

**Interview with Heather Roy**

**Timberlane Regional High School, Plaistow, New Hampshire**

**Tuesday, October 20, 2009**

**Interviewer – Scott Strainge**

**Crew – Joshua Silveira**

Q: Thank you Heather for putting up with us all these months to get to this point and what we ask all of our interviewees to do is to please state and spell your name for us

**0:19 – HJR: OK. Heather Jean Roy. H E A T H E R J E A N R O Y.**

Q: Thank you very much. That was excellent. We are done (laughs)!

**0:31- HJR: (laughs) I passed!**

Q: The first thing we ask is can you just tell us from your perspective what it is that makes Berlin special?

**0:43 – HJR: I think what makes Berlin special are the people there in the small community that is there. I mean when I grew up there every one knew everyone. It was a safe place and we could leave our houses and you know go a couple of miles away and take our bikes, go down town, hang out with friends. Our parents wouldn't have to worry that something was happening. They knew we would come home after. You would go out and you would see people that you know. Everyone that you saw you knew and you could have a conversation with. So it wasn't like you were walking down the street and you know you didn't know who people were. They knew you and they knew you well and it was nice because you knew them and you knew them well.**

Q: What year were you born?

**1:28 – HJR: I was born in 1983.**

Q: And were you born in Berlin?

**1:31 – HJR: Yes.**

Q: Born and raised in Berlin?

**1:33 – HJR: Yes.**

Q: What was it like growing up in Berlin in the late 1980's and early 1990's?

**1:39 – HJR: I would say the early 1990's is what I remember. I mean we didn't know anything else, so it was kind of everything that we knew. It was just a lot of; you know**

**you would always be with friends, hanging out in the neighborhoods, going outside a lot, kind of playing outside. Athletics was huge in my life. That is what kept me busy. From when I was six or seven I was playing on my sister's softball team, probably the youngest one on the team and everyone would play. It was kind of like the social aspect of what you would do. We grew up, my family grew up with athletics so that's what kept us busy but a lot of families, people went hunting, and there was a lot of outdoors activities. I don't remember ever kind of sitting inside. It was always just going out you know, what are we doing? What is going on? Are we skiing this weekend? Are we going hiking? Snowshoeing? Going Ice Fishing? It was kind of like there was just always something going on and every time you did something you would see people you knew and there was just that kind of feeling of you know kind of a community.**

Q: Were there still in the nineties were there still sort of distinct neighborhoods or were they things of the past by then?

**2:58 – HJR: Yeh, they were things of the past. I remember in high school learning about it. Maybe they were distinct at that time but I didn't recognize them or my friends and I didn't think about them. I remember in US History learning about them and that was the first time that I had ever really knew about them. I think in the Nineties they were probably still around but I was young and was not really thinking about that culture.**

Q: How much of that ethnic diversity remained into the nineties? Were there people speaking French and Norwegian and Russian and all of the languages? Was that all still around or had that sort of gone by the wayside a bit?

**3:36 – HJR: I was familiar with the French because my Memere and Pepere spoke French and my great grandmother and great grandfather spoke French. My great grandfather we would go over and he was smoking his pipe and I didn't understand a word. I don't even know if he spoke English that great. So, we would go and watch TV and my parents would talk and so we didn't even know what they were saying. They just spoke all French. But, that was the last generation of that language that I was familiar with. Then when my great grandfather passed away and my Pepere passed away you know no one in my family speaks French fluently right now.**

Q: So, you talked about sports sort of being a center piece for the community. Can you talk a little more about that?

**4:18 – HJR: Yeh, just since growing up I was, I have always been involved in sports. I think a lot of people in the community have been because it was sort of a social thing too. It wasn't just the athletics and the competition; it was like a community and the pride, the pride that everyone had towards the sport that they were playing no matter what. I mean we would travel down two, three hours away to play a game and to us that was completely normal, but we wouldn't just go, we would have more fans than the other teams. I mean the whole town would come. I remember playing softball in high**

school. It was the State Championship Game. We drove down to Concord three times and it got rained out three days in a row, so we would drive down and have to turn around and come back, drive down and every time we would have a line of cars following us down and following us just turning around and going back home and coming back the next day to come support us and cheer us on. So, it was kind of one of those things that brought the community together. It was a common interest in everyone, and jus the pride I think of Berlin was just shown through the athletics and it was a way to kind of show our pride in who we were.

