

INTERVIEWEE : May Pinault, with her niece, Alice LeBlanc

INTERVIEWER : Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello, Salem State University

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LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: 1:26:04

MP: In the second year of high school.

AL: Okay, sophomore year of high.

EDO: At Saint?

AL: Saint Joseph's.

MP: I had one year at St. Joe's and one year at Ste. Chretienne's. (pause in recording) So much history on the games—

EDO: Well, I'm so excited. So we'll start—

MP: I don't know it all, but I have the papers.

EDO: Well, we're happy to come back at any point.

MP: (handing papers to EDO)

EDO: Look at this. Oh, this is wonderful. So, perhaps—One of the things that we would love to do is to perhaps make some photocopies of things. I don't want to take these from you.

MP: Oh, you can.

EDO: These are yours.

MP: Oh, you can.

EDO: I can, really?

MP: Yeah.

EDO: Shall I make a photocopy and send it back to you?

MP: I have a big picture over there too that you can see.

EDO: Okay. So this I'm going to keep right here, so we can come back to talk about that. Can I ask you just to start—?

MP: I don't know about that because I was not here.

1:12

EDO: I know. I know. But (AL laughs) you might have heard some things about it. If we could, just to start, I was wondering if we could—just tell me your name, just so we have that on our—We'll just start that way.

MP: My maiden name or my—?

EDO: Any name you want to tell me. That's fine (laughs). Your maiden name would be fine. Your married name. Both of them.

MP: May Pinault, married to Roland A. Pinault.

1:39

EDO: Wonderful. So the questions that—we have a few questions that we'd like to ask, a few areas we'd like to ask you some questions about. But really, if there's anything you want to talk about, or something I ask reminds you of something you really want to talk about, you just go ahead and tell your story. That's the point of all this. My questions are sort of useful, but not more important than yours. So the first area of questions that I'd love to talk about is just your family and your family history—what you know about your family history, your parents, where people were from, why they came to Salem, those sorts of things.

MP: Well, my grandparents came from Canada, but my parents were born here in Salem.

2:22

EDO: Where in Canada were your grandparents from?

MP: New Brunswick.

2:26

EDO: Oh, okay. And do you know why they came to Salem?

MP: Well, because everybody else was coming, I guess (laughter). It was the thing to do, I would say, because so many did, and all at one time, you know, to—looking for work maybe? Cause I don't know if the factories were already established here or not. They had to have been for them to, you know, to want to come here, and that was probably their main reason, was for work.

2:59

EDO: And that was in the 1880s, seventies, 1880s?

MP: Oh, yeah. It was way back. That's way back. And they had most of their family here after they got here. Most of my aunts on my father's side worked at Pequot Mills.

EDO: Okay.

MP: Yes. Unfortunately, no pensions or anything else and worked all their life at that Pequot Mill, and for very little pay, I would say. Very little pay. But they weren't fussin'. They weren't fussin'. But that's on my father's side. My mother's, same thing. My aunts and uncles, not all of them, but most of them worked at the Pequot Mills. The others were in the shoe factories. Yeah. Around here, in Peabody and Lynn. Lynn was very, very big for the shoe factories. And then, from my father's family, I had one aunt. She was the hairdresser. One of the uncles worked at A.C. Lawrence Leather factory and so did not my father. My father did too. Uncle Edmond was leather—with the A.C. Lawrence. The others all worked at the mill.

4:30

EDO: And did they work there? As you said, many of your aunts as well as your uncles all worked there. Did they work there only before they were married? Did they work there after they were married?

MP: Definitely, and some of them were still there when they closed the factory.

EDO: Wow.

MP: Yup.

EDO: Can you—what kinds of jobs did they do? Were they in different parts of the factory?

MP: Well, some were in the ^{{weave} se} **weep shed** and others were—I mean, in the finished product or whatever. I really never got into that. I don't know what, but all I know is that they all worked at Pequot Mills. But on both sides, too. Yeah, my aunt Blanche, my aunt Claudia—my aunt Claudia that was on my father's side. Uncle Richard worked in the shoe. My uncle Richard—my mom worked in the shoe.

5:22

EDO: Over in Beverly?

MP: No, my mother was in Lynn, and they had—we had—they were living here. They had a little bridge connecting us here to Canal Street, which was like going to south Salem.

EDO: Right.

MP: And the train would stop there cause we had a big depot downtown. A big, you know, big depot.

5:49

EDO: On Washington Street, right?

MP: Yeah. And so the train would leave there and would stop—because there was a set of stairs going all the way down to the track, and they would stop there so they wouldn't have to walk downtown to take the train to go to Lynn.

EDO: Oh goodness.

MP: So she worked in Lynn. My mother had a very small foot. She had a size three and a half. She wore a size three and a half shoe.

EDO: No!

MP: And she's the one that when they ordered—when the salesmen would come in, she would model the shoe. She was—yeah.

EDO: Oh, quite fancy.

MP: Well, she had a small shoe. It was the smallest. They say size three and a half, so they put her in a four probably. I don't know. I think they started with three and a half as far as sizes.

EDO: Wow. Wow.

MP: Yeah.

6:37

EDO: So your mother was working there when she—when you were a small girl? Or she worked there before she was married?

MP: No, no, before she was married.

EDO: Before she was married.

MP: My mother didn't work after she was married.

6:48

EDO: Now did your mother and father, did they grow up near the Pequot Mills? Near St. Joseph's?

MP: My father did. My mother grew up here. (pointing at table)

6:58

EDO: So your mother grew up here—okay. In this—?

MP: Jefferson.

7:03

EDO: Right on Jefferson Ave?

MP: Yeah.

EDO: Okay.

MP: When you go down here, and you turn to go downtown—

AL: I can show you the house.

MP: The cottages are all right there. There was more than one. They were built by the same person. They were all alike.

7:17

EDO: So that's where she grew up?

MP: She grew up there.

7:20

EDO: And she had many brothers and sisters or—?

MP: Oh yeah. (looking at photo)

EDO: All right, so this is—(looking at photo)

MP: This is the girls.

EDO: Oh my goodness.

MP: These are the girls here.

7:29

EDO: Which one is your mother?

MP: There is my mother, right here. She's a big woman. She was a beautiful woman (turns page). And there are the fellas.

7:37

EDO: Oh my goodness, and these are your grandparents?

MP: That's the grandparents. Yeah, see. (points)

EDO: I'm going to just hold this up. I'm gonna see if I can get a shot of this with my camera here. (holds photograph up to camera)

MP: It's probably close.

EDO: No that's—actually, it's fine. So those are all the sisters.

MP: That's my mother's family.

EDO: Gagnon sisters.

MP: Gagnon.

EDO: And your mother is the woman in the front row, all the way to the left. Okay, and I'm gonna turn the page (turns page).

MP: My brothers.

EDO: And these are her brothers and her parents.

MP: Yup.

EDO: Wonderful.

MP: Now, this here (looking at papers)—this here is the LeBlanc family.

EDO: Oh, geez.

MP: With their children. (holds up photograph and laughs)

EDO: Now the LeBlanc's. This is your father's family.

MP: There's my father, right here (points to photo).

EDO: Oh, goodness, right there in the back.

MP: Yes, and there's my mother right here (points).

EDO: Oh, wow.

MP: And there's my—that's me here.

EDO: Oh, precious! (laughter)

MP: There's my brother Nap (points), and there's my sister—

AL: My mom.

MP: Alice's mother, hiding behind my aunt, Laura.

8:48

EDO: You know what I'm going to do when we finish this? I'm gonna take that off the tripod. I'm gonna bring the camera here, and have you tell me again who everyone is while we're looking at it because then when you get your DVD it will all be there. So this is—Alice, this is your mother? (points)

MP: That's Alice's mother right here (points). Dorothy.

EDO: Oh my goodness. What a beautiful family.

MP: That's me (points). And there's my brother Nap (points).

EDO: And what year was this, do you know?

9:11

MP: Oh, god. My brother Nap is—Oh, god, I don't know. There's no date, of course.

9:19

EDO: So maybe it's in the twenties or thirties?

MP: Let's see. Well, I was born in 23'.

EDO: So the late twenties, maybe?

MP: Yeah.

EDO: You look like you're maybe four or five.

