

Mary: Isn't it something that somebody, guns blowing away--? I never realized that they had the music in the trenches or whatever this poor boy was in. That was the Korean War.

Wayne: So they announced you as from St. Johns?

Brunetta: Not where I was from.

Mary: He knew.

Wayne: He knew the family.

Mary: He was from St. Johns.

Brunetta: The name, that's how he knew me. He was from St. Johns. He survived the Korean War and came into the bar and told my brother that he had heard me singing while they were in dug into a hole, foxhole, they called it.

Wayne: Do you speak Italian at all then?

Brunetta: We used to. Mary, I don't think --

Mary: All I know is the dirty words of the Italian. I kind of know what's going on when they talk.

Brunetta: My two brothers spoke Italian fluently because, when they were little, we had my mother's aunt living with us and she didn't speak English, so they spoke Italian with her.

Mary: You know what, when Leroy went to the kindergarten, he couldn't speak English. Dad said, "That's it. No more Italian. We speak English. We live in America."

Brunetta: We all went to St. Joe's. The nuns were pretty upset with that, that Leroy, my oldest brother, couldn't speak English well enough, you know, 'cause if my mother's aunt wasn't living with us, my grandmother was and neither of those ladies spoke--. Do you remember the movie, *It Happened One Night*, with Clark Gable? My grandmother loved that movie and she couldn't understand a word of it but she just loved it. I think she saw it like six times.

Wayne: Up to that point, you only spoke Italian in your home?

Brunetta: Yeah.

Wayne: Apparently, he didn't have neighbors that he had learned English from.

Brunetta: My Dad spoke English very well, I thought.

Wayne: But your brother—

Brunetta: My oldest brother, when he started at St. Joe's School, he couldn't speak English because my dad and my mother worked and he was in the care of my mother's aunt who spoke no English. Naturally, he spoke only Italian.

Mary: So that had to be stopped.

Brunetta: I know. No wonder the Ku Klux Klan wanted to get rid of us.

Wayne: Do you have any special memories of attending St. Joe School?

Brunetta: I loved the nuns. I really did. I had wonderful nuns and we had Christmas plays every year. I don't know, it just--

Mary: I tell ya! I mean the schools today should have had some nuns because there were restrictions: attitude, honesty.

Brunetta: They were strict but they were never unkind.

Mary: But that was that time. As the years went by, like when I was in school—

Wayne: It changed a bit?

Brunetta: You don't have nuns anymore.

Mary: Nuns are different. In the 8th grade, we wanted to do something different so went in and we decided to put a little orange lipstick on. We went to school that way and the nun caught us and took us all in the bathroom and washed our faces. It was just like standing in line: Do not turn your head either way! You look straight! Somebody tapped me on my shoulder, and instinct--

she grabbed ahold of my head, my hair, took it and pulled my head back. Straight!. That's how stern--

Brunetta: You couldn't do that nowadays. You can't touch a kid, can you?

Wayne: You'd probably have a lawsuit.

Mary: You learn how to do whatever they say to do.

Wayne: Were the class sizes rather large or--

Brunetta: in the Catholic school? No. They were fairly small, 12, 15.

Wayne: I only say that because my wife went to a Catholic school in the Detroit area and she talked about having like 40 kids in the classroom. She said they were very strict but she could kind of understand because if you've got 40 or more kids, you've got to keep it under control.

Mary: I think it's good. When I went to high school as a freshman, the teacher asked a question, I stood up and she says, "Mary, you don't have to stand up to speak." When the nuns taught us, we stood up to answer.

Brunetta: When I went to high school, I kind of missed the nuns at first. It was strange.

Mary: Back then the nuns are nicer. As we got older, we picked up more.

Brunetta: I took mathematics--this was my freshman year in high school--this boy who was in the class was very mischievous. He said, before the teacher came in, "Everybody turn your chair around so your back is to the teacher." I just did what everybody did and when he came in and saw what we had done, he conducted the whole class with our backs to him. He didn't say a word.

Wayne: Do you remember that teacher's name?

Brunetta: Oh, I can picture him. Mr. Cummings.

Mary: Where was this at?

Brunetta: In high school. I was a freshman.

Wayne: Do you have any other memories of high school?

Brunetta: Oh, it's been so long since I thought about it.

Myrna: Did you get any music education in high school?

Brunetta: No, just chorus.

Mary: They were always fun, always good, and they had plays. You could go out for them. I liked that.

Brunetta: They had shop for boys who wanted to become carpenters or whatever and they had business courses for girls who would probably become secretaries after they graduated. Other than that, nothing.

Wayne: Did you sing at all, Mary?

Mary: I was in the choir. I never was good. She's good. I never had any lessons.

Wayne: Were either of your parents particularly good at music, or grandparents?

Brunetta: My mother sang.

Mary: They loved music.

Brunetta: My father said she had a beautiful voice but I don't know of any ancestor that was a performer or a musician.

Mary: Mom said, when she was younger, she used to sing.

Brunetta: My father said she had a beautiful voice.

