

**MANX HERITAGE FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT**

‘TIME TO REMEMBER’

Interviewee(s): Mr Vincent Ciappelli

Date of birth: 24th December 1936

Place of birth: Sicily

Interviewer(s): David Callister

Recorded by: David Callister

Date recorded: No recording date

Topic(s): Early childhood memories
Training as barber
Moving to the Isle of Man
The Majestic Hotel
Working as chef for various hotels
The casino raid
Sir Dudley Cunliffe-Owen
Mike Hailwood and TT races
Professional American gamblers
Organising conferences and banquets
Gambling at the casino
Duke of Blenheim
Kevin Woodford and *The Waterfront*
Meeting wife and starting family

Vincent Ciappelli - Mr C
David Callister - DC

- DC** Vincent, or Vincenzo, I suppose, isn't it, really.
- Mr C** Vincenzo.
- DC** Vincenzo Ciappelli, born in Sicily, how many years ago?
- Mr C** 1903.
- DC** Go on!
- Mr C** 1936. Christmas Eve, my birthday.
- DC** What did you do there, before you moved around the world? I mean did you, were you in catering in some way?
- Mr C** We were working in a café bar, helping a friend of mine, and then the time in Sicily, after schools, they always tried to learn us some trades, or some – it could be a tailor, it could be a carpenter, so after school my mother, she allocated me to go somewhere, to the barber, I did a barber for two years and so on. And so therefore you can do some message, you can get a few pennies, and someone will say, 'Go and get me an espresso, go and get me something else,' you know. And it used to shaving, you know, and used to get to there for a few hours instead of going on the street and just wear away with the shoes.
- DC** But life was pretty simple and basic, was it?
- Mr C** Oh, absolutely, I had a wonderful childhood, well, in my young age, wonderful, because the weather helping you in Sicily to get out and play and infinity, just to finish your school and maybe you'd just come back 10 o'clock, you just always play football home, just wandering round or just going and pinching somebody else, the grapes, you know, it was very healthy and ...
- DC** So when you first left Sicily then where did you go, did you go to Italy first or something?
- Mr C** Yes, I was in the army, yes, I went to north Italy for 18 months and then there was a turning point sometime when you go into the army, you, more or less, the Italian sort of way to decide what you are going to do in life, you know. A

turning point, you know. So I was try to – I met someone in the police force when I was to play school Regimelia, near Bologna, I had an option to stay there in north of Italy to work there in a café restaurant and so on. But I felt just to come back home and then my brother-in-law, my sister's husband, he came in England for a very short period and he met somebody else, you know, and when he come back to Sicily, he gave me this address, with another friend, to come to the Isle of Man, I'd never heard before, you know. I said, 'Oh,' he said, 'it's an Island, it will be lovely now, an English island,' and so on you know, so they say, 'let's go.' And that travelled then with a friend, they were staying in London, working London, Piccadilly, and they tried to dissuade me to come to the Island, he says, 'Stay here.' Well and then with a permit of restriction, it was so funny, you know, because I had a permit already for *The Majestic Hotel*, and so I said to the boys, because they were working there in England, in London, for ten years already, so they knew exactly, and he said, 'There's plenty of work here, no problem, if you want to stay here, London, don't go to the Isle of Man,' and that sort of thing. So I said, 'Let's go, and see what's going on there.'

DC So you went to *The Majestic* first, did you?

Mr C Yes, we go straight to *The Majestic* Hotel and then, 3rd May, I mean before open, they, Mr Jackson and Mr Parker who were the owners of *The Majestic*, I think Mr Jackson's still good and living, occasionally I see him and always get a good respect for him, you know, he's a lovely person. And so we worked there to clean the swimming pool and get a kitchen organised and ...

DC Oh, yes, odd jobs.

Mr C Oh, absolutely, I mean, I didn't mind.

DC This was what, was this 1963?

Mr C '63, 3rd May I arrived here.

DC But weren't you going to go back and you missed the boat or is that just – is that true?

Mr C That's what said, after the summer, I meant to work in the restaurant, and that was all happened, and when all those started arriving, was an Italian chef,

Stefano, and he'd been in the previous summer at *The Majestic*. 'Oh,' I said, 'he no speak good English,' I said, 'you rather work with me?' you know, and he said, 'okay.' And I felt, but you know ...