Q: The late Eighties and early Nineties is also sort of the beginning of the downturn of the city of Berlin and a lot of difficult times economically, mills closing, opening, closing, opening, shrinking in size and importance. So how aware were you going through high school of some of the economic difficulties that the city was facing?

**6:01 – HJR: I want to say not as aware as other families because my parents didn't work in the mill, so I wasn't seeing the first hand impact of the mill closing or people being afraid of losing their jobs. I mean I would hear my friends talk about it but I still wasn't able to I think understand the full impact of the job loss. You know you would hear people, everyone would talk about it but it didn't really hit home for me and my family because we weren't a part of it. The mill was a part of Berlin since I was born but wasn't I think as big as it was years ago with the logging and you know that was the way of life for a long time. It was already starting to pull away from that. Again I think because my parents weren't working in the mill it didn't directly affect us at my house so we weren't able to really see that impact like other families. You know I remember my friend constantly worrying about her Dad losing his job and I just didn't get that as much as maybe you know someone else would.**

Q: One of the things that a lot of the folks we have spoken to talk about is that your generation is the generation that has left Berlin, but not come back.

**7:11 – HJR: Yeh.**

Q: Why do you see that happening with your generation in particular?

**7:16 – HJR: I think my generation was a generation that went away to college. I think a lot of my parent's generation a lot of them are still there but they never really left. They had job opportunities there when they got done high school and they were able to support themselves and start a family and they had the opportunities where now it is like you have to go to college to get a job. I think when people leave and get away they realize there are opportunities elsewhere, just the proximity between Berlin and anywhere in Southern New Hampshire. We would travel three hours to go to the mall, three hours to go to the beach and at one point in our lives that was completely normal. We didn't know anything else, but when you step away from that and do and live down where there are more activities you start realize how convenient everything is being**

**right around you. I think just the opportunities; the job market just isn't up there anymore.**

Q: One of the things that we have heard from everybody and in conversations with you we have talked about this too, is the pride that people have in that community even though it has faced its difficult moment, there still is that pride. Can you talk about that and what that means to you?

**8:33 – HJR: I mean I think you don't realize the pride of Berlin until you leave it and come back. I just Remember going to college and talking to my friends who were from Massachusetts you know different towns and they would say "oh I went home for the holidays and I saw a few people the I knew." When we go home for the holidays you know everyone is out, you know. You are all hanging out together maybe at a local pub and everyone is talking and it is not just like you are just in touch with one or two people you are talking to your old teachers, to your old coaches, to your friends, to your parents friends and you have stories to tell of growing up in Berlin. "Oh remember that game that we lost or remember that play that this person made?" I think it is just you know that we are so close that our pride is from our relationships that we have with everyone. You know we want to still support that and show how strong that is, and I don't think other communities have that relationship.**

Q: What was high school like in the nineties in Berlin?

**9:33 – HJR: It was, we had about 500 students I would say. So it was still pretty... I mean it was pretty big, but everyone knew everyone. I would say I pretty much knew everyone in the whole school. A lot of the teachers had taught our parents, so there were those connections, you know. They knew your family history. They were there for a while. Again most of high school, our high school was focused on athletics and the team spirit and homecoming was unbelievable. We would have a parade, we would build floats, we would build dummies of the opposite team and throw them in the fire. We would have a big bonfire at the end of the night. It was just... now someone would listen to you and say "oh my god that is just horrible" but it wasn't about that. It was the pride and everyone was there together as a town supporting each other. So, high school for me was basically going to school focusing on academics and doing athletics at night and that was what kept me busy.**

Q: And what were some of the things that you and you friends would do to keep busy in Berlin during the summer?

**10:42 – HJR: During the summer a lot of time we would bike. We would take our bikes from probably fifth grade and just bike down town and just go to shops or go to Horne's Field and hang out at the field. Brown School had a playground. We would just kind of hang out. We would go swimming, water skiing, canoeing. Any time that we could get**

**access to someone's camp, there are a lot of camps up in Errol, we would you know take advantage of the water and the water skiing.**

Q: What roll did the River (Androscoggin) play in all of this for you?

**11:06 – HJR: The river didn't really play much of a role for our generation. Only recently have I seen a few of kayaks and stuff up the river and further up the river I know people are kind of doing more boating and canoeing. It was almost something that we never touched. We would be worried if our softball got hit in the river (laughs). That was as far as the river impacted us. It wasn't used at all, at least down in the center of the town. There was nothing really on the river.**

Q: And what about the downtown area? What were some of the places you would go there? You said you would take your bike and go downtown. What were some of the places you would hang out in the downtown area?

