

INTERVIEWEES: Raymond H. Tetrault, Jr. and Tom Tetrault

INTERVIEWER: Elizabeth Blood, Salem State University, with Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello Salem State University

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LOCATION of INTERVIEW: Bernards Jeweler's, 179 Essex Street, Salem, MA

LENGTH of INTERVIEW: 39:50

00:00

EB: Can you please tell us your names?

RT: Ray Tetrault Jr.

TT: Tom Tetrault.

00:06

EB: Excellent. So we're gonna start off—we're just gonna ask you some general questions but we really just want to hear any stories that you want to tell us about growing up in Salem. First, what do you know your ancestors, how your family came here, how they got to Salem, what they did?

RT: Let's see. Well, my father's father was an itinerant photographer. Came from Fall River and rented a room in my father's grandfather's house and that's how he met his wife, married my father's mother, my grandmother. Our mother's parents came from Québec area.

TT: You know, **Dottie's**—Excuse me for one second [walks off camera].

EB: [laughter] Sure.

1:16

EB: So your grandfather on your father's side was already in Fall River. He was French-Canadian also?

RT: Yes, yeah. My father was eleven and so he was raised by his grandfather who—

TT: He had an interesting story. He was from Three Rivers and he came down to—
he worked --by the Harvard building—making bricks to built Harvard, and then he ended
up bringing his family to Salem. That's the story I heard.

RT: Well they also—well I guess that's that—which side is that?

TT: That's the **Tremblay**.

RT: That's the Tremblay side. And then there's—somebody comes from Les
Éboulements.

TT: That was him.

RT: Well that isn't—

TT: That isn't Tremblay?

RT: Yeah, that's not—what did you say? That's not Three Rivers. [Everyone laughs]
That's not Three Rivers.

TT: No. That's Les Éboulements. Yeah, okay.

RT: No, Trois-Rivières, that's up north of Montreal. See, he—[laughs]—the stories—

TT: I never paid attention.

RT: That's where we used to go—

TT: I didn't do well in French in class either [laughs].

RT: No, yeah, my father's ancestors came from Les Éboulements, which is on the St.
Lawrence seaway. Beautiful farmland. I have pictures of it, if you're interested in seeing
that.

EB: Sure.

RT: I have a picture that was in National Geographic. And then I guess they—yeah, well that's how they came to the United States. He came to work here. So my father's father was actually born, would have been, I believe, Fall River. Should of researched this [laughs]. Actually, it was never really clear where my mother's parents came from other than Québec area. And they were born in, both in Québec area. They were probably married there too. That I'm not sure.

3:40

EB: So your mother and father were both born—

RT: They were both born here.

3:45

EB: Here in Salem?

RT: Yeah, Salem. Well, my mother was born towards—because of the fire she was born in Lynn because of the Salem Fire. She was born in 1914, right after the fire.

3:58

EB: Where did her family live?

RT: They lived in Salem on Green Street, which is down near the Palmer Cove area. They had a two-family house there and that was destroyed in the fire so they went to stay with her mother's family in Québec and came back before she was born.

4:27

EB: So did they come back to Salem after that or did they stay?

RT: Oh yeah, they lived in Salem.

TT: Yeah, he was a barber here in Salem at the hotel at one time.

RT: He was all around, yeah.

4:40

EB: At the Hawthorne Hotel?

TT: Yeah.

RT: Yeah, he had his own shop at one time but—

TT: **Haircuts** was a big deal in those days. A real barbershop, you know, with the spittoon and the whole bit.

RT: Yeah, I still have the spittoon [laughs]

EB: [laughs]

RT: [laughs] His spittoon from the barber shop, you know. I had his tools. I had five sons and I cut all my five sons' hair with his tools, his clippers—

5:11

EB: So this is your father?

RT: No, grandfather. On my mother's side.

EB: On your mother's side, okay.

TT: Our father was in this business. He started this business in 1934. He was twenty-one.

5:22

EB: Do you want to talk a little bit about—we're here in Bernard's Jewelers on Essex Street in Salem.

TT: Well our father started at twenty-one years. He was a bookkeeper at **Mill Hill Motors**, which was an automotive place here in Salem. He'd been to Saint-Joseph's school and the academy and then Salem Commercial School but, you know, that was only until he was eighteen or nineteen and then he went to work and then at twenty-one he started a business with a cousin, Wilfred Gauthier, another French guy who had

connections in Fall River. And he started a small store down on Essex Street. We've been on this street ever since. You know, he grew through the years, through the Depression and then the good years of the fifties and sixties, he really grew a lot. Moved to this store in 1965. So we grew up in this business, you know, learning from our father, so.