Mary: Yeah, she was a beautiful woman.

Wayne: You never heard your mother sing?

Brunetta: No never. She had a tonsillectomy and the surgery wasn't good for her. Something happened to her throat. The doctor got too close to her vocal cords or what.

Myrna: Mary, you used to sing in church a lot, didn't you?

Mary: Yes. I sang in church a lot.

Wayne: Solos or just in a group?

Mary: Group. I sang solo one time. It made me so nervous, I didn't like that.about the organ upstairs, remember that?

Brunetta: I forget. I wanted to ask you, how is Lynne [(Laurence) Gregory, president of Clinton Co. Historical Society] doing?

Wayne: We were just with her last week, was it?

Brunetta: I used to see her once in a while, but I haven't seen her for a long time.

Mary: Was that Lynne Laurence?

Wayne: Gregory; same person.

Mary: I'll tell ya one thing. Brunetta wasn't home a lot after she got famous, but my dad gave a lot of stuff to help a lot of people. He helped people save their homes and he helped give them clothes and food and everything. I knew my dad was really good at things but after he passed away, we had people come in and tell us all the stuff he had done. He was a giver, not a taker.

Brunetta: One time--remember the Steel Hotel had a dining room? It was an active dining room and someone in this poor family in the St. Joe's parish died. My dad sent the family and their out-of-town guests to the Steel Hotel for lunch and my father paid for it. That was the kind of man he was, you know.

Mary: They weren't rich either, never bragged about anything.

Brunetta: He never told anybody what he had done. My mother used to say, "Bruno, you can't buy your way into heaven."

Mary: My daddy really had a good sense of humor too. He had a convertible. They used to wear those old, stiff, straw hats. He smoked cigars and he waited for my mom to get out of church. He had the top down and he was smoking a cigar. Mom was coming. He says, "Come on. Get in and I'll give you a ride home." She says, "No, You look like a big shot." She walked home. My dad laughed. He thought that was really funny. So, you know, he just did it to make her say that.

Wayne: Did he not normally attend service?

Mary: No. He always made the sign of the cross when he passed the church.

Brunetta: He would go Christmas and Easter. Someone told me that's very typical of Italian men that the wives go to Mass, but they stay home or whatever. I don't know how true that is.

Wayne: Have you been to Italy?

Brunetta: Several times. It's beautiful. I saw where my parents came from.

Mary: My son was over there too,

Brunetta: We have quite a few relatives over there.

Mary: He went to relatives and he went to the grandparents' cemeteries where they were buried and he took pictures of the names on the stones. My son really loved it there.

Brunetta: Where my father came from, it was not a big town. It was a fairly small town. It was on a plateau. During the war the Germans had their big cannons up there and shoot them down into the valley.

Mary: He met a cousin, Mom's nephew, Joe. He was in the war. He was in the Italian army and he was a prisoner of the American army. He said he was so happy. They didn't want to get into the army and they didn't want to fight the Americans. When they were caught, they were all so happy they were with Americans. They didn't want to fight with the Germans.

Brunetta: A lot of the Italians went to South America to get work, you know. Italy was going through a depression after the war. Things were pretty bad.

Wayne: Did you do any singing in Italy when you were there?

Brunetta: No, just a tourist.

Mary: Well, she wouldn't just tell anybody that she sang. She's so quiet.

Myrna: Weren't you involved with the Seattle Opera?

Brunetta: Yeah, I sang with Seattle opera. That's right. They have a short season. It goes March, April, May.

Myrna: As I was looking at the internet to see what I could find and you were singing when a conductor died [1953].

Brunetta: He was a conductor of the San Francisco Opera Company.

Mary: He died on the stage.

Brunetta: I was singing and I felt something hit me and it was his music stand and it fell on the floor, made a big racket. I looked and the podium he was on was at least that high. That fall would have killed him. He fell backwards onto the floor and his eyes were open and he was dead. His heart stopped like that.

Mary: Just how old a man was he?

Brunetta: I don't know, in his 70's.

Myrna: What was his name?

Brunetta: Gaitano Merola. He was Italian.

Wayne: I assume it kind of ended the concert?

Brunetta: Oh, it sure did! The people in the audience just rushed forward. It was such a shock! I looked down and his eyes are wide open and he was dead. His heart just stopped.

Wayne: Was this while you were still living in Los Angeles?

Brunetta: San Francisco.

Wayne: So you moved from Los Angeles to San Francisco? Where else have you lived then?

Brunetta: That's it, except when I went to school in Philadelphia, St. Johns, then in Los Angeles.

Mary: She was living in Oregon, Florida. She was all over the country.

Brunetta: I end up in DeWitt.

Wayne: How did you end up here?

Brunetta: My husband died and I just wanted to come home, be near family, you know. I'm not a spring chicken. I'm a sprung chicken now!

Mary: No. She was in the St. Johns at Hazel Findlay apartments you know.

Brunetta: It's very nice.