**11:58 – HJR: Yeh we would just go to different shops, Hallmark. You would go to a shop and you would say "oh you would just go to shops all day?" but you would go and you would see someone you would know so then you would have those conversations and you would talk to you know the people who own the shops and they would know what was going on with you in high school and they would ask you questions about you know how you were doing and so it was like more of a social aspect. It was to get out of the house and go and see people downtown. Middle Earth was a shop that we used to go to a lot. We used to go to restaurants. KFC used to be there, it is not there anymore. We used to hang out at KFC. The Arena, we would go to the arena if there were any games going on. In the winter we spent a lot of time at the Arena. It was just more of a social thing you know, just kind of driving around, getting outside and seeing people, seeing who we could see that day you know, who was out.**

Q: What are some of the stories you remember your parents or grandparents talking about in terms of Berlin and its history and their lives there?

**12:57 – HJR: I remember how they used to talk about how downtown was busy and they, you know, there was bars lined all down the streets and the people were pack in the streets of Berlin. I always thought I can't imagine it being that way now, and the shops and the Converse Shop and the big stores that they had. That was never there when I was there. I do remember one building burning. I don't know what building it was. I was young but I remember the whole town went downtown to watch this one building burn. I think it was, you know, a pretty famous department store.**

Q: What is your favorite story from growing up? Do you have something that you tell all the time about an adventure that you had or something that you did, something that happened to you when you were younger in Berlin that you always pull out during the family events that you can tell on camera?

**13:58 – HJR: (laughs) Yeah right! I don't know. I just remember spending a lot of time you know on the weekends cross country skiing and we would be skiing and we would pretend that we were lost in the woods and that we had to get out and survive. It was kind of like those wilderness stories that we would, we did a lot of kind of pretending my friends and I that we had to survive in the wilderness and like how are we going to get this food? A lot of it was just making things happen from what we had. I don't know if I can think of any specific stories.**

Q: When you were in college and someone would ask you where you were from, how would you describe it to them?

**14:41 – HJR: Well, a lot of times I would say I am from Berlin they would say "Oh you are?" and I would say, I would get all defensive "What do you mean?" and they would say "oh, it smells up there." And I would have to say that the first time I ever realized that the mills smelled I would deny it. It was when I finally went away to college and came back and I did, I could actually smell the smell. But, before that it did not faze me. It did not bother me. I did not think it was a big deal. I just don't think people understand the relationships that we have with our friends. Even if there was a falling out in high school with someone you still go back now and you just have that unspoken connection with them and it is almost like you can't describe it to other people because they just won't understand. You know you try but they don't get it unless they get up there, and everyone who goes there loves it and wants to come back all the time.**

Q: We have asked all of our interviewees to start a sentence with and finish a sentence with Berlin Is. If you could start a sentence with those two words, how would you finish it? Berlin is what?

**15:54 – HJR: I would just say Berlin is my home. I mean no matter where I go or what I do if I go back there it is just that sense of home. I could have times when I was have struggled in the past when I was at school. Just to get away I would go home and it was like that sigh of relief like (sighs) Ok I am safe here. This is where I feel safe and myself.**

Q (Josh): I know there are a lot of people trying to figure out the future of Berlin trying to get in new businesses and things like that. The people we have talked to some are very hopeful for the future and some people are like no, the better days are gone by. Do you think the better days have gone by or are you hopeful for the future for Berlin? Are they going to rise from the ashes or is this it?

**16:54 – HJR: I am hopeful for the future of Berlin. I think that it has had a rough time but I do think that there is enough people up there who really want to make...to bring Berlin back to the life that it was. I think that you know the economy definitely hurt us. The cheap definitely has brought some people up there that has contributed to crime, which was something that I never never grew up with crime. I mean there was never...you would leave your house and not lock you doors. It was no big deal. So, I**

**think that it does need a turn around. I think that you need the right people with the right ideas to make that happen. You know maybe just turning it into a cultural place, a place of heritage that people can come to vacation or get away from the busy you know the busyness of their lives. That might be the way to do it. I think that they need to move away from mill and industry. I think that that time has passed. I think that they just need to find the right direction to go with Berlin.**

Q: That was great.

**18:07 – HJR: Thank you.**