RT: He was an unusual man. He was—I always used to kid him. I says, “I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth but you were an orphan.” His parents died—his father died when he was seven and his mother remarried and then she died,

I think three years later, in childbirth, giving birth to my father's half-brother. And they lived in a—There was two, two-family houses on Prince Street that my father's grandfather had built. And it was—both homes were all occupied by family, his cousins and so forth, his grandfather. And he decided he wanted to go live with his grandfather after his mother re-married, which was next-door. And he lived there with his grandfather and one of his aunts, who was very [inaudible] never married. They pretty much brought him up. And then cause the story goes on, you know. When his mother died in childbirth she had married Steven Richard and Steven Richard married her sister [laughs]. So, you know, he had, you know—Our grandparents on that side were his aunts and uncles or whatever [laughs].

TT: It took a long time to understand that cause we used to be visiting, you know, our Aunt Louise and Aunt Eva and we'd go sitting in the kitchen, and it took me a long time to understand the whole relationship of who these ladies were before I found out that they were my grandmother's sisters. But yet they were also—the re-marrying and the passing away, you know, it was all very much in good order but it took a while to understand.

RT: Those were always great memories. There was this big kitchen that was more like a family room. They had the family room the living room and dining room but that's where everybody gathered, you know. And we'd visit on the Sunday afternoons or mornings or whatever. They would all be there and it was my Aunt Louise and Aunt Eva. That was actually his mother's sisters who were his aunts and—but they treated us like—as far as we were concerned they were like grandparents, you know. And they were cooking and preparing meals and it was a very fun way to visit, you know. It was a fun growing up—

TT: You just drop in at any time and they'd—

RT: They were always there.

TT: Always there, always very excited to see us. My wife continued to visit them too **when I had young children**. She had had elderly aunts in Gloucester that she always [recording skips]. So when we got married she appreciated what they were like as family and even without me, she'd go over and visit and they'd get all excited. Sometimes they'd even go sit in the parlor, not even just sit in the kitchen [laughs]. So they'd draw their curtains up and, you know, but we would always—never went anywhere but the kitchen it seemed. There was a little pantry off to the side with polished brass **arcopal** pipes on the walls and everything else there—

RT: Tom's a lot younger than I am. He's thirteen years younger. You probably don't remember too much the gatherings of mémère and pépère at **Susie's** house?

TT: Some of them. You know, very little. Yeah.

RT: Cause we had, you know, ours was an extended family and we had quite a few cousins who lived in the area and had holiday gatherings there. New Year's day seemed to be a bigger gathering than Christmas time. And that's when the families were still

around and we'd have this New Year's day visit that that would be just a big party and all the kids in a great big house and it was—

TT: There were six children in our mother's family.

RT: Yeah, there were several that died, you know, young in the old days and that sort of thing—

TT: There were five sisters. Five sisters, yeah.

10:51

EB: So is this all in the Point area?

RT: No, no, this was on the Lafayette Street—

11:01

EB: The other side of Lafayette Street?

RT: Yes, Lafayette and Holly Street. There was a big house on the corner there that one of my uncles. My mother's twin sister was married to a doctor. He owned the house. It was a big two-family. He had his office and my grandmother and grandparents lived on one side. They also lived further up on Holly Street.

11:32

EDO: Did they all marry other French speaking, French-Canadians?

RT: Who, our—?

EB: [inaudible]

TT: No, there was some Irish blended in there right away—

RT: Yeah my brother's twin sister married **Frank Cane**. Her brother, Richard, married **Frank Cane's** sister [laughs].

TT: They met in [inaudible] in much good order. But other than that everybody else is— you know, there's Dion. There's—

RT: Yeah, Dion and they were—Aunt Jackie married Uncle **Lionel**. He was a Dion. He grew up in Salem. **Juliet Bouscé** married a **Bouscé**. He was a local man.

TT: George.

RT: George married a Levesque.

TT: So they stayed pretty much tight. This next generation, we all—

RT: We all married Irish [laughs].

TT: It's funny, yeah. His wife is Irish. My wife is Irish.

RT: There were four of us and our sisters married Irish and we both married Irish.

TT: Its funny. My wife is language teacher and she spoke five different languages but French wasn't one of them. She really started picking up a little bit of it at one time. She had to teach primarily Spanish and Italian, Latin and ancient Greek. And then she came into—My father said, "Oh, you're a language teacher." He tried to teach French to her, speak French to her, and she wouldn't follow up on it, you know. It's like—

13:25

EB: So where did you guys grow up?

TT: Here in Salem.

13:29

EB: Which part or which street were you living?

RT: Well I was born on Leach Street, the corner of Leach and Summit and we then we moved to Moffat Road when I was—it was before the end of the war so I was probably

four or five. We lived there until 1949. My father built a house on Raymond Avenue.

And then Tom was born there and that was in 54'.

TT: South Salem, it's still the same general area.

RT: You mentioned the Point area that—one of my father's—Again, this would have been his—Oh, actually—I think Mike—I think his half-brother lived on down in the apartment buildings in The Point area. And then it was his brother, which would have been my father's stepbrother—those were Richard's [children]. They lived in an apartment and it was in that whole—those brick apartment buildings that were built to house the people who worked in the mill. And that was all French-Canadian. And you would go there on a Sunday to visit and all you could smell was the pork roast cooking, you know. And in those buildings and those apartments were immaculate. They were just—it was a very unique situation. But I just—all remember that—those pork roasts smelled so good! [laughs]

15:18

EB: So what kind of foods did you have when you went to these family gatherings?

