

INTERVIEWEE: Diane Charette

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

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00:10

EB: How are you doing today?

DC: Okay.

00:15

EB: When is the next meeting of the Nord de Boston?

DC: Oui.

00: 20

EB: When is your next?

DC: I can't hear you.

00:23

EB: When is your next meeting?

DC: Our next one is going to be—uh, this is August. It's going to be the Monday after Labor Day.

[camera turns off and on]

DC: Diane Charette.

EB: And so we'll just start off talking about your family, what you know about your family history, how your ancestors came to Salem.

DC: My ancestors came to Salem—Well, my father came when he was in his twenties. My mother's parents came when my mother was three years old. That would have been in about 1907.

1:11

EB: Do you know where they were from in Québec?

DC: My mother was born in Sainte-Sophie. My father was born in a little village called Tingwick in Canada. I've never been to either place but—There was a couple that belonged to the Biddeford Richelieu Club that came from Tingwick, which was really interesting when I met them many years ago. So my father came to the United States to work, and then went back to Canada and then came back again. And stayed when he was married the first time. His first wife died, left him with three small children. Rita, who was the oldest, was six. Claire was three, and Roland was eighteen months old. My father and mother married—oh, about nine or ten years later. So, my mother at thirty-five had an instant family. My father's sister was married to my mother's brother. Those two were my godparents. So after my parents were married they lived on Congress Street for about—until I was a year old, in an apartment building at 96 Congress Street that my aunt and uncle owned. This was uncle **Eudioust** who was one of my mother's brothers. And my grandparents lived in an apartment there on the second floor and my parents lived across the hall from them, in the other apartment on the second floor. So, my mother says Pèpère used to come and visit me every day. He died when I was two, though, so I don't have a lot of memories of him. When I was a year old we moved to Highland Avenue, upstairs in my aunt and uncle's home. Those are my godparents, Aunt Francine and Uncle Wilfred. And so we were thirteen people living in that house. There's only one bathroom. The upstairs had a finished pantry. There was a kitchen and my parents' bedroom was finished. And we slept in a part of the attic that had floor boards laid down. The boy's bed there, the girl's bed there. [gesturing] No lights in there. But it was—it was a good growing up that I had. Living on Highland Avenue, there was no neighbors around except for the **Vielles** across the street, and so the people that were around me were all family. There was the thirteen of us living in the house, but we had cousins that used to come and visit from Maine, from Canada, and of course all the cousins in Salem. And so, there were always aunts, uncles, and cousins around so there was this big, like, protective group of people around all of us little ones, all the time. It was very nice and I thought that all families were like mine until I started working. And I was shocked to find out they weren't. [laughs] So when I was very young and we were still living upstairs at my aunt's house, my father and my uncle had huge gardens. And my mother and my aunt used to can vegetables, that would provide for us for most of the winter--make jellies and jams and they worked hard. My father bought some land from my aunt and uncle and built a house. He built it with wood he got from a house that was taken down in Marblehead. He used that wood and did a great deal of the work on the house himself. He used to keep us busy. He had—There was a barrel about this big about that big around full of old nails, and one of our jobs was to straighten out the nails. So we had to hammer them and straighten out all those old nails, and—

EB: Wow

DC: [laughs] It kept us out of trouble so that he could work.

6:06

EB: So this would have been around the fifties?

DC: This was actually in the forties because we moved into that house in 1949, so. We had a lot of room to roam around in when we were growing up. We used to go—

EB: I was going to say that part of Highland Ave was probably very different in those days.

DC: There was nothing there. It was—

EB: Sort of like farm

DC: Land.

EB: Yeah.

DC: Woods and fields, and we ran all over the place. We had a good time. Used to go exploring in the woods and so it was—it was very different then than it is now. There was a silo on the land, not far from my aunt's house. It was on the street, a big fieldstone silo that we use to play in all the time. There was a pair, a set of stairs, that had been dropped down and my cousin Jerry, if he didn't want us following him, would pull the stairs up when we were down there so we couldn't get up [laughs]. So, another thing that my father and my uncle did was they raised chickens. And it was so wonderful when they used to—they'd buy the baby chicks and so there were hundreds and hundreds of baby chicks. It was so fun to see the—Ah, we couldn't go in there alone because they're delicate and little kids picking up baby chicks could really do damage [laughs] but my father and my uncle would take us in there every now and then to see them, so.

07:51

EB: I'm sorry. Did you say what your father did for work?

DC: My father, he used to work Pelletier Shade Shop. Pelletier Shade Shop was started by one of my mother's brothers. When he started that business my mother said he used to make the shades on the kitchen floor in my grandmother's apartment. So, he sold it quite a few years ago. And, but insisted that they keep the name.

