

Interview with Odette Leclerc

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Interviewer – Ken Turino

Crew – Josh Silveira, Steve Rugoletti, Dean Zanello

Q: What we are asking everyone is to say their name and spell it for us.

0:11 – OL: My name is Odette Leclerc. O D E T T E last name L E C L E R C. Pronounced “laclair” but spelled like Leclerc.

Q: I would like to start by hearing a little bit about where you were born and where you grew up.

0:32 – OL: I was born in Berlin and grew up in Berlin.

Q: When was that?

0:38 – OL: I was born 1936 on the East Side at home. I grew up partly on the East Side but then on the West side.

Q: And the neighborhood that you grew up in, what was that like?

0:51 OL: It was mostly French-Canadian people. We talked French all the time at home because my parents were French-Canadian. We were first generation American. Very few people that we knew didn't talk French, some but very few. It was mostly French neighborhoods that we lived in.

Q: What was it like growing up in a French neighborhood? What made it special?

1:21 – OL: I don't know if it was really special but we were very...we had a lot of freedom my brother and I. He was just thirteen months older than I and we were all over town from the time we were little with his little red wagon. We went to see this parrot on this street maybe five blocks from our house. You know we were little but it was very safe then. There wasn't many cars and I remember that. It was very controlled. It was church on Sunday and French schools and Catholic schools. We were very protected in some ways although we had a lot of freedom. We went swimming all by ourselves when we were like six and seven years old. We would take the bus and go to Berlin Mills to go swimming in the public swimming pool. I marvel at this today. We used to lie about our age so we didn't have to pay, with my mother's encouragement. She was daring. She wasn't hovering over us all the time. We had a lot of freedom which was good. We never got in trouble.

Q: Now did your parents come here for work?

2:32 – OL: Yes they did. They came here separately and they met in Berlin and married in Berlin. They lived in the same boarding house and they married in 1929.

Q: Were there many boarding houses in Berlin?

2:45 – OL: There was at that time and I wish I would have questioned them more about that to get where it was located and the name of the people who owned it. My Mother was working in Sherbrooke, Quebec and she got laid off. Where she worked she made silk stockings and stuff like that and then she got laid off and her friend had an aunt who had a boarding house in Berlin so she came down with her friend. Her parents were already deceased and her sister was sixteen years older than her I am sure wasn't very happy about that. She was starting to defy her because she would never have gone anywhere. My father said that he was looking for work because he lived on the farm with his family and his father. His mother died young too and then his father died. He was actually in bed with him when he died and after that his brother married the school teacher. He was the second one. My father was the oldest but because his brother got married first he kept the farm but they got some money out of it. I don't how much, but he had to bring up the rest of the family. When their mother died the youngest was only two years old. Same thing with my mother's family, both of their mothers died at forty-four. Sad huh? My mother was only four when her mother died and my father was going out and looking for work and of course if you lived on the farm you already cut your own wood so he already knew how to do that and he heard there was work in Berlin so he got his green card and came down with a friend and always worked in the woods after that. He was a lumberjack. He was at ease in the woods. I think it was his thing.

Q: Did he work for a specific company?

4:29 – OL: He worked for different jobbers I believe and I know he worked a little bit in the IP Mill the other paper mill but not for long. He told us about working a lot of overtime. I hope he wasn't a scab but I am not sure about that. Then he always worked in the woods and that was for different jobbers but eventually he worked for Brown Company. I don't know what year he started exclusively for Brown Company but it was somewhere along the line because he had a pension from Brown Company when he retired.

Q: So would the lumberjacks be gone for extended periods of time?

5:03 – OL: Oh yes. they were gone for months at a time. They came home during mud season which would have been in like March and April, so my sister was born in December, my brother was born in November and I was born in December. Figure it out (laughs)! It was mud season. Yes, he was gone for months and months. My mother was on her own, learned to do everything herself. She took care of the house, she took care

of us, she took care of the money. All of the problems were on her shoulders. She had to be a really strong woman. When he came home it is like he sat on his rocking chair and didn't take really any part of running the family or anything. Which is kind of sad but I think that was the way they were brought up. The men worked outside and the women worked inside and that was it. Eventually my mother went to work too and she worked in different factories in Berlin. She worked at the hospital first and then different factories. Landed at Converse too until she retired because things cost so much and at the beginning when he was off during mud season there was no money coming in. There just wasn't any money so eventually I think I was nine years old when she went to work. I always had a working mother which was unusual a little bit in those days. When I went to work it was the thing to do.

