**Oral History: Adriana Zylmans**

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| Interviewee | Name of Interviewee (SURNAME, given name(s), middle initial) |  Adriana Zylmans  |
| Interviewer  | Name of Interviewer (Surname, given name(s), middle initial) |  Rebeca Salas  |
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| Summary | Brief summary of the interview session (Copy and paste from Form 13 – Session Summary) |  Adriana Zylmans begins the interview describing where and when she was born, her parents’ journey to settle in Canada from a war-torn Netherlands, and her experience attending university to study to become a teacher. She then highlights her varied experiences in the education sector working with organizations like the Ministry of Education as the curriculum coordinator for Consumer Education, and then in academia after receiving an Educational Doctorate in Leadership from the University of San Diego. After reflecting on the education system and how it has evolved over the years, Adriana moves on to her experience growing up in Canada as the descendant of immigrants and its significance in her life. Toward the interview’s end, she talks about the City of Richmond’s efforts to name a road in honour of her family’s contributions to the Richmond community.  |
| Keywords | Keywords indicating interview subjects (Copy and Paste from “Keyword” section of Form 12 Interview Summary.) |  Teaching, Farming, University, Education, Richmond, New Westminster, Government, Consumer Education, Ministry of Education, Education System, Consumer Education Program, BCTF, Opportunity, University of British Columbia, Principal, International Relations, University, Doctorate, International Ambassador, Netherlands, Holland, The Hague, Keyboard Wizard, Professor, Business Education Teachers Association, Change, Inclusivity, Success, Family, Extracurriculars, Strawberry Fields, Immigration, Camaraderie, Second World War, Vancouver Foundation, 4-H, Road Naming, scholarship, Gilmores, Family, Technology, Community, Royal Canadian Legion, Dutch Liberation 2020 Canadian Society, Canadian Liberator Tulip. |
| Subject | Subject headings applicable to the Interview. The OHC uses Library of Congress Subject Headings. |   |
| Duration | Length of Interview Session (if applicable) hh:mm:ss |  02:51:46  |
| Interview # |  Number of the interview (interviewees according to date) |  1  |
| Session # | Session # of the recording (X of all interviews in the session) |  1  |
| Location | Where the interview was conducted |  Richmond Museum and Cultural Center  |
| Media Type | Audio or Video |  Audio  |
| Restriction Type | Open (Open access)Restricted (Interview has some restrictions detailed below in “Restrictions”)Closed (Closed/No Access) |  Open [[1]](#footnote-1) |
| Restrictions | Details regarding any restrictions on the file’s use (as outlined in Form 6 –Consent) |  N/A  |
| Rights | Release Information regarding copyright and access through the repository (as outlined in the Release Agreement) |  All rights given to the interviewer (Rebeca Salas) and the Oral History Centre  |
| Funding | Information on how the project was funded. |  N/A  |
| Equipment | Equipment used to record the session. (Brand and model number of recorder.) |  H2N Zoom Recorder  |
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**Transcription Legend:**

. . . = Ellipses used to indicate where an interviewee does not complete a thought.

[?] = Used to indicate indecipherable words or unknown spelling of words.

START OF TAPE PART ONE OF ONE

[00:00:03]

REBECA

This is Rebeca Salas, I am here with Adriana Zylmans for her oral history interview at City Hall in Richmond on January 20th, 2020. Thank you so much for being here and, as we sort of talked about in terms of the direction of the interview, it’s best to start at the beginning. So why don’t we start with when and where you were born.

ADRIANA

Well, I was born on March the 7th, 1954 and I was born in Steveston on Finn Road and the address – there wasn’t an address at that time.[[2]](#footnote-2) I was the first of two children that my parents had. My parents arrived in Steveston in 1948 – September the 1st they arrived. My father had an uncle[[3]](#footnote-3) that was living in Steveston and my father’s uncle was not married and had come to Canada in 1908. His first arrival was in New York and went to Alva, Oklahoma. Then he made his travels through the United States and up into Canada and eventually settled on Gilbert Road and Finn Road. At the time that I was born, my parents had bought the farm across the street from my dad’s uncle. So my dad’s uncle had nine acres and my parents were able to buy the other nine acres across the street from him just about a year and a half after they arrived. They arrived with very little money, less than $100 in their pockets each. Their immediate concern was, obviously, to get a job and, eventually, they were able then to start their own farming because my dad wanted to be a farmer. My mother wanted that as well. We didn’t stay there that long because my dad and mom wanted to expand. So, in 1956, they bought the farm on Westminster Highway – at 1773 Westminster Highway[[4]](#footnote-4) – at that time. It was an old farmhouse with a single barn, very primitive as you can see in the picture but it was progress for them because my mother liked the house. It was a new home but, as you can see, there was no white picket fence. It didn’t have the American Dream that most people would be looking for at that time. My mother wanted to be on a street where there would be traffic because she wanted to start a roadside business and sell vegetables to customers. Eventually, that dream became a reality for her. My brother was born in 1957 at that address of 1773 Westminster Highway. The two children, my brother and I, grew up on the family farm and, eventually, we were old enough to start school. In 1959, I went to Holy Spirit Elementary School in Queensborough. It was a Catholic school. It had schooling from grade one to twelve but it was only a three-room schoolhouse. So, grade one, grade two, and grade three were in one classroom. And grade four, five, six, and seven were in the second, and then from grade eight to twelve they were in what we would call the auditorium.

I was quick to take a role in “Alice in Wonderland” and immediately became quite involved in the school from grades one to six. Unfortunately, Holy Spirit School had to close as the priest could not get the sisters, the nuns, that he had hoped would arrive and so we ended up then going to St. Peter’s Catholic School in New Westminster. Both my brother and I did. Before we actually moved to St. Peter’s, I must share that our grade one to six experience was being picked up by a priest in a large black car because, of course, he needed to have his students come to Queensborough. As a result, we always had to go to church every morning and the mass was in Latin. So, we learned how to speak Latin through our early years of our school. Eventually, Richmond came up with a bus and we were then able to take the bus to the Catholic school. That was certainly progress for Richmond, at the time, and for Father who didn’t have to pick us up any longer in the black car. His routine was Westminster Highway, River Road, then circle back along No. 7 Road to Westminster Highway[[5]](#footnote-5), and then back into Queensborough. Anyway, so, we went to St. Peter’s. I was there from ’65 to ’67. Unfortunately, I had to repeat grade seven at St. Peter’s for whatever reason. I guess the three-room schoolhouse wasn’t sufficient in preparing me for a classroom with one grade with 30 students. So, I repeated grade seven. However, I started school at the age of five and a half so, maybe, it was time that my education had caught up with me. We had spent a lot of time in Holland as well during our elementary years. In the winter time, we would go for two and a half months to visit relatives. So, that may have had an impact on my elementary foundational education. Then, I went to St. Ann’s Academy for one grade, for grade eight, and St. Ann’s Academy was run by the Sisters of St. Ann’s. It was an all-girls school but, unfortunately, that school closed in ’68 so the Archdiocese of Vancouver had built a new school, Marian High School.[[6]](#footnote-6) That school was where I attended for grade nine to twelve and graduated from in 1972. My leadership roles at Marian High were significant. When I was in grade nine, I was their sports representative on the Student Council and, before long, I was the grade eleven School President of the Student Council; grade twelve, the yearbook editor; and then in grade twelve, the Girl of the Year. So, I had good accomplishments at Marian High, but not knowing what I wanted to do because we were always working on the family farm. It seemed almost a message of, “Well, I think you’re going to be a farm girl forever” and . . . But that wasn’t really what I wanted to do. I didn’t know what I wanted to do. [[7]](#footnote-7)I went and worked on the family farm and my dad was proud, of course, that his daughter was going to be a farm girl. My mother had a hysterectomy that year so it was perfect for their daughter to be home to work on the farm. Then, of course, I ran into the fact, “Well, which guy are you going to date? How’s that going to work out?” and then I would get women coming into the barn and saying, “Oh, I can only buy ten pounds of potatoes today because my husband only makes this much money. So, we’re only going to be able to buy this and this.” Then I’d say to them, “Well, maybe I think I should go to university.” They would say, “Yes, do that” because that’s the thing for women to do, right? It was to finally get on and get an education. It was not customary. Basically, you got a high school education and then you’d start work. So, I worked on the family farm for two years and I had a cousin who had gone to UBC and he was in agriculture. In one of those two years that I was still at home he came over and spent a couple of weeks with us because my parents had gone to Holland. I saw him studying and seeing these books from the university and I thought, “You know, maybe that’s what I should do, too.” I was also an official ref for basketball and for volleyball. So, I was a national referee for volleyball. I ended up doing a lot of refereeing at UBC and then one day ran into a person and said, “Is there a possibility that, maybe, I could become a teacher in Business Education and PE?” She said, “Oh, UBC has such a program.” So I ended up, actually, seeing a counsellor and by then I had already, at night, taken French during my night school classes because, of course, just working on the farm for those two years just, somehow rather, wasn’t sufficient for me. So I had also gone to Richmond High and taken a bookkeeping class and taken some cooking classes and some flower arranging. So, then, when I saw the counsellor at UBC he said, “Oh, yes, you can parachute right into our education program, do the Arts One [Programme], and take these other courses and you can become a Business Ed teacher.” I said, “Can I do it in four years, rather than five?” He said, “With your advanced credits, yes, if you do summer school work” because my friends had all moved on to university and I was, you know, still kind of behind in that regard. So, yes, I finished my five years at university in four years, graduated in 1978, got my first teaching job at Balmoral Secondary School in North Vancouver, was thrilled to be the PE teacher and Business Education teacher, teaching typing skills with the typewriter to children, and having to improvise because there were some students who had finger dexterity problems. For a teacher who’s in her first year of teaching, adapting to students’ needs was a big challenge but, anyways, got my first teaching job, ended up doing a lot of coaching and was very successful but declining enrollment in North Vancouver, as it still always is, and I started . . . They re-hired me, but I didn’t want a part-time job, I wanted security as a full-time teacher. So, I contacted Richmond because I had heard through the grapevine that Richmond was looking for a PE teacher and Business Ed. So, I contacted Gerry Bouman at the time, who was the principal, and Jerry happened to know my parents. Gerry Bouman knew my parents, knew that I was looking for a job, and I was in Burnett School for the next year. I started at Burnett in 1979 as a Business Education PE teacher.

