

INTERVIEWEE: Jeanette Masse and Leon Masse

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

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LOCATION of INTERVIEW: Masse home, Salem, MA

LENGTH of INTERVIEW: 47:02

OTHER: Niece of Jeanette and Leon Masse present to assist

00:00

EDO: So, the first thing I'm going to ask if for each of you to tell us your name. We can start here.

LM: I didn't hear.

EDO: Your name? Just your name.

LM: Leon Masse

EDO: And your name?

JM: Jean.

EDO: Jean?

JM: Jeanette

00:20

EDO: So, Jeannette, I maybe can start with you. Can you tell me a little bit about your family? Your family history that you know. Anything about your parents, or their parents, and how they came to Salem?

JM: Well, there was eleven of us and my mother and father were born in Canada and when my oldest sister was a year old they moved to Salem. I lived in Salem till I got married. No—yeah. No. I lived in Salem until I was about nine years old and we moved to Beverly and that's where we stayed till I got married and we came back to Salem. (coughs)

1:18

EDO: And why did your parents come to Salem?

JM: I haven't got the faintest idea. (laughs)

EDO: (laughs) Okay. Do you know where they were from in Canada?

JM: Yes. **Saint Hyacinthe.**

EDO: Both of them?

JM: My mother but I'm not sure about my father. Must be.

1:36

EDO: Okay. Now you had—there were eleven children in your family?

JM: My mother had eleven children.

1:39

EDO: Your mother had eleven children. And you—where are you in the order?

JM: Right in the middle. I had three brothers and the others were all girls.

1:54

EDO: Excellent. So can you tell me the same? A bit about your family? [question is directed at Leon]

LM: Well, I don't remember too much about it, but my memory is not as sharp as she is. When I want to find out anything, I ask her. [They both laugh] I don't quite remember anything. All I remember is that we lived on St. Paul Street in Salem for quite a few years. That's off of Canal Street in Salem. And we lived on—my father built a house there, so we stayed there for quite a few years. Beyond that, I can't remember too much.

2:47

EDO: And you [speaking to Jeannette] lived in Salem, then, until you were nine?

LM: Right.

EDO: Jean—yup?

JM: [hesitates]

EDO: About nine?

JM: I was a [inaudible] when I got married.

EDO: Okay. When you were living in Salem when you were just a little girl—

JM: I was about eight or nine years old.

3:02

EDO: Do you remember where you lived?

JM: Yeah. We lived on Palmer Street.

EDO: On Palmer Street. And what was the neighborhood like? Do you remember at all?

JM: Huh?

3:12

EDO: The neighborhood. What was it like?

LM: It was South Salem.

JM: I remember it was friendly. That's about—

3:19

EDO: Were there a lot of other Franco-Americans?

JM: All French!

EDO: All French.

JM: They used to call it the French quarters. All French people lived in South Salem.

EDO: And your neighborhood as well [directing question to Leon]. Do you remember if it was French?

JM: I think it was all French, too.

LM: Most of the time, most of them were French.

3:40

EDO: Where did you go to school in Salem?

JM: St. Joseph's

EDO: Did you [directing question to Leon] go to St. Joseph's as well?

LM: St. Joseph's school. I graduated from the grammar school. That is how far we went. At the end of the season, they took a picture of all of the students in that class. I couldn't attend because my family was so poor I was working for ten dollars a week—

JM: On a farm.

