

**Interview with Dino CAVANNA on January 12th, 2019
in Connecticut**

WAV M4197008

1 hour 19 minutes 3 seconds

WAV M4197009

29 minutes 32 seconds

Dino CAVANNA was born in Arona, Italy, on October 5, 1939. His parents' families were from Ferrara, Italy, and he gives a detailed account of their backgrounds. His mother's family was a noble family from Emilio Romagna. The family donated their entire library to the city of Torino and in Cremona, a street is named after a member of his family.

His paternal grandfather was a professor of ancient Greek and Italian literature at the *Lycée* of Ferrara. He thinks that his paternal grandmother, Lilia Binda, might have been Jewish.

His father fought valiantly in World War I, one of the first soldiers to enter Trieste, and was later made a Knight of the Order of Vittoria Veneto, which is accompanied by a lifetime pension, by the President of the Italian Republic. Dino emphasizes that he was a fervent Catholic.

From 1919 and for the next 40 years, his father managed a savings bank, but it is not clear if he started out in Milan. Mr. Cavanna mentions that since Milan was being bombarded, the family was in Arona, a picturesque town at the foot of the Alps on the shores of Lago Maggiore, during WW II. Mr. Cavanna mentions that a munitions factory on the other side of the lake had been bombarded. He also says that his father was on a list of hostages to be executed by the Nazis, but he does not explain why.

The Cavanna family was well-to-do and Dino remembers his mother helping people out with food, and perhaps allowing them to stay at their home.

The incident which incited him to agree to this interview was something that has remained engraved in his memory.

It was September, 1943, he was not yet 5 years old, and the war was lingering on. It was around 3 P.M. and he was in the living room of their home and bored, so he was glad to go out with his mother to pick-up some photos that were being developed at a near-by studio in the via Berrini.

When they arrived, the owner's daughter, Signorina Pinco, a young woman about 16 years old, was quite pale. She apologized because the photos were not yet ready and asked them to wait 5 minutes, but Dino's mother decided to cross the street for another errand.

Mr. Cavanna mentions that a friend had told the family that the Nazis were active in La Maina, about 50 miles north of Arona¹. A convoy was heading toward their town with German soldiers and tank-like vehicles and a beautiful white horse.

¹ Actually, La Main is in another region, closer to Venice, but this is how Mr. Cavanna remembers what he heard.

It is not clear whether Dino waited for his mother at the photo studio, or if they both returned quickly, but he describes a German officer in a blue-gray uniform, wearing a saber. He acted with “calm and precision, obviously wanting to finish the task (at hand) as soon as possible”.

Signora Pinco was wearing a Burberry and tried to rush out the door. There was hugging and crying. Dino saw another person sitting in the car waiting outside the shop. It seems that these were the only two Jews in the town of Arona, or the only 2 arrested that day. The car sped away and Signora Pinco never returned. Mr. Cavanna does not mention whether, at the time, he asked why she was arrested or what was going to happen to her.

Mr. Cavanna then recounts his life in post-war Italy. His sister, who was three years older than he, died of rheumatic fever at the age of 28.

The last part of the interview discusses Mr. Cavanna’s studies, his interest in the arts and literature, his business ventures, and his decision to move to the United States when he was already successfully established in Italy.

He and his wife Barbara, of Polish descent, have two grown children and several young grandchildren.