Franco-American Salem Oral History: Orille L'Heureux

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INTERVIEWEE: Orille L’Heureux

INTERVIEWER: Elizabeth Blood, Salem State University,

with Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello, Salem State University

DATE: June 28, 2011

LOCATION: at the home of Orille L’Heureux, south Salem, MA

(Note: words in italics were spoken in English)

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: 1:25:44

00:00

EB: OK? Alright, what is your name?

OL: My name is Orille L’Heureux

EB: L’Heureux. And you are from Salem?

OL: Yes, I was born here and I am still here.

00:21

EB: Alright, we’re going to begin a little with what you know about your family. How did they arrive here from...?


EB: And her family came from Quebec as well?

OL: Rockston Falls. It’s near Sherbrooke.

01:15

EB: Alright. And your grandfather from----?

OL: He’s the one who came from Sherbrooke.

EB: From Sherbrooke.
OL: Yes, all the L’Heureux’s... I have some photos there-- some photos over there-- they’re of the L’Heureux’s of Rockston Falls.

EB: Ah, ok.

EDO: (We’ll take pictures of those after).

EB: So, your grandfather came from Sherbrooke and your grandmother came with her family?

OL: That, I’m not too clear about that.

EB: Ok. But they married here in Salem?

OL: I don’t know. [pause] If I had my-- I have the genealogy but I don’t have it with me.

EB: Ok.

OL: I have it with me somewhere. [gesture]

EB: So your parents were born--?

OL: No, my mother was born in Canada. She arrived here--she was three-- three months old.

EB: OK.


EB: And your mother? Did he meet your mother here in the United States, or----?

OL: Oh, yes. That is another history that--uh-- my mother and my father were married in 1932. And, uh, my father was born in 1894. My mother was born in 1905. So, there were eleven years separating them. And the reason for which I am here-- and my brother and my sisters-- it’s because my father wasn’t-- my father wasn’t married until the age of 38, my mother at 27.

03:17

EB: Ok.

OL: We were all born at the house. All three. My father--my grandfather had a hotel and my father, he was the manager, and, uh, there was an apartment, downstairs. A small apartment, and, uh--

[video freezes here]

05:58

OL: And, well you know, in this photo, there was the *soubassement*-- how do you say? The basement?
EB: The basement.

OL: The basement of the Old Town Hall, it’s-- there was a butcher shop.

EB: And this is the same grandfather?

OL: Yes.

EB: Who had the hotel and the butcher shop?

OL: Yes.

EB: Yes?

OL: No, not yet-- not during the same time.

EB: Ah?

OL: No, the hotel is during 188-- 1928. So, the reason that my father became the manager, it’s that him and his brother, during this time, there-- there was-- each had a store. My father had a store-- how do you say it?-- affordable items for-- canned goods.

EB: Canned goods?

OL: Canned goods, yes. For three years. And so his brother had a butcher shop, and between them, in three years they accumulated 25 thousand dollars. Between 1924--27. Anyway, they sold their stores. They left for Florida. And there they had an excellent time. They spent all their money. They bought some properties and-- the properties were under the water.

EB: Yes?

OL: [laughter] Well the lands-- I still have some maps. They were under water.

EB: Under water? [laughter]

OL: Well, they returned. There was-- they had a car. They went as far as Providence, Rhode Island. And then they had to-- there was only 25 cents left between them. They had to call Dad. He went to get him. It’s-- my grandfather had bought the hotel and it was my father who became the manager. In 1925, or so.

EB: Alright, when was the market in the Old Town Hall? What period was this during?

OL: Uh-- around 1900 to 1933, because it moved to Front Street in 1933. And there, it’s all-- it’s one of the brothers of my father who bought the market. And there he sold it in 1973, because of urban renewal.

09:20
EB: So then the market, was it for the Franco-Americans or for everyone?

OL: Everyone, everyone.

EB: But did the Franco-Americans go there because it was a (French) store?

OL: Oh, yes. [laughter]

EB: Yes? Were there other stores in Salem like that one?

OL: Oh, yes.

EB: Did they know that they were stores of Franco-Americans?

09:47

OL: Ah, yes. In the-- the people from the Point that I was-- there were many, yes. Audet, Genest, Tremblay, uh, Bouchard, Pelletier. There were many of them.

EB: Very well. So, did you-- you, as a child, did you work in the stores or did you help your parents?

OL: I worked in the stores when I was young. The store of Mr. Pelletier and my uncle’s store, my uncle Paul who had the new Subway Market who had moved the town hall to Front Street. Front Street. Then it’s-- the place opposite--number 26, that’s opposite the Shanty. The Shanty.

EB: On the little road?

OL: Yes. It was on the corner there.

11:03

EB: Very well. So, was there-- to return to your childhood-- did -- did you go to St. Joseph’s School?

OL: Yes.

EB: Like many other Franco-Americans. How was this school?

11:18

OL: It was very good. It was good, you know, we had the sisters who-- the discipline was always there. So, if you didn’t listen, you had to go to public school. [laughter]

EB: So, people preferred St. Joseph’s school?

