

# Orleans County Historical Association

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### NAMES

Joseph Coppa, father  
Carmella Palmisano Coppa, mother  
sisters: Christine C., Mary C. (Young), Margaret C. (Gerety),  
Victoria C., Minnie C. (Krysinski), Stella C.

and others.....



# Orleans County Historical Association

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW

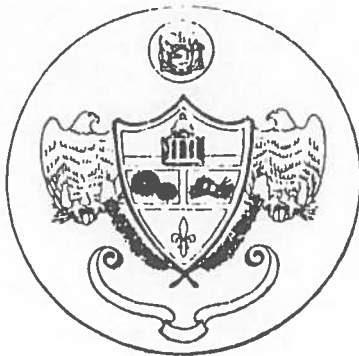
Mr. Andrew Coppa  
491 East Center Street  
Medina, New York

Mr. Andrew Coppa was born January 25, 1920 in Medina, N.Y.  
The interview was conducted by Helen McAllister at her home  
in Medina, New York.

C Coppa

Mc McAllister





# Orleans County Historical Association

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to collect information about the historical development of Orleans County by means of tape-recorded conversations with people whose experiences reflect the county's growth.

These tapes and transcriptions will be preserved as educational resources and possible publication (all or in part).

I hereby release this tape and transcription to the Orleans County Historical Association.

Andrew Copp  
Signed  
August 14, 1979  
Date

Understood and agreed to:

Helen M. McAllister  
INTERVIEWER  
August 14, 1979  
Date

For the Orleans County Historical Association,  
August 14, 1979, Helen McAllister of Medina, New York  
is interviewing MR. ANDREW COPPA, of Medina, New York.  
Mr. Coppa repairs shoes.

C I was born in Medina, New York in the house I live in,  
491 East Center Street. I was born January 25, 1920.

Mc What was your mother's maiden name ?

C My mother's name was Carmella Palmisano. My father's  
name was Joseph Coppa.

Mc Your father and mother came to America as young people,  
is that right ?

C Yes, from Italy. My father was Roman and my mother was  
Calibrese. That's the difference in nationalities, but  
still Italian.

Mc About how old was your father when he came over ?

C My dad, from what I understood, was 21 years old when he  
left the old country. He was born in San Lorenzon, which  
was a province of Rome at that time. When I was over there,  
they made it the province of Viterbo. I couldn't tell you  
how old my mother was when she came over; but they were  
young girls when they came over from Italy. She came over  
here with sisters and a brother.

Mc What was it like for your father to come ? What happened ?

C Well, I think it was because everybody wanted to come to  
America, because I imagine it was better work, as far as  
that goes, and then, it wasn't that great over in the old  
country, I guess, as far as his trade was concerned.

Mc What kind of work did his father do before him ?

C His father was a tree surgeon in Italy. Dad never liked  
his father's trade too much. He tried it a few times but  
he finally went back to the making shoes. When he came to  
this country, he found out his father got killed misjudging

a tree. He wanted to go back, and a buddy of his that he met coming over here, talked him out of it. He told him it wouldn't do him any good. By the time he got back, his dad would be buried. And if he went back, he would probably never come back over here again. So he stayed. From what I understand, I know that he was in Virginia. How they drifted back this way to get into Lyndonville, where he finally did open up a shop, I don't know. But before that, he did - - - I heard it mentioned that he did work at the Balls and Shades making shoes.

Mc Where was Balls and Shades ?

C That I can't tell you either. Whether it was in the city of Rochester, or where it was. But then I think he decided that he would rather be in business for himself.

Mc Did you remember your father or mother telling you how they may have met ?

C That I never did know. I don't know whether it was through notes or messages or somebody. You know, back in those days, I guess they did tell somebody: "There's a nice girl over here in Albion that might want to meet you. Or - - you could meet." Probably that was the way it was done, but I couldn't tell you for sure.

Mc Do you know if they were married in Albion ?

C I don't remember that either. Now they might have been. That's probably where they did get married because that's where she was from. She lived there with all the sisters. Of course, like I say, there was four sisters, I think. Two of them married brothers, and, of course, my mother married my father. And, the other one was sick.

Mc Do you have any idea that the work on the Erie Canal might have brought them to this area ?

C I never heard Dad talk about that. But I know he has done other jobs of work to get by so they could eat. Coming to this country as an immigrant, it was tough sledding for them. Like I say, he picked up English very rapidly, I

think; because he spoke real good English. My dad was very well versed on subjects. Like I say, with this ability to make shoes and repair them; he also followed through with music. I understood him to say that the first instrument that he tried to play was a Violin. And during his practices and his rehearsals, he was taken to a Symphony Orchestra, band or whatever you want to call it. And when he heard those Violin players, as good as they played, that cinched it for him right there ! He quit. He said he could never make or play the Violin after he saw these professionals.