DC You weren't too happy?

Mr C Very timid sometime, when you don't know the language, just go out and face – but there were lots of Italian student, they used to either hold school about fifteen or sixteen waiters and waitresses, and the *maitre d'*, they had to wait there from *maitre* as well, you know, so anyway I was quite happy to go with Stefano, because he was a chef who would finish the same time, he used to take me out, he wants more or less for company, you know. So I really enjoyed the four months there and then the summer's over, everybody gone, and we used to sleep, on the entrance to *The Majestic*, the left hand side, they used to call the staff lodge, you know, and left just a skeleton staff you know, there would have been three or four people, you know, we'd have been used to sort of ratmatazz [razzamatazz ?] there, night time, the boys, music and disco, and so once ready, I contact my friends in London, I said, I will depart tomorrow, 9 o'clock, I get a boat and I will see you in London. So for a reason I overslept, one of these October morning, you know, it must have been the middle October, mist and I wake up about ten to nine, oh, dear, dear, so nervous, and I said, I can do nothing now, you know, and I could hear the boat [blow], okay, so I left the luggage ready, I said, tomorrow, we'll see. And then it was *The Rendezvous Café* where we used to meet, all Italian boys, you know.

DC On the promenade.

Mr C Near *The Sefton*, yes. 'Oh,' they say, 'I thought you gone,' 'I not gone, I'm still here, can't you see?' I said, 'I waked up,' I said, so-and-so, you know, 'I missed the boat, so I go tomorrow,' so he said, 'I think you should stay here with us, you know.' So they persuade me, and this chap was working at *The Castle Mona* then, casino ...

DC The Americans were running it, weren't they?

Mr C Yes, and I said, 'Oh, well, we'll try to,' so anyway we went to see the manager the next day, and he gave me a job.

DC This was of course at the end of the summer season, but the Americans presumably were hoping that they would attract business from around the world then.

Mr C Oh, absolutely, was the turning point for the Isle of Man, no doubt about it, you know, because people, with the casino here, used to come from anywhere in England, was a free sort of casino, it was not a member as such, but you could be a member on the night, you know, if you just put your name down and just go in.

DC So that period would be a kind of training ground for you then, was it? When you went to the casino you'd be getting into the waiting side and the service and so on.

Mr C Yes, it was Mr Manfred Kraft, he was a German, he was then in the restaurant, manager, and he said absolutely, so he took me on and I worked with the German for quite a long – it must have been at least 15 months, so I learned quite a lot from them because they were disciplined people, and you know, they would take serious the job, you know, so I took some that, you know, with me, I like to, rather, well, discipline the job, you know, to do a job the way people are supposed to do it, you know. And then obvious the American they were doing something they shouldn't have done, they got told, all done, they've been arrested somewhere, and I've never known why, what they're doing wrong, you know.

DC They were cleared out pretty quickly, weren't they?

Mr C Yes, the whole thing just – and then the Crockford from London took over and they came in and Sir Dudley in to it.

DC That's Sir Dudley Cunliffe-Owen.

Mr C Yes, yes, he came in to a director there, the director for the casino, you know, then obvious after one year or so they were talking to do a new casino, you know, so we felt it was, we had the three Italian boys, I said, 'We go, we're leaving *The Castle Mona*, because they're going to shut it up,' you know. So the whole staff, the whole direction of the management will leave, and so on, so we went to the – we met, while he was coming, dining there, to the Venetian Room

at *The Castle Mona*, because we used to have this beautiful Venetian Room.

DC I remember it, yes.

Mr C That's Mr [unclear].

DC Because you were in charge of that really, weren't you?

Mr C No, then, it was, no, no, then I was just working as, you know – I was like a station head waiter, but all the German boys they were in charge, Manfred Kraft was the restaurant manager, also had this entourage, you know, when you're Italian you're always plan to get Italian food to your son you know, and then it was the sense of employees, just brought so many – Jurgen was there too. Jurgen, oh yes, Jurgen was in charge of the restaurant in the evening, most other people took it in turns, you know, and so on. And then obviously we left, Alex O'Brien was the manager there, you know, and so we went to *The Peveril Hotel*, we asked John Beatty Pownall, his father was the Chief Constable ...