LM: So I had to keep working, so I never appeared in that picture of those students. All I got is—I got the diploma. I graduated from that grammar school and this is how far I went, as far as my education is concerned. I worked ever since. And I never loafed. Not even one day during all the Depression. I worked so hard that they didn't dare lay me off because I was the hardest working guy [laughs]. And my boss treated me almost like a son. If I happened to have to go out he said, "Why don't you put your coat [on]? It's kind of cold out there today." He treated me like that. And I stayed there for quite a while in that department. It was in the rough department at Pitman and Brown on Bridge Street. It was the best mill around, and there must have been maybe twenty-five cabinetmakers of all nations. And I worked on the first floor in the rough department. Planers and then at the back of the machine, receiving material. Finally I got sick of that. I wanted to go in the cabinet shop on the second floor and I knew nothing about cabinet-making. And I kept after them. My boss, "Get me upstairs." He says, "I don't think that you'll fit up there." I got all upset. But I kept after him so much that finally he asked the foreman if he could use me up there. And finally he got me up there. So I went up there. I'm a total stranger [and] I'm among first-class cabinet makers. I never saw anybody who could touch them. They could do inlay work, engraving, carving. They were the best. And I was placed—my workbench was placed alongside two Russians, the best. Those were the best workers. 'Course, I knew nothing about it, so the boss gave me—the first job he gave me was to make a cross, [crosses forearms with palms facing in] an old cross sign that's seen alongside of the highway half falling off or something like that. So I made that and I didn't have them exactly right, and I carved through too much and I filled it with putty. I filled it and sanded it. Then the customer came to get it and he said, "That's the best-looking thing I've ever seen." And when the boss gave it to him, he saw what I had done. And boy, he called me after the customer was gone. He gave me the holy business. He says "The next time you make a mistake like that—why didn't you come to me? We could have corrected it." So I agreed that I would do that. And gradually I increased my skill because of the two Russians. If I had a job to do and I'd make something wrong they would notice it. They'd come over and say "Don't do it like that. Do it like this" and then they would run back to their bench to work on whatever they were doing.

7:40

EDO: Can I ask you a quick question? And then I'm gonna ask Jean—I'm gonna ask you a question as well. You mentioned at the beginning of the story that you were not able to be at your grammar school graduation because you were working on a farm.

LM: Right.

7:54

EDO: Can you tell us a little bit about why you were working on the farm and where that farm was?

LM: That farm was in Danvers. [MA]

EDO: It's okay. Danvers is fine.

LM: I know it was in Danvers and I was weeding all day long, on my knees for ten dollars a week.

8:16

EDO: That was during the school year?

LM: I never saw the check. It came in an envelope and I gave it to my mother because she needed it so bad. That's how I did it. As long as I was single. Then when I got married that created a problem because now my—I was getting it on my own, but I gave her part of my salary just the same. Took it out of us [indicates Jeanette]. That's the way we lived at that particular time.

8:48:

EDO: You had brothers and sisters?

LM: Yes I had—we were six in the family. We had—

JM: Two sisters?

LM: Two sisters, right. And four brothers.

JM: I guess. [laughter]

LM: I'm the only one in the family now.

EDO: Oh, goodness.

LM: [points to Jeannette] She's the only one in the family.

JM: No, I'm not the youngest one. I'm in the middle.

EDO: The only one.

LM: No, I mean, you're left.

JM: Oh, I'm the only one left.

LM: We're both the only one left. No, I've got one brother left. A younger brother.

9:30

EDO: And did your parents—what did your father or mother do for work? When you were small?

LM: They used to work local.

JM: His father was a—

LM: My father used to work in Marblehead as a carpenter.

EDO: Okay.

LM: He was a first class—

JM: My mother never worked. She had enough to do with the kids.

EDO: Well, no. She worked a lot with the kids.

JM: Yes.

EDO: And did your [speaking to Leon] mother stay home and take care of the family?

LM: Right.

9:54

EDO: So, Jean, tell me a little bit about your parents and what they did.

JM: Well, my father used to work for a bakery in Salem. The name, I've forgot. And yeah, of course, they had the horses. And during the fire my mother kept telling us, "Let's start saving some of this stuff." And my father would say, "Oh, we've got plenty of time. It's not gonna be as bad." And it got to be. So finally, she got a few things in a wagon and drove to Salem Common, I think it was. And we stayed there for a while until we found a place in Beverly. I was a year old then. About a year old then. And they were beautiful parents. My mother used to work all the time. Baking, cooking, crocheting, braid rugs. They did everything. And knit. Sew. She made all our clothes. She had to [laughs]. And we [points to Leon] got married during the Depression. It wasn't too easy.

11:13

EDO: So, I want to ask you each a question about school. And then, I want to ask you each a question about food.

JM: About what?

EDO: Food.

JM: Food?

11:24

EDO: So [laughter]—you both went to St. Joseph's? You just went there a bit. And you a bit longer? Can you tell us what you remember about going to St. Joseph's school?