Mc Did your father play an instrument, though ?

C Oh yes. After that he picked up, I think it was clarinet and then saxophone and, of course with that, he picked up enough knowledge with music so he got so he could teach. He never went to school, but he taught the family.

Mc Will you give us the names of your sisters ? I think you were the only boy, is that right ?

C That's right. Well, I will start with the oldest one, which is Christine Coppa. And then there is Mary Young, her married name. Then there is Margaret Gerety, her married name. And there is Victoria, who passed away. She was a Coppa. And then myself, Andrew Coppa. And then there was Minnie, now Krynski. And my kid sister, Stella Coppa.

Mc Well, that is quite a family. Seven ! That must have kept your mother pretty busy.

C Pretty busy, with those kids.

Mc Your father settled in Lyndonville ?

C Yes. In fact three of my sisters, Christine, Mary, and Margaret, were born in Lyndonville. They were little girls when Dad moved to Medina from Lyndonville.

Mc You said that in Lyndonville your father had his own business making shoes and repairing them ?

C I couldn't remember. But I know he settled in Yates

Center with his first business place where he made and repaired shoes. He worked with John Peters, a harness man. Later on, how the connection was I can't tell you that; but I know that he moved in to the Village of Lyndonville. He had this place for shoe repair and John Petr<sup>s</sup> came in there with his harness work. John Peters was a harness man. My dad taught John the shoe repairing business, And Dad picked up a little harness work, too. I suppose the leather work, harness and shoes, went together; so, like I say, they worked together. I don't know how long they were together there, because that was before my time. I wasn't born.

Mc Do you know where that was located in Lyndonville ?

C The building was right behind the Citizens Bank. Maple Avenue. Now it's torn down. They made a parking lot for the bank back there and the building is gone.

Mc You said that Mr. Peters came to Medina ?

C I think Mr. Peters lived in Medina and was traveling to Lyndonville, if I understand this right. I remember them talking about pitch-holes in the street.

Mc What's a "pitch-hole" ?

C Well, a lot of holes. That's what they mean by pitch-holes.

Mc Like a Pot-hole ?

C Yes. This was a dirt road at the time. I think that John Peters liked to live right in Lyndonville and, I guess my dad kind of liked Medina; so it came with a swap in homes. The deal, I don't know. Because I never heard if there was any money exchanged or whether it was just a swap. They just exchanged homes - - - the home where I was born and the home I still live in, 491 East Center Street, Medina, New York.

Mc That's wonderful.

Mc When your father first came to Medina, do you remember where he had his shop ?

C Well, I'm trying to think. It was on Main Street between

the two banks. There was the Union Bank and the Central Bank, and he was in between both of them. Now, I don't remember whether he was where Knights Real Estate has their office, or the Chamber of Commerce. In one of those because the buildings have changed now. Back in those days, Jay's Drug Store had taken up part of another store that was there one time. There used to be Herb Dygert's Hardware Store. Somewhere between my dad and up the street was a Jewelry Store. I think Harry Cox had taken over the other building which was a Hat Store, and this building used to be a little larger, Because I remember that there was a door-way there that Katherine Holdraker used to have. She was a Chiropractor and a Seamstress. I remember going up there when I was a kid to pass time away. I reported at the store from school all the time. My dad wanted to know where I was at all times so I could practice my drums.

Mc Do you remember where you started school ?

C Yes. I started school when I was six and a half years old and in kindergarten. I went to St. Mary's.

Mc Where was this St. Mary's School ?

C On Eagle Street. The building is still there, but there is no more school though. I went then right up until Grammer School, which they still had two years high. But I wanted to go to the High School where most of the kids went.

Mc You took the first eight grades there ?

C Right, and I graduated from their GramMAR School. What they call Grammer School. Then I went to the High School with the intentions that I might be able to play some sports.

Mc Sports such as Football ?

C Football, of course. I had a tough time to go there in the first place, because my dad knew that there were still two years left at St. Mary's and he would rather have me finish in St. Mary's School. I did get to talk to him and



told him I wanted to go, Because most of the kids I graduated with are going right to the High School. I remember my first year at High School. I was a little scared because it was all new to me, I was used to the nuns all that time. I took gym and if my dad could have got me out of that, he would have because of the sport, and getting hurt and then I wouldn't be able to practice and play with the orchestra any more. So finally in the gym class, we had different games and that; and I played a little football as center a few times. The coach asked me why wasn't I out for football. I said: "Coach, if you will get my father to sign the slip, I will be glad to come and try out." So he said: "Oh, you can get your dad to do that." So that day when I got through school, I was so happy. I thought, "oh boy; I'll go home and ask Dad if I could play football." At this time he is on East Center Street, where his shoe repair shop was located.

Mc Your father's shop was on East Center ?

C He didn't move to Main Street. It was East Center Street.