DC That's right.

Mr C ... and if he could employ us, you know. 'Oh,' he said, with a wide arm open, you know, he said, 'sure, I'll give you a job, good boys.' I said, 'We've finished at the casino,' and in two or three weeks' time, so I could, I started earlier than the other friend, so we went to *The Peveril Hotel* and what we used to do, we used to serve all the residential side first, you know, and then we used to operate an *à la carte* dinner, because they used to come early there, six to half past seven, and then the next, we replace or replenishing all the tables and setting for the next, you know, anybody could come, you know, and we were very successful. And then obviously something's happened in *The Peveril*, you know, when they had that sea strike, it must have been 1966, they had lots of alterations, they spent so much money, and that was a disastrous summer, and they went on the wall [to the wall] later. So, and then I've been addressed to go ask *The Fort Anne Hotel*, it was a Swiss manager there, a Swiss German manager, Mr Meyer, or some sort, you know and I went there for three or four months, you know.

DC Was that all you were there, only three or four months at *The Fort Anne*?

Mr C Yes, yes, and there was one or two Spanish boys there. And then I left, I went to *The Arragon Hotel*.

DC Oh, did you, yes?

Mr C With Geoff Duke, lovely little country place, and so on, very sort of relaxed area, you know, and so on but in the end of the day, I did most of the summer there, you know, with the late Mrs Duke, she was lovely, and then I dodged Mr Duke and Peter and got to know the boys and so on and enjoyed the – I must have worked about four months, but there wasn't my address to be profession, working in a kind of place like that, you know, so I wanted a bit more, you know.

DC But there wasn't a problem with drinking and driving in those days, was there?

Mr C No, no, you know.

DC You could drink as much as you like and get in your car and drive away.

Mr C Well, I didn't do that, myself, I made sure.

DC No, no, but the customers probably did.

Mr C Oh, yes, yes, yes.

DC So what happened after *The Arragon* then?

Mr C After *The Arragon* obviously the casino got completed, you know, but I didn't join when it opened, Mr Alex O'Brien, he was looking for me to come back there again, because he said, 'When this building's ready I want you to come back.' So I didn't have that real particular intention to come back to the casino, because it's a lot of work and lots of extensive work, at night, at day, big hotels, you know, but I suppose when you see, and you start to get, in the Isle of Man then, in the winter, was so difficult, if you go in a place where they shut in the winter and then you have to find a job again, and so on, and it would have been more or less settling down in the Island, with a family and so on, and I preferred to get a proper job. And that's what I did, so, but I say, saying so, my, always I felt I would come back there, you know, to the casino.

DC Did you?

Mr C Yes, so we went one night as family, my wife and her mother and sister, and we went to see this show and Mr O'Brien spoke to me, and he said, 'Oh, I'll have a word with you when you finish, when this show's over,' so I was – tried to sneak out without seeing him.

DC Why were you not keen to go back, was it just a hard job really, was it?

Mr C Just to the heavy loaded work, you know, you would face, you know, and so on.

DC But you couldn't sneak out?

Mr C So, about two o'clock in the morning we went just to go out and the security say, 'Oh, Mr Alex O'Brien would like to see you,' I said, 'thank you very much,' he's having gentle [unclear], and you know, 'look, we need you here, we'd like to see you come back,' he said, 'go and see Manfred Kraft.' I said, 'I will speak to him tomorrow,' and said, and the waitresses and that, 'we'd like to see you come back.' And then obviously, with *The Arragon* was a bit up down, you know, as I say, you get nowhere there, it used to have a lovely, Mr Jackman there, you know, he used to look after the Dukes, you know, sort of house manager, you know, but the wine was downstairs in the cellar, and before I get a bottle of wine, and people maybe will just forget they ordered some wine, you know, things like that, I mean it was very relaxed sort of place, you know, it wasn't a case for me to get involved, you know, in a place like that, but a lovely, I enjoyed terrific, a lovely, nice to meet the Dukes, and so on, a lovely family, and so on, you know. And I see Mr Duke from time to time, sometimes, but that was this experience. And then I decide, okay, let's go back to *The Palace* and casino and lots of work, lots of experience, and obvious I met there people, all over the globe, you know, it would have been Manx TT race, you know, the TT race in June, you see people repeating every years from America, Australia, you name it, Japanese, the Honda people, you know, you just, I met all, Mike Hailwood, and newspaper boys, you know, really, you were the central point there, people return and say, 'Ah, Vincent,' you know, and fellow tease [unclear] you know, and so really it was something you just were there and everybody, you know, looking for you.

