

**INTERVIEWEE: Paul Bossé**  
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PB: Good Morning. My name is Paul Joseph Bossé. *En français, on dit Paul Joseph Bossé.*

EDO: *En français, merci.* So, thank you so much for being here with us today. We want to start off talking a bit about your family's history. So can you tell us a bit about your family and its history, as much as you know?

PB: Okay, [clears throat] I was born in Peabody, Massachusetts in 1947. Both of my parents were born in the United States. My father was born in Salem, Massachusetts in 1912. My mother was born in Nashua, New Hampshire in 1914 and there's a specific reason why that occurred. In 1914, in the month of June of that year, Salem experienced the Great Salem Fire, which perhaps—

EDO: Yes.

PB: The conflagration probably burned down a good 20 percent of Salem. So, my grandmother was pregnant at the time and because their home was burned on Palmer Street in South—in Ward 5 of Salem—they had to move to New Hampshire. And she had a sister who was residing there in Nashua, New Hampshire. So my mother was born October 3, 1914 and years later when she was coming to France with me and my father for a vacation, we had to obtain her passport. So before we got the passport we had to go get the birth certificate at La Paroisse de Saint-Louis de Gonzague in Nashua, New Hampshire.

EDO: Saint Louis de Gonzague.

PB: My first, and I think, the last time I was there. But it was interesting.

2:02

EDO: Oh my goodness. So they were both born—your parents were both born here in the United States?

PB: Correct.

2:07

EDO: What about their parents?

PB: Okay, my paternal grandparents—my father's father, **Arsène Bossé**, was born in Canada, *Province du Québec*. He was born in a little town called **Sainte-Hélène**. He was born in 1871 and he came down to Salem in 1890. He was nineteen years old. Now, his wife, my grandmother, **Georgiana Beaulieu**, was born in Salem, Mass and she was born in 1879.

2:51

EDO: Now why did your—paternal grandfather, right?

PB: Right.

2:56

EDO: Why did he come to Salem?

PB: Okay, he—I mean, well, that's a little town right next to Sainte-Hélène. Sainte-Helena is a farmland and—now this is post, you know, civil war in our history but in French Canada, in Québec, there were a lot of hardships going on with agricultural programs and so forth. So at nineteen years old—one of nine children, he was—he came down over the border into Maine and eventually came down to Salem, Mass, arriving in Salem in 1890. I think it was just to seek employment. He was not educated, you know. He was a farmer more or less by trade. But when he came to Salem, eventually he learned the trade of masonry. So years later, my dad told me that one of the—Nah, nah—No, not just he, but a lot of people helped build the famous Eleanor Sears Mansion in Beverly Farms.

EDO: Yes.

PB: You see the stone wall, its the rock iron fence, and etcetera. Now, he was one of several men that worked on that but that's one of the projects. Yeah.

4:13

EDO: And he ended up in Salem because there was a French-speaking community here? Or he ended—you don't—

PB: You know, that could be. I know he came down into Maine. He may have stayed in—My father had several first cousins who resided in Maine: Biddeford, Maine, Saco, Maine, Auburn, Maine and there's another one—So he may have come down into Maine for a while and then, yeah, maybe through word of mouth he heard there's a Franco-American community in Salem, Mass. So he—you know. He was single, nineteen years old, twenty years old, you know, whatever. Yeah.

4:58

EDO: And then he met his wife here?

PB: Right. Now he met his wife, my grandmother, who was born in Salem but she was able to get employment at St. Joseph's church. The home where the priests lived was called the *presbytère*. It's the rectory, and she was a—pretty much a woman who did the cleaning, the washing, and some cooking, you know. And while she was there—for maybe eight, nine, ten years of her more or less adolescent life—at fourteen, fifteen whatever years old--she learned the French language, at least spoken by priests who had been educated, many of them, in Québec. So she was pretty well versed in French, and even knew some of the written—some of the language, the grammar, the syntax of, you know, verbs and—

5:51

EDO: But she, herself was never—

PB: No, neither of them had gone to school.

5:55

EDO: But she was not French-Canadian?

PB: Yes, oh yeah. Her maiden name was **Beaulieu** but she was born in the United States.

6:06

EDO: And then your mother's parents?

PB: Right. Now my grandfather, his name—Right, my maternal grandparents—his name was *Jean Baptiste Banville*, John the Baptist. *Jean Baptiste de la patron de la Provence de Québec*.

EB: Ouais.

PB: *Pour les—and then Saint Anne pour les femmes*. But anyways—so he was a exterior house painter by trade. But he was not—he hadn't gone to school either, okay? And he met grandmother, **Alphonsine LeBrun**, who was born in Canada in a little town called Sainte-Flavie, which is next to a little bigger town called Mont Joli, which is on the St. Lawrence, *le fleuve Saint-Laurent*. I was able to visit that for the first time in '59 and then later in 1970. And, uh, that's really nice section of Canada, the St. Lawrence River. And I recall the first time in '59 when my grandmother's sister, Adele—her husband would go fishing for salmon, and I just happened to go with him that morning, that one time. And, you know, they brought home several nice size salmon and he filleted it. And then obviously the preparation was exquisite, you know?