Mc Where on East Center Street would that have been ?

C Well, it's right where the Hickey-Freeman Building was and where the Laundrymat is now. Jim Corrieri bought the building. But before all this there was the Postal Telegraph where the Taxi part is. People lived upstairs. Then there was my father's Shoe Repair. And, next door they had a plumbing business in there. When they went out of there I think Sid Pittard took it over and had sort of a repairing of radios and that sort of work. Then, as I say, I came back home that night and told my dad what the coach said to me. I said: "He'd like to have me go out for football, Dad." "Football ! Is that what you are going to school for; foolishness ?" And that was the end of that. So that marking period I got four E's. I flunked everything and I said: "That's enough school for me." I went down to the principal and I told him: "I'm leaving school."

Mc Who was the principal at that time, do you remember ?

C Mr. Trippensee. Well, I finally left, anyhow. And, of course, can't get a job.

Mc That was about when ?

C Around 1936. So then like I say, I had to hang around the store. So I finally had to tell my dad: "Dad, I think I will go back to school again at St. Mary's." "You want me to go and beg them to take you back ?" I said: "No, Dad, I will see Father Hogan and Sister Germaine." Which I did, And I got back to school. I had two more years of High School, and when I finished two years there, I figured - - "that's enough school for me now." "I will get a job at Heinz Company," which I did. About six weeks after school started, they laid me off. Now I am hanging around the store again, and I don't know what to do. I finally decided I might as well go back to High School. I kind of dreaded that because I didn't like it when I went there my first year. So I said: "Dad, give me some money for books. I 'am going back to school." I think he was pretty tickled ! And which I might add - - - that I was the only one in the family that graduated from High School ! He was pleased with that. I went back in September, right after school started. Like I say, I had to get five units in two years with my music, for I didn't care for business anymore.

Mc What course did you take ? Was it a business course ?

C No. I quit the business course. I took an academic course. I had to get five units. In order to take the subjects that they wanted, you had to take English and History C, but the other subjects were all music. I took Rudiments, Harmony 1, Harmony 2, all the band and all the orchestra I could get in.

Mc Do you remember any of your teachers ? Like your music teacher ?

C Yes. R. Ray was my band and orchestra teacher and my music teacher was, R. Belle Cooper, who is now passed away. A very nice lady.

- Mc Do you remember any of the other teachers in the school ?
- C Yes. In my third year I had Miss Ermie Boardman and I had Carol Hall for English 3.
- Mc What year did you graduate from High School ?
- C Well, I was age 19 and 20 in my Senior Year. I graduated in 1940.
- Mc That would have been about the time our country was getting ready to go to war.
- C Yes, just about the time. Well, I got out of High School, finally, and back to Heinz's I went. I worked there up to the time I got drafted for the service in February 1942.
- Mc Mr. Coppa, would you go back a little bit and tell us more about the music part of your life ? What do you remember about how your father started you ?
- C Well, I was started on the drums.
- Mc Did he start you out with a big set of drums ?
- C I was getting drums for Christmas until I was six years old. They were toy drums. One Christmas I got the full set of drums, which started the ball rolling from then on. Then of course, my dad was my instructor. As I say, he picked up music by himself and loved it so well that he taught my sisters ahead of me. They were a little older. He had my sister, Christine, as the piano player; my sister, Mary, was the saxophone player; my sister, Margaret, was the violin player. My sister, Victoria, was the trumpet player and then me with the drums, and then Dad. He played most of the instruments. He taught music. Of course, as we grew older, we played in several different places. I can remember a lot of the places where they had old time dances. Especially Leo Foss' Chicken Coop. Oh ! Everybody had a grand time there ! People brought box lunches and mixed them up. Who ever you danced with, you sat with, and mingled, and everybody had a grand time. He used to keep chickens at one time in the Chicken Coops. I would say, of course, it was all cleaned out and everything else, and

it was big enough to hold barn dances, if you want to call them that; Square Dancing. That's what I remember; Chicken Coops. Then we also played in Robinson's Barn, above the cows. The cows would be down below and we were up above. People were dancing up above. They had a big hay loft, all cleaned up for Square Dancing.

Mc Who would do the calling ?

C I can't remember the guy's name that called, for the life of me. I have thought about it, and I just can't remember it. But no matter the tune, he would call it. It didn't make any difference, if we would play it.

Mc Did you ever do any singing ?

C Not with the band. No, I never sang with my family. No. I have started just within the last seven or eight years ago with the band that I play with once in a while now. Because my sisters don't get together any more. I still continue.

Mc Then your music has stayed with you ?

C Oh yes. It has stayed with me. I wouldn't give it up as far as that goes. But I get a little rusty because I don't practice.

Mc Who do you play with now in your orchestra ?