MP: Yeah. I've got to be five or six years old right there. What do you think, Alice? Five or six? (hands photo to AL) It was 28'. Late twenties, I would say.

AL: I'd say you were four.

MP: In the late twenties.

AL: Uncle Nap looks like he was three. Or is he older than you?

MP: No, I'm older.

AL: Oh, you're older than him? So he was, like, about three.

MP: I would say 28'. Twenty-seven, 28'.

EDO: You know what? If you want to hold that one up, I'm gonna zoom in on it. I can do that right from here (MP holds up picture). Woops (adjusting camera). What a beautiful family. Lovely. Okay, great. Thank you. Perfect.

AL: There's your paperclip. (listening to music in background) What, you got your bose on? Some soft music so you can relax. (laughter)

MP: It's just so that I don't talk to myself anymore. (AL laughs)

AL: That is a beautiful picture. I have to look at that after.

MP: (looking at photo) There's my aunt. The hairdresser. That's my father's sister, the hairdresser. Aunt Rose. Aunt Betty.

EDO: And in fact I've just set this up so now you're—

MP: (looking at photo) This is aunt Laura. That's uncle Pete, here (inaudible). That's uncle Pete, here. That's my father's brother, and that's his wife. And that's her son. It's the only one she had. She had a boy.

EDO: It's a beautiful family.

MP: (looking at photo) And my aunt Claudia, here, who was probably about the same age as my mother because my mother loved her. That's gotta be Theresa (points).

AL: Oh, okay!

MP: (looking at photo) And that's aunt—See, that's uncle Edmond's wife, aunt Emma. And there's aunt Laura, my uncle **Boy's** wife. Uncle Boy, where is he? Right here. He was so good. He was so nice. And this here is uncle—Aunt Rose's husband, (inaudible).

AL: Okay.

MP: (looking at photo) Uncle Jimmy. Aunt Claudia's husband.

AL: Yeah.

11:46

EDO: So how many—?

AL: Okay, we gotta keep going now.

11:49

EDO: No, it's fine. It's beautiful. It's a beautiful, beautiful, family. So that—tell me again, that's the LeBlanc family?

MP: This is the LeBlanc family. That's my father's family, here.

EDO: Okay.

MP: With their wives and children. This one is my brother, Nap (points to photo). After Nap, I have two other brothers.

12:08

EDO: Okay. Are you the oldest?

MP: No. My sister was the oldest.

AL: My mother.

MP: Then there's a girl between my sister and I that passed away.

EDO: Okay.

MP: My mother had six. I would'a had six, too. I lost one, too. Unless (inaudible) hadn't been born, though—one of those things. So that's it. (Puts photo down and picks up papers) So this is their mortuary cards, (to AL) if you want any information. But I had—I think I must have given it to the kids. This here is my grandfather's—(showing genealogy)—this is LeBlanc.

EDO: Oh, goodness. I would love to have some. I don't want to take these things because you don't have copies of them.

AL: Well, do you want me—I can make copies at work.

EDO: That would be wonderful.

AL: (to MP) I can make all the copies at work and give them right back to you.

EDO: I would feel more comfortable than me taking them to the—

AL: (nodding) Okay.

MP: And I have that same thing in the Gagnon. I have the same thing for the Gagnons, too. And I thought I had brought it out, but I guess I didn't.

EDO: Well, that is wonderful.

AL: You can get it to me and I'll copy this.

EDO: And these are gorgeous photos. Absolutely gorgeous photos. I love their hair (points).

MP: Well, (AL laughs) this (points) is marcel. They called it the marcel. That's done with the iron. That was done with the iron.

AL: Oh!

MP: See, they're all marcel. Look at her. And all the waves going down like this (gestures).

AL: And they called it the marcel hairdo?

MP: My grandmother. The marcel.

EDO: They have a product, a hair product, as well, that you could—at one point it was called—

MP: Joker. That was finger wave. That was for the finger waves that you used your fingers to do (gestures). I gave my mother a finger wave every Friday (laughs).

13:49

EDO: Did you really?

MP: The little shop that I had—had been the knitting shop. Knitting goods. It was a beauty parlor for nine years when I was probably nine, ten, years old.

EDO: Oh, goodness.

MP: Yeah. Well, no. I was older than that. Wait a minute. I was probably twelve, thirteen, because I took care of her children.

AL: Yeah.

MP: And so, she was there for nine years. Of course, I'm the one that did the sweeping and picking up, you know, for her.

AL: And learning everything.

EDO: And when—

MP: I would watch her doing what she was doing.

14:27

EDO: So when did you have that job?

MP: Well, I was just a kid. I lived right next-door, see. That whole thing—there was the beauty parlor, the two-decker, and the cottage. And that was my—

AL: Nineteen-thirty something?

MP: Hmm?

AL: About nineteen-thirty something?

MP: Oh, over that. Yeah, oh yeah.

14:44

EDO: And where was this? This was on—?

MP: It was 1937, 36', when I came out of grammar school. So it was, you know, it was in—yeah.

14:53

EDO: And where was this? Where did they—?

MP: Right where my parents' property—

AL: Across the street from Sainte Anne's church.

EDO: Okay.

AL: From Parallel Street up.

MP: Lawrence Street—their property was on Lawrence Street and Jefferson. The little shop was facing the Rectory.

EDO: Okay.

MP: And the two-decker and the cottage were next to it, but Lawrence Street started right here (gestures). There's Jefferson here, and Lawrence Street here.

EDO: Okay.

MP: (to AL) You show her before you go.

AL: Yes.

15:25

EDO: So, Lawrence—so they had a triple-decker?

MP: Two.

EDO: Double-decker. And then a—

MP: Two tenements and the cottage.

15:33

EDO: A cottage and then a shop, a little commercial property?

MP: Yes. On Jefferson Avenue, yes.

15:38

EDO: And it was a hairdressing shop?

MP: Well, it was for nine years. It had been a little grocery store before that and god knows what before that.

EDO: Okay.

MP: Yeah, and then after that it was a barbershop. And two different barbers occupied that.

AL: And they cut my bangs.

15:56

EDO: Now, were the folks who owned those different businesses, were they French-Canadians?

MP: Yeah! Oh yeah. Yeah, there was **Boucher** and there was, uh—

AL: **Caron.**

MP: She was Caron. Florence Caron, yes. She was Caron. And she was the sister to Alice's mother-in-law.

AL: My first mother-in-law.

EDO: Oh my goodness.

AL: (laughs)

MP: And there was another, a mister **Therault**, I think. There was a barber in there also. Then it was mine (laughter). Knit One. That was the name of my shop. (laughs)

EDO: Knit One, pearl two?

MP: No, I didn't put 'pearl two.' (laughter) I just said 'Knit One.'

EDO: That's wonderful.

MP: And I was born on the first floor of the two-decker.

EDO: Okay.

MP: Then when the brood got bigger, my father moved us into the cottage.

16:54

EDO: Okay. So, all right. So when you were born, your family was living on the first floor of the—?

MP: On the first floor of the—yes.

17:01

EDO: Okay, your parents had been married for—do you know—?

MP: Well, I was the third one.

EDO: Third, okay.

MP: They were married a few years.

17:10

EDO: Okay. So if you can tell me a little bit—if there's any stories or memories that you have of your childhood? Things you used to do—

MP: Well, I was—my mother thought I was tomboyish. And I'm the one—we had five cherry trees in the yard, and two apple trees. We had from Parallel Street on—two of them was all in one big yard.

EDO: My goodness.

MP: Yeah. The shop's yard, and the two-decker's yard, and our yard was the same yard. And it was a big yard. There were five cherry trees and two apple trees. And I used to be the cherry picker (AL laughs). And my mother used to get so upset because, you know, when I climbed up there—when we were kids, we didn't wear slacks. But we did wear bloomers down to the knee. (AL laughs)

EDO: But you climbed those cherry trees.

MP: She didn't want me up there at all and so she finally—she couldn't stop me, so—Well, somebody had to pick the cherries. So she went to the Salem Rubber Store, which was on Essex Street here in Salem. And they carried sporting goods and, you know, the winter overshoes and stuff like—they called them overshoes then. And she bought me a gym—a gym suit. It was a one-piece thing, big bloomers with the elastics on them (laughter).

18:40

EDO: Was this in the 1930s?