Q: Where did you end up going to school?

6:26 – OL: I started at Angel Guardian on the East side for two years and then we moved to the West side so I went to St. Anne's or St. Regis Academy they called it, St. Anne's Parish. Then I went to Notre Dame High School for four years.

Q: So Catholic school, Catholic upbringing? That was a big part of your life?

6:47 – OL: Oh yes. That was all we knew. I don't think I knew any Protestant people until I went to work and met people from Berlin High School, my gosh. They were Protestant. They were good people too. It was a revelation. We were very protected in that way very much.

Q: Let me ask you being born in the 1930s was the trolley system still running when you were growing up?

7:16 – OL: Well, I was born in '36 and it stopped in '38, so I don't remember it at all. Then they started with the busses and I remember the busses because that went on to my gosh in the sixties I think, probably the late sixties. I rode the bus.

Q: When you got out of school did you go straight to work?

7:41 – OL: Yes, I did. I worked for a dry cleaner for a while as a clerk. Then we got married very young. We were both nineteen so that was it for a while and then my husband Don started at the mill and thought he would work at the mill his whole life just like his father but that didn't work out because in the late fifties and early sixties they had a lot of layoffs because they had more machines and they needed less men and that is when the mill started to go down a little bit too. He was forever getting laid off and that is why too that I kind of went to work in '59 and then we had our second child in 1960 and then I stayed home for a little bit and they called me back to work and I went. That was at Converse. Then he came to work at Converse also and so I was there twenty years and he was there seventeen years.

Q: Tell me a little bit about what Converse was like and how it fit into the community and how large it was.

8:43 - OL: It started in '46 way before I started because I only started in '59. At first it was just stitching the uppers but eventually they built a new plant up in Jericho and then they worked on the soles. By the time I went they were putting soles on and everything. We had big orders from Sears then. We were making sneakers and then we made the All Star which was a very expensive shoe at the time. They were very good and then that got more and more popular as the price came down I think and they started to make them in all kinds of colors. It was kind of exciting. At first I worked evenings because Don would work days and I worked evenings so we didn't need a babysitter. Later on I went days and just worked there until it closed in 1979.

Q: Why did it close?

9:39 – OL: They brought a lot of the operations overseas just like many other companies. Some people blamed it because we got the union in. I was a union person so I don't blame the union. I think we needed it at the time. It just happened. We knew it could happen but yet we didn't believe it until it really did. It was a big blow to the community because there were a lot of couples like us that both worked at Converse. The lucky ones were the women that had their husbands working at Brown Company that were there full time. Then it was so much easier for them. Well, it wasn't Brown Company any more but it was a paper mill, because they had a choice of going back to work or not. We didn't have a choice. We had to look for other work. Then I got into a shoe shop here in town. They were here about a year and a half. That wasn't so good. It was run by one person and she did what she wanted. If you didn't like what was going on she showed you the door. You had your choice, sit down and work or go and...I really hated that job. Then I was lucky because before the shop closed we had gone on strike to for like a month. While I was on strike Don always would pay the bills and go to the post office or whatever had to be done, but because we weren't working I went to the post office and happened to see that they needed people there and were going to have the test. They said within the next two years they were going to be employing six people. I said I will take the test, what do I have to lose? I did and that was my lucky break because in '81 I finally got a job at the post office in Gorham. That really held us because we had benefits and all that. We went a couple of years with no benefits. Then when our second son who had gone to the Vo-Tech which is now the community college he was a technician, he didn't like his job then he got laid off. He was working next to Portland, Maine and then he got laid off. Because I was working and then Bass Shoe had come in and Don was working at Bass Shoe, he was a foreman, things were going great for a change and we talked him into going back to college which he did. He became an engineer. We are very glad we did that. We talked to him and you know I think he wanted to go to college but he didn't want to ask for our help. I think maybe

after the Vo-Tech he probably would have wanted to finish his college he just didn't dare ask because we were out of work. I feel bad about that. I never asked him about it but finally he did and of course that changed his life. Our oldest son is an electrician in a paper mill also in Maine. As far as...the paper mill is not doing too good there but he has been an electrician for over thirty years so if that closes I am sure he can find work. He has got his trade.