C Well, we generally get different people. When I played so steady for a while, there was Charlie Piazza on Sax, Eddie Hess on piano, and myself. We were just a three piece band. We played three times a week sometimes at the Moose Club, when it was going real strong there. And like I say, we played wedding, parties, anniversaries, you name it. We played them all, I guess. Of course with the band that I play with now, band and orchestra, we play all over. We even played at the Airways in Buffalo. The Airway Cleaner. They used to have what they call a cleaner by the Airways; cleaner. It was one of those with a handle type. I think that was the name of it. ~~And~~, We were too small to continue. We were young, going to school and my dad wouldn't let us out of his sight. You might as well put it that way.

- Mc When you came home for noontime, you had your practice even then ?
- C Yes. My dad picked us up with a Cleveland car at school. It was one of the first cars, 1912, I think it was. We'd gobble our dinners down, and practice for 15 or 20 minutes, then back to school we'd go. This would continue on at night. Because we were playing out. You had to know what you were doing to play for the public.
- Mc You played more than just week ends ?
- C Well, sometimes we worked during the night but then we played all over. We played at Toby's at Middleport and Saturday nights steady for quite a while. I can't name all the places. I know we played all over; which, as I say, it was a wonderful thing.
- Mc What was your orchestra called ?
- C Coppa Family Orchestra. In fact I got pictures in my store there with the family. And also we had bands. We had an Albion Band at one time with all different fellows and girls and my sisters and myself. My dad was the leader. Then we had the Lyndonville Band which my dad organized. We were all in that, too.
- Mc And your father was the leader of that ?
- C The leader of that, too. We played a lot of carnivals. Lyndonville used to have a carnival right on Main Street. Shut off the Main Street right there, and we used to play. They got a bandstand where the band would play. There's that, I can't go back too far. Probably I should try to forget about, but I can't.
- Mc Why should you try to forget about it ?
- C The kids part of it, I mean. You're just tied down. I couldn't do thing<sup>s</sup> that I wanted to do.
- Mc You really didn't want to be playing that much ?
- C No. I wanted to play some. I used to have to sneak out to play. So sometimes in there - - well, my dad's gone now. May he rest in peace now.

Mc You mean you really wanted to play outside ?

C I wanted to go out and play with the boys that would come. They wouldn't even come up to the house. They'd whistle and I'd get ready to go out the door, and my father would hear me. "Did you practice yet, Andy ?" "Yes, I practiced. "Let me hear your lessons." Then I'd slam the door and I got a slap for that. And I'd holler to the kids: "I can't come out, kids." You know, those are the things that you can't forget. I should forget.

Mc What about your mother during all this ?

C Mom couldn't say too much. Dad was the boss. But I know she had compassion for us. I know she would never go to bed until we were all in the house— When we played out, and she didn't come with us. Of course she had the smaller ones at home. But she would always wait. I can still see her sitting in that chair, a rocking chair, until we all got in the house. Whatever time it was. However late at night it was. She would always be there, waiting for us to come in. My mother and I were very close, and of course Dad and I were, a little bit. But I respected Dad very highly even if he was very strict. I think more people should be that way and we wouldn't have so much of the delinquency we got in the world, and have to be afraid to go out because somebody would hit you over the head for a quarter. But I can say, I thank my dad for a lot of things and I am playing my music well. At least you got something behind you, you know, that somebody else can't do.

Mc Do your sisters enjoy their music still much anymore ?

C My nephew plays drums with them, when they've got a job. That would be Mary Young's son. His name is Russell Dennis Young. He would set in with them as far as playing drums when they have jobs. After my sister, Mary, passed away they don't play anymore.

Mc Did you have any special outfit that you wore with the group ?

- C At one time we wore a gray jacket. Especially when we played at the Moose. Everybody was dressed alike. But then after that we just dress casual. Whatever we put on would go. We try to dress in dark clothes.
- Mc Tell me, did you play for how long a period of time before you took a break ?
- C Well, our band played right to midnight. Start at nine o'clock and play right 'til twelve. Then a half-hour break, and then we played 'til one-thirty or two o'clock in the morning. But any band that goes out now, plays an hour and takes 15 minutes break. Play an hour and take a 15 minute break. So your four hours are only three hours. You are there four hours, and the price is quite different.
- Mc Do you have any idea how much your father and the family received ?
- C When the family orchestra was playing, I would say we got \$5.00 a night for the whole family; \$5. to \$7.00. Depressic times. But now I wouldn't go out for less than \$40.00, per man !
- Mc Do you belong to a Union ?
- C Yes, we have a Union. Musician's Union #312. #312 I think is our local here. There is a list of Locals. Our Local extends in Orleans County. As soon as you get out to Middleport, you are in a different locality and you have to get permission to play, on contract. You have to let them know you are coming in their section to play and they do visa-versa. They give a contract, too.
- Mc After High School you were working at the H.J. Heinz Company when the United States entered World War II. Will you tell us how that affected you ?
- C I was 20 when I got out of High School. I went right to work up there. I missed the first draft. I was 21, it was July, I remember the day I was supposed to register for the draft. Heinz went on strike, and I wasn't too sure whether I was going to get down to register or not, but I made it.