JM: I remember the nuns. [laughs]

EDO: Tell us more. What about the nuns?

JM: Oh, some of them were very strict. You couldn't do much wrong or you—your hand had to go out [holds hand palm up in front of her] and they had a strap. Boom. [indicates someone striking her hand]. Well, we learned a little bit of English. Not much. That's about all I can remember.

12:05

EDO: Did you have any little friends that you played with there at school or in your neighborhood?

JM: Oh, I had a lot of friends.

12:12

EDO: What did you do for fun with your friends?

JM: Not much. I can't remember. [laughs]

12:23

EDO: And one more question. When you were in your home with your parents and your family, what language did you speak?

JM: French all the time.

12:31

EDO: Did your parents speak any English?

JM: My father did but my mother, not too much.

12:36

EDO: And when you left your home and you were out in Salem, what language did you speak?

JM: English. All the time.

12:47

EDO: And what do you [speaking to Leon] remember about St. Joseph's School?

LM: Not a heck of a lot. All I know, I got up to the grammar class when I graduated from there but I never appeared for the picture. From there on I just kept on working. Doing something. And I know when I got off of the farm I went out to look for a job at Pitman and Brown on Bridge Street. It was one of the best shops around.

13:26

EDO: And how old were you? Maybe fourteen, fifteen?

LM: Oh, close to that.

JM: I think when you worked at Pitman and Brown you must have been sixteen.

LM: Sixteen.

JM: I think.

LM: Yeah. You couldn't go to work unless you were sixteen years old. So I went right up there. And that morning they were hiring youngsters. So there was about ten youngsters who appeared for the job. And I was the last one that they talked to and they hired most of the youngsters due to the questions that they asked. And he came to me and he said, "I suppose you're looking for a job too." And I said, "Yeah, I'm looking for a job." And he asked me a few questions and he said, "Okay, you're hired."

So I was hired and I worked in, on the ground floor where they do all of the rough work. Planers. In back of it, take it out. Coming out of the machine sometimes, it was heavy. And I had to put it on a wagon and then run like heck to catch the next piece. And the one that was feeding the machine, he loved do that: push them on the back of the other to keep me going.

14:44

EDO: That was his fun, right? [laughs]

LM: But it was not fun for me on the other end. I had to work hard to do that. I took it. I never swore. I never said anything. And that's how I earned my living up there, but I wasn't getting much but maybe twelve dollars a week. Something like that.

15:06

EDO: Can I ask a—I said I wanted to ask a question about food. And this is—when you were children—so when you were a child—were there any special foods that your family cooked that were French Canadian, that were Franco American? Can you talk about any foods that you really liked or that were special to your family or that your mother made?

JM: She made so many things and everything was so good. [laughs]

EDO: Were there any ones that you've continued to make?

LM: No, not really.

EDO: No? We hear people talk a lot about *tourtiere*, or *creton*.

JM: *Creton*. I used to make that myself. That was very good. And salmon pie.

EDO: Salmon pie.

JM: That was French too.

EDO: Where did you get your—

JM: Pea soup. [laughs]

EDO: With yellow peas?

JM: Oh no. They were green.

EB: [from off screen] Some French Canadian thing with the yellow peas.

JM: Baked beans. I still used to make my own until about a year ago.

16:21

EDO: And where do your recipes come from? Are they just things you learned from your mother?

JM: From my mother, yeah. Pies. I used to make a lot of pies. At Christmas, Thanksgiving. My mother used to make a lot of pies too. And then I took over when I got married. I used to make about ten pies at one time. All kinds. And the kids loved it. I don't do that any more.

EDO: Sounds just like my family. And do you remember any foods that were special or that you liked [speaking to Leon]?

LM: Well, to be honest with you, I was never picky. I ate everything that they made regardless of what it was, and I ate it. And I'm still doing the same thing. I never know—She [points at Jeannette] makes so much different food, I never know what she's gonna make. I ask her

sometimes, “What are you going to make for today?” She says, “You’ll find out.” That’s her answer. But I’ve never refused food.