MP: Oh yeah.

18:42

EDO: This was the 1920s, 1930s? That's wonderful. A wonderful story. And you kept climbing the cherry trees?

MP: Oh, yes. So I was safe. I mean, you know, she felt good about that. I could do that. And then we had customers. We'd sell the cherries, twenty-five cents a basket. We had one Bing cherry tree. One. The others were different kinds of cherries. And the Bing was the favorite, of course. Everybody loved that one. Cause they sell them for \$3.99 (gestures).

EDO: Oh, I love them.

AL: (whispering) Those were—yeah.

MP: There was a gentleman that—of course the—our property went up to the tracks.

EDO: Okay.

MP: Right up to the tracks. It was a good-sized yard, but then there was the tracks.

AL: The tracks.

MP: We never were bothered by the train noises or anything. You get used to—you have to get used to your surrounding noises, anyway. I mean, if you want to survive.

EDO: Exactly. (laughs)

MP: And in the summertime, of course, the windows were open. And they used to—it was at night that they used to arrange the freight. Put the freight in order. (gestures) So there's a bang on this car, remove that car, bang this one, and take this one because the first one that's going to be left off has got to be at the end. So there was a gentleman that—he did the freight, the big locomotive. And when the cherries—he had come out. He had stopped one time and—Do you sell the cherries? And my mother said, “Yes, when they're ripe!” Well, he used to buy two baskets of cherries of the Bing. And he was so glad to have it, you know, that when he'd leave the yard with his freight, he would wrap—he probably had the morning paper and he would roll it and tie it with that—they called it **wheeze**. It was all threads (gestures). A mess, a mess of knotted threads. That's what they used to use to wipe their hands on the locomotive, you know. He used to tie that paper, the morning paper, with that. And when he went by my mother's yard, (gestures) he would fire it into the yard! So, my mother had the morning paper from the guy from the locomotive. Yeah! That was one of my nice stories.

EDO: Oh, that's fantastic.

MP: He was so nice. Yeah. And we never—of course, we never had a ride on the locomotive. We never—no, no. But when my youngest one, when he was little—See, we had a little luncheonette here on Jefferson Avenue, and a lot of them used—on the freights not the regular rides, just the freights. They'd come to get their lunch over there. And one of them was full (inaudible), was a classmate to my husband, and I was at my mother's with my youngest one, and he'd got to talking with me—well, I talked with him—I saw him so I talked to him and everything. And he says to **Roly**, “Would you like a ride on the train?” (laughter) Well! He took him up on the locomotive. He took him up, and he went up to the bridge, and he backed out (AL laughs). And he went up to the bridge—the bridge is right there near the church (points)—there's the bridge. Out of the group—my brothers never got a ride on the locomotive! I can't imagine! **Roly** was thrilled. Oh, he was thrilled. I mean, he was flabbergasted, really. It was so big.

22:26

EDO: Yes! Oh my goodness. So when you were a little girl growing up, did you just play with the other kids in the neighborhood?

MP: Oh, definitely, definitely. Yes. Oh yeah. I was—I played—I had a team—baseball.

EDO: Oh? (AL laughs).

MP: And we did football, too. Of course, I had to use my gym set for that (AL laughs). I had to use my gym set.

22:50

EDO: Did your sisters play these sports as well?

MP: No, my sister, no. No, she didn't care for that. But one day she says, "I wanna play!" I said, "You don't know how to play." I really didn't want her on my team (laughter). Of course, she didn't know how to play, you know. So, anyway, I wanna play and if you don't let me play, I'm gonna go tell ma! (AL laughs) And I felt like saying, Well, go tell ma. I didn't. I let her play and I told her she could be the catcher. Well, it was very unfortunate for her. Because the next guy up to bat, swings the bat, hits her in the mouth. It was a mess. It was the end the game (laughter). The end of the game cause I had to take her to the house. I mean, she was bleeding. That was the end of her.

EDO: Yeah, she didn't come back to play anymore.

MP: No, no, she didn't do that. She didn't want to (laughter).

23:54

EDO: So did the other girls in the neighborhood play these games? (AL coughs)

MP: No, I had fellas on the team.

23:58

EDO: Oh, all right. And you were the captain?

MP: Yes. It was my team! (AL laughs) Oh yeah, cause I had the big yard, you see.

24:06

EDO: Okay, now how did your brothers take to this? They didn't want to be in charge?

MP: My brothers were too much younger than I.

24:12

EDO: Okay, so how old were you about when you had your baseball team?

MP: I was in grammar school.

24:18

EDO: So none of the girls—what were the other girls in the neighborhood doing while you were playing baseball?

MP: God knows. I don't know. We had had a club, too. I didn't always play baseball, you know. We had an old chicken coup in the back, and we had chickens, we had rabbits. The club—it was our club—we had curtains, lace curtains in there, and my father had white washed the whole inside of it.

EDO: Nice!

MP: And so, we'd sit there and embroider. And we had my mother's old (gestures) crank-up phonograph. We played records. (laughs)

EDO: And embroidered.

MP: Yeah.

EDO: That's—(AL laughs)—very well rounded. I appreciate this, a lot.

MP: But I did—I did have a team. And I ice-skated a lot, too. Cause on the other side (gestures) there was water—

AL: Oh yeah, Rosie's Pond.

MP: Well, we called it Rosie's.

EDO: It's the pond you can see when you drive—

MP: Coming up Jefferson, yeah, from the (inaudible) place. Well, one of the girls was Rosie. That was **Vigneault's** daughter.

AL: Right, yes.

MP: And her name was Rosie and she figured it was her pond, and it was not her pond. It was everybody's.

AL: She had lived there, so you had to walk behind the house to get to the pond.

MP: No, we didn't. No, there was other spaces we could get onto the pond. She—because it was there, and she thought it was her pond. So they called it Rosie's Pond.

25:52

EDO: So who cleared that off in the winter? Just the kids would clear it?

MP: The kids would help.

AL: The kids (nodding).

MP: After it snowed, yeah.

AL: If the boys wanted to play hockey—

MP: They wanted to play the hockey, you see. So, and then we had—going down Jefferson Avenue, you've got a big (gestures)—How big? The pipe would probably be this big (gestures) and one of those real big—to carry the water on the other side, and there was skating on the other side also—of Jefferson. When you get down below, you can see where there's a cement thing there (gestures). They've done that over. It's all done new. It was just a big pipe and we'd go right through, from Rosie's Pond right through under, to the other.

EDO: Oh, wow.

AL: That's a street now, but did you go underneath that big thing? (gestures)

MP: No, they closed that off.

AL: Oh! Oh!

MP: The pipes are there, but there's cement all over it.

AL: (laughs)

EDO: Wow.

MP: That was a long time, Alice. A long time ago.

AL: Before me.

26:59

EDO: So actually, this is a very specific question, but where did people get skates and all this equipment? Where did you get all that?

MP: Well, I wanted—Oh, I wanted skates so bad because my mother couldn't afford skates. One of her tenants—she probably told her then that I wanted to go skating, but I had no skates. So she had an old pair of skates. It was **Lefansier's** wife. They were old, all right, but they were skates. She gave them to me. I put a whole lot of paper in the end of the toe (AL laughs) and I was able to skate. And so, my mother finally (inaudible) that day was a formative year. She bought me skates for Christmas. Well, she bought me tubulars and I was a little disappointed because tubulars were more boys' skates. That's the type—the kind that they use for hockey.

EDO: For hockey, not figure skates.

MP: And I didn't want them for hockey. Cause I could skate backwards and frontwards. That was my speed.

AL: Where did they buy the skates?

MP: Salem Rubber was one place. Yeah, all sports were there. Different stores had them too, I would say, but Salem Rubber was really the place. And that was another one of my activities—

EDO: You were busy!

MP: That I was punished for every now and then. (AL laughs)

EDO: Oops.

MP: Well, I came in late. I didn't realize how late it was.

AL: You were having too much fun—late for supper.

MP: Well, no. Cause my mother would send me to the store after school and, you know, I was doing the store and—Finally, by the time I got to the—I had to stay on the ice for some amount (laughter) of time, anyways. (whispers) I got punished all the time!

EDO: Oh, goodness.

AL: (laughs)

MP: But we all survived.