8:25

EB: Is that the Pelletier Awning that's still there, on Congress Street?

DC: Its now on Congress Street. It used to be on Washington Street in Salem. So.

8:36

EB: Did he sell it to another Franco-American family?

DC: He sold it to a man named **Jule**, but I don't know that he still owns that. I don't know who owns it now.

8:49

EB: And so what was your mother doing, while your father was?

DC: Until my youngest sister was five, she was at home and then when Janet turned five and started going to school she took a job working as a sales clerk. When she was single she used to teach piano and had recitals and the whole thing. And not one of us knows how to play the piano, although some of my nieces and nephews do. But she was busy working and she didn't have time to sit and teach us. [Laughs] She gave me the piano book and she says, "Learn to read your notes", which I made a very faint attempt, but didn't really, which I regret now but—I still have the piano she taught on. It's an upright, at the house.

9:53

EB: So did they, so did your parents speak French to each other? Did you speak French at home?

DC: Oh yeah, French is the first language that I learned.

10:01

EB: And between, among your brothers and sisters, you all spoke French, when you were—?

DC: When we were little, yeah. Yes, that started changing after my two sisters got married and had children. And with the coming of the nieces and nephews, all of a sudden it was much less French spoken, although the first four did learn. My sister Rita's two girls, and my sister Claire's oldest daughter and son did speak French, at first, just for a very short while, but they were all playing with kids who spoke English all the time and so the French just went by the boards.

10:44

EB: So did you—where did you go to school?

DC: St. Joseph's.

EB: St. Joseph's.

DC: I started in kindergarten and graduated from high school. So we had half a day of French, half a day of English. And had to speak French in the schoolyard. So—and sometimes that was hard, for us kids [laughs]. But the pastor had instituted this, these *jetons* he called them. And so you would get a certain number of *jetons*, and then the nuns would check to see how many you had at the end of the week. Because if you spoke English in the school yard, someone ask you for one of your *jetons* and you had to give it to them. So, [laughs] we did not like that system. But, it kept us speaking French [laughs] and so that was a good thing.

11:37

EB: So at St. Josephs, was it equally split, boys and girls, or were there more boys than girls?

DC: It was fairly equal when I was little and then when into high school some of the kids went to public school. They went to Salem High, and there were more girls than boys. So.

12:09

EB: Interesting. Okay, so your parents came, and then your mother, you said, worked as a clerk. Do you know where she worked?

DC: She started after she went back to work. She worked at **Nugent's**, which was on Essex Street in Salem. And then when they closed, she worked at **Bell Shops**, which was also on Essex Street. And then she worked at **Mehan's**, and that was on Washington Street, near City Hall. So.

12:37

EB: And you said you had some stories about the fire, or was that from your grandparents?

DC: Well, my grandfather, as I said, died when I was two. And my grandmother and Aunt Albertine still lived on Congress Street, when I was going to school. Aunt Albertine used to sew, and when my sister Rita got married she made the dress that I wore to the wedding. So I used to go at lunchtime. I'd go to my grandmother's and she would do fittings and so on, then go back to school and—The Point was a very different place then than it is now. It was—the majority of the people there were French-Canadians. And it was clean. It was safe. You didn't have to worry about being a little kid and walking down the street there. And you couldn't do anything bad either because everyone knew who you were and your parents were gonna find out about anything you did that you weren't supposed to do [laughs]. So, but it was a good. It was a good time to grow up. It was—safe and people knew each other better then. It was just a more—human way of living, I think, than we have now. I think that we are too separated—from other people. A lot of it because of the technology, I think. But it was a good growing up.

14:21

EB: So did you, as you remembering your childhood and growing up—We've heard a lot of stories about what the boys did in their free time, sports that they played and places that they went, and we haven't heard a lot about what the girls were doing. Were there traditions you were involved in? Were there activities that were just what the girls did?

DC: When I was little we had—When my mother started working again, we had jobs to do. Ah—when I was in high school, I used to come home and have to start supper and—But before that, way before that, when my father was still raising chickens, he had an egg route and on Friday nights one of the things we had to do was—he would kill some of the chickens for his customers and one of my jobs was plucking the chickens [chuckles]. He did that until he could not stand killing another chicken—and then—that went. Ah, another thing that I used to have to do was feed the chickens and gather the eggs, after I came home from school. So we still had the gardens in the summer and—Another job I had was picking the strawberries when they were ripe. And we'd help my father out in the garden. As far as being a girl—well—my mother was working after my sister started school she worked and so the three of us, for a while, would go to my sister Claire's house and she'd keep an eye on us until we got a little older and old enough to be left on our own. And so, we pretty much had the run of the fields and the woods and just—played. We were taught to embroider, my sister and I. My sister Rita taught me how to knit. Janet didn't learn. But as far as traditions, one of the things, going back to when we were living at my aunt's house—before we moved, before

my father built the house—one of the things that happened a lot is, we would have visitors from Maine, cousins, sometimes from Canada, and even the cousins from around Salem would come over and there was music all the time. My mother had a friend who played the accordion, and she would come over and play the accordion every now and then, and my sister Lorraine had learned to play piano and so—Everybody would gather round the piano while she played and everybody sang. So that was—