Q: In talking with other people we have heard a lot about what Berlin was like especially in the fifties and sixties when things were really booming. Can you tell us anything about life in the town in that period?

12:58 – OL: Yes. I think life was pretty good. We married in '56. Of course then he was up and down with jobs so as far as we were concerned that was really a concern because we weren't getting anyplace. But, life was pretty good. You could go downtown on Friday night and you know you met everybody. That was kind of the end of that too until they started the plaza and you know the shopping areas and that took the businesses away from Main Street and the stores started closing. Before that we had beautiful stores. Berlin was the place to go shopping for all the towns around. It is the only city in Coos County. It was the nicest Main Street. In the late sixties that stopped, middle and late sixties.

Q: Where were the shopping malls?

13:51 – OL: The first one was where Wal-Mart is now. It was a Globe Department Store. That was the first one. Of course like the stores downtown, Woolworth's and all that where you could get everything they close at five, well the Globe was open until nine and with two kids they always needed something for school tomorrow. You know "I need it tomorrow". SO, we frequented the Globe too. They were convenient, but that was the start of the end of Main Street which happened all over the country anyway.

Q: What were your thoughts about Urban Renewal when that came in?

14:29 – OL: When that came in I wasn't sure because I really didn't understand why they were doing that. Some people would say well yeh those old buildings they were old and they will build new buildings that will bring in more taxes. Well that didn't really happen. A few new buildings but two of them were banks and now one of them is a medical center. That doesn't pay taxes. The bank does but the unemployment doesn't pay taxes so all in all I don't think it was a good thing because they brought down some good buildings. Some of them probably should have come down but others were really nice brick buildings. I think all in all it probably wasn't a good thing.

Q: What do other people say your friends and all? What were their feelings about urban renewal?

15:14 – OL: I think a lot of them see it like that now too. At the time some liked the idea and others didn't. I don't think we had strong opinions at the time because we really didn't know what was going on. That is the time when we were bringing up our kids and it was like we were so busy there is no way we would volunteer like for a place like this even if there had been one because it was real busy years for us. We built our own house. Don built our house after work. We moved in in 1970, so we were busy.

Q: It sounds like it! Well maybe you can tell us a little bit more about the decline of the paper industry and how that affected the town.

16:02 – OL: It did because even after for a stretch there they were working more steady, not so many layoffs and everything, not as many people...at Converse there were some good paying jobs. Most of them weren't as good paying as the mill but at least it was another place to go. Yes, it affected it a lot. Then of course when it closed that was the end of that. Some of those guys went in at the right time and they were never laid off till the end of their career. They were in their fifties and they lose their job, so that was really bad.

Q: Did many people move away at that time?

16:43 – OL: Yes they did. All our class mates graduated in 1955. I think there is a handful that stayed in Berlin. A lot of them, I look through the Brown Books and I see their names that they were working in the mill they are all out of town now because they were laid off. Because that is the years if you went in '55, '56 that was it they were laid off so they all went out of town. There is probably, I don't know that there is ten from our class that stayed in town. All the others went out.

Q: Your children went through the school system here in Berlin and what was that like and what were they involved with?

17:22 – OL: In grammar school they went to Catholic School just like we did. Then they started closing down of course. Our youngest one was in sixth grade I think when his school closed down and that is the school where his father went so that was hard kind of for him. Then our oldest one went to Notre Dame although we had encouraged him to go to Berlin High. He wanted to go with his friends and he went two years and that closed down so they had to go through that. They went to Berlin High but then the classes were really big. They were three hundred thirty something in the graduating class that year and he never got to know all his classmates because he was there only two years. Then they declined like last year only 130 graduated, two hundred less. Of course it is smaller families; it is not just the workmen. After Converse Granite State Division closed then of course more people moved out. Then you know it is just like if your kids, especially if they go to school, they just don't come back because there is nothing to do. Once they leave they come back for holidays which is nice and that is it.

