

041 Nettie (Natividade) de Frias

Please note that any items that were difficult to transcribe are marked with an [indiscernible] tag.

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: I just want to say I am with Nettie ...

Respondent: de Frias.

Interviewer: Yes, de Frias, in your home at 156 Borden, and your husband died four years ago...

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: ...but you have five children, and they all grew up in this house.

Respondent: They all grew up in here.

Interviewer: What year did your husband buy the house?

Respondent: 1964. We moved in September 3, 1964.

Interviewer: And now it's [0:00:30] 2012, and you're still living here.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: So...

Respondent: And I intend to live until I die. And I want one of the children keep the house.

Interviewer: Yeah. And why do you feel that way?

Respondent: Because I have so much love in this house.

Interviewer: Ah, right.

Respondent: Every corner I go it's in here. My life is in here.

- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. So you love the house and you want the house to continue to be loved by your children.
- Respondent:** That's right.
- Interviewer:** And maybe your grandchildren.
- Respondent:** Oh, I [0:01:00] – you know, I wish.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** We fix a little bit, not much. Believe me, everything we see we have our hands on. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So you've really made this house what it is.
- Respondent:** No, actually we just put the floors.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** And painted, and did the kitchen. That's it. Finish a little bit the basement, that's it. That house belonged to a dentist.
- Interviewer:** You bought from a dentist?
- Respondent:** [0:01:30] From a dentist. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** And was it in nice shape? Did he take good care of it when he owned it?
- Respondent:** Oh yes.
- Interviewer:** It was.
- Respondent:** Just the basement with those big machines.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** Remember oil or something. The time, can never...

- Interviewer:** Oh, the heating. An oil tank.
- Respondent:** Yeah. Before. And he has a small home. Now it's my kitchen. Actually I have two kitchens.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** That's all we did because he used to make the dentures [0:02:00] and all the things there.
- Interviewer:** So he used it.
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** So he worked here.
- Respondent:** It was a toilet, and then the things – yeah, he moved the basement for those things, you know? And he has his mother-in-law, and his brother-in-law work on the garage fixing cars.
- Interviewer:** So he made dentures and things like that here, and in the garage...
- Respondent:** Right. And he has a brother-in-law living or so in here too because before was two kitchens.
- Interviewer:** [0:02:30] Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** We moved the kitchen upstairs because we now need. We have a big one here now in the first floor, and a big one in the basement. I don't need more floor.
- Interviewer:** Did you keep the kitchen in the basement? Or you don't have it?
- Respondent:** Where is home we did the kitchen because the family, you know, and keep things clean, and sometimes, you know, I did it, you know. It's not well, well luxury, but cleaned up, you know?
- Interviewer:** So they used the garage as a car mechanic to...

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: ...repair cars.

Respondent: [0:03:00] Yeah, he did repair cars, you know, still the same garage.

Interviewer: And how do you use that garage now?

Respondent: Oh, my daughter parks the car in, my son in Mississauga to have another car there. [Laughs]

Interviewer: So you have two cars there.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: So would you just tell me who lives here with you now?

Respondent: Just my daughter. My daughter has two children.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: More for company.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: Yeah. Because she sold the house when the father died.

Interviewer: Oh, so she came back here to live with you four years ago when your husband died.

Respondent: [0:03:30] Yeah.

Interviewer: So that you wouldn't be alone.

Respondent: Not be alone, you know?

Interviewer: Oh that's very nice.

- Respondent:** Oh she's too nice. She's too careful. Sometimes I wish – I'm still stable. I have osteoporosis. You know, every woman goes through those things.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. How old are you now?
- Respondent:** Seventy-four.
- Interviewer:** Seventy-four. You look lovely.
- Respondent:** Thank you. You know, but...
- Interviewer:** So are your granddaughters in school, or are they working? And your daughter, is she working?
- Respondent:** Well one granddaughter is in school and working, and the other one is [0:04:00] going to be sixteen in October. She's very good marks. She's in Harbord.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. Oh, Harbord Collegiate.
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. That's where my sons come from, and Ria, and...
- Interviewer:** Everybody went to Harbord Collegiate. And what about your daughter? Is she working?
- Respondent:** Oh yeah, oh yeah. She works hard. You should see her.
- Interviewer:** Maybe I will see her.
- Respondent:** You probably see her all the time, you know.
- Interviewer:** When you and your husband bought the house, why did you choose this neighbourhood?
- Respondent:** [0:04:30] Well first of all, I have children. I take a look around the city, all high school, church, markets because you never want to drive. So we got the money, that money was the years of separation.

- Interviewer:** While you were still in the Azores.
- Respondent:** Portugal.
- Interviewer:** And he was here, so he was saving money...
- Respondent:** He was supporting his mom [0:05:00] and his sisters. And they saved money for that house.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. So he lived very frugally. He didn't spend much money.
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** He saved his money.
- Respondent:** Like I said, nine years old were working in cement finish, grow up very tight, support his mom until she died, even married. Then they send the family in here. My sister-in-law went to British Columbia. She went in here, but after they have a brother-in-law who come in here, she went. [0:05:30] So my mother-in-law went too, went with her.
- Interviewer:** But you told me before we turned on the tape that your husband's father died when he was nine years old, and he went to work at nine years old.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** So he worked for a lot of years, and he helped a lot of people.
- Respondent:** And everything give to the mom to support the children, you know?
- Interviewer:** But he saved money when he came...
- Respondent:** So he make die and put the mix and everything.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent:** The last one [0:06:00] who died a year before he come with – it's not TB. It's something with asthma or stuff like that, you know? The

doctors – they were good doctors, but they're not like today, you know? They don't have medication like today, you know what I mean? So.

