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Josephine Pizzo oral history interview by Mark Greenberg, June 12, 2003

Josephine Pizzo (Interviewee)
Mark I. Greenberg (Interviewer)

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Dr. Mark I. Greenberg: Well, the way I usually start these interviews is by identifying myself and by identifying you. So, I’m going to start the tape by saying that this is Mark Greenberg, the Director of the USF [University of South Florida] Florida Studies Center and today’s date is Thursday, 12 June 2003. I am with Mrs. Josephine Pizzo. We are in the [USF] Tampa Library on the second floor in our little oral history filming studio. I’m very glad that you’re here with me today.

Josephine Pizzo: I’m glad to be here. (laughs)

MG: What I want to do in the time we have together is to start with some questions about your childhood and work right up chronologically through the present day. So, what we’ll have when we finish is a life history of Josephine Pizzo, as told by Josephine Pizzo. We’ll be able to share that with your sons and with your sons’ children, and then their children. We’ll have an official record.

JP: Well, I’m just afraid that it’s a very uneventful [story], un—not an unusual—there’s nothing unusual very much that happened in my life. It’s sort of run-of-the-mill.

MG: I think you’ll be surprised. When we’re done today, I’ll ask you again whether you thought it was run-of-the-mill. I think maybe you may say, “No, I did some interesting things.” We know you’ve done some interesting things. That’s why you’re here.

JP: Well, there were things—and many things—that I enjoyed, that’s for sure.
MG: I want to start at the beginning. Tell me a little bit about your family’s heritage. Where did your family come from, and where did they settle? Did they come directly to Tampa?

JP: Both of my parents, my mother and my father, came from northern Spain. My father came from Galicia, which is the northwest corner of Spain. My mother came from northern Spain from Asturias. My father came through Cuba first. He’d lived in Cuba for a little while. I don’t know exactly how long. My mother came directly, as I remember, from Spain. They met here, and they were married in 1913. I was born in 1914.

MG: What are your parents’ names?

JP: Piedad, which translated means piety, Piedad, and her maiden name was Riacon. My father was José Acosta, A-C-O-S-T-A. And as I said before, he was from Galicia.

MG: He had gone through Cuba before coming to Ybor City?

JP: Yes.

MG: How about your mother? What was her travels?

JP: As I remember, she had a brother and a sister that had come here, before she came. She lived with them. In the beginning, I’m sure she wasn’t working. She met my father, and like I said, they were married in 1913.

MG: Did your father come with his parents or any siblings?

JP: No, my father was an orphan, unfortunately. He had an older sister. She was quite a bit older. She was the one who helped him, who paid for him to come to Cuba, because in those days, this was the land of opportunity. And everyone who could, or—also, many of them in Spain, if they could, they would help the young men and, more so than the girls, even, to come to the United States. It was his sister who helped my father to come here. She was older, and she was able to finance it. But they were—they had—their parents were both dead.

MG: Do you know what prompted him? He stopped in Cuba first before coming here. Do you know—did you ever hear what it was about Cuba? Was the sister in Cuba or the sister—

JP: No, no. The sister remained in Spain, but she paid for his passage to Cuba. I imagine, that was what many of them did. Some came directly on to the States. I don’t know exactly other than—probably many of them didn’t. That’s what they did. They arranged for him to stop in Cuba.

MG: Did you learn what it was in Cuba that he did, for a profession?
JP: That’s where he learned cooking, working in restaurants. He was an apprentice, and he learned, of course, Spanish cuisine. He stayed there—I don’t imagine it was more than a couple of years. Cause he came over—you know, in those days, they came over very young. To us now it seems unbelievable that they would send them at twelve, thirteen, fourteen years of age to travel and come to a foreign country. But they did.

MG: Do you remember what year he actually landed in Florida?

JP: No, but I believe it was either late 1912 or early 1913.

MG: How about your mother? Did you learn about how she—

JP: She came from a family of seven children. There were three brothers. One or two of the brothers had come ahead, and one sister; that sister was older. She had married in Tampa. Then she came. It wasn’t long before she met my husband—my father—and they were married. I’m sorry. (laughs)

MG: Did she come—you mentioned your mother came with siblings, or there were siblings here.

JP: No, the siblings were here already.

MG: Did her parents come as well? Did you know your mother’s parents?

JP: I did meet them as a child, so I really don’t remember them well. Because we went back—I must have been about six years old—in 1920, and my mother went back to Spain to visit her parents, and so I did get to meet them, but I was young. I remember things faintly. I remember, like in a dream, sitting in front of a little stoop in their house. Up ahead were mountains. I remember a mountain because, of course, I had never seen mountains in Florida. That was different. I remember cherry trees. It was the first time I had seen cherry trees, and I loved the cherries, which I still do. They were somewhere near the home in the back. [I remember] things like that, not a great deal, just a few things.

MG: Your mother’s parents, then, never came to the United States?

JP: Never, never.

Andrew Huse: Would you just give me one second? I’m really sorry, but I want to change the angle here. I think it’ll be better. (Sound of equipment being moved) Ah, yeah. This is much better. Okay, great. All right. Sorry about that.

MG: Are you ready for us to—
AH: Yes.

MG: What do you know of the life of your parents before you were born? What did your father do? What did your mother do? Where did they live?

JP: I’m sure my mother lived with her sister, the married sister. Because of them, then, she moved—my father and mother lived by themselves after they got married. My father went to work in one of the—in fact, he owned—I remember my mother telling me that he owned a restaurant for a while, but taking care of the kitchen and the financial end and the waiting, it was too much for him, and he went to work in a restaurant, which is what he always did.

MG: Your mother, did she stay at home? Did she work outside the home?

JP: I remember her being at home always, until I started school. I think she worked for a little while in a cigar factory, [but] not very long. I had no brothers or sisters. I was an only child. And I’m—from early on, my parents made me aware that they wanted me to have an education. That was very, very important.

MG: Had they had educations themselves?

JP: Not a great deal of schooling. All the immigrants had to learn to read and write. They could not come to this country otherwise. So they did have—they had gone to school, but not for a long time, no, not for a long time. But, of course, they had gone to school.

MG: How did your parents learn to speak English? Had they known any English before arriving?

JP: No, no. And they (clears throat) learned, but they didn’t become very—you know, didn’t speak it very well, naturally. But they tried, and they both became American citizens. It was very important to them. One little thing I remember: one night I woke up, I was young. I could hear my father. He was giving some of the answers that he had expected he would be asked on his test, like about the presidents and things like that. So, I knew my father was very concerned about that exam. He wanted very much to become a citizen, which he did. My mother did, too, later.

MG: They spoke Spanish in the home?

JP: Yes.

MG: They spoke Spanish to you?

JP: Yes. Until the age of seven, when I started school at Our Lady Help of Mercy, I didn’t speak a word of English.
MG: Where did you live in Ybor City? Where was your family home when you were growing up?