Mary: I was at Boyne city. I lived there for 20 years. My husband passed away and I have a son Mark that lives in St. Johns, only fair to him that I should come down instead of him having to help me out. My other kids were all out of state and so I moved here and she was at Hazel Findlay. I talked her into coming over here so we could get together and go out to lunch or--

Wayne: You're In the same apartment complex here?

Mary: Yeah. We couldn't live together because we're like Mother.

Wayne: You need a little space between you.

Mary: Exactly!

Brunetta: We would have lived in St. Johns but they didn't have anything like this. You could go to Hazel Findlay and paid \$700 or \$800 more than I pay here.

Mary: Plus the fact we have our garage.

Brunetta: At Hazel Findlay, they charge you extra for the garage. Here we get a covered garage.

Mary: The garage at Hazel Findlay's was just a car port. \$25 a month they charge for that.

Wayne: How did you meet your husband?

Brunetta: I think, through friends. I met him at a party. He was from Michigan too. He was from Detroit. He was in school with this young--he became a news newscaster or something. The Pentagon Papers--do you remember that scandal, the Pentagon Papers? He was the newsman that brought that all out [Daniel Ellsberg]. My husband went to grade school with him and high school. They were good friends. I can't think of his name now.

Wayne: Where in Michigan did you husband grow up at then?

Brunetta: Detroit, big city slicker.

Wayne: Did you meet out in California?

Brunetta: We met in Oregon and we met through friends. That was it.

Wayne: What did he do for a living?

Brunetta: He worked for Merrill Lynch for a long time. Then he went with Bank of California as the investment officer.

Mary: He was a workaholic. That man worked night and day, went to school at night.

Brunetta: He decided he wanted to become a lawyer. So he went to law school and had to go at night. He'd come home from work and hit the books. I don't know how he did it. He was smart. He could handle it.

Mary: He put pressure on you. Everything he did, he did good.

Mary: He was good. Dick was a nice man.

Wayne: Was he into music at all then?

Brunetta: No. He appreciated it and that was it, you know.

Wayne: Did you have any children then?

Brunetta: Nope. Never had children.

Wayne: How did you meet your husband then, Mary?

Mary: The first husband I had, with him, I was married 28 years. I had a mother in law—I want to say from Hell—but I won't say that. Anyway, after 28 years I decided that he wasn't helping me at all. He didn't support me. So then the second husband: I went with a bunch of women out to dinner one night. This girl was a realtor and she had just sold this restaurant in Lansing, out towards Charlotte. There was about six of us. So we were all going to go out there and, you know, give him some extra business. I don't know why, but I just ordered a Coke. There was a bar. I had a coke and my husband was at the bar and he saw girls walk in and finally after maybe a half hour or so, he came up and asked me to dance. He was shocked when he saw the Coke when everybody else was drinking. He was an ex-marine. After he retired from General Motors, we moved up to Boyne City and were up there almost 20 years. He had a stroke at Walmart in Petoskey. We went there to shop and it hit him there in that store and after that was a couple of years of trials.

Wayne: It's difficult. It's always difficult.

Mary: He was young.

Brunetta: You see that picture over there, that poster? It says Barca. That's where my dad came from. They had a tourist office there so I went and got that at the tourist office.

Mary: Dad said, when they'd have an earth tremor, his mother would run out of the house crying. He said when they were kids they used to laugh at her because she was crying, running.

Brunetta: Oh, it was hit a lot? Well, it was in the mountains. They had tremors all the time. It would scare me to death. I was in an earthquake in California then. They are scary. You don't know what to do, where to go.

Wayne: Was this when you were in San Francisco?

Brunetta: We had several where we lived in San Francisco. All of a sudden you'd be sitting there. It would go wooooo and it made a noise too. I was in Santa Barbara one summer, went to a singing session there and we had a bad earthquake. It destroyed this women's prison that was not too far from Santa Barbara. That was frightening. I woke up and I was being thrown at the wall. I was in kind of a dormitory. My bed was right next to the wall and woke me up. I guess they have them all the time in California.

Mary: I can't see how anybody can be up on those apartments that are so high up. That's not for me, even if it was \$200 a month.

Wayne: If you can find something in San Francisco for \$200 a month, good luck.

Brunetta: It's an expensive city.

Mary: I didn't get out of St. Johns until ---. It was a good town.

Brunetta: That's my father during WWI.

Mary: He was in the First World War. He joined the army. When he got to the United States, Italy sent him a letter stating that he'd have to come back and if he didn't come back he would be in prison.

Brunetta: My father's family. That my father's brother, his family, and that's my mother.

Wayne: Did he tell you stories of World War I?

Brunetta: They put him in the medical corps and they had this flu epidemic during the war. It was horrible. He said they just took bodies out.

Wayne: That would be 1918.

Brunetta: It was terrible. There was no surviving those.

Mary: He was a true American, my dad. When my brother was in the Marines during the war, he'd send a box of cigars every week to him. He said, "I know he's not getting them, but somebody is getting them." That's the way he was to help other soldiers. "If they smoke, they can have a cigar." He did it every week.