Interviewer: So you were saying you moved into this neighbourhood because you could walk to so many places.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: You could walk to the church...

Respondent: That's the idea.

Interviewer: ...you could walk to the market, you could walk to...

Respondent: I was very happy [0:06:30] with. Very happy with. We actually had two sons live in Mississauga. They intend to come downtown.

Interviewer: They want to move back here.

Respondent: They want to move back here.

Interviewer: Yeah. So your whole family loves this neighbourhood.

Respondent: They save some. You know? They have nice houses, you know? Oh, this neighbourhood, no question about it. How many years you live there?

Interviewer: Twenty-five years.

Respondent: I know.

Interviewer: You know, I...

Respondent: I know the people who lived there before was Portuguese too, then some other one come [0:07:00] you know? And 170 was Portuguese too, now is another Portuguese. It's from Brazil.

- Interviewer:** Oh, I knew that family. I remember when they moved out near the Wonderland is where they moved, because when I moved in they were still living there.
- Respondent:** Yeah, but they're educated. I think they come from the University of Toronto too.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So you know a lot of people, and you knew a lot of people.
- Respondent:** Well lots and lots of people mostly then move away and new people come. Then [0:07:30] I worked for thirty-one years.
- Interviewer:** You worked?
- Respondent:** Full-time.
- Interviewer:** What did you do?
- Respondent:** My first job is in home laundry over in the corner, that building.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Because I was in house fourteen years without working, so he never want me to work. I say, "No, you have job for you." But I was thinking you don't make much too, you know? Back then is different. Family's growing, children's growing, then I said, "What am I doing [0:08:00] home?" I was sewing for people before. Now I can't because my hands numbed, you know. Some neighbours who already moved away. This one next door was Jewish. She was my best friend. And it was Bertha, and the man was William, you know?
- Interviewer:** So you missed them after they moved away.
- Respondent:** They moved away. She passed away with cancer in her house. They like us so much, children's growing up, [0:08:30] and they know things from little babies. She'd leave there couple of years. She have two girls, Rochelle and Sheila, two girls. One day she comes in with a purpose. Alfred was already a teenager. "Netti, you know what I want? I want your Alfred to be my Sheila husband."

Interviewer: Oh. [Laughs] Oh my god.

Respondent: [0:09:00] The kids were growing up in here.

Interviewer: Oh so she loved your Alfred. [Laughs] And wanted him to be her son-in-law.

Respondent: Oh my god, you know, I say, "Bertha, ask me everything." I know I never want nobody to interfere me, and I don't interfere with my children.

Interviewer: So you couldn't tell Alfred who to marry.

Respondent: I love your kids, you know, you watch, you love each other, you know? It's one thing I can't do. [Laughs]

Interviewer: But it shows how much [0:09:30] she loved your family.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: Yes. Then at first around eighteen, something like that, then he was still in college and, you know, he's the one the tool and die. So he married around twenty-eight years old. He find a nice girl. I don't want nobody to interfere with mine too.

Interviewer: No, you can't tell him.

Respondent: I don't interfere what they decide. What they love, that's where they are.

Interviewer: [0:10:00] Okay. So they were Jewish and you're Portuguese and Catholic?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: But you all got along very well.

Respondent: Yeah. Very nice.

Interviewer: It didn't make a difference.

Respondent: No. No relation at all mix differently. What I see, I believe in God. We don't know what he is. You call about Christ, this, one of those that, the other one of those this, you know? It has to be something.
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Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: **[0:10:30]** I respect all the religion. They all have the same rights I have.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Is that true or not?

Interviewer: Well I certainly agree with you. So you're saying if they were Jewish or Catholic or whatever...

Respondent: I don't criticize no religion at all because we are all human beings.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: We're made the same.

Interviewer: And who are some of your other neighbours when you were here at 64, 68 in 1970?

Respondent: Oh, I have in here Miss Gellar. She had a sister a little bit mental, **[0:11:00]** but nice. She was not a very good neighbour for me only for one reason. Any little bang Nick does around the house she wants to do it too.

Interviewer: So you mean if Nick made a bang, then she wanted to bang back?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

- Respondent:** She come and see. First she come and see, "Nick, I have this to do, [0:11:30] and that to do, you know?" Nick is working to support the family.
- Interviewer:** Oh, so she wanted Nick to do for her?
- Respondent:** Yeah. And he did a couple of things, but it comes a point I've got a life to live. I have my children, I have my wife, fixing little things around the house...
- Interviewer:** And working at...
- Respondent:** ...I work hard hours.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** What do you want out of me?
- Interviewer:** So she had expectations. She wanted Nick to help her a lot.
- Respondent:** Yes. [0:12:00] Yes.
- Interviewer:** Okay. So that was unpleasant because eventually Nick had to start saying no, I guess.
- Respondent:** Yes. That's exactly what Nick said. "I'm sorry."
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** Actually if I find the time, you know, but doesn't have to be right now because I also have a family to support. I'm not a robot, you know what I mean?
- Interviewer:** Yeah, right. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** You know? And sometimes we're going out, you know, and then she could lead to kind of anger against us. I don't think [0:12:30] so she gain words, and a little bit screwed up, you know? And those people – because the sister are okay, the mental one. She don't