DC Did the casino attract American gamblers and people from across the world or

not, was it mostly locals, would you say?

Mr C When, I think in the late '68, '69, I think it was, I mean, me personally, you know, was a bad idea, to organise 'junkets.' They were going to London first and then they would come to the Isle of Man and obvious they were too, so embraced, because they were American, I mean American, they weren't direct, the people responsible to bring them here, they were smart lads, you know, they were creaming them off and then all over here in the Isle of Man, I mean, you know, because they were the sort of people, maybe ...

DC Professional gamblers?

Mr C Yes, maybe, you know, they're losing \$5000, maybe they bought another \$10,000 from the casino, you know, things like that, you know, you cannot do that. Anyway when they were coming, 120 people and so on, everything free.

DC Really?

Mr C Everything free, and then the second trip, I said just the food free, not the wine, not the champagne, the third trip they could have just the breakfast, you know, and so on and so on, because they felt nothing was coming out then.

DC So it wasn't paying.

Mr C But they put the place, right on the wall, they had to change the structure, the whole thing when it was so bad because imagine you feed 120 people for one week, it costs you £100,000 and so – and then obvious they stop, because there were loss, some people, gambler lost, debts, they were trying to chase some of them in Canada, here and there, but you know, no money to return, anybody gambling, you don't lend them money to somebody gambling, you know, but anyway that was the sort of things, but that's what happened.

DC Who were the people you were working with at *The Palace* at that time then?

Mr C Well, there was the Crockford from London and they used to – they were the main people, because they were all directors from, you know, Crockford's London.

DC So did you get to the stage there where you took charge of all the catering and the restaurants, and so on?

Mr C Yes, when, was happened, just turning management out, and then we got Alan Fairley and Binstock, if you remember, they bought it, the actual casino, the whole building, the whole place, and obvious he brought in all his people like Alan Fairley, from Mecca, he was wonderful person and the Mr Les Dunnage, he was alongside Mr Fairley, because they used to be in the army together ...

DC Oh, yea.

Mr C ... so Mr Alan Dunnage was one of the gourmet sort of London, you know, food society, you know, was a great person and it changed all the whole structure and so on and they promoted me to be a restaurant manager.

DC Yes, so then that was real responsibility there, wasn't it?

Mr C Yes, yes.

DC I mean when you were catering for large numbers what will have been the largest number of people you've catered for on one occasion?

Mr C Well, when the other old management left and, you know, the new management took over we were left with ... I mean ... then later '69, early '70 there were conference every week, up from April to the end of May, just prior to the TT race and there were conference non-stop and there was about 1100 people, we had an LVA booked and we did that at *The Palace Lido*.

DC Two sittings?

Mr C No, no, one, it was a banquet, a banquet, it was absolutely terrifying.

DC That must have been an awful thing to organise and get staff, I mean you'd have to have extra staff in as well, wouldn't you?

Mr C Well, what we did, I suggested to get some students from anywhere in England and so the manager then organised with the Blackpool College and they hired an aeroplane to bring 70 students from Blackpool.