RT: Pork and veal roasts, you know [laughs]. And my wife has spent—we've been married for forty-seven years and she spent many of those early years learning how to make corton. And she's perfected it. And it's interesting because all of my—my grandmother and my aunt Louise and aunt Eva, everybody made corton but nobody really had a recipe written down. They were all different.

TT: Everybody's had a different taste and every batch would come out different too.

RT: When she gathered, you know, all this information and eventually after a long time perfected the corton. And she cooks a beautiful pork roast [laughs].

EB: [laughs] Excellent.

16:17

EB: So did you belong to one of the parishes?

TT: Yeah, St. Anne's. I grew up at St. Anne's. Ray did too, I think. I don't know. Didn't you go to St. Josephs too?

RT: Well, it's complicated. Where I was born, that was part of Saint-Joseph Parish, on the corner of Leach and Summit. And then when we lived on Moffat Road that was part of St. Anne's Parish. And my folks because very friendly with two of the priests that were in that parish, two of the curés. One in particular, Father **Leduc**. And so they were very much attached to Saint Anne's and I went to school there. I went to St. Anne's Grammar School, as Tom did. But then they were living on Raymond Avenue, which geographically was part of St. Joseph Parish. But they kept their allegiance to St. Anne's, which really in those days was a no-no. You really—supposed to support the parish that you lived in. That was one the rules that my dad broke [laughs]. And I had an interesting situation in later years. This is after I left and married. One time, recently, Father **Louis Bourgeois** was the pastor at Saint Anne's and he knew my folks very well. This was only within the last ten years or so. I lived in Beverly and Father Bourgeois went to Saint Paul's in Hamilton. And just because it was convenient, my wife and I started going to mass there, particularly at 4:30 mass on Saturday, which we called the golfer's mass because I wanted to play golf on Sunday morning. And we got to know Father Bourgeois and so we were going there all the time for a couple of years, supporting the parish, but we actually belonged to Saint John the Evangelist in Beverly and were supporting that parish. Finally I said to him. I said, "I really—I know your supposed to attend church or

support the parish that your in but we like coming here and we like to change our—Can we sign up?” He says, “Ray, you can go wherever you’re spiritually nourished” [laughs].

I love him. And that was him. He was a French-Canadian that grew up in Lynn and—

TT: He was the pastor of Saint Anne’s when the church burnt down, wasn’t he?

RT: No, Father—

TT: The big old, creaky, wooden, church that we grew up with—

R1T: It burned down on Candlemas Day. What was his name? **Father Leger**. Father Leger was there. He was retired from—he was an army chaplain and he was retired from the army. He was a stern, old guy [laughs]. Again, he used to come to visit at our house. He wasn’t really a close friend of my dad’s but that’s how my father was. Everyone was attracted to him and he kept his French background, which is another story. And my mother was an artist [laughs]. And they got talking about art and I don’t know how old I was. I was still fairly young and I decided it’d be interesting if I went upstairs to my mother’s art studio and got some of her pastels, drawings. I knew she had big pad with just where’d she’d gone to classes and so forth. And so I brought it down into the den where my father and Father Leger were sitting and I started leafing through the pages and I got to the nudes [laughs]. “Go put that away!” I mentioned it in passing. You talked about our not—Do we speak French? And we don’t. You know, I’ve lost it, as I’ll explain to you. My father—he never went beyond—Actually, and I don’t think Tom even realizes this. My father didn’t graduate from St. Joseph’s Academy. He used to like to say that he didn’t drop out of school. He skipped high school. Which was very true. He went to Salem Commercial School, which was a program that you had a year to complete, but he did it within four to six months, in a very short period of time. And that’s the way he

was, a real worker. And then he spent the rest of life reading. He was an avid reader. Not fiction, but philosophy. He'd read in French. He could write in French beautifully. He could speak great. I mean, he was really—he sent us to college but I always felt that much better educated [laughs] than he was in a lot of ways.

21:56

EB: Did he speak French to you at home when you were growing up?

RT: No, no, we didn't, no—

TT: My parents would speak French when they didn't want us to know what they were saying and I really never learned much. It would just go right by me.

RT: When he went to Saint Anne's, I don't think they—You probably didn't even learn French.

TT: Oh yeah, they still was teaching French. It was very strict grammar and basic sentences and things like that. There wasn't as much dialogue. It wasn't the spoken language as much as—it was more just grammar.

22:31

EB: They used to do part of the day in French and part of the day in English?

TT: Not when I was there. I know St. Joseph's used to. They held onto it a lot longer.

RT: Well, we had French literature and we had our catechism in French but that was it.