Wayne: So he became a naturalized U.S. citizen.

Brunetta; Being in the army, you had to pay \$100. You know \$100 then was a lot of money.

Brunetta: He and a cousin went to Detroit to the Italian Consulate and I think the Italian Consulate put that money in his pocket and they arranged for them to do whatever they had to do to become citizens. Oh! What a life!

Wayne: I'm just surprised you'd have to go to the Italian Consulate to do that. Seems like you'd just go to a U.S. court and apply.

Brunetta: Of course, this was 1918.

Mary: That didn't know a lot of stuff that they should do, you know?

Brunetta: My mother became a citizen when she married my father. He was already a citizen, so they granted her a citizenship.

Wayne: They did some weird things back then. If you marry somebody who wasn't a citizen, you suddenly were not a citizen anymore. So if you were born in the United States and you married somebody who was, say an Italian citizen, you would be an Italian citizen. You weren't a U.S. citizen anymore. You have to come back and apply to become a U.S. citizen again, later.

Mary: I never heard of that either.

Brunetta: I remember when my aunt and uncle became citizens, they had a lot of studying to do. They went to the courthouse and they were sworn in.

Wayne: I think part of that was the idea that if you're a woman, you were your husband's property, kind of. You belong to him. My wife would be out the door if I ever mentioned anything like that.

Mary: It's too bad they ever let women vote.

Brunetta: (to Wayne) Do you live in St. Johns?

Wayne: I live here in DeWitt.

Mary: Oh, you do?

Brunetta: It's a nice community.

Mary: Do you go to St. Jude's?

Wayne: Yep. We've lived here since 1988.

Mary: You know, it's really a nice place. You don't see trash. Everybody takes care of it. Clean. Yes. Yes. Very nice.

Wayne: What I like about it is, it's very convenient to get anywhere. I mean, you have Meijer, as you know, just here if you need something.

Mary: I support Meijer's.

Wayne: It's close by, but also you can get to St. Johns easily. You can get anywhere in Lansing in about 15 minutes.

Mary: You know what though? The driving, this bugs me. They drive so fast. You go west out to the mall. You know, they don't care whether they hit you or not. It just seems like the cars go by so fast. Is that just me?

Brunetta: You're a pokey driver.

Mary: I'm not a pokey driver. Up north we had two lanes. We had a different life.

Brunetta: Do you see Lauren [Lynne] Gregory once in a while?

Myrna: Once or twice a month.

Brunetta: How's she? I haven't seen her for a long time.

Myrna: She's old like we are, you know. We've all got problems.

Brunetta: She's my age. I knew her sister [Esdeane (Laurence) Osgood]. Her sister was more my age.

Myrna: She's okay. She's doing good.

Mary: I tell my kids, "Enjoy your life. Don't worry about anything. Just enjoy, because it'll work out." You know, it usually works out. I always wanted to be 21 and I'd say, "Mom, I can hardly wait 'til I'm 21." She says, "Don't wish your life away. After 21 it goes fast." Okay, In July I'm going to 86. Where did it go? I don't know what I did at 21 now. I can't remember. It must have not been very good. I was thinking about this. You could have a coffee shop for people from 60 or older, 'cause there's a lot of older people. They don't have friends, you know, to go and talk to and enjoy what we got. I'm very thankful. Very.

Wayne: (to Wayne) Have you ever been to Italy?

Wayne: No. We had kids. We traveled where we could drive to.

Brunetta: That's smart.

Mary: When I was younger, I couldn't afford to go to Italy and then after I could afford it, I'm tired.

Wayne: I would like to get to Europe at some point. My wife's been to Europe before we were married, but I've never been there.

Myrna: I'd like to know more about how you were treated as immigrants in St. Johns area.

Brunetta: How we were treated? I never had a problem. My father did when he first arrived because there are people that--, you know, foreigners coming in the--, He never talked about it much. I just knew about this one incident.

Wayne: Just the one KKK.

Brunetta: The Black Legion, it was called. That's what it was. It wasn't KKK. I'm pretty sure it was Black Legion but it was like KKK, you know, threatened. Do you remember Eddie Boron? He had a shop up above the furniture store and sold rugs, linoleum, and things like that. He was threatened too—

Mary: He was a good man.

Brunetta: --because he was Catholic. Isn't this crazy? Why didn't they go after the Methodists?

Wayne: Like me.

Mary: I think people used to tease me because I was Italian but it wasn't because they were mad at me or I didn't take it right. I was very proud. I still am proud of who I am, who my mom and dad were.

Brunetta: Everybody should be.

Mary: You know, we don't have that choice of our parents but I sure was very fortunate with my family because I love them all. If you need it, they're there. I tried to train my kids that way too. I just feel that there's a need.

Myrna: Brunetta, I understand you still volunteer.

Mary: I do too.

Brunetta: Oh, at St. Vincent's. I enjoy it. It's a wonderful charity and you don't have to be Catholic to ask them for help. They do so much good. Do you know John Thelen?

