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MODERATOR: We are at The American Labor Museum are very happy to have with us Ralph Golzio whose family is from Paterson and was involved in the Paterson Silk Strike of 1913. And Ralph is here today to provide us with his views -- his family's experience in Paterson in those early years. So, if I can begin, Mr. Golzio, I'd like to ask you if you could tell us about your parents' earliest years. Who were your parents? RALPH GOLZIO: Yeah, I think so. My father was a young man who came from Italy. [He] immigrated from Italy. My mother was born in America in Summit, New Jersey. That's seems very odd that a lady born at that time from Italian parents in Summit, New Jersey. And my father wasn't a silk weaver. He didn't have that talent and didn't come from Italy with that talent, which so many people did

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at the time of the Industrial Revolution. MODERATOR: How did your father earn a living? RALPH GOLZIO: Oh yes that's important. He was a man, I was telling Isaiah, that he was a man of great physical build and he was very handsome too. And of course, coming here as a young man, he didn't have much to offer because he was that young. So, he offered up himself, I thought, in view of the fact that he became a wrestler. He had that kind of body and it got him into professional wrestling. And I can recall that he would come home with the collection. In those days there was no such thing as a fixed salary, a contract

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let's say. There was doing one's "whatever" and then the hat would be passed and the funds would be there. So, he came home with this hat full of money.

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So, he did continue in that professional vein because it was more or less in his blood. He then played football for the diamond field club in Paterson

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and they played together for 13 years, so you can imagine

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they were quite good.

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MODERATOR: Did your father -- I understand he had beautiful Italian name, but that as a boxer, his name was changed for publicity or other reasons. RALPH GOLZIO: Yeah, I'm going to have to tell you that. I will tell you it doesn't make me happy to talk about that,

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but you can understand that the sportsmen were not going to call him John Golzio. So, what did they call him? John Gold, and this really took hold.

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Because I went through grammar school as Johnny Gold. I was his son. Nobody ever talked about the name Ralph John you know. So, I was Johnny Gold. In grammar school you realize, I was really a very, very bad boy. No question about it. I had to have a fight every day of my life. Otherwise I wasn't happy. Just so long as the kids would congregate in the afternoon and watch me fight. That was my delight.

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So, I went through life, went through high school as John Gold. No, I think the name was finally changed to Ralph, but it was still Gold.

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Consequently, I had nothing but Jewish friends and they were wonderful friends. Wonderful. And, of course, when I went to college they wanted to see a birth certificate. That's when they - and I hardly realized the name was Golzio. By this time, they naturally said it's Golzio. I said, "Of course it is." And I went through college and I continue now in life is as Ralph John Golzio. Most people call me Ralph. MODERATOR: Your father's given name is Giovanni. RALPH GOLZIO: This is where I always think about you. His given name is Giovanni Battista Angelo Golzio. That's where you come in. And he went on with his wrestling and sports work and also, he would train boxers. So, he did that and this is one of the reasons why during the strike he would be alerted well in advance that the strike is going to be at "such a place." [So] please don't have your wife go there. The police would tell him because they forever wanted him in the police department. Please join the police department. But I believe that no other Italians in those days just didn't join police departments. However, they were very friendly and this is one of the reasons why the first time I was exposed to striking conditions, you know I was a child of a foreigner. Of course, I could walk,

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I was a real scamp, but mostly my mother would carry me in circumstances of that kind. MODERATOR: Your mother was [of] Northern Italian descent also? RALPH GOLZIO: They were. They were. Yes. Whole family. MODERATOR: How did she get her start in the silk mills at Paterson? How old was she?

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RALPH GOLZIO: Anybody could start in a silk mill in Paterson. If you had two arms and two legs. And she was nine years of age when she started weaving. She had a hard life, but in later life, she was compensated by good health, longevity. You know these are important things. And she passed it on to me, thank God. You know at 96, I'm quite alert.

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MODERATOR: So, your parents met and married in Paterson? RALPH GOLZIO: They met and married in Paterson and

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I always heard her say, or heard other people say as well, "Oh, I want that man or none other." But I guess that's the way of young people. You know.

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MODERATOR: Where were they living? And you also, during the Paterson Silk Strike of 1913? RALPH GOLZIO: Well, I was born on Beech Street which today is

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a disaster.