17:48

EB: What kind of songs did you sing?

DC: Hmm?

17:49

EB: What kind of songs did you sing?

DC: Then they used to sing mostly the popular songs, not too many French songs. But they were younger people. They were my cousins and so they were keeping up with all the popular songs and sang all of that. And then we moved to our house and there was less gathering of family. That had started to disappear a little. And the other thing too—when we were young—the church was such an important part of everybody's lives. There were a lot of activities that went on and I can remember functions at the hall **Saint Jean-Baptiste** hall that was on Park Street and *grandes marches* that always took place at like, weddings and things like that. So, life changed. A lot of that kind of disappeared.

19:16

EB: Were there any particular foods that you would prepare at home, that were French-Canadian?

DC: The *cortons* was one of the things that we always had. The meat stuffing for the turkey, um, *tourtière*. Those are the French-Canadian tradition foods. In the wintertime, we would have *la tire sur la neige* that my mother would cook up and my father would pour out on a clean patch of snow. That was wonderful.

EB [chuckles] That was made with maple—with syrup?

DC: Yep, maple syrup. When I was, oh, probably about eleven, twelve, thirteen, my uncle worked at Essex Sand and Gravel. He used to have to go in on Sundays and I would go to—very early--to the seven o'clock mass with him and my aunt and my cousin, Gail, and then we would all go with him to where he worked because there were big, wild, low bush, blueberry fields there. And so we would spend the day picking blueberries, and then I'd come home with my jug of blueberries and my mother would clean them and make blueberry dumplings for supper. So, that was good.

21:03

EB: Do you still make any of these recipes?

DC: I made dumplings last year for my sisters and brothers. Had them over for blueberry dumplings, and that we haven't had in quite a while. The meat pies I make every year for New Year's Day. I have open house for my family, as many as can come, and meat pies are one of the things that we have. My mother used to make a potato pie, which very few people seem to know about. But it was a pie, and it was filled with mashed potatoes. They were cooked with onions, though and butter and milk and salt and pepper and—always a favorite of my younger brother—so I still make that too, for New Year's Day.

EB: Sounds yummy.

DC: Yeah.

22:02

EB: So you've graduated from Saint Joseph's?

DC: Mm-hm.

22:06

EB: And then, what happened?

DC: Then I—two weeks after graduation—I got bused to New Jersey. I got a job working for Prudential. They were going to be opening an office in Boston. And they sent all of us—all of us that they hired—to New Jersey, Newark, for training. We didn't stay in Newark. The girls were staying in Madison, at Drew University, and the boys went to a different town. They were at Upsala University. So they had us in dormitories there. They had the older girls in one dormitory and all of us who were younger in a separate dormitory, where we had to sign in and out every time we left the building and—it was—They bused us out on Father's Day. I was crushed because all my family was going to be at my house for Father's Day and I just—Here I was being sent away, not sent away, but going away. And anyways, so I spent the summer in—

23:29

EB: Was this a job that you wanted—

DC: New Jersey.

23:30:

EB: Or was it something that your parents—

DC: No, no.

23:33

EB: Preferred you to do?

DC: Well, it's the job that I got.

DC: Who is it? Hm? Oh yeah, she can close the door [off camera conversation].

DC: At Prudential, as I said, was going to be opening an office. And so, they came to the different schools and recruited people and I applied for the job. What I had really wanted to do was to become a teacher. But there was no money for college and in addition my mother needed, you know—My mother and father needed help, and so they needed part of my income. So I went to work and actually did do some teaching at Prudential because, as a systems analyst, I was training the clerical areas every time there was a change in the system that they were dealing with, or a new program, or a new system was being installed. So I did do some teaching at Prudential. So, but I worked for Prudential for almost twenty-six years until they downsized, and then ended up needing to find another job. I did not leave with them when they moved out of Boston because I—My mother was a widow then and I knew she would not be able to manage the house on her own. And so I stayed home and got a job working for the city. I started in the assessor's office, started from the bottom up again. Worked as a clerk in the assessor's office and then transferred to the collector's office and became first deputy city collector. So I was essentially running that office and worked there until my job was eliminated there, and by then I was—It was 2003 so I waited until I got—I reached sixty-three and I took retirement from the city. I wasn't working there anymore but a couple of weeks after that, I was talking to the woman that was Father George's secretary at the time. She had filled in to help Lois, who had been sick and didn't really want to be working. She wanted to be retired and so she says, "Diane, your next job may be closer than you think" and she told Father George to hire me. So, I've been working here part-time here since then.