OL: Oh, yes. Because I stayed for high school, and my two sisters as well. And my brother, he was at St. John’s Prep. He was-- really, he was at Assumption. We don’t know what happened,
but the second year he told our mother that he-- he didn’t want to return to Assumption. A week before the classes began! So he managed to go to St. John’s Prep. It’s [Inaudible]

12:26

EB: So at school, they spoke French or English or--?

OL: Uh, both.

EB: Both. And--?

OL: Yes, we had some subjects in English and we had some subjects in French. Religion and the French language were in French. [laughter] And so all-- in French I’d say it wasn’t translation because we spoke French. The teachers, they were there to teach us proper French, uh, it was difficult. [laughter]

EB: But it was fun?

OL: Oh, yes. Yes.

13:06

EB: And so what did-- at home, did you speak French or English?

OL: Both, but mostly, in the beginning it was French because my grandparents only spoke French. So, it’s-- in the beginning, it was always French.

EB: But afterwards?

OL: After several years-- they went-- I don’t remember when their English came back, but it’s that-- it must-- three, four years, perhaps. That’s an estimate. I don’t remember.

EB: Alright, so it was a mix? French and English?

OL: A mix, a mix.

EB: And with your friends, when you were in town, where did you play?

OL: Oh, yes, we played, we played. We would meet to go to the cinema every Saturday or Sunday. We walked down Lafayette Street-- the theater was at the end-- we had three theaters. The largest was Paramount Theater. Very beautiful, very beautiful.

EB: Was it downtown?

OL: Downtown on Essex Street. It’s where the-- the municipal garage and the Museum there? What-- Museum Place.
EB: Yes.

OL: It’s there that-- it was very bad-- uh, how would I say this-- to destroy this beautiful, beautiful, beautiful building. [Shrugs, says softly] I don’t know why. There was a special organ there that a player between the-- several players to operate it. There were always two-- two? Sites?

EB: Shows?

OL: Two films. Two films.

EB: So then, you were there every Saturday to--?

OL: Saturdays and sometimes Sunday. However the parish also had its own cinemas Friday night. It was tapagueux. [Laughter]

EB: Tapagueux? What does--?

OL: Tapagueux. It was noisy.

EB: Ah!

OL: Because the priest was there with his-- his-- how do you say it in French-- its him who conducted the film there. How does one say that in French?

EB: What is it in English?

OL: The film-- [Grimace]

EB: The projectionist?

OL: Projectionist!

EB: Yes. Uhh--?

OL: Le projectionniste?

EB: [Laughter] Yes, projectionist, that’s alright. [Laughter] And so was it a religious film or--?

OL: No, no, not too religious. Other than that there were films-- like the films that continued. Some--?

EB: From a series or--?

OL: A series, yes. Flash Gordon. The Lone Ranger.

EB: Were these films in French or English?
OL: Oh, all in English. All in English. Very little in French.

17:16

EB: And, were there other events organized by the parish, or--?

OL: Oh, yes. We always had religious festivals, mainly. A parade in the time of-- the month of May. It’s the month of Mary. It was very large. We walked around the-- the church, but not only around the church, down several streets with-- with the incense and 10 other priests from the other parishes and their friends. They were all dressed with their-- how do you say that there? [Pointing to forehead] Hmm.

EB: The bishop?

OL: The bishop, no, no. The special hat that-- that they wore-- [moment of silence]. There’s a word for-- you?

EB: I don’t--

OL: Like in Rome-- what do the bishops wear there?

EB: Yes?

EDO: Oh, the little hats like that?

OL: No, no, not that. Not that. There’s-- myself, I don’t remember this word. There’s a word.

EDO: [Quietly] Mitre?

OL: There was a special word for this hat. We have to figure this out.

EB: Was it for special celebrations?

OL: No. Sometimes there were priests who wore-- it was their daytime hat. Their everyday hat.

EB: Alright, so the festival of the month of May. Did you celebrate the festival of Saint John the Baptist?

OL: No, no. We didn’t celebrate--.

EB: It’s a Quebecois festival.

OL: No, no.

EB: Alright, there was Christmas--.
OL: No, I know that in the city of Lowell, them, they celebrated the festival of St. John the Baptist. Also, in Biddeford, Maine there was a great big festival. There was-- it was in the past--the last week.

EB: Yes.

OL: Because we went several times to their festival, there was-- the Richelieu [the Richelieu Club] always had-- a-- how do you say that in French?-- a place to promote our club. And we sang. We sang in French, naturally. [Laughter]

EB: Yes.

OL: You know, there were many years when we weren’t-- we weren’t invited to that festival. I don’t know why. I think it’s because the clubs don’t-- don’t participate anymore. [Pronouncing more clearly] Don’t participate any longer.

EB: Yeah. [Unintelligible] local-- that’s good.

OL: It’s very good. It’s great.

EB: But there was never anything like that in Salem for the Franco-Americans?