bother nobody, but they fight together. Then from that time one, for twenty-five years, he puts on her mind – sometimes I go to the garden, "Walter. Pond. Can you come to mommy?" Then slowly she [0:13:00] learned the name of the children. People sometimes, some boys – Nick fine with that. One time the door was a little bit – Walter was asleep, and I heard, "Boom, boom, boom." Because I was downstairs, I saw a policeman. "Sir, what's going on?" "Walter's bothering Miss Gellar next door. [0:13:30] Because she can see also very, very well, you know? I blame that obvious. But that doesn't – you have to be bad about that. I see a lot of people can see that you're not being bad. She was impatient. She wanted things, you know, I don't understand. She's Jewish.

Interviewer: So why was the policeman here that time? Do you know?

Respondent: Because she called the police.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Back then I don't speak good English. She called the police [0:14:00] to tell Walter push her. Maybe some crazy – if she can see that he – some crazy boy, because she's bad. She's very bad for, you know.

Interviewer: Oh, so she was a difficult neighbour.

Respondent: Very, very difficult.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Sometimes she sits over there with a pipe, and people pass by and she roasts the people. Maybe she see – don't see very well, nobody to take care of her.

Interviewer: So she was a little bit crazy.

Respondent: [0:14:30] She is. She is.

Interviewer: Yeah. And her sister. [Laughs]

- Respondent:** No, her sister not. She thinks the sister's crazy.
- Interviewer:** Oh okay.
- Respondent:** No, she's very quiet. Very big woman.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** I say hello, don't talk too much. That's it.
- Interviewer:** Oh, so you had a difficult neighbour.
- Respondent:** I have.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** For twenty-five years.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So on one side very nice family...
- Respondent:** She send me – but they moved away.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** Then they come another bad one. He pass away [0:15:00] in Christmastime. Chinese.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** I don't know if you remember a skinny old man sometimes pass by.
- Interviewer:** No, I don't remember.
- Respondent:** You probably – outside the house.
- Interviewer:** Maybe I wasn't here yet. Maybe I was still on Robert Street.
- Respondent:** Oh, no, no.
- Interviewer:** I've just been here for twelve years.

- Respondent:** Oh, you're in here. He just passed away in December.
- Interviewer:** Oh okay.
- Respondent:** The wife is a saint.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** And the children is very dedicated too. One of them is an engineer, you know? She has nothing to do with [0:15:30] him.
- Interviewer:** So his wife was nice, but he was a difficult man?
- Respondent:** Yeah. My daughter used to say, "Mom, how can the woman like that live so many years with that guy? Probably arranged marriage."
- Interviewer:** Oh, could be. Sure.
- Respondent:** Now she's away. You know what happened in Christmastime? The daughter wants to take the parents there, but nobody take him out of there. Nobody a little bit. Probably sick, mental [0:16:00] because he was ninety-one, you know what I mean?
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** They lived without the guy for thirty years. Thirty years. Oh, that was too. I said my god, thank god. God bless him, but he's interfere. I put the air conditioner, he called the City Hall.
- Interviewer:** Oh, so he complained about it.
- Respondent:** When we struggled as the children were growing up and everything to put stuff, you know, you know? He called the City Hall. The [0:16:30] City Hall come, call the company because those people, those inspectors wants work between the neighbours.
- Interviewer:** Sure. Of course.

- Respondent:** The work was okay. And we changed the air conditioner for a second-hand. It's still there.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** It works okay. It's silent. Another year passed by, again, City Hall.
- Interviewer:** So he complained again.
- Respondent:** Complained again. Yeah. Yeah, but the second time [0:17:00] – the first inspector leave everything the way it should be. Measure the noise, inspect the home, everything. After a year, again the same complaint. What they did the second time, they don't come to me. They went there.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** They get that machine. The air conditioner was on, to measure because he complained.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** When they entered the home, they see beside his bed a chair. [0:17:30] You know, I'm not exaggerating, but the fan is this big, this hard, and this high. It's square. Remember those big fans?
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Yeah.
- Respondent:** Beside his face in the bed. But that inspector was smart. He said, "I worked with that family, they have everything already done the way it should be. The law permits, you know? This time my boss is going to come with [0:18:00] me." So he comes with his boss. When they entered his bedroom to measure the noise they see the fan there.
- Interviewer:** So the fan was noisy.
- Respondent:** Of course.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.

- Respondent:** He complains about my outside...
- Interviewer:** But it was his noisy fan right in his bedroom.
- Respondent:** Then he had beside his bed one of those big ones before you used to put in windows. Another big, square, you know?
- Interviewer:** So the noise wasn't your air conditioner, it was his fan.
- Respondent:** But he complains about me.
- Interviewer:** Right, right.
- Respondent:** Was jealousy.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So his [0:18:30] wife was nice, but he was a big complainer.
- Respondent:** But nothing she can do.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, so he was the boss.
- Respondent:** So the inspectors leave the house immediately, knocked the door. "Mrs. de Frias," I look at him, "Please don't tell me I'm going to be in trouble again. He said, "No, actually I come to tell you I'm sorry because when I start to work with you a year ago in that air condition, I should do what I did today. [0:19:00] Just go look."
- Interviewer:** Go to his house, yeah.
- Respondent:** "Measure the noise and let them go to hell." [Laughter] Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And the police was the same when my children were growing up with her too.
- Interviewer:** What about the neighbours across the street?
- Respondent:** Very nice.