[00:10:38]

Then I was seconded to work with the Ministry in 1981 as the Curriculum Coordinator for Consumer Education. That came about because Brian Smith had done an actual request with parents and teachers, what it was that they wanted in the curriculum that would change the educational system. He found out from parents that the students should learn something about financial literacy skills. So, Brian Smith said, “Well, if that’s what you want then we’ll make sure we get a course of such a nature.” So, Brian Smith, having done all these meetings around the province hired Gayle Bonner? to be the Curriculum Coordinator for the Ministry of Education to create the Consumer Education Program, but I had already done a lot of creative writing, as you can see from the work that I was doing publishing in the monthly publication of the BC Business Education newsletter/magazine. I started to write creative articles about teaching in the classroom and about Business Education. Gayle had seen some of my work and, so, Gayle invited me then to join up and see if I would be able to help her with designing this curriculum that needed to be done within a year. So, I suggested to Gayle that maybe she should talk to Brian Smith and tell him the challenges that she was being confronted with and that I’d be very happy to help her but she would have to then recruit me or second me as an assistant. So, Bob Overgaard hired me in, I think it was around the end of September of 1981. I was teaching at Burnett School and I was seconded for two weeks. He wanted to see the work that I did, would do, and gave me a task to complete. Of course, he was happy with the work that I had done and so asked me to join Gayle to create the Consumer Education 9/10 curriculum for the Province of British Columbia. At that time, the BCTF was not in favour of this curriculum because it was going to be a superimposed expectation on students that would take away an elective course. To take away electives, like music or dance or something else or drama, was certainly not something teachers were happy about. Home Ec teachers would also be affected. So, the BCTF was not too happy that, as a BCTF member, that I was going to support the ministry’s curriculum development. I felt that it was my opportunity to undertake a new challenge. I didn’t feel that the BCTF could restrict my educational opportunities and my career opportunities. So, in the end, I was with the Ministry for that particular year but Gayle left in December only a few months after I had started because she had some personal challenges in her own life. I was able to finish the program, and then the ministry said, “We’re now going to do Consumer Education 12. Would you stay to write that as well?” So, I ended up writing the program for Consumer Education twelve and, as you can see, there were textbooks created, teacher resource manuals were created, implementation plans. I travelled around the province to implement the course, to teach parents, or, to teach teachers what financial literacy was all about and what the expectations would be for students. It was a very creative design because there had been money allotted for this program to be a success but many teachers did not know what the curriculum was going to be and had not been prepared for through their Teacher Education Program. So, many were reluctant to teach it. I felt the only way that I could obtain consistency around the province for program implementation was to have a comprehensive package, which would be like a workbook, textbook style that teachers couldn’t fail with the program. As a result, it became a very successful program in Consumer Education. It lasted for eleven to twelve years in the curriculum, which is great for a program to have survived that long. Eventually, it got changed to Planning 10 and, again, the Planning 10 Program was changed but, coming back to my role, after I finished with the Ministry in 1984, I had also, at that time, undertaken a Master’s program at UBC because people were saying “You’re writing curriculum. What is your expertise in writing curriculum?” So, I completed a Master’s degree at UBC from 1982 to 1984 in Curriculum and School Administration at the same time that I had been working with the Ministry. So, it was a full-time job over and above studying full-time. So, I was successful in getting my Masters, but, since I had only been a teacher for such a short period of time, only a few years before I was seconded, getting an administrative position as a female was not going to be that easy. So, they asked me to go to McRoberts School and that’s where I started after I had been let go with the Ministry. Many of us had been let go. Our jobs were complete, the funding had been done, and they closed the offices in Richmond as well because, again, the funding had changed and there were changes in the Ministry of Education. So, disappointingly I returned to McRoberts but, um, as people often say, “When you’re given lemons, you make lemonade.” So, I immediately got my feet wet at McRoberts, but I continued to take a course at UBC in technology. I was invited by the professor there, who happens to be Kanwal Neel, that I think you’re familiar with in Richmond, who invited me to join him in taking the students overseas. So, I immediately ended up taking students on school cruises during springtime. I took them on a Mediterranean cruise and did student exchange programs with the students here in Richmond. When I was at McRoberts, I took them to Newfoundland and out on the school exchange programs. That was a very interesting way to enrich my coming back into the classroom and having to leave a position like the Ministry, which I enjoyed so tremendously because it gave me so much more freedom, so much more responsibility, and I was recognized for making a very prominent contribution to the education system. It was difficult to go back into a classroom where I was just a teacher, but I wasn’t just a teacher. I was in transition. I was recruited then to become a principal at Marian High School. So, in 1987 I became the principal at Marian High School, my Alma Mater. As you know, I graduated from there in ’72. It was a very interesting experience to be parachuted right into an administrative position as principal because the teachers had unionized and they wanted to improve not only their own benefits, but also that for the school. The Archbishop of Vancouver was not happy with that and he ended up going to the Supreme Court of Canada and, ultimately, the Archbishop closed the school in 1988 in June. So, I had one year of administrative experience. The outcome of that was such that secular law could not replace the laws of Catholicity. So, the Archbishop decided to close the school. In all of my efforts, I had never left Richmond in the sense that I always was in touch with the school administration and the superintendent, and told them that I was making the career move because it was a career move. It was not because I wasn’t happy with Richmond. Richmond had always given me my leave when I worked with the Ministry as a secondment so that once the job was done I could return to Richmond. In this case, he said, “Go and get that experience as a school administrator and who knows where you’ll go from there?” So, then I decided that maybe I would like to become an International Education Ambassador in education. To do that, I would need a doctorate degree. So, I thought, “Well, why don’t I see if I can get into a university with a leadership opportunity in international relations?” The University of San Diego offered such an opportunity in educational leadership. So, having the school not needing me as an administrator in the Catholic system, at that point I decided to capitalize on taking a doctoral program at the University of San Diego. It was a Catholic university and, therefore, I felt I could use my educational experiences to apply to new knowledge. So, I completed a dissertation there on ethnic inclusion strategies for the World Affairs Council. That was a very unique project because I was given a $50,000[[8]](#footnote-8) grant from the Ford Foundation to undertake such a research project. That was based on four different international groups. It was the Native Americans, it was the Hispanics, and it was also the . . . let’s see if I can remember them now. Do you want to just pause and I’ll see if I can remember them all. So, that was the American Indian organization, the African American organizations, the Asian American organizations, and the Hispanic American organizations that I interviewed.

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The results of my study were such that, if you want to increase ethnic inclusion strategies, you need to do it based on a one-by-one invitation because people build trust with camaraderie. They were keen on developing more inclusiveness because they knew that future leadership and future leaders of the United States were going to come from African Americans, from Hispanic Americans, and from Filipinos. That was my focus, on the Asian Americans. They were feeling that they wanted to provide programming that would cater to those interests of those ethnic groups. Ultimately, it became a very interesting study. That would lend itself to the fact that I wanted to become an International Ambassador in education and how more interesting than to have had such a background. Then, I decided that going to Europe might be a good idea. I tried to get into D&D[[9]](#footnote-9), at one time. I wanted to learn more French. At another time I had sent an application to [the University of] Strasbourg to try to get some more French background because of my desire to become an International Ambassador. Unfortunately, I didn’t get into the Strasberg University and I also wasn’t able to find a D&D position, although I had been shortlisted. So, I decided to go to the Netherlands and find a position there, perhaps at the International School in The Hague, because I speak Dutch. My parents, having come from the Netherlands in ’48, my mom and dad wanted us always to learn the Dutch language so that we could communicate with our relatives back home. My mother was very keen on us learning a second language. It certainly helped me in my high school years and also when I took a year of French between my time of working on the family farm before I went to university. So, I tried to get into working at the International High school in The Hague, but then my mother had a very serious car accident on the Knight Street Bridge. I ended up looking after my mother for six months because I had taken, again, a leave of absence from the Richmond School District in order to pursue this international opportunity. It was at that point that I decided that, probably, staying here was going to be more important than trying to pursue my own goal of becoming an International Educational Ambassador, that my parents needed support on the family farm. Not that my parents were unwell but it was just seeming that my dad had very significant roles in Richmond. He was on the planning committee in Richmond. He was the leader of the potato growers in Richmond. There were speeches to be written. He was dependent on my linguistic skills. So, I felt that his leadership in the community was significant, and I felt that I could probably become as significant of a leader here as well. So, again, I returned to being a teacher in Richmond and trying to move ahead. It always seems like I move ahead three feet and back two feet. I think that’s just an example of growth and change and taking advantages of opportunities so that one leaves themselves open to greater opportunities. Even though it may seem that some doors shut, other doors will open. If you leave yourself open to those opportunities, then I think your potential will be enriched in whatever it is that you have that chance to participate in. So, um, Richmond then went through a very significant change. I’m talking now, I started my education at the University of San Diego in 1989, and I graduated with my doctoral in 1991. It was in about 1993-94 that Richmond was going to go from a junior high school system and a senior high school system to a high school from grade eight to twelve. I did make some presentations to the School Board at that time, suggesting that it would be much more, I think, unique for Richmond to at least retain some schools, perhaps, at just a high school or senior level because we had such great opportunities here. We had Richmond High, we had Steveston High – very prominent schools with huge automotive programs, woodworking experience. They were preparing students, once they left grade twelve, to be the mechanics, you know, a direct mechanic or a direct carpenter. My brother ended up benefiting from those programs because he was going to be my dad’s follow-up farmer. Those programs were highly intensive and provided students with those skills that, today, we seem to be lacking. It was unfortunate that the School Board at that time wanted to change all the schools. Every school had to go from eight to twelve. I had asked and invited, with my own educational experience, making these presentations that, maybe, one or two schools could become magnet schools of some kind with their expertise in something that they were profiled in. My other concern was, is when you water down 300 students from one grade to, maybe, a grade of 70 students, the number of electives that the students could take at a certain level, would be greatly reduced. For example, if you have two-or-300 students in grade twelve, you can provide an awful lot of electives to those two-to-300 students and run a class with 30 students. If you have only 70 students in grade 11 or 12, you might only be able to offer a few electives and many students wouldn’t get their first choices. Anyways, Richmond chose to do what they did and today you see that some schools have gone back to a little bit of more specialization. One school is stronger in music, one school may be stronger in drama, one might be stronger in automotive. So, um, I guess, my thoughts were not that futuristic at that time. Anyways, I continued [teaching high school] for another year or two and then I was invited by UBC to become a professor in the educational department in UBC. So, I became a faculty associate and joined the faculty as a seconded teacher in preparing teachers to become teachers in the classroom. That was in Business Education, specifically. Dr. Shirley Wong had retired and they were looking for a replacement for Dr. Shirley Wong, but the University of British Columbia was not really prepared to hire a full-time professor because they weren’t prepared to actually put the money into research that a full-time professor would be granted. So, they seconded me and I was there for a few years and then I was hoping that I could become a full-time faculty member in the sense of becoming tenured at UBC. UBC wasn’t convinced that Business Education had much of a future. The typewriters that I had learned on and had used at UBC, and the classroom that I was in at UBC[[10]](#footnote-10),was still the classroom that I experienced when I went there in 1995 as the faculty associate. So, I was part of the transitioning from electric typewriters to the computer. It was 1995. I remember the Internet only started when I was doing my doctoral studies. The Internet only started in about 1989-1990. I had my first Apple computer to actually do my dissertation on. To have a Word document and an actual document that could do some drawing on Apple, at that time, was just very cutting edge. So, anyways, I went to UBC and when I was their faculty instructor there, I transitioned into introducing more of the computer technology into the curriculum at UBC. They were very happy with my work and I did some research projects. I worked with Dr. Westrom and we provided . . . Westrom created a Keyboard Wizard. My thoughts were, “Well, if I wasn’t going to be the international ambassador in education, what about creating a tool for underdeveloped countries?” So, I created a Keyboard Wizard with Dr. Westrom[[11]](#footnote-11). At UBC, I wrote the lesson plans so that the students could use the tool that was battery operated. They could learn English and they could learn to type at the same time. It was with VTech here in Richmond, that we created this particular Keyboard Wizard. Unfortunately, it never made it to Africa and Dr. Westrom and I did get acknowledged for the efforts and the Keyboard Wizard is available in your Archives. So, uh, that was a very interesting time as well. I was hired at Central Washington University in Ellensburg to become their tenured Faculty Teacher, Teaching Professor in Business Education[[12]](#footnote-12).