Funny, my father's real best friend, yet another priest, Andre Ouellette who—he did go to grammar school and whatever time my father spent at St. Joseph's, they were classmates and they were very good friends. And he went to Canada to become a priest right after high school and eventually became bishop of Mont-Laurier. And we used to go on fishing trips up there and he would come to visit us. And Tom made reference to these—

when they were having French conversations. And I tried to join in French and maybe I was in high school. It could have been college then. And the bishop said to me, “Vous parlez français comme une vache espagnole” [everyone laughs]. That’s how bad my French was [laughs].

EB That wasn’t a compliment [laughs].

TT: Yeah those trips we’d—

[video freezes; timer restarts]

00:00

RT: Which was a lake. Well it’s a hundred miles north of Montreal. Again, further north than Mont Laurier, *Mont Laurier* [said in French] and you could drive a certain distance but then you had a two-mile walk into the woods to get to it. You know, we went there for a week and Bishop Ouellette didn’t—he only stayed a couple days and then it was my father and Uncle Lionel. That was a good time. I have pictures of that. And it was the only cabin on the lake and I have a picture of me holding a lake trout that’s this big [motions with hands] around. It was great. I was only eighteen when I was there.

00:49

EB: So you both married? You have kids. How many kids?

TT: I have only two, one married and one engaged. The younger one’s thirty that’s married a twenty-six year old but he’s had a much heavier head start than me—

RT: I have five sons [laughs] and we have eight grandchildren.

1:11

EB: So did you take your children up to Canada?

RT: No, no—

TT: My wife and I went on our honeymoon but that last time I was in Canada. We went to Québec for our honeymoon. It was nice. So we haven't, no—

RT: No, I think—well by then, I think, the bishop was retired. You know, by the time I got married after college and we lived in Maine for three years and then Washington for a year. So by the time I came back here and we had young children the connection was— He was—I think was in a nursing home by then. So there wasn't, you know—

TT: You used to work with the Frenchmen in the logging camps, right?

RT: Yeah, well that's why I told them earlier. I was hired originally by the Wage and Hour division of the U.S. Labor Department, a regional office in Boston. And they hired me to work in one of the offices in Maine because of my French background and I guess I told them I could speak French [laughs], which I could then. So I was, what, twenty? At my early twenties then and trained in Portland and a couple months in Washington and then I went up to Bangor. I was stationed in Bangor and I worked out of my home and I was with a senior guy in Bangor as well. So he was an assistant supervisor. Our supervisor was in Portland. And then we would travel. First, for a couple months I traveled with him and then one of my own. We were called investigators but today I think they're compliance officers, responsible for enforcing the Wage and Hour Law. And I went into logging camps in all of Northern Maine to interview the Canadian cutters who were coming across the border to work in the camps and determine whether the cutters, the loggers, or the papermills or the whatever it was, that were in compliance with the Wage and Hour law because people worked on piecework. They were pulp cutters or log cutters, hard woodcutters. They worked on piecework and there were various things that they did that were job related that they needed to be compensated for. Those hours had to

be taken in consideration for their minimum wage—whether they're making the minimum wage—which they all were. But most often they weren't being paid time and a half, the overtime hours, so that's what was our responsibility. And I was able to communicate with these people. Most of them were illiterate. They came from various villages just over the border. They'd come down through the woods and actually in areas that you couldn't do today. I mean, they came over without going through—these weren't regular entries into the United States. They were just woods roads that didn't really connect—they connected the village to the northern Maine woods. Today, you wouldn't be able to—

TT: Today they'd call them illegal aliens.

RT: [laughs] No, I don't know. Yeah, they would be and I don't know if they—The government knew about it. They just came here to work. None of them, when I was there—this is in the mid-sixties—there was no intention of staying there. So they came from small villages in very interesting dialects. I mean, I think because my French was so poor I could understand them. We could communicate. I think if—with your formal French education I don't think you would really communicate with these people. It would be like the hill people in Kentucky or whatever, in the Appalachians. This is what they were like. They were great people. I mean, it was so interesting. I'm fairly small now. I used to be, like, two-twenty and I was a big build. And one of the times I stayed in one of the camps overnight because it was way into the woods. It was a logging camp. It was owned by Pinkham Lumber. Beautiful camps, nice set up. And all these guys were just little wiry guys working, and this was in the wintertime and they'd be out cutting woods. I went into breakfast and they were these people there, eating these big, greasy, pot roasts

and so forth, big helpings, you know. And here I am, two hundred and plus pounds [laughs] and this little bit of food that I'm eating because I couldn't eat like they did. That was an experience. That was an education in itself. I spent three years doing that.

6:57

EB: So then you both, I see, have business degrees?

RT: Yes.

7:02

EB: And you ended up coming back to work with your dad?

RT: Well, I worked in Maine till I reached a certain level and then I transferred to Washington. I applied for a position down there so I got a position as a titled "economist" but it was not Galbraith or anything like that [laughs]. And basically I did background research for the legal department, stuff like that. That was in 68' and my father had a partner who died in October of 68' so I came up to help my dad at Christmas time. Tom was just thirteen years old, fourteen years old. And the rest is history. I stayed.

7:47

EB: So is he—who's Bernard?

RT: Okay—

EB: [laughs]

TT: He wasn't French.