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But in those days, it was, you know, one would be born wherever he could. There were no restrictions or anything like that. And as a growing child I didn't know that there were automobiles because there weren't any. Across the street from our home was the, oh the Wells Fargo and everything they had was horse driven. And they had their horses. They maintained their horses there. So, I grew up in that kind of environment. I did go to church although the family wasn't very religious. And when I go to Italy, even now, I must say the Piedmontese, the Northern Italian, is not a religious person. They've got a church every three blocks, because every three blocks there's a different town, but nobody goes into the church. I go there and of course I'm very pleased to look at them. I want that, well that kind of knowledge of what was, so I look at them. The priest is, when I meet the priest he's quite surprised that I'm this kind of person. He and my cousins there are very friendly. Oh my God. My cousin brings them fish and all, but they understand that one will go his way and the other with his own. MODERATOR: On Beech Street,

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did your family live in a house or an apartment?

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RALPH GOLZIO: No, we didn't. There were no such things as apartments. There was first and second levels. There was only one apartment that I remember in Paterson and that was on Beech Street. It was occupied chiefly by Southern Italians. It was a brick structure. And I have a little anecdote for that.

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It's a cute one. I was one who, by my great, oh not great but... Yeah, my great uncles. They took me under their wing and I had one who particularly did that. He lived Haledon near the...

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Oh, up on the Hill section near the florist that's up there, Morningside. And that part of Paterson was a woodland that was strictly mountainous and below that there was a city dump and he owned all of that city dump. Now Uncle Camillo, I never knew him to have worked, but he got along. As long as he had his wine and his dogs he was happy. And he had his little house.

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MODERATOR: What is your mother's full name? Do you recall her maiden name too?

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What is your mother's name? RALPH GOLZIO: Her name is Caroline Mosca. M-O-S-C-A. Do you have that in the records of...

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MODERATOR: Now it sounds familiar. The last name sounds familiar. I didn't know her maiden name until you said it now. And did her husband and friends call her by a short name?

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RALPH GOLZIO: Carrie. Her name was Carrie. And something that you don't know about Carrie; she was a tremendous entertainer. In this, I should tell about it because she was a fabulous woman. In this Northern Italian club, The Piedmont Pleasure Club,

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yes. It was on Park Avenue. Every Saturday night there would be a dance and she would be the entertainer. She would begin the singing to these 200 - 300 people they'd be attending. And she'd entertain every one of them and they all came there because of Carrie. She made their lives a lot easier really by being what she was. MODERATOR: How did she entertain them?

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Did she play instruments? RALPH GOLZIO: She would act. Oh my God. They had a stage. Oh, she would act on the stage and everything. And she was a tremendous dancer. You know today people must take a drink to do that. Never, my mother never took a drink of wine. My father, oh yes.

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MODERATOR: How did you, as a four-year-old, become involved in the strike in 1913 in Paterson?



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RALPH GOLZIO: That's a very good question. You know I get off the real intention of the subject very often because I've got to inject these things -- they're going through my mind -- however, I do want to get that across. As a four-year-old I was in my mother's arms. And this is the ugly part of it and I guess it's lived with me all these years. I had never seen viciousness. Now the strikers had a point and I imagine that the industrialists had these. The industrialist had no

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restriction. He was directly connected to the Mayor. In fact, he even shunted the Mayor. He would make his own rules. The Mayor was merely, in his opinion, in their opinion, a figurehead. They would direct the need for the police, see that they got at the area where it was intended to keep order. So, the police were really a force primarily for use by the industrialists and they could direct them where they wanted. And I saw the ugliness that took place as a child, you know, you remember these things. I remember police on horseback with their clubs, striking people. People being hurt and yelling and crying and so on. And of course, my mother, after seeing a lot of that, she took me away from the sights, which I think was very good. But it's that ugliness that I remember. That I just don't forget. That's why I remember it so clearly for this interview.

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MODERATOR: The experiences you're recalling are from picket lines during the strike and the picket lines were in Paterson.

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RALPH GOLZIO: Yeah. Well the picket lines would get beyond just a picket line. Wherever they found strikers there would be the police on horseback to do their dirty work. Now there'd be no reason for a picket line where I

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remember this thing at the intersection of Straight Street and Essex Street. MODERATOR: Is that where your mother worked? RALPH GOLZIO: There was no mill immediately there. It was just off the street. And you'll notice that those mills are still there. They are in the area of Beech Street there. They are large stone structures. Which meant that maybe the picket line did extend that far. I can't say. I was just a child.