JM: He likes to eat. [laughs]

LM: There was only one item that I didn’t care for. What the hell was it that I wouldn’t eat? I can’t remember now, but there was one food that I didn’t want to eat.

JM: He’s not fussy.

LM: What?

JM: You’re not fussy.

LM: No, what was that? When I went to Revere and I went in there—?

JM: Liver?

LM: Liver. I wouldn’t eat liver no matter what they did because what I still remember what it looked like in the store. Like a jelly thing. So I never ate any until I was working. And sometimes I looked for the job first, and it was around one thirty, two o’clock, I’d think of eating my lunch. So I’d stop at a restaurant and I’d eat my lunch. And I went into this restaurant in Revere and everybody in there—the place was full of workers—and everybody that was in there was eating liver. Everybody. And you come to find out that the chef of that diner, he specialized in liver. So I went in there and—jesus, I didn’t want to have any liver, but he talked me into it. And I ate the liver and I loved it so much and I’ve been eating liver ever since. [laughs]

EDO: Excellent!

LM: And he died. He was a gambler and he was making money because his restaurant was always full of people eating liver. The first year, though, he disappeared. He was a gambler and he’d go away gambling money, and he lost money, and he lost his job. So I never went there again ‘cause he wasn’t there. But I’ve been eating liver ever since and I love to eat it.

19:38

EDO: So, my next question is a little bit of a different question and it has to do with the church. When you were living in Salem, did you belong to a church?

LM: St. Joseph’s.

19:50

EDO: St. Joseph’s. And how important was the church in your life?

JM: Very important.

EDO: Can you tell me more about that?

JM: We just believed in God.

20:02

EDO: You attended Mass?

JM: Every Sunday. And the kids did too. Never missed unless we were sick, of course. And the same with him. [points at Leon]

LM: Yeah, it's about the same story. We were very strict on Sundays. We always went to church with the children, and we've been doing it ever since. But now we can't go because they won't let me go out by myself. I have to have somebody holding onto me. So whenever I stick my face out of the door, my neighbor **James**, he says "What in the hell are you up to now?"

JM: He watches him like a hawk.

LM: "Don't do that. I'll go and do it for you."

JM: He doesn't want him to fall down.

LM: No. He doesn't want me to fall down. And if I go out in the yard, the same thing. If he sees me, he says, "What are you up to?" So I tell him and he says, "You leave it alone and I'll go and do it." And he'll go pick it up.

JM: Everybody should have a neighbor like him.

EDO: Sounds like it.

LM: He's a very, very good one. He says, "I'll do anything you want. Just ask me and I'll get it for you." So I asked him—he's got a lot of stuff in his garage and I've been doing woodworking over here, too. I used to work all day. I have a workshop downstairs. And the first job that I did was the Taj Mahal. It took me a year and a half to make it.

EDO: Wow.

LM: And I had it here [indicates elsewhere in the room] for quite a while and my daughter kept asking me and asking me that she'd like to have it. Finally, I gave it to her. Then I started thinking. I had two children. I have her and my son. And he's in Florida. He lives in Florida. So I felt that if I gave that to my daughter, I'd have to do something for my son.

EDO: Right.

LM: So I chose to do the Jefferson Memorial in Washington. And that took me about a year and a half to make, too.

EDO: Oh, my goodness. You're a busy man.

LM: I have plenty of time. You see, I used to work in my workshop from about eight o'clock to about noontime. She would call me for lunch [points to Jeanette] and after lunch, I'd go back and work until about four thirty or five o'clock and then it's time for supper. She'd call me for supper. [points at Jeanette]

EDO: [To Jeannette] You're a good woman. Keeping him fed all those years.

JM: What?

EDO: I said you're a good woman for keeping him fed—well fed—for all those years while he was working in his workshop.

LM: That's why I've lived so long. [both Leon and Jeanette laugh]

22:57

EDO: I have another type of question. Did you—when you were children or adults—did you ever visit Canada to visit relatives or just to go to Canada?

JM: Not when I was a child. When we got married we went to Canada.

EDO: You did?