JP: For many years, the home that I remember the most was on Fifteenth Street, 2204 Fifteenth Street, on the corner of Fifteenth and Eleventh [Avenue] where the street car made a jog, a left turn and then, on that one block, and then made a right turn. That’s very clear in my mind. At another address, my father and mother had a bungalow built on the corner of Tenth Avenue and Sixteenth Street. Then we lived there from there on until I got married.

MG: What do you remember of Ybor City as a small child? Who were your neighbors? Who did you play with? Draw me a little bit of a picture of what Ybor City was like as a young child for you.

JP: Well, everyone was friendly. I remember—one thing that I remember very clearly was there was an alley between my house and the next house, and there, there was a Cuban family. They were a big family. I don’t remember an elderly gentleman. I remember two elderly ladies. I would love to cross the alley and go to their house. The little lady would tell me stories about Cuba, and oh, I just loved that. I would play with children. Mostly they came to my house. We would play the usual games in the yard. I remember sometimes we would play acting, and we would take parts in the little plays that we made up, things like that. The usual. Nothing unusual.

MG: Ybor City had a number of different immigrant groups that settled there. Were your friends from different backgrounds?

JP: Mostly Spaniards. I remember that mostly there were Spaniards. Then, as I got into school at V.M. Ybor, a grammar school—I started in the Catholic school (laughs), but there was an unfortunate little incident. I got home, and my lip was purple, and my mother asked me what had happened. I said, “The nun hit me with a book because I was talking out of turn.” The next day, she took me to the public school.

So, I went to public school from then on. That was in Ybor. And they were—made friends with several little girls my age, second, third, from then on, that spoke Italian, and I didn’t. I remember that sometimes they would say something in Italian to each other, and I would ask them, “What was that you said?” They would tell me, and I would repeat it because I wanted to be able to do like they did and speak Italian also. In those days, we walked to and from school, and we thought nothing of it. It was very easy. As compared to now, no one—none of the children walk to school, but we did.

Then I went on to Washington Junior High and on to Hillsborough High School. Graduated from high school—both Tony [husband] and I did—in 1932. He was two years older than I was, but we graduated in thirty-two [1932]. Before coming here, I was thinking, my life is so, just, no different from everybody else’s. But the one thing that was a little different, in 1932, when I graduated from college [high school], there were not
many girls going to college. Looking back, I wonder how many girls from the 1932 graduating class went on to college. I bet it was a very small percent, very small.

MG: I want to come and talk to you about that because I know you went to FSU [Florida State University].

JP: FSCW.

MG: I’m sorry. You’re right.

JP: Florida State College for Women.

MG: Before it became Florida State University. I want to talk to you about that, because I think you’re right that that was quite uncommon. But I want to talk a little bit more about your childhood because I think folks are going to be very interested—and especially your family is going to be interested—to learn more about Ybor City, which was such an important part of your life and the lives of people here in Tampa. You had some Italian friends, and you learnt a little Italian from them. Did you teach them Spanish?

JP: Well, a few phrases, a few phrases, yes, uh-huh.

MG: Was the neighborhood, like the houses—as you think about your street, was the street, neighbor-to-neighbor, mixed between Cubans and Italians and Spaniards? So there weren’t—

JP: Yes, there were certain areas in Ybor City, and some of them went down as far as the Columbia Restaurant, south of the Columbia a few blocks, and then east of Twenty-First Street. There was a group, quite a big number, of Italian families. Because I remember Tony would name the families that had lived there. He could remember and tell me about the different families. Many of them were Italian. Then, of course, there were north of Seventh Avenue also. But on Fifteenth Street where I was, the families that I remember were mostly Cuban. Cuban. We knew some Spanish families that were friends. They lived several blocks closer to Columbus Drive, which was called Michigan Avenue then.

MG: Ybor City has, still, to this day, very vibrant mutual aid or social clubs. Were you involved?

JP: Yes, uh-huh. To begin with, my parents were members of the Centro Español. There was Centro Asturiano, which is on Nebraska [Avenue] and Palm [Avenue], the Centro Español on Seventh Avenue and Sixteenth Street, and the Italian Club further down on—I think it’s Ninth [Avenue]. Seventh [Avenue] and Nineteenth [Street]. My parents belonged, and there was a mutual aid society where they paid a weekly fee and had medical care. They belonged to that.
MG: Did they take you for any—either for the—did you go to doctors there? Do you remember any experiences with the medical?

JP: I remember my mother going to see doctors when she needed them. I’ve been blessed. I’ve had very good health. I don’t remember being taken for me. (both laugh) I was doing fine.

MG: Did you go—were there activities for young people?

JP: Not when I was very young. After high school, [I went] to dances at Centro Español. They had the matinees on Sundays. Oh, when I first started going to dances, those were the days of the chaperones. Our mothers went with us. (laughs) I laugh about that now. I’d think—I’d see the mothers sitting around the ballroom. The mothers took their daughters. For some reason, I don’t remember the fathers going. It was the mothers. The young men would be there and we would dance. And then, [at the] time to go home, we went home with our mothers. That’s the way it was until I came back from college. After I had finished college, that’s when I first started dating on my own that it was all right for me to date without a chaperone. (laughs)

MG: When you were a youngster and started grammar school and middle school and high school, were there particular subjects that you were interested in? And how did you do learning English?

JP: It was very easy. I accepted everything as normal. Looking back now, one thing that’s funny—that I realize that’s funny, but at the time I accepted it, was that if we were going downtown, we would say we were going to Tampa, “Vamos a Tampa.” Looking back now it’s funny, but at the time it was—you know, I accepted that that was the thing to do.

MG: Was Tampa—when you left Ybor City, for example, to go to other parts of Tampa, did you have a sense that was just a very different place?

JP: No. Not really. When we first got a—the family bought a car—they let me drive. In those days, you can imagine what the traffic was like: very little, very safe. They had confidence in me. My parents worked during the week, so on Sundays, I drove on the Bayshore [Boulevard] out to Temple Terrace and places like that. That was our Sunday drive that they enjoyed. They relaxed and enjoyed that Sunday drive. That’s one of the things that I remember, those Sunday drives with me driving. (laughs)

MG: You started school, and you learnt English relatively quickly?

JP: Yes. Oh, yes. I don’t remember any—I remember the first day of school I had a little problem with the M’s. I wanted to say “mother” instead of “mother.” That’s the one little thing that has stayed in my mind. Other than that, that was it.

MG: Did you have other subjects you really enjoyed?
JP: I’ve always enjoyed science. I was not particularly interested in history, as opposed to Tony, who loved history. In college, [it was] the same thing. I took chemistry and physics. I took organic chemistry, second year physics. I loved all the sciences.