RT: You want to tell her? You want to tell the story?

TT: Sure, I'll tell the story. Bernard—well, my father originally started with his cousin Gauthier. So in 34' there was just Gauthier and Tetrault, a very, very, small shop. They had no money. They started with a thousand dollars apiece and just—they make whatever

sales they did or they'd buy scrap gold and then they'd go—They had a pawn broker connection down in Fall River, where'd they go and swap scrap gold for merchandise. And, you know, they didn't take much out of the business. They just—very much hand them out.

RT: Well actually, the gold had—that was in 34' and that's when the government declared that you couldn't hold gold. They actually had to sell the gold to the government on a daily basis.

TT: Oh, okay. And then the owner of the building, whose name was Goldberg, had a son who had just graduated from college and was interested in getting into the business. So he bought into the business suddenly right then for his son Bernard Goldberg. So there was a littler merger there. So then it—

9:03

EB: So you the bought the name?

TT: Well, it kind of—it seemed like the best name. Plus he came in with more money than anybody else had at the time so—But my father's first name was Raymond and there was always the Raymond Department store and he didn't want to be confused with that. And then there was Gauthier Motors, which was an automotive dealership. And then Goldberg, Tetrault and Gauthier sounded like a law firm, so they didn't want to do that. So, you know, Bernard's sounded good so they called it Bernard's. The Gauthier, after just a short period of time, left and bought out his interest and it was just my dad and Bernie. And all while I was growing up—as Ray said Bernie passed away in '68—and that was when I was just starting to work legally in the store. I'd been working—I grew up in the basement, taking things apart and always fiddling with this and that. So I've

always just been here. You know, I've gone away to go to school and I'd come back and work summers on special projects and things like that.

RT: My dad and I groomed him to come into the store [laughs].

TT: I didn't have any other choice. Every time I wanted to do something else, he said, "No, you don't want to do that. Go work in the store." I wanted to work in a boatyard. "No, you don't want to do that." You know, there's certain things like that. You know, "Hey, no, come over in here." He was very, very direct about those things. But anyway, it all turned out well enough. And we enjoyed—he worked with us until he was eighty-four. You know, he started getting going on a more and more part-time basis through the years. So we were together working for quite some time, so that was—

10:40

EB: So really since the seventies you'd both been working in the store?

TT: Yeah, yes.

10:46

EB: Can you tell us what that's been like? What changes you've seen in the city? Have you had a French clientele that would come to regularly? Has that changed?

TT: Yes, I think that's been reduced significantly, you know, just because of attrition. These people have passed along and we're dealing with third and fourth generation customers. And literally we have taken care of all four generations ourselves.

RT: Actually, I mean, if you're thinking that the customer base back when my father started was strictly French-Canadian, it was not. It was all nationalities, really, as we have in Salem. I mean, the Italians, the Polish, French, the Irish, you know. Our custom base was always with that, the same mix. And some of my dad's best customers were the

Greeks in Peabody and so it wasn't—I don't know that the mixes changed, really. You know, its pretty well—

12:05

EDO: As a French-Canadian, Franco-American businessman—we've talked to other people who had parents who also had business at the time—was there any connection between folks who maybe lived in the Point and grew up there who were French-Canadian that owned businesses? We spoke with—

RT: Well, there were two other jewelry stores. At one time there were seven jewelry stores in Salem. There were two other jewelry stores. **Madore's** which was right on the corner of Front and Central Street or Front and Lafayette Street. And Joe Richard's was at the corner of Harbor and Lafayette, right across the street from the Saint Joseph rectory. That was a small operation. I think he was a watchmaker and might have had one or two employees. **Madore's** was a little bit bigger. There was a case of Daniel Lowe's and **Sacon's**, which was started by somebody. **Sacon** worked for my father during the thirties when he started.

TT: But as far as the businesses interacting specifically because of the—not really. I never saw it, anyway. You know, whether you were friends with someone just because of their background. Not so much.

RT: The economic base in Salem has change dramatically. I mean, we had automobile dealerships. There were Chevy, Ford, Buick, Cadillac, Mercedes, all these agencies in Salem. There were a lot of business. Downtown Salem—well even as late as the sixties and going into the seventies, there were sixty major retail stores in Salem, downtown Salem. This was the North Shore shopping center, literally. It was bigger than Lynn or

any of the surrounding towns. You know, there was Almy's and Webber's. Those were big fleet department stores. They had everything from appliances to clothing, furniture. They were multi-store businesses that had a very broad product base. There were four or five theaters. This city has really changed economically over the years.

15:09

EB: The seventies were probably a tough time. Have you seen things sort of turn around?

TT: The seventies and eighties were good. There was a little dip of things in the nineties. It was just with riding the economy, though, as far as we're concerned. And there was a big physical change of downtown, of course, in the seventies. But that was a redevelopment, just adapting to those changes. I remember when the neighborhoods changed. You know, when did the population of the Point change? And we still know some French people who live down on Levitt Street and still in that area and still on Green Street and all that. The tenements, yeah. I remember in college having a friend who lived on Dowd Street. It was still some people there. It's really—I mean, distinct borderlines of where the Irish lived and where the French people lived. That's all dissolved. That's all different.