- DC** And what about the food, where would that be obtained then, locally?
- Mr C** Oh, yes, it was all prepared at *The Palace* kitchen because we had an immense kitchen behind the actual *Lido*, you know, very, very – I mean they spend a lot of money.
- DC** But anyone looking at those numbers would say well, we'll have to do a sort of cold buffet style meal, wouldn't you?
- Mr C** No, no, because it was pre-organised, then you see the people who were coming to the Island to organise the conference, would try to compete with Birmingham or Brighton or someplace else, so they had to give what, you know, people wanted or either the conference would have been off.
- DC** Would you have two hot courses?
- Mr C** Oh, yes, the menu, believe it or not, was absolutely, I mean, no sense put on for 1100 people, the LVA, was nonsense, that menu.
- DC** Was there sort of gourmet meal, was it?
- Mr C** Well, it was just a banquet but I would say they didn't put any thought to 1100 people, you have to be adequate what you can do, you know, and they put *consommé*, I mean, they put trout, full of bones, *consommé*, while you're serving, it was flying all over somebody's jackets, you know, we had about twenty suits to the laundry the next day, well the *consommé* is so thin, and it vaporise so quick. And then, you know we had the queenies in their shells, and then they had the *petits pouissin*, left more bones than they actually had chicken, it's such unbelievable, but because it was arranged, I mean, you know, you ...
- DC** You had to do it.
- Mr C** ...you had to do it. And then, obviously the student, they left early because the airport would be closed so they left everything, they turned their back and they're gone and we clear there till 1 o'clock in the morning, all the – unbelievable – but we did it, you know, we had all the staff round about, do this, do that, and we finished two or three o'clock in the morning, washing up.

DC But this would be a major lesson to you, for future catering as well, wouldn't it?

Mr C No, we had, actually, at *The Lido*, I mean somebody book a conference, you talk about one year, two years before, it's not just happen two or three months – so it's always commitments and to honoured. And that was the worst one, as menu organised, you know, but we had like the post office, I mean then I mean that's why we couldn't compete with the people just looking ahead ten years before, because they used to do the conference at *The Lido*, the actual, you know, talking in the morning and all delegates, you know, 1100 delegates to stay, all the various places around the Island, you know, but the conference, the working conference stopped, about 4 o'clock, half past four in the afternoon, and we had to set up for 1100 people.

DC To eat at what time, 7.30?

Mr C About quarter to eight, and they mobilise everybody in the hotel, even the accountants, they were helping out, and the [unclear] that had been ordered, they were on the plane, it wasn't here at 4 o'clock, you know, it's all, you know, sort of, but we did it, and – and then, as I say, we had about four major events over times from people and also we did the Princess Anne banquet, Save the Children Fund, Mrs Salmond, she was involved, we had a committee as such, you know, we had obviously you take your time, what's best, where you should do, the menu, that's on you know, and they were very, very successful, excellent.

DC Did you have, were there occasions when things actually went terribly badly wrong for you or had you always, were you always able to get it right?

Mr C We had an occasion with the Lions International Conference, you know, and obvious we didn't get any student from across, we just had to survive what's round the Island, you know, ring all the hotels, that had nothing on, maybe give you two staff, somebody else's missus, you name it and also these people, they're meant to have a reception, I mean 1000 people plus the banquet at *The Lido*, it's not, you know, Wembley Stadium, you know, it just was adequate enough to do the table, but small amount and lots of people, when they start flushing in and coming in and coming in, you know, 300 or 400 going to drink all right but the other 400 or 500, they couldn't get to the bars, so therefore somebody must just give away space and they look for seats and I once tried to

locate the girls where to work, all the day planning had just gone, once the people are sitting down you can operate, you can do a job, and there were lots tables without a location, there was no staff, maybe there were two somewhere, but an immense staff like that, you just lost – and I felt, as if, if a helicopter had come by, if I had a pair of wings I would have fly immediately around the place.

DC So *The Palace* then was, I suppose, the largest part of your career in the Isle of Man was spent at *The Palace Hotel*.

Mr C At *The Palace*, yes.

DC How do you account for staying so long then? You just got everything running smoothly did you, do you think?

Mr C Well, I suppose you get attracted to a place, you used to become part of this, you know, and then you just get affection to staff, to people, you just become, you know, like people staying in government office for 30 years, you know, I mean it's a ... and doing people, changing too many places is good in life for anything, you know, I mean you need to stay.

DC Was the summer season, were the summer seasons much busier than winter time though?

Mr C Oh, yes, absolutely.

DC So it was a quiet time, winter, was it?