20:48

OL: Oh, yes, yes. When-- almost every year. There were some carnivals in the school courtyard. For the-- naturally, for the church. It was very good with, uh-- how do you say that? The wheel that-- the ferris wheel. [Laughter] And the horses there-- the horses-- the horses. [Pronouncing more clearly] The horses! And next, the-- the games of chance. Oh, yes, when we were young, it-- because, myself, I was in Cherry street and to the church, it was two minutes by foot.

21:42

EB: Yes. Not too far. So the children, in the-- they played in the neighborhood, or--?

OL: Yes, in the street. Next to our house, in the-- there was an empty lot, a free space where we played baseball et then-- and then what happened [22:03] when the war, the Second World War began, the neighbors-- all Canadians-- shared the land to make gardens. And who-- we-- my father also. We had-- we had the largest garden. Our, our crop was white corn. It was-- we had cucumbers, tomatoes, all sorts of other things. Someone had to-- how do you say-- till the soil with a pitchfork.

EB: Yes?

OL: It’s me who began to do that when I was 12.

EB: Alright.
OL: But apart from that, during the war, my father had decided to have some chickens. So he had bought a truck, only the body-- only the body, the body. And then he had that installed in our corner and he had constructed some pièges-- is it? Pièges?

EB: Some shelves?

OL: No, no, some-- [gesturing]-- where the chickens--

EDO: Like a coop?

OL: Where the chickens sleep at night. And then a little table had to be made and it was I who did the [unintelligible]. Then we placed the manure in some baskets, and we used that for some-- for our vegetables that we had in the garden. We had [unintelligible]-- how do you say that in French? Saucepan? How do you say that in French? Hey! [Laughter]

EB: A saucepan? A saucepan? Yes?

OL: And each ba--ba--ba--ba--ba. [gesturing] Everywhere. So, the chickens, we started with 20 and then there were always-- my father bought the small, the small chickens. And so there were always three, four roosters. And then it was certain when the roosters to grow, they begin to-- they begin to-- how do you say that?-- coo--coo--coo--coo? The morning-- as soon as the sunrise. And then Madame Bouchard, our neighbor, she had—she telephoned my father and she said [high--pitched voice] <<Monsieur L'Heureux, your roosters make we wake up too early in the morning!>> [Laughter] Anyway, once the roosters were big enough, we had that for dinner. And when there were many of them-- then we had eggs. And my father, he had-- I think that he had thought of this-- below-- underneath, [unintelligible]-- it went down two feet. It was there where there were replacements. It's there that-- because when the chickens stopped laying eggs, they became dinner, and So there was a sort of rotation that my father had.

26:21

EB: That's very good because it was a period when people didn't have much to--

OL: We had a lot of meat. All chickens. But there was-- my uncle had my grandfather's store and he had some pork and some beef from time to time. There was that my uncle Henri-- he had-- he had been drafted into the army. He wasn't married. And so all of a sudden a carton arrived-- a box-- a carton all covered with blood. A fat piece of meat. Around, around.

EB: Around? Yes?

OL: Ok, my father had all around-- and so we had meat for a good while. And we also shared it. I don't know with whom, but I know that we shared.
EB: So, the people in the neighborhood helped each other?

OL: Oh, yes, yes, yes. It was very good because all, all my friends were Canadians-- Franco-Americans. Americans. Because only-- not all. There some people-- some-- who didn’t speak French.

EB: Who lived there--?

OL: Who lived in the same place, yes.

EB: But, in general, they were Franco-Americans?

OL: Oh, yes, yes, yes.

EB: They didn’t have much contact with the--?

OL: The house that we had, it was a house for two families. And that-- also, there was one house-- there were two houses. Two families in the house in the back, and there was the house in the front. There, there was a house with six apartments. In the beginning, there were four apartments, but my father made two more of the [gesturing, pointing up]-- third--

EB: In the attic?

OL: Yes, in the attic! Exactly. And then we had-- we were six in four bedrooms, five bedrooms and my mother said we were going to move from-- the second-- the---- in the second, they had nine rooms. It was only a couple. Anyway, so my father said that we wanted the apartment and we went up to the second, to the third. The only ones who didn’t have ones [of their own]-- were my two sisters who slept in the same bedroom, and me, I had my room to myself. Then, who else? My brother, my parents. We were all on the third floor. But we had a bedroom on the second that, before that, belonged to the first. There was a special staircase. It’s there that my brother and I slept, but my father, when he moved to the second, took this bedroom. He closed off the door. And then-- but, what happened? It came to pass that my grandmother, my grandmother became a widow. And at that time-- it was 1947-- and they owned three houses and received 25 thousand. It was a lot of money. So he moved out of the small apartment. It was Mill Street that-- you know that-- where the – Canal. Canal, is there a garage there?

EB: Yes.

OL: His house-- it was me and my uncle with some people afterwards-- my wife, her father had a store and he had a truck. It was with the truck that he moved. We got rid of a lot. He made some nice lamps with [gesturing]-- how do you say that? Some old lamps with some [gesturing]--
EB: Tassels? Fabric?

31:35

OL: Some--

EB: [Laughter] I don’t know.

OL: That, that--

EB: Glass lamps, or--?