Q: I am going to go back to Converse for just a minute. What kind of a company, what was it like to work there?

18:44 – OL: Well, we kicked a lot. Of course we called it a sweat shop, but it was steady. We knew everybody and like I worked in stitching and it was mostly women. We brought up our kids together and it became like a social thing. We had our parties and all that so it was good. You knew you had a job and after going layoffs and everything that we did we were very grateful to have the jobs. We knew our bosses. We saw them all the time. They were like our neighbors and so you know it was not like somebody we didn't know that we never met. That was nice. I missed the girls a lot after we closed down because we were like family.

Q: You mentioned being involved with the union and we have heard from a few other people. Can you talk about the role of unions in Berlin? Were there strikes?

19:43 – OL: Yes, there was at the mill on and off and I think they had unions even in the early 1900s because I have books here that prove it. Then it kind of was quiet during the Depression and after but in the late 40s this man Babe Smith became the head of the union and really rebuilt it in the mills. So, there was a couple of strikes but they got a lot of good stuff out of it, better pay and better conditions sometimes too. Then at Granite State we tried to organize. They tried to organize before with another company and it didn't work out and finally we went with the same union that the mill had and that was voted in. I wasn't really active in it but I voted and we were for it Don and I. Some people, like if you talk to those two ladies I talk about they were at Converse way at the beginning. They were very much against it. To this day if you interview them I know they are going to say the unions closed it. Maybe it had something to do with it but we heard from one of the bosses later that it was already decided that they were going overseas way before we had our strike and before the union came in and I believe that. I don't think it would have changed anything if we wouldn't have had the union. There is still controversy about that. It always is with unions.

Q: Do I understand that you had a mayor who was very pro labor?

21:17 – OL: At that time...gee I don't remember if they were pro labor. They must have been but I don't really know.

Q: One of the things that we wanted to ask you because we know you have good stories is just to tell us maybe a couple of the stories about what Berlin means to you or just special memories that you have of Berlin that makes it special.

21:44 – OL: Well, I guess just growing up here. Like my brother lives in California and when he comes to Berlin he says well my home is California. That is where my life is and my kids are, but Berlin will always be my hometown, so I would say the same thing. It is our hometown. When he comes to town he has to go, we have to go in City Hall and

look in City Hall and go into the library and of course now he comes here (Moffett House) because he wants to absorb it all. We meet a lot of people like that that who have lived out of town since school and that really makes us feel good that they remember Berlin like that. That it was a good place to grow up and it was. It was of course in the fifties, forties and fifties it was safe compared to today. Even our kids growing up in sixties they were all over town too. We had no restrictions; you can't go here or there. It was safe. They rode their bikes to the Community Club to take their swimming lessons and we were working and they were very safe. Today while it is like the rest of the country people are more wary. They walk them to school and everything. We didn't. They walked to school and then took the school bus. There was really no worry. We didn't worry about stuff like they do today which is kind of sad I think that it has changed.

Q: Josh? Some questions from you?

Q (Josh): I went to a parochial school as well from kindergarten to eighth grade and I have many memories of that rigorous education from the nuns.

23:26 – OL: Oh yes (laughs).

Q (Josh): Could you share just one story that you have of that education, that parochial education because I know I have a lot that we could talk about

23:34 – OL: They were very very strict.

Q (Josh): Could you talk about the strictness of the nuns?

23:37 – OL: Some were a little crazy I think. We had some really good ones too. We can't put them down. They were really dedicated and were very good but some were a little over the top. We had one in fourth grade, my brother had had her the year before and of course my brother always got in trouble because he couldn't stop laughing because somebody made a joke. I was always quiet because I was so afraid of them. This one girl who was going to be in this one play of the Fatima Story, you know the children of Fatima, so this nun had us wear our rosary around our necks all the time and everything and all she would talk about is religion and the Virgin Mary and everything. Well, this girl that day she asked us who said their prayers as a family at night that said the rosary every night. I put my hand up because I was afraid not to. It wasn't true. Anyway this girl said they didn't. Well she went to her and pulled the rosary and the beads went flying all over because she wasn't worthy. Now of course she was crying and I always remembered that. I was so scared. She was nuts! (laughs) We had a few like that but most of them were pretty good but strict.