- Interviewer:** You knew those people?
- Respondent:** Just those two.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** This one comes after she pass away.
- Interviewer:** Okay, yeah.
- Respondent:** Now you have it all in here. She's Japanese.
- Interviewer:** You have a Japanese woman next door.
- Respondent:** [0:19:30] Yeah.
- Interviewer:** And she's nice.
- Respondent:** She works. She's a masseuse.
- Interviewer:** Oh yeah. Okay.
- Respondent:** She's like a daughter to me. Her mom passed away. They're not very neat around the house, but they work. You know, what do you expect? Young kids, you know?
- Interviewer:** So in all the years you've been here...
- Respondent:** The rest of the neighbourhood's okay.
- Interviewer:** And where do they come from?
- Respondent:** Bertha is Jewish, and the mother-in-law they pass away. They're very nice. I [0:20:00] have Rita across the street, Jewish too. Yeah, very friends, so just because she likes me so much, I used to make dresses for the one across the street. You know that house family used to live? Rita used to live there. They're friends.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

- Respondent:** Very nice people. Very nice people. We have Elaine across the street. I think she's from Australia.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** She lives over there in that house across the street. Maybe [0:20:30] about thirty years.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** I think she's there. Australia sometimes she goes, she has family there, you know? A lovely person. Just those two.
- Interviewer:** What about – are there other people from the Azores here? Do you have other neighbours from Portugal?
- Respondent:** Yes, the house you have is people from close, probably another way from my home town.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** There's a young couple, an old lady that moved away. I think they live in Mississauga or stuff [0:21:00] like that, you know? So we decide to stay here. We decide to stay in here. The neighbourhood, no complaints. We have Central Tech. Sometimes they paint.
- Interviewer:** Some of the kids, yeah.
- Respondent:** Oh you know, the children, you know? You know? But you can't complain even the children.
- Interviewer:** I want to talk about your sewing. So you sometimes sewed for other people?
- Respondent:** Yeah. Before.
- Interviewer:** Repairing things? Or making new things?
- Respondent:** Making new things.

Interviewer: What did you make?

Respondent: Dresses.

Interviewer: [0:21:30] Really?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Fancy dresses? Summer dresses?

Respondent: Fancy dresses.

Interviewer: Really? So how did you learn to do that?

Respondent: When I was young I was born in a town around seventy, eighty kilometres away from the city, so I had a brother. He couldn't go to the army because he was so thin, and you know? Then the doctor did [0:22:00] an inspection, you know? Want him. So he went to work in a house with a doctor. Then the doctor's very rich. He had boats across the islands, you know? That doctor works through the Canadian government when there's all Portuguese people coming here. [indiscernible 0:22:18], you know? So my godmother, because I was very young, I was fourteen years old, my mom was old because I'm number ten.

Interviewer: [0:22:30] You're number ten. Whoa. Some more after you? Or you're the last one?

Respondent: I'm the last one.

Interviewer: Ten. Okay.

Respondent: I'm number ten.

Interviewer: Okay. So you're...

Respondent: And that one is number nine.

Interviewer: Okay.

- Respondent:** And there was another sister, but she married. We are the young couple at home; my mom's already old and my dad, you know, he was disabled too. Then one day I got a phone. I said, "Mom, I've got somebody. You want Netti" **[0:23:00]** Can she come?" The family, you know, they're very, very, very rich. They're from Cannes, France. Her sister was married to a general in Lisbon. These people the top-line.
- Interviewer:** Got it.
- Respondent:** So I was fourteen years old. That's when I met my husband because when you go for summer, have another house when you go somewhere, he pass by. Just what you need to happen **[0:23:30]** you know? Because the ocean was so far, like here from across the street.
- Interviewer:** That's how close you lived to the ocean?
- Respondent:** Yeah. No, just summertime.
- Interviewer:** For the summer.
- Respondent:** Then we have a beach, you know? Those rich people have what they want anyway. Okay, so that's what it is. My life starts that way, you know?
- Interviewer:** But the sewing, you learned to sew?
- Respondent:** Oh I sew there. She put me where the nuns are.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** You know? **[0:24:00]** The college where the nuns are to learn to dress.
- Interviewer:** Oh, so you learned to sew from the nuns...

- Respondent:** Yeah, but I also had experience from one sister. She was to make clothes for people, so from a little girl I just started helping her, you know, those things, you know?
- Interviewer:** So you started to learn from your sister...
- Respondent:** From a very young age.
- Interviewer:** Right. But then you learned from the nuns.
- Respondent:** Yeah. And from the nuns how to cut, how to measure, how to do those things.
- Interviewer:** Right. And then you came to Canada, so you could [0:24:30] work at home and make dresses.
- Respondent:** I did. I did.
- Interviewer:** Okay.
- Respondent:** I did a dancing dress for Berta, and the one, the shiny thing with silver.
- Interviewer:** Sequins or something like that. Yeah.
- Respondent:** Years she still had the dress, you know?
- Interviewer:** Oh so you had a little business at home and you could...
- Respondent:** Not exactly business. Some friends, because I have so many children, you know? Not exactly...
- Interviewer:** But they would pay you.
- Respondent:** Yeah, but I work for the clothes of my children. [0:25:00] I did it...
- Interviewer:** So you sewed your children's clothes.
- Respondent:** Everything I did. Everything my hands. Everything, you know? You see, I can show you this.