Mary: He's a nice guy.

Wayne: I know a lot of John Thelens. If you're from the Westphalia area, there's a lot of them.

Brunetta: He's the director. First of all, he's very kind but he's so good at what he does.

Mary: I joined for the simple reason, first because Brunetta did. This winter it was so cold, I didn't do anything but eat and watch TV. That was my thing. I played bridge once a month and I said, "I just can't do this. I gotta get up and walk." So then I joined St Vincent's and I do the walking on the whole plant.

Wayne: How many days do you volunteer there?

Brunetta: Two days a week. I offered to do more, but they said, "No. We can't expect you to do more." I have so much time on my hands. You know, it was willing to do it. Now I'm glad I only go twice a week.

Wayne: You don't want to exhaust yourself.

Brunetta: All I do is price clothing, put it out--

Mary: I tried to be their cashier. I was a cashier at a grocery store but their register is so totally different from what I was used to. I don't want to get frustrated; you know. You used to get frustrated but when you're older it gets worse.

Mary: Enjoy your life. You guys are young.

Wayne: We expect to be around for a while, I think. My parents are still alive.

Mary: You're lucky.

Brunetta: How wonderful!

Wayne: My wife's father, he's 95 now and still doing well. He's talking about-- We were there a couple of weeks ago. He said, "Well, I think it may be time to sell the house and move to a condo or something." He said, "it's getting a little harder—" because he refuses to pay for anybody to mow the lawn or do anything. We've been telling him, "You can pay someone to mow your lawn."

Brunetta: He does it all by himself?

Wayne: He lives over in Lake Orion which is north of Detroit. It's a beautiful house on a lake.

Mary: That's good. You're lucky because Brunetta and I are the only two left.

Brunetta: (to Myrna) Do you live in St. Johns?

Myrna: I live in Wacousta which is west of here.

Wayne: She grew up north of St. Johns.

Myrna: I grew up in the country north of St. Johns; went to St. Johns high school; '53, I graduated.

Brunetta: I graduated in '43.

Mary: and I was in '51.

Brunetta: My graduation was so sad because the war was on and all the boys were going into the service the next day. It was terrible.

Myrna: Did you ever hear of the St. Johns Liberty Band? That's way too early maybe [ca 1917].

Brunetta: No. Never heard of it.

Mary: We had good bands though.

Brunetta: We only had one casualty in the war and he was on a beach in Italy and he was strafed by an airplane. He survived except that he's in a wheelchair.

Mary: Who was that one?

Brunetta: I'm trying to think of his name. I can see him but I can't think of his name. It'll come to me.

Wayne: It seems very fortunate if almost every boy went into the service that only one was injured.

Mary: We had the Korean War that started in '51.

Brunetta: Do you ever watch that show, *Mash*? That's good, isn't it?

Mary: I think that's out now, isn't it? They don't have it anymore.

Wayne: It's in reruns.

Brunetta: They're doing reruns. It comes on at like seven o'clock

Brunetta: You always watch other stuff.

Mary: I watch either Hallmark or the news.

Myrna: So this is why you can't live together.

Brunetta: She watches too much news. It's too depressing.

Mary: It is depressing.

Myrna: Do you remember the names of any of your teachers?

Brunetta: Cummings, he taught math and I think he also coached a little bit; Eymann, he was our choir director.

Myrna: How do you spell it?

Brunetta: E Y M A N N, I think. Dale Eymann; and of course, [C. W.] Beemer was the superintendent. I don't know his first name. He was always just Mr. Beemer.

Mary: Us girls, I think sophomore, we wanted it to get a basketball team together and we went to the superintendent and he wouldn't let us. It wasn't Pocus.

Myrna: Niergarth.

Mary: Yes. He said it wasn't ladylike.

Myrna: (to Mary) What musicals were you in in high school?

Mary: I was in chorus, four years.

Myrna: But they didn't put on a musical?

Mary: No. I was the silent lady in a play there. It was a murder mystery and they had a bench where I was supposed to set. Over it was a bookcase, but it was opened up so the boys would come, take me through the hole. They would turn the light off and there was thunder and it was stormy. When the lights came on, I was gone. The boys picked me up and took me out. I wasn't as heavy as I am now.

Myrna: (to Brunetta) They didn't have musicals when you were in high school either?

Brunetta: We didn't have any. We had chorus recitals and things like that but not a musical that I remember.

Wayne: That would have started later.

Mary: Let's see, what year was it I was the president of the Woman's Club at the hospital and you and Joe gave a concert at the high school?

Brunetta: Oh yeah. You sold tickets.

Mary: We sold tickets 'cause we wanted to work for one room for heart attacks and they gave us a recital and it was full.

Myrna: What year?

Brunetta: It was for your benefit at the high school, St. Johns.

Myrna: That's the probably the one I went to, 1940's.

Mary: No. It wasn't the '40's. Let's see, I started at the hospital 1968 so it will be around in there somewhere, but we got enough money.