Q (Ken): Do you have a story about your name and the nuns?

25:02 – OL: Oh yes. In the first grade the nun said we have to say our name and she tells if it was a saint or not. You were supposed to have a saint's name and when she came to me she says "There is no Saint Odette. Well what is your other name?" I said it was Marie and Madeline and OK I was safe. About a couple weeks or a month after she came in and gave me this little booklet and she says "there is the name of Saint Odette in there in April because that is when she and that was in France" and she wanted me to see there was a Saint Odette. That was kind of an apology I guess. I always kept it. I still have it. For a nun to do that was pretty brave because she had given me such a hard time about not having a saint's name. I hated my name when I was younger because it is a rare name. You go to Canada I don't have to spell my name ever. In fact there is a singer named Odette LeClerc, but here it is like, but now I don't mind. My mother named me that because it was her family name but spelled with AU instead and that is why she named me that.

Q (Josh) I have another question for you Odette. You talk about today about how it is scary that people have to walk their children to school, but when you were younger it was much more free and safe. I know when I was a little boy growing up on my street I have many memories playing with the neighborhood children. Can you just share one story about the neighborhood children getting to children and not being afraid and being able to just get together to have some fun; any kind of an activity or a game that you played one night or some afternoon?

26:47 – OL: We used to play in the summer. Of course we used to play hide and seek at night until the whistle of the mill would blow at nine o'clock. That is when we would have to go in. You know it was dark sometimes like in the spring and the fall. It was still pretty dark at nine so it was fun to play hide and seek when it was dark. We would play all these kinds of games. I don't know what the name of the other one was but you had to go hide also. It was fun I mean especially when we lived on the hill for a while. Every night we played until that whistle blew then we were expected all to go home and we did. It was just as safe as anything. Even our kids, our oldest son always loved the woods and still does and he would go up in the woods in back of our house because in back of our house it is all woods up to Lancaster I think. From the time he was little he would go up in the woods. Finally we gave up on telling him that he couldn't go because all we would tell him after if we are not home you have to tell, Don's parents lived downstairs, you have to tell Memere where you are going and then you can go. We have to know because if ever you don't come back and you are lost or something we wouldn't know where to look. So tell if you are going to Big Thinker or Little Thinker, there were little brooks and Big Thinker was even further than Little Thinker. So you know he never never lost his way and we were never afraid of...in fact we thought after well he is probably safer in the woods than he is on the street anyway (laughs); less cars! Even when he was little, we were talking about it when he came home two weeks ago, he wasn't even going to regular school he was in kindergarten, I think he was five years

old, he had gone up in the woods alone because the older kids on the street were in school, and he came back soaking wet. It was in the spring. It was still cold. I said how did you get wet like that? It was still cold and the water was just falling off his clothes. He says well it is all daddy's fault. I said why is it Dad's fault? He said he told me there were no eagles around here and I said there is too and I said there is? And he said yes, one pushed me in the brook! (laughs) Now we keep repeating that and he says he actually doesn't remember that but he remembers us talking about it so much. He fell in the brook.

Q: One question I want to go back about being French because you said you grew up speaking the language. One of the things that sort of interests me is the traditions that stay with families. My family was from Italy and one of the things that really stayed with us is the kinds of foods that we prepare at holidays and all. My question to you is were there particular French foods or things that you prepare or that your mother prepared at holidays?

29:47 – OL: Like meat pies, and maple syrup. Of course when my parents were here every summer that is the only place we ever went was in Canada. Of course because they were alone here in the States. We would go to Sherbrooke especially and of course we would buy some Maple Syrup for my uncle and the maple sugar, the big big cakes and my mother would just slice it up. We ate that with pancakes and that was really big with us. The meat pies was always a big Canadian tradition that everybody does. Everybody makes them different but still it is meat. That stayed with us and going to midnight mass and all that. That is how Don and I started going out together because he was my brother's best friend after we moved on Western Avenue. My brother was the only boy in the family so he always had a best friend that became the family friend. After we moved there Don was it. Then one midnight mass when Don came to mass with us my mother got in the seat and I pushed my brother next to her so he got in and I got in back of her so Don had no choice he had to get next to me and that was almost our first date.(laughs) After that we started dating and that was it. So, I kind of pushed him into it. My brother says finally when he would leave at night and he would say are you staying with the woman or are you coming out with me? Don says "oh I think I will stick around here", so my brother joined the Navy! (laughs)

Q (Josh): Odette, if that was your first date, where would you and Don go for dates?

