



Bianca Pirro
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"I'm Bianca Pirro. I live in Babylon. I taught in the Brentwood School System for thirty-four years, and I'm retired. It's a very wonderful feeling. There are many, many activities for people like myself who are retirees in a very high age group. Oh, you might as well know my age too. I'm ninety-three years old, so that I hope to make a hundred, if the ONE above us will allow it. I still love teaching. I still think about it. I enjoyed what I did. My mother used to call me 'Biantina'. Then she knew that Bianca meant white. So she used to call me 'Whitie' or 'Whitina'. Most of the time it was, 'Whitie, Where you going? Blah, blah blah.' Okay! I guess when she was reproaching me for something or other, she'd use Biantina. Otherwise it was Whitie. I could tell the mood she was in. But she was a very busy woman. She had thirteen children. So, it wasn't one or two children with which to divide your time. She had to divide and spread it thirteen ways. We had a very lovely life. We had a very poor life. Poverty we had. We had a good deal of it. It was very hard sometime to get bread on the table, but Mama went out, and she bought flour and water, and we had bread. She made the bread. 'Knock, knock, knock, on the door, who could it be?' Mr. Cohen our baker who was only a half a block away from where we lived at that time in Bensonhurst, and Mr. Cohen said, 'Mrs. Pirro, I don't see you in my store anymore. Is there something wrong with my bread'? So, my mother said, something -- bread, she didn't quite understand -- and then she thought about it a moment and realized it was for the fact that she wasn't really going into his store anymore. So she says, 'No, not something wrong, the thing that's wrong is that my children don't have jobs, so it's very hard for me to manage with the little that comes in, and since its' bread, I make my own bread. 'You do Mrs. Pirro? 'Where do you go to buy your yeast?' 'The grocery store.' 'Un un, no more. You come to me

and I give you my yeast'. So, Mr. Cohen used to give us his yeast. 'Mrs. Pirro, you could come in my store and take as much bread as you need'. Exactly what he told her. Then he said, 'You can pay me when you can.' So my mother said, 'I wouldn't do that to you Mr. Cohen. Right now, I can make the bread and it's working out a little bit better.' At least we had bread on the table. That was one of the hardships for everybody when you were in poverty. You'd have to make two cents match two cents otherwise the table was empty. But she was good. She was very, very good."

"She was a very strong, terribly strong, vegetarian. Vegetables were in abundance at home. And, it was even so good that the vegetable man was also near Mr. Cohen's Bakery that was only half a block away from where we lived in Bensonhurst." He used to be a half truck vendor. He had his vegetables in the half truck and you bought it from the street. He went down and he used to honk his horn, and the people would stop and buy from him. Every time he came to our house it was at the end of the day, and he had to clean out his truck. He knew we had a large family there. So, he said, 'Mrs. Pirro, take whatever I have there.' It was good, good vegetables but only like in the lettuce, the outer leaves would fall off and when they did, he had all those leaves in the vegetable truck. And at the end of the day he didn't want to go home with it. There was too much so he said, 'Mrs. Pirro, you could have this. I won't charge you.' She said, 'You really wouldn't?' That was good because Mama didn't have the money, since it wasn't coming in at all. How we ever lived that way I don't understand. She managed very, very nicely.

"I was born in 1911. I'm ninety-three years old. My mother had thirteen. Children. I was number eleven (She, pointing to her sister Italia), was number thirteen. My sister is the baby; the baby of the family. All my other brothers and sisters, my mother and father are all gone. We're the last of the family now."