MG: Before we turn, because I want to talk about high school and then going off to college, I’d like to talk a little bit about your dad and the restaurant and also a little bit about your mom and what you remember of her working outside the home. You mentioned earlier the cigar industry. Tell me a little bit about your dad’s career. I know that he was at—was he the owner of Las Novedades? Or he worked there?

JP: No, he was offered one time, if he wanted, to become a part owner, and he wasn’t interested in that. He had had a restaurant and he was perfectly happy. He did well. He was paid very handsomely because he was outstanding in his field. He really was. I remember growing up how often people would talk to me about my dad and tell me that he was so outstanding in his field. He was just a wonderful, loving father. Although he didn’t have a lot of schooling, he was interested in world events. I would hear him and my mother talking about what was going on in other countries. They weren’t talking to me. They were talking to each other. At the time, I didn’t even realize it, that I was listening. Later on I remembered my dad and mother used to be interested in world events very much. I would hear them talking.

MG: I know this is jumping ahead a little bit, but was the family—did they have strong feelings about the Spanish Civil War? You would have been, obviously, much older by then.

JP: Yes, by that time I did. I know that in Ybor City there was a very, very strong feeling against Franco. But, uh, what—

MG: In your home was it a topic of conversation?

JP: Yes, I remember my mother sending packages of clothing, and sometimes she allowed me to send clothes that were new. She said, “Well, they need them so badly.” I was surprised because they were relatively new clothes, but she felt like they needed them so badly. I remember that distinctly. What I couldn’t understand is, later, I thought, “Well, those were the—” later, it turned out, communism, and I know my parents were not communists. (laughs) So, that was something that went over my head, and later I thought about it. But they were—the feeling in Ybor was very strong.

MG: Your dad, he was the Head Chef? That would have been his title?

JP: Yes.

MG: Were there recipes that he tried out at home? You must have eaten pretty well.
JP: Well, he would—there was one recipe that is in Claudita’s cookbook—Claudita Garcia’s cookbook. It’s called Acostas Chicken, I believe it’s called. That was the one recipe that’s there with his name. But, of course, his specialties were the Spanish recipes. He was very good. He could [be] responsible for cooking tremendous trays of yellow rice and chicken when they had picnics in the different clubs, the Centro Español. Also the Centro Español in west Tampa, on Howard Avenue; they would have these indoor picnics. There would be hundreds of people, I don’t know how many. They would bring in the tremendous trays of yellow rice and chicken, and my father—everyone raved about it. How could my father prepare those tremendous amounts of rice and that it turned out so delicious? They were delicious.

MG: Did he cook at home as well, or did your mom cook at home?

JP: Mother cooked at home, except special—sometimes for Thanksgiving, for the turkey—he knew that I loved turkey and he said, “Well, as long as I live, I’ll fix the turkey for you on Thanksgiving,” which he did. He ate at the restaurant, so my mother just cooked for herself and me, except on special occasions.

MG: Did your dad spend long hours at the restaurant?

JP: Yes, many, many hours. It was a two-shift thing. He would go in the morning—I don’t know exactly what time—he would come home after lunch and be home in the early afternoon for several hours. Then he would go back and do another shift. I would say, probably, between four and eight or four and nine. It varied a little bit. I’m sure that on weekends it was probably later, but I wasn’t aware of it. I didn’t watch the time. I couldn’t tell you exactly, but I do remember his coming home and being home in the afternoons when we were all at home, and then he would go back and come back not very late in the evening. But he worked many hours.

MG: The restaurant served three meals? Breakfast, lunch, and dinner to customers?

JP: Breakfast for most Latin people did not include scrambled eggs and bacon and grits and all of that. It was a European breakfast that most people in Ybor City had, which is what I had. It was the café con leche, the coffee with milk, and the Cuban bread toasted and buttered. Later on we started having the orange juice, but in the beginning when I was little, it was the coffee and the bread—the Cuban bread toasted, and that was it. Later we got into the habit of having the orange juice. So, I don’t even remember whether the Las Novedades offered more of a breakfast than that, than the European breakfast. I kind of doubt it.

MG: Did you spend much time in the restaurant with your dad?

JP: No, no. Occasionally we went and had dinner, but no, not a great deal of time.
MG: Who were the primary clientele at the restaurant? Was it other Spaniards or Italians from Ybor City, or were there a lot of Anglos?

JP: [There were] a lot of Anglos. Oh, yes, very popular, very, very popular. It was a mixed thing. If in—like, in the stores in Ybor City, there were stores like Wolfson’s trimming store that had beautiful laces and different materials for sewing. Little Katz was another store that sold very nice materials for ladies dresses and so forth. It was the Anglos, like you said, that came to these stores very, very much. There’s a gentleman living at Canterbury Tower now whose sister was the owner of Wolfson’s trimming store. He and I have laughed at times because we say, well, we’re two of the rare ones from Ybor City. There are a few ladies at Canterbury Tower from Ybor City beside myself.

MG: Where did the family shop? Did you used to shop along Franklin Street at some of the—like, Maas Brothers [Department Store] and other things, or did you do your shopping in Ybor?

JP: For many, many years it was Ybor. Then, once I graduated from high school, during my college years and all that, it was downtown. And after I married—by the time I got married, it was strictly downtown. We would—those were the days when we wore—the ladies wore hats and gloves to go downtown. We would have lunch at Maas Brothers. (laughs) That was the thing.

MG: Your mother spent some time in one of the cigar factories.

JP: Very little, not much.

MG: Do you remember much about that?

JP: No. I remember her—by that time I was in school. I don’t remember how long, but I remember that there was a family—and strangely enough, this was an Anglo-Saxon lady. I remember her very well. Her name was Fanny. She was redheaded and freckled. She was married to a Cuban man. The name was Antonio Lopez. His son had taken piano and was a piano teacher. I would go for a couple of hours in the afternoon until Mother got home. I started taking piano lessons from him at age seven, which I continued taking until I graduated from high school. Of course, now I don’t play anymore. (laughs)

MG: While you were growing up, there were changes going on in Ybor City. There were several strikes, and there were some changes in the cigar industry. Do you remember any of that?

JP: No. No, that didn’t mean—no. As a child growing up—I really don’t. Later on, as I became—while I was in college, I remembered people talking about once, how—
conversations would come up, and they’d talk about the strikes in Ybor City and things like that. But while I was growing up it didn’t mean a thing to me.

MG: Do you remember feeling different than any other kids? Did the kids get along?

JP: Yes [they got along]. No, I never felt different. Maybe I just wasn’t observant enough. I don’t know. Even in high school I knew that that there were, you know—that people who spoke Spanish or Italian were considered Latins, and I guess that came from the language, because language [was] based on the Latin. But I was just—felt just as good a friend with the Latin girls as with the Anglos.

MG: Was there much socializing? Were there sororities or clubs, at the high school level, that you belonged to?