EDO: Clearly.

MP: We all survived.

29:04

EDO: For school, where did you go to school?

MP: The school was right across the street, you know. When you go by there—when she shows you the big park (gestures), the big area there—that was the school—was there.

29:17

EDO: So Ste. Anne's school was there?

MP: That was there, the big school, up to the eighth grade. From the fourth to the eighth. There was four grades there. The rest were in the back, one in back of the church and then next to the convent was the—

29:35

EDO: So right now there's a building—

MP: No—

EDO: But there's a building that says "convent". There's a convent building there.

MP: The convent is there and next to the convent is a new school.

EDO: That's a new school. But there—

MP: That's empty.

29:44

EDO: But on that same spot, was where the grammar school, the little—?

MP: That was where you started. You started in the basement. The kindergarten was in the basement of the church, and the first grade was in the hall, and then the second grade was in back of the church.

AL: Yes.

MP: That building in back of the church there, as you can see it on that picture. And there was the second and third grade there. It was up and down. And then the fourth to the eighth was on that lot, there.

EDO: Which is an empty lot—

MP: And I lived right across the street from **Betsy**.

30:25

EDO: So you went to Ste. Anne's through all of grammar school?

MP: Oh, definitely. Yeah.

30:29

EDO: Okay. And then you went—?

MP: Then I went to Ste. Chretienne's for my first year of Academy. I was junior (inaudible) there. I stayed there and I loved it. My father says, "What is she doing up there? Why is she staying there?" Cost my mother ten dollars a month.

30:54

EDO: So you lived there?

MP: I lived at Ste. Chretienne's.

30:58

EDO: Now where—if the students were boarding there, where did they stay?

MP: Oh, they had the big convent up there.

AL: The big convent downstairs—

MP: It was a big, big house.

AL: It was gigantic.

MP: Big, rich person's house. You run out film? Good?

31:21

EDO: Can I actually turn down the music a little?

MP: Oh, sure. I can shut it off.

EDO: Cause I realize—

MP: I can shut it off.

EDO: I can do it.

MP: Na, I'll go. (gets up)

EDO: Sorry. Just realizing it might be hard when we try to capture this. We may get more of the music than the voices—

MP: (off camera) Yeah. Oh, you should have said something.

EDO: Oh, it's fine. Its just—it was much quieter before.

MP: (off camera) I never gave any thought.

EDO: It's fine. Don't worry! I'm sorry. (holds photograph up to camera)

MP: (off camera) I never gave it thought.

EDO: Thank you.

AL: (laughs)

MP: (sitting back down) Thank you.

32:11

EDO: So, I'm sorry, for the interruption. So you—why did you decide or why did your mother decide to have you stay there?

MP: Well, there was two other girls and myself from Ste. Anne's. Ste. Chretienne's is our high school, originally. That was our high school. It belonged to this parish. But all the other kids went to public school, public high school.

32:39

EDO: So most of the kids from Ste. Anne's went to public high school that you graduated grammar school with?

MP: Yes. Well, because it didn't cost anything. Down Ste. Chretienne's you had to pay. So, but anyways, I wanted to go there. I went there. I liked it and I met a girl there that was a **novice**. She was so nice! Of course, they were all strangers to me. So I decided, you know, I'm gonna go with her. Of course, she couldn't come out with us. They were very strict then, you know. She couldn't even talk to us while we were in school. And, course, that's the first step for becoming a nun. **Novice**.

EDO: Okay.

MP: But anyways—

AL: Very, very strict

MP: Yeah, then. Not so today. But they're still not getting the girls, unfortunately. But anyways, so I stayed. My father said, "Why is she staying there?" Because she wants to stay there! Anyway, one day the lady across the street called us to our mother. Marie, where's Mickey? They called me Mickey. Where's Mickey? I haven't seen Mickey. Is she sick? She says, "No. She's at Ste. Chretienne's." What do you mean she's at Ste. Chretienne's? She's staying there? She says, "Yeah!" Get her out of there! She's gonna die", she says (laughter). Because she used to watch me in action, you know. And she missed me (laughs). But I really—I had my first year there. And every time my mother—I could see my mother—family—once a month. And we took walks. We walked and we walked. That was our entertainment, I think. And every time we came this way—the kids—they were small—my brothers, they'd go running. They'd see us coming down—there was a bunch of us, you know. They see us coming down the hill. Mom! Mom! Mickey's coming! My mother would go. She would cry. Good lord. And when it was time for her to leave the monthly visit, she would cry. Oh, for christ's sakes! I couldn't stay. But I had my first year.

35:03

EDO: So were you considering become a nun?

MP: I would have stayed. As a matter of fact, I asked them to send me to Canada. I figured if she didn't see me she wouldn't cry. But they wouldn't do it. I had to be educated first. I had to go through my high school first, yeah

35:25

EDO: Right. Okay. So unlike some of the seminaries for the boys where they might have gone to Canada for high school, they wouldn't have let you do that? You had to do your high school years here and then—But am I correct in understanding that you were—had begun the process—you had done your first year and you were considering continuing on?

MP: I would have loved it! I would have loved it! Yes. Yeah. (turns to AL) Poor Pinault! (laughs)

AL: (laughs)

EDO: What's that?

AL: Poor Pinault. (laughs)

35:57

EDO: Yes, that leads me to my next question! So there were girls there who were just there for the day school, just for high school?

MP: Oh yeah, they were boarders. They were boarders. The majority of them were boarders. When they came, the majority of them were boarders. They stayed.

AL: From wealthy families, some of them.

MP: (whispers) Rich kids!

36:17

EDO: Mm-hm. Were there other girls from—?

MP: And they were not very sociable.

36:21

EDO: Were there other girls from Salem who went just for the day? Who would just go there for the day and go home at night?

MP: Yes! Yes! Definitely.

AL: I was one of them.

EDO: Yeah, and there were others—

MP: Because this was our parish. This was our high school.

EDO: So your other girlfriends—

MP: My others—they didn't stay. Because the girls were not very sociable. We were not their class. I shouldn't say that, but that's what it was.

36:46

EDO: And the sisters were—they were all Canadian? I mean the order was Canadian?

MP: Yes. Oh yeah.

36:54

EDO: They're in Montreal?

MP: Canada. They were in (inaudible) Sainte Joliette?

EDO: Sainte Joliette, okay.

MP: Was it Sainte Joliette? Sainte Joliette.

AL: Was it?

MP: Yeah, I think so.

37:06

EDO: So, a year into your potential life of being a sister—

MP: Yeah. We worked, too. We worked, too. We cleaned and did chores and everything. It was nice. It was very nice. The quiet of it was what I liked, you know. The quiet. (laughs)

37:26

EDO: Did you know any other girls who had joined the order?

MP: No.

37:33

EDO: No? So what made—I'm just curious—

MP: I just liked to be with that girl, as I told you. She was so nice, you know. I could go visit her after school. They had a period of, you know—

EDO: Visitation?

MP: Visitation or pleasure or whatever it was, before they settled down to homework and stuff like that. They had a few minutes—they called it *gouté*, which was a little lunch wrapped in a 3:30 class there, and a little recreation. So we were able to go and talk with her.

38:08

EDO: And did she continue on?

MP: Yes, she did. She ended up having to leave because she had rheumatoid arthritis, and she was in such pain. It was pathetic. She was from Amesbury. And I went to visit. (turns to AL) It was about three weeks ago? I went to Marlborough, to the convent. There's another girl there that was in the same class. And she's up there and retired, you know.

EDO: Oh, goodness.

MP: And she's up there, so Sister—we have Sister, here—Sister Pauline. She goes up there quite often. So I say—every time she goes, I say, “Say hi to Irene!” And so she says, “I'm gonna take you up there someday.” She says, “When I can't stay over—If I'm not staying

over, I'll take you." Course, she took me about three weeks ago. She was so glad to see me! I hadn't seen her. See, Roland, played center up there at the convent. That's in Marlborough—my husband. And she was there. So I had some pictures. I brought them over. She was so glad to see!

39:29

EDO: How wonderful after all those years. How wonderful. So then, how did you meet your husband? So you leave. You're considering becoming a nun. You leave (laughter). What's the next chapter that story?

AL: Oh, you went to St. Joe's.