OL: No, no, not glass. There’s a special name for – on the, uh, how do you say that in French? The-- the top of the lamp that covers-- I can’t even think in English. This thing. [Pointing to lamp]

EB: The lamp shade?

OL: Lamp shade! Yeah, and it was all kind of-- there were all kinds of things dangling. We threw out two or three of those. [Laughter] Goodbye. It was a little apartment with three bedrooms. A small kitchen--

EB: So, you moved a lot, but always in the same, in the same neighborhood. Always in the same area.

32:45

OL: Oh, yes, yes. The first apartment that my father had was on Ropes Street. When I left for the army, I married. And there was an apartment there-- empty during vacations. And then, my father had a special price. And there, the house next to my apartment belonged to my friends, and we had five bedrooms, my father’s. That house had six bedrooms. I told my friend, I said, <<When you’re ready, concerning the house, I’m interested. >> He came. He told me it was time-- I said OK and blah--blah. We went through the formalities. And I bought that house. And I remained there many years, and then the house, when we moved here, it’s that we had-- after a couple of years there was a large fire at the house. So we had to move to my-- to my mother’s family’s house-- of my wife’s family in Marblehead and-- for three months-- and there, the rents of six bedrooms-- two rents and six bedrooms became four rents and three bedrooms. [Laughter] And after a few years my wife said <<I’ve had enough. I’ve had enough of this.>> So I said, <<You find a house>> and yes, it’s this one here that she found, in 1959. The next month, it will be 42 years that we’ve been here. And we’re not moving. [Laughter]

EB: But this street-- this neighborhood isn’t a francophone neighborhood. There are people here from all over the place.
OL: From all over, yes. But even on the street, there were some people on Cherry Street. We had other people as well. There were jews, poles, and we got along very well. There was only one family that didn’t get along because the man, he didn’t want us to play on his sidewalk. We couldn’t have our skates, we couldn’t have our bicycles. Anyway, on Halloween, we paid him back. [Laughter]

35:45

EB: Ha--ha! But were there other Franco-American traditions at the house, like New Year’s Day? Did the father do--?

OL: Oh, yes. My father did-- he gave us the benediction. [Makes sign of the cross]

EB: The benediction.

OL: We had to get on our knees. On our knees.

36:10

EB: And concerning food, were there any particular dishes?

OL: No, my mother. Yes, my mother-- oh, I forgot. To continue on the subject of my grandmother. We must return to that for a bit. After she had decided-- she had decided to travel, but she had to have a companion, but the companion had no money. The 25 thousand dollars disappeared in five years. So my grandmother, mémère, she said, <<I have no more money. Take care of me.>> So the three daughters took their turn. There were four daughters and there were three who took their turn. We had our turn. The bedroom that we had there, it’s to say, it’s like the bedroom for my mother sewed and ironed. It became the bedroom of my mémère. And in the room, we had-- in the kitchen, a rocking chair that mémère, she [Makes rocking motion] She criticized. She criticized that my mother-- how she was raising us. <<I told you what I’d do if they were mine!>> My mother said, <<Ma!>> and <<I told you what I’d do if they were mine!>> But my grandmother was a cook. My mother loved that, that she helped in the kitchen. And there, there was enough pork, and pork soup, and cortons, and meat pies. Uh--

EB: Tourtiere?

OL: Some tourtiere-- which I still make.

EB: And the-- salmon?

OL: Salmon pie.

EB: Yes. And you also make the soup?

OL: Yes.
EB: Pea soup. Yes, every year, he made it.

OL: I'm going to make some for myself in the month of August.

38:52

EB: And, alright. Let's continue, then.

OL: Let's get back. Where were we?

EB: Well, I-- I was asking some questions about your youth, but it's interesting too-- So, then you moved from Cherry Street—

OL: To Ropes.

EB: To the other side, at Ropes.

OL: Yes, it's very close.

EB: And you said that it was-- it wasn't the same neighborhood. It wasn't the Point, it--

OL: No, no. It was South Salem.

EB: South Salem.

OL: South Salem. It's wrong, what was in the newspaper yesterday. The Point, it's the other side of Lafayette.

EB: Nearby--

OL: Congress up until--

EDO: Leavitt?

OL: Just-- yes. Chase, Leavitt, Chase. It makes a-- after that. It becomes Lafayette Place after then some other places.

40:12

EB: So the other side, it was South Salem.

OL: South Salem.

EB: But it was also a neighborhood with many Franco-Americans?

OL: Oh, yes, yes.

EB: And was it from the point of view of the culture or--?
OL: No, no, no, no. No, no, no.

EB: More houses than apartments, or--?

OL: Yes, many, many apartments. Many houses as well. And the land there, at the end of the day the woman who owned it sold it. Then there were some private houses that she owned there. I think five. She owned another, on Porter Street, and she owned another plot of land of Lafayette Street, just across from [pause] the gas station there. Levesque Funeral Home and then--

EB: Yes.

OL: There were two. I think there were two [inaudible] there. And we played football there.

EB: What?

OL: We played football in this field.

EB: Ah! American football?