Well, with thirteen children –you didn't need friends. There were friends but not the kind of friends that you would get to feel like sisters and brothers. "Yes, we were very close, and whatever we had we shared, and if we didn't have we waited until we had, and then we shared. We would wait until we were able to. She had a bowl. I think it was, at the dinner table. Yeah! She used to put all her change; the money that she needed in it for the house, you know, we all took from it as long as there was something to take. If there wasn't anything, she said, you'd just have

to wait until there was. But, we never over did it. We never took useless money just for the sake of taking it. We weren't that kind of a family. Well, the Depression I remember. I couldn't get a job because I had two degrees under my arms. I had a Bachelors Degree and a Masters Degree in Mathematics. I couldn't get a job at all. When I did I get a job I was looking for in Mathematics I got a job that took me two and a half hours to get there and two and a half hours to get home, which meant that I had to use the Long Island Railroad which meant that some of the money was used in car fare only. So one of the co-teachers that was teaching at the time I was teaching there said, 'Bianca you're silly wasting all five hours of the day to come and go to your place of business. Why don't you rent a room?' So I rented a room and that was a little bit better. But then I was away from my family and I had never been away from my family. And when I did I didn't like it at all. I missed the family terribly. I used to go to a woman that lived in a moderately good housing compound and her mother was being taken care of by a nurse in the –what do you call it – in the apartment of the nurse around the clock, so it must have been a terminal kind of condition, just waiting, so this woman had a room that was Mama's and the woman that I knew spoke to her and spoke to me she said she has a room and she'll be glad to rent it. I said whatever you decide will be all right. So I got the room for \$10 a week. That was better than spending \$21.00 every three or four days for the train fare and the time slotted at that particular time. But other than that it was great. I liked the job. I was teaching High School Mathematics to children in Hollis."

You come from an Italian family is that right? "Yes." Are both your parents Italian? "All the time." What was your mother's maiden name? "Filachetta Di Napolie. Her father's name was translated --- 'Little Cherub', Cerobinno Pirro, yeah, my father. He came from near the airport in Italy—Santo Viero. Yes, I've been there, and they're known for their wine. So, like tourists—we went to the liquor shop. Right? 'We would like one bottle Santa Vera wine'. 'Lady, You're three days late. As soon as it came in it was gone.' 'What do you mean – three days late?' 'No more, I don't have it. It's all gone. So it must have been a good wine. Very good."

What was your mother good at? What did your mother like to do? "My mother was a dress designer for a woman on Fifth Avenue. She made all our clothes –my mother's, my brother's, my sisters, my father, hers. Yeah! She did so much of it and you see her doing so much of it at home that you kind of lean

toward it. When I was fourteen years old, I made my first suit and everybody thought I got it from the shop. I didn't. I made it myself. So, I had a lot of scrap. I didn't use a lot of material. I made a hat to go with it. I made a bag to go with it. 'Where did you buy the hat?' 'I didn't buy it. I made it', and they looked at me as if—'Oh, she's such a liar'."

What did you learn from your Dad? "My Dad? Oh, he was a very quiet man. I think I loved my father a little bit more than I loved my mother. My mother had to share her love, because she was taking care of children. My dad only came in when he did and sat down and was part of the family and all that. He was a very quiet man. You had to kind of draw it from Daddy. He was very different from mom. So when I was in High School I think, I was thinking of what I wanted to do. So I took my father aside and said, 'I want to talk with you'. He said, 'Go ahead, talk,' I said, 'Pop, I want to be a dancer, and I want to be a painter.' That's exactly what I told my father. So, he looked at me and he says, 'Yeah. It's a good field, painting and dancing.' He said, 'You know, it's good work, but it's very hard to find that work.' He said, 'What else did you like?' 'What about school did you like?' I said, 'Yeah, I liked Algebra'. I really did. I was in love with Algebra in the first five minutes. So, he said, 'There's room for teachers. They need more teachers.' 'How about Algebra?' 'You know Daddy, I think I'll work towards that'. I felt that becoming a dancer was very unreliable and unproductive on my part. So, I went into teaching. I liked Mathematics. I liked my teacher. Miss Marchin was her name. Five minutes after I had Algebra, that was it. I wanted to be an Algebra teacher. She was very much like my mother. My mother is about five feet, very little, wore her hair up in a roll, to here and another roll to hold it on. She must have been eighty-eight pounds like my mother and very close to five feet. Okay! So, I went home and told my dad. 'I can't do the others but I think I'll go into teaching mathematics.' Because I liked Miss Marchin, and I was very comfortable with the subject."