MP: I went to St. Joseph's. I didn't meet Roland there. Roland was Salem High, class of 41', which was the most famous class of the world. Of the whole world!

EDO: Really?

MP: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Everybody knows the class of 41'. My number, played there as class of 41'.

40:02

EDO: All right, so why was Salem High, the class of 41', the most famous?

MP: It was the largest class to graduate for—I don't know how many years. And the thing of it is—well, they—

AL: They still get together.

MP: Reunions. They started the reunions but after, of course, they graduated and they went in the service. And that was four years that went by there. Cause Roland was in the Coast Guard for forty-one months.

EDO: Oh, goodness.

MP: And I didn't know him when he—Well, I did know him when he left because he had just graduated from the high school and he left in August. He graduated in June, left in August. Well, my brother had started going out with his cousin—my brother Nap. And Jeanette, Jean's sister, twin sister, and was—So he went in the marines and my brother did. But anyways, he started going out with Jeanette. I don't even know where he met her but anyways—that was all right. Then he went off in the service too, see. He was about the same age. He was same age as uncle.

AL: That is right, probably.

MP: So he wrote to my mother and he said to her one time—He said, “Ask Mickey to go over and see Jeanette”, cause her mother had a bad stroke and she was taking care of her mother. Her mother was bed-ridden. She was the nicest lady. My mother had gone to school with her. Can you imagine? But he says, “Ask Mickey to go and see and visit with Jeanette on a Sunday if she can”, you know? So, we never went very far, you know. And I’m not too familiar with South Salem. I says, “Where does she live?” It’s on Palmer Street. Where’s Palmer Street? And so my mother tells me where to get off—off from the bus—took the bus right here—Jefferson. So I went. And she said, “Palmer Street is this street. You’re gonna see this. You’re gonna see that. Go down there and it’s all the way to the end.” Oh, okay. So I did. I had my instructions. So I went off on the bus. Get off on Mill Hill and found Palmer Street off of Lafayette Street. And she was on the second floor and I went up there. And she was glad to see me, and was very nice, and brought me into the room where her mom was, and introduced me, and all that sort of thing. The mother—I couldn’t understand what she was—she was trying to talk but I couldn’t—she had had a bad stroke so—but she was trying to talk. I felt so bad. And Jeanette kinda was able to tell me what she was trying to tell me, you know. So it was a nice visit and I’m sitting there. (recording skips) Bang, comes knocking at the door, comes in, and she knew it was him, his aunt, and she had the biggest grin when she saw him. She was—they were always happy to see him. I think he made them laugh. I guess that’s what it was, you know. And he comes in—oh! (leans back) Big motion, you know. He sees me. I don’t know, haven’t even met him, but anyway—runs in the kitchen, gets a chair, pushes the chair up against me, and sits down. That’s how I met my husband.

EDO: (laughs) That’s a wonderful story!

AL: (laughs)

44:01

EDO: So he was in high school?

MP: He had just graduated.

EDO: Okay.

MP: And he was ready to go into the service.

44:08

EDO: And you were a couple years younger than him, or you were the same age?

MP: No, I’m a year older than him.

EDO: Oh, okay.

MP I was a year older than him and he told everybody in the world—(AL laughs)—I married an older woman, you know (laughter). Very good.

EDO: Oh my goodness.

MP: So that's how I met my husband.

EDO: And so he had—

MP: And it really didn't—you know—click.

EDO: So he went off—

MP: So, that day—so I says to Jeanette, after a few minutes. I says, “You know, I'm gonna have to go” because the last bus had left downtown on Sunday was at four o'clock. So I had gone there after dinner. So, I mean, it was close. I said, “I've got to go.” So I said to Misses, I said, “I'll be back! I'll come to visit again”—you know this and all of that. And, I'll walk you to the bus! I says, “No, no, that's all right. There's no need. You know, it's not that far.”

AL: (laughs) Miss Independent.

MP: Hey—Go home, mister. (laughter)

45:21

EDO: Take the hint.

MP: No, he wouldn't! Of course, they had had their dinner and cause there was stuff on the stove that was cooling before being put into the refrigerator or icebox, whatever. And there was an ear of—it was corn, ears of corn. He takes one. He's eating an ear of corn, walking down the street with me (AL laughs). I said, “That's okay. That's enough now. You don't have to come all the way, you know.” I didn't—I says, “Oh my god. I hope there's nobody on the bus going to Castle Hill.” (laughs) He had corn here (points to chin), under the nose. He had corn everywhere, the butter—I'm telling you, I was devastated. I was so glad to get on the bus. There was nobody on the bus. (AL laughs) That's how I met him.

EDO: Okay. And then—

MP: My husband of sixty-four years.

EDO: Wow.

MP: Yep. (laughs)

46:31

EDO: And then he went into the service?

MP: He went into the service and, oh yeah, he found the address.

46:37

EDO: When he came back?

MP: Ah, mm—well, he talked with his cousin, of course. She had been to the house, you know. She had been going—

46:46

EDO: And so when were you married?

MP: Nineteen forty-five. The day after Roland died. We were sixty-four—married sixty-four—

EDO: Oh my goodness. That's a long time. Gotta get the secret to that.

MP: Yeah, long time. Yep. (whispers) I miss my—

(recording stops)

AL: She does that to you.

EDO: Mm-hm. He sounds like a wonderful man.

MP: He was. He was a gentle, loving—man. But he was trying to save the world. That's what it was. He had to make everybody in the world happy. You know—

EDO: Seems to have worked.

MP: It did. Oh yeah. He did an awful lot for a lot of people.

AL: So what about all these French things that were here?

EDO: (inaudible)

MP: The what?

47:42

EDO: So, you know what? I would love to come back and have another conversation cause I don't think we're gonna cover all this (AL laughs), which is fine. Now I'm crying (MP laughs). I wanted to ask a couple of questions, which you might be the only person I've talked to who could answer this for me. One is—there were these two neighborhoods. I mean, there was really the neighborhood down near St. Josephs and there's this neighborhood of Castle Hill. What was the relationship between people who lived in those neighborhoods?

MP: Canadians, Canadians.

EOD: Right.

MP: It was all French people down there. That—they called it the Point. It's still the Point. And over here there was—Well, you know, I just gotta—this was water. There was water and hills. This was separated from downtown. The ocean came real close. This is all fill (gestures) and this here was all hills. My famous story is Mr. Derby, who's Derby Street is named after. He had his summer home here, and he had to take a boat to get to his summer home, in the summertime. Because that's what it was until they—See, now you go down the tracks. When you go over those tracks there—boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. That's because underneath there, whatever they put for fill, is always washed away cause there's water there. The water's gonna find it's place. Canal Street, (gestures) there was a full canal running all the way to the water that connected to the North River (gestures), which is where the overpass is. That was water. That came down Canal Street, and came here (gestures), and then they had the ocean.

AL: Yeah, Canal Street was water.

49:33

EDO: So did people move out of the Point and move up here, or was it really just some people decided to settle here?

MP: —And other people that came, and they were still coming, you know. They kept coming. I still think there's still some coming, but that's all right. They don't come from Canada but that's—what you gonna do? They're coming—supposedly to work.

49:55

EDO: But for generations people came from Canada to work?

MP: Oh, definitely, definitely.

49:59

EDO: And some people chose to live here because they wanted—?

MP: How they came to call it Castle Hill, I have no idea. It might have been because of Mr. Derby's big house and all the hills. That's how they nicknamed Castle Hill, I would say. That's the only way I can see.

50:17

EDO: Was there an understanding that there were two different types of Franco-Americans or French-Canadians in these two different—?

MP: (shakes head) No, no, no.

50:26

EDO: No? Okay. So some members of a family might live in the Point and some members of the family might live here?

AL: Right. Like her grandmother.

MP: (gesturing) They started down there first, you see. And then, there was probably no more space down there, so they came this way.

50:39

EDO: Did your parents both grow up in the Point neighborhood?