EB: Here at the Sainte Anne's Parish.

DC: Yes, here at Sainte Anne's.

26:29

EB: Do you live in this neighborhood now?

DC: Now I live in Witchcraft Heights. It's about a five minute drive from here. So it's not a difficult commute, and it's a good job, good boss, and I feel that I'm contributing to the parish also, so—The only thing is, I'm involved in much more than I thought I would be [laughs]. So—

EB: Of course.

DC: I'm on the Parish Council [laughs]. I'm on the Salem Task Force Committee right now. I'm on the Maintenance Committee and the New Roman Missile Committee. So, it keeps me out of trouble.

EB: That's a lot of tasks.

DC: Yeah.

27:20

EB: So now did you—you got married?

DC: No. I never married. I was too busy helping out my sisters and brothers and taking care of my nieces and nephews. And I'm still taking care of little ones. I love children, always did. Everyone in my family did and does and I was very fortunate because I've had little kids in my life, all my life. I became an aunt at nine and a half, and I am now babysitting my niece's three little ones. She's got six year old twins, a boy and a girl, Garret and Ava, and a four year old, Liam. And they're just—they're a delight. They're just a joy. Sometimes I'm really tired when I come home [laughs] but it's well worth it. They're just—they're good kids. They're a lot of fun and I consider myself extremely lucky to have had little children in my life, all my life. I really do. They're just a joy. So.

28:35

EB: Do you try to speak French with them—to teach them French?

DC: Once in a while. I figure if I say things in French to them at least it's getting recorded there, somewhere. And hopefully it'll take root. But sometimes they're just too busy. They don't want to be bothered and so I do try it a little but we'll see.

29:03

EB: And so, also, we wanted to ask about the city of Salem and how you were involved in the city as a French-Canadian, Franco-American—as a French speaker? Were there places that you went in the city as you were growing up or even when you were older that were specifically French speaking? Maybe you can talk about the club?

DC: Well, I grew up on Highland Avenue, so I was not downtown very much. We came to school, we went to church, but growing up we were not around the city very much. When we were going to school, we used to walk to school from the bus terminal, which was downtown Salem. And as I said, Pelletier Shade Shop—where my father worked—was on Washington Street then. So if he was there, when we were coming home from school, he would wait for us. And there was a great big opening up, on the second floor where they must have either put things out to the trucks and brought things in. And he'd be standing there in that doorway as we came around the corner, going in, because we always went through the Shade Shop to see if my father was home before going up to the bus. So once in a while he used to take me in on Saturdays, if he had to go in. And he would go and get chocolate covered doughnuts [laughs]. That didn't happen too, too often, though. But—

39:59

EB: A special treat?

DC: Hmm?

EB: A special treat.

DC: That was a special treat because we didn't have a whole lot of money. And one of the things—we didn't have a lot of money and yet we never felt deprived. If we wanted something, we'd ask my father for it and he would always tell us, "When I'm rich, you'll have it." We never, never, felt deprived. So, when I was really little, my mother and my

aunt would make clothes for my cousin Gail and I. We were nine months apart and people used to think we were twins, partly because we were dressed alike. They would make clothes for us from grown-ups clothes that was being passed down. And they made jumpers, and little skirts, and things out of that fabric. And so we were dressed alike. People thought we were twins. So, another thing that they used to do when I was really little—because they had the chickens—they used to buy the feed for the baby chicks. And it came in cotton bags that had little blue rose buds: a little yellow rose buds, a little pink rose buds, and they'd make pinafores for us out of that, out of that fabric. So, those were pretty special.

EB: Much more frugal in those days.

DC: Yeah.

EB: Recycling things that—

DC: Yep.

22:39

EB: So how did you become involved with the Nord de Boston?

DC: In 1982 they started admitting women as members of the club, but not as members of the existing men's clubs. They were forming women's clubs. And so, some of the women—**Rosanna Thorneau and Connie Thoizy, and Cecile Roy**—were some of the people that started looking to form a club for women. And I joined in—I think it was January or February of 1983. The club had not yet been formed. It had not received its charter, so I'm one of the founding members and have been a member up to here [gestures] since then. But I'm glad because I had forgotten a lot of my French because we were not using it very much. And some of my aunts were still living then, and I can remember my aunt Albertine—as I'm trying to speak French to her—she had this little grin on her face. I knew it was really terrible. But anyways, it has gotten much better [laughs]. And so, I'm really glad that they did allow women to become members because I have my French back, and it's because of the club.