What was life like in your family with all those children? "Control. It was all about control. My brothers had little sisters and little sisters had to be protected and taken care of. Saturday morning my mother used to chase all the children out of the house. She wanted the house to herself. She did a lot of work in the house. Right? So when we went with my brother, he was a Fordham man: football. He had three girls in his team. Believe me; the boys all missed the three girls when they weren't there. He was very, very good. The only thing I couldn't take in football,

was that ball coming at me (she gestured) -- this way. I used to run in any direction except – (she accidentally knocked over her glass of water as the screen went black until the water was wiped up. “I did it. I’m sorry”. When we were young, my brother was a pre-med student, and at that time there was a depression. Money wasn’t there so he couldn’t follow through with pre-med. So he became a chemist – a research man with the Navy. He was a Navy man. Okay, that’s my brother. But Saturday, my mother was the word. Listen to mama, he had to take Italia, and I had another sister, Mafalda, and me, Bianca, and keep them out of the house. Just Saturday, keep them out of the house. Well, Freddie had forty boys from the street we lived on in Bensonhurst. He was a Navy man; and he had a nautical club of these forty boys. The house we lived in in Bensonhurst had a wadayacall, a basement. But the basement was only one foot below the street level, so it had four foot windows but it was another floor really but it was really the under part of the floors up and down. So he had his forty boys with his nautical training and he was sixteen years old when he had this particular club that he oversaw. He was the Commander. But he couldn’t over command my mother. There was Mafalda, that was the girl between us, (Italia and Bianca), and his mother said, ‘You take three of them with you wherever you go -as Bianca’s voice became deep throated and gruff sounding as I imagine she remembered her own mother’s voice having been- and you can come back whenever you like, but it has to be late. So we were out, and he used to take us to the Park that was about six or eight blocks away from where we lived in Bensonhurst on 18th Avenue and they had a small Park and it was interesting. They had enough ‘fixed’ items on which boys and girls could play so we went there and we took our books and we did our reading, we talked with the other boys and girls who went to school and that sort of thing. That was it. He was good my brother, Oh, football was the best one, of course he got his football team with him and we practiced in the Park. We caught the ball very well. I know I did. But if that ball was coming to me this way, I would run that way. Ha, ha. I still remember them. ‘You’re going the wrong way’. ‘No I’m not. I’m not going after that ball.’ If it bounced, then I got it. I ran like – heaven help me and give me more breath. That was it.”

“My first school was PS 110 that went to the 6th Grade. Then I went to an intermediate one that went from the 7th through the 9th Grade. Crawlene’s Junior High. The next one was Bay Ridge High School. Bay Ridge I didn’t like it. I wanted to go to College and Hunter was the school I was going to attend. I was trying to get

in with a scholarship. Okay. I did very well in school. I had the grades. I didn't like Bay Ridge HS because I don't live in an all girls society. That was the thing that really burned me up. Here's my brother putting me into that school and I was very bashful. I couldn't even say hello to my own cousins because they were boys. Then I had an older sister who was disagreeable she was never agreeable, now that I think back—oh, never mind. Oh, the best part. I must remember this, we had four bedrooms in two apartments in lower Manhattan. We had the whole floor to ourselves. There were two apartments with eight rooms. My father bought extremely large double beds and we had two girls in each and my two brothers and they both got married so there were no worries just girls, fine. I had my sister Mary. My sister Mary must have been about five feet and very small from here to her waist and very large from her waist down to her knees. Okay! We slept in a double bed and it was soft. It was very soft. Okay? I'm on that side, she's on this side. She's pushing me away. Never realizing her 140 couldn't cope with my 98 and I'm rolling off. I used to hold the edge of the bed –the wire of the bed –to avoid being pushed. She never realized she was the one that was doing it. You couldn't even explain it to her. What I used to do -- there was a wire from the ledge in the spring of the mattress. So I used to hang on to this particular wire. But when I was asleep believe me, I wasn't holding on to anything. Here I roll, so she wakes and shakes me – get away from me – I had no intention of getting anywhere near her, she never accepted the fact that she was the one who was causing it. Oh, in the summertime, I was so happy when she got married. I didn't have to worry about it anymore. It was a riot. Oh, it was a riot. But that was funny. She never realized that she was the one that was doing it. I was only 98 lbs she must have been 130 or 140 lbs."