MP: My father—when they came from Canada they settled in Lynn. Cause he was born here. But then they bought a house on Harbor Street. My grandmother had an eight family house on Harbor Street. She took care of every bit of it. My grandfather worked in the leather, also. She took care of the tenements. She did the whitewashing and the wallpapering and the painting. She did. And she also had a monstrous loom in the basement and after the Salem Fire—cause her house didn't burn—she was lucky. She made blankets for—collecting with rags. She used to cut the rags. She didn't use all threads, you know. It was rags. She made blankets—they weighed a ton. We all got one when we got married. They weighed a ton, but they kept you warm. They kept you warm. And mine—now, I don't use it. I don't because in the houses here, you can't. But I got so used to having that weight on me—I even had them at home, cause my mother had some. I have to have this weight, in order to be warm (laughs). But she did. She did. I don't know how many. Everybody in the city, I think, after the fire got one of my grandmother's blankets that she made on the loom. She did that. My father took care of her (inaudible). He would take care—he could do anything. He didn't do that much, but what he did, he could do—anything, you know? But my grandmother could do—Oh, she was strong. She was strong.

52:34

EDO: So are there—one of the things we've been trying to ask people about are French-Canadian traditions. So traditions around holidays, traditions about food, things that really were unique to being French-Canadian or Franco-American. Were there things—?

MP: Oh, of course you're gonna think—right away gonna think of *cortons*. You're gonna think of pork pies. We still do it.

AL: (inaudible) French food name ?

MP: That I've never made. Never done those. But they had—they called—it's made with raw potato. Inside you put either ham, or pork, or whatever. (gestures) Make it into a ball with the raw potato, and put it the cheesecloth and tie that up tight, and make a ball. And then you'd put it in, and boil it for a little while. But it cooked the potato. They went crazy for that stuff. My father was crazy—I wouldn't eat it because—You know, when you cut a potato, if you leave it out too long, it's gonna turn black. (gestures) And these balls were gray! (laughter) And they didn't look that appetizing to me. I wouldn't even try it, so I can't tell you how they tasted.

53:49

EDO: Did your mother teach you how to cook? Did your grandmother teach you how to cook?

MP: No, my grandmother didn't teach me how to cook. My mother—I watched my mother and I learned from watching. But I did ask—there was never any recipes. There was never any written recipes. What do you do? Well, this is what you do. You do this, you do this, and you do that. Okay. From watching her, I learned a lot. Yeah. Otherwise—

AL: Home-made baked beans every Saturday.

MP: Every Saturday. Every Saturday. Everybody was gone, and she's still making a big pot of beans. Come and get some beans! Yeah, oh yeah. They were so good. My mum made the best beans in the world. There was no heavy molasses in my mother's beans.

54:36

EDO: No? How did she do it?

MP: Tasty. Her beans were blond. Oh! It's all pork. It's all pork. No, no. Most of the people put molasses in there but—of course, the canned beans have got molasses but my mother's beans were blond and they were good. Oh! I had two indigestions when I was a kid.

54:59

EDO: (laughs) So, when you grew and then you had your own family, you continued to make?

MP: I did beans once.

55:06

EDO: Oh, okay. Did you make any of the other ones?

MP: They didn't like it. They didn't like the beans, so I never made any beans.

AL: Oh, I made some every—

55:13

EDO: Did you continue to make the *tourtières* or the *cortons*?

MP: Oh yes. Oh yeah, we still do. We go to midnight mass—we have to have that *Réveillon*.

55:21

EDO: So tell me about that. So you tell me about that tradition.

MP: You come home for your little snack of pork pie and whatever, you know, *corton* on toast, if you want.

AL: Yes! My favorite.

EDO: That's how I like it. It's my favorite.

MP: On crusty bread, too.

AL: Yes. (MP and AL laugh)

55:41

EDO: And let me ask you this, were the men, or the brothers, your brothers, fathers, or husbands, were they involved in any of the—?

MP: The cooking? No.

55:51

EDO: So there really was a—

MP: My brother did after his wife died. She died very young, so naturally—Now he worked in the—he had his restaurant. He had a restaurant. So he was able to do that.

56:01

EDO: What was his restaurant?

MP: He had—on Lafayette Street, Mary's Lunch.

AL: Mary's Lunch.

MP: His wife's name was Mary.

56:08

EDO: Oh, where was that on?

MP: It was up, down—next do the Lincoln Hotel.

AL: Right across the street, right next door to Vaillancourt's—what was Vaillancourt's pharmacy, and before that it was Eaton's.

MP: Across the street from the Lincoln (gestures). The Lincoln was on this side, I think.

AL: But it was right next door to the—

MP: Isn't the Lincoln on that end?

AL: Across the street—No, it was on that. Across the street. Oh, there was the Lafayette and the Lincoln.

EDO: So the Lafayette and the Lincoln faced each other.

AL: Yes.

MP: Oh, that's it. So the Lincoln—he was on the same side as the Lincoln.

AL: Yes.

EDO: Mary's Lunch?

MP: Mary's Lunch.

EDO: Okay, that's your brother's restaurant.

MP: That was my brother's restaurant.

56:46

EDO: And he owned that for a long time?

MP: Before him it was **Inault's**.

AL: Oh yes, Inault's.

56:53

EDO: And that was another French-Canadian fellow who—?

MP: Yeah, he was French but I don't know his name now.

56:59

EDO: So, food traditions—when you were growing up did you do any—where there any songs that you sang or anything like this?

MP: Never French.

EDO: No? No.

MP: But my uncle Richard and his wife, the **Harveys**, they had big to-dos, you know. Course, they had—we always had—not my mother, but my grandparents, you know—Ste. Anne's—New Years was always the gathering of family. They played the piano. There was always one that played the piano, and there was a lot of French songs, the nice ones and the nasty ones.

57:41

EDO: Any one that you remember that you'd to sing a little bit of?

MP: No. (laughter)

AL: My mother used to sing the nasty one when she was rocking the babies and, of course, they wouldn't understand it.

MP: No, I didn't. I never sang in French.

57:56

EDO: Now, I want to ask about your language. So, you speak French and English?

MP: Ah, *je parle francais*.

58:04

EDO: *Oui, parfait.* And when you were growing up did you speak French at home?

MP: I was sixteen years old before I started to learn to speak English.

58:11

EDO: Okay. So at school it was French only at Ste. Anne's?

MP: Definitely. We studied English grammar but the nuns couldn't speak English either. So (laughter) we didn't learn much from that. But that's all right. But I—no, I was sixteen years old when I was taking care of Florence's babies. And her husband was—his last name was Hynes, and he didn't speak French. He didn't understand French either. And he would laugh (whispers) *if I said French words.* But I was there to get his supper started. I was there to clean his house and take care of his babies, but he'd laugh at my English. (laughs)

58:56

EDO: So how did you learn English?

MP: From trying to talk it, to listening to other people. Oh yeah.

59:04

EDO: So when you went to Ste. Chretienne's—

MP: They spoke English over there. Of course, a lot of those girls didn't speak French.

AL: Right, but they had to learn French.

MP: They did learn to speak French.

59:16

EDO: So did you have school in both French and English at Ste. Chretienne's?

MP: Yes. But we had English grammar here, too. But there was—the nuns wouldn't speak it.

EDO: *C'était plus difficile parler l'anglais.* (laughs) *Les enseignants ne parlent l'anglais.*

MP: Well, my children—I had five children—there's only one that'll speak French. The others don't speak. They don't understand—they didn't understand it.

59:42

EDO: Did you try to teach them French?

MP: I wanted them to learn but they were not interested.

AL: (laughs)

59:48

EDO: So when you were raising them, you were speaking English in your house?

MP: And I spoke French too, sometimes, but they didn't know what I was saying. So I ended up—just English.

59:58

EDO: Now your husband, did he—?

MP: Roland, he didn't—he spoke very, very little and whatever he spoke was what he learned from his grandfather. Cause the grandfather lived with them for a little while.

1:00:10

EDO: So he only spoke English, you're saying?

MP: Yes, he spoke English. But he did a little bit of French that he learned from his grandfather when the grandfather moved in with them, which was—I'm whistling here—do you hear me?

AL: You're getting hoarse.

EDO: I'm making you talk a lot.

MP: No. But anyway, he could speak just as good as me. I spoke French to him—oh yeah! (laughter)

1:00:37

EDO: Did he grow up in the Point? Your husband grew up in the Point?

MP: No.

1:00:04

EDO: He grew up in South Salem somewhere?

MP: He was in—yeah, he was off of Lafayette Street, but not the Point. The Point is Congress Street and the beginning streets.