41:43

OL: Yes, yes, yes. Then the fields, the three fields had houses on them before. But after the fire it-- all that there was [inaudible].

EB: That was the Great Fire?

OL: The Great Fire of Salem in 1914. My father stayed at Pond Street which is nears Ropes. There, there was Ropes. [Gesturing] So my father said that we had-- that there had been a little hoodlum. He said <<stop peeing>>. [Laughter] And the house burned down! So the people-- they were-- they went to Lynn with their family. My grandfather rebuilt, but it was a brick house. Brick. He was there for several years until my uncle Charles—he’s the one who had it last----he had the house for some years. And he had four children and then there was a tenant upstairs. So it went well. He was marvelous, this uncle. He had----he had a sense of humor. [Laughter] Oh, there was one time when he said, <<That smells like ass.>> [Laughter]

EB: I don’t understand.

OL: Something that happens-- something that happened. He was marvelous. And the others, the other uncles-- there was one who-- who [inaudible] alcohol. He died young, at 48. And so, my other uncle, who also had this problem, for him, it wasn’t as bad as my other uncle, Louis. My uncle Henri, he never married. He had a woman who stayed with him. Then, all of a sudden, my uncle Louis, Henri, and his woman who lived with him, and her mother. [Laughter] A ménage à quatre. That’s the house that burnt recently.

EB: Recently?
OL: On the-- yes, a few months ago.

EB: Where was it?

OL: The big fire-- near the Hawthorne Hotel.

EB: Ah, yes, in the Salem--

OL: Yes, it was a boarding house that my uncle had.

EB: Ah really? During what period?

OL: Oh I don’t remember that-- ’50 the 50’s, 60’s.

EB: Yes, because there were many small apartments in this building.

OL: Yes. But now, it was studios.

EB: Yes.

OL: Yes, with a private bath. But my father said that there were some of them in the newspaper. He saw 20 that had been in the area. But it was the second big fire in this building. After the first, they cut out a big piece. They didn’t rebuild it.

EB: Now, it’s [inaudible]

OL: Yes, the family of my father had a lot of----there were many who had apartments.

46:30

EB: And you as well.

OL: And I as well. It-- how do you say that, it’s-- coincidentally that my father who had a store, the butcher shop, and me, I bought a store. My father had a hotel, and me, I bought some—

46:56

EB: So, to continue, you went to St. Joseph’s, and for high school as well?

OL: Yes.

EB: And then you left for Boston College?

OL: Boston College.

EB: where you studied what?

EB: And after university, did you return, or did you?

OL: No.

EB: What did you do?

OL: It was because of the draft. Greeting. A week after graduation, I received a letter and then I went into the army in September. September '55. Then I was stationed in Germany. Around a year and a half. [Laughter]

EB: Were there--

OL: As soon as I got out, I got married.

48:00

EB: And how did you meet your wife?

OL: Yes, what happened is I got a car. We travelled to Boston College every day. I had some passengers. There were always four or five of us. In any event, the car would stop and one of my passengers said << I know a girl who lives in Marblehead who's going to start going to B.C.>> With the three of us, three Canadians, one stayed on Lafayette, the other stayed on Holly Street, then I stayed-- she had to go up to Peabody because she had a boyfriend as well, a friend-- a friend who-- she had-- my wife, she was at the Sainte Chretienne school for French sisters. She could read and understand French, so she could speak at the time.

49:17

EB: Was she Franco-American as well?

OL: No, she's Irish.

EB: Irish. But she went to Sainte Chretienne?

OL: For 12 years.

EB: Then she could speak and understand French?

OL: Yes, yes. At the time, yes. So, then, I don't know what happened, but all of a sudden, we had-- my father bought us a new car and so she and her friend and us three-- there were always five or six of us. We went and-- [gesture]

EB: Commuting.

OL: To go and to return. Commuting, yes! Commuting—
EB: And what happened, because she had a boyfriend? Well?

OL: After some time, my brother [Roger] went as well—and Virginia was at B.C. too. He took physics. He had a lot of [pointing to brain]. But with-- we travelled. Back and forth. And we went on trips up north with-- there were groups, skiing groups, for those who drank. My wife and I, no, we didn’t drink.

EB: You didn’t drink?

OL: We didn’t drink at all.

50:42

EB: So you began to talk to each other?

OL: We called them drunks! [Laughter] Those who were sick. And—

EB: Is that how it began? Did she wait during the years that you were in Germany?

OL: Yes, yes. I didn’t know at first that I was in love with her. I knew once I had been in Germany for a few months. So, I wrote a letter. I said, <<I love you. We’re gonna get married.>> <<OK!>> [Laughter] I left the last day of the month of August and we married the 12th of October.

EB: Very quick!

OL: Oh, yes!

EB: So, how long have you been together?

OL: 50—it was done fifty--four years ago.

EB: 54 years. Congratulations!

OL: We have four very good children—beautiful and good. [Eyes watering]

52:05

EB: So then, the-- in the-- you returned, you were married, then you bought a house. Right?