Did you like attending Hunter College? *"Oh, yes. Very much. Did both my Graduate and Undergraduate work there. I worked toward my goals. I worked very, very hard to get those grades. I took classes at Farmingdale. That's right I'm sorry. Yeah! Yeah."* How did you come to teach at Brentwood? It's a long way from Manhattan, where Hunter is located. *"Oh! Oh, I remember."* They had, 1945, the war ended. There was a high influx of children. There was a terrific baby boom. Brentwood was the only school district in the United States that was expanding as rapidly as it did. Every two years there was another building, which meant they had to fill that building with children, and they did, because the boys came back from fighting in the army and the war. It was 1945, and that's how it happened. In other words, you heard about teaching openings in Brentwood and you applied.

“And their prices (salary offers,) were a little bit better than in the City too.” “I taught in New York City for a very short time. Yeah! Yeah. Mathematics. I taught in Hollis, New York with Cloistered nuns.” “Oh, and I taught at the Sacred Heart Academy in Yonkers. Yeah. That was it. Cloistered nuns. They don’t go out into the world, but the grounds were beautiful; better than the Palisades and Prospect Park or anything...Very, very beautiful. Now, the school that had the nuns teaching in that private school, let’s say that this is the main street in Yonkers, this is the sidewalk, this part of the sidewalk had a building that belonged to the cloistered nuns. That was the school they were using for the children that came to that particular private school. The teacher that was teaching mathematics at that particular time became ill. They needed a teacher. So, I wanted a job and I couldn’t find a teaching job but this teaching job was two and a half hours away from home. So I finally ended up boarding in one of the apartments whose mother was being taken care of by a nurse around the clock. So I guess she was terminal. She lived in the apartment of the nurse that meant the daughter had an empty room that was half a block away from the school where I was teaching. So that worked a little bit better for me. But I didn’t like being away from home. Now, Rozie was a very strong and determined woman. She was a schoolgirl like myself, and I needed a job because I was taking this job as summer work; summer courses; to build up my own record. So I get a notice, from Rozie (I’m in class), and the Dean of Early Childhood, of New York State Department of Education at New Paltz, was in my Building where I was going to College. He was teaching there. So Rozie came over to me and she said, ‘Bianca, you didn’t get a job yet, you need a job’. She got a job. Her job was in Brentwood. So she says, ‘They need teachers in Brentwood.’ So I heard that and I’m ready to go. But you had to go at that moment, because the Principal was outside the classroom door, because he needed them now because September was coming soon. So I asked the lady if I may leave, because I have the offer of a job at the same time Rozie was the girl that came in to tell us that the Principal was waiting to talk to Bianca for the job. The teacher I had was the Dean of Early Childhood. Okay. She must have thought that Rozie was trying to get me out of class because we were going to fiddle-diddle outside, Right? Okay. It was nothing like that. She said, she told the woman. She was very outspoken. She said, ‘She has no job. ‘The girl (which was true)’, she said, ‘The girl has no job.’ She said, ‘There’s a Principal outside that is willing to talk to her. All he wants to do is tell her when to come to see him. That’s all it was.’ She wouldn’t let me come out of the room. She thought I was being pulled out because we were ‘gonna hanky-pank. I’m