34:22

EB: And so the club was created specifically to keep the language alive? Or what was the idea behind creating the Nord de Boston?

DC: The organization—it began in Canada and it was really to help the French-Canadians because they did not have an easy time of things. And it was to provide a kind of support for them. And so it was to preserve the heritage and the language. And the first club that was founded outside Canada was in Manchester, New Hampshire and then gave birth to all the clubs in the states. So, hopefully they'll persist and continue.

35:18

EB: And what kind of activities does the women's club do?

DC: We have our *Concours Oratoire Français*, a French oratorical contest. And we send out letters to various high schools—this is at the high school level—and have children that participate in our—whatever it is they do in the school to select a winner. And then we have one representative from each of the schools who participates come and present their talk. We give them a theme or a subject and they do the research, they prepare it, and these children are amazing. Some of them have not a drop of French blood in them and they speak in French, fluent, and just—you can tell they have a gift for tongues because they do a wonderful job and, but they work hard. And so we give them a small prize of money and then the winner gets to participate in the regional contest, which has also financial prizes that they give to the participants. So, it's a good thing. The other thing we do is, we have made donations to Catholic Charities, to Saint Joseph's food pantry. We buy gift certificates that we donate to Sainte Anne's here, for families. We do that usually around Thanksgiving and Christmas. That need has grown tremendously in the past few years. It's really sad because we shouldn't have those problems in this country. But we do, so we try to help out. The other things that we've done—we helped someone build a ramp for a wheelchair in their homes. We've made donations for motorized wheelchairs for an individual. We have donated money for two specific families where a child had cancer and they needed financial help. We have made donations to Plummer Home, not as often as the Salem Club, but we have helped them out occasionally. And we have donated to Saint Vincent de Paul Society this past year at Saint James. So, we don't raise a tremendous amount of money so we help as much as we can, where we can.

38:25

EB: I guess, I'm just, I'm still trying to understand the differences between the Richelieu Club and the Nord de Boston and are there—were the women in the Nord de Boston—are they interested in maintaining an all-women's club, for a particular reason? Why don't they, like, blend it together?

DC: Well, what happened is when our club, Nord de Boston, began—there were no mixed clubs. They were either men's clubs or women's clubs. And the Salem Club was a man's club. It had been founded—oh, many years before. I don't remember what year. One of my uncles had belonged but you could not be a women member in that club. And so they were *les clubs parrains*. They sponsored my club and we've maintained members. We've got twenty-one members right now. We were thirty some-odd at one point in time. The Salem Club was fifty members strong, at one point in time and there was really no need for the clubs to merge. And for a while, the Salem Club had diminished quite a bit, and so there had been some mention of perhaps combining. And yes, we did have a few members that said, "Oh, no, no men in the club. We're going to leave if you have men." And, so we have the two clubs still and I'm glad to see that the Salem Club is picking up and getting a little stronger and hopefully that will continue and my club too. Some of us visit back and forth a lot, to the meetings, and that's a good thing. I'd like to see more of that among some of my members, but we'll see. As long as both clubs keep going well, that's the important thing. So.

40:57

EB: I just have one last question. So, you mentioned both of your parents were born in Québec, right?

DC: Yes.

41:07

EB: So when you talk to people and you describe what your heritage is, do you say that you're French-Canadian? Do you say Franco-American? Do you say you're French? Do you say—is there a particular term?

DC: I generally say Franco-American. I'm very proud of being an American, but I'm very proud of being—of French-Canadian descent too. The French-Canadians contributed a great deal, hardworking people, very strong in their faith, most of them. I can remember when I was very young, some men talking in a derogatory way about the French people in Salem. And yet, people relied on the French people to clean, to do a lot of work because they did it so well. So, I say I'm Franco-American because I'm not really French-Canadian. That's my heritage but I was not born in Canada, and so—I think that it's very difficult sometimes to hold on to your heritage. We don't talk about family things the way people did when I was young and I think that's a big loss for the newer generations. I think it's important to have your heritage, to know what your heritage is because those are your roots. Those are the things that help keep you grounded. So, anyways—

EB: Great.

ED-O: I have a few more questions, if you don't mind if I jump in on this. One is—I'm just wondering if there was anything else—?

DC: I can't hear you.