JP: If there were, I wasn’t even aware of it. No. I really wasn’t. And, of course, the schools that I went to were mostly young people that lived in Ybor City. That was the case in Ybor. George Washington, all the student body came from families who lived in Ybor. In Hillsborough, the same, though in Hillsborough there were a lot of other—you know—around Osborne [Avenue], and around that area, there were more English-speaking students then, by that time.

MG: Tell me about your teachers. What was their background? When you were at the schools in Ybor City, were your teachers of Latin background? Of did you have—

JP: Some were. Some were. I remember two ladies. Their name was Wohl, W-O-H-L. They were Jewish. As I remember, [they were] very fine teachers. I remember some who had Spanish names, but that was, you know—been a long time, and I never saw them later on or anything. But there were several that were of Spanish decent or Cuban descent, Jewish descent, like that.

MG: Let’s talk about high school, because I want to move you along. While you were in high school, when did you start thinking about going to college? What ideas did you have about what your life would be like when you were in high school?

JP: Well, even before I graduated, probably in my middle year of junior year, I had a couple of friends who were going to college, and we talked about it. I went home and told my parents, “Would it be all right?” They said, “Of course, that’s what we want you to do. We want you to go to college.” I enrolled at FSCW in 1932. There were just a handful of Latin girls in Tallahassee. I would think the enrollment was probably 1,500 or 1,800. It was a beautiful campus, the Florida State College for Women, a beautiful campus. There were, probably just—I don’t know, anywhere from five to ten Latin girls at the time, out of a student body of 1,500 or 1,800. But at the time, I didn’t think it was unusual. Now, looking back, I do.
MG: This is the dark days of the Depression, too. How did the Depression affect your family, and did it affect your ability to go to school?

JP: No. Since I was an only child and my father made a relatively large salary as compared—I think he really did much better than cigar makers. There was never any financial—to tell you the truth, I was not aware that there was a depression going on. (laughs) I guess I wasn’t a very demanding young person so I was perfectly happy with what I had. There was no problem going to school at all. I absorbed it from my parents to be careful about how I spent my money. They did not tell me, “All right, you have so much to spend weekly.” I, myself, put myself on a weekly amount that I was going to spend, and that was it. They didn’t have to tell me. That’s with me even now. I learned to be careful with how I manage my finances. So that’s been (tape skips) (inaudible).

MG: You arrived at FSU in the fall of 1932, [there were] just a handful of Latin students.

JP: Yes. I arrived at—I think it was, the beginning of September. I don’t know what date in September. And on September 15 I turned 18. I was up there and had my 18th birthday in Tallahassee.

MG: Was there a party? Had you met friends so there a party for you? How did you celebrate that birthday?

JP: No. Just a couple of friends that knew that my birthday—of course, I received a package from my parents. (laughs) I remember they sent food. Already, I was conscious of my weight, and I knew that I gained weight easily, so immediately, I told them, “No more food packages! Clothes. Send me a dress, send me shoes, but no food.” (laughs) My friends wished me a happy birthday and things like that, but no. Nothing. That’s one thing my parents didn’t—they always bought me a pretty dress for my birthdays and things like that, but at that time, among my friends, my friends didn’t have little parties. They start having birthday parties now at age two. No, we didn’t. My friends didn’t have—until, maybe, the senior year in high school I remember having—where this birthday party thing. But in Ybor, really, there wasn’t—it wasn’t customary, it wasn’t common to have birthday parties. Our social life was taking rides in the family car, going to the movies, going to the Tampa Theater, and to the Spanish movies, too. We went—I was familiar with many Spanish actors and actresses who were well known at the time because of the Spanish movies.

MG: Where were the Spanish movies shown?

JP: At the Centro Español on the corner of Sixteenth Street and Seventh Avenue. There’s a theater there. I don’t know whether—I think it’s been refurbished but I’m not sure. I don’t get to go back to Ybor City that much.

MG: I want to talk about your social life and your academic life when you were at college. What did you do for social activities as a young college person?
JP: Well, let’s see, I did not join a sorority. I do remember that, one day, I had been there just a few days, and I saw the girls dressed up. They seemed like there was some activity going on. I asked some of the girls that I knew, which were Latin girls from Ybor City, “What’s going on?” They said, “Oh, you see, they’re going to sorority parties. They’ve been invited to sorority.” I said, “Well, how come you haven’t been invited? How come I haven’t been invited?” (laughs) I thought we were just as cute and just as personable as they were. They said, “Well, we don’t know them, and they don’t know us. How can we expect to be invited?” I said, “Oh. So, that’s it.” It didn’t bother me. It was the—oh, I thought, “Well, why haven’t I?” I should have been, but like they said, “We don’t know them.” And, really, we didn’t.

MG: Did you become closer with some of the “Anglo” girls at college? Was there mingling socially between Latin and [Anglo girls].

JP: Not really, not really. No. I did not get to meet them during those days. There were one or two that had gone to Hillsborough High School and that went on to FSCW. We were still friends, but we didn’t see each other that much on campus. We were not in the same classes. I remember I was always happy to see them. We were happy to see each other. Most of these girls went on to live in the sorority houses while I stayed in the dormitories. So that was it.

MG: What were you studying?

JP: I was in the school of education. In those days, girls had three choices: nurses, secretaries, becoming a secretary, or teaching. I really enjoyed science, lab work, and chemistry. For a while I thought I would like to become a lab technician, but then, I don’t know, I changed my mind and decided I would be a teacher. So I went to the school—I was in the school of education and graduated with that degree and went on to teach when I came to Tampa.

MG: So you graduated in what year?

JP: Well, I had been allowed—I had good grades, and I was allowed to take extra hours, eighteen hours instead of fifteen. I had accumulated some extra hours. I realized that I could graduate a semester early by going to summer school and taking the six extra hours that I needed. I mentioned it to my mother, and she said, please do; please go to summer school so you’ll be home that much sooner. Of course, she missed me, being her only child. And I did. I went to summer school. So, I graduated in January of thirty-six [1936] instead of June. (laughs) But, then, I didn’t even go back for my graduation because the opportunity came up that we were going to New York to see a brother—an uncle of mine in New York. That was more important. We went to New York instead of—so, I didn’t attend my college graduation. (laughs)
MG: I should have asked. At what point did you meet Tony? Were you dating at all in college?

JP: We started dating in high school. We started dating in high school and dated—while we were in Tallahassee, he would come from Gainesville to see me in Tallahassee. Then, after a while, he remained in Deland. I came back to Tampa after graduating so for a while we stopped going together. Later, he came back to Tampa, and we started dating again. We were married in 1941. July 16, 1941.

MG: At what point did you start to think that he was the man that you wanted to marry?

JP: I think, probably, when he came back to Tampa. I had dated others, and I remember thinking how boring some of the nice looking ones could be. I knew that whenever I was with Tony, I was happy. I realized that that was it. The person that you could be happy with was the one that you should marry.