- Mc The people at Heinz's were striking ?
- C We went on strike but I never struck. I went right back to work when I returned. That's why I wondered if I was going to be able to go back or not. They were on strike before I went into service. But I was supposed to register that day for the draft. So I registered and came back and went right to work. I worked in the fillers on a basket job.
- Mc When you registered for the draft, where did you go ?
- C I went to Charlie Slack in Medina, if my memory is right. It was six months after I registered that I was in the service.
- Mc How did your parents feel about this ? You were the only son.
- C Of course, like any parents, they hated to see me go. But, there was nothing they could do about it.
- In the meantime, of course, my sister, Victoria, was in Mount Morris Hospital. She was in the hospital about five years. She had Tuberculosis. And, I never knew. They didn't tell me she never had a chance, On account of me going in the service. But we used to write back and forth, anyhow.
- Mc Where did you serve ?
- C I was drafted and went to Fort Niagara for my Induction Center. From Old Fort Niagara or whatever you want to call it down there, they sent me to Camp Lee, Virginia, for my Basic Training. When I got through there I went to Camp Edwards, Massachusetts to go in with a group I was supposed to be with when I settled down.
- Mc What was your outfit called ?
- C My outfit was with the Third Convalescent Hospital. I was in the Medics. That's what I took up.
- Mc What kind of things would you be doing ?
- C We were taught different things, you know. We were going to classes. They tried to teach us about Anatomy, the body. At that time, because you weren't fully organized; you didn't have enough men. We were just schooling and



different things like that. They would try to give us different ideas of how to carry people and the wounded; litter bearer carriers. When I got out of there, Camp Edwards, Massachusetts, I went to Camp Livingston, Louisiana. Then I was really with the Third Convalescent Hospital, and that's where we started to do our training and hiking. We'd do a lot of hiking ! Oh, man ! For the Medics, the doctors had hiking all the time. And you know, everyone went different ways. Some of them went to school. I had a chance to take up medical and surgical nursing and I just turned it down because school work bothered me. If there was going to be school and exams, I thought I would never make it. But how many times I could kick myself for not even trying because I would have liked to work with people. 'Cause I was working where I could watch and do things like that. But that just never materialized, so I stuck in the camp. They made a Bugler out of me !

Mc So your music followed you !

C I was a Bugler in the camp for quite a while. While I was there, of course, I came home a couple of times on furloughs. And, I saw my sister, Victoria, which was tough to get, because gasoline was rationed then.

Mc How did you come home ?

C On the train. Sometimes some of them trains were really loaded ! But from there, I was the only one out of the outfit that was called for. I didn't know where I was going at the time. Of course there were things that went on before this, but I am not going to go all through that. But from this outfit here, I was transferred overseas. I never could figure out why I was transferred when this Lieutenant told me we got to go to the main office. Your name come in down the and we don't know what it is all about. When I got down the of course, they brought me to another Lieutenant. I could see him reading this confidential paper all the time until he got to my name. He said: "Are you Pfc. Andrew Coppa, 32234480 ?

And I says: "Yes Sir, but I am T5 right now." 'Cause I wasn't registered as a Pfc. I says: "Yes Sir, that's me." "Well," he says, "we got notice for your to pack up immediately for overseas duty." I looked at the Lieutenant over there; and I says: "Why? What did I do? I never asked for a transfer." "Well" he says, "There is nothing you can do about it. It comes right from Washington." But, I didn't know that I was going over as an interpreter.

Mc You went as an interpreter?

C Originally. I did civil affairs work when I first went over there. They called it AMGOT, at that time. Like I say, got over there and things started. In the meantime I was traveling a lot. I was moving. You know what I mean? And, I wasn't getting any mail. Finally, when we finally docked in Palermo, Italy we were at this building where we slept until we were disbanded to different places where we were going. I finally got a big stack of mail, like that, I guess it was about six inches high. It finally caught up with me and the first letter I opened was from some friends of mine. It was a V-Mail Letter, Static Photo Copies. I am reading on and I read down and pretty soon I read: "No doubt you have heard about your sister, Victor passing away?" That was it. I just went out, like a ligh She was 25 when she died. Finally they got me in my room and after I settled down I read some of the other letters. And, I read a couple from her, telling me how she felt fine and all this stuff. They kept me in camp for a while. They didn't send me out right away. Then I finally went out with this Lieutenant. He and I went to a small town called Villafrat, I think it was, where we made our headquarters. We had three or four little towns that we tried to set up their own government. We let them get their own Mayor in the town. We were back there to supervise them. We tried not to let them put in anybody that was a Fascist. You know, anybody like that. But all of them at that time, they were all Fascists, because they had to be. Even your teachers, or they wouldn't work!