31:25 – OL: Oh the movies or the drive-in. That was mostly what we did because we were only nineteen. We were actually seventeen when we started going out together. Where else could you go? And to the arena of course, we went to hockey games. I wasn't much of a skater. Don was a good skater but I wasn't so we didn't go skating so much. So we went to hockey games and the movies a lot. Growing up we went to the movies all the time. There was no TV.

Q (Ken): Where was the drive-in?

31:59 – OL: It was on top of Gorham Hill, when you go on Route 2 there right on top of the hill. That became a big deal in the 50s and we went there a lot. We went with sometimes if I could borrow my father's car we would bring all of his sisters and brothers with us and fill the car up. Don was the second oldest in his family and I was the youngest but he was older.

Q (Josh): Of course Odette there was the famous Friday nights correct on Main Street?

32:30 – OL: Yes, to go down street yes.

Q (Josh): Now if I were to go down Main Street with you and Don back when you were dating, what would I hear? What would Main Street be like?

32:41 – OL: You would hear a lot of French and you know everybody knew each other and you went downtown Friday night whether you needed to buy something or not. Even before I went out with Don my mother would always go down street Friday night. Very seldom missed it and we would do all the stores for some reason even if we didn't buy anything. Then we would go to Pleasant Street and go to the, then it was the First national, one of the biggest stores you know, that was just starting the A&P and the First National. We would do our food order and take a cab and go home. That was pretty much Friday night for us. Even on Saturday there was a lot of people downtown. It was just a way of socializing.

Q (Ken): Was there a bowling alley downtown too or was that later?

33:33 – OL: Yes, there was a bowling alley. The first one...well there was one at the Community Club. The Community Club was a great thing because the Browns started, it was the YMCA to start with and the Browns gave a lot of money towards it because the girls then, it was before my time of course, had their own Girls Club for a while. At a certain date, and I think it was in the 30s, they opened it up to women and they changed the name to Community Club. But, the Catholics were encouraged not to go. It was not a good place. So, we never went to the Community Club, Don nor I and he doesn't remember why and I said I remember why because I remember the nuns talking about it not to go to the Community Club. So we missed out on that. Then after I went to work at Converse and these girls that went to public school were telling me the fun they had at the Community Club because it was very well chaperoned. If anybody swore they were out of the club. They couldn't come back. They had the bowling alleys they had the swimming of course and swimming lessons and dances. After school they went to the Community Club and passed all their time there but we Catholic people, very few Catholic girls that I talk to, now I ask them did you go to the Community Club and very few will say yes if they went to Catholic School. They will say yes I knew it was frowned upon but we went anyway. We never did. We really missed out because it was

a great thing. There wasn't much else to do except the arena and the arena opened in the late 40s then of course we were there a lot. We would go skating; roller skating in the summer and ice skating in the winter. Of course I was never a good skater so sometimes you went just to watch. Of course you watched the boys! (laughs) Don was a good skater and he would help the priests to clean the ice after because they did it all by hand before they had the machinery. So the priest after that would bring them in back and they would watch a small TV, you know the round TV with the magnifying glass in front? He would have them make a big bunch of French Fries and they would sit there and eat French Fries. They talk about priest abuse and everything but we never, I don't say it didn't happen, but it didn't happen to us. We never saw it. He passed a lot of time with the priests that way because he was always at the arena. Then he bought a pair of skates and he would pay twenty-five cents a week on it from the money he made cleaning the ice. That is how he got a brand new pair of skates. I never got a brand new pair of skates. That was probably why I could never really skate good. That was a good time for him. My brother also did that with him. That was good. The priests were very good to the kids. One of the priests at St. Joseph's the school he went to he even had a boxing club going. He had like a little gym in the school where they could go after school and everything. We would bring him to up to his camp in the summer so they would swim in the brook stuff like that. We had a lot to do with the nuns and the priests. In my time I never heard of any abuse. I didn't say it didn't happen at all but I never heard of it. In my age group I never heard of anyone complaining about anything. Not in Berlin. That was good in a way.