OL: Not right away. I was an accountant at two offices. Two or three offices. Two. Then I was quickly cleared. I resigned. So my uncle owned a store on Congress Street, with someone else. Then the other one, he wanted to leave. And it was me, I bought his part. And a year later, I bought my uncle’s part. It was my mother’s brother. He wasn’t-- how do you say-- good for-- he wasn’t-- he wanted money but he didn’t want--
EB: The work.

OL: The work. And so it was I who took it because, myself, I told him, "If you want to buy it, me" [shrugs]. Anyway, it was arranged with the bank. I worked with him for a year. He was a good guy, but not for being my partner.

53:56

EB: And what was the market called?

OL: In the beginning, North Shore Market. I changed it two-- two times. The name.

EB: Yes. What were the others?

OL: The second name was JGA. The third name, it’s a name that-- my cousin came on with me-- MultiSave. Multi Save. It was my kids and nephews who worked there and called it "Multi Slave". [Laughter]

EB: 54:22

EB: And what street was that on?

OL: What, now?

EB: No, the store, what street was it on?

OL: Congress. Congress Street.

EB: Congress Street.

OL: And then when I bought the store, the house next door came with the store, but I didn’t move into the house. There I began-- I began renting rooms illegally. Then there was a big fire and a friend-- at this time there wasn’t a-- there was no-- how do you say? Licensing board. There was a policeman nominated who ran everything. And he-- this was my friend. Laurent Bedard. Oh, and then he, he had two-- he was a policeman but he also worked at Stop and Shop, as a butcher. As a butcher, because he had 10 children. 10! [Laughter] 10 children!

55:42

EB: And then?

OL: And he helped me to-- in the end, he helped me when things weren’t going so well there. My employee was-- he became-- me, I became a butcher. I went to school at AGGI, Essex Aggie. And then, there were no more problems. There’s no mystery there. There was nothing do but follow the cuts. [gesturing] And then, Laurent, he helped me at that time because he came to the store. He cut. He cut everything in an hour and I returned to-- what?-- wrap?
EB: Yes.

OL: *Wrap, wrap, wrap.* And then we put the prices and placed them on the counter.

EB: And you spoke-- in the store, did they speak English or--?

56:50

OL: Both. In the beginning, it was almost all French. It was a French neighborhood. A French-Canadian neighborhood. I had many-- also, there were factories in back where many of these people worked. They would leave the factory Saturdays, Thursdays, and Fridays for-- how do you say that-- their *checks.* And their big baskets. And we would deliver. We delivered.

EB: And, um, what was I going to say? I forget now. [Laughter] Anyway, there was the store and the buildings as well. And--

OL: Yes, I had bought the building. The first I bought was an apartment building. And the second-- I bought three houses after that-- in the space of three or four months. Then my brother and then Virginia, they were looking for a house in Salem. I was with them; my father, my mother, and Virginia didn’t like this house while I did. I saw it and it would be an apartment building. That’s what I made of it. It went very well. It was in 1959.

EB: In ’59.

OL: The month of May.

EB: And when was-- when did the neighborhood begin to change?

OL: It began to change around the 60’s. First, it was the-- how do you say-- *white trash.* They weren’t really *white trash,* but the women there without husbands but with lots of children in--

EB: Who didn’t have much money?

OL: *Welfare.* How do you say that in French? Eh-- yes, yes-- there’s a word. There’s a word for that. And so, after some time, in the-- after 1970 the Hispanics began to arrive. I didn’t have trouble with them. Because I spoke Spanish a little bit, at that time. I learned more with them. I went to school again, at North Shore, to learn it.

EB: Very well. And when di-- I know that you’re a member of the *Club Richelieu*-- when did the club begin?

01:00:22

OL: In Salem, in 1965. But me, I joined in 1970. It was Emile Devoe who had-- on the corner of my store’s street was his studio. And then we became very good friends. He asked me to join the club, and I joined and then--
EB: Can you explain what Club Richelieu is?

OL: Club Richelieu is a club that promotes the French language and helps the young to try-- to share our heritage-- to improve.

EB: And are there many members?

OL: Oh, yes. We’re around 30 and we’ve gone up to 49. Yes, yes.

EB: And what are the-- what have you done?

OL: Oh, every June we’d go to Camp Naumkeag to paint the buildings that they have there. It was more-- because the women there-- there were women Naumkeag Associates-- who lead the business of the-- of this place. And we cooked a big meal. We brought our own drinks and we gave them a donation on top of that. It went very well, until a few years ago-- around 15 years. A new mayor who came in and fired these women, and the town took control and it didn’t go well. It didn’t go well. There were many chairs and tables. And the chairs and tables disappeared. So we, when we had a get together there, we had to bring our own chairs and tables and what happened was that Armand, at the time he worked for Kernwood Country Club. And there was-- they were throwing out-- for the tables—they were throwing out the-- [gesturing] how do you say that?

EB: The tablecloths?

EDO: The legs?

OL: The legs! The legs, the legs, the legs. They gave the legs and, me, I bought the wood and Armand made the tables. And for the chairs, the club where Bertrand worked. They were throwing out the chairs. And, boom, boom, boom, at the house. Him and Rachelle-- do you know Rachelle?