EDO: I'm sure it was.

PB: French-Canadian cuisine.

EDO: Cuisine.

PB: Yeah.

7:46

EDO: So you were able visit—[you] clearly have visited Canada?

PB: And I also forgot to mention, but I did visit my paternal grandfathers' home in Sainte-Hélène. Yeah, 1970.

8:00

EDO: And there were still relatives?

PB: Well, they all had children and they would have been, like, first cousins to my father? And then, of course, those first cousins had children. I had met a few of them, but I'll be honest with you, since 1975 its—you know, I really hadn't seen them.

8:23

EDO: It was definitely something you did but did you decide to go to Canada on your own choosing?

PB: No, in 1959 I was only twelve so my parents—we went up there together. And then in 70 I went with them. And then, the last trip—I've only been there three times—the last one was in 75 when my mother took her last aunt, my grandmother's sister—My grandmother was one of ten and her youngest sister, Blanche—So we took *le voyage*. *On faisait les promenades de la Gaspésie*.

EDO: Ah, *très, très bon*.

PB: Yeah.

9:04

EDO: And then, Alphonsine, *oui*?

PB: Alphonsine, right.

9:08

EDO: Her husband, Jean-Baptiste?

PB: Right, Jean-Baptiste.

9:10

EDO: He arrived in Salem also?

PB: He—[clears throat]—I believe he was born in Sanford, Maine, but then came down to Salem. And my grandmother came down to Salem, Mass, I'd say—I mean, she did come down to Salem maybe via New Hampshire to Salem. None of these were, like, direct destinations. You know, they probably—Like my father's side, several of the family resided in Maine, in Biddeford, in Saco, and Auburn. There's another—Mumford—that I said. Yeah, something like that, yeah.

9:53

EDO: So other places with—

PB: Right.

EDO: Some French-Canadian communities.

PB: Exactly, and my grandmother probably came down from Saint-Flavie over to maybe Nashua but maybe Manchester. I don't know quite exactly.

EDO: Wonderful. That's phenomenal family history. It's just great to get all those details. It's fantastic.

PB: Thank you.

10:15

EDO: And then your parents met here?

PB: Yes, both, both were living in what we call—they call it "The Point" today but it's actually the first inhabitable region when the English came here. Well, in 1626, Salem—that's their charter year as a town. And then, that's where they lived on Congress and Palmer Street and—

10:50

EDO: They lived there--One lived on Congress; one lived on Palmer?

PB: My mother was on Palmer and my grandfather—who had come here at nineteen years old—eventually after working many years was able to buy some of those large apartment buildings.

EDO: Uh-huh.

PB: And then the fire came in 14, destroyed those buildings. And they did have insurance but not enough to cover the total loss so then he eventually built a little house on Salem Street. Yeah, which I used to visit after school because—You see St. Joseph's Church on Lafayette Street, the

white building? That one that you see presently was built in the late forties, maybe opened up like around '51.

EDO: Okay.

PB: But that was their parish. And so that's—you know.

11:54

EDO: Right. Was that the parish—had there been another building there?

PB: There was and I don't—

11:59

EDO: It was St. Joseph's but just a different structure?

PB: Right, you're right. The parish was there but a different edifice, a different church building. Right.

12:08

EDO: Okay. So your father is now living on Salem Street?

PB: Right.

12:13

EDO: And your mother is living on?

PB: Palmer Street

EDO: Palmer Street.

PB: Yeah.

12:16

EDO: They rebuilt after there—correct me if I'm wrong—

PB: Right, after the f[ire?] - Right. That house was probably built, maybe in the late—maybe early twenties or something or maybe even prior.

EDO: Okay.

PB: Yeah.

12:33

EDO: Okay, excellent. So then, they met how?

PB: Well, you know, through the parish more or less and through the neighborhood. And then they dated before the war, that is, the Second World War. But in '42 to '45 my father was in what they called the Seabees. That's the construction battalion. It's part of the United States Navy. First you have the marines, which land on the islands. He was stationed in the Pacific theatre. And then after the marines have taken over the island, then the construction battalion crew comes up. And they put up, you know, makeshift barracks and buildings and they'll pave roads or not pave roads but they'll clear the roads, yeah. So he was in the military from '42 to April '45 and he was discharged and then he came to see to my mother and he says, "We're getting married April 28<sup>th</sup>." And then they got married April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1945.

EDO: Wow, how fantastic. Wow, and then—

PB: But they had known then—they had known each other prior to the war. And [clears throat] yeah, my dad was a quite interesting person who never went—Well, he did go to St. Joseph's Academy, which was a two-year school then. And so he was one of four members of that original class. I think it's 1928, 1929. There were only four members, and it was really just a two-year school.

EDO: Effectively the first two years of high school.

PB: Exactly, first two years of high school. Four members, one of the members—one of his classmates eventually became the proprietor of a jewelry shop in Salem called Bernard's. Bernard's Jewelers—it's a mister Tetrault, Raymond Tetrault.

EBO: Tetrault.