Q (Ken): Are there any questions or things that we are forgetting to ask you about? You are so knowledgeable so is there something that we haven't asked that you would like to tell us that you would like us to hear?

37:23 – OL: I can't think of anything. I will probably think about it tonight

Q (Ken): Then we will have to interview you again! (laughs)

37:28 –OL: Oh no! (laughs) I can't think of anything except for what we did and that is pretty much it. We walked all over the place of course because you know Don's parents had a car when they were, when Don was younger but then they let it go. My father always had a car but he had it up in the woods so we walked everywhere. I think that was probably true of every city I don't know. No matter if you were three miles from downtown you still walked downtown and you walked back home. The only time we took a cab is when we did grocery shopping. My mother didn't have a car. My father had it out in the woods so we would take a cab to go back home with the groceries but that was the only time. My brother and I we remember when they used to deliver ice at the homes. That really surprised me when we opened the museum and we had these people come in and not thinking because I had never showed anyone around and I am showing them the ice box with the card that says ice on it that we had to put in the

window if you wanted a piece of ice when they were delivering ice. They looked at me and I thought oh yes they are not old enough to remember that. Then I said I will have to remember that you have to go with the age of the people. But they used to deliver ice with, it was a pickup truck then. They didn't have horse and buggy. We would see that in Canada in Sherbrooke when I was young but over here they had already gone to trucks. The guy would cut a piece of ice and the way you out the card in the window would say if you wanted a twenty five cent piece or a fifteen cent piece. He would cut it and weigh it I guess and put it on his shoulder and we lived on the third floor and he would bring it up to the third floor. After that we would look for a piece of ice that would fall on the road. That was our popsicles. We would take them up and suck on that. It couldn't have been very clean. The ice came from the river and they would cut it in the winter and put it in sawdust so I am sure it was very clean but we loved that. I was on East Side then and Don lived on the West Side way over on the other end of the city and he used to get the same darn thing. He says yeh we used to run after the ice truck too you know. It is funny sometimes when you think of people they are probably just a few years younger than me and they don't remember the ice truck. It stopped when I was probably eight or nine years old so at first we still didn't have a refrigerator so my brother and I had to take his wagon, walk way downtown, and we lived way up on the hill, and go up with a piece of ice in the wagon way up home to put in the icebox. Finally my mother got enough money together to buy a refrigerator. So, she really shopped carefully to get the best refrigerator. We had gone down to this store and she had ordered it and walking back home it was really really hot. She started making us guess what she would do if when we got home the refrigerator was there. What would be the first thing I would do? We were guessing oh well you would make some ice cubes and you would make a cold drink or you would make lemonade or whatever. She said no, so we all gave up and she said I will take all of the shelves out and I will sit in the refrigerator! (laughs) I never forgot that! It is so silly!

Q (Ken): That is a great story! Along those lines we actually haven't asked this of anyone but do you remember when you got your first television or the first time you saw television?

41:02 – OL: Oh my gosh the first time was when Don and I were going out together and my sister was going out with this guy and he was in the neighborhood also and they had a television so we would go and watch the television at his house. It was all snowy but we loved it. It was just great. Then Don's parents got one because all of the younger kids were all there and their friends and they would stand there in the window and watch the television through their window and they figured before they called the cops on them they better get a television. Then we would stay at his house and watch television. When we got married that was our first argument I think because two weeks after we were married he said he was going to buy a television and I felt we couldn't

afford it. I think that was out first little argument about money. One of many but it was buying a television but of course I was happy after we got it.

Q: Did you have favorite shows?

41:59 – OL: Yes. At first it was like Art Linkletter and all the music shows. Then we used to watch wrestling. For some reason we loved wrestling. I can't stand it today but we loved it then. It was Saturday afternoon we would watch the wrestling and all the westerns after that that came on. We liked just about everything.