Mr C Well, I mean, you see, *The Palace*, one of the leading hotels in the Island, you know, then in the winter used to have, you know, I mean November's quiet, anywhere, all the time, you know, but and then used to have this season of banqueting situation, you know, lots of banquets, lots of social life and so on, and you would have been leading you on challenge always, you never suffer, you know, there's always plenty to do, plenty of work, you know, big establishment, you know, and then come, November goes and start to building up over the Christmas and immense work, I mean you've got a 138 bedrooms, you know, you find Christmas, their lunch, you know, used to raising them, you know, it's serving the breakfast in the morning.

- DC** Did you have to provide room service as well?
- Mr C** Yes, yes, that was – sometimes it depends on age of – toast, cup of tea, but as I say after time the chambermaid were doing other things and we took over serving later breakfast and things like that, you know. But when there were gamblers staying, like the Americans, it was 24 hour service.
- DC** Was it?
- Mr C** Yes, 24 hour service.
- DC** Well, I suppose the Americans would expect that, they would be used to that, wouldn't they, wherever they went. So now, let's try and get some feel for what it was like for everybody sort of working in a place like *The Palace*. It did get a bit of a reputation for having a few 'good-time' girls there, didn't it, at one time?
- Mr C** Well, I was too involved with working, you see, I didn't know anything about – no, no, I wasn't aware of that.
- DC** And there was always a lot of criticism about local people going to the casino and spending money they couldn't afford to spend and all that sort of thing.
- Mr C** Well, obvious, I mean, I didn't monitor that, you know, it was not, you know, just the dining area mainly, you know.
- DC** You had plenty to do without thinking of that.
- Mr C** Oh, absolutely, you know, well, I mean it's always, wherever you go, people love gambling, you know, and sometimes people, if you've got an establishment like that, it just take, you go one night with your wife and you say you're going to put a fiver in, you know and you lose that fiver, and you maybe want to take him back again and put another five and then gone again, and so on, and you just, you know, it's just irritating you, you want to get the money back again and you're losing your head. The staff wasn't allowed to go in the casino, no, no. Just leisurely maybe, just to join the boy for a lager occasionally, here and there, you know, but no staff whatsoever allowed to go inside the casino.

DC It's very difficult today for people to get staff for anything almost but in your time then, did you have problems getting sufficient staff?

Mr C No, we didn't have any problem because I mean I used to organise six months before, you know, once you get to the Italian system, hotel schools, you know, and we had ample of men staff, you know, and then, what would happen, somebody come, finish this course and stayed for the winter, you know, that small amount people, two or three people, that's enough I suppose to say and they were multiply, you know, so some even stay here married, you know, like me, yes, yes.

DC Well, the other thing that, I mean, one of the most essential things for any of these hotels, whether it was *The Palace* or whether it was Dukes, or *The Arragon*, or wherever it is, the key to it is the chef, isn't it?

Mr C Oh, yes, absolutely.

DC So you've worked with some pretty good chefs, haven't you?

Mr C Yes, when we went, the first time I went to the, was this Italian, at *The Majestic*, it was Stefano, he was good, and was the second summer they used to take a Swiss *patissier*, you know, was absolutely an artist, you know. And then *The Majestic*, I mean it used to take about 200 people a day, you know, and absolutely start at the end of May and finish middle October, you know, packed all the time, I mean *The Majestic* used to have, all sorts, immense amounts of rooms, cabaret, all, such a lovely place, you know, but it was big, big, but they built it just to cope with that, adapted thing, you know.

DC What happens when they get a chef that isn't so good then, do they get him out, get rid of him pretty quickly, do they?

Mr C Well, I suppose, you know, if you, now I think, I mean we don't talk about a century ago, you talk about modern times, you know, I mean, the time at *The Palace*, 30 years, 25 years, and when did they open, *The Palace Hotel*, Alex O'Brien and the whole set up, they employ, they have the [unclear] and he once worked for the Duke of Blenheim, or something, you know, well-reputed people, and he didn't last long, he was good administrator, good organiser, you know, and sometime not necessary in the kitchen, you know, once some people

do that and then you employ people to do what you think's right and tell them how to do things, you don't need him to cook any more, you know, but that's imperative to see an hotel go like clockwork, you know, rather than be a shamble. You always try to be on the top to people, even how to hold a knife, a *commis* chef, you know, and if you don't say that you would never learn.