Myrna: What range is your voice? Are you a mezzo soprano?

Brunetta: I'm a soprano, lyric soprano.

Mary: Very high.

Brunetta: I don't even know if I have a voice anymore--allergies.

Wayne: When did you stop singing professionally?

Brunetta: I can't just pinpoint the day, you know?

Mary: You taught too, didn't you?

Brunetta: I taught for a long time.

Wayne: Where did you teach at? Private lessons or--

Brunetta: I taught at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington, for a long time and I taught at Lewis and Clark College in Portland for quite a while because my husband and I, we lived in Portland. He was transferred with the Bank of Cal up to the Seattle area. So I taught up there at Pacific Lutheran University.

Wayne: ... Catholic girls?

Brunetta: Religion never entered into it. They were, you know, pretty nice.

Wayne: It's all vocal?

Brunetta: I just taught voice in the music department.

Wayne: Were these individual students? It wasn't like you were in charge of a group, choir or anything?.

Brunetta: The voice lessons are all private. It's that way in every school.

Wayne: (to Myrna) Do you have anything else?

Myrna: I guess not.

Wayne: Usually we think of questions later.

Mary: That's normal.

Brunetta: My life isn't that interesting.

Mary: We had a good life though, very proud of, you know.

Wayne: So what's the craziest thing that ever happened to you in your life?

Mary: The craziest thing ever happened [1950]. Do you remember what they call a "belling?" Okay. We had a belling for Nancy [Black] & Leonard Puetz. He was supposed to take her in an wheelbarrow down through Main St. at 12 o'clock at night. So a bunch of us got together. Somebody in that group shot off a shotgun in the middle of the night. The police came and chased us all. They caught me, put me in their car, took me home, put the lights all over the house at 12 o'clock. This is the honest-to-God's truth. Bob Ott and Everett Glazier, they walked me to the door. They knocked on the door and my dad opened it up and he said, "What is this, the Gestapo?" They said, "Bruno, do you know what your daughter did?" And I said, "Dad, I didn't drink nor did I smoke. Those were the two things you told me not to do." You were home then when I got caught.

Brunetta: Yeah, I remember that.

Mary: My dad was so good to them. Why would they do it to me? They totally embarrassed me.

Brunetta: They probably did the right thing.

Wayne: Trying to make an impression, I guess.

Mary: Yeah, they did.

Brunetta: Do you know, this is something right out of Andy Griffith [The *Andy Griffith* TV Show]. My mother lived down--. What was the name of the St.?

Mary: What one?

Brunetta: The last one she lived in.

Mary: Walker.

Brunetta: --on Walker St. It was across from the bank and she only used the downstairs, so there was an apartment upstairs. She rented it out and she rented it to these two kids. They'd just been married and they were terrible. They were noisy; they were this; they were that. She finally got rid of them. She had put new curtains in the apartment before they moved in. When they left, she went upstairs to see what kind of shape they left the apartment in and the curtains were all gone. My mother called Everett Glazier and he said, "Well, where were they going?" She said,

"They're heading for Alma." He said, "Don't worry, I'll get em," and he caught them and got my mother's curtains back. Doesn't that sound like *Andy Griffith*? It could only happen in a little town. If that were Detroit, they'd say, "Sorry lady, your curtains are gone."

Mary: Everett, he was good guy. Those were the days when you knew the police and they knew you.

Brunetta:: Does St. Johns have a police department?

Mary: Oh sure. You know what? When my brother, Don, died and they just took him to the funeral home and I just got done and was coming back to DeWitt and I was thinking about the family and everything. I got stopped by the county police. They said, "Do you know how fast you were going?" "I'm sorry," I said, "No. I don't have no idea." He said, "You were going over 75 miles an hour." I said, "You know, I just got back from the funeral home and I was thinking about my brother." Never, ever thought about what I was doing. He took my license and everything and then he came back to the car and he says, "I'm very sorry about your brother." And he says, "I'm not going to give you a ticket. Be careful." I felt I should have gotten a ticket because I was wrong. But man, that guy was nice. This is the trouble, you know, you get to worrying about your family and thinking about them and nothing else comes in.

Brunetta: Life is sad at times, isn't it?

Wayne: You have the highs and the lows.

Mary: Brunetta and I we're are going to be cremated. I'm going to be with Mom and she's going to be with Dad. We got it all fixed up so our kids know what we want.

Wayne: Why did you decide to go with your mom and her with dad?

Mary: 'cause they're right together. So we, all four of us could be there together.

Wayne: Why that particular-- Did you flip a coin or did you--

Brunetta: Just decided. I don't know.

Mary: I could be either one. It wouldn't bother me.

Myrna: Did you have nicknames growing up, always call by your formal name?

Mary: My brother Don called me "scragia"(?) a lot. That's Italian.

Wayne: What does it mean?

Mary: You don't want to know.

Wayne: I'll have to go home and look it up the Italian.

Mary: It means f-a-r-t. He did it all the time. "Hi scragia." We were just six years apart. We did a lot together. "Play with me; please play with me." "Okay, we'll play cards. We're gonna play 52-Pickup." That kind of play.