PB: Yeah, and his sons presently run that Bernard's Jewelers. I think they were partners and then one of the partners passed away then Mr. Tetrault, eventually. But it's been around for years. It's right around Essex Street. So he—in other words—the sons who are there presently, their dad and my father were two year high-school mates. Now, there's another famous person in that class. His name was Andre Ouellette and he became a priest and then he went over to Canada to become a permanent priest in Canada, who eventually became bishop. And then he became bishop of Rivière du Loup, Rivière du Loup—Andre Ouellette. And then there was my father—so that's—

15:40

EDO: Can I ask you a quick question? Was he—so he clearly was not a Diocesan priest?

PB: He was born in the States but then you could, I guess, give your service to Canada? I guess? I don't know the exact—how it works out. I know in the Archdiocese of Boston, some priests

have joined organizations, like, in Peru. You know, the Society of St. James, things of that nature.

EDO: Yeah. Yeah.

PB: And I don't know but he eventually stayed in Canada. In Québec, and it's Rivière-du-Loup, yeah.

16:13

EDO: Are his relatives still around here?

PB: Well, [sighs] I really—my dad probably would have known but this going back, you know like, 1920, 1930.

EDO: Right. Right, right, right.

PB: So that's—

EDO: But this is wonderful--.

PB: Yeah.

EDO: Your detail is phenomenal.

PB: Well, I only know this through my father but I didn't ask many questions for the details but—

EDO: But you apparently asked quite a few, so I mean—

PB: I'm only repeating what I heard him say to other people that he met or talked with or relatives, yeah. And there was another man and I think his name was Mr. Roy—so there were four members of that graduating class.

EDO: Huh [okay].

PB: But as like I said, it was a two-year school. Then, maybe four or five years later, then it became a four-year school.

EDO: Okay.

PB: Yeah.

EDO: Okay.

PB: *L'Académie de Saint-Joseph.*

17:02

EDO: Saint-Joseph. And it was only for boys at that point?

PB: Maybe I—Yeah, I think—

EDO: Okay.

PB: But there are articles, I think, that you could find that would have those—

17:15

EDO: I'm sure we can. So then, you were born. Are you the oldest?

PB: Yes I am. Oldest of three.

EDO: Okay

PB: Yeah.

17:21

EDO: And you grew up on Salem Street?

PB: Actually, when my parents were married on April 28th 1945, they were staying—They bought a house in Lynn, Mass for a couple years. My father was a carpenter now and what happened is, prior to the war, he was working for the First National Stores, food stores.

EDO: Oh yeah.

PB: Um, [clears throat] and that was fine, you know. The war came so he went into the military and they put him in the Seabees. That's what they assigned him. And while there, he learned some skills with building. So after the war he went back to First National for a while and then around '46, '47 decided to go into carpentry. So he built his own house in 49. Yep, here in Salem.

18:26

EDO: And so where was that?

PB: That's in Salem, here on Moffat Road.

EDO: Moffat.

PB: Yeah, where I presently reside. Yeah.

18:35

EDO: And can you talk a bit about your childhood, what it was like living in Salem, your experiences growing up here?

PB: Well, I vague—I guess everything I can recall pretty much is when you are about five and a half years old and you start school. I mean, I may—If I think hard enough maybe I can remember things but I definitely remember that first day going to school *l'entrée de l'école* and my mother saying to me in French, you know, "*Faites votre possible à l'école. Etudiez fort. C'est très important.*" She had never—I think she only went to 6th grades. So it's St. Joseph Parish but now this is like 1952, 53, post-war, and so they couldn't accomm—The present school on Harbor Street—Oh, excuse me, on Dow Street, Lafayette, couldn't accommodate the large population at that time. So they had a little chapel called St. Theresa's Chapel in Salem, and right across the street was this old building that they used as a makeshift school for the kindergarten and first grades only. Just two first grades and the kindergarten. And I would say, in kindergarten, in 1953 or whatever it was that year, there may have been forty, forty-five, you know, students. And I'm going to say maybe half could speak French. At least a third anyways could speak and the other remainder didn't really. Because by now you had families that were marrying other ethnic groups, you know. But in our family, you know, both my parents spoke French and my grandparents. And when you learn a language at a very young age like, actually, myself—I think I was speaking the first—I think I spoke French before I spoke English—I think at two years old, whatever. Because I remember when I was, like, four or five, my English was not the greatest but you go to school and you learn, and-- So that would have been kindergarten and then first grade at St. Theresa's. And then from there you would go over to now the main school, St. Joseph's, right near the church. And the class that I started out with at St. Theresa's, K and first, we, more or less, as a group, stayed together for eight years. Yeah, we had some amendments, some deletions and additions, but pretty much the basic twenty or so of us stayed together. So, we, to this day, you know, are really closely knit. Oh, and I might add that of the members of the Richelieu Club—that brought me into the Richelieu Club—Georgette was in that class, yeah.

22:04

EDO: Is there a particular memory you have of your time at St. Joseph's? I mean, is there a story or something that stands out?

PB: They were good times. They were good times.

EDO: You brought some lovely things here as well.