43:19

ED-O: Sorry, I was just wondering if there was anything else you might be able to say about the work, or the roles of the women in Franco-American families? You've talked a bit about that, or sort of the importance of women in those families?

DC: The women are the ones that kept families together. They worked hard. When I was young, my mother had this old Maytag ringer washer. And so, she worked all day at the store. She'd come home and on Mondays, she did the laundry, and that machine was not nice, because the ringer would swing back if you weren't careful. And it could really hurt you bad but the machine had to be filled from hoses from the sink. It had to be emptied with a separate hose. Everything they did was not easy. In the wintertime, when it was very cold—the close lines were down the cellar and that's where she hung the clothes and— Sometimes in the winter, if it wasn't terribly bad, she'd hang them out on the line and we'd be bringing in frozen clothes [laughs]. But, they're the ones that did all of the cooking, all of the cleaning, taking care of everyone, and—The mothers, the women, were the glue. They really were. They're the ones that helped the children learn their faith, which was an important part of our lives. Still is an important part of my life and I'm very fortunate, I

think, that I do have my faith and that I had the upbringing that I did. Very strong family values and the mothers, they taught us to take care of each other and they were important. Still are.

45:37

ED-O: The other question I had is, whether there were any stories, or anything you remember about the nuns, the sisters who taught you at school?

DC: Well, we had the Sisters of the Assumption. One of my mother's cousins was a nun. My mother told me that when I was born, she took me to see Sister Marie and she took me under the chapel as a baby and consecrated me to the Blessed Virgin. But she did not teach in Salem when I was going to school. And a lot of people had a lot of not very pleasant stories about the nuns, but I don't really remember any bad things. But I was a quiet child. I didn't tend to get into trouble a lot [laughs]. The nuns were strict but—they were good teachers. Some of us had nicknames for some of them. But they worked hard. There was Sister Louis Hector—had tried to get me to be a nun, but I didn't think that was my calling. I don't really have any stories about the nuns. There was one nun, she taught third grade, **Soeur Ludovic**. And she was very short, very roly-poly little nun. The boys were very much afraid of her. She taught math. It was arithmetic in those days, so. But I don't have a whole lot of stories about the nuns. I'm glad I went to a parochial school. And we wore uniforms and I think uniforms are a good thing. Yes, because no competition amongst the kids. They're all dressed alike, better for the kids. It wasn't always easy. Like I said, we didn't have a whole lot of money and so paying for uniforms and all of that was always a problem.

48:41

EB: Did the church help out the families that needed assistance?

DC: I think they probably did with some. My parents always managed one way or another. As I said, my mother started working again when my sister was five years old. And when I was in high school, I found that difficult at times because I came home to an empty house. And if I had something to say, something that I wanted to talk about, there was nobody there to talk to about it. I was there when my brother and sister came home from school, but that was something that I found difficult.

49:30

ED-O: All right, I'm just curious to go back quickly to your—when you graduated high school then you left and went to go work with Fidelity, was that—?

DC: Prudential.

ED-O: Prudential. I'm sorry.

DC: Yes.

49:41

ED-O: Was that common? Was your choice or that decision—was that something that your friends were also doing, that sort of thing, or many other people going to college? Or what was—how did that fit into—?

DC: Not many girls went to college when I graduated from high school. There were—let's see—Cora, Claudette, Joanie—there were five or six of us that went off to work with Prudential that year. Going off like that was not normal or common and the only reason that happened is because Prudential had not opened the office in Boston yet. They were preparing to do so and they needed trained workers and this is how we were being trained. They, as I said, bused us off to New Jersey and that's where I spent the summer. I did fly for the first time from New Jersey to Boston, when I came home to visit for the weekend. That was exciting. It was fun to fly back then. Not so much fun anymore. But it was fun to fly, back then. It was really exciting, and so it was not something that was normal or happened frequently. It was just the circumstances right then because they were starting up their new office in Boston. But it was a good job.

ED-O: So most of your friends ended up working, right out of high school?

51:17

DC: Yes, yep. Most of them did. There were maybe two of the girls in my class that ended up going to college. So, it was not what mostly happened. Most of us went to work. Some of the girls got married soon after graduating from high school.