LM: Yeah, I had relatives in Canada and we went a few times. And we would meet our cousins and stay there for about a week. And one year I went there and they had built a new church. And I went in the church and I was amazed. It looked like a Boston **sachel**. It was made like that [indicates an almost hour glass shape with hands]. But it was beautiful. And it stayed in my mind and when I was doing a lot of woodworking about ten years after that, the idea came to me again so I decided to make the church. So it took me over a year to make that church. That was an elaborate church, and I could remember all the details. So finally I asked my cousin, I said, "Why don't you come and bring the misses? You haven't been to the United States for quite a while." They had—financially they were well-off. And "Yeah," he says. "That's a good idea," he says. We'll do that." So I think about a month after that they called me up and they said, "We're coming down shortly." And I had—the church was all done. So when they came down I put that church away so they wouldn't see it. They stayed here one week. We took them everywhere they wanted to go and finally they decided, well, we're going to leave tomorrow morning. So I said, "All right." So they're leaving. They're going into their car. See, the car was in the driveway. They were going into their car and I said, "Please, I'd like you to see something before you leave." So they came back in the house and then I brought out the church. Well, if you'd ever seen their face! To me, that was worth thousands of dollars, just to look at them. They were so surprised. They kept going around it and—I had the big tower bell up there for the church and the walkway.

EDO: It sounds wonderful.

LM: Yeah, before you go I'll show you pictures of it.

EDO: Okay.

LM: And finally they said, "Well." I didn't tell them that I had made the church for them. So they go and they get in there and I say, "Wait. Aren't you going to take it?" I said, "I gave it to you." I said "Put it in your trunk." And there again, they couldn't get over that.

EDO: Wow.

LM: And now, today, they're both gone. So their children have taken over. They had a business. Some sort of a business up there. But their children have the church. They still have it. But they used to live right next to the St. Lawrence River where the ships and the road going by to Montreal and the other one that's going away from Montreal. It's a sight just to watch these ships go by. And this goes on all day long.

EDO: Wow. Yeah.

JM: And they used to be right there, and they had the church right in the window facing the St. Lawrence River. It really was a beautiful sight. But they're both gone now. I think there's only one child left. Of course, he's a little bit old.

26:52

EDO: So actually, speaking of children, maybe Jean, can you answer this for me? Can you tell me a little bit about—you have children, and you have grandchildren. Can you tell me a little bit about your children? Or raising your children here? What life was like? Because you moved back to Salem after you got married, yes?

JM: Yes.

27:11

EDO: Okay. Actually, before I ask you that, I want to back up one moment. I didn't learn about where you went to school. After you left Salem, you all moved to Beverly?

JM: Yeah.

27:22

EDO: And then, what was your schooling? Did you—

LM: Come again?

27:25

EDO: Where did you go to school in Beverly?

JM: I think the first one was Edwards School. On, I think it was Rantoul Street. And then I went to Briscoe School. That's it. I went to the seventh grade. I had to go to work too.

27:43

EDO: What did you do for work when you left school to go to work?

JM: When I worked, I used to make radio tubes. I worked up the Hygrade. I worked up Sylvania. When I was a girl, not after I was married.

28:03

EDO: And while you were a girl doing that, did you also bring your money home for your family?

JM: Did I what?

28:08

EDO: Did you give your paychecks to your mother?

JM: Oh yes. Every cent. Never paid—I never kept anything. We got paid. We got twelve dollars a week working forty-eight hours until Saturday noon. Twelve dollars a week.

28:29

EDO: And did your brothers and sisters work?

JM: Now they get twenty dollars an hour. [laughs]

EDO: Did your brothers and sisters work as well?

JM: Pardon?

28:36

EDO: Did your brothers and sisters also go to work?

JM: Oh, they all worked till the Depression. Then nobody had a job. I was the only one that had a job then. That was in 1935, I think.

28:49

EDO: Did you get a WPA job [Works Progress Administration]? Were you able to get—

JM: Pardon?

28:53

EDO: Were you able to get a job through the government?

JM: I had a job up Sylvania then, and you had to do good work or out you went! I worked there for a while.

29:10

EDO: Can I ask you one more question about—when you got your money, and you were a girl, and you got your money, and you brought it home, your mother was the one in charge of the money?

JM: Now, that's a good question. I think my mother and father both. I think.