Q: Did you get Canadian television at that time?

42:27 – OL: I don't think we did at first. After the cable came in and that would have been probably before 1960 that the cable came in then if you could hook onto the cable you got...I remember my mother got it right off because that's when she got it or my father got television because when they got cable they knew they could get the Canadian shows. We were brought up like all the Canadian shows the French shows on radio that is all we listened to in my family. Not Don's because Don's his parents grew up in Berlin so it was different for him but that's all we knew is the French shows. Of course when they heard they could get French television from Canada they got their television then. We didn't get cable right off because we couldn't afford it but then we moved over his parents. They had an apartment and it emptied and we took the apartment so Don connected the cable to theirs which was illegal of course and we didn't pay the cable and we got the French shows too. Still today I like to listen to the French news and some French shows because I like to get their slant on the news.

Q (Josh): One last question from me. The primary purpose for this project is to preserve twentieth century history that is possibly in jeopardy of being lost. In your opinion, what part of Berlin twentieth century is in danger of being lost and why should we preserve it?

44:11 – OL: Of course The Mill and I think we save everything we can especially about Brown Company because the Brown family was such a good family and what they did for the city and everything. To me that is very very important to save. Everything is but especially I think that. We kind of feel a kinship to the Browns now. One of the daughters, one of the W.R Brown, the one that wrote two books that was the big boss in the woods department, their daughter came last year and she is in her eighties, she has to be. You wouldn't think so. She looks like she is sixty. What a nice lady. All of the Browns that we met, also the grandson, O.B. Brown's grandson that we met that came here several times with his wife. Just the nicest people, down to earth, they are not what you would think they would be you know? They love it when we tell them stories about what we know of the Browns and what they did for the city because three of them at one time lived in Berlin then one moved to Portland because he was taking care of the office. They had neighbors and they interacted with the neighbors and a lot of people that worked for them they were actually friends of the Browns. They would lend out even

their Arabian horses to them for races and winter carnivals and everything. They were involved in everything. They were really really to me our royal family if there is anything like that. When we went to Canada three and a half years ago four of us girls went up to see the mill that they built up there and they did the same thing up there. They built a big community club. They are the ones who laid out the streets because there was nothing there when they got there. They built a big paper mill and then some of the La Tuque people came to work here and some of the Berlin people went up there to work. We went up there and the first thing we asked them is "do you remember the Brown family," and they certainly do. They said "oh yes we remember the Browns," and they would tell us all these great stories about how great they were for the town and what a nice family they were. One of the Browns still has a hunting camp up there that they go every year and visit some of the people in the town. They were very social people. Even O.B. Brown lived on a corner not far from here and I don't know if Romeo Labonte told you about that but in the winter they had a skating rink in front of the house because there was a lot of land and all of the neighborhood kids were encouraged to go skating there. They just did. I had a friend who was twenty years older than me and she said they went skating there all the time. Then in the summer was tennis on that same lot and they went there. Romeo says when they would go skating there and skiing in their yard because there was a nice slope there, at noon time they would call everybody in or they would call and ask how many are you you know and they would say oh there is ten of us or whatever and they would serve lunch to all of them which I think is unusual for a family like that. To me that is a thing I don't think we should ever ever forget is the Brown family and what they did. I wish I could have known them all personally but I feel sometimes I do. You know you read about them and it is like oh yes. When I went to Canada they had one of their managers his name was Simons Brown. I said Simons Brown I have never heard of Simons Brown. Who was he? Was he related? So when we came back this young girl was doing research and she put a lot of the families together and I looked on the chart and Simons was one of the sons of one of the older Browns and he was a manager for quite a few years in La Tuque. We copied everything that we could of the history of that mill while we were there. There were four of us so we went to the library and they gave us everything that they had history of their town. I told the girls anything that mentions the Browns or even if you are not too sure just mark them and they copied everything for us so we got a bunch of papers on their history which is great. It is a hundred years next year that they built that mill that the mill started working and we have a piece of pulp downstairs that comes from that mill that was the first piece of pulp that came to Berlin to make the paper from the La Tuque Mill.

Q (Ken): Thank you that was wonderful.