16:16

EB: What have you enjoyed about being on Essex Street, right in downtown Salem? Or what have you not enjoyed about it? [laughs]

RT: Well, this has been a pretty successful business, and that was always very enjoyable. This is a very pleasant business. Number one, we don't sell anything you need. Really, when you think about it. And when it's all things that people enjoy having or they want or they all got a perceived need or whatever. So basically we're making people happy. Like

I said to my dentist one day, “Do you like doing this?” I says, “Does anyone come in here and like coming here?” And we were friends but it’s the truth. I mean, people, hopefully they’ll walk out smiling. We create enjoyment. So that’s been—and I’m seventy years old. That’s why I’m still working. I don’t work full time but I played golf this morning and yesterday morning [laughs] before the heat. So it’s been a good business for us and we live comfortably, educated our kids. It’s been good to us. So that’s been very enjoyable. We don’t have anybody complains, Oh, you couldn’t walk down Essex Street on Saturday and the weekends, or even Friday and Saturday because there were so many people. You couldn’t drive down the street. Even when we had a real market, you know, down in the market area where farmers would come in and bring—people would shop and they’d come from other cities, surrounding cities, Marblehead. So our customer base is really Lynn all the way up to Cape Ann. So that’s been very enjoyable.

18:36

EB: So you mentioned some theaters in Salem—were there—have you been involved in any of the French-Canadian clubs, the Klondike Club, or the Richelieu Club?

RT: I have not. Neither has Tom. [pause] Never did [laughs].

EB: Although Tom, I know, he’s coming back. He mentioned you go to the Palmer Cove Yacht Club, which is sort of an unofficial French hangout.

TT: It started as pretty much all French guys when it was founded in 1934, incidentally the same year as we were founded here. I was co-chair of the seventy-fifth anniversary committee down there. And they’re running a big seventy-fifth anniversary here for our store at the time. But it was mostly all French. They did start letting some Irish guys in.

The first guy whose name was Mar, they thought he was French. They found out he was Irish and so he's our oldest member right now. He's still a member there. And there was a large family of **Leblancs** that are still present. The father was one of the original founding members and he had six, seven, sons and three or four daughters. So their husbands were all and sons were all members and then their children were all members. And there's still two of the brothers left. One of them just turned eighty. The other is eighty-four or five and still very strong—The one that just turned eighty runs the boat yard. He still works the travel lift and hauls the boats and throws the box around. He'd been working at that boat yard since he was just a child. And there's still a lot of cousins, a lot of family, a lot of French-Canadian background there. It's still—some good things going on, still some heritage there. You still hear the accents and this and that—all that. And I hear a few old stories from some of the guys. The stuff—the kids that grew up there as part of them family and the things that went on. It's still around. It's a three hundred and fifty member club. There's a good portion of French Canadians still there but mostly from the original people like my father. My father was a member there for a long time and his half-brother had married one of the Leblanc, so we're kind treated like a nephew to some of the old guys. I get some of the courtesies that only family gets and there's still some controlling going on that happens with the heritage.

RT: I guess the Point area changed with the economy changing and the French-Canadians advancing economically and [getting] better educated and achieving the American dream and that sort of thing. And they just migrated away from those apartments. They were fairly small apartments, in those buildings, that I can remember, anyway. There's some interesting people that have come out of there. There's **Paul and Frank Girard** who—

he had a brother, Paul. They both went to Merrimack College. Frank was three years ahead of me. He has become very, very—real successful, very successful in the computer industry. I forget the companies that he actually started, a couple of companies, and donated several millions of dollars to Merrimack College. He started the Frank Girard Business School. And he grew up in the Point. There are other people I've met that—none that I can think of—others that I can think of particularly. But his brother became head of the science department at Salem High School. Both bright young men. But I think that's where that all changed. That's how that area changed.

EB: A natural progression.

TT: Did the location of the mills have anything to do with—?

RT: Oh, those buildings were built to house the—

TT: So the French-Canadians were brought in to work in the mills and they came down?

RT: I was going to say that dad's father worked in the mills but he didn't. He worked for the grocery stores.

TT: He had a heart attack when he was thirty years old.

RT: So yeah, those were built to house the workers in the mills. Of course the mills left. So all those people, they worked at General Electric, Sylvania and so, moved, bought houses and built houses and so forth. Now the mills have changed immensely and everything changes.

24:21

EB: Now Halloween is a big topic around here?

TT: Yeah, it was always overlooked, you know. It seemed like such a natural thing for Salem and nobody every thought of it until Bif Michaud and other prosperous types came up with the idea of Haunted Happenings, you know.

24:36

EB: Who was that?

TT: Bif Michaud? You don't know Bif Michaud? Well, his father was another French-Canadian who had Michaud bus lines, which was in Salem, which was a big business. They owned all the buses. They did all the school buses. They did all the transportation. He was an interesting man, which someone may tell you about someday. He had three sons: Bif, Gig, and Spike.