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But I remember the ugliness, that's principally the theme.

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MODERATOR: Did your mother, do you know, attend any of the meetings that were held in Haledon in front of the Botto's (sp) home, in front of the museum where we are?

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RALPH GOLZIO: No. I never got to know about that. When I became older naturally it was something of a landmark. Even then it was a landmark, because people would congregate. It was like knowing to go to a particular store for groceries you know. The Botto house was the place for congregation. And that sort of thing.

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MODERATOR: Do you recall -- at the time of the strike when you were so young it maybe a little bit difficult -- your mother's attitude toward unions, towards workers having a say on the job? Did she ever? RALPH GOLZIO: Let me tell you.

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She never quit that. Never quit it. If there was one to carry the torch, even in her later years, nobody could get away with anything. She was the epitome of the suffragette woman. Really it was the first time I saw a woman really take hold. Women take hold. She would guide them. She would instill courage in them. That's what she'd do.

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MODERATOR: Do you have an idea where she may have gotten those traits? From her parents?

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RALPH GOLZIO: Well my grandfather or her father was a very stern man. He was also a weaver, but driven as my mother was driven. I don't know anybody in the family. There's none of her sisters that were that way. It's an individual trait.

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MODERATOR: And how long did she work in the

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silk mills? What age did she retire? RALPH GOLZIO: Until she was 69 years of age, so she worked 60 years.

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I was married by that time.

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MODERATOR: Did she ever talk about the strike in 1913? RALPH GOLZIO: Always.

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RALPH GOLZIO: What would she say? RALPH GOLZIO: She would

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tell us her role in the strike and she never relinquished. She was like a bulldog. Once they make a grab they never let loose. That was my mother. But she was also very kind. She had the other side.

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Did she ever talk about the issues in the strike? RALPH GOLZIO: The what? MODERATOR: Issues in the strike? An eight-hour work day? Wage increases.

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RALPH GOLZIO: Oh yes! She was the one who began to tear down the 10-, 11-, and 12-hours a day [shift]. It was really she that started the movement. You can imagine a person working from age 9, I'm sure that they would be the forerunners of everything. Sure.

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MODERATOR: What did your father think of being married to a suffragette? Did it worry him? RALPH GOLZIO: My father

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turned his back on everything she did. Not that he saw it as the right thing, but he could handle it. He was able to handle it. He would never interfere with her movements. For a reason she couldn't relinquish anything to him and she would never do it. She was the force in the house. She was the force in the family. You can imagine. She was a forceful person. That's what makes changes. And it doesn't take too many people to do this in our lives. That's what makes changes in life. The force of certain people who never relinquish, therefore it just permeates the whole thing. MODERATOR: What type of education did she have? She was born in Summit. RALPH GOLZIO: I think that she went to the sixth grade. That's all. People were not educated in those days. We didn't know what doctors were. In fact, it was a midwife who delivered me.

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Come on dear.

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MODERATOR: I lost my train of thought for a minute. I'm sorry. RALPH GOLZIO: Alright. That's permissible. MODERATOR: I was going to ask a labor question and I lost my train of thought. RALPH GOLZIO: Refer to your notes. MODERATOR: I'm doing better without them at this point. I was going to ask if you ever saw your mother's workplace?

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If you ever went into any of her workplaces. And if you could describe what it was like. RALPH GOLZIO: Oh yes that's very interesting. It is interesting for me to tell you about it. The Mill, as they were called, were not sanctuaries as they are today with guards etc., etc. You know, and security.

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They were open houses and I would very often -- because they were very close to the family home -- very often visit her and I'd watch her weave. Weaving is a very interesting thing and it interested me. Now do you know that there are two kinds of weavers? There was the "shaft weaver" which wove a very simple fabric. The shuttle would go back and forth as in all weaving, but the warp, which is the basis for weaving, that is really the matrix, that was more complicated. Because in the second form of weaving, which was called jacquard, there was a more complicated thing.