MC How did you feel about going back to the land of your parents ?

C It never bothered me so much, because I sure got along because I could speak some. I didn't speak Italian as good as I did after I had learned it over there. You see, if you are over there, Sicily, that is one dialect. Then every place, say further up north, like in Rome. Now my father's language was the real, real, real good Italian. What they call the Tuscona Language. It's a real rich language and the more south you go, it's just like southern people. You've got southern people here that you can't understand. And you've got the same thing, dialects. If you slow the people down when they are talking to you, then you can understand it. But some of them get one word out before the other one is finished. And, like I say, it was quite a chore. Then Rome fell fast, you know. The war was kind of getting over so now you got all these men in the outfits. So the ones they didn't need the most, they transferred us out. So I ended up in the Replacement Depot. The first place I went to was the Mussolini Race Track and stayed there two or three days. Then we were shipped out to Chano's Dairy Farm. That was where Mussolini's son-in-law had been executed. That's where the Germans bombed and destroyed everything. That was where, I think, they made condensed milk, if I remember right. But at the time I was there, of course, everything was all bombed out. I stayed there, I don't know how many months I was there. A couple of months anyhow, I think, before I was picked up for combat malaria outfit. That's where I wound up. We fought the malaria. We were 11 men with an officer, and we went out with Italian prisoners and sprayed homes and we cleaned out canals or somethings to prevent malaria.

MC Were you in on any of the celebrations when victory finally came ?

C No, no. We didn't get into any of that. But then like

I say, I did collaborate with them. When the war started to slack off, my outfit, which was 11 men and one officer, was slated to go to the Pacific, for malaria work. Of course during the Physical time, I turned up with a Double Hernia and I was disqualified. Couldn't go with the outfit. So they left me there.

Mc I bet you were disappointed ?

C Well, I wanted to be with the outfit. I cried like a baby, to tell you the truth, and begged for the officer to take me. I have a picture of my Captain at home and under it he has written: "To one of the best men in my outfit."

Mc What was the Captain's name ?

C Captain Harvey J. Kulin. He was from Indianapolis, Indiana. He was the type of man that if you did your work, everything went smooth. If you tried to sneak around the bush, he could really lay you out in lavender ! But then forgot about it, see. He'd get in a card game, shoot a little craps. In fact, during Christmas or somethin we'd be all alone. Of course the officers used to get whiskey, you know. They'd get rations. But of course, I didn't drink at all, so we used to give a party. We'd pool our beer and he'd put in his whiskey and get ice and maybe invite some other officers over. I was the bartender. He'd always say: "Now Andy, just remember, we only got a little bit of booze there so only put one shot in each glass." And I'd say, "Yes Sir. Corby's and Coke." And when it came his turn, and his officers, I took a couple of extra ones and put in his drink. Then he says: "Is there only one in there ?" And I said: "There's only one in there." You know, he was a good Joe; but he could really lay you up for lavender !

Mc Did your double hernia send you back to the States ?

C No, not at that time. I was sent back to the same kind of outfit; a malaria outfit again. Only I was the only

man there at the time, until it was set up. I went back to Fogia where we set up the new outfit and then I stayed with them. I didn't do any of the outside work. I was the PX man and I was the Mail-man around the camp because they wouldn't let me do any lifting or anything. In the meantime I was getting enough points to get discharged.

Mc How many points did you have to have ? Do you remember ?

C I think it was 38. I am not so sure now. But anyway, I was close and I had, I think I had 28 months overseas. I was discharged October 29, 1945. (Note: 3 years, 8 months, and 4 days.) Then I left for my home town.

Mc Was there any kind of a celebration when you came back ?

C No, I wouldn't say we had a celebration. But my folks were all happy to see me back in one piece. I couldn't get a job at that time because I knew I had this surgery to be done. They wouldn't do it overseas when I was there, so I said I will wait until I get home and have it done at the Batavia Vet's Hospital.

Mc After you had the surgery ?

C I couldn't work for another three months. So, I told my boss, Bob Slack, that I had to have the surgery. He was extending my seniority at Heinz's. In the meantime I put my name in at Harrison's. Of course I put Heinz as a reference. And Snyder's, and places that I had worked. I got a call from Mr. Slack and he wanted to know if I was trying to get in to Harrison's. I was. "Bob" I says, "if I could, I would like to improve myself a little bit, if I could. If there are no hard feelings. Then if I shouldn't like it maybe I could come back some day, if you would have me." So I got into Harrison's. I worked one month and they laid me off ! I am disgusted. So I said: "I'll go back to Heinz's." Which I did for another year and a half before I left for Hudson, New York.

Mc Hudson, New York ? What was down there ?