51:52 [interview language changes to French]

EB: *Est-ce que vous voulez parler français un petit peu, juste au cas où, il y a des--.*

DC: *Oui, oui. Bien sûr.*

52:00

EB: *Est-ce que vous pouvez peut-être raconter comment était Noël chez vous? Quand vous étiez petite?*

DC : *Oh, quand j'étais jeune—Quand j'étais très jeune les dimanches on passait chez mémère. Tout le temps les uns—les cousins, les cousines allaient voir ma grand-mère. Mais pour Noël on n'avait pas beaucoup d'argent. Les cadeaux étaient plutôt des affaires que nous avons, avions besoin—un ou deux jouets. Mais la chose la plus importante est que nous étions toujours ensemble avec ma tante, Francine, mon oncle, Wilfred, et mes cousins de sa famille, on était toujours ensemble pour les fêtes. Alors, quand on mangeait chez nous, mon père mettait les tables dans le salon, prenait des chaises, des grandes planches de bois qu'on mettait sur les chaises et on les enveloppait pour que tout le monde pouvait s'asseoir à la table. Et puis, on était tout ensemble et puis c'est ça qui était la chose la plus importante.*

53:38

EB: *Est-ce qu'il avait la messe de minuit?*

DC: *Oui, il y avait la messe de minuit mais quand j'étais très jeune--on ne venait pas à la messe de minuit. Et nous n'avions pas de réveillon parce que on faisait pas ça, on faisait ça plutôt pendant les jours. Quand j'étais un peu plus vieille, on venait à la messe de minuit, dans la vieille église ici. Mais on n'avait pas de réveillon après. Alors, c'était plutôt tranquille à part du fait que nous étions une grande famille et il y avait beaucoup de monde [rires].*

54:32

EB: *Alors, quand est-ce que vous avez changé de paroisse parce que vous avez dit que jeune vous alliez à l'église Saint-Joseph ?*

DC: *Jeune, oui, on allait à Saint-Joseph et nous avons été à l'école à Saint-Joseph. Mais, quand ma soeur Rita et ma soeur Claire se sont mariées, et assez proche—j'avais peut-être huit ans. Huit ou neuf ans quand ma soeur Rita s'est mariée. Et puis quand ils ont été au presbytère--au presbytère, pour faire les arrangements, ils ont appris que--on appartenait pas vraiment à la paroisse Saint-Joseph. On appartenait à la paroisse Sainte-Anne. Alors je suis ici depuis l'âge de neuf ans. Alors, nous avons continué l'école Saint-Joseph mais on appartenait vraiment à la paroisse Sainte-Anne. Alors c'est comme ça qu'on a appris qu'on appartenait pas à l'église-- à la paroisse Saint-Joseph. Mais, mes parents pensaient qu'on appartenait à la paroisse Saint-Joseph parce que Les Vieilles qui demeuraient en face de nous sur la Highland Avenue appartenaient à Saint-Joseph. Alors, on pensait que on faisait part de la même paroisse. Et puis, ma mère appartenait à Saint-Joseph quand elle demeurait à Salem. Elle demeurait, quand elle était jeune, sur la Perkins Street. Et puis, mes tantes, mes oncles, ma grand-mère allaient à Saint-Joseph. Elle appartenait à cette paroisse. Alors on savait pas qu'il y avait une ligne de division [rires] le centre de la Highland Avenue et une partie, le côté que nous demeurons appartenaient à Sainte-Anne, l'autre côté appartenait à Saint-Joseph et c'est comme ça qu'on a appris qu'on appartenait ici. Maintenant, ils—ce n'est plus le cas, les gens peuvent aller où ils veulent. Alors, c'est comme ça.*

57:04

EB: *Est-ce que tu—Après quand on a fermé l'église Saint-Joseph, est-ce que les gens qui était--qui allait--à l'église Saint-Joseph, ils sont venus ici après ? C'était en 2003 ?*

DC: *Nous en avons reçu quelques-uns presque tout de suite, mais la plupart, ils--la diocèse a transféré les prêtres à Saint-James et la plupart de paroissiens ont suivi le père Rondeau. Alors, ils ont été à Saint James. Là, nous en avons qui ont décidé de faire part de Sainte-Anne alors ça change, ça change. Nous en avons reçu plus ici maintenant et puis nous avons—nous sommes la seule paroisse des alentours qui a une messe en français une fois par an. Alors, on fait notre possible pour garder ça. C'est une messe pour célébrer à la fête de Sainte-Anne qui est notre patronne ici, alors—*

58:20

EB: *Et le prêtre ici, il est franco-américain ? Il parle français ?*

DC: *Oui, oui. Père George Dufour, il parle français, aussi. Alors, même héritage [rires].*

58:32

EB: *Et il est là depuis longtemps ?*

DC: *C'est sept ans, maintenant, oui. Le père Bourgeois qui appartenait ici--qui était le curé ici avant le Père George est aussi franco-américain. Il est en retraite maintenant. Il demeure au presbytère à Saint James parce qu'il est très grand ami avec le Père Rondeau.*