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I wasn’t sure that I could take the position. I was still at UBC, but I wanted a permanent job. Ellensburg had seen the work that I had done in education and in business. While I was a faculty member at UBC, I coordinated an international business conference here in Vancouver and the United States. Of course, teachers from the United States and from Europe attended this international business conference because I was the president of the [BC] Business Education Teachers Association for many years. I had written many articles, etcetera. While I was at UBC, I was still the president of the Business Education Association and I felt it was vitally important for us to be on the map. In so doing, Ellensburg had seen my work and wanted me to become their faculty member and I thought going to the States, “Well, I had done my doctoral studies and why wouldn’t I accept such a position?” But, life has its means and I was living in a condo, here in Vancouver, and we went through that whole leaky condo situation and I ended up with a $60,000 leaky condo assessment. My job at Ellensburg would be renting out an apartment there and then having $60,000 [in condo renovations in BC]. So, my first year of working in Ellensburg would be totally working for my rent, for my accommodation. I had hoped, eventually, that UBC would still come through with a full tenured position. My parents were a little reluctant to see their daughter travelling to Ellensburg, through Snoqualmie Pass, and, so, not being married and having no children, they felt that maybe being here would be just as rewarding. So, I, unfortunately, turned the position down at Ellensburg. They were greatly disappointed but, I think, for my future it was a better opportunity to, again, stay with UBC. I was there with them for nine years when they finally made a decision. They either had to put money into the department or they had to go to a part-time position. So, they went to a part-time position and I came back, again, as a teacher to Richmond because, at this point, I was nearing the age of 55 and, I thought, “Well, maybe it’s time to retire and do something else.” In the meanwhile, my father dies. My father died in 2005 and my retirement would be in 2009, when I would be 55. With the family farm and my mother’s commitments as well, I figured that I would just finish up my teaching career and then support my mom with the family farm needs that were being addressed. So, the family farm needs ended up being the handling of land expropriations, um, a barn in Ladner that needed upgrading which my parents had bought. The property in Ladner was bought to support my brother’s transition, if he needed some more farm property because Richmond is expanding considerably and farmers are being pushed out because of the expansion. So, my father wanted to secure my brother’s future. So in 1999, he did buy a 200-acre farm in Ladner of which half of that is my brother’s, and because it was a natural divide with freeway, it ends up dividing the property into two 100-acre parcels. So, my brother is farming the one property, but he never moved his farm operation to Ladner. We’ve continued to have our farm operation in Richmond because we have the infrastructure constructed here. It didn’t make sense to move there. It was security that my father wanted for my brother and the family. So, he bought that in 1999 and died in 2005, and then in 2009, I retired from the teaching profession and then supported the other 100 acres that we were renting out. It needed some farm improvements like concrete floors, and painting, and doors, and a house that needed renovations. We had some houses on the farm property in Richmond that needed to be renovated, and there needed to be tenancy agreements put in place. So that’s how I supported the family in those regards because my brother continued to farm, but he was farming the seed potatoes, and the vegetables, and the strawberries. That required a lot of crop management and he didn’t have time to deal with tenants. So, anyway, that’s how that ended up. Then, I supported my mom until my mother passed away. My mom passed away in 2014, in June. Since she passed away, the estate needed to be settled and it took a lot of my personal time for that. In settling the estate, it gave me an opportunity to look back at my career and, thinking that I’m still young, so I’ve returned back to teaching in Richmond as a teacher on call. I have been enjoying it tremendously, and having had the breadth of experience of having been a, you know, high school teacher, and working with the Ministry in curriculum, and being a principal of a high school, and having had the doctoral studies, and preparing students to be teachers in the classroom through UBC’s educational program, and now coming back and seeing the inclusiveness in the Richmond schools and the new programs that they’ve introduced, uh, MacNeill School having the ASRER Program[[13]](#footnote-13), and seeing the different specialty programs that have been introduced to meet the needs of inclusivity in schools has changed considerably to what it was when I started in 1979. So, there has been change, lots of growth. I started with portables at Cambie School as a teacher when that new transition took place, and now you can see Cambie has become a school without portables. They’ve got the Learning Services Center in the Cambie School because of declining enrollments. There’s been huge change in Richmond with the immigration, with the families having reduced sizes of [their] children, the needs of the schools have changed considerably, and that transition, I think, is going to continue to change as we continue to see immigration here in Richmond. And how the schools . . . Of course, schools are the first to adapt to changes in society and changes in population. You’ll see that through the curriculum as well. Now, you’re seeing a lot more inclusivity with special needs students and in the situation where a lot of educational assistants are now in schools, and there’s a shortage of teachers. Richmond’s been creative in bringing back the retired teachers and inviting them to share the expertise and skills that they’ve acquired in those years. Today, you can give me any class, whether it’s French, or Mandarin, or as a teacher in the ASPER Program at MacNeill, or working in automotives at Richmond High School, or music, French, being a teacher, I can do it all and I feel comfortable in doing what it is that I’m asked to do. So, I feel like I’ve had a very full career, a very interesting career. I’ve seen the transition in schools and I’m grateful for the opportunities that Richmond has given me, because if you leave yourself open to opportunities, there are lots of doors that open up. You can’t imagine all the experiences and the wealth of opportunities that are out there if you’re open to the growth that’s available for us. So hopefully that’s a little bit of history.

I guess, having grown up on the family farm, one of the, I guess, monumental moments as a child was being driven over by the tractor. My dad drove over me with the tractor wheel at the age of two and a half years of age. I was sitting on the front of the tractor and I fell between the front wheel and the back wheel, and my dad drove over me with the back wheel. I was very fortunate to have sunk into the soft soil. Of course, at that time, there was . . . the ambulance service wasn’t that great. So, he picked me up and put me in the back of the car and drove me to St. Vincent’s Hospital. We didn’t have a hospital in Richmond, at the time. There was nothing wrong with me. No broken bones and heavily bruised, but I guess that always created a special bond between my dad and I, and with the family because we, as immigrant families, you depend on the children. The parents depend on their children to help them because my parents had no . . . did not have any experience with the English language when they arrived. So, they had to learn it from the street and from their jobs. So, they were heavily dependent on the children to guide them with that kind of background. So, I guess we always had a special feeling of responsibility, commitment to their success because their success meant our success, and our success meant their success.

[00:41:18]

It was a kind of a group effort, it was a team effort, it was a family effort to be successful, and if we were successful, my parents felt that they were successful. That certainly brought lots of opportunities. I played a lot of sports in high school. I did a lot of public speaking in high school. I won a number of trophies by doing Bible reading and doing public speaking. That was all part of my high school experience and, I think, leant itself to going into the teaching profession, eventually. I think all that students do extracurricularly in high school has great opportunities and benefits in the future. We sometimes don’t understand the significance of extracurricular activities, or elective programs, or opportunities that teachers provide to their students. If a child is open to experiencing different opportunities, different challenges, the benefits are hugely rewarding in the future. There’s so much that this world has to offer that a child can never see all the opportunities that lie before them unless we as teachers open doors for those children. We do that through, as I said, I travelled with students across in Europe and across Canada. We did student exchange programs where the exchange students experienced here, and our students experienced life in Newfoundland or in, uh, we were in Quebec, in Chicoutimi, and we were in Ottawa. Those student experiences are remarkable and open up an awful lot of opportunities for students outside of the school. Yes, I think the role of family is important in children’s’ lives. We didn’t have aunts and uncles directly to support us. I think that’s another reason why we end up spending so much of our time supporting our own parents. Today, many families have grandparents but we didn’t have them here. They were in the Netherlands. If we did have aunts and uncles, on my mother’s side, we did have a few aunts and uncles, they were too busy working and trying to make their own lives important. I also got my class four driver’s license so that I could drive the high school bus when I was principal at Marian High School so I could drive the school bus to take students to their games, to their volleyball games and basketball games. That was, again, something that I undertook. If you look at the history of Richmond in regards to what Richmond looked like, the winters here were very cold in the years of the ‘50s, ‘60s. I remember playing ice hockey on Westminster Highway and there wasn’t a car to be seen. We used to skate on the cranberry fields in Richmond during the winter and there were opportunities for barbecues then as well. We ended up doing a lot of tobogganing. When there were opportunities like sand piles, we’d find sand piles because there would be road construction or expansion and we would benefit from those sand piles to do tobogganing. I remember the Lansdowne Racetrack, the farming communities that Richmond had, bus service along Westminster Highway on a Friday evening so we could go shopping or do some skating in Richmond at the Richmond Skating [Arena] . Cambie Secondary was still a junior high school, at that time. So, a lot of my friends went to schools in Richmond and I went to [Marian High] School in Burnaby, in New Westminster. There was a little bit of a separation there. When I was also in high school, I played the captain of the *HMS Pinafore*, a Gilbert and Sullivan. I was part of the “Now Production,” a musical production. I used to have many pictures as a farm girl in the newspapers, and pictures of myself in the strawberry patch working with strawberry pickers, selling pumpkins and having carved a few pumpkins and getting those into the newspaper. Journalists were always looking for stories and we happened to be a farm that was nearby Vancouver. So, I was the girl that ended up in a lot of pictures for Richmond. For whatever reason, I guess I was either lucky or unlucky, but that happened to be what were some of the opportunities. My dad would go to John Oliver High School in Vancouver to pick up our strawberry pickers for our farm during the early years because a lot of high school students spent their summers picking strawberries or picking farm vegetables, because that was the thing to do. They earned their money during the summer. There were no adults to do that. Today, we have people from India, from China, and even in those early years, in the ‘60s, we would have a lot of people come from Hong Kong. The Chinese workers would come and do a lot of our weeding for us on the family farm. They were vital for crop harvesting as well but, ultimately, the high school students were the kids who did most of the farm work. I learned to be the strawberry boss. I think I learned some of my working with students because of working in strawberry fields and strawberry patches. Strawberry fields forever, as the Beatles used to say. That was certainly an opportunity. I took a Readac course, to improve my reading speed, in high school. That was an interesting program that, today, I don’t think we see many students learn how to read faster. That was something that was introduced at our school at that time at Marian High School.

REBECA

Can you describe what that course, or, what the tools in that course looked like, or the exercises?

ADRIANA

In the Readac Program, what they did was they actually flashed words onto a screen and tried to have you improve your reading comprehension and your reading speed by them actually controlling the speed of the words onto the screen, so that you would force yourself to read more quickly and grasp an understanding. That was a very unique program that I took at grade nine, in grade nine high school at Marian High. My dad won a lot of farm prizes because he was very good in his potato field and crop cultivations, management. He had planted his potatoes in very straight rows and there were no weeds. So, he won an awful lot of farm prizes and some of them were crystal bowls that we received or a fishing rod he’d received once, as well. My mom returned that as quickly as possible. Dad had no time for fishing. It was an opportunity that he would have had to take some time off work but, no, that wasn’t it. He was full-time. My mom started, as I mentioned earlier, the selling of vegetables at the roadside stand and we learned a lot by helping customers and selling a great variety of vegetables.

[00:49:58]

We had green beans, yellow beans, you know, uh, beets, pumpkin, squashes, kohlrabi, green cabbage, red cabbage, savoy cabbage, curly kale, cauliflower, you know. The vegetables, at that time, that my father grew, were also peas and apples and he’d planted an orchard which was unique for him. The fact that we started this roadside stand was very unique and we sold beets and vegetables all year round to customers . . . the crops that we could maintain, um, like we could, um, cold storage beets [and potatoes], we could cold storage onions, carrots. So, those we continued all year round to sell. That became a fairly significant source of income for our family because we had people coming to our home and purchasing the vegetables rather than we having to market them. My dad did that as well. We took our vegetables to MacDonald’s Consolidated and that’s where Safeway would order the pickling cucumbers and they would want slicing cucumbers. We would package those slicing cucumbers in, like, 24 cucumbers to a box. We’d have to count them and sort them and make sure they were straight. Pickling cucumbers needed to be sold in 20-pound boxes. Then we would, in the evening after school, we would go with our dad to Safeway, to MacDonald’s Consolidated to deliver those particular crops. Then we would be doing the multiplication tables in the truck with my dad. That’s how he would make use of our time with him in the truck, so that he would supervise our educational learnings that we needed to do. Today, we seldom see children even knowing the multiplication tables. They’ve all got calculators. We didn’t have calculators and computers when we were children, so reinforcing the multiplication tables was a great way and my dad was able to capitalize in sharing that time with us. So, we would go and accompany him. Of course, the day that I received my Bachelor’s degree in Education was one of the most glorious days because I felt I finally had a job for life and that becoming a teacher was such a great opportunity because, should I get married and my husband become injured and all those stories that I used to hear from our customers about getting that education because my husband only made this much money and we would only be able to buy this much vegetables, or this many vegetables this week, provided me the security that I wouldn’t have to be worried about those stories that I had heard from many women in the barn telling me, “Get the education because, look, I don’t have an education and I can’t earn the money that I would need or would like to have and my husband only earns this much.” So, I certainly learned from those lessons that the people used to tell me, the stories that I used to hear. I was able to capitalize and make sure that I was going to have a better life than what I heard from those people. As I said, Richmond high schools, the high schools were great for night school classes during those two years that I worked on the family farm. Bookkeeping, accounting, cooking classes, flower arranging, they were providing those at night school. Going to college, there was Douglas College, or going to university wasn’t really that significant because there was an educational program you could take. It was a two track system. You could take the academic program in high school or you could take the commercial program in high school. If you were going to take the commercial program, then you were probably going to be a secretary or an administrative assistant, but that didn’t allow you, really, to go into the academic stream. So, when I was in high school, I made sure that I took the academic stream to leave, again, my doors open, but that meant that I didn’t really have a direct job to work somewhere after high school. My father said, “Well, you’re going to work on the farm anyways, so you really don’t need that secretarial program directly.” So to complement the inability to take commercial courses due to the academic stream I had followed; once I graduated, I decided that I would do some secretarial courses including bookkeeping and accounting. I had typing skills, so that was good. Richmond offered night school courses in bookkeeping and accounting which I completed. I’m not sure if I have anything on hand to show you the course work I completed.[[14]](#footnote-14)

REBECA
Well, I have lots of questions. Would you like to take a short break or . . .