*sure of that. I'm sure of it. You know she's in front of the class and she's the Dean, she realized she had to give in otherwise the impression the kids would have was a real lousy one and she would be no favorite at all. So, I talked to Dr. Hoyt and he said, 'I'll be in my office.' 'But I'll have classes until 5 o'clock'. 'I'll wait for you from five o'clock on. Come to my Office.' That's all he said to me. And he left. I went back and I sat down. I went in there with Bruno Munari's, 'Lorry Driver.' In those days you didn't have unfolded books. You take out one page and it folds, stays put and it folds and stays right there. This came from Italy ---Bruno Munari. -- 'The Lorry Driver' and I had that book. Munari was also a significant contributor in the field of children's books and toys, later in his life, though he had been producing books for children since the 1930s. He used textured, tactile surfaces and cut-outs to create books that teach about touch, movement, and color through kinesthetic learning or tactile learning is a learning style in which learning takes place by the students carrying out physical activities, rather than listening to a lecture or watching demonstrations. Kinesthetic intelligence, which was originally coupled with tactile abilities, was defined and discussed in Howard Gardner's *Frames Of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* in 1983.*

"You should have seen her eyes popping up as if 'What is this?' and she thought I was really---no I was prepared, I wouldn't have gone to class if I wasn't prepared, believe me. No I wouldn't. I wasn't that kind of a student. But she was really surprised. A girl is showing her a new kind of book. They didn't have folding books in those days. But they did in Italy. The book came from Italy. But that was funny, Yea!"

Did you have an interview with Dr. Hoyt? "Oh yeah!" He didn't even talk with me. 'What's your name?' 'Bianca.' 'Have you taught before?' 'Yes. Two years at the Sacred Heart Academy.' I thought teaching in a private school didn't mean anything in a public school, but it did. If you got credit for the time you taught your scale went up. I taught in North Elementary and then Northwest. When the Sustrin Twins came to Northwest they wanted to stay together so they moved me up to Twin Pines. (You can hear Italia's voice off screen helping Bianca with her memory back then she is saying---- "in another school they had to build up the staff in New York City, we worked in Spanish Harlem, you name it we worked in all areas. We were there. We were used to going from school to school. It didn't matter where. We were there. 'Cause she had a car --- get there by car." So did you work in

many, many different buildings in Brentwood? *“Yes. North, Northwest, Twin Pines and Pine Park, yeah....She remembers them. I don’t remember them that well. There was a Teachers Association in Brentwood when we came here. It wasn’t very strong but they tried. We didn’t get involved with it in the beginning; just what they gave us. We went to their meetings; that was it and they told us how far they went and what we should do and that sort of thing. Other than that I wasn’t in any part of it. No. No. I was eventually an Alternate”.*

Was that when you first met Jack and Dot Zuckerman? *“Yeah! I met him with the Teachers Association. We go to the....they have us come once a year to the.....opening of school I think. We have a tea. We see Mr. Zuckerman again, haven’t seen him----we’re all growing old. It’s nice.”*

You taught altogether for thirty-four years and you retired in 1978. You’ve had some time to get used to it. *“Oh, I got used to it on the very first day. It hasn’t changed much. I don’t remember our salary scale but it was a good one. We were paid more than in other districts. I had offer’s to work in Manhattan because I had taught there. The salary schedules there were nothing like in Brentwood.”*

Why did you decide it was time for you to stop teaching? *“Well, I think it was because I wanted time to be by myself; for my own pleasures. I think it was that more than anything else. Teaching for thirty-four years; not that I disliked it after 34 years, but I felt I had done enough. That was the reason.”*

What did you love about teaching? *“Children. I loved the children. I had a good time with them. Even teaching them mathematics I had a good time with them. Then they didn’t have any grades. Kindergarten. Well, I’m one of thirteen children so children don’t disturb me at all. So here I am teaching Kindergarten – mathematics to kindergarten. I liked the Kindergarten best because I really didn’t work. I played with those children - a lot. They learned a lot. Wow! Every schoolteacher in the building knew Bianca Pirro’s children. “Only mine. They didn’t know the child’s name – only mine – I had my own method and I had my own goals. I wanted two things from every Kindergarten child that was five years old. I wanted them to be polite and I wanted them to consider other people. Those are the two things that I aimed at all the time; all the time. Whenever they found my children in their classroom they say, ‘Bianca, I have your child in my classroom.’”*

and I'd say, 'Who?' and they'd say, 'It is your child. No One else does what you do.' Politeness and thoughtfulness, kindness, helpfulness and they were only Kindergarden children – five years old. Oh, they were beautiful.