C Well, I didn't know until I got down there. I drove a friend down there; that's how it was. That's where my

friend's people lived. So when I was there I said I'd look for a job, and I got this job in a textile mill.

Mc Did you like it ?

C When I first went there I was working in the shipping department and that was real good. You see the goods we made was shipped to New York and Boston. When things got kind of slow and they were going to lay people off, they come over to me and said: "We like the way you work and there's an opening at the twisting room," which they were going to open up again. Well, like I said, I took the job. It was a day job, which I wanted. When I first started, I think I had four girls, and the next day it was six girls. When I finally ended up, it was with 23 women I was chasing around for.

Mc Were you the foreman ?

C No, the foreman was over me. But, he was the laziest foreman I ever worked for in my life ! If the ladies needed a spool to put in these machines, I had to put the spools in. He'd send them down to me, and I'd be down at the other end, steaming the yarn or something. Instead of giving me a hand, he wouldn't touch anything. The ladies told me that was the way he was downstairs; as lazy as could be. I stayed about six months on that, and finally decided that I would give them notice I was going to quit. Remember when I came back home, I tried to get into Harrison's again and GE. Of course when you've got "Labor" on your unemployment card, anything that they found for you, you had to go, or else ! So I couldn't get into GE, and I couldn't get into Harrison's. Then a friend of mine said: "Why don't you take up your father's trade ?" "Oh, God," I said. I hated that. I could never see myself in that. "Well, somebody's got to do it sometime." So finally I thought about it for a while and I finally asked my dad if he would teach me under the GI Bill; if I could get under the GI Bill. He said he would; so I went up to the City Hall and talked to a fellow up there. Of course with

the ten percent sinus I was getting, I wanted to get it under Law 16. I get a pension, Compensation or whatever you want to call it - - ten percent sinus, which claimed for both sinus and hernia. But when they operated on my hernia, they took that away from me and left me with the sinuses. So I talked to them about it and they said they would get me fixed up. So I waited and finally my dad got a notice from them to start me on for two days under the Public Clause 345, they call it, I think. In the meantime I was starting there and pulling heels out, and one thing and another that pertained to shoes. He was teaching me different things.

Mc Was your father a "hard taskmaster" ?

C Oh, he was very difficult to teach you. Many times I had to say something that I wouldn't say on your mike there, to myself. But I would tell him where to go first, because he would get me nervous, you know, when he would come around. So finally the man came from Buffalo and he had the program all set up for me. How I had to do it and he only had it for a year.

Mc What do you mean; man came from Buffalo ?

C Well, he would be one of the men from the government to set me up under the GI Bill to show me how I was supposed to keep my records. I had to keep my records: How much time I had on this, how much time I had on other stuff. So when he came, he said: "We have you all set up for a year." And I says: "A year ! You can't learn this trade in a year's time !" I says: "I wanted it for two years." And I says: "Wait a minute. My dad had already sent a letter on the 345 to start me, until this Public Law #16 comes through." "Well," he says, "if that paper is down in Albion there with your VA papers, they had to be, I'll be back." So, it wasn't long before he came back and everything was set up. Because he found your papers and you are all fixed up

for two years. So he says: "I will get this all fixed up over again." But I still went on practicing any how. So finally he came back and brought me my papers and I was on my way. But everything was like pulling teeth, because I shivered in there because I didn't like machinery. I was always afraid of machinery ! Of course, my dad, being the kind of strict that he was, If you didn't do it just right, he would yell. He didn't have no patience. He wanted you to do it right and that was it; it was done the right way. I didn't stay on rubber heels for half an hour, or an hour, or so. I went through the whole process. Put the heels on, take them off, put them on. He'd go right to the machines and show me how to trim them and scour them and like, you know.

Mc Have the machines changed much since then ?

C Well, there's more modern machines than I got there. Machines that are more compact and everything is - - - but who has the money to invest in them ! That's why I say, especially with the trade I have, No young fellows want it. But, like I say, I finished and I remembered every month one of the inspectors would come down and see if I was there and what I was doing. I think I had four different inspectors in the two years I was in it. Most of them were all good until the last one. The last one was just a - - - well, I won't say it.

Mc He wasn't a gentleman ?

C He was just one of those guys that was just for the company. He thought you was cheating somebody. You was trying to do this, I mean. He was just - - - you know, you get those type of people when they get a little authority ! But after you got two years under the government, then I was on my own. No more checks from the government. Dad paid me so much while I was taking the training, and every month it drops down and your pay is supposed to increase from your dad. But poor Dad couldn't pay me.



MC

After you learned then, did your father retire ?