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It gave you a woven cloth in three dimensions because it was embossed. Being embossed why it gave you that third dimension of thickness. And the Weavers themselves wanted to be known that they were either shaft weavers or jacquard weavers, because one was a more elevated position than that of the other. The jacquard naturally would take preference over the shaft waving. Jacquard was rather complicated. Even as a child when I would go in and stay with her, and it might be for... MODERATOR: Your mother was a jacquard weaver? RALPH GOLZIO: She was a jacquard weaver, but also having worked in shaft weaving, they did go from the two looms, to the three looms, to the four loom. You couldn't do that in jacquard. MODERATOR: How did your mother learn weaving? How did she learn? She just had a natural talent really. I guess going to a shop and wishing to work there was always somebody to teach you something. MODERATOR: Why did she go at such a young age? At nine? RALPH GOLZIO: She started at nine years of age. MODERATOR: Why such a young age? RALPH GOLZIO: Why? Because this is the way families had to earn a living to live.

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They needed bread and principally it was not, go seek out the bread. And of course, there was work for that. That's why we had in Europe such young children working. MODERATOR: Were her parents



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silk workers? RALPH GOLZIO: Her father was silk worker. My grandmother was a housewife. She started that early because it was expected of children to do that. MODERATOR: Back to your experience when you visited her at her jacquard loom. Do you recall the environment? Did she operate two looms or four looms?

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RALPH GOLZIO: No jacquard is usually two looms. And not only [that] they never got into the three and four. As I say, they were the more elite of the two types of weavers and it was a more difficult task. Because getting the embossing that was done through what was called a machine that stood above. Do you know what I'm talking about now? Oh, you do know a bit about jacquard. MODERATOR: The Paterson Museum has a jacquard loom set up with punch cards. The jacquard cards. RALPH GOLZIO: And they were perforated cards that would unfold and transfer or monitor the pattern that was going to be in the loom itself. Now you asked what I would do in the shop as I say probably at 10 years of age. I no longer visited my mother, but I would go there and it fascinated me. I was able to go to the winding. There was winding, which is the spool, making the spool for the silk shuttle, and then I go there and the people were very nice. They'd let me run the machine a little bit and I thought it was rather cute for a young guy to do that. MODERATOR: What was your mother and your parents' vision for your future? Did your mother ever encourage you or discourage you from becoming a weaver and doing what she did?

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RALPH GOLZIO: Well that was never even talked about. It was a foregone conclusion that I was going to be certainly not a weaver. And I had in my mind, when I was quite young, to become an engineer. MODERATOR: Why do you think your parents or your mother would discourage you or discouraged you from becoming a weaver? RALPH GOLZIO: It was never even talked about. The subject was never even addressed. It would be expected that you wouldn't be, in this generation. MODERATOR: With such a big industry in Paterson, so many generation after generation. RALPH GOLZIO: Well. Well. Well. The Northern Italians did not get into weaving. The first ones to get into it were the Jewish people and they at one part, displaced all of the industrialists, and it became an industry. [to someone off-screen] Hello. It became an industry that was run principally by the Jewish population. And toward the end of weaving in Paterson, it was all [the] Jewish population ran the weaving [industry]. MODERATOR: Do you have any memory or sense of what life was like for your family and the other families in the silk [industry] after the 1913 Silk Strike ended?

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RALPH GOLZIO: No, I just I think that we just picked up and continued trying to make a living. trying to exist. MODERATOR: It was a long strike.

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RALPH GOLZIO: Yeah, it was that. And thank God we did. MODERATOR: Your mother wasn't blacklisted?

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RALPH GOLZIO: Oh, there was no such thing as blacklisting. MODERATOR: No, not for her.

RALPH GOLZIO: There was labeling that one was an agitator. Look out for that person who may upset the apple cart. That sort of thing. MODERATOR: Was your mother labeled as an agitator? RALPH GOLZIO: Well she did agitate, but all of the suit manufacturers loved my mother.

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Really, they did because she made things so clear to them. She simplified them and they accepted it. They thought it was wonderful. Even the eight hours that was simplified for her. So, you see, I believe it's the way you get it across. If you have that talent, that's important.

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MODERATOR: Very good. I think I covered all my questions. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

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RALPH GOLZIO: Did I answer everything? MODERATOR: Beautifully. Beautifully. Thank you. RALPH GOZLIO: [to camera operator] Just stop it a moment so I can give it some thought.