ADRIANA

Sure, let’s take a break. Yeah. Have I answered the questions you were looking for?

REBECA

Oh, yeah.

ADRIANA
I kind of jumped all over a bit, but . . .

REBECA

Yup. Alright, so, now we can get into some of the notes that I took and some of the questions that I wrote down as you were speaking. One of the first things I noted down was that I was curious about if you had inherited any stories from your parents or your uncle from when they first came to Canada – if they had any memories, or experiences, or impressions of when they first came to Canada, first came to Richmond; if you had heard any of those stories as a child or perhaps later in life.

ADRIANA
Well, I think one of the first stories that my dad often would say is that he had received a very good farming education in Holland, but he said that Canada provided him the land. It was the land with opportunities and that was his goal. He wanted to be a farmer. That was one of the skills that he felt most comfortable with. As far as stories about Richmond, Richmond at the time in 1948 and in the ‘50s was a very much of a strong farming community. There was a huge relationship amongst all of the farmers. There were times when they would share equipment with each other, there was camaraderie among them that they were all trying to create a reputation for Richmond that would be something that would be commendable throughout Canada. One of them was the potato industry. It was significant. So was the cranberry industry that started as well. As far as stories went, well, I’d hear the story about my father trying to buy his first truck and how they didn’t know what an immigrant was, and that they didn’t trust immigrants in Richmond, and, because they had no money my father requested from the Royal Bank in 19 . . . I guess it would have been about ’50 or so, to get his first truck because he had these crops planted on Finn Road and he needed to get them to market. So he completed all of the application requirements for this money and I think he wanted something like $1500 to buy his first truck. It ended up being a truck of $425 because that’s all he had. The Royal Bank, in the end, said to him, “Sorry, we’re not sure that you’re going to be able to repay this even though you have your crops in the fields. There is no guarantee that that crop is going to give you sufficient monies for you to pay back this loan. So, sorry, we can’t give you the money.” So, he bought this truck for $425 and the truck had to be placed on a ramp at night so that he could actually get the truck started in the morning, and then he had to carry a potato with him to actually put the potato on the gas pedal so that he could continue to get gas. So, he had a whole bag of potatoes with him. So, to be an immigrant in Richmond without language skills was extremely difficult. What they did have was, my dad had his uncle, and because it was a brother of his mother, who was not married, he was very disappointed the day he arrived. There was no running water in the house. There was no nail to hang a coat. There was just a chicken coop. They had put the . . . The neighbours had helped uncle put some linoleum down, which, again, signified the camaraderie. Everybody on Gilbert Road knew that this newlywed couple was coming from the Netherlands and they all got together to make sure that there was going to be cake and cookies, and ample opportunity for some kind of a celebration to welcome them. It was never forgotten. It always continued, this camaraderie of togetherness, working together, supporting a newcomer even though they all were newcomers here. They all knew how difficult it was to get established in a new country or in a new location. That was something that my parents talked about considerably when they talked about how they were welcomed to Canada.

[01:00:17]

I think, today, we still do that because we’re all immigrants. We’re all from somewhere else. So, that, I think, has been part of Richmond has been its kindness and its generosity to newcomers. That has been something that my parents have always spoken of and the gratefulness for that because the story my father used to say was, “The people who earn the money here, in the country, in a new country, will keep the money. If you bring money into the country and you don’t know its economy and its economic system, you will have great difficulty understanding the value of your money. You may have difficulty keeping it. If you earn the money in the country you live, then you know its value.” So, I think, you know, that was something that my father used to say frequently. He knew the value because he had to earn the value of the money. They didn’t have the money to buy the tools that they needed to farm. They would go to the dike and they would look for tin cans or wood, and that wood would become the beanstalk, you know, it would become the . . . the tin can would become the tool that my mother would use as a cup to flower . . . to put the actual pesticide by each plant, at that time. They would use dust to keep the slugs away and, so, she would use that as a container. The dike provided a tremendous amount of resources for farmers. The dike was not far from Finn Road. They were very grateful for that. There was great peace here. They’d come from a war-torn country. The Second World War had just finished in ’45. There had been food rationing in Europe. The buildings had all been destroyed. Holland could not find shelter for their people. So, they were pushing and recommending young farmers to leave the country and meet their dreams somewhere else and because the Canadian liberators, the Canadian soldiers who liberated the Netherlands, had built such a friendship with the Dutch, it was a natural way to gravitate to Canada because Holland had built that relationship. So, it was kind of a push and a pull, because Canada needed people to develop its country and then my dad had his uncle here. So, it was natural for them to come to this area. Was he devastated the moment he arrived? Yes. He brought his bride here on their honeymoon and they had a . . . the family, the Zylmans had a big farmhouse in the Netherlands and to come to a chicken coop that his uncle had built and there was only a stove, no running water. It was quite devastating. The only means to get ahead was with their hands, and their head, and their feet. The first day that he was in Canada, he ended up cleaning septic tanks. Interestingly enough, we have a septic tank on the farm still here in Richmond, the little farmhouse. I had the experience, a number of years ago where the septic tank needed to be cleaned out and I reflected back on that time where, today, we’d pump it out. At that time, it was done by hand and to think that that was the way my father earned his first dollars was cleaning out a septic tank. It certainly makes you think back of how difficult those first days and years must have been.

REBECA
Mhm. I’m curious about . . . you mentioned the warm welcome that your parents received and your uncle was, of course, there. Were there other families or community members that they ever spoke about that were a part of that welcome or was it mainly a family associated thing?

ADRIANA
Well, the names that come to play, of course, were the McNairs and my dad had his first job working for McNairs, and Archie Blair and, you know, Irene Howard, the Howard families, the Mays, the Savages. They’re very prominent names in Richmond and they, too, played a significant role in my dad’s life because they were the ones who gave him his first job. My dad was able to borrow a tractor from Archie McNair or from the Blairs because they happened to be in that Steveston area. The cannery, at that time, was a place that was hiring a lot of people. Uncle said, “Why don’t you go and work for the cannery, for the fish canneries, the Steveston cannery.” Dad says, “No, I’m going to be a farmer. I don’t want to be cutting fish.” It was that . . . It was almost like the role of bartering. “I’ll give you this if you can do this in return for me.” My dad was very grateful for that because he couldn’t farm his farm of nine acres without tractor or equipment, and he had just bought the farm. So, that’s where all his money went, to get a tractor [Dad would barter]. The first years, they did everything with their bike. They had a bike and literally took cauliflower on their bikes, and went from door to door selling cauliflowers on Gilbert Road and wherever he could. The other thing was, my dad had his driver’s license from Holland. So, he was able to drive truck for the sawmill as well. My dad basically had four jobs. He would drive truck at night for the sawmill, and he would carry coal and sawdust into the homes because, at that time, we had furnaces that needed coal and sawdust, and wood. During the day, he would put his work in at his own farm. Then, he would even . . . If he did that in the [very early] morning, and thereafter, he would go and work for Archie Blair or for the McNairs and do some tractor driving. My mom would go and pick potatoes, maybe at the Oeser[[15]](#footnote-15) family because they had a farm. Then you’ve got Harold Steves who, you know, the Steves family, too, had similar opportunities. Wherever they could, they would work from home, work for other farmers, drive tractors, drive trucks. They did whatever they could to assemble some dollars to continue their farming and improve their lives. As far as more stories went, it was . . . everyone was basically in the same situation. Money was not really plentiful. It was a commodity that you needed to get ahead, but there wasn’t a lot of it. In farming, you know, one year it’s better than another year. So, whatever you earned you tried to save. Spending it, there wasn’t a lot of places to spend your money. You could go to the theatres and you, possibly, could go. At that time, it was great. The distance of . . . Transportation wasn’t that available either. They had a tram running from Steveston into Vancouver, at that time, that my parents would talk about. They didn’t see that they had the money to go to the theatre or go dancing, which were opportunities for them, because they wanted to get ahead and the only way they could get ahead was to save. So, they would go into Steveston and my dad would say to the butcher there, “What is the cheapest meat you have?” He would say, “Well, maybe that over there. Those bones over there with that little bit of meat.” My dad would say, “Yes, that’s what I want and I will do something with that.” They would make headcheese with the worst type of meat you could imagine. They made their own butter and made their own yogurt. They didn’t have a fridge, so they used a hole in the ground to actually keep their food cold. Those methods, they had learned in the war. The techniques they had learned in the war, too. So, they could churn their own butter, make their own yogurts, make their own soups. They were extremely resourceful. I think much of the recipes were in their head. Very little was written down. My mother used to say she would avoid her homesickness by singing. So, she would sing in the fields. She found the peace and quiet of Steveston very close to, similar to where she had grown up except there were no bombs falling around.

[01:10:34]

[Buying nylons was] something she wanted and there was plenty of which, I guess, at that time was part of women’s clothing, right? As far as other stories went, it was working from early in the morning to late at night. You worked with the seasons. The winter, you worked less but had stoves that you needed to keep wood in. I remember my dad chopping a lot of wood to keep the furnace going at night. Yeah.

REBECA

What was the method of transportation for their move to Canada? Or multiple methods, probably.

ADRIANA

Well, they brought their bikes. They each had their bike when they came. I think, for the first couple of years that was their only mode of transportation was walking and biking. They were members of St. Joseph’s Catholic Church and they were part of the choir there. Madeleine Therrien, I think you’ll remember her as well, a teacher in the Richmond district. She was a librarian for many years. They were in the choir with her. Her mother[[16]](#footnote-16) was French speaking and I took a lot of lessons, French lessons, private, from her. Their early mode was basically the bicycle, walking, and then when they bought that truck. They didn’t buy a car, I think, until after my mother needed to take me to the doctor, right, to get . . . and then my mother needed to learn how to drive. So, that was what her goal was, was to have her own driver’s license before I was born, so that she wouldn’t be dependent on my dad to have to take her to here or there. The car, I don’t think, came along until about 1954, I would think.

REBECA

And how did they get to Canada?