EB [laughs]

TT: They have real names but I'm not sure what they are.

RT: I think there were more.

TT: Yeah, there may be more. Those are the only three I know. But anyway, Bif owns the Witch Museum and he is credited for starting Haunted Happenings and really getting things going, you know, after he founded the museum. It's become a big industry. It's very—sometimes we like it. Sometime we don't like it. It gets a little overwhelming—

RT: There's a lot more to Salem and Salem's history than the witches. I mean, that was a very brief period of time. I mean, Salem played a significant part opening the China trade in the 19th century. It was a big seaport. If Salem harbor had been deeper, it would have been the capital of Massachusetts. It's just that it wasn't big enough to accommodate the ships that were being built at the time. But it was a major seaport. You know, it was big

part of the United States economy. Look at the trade that came through here. I mean, the homes were built by ship owners and the captains and so forth. It's an interesting city.

26:32

EB: So would you say—we're just hearing people's stories and we're learning more and more about—you know, the Point neighborhood maybe has completely changed but there are still a lot of Franco-American businesses, people who live in the community and would you say that they've had a major impact on Salem? I mean we have Bob Saint-Pierre, we just talked to, and John Leveque who was the mayor and now your telling us about Bif Michaud who started happenings and Joan Boudreau who bought the lyceum.

RT: You mean more so than other[s]?

EDO: Not so much comparatively but just—

EB: It seems overlooked, the contributions that the Franco-Americans have made to the city.

TT: I guess so, maybe.

RT: You think it's overlooked?

EB: Yeah.

RT: Why do you get that impression?

EDO: If you ask—if you walk around Salem and you say to people, “What are the—who are the folks who made Salem Salem?” You might hear about 19th century sea captains mostly of British descent. You might actually hear about the Polish community. There's an exhibit just down the way. You might hear about the Irish. There was a lot of Irish domestics. There's a history that's being told in the Phillips House. And then just say, “Oh, and the French-Canadians.” Maybe some people will say, “Oh, some people who

maybe worked in the mills.” And that’s sort of where the story begins and ends or people aren’t even aware that there was a French-Canadian—But Salem’s not known—

TT: And we think of it—I don’t know. The two churches I think and Ste. Chretienne’s—that tied it all in. You know, it really did. We both served masses at Ste. Chretienne’s when we were boys and taking our bikes there at six o’clock in the morning. It was on—that picture was on the—that you passed our brochure. I said, “I used to serve mass here.” [Pointing to Raymond] He says, “Well, I did too.” Cause we were so far apart growing up, you know. He was kind of gone when I was old enough to be aware of things then we came together after—

RT: When I came back, my father said, “Here, take care of him” [everyone laughs]. So what you’re saying, it depends on who you ask. I guess I never thought of it that way.

TT: So you mentioned Bob St-Pierre and Jean Leveque, very influential people in the city and did a good job and things and you know—

RT: Well actually, if you think of who were the police chiefs in Salem, Bob I think was probably the only Frenchman.

TT: Jean was the only mayor.

RT: Regan, he was at St. Anne’s Parish. His wife was a Dion, so a little connection there. There’s Connelly, so that’s just one position that’s been—I think it’s been—

29:47

EDO: The domino effect?

TT: Yeah, probably. I guess you could say that, yeah.

EDO: Just yourself, with this business. This is a business that if you ask anyone in Salem, they know your business. But if you say to them that [you’re?] French-Canadian, no way

would they think a French-Canadian, a young man from the Point, who had a grammar school education, spoke French, spent his time in Canada with his French heritage, and this is his legacy. This business is an established part of Salem's economic legacy.

RT: Yeah, I guess we're not part of it from that standpoint.

EDO: So this is part of our—what we're --to us. This is hidden—

TT: We're pretty good, huh? [everyone laughs]

RT: We're all right. We done good [laughs].

EDO: Franco-Americans have single handedly saved the economic—

EB: Well maybe if you're in the group you don't see—I mean, cause we're both new to Salem. You know, we've only been here the last ten years.

EDO: We're both Franco-American ancestry but we're not—we're new here.

EB: So coming as a new comer to Salem, the first few years I was here I heard there was a French-Canadian community and I tried to find people and I was like, “Gee, I guess they all moved away. I don't know where they are anymore.”

TT: We're hiding it now, you know.

EB: But when you start to meet people and you make connections you see that it's still everywhere.