EDO: Many people tell the story of giving their paychecks to their mothers. I've heard this story many times.

JM: Oh, it was my mother. We gave it to my mother. And they were wonderful parents. You couldn't have asked for better. And we had a lot of kids but we never, never went hungry. Never! And we had two pairs of shoes. One for school, one for Sunday. And of course, like I said, my mother used to make all our clothes. She was busy all the time. [laughs]

29:52

EDO: Sounds like it. And when you lived in Beverly did you still come to church back here at St. Joseph's? Or did you attend a different church?

JM: No, in Beverly. St. Alphonse.

30:04

EDO: Okay. Okay. The other question—you then were married? And what year was that?

JM: Nineteen thirty-five.

30:12

EDO: Nineteen thirty-five. And you moved to this home? Did you move here?

LM: No, we lived on Bridge Street.

JM: No, we were—

LM: Saunders Street. We went to Saunders Street.

Niece: [from off camera]. I know the story.

LM: And then we went to Saunders Street and then we moved to **Richards**.

Niece: [from off camera] It's a good one.

JM: [to Leon] She asked me another question.

EDO: It's okay. So, when did you move to this home?

JM: Well, my son was nine months old when we moved here. So you take it from there.
[everyone laughs]

EDO: That's fine. And you raised your children here. Yes?

JM: Oh yes. We had two beautiful kids. [laughs]

30:56

EDO: And where did you send them to school?

JM: Pardon?

EDO: Where did they go to school?

JM: Well, they were on School Street. What was the name of that school? [asks her niece who is off camera]

Niece: [from off camera] Pickering. Pickering School.

JM: Yeah. I guess that's where they went.

EDO: So, you didn't—

JM: And then they went to the one near the cemetery after a while. I don't know the name. I forget the name of that one. There were only four grades in that little school.

31:26

EDO: So you did not send them to St. Joseph's?

JM: No.

EDO: Or to a Catholic School?

JM: No. Then they went to high school. Both of them.

31:36

EDO: And then, you have grandchildren?

JM: Oh yes. We have nine grandchildren.

EDO: I'm sure they kept you busy.

EB: Any great-grandchildren?

31:53

EDO: And you have great-grandchildren also? Yes?

JM: Oh yes.

EDO: How many of those? I see three little boys in that photo [speaking of a photo in the room. Not visible on camera]

JM: We have two children. We have nine grandchildren, right? [asks Leon]

LM: Great.

JM: Great. How many great, great have we got?

LM: Nine great

JM: Nine great.

EDO: Wow

LM: Great grandchildren. And we have six grandchildren.

JM: Hmm?

LM: We have six grandchildren. Don't we?

JM: Oh, we've got more than that. Elaine's got three. Laurie's got three. Steven's got two. And there's Michael. How much is that? That's nine, right?

EDO: That's nine. That's a lot.

JM: Yup.

32:47

EDO: When you were raising your children, did you speak French with them?

JM: Yes. When Dick started going out to play and all the kids around here speak English, and he couldn't speak English. So they'd gang up on him and beat him up. So when he came home and he started learning English, he never would speak French again. So that did it. But now, like my daughter, she wishes she could speak French. But they never did. That's the way it ended.

33:31

EDO: When you were living here in Salem and raising your family, did you have friends who were also French Canadian or Franco American? Did you socialize with people who spoke French?

JM: Well, I had a girlfriend for a—till she passed away. And I met her in Beverly, met her in the Beverly schools. She was French too. She was a very, very nice friend. And we did a lot of things together. We went on trips together [gestures towards Leon].

EDO: What was her name?

JM: Annette

EDO: Annette.

JM: And she married a guy by the name of Sigmund. And he was French too.

34:17

EDO: Now, when you were married—first, tell us how you met. Can we hear that story? How did you meet? And how did you decide that he was the one or she was the one?

JM: Well, it was in Beverly, of course, and we always went to church. So on one Sunday after mass we're coming home and he came up to me and asked me for a date. [laughs]

EDO: At a church in Beverly?

JM: In Beverly. His grandmother had given him some tickets to go to a play or something like that, a rehearsal. So he wanted me to go with him. That's how we met. That was it.