- Interviewer:** What are you showing me? Some pictures?
- Respondent:** You see?
- Interviewer:** So that's a picture of one of your children...
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** ...and a baby dress.
- Respondent:** That's Maria. That picture was taken for that – find out what he did [laughs] because he married and got pregnant coming here.
[0:25:30] I did the dress, I embroidered the dress.
- Interviewer:** It's pretty.
- Respondent:** It's just from kids, you know? From child, you know?
- Interviewer:** Beautiful. Oh my goodness. Beautiful dress.
- Respondent:** You're young, you were good in eyes, you know?
- Interviewer:** She looks like a baby doll.
- Respondent:** Yeah, she is.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, very pretty.
- Respondent:** You know?
- Interviewer:** So your children's clothes, so you were busy sewing.
- Respondent:** I got the kids in here some of them. They're very athletic.
- Interviewer:** Athletic. Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah. They like sports, you know? There we go. That's my son.
- Interviewer:** **[0:26:00]** Uh-huh.

Respondent: That's my son.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: That's my son.

Interviewer: Oh my god.

Respondent: All of them.

Interviewer: And what sport were they playing there?

Respondent: It was in King Edward, and they go around play, you know?

Interviewer: Let's see what it says. It says tenth anniversary 1989.

Respondent: It was 1989. 1989, you know?

Interviewer: Was that soccer? Baseball?

Respondent: Baseball.

Interviewer: Baseball. I see a baseball mitt. Yeah.

Respondent: Yeah. So they...

Interviewer: So you sewed other people's [0:26:30] dresses.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. But mainly for your family.

Respondent: Yeah. For family, for my husband, you know, for me you know.

Interviewer: You want me to see some more pictures?

Respondent: Oh.

Interviewer: Is this your [indiscernible 0:26:48]?

- Respondent:** Yeah. This should be at home, but it passed away – my daughter live upstairs. I need a big bed.
- Interviewer:** [0:27:00] Yeah.
- Respondent:** My bed home, my granddaughter has.
- Interviewer:** So your granddaughters and your daughter are upstairs.
- Respondent:** Yeah. That's all my grandchildren. You see this?
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Come and see.
- Interviewer:** What?
- Respondent:** Come and see.
- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent:** Look.
- Interviewer:** Oh my goodness. So who's that?
- Respondent:** My husband, me, my daughter when she had the first communion. So the second one and the three little ones. They're all in line-up.
- Interviewer:** Oh, is that gorgeous. Oh my god.
- Respondent:** And believe I did those things for them.
- Interviewer:** [0:27:30] You sewed all those clothes.
- Respondent:** The dress, my, and the children's.
- Interviewer:** All those white little jackets. Oh they're cute. That's a beautiful picture.

- Respondent:** It is. It is.
- Interviewer:** You look pretty.
- Respondent:** I'm glad, I'm glad, I'm glad.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. That's a gorgeous picture.
- Respondent:** Yeah. They're all in line. Whatever they do, even now. Whatever they do,, they're all in line. [Laughs] She's the first. The second one is Alfred. Maria, [0:28:00] Fernella's better, Maria, Arnand, Paul, and Walter.
- Interviewer:** Absolutely gorgeous. And cute too. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** They are. You should see them now. They are. This was my daughter-in-laws.
- Interviewer:** How many grandchildren do you have?
- Respondent:** Oh, eight.
- Interviewer:** Eight grandchildren?
- Respondent:** Eight. Six girls, and two boys. Imagine, I have four boys. They give me two.
- Interviewer:** Two boys and six girls.
- Respondent:** Six girls. I have one girl, they give me six. Yeah. [0:28:30] Here. That's the girls. That's my daughter.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** That's my son, Arnand. Alfred. Alfred, Walter, and Paul. Looks exactly like father.
- Interviewer:** Come. We need to talk some more. Is that okay?
- Respondent:** Oh sure.

- Interviewer:** Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- Respondent:** Yeah. That's [0:29:00] my, how do you call, all the family. So my daughter decide to take that picture and paint that.
- Interviewer:** Oh, so that's the picture and she had an artist paint it.
- Respondent:** She did.
- Interviewer:** It's beautiful. Yeah.
- Respondent:** And she tell the artist to change the clothes and her hat.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** I said, "Marie, which is it?"
- Interviewer:** She took the flowers off.
- Respondent:** Yes, she take the flowers out and they changed the suit, the colour. You know, that's what she did.
- Interviewer:** [0:29:30] That's funny.
- Respondent:** That's funny because the picture was out, and I didn't even notice.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. But the rest is quite similar. She took...
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. That's my husband.
- Interviewer:** And she left your necklace on.
- Respondent:** Yeah. But she left the rest on, so there. Actually the dress is blue, she just put the kind of mix.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** The dress is the same, you know? Even the suit here.