PB: Yes, yeah—[clears throat]— Well, as a--let me just say this in passing, that sometimes later on in life when I was working in industry I met people with, like, similar backgrounds. They were from Lowell and they had pretty much the same basic, you know, early experience with French-Canadian schools that were supported by the church and the religious staff. And one of the chemists was telling me, he says, "To get that education"—and that in the 50s—that we had with the—Because you had English and history and math. Science was all right, you know, but

just pretty much descriptive. But then the other secondary subjects like, foreign language and music and art—It was a classical based education, and he said, “People today pay a lot of money, you know, for that type of education.”

EDO: And in a bilingual setting.

PB: In a bilingual setting, exactly, right, where the English was say from 8:00 in the morning till noon time, and then from noon—including recess till 3:00—was when the minor or the secondary subjects which were taught in French.

23:43

EDO: And it was the same pattern each day or?

PB: Same pattern each day, as far as I can recollect. I mean, [clears throat] it would be like, say 8:00 to 9:00—what—whether something like that would be, say, English. So you read and spelling and diagramming sentences and learning the English language skills, okay? And then maybe an hour later was mathematics, were you learn the basic math. And then you had, eventually, history and geography, the social studies, and then science, and then recess, lunch. And then you had the minor subjects, which were the French—which were, since it was Roman Catholic school, religion, and in those days we had what was referred to as *le catéchisme*, the catechism. And here’s my catechism that dates back at least—this is at least 1957, 58, 59 and its all in French. And we learned our religion—you had to recite and learn these questions by memory.

24:48

EDO: Is there any that you—

PB: In French.

25:00

EDO: Are there any that you remember—is there one that you remember from those days?

PB: Well, you know, “*Quels sont les sept sacrements?*” ou “*Quels sont les Dix Commandements de Dieu?*” Or, you know, basically it was your faith in learning it in the French language. And years later, when in high school, when I had to—I remember once in high school telling the theology teacher. I said, “You may not believe this but I do know these prayers, but I don’t know them in English.” And she says “No problem.” She says, “That’s fine” [laughs]. But after a while you pick it up much easier. Yeah so, like you mean, “*Quels sont les Dix Commandements de Dieu?*”, *les sept sacrements*, things like that. Well, actually there were a lot of good, wonderful experiences—It’s just that, you know—I do remember this, because years later it dawned on me. When I was attending St. Joseph’s Grammar school, and I’ll say from—at the main building—say, from ‘54-‘61—we may have had at least seven hundred students in that building. Now it could be six hundred, it could be six hundred and fifty, but it was up there. And

I remember the first Friday of the month we would go over to the church, which is right across from the schoolyard. And let's say its wintertime, like February. Let's say we're going for, whatever—And of course, you know, naturally you got six hundred, seven hundred bodies with their boots and their coats, and they walk into church and it's that noise. It's not intentional. It's just a lot of mass and the sound, right? And now, then, all of a sudden, *la soeur, la principale* — Ah, she takes these wooden—

EDO: Clickers.

PB: Cassettes, like, whatever. [Snapping] And after that first one, whatever that decibel reading was, it's down to, at least, pretty low. And then the second time, by the second time, this is what you hear. You may hear a few kids because they have colds [coughs]. They're just coughin', you know. [Snapping] And when the third one went, it was complete silence [laughs] because I've gone to a few other places today and you hear, you know—You see about maybe a hundred students, you know? Things have changed [laughter]. I was always impressed by the way they could really—

27:43

EDO: Was there any—did your parents have—what was the decision to send you to St. Joseph's? Was there a decision?

PB: Well—

27:52

EDO: Did they make that calculated choice—send you there or send you to the public school?

PB: Okay, obviously public schools would have been a great alternative. Nothing wrong but in that time, in that setting, and where the Catholic Church was very—I wanna say this. This is the truth. If it weren't for the Catholic Church, say, in Salem—we had about five or six Catholic grammar schools—if they didn't exist then that population of students would had to assimilate or get incorporated into the public schools and that would have increased taxes. So the church, by providing an alternative form of education, helped to stabilize the tax base. But it was just a interest—it was—I know it was kind of a homogeneous setting in a sense because because most of my classmates were a good portion French-Canadian based and Roman Catholic and so—Years later, in college, in life, you say--You know, you just adapt and accommodate to the circumstances when they arise.

29:04

EDO: So most of your friends, your school friends, were also neighborhood friends. Is that true?

PB: Correct. Yes, that's true. Right. Yeah.

29:11

EDO: So can you talk a little bit about what you did, when you weren't in school?

PB: Well, I—

EDO: As a child and a teenager—

PB: Okay, a very good friend of mine from kindergarten to this day is the present director of the Salem Public Schools, the buildings. He's in charge of all maintenance and, you know, building superintendent—I guess you might call him. All the schools in Salem: high school, middle schools, and elementary schools. He's in charge of that support staff and he was a good hockey player. Now, they couldn't understand why I didn't like hockey [laughs]. I says, “I just don't know how to skate and I don't know the rules.” So he told my mother, he says, “If you come.” He said, “I'll go with your mother and we'll go to the store and I'll show you what skates to get” and he taught me how to ice-skate, you know? I'm not very good at it but at least—

30:11

EDO: And his name is?

PB: His name is Mr. Paul *L'Heureux* [said in French], Paul L'Heureux [said in English]. I've known him since kindergarten. And many times we'll just meet and reminisce a few things and, you know. I mean, when *la sœur*, when the sister said, “You do not write on the desk.” You didn't write on the desk [laughs].