ADRIANA

They came with the boat to Tabinta. They left from Rotterdam on the 16th of August[[17]](#footnote-17) and they arrived, left Rotterdam then arrived in Quebec, City of Quebec because they came . . . at that time, the *Tabinta* could come down the St. Lawrence River. That’s where he exchanged his first money into Canadian dollars. Then they boarded the train there and then took a train ride, which, the whole trip was about a two week trip, about nine days to cross the ocean. My mother said she never needed to go on any more cruises or take a cruise because she had experienced the Atlantic Ocean in such a way that they had come across it to immigrate. They returned to the Netherlands three years later to visit their families. They had to go for my Dad’s mother (my grandmother Zylmans) was ill. They, again went by train to New York and took the boat across the Atlantic. I remember my parents saying the ship was better than the *Tabinta.* So, they crossed it three times. The thing that my father said about that first crossing was, “The *Tabinta* was a freight ship.” It brought them across the ocean. The experience wasn’t the best because they were quite sick, and very high waves, and a lot of rats that were travelling around that ship. My mother was sleeping in a hammock. My mother would sleep at one end of the ship and my father at the other. When he arrived in Quebec, he said, “I’m going to go and say one final goodbye” because it brought him safely across the ocean. Should he return to the Netherlands again for a visit or whatever, he said he’d hoped that it would be under different means. They welcomed them when they arrived in Quebec. The Dutch Government welcomed them, the Canadian Government welcomed them. The words that they . . . the message they gave the new immigrants was, “You’re welcome here in Canada. The Dutch have a good reputation for being resourceful. Don’t expect that the housing here is all that exquisite. So, you’ll have to be careful in regards to making sure that you look after yourself, but don’t be disappointed that the housing isn’t what you would expect.” Certainly, that was the experience they got when they arrived. The trip across Canada from Quebec was also a bit disappointing. The immigrants were told to go to the back of the train. Of course, the seats were less comfortable there. The train, at that time, was still running on coal. It was a dangerous trek. My dad did keep a diary and I have translated that diary. It’s available in Dutch. I’ve translated it into English. He was certainly grateful upon arrival after going through those mountains through British Columbia, and going through the prairies and getting all that dust in their face, they were glad that they finally had arrived and were able to, you know, have, not a shower, but wash themselves because it was certainly quite the trek during the heat of the summer through the prairies. For them, it was a new experience, right? They didn’t know what Canada was like. No one told them what to experience.

REBECA

It’s interesting to hear different stories about your parents and I was taken by the story of you going with your father and sorting the cucumbers. A lot of stories around work. I’m curious, I guess, to hear a little bit more about his personality, too. What made him laugh, what was, kind of, his way?

ADRIANA

Well, I think what made them laugh, and be proud, and celebratory in everything they did was they saw themselves getting ahead. That’s one thing about farm work. If you want to see progress, you can see progress because you can pick a row of strawberries and you can see the beginning and you can see the end. Often, when you teach a child, they don’t see that direct progress in school but in farm work you can see that. So, the fact that they were able to buy their first nine acres, the fact that they were able to buy a truck, the fact that they were able to buy tools with their money and saw their returns, they were gratified. That brought them gratification. They missed their families back home, but the families back home were struggling with the remains of what war was like, and the rebuilding. It was very difficult there, too. So, they didn’t see themselves in that much of a different situation, but they certainly weren’t going to share with their parents the difficulties that they were experiencing here because they didn’t have language skills, they were homesick, they didn’t have support, they knew no one, they, you know, my dad had four brothers but all of them wanted to be farmers. What made my Dad laugh and be really happy was the fact that his education had given him the tool that he needed in order to apply the farming qualities that were required of a farmer in order to get good produce. Even that was difficult because the farmland in Steveston, on Gilbert Road and Finn Road, that farmland was even far better than the farmland on Westminster Highway. The difference of integrity between the two soils was remarkable. In Steveston, we can get on the farmland much earlier than we can on Westminster Highway. There’s less rain in Steveston than there is on the eastern part of Richmond. So, what skills he had learned to adapt to the soil qualities in Steveston, river soil, when you plant your produce, he had to re-adapt to the soil type on Westminster Highway, that technique of planting and growing crops, he wasn’t able to apply to the Westminster Highway property.[[18]](#footnote-18) He had clay soil here. It was more water here and the water table was significant, the drainage was different. So, you know, those were kinds of his challenges [he faced] but, of course, he was grateful when he had his good crops, when he saw the strawberries were great, and he saw his children growing up, and they saw that they were moving ahead, but he was most proud when he was married 25 years. He said he had suddenly laid the foundation for a good future and he had children that were successful, having completed high school. Those were his greatest years were when he was married 25 years. He finally knew the direction of his life and knew that he was able to be successful at what he had set out to accomplish.

[01:20:47]

I don’t think that . . . my dad was 26, my mom was 23 at the time when they got married. What immigration meant, I don’t think they understood. They felt that if uncle could be here since 1908, there must be something good about it. My dad was a very kind gentleman. He took advice and was a good learner. I think his politeness and he always felt a second-class citizen because he had a dialect. He could never get rid of his Dutch dialect. He knew that Canada was his new fatherland, as they called it, but he always felt he was still a guest in this country. I think that stood him well because he felt that it was an honour to be here, but he was also going to make his own way and he was never going to be dependent on social services. He felt that he chose to come here and he was going to make the best of it, but he wasn’t going to be dependent on handouts. He felt he was responsible for his own success. Fortunately, he had good health. My mother did have an appendix operation within the first year that they were here. He didn’t have the money to pay for the surgery for the appendix. Dr. Tolmie, at that time, and Dr. Varley were two very significant doctors here in Richmond. At some later time, I’m sure my father ended up repaying Dr. Tolmie for that surgery, but he didn’t have the money and he knew what it was like not to have money because he had just settled in to maybe having bought that nine-acre property[[19]](#footnote-19). He understood that . . . He was humbled by that experience, I think.

REBECA

I’m also curious about your mother, but while we’re on the topic of your father could you tell me a little bit about your experience with the honour of the road naming in 2017, I believe, associated with your father?

ADRIANA

Yes. Well, it occurred to me that there were school names that were honouring immigrants and there were street names that had honoured farmers in Richmond, and it occurred to me that when my father died, so many people called me to ask, “What can we do in honour of your dad? Is there going to be a scholarship set up? Is there . . . What are you going to do to honour him?” So, my brother and I immediately set up a scholarship for the 4-H through the Vancouver Foundation. That was a $10, 000 scholarship that we set up at the time of my dad’s death. The day my father died, or a few days thereafter, Richmond City even came and cleaned the street along Westminster Highway. I couldn’t believe the gratefulness that they, somehow, acknowledged.

REBECA

Would you like me to pause?

ADRIANA

I think it was the honour of the contributions that other people had acknowledged in my parents that brought me to the idea that, maybe, it might be nice if so many people were acknowledging his loss, he seemed to be bigger than life, that maybe there was an opportunity here to have something more momentous, something that would recognize their legacy, that would recognize their contributions to Richmond and, in reflection, I thought, well, maybe there’s an opportunity here for me to write a letter to request Richmond to acknowledge their contributions to Richmond because so many people had told me they were so grateful for the work that they had done. My father had been on the planning, as I said, on the Richmond City Planning Committee for many years. He had brought potatoes in from the Netherlands, a new variety, pioneered that with UBC’s guidance and the potato growers, not potato growers but the potato research inspectors from the university, from the School of Agriculture. [Dr.] Bud Wright was instrumental, a gentleman here in Richmond, helping my father bring in this Bintje variety from the Netherlands to bring a new variety to produce and grow here. It was a yellow flesh potato which we didn’t know about here in Canada. It was very popular in the Netherlands to have yellow flesh. It’s like a buttered potato. Today, we have the one that they took off.[[20]](#footnote-20) It’s called the Yukon Gold and that was basically based on this Bintje variety that became the Canadian variety which is very well respected in stores today and people love the yellow flesh and the buttery taste of those. I must admit that we were gratefully honoured for the City to acknowledge the fact that we were going to be recognized with a name at some point. We didn’t know when. So, I wrote the letter, I believe, in 2005, after my father died. The City of Richmond said that, some time in the future, if there was a new area or street to be named or new street names to be named, that it would be forthcoming. I had hoped that it might have happened before my mother died, but it didn’t happen before then because, I guess, Richmond hadn’t developed to where they thought, maybe, the name would be most suitable. So, in 2017, it was confirmed that we would have a street name called Zylmans Way. The sign isn’t up yet, but I did go and drive there this week and did see the address ‘Zylmans Way’ printed on a sign and, I must admit, it’s very honourable and we are very grateful for that recognition. It is one way to maintain my parents’ legacy, but we’re looking, I’m looking at other ways to continue the legacy. I’m looking at working with the University of British Columbia, with the School of Agriculture. I’m not sure what the legacy will be there, but we’re trying to crystalize that at this time and what that financial donation will be is going to be developed within the next couple of years, I think. We also are looking, or I’m looking at a contribution to Richmond in some other way, whether it’s through the museum or to maintain the legacy over and above the street name. So, yes, we’re certainly touched by their lives. It’s unfortunate that I’m not married and I have no children. So, the legacy of my involvement with Richmond will hopefully continue, too, in my parents’ name because I still carry Zylmans name. Of course, my brother being a farmer in Richmond and still continuing my dad’s legacy, my parents’ legacy as well. My mother was also very appreciated. I was shocked when my mother passed away that she, too, was recognized by many farmers for having contributed in her own way. That roadside stand was her idea. She was the one who was selling the vegetables and it was my dad who was growing them, but it was my father who always said, “It’s a team effort to be successful.” He felt that my mother had supported his desire to be a good farmer, but my mother was the one who grew up on a farm too. So, they both had farming backgrounds, but my mother was the . . . grew up on a farm with cows and my dad grew up from a farm with cows as well, but they also grew other crops. So, my dad felt that he was more interested in crop growing than in having cows. So, that’s what made the decision to go in to crops rather than farming cows and milking cows.

REBECA
Do you think that spirit and perspective that they both had as a team is a part of the name or maybe you’ve been told, in terms of the name of the farm, its W&A, right?

ADRIANA

Yes, well, my dad called it W&A because his name was William and my mother’s name was Ann. He said, “You make sure that the woman’s name goes second because you’ve got to keep the women out of the farm operations” [laughs]. It was a typical way of the old school of thinking, right? Then, they named the children Adriana and the son William. So, it would be the legacy of W&A, my brother being W and I being A.

[01:31:10]

Interestingly, my brother has maintained the legacy as well because he named his children William and Angela. It did continue to the following generation. It’s unfortunate that William and Angela are pursuing their own goals, not farming per se but, who knows? They may still do like I did. I’ve come full circle and I’m back living on the farm. So, never say never, right? William is doing his masters at Carleton and Angela has just finished her teaching degree, I think, with UBC. So, both have fallen into fairly good positions in society. I think that’s what we hope all children will do. That all children are able to find their way in society and become good contributors so that they have purposeful lives.

REBECA

Well, it seems like every generation in your family has some form of connection, personally or in a professional sense. I was reflecting, as you were telling your own story and your journey through education and coming back to Richmond and motivation and tenacity to learn and try something new, it reminded me of the original story you told of your mother and her idea to sell. I just wonder if I could hear a little bit more about her because, to me, it sounds like you take a lot from her and from her personality.