MG: What was it about him? He was interested, I guess, in history or, certainly, he became interested. You were interested in sciences. What did you share in common? What made the relationship so wonderful?

JP: We seemed to be interested in the same things. He was always so upbeat, and I’m inclined to worry. Any time I was worried, he could talk me out of it. He would say, “Everything’s going to be fine. Everything’s going to be fine.” And it was. It seemed like I always told him, I said, “Things happen wherever you are, Tony. I don’t know how you manage it, but things do happen.” He would come home and this had happened, exciting things. It was just fun being with him. I was happy. He showed he loved me very much. Of course that was very important. I think we had a very good marriage. Nothing is perfect; there were times when we disagreed, but it wasn’t, you know, anything that—our children never had to listen to—never heard us screaming at each other or anything like that. I’m so happy that it was like that. We were happy raising our two sons. He was a wonderful father and that made me love him even more.

MG: Tony was from an Italian family. Of course, you [were] from a Spanish family. When you were dating, were there any discussions about the fact that you were not dating a Spaniard? Was that an expectation of your parents?

JP: No. We often laughed because we knew that if a Spanish girl had dated, tried to date, an Italian boy, earlier on, before our time, say fifteen or twenty years earlier, that would have been bad. The Spaniards wanted their children to marry Spaniards. The Italians wanted their children to marry Italians. Oh, no. They didn’t like the idea. But, gradually, it happened.

MG: Did your parents have anything to say? Did they have any positive or negative reactions when you started dating Tony?
JP: No, they liked him. The family—I know they were very happy, very happy, for Tony, too.

MG: What was Tony doing? When you got married in 1941—well, first of all, the war had broken out in Europe. What was your sense—did you worry about what was happening in Europe in the late 1930s.

JP: I was very conscious of it. We were—I was teaching, and Tony had started an insurance company. He was getting started, doing well. He volunteered, which caught me by surprise. I said, “Tony, why?” He said, “I can’t stand it; I feel like I should. At my age. Others my age are going.” From the whole city, young men were leaving for the service. He volunteered. I remember going to Camp Blanding, and he left—one little thing for the—one little funny incident—should I take the time to tell?

MG: Please.

JP: He was stationed in Camp Aberdeen in Maryland. When he left he said, “My goodness! They gave me enough heavy clothing [that] if I could go to the North Pole and not be cold.” When he got to Aberdeen, Maryland, he was soon writing home, “Send me wool socks! My feet are cold.” (laughs) It’s—as unimportant as it seems now—cause I laughed when I heard him. During the Christmas vacation, I went up to Aberdeen, Maryland, to spend two weeks during Christmas break with him. He was in officer candidate school. He had—at one time he had Undulant fever, which comes from drinking milk that hasn’t been pasteurized. While he lived in Deland, that happened. He was drinking milk that was not pasteurized. But he had gotten well. He had gotten over it. What happened when the stress of military life and officer candidate school, the Undulant fever came back. So, he got an honorable discharge and that was the end of his—but he volunteered. He tried to serve. He went through that period of training and everything. Then he came back, and by that time, he had closed his office and everything. Joe Midulla, the owner of the Tampa Wholesale Liquor, asked Tony to come and join him in that business. Tony became general manager, and he was with Tampa Wholesale with Joe Midulla. That was it. That’s what he worked.

MG: I want to come back and ask a couple of earlier questions. Tell me about your wedding. Where was it held? Did you have a honeymoon?

JP: Yes. (laughs) Tony and I concentrated on the honeymoon more than the wedding. We had a very small wedding, the families, at OLPH.

MG: OLPH?

JP: Our Lady of Perpetual Help, the church in Ybor City that stands still. [We were married] in 1941. We left for Mexico on our honeymoon. We took time off. Tony had saved, and he could afford it, so we stayed a month. We drove down there. In those days, there was—the last 50 miles of the trip were through the mountains and it was pretty
scary. I remembered the first time that I was driving in mountains, you know, and looking
over—he had taken that trip before with some friends, and they had been very scared.
And he said, “Are you scared?” I said, “Well, it is a little scary.” He was surprised that I
wasn’t more scared. We were there a month. We were in a 1937 Chevrolet, four-door. The
car was loaded, loaded, with souvenirs for the family and things for ourselves that we had
brought from Mexico. Mexico was so different then. I remember being in Puebla, and, for
two days, we hardly ate because, to me, everything tasted of goat. They used goat instead
of butter on the toast. You didn’t—there were so many things you didn’t dare eat. The
end result was I think I lived on pineapple or something like that. But we had a wonderful
time. That was it.

MG: You came back and taught.

JP: [I] kept teaching.

MG: Where were you teaching? What schools were you at?

JP: I started teaching in West Tampa. It was called MacFarlane School. It’s not
MacFarlane Park. There was a MacFarlane Park and a MacFarlane. After I had taught
there for a couple of years, I think it was, the school for the colored children burned
down, and so that school became a school for the black children. In those days, we used
the word colored, not black. The teachers, the faculty, all had to be transferred to different
schools. I was transferred to Orange Grove School, which I liked very much. Mrs. Kent,
Mary Kent, was the principal there. I hadn’t been there long, and they needed a science
teacher at Jefferson. One who had general science on her certificate. I did because of the
chemistry, and the physics, and all of that. They said that they were going to—being one
of the younger teachers I had no choice. They needed me at that school and so I was
transferred. Mrs. Kent did call in front of me and try to talk them into letting me stay at
Orange Grove, but they said no. They needed a—they didn’t have teachers that could
teach science, general science. I was there, and then I stopped because I was going to
have a child. I stayed out for two years. We were living with my parents. In those days,
girls stayed with their parents to live very often. Especially, my mother wanted me,
wanted us, to stay with them. She took care of my children while I taught school.

MG: You taught during the Depression.

JP: Yes.

MG: What was that like? Were there specific problems? Was it hard on you or hard on the
students during those years?

JP: Well, no. By this time, I’m talking about the 1940s. And during the [Great]
Depression was the, were the, years that I knew there were some people having a hard
time, but everything seemed so normal to me. I’m amazed. Looking back now, I’m
amazed that—I blame it on the fact that we had a small family. I was an only child. My
father had a—was making a good—earning a good salary. And, so, I never felt that my family had financial problems. I really didn’t.

MG: Teaching during, as you taught—Tony was born, Tony, Jr. was born, in what year?

JP: Paul was the firstborn.

MG: I’m sorry, I didn’t realize. So Paul was born first.

JP: Paul was born February 16, 1944.

MG: So you taught for about three years then, and then Paul was born. I didn’t realize Paul was the oldest. And [you] took a couple years, then, off and came back and started teaching again.