DC How often have you come across customers who didn't like the service or didn't like the wine or walked out and weren't prepared to pay the bill, I mean, did you ever come across that sort of thing?

Mr C Oh, it's happen, it's happen, sometime people may do it just because they want to do it, sometime it's a genuine cases, you know, you have to believe, I mean if you work for a company and if you start arguing to a customer and then it goes two step forward, it goes to see the manager, and go to see the director and so on, but if you got your own restaurant and somebody come like that and you feel, try to say something, because he want to get away with that, you know, and then he can argue to that, you know, and that's the way it works in hotel, some managers say, well, why should I have him to write to my director saying, you know, later, so that's okay, we'll invite you again, or we'll do something about it, you know, but there are lots of genuine cases, you know, a customer's right in the end, you know.

DC The customer's always right. Then there's also at *The Palace*, you must have had a succession of probably top named stars and artists arriving and staying there as well, were they treated differently, the stars, the entertainers?

Mr C Well, yes, in the hotel circle, wherever you go, London or *Savoy*, *Dorchester*, always you find VIP, the people expect modern normal people, very important person, okay, VIP, you know, and obvious could be very influential, or could be pain in the *** you know, in the backside, you know, so you had to smooth things off and just keep the peace, you know, to do a priority job, you know.

DC So then you had, was it, 24 years?

Mr C 24 years at *The Palace*, yes, and they're all gone, it's happened, we're still here.

DC Where did you go after *The Palace* then?

Mr C Okay, because through the duration of *The Palace* I met Kevin Woodford, you know, and because obvious, used to teaching, Kevin, Nottingham, Sheffield, so therefore used to come in Christmas period with all his children, two kids, you know, and used to work at *The Palace*, Kevin, used to have his room upstairs, you know, his family here in the Isle of Man, and so on, so we become rather close and you know, in good combination and sense, and he said to me, 'Any time you want to stop, let me know.' And I tell you Kevin has send me lots of people, found fifteen people, used to serve, fifteen people for Christmas, fifteen students, yes.

DC So really was this contact with Kevin that took you onto his restaurants, really, was it?

Mr C Well, I remain a good friendship with Kevin and every time I used to see him and he asking me a few times, even when he was at *Woodford's*, you know, and then I was rather happy at *The Palace*, there was a good manager, Mr Barry Gregory, we used to get on very well, and so on, and I said, 'Maybe once we'll meet one day,' to Kevin, and then it's happened, you know. We went and Kevin starts break down with television work and it's happened he advertised for somebody and just I went to say hello and it all happened, you know, and I was allowed to join with him and he's been very good to me, because, you know, considering that *The Palace* was no Sunday, no Monday, no Christmas, no Easter, all the days.

DC Every day, work every day.

Mr C I mean sometime you know, you're responsible but I don't think it's worthwhile, you know, but it has paid off, obvious, in a way, because people, you can be known less would you have been a job like that, you know, you would have been anybody else, you know.

DC And then, I mean, you're retiring from *The Waterfront*, you're a fixture at *The Waterfront*, people are going to go in there and say, 'Where's Vincent?' and there you'll be sitting at home, what will you be doing?

Mr C Kevin got, just put a big picture for me there, no, I think, just be a period of transition and then obvious I said to Kevin, always *The Waterfront* would be a good place to be, and all the custom and the stand, you know, no question

because I'll leave as to go to another restaurant or another hotel or that, it's just finished off.

DC Time to retire.

Mr C My time comes and I think I have to do things, you know, for me and my family.

DC *The Waterfront*, of course, was originally the old brewery building, wasn't it?

Mr C Before was Clinch's.

DC Oh, that's right, Clinch's brewery, that's right.

Mr C Clinch's, and the actual restaurant was called *Clinch's*, when Kevin took over he asked to change things round, I think they had an old tank with a fish of some sort, you know, and that's and then Kevin did the whole changing, not just, but change everything, you know, from carpet to chairs, and the whole system, you know.

DC This restaurant was a bit different to anything you'd worked in before, it was smaller – it was a bit up and down, wasn't it?