Were you always a reader? "Not tremendously. Like in High School, there was Edgar Rice Burroughs. Not as important to me as it was when I got into college. I was assigned to write a paper on an authors work. But you had to write on a book that you had read. I enquired of my teacher. 'May I write about the work of Edgar Rice Burroughs? I had read some of his books and felt I could do a good job on writing about his.' 'No!' That meant I'd have to choose another author. Now I see Dumar, Dumar, Dumar, okay, Alexandre Dumar. I'd never read any of his work. I pulled the book out and I read Dumar, but Dumar's pages run into the 500's. Burroughs pages run into about two hundred...a big difference. Okay. I still did it and she was really surprised that someone picked up a book like Dumas to make a report on. But I laughed to myself when I did it. Try to fool me with your book? I'll fool you with my book. See how you like it. But she liked the report. I put a lot of time into it. I don't remember the title at all."

Was there something you would like to have seen accomplished, something you would like to have done before you left the classroom that hadn't happened by the time you retired? "Well, when it came to the children, I liked the children. When I didn't have them, I felt sorry. But other than that I think we all go through that stage. You're accustomed to that particular kind of living. Suddenly it's cut out of your life and it makes a big difference, and the adjusting was nice too."

Did you have heroes in your life as you were growing up? "No, but my mother did. My mother loved an Italian wrestler. Oh, what was his name? -- Morocco. I used to see her watching him. The more I watched the more I was like my mother. I began to like that type of a person. Yeah, I like him very much. Really. I read his books and life story, yeah! In my time they had the actors and actresses. Katherine Hepburn. Who did they, the actors and actresses? "The male... Oh, I know who I liked – the fat one, English, Charles Laughton. I liked him. Oh, what made it even better, we were coming home, from "Circle in the Square", and when we were walking on that particular area, we saw someone that to me, looked like Charlie Laughton. Right? So he's coming this way, and I'm going this way, and the more I looked the more he looked. And then he must have thought, this girl I have

to tell her, so he says, 'Yes', which means, he's Charlie Laughton, and I said, 'Thank You.' I said, 'Goodnight!' He was cute! "

Let me ask you for someone who is not here to ask the question. Someone who is just beginning their teaching career and as somebody who after thirty four years is now in a position to look back and offer one piece of key advice from all their years of teaching experience to that first year teacher -- what would you tell that new teacher? *"That's easy. Love your children. They'll work with you. They're not like the grown-ups. They're already stagnant – unchanging. It's got to be this (gesturing with her hands), not this. You can't be this, (repeating) it's got to be like this...Very different. They'll adjust. And they'll be more enjoyable too.*

When you left teaching you said you missed the people. *"Oh, yeah! I missed those children; two thousand children I had. All mine for five hours a day. They were mine and they knew Miss Pirro, when all the other teachers got my children, they didn't know the names of the child but they knew they came from Miss Pirro."*