59:02

EB: *Alors, ils sont toujours là à Saint-James?*

DC: *Oui.*

EB: *Hm. Tout s'explique maintenant. C'est parce que l'école Saint-Joseph—*

DC: *Ils ont transféré l'école à Saint James.*

EB: *À Saint James.*

DC: *Malheureusement ils ne l'ont pas gardé ouverte. Et maintenant nous n'avons plus d'école paroissiale à Salem. Une grand perte.*

EB: *Okay, merci beaucoup.*

DC: *Bienvenue [rires]. J'espère que ça aide un peu.*

EB: *Oui, c'est très intéressant.*

DC: *Oui. Oui.*

[interview ends]

English translation of French section:

EB: Do you want to speak French a little, just in case there are--

DC: Yes, yes. Sure.

52:00

EB: Can you maybe tell us what Christmas was like in your house ? When you were little ?

DC : Oh, when I was young—When I was very young, we spent Sundays at Mémère's house. All the time the—the cousins would go to see my grandmother. But for Christmas, we didn't have a lot of money. The presents were mostly stuff that we needed—one or two toys. But the most important is that we were always together with my aunt Francine, my uncle

Wilfred, and my cousins from his family, we were always together for holidays. So, when we ate at our house, my father would put the table in the living room, would take some chairs, big planks of wood that we would put on the chairs and we'd wrap it so that everyone could sit at the table. And then, we were all together and that's the thing that was most important.

53:38

EB: Was there a midnight mass?

DC: Yes, there was a midnight mass when I was very young, but we didn't come to the midnight mass. And we didn't have a *réveillon* [Christmas eve party after midnight mass] because we did that, we did that during the day instead. When I was a little older, we came to midnight mass, in the old church here. But we didn't do a *réveillon* after. So, it was rather quiet, except for the fact that we were a big family and there were a lot of people. [laughter]

54:32

EB: So, when did you change parishes, because you said when you were young you used to go to Saint-Joseph's church ?

DC: Young, yes, we used to go to Saint-Joseph's and we were at the Saint-Joseph school. But when my sister Rita and my sister Claire got married, and pretty near—I was maybe eight years old. Eight or nine when my sister Rita got married. And then when they were at the presbytery, to make the arrangements, they learned that—we didn't really belong to the Saint-Joseph parish. We belonged to the Sainte-Anne parish. So I've been here since the age of nine. So, we continued at the Saint-Joseph school but we belonged to the Sainte-Anne parish. So that's how we learned that we didn't belong to the chu—parish of Saint-Joseph. But my parents thought that we belonged to the Saint-Joseph parish because the Vielles, who lived across from us on Highland Avenue, belonged to Saint-Joseph. So, we thought that we were part of the same parish. And also my mother belonged to Saint-Joseph when she lived in Salem. She lived, when she was young, on Perkins Street. And then my aunts, my uncles, my grandmother used to go to Saint-Joseph. She belonged to that parish. So we didn't know that there was a dividing line in the center of Highland Avenue and one part, the side we lived on, belonged to Sainte-Anne and the other side belonged to Saint-Joseph and that's how we learned that we belonged here. Now they—it's no longer the case, people can go where they want. So, that's how it is.

57:04

EB: Did you—After they closed the Saint-Joseph church, did the people who were---who used to go to the Saint-Joseph church, did they come here after? That was in 2003 ?

DC: A few of them came here right away but most, they—the Diocese transferred the priests to Saint-James and most of the parishioners followed Father Rondeau. So, they went to Saint-James. Here, we have some who decided to belong to Sainte-Anne so it's changing, it's changing. We got more of them here now and then we have—we are the only parish in the area that has a mass in French once a year. So, we do what we can to keep that. It's a mass to celebrate the feast of Sainte-Anne who is our patron saint here, so--

58:20

EB: And the priest here is Franco-American ? He speaks French?

DC: Yes, yes. Father George Dufour, he speaks French too. So, same heritage. [laughter]

58:32

EB: And has he been here long?

DC: About seven years now, yes. Father Bourgeois who used to belong here—who was the parish priest before Father George is also Franco-American. He's retired now. He lives in the presbytery at Saint-James because he's good friends with Father Rondeau.

59:02

EB: So, they are still at Saint-James?

DC: Yes.

EB: Hm. Now I understand. It's because the Saint-Joseph school Saint-Joseph—

DC: They transferred the school to Saint James.

EB: To Saint James.

DC: Unfortunately they didn't keep it open. And now there is no longer any parish school in Salem. A great loss.

EB: Okay, thanks a lot.

DC: You're welcome [laughter]. I hope it helps a little.

EB: Yes, it's very interesting.

DC: Yes. Yes.