- Interviewer:** Thank you. Thank you.
- Respondent:** You know, that's life.
- Interviewer:** Can you tell me when your family was growing up, [0:30:00] where did the children play?
- Respondent:** They go to King Edward, then the park was built over there. Sometimes they go to Central Tech, you know? Soccer.
- Interviewer:** They play on the street sometimes?
- Respondent:** Sometimes, sometimes.
- Interviewer:** More they would go to the playgrounds.
- Respondent:** More in the space because they go and play ball, and stuff like that.
- Interviewer:** Sports.
- Respondent:** You know?
- Interviewer:** And what about the back lane? Did they ever play in the lane?
- Respondent:** Not much, not much because the garage, somebody working there fixing cars, you [0:30:30] know what I mean? So Nick rented the – because we don't have car before. So they don't bother. Mostly they went to King Edward, or Central Tech, or even Harbord School. The places they're in school play...
- Interviewer:** So where there were playgrounds.
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** And behind your house, do you have a garden, do you have vegetables? What's behind you?
- Respondent:** No, it used to be, but now it's grass. Flowers some of them come out. Others, you know, before was nice, [0:31:00] you know? Things changed a little bit since he passed away.

- Interviewer:** Yeah. I'll bet they changed a lot.
- Respondent:** Because, you know, I can't do much things, you know? Maria's busy. I'll show you.
- Interviewer:** Oh you have some more pictures behind?
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. That's her when she's born.
- Interviewer:** [Laughs] Oh, is that ever a cute [0:31:30] picture. She's not wearing anything. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Oh the photographer did that, you know? But don't show nothing. The photographer said my god, I said, "It's too cold." Oh, no, no, no.
- Interviewer:** Oh very cute.
- Respondent:** She's lovely. She's a lovely girl. That's me.
- Interviewer:** So how – oh my goodness. Did you make that dress?
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** Yes?
- Respondent:** Eighteen years old.
- Interviewer:** Oh very pretty. I love the dress too. That's so pretty. [0:32:00] And you look beautiful.
- Respondent:** Thank you.
- Interviewer:** So there you're still in the Azores.
- Respondent:** Yeah. Actually that picture was taken to send to him. He was in here.
- Interviewer:** Okay.

- Respondent:** Yeah. It was taken to send to him. That's the little girl.
- Interviewer:** So that's the one and only girl. That's...
- Respondent:** That's when he goes back after three years and a half to see the little girl, and her sister get married.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** [0:32:30] Yes. That's the...
- Interviewer:** So by the time you moved here, you had two children.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** And then you had three more, and you were...
- Respondent:** Three more in here. Three-and-a-half, actually. Three-and-a-half. Now that's – let me tell you something. He is what he shows. Very nice man. We are a very loving couple.
- Interviewer:** Holding hands?
- Respondent:** Oh [0:33:00] yes. [Laughs] No, a very nice man. I couldn't ask for more. I couldn't ask for more better life.
- Interviewer:** Could you talk to me about the stores in the neighbourhood?
- Respondent:** The stores, it's still the Chinese store over there. It used to be – his name is Manuel. He buy a house in Scarborough. They rent to Chinese people. They're still there.
- Interviewer:** [0:33:30] Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** But they had a store?
- Respondent:** Yeah. They still sell more things there.

Interviewer: When you say there, where do you mean?

Respondent: Now the Chinese keep different styles, you know? People – she's hard. People know better now, you know? Like if you go there, one time I went to buy crackers, you know. My god she charged me two dollars extra. [0:34:00] And slowly people smart up. They go to the big stores, they go see sales. They know to speak English, they have the children. That's what I suggest she never hold.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Respondent: Those corner stores now they're less sales...

Interviewer: Because they were cheating people. They were charging too much.

Respondent: They're charging too much.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: People learn.

Interviewer: So you say you prefer the big stores because they don't...

Respondent: Well...

Interviewer: ...cheat you.

Respondent: [0:34:30] Yeah. We all go for sales, right?

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you ever shop in Kensington, or did you shop in Kensington?

Respondent: I still go. Not that much anymore because they're all so – people move away. You see, we're all getting old.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Used to be a store, Melo's. Very nice people. I used to shop fourteen years there.

- Interviewer:** Oh my god.
- Respondent:** That's right in Kensington.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Oh they delivered.
- Respondent:** They delivered. And they know us, you know? So it was normal.
[0:35:00] You know.
- Interviewer:** So when your family was growing up, where did you buy most of the food?
- Respondent:** Market.
- Interviewer:** In the Market.
- Respondent:** In the Market.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Jewish Market.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** Nice fruits. Used to buy baskets, and you know, those things. You know? Now it's – I think things are getting higher, higher, higher, higher. I don't know why. Even now I still go around shopping, see what, you know? We go to Wal-Mart, we go to No [0:35:30] Frills, you know? My daughter has a car, you know? Before we never want to drive.
- Interviewer:** So you never had a car, you and your husband?
- Respondent:** I did have.
- Interviewer:** You had a car.
- Respondent:** I had a car. He asking for drive, I drive for a couple of years. The children learned, they got over all my hands, that's it.