ADRIANA
Well, I guess, my mother was one that had only grade six education. My father had only grade seven education and then did a lot of night school courses because that was typical at the time. My mother did some sewing, took sewing lessons, and she also played the accordion. She did the knitting. She would take sheep wool and she would knit socks for my dad because they needed sturdy socks for wooden shoes. So, she was part of a cottage industry, as we would say. So, my mother was very creative, extremely hard working, and never sat down. She says, “I’ve never read a book. I’ve never read a book.” So, when we were trying to read books at home . . . It’s interesting that I had to do that [readac?] course, but reading was considered a lazy job because she felt there was potatoes to be picked, and chicory to be cleaned, and things to be harvested. Reading a book was not bringing an income. There was just no time for reading. That was just not part of our culture because our work was done with our hands and our heads. Reading was not going to support that directly. I had a lot of catching up to do at university as well. My mother was a very strong supporter of her husband’s goals and objectives and, at that time, made a lot of sacrifices but did everything – did the household chores, and cooked the meals, worked on the farm. I must say, my father also, when my mother wasn’t able to cook the meals or prepare the meals, my dad would be doing that. My dad didn’t care so much in helping customers [laughs]. He felt that that was a personality my mother was good at. So, isn’t that funny how they had these projected roles that each filled to their fullest potential and were good at it. I think, we, my brother and I, have received the opportunity of getting both. My father was a very intelligent man and was envious that he couldn’t have a university education because, you know, there was always a joke about my dad wanting to become a priest. They used to say, “Yeah, we think you’re lazy enough for it” because he could use his intellect. He wanted the intellectual component to it. The Catholic faith was very prominent in our life. Going to church every Sunday was very important and my mother instilled in that value as well because that was all immigrants had to hold onto, was God and their faith. I think it was the fact that a miracle happened on our farm, the fact that my father drove over me with a tractor wheel and that I survived, made them feel that there was something. We always made the effort. If we couldn’t make it to five o’clock mass on a Saturday night, we would do it in the morning at nine or in the evening, but we always traded off, all four of us, if we couldn’t all make it to church together, we would do that. I think my mother was very strong in keeping her family values from the Netherlands. We would speak Dutch at the coffee table, at our lunch and dinners. What we spoke outside was English but she wanted us to learn the language and people would tell her, “Well, why don’t you forget about that language. You’re in Canada now.” She would say, “No, I want my children to learn the Dutch language because I want them to communicate with their cousins, and their uncles, and their aunts, and their grandparents.” If they’ve learned a language, they can only learn another language, she thought. She was the first to start recycling. She was the first to say to the customers, “If you wish to come back the next time, please bring the strawberry baskets next time. We can use them.” I would say to mom, “Oh, mom don’t be so demanding” right? Because it was like, “Okay,” they’d say, “Yeah, okay, that’s a good idea. I’ll bring them back” [laughs]. It was an expectation that, well, “They were giving you money, mom, to buy the strawberries. Don’t give them an expectation,” right? She had some very good ideas about recycling and about, you know, they were ones not to use an awful lot of cleaning agents and washing your hair every day. She says, “Don’t wash your hair every day. Don’t start shaving your legs every day because it’ll only grow more.” There were all these tales of what folklore might be, right? I guess, some of it had some truth to it, but because it was so old school we’d think they didn’t know everything as a child, right? We knew things better but, anyways, she was very committed. If she said she was going to do something, she followed through on that. If she was not able to attend a meeting, she would phone and say, “I’m not attending tonight” or “I can’t attend the coffee club because of this.” So, she had huge respect for other people’s time and energy. I think that made us also become quite responsible people. As I said, I was Student Council President. I would drive students home after school dances and things of that sort. So, we were instilled with responsibility, commitment, value, determination, hard work. Virtues of life, I think.

REBECA
Certainly. As you were telling your stories about experiences in school as a child and at home, I wonder if you remember any of your childhood friends or anything that you . . . that sticks out in your mind from outside of school that you might hold dear or comes to your mind at all.

ADRIANA
Well, the challenge that we had was there was no bus service. So, for us to continue with a Catholic education, which was prominent because of the Catholic faith, my dad and mom would either drive us to Gilley Road, in Hamilton area, to pick up a bus. So, we went to school after Holy Spirit, after the priest would pick us up, and we went through all that earlier. To get to school in New Westminster, we had to take a BC Hydro bus. That meant that my school friends were not my friends at home. When school was over, we were back on the family farm focussed in on farm work. A lot of school friends, I didn’t have. I had friends at school, but the friends that I had at home were the farm children, but they all went to public schools here in Richmond. So, there was an automatic separation between those children and us. Being on the farm, too, there was not a lot of children in the neighbourhood because it was farmland. There’s quite a distance between one farm and the next farm, or one house and the next house, but I did have a very good friend. She was Dutch. It was Maryann and Peter Scheer. In fact, I’m still in touch with both Maryann and Peter because their father was the farmer at Don Gilmore’s farm. The Gilmores are also very prominent farmers in Richmond for a long time.

[01:41:28]

They had a milk herd, a cow herd. Her father, Maryann’s father, was a farm milker and the farmhand for the Gilmores and, so, because Maryann was Dutch and her mother would work on our farm in the summertime with watching the strawberry pickers, I got, of course, very good friendship with her mother as well. We worked together as a child on the farm and this and that. Maryann was a very good friend and I’ve maintained friendship with her, but the unfortunate part of our living on the farm in Richmond was that we didn’t have a lot of friends to play with after school. So, when we went to Holland, which was once every three or four years, we would go for a lengthy period of time in the early years. I loved Holland because my cousins, and nephews, and children, there were so many because the houses were so close together. There were tons of children to play with. I remember being on the plane and saying to my father, “Why did you ever leave Holland? I want to stay here. I want to have fun with all of these children.” He said, “Well, if you could have only known the time then and know the time, yes, maybe we could have stayed and maybe we could have done just as well.” But the opportunity was such that my father wanted to give his brothers the opportunity to become farmers and there just wasn’t a lot of land available to share. So, he thought he would give it a try in Canada. That’s why he just never stayed in Holland. For us, as children, Europe was the place to be [laughs]. We weren’t very happy when we came back to Canada, because we didn’t have a lot of friends to play with.

REBECA

I had also taken note of, you had mentioned that during your time in school, you had transitioned from very small classes with kids with lots of different ages to a larger class of thirty kids who were all about the same age. Do you remember what that felt like or what that experience was like?

ADRIANA

Yes, it was . . . first of all, there were a lot of boys in the class and that was interesting for me because they seemed to be taller than me and I was small and petite but, having experienced failure that year, failing grade seven, was very difficult for me because I felt I had given it my very best shot. I worked hard but I just, somehow or another, the transition of grade seven science and math just was so much more difficult. Project work just, I couldn’t bring it to the standard of expectation. Being in a classroom with thirty students and you see the variety of levels of intelligence. As much as I wanted to be like them, I couldn’t reach their potential for whatever reason. I was always seeming to be on the hardworking side, but never being able to academically perform, whereas I was probably very, very good at hard work on a farm. I just didn’t have it academically. So, that created quite a difference in expectation for myself. I think it was probably good that I repeated, obviously, grade seven again because it gave me an opportunity to pick up on those skills. I had a tutor as well. It obviously provided the enrichment that I needed to get into grade eight and grade nine, and further on. All that I remember very vividly was carrying an awful lot of big books in grade seven from the bus stop to St. Peter’s School. We had a school bag like you see the bag there and, of course, I didn’t want the school bag because, at that time, it was . . . the thing to do was to carry your books in your arm and carry it. Eventually, my parents convinced me that carrying those books in my arm from the bus stop to school was going to be a bit longer than my arm was going to be able to handle. So, I eventually allowed myself to accept a school bag [laughs].

REBECA

That’s funny. For, potentially, students listening to this interview in the near future, what was Girl of the Year? Because I’m sure that that’s not something that you see anymore.

ADRIANA
No. Yes, to be the Girl of the Year was a very overwhelming experience because, first of all, the students in the school vote for you and the teachers have to acknowledge that it was not a popularity contest. So, um, but in reflection I guess I was honourably recognized because, as I said, I was the captain of the HMS Pinafore in grade ten. I was the leader of the Now Production, which was a popular . . . I was the leader of the Square Group and my other best friend was the leader of the Hippie Group. We took that particular drama play on tour. I played a role in Shakespeare that we did at the school. Our school was small but we had a very good drama teacher. I was public speaking. I was participating in Bible reading contests, public speaking contests. I played on the volleyball team, the basketball team, and was on the track and field. I was year book editor, Student Council President, um, I had so many leadership roles within the school and created so much change in the school. At that time, we didn’t have vending machines in the school and we wanted to have a pop or we wanted to have a snack, right? We didn’t have lockers in our schools at that time, we just had coat hangers, right? We wanted lockers like public schools. So, being the Student Council President, I asked for those things and we didn’t have a record player. We wanted to have a Califone [turntable]. So, I went downtown and checked out a Califone record player, so that we could have speakers and we could have a microphone. So, I guess, I was quite a progressive girl at the time. I had my driver’s license. I got my driver’s license on the day I turned sixteen. I got my license here in Richmond and my dad and I drove through the tunnel because I had been driving a lot on the farm as a farm worker. I was driving tractor and trucks on the farmlands all the time, but I couldn’t on the road. So, for me to drive a car was just easy, my dad was so pleased because he didn’t have to drive me everywhere. I went for my driver’s test the next day and they said, “Oh, no. You must wait two weeks for your driver’s test.” So, I had to just wait two weeks to get my driver’s test and, of course, passed in flying colours. So, getting the Girl of the Year Award was, kind of, telling me that I could be whatever I wanted to be and that the people who had mentored me and the people who had been role models for me at school, uh, certainly were able to, I think, take all the potential out of me that I possibly could give as a high school student. The opportunities were there because the school was not such a large school. The school had, like, 150-200 students. So, for women at that time, you could be whatever you wanted to be. There was no competition with boys.

[01:49:59]

We were being taught by nuns, and the nuns always used to tell us, “Oh, leave those boys alone. They just distract your attention” [laughs]. So, we were supposed to be focussed academically on our school studies and we were supposed to be leaders for the future. I think that was instilled in us by these women who were nuns, who were leaders as well in their communities. Particularly, Sisters of St. Ann’s contributed significantly in building schools throughout British Columbia. They did a lot of work with the indigenous communities. There are still lots of remnants today of the schools that the Sisters of St. Ann’s built. Especially the school in Victoria, which the Ministry of Education had as a long-term facility for use.

REBECA

Well, that’s, I think, a really important story to hear about opportunities for women years ago, because you don’t often hear them because people don’t ask. So, it’s wonderful to hear stories like that. I had noted down one thing. You had talked about your involvement with developing this Consumer Education course, and you said that they had shut you down, and then time had passed, and then they approached you saying, “Would you do it?” Did they ever tell you what made them, the BCTF I’m assuming, perhaps it was another body, that made them come around to say, “Yes, we would like you to move forward with this course.”

ADRIANA

Well, the BCTF never shut me down.

REBECA
Okay.

ADRIANA

What they did was, they were not supportive of my accepting the position of being a Consumer Education Teacher, accepting the secondment.

REBECA
I see. Okay.

ADRIANA

They had preferred that I had not accepted the secondment, because I was a member of the union. The union’s voice was, they were not supportive of introducing a mandated course in the educational system. So, when you’re part of a union, they really want you to toe the union line, and it’s true that, as a member, you receive an awful lot of benefits and support from unions, if you’ve experienced work in a union life. I’ve been very grateful for all of those contributions that I have received through being a member of the union. I mean, we’ve . . . The teacher’s union has played a significant role for teachers - equal pay for men and women, we have good benefits and sick pay, we are well looked after if we get injured on the work site, they have led education in many ways – but I take objection to the fact that my career ambitions could be handicapped by a philosophy of a union and, that, I could not accept. I figured that a union shouldn’t restrict one’s leadership potential, or one’s personal ambitions, or one’s opportunity to take a new job. I didn’t see that I could fight the BCTF battle about accepting or not accepting the course. That wasn’t my job, but there was a job that was available. It needed to be done, and whether or not the course was ever going to be implemented was for the BCTF and the government to settle. It was not my role. I was able to see that as an individual. I was grateful for someone recognizing my potential, I was grateful that someone knew that I could do the job, and I felt if I could do the job there was going to be more opportunities for me in the future. I feel that no one should restrict one’s ambitions, or one’s desire to be a contributor to society. Here, I had an opportunity to contribute my expertise, and my knowledge, and my talents, and my abilities that would then enrich me so that I could, potentially, change society’s understanding of financial literacy. What a monumental opportunity. I think no one should bypass or be restricted on what you can and cannot do in life. I think you, yourself, as an individual should have that choice. Whether you fail or succeed, if you’re successful you reap the benefits and if you fail, yes, you’ll learn something from that and maybe you’ll recognize it as having been a mistake, but there’s much more to learn in having failed at something than always to having been successful at something, because sometimes it comes too easy and you don’t understand the challenges that you’ve gone through. Recognizing the task at hand, and the potential, I had tremendous support from the BCTF once the project got underway. It was the teachers who helped me succeed in the end, because I needed teachers to come and write my lesson plans. I needed the teachers, for them to share their knowledge and experience, that I didn’t have. So, I had working committees, I had steering committees, I had huge number of teachers that I worked with throughout British Columbia that became my implementation committee. That’s why I was recognized as the Outstanding Business Education Teacher Award. When you speak to people today about my role as a teacher, they’ll all say, “Oh, yes, Consumer Education. That was the course Adriana designed with the teachers in the Province of British Columbia” and it was highly successful because there was a lot of creativity and hard work that went into it. The Minister was proud at how quickly those teachers moved and stood behind us. So, the teachers came on . . . the BCTF came onboard in the end, but it was difficult for me in the very beginning to make that choice because, as I said, there were consequences and they weren’t happy about it, but I just felt that I had the opportunity given to me and no one should restrict one’s educational opportunities in life that come your way. So, yeah, I’m still grateful and I’m thankful that the BCTF accepted that as well, in the end.