EB: No.

OL: No? Oh, his wife who painted in blue-- blue chairs. And they had everything there and I saw. I said <<Ah, You didn’t paint underneath!>> [Laughter] And so there--

EB: So the picnic. And there were meetings every month?

OL: Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes.

EB: Always at the Hawthorne Hotel?

OL: Oh, no, no. We had many places. That began at the Hawthorne Hotel. And then I don’t know what happened because I wasn’t-- eh-- how do you say that-- active in the beginning because I was a prisoner in my store. So I don’t know, all of a sudden they said another place. It
was always downtown near the fountain—nearby—Museum Hall. Museum—next to there. Near the fountain there, the one that doesn’t work?

EB: Yes, yes.

OL: And so there, there were no private rooms. It wasn’t good. It wasn’t good for us because we needed a room. And so, after that we went to the Lyceum. It was also good. And all of a sudden, the owner had a new manager, and on top of the meals we had to pay 150 dollars. So [laughter], no. And then we were at Purcell’s. You know Purcell’s was the restaurant where Bangkok is now. It was Purcell’s who owned it and it went well. It was in the cellar but the meals were good and so— the Club Nord de Boston was in this place.

EB: Was it a Franco-American restaurant or—?

OL: No, no. It was an American restaurant.

EB: And the Lyceum, was it a—?

OL: Yes, yes, it was Franco-Americans who were there.

EB: Which family was it?

OL: Boudreau.

EB: Boudreau?

OL: Boudreau. It was Joseph and Joanne Boudreau.

EB: Because I read somewhere it was the Harrington family who—?

OL: Presently, yes.

EB: And so—then, they were before the Harrington’s?

OL: Yes.

EB: Was it always called the Lyceum?

OL: Yes. Yes. The, we moved to—oh, and some stores closed and then we went—we returned to the hotel. And we’re very happy to be there.

EB: And what do you do during monthly meetings in the Club Richelieu?

01:07:58

OL: Not enough! [Laughter] In the past, it was very animated.

EB: Yes.
OL: There was a sale for all sorts of things. And it was good. Not expensive, only 25 cents.

EB: Did they sing?

OL: Oh, yes, we sang. Much more than-- it’s too bad because Pierette became President and we don’t sing anymore. [Laughter]

EB: It’s true. We sing less.

OL: We don’t sing anymore. We should sing. We used to sing all the time. And that-- to get back to Emile. He-- he became-- he was like my mentor, another father. And at the time, I had two telephones. I had a private telephone and I had a pay phone. And always-- I closed my store at nine, and-- at night-- and around five of nine, the telephone would ring. [Holding hand up to ear] <<They’re ready>>. <<They’re ready>>. The perfect Manhattan! So, I would close the store, the money in the safe, and then at the end of the street were two Manhattans. Two Manhattans that were there. We drank many Manhattans. And so, there was a time that it was he and I who made the bulletin there. He had bought a French typewriter and I knew how and so we had a lot of fun there, he and I. So after we’d finished the newsletter, we made prefect Manhattans. And one time, we started drinking Manhattans before we began the newsletter. We were there until two in the morning-- we began to laugh like fools. And at the hotel one time, he had a draft of the newsletter. And there [gesturing]-- and there he read, he read what was in the newsletter and he said <<It’s no good, blah-- blah--blah>>. And I said <<It’s too late! I’m not starting again!>> [Laughter] It’s not like on the internet. They say-- we change-- we changed.

EB: And he’s the one who started the club?

OL: No. It wasn’t him. The first president was Georges Aubertin. I found his photo recently. I looked through all my things-- my photos-- because I make-- photo albums, for my family and I’m going to start for my children.

EB: And with the children, did you speak French at home or no?

01:11:25

OL: No.

EB: English. Because--

OL: I was never here. Because that sort of thing, it’s not bad-- it must be done. It must be done.

EB: So, the children don’t speak French? Not at all?

OL: Not at all. Uh, my daughter, the older one you met, went-- went to Salem State. There she had to speak because it was Paul Madore who was the teacher. Every year-- the college had a yearly trip to Caen. To learn French.
EB: Yes, they had a program.

OL: Yes, a program, for three months, but the fools who ran the program there, they placed all the-- all the foreigners in the same dorm. My daughter-- I made a mistake to give-- how do you say-- a Eurail Pass for my daughter. She was in Ireland more than she was in France. And one year-- three months-- she called me and told me that she wanted to stay another three months. "No, my girl"! [Laughter] So then, the next, after a year-- I don’t know how long, we received 21 people from Caen. From school. Her friends. Here. [Pointing upstairs] So, they slept in the living room and all over. It was at the time-- it was at the time when we had our lobster party. My daughter, she was there. She gave the instructions.

EB: Um, we don’t have any more time on the cassette, but is there-- I’ll ask the last question. How do you describe yourself when you meet other people? Do you say that you’re Canadian, French-Canadian, Franco-American or simply American? If someone asks you--

OL: If I-- I don’t get the opportunity. No.