JP: Yes, then I started teaching at, oh my goodness, in Ybor City at Phillip Shore, how could I hesitate, I don’t believe it, Phillip Shore, and taught there for several years, and then I transferred to Memorial Junior High School where I taught—I taught 25 years. Actually, it was a little less because the years that I didn’t teach, I contributed to the retirement system. If you did that, it was your prerogative. If you wanted to, you got credit as if you were teaching because you were contributing like the teachers that were actually working. I had that credit, and I retired in 1964. Tony was born, our second son, July 6, 1946. They’re 29 months apart.

MG: Did the war—obviously, your husband was in the service for—how long was it before he was discharged?

JP: It wasn’t long. It was probably a total of nine months.

MG: Did the war affect you in any way? As a teacher, for example, did you have to deal with students who had lost loved ones?

JP: Oh, yes. I remember—oh, yes, there was a lot of talk in the schools. I remember the physical education class, the phys-ed teacher, because I was young, asked me—I think it was one period a day. The rest of the time I was indoors in the classroom but for the one period. Because of the war, girls were thinking of going into service and everything like that. She asked me if I would help with the phys-ed program. One of the things that she wanted to do was marching. We were marching. (laughs) It’s strange how, at the time, I accepted things without—you know, seemed perfectly normal, and then, looking back, I realize how different they were from the normal. At the time it just seemed, “Well that’s it.” I was marching with the girls. In fact, I remember I lost a couple of pounds from the marching, (laughs) which had made me very happy. So, yes, we were very much aware. Then, of course, the rationing—for years, I had those rationing coupons. While Tony was in the service, we did not sell his car, so I had two cars and gasoline was rationed. But I really needed to drive both cars. That seemed strange. Here I am with two cars. But we
knew that eventually he would be out of the service and we would need the two cars again. So we kept them.

**end of Side A**

MG: You had mentioned, when we left off, we were talking about rationing. You had the two cars that you were driving. What things were rationed and how did you make…

**pause in interview**

JP: Foods, certain foods. Shoes. That was the thing that bothered me because I liked shoes, and we were limited. Then, of course, I had the two boys, and children need new shoes because of the growth. Very often the shoes were not worn out, but they were small, they had become small so I needed coupons for their stamps, for their—and meats and certain things were—became scarce. I remember, at one point, onions became hard to get. I couldn’t believe we couldn’t find onions. I said, “I can’t cook without onions.” I like onions in my food, and I use them a lot. Yes, the tires, people were recapping tires. New tires were not available so we had to recap tires to keep going. Saving things, aluminum, contributing aluminum to several drives, different things. We were very—oh, the war was very much on our mind. It was a bad time. The loss of young men that we knew was sad. It was a relief. In June, I’ll never forget, when the D-Day, Normandy, and the war was over. It was wonderful to get back to our normal stage in life.

MG: Tell me about Tony and the business. He had come back. I guess he was only in the service until 1942? How did the business progress, and what sorts of things was he doing?

JP: As I said, he had closed his office so he didn’t go back to the insurance because when Joe asked him to go work at Tampa Wholesale, he did. He loved it, a natural-born salesman. He said, “My work is not work because I love doing this.” I said, “How different from me. If I try to sell, I feel like I’m imposing on people.” We laughed about the difference between his feeling about being a salesman and mine. He enjoyed his work. We traveled a lot with Joe and his wife Mary because Joe always wanted Tony to go, and of course that included me. We took trips to Spain several times, to Italy, to the wineries. We visited wineries in Spain and here in the United States, a Gallo Winery, different wineries in the United—very interesting. I enjoyed it very much. It was wonderful doing the thing that we loved best, traveling. He stayed with Tampa Wholesale until he retired. He was in his seventies when he retired. Of course, we remained good friends with the Midullas. Now Joe is gone. I speak with Mary, occasionally. We don’t get to see each other very often, but things change. It was a very good time. He enjoyed his work.

MG: When did he begin collecting materials related Tampa and Ybor City?
JP: I think on the day we were married. I remember that he saved Life magazine. He had stacks, piles of them, several years’ collection of Life magazine in the garage. Finally, we decided that we wanted to build our own home, which did not please my mother. My father didn’t say anything. But when we told them that we were going to build, my mother said, “But why? Why can’t you stay with us?” I said, “Mom, we would like to have our own home.” We had bought lots on Davis Islands.

MG: Had Tony, Jr. and Paul been born at this point?

JP: Yes. Paul was around four, more or less, and Tony [was] two, something like that. We went ahead and built our home on Davis Islands. We moved and we lived there until—the children were little. They grew up in that home until Tony passed away. I thought I would stay there. I didn’t—I said, “I’m staying here the rest of my life.” But after five years it got to be—the maintenance—it’s hard to—the yard was a worry, and the upkeep. It was hard to get people to come and do the work. What finally made me give up, the burglar alarm system broke down, and they came back and tried to fix it, and I was getting charged for calls, but the system was not working. I thought, I’m out of here. (laughs) I’m not going to put up with this. So I started looking around. I said, “Anyway, if I need to go to a nursing home, I need to go somewhere near my children.” Canterbury Towers [is] very close by so that’s when I decided that Canterbury Tower was the best place for me to go to.

MG: We talked—we had started talking, a little, about Tony and his collecting. He had the Life magazines.

JP: Yes, and when we moved—I’m sorry, I got off—

MG: That’s okay.

JP: I forgot to say, when we moved, when we built our home and moved, somehow, an oversight, I guess, he left the magazines. He was upset later. He said, “Why did I leave the collection that I’ll never be able to get all those issues again.” From way back and there were—different affairs that we’d go to, he’d keep the brochure, or whatever, concerning it that told about it. Little by little, there were boxes here and there in the house until it was tremendous.

MG: What kinds of things was he interested in doing, and did he take you? I know he was writing articles, and he coauthored a book.

JP: Yes, we went socially. We went to many of the Latin affairs, the dances and everything. In those days they would start at eleven-o-clock on Saturday nights because the stores on Seventh Avenue were open until ten. Naturally, dances had to start at eleven. We went to those during the first years of our marriage. Then, when we started a family, for a little while we didn’t go as much because the children were little. After they got a little older, we started going again.
MG: Did you ever help Tony with research or get involved in his collections of materials?

JP: Not really. Not really. I enjoyed listening to him and I became interested in the history of Tampa. And I thought to myself, “My goodness. I never really thought much about the history of Tampa.” I guess, being younger, I was more interested in other things than the history of Tampa, but I realized how much more he knew of the history of Tampa than I did. Then I made it my business to try and catch up with him (laughs) on the history. [He collected] pamphlets and pictures. I would notice that he would talk to the elderly people about Tampa, and then he would come and talk to me about it. By the time of his death, oh my goodness, there was a whole room, the den, boxes and boxes and boxes. We had a big table in the center of the room, and there were tables under it completely filling the gap, boxes on top, boxes in the closet. We could hardly—and a space just enough to walk around that whole room. He had already given some material to the University of South Florida. He knew that it would all come to you [USF]. I remember the librarian from here coming to our house and visiting with Tony and how he was interested in all the materials. Upon his death, before sending it out, I felt like I needed to go through it. Oh, my. I spent hours reading. I felt some things might be too personal. I might want to keep them myself. I would go in the den thinking that I would get a lot accomplished. I would start reading, and after two hours, I had read several things but hadn’t really made any progress. It was—and the boys helped, too. They went through the materials looking through things. Of course, the bulk of it all came, just a few personal pictures and things like that that we kept.