Wayne: He liked to torment you.

Mary: Exactly. He did a good job. We had a good, good life. I can't think of anything that--

Brunetta: Have I told you enough?

Wayne: I think so.

Brunetta: My dark past.

Wayne: We need more dark things if it's going to be your dark past.

Mary: I just can't imagine when a mother loses a child. I lost a set of twins.

Brunetta: When was St. Johns founded?

Wayne: When did the railroad go through. It's a railroad town.

Myrna: I should know.

Wayne: About 1850's, I think around there, because DeWitt was the oldest town. It was the county seat at one time. Then when the railroad went through, St. Johns was founded and then they moved the county seat there 'cause it was near the center of the county.

Brunetta: Do you like that new courthouse?

Wayne: I take it you don't.

Brunetta: It's so big. It throws everything out of proportion, doesn't it? You know what I would've done?

Wayne: You're used to it being back a ways.

Brunetta: I would have put that out where the jail is, the new courthouse. I would have left that old courthouse with the lawns and everything. You could put little antique shops in the courthouse.

Wayne: I think it was discussed. I'm trying to think back at the time. I think they discussed moving it out of town. Most people wanted it to be in town at about the same location so they built it in front of the old one and then after it was built, they tore down the old one and put a parking lot there. That's why it's closer to the front.

Mary: Who was In charge of the city back then?

Wayne: I'm not sure. I know there was a lot of discussion at the time about what do we do about it because the building really probably needed to be replaced at that point. It was going to cost more to repair it than to just build a new one. The new one is beautiful if you've been inside. Judge Sullivan is from DeWitt here. I've taken kids to her court before and it's really very nice.

Myrna: It looks like it's going to pounce on you when you come in.

Brunetta: Our nieces is married to the district attorney, Mike Clarizio. I've always wanted to go out and see one of his court sessions. He's a judge now though. That's right. He's a judge.

Wayne: Go, go, go visit.

Brunetta: I will one of these days.

Wayne: You can just walk in there and sit in the back and the public's welcome for both sessions unless for some reason it's closed.

Brunetta: The rest of the town has all these pretty old buildings and then this big square thing--

Wayne: They tried to make it look a little bit traditional but you can tell it's not the old one.

Mary: When I first came to St. Johns and saw that, I had tears coming down my face.

Brunetta: I was just shocked when I saw it, wasn't used to seeing it, you know.

Myrna: A lot of people are really unhappy about it.

Brunetta: It's too bad.

Mary: The thing is, now you go to St. Johns, I don't know anybody.

Brunetta: We've been gone for a long time. I heard that somebody bought the Sugar Bowl.

Myrna: If I remember it right, there's a candy company that's been there for a long time and they're taking it over. I don't know that much about it but they've been in business for a long time. If I could remember the name of it, I'd tell you what the company is, [Hanover's Michigan Mints], but they make St. Johns mints.

Brunetta: Will it be an ice cream parlor?

Myrna: I don't think so, but I don't know.

Mary: It has been out of use for a lot of years that I imagine—

Myrna: It's in bad shape.

Brunetta: The floors were bad. I heard they were terrible.

Myrna: It's a stable company moving in. They know what they're doing, I think.

Wayne: They have some money. Some of them have big ideas, but no money.

Brunetta: Building is so expensive now.

Wayne: You have to have the money to fix it up and run for a while before you start making money.

Brunetta: What happened to St. Johns? Was it the fact that Walmart moved out?

Myrna: The highway went around the town.

Brunetta: --and that affected all businesses?

Wayne: I think that, plus you get the Walmart's coming in which really hurt. You have to be more of a specialty shop to stay, have things that Walmart doesn't sell.

Mary: We used to have 4 or 5 grocery stores in town.

Mary: You know, I get kind of irritated with Meijer's once in a while.

Myrna: You have no choice.

Wayne: You have choices, but not much. You have to drive into town into Lansing or go downtown. Downtown Dewitt is basically a few restaurants and that's about it, offices, sometimes some professional things, and pie shop. It's not like there's dress shops or things like that down there anyway.

Myrna: There used to be three or four shoe stores in St. Johns.

Brunetta: Is there a shoe store in DeWitt?

Myrna: There's no shoe store any place?

Mary: We were taught when you sell shoes, you also sell nylons. We always had to show a nylon too when you over to the register.

Brunetta: I worked at Hick's for that awful man. Mr., what was his name? Oh God, I didn't like him.

Myrna: Shellenbarger? Maybe that was it. I don't know.

Brunetta: He had a terrible personality. His wife was nice so I liked her.

Mary: I worked for Penney's after I was married. I worked during Christmas. That's when they had that thing that you put the money and then [it would] go back--.

Wayne: Pneumatic tubes?

Myrna: That was fascinating, wasn't it?