EDO: [speaking to Leon] And why were you going to a church in Beverly?

JM: He was over his grandmother's.

EDO: Oh, I see.

JM: He was visiting his grandmother for a while.

EDO: Okay.

JM: So, that's how we met.

LM: She's the one that kept after me. "Why don't you ask one of those Soucy girls?" And we used to meet every Sunday and finally she had two tickets to go to a recital, I guess. And she says to me, "There's your chance. Go and ask one of those Soucy girls." So that's when I went

down and I asked her. So we—and I didn't have a car then, so we walked. I think we walked to Salem.

JM: We used to walk all the time.

LM: Yeah. But from Beverly to Salem, and we went to the recital and we enjoyed it but [makes a somewhat indifferent face] like that. To me, it was all a bunch of kids dancing, whatever. Well anyway, that was with her. [points at Jeanette] And we've been going together ever since. And finally we got married after—what was that? After four years?

JM: About three and a half years.

LM: Yeah, three and a half to four years, we got married. And we still didn't have any money. When I came back from my honeymoon I think we had about fifty dollars between us. Between the two of us. So we couldn't go on a long trip. We decided to go to Boston at a hotel. And my brother-in-law took me. He says, "I've got a nice hotel up there where I go often." So we went there. We stayed there one day or two days because that's all we could afford, you see. Then we came back. We came back home and I had fifty dollars to my name. That's all I had. And we worked from that. Between her and me, we combined our sources and we paid all our bills and whatever we had left over we put it in the bank right away. And finally, we just decided we were going to see if we could buy a home. And homes were cheap then, so we visited a real estate guy. He took us everywhere. And he took us over here, and we sort of liked it a little bit and the prices were fairly fair around in this neighborhood. You wouldn't believe it. We paid forty nine hundred dollars for this house. You could have bought any house on this street, whether it was a two family or one family, for less than six thousand dollars. That's the way it was. But we didn't have forty nine hundred dollars. We had, say, maybe a couple of thousand dollars by then that we had accumulated. So we bought it on the basis of that and my uncle, I think it was, he said, "I'll lend you some money so you can buy the house and pay for it." So he lent me the money so we paid the price—forty nine hundred dollars. So we owned the house. But I owed my uncle money so I told him—I promised him I would pay him so much a month with interest. So he won't lose any money from the bank. And the interest was high at that time. Maybe around fourteen or fifteen percent.

So, it didn't take us too long to pay him off. He wouldn't accept the last payment. He said, "No, you've been pretty good paying me back." He says, "Don't pay me for this month. You're done!" Well, he told me that he had lent money to grandchildren. Probably four of them. And nobody ever gave him back any money that they borrowed from him. He told me that. He says, "You're the only one that paid me back." And I felt pretty good about that. And we've been here ever since.

And the neighbors, they greeted you as if you were part of their family. They came over and they greeted us 'cause we were all young. We had young kids. And they were elderly. Now we're the elderly and surrounding us is all the younger generations.

EDO: Maybe I'll come buy a house across the street.

LM: Yeah. They're all younger. Just the opposite. But it's the way we came here. And we're famous—we're favored with everybody around here the same way. I mean, they'll do anything for us.

EDO: That's so nice.

LM: So we enjoyed the neighborhood.

40:02

EDO: You said you went to—you kept most of your money in a bank. You were very good at saving money. What bank did you use?

LM: Salem Five.

40:12

EDO: Why did you choose Salem Five?

LM: I don't know, but at the time that's the bank that we chose. And, of course, as I say, the interest was high. We were accumulating. Whatever we could save we put it in the bank right away. We wouldn't spend foolishly.

40:26

EDO: When you were living here in Salem did you read any of the French newspapers? Did you ever read a French newspaper?