TT: And I find it, cause I do spend a lot of time at the yacht club whenever I'm involved down there. There is still—that bond is still there. There's still the **Moneaus, the St. Pierres and all the Leblancs** of course and everything else. And you know who's what and there is comments from the Irish guy about the French guy. You can still banter about it down there cause you have that kind of close association with people. And one of my best friends is Polish. He was from—lived off the Bridge Street area. We were talking

about it the other day cause we were away on a trip and a guy was thinking about moving to the area. He was asking about the yacht club. He said, "Oh, so there's a lot of French-Canadians here." And Billy started telling a story, "Yeah, but they started letting a few of us Polacks in and it's all different, you know." And he told the story about Mar being—you know, they thought he was French and they let him in. He's Irish. But it is—you still make a little mention of it in that surrounding. But in business-wise, not so much. Like my brother said, we always had a lot of very strong Greek customers and Portuguese from Gloucester, a lot of fishermen would come and do business with us here. And you know, the Irish policemen and firemen and everything else. It was all—

RT: Also I think, like we say we all married Irish. I think, for example, all of these ethnic groups, the majority of them went to Salem High School so then they all married, French, Irish, you know. So I think that it kind of got diluted. I know my boys are—they're as proud of their Irish heritage as they are of their French background.

TT: Before if you went to St. Joseph's High School and stayed there you're more apt to stay in that close-knit community. You know, throw us out in the fields and then you don't know what we'll find [everyone laughs].

33:21

EB: I think those are pretty much all the questions we wanted to cover. Do you have any?
No?

RT: Some of our employees are of the same background.

TT: I don't know if any of them are interested in speaking. I don't know if Sylvia's interested in speaking.

RT: Sylvia's not here tonight.

TT: Oh, she's gone.

33:47

EB: Particularly do you have female employees who lived in Canada?

TT: Yeah Sylvia's born in Canada and her parents came here. I don't know what—her father was a machinist. Probably--come here.

RT: She actually has dual citizenship but I don't know what the story is on that, whether they lived here. I think partially they were living here and then but went to Canada when Sylvia—before was born. I think they were already American citizens. I don't know. I'm not sure of that.

EDO: We're having a hard time finding women of your generation, particularly also people who would have been girls that you would have been in grammar school or high school—

TT: We got a sister for you.

EDO: Yeah? [RT and TT laugh].

EB: We've interviewed tons of men [laughs].

34:49

EDO: We feel very confident we know what it was like to grow up in the forties and the fifties as a son of a French-Canadian family. We are fairly sure that we could do that walk? And we are can't—we're trying to find, what were the girls doing that whole time?

TT: Okay, well set you up with my sister Carolyn and some of her buddies. She went Ste. Chretienne's and has still—she just moved back to the area. She's living in Marblehead now. She had been—they lived in Concord, then in New York for a long time, moved to

Manhattan, and just recently retired, and moved back home. They're away for the next couple of weeks but when they come back I'm sure she'd love to talk to you.

EB: That would be great.

TT: And we'll just hook you up maybe with **Mary Derby**.

RT: That's interesting because I'm of the generation where women were just beginning to have careers.

TT: Yeah, we're from a different generation. We're brothers but he's thirteen years older than me. He was in the more conservative, disciplined and—

RT: My wife has a degree in physics. She's a real brain and she actually graduated from college a year before I did, and she worked for the government but we were from the old school. She was Irish but old school Irish. And we got married and she continued working and then in a short period of time she got pregnant and she stopped working and became a housewife. If we hadn't kept having kids she probably would have gone back to work eventually. But that was my generation—that was just—your dual income families was just beginning to happen. Most of my generation when they had kids the mother stayed home. If they could do it financially and you could. It wasn't like today. You have to have so much today. Both parties have to work to have all the stuff that we need, you know, perceived need. So that's an interesting—

EB: To buy the things that we don't need—

RT: Exactly. That's absolutely correct. That's why you're probably not finding these people—

37:27

EDO: Tell us just, what was their experience growing up? What was it like to be a girl in a Franco-American, catholic, neighborhood, family? What were the things they did?

What did they learn to cook? What were the expectations? All the stories.

TT: I wanted to get my father's—she's his cousin. She's kind of like a little sister. There were two sisters that are both nuns and one still lives in Salem and this other one's a little more active, although she says she's eighty-three or something like that. She was just in the store yesterday and we told her about it, about this, right after you came, and trying to get her going. But she was a little to shy to get it but she's perfect.

EDO: What order, do you know what order she was in?

TT: She taught in Montessori schools and I'm not sure.

RT: I want to say Sisters of Notre-Dame. I'm not positive. Well, what order was at St. Joseph's?

EDO: I think they were either the Grey Nuns or the Sisters of Notre-Dame, one of the two.

RT: It wasn't the Grey Nuns. They wore the square habit. Yeah, that was them.

TT: St. Anne's and Ste. Chretienne's were Sisters of Notre-Dame.

RT: Which Sister Jean was telling me they combined the—there are still some of these ladies around.

TT: If we could get her to talk to em', you know. **Sister Frananne**. Where does Sister **Frananne** live? She's here in Salem.

RT: Yeah, she lives in Paul Leveque's house. Not house, the house next to the funeral home.

TT: There's another-- this guy Paul Leveque. He's second generation—

EDO: This is what we're saying. There are these longstanding, very well established, sort of cornerstones of the community, businesses and establishments, that are all tied to this heritage.

RT: Yeah—

EB: So thank you.

RT: Oh, okay, thank you [laughs]

TT: We'll set you up with our sister.

EB: Okay.