EDO: [laughs]

PB: And if you did [laughs].

EDO: You didn't do it again [laughs].

PB: Yeah.

30:50

EDO: And he lived just in the neighborhood there with you?

PB: Yes, yeah, in Salem. Yeah, right around this Salem State University ward, yeah.

35:59

EDO: So we've heard from other people that the Palmer Street playground was quite a place that particularly the young boys played and—

PB: Okay—

EDO: Baseball, we've heard—is that a place that has any significance to you?

PB: Okay, right. Palmer Cove playground, right? They had the ball field there, right? Abutting the Yacht Club, PCYC Yacht Club. Yeah, kids in that section would play there. I, myself, was more in the city. Where I was located—where I lived—was more the Forest River and Pickman Parks. But, you know, St. Joseph's School was on Dow Street and my grandmother, paternal grandmother, was living on Salem Street. And after my grandfather died in '55—From '55 to '60, I would go to my grandmother's house after school. And that was no sacrifice. *Ce n'était pas un sacrifice*. I would walk in there and waiting for me on the table was—It could be a chocolate cake. It could be my favorite, *la poutine au pain avec la crème fouettée*. In France they say, *la crème chantilly* but its whipped cream. No, no, sacrifice, believe me [laughs].

32:28

EB: Where exactly was Moffat road? I've been trying to find that.

PB: It's right over here. It's in Ward 7, Precinct 2. It's right before you get to South Campus.

32:37

EDO: Oh, okay. So, your parents—your father chose to build a home there.

PB: Correct.

32:46

EDO: As opposed to—were there other Franco-American or French-Canadian families there?

PB: Well—

32:52

EDO: Is it [at] Saint Anne's Parish or—

PB: I think there was one or two, yeah.

32:57

EDO: So did you walk to St. Joseph's?

PB: Well here's the story. There was bus services. It was—what'd they call it? There was no MBTA. It was called Eastern Mass Bus Service. And since we were beyond—we qualified—they would pick us up. We had a bus ticket that you had to purchase. And they would, you know, yeah.

33:24

EDO: So your neighborhood that you grew up in had some French-Canadian families but not many?

PB: Just a few. Just a few, yeah.

33:32

EDO: So, okay. And your family were members of St. Joseph's parish?

PB: Oh yes, always. Yeah.

EDO: Okay.

PB: You know, I graduated from the grammar school in '61 so I started high school in September. And then I met some good friends around '62, '63, who were going to St. Anne's. And in those days you really—depending upon where you lived—you needed to subscribe to that church. So my father, in order to—He belonged to the both parishes. He always retained St. Joseph's and then he went to St. Anne's too because my grandmother—Well, she passed away in '60, so after 1960 then we more or less stayed with Saint Anne's.

EDO: Okay.

PB: Yeah.

34:26

EDO: And within the city, was there a clear distinction between those two parishes?

PB: Um, I'm not--They were both French-Canadian based but I think it was primarily because, you know, where you were living. St. Joseph's was further this way and St. Anne's was over here by the tracks and Jefferson Avenue, like, cut the city. So it depended upon—

34:52

EDO: And did Saint Anne's have a school as well?

PB: They did. Oh yes, in the forties and fifties, you have the oldest catholic school. The oldest parish in Salem is Immaculate Conception. They've been around—actually the second oldest in the whole archdiocese after the cathedral. So I don't know if they're, like, 1820 or—And then you had St James. And then you had St. Joseph's. And then you had St. Anne's. And then you had St. John the Baptist, which was the Polish church. St. Mary's was the Italian church. And then—I always called it Salem—but people say, “No its in Peabody”—St. Thomas. It's right at the cemetery.

EDO: Right, right.

PB: But I had friends who went to St. Thomas. So you had all those parishes and you're right, they all had schools.

35:55

EDO: And St. Anne's and St. Joseph's were French-Canadian?

PB: Correct. Based, predominately.

EDO: Yeah, predominately. Right.

PB: Right, right.

EB: Okay

36:07

EDO: So, so you finished grammar school—

PB: Right, in 61.

EDO: And then—

PB: So I went to high school in Lynn, St. Mary's Boys High School in Lynn. And that's where, in the religion class, the teacher had each student, every day, lead the morning prayers. And my last name was Bossé, B, and I think I was the fourth one. And I went up to her the day before. I says, "You know." I says, "I know these prayers but I don't know how to say them English."

EDO: Right.

PB: She says, "Oh, that's all right. Say it in French. That will be okay" [laughs].

36:44

EDO: So while you were growing up in your home as well—if we can just switch back to thinking about those, those earlier years.

PB: Right.

36:50

EDO: You spoke French at home?