- Interviewer:** But it's interesting that your husband didn't drive.
- Respondent:** Never.
- Interviewer:** And his brother repaired cars.
- Respondent:** Because his best friend, he comes with him, he died in a car accident.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** He went to wash the car in the Lakeshore, [0:36:00] you know, for the car wash, you know? Then he put the feet – he thought he put the feet...
- Interviewer:** On the gas or the brake. On the gas.
- Respondent:** Yeah. He put on the gas. No. The car go back instead of go forward.
- Interviewer:** Oh, he went – oh my god.
- Respondent:** You know. And then...
- Interviewer:** So...
- Respondent:** ...the Italian guy with him saw – he survived. He broke the glass, he come out, but he passed away. He's scared.
- Interviewer:** So he went into [0:36:30] reverse when he wanted to go forward.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** And your husband was so frightened by that, or so upset that...
- Respondent:** Yes. Because he doesn't see the accident, but he's a best friend. He said they never want to drive. And he worked so far. He worked in precast, and far away, but always somebody drives and he pays for time, you know?

- Interviewer:** Yeah. So you drove, but he didn't.
- Respondent:** I asked him, the children are growing up, and we go – you know. He tell me, "You sure? **[0:37:00]** You sure?" I said, "Okay. I'll drive." I never have accident.
- Interviewer:** Good for you.
- Respondent:** The children learned with me, but now they don't want me to touch anyways. [Laughs] That's him when he came to this country in 1956.
- Interviewer:** So how old was he there?
- Respondent:** Twenty-seven years old.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Very beautiful man. Sexy.
- Respondent:** Very. [Laughter] Very, very, very, very. [Laughter] Quiet.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** But **[0:37:30]** very.
- Interviewer:** He's very, very nice looking.
- Respondent:** A little bit insecure.
- Interviewer:** Oh really? Yeah.
- Respondent:** Because I think he take over his dad. Before men not like that, because my mother-in-law used to tell – when I got married, he wants me – he was so, so ugly here now. Never show my legs, you know? And I remember one time was a hot summer. I **[0:38:00]** had pantyhose and the shorts. It was black people who lived next door after Mr. Gellar. They bought the house for fixing. So I had osteoarthritis, I was fat, you know? And the guy was asking me, he's come off work, he's asking me, "Miss de Frias, how's your legs?" And I say, "Well **[0:38:30]** this one is the bad one. Always

the bad one." He passed by, he come, "What does he want? Why are you pointing the legs to him?" And he was with his wife beside him. I said, "Nick, what's wrong with you? You think I show myself?"

Interviewer: So he was jealous.

Respondent: Yeah. And then he give up. He give up.

Interviewer: [0:39:00] Yeah.

Respondent: He give up because I told him, "My god, you live me so young. Don't you think I have dozens and dozens of guys through. I have to drive myself home. My friends come to me, Netti, discussing this." I mean, "Oh, I don't want." Because he was in here he was afraid that the...

Interviewer: The gossip.

Respondent: Yeah, the gossip. You know? "Don't you think I have – I was not very interested. He was my only man."

Interviewer: [0:39:30] Yeah.

Respondent: Then he gave up. I had to be strong with him. I had to be strong with him.

Interviewer: Yeah. We women have to be strong.

Respondent: Oh, I learned to be strong, you know?

Interviewer: Where was the church that you went to?

Respondent: Oh, it was St. Mary's church.

Interviewer: And where was that? Somewhere close by?

Respondent: Yeah. The children have communion there in Bathurst and Adelaide. Something down there in Bathurst. It's still there.

Interviewer: So did your family go to church...

- Respondent:** Sometimes [0:40:00] yeah.
- Interviewer:** Regularly?
- Respondent:** Sometimes we'll go to St. Peter over there.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** Close.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** Other days you can't go, you're busy, you know what I mean? Children are long taking care of me, you know? I have had operations too.
- Interviewer:** So you had some big health problems.
- Respondent:** Yeah. I had operations, I did have to remove my ovaries. I have to remove here. I did seven or eight pap smears because I have a lot of bleeding, you know what I mean? [0:40:30] I did – I'm always operation. A lot because I work a lot. I work a lot.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. I'll bet you did with five children. Yeah.
- Respondent:** And I worked thirty-one years in Home Laundry.
- Interviewer:** Right.
- Respondent:** Home Laundry was nine.
- Interviewer:** And what did you do at the laundry?
- Respondent:** Then I went to work in Molson shipping, you know? It's hard, you know? Sheets, put signs, answers the phones, stuff like that, you know?
- Interviewer:** So you did heavy work.

- Respondent:** Yeah. [0:41:00] That's when the children were growing up because Maria take them to school. I come home to lunch. One time I have my five kids working with me there.
- Interviewer:** In the laundry?
- Respondent:** In the laundry because the boss likes me so much, I say thank god he was an old man because he's jealous. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** You had a jealous husband. He was kind...
- Respondent:** He's not jealous. It's more insecure.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** Like oh my god. I had to [0:41:30] be careful, you know what I mean? But I have never had complaints.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Well what about the pictures? You still look beautiful.
- Respondent:** But let me tell you something. Two months after he passed, before he passed away, we took him downstairs on the couch and he looked at me and said, "Netti, I don't even know how you did so much. Because he was [0:42:00] busy too."
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** He was busy. Come home, the children's down, clothes done for him, I used to sew, you know? Everything. Now sometimes hours and hours without sleeping, sewing. Or to save, save, save, save. That's, you know, that's the way I...
- Interviewer:** So you worked hard and he worked hard too.
- Respondent:** He worked hard too. Yeah, but he had nothing to do in the house.
- Interviewer:** He didn't do anything in the house.
- Respondent:** The garden, do things, yeah, cut the grass. [0:42:30] Yeah, but like clean dishes.