EDO: Ward to Leavitt, sort of. Yeah?

MP: Yeah.

1:00:57

EDO: That area. And we've also heard there was Ste. Therese's Chapel.

MP: Yes.

AL: I loved that place.

1:01:02

EDO: Where?

MP: That was on Summit Avenue.

AL: I would take you and show you.

MP: Summit Avenue. It was on Summit Avenue and it was right off of the Lafayette and you—

AL: A little ways back from Lafayette.

MP: It was on Summit, see. But you could get to it. They had that opening part there

AL: Yes, it was a parking lot.

MP: That they opened so that the people could go through there.

1:01:26

EDO: Is the building still there?

AL: Yes, I can show you.

EDO: Is it—?

MP: I don't know what's in there.

AL: I don't know what the heck is in there now.

MP: I have no idea.

EDO: But it was on Summit.

AL: Cause I went there every Sunday cause I grew up on Willow, after we moved from Castle Hill.

EDO: Okay. So these were—And it was a chapel associated with St. Joseph's?

AL: Yes. Yes, and it was cozier.

MP: It made it easier for the older folks to go to church there than to walk.

AL: It was more or less because the parish was so large, you know, the ones in that area—we used to go to there. And they had the midnight mass there too, and everything just like the big church.

1:02:07

EDO: So the last question—maybe there's two more questions I want to ask, which is—Well, I would like to ask a little bit more about your work. So you finished grammar school. You went to Ste. Chretienne's for one year. You went St. Joseph's for one year—where you must have had some English there because—

MP: Well, I worked in the leather factory for four years.

EDO: So tell me about that. You worked in the leather factory.

MP: Well, my father was a **middle wright** at the AC Lawrence Leather, the big—

1:02:37

EDO: And where was that?

MP: In Peabody.

EDO: Oh, in Peabody. Okay.

MP: And so he got my sister a job. She went in to be interviewed and she didn't like it. (laughs) So she didn't stay. She came right back home. She didn't want to work there. Well, of course, when you smell the leather factory, nobody wants to work there. So when I was eighteen—I had to be eighteen—to go in the factory. But from fifteen to eighteen, I took care of Florence's children. She paid me five dollars a week.

EDO: So let me just ask—so from fifteen to eighteen, in the afternoons and evenings?

MP: Yes. Not evening. No, no.

1:03:21

EDO: And whose children were you taking care of?

MP: The hairdresser.

EDO: Oh, okay—at her home?

MP: Yeah.

1:03:27

EDO: And was she French? They weren't Franco-American?

MP: She was French. Yeah. Caron. She was a Caron. But he was not.

AL: He was Irish. Hynes. Frank Hynes.

MP: And I used to say to myself when he'd laugh at me like that, I'd say, "One of these days, I'm gonna fix you good." (laughs) But I never did.

1:03:51

EDO: So you cared for her children and you did some housekeeping? And did you get to keep that money?

MP: No, no. I gave that to my mother. And when she had her second baby, she gave me a fifty-cent raise. So I made five dollars and fifty cents a week. I gave my mother all my money. I worked four years in the leather factory and she got every cent. That's why I went to work. And it was after that I had—One time, there, I think—I don't know if I was married, I guess. I went to the employment office for jobs, not the unemployment, the employment.

AL: Right, we had two.

MP: Fill out my applications and everything and the woman says to me, "You worked in the leather factory? What were you doing in the leather factory?" Meaning, I could have done much better than in the leather factory. But my father worked there so he was able to get us a job.

1:04:58

EDO: And what did you do there?

MP: I was—I cut shammy. I started cutting shammy. Then I went into the bigger stuff. Some of these skins were as big as this table. You'd take them off of the horse (gestures) and you'd swing it up there.

AL: She was strong.

MP: Then you'd bring it down and you started to put the seasoning on it. (gestures) You get doing the—and pushing it up and put some more on.

1:05:24

EDO: I'm imagining there weren't that many young women working there?

MP: Oh yes there was. There were women.

EDO: All women?

MP: No, no. A lot of men but there was quite a few women, oh yeah.

1:05:36

EDO: Married women, unmarried women?

MP: Unmarried and married. I didn't work after I was married.

1:05:40

EDO: Right. So you worked there from eighteen till you were twenty-two or twenty-three?

MP: Yeah. I was twenty-two when I got married.

1:05:50

EDO: And then when you were married, you were at home doing lots of work?

MP: Oh yeah. Roland was still in the service. He was still in the service. We stayed with my mother for a year and a half. Then we looked for a place. My mother's people had been there a long time. There's no way—people were telling people to move out, to put their own children—See, not right. I didn't think it was right, and I didn't want my mother to do that. My god, my (inaudible, someone's name) had been there for eighteen years.

AL: Oh, out of the apartments.

MP: From the two-decker.

1:06:27

EDO: From the two-decker. So you stayed—she was still living in the cottage? So you stayed with—and then you bought this home?

MP: No, we went from there, we lived five years on Loring Avenue, and then we went to Hancock. We were supposed to be heated in that place but we never—we were cold every winter. The first winter we were there with Jean-Marie, she ended up with pneumonia. It was terrible!

AL: And the owner lived there.

MP: We were paying big money. My mother's tenements were five dollars, and she only charged four for the upstairs cause they had to climb the stairs. And we were paying thirteen on Loring Avenue. A week! My mother's was only five dollars. But anyway, we went on Hancock and we paid eleven on the third floor! (laughs) And I said to Roland, I says, "Honey, we will die here. I'm not moving from here unless we buy our own place. And when we're ready to buy our own place. That's it. I'm not moving again." Damn near killed the one of the movers—moving the—had a big bengal stove. Bengal. Four and four. Four eating, and four gas. Big stove. Well, we bought that to heat ourselves.

AL: Yeah.

MP: Because we were supposed to be heated. That's why we paid so much money. But anyways, this is all learned with experience, see. But then on Hancock we moved. We had to get out of there too because Roland sometimes was working away from home and they had a coal furnace, and I'm on the third floor (points up), and I have to run the coal furnace, and he was forever coming upstairs and knocking at the door. You got too much steam going, your gonna blow up your furnace! Well, what am I gonna do? I got to push it (gestures) to go to the third floor!

EDO: Oh, goodness.

MP: Yeah, so I ended up getting sick. I ended up having to have electric shock treatments in my back.

AL: You thought you were—infallible?

MP: Well, no! But you have to do what you have to do!

1:08:53

EDO: And you had your children—were small?

MP: And I had my—yes! As matter of fact, Judy was born on—

AL: Was she born on Hancock?

MP: On Hancock. She was—she was a year—She was supposed to have her first birthday here cause we had bought in October, but the people that were selling—he was being transferred—he was at GE. He worked at GE. He was being transferred, and they were not moving until—so they stayed for a month. You know, we rented them for a month. So Judy had to have her first birthday on Hancock Street. She was walking. You should have seen her. She had a pretty dress her daddy had bought her.

1:09:41

EDO: So then what year did you move here?

MP: We bought here.

EDO: What year was that—that you moved here?

MP: Oh, god. I don't know. It's fifty-five years or more. Fifty-five years or more. Whatever—whatever the date. I'll have to check on these papers I got. You know, (points to head) this here is eighty-eight years old.

EDO: No, it's fine. Just generally. In the 1950s? In the 1950s?

MP: Oh yeah.

EDO: It's a beautiful home. Um, I think that we've talked (recording skips)—that I don't want to drag this out much more. You've told me so many wonderful things and I'm wondering if there's anything that you wanted to talk about that we haven't talked about. One of the things that we didn't really talk about a lot was the church, and the role of the church in your life, and whether you—

MP: Well, the church—I have been singing in Ste. Anne's since I was in the fifth grade.

EDO: Oh!

MP: I'm the choir—still. Still! (AL laughs) And if you'd have been here to listen to our choir, and there's not too many left in the choir now—

AL: No.

MP: But the choir, the bell ringers—we have bell ringers—my Judy rings bells. And instruments! You could never have heard better in the cathedral. I mean, we raise the roof. People were crying. (whispering) People were crying.

AL: That was last Sunday.

MP: No, no. Not last Sunday, the Sunday before.