MG: I know Tony developed a real interest in the relationship between Tampa and Cuba.

JP: Yes he did.

MG: You traveled to Cuba on several occasions.

JP: Several occasions, yes.

MG: Tell me about those trips. Did you meet people and dignitaries?

JP: Yes. On some occasions I did. He did take a couple of trips, at least twice, with the Rotary Club from Tampa. I forget which ones I went. I went to most of them. But there were somewhere Tony went with a group of Rotarians. See, I’d almost forgotten this. I haven’t thought about it in a long time. It’s bringing things from past to mind. Rotarians, a group of Rotarians came to Tampa and one especially, Federico Morales, I remember very well, and his wife. The Rotarians from Tampa were invited to visit in their homes in Cuba, and in their clubs, their tennis clubs, which were beautiful, beautiful clubs in Cuba. We were invited to visit those. That’s when Tony became so interested and wrote several articles about the war of independence and José Martí, which, of course, as children, José Martí didn’t mean a thing to us. I’m sure it did in the homes of Cuban families. I bet the children had heard the name José Martí because the Cubans worshipped José Martí. He’s
their hero. Coming from a Spanish home, no. I had not heard of José Marti. Tony did and became interested and wrote articles. He interviewed elderly Cubans in Tampa so he could know more about their history.

MG: As I recall, Tony received an award in Cuba?

JP: Yes.

MG: Do you remember this—I wish I could remember the name of the award, but do you remember the events surrounding it?

JP: I think it was Carlos Miguel de Céspedes [Dr. Carlos Miguel de Céspedes Ortiz]. I believe that was it. We went to Cuba when he received that honor. Oh, it was on the radio in Cuba and everything. Oh, and then, when he became honorary mayor of Tampa—of Ybor City, Alcalde of Ybor City, in Cuba they took it to mean that he was the mayor of the city, which he was not. It was just an honorary—just a group that organized to have fun, really. He was on—and, from then, they did—it continued. They had a mayor of Ybor City. I think they still do, don’t they?

MG: I’m not sure if Ybor City has its own mayor. It might have an honorary mayor.

JP: It’s just honorary, oh yes. Not a separate mayor. Honorary. It was just a social, fun thing.

MG: And he won—I know that Tony won several awards here in Tampa. And, of course, there’s a statue for him.

JP: Yes.

MG: How did the statue come about?

JP: That was when he passed away. Friends talked to me about it and to my sons, who were of course grown men by this time. [They] said, “We would like to honor Tony. We have a group, a large group, who are interested in having a statue of Tony. E.J. Salcines was very helpful in that, as were several others. Right this minute I can’t—E.J. is the only one I can think of, but there were several others involved. They collected the money, and the statue was made.

MG: Was there a ceremony?

JP: Oh, yes.

MG: Tell me about that.
JP: Very nice ceremony and the unveiling of the statue, we had a large group of friends. There was a reception in the museum, in the patio. I thought it was lovely. There is a tape of that. To tell you the truth, I don’t know which one of my sons has the tape of that. I’m sure that I don’t have it any more. I had to give so many things to my children for lack of space. I just don’t have it in the apartment. Coming from a larger [house], downsizing, you have to get rid of a lot of things. They had a beautiful tape made of that. It was my daughter-in-law’s father, B.G. Smith, who made the tape. He’s very good with that sort of thing, photography, taping, sound effects. He’s excellent. He’s not a professional, but he’s as good as any professional, and he made a beautiful tape of the occasion.

MG: Ybor City has changed so much since you were a young girl.

JP: Oh, absolutely.

MG: What are some of the most important things that, when you think about Ybor City today and what it was like?

JP: The homes are gone. The families are gone. We’ve all scattered. Those of my generation, many of them have [moved] to Davis Islands, some of them to different parts of the city. Quite a number moved to Davis Islands. It became a—well, it was a growing area, a new area that was just building up. When we moved to Davis Islands, there were very few homes on it. On our block, where we built our home, there were only two other homes. We had the whole lake and the whole—in fact, Paul and Tony thought it was their private park.

MG: Why do you think [there was] the decline? Were some things that you remember that you thought were the reasons people were leaving Ybor City?

JP: Well, oh, yes, first of all, the decline of the cigar industry. The cigar workers—they went into making cigars by machine. Immediately, that cut off thousands of cigar workers. I would probably say that was the beginning of it, the families moving away, everything—for a while, Ybor City seemed like it was destined to become nothing, just a few—El Pasaje and the cigar factories that were left but not much more than that, really. Now, it’s gone to a New Orleans (laughs)—Seventh Avenue is more like New Orleans with a nightclub—which I—I’m a little disappointed. I was hoping there would be more of a mixture, businesses, maybe some museums, a nice mixture. But it didn’t work out that way. So far it—I think maybe there’s a little beginning of rebuilding on Fourth Avenue and Second Avenue. Those old homes, some of those, have been restored, and they look very nice. I understand a lot of young people are living there. So, maybe [there’s] a little bit of revival for Ybor City.

MG: The clubs are still active, some stronger than others. Are you still active with any of the clubs?
JP: No. No. In my younger days, I took part, at times, not a whole lot, but from time to time, in plays that were held at the Centro Español. I was surprised to see in *The Tampa Cigarmakers*, that there’s a picture, when I was looking through the book, there’s a picture of a group of young women from the Centro Español, and I’m in that picture. It was such a surprise (laughs) going back to that time.

MG: I have a few questions. We’re nearing the end here, but I had several questions for you. Tony was such an avid collector. Do you have any funny or memorable stories about him collecting? Things that he would bring home or people that he would introduce you to as he was collecting?

JP: No, I remember I admired him for his patience. I don’t know that I would have been as nice. He had so many, many calls on the telephone, so many people coming to the house. [There were] students who were writing a thesis for their diplomas, reporters constantly calling for information, and he was so patient. Sometimes I felt like [saying] I want your attention, Tony, and you don’t have time. I remember more than once, there were groups at our house, TV men, doing articles and taking pictures at our house, and Tony was always glad to do it. So many times since he passed away, I have met people, strangers to me, and they’ve told me, Mrs. Pizzo, I’ve been in your home; I went to your house to talk with Tony. I called him and asked him if I could come by and talk with him because I’m interested in history, and he said, yes come by. That’s true. Many people would come to the house that I didn’t know to talk to Tony about history, whether they were students working on their thesis for graduation or reporters.