PB: Yes, yes. Because, see, there were four grandparents. So my mother's father died in 44, before I was born, so I really didn't know him. But the other three grandparents I did know very

well, especially the two grandmothers because—My father's father passed away in in 55. So, I'm, like, eight years old. I knew him, *pépère*, you know, and this and that. And my maternal grandmother died in '57. And so, like I said, from '55 to '60, I was always over my grandmother's house on Salem Street after school. My dad would pick us up around 5:30 after work. And my job was just to go over there and watch *mémère* and maybe go to *Monsieur Tremblay's* épicerie and get a few items, you know. They had a little grocery store there, you know. *Bleu Tremblay*—They used to give em' nicknames. I don't know why but that's just the way it is, you know? [laughs]

37:51

EDO: So to follow up on that, for a moment. Are there businesses, or locations, or establishments that you associate with the French-Canadian community, and that you associated growing up with those?

PB: Right, right.

EDO: Obviously this small grocery store.

PB: Right, that small little grocery store. There was North Shore Market, who the proprietor was the L'Heureux family. Orille L'Heureux and his father. They were a big food store in that area, Congress Street, Palmer Street, in that area. You know, there was a boat yard, a Mr. Dion Boat Yard which was—I mean, again, they were proprietors but—

EDO: Right.

PB: Their work entailed many different things. My mother's oldest sister, Eva, she and her husband ran a dry cleaning business in Salem for many years—Marquis Cleaners, yeah. And later on in high school days I worked there on Saturdays.

39:12

EDO: Did they have a particular clientele? I mean, did people who were French-Canadian or Franco-American--?

PB: No, everyone. Everyone. As a matter of fact, one of her clienteles eventually became the president of Salem State College, President Harrington. I knew her. I knew Ms. Harrington when she was maybe a principal, I think, of a grammar school. I was in high school at the time. I would just work there, you know, helping out.

EDO: And she would just kind of—

PB: Yeah.

39:52

EDO: Oh, how interesting. So, and you went to Saint—We'll stick with Salem for one second. Growing up, one of the things we've been asking people to talk about are any French-Canadian traditions in your home. Foods, food-ways, religious observances?

PB: Right.

EDO: Celebrations, rituals, anything that was particular?

PB: I mean, nothing, like, extraordinary, nothing—But yeah, I mean, religion. Roman Catholicism, you know, more or less weekly attendance at mass. The rosary which was—And then, of course, we had on occasion—Well, you know what it was—it would be, like, the month of the rosary, which would be in October, *Mois du Rosaire*. And usually, like, at St. Joseph, they would invite some priests from a religious order. And I think they were the Redemptorists from Canada, *C'était en français*. Anyways, *la retraite*, and it would be like a three day retreat. And then they'd have maybe another one in May. But then for culinary things, I know I've always enjoyed *la pâté au salmon*, salmon pie. *Pâté*, it's more or less a filling that's pureed and I have no problems with that [laughs].

EDO: [laughs]

PB: Maybe the heart does but I—And, you know, it was just pretty much traditional foods. I mean there may be something else but *la crème fouettée*. I like that one.

EDO: Ouais, ouais.

PB: With whipped cream. Bread pudding—

41:41

EDO: Bread pudding. *Tourtière*?

PB: *Tourtière*, it took me a while. I wasn't much on pork but I am now. I do like that.

41:49

EDO: So it was cooked in your home but you just didn't like it so much?

PB: I would go with the salmon pie, definitely. And my grandmother every Friday would make fish chowder.

EDO: Uh-huh.

PB: No problem [laughs].

EDO: [laughs].

42:03

EDO: And as you were growing up, what it sounds like to me—correct me if I'm wrong—was that being French-Canadian or Franco-American was a significant part of your identity and your family's identity while you were growing up?

PB: Yeah, maybe not as much as like it was early on when they came down in the 1870's, 80's, you know, after and then around the First World War. Because post-World War II everyone is acculturating and you know—One of the things is that we meet friends. Like, say I met someone from the Polish—You know, I met a kid from, say, Saint John the Baptist. And you identify—Oh yeah, I'm from St. Joseph. Oh yeah, you're from St. John the Baptist, or St. Mary's Italian, you know, whatever. You just identify from where—locations.

EDO: Right.

PB: So the church at that time was—But, you know, that was in those days.

43:00

EDO: So then you went St. Mary's in Lynn instead of staying at St. Joseph's?

PB: Right. I could have gone to Salem High School but—

EDO: Uh-huh.

PB: I was able to go there. So some people went to St. John's Prep or whatever.

43:15

EDO: And then from there?

PB: See, my parents, you know—they wanted—wherever they wanted me to go to school. And, you know, they got a lot of input from other people. Now, you could have received as a quality education at Salem High just as well. It existed because some of my friends went to Salem High and, you know, have done very well. It was just that, I think, they just wanted me to try St. Mary's. I had a cousin that—

43:45

EDO: St. Joseph's Academy didn't exist?

PB: Oh yeah, it did. It did.

43:49

EDO: And that was?

PB: Well, I don't know they just—I had a cousin Richard who went to St. Mary's. His father was Albert, who was my mother's brother, so—

EDO: Makes sense.

PB: So, they said, you know—

44:07

EDO: So you took the bus there or you?

PB: Yes, yes. The bus. Exactly.

44:11

EDO: And then from there you went on to?

PB: Then I went and I started Merrimack College in 65, went there.

44:24

EDO: And then you?

PB: And then I taught for a few years. Then I took a few graduate courses but—As I told my own children, its right after college is when you go to grad school. Otherwise, you know, you're—

EB: It's hard. Yeah.