C

No, no. Dad was still with me. But what happened after that; this fellow in Middleport had died, Vito Pollizi, I think his name was. Dad bought out his shop, which was on Main Street, in Middleport. He would go down there while I took this over. Well, there was the stitcher that bothered me the most when I was trying to learn, because he would show me one hand. And I said: "Dad, you have been doing it all your life, 50 years, and I'm scared of it." "What are you scared of ?" So finally Dad had to have an eye operation and I was alone, and I mastered it, without his supervision. I knew what to do, but, I mean, I was mastering it. I had to buy a new one here a while back. Dad stayed in Middleport for about five years and it got too much for him. He was still going out to the homes and teaching music lessons, and then he came back to the store with me in the meantime. Well, I guess it was a few years, and he had a slight stroke. Then he got over that quite well, and like I say, he would come up to the store. He didn't do much of the work anymore. I did most of it; the shoe repairing, after that. He would be up there strumming on his guitar. He was still teaching although he had a slight stro<sup>l</sup>. When he would go out evenings. Or, of course, he'd stay up to the store until about 11 o'clock and my sister, Mary, would pick him up and take him home. And people would come to the house, and then he had to teach. And he was quite a guy for yard work, gardening. He had more flowers around the house there ! And he did love flowers, too ! So that now, in about 1963 is when I lost my father. I didn't know for sure whether I would stay in the business or not, because Dad was the boss. He was my crutch and I didn't know whether I could carry on alone or not. So, after he went, the Lord was with me and I've been here ever since. So this will be my 30th year. I started in 1949. That has been

30 years.

Mc How has the shoe - - - changing from leather to synthetic, how has that changed ?

C Well, they are a tough shoe to fix. Now you're getting hollow heels or pop-in heels. They are little nipples that you got to cut, put them back in those holes and hope you hit the nails. If I had only some of the machinery that they can use. They call it an "Autosoler", that you can neatly nail the things on, of anything. I use eyesight. I do all the tacking by hand. I "spit" my tacks, in plain English. I put them in my mouth; just like an upholsterer does. If Dad were alive today and knew the shortcuts I have taken from the way that he taught me what he taught me, I think he'd roll over. His way was the right way ! The old fashioned way was my dad, and that was it ! But the work is done. At the time that I started the repair business, we had a price list that the government made us charge for rubber lifts for 50¢, ladies lifts for 35¢ and 50¢. Men's rubber heels were 75¢. Soles and heels for \$3.75. Today we are getting \$1.50 for rubber lifts and \$2.00, \$4.00 for men's rubber heels. \$12.50 for a leather half sole. But the cost of leather has tripled.

Mc Why is that ?

C Well, your material, hides. Whatever it is. I imagine it is shipping them overseas and tanning them in this country. Leather has just gone out-of-sight. Even leather shoes. You go and buy a good pair of leather shoes; you are paying \$60., \$70., and \$80.00 for shoes.

Mc Do you think that is why so many shoes are made in Spain or other countries ?

C Well, they have always been made in Italy and you find some of those shoes here, but they were never that price. But all foreign stuff, even your clothing. If I buy a Van Huesen shirt, it is made in Taiwan. I have some shoes I bought that come from Singapore and I paid \$19.95 for them.

Mc Well Mr. Coppa, in addition to your music and your shoes, what organizations do you belong to in town ? What other interests do you have.

C Well, I suppose the Moose Club, but I very seldom go there because I am not a drinker. And I belong to the Senior Citizens in Lockport, which I enjoy very much. I sometimes donate my music talent when we get together, to let the people enjoy themselves. I can give part of me.

Mc May I ask, why you belong in Lockport instead of Medina ?

C Well, there are more activities. There's a Couple's Club, and they have more to offer than they do in Medina.

Mc Are you active in your church ?

C Oh, yes. St. Mary's. I go to church and that's it. I'm not active in anything else.

Mc Are there any other groups that you are active in ?

C No, nothing else.

Mc How about the Shelridge Country Club and golfing ?

C Well, golfing, yes. That's one of my hobbies and I love to dance.

Mc Do you do Square Dancing ?

C I do Square Dancing on Wednesday afternoon. But in the summer I don't go there too much, because I can't be both places; golfing and that. Especially if you pay \$300.00 to belong to a club, you got to get a little something out of it. But, I enjoy people. I respect people, women especially, and anybody as far as that goes. And, as I say, in your business you try to help somebody. That is something you shouldn't tell anyway. Because if you are going to do it, you do it because you want to do it, With a good heart. I guess I try to be a good citizen, and try to do the best I can. We all have faults. But like I say, I try to "keep my nose clean"; let's put it that way.

What the other fellow does, I haven't got time to worry about. I just want to worry about what Andy Coppa is doing.

Mc I think Andy Coppa is doing just fine.  
Thank you very much.

C Well, I hope my story will be interesting to read, I don't know. It's the best I could remember.

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Original Transcription by Luther P. Burroughs of Albion.  
Edited by Helen McAllister of Medina.  
Final Typing by Lysbeth A. Hoffman of Lakeside, New York.