- Interviewer:** That was your job.
- Respondent:** He didn't know how to do that. Sometimes he cleans the fridge. More outside.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** More outside.
- Interviewer:** So he did the gardening. What did you have in the garden?
- Respondent:** Now it's grass and the flowers.
- Interviewer:** But say thirty years ago when your children...
- Respondent:** It used to be flowers and things, but things...
- Interviewer:** Vegetables? No vegetables?
- Respondent:** Yeah. Sometimes he put, now he put grass.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** You know? And a little bit flowers every now and then.
- Interviewer:** [0:43:00] Yeah.
- Respondent:** He was a man in the house. He was a man in the house, always around. Always, always. You know? Do you want to see the house?
- Interviewer:** I have two more questions and then I'd love to see the house.
- Respondent:** Yeah. Okay.
- Interviewer:** Do you remember when the war ended?
- Respondent:** Which war?

- Interviewer:** The Second World War. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** You were quite young, come to think of it.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** I know a few things, you know? But I was young. You know?
[0:43:30] I was young. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. What about the university? Do you ever feel that...
- Respondent:** I worked at the University of Toronto for fifteen years.
- Interviewer:** Oh my goodness. What did you do there?
- Respondent:** In the physical plant.
- Interviewer:** And what were you doing there?
- Respondent:** Well cleaned office, you know? And I worked in the Fields Institute, too, seven years.
- Interviewer:** So you raised five children, and you worked many jobs, hard work.
- Respondent:** I worked a year-and-a-half in Molson. They loved me there. You can go there. They have my records. [0:44:00] Some of them tell me, "Netti, you don't have to do that job."
- Interviewer:** So they thought you were working...
- Respondent:** You know, the people. You know?
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent:** I worked in the first floor. My personality, you know? Now it changed, everything changed, you know? Then I worked nine years

in Home Laundry. I worked a year-and-a-half in Stork Diapers. Then from Stork Diapers I went to University of Toronto.

Interviewer: Wow.

Respondent: I get a phone [0:44:30] call, and then from there I was retired.

Interviewer: Yeah. So how old were you?

Respondent: Growing five children, that's what I'm trying to tell you when I got that phone call with the Adams and the Rob Fords. Some people like to come question me. I said, "Let me tell you something. Our city are screwed up." My wording's exactly like that. Some of them can help, some of them can't because it's more people in a city, different types of people. We see it. [0:45:00] You know. You're from here.

Interviewer: I'm from Canada. I grew up in Montreal.

Respondent: Oh, you grew up in Montreal. Oh, I see. Anyway, but I can tell you about my life in a few words. I entered this country in 1963 with two children disabled already.

Interviewer: Disabled?

Respondent: Disabled.

Interviewer: Because of your...

Respondent: I was helping along.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: You know, before it was terrible in Montreal. They have to hold me. Before it's not like now. [0:45:30] They come and it's – with diseases and everything. Before they have to see, you know? But they find out it was a spot with shots, you know? It was not a TB. But they have to see that the tuberculosis for a year to check me, you know? But they're in College. Still there. Actually I work close from there, you know? Growing up five children, I have my husband

when I come to this country. The house was paid [0:46:00] for in '64.

Interviewer: Oh. You already paid for it.

Respondent: Sixteen thousand dollars.

Interviewer: Yeah. [Laughs]

Respondent: That's how much he saved.

Interviewer: Yeah. Good for him.

Respondent: What I tried to tell those people from the government, there is a lot of people in the street. I was sick then, and worked so hard, entered this country with sixteen thousand dollars before is a lot of money.

Interviewer: Oh yes. Oh yes.

Respondent: Okay? And I still going [0:46:30] on, helping my children, my daughter, doing everything around the house. Everything. We have a lot of lazy people in this country. I don't care what people say. A lot of lazy people in this country. Even young women, some of them are alcoholic. Other ones are prostitutes. And the government – I heard they have sixteen billion dollars deficit.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: What's going on?

Interviewer: It's a big deficit.

Respondent: [0:47:00] What happened to our government before when those good workers come, my husband come, and those Italian people come, and those Polish people come? Actually we have the old neighbour in the street are not – the Chabichou.

Interviewer: Chabichou? Yeah.

- Respondent:** The house next.
- Interviewer:** Right.
- Respondent:** South.
- Interviewer:** Veronica.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah?
- Respondent:** She's the oldest neighbour.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** She's a doll.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Veronica. Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah. She's the oldest neighbour in the street.
- Interviewer:** [0:47:30] Yeah. She's eighty-seven. Eighty-six.
- Respondent:** Yes. Yes.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. I'm going to try to speak to her too.
- Respondent:** I never passed there, she said, "Netti, Netti. Come on." You know?
- Interviewer:** So Netti, I'm going to turn this off now because I'm going to look at your house. You offered to show.
- Respondent:** Yeah. Why not? Yeah.
- Interviewer:** But I just want to say thank you very, very much. I enjoyed...
- Respondent:** It was nice to meet you. I'm sorry, because I thought it was tomorrow.

Interviewer: This is fine.

Respondent: Actually I was prepared, but I wanted you to come in here anyway.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. But thank you very much. I really enjoyed meeting you.

Respondent: And if you want to come sometimes...

Interviewer: Okay. We could do that.

Respondent: Okay.

Interviewer: But I'm going to turn this off right away.

Respondent: Oh. Come...

[00:48:00]

[End of recording]