PB: Yeah.

44:42

EDO: And then you met your wife?

PB: Right.

44:49

EDO: Here? I'm sorry. [Looking at paper]

PB: No, I didn't. I just put down my siblings.

44:53

EDO: Oh right, there you go. I'm sorry. So, other thoughts on—let me look at our list here—  
I'm sorry we've got—

45:00

EB: Did you meet your wife in Salem?

PB: Here in Salem, right, yeah. She's a teacher with the Salem High School Special Ed.  
Department.

EDO: Okay.

PB: Yeah, and she got her master's degree right here from Salem State college in 03. Special  
Ed.

45:17

EDO: Is she Franco-American?

PB: No, she's Italian.

45:20

EDO: Oh, she's Italian. So, can we hear the story of how you met?

PB: [laughing]

EDO: And anything about that?

PB: Ah, just, you know, we met in 1975 and then got married in 1976. I was thirty, almost thirty-  
one years old so, yeah.

45:40

EDO: Well, at that point in time was there any question or did anybody comment about the fact  
that she was Italian and you were French-Canadian?

PB: No. No, not in 1976. No.

EDO: Okay

PB: Many of my friends that are my age today—some of them—they didn't for whatever  
reasons—They didn't want to follow—They know the language but they—I just took a personal  
interest in it because I got to go to Europe early on in life and I was so impressed with how these  
people know two and three and four languages, you know? So I said, "Jeez, you know, I gotta  
learn French a little bit better."

EDO: Oh, fantastic.

PB: So, in college, though, I had to because when you're studying science they wanted you to take German.

EDO: Mm-hm.

PB: So I had to take—I took two years of German. That was good. I loved it. It's just that you don't—I haven't—

EDO: Have a chance to speak it.

PB: Yeah. So now I'm learning Spanish [laughs]. Not formally, but just trying to pick up, you know.

46:47

EDO: Now, I wanted to switch gears for a moment. When--if someone says to you, you know, "Who are you?" or "How do you describe yourself?" There's a lot of words. We've been using a lot of different terminology just now. Some of them are Franco-American, French-Canadian, French, Quebecois, just American. Are there any of those terms that you tend to use, or you used growing up, or maybe switched? Do any of them resonate?

PB: I am a citizen of the United States. That's number one. I'm very proud to be a citizen of the United States and when I did go to Europe I did try to project the good American. Renaissance, avant--. But I took a personal interest in my own ethnicity only because, you know, they've made great contributions also. And I'm proud of that. That's what I am. If I had been any other, I would have been extremely proud in that too, you know? But citizen of the U.S first, and then my heritage is this and—You know, I try to learn as much of it as I can.

47:56

EDO: Now, have you passed on any of either the language or any of the traditions, food, food-ways, or other traditions in your own family, with your own children?

PB: Yes, the children Michelle and Jean-Paul are fine on that, but they didn't want the language [laughs].

EDO: [laughs]

PB: Michelle took Spanish and—Oh, they love the salmon pie. They love pretty much everything but she—No, she took Spanish and my son took French but—To this day, though, he says, "Dad I wish you—You gotta teach me more." So, you know, he's just trying. But it's different. See, in our day you had grandparents and uncles, extended family. You could walk

down Salem Street, Congress Street, in the fifties and sixties and—Oh, that's the way it was then. There were people there, speaking their language.

48:59

EB: So, after you finished college, did you work in Salem?

PB: No, I started teaching at a high school in Boston, in the North End, Columbus High School.

EDO: Yeah.

PB: I was there for five years. It was a religious high school that was under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese but the Franciscan priests of Order Minor, Friar Minor.

49:27

EB: And did you—we've heard stories about the Klondike Club, and dances, and things that were involved in the social scene in Salem?

PB: I just joined a Richelieu Club [laughs] in February. And, you know, its not like I didn't want to join years ago when they were going strong, there. I used to read about articles in the paper and it sounded amusing and I thought this is a good way to keep up, you know, learning a language and—but there were other things. You know, I was working and other things so you just procrastinate, unfortunately. You know, it's not—Yeah, but those clubs were like—The Klondike club was as a organization that had, like, maybe monthly or weekly dances for the working community and this section. It was open—a lot of—every ward, pretty much, had—You know, there's, like, the AOH, Ancient Order of Hibernians. There's the Ward II Club. Those were, you know, its just a sign of the times. The immigrants had a place to go and socialize on a Saturday night but I—

EDO: Right.

PB: When it got to the mid sixties there, the early seventies, my generation—

EDO: Right.

PB: Not really but their parents, yeah. They would probably go do the line dances and all that stuff, yeah. Yeah, and what was the other one, the other club you mentioned? Lafayette, Klondike—There's a few of them.

EDO: That's the one that we heard of.

PB: Yeah.

EDO: Yeah.

51:09

EDO: Are there any other memories or stories that you have, that we didn't ask about, that you wanted to talk about or share?