AL: Oh, it was—(recording skips)

EDO: So you've been singing in the choir since you were—

MP: In the fifth grade. Well, I couldn't wait to be in the fifth grade. I couldn't wait! I was in the fourth grade. I said, "Next year, I'm gonna be in the choir, and I'm gonna sing in church." (recording stops)

1:14:42

MP: Well, my brother got scarlet fever. And that was six weeks of the house being closed.

AP: The big quarantine.

MP: (gestures) And the big tag on the door, quarantine. So, my (recording skips) stayed with my grandmother because she was in a higher grade and I stayed home. And then he was almost better when the other one came down with it. So there was twelve weeks that I couldn't go to school. So naturally, I had to stay back. My mother went to the nuns and asked that they would tutor me during the summertime, after the house was open, but they didn't do that. So, I had to stay in the fourth grade another year. (laughs) It took me another year to go before I could sing.

1:15:38

EDO: So you sang with the choir, and I guess the church played a big part in your life?

MP: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. I was just a little girl when I used to go with the sister that had the— **Sister Sandrine**. She had the kindergarten. I worked with her in the sacristy. (gestures) I removed all of her little metal things out of the bow ribs and put a new (inaudible) and then put them back in. We had the cases, you know, the boxes that the bows came in. So I'd go with the empty boxes, and fill them with the empties, and bring them in back in the sacristy. That was my job on Saturday mornings. (AL laughs) And then when I got bigger, my mother would call the ladies at the rectory and she'd say, "I'm sending Mickey over there. Now you give her something to do. Keep her busy. She can help you." During the spring cleaning and the fall cleaning. So I did that. And one time Father Borgeaut—it was father Borgeaut—he says—and he took care of the scouts, you know.

AL: The boy scouts.

MP: And he had made a movie of the scout camp where the boys were, the things they did. So I'm up there doing housework and he says to me, "You want to see the movie?" (AL laughs) I was in grammar school, you know (laughs). Yeah! So, he said, "Close the door. Put the shades down and set the movie" and he's got the—

EDO: Screen.

MP: Screen, there. So we're watching the movie of the scouts at the scout camp.

AL: At the scout camp!

MP: Knock on the door, and it's Father Dion. Ho, ho, behind closed doors! (recording skips) He was laughing like a son of a gun because of what he did. He knew he scared the hell out of me! Oh! (puts hand over mouth) He knew he scared me a lot! (laughter)

AL: (coughs)

EDO: All these years later you remember. (AL laughs)

AL: You gotta tell em' about the hall, (inaudible). Was the hall there at Ste. Anne's? The old hall now, where we went to the movies every Saturday?

EDO: Oh yes, the old hall. That's where they had the—

AL: Like the movie theatres. We had our own movie theatre, see.

MP: They had second and third grade and there was long, long, benches, and the long table, like. That was the school. That was—yeah. And the first school, the very first school, was on Story Street where the Rectory is. In back there, there was a little shed, like. And that was the first school in Castle Hill.

AL: On Story Street, is there a house there now?

MP: Well, yeah, it was where Brother Morin lived, there.

AL: Oh, okay.

MP: In her yard, there was a little shed—

AL: Type. And that was the first school.

1:19:50

EDO: Now, was that still there when you were a small girl, or was that gone?

AL: Well, they kept the shed.

EDO: Yeah, but it wasn't—

MP: I think, but it was not. No, no. Kindergarten was in back of the—Well, for a while they had—

AL: Go get the picture of the church and show her.

MP: Where the club was, down below. (gets up)

AL: Yeah. (nods)

EDO: Shall I bring these in here?

MP: You can, if you want to.

EDO: And you can show them to me?

MP: You can, if you want to.

EDO: Why don't I hand them over there and you talk about them, and I can put them on camera? That would be easier. (hands photograph to AL)

AL: (takes photograph)

MP: That one there, I think is the—I'll take this one. That one there is—Judy made that up for the anniversary. That's the fire.

EDO: Oh, goodness, right.

MP: That's the fire. That's what was left of our church. And it was on our anniversary, too.

EDO: Oh, I know.

MP: Ugh.

EDO: I remember hearing that. Here, let me take that one. I'll bring it back to you if you want to sit.

MP: If you want to look at that—

EDO: Yeah, I do. You know what? If you go sit back down, we'll put it over there and then you can tell me.

MP: This one here is the Ste. Anne's—the fiftieth of the old church.

EDO: Right. All right. Let me put that over there, as well. (places photograph in front of AL)

MP: It probably won't look good there. Take that thing. Give me that thing.

AL: (holds photograph up)

EDO: Take care of this.

MP: I've got coffee here.

EDO: Oh (laughs). Unfortunately—so let's—this one here. I can't get that one. So this—
(recording skips)—you want that picture that we've got right there?

MP: The fiftieth anniversary of the old church, Ste. Anne's. (camera zooms into picture) The
original Ste. Anne's, yeah. Can you see it?

EDO: I can.

MP: The people are so small.

EDO: And then the other one—

AL: (takes down photograph)

MP: The other one is the—this here is the old church—(hands picture to AL)

AL: (holds picture up)

1:21:53

EDO: And that's the church that you remember?

MP: Yes! That's the church I was baptized in—

AL: That's the one that I went to—

MP: Married, first communion, confirmation—

1:22:03

EDO: And the small building in the back, that's the building your saying is—?

MP: That was the school. This, right here (points). There was two classes in there.

EDO: Okay.

MP: Yeah.

EDO: That's wonderful. And you know what? Do you watch (recording skips) for me? If you
hold that (AL takes down picture), and tell me who those people are, then that can be
on—

MP: Well, let's see em'. I got another one? No (holds up photograp). Oh, golly—Well, this is my father's family with their wives and some of the children. In the middle is my grandparents (points). My grandmother is right here (points). My grandfather is right here (points). My father is right here (points). And next to him, on both sides, are his brothers. Brothers, and then a few brother-in-laws.

AL: Point where you are.

MP: My brother (points)—my younger brother's right here.

AL: Napoleon.

MP: I'm right here (points) and my sister's hiding over here (points).

EDO: That's wonderful.

MP: And the others are my cousins.

1:23:23

EDO: Can you tell me once more, the story about the hair? The marcel?

AL: Oh yeah, the curls.

MP: All the girls, my mother included—this is my mother here (points). They all, even my grandmother, they all have the marcel. Done with the iron. I watched her do that but I would never tried it because I was so afraid because, you know, the iron is in—on those little stoves, those little gas things there. And I said, my god, I'd probably be burned. And I was not sure enough of myself to do the marcel. So I gave her the finger wave. (laughs) I gave her the finger wave!

EDO: Well, thank you so very much.

AL: I'm gonna have to take this stuff, (inaudible) and I'll copy it.

MP: And these are my grandparents here.

EDO: You know what? Why don't you do that. Why don't we do the same thing with that one.

AL: Okay, hold that one up for her.

EDO: It's just would be wonderful to have it.

MP: Well, these—

AL: Show her the first one, though.

MP: The boys and the girls, here.

AL: Yeah, you gotta show one at a time.

MP: (holds up photograph) My mother's family.

EDO: And your mother is? On the end?

MP: My mother's right here. (points)

EDO: And the others, do you know their names?

MP: Yup.

AL: This is Marie Corneau. I mean, Marie Gagnon. It's her mother. (laughter)

MP: (points) This is my aunt Blanche, my aunt Irene (points), my aunt Emilia (points), my aunt Alice (points).

EDO: And your grandparents.

MP: And my grandparents. My grandmother, Adele (points). She was Adele. And my grandfather, Aramice (points).

AL: Aramice? Was his first name! (laughs) And the brothers on the next one.

MP: (holds up photograph) It's too bad it's paper and it's not very clear, but this is Henry (points) and this is Rene (points). This is Wilfred (points). There's Richard (points).

AL: All Gagnons.

MP: My mother's family.

EDO: Well, thank you so very much for your time and your stories.

AL: We had fun! She loves to tell stories.

EDO: And, Alice, we'll find a time to—

AL: That's okay.

EDO: To meet again and get more of your story. I think it would be easier for us to do that. I think—that will be an easier scheduling.

AL: (reading papers) History of Salem, what's this?

MP: This is the history—

AL: Oh, Essex Institute. Historic Collection Volume Thirty-one? What is that stuff?