MG: I know that’s how Gary Mormino met you. He speaks very fondly [of you].

JP: We were very fond of him and his wife, and I’m happy that they’re moving on to St. Petersburg. At the same time, I’ll see him even less. We’re very fond of them, and I know that they were of Tony. They’ve always been very, very friendly, very warm toward me.

MG: Several honors we had mentioned that had come because of Tony’s work, but I think behind every husband is a wonderful wife, so I think there are honors for you, too. They named a school after Tony, which is right around the corner, right on the USF campus. What do you remember of…[interrupted]

JP: I have a little story that just happened. The night before last, I felt like I ate a lot at Canterbury. I don’t know whether I should be taking time for this story, whether it’s worth it or not. Anyway, I’ll tell you, and you can delete it. I went out in the parking lot. I said, “I’m going to take a little walk—make up for the—use up a few calories.” I saw a young black girl next to a little red car. The hood was up. She had a bottle of something, and she was getting ready to pour, I thought it was oil, into her car. I stopped in my walk and said, “Aren’t you great; you know how to take care of your car.” I said, “Who taught you?” She spoke with, what I think was, a Jamaican accent. I think she must be from Jamaica or one of the islands. She said, “My daddy taught me, and my brothers. I watched them.” She said, “Oh, I can take care of my car. I can change the oil. I can
change the tires. I can take care of my car pretty well.” I said, “You work in the Health Center, don’t you?” She said, “Yes.” She said, “Do you live there?” I said, “Yes. I’m Mrs. Pizzo. I live right there at Canterbury Tower. Of course, I’m not in the Health Center. That’s a nursing home. I’m in where they have other residents.” She said, “Pizzo? My son goes to Pizzo Elementary School.” I thought, “Small world.”

Once in a while, I have met people, just casually, [and] it would turn out that they had children attending Pizzo Elementary School. That always makes me feel so good because it’s a wonderful school. We visited there when it first opened. We enjoyed it so much. We’re so proud of the statue and of the school being named after him. It means a lot to us, to our family.

MG: You and Tony did so much for USF. The Pizzo collection in Special Collections is one of the most important, if not the most important, collection of Tampa history.

JP: Oh, that’s wonderful.

MG: We’ll take you up because I want to show you. I know it’s been a while since you’ve been here so we’ll go visit [USF Libraries] Special Collections.

JP: All right. It’s been a long time.

MG: It takes up a lot of room in Special Collections so I can imagine how much room it took up in the house.

JP: Oh, yes.

MG: Of course, the naming of the school for him [was important], and we have a lecture series which we are going to do every fall in Tony’s honor, a lecture about Florida immigrant and ethnic history. That’s something we’ll continue to work with you and your sons—

JP: There was the one, they called it Tony Pizzo’s Tampa. Have you seen that?

MG: Yes, the book.

JP: No, this is a film.

MG: Oh, this is the film. I’m sorry.

JP: It was taped by Channel 16. Cezar Medina was in it, oh gosh, a lot of names that should come to my mind immediately but don’t. There were many people that took part in that film. I guess Tony was in every one of them. You do know which one I’m talking about?
MG: I do know. I’m sorry, I confused that with the book that he had done with Gary Mormino.

JP: No, that was before. In fact, I don’t think Gary was even in Tampa at the time. He may have been, but it was not *Tampa, the Treasure City*. It’s a different thing. *Tampa, the Treasure City* is the book that Tony and Gary coauthored. This film—

MG: Was before that.

JP: Yes. USF, Channel 16.

MG: Very good.

JP: They did that.

MG: Well, as you look—one of the things we haven’t talked about is a little bit about your sons. We know a little bit about them when they were little. We know Paul went on to become an attorney and Tony, Jr. a physician.

JP: A plastic surgeon.

MG: Plastic surgeon. Were they good kids when they were young? Do you have any stories that you want to share with them and share with their—

JP: I think so. I really do. Sometimes I wonder, is it that I have forgotten? Because it seems like they were no problem. I just can’t remember having problems with them. They were healthy kids, occasionally an upset tummy or something like that. The chicken pox, they did have. It was Tony that came home with the chicken pox. Then Paul got it from him. Some siblings just fight and quarrel constantly. Either I’ve glossed it over or something, but it seems to me like there was not much of that. Paul was good with Tony. I wanted him to be like an adult, to be just perfect with Tony. I would tell Paul, “Be patient with your little brother, honey. He wants to be like you,” which he did. Tony just worshipped Paul, as younger brothers often do, I think. I remember telling Paul, “Be patient with him; he’s younger than you.” They really didn’t have problems like so many, often, teenagers. It just seems like my life has been fairly easy, honestly. I’m thankful for that.

MG: Andy, do we have some questions about the restaurant industry that we didn’t cover?

Andy Huse: No, we chatted a little bit. I found out most of what I needed to.

MG: Good. Well, as we kind of bring this thing to a close, you and your husband have left an enormous legacy both here at USF, in terms of the school and the collection, and to Tampans in general with all the collecting that Tony did.
JP: Thank you.

MG: As you look into the future and the great, great grandchildren that you probably won’t know—

JP: Excuse me, but I realize that first, it was my children. I prayed that I would see them grown, see them graduate from high school, college, get married, and I was lucky enough to see that happen. Then came the grandchildren, and then you go through the same cycle. You will pray that you will see them grow and graduate. I’ve seen the two older grandchildren through that. They’re older. Then Tony’s children are the youngest set of grandchildren. I’m going through the same thing, and I realize that what it is, we all want to remain alive so we can see more. Of course, we know it can’t happen, but that’s really always the interest, the desire to see the new generation.

MG: Are there words of wisdom? Things that you would want your grandchildren and great grandchildren to remember about you and Tony?

JP: Gosh, I never thought about that. It’s just that we love them very much. To Tony and me, our sons were the most important thing in life. Of course, number one was an education. From early on we told them, we don’t have a big business to leave you or anything like that, but we will make it possible for you to get a good education so take advantage of it, and they did. I think they are enjoying a happy life with their families. I think, probably, education is one of the things that stands out in my mind that parents need to instill in their children, that an education is so important. You enjoy life more, not only financially, but because of your appreciation of things. You appreciate things more, art, whatever, traveling. I guess that’s one of the things I would want to pass on to my grandchildren.

MG: Very nice. I’m really glad that you were with us today.

JP: Thank you. I’ve enjoyed being here. But, like I said, you see, there’s nothing unusual [about my life].

MG: I think you had a fascinating life. I know that your sons and your grandchildren and your great grandchildren are going to be glad.

JP: It was a happy life. I’m very thankful. Thankful that I’ve enjoyed good health and I’m here at this age. I never expected that.

MG: I hope you’re with us for many, many more years.

JP: Well thank you.

*end of interview*