Mary: But you know what, Penney's was a good company. They really were. Kroger's is a good company. They really are. I worked in Lansing as a person that would call businesses that had problems with their lighting and stuff. I talked to the home office. Those guys were good, nice. They want their managers to be as good to the people as they come in the store and if they're not good, the manager goes. That's good. My, brother Joe did a thing in a movie and I saw that show.

Wayne: What movie was he in?

Brunetta: That was so long ago we don't remember. It was a Doris Day movie.

Mary: He was in Italy and then in Germany with the operas. He sang with the operas.

Wayne: I guess we didn't really talk much about your brother, so can you tell us a little bit about his career?

Brunetta: He went to Europe.

Mary: He was a tenor.

Brunetta: He got a contract with an opera company. He sang there for quite a while, 2 years, till he wasn't feeling well and decided to come home. He said one time they were in rehearsal and they broke for lunch and they went to this restaurant and he was the only American. All the others were Germans and they got to talking about the war. This one man said, he says, "It's not over yet. We will do it again!" Like that. Oh gee, didn't they have enough?

Mary: When my dad died, I didn't know Joe's address nor did I know a phone number but I knew the name of the place. I had to get ahold of him so I called and talked to the operator and you know what? They helped me and they found a phone number and I got ahold of him. I didn't think I was going to be able to tell him that Dad passed. He was in Italy.

Wayne: Was it an Italian operator?

Mary: No, it's an English, the one I got, 'cause I told her about it would go to Italy so she had to talk to the person that was an Italian.

Brunetta: Those inter-Atlantic operators speak several languages.

Mary: I was scared. I mean I was worried that I couldn't do it.

Wayne: He managed to make it back home then?

Mary: No. He couldn't make it back home but he was in the opera then.

Wayne: It would be difficult. First, it's a long trip.

Mary: Did they have flights going back then?

Wayne: What year would that have been?

Brunetta: In the 80's.

Wayne: There would have been flights in the 80's, but you would not be able to get one at the last second--plus if he was committed to singing, what do you do?

Brunetta: My dad said, "Don't come home if you're in a job. Don't come home if something happens, we'll be all right."

Mary: I was surprised that my mother could even get here. She was so scared of water, scared to death.

Wayne: On the boat across?

Mary: Yes.

Myrna: You said she was working for a millionaire.

Mary: --when she was young and in Alma.

Myrna: Doing what?

Mary: Housework. She was a maid. They had like seven people working for them. They had a gardener and a cook. He owned the railroad company or something. They took her to New York.

Brunetta: They liked my mother. I think this woman liked having a foreign maid and she was very good to her. That house, you can see it in Alma. It's a funeral home now.

Myrna: Probably the only millionaire in Alma.

Mary: You know, it's sad to see the railroad closing up in St. Johns.

Brunetta: It's depressing, isn't it, to go around there and see the changes if you remember what it was like?

Wayne: Now it's a bicycle path.

Brunetta: They've taken up the tracks?

Mary: It goes to Owosso.

Wayne: It goes from Owosso to Saranac. You can go the whole way on bicycle if you have a lot energy.

Mary: The whole thing is, now the kids don't know how to write. They don't have that in school. They don't teach them how to write. There are so many changes in our life now. It's really hard to comprehend. My son has a phone. "I want to talk to my mother." "You want a cell phone or a house phone?" "Oh, the house one." He's talking to somebody on the phone that'll want to call me. I mean, you know--

Brunetta: When I was little and my mother worked with my dad at the store, I'd pick up the receiver and say, "I want to talk to my mother." and she'd connect the store.

Mary: I'd call and say, "My mom wants the Sunday paper." "Okay, Mary."

Mary: Today it makes me upset. It makes me feel dumb.

Myrna: First place, there's no paper.

Mary: It makes me feel dumb to not know how to do those things. It really does. I don't have anybody to give me instructions. When the kids come--one is in Arizona; one is North Carolina; and the other one is in New York--so I don't learn that fast when they tell me what I should do. I forget. Can you imagine that when they had wooden carts with the women having to ride on one of those to go to find a home to live in, what women had to go through?

Brunetta: Wooden carts?

Mary: --with the horses, the horse and buggy, not the cart; the long, wooden one--

Brunetta: --the covered wagons? I wouldn't have survived.

Mary: I felt so sorry for those women.

Myrna: Maybe better than the home they left.

*The Metropolitan Opera began sponsoring a structured auditions program for young singers in 1935 with *The Auditions of the Air*, the predecessor of the present Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. *The Auditions of the Air* was a radio program that featured exceptionally talented young American singers auditioning to become part of the Met's working roster. This program continued until 1958, however, it was in New York City, dominated by local singers, and not readily accessible to young artists throughout the country. <https://metauditionsmn.org/about/history/>

** Romberg starred in *An Evening with Romberg* on NBC June 10, 1940 – September 2, 1940, as a summer replacement for *The Red Skelton Show*. The program featured two soloists and a 58-piece orchestra. Music genres included "operatic arias, short symphonic works and overtures to popular songs, light classics, dance music and even a bit of outright jazz." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigmund_Romberg