REBECA

Right, great. As a teacher [laughs], as you are a teacher, I always wonder, especially when someone has so many years under their belt teaching and in administration, are there any students, perhaps first name, that stick in your memory or that you remember in particular, that shaped your experiences or your growth as a teacher or in admin?

ADRIANA

You know, I always say to the students, “I learn more from you than you, probably, are going to learn from me.” I’ve had a lot of students who have shown me things that I could not have imagined. It was, maybe, a new way to look at a textbook, or it might have been a new way to do a project, or it may have been something that they experienced that shed some different perspective on something. If I am to say now, are there students that I would name on a first name basis that really taught me something, I think now it’s become quite a blur, right? I only have this story, here, that I can read to you about what happened when I was teaching in . . . and the date here was November the 18th of 1984 and, as you may recall, I had just finished my three years of work with the Ministry, because I finished my work with the Ministry in June of ’84, and here I am now at McRoberts School. I wrote this letter to my aunt, at the time. “Just a short note to say hello, Aunt Betty. All is going well at McRoberts School. I’m being kept very busy. I coach the cheerleaders and, presently, I’m organizing a group of thirty students for an exchange to Grand Falls, Newfoundland in March. I’m coaching the bantam girls’ basketball team and they will be starting in about a week. So, all in all, not a minute of free time. I’m looking forward to the Christmas holidays and you can probably understand why. The students stole my school keys from me about three weeks ago.

[02:00:17]

A guy picked them off my desk. This happened on a Tuesday and, by Friday, a teacher found them lying on the stairwell. On Saturday, the kid who stole my keys broke into the school and was caught in the act by the police. He had my entire set of school keys duplicated. The alarm went off in the police station when the guy broke the window. The student has since been sent to Station Stretch, a school for dropouts and juvenile delinquents in Richmond. I’m presently applying to Ottawa in the hope of having a teaching job for a year or two in Europe. The School Board, on behalf of the School District, has nominated me and now I have to apply to the Department of National Defense. The Army has schools in Holland, Germany, and France. Maybe with a little luck, this opportunity will arise. Take care. Love, your niece.” Well, that was one experience, but I also had the students steal my wallet when I was a teacher at Balmoral High School. I had given the students my keys to go into the changing room to pick up a basketball that had been left in the changing room and I didn’t remember that the teacher’s office was unlocked. I had left my purse sitting in the teacher’s changing room, there in the teacher’s office. So, when I got back to my desk in the office, I realized that my wallet had gone, but the student that I had given my keys to, obviously, knew nothing about the fact that my wallet had been stolen. So, I pleaded with students that my wallet would be returned for several days and, wouldn’t you know it, somebody found my wallet strewn in a stream, because Balmoral High School was up on the mountains up near Lonsdale Avenue[[21]](#footnote-21). The students found all of my ID. The money was gone but, in the end, we found out that the student who had stolen my wallet was actually a kleptomaniac and she had her entire locker filled with jeans and things that she had stolen throughout school. So it’s all a good news story in the end, but for my first year of teaching experience and having had my wallet stolen, it was . . . I was grateful that, eventually, I got it back but, obviously, it showed that I had extremely good rapport with the students because they cared for me as a person and they were on the lookout and, eventually, I got my wallet back, and my ID, and we found out that we had a student in the school who needed help. So, my experience in 1984 and my experience in 1978, I guess those are experiences teachers are prone to but, fortunately, they all work out in the end [laughs].

REBECA

I think it’s quite amazing that you have firsthand experience and memory of the change in education from no computers to computers. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

ADRIANA

Well, if I was to look at my notebooks that we have here, I’m very amazed that my notebooks and my handwriting are so neat because we didn’t have computers and there was no opportunity to redo anything. Everything’s underlined in red, and the handwriting is still the old MacLean’s Method of handwriting that we were taught, script writing, penmanship was important because they used to say penmanship reflects who you are. It was the typewriter in high school, in grade nine that I took typing lessons and learned how to type. At that time, we were taught the touch method of typing. That means that you didn’t look at your fingers and so you could blindly type. It’s a skill that I’ve been forever grateful for. And then, of course, when I went on to university, they had electric typewriters and manual typewriters at UBC and with the correction tape at that time. I had to type up letters. My father was given a typewriter when he bought his new Holland baler. It was a gift from New Holland – when you bought a baler that you could get a typewriter with it. So, I was forever grateful that my dad he, because that was the question he asked me, he said, “New Holland wants to give me a gift of a typewriter or some other gift” and he said, “Will you use the typewriter?” I said, “Oh, yes, dad. I’ll use the typewriter for projects and things at school.” At that time, it had a black ribbon and a red ribbon. So, you were able to just adjust between the black and the red. I mean, that was just fantastic and we had still then liquid paper to use to do whiteout. Anyways, the typewriter was a very significant tool for us at that time and I made good use of it and, of course, throughout my teacher education experience at UBC the typewriter was vital because we were learning to teach students in the high school to be prepared for the work in the workplace. That meant that we were giving secretarial training to our high school students who were on that commercial program. So, I learned shorthand and taught the Pitman shorthand as well. I learned shorthand at UBC in the education program. We learned office procedures, office management. Those were the basic requirements. Then, of course, I had PE as well. So, I had the dual major in PE and Business. So, I learned how to play sports, I learned how to swim at UBC. I never knew how to swim before but, becoming a PE teacher, I would have to know how to swim. So, I learned swimming at UBC in their outdoor pool. Today, of course, everything’s indoor. I learned all the sports activities, the volleyball, the basketball, the gymnastics. I had done gymnastics in elementary school at St. Peter’s but this was bringing back gymnastics in a different way and doing the trampoline and the box horse. So, being in education for PE and Business Ed, I had accounting classes in the School of Business at UBC that would complement my accounting work that I had done at night school in bookkeeping. Eventually, the typewriter became an electric typewriter, then eventually the electric typewriter became a typewriter with memory, and then when I was a principal at Marian High School, I was finally introduced to, maybe, changing those typewriters to a memory sort of typewriter and everybody was telling me, as the Principal of the school, “Go to a computer! The computers are out.” I said, “Well, it’s a little too expensive to introduce computers.” That was ’87, ’88. So, I said, “No, I’ll just go with a computer with a bit of memory or a typewriter with a bit of memory, but I can’t introduce a full-fledged Apple II computer yet.” Then, when I went to the University of San Diego to do my doctoral studies, well, my memory typewriter didn’t work, so then I bought my first Apple computer. I bought that in California, in San Diego. The university had those available through their bookstore. So, that’s what I did my, on the floppy disks, I transitioned from the typewriter to a computer, and then I still didn’t have Internet because Internet wasn’t around yet that we could have access to. I must share that the typing skills I learned in grade nine were certainly advantageous. Now, I play the piano, too and I play the organ at church, Sundays, regularly. Having learned to type certainly helped me with my piano skills as well. So, yes, I still struggle with the fact that today we don’t teach children how to blindly type and use the computer effectively. The computer works because we think that voice recognition is going to be available but, look, we’re in the year of 2020 and voice recognition is still being modified to a considerable extent, to the point where it still isn’t perfect. We can type faster than we can do voice recognition software. Although, it is being used in many fields. There’s no doubt about it, but you still see us typing, still, an awful lot, especially in legal offices the typing skill is very important. You’ll find some manual typewriters in some legal offices today because they want, truly, an original copy in some cases. There is a demand for manual typewriters or electronic typewriters, even today.

REBECA

What are the, would you say, from your personal observations, some of the benefits of computer and Internet in education after, sort of, witnessing that change or that transition over time.

ADRIANA

Well, I think the value of the Internet is that knowledge is so easily accessible. The downside of the Internet, I think, is the fact that we never had the social media sites that they have today and the lack of confidence you have as a young person when you’re in school is significantly handicapped and influenced by people who can be hurtful on the Internet and with social media.

[02:10:45]

Therefore, I think it’s more difficult to be a young person today using computers, Internet, social media sites because of the opportunities that are available out there to be hurtful to you. If people were going to be hurtful to us in the ‘70s, in the ‘60s, when we were in elementary school, they had to do it by either writing you a note and leaving that note for you to see somewhere or they said it to you or it came through gossip. Today, they can just place it on the Internet and a million people could see it and it’s you against that word. Suddenly, it can become extremely devastating and destroy one’s personality by the fact that so many people can be hurtful to you. When it’s written and shared with so many people in such an instantaneous occasion, it’s very difficult because your reputation is all you have. It can be easily destroyed on social media and it’s very difficult to get it back. When you’re young and inexperienced, you don’t know how to handle hurtful tactics. You can easily get depressed and become withdrawn, and feel that you have nothing to contribute ever in the future to society because you’re still experimenting with who you are, and you’re wanting positive role models in your life. You don’t need your classmates to tell you how bad you are or how good you are, but you need strong role modelling. I’ve mentioned that earlier that our parents and our teachers were our role models in school. The students that I worked with were my role models, as well. All the people outside of me that saw me as a strawberry picker or whatever, gave you the positive reinforcements, but today’s social media doesn’t give positive reinforcements for things you do well. All social media does is analyze things you do wrong and that get propagated, either through YouTube or whatever means are available - Instagram, or Facebook, or . . . Those tools that have value, if they’re used correctly, can augment learning but, often, we see the dark side of it, the downside of it because it seems to be too easily accessible. It’s hard to know what’s right and wrong when you’re a young person. Sometimes you think by providing a comment to someone it is a reflection of, perhaps, helping the individual but sometimes it can be picked up by someone else and they just blow it out of proportion. So, technology, yes, as a tool, has, obviously, some very strong advantages in society but I see far too many students spending way too much time on the cellphone or the computer filling their time and their day. They’re not getting access to all of the potential of their self. For example, I expressed how we had to work with our hands and our heads and our eyes by observing what other people do, but when you’re focused on a cellphone, you’re not observing anything what anyone else is doing and you’re not learning in that setting. People can be doing good things all around you, but you’re so focussed on that cellphone that you won’t learn anything from the people who are around you. The Internet, although it provides some insight in education for the future, how do we always know the information is correct. How do we know the message has been written with the correct intentions. So, I think it’s very difficult sometimes for students to know the truth behind the Internet. The other thing that I find that the Internet is focussing a lot on is plagiarism. I must share that all the work I ever did in school or at university, I wrote it myself. I did it myself and I did it on my own. Today, we talk about group work and we talk about how important it is to do group work, but in society when it comes to being successful, you have to work with other people, there’s no doubt about it. You cannot do things alone and on your own in society to move ahead, but in order to be able to have confidence and know that you can do something if people fall away and let you down or whatever, you need to be able to have that strength to pull yourself through. You learn that when you have to learn to do things on your own because you don’t have anybody else to depend on. Those are skills that technology can’t teach you. You won’t learn those skills if you depend too much on technology because you don’t have to fall back on them. So, yes, technology has made life easier in many ways. I mean, today, we have remote controls. We don’t have to get up from the chair if we want to change the TV channel. It has its benefits in society and I can certainly acknowledge that without computers today, planes wouldn’t be flying, and we wouldn’t be in space, and we wouldn’t have the laser technology that we have today, and we wouldn’t have the medical advancements that we experience today. So, I must not degrade technology as being a negative thing. When it comes to students’ lives, I wish that it may not have been, or, I wish that it was not so easily accessible. That’s easier said than done, but I have seen the students use it in a positive way in classrooms. They use it frequently for translation in French classes. I see students going to a YouTube video to help them learn a math skill or something. I’ve also seen teachers use some very good techniques about how to constantly not be focussed on that technology, and to submit their cellphones at the beginning of class, and place it in a basket, and return the cellphone to them at the end of class if the teacher has decided the cellphone was not going to enhance their learning for that particular period of time. I think those are good skills. I think the one thing that we need to learn today about technology is that we need to turn it off sometimes. I witnessed that this Christmas. I took, between Christmas and New Year’s, I turned off the computer, I turned off the cellphone, and I just took a break from it all. I think that was a healthy thing to do and I think we need to, probably, do more of that because we’re so glued to it that we don’t understand how much impact it is having on our lives. It’s not giving our eyes a rest and it’s not giving our minds a rest. Our bodies can be physically tired, but I was always able to do a lot of extra mental work at night, but if you’re mind is tired then your body is tired, too. So, I think we’re going to have to learn in the future to use the tool more effectively and take more downtime away from it. Maybe it means not answering an email exactly today or tomorrow, but answering emails in a different way, too. I don’t know what that’s going to look like, but I think there has to . . . the future is going to have to look at emails and how we’re communicating. Maybe it means that we try to structure our communication in a way that we learn when an email is most effective and, maybe, when a telephone call might be more effective and, maybe, not sending so many messages about a date and a time and whatever, and maybe just send one and then just have a reminder. I’m not sure, but we are going to have to look at how we communicate in the future with the use of technology because it’s affecting people’s wellness and level of confidence, particularly in schools.