PB: Growing up, it was a nice time. I mean, we got our first television, black and white set, maybe in like the late fifties. It could have been '58 or something and there were a lot more activities you did outside after school, you know. I was trying to learn ice-skating and—Or, you know, there were little league ball. It was very difficult. Making a little league team in the old days, in the fifties, was a difficult process. Today everybody more or less gets on a team. Those days it was like try-outs [laughs]. It was like trying out for the major leagues, you know, and I wasn't all that good [laughs].

EDO: [Laughs]

PB: You know, and it's hard but—You know, Forest River Park was a nice venue to visit. You know, you had the saltwater pool. You had the little beach down by the early settler's colony, there. And then, it was good times. Again, there's not a lot in the audiovisual realm. It's just, you know, a little TV, one TV, a little Philco, whatever it was, and a radio. Oh, I remember in 61, my dad got me a transistor radio.

EDO: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

PB: A little transistor radio. And his name was--that French establishment. It was for everybody but it was a **Mr. LeBrun**. And he had a camera store, and sold those little transistor radios, which I prized. It was unbelievable because now you could get certain music stations. But at night you could listen to the Boston Celtics, telecast.

EB: Wow.

EDO: Wow.

PB: Yeah. So there were things like that and then—But again, it was pretty much, you know from—Until the eighth grade, it was pretty much school-oriented type things.

53:38

EB: *Est-ce-qu'il y a des blagues ou des souvenirs, des proverbes que les grand parents disait?*

PB: *Oh, yeah. Mais, ma grand-mère, Alphonsine, ma grand-mère maternelle, à nous lisait des histoires en français et m'aidait avec mes mots, les épellations. Il y avait quelque mots, termes, que je connaissais pas comme des babouettes. Il y a des termes comme cela...so, elle m'aidait avec les épellations. Ma grand-mère était très religieuse. Son frère était un prêtre à Nasarette à Québec. Et elle était une bonne grand-mère. Elle m'a cuit—m'a cuire--un potage de poisson, et saumon, pâté au saumon et des autres délicieuses repas. Repas délicieuses. Mais, l'autre grand-mère paternelle, était gentille, aussi, très. Elle m'aidait beaucoup. Elle aimait voir la télévision*

*avec moi, après l'école quand il y avait les jeux de balle, de baseball, the World Series, en octobre.*

EB: *Ouais.*

PB: *Et elle m'a demandé des questions, « qu'est-ce que l'homme va faire maintenant ? » You know, des petites conversations comme ça pour les jeux de balle—*

EB: *Est-ce il y avait un endroit par acheter des livres en français à Salem?*

PB: *Um, okay. Je crois qu'il y avait des endroits pour faire les achats des livres. Moi-même j'allais à la bibliothèque à Salem. Oui, aujourd'hui il y a plusieurs de établissements pour faire les achats des livres. Mais, mon père m'amenait à libr—à la bibliothèque. Je me rappelle une fois quand j'étais—je crois c'était en 56--il y avait un programme sur la télévision, Walt Disney. Puis il annonçait qu'il va avoir un programme à peu pour un fameux américain de Tennessee, son nom était Davy Crockett. Et j'ai dit à mon père, « Qui est Davy Crockett ? » You know. Je veux savoir. So, mon père, il m'a dit. Je vais t'amener. On va aller à la bibliothèque. Et la dame, la biblio—*

EB: *--thécaire*

PB: *La bibliothécaire, elle m'a dit "Attendez un moment." So, elle va en haut. Elle revient avec deux livres à propos Davy Crockett. En anglais, so, j'ai lu à propos mon hero. [rires] Ce n'est pas une histoire très, très—mais je crois que c'était—Il était fameux, you know, dans l'histoire des Américains.*

EB : *Parfait.*

PB : *Aujourd'hui, il y a des autres héros. Il y a Pacman, puis Spiderman, Star Wars.*

EDO: *Well, merci. Merci beaucoup. Thank you so much for your time this is wonderful.*

PB: *Oh no, its alright. C'était une bonne occasion de réfléchir, de se rappeler des choses but you know, there were many pleasurable moments. I just don't know sometimes. It's hard for me sometimes to select, like, "What's your favorite book?" I mean, I like all of them [laughter].*

EB: *You had a lot of details.*

EDO: *It's a wonderful detailed history. This is fantastic. Thank you so much. So much.*

PB: *Well, I didn't know if you wanted more historical things like—*

EDO: *You gave us a really wonderful mix of—*

PB: *But that's—*

EDO: What you have—you telling us the stories of your parents and your grandparents—We, so far, we haven't—People of your generation, we haven't spoken to anyone who actually knew as much about those pieces of that history. Because those people are gone, so we can't talk to them. So you were able to tell us your generation, but also that other story which is really a blessing.

PB: Well no, it's my pleasure. We're not—we're just a humble family, you know? My parents, they were wonderful to me growing up, like, the one I just told you about Davey Crockett. I didn't know who he was, and my father didn't know, so he says "We're gonna go to the library" and the lady got me two books. And when I was going to school, yeah, you're a kid but I was very attentive in class cause, you know, it took me time to learn things too. I didn't learn, you know, everything easy. But, you know, my parents were always there to help me from that point so it was good.

EDO: Fantastic.

PB: Like I said, going to my grandmother's house was no sacrifice [laughter].

EDO: Sounds quite lovely.

PB: Every day there was a different dessert.