EB: If you had to choose.

OL: Yeah? I don’t know. No, when I meet other people-- I know lots of people in town. They know that I’m Franco. And I know if they’re Irish, Polish, Italian. We have a mix here in the town.

EB: But because you have a name that is particularly French, Orille L’Heureux, are there people who say, "But, are you French? Are you--? What is your--?"

OL: Sometimes. Sometimes. Yes. But for the spelling as well. We Anglicize-- we Anglicized my name "L’Heureux" [pronounces "Laroue"] It’s not good. Laroue. I could say Leroux, like Leroux Liquors, L E R O U X [spells word]. Or LARUE, "Larue". Lash Larue. He was an actor, some years ago. I think he was a cowboy. I have a cousin, his name is his nickname, Lash. He calls himself Lash. His real name is Gerard. I always call him Gerard, but everybody called him Lash. It’s he who began the-- how do you say-- the trash for restaurants. If you want help, he’ll go and quite easily, for example, if you want something, let him know and "cham!"-- because, Gerard, if he’s there [gesture].

EB: He picks up?

OL: It disappears. And he has-- there’s a poster on his truck-- I’ll say it in English-- "Lash is my name. Trash is my game." [Laughter]

EB: I was also going to-- someone spoke about the Klondike Club.

OL: Oh, yes, the Klondike Club, which was directly across the street from my hotel.

EB: Your grandfather’s hotel?
OL: Yes, there were town hotels. Lafayette Hotel and then Lincoln. Lincoln was my father’s and the other was another Canadian. I think that it was Levesque, but the Klondike Club is where Strega is, it’s on top.

EB: And what is it?

OL: Completely French. Completely French.

EB: Is it for dancing? Or a bar? Or--?

OL: Oh, everything! Dance, music! Because we, friends, first married-- we have school friends-- Hallow, you know what that is? It came once a month and we would go to the Klondike Club because I was-- we had walked. Oh, it was great. Some days there was music, particularly Tuesday and Saturday nights. One of my very best friends had an orchestra.

EDO: And it’s closed--?

EB: When did the club close?

01:18:35

OL: Eh-- after 10 years. What happened was, it’s that, as there were Francos there-- there were Francos. Some were valuable. The reason it closed was there was someone who took too much money-- the two guys who took the money and then they-- they went bankrupt. It’s really a shame.

EB: And when was this? 10 years ago, you said?

OL: After 10 years, I think. But, I think.

EB: The ‘90’s?

OL: I’m not certain. But it was a great place. We had a lot of-- we had a lot of marriages there and Emile, when he was a photographer, he was the one who took them for all the Francos. And at each marriage, there was a grand march. And he was the one who led it. They began two by two, then four by four, eight by eight, then the dance until sixteen, but sixteen was the most that went.

EB: What was the dance called?

OL: The grand march. The grand march.

EB: The grand march.

OL: Emile was always there. He was the director, conductor. He’s the father of Armand. But Armand, he was the eldest of eight. And I asked myself, how could there be ten people in that
house with one bathroom? If you knew, the mother stayed below, then the children, then the grandchildren [gesturing].

EB: So, anything else? Other memories?

OL: I’m sure that I could come up with more, but-- [laughter] It was [Becomes emotional]

EB: It was a good life!

OL: Good parents. Very good. And we’re still together. Us four, we see each other. We call that the round table, the round table at Angelica’s. Once a year, but before that, we did it more than once a year.

EB: With the whole family?

OL: No, no. Just the eight of us. Us four and our-- spouses. But the next time, I have an aunt who’s 89. The next time we’re going to invite her. And then, I’m having a big party on Monday. The July holiday. And then there I’ll have all my family, the families of the two sides. L’Heureux, Audette. Last year we had 49. It’s the largest we’ve had. This year I think we’ll have around 40. We never know. I’d love to know because I have to make the main dish, pork. And each family brings something. My brother, he comes, he plays accordion. We sing songs in French and English. We sing patriotic songs. Over there I have my American flag because I used the Richelieu flag, so Pierette has that in the Hampton. In fact I bought one because the one we had was a bit torn after I had examined it, so I had to go to the store to buy another one. And now, in my room, I have a large Constitution. An, old, old--

EB: Copy?

OL: An old copy of the Constitution. So I teach the young ones, the youngest who are still in school, them, so they’ll know. Oh, we have so much fun with that. That day, it’s great. It began with my mother when we were eh-- around when we were-- we four were married in two years, all the parties. But we would return, and it began. And Maria, she’s the oldest. There are 19 of us. Because we had four, Lucille had three, Roger had seven, and Lorraine had five. Every year there’s some who come and then the others. They are all invited.

EB: Very well. Do you have any other questions?

EDO: I think we are out of tape.

EB: We’re out of tape.

EDO: I think we don’t want to start another conversation right now, because it will close. I may be two minutes.

EB: We-- you used up the whole tape.
OL: Oh yeah?

EDO: You win the prize.

OL: You mean a lot of this stuff is not on tape?

EB: No, no. It’s all on tape.