What have you been doing as a retired person now that you are not any longer in the classroom? *"I go to shows, I go to plays, I go to the theatre, I go shopping, I go to gymnastics, Oh, I go to weightlifting, I go to that too, yeah, whatever we could get and it's all without cost, I don't pay a penny for any of this sort of thing (hand gesturing), former teachers, no I didn't pay any money, not that I didn't have to give, but I couldn't see going for this (doing exercise) and paying for it. Oh, and dancing I did before and I still do. I can't last as long but I do".* What kind of dance do you love to do? *"The Peabody. Faster the better". I had one lady when we went to the dance and when I got there, we just got there and you know, I'm taking my coat off, and putting it down and I hear – the Peabody and I'm ready and able, this little lady comes over and I look at her, I just take her arm, and we dance – beautiful follower, no problem at all, you could do anything with the lady, when we finished she says, 'I really enjoyed that', and I said 'so did I. I'm sorry I was so abrupt about it.' But she says, 'You weren't. I'm glad you took me.' Yeah! But I love a Peabody. Wow! This is a very different world today from the world all of us grew up in.*

Do you have any point of view about what you see around you in the world and how children are being raised today? *I don't think there's enough to occupy*

young people today. I think of where I lived, when I was a little girl. The only place we had to go, to do something that we would like –that was the Clark House – it was like the YWCA kind of thing, and they taught the girls to sew, to cut, to make their own dresses, really in the arts, really, really good. I don't think that there's enough of those things to do for people today. For young people today. They need it today because there's so many other things that are going on today for the thrill of it. You don't have to live for a thrill. If you have to live for a thrill there's something wrong with you. Then and there...you don't have to live for thrills. You get pleasure from living. And if you live a good life you get even greater pleasure that you can remember. I see these young people. We went to Alaska –Anchorage, mind you. We had to go from where we were, I don't know where it was but we were going there, Okay, four o'clock in the afternoon, snow covered all over and this is August and July, right? Four o'clock in the afternoon and we see a young fourteen year old boy, drunk like an old (34 yr old) man. There was nothing for him there. Nothing! Not even a place for them to get together. And how do you get together. The spaces are miles, and miles and mile apart. Nothing! And how do you get together? A fourteen year old, oh boy, was he drunk. When we saw that; that was it."

What was the most difficult thing you ever had to do? "Accept the death of my mother and father. Now, my sister Mary would give all of her belongings for either of us. She was good. But her ideas weren't anything that we had. We didn't have special ideas. We had good, wholesome, progressive ideas. And I didn't like, well ---just a sister!"

Do you want to talk about how your father passed away? "Yeah! My father never had a doctor, never went to a hospital for himself, took very fine care of himself...very, very, fine. And he was not a drinker of any kind. He had barrels of wine. He made his own wine. Whenever he had a barrel of wine, if he took a sip that was a lot. And all of a sudden we'd get the friends, when they heard my father made the wine. So they used to go home with a gallon of his wine. Then at that same time they had wood alcohol that was blinding the population, so my father had a friend, who had a friend, who with five dollars – which was like twenty-five dollars today –brings the gallon he had bought upstairs and puts it on the kitchen table. And my brother just came in. Freddie was a Pre-med student. He couldn't go through with that because the money wasn't there. Okay? So, he sees this clear

bottle on the table and he says, 'Momma' what's in this bottle?' 'Alcohol.' Poppa used \$5.00 to buy this alcohol. Right away he said, 'Did anybody use it?'. She said 'No. We just got it.' He said, 'Don't touch it.' Then he said, 'Mom, I want a tea spoon and a match.' So my mother gave him a teaspoon and a match. Goes to the bottle, unwinds it, takes a little bit of the alcohol and puts it on the spoon. Light's the match and ---swooch! A flame consumed it. He takes the alcohol and puts the cover on the kitchen table and says this gets poured straight into the toilet bowl. So that was exactly what happened to the alcohol. We would have been another one of the families to have lost their eye sight. He was a chemist. He liked chemistry a lot. Very good! Oh, the onetime my father got sick – he never got sick in his life – his lungs had failed him – 3 o'clock in the morning, the police were called and took him to the hospital emergency where they were all out of oxygen. I was there for a half an hour and my father was pronounced dead.

Bianca, before we wrap up our interview, is there anything you would like to say before we conclude? *"Yes, there is. I'm ninety three years old and I'd like to make it to 100."*