Mr C I don't think, I mean, the actual, because they'd three stages, restaurant, and people love it.

DC Because there's nice little nooks and crannies, aren't there?

Mr C Yes, absolutely, it's got its own character, everything, it's an old brewery, I mean, you can't just form anything of that nature, it's always people, you know, you go to a restaurant some time, you see four square walls, and four tables and tablecloths on, but that's got an image, got a character, you know.

DC Did you have to build it up from a fairly low clientèle then did you?

Mr C I think, the combination, Kevin, we all recognise he was to break through the television and obvious he knew me from *The Palace*, I knew everybody in town and then the combination was just right, you know. It took a while for us to get

what today, you know, but we made it, we done it, you know, and Kevin was gone away and left it to me, the senior, just, not just the service, but in many respect goes always prevalent lots young lads, and in the kitchen or in the restaurant and you're the old pro, you know. You can keep everybody at bay, you know.

DC Did Kevin set, has Kevin set all the menus virtually, has he?

Mr C Oh, absolutely, he's, that's his, you know, his strength, to do the menu, Kevin, he have to, yes.

DC And with a restaurant of that kind you have to have an extremely good chef and I mean you must have been fortunate with chefs there.

Mr C Yes, well Kevin always, he did pass the message what he wants, you know, that's what I always say, you have to tell what you want and how to do it, and then you just carry on, you know, basically, it's, everything's fresh, it just requires somebody with the skill and you're there, you know, and everything is fresh at *The Waterfront*. You're dining there quite a lot yourself.

DC That's right, you look too active, too young even, to be retiring from your job at *The Waterfront*?

Mr C Yes, I suppose, I have to pay something back to my wife and the family, you know, so hope to have a lovely retirement ...

DC I hope you do.

Mr C ... and do things we have never done before, at least you have that sense freedom, you know.

DC You might get back to Sicily more often than once a year then?

Mr C Yes, that's true, but that's very imperative now, I will do that, occasionally, you know, to go to Sicily, got a sister there, brothers, and so on, you know, so another family there, you know, so there's still, they wait for you to see you.

DC So you came really, since 1963 you've been at all the important places in the

Isle of Man as far as restaurants are concerned.

Mr C Yes, well, I say, *The Palace*, *The Fort Anne* was beautiful place then, you know, immense view, an immense view, and it was a lovely place, but obvious things don't last like *The Palace*, you know.

DC When you came here there weren't many restaurants, and there wasn't an awful lot of competition, now the Isle of Man is covered with restaurants, isn't it, I mean do you just relate that to the growing population or to the growing wealth or what?

Mr C I think people met themselves, you had to have a choice, look how many boutiques we have, look how many restaurants we have, look how many things go on, I mean it's, everybody like living in a big city here, we have a wonderful facility, you know, now obvious everything have to go appropriate to, you know, because some time if people want to go on a Friday or Saturday, I mean imagine you know having half a dozen restaurants, people have to have – but no, no, it's good for everybody, making people aware, competition's good, you know, instead of monopolise things, you know, people be surprised but you have to be always good, you know, always people come if you're good, but if you're cheaper you do things not all right, say forget it, that's [unclear].

DC So standards have increased greatly then have they?

Mr C Oh, yes, absolutely, the expertise in people and it's all helped, television chefs, and you go into a supermarket now, everything's there for you and so you have to be different to a supermarket, doesn't matter good looks in a supermarket, they make beautiful pictures on the actual items but sometime you can go home and get disappointed, it is true, it is true.

DC Well, from 1963 through to 2001, it's a pretty long time, you settled down, of course as you say, and had a family here as well.

Mr C Yes, just very briefly come back to the, obvious when I stayed I missed the boat, obvious, in the Isle of Man, you meet just Manx girls and I met my wife then, you know, and so and I stayed here for good, got married, and have a nice family, three kids, you know, two girls and a boy, Damien, all over here, Manx orientated, they've got jobs on the Island, so nobody's away, everybody under

my roof, you know, and it seems to me everybody happy and hope they do a very successful career, better than me.

DC Oh, you've been pretty successful, very happy retirement to you, anyway, Vincent.

Mr C Oh, thank you so much.

END OF INTERVIEW