LM: No. No. It was always the *Salem News*. And that's what we've been getting ever since. But the—We've done very well. I think we're pretty satisfied with what we did. We didn't exaggerate. We didn't spend foolishly. We didn't buy anything unless we both agreed that that was the thing to do. And if we had disagreed, we agreed to disagree. And that's how we got our—I used to put my pay, give it to her. She'd take that pay and we'd take what we needed to eat for the week or whatever, and the rest we'd put it in the bank. That how we [inaudible]. We never loafed. And whatever we bought, we'd pay cash. We never bought things on payment. 'Cause we never believed in that. Except, I think, I borrowed money one time and I always paid the bank a dollar a week. I was paying part of the thing and the interest. And after that we said, "We're not going to buy on payment anymore. We're going to buy it if we can afford it. If we can't afford it, we don't buy it." That's it. And we're still acting the same way today.

[some off camera quiet discussion between EDO and EB]

42:09

EDO: Okay, we just have a couple—Is there anything—? Our time is about running out. Is there anything that you want us to know about being Franco-American or being French-Canadian that we didn't ask about? Is there anything else that you want to say?

[Both LM and JM shake their head's "no"]

EDO: Well, we are very, very, very thankful for you both for being able to talk to us. You have a story and a perspective that's really important for us to have been able to hear. So, thank you so much for your time. I know it's a hot day and I know it's a long time to talk and answer strangers' questions, but thank you so very much. You're just lovely. You are a lovely couple. I'm going to start crying. You are a lovely, lovely couple and you have a beautiful home and—really, I'm going to start crying. This is so sad. And it is really just so wonderful to hear your stories, and to know that you have all of these things that you have done, and to have raised such a nice family, and to be sitting here together.

LM: When we first bought this house, this house wasn't like this.

EDO: I'm sure it wasn't. I'm sure you've done a lot of work.

LM: The ceilings were ten foot high and we found out the heat was costing us so much money. I said there's got to be a reason. So one day I was painting one of the rooms and all the heat was up there. So I decided to lower the floors. See, all the floors on the first floor was ten feet high. So I lowered them that much [indicates approximately eighteen or twenty four inches with hands].

EDO: Very smart.

LM: Put new ceilings. Plastered the whole thing. The same thing in—The only one I didn't do—I framed everything in the kitchen. I had to plaster that. Outside of that, we changed everything. I added a stair in the front there. I added that. I changed the balustrade going up. I changed the doors in here. They had the six panel doors. You could close the whole room. That didn't appeal to me. So I took all the doors out and bought new doors. And we did everything else that's in here. I built all these cabinets in there.

EDO: It's beautiful.

LM: I built the sunroom out there.

EDO: Yeah, I see that.

LM: If we go down there. The blinds are all down because the sun keeps coming in and it gets close to a hundred in there.

EDO: Goodness. But I guess it's nice in the winter.

JM: Yeah.

LM: In the winter, we can go down there and it might be twenty degrees outdoors, but when the sun gets in there it gets about seventy five to eighty in there. So we go and sit down there in the winter when everybody's cold. We don't add on any heat. We open the two doors we have there, and that heat heats part of the kitchen. So, we do very well here.

45:24

EB: So, you've been married for seventy-six years? How long have you been married for? What'd you say, 1935?

LM: She would know that. Her mind is different.

EDO: Nineteen thirty-five is when you were married?

JM: Yes.

EDO: You've been married seventy-six years almost?

LM: Yes, seventy-six.

45:43

EB: Do you have any words of advice?

JM: Huh?

EB: For your descendants who are going to watch this video?

EDO: Do you have any words of advice—

EB: About how to have a long-lasting marriage?

JM: Don't get mad at each other. [Jeanette and Leon laugh]

EDO: Do you have any advice about how not to get mad at each other? [laughter]

JM: Well, I don't know.

LM: Oh, I wanted to show you—

JM: He wants to show you the book.

LM: See, I've worked over forty years in my workshop and whatever I do I give away. I don't keep—I don't sell anything. And I don't keep anything.

EDO: Okay

LM: Did I say I made lighthouses? I must have made forty or fifty of them. And, what else did I make? [looks at Jeanette] Oh, I made those Cracker Jack [inaudible] Right, this door right here. On the other side.

EDO: Oh, on the other side.

Niece: [from off camera]: Oh, the soldiers.

EDO: The nutcrackers?

LM: I might have made about twenty-five of those. They were all like [holds hands about three or four feet off of floor to indicate height]. I had plenty of wood.

JM: You made the [inaudible] ones too.