REBECA

I think those are very important things to keep in mind, and I’m getting a sense from your interview and also from a bit of what you’re saying that human connection, community connection, the benefit of being connected to other people is very important to you and it made me think of some of the items that you actually brought in today. So, I wonder if you could speak to, maybe, some of your involvement in clubs, societies, organizations, and those that are important to you and, perhaps, if they are related to any of the items, we can revisit that, but if you’d like to just, maybe, speak to some of those? I mean, you’re quite involved.

[02:21:03]

ADRIANA

Well, I think that, as a leader, I’m creative but I also have learned that I cannot do anything alone. I can create ideas and I can start a project, but I need people to help me to carry out the missions and I need people to help me carry out the visions that you have. The more people that you’ve networked with in life, the more that they will come back to help you in the future. One of them is the fact that I have just started a new project. I created the new Dutch Liberation 2020 Canadian Society. A lady approached me from the Royal Canadian Legion and she said, “You’re the president of the Dutch community in British Columbia. What are you going to do for the 75th liberation of the Netherlands?” I said, “Well, when’s that? I hadn’t thought two years ahead.” She said, “Well, that’s going to happen such and such.” I said, “Oh, well, maybe we should. My father did the 50th liberation. He sent 35 Canadian soldiers. He paid for their way to go back to the Netherlands to see the country that they had liberated.” So, I thought, well, now it’s 25 years later since my father played that role, significantly. Again, he didn’t do it alone. He did it with a group of people that helped him to carry out the vision. I thought, well, maybe there is a message here. So, I, with my vice president of the Dutch Network which is the Netherland’s Association “Je Maintiendrai”, of which I have been the president for the last five years and vice president for many years before that. We created this organization through the fact that I was able to network within the Dutch community and share my vision, and people came on board and together we were able to actually do something very concrete for British Columbia this year, and across Canada, and by the fact that we then created the Dutch Liberation 2020 Canadian Society as a non-profit organization. We’ve held meetings at Haro Park Senior Care Facility, where I am also on the board and have been a board member and the president of Haro Park in my past years, as a location for [Dutch liberation] meeting. Before we were able to launch the Dutch Liberation 2020 Canadian Society, we first needed a meeting location, then we needed to get the people on board who trusted our vision, and then we needed ideas of what to do as a Society. It’s okay to say “how are we going to carry out what we want to?” One of them was let’s colour the province red in tulips. Well, how are we going to do that? So, we got a grower[[22]](#footnote-22) on board, a tulip farm grower that I went to and approached. Through my networking, he trusted my vision and came on board. Together, we sold many tulips throughout British Columbia. We made presentations to city councils. The Royal Canadian Legion had partnered with us then to carry out the vision. They were going to do commemorative services in May of 2020, May 2nd, 2020. We’re going to be hosting a very significant send off for the Seaforth Highlanders. We’ve planted over one million tulips across Canada. Vancouver, Richmond, and others have bought thousands and thousands of tulips. We’re now putting together a storyboard called [“Liberation of the Netherlands”] for Victory Square because the Vancouver Parks Board has planted these 60,000 tulip bulbs [at Victory Square][[23]](#footnote-23). They wanted it to become a storyboard of an educational tool. We sent tulips to schools and one of the teachers in Abbotsford, her name is Debbie Mar, took the 75 tulip bulbs, planted them with her students and, eventually, took the students to a very experiential type of learning opportunities, took them to the grave sites of the soldiers, had them do projects, and she created a video on her experience. I have just nominated her for a prime minister’s award for teaching excellence. Her video is now on our website and, so, we’ve got, you know, we had the whole of British Columbia planting these tulips, everyone has come onboard. The same thing happened with Consumer Education when I had the opportunity to become the Curriculum Coordinator. All the teachers came onboard to help me to carry through the vision. I worked with the Richmond Visitor and Tourism Association. At that time, I was on their board as well and they wanted to actually have a trade and convention centre in British Columbia, in Richmond. What do we know? We’re building a trade and convention center in British Columbia. I haven’t been on the committee for many years but it takes vision, creativity, risk, responsibility, and the stamina to carry through new projects. No one can do anything alone. You need to have people that share in your vision, that trust you, and your reputation is all you have to go on. If people have known that you’ve done work in the past that’s been successful, then people will frequently come on board when they see a new vision or a new opportunity. Does it take a lot of hard work and extra work on the part of the leader? Yes. You’re always carrying an extra load because when people aren’t able to carry through on a certain aspect that they have committed to then, frequently, you end up carrying that load for a while until you’ve found another person who will take that job. In leadership, they often say . . . I don’t know if you’ve ever watched the geese[[24]](#footnote-24), how they fly in a V, and if you watch the geese, how they exchange positions when the goose on the front gets tired, he switches positions with someone at the back who then takes the leadership role. It’s interesting, you should have a look one day when you see some geese flying or how they fly in a V. It’s very amazing to see. Often, other birds do the similar shape. Your reputation and networking are so important and I’m with Rotary now, I’m with the Vancouver Rotary club. I was with the Richmond Sunset Rotary Club for a few years and I wanted to, again, enrich my opportunities and I’m now with the Vancouver Rotary Club. Again, why did I join Vancouver Rotary? Because I wanted to network again with other people who might see potential in you and then have a project or something that they want fulfilled and would hope that you would join them in carrying out their vision. Then, again, you have an opportunity to grow as well. So, um, community and working together goes a long way in society but you have to have trust as well, and people have to trust you. It’s a reciprocal relationship. It’s a give and it’s a take but, often, it’s more giving because through giving you also enrich the lives of others. It’s important for a leader to see the potential in others and that’s what you do when you network, you also see the potential in other people and you can enrich their lives. So, then they grow and then they start to network and they can start to make the circle even bigger.

REBECA
Right. I’m curious about the project from the Liberation Society. Could you, for those who don’t know much about it, just talk about the significance of the tulip, and the colour, and the things that you were talking about, and why that’s a focus of the project and why it’s important?

ADRIANA

Well, as you will know, it was through the Canadians landing on the shores of Normandy, coming up through Europe to liberate the Netherlands. The Netherlands was in a severe situation because the Germans were so entrenched in the country. The Dutch suffered severely. The Germans stole all their food and they had lost their shelters because of destruction, and it was through the Canadians that they regained[[25]](#footnote-25) the strength and the stamina, because they hadn’t been so entrenched in this war for too long. So, in ’44 my parents were liberated in November of ’44. So, the southern part was liberated sooner than the northern part, and that was because the Germans were so entrenched. So, they go through the severe hunger war, the hunger, the winter of ’44 to ’45 was extremely severe for the Dutch. Their means of food was the tulip bulb, was one source of food that some people were able to survive on. There was food rationing at that time as well. When we started to think about how we could recognize and to thank Canada, here, this time for 75, the soldiers, many of them, have passed away now. They aren’t alive, we can’t thank them but we can thank Canada.

[02:31:29]

We can thank the Canadian families and we can resonate in the minds of the young. We can hopefully enlighten them about what happened 75 years ago. We are here in Canada, the Dutch have benefited greatly. We have a Dutch Heritage Day that Parliament acknowledged on April 14th, 2019 for the contributions that the Dutch have made to Canada. So, we thought, with that in mind, we have a Canadian[[26]](#footnote-26) Liberator Tulip. It’s called the Canadian Liberator Tulip. It was inaugurated for the 50th anniversary, in Holland. So, if we have a flower, a tulip, that’s called the Canadian Liberator, we thought, why don’t we try to express our thankfulness through the colour of that tulip, and to resonate in the minds of others how thankful the Dutch are and how grateful Europeans are, not only the Dutch, but all of Europe for the efforts that the soldiers have made to Europe’s liberation. So, we thought, well, we can decorate, we can place tulips where there is probably no tulip or no flower and we had hoped that people would buy into it, and they have. We’re very grateful for it.

REBECA
Wonderful. We can use the pause and move around but I wondered if, while we’re on the objects that you’ve brought in, if there are any that we haven’t visited yet that you would like to speak to, that you really wanted to talk about.

ADRIANA

Well, I think if we were to look at one project that I did with the students, it would be the Cambie Enterprise, it was a popcorn business that we did in school. No, the binders there.

REBECA
Oh, here?

ADRIANA
Yes. The binder . . . yeah. The popcorn business, I think, is the one that resonates the most. Yes, that one there, and the other one. Because this was being creative. It was in a sense of introducing the students to each having a real job and having to buy the popcorn, you know, actually make the popcorn, sell the popcorn, find customers, make sure the place was clean after all of the selling was done, and it was a project that I felt the students I had at that particular time were not really book students, they weren’t academic students. So, a project of such a nature would allow them to take leadership roles where they could, where leaders were needed, and where the students themselves could actually exhibit their potential and, so, we did this very successful popcorn business with junior achievement. In the end, I was acknowledged as the Teacher of the Year for doing such an outstanding job with junior achievement. They recognized me as an outstanding teacher award for the project. It’s become a template for other schools to implement. So, a very successful idea, a small idea that ended up becoming, almost, the course for the year where students were greatly involved and were very happy to have participated in because they all found success.

REBECA

How did that recognition make you feel or what does it mean to you to have these recognitions that you’re speaking to?

ADRIANA
Can I stop for now?

REBECA

Alright, there we go.

ADRIANA

To be recognized for your efforts is, personally, very rewarding because it makes your life full and it allows you to reflect on the fact that you have become a purposeful contributor to society. You’ve tried to make the place, society, a better place for others to enjoy or to appreciate. That’s gratifying when you can create change or you can influence change in society because that’s what leaders do. If I can create change that’s a positive change, and enriches the minds of others or helps others understand why things are happening the way that they do, or why we’re doing what we’re doing and then be recognized is, kind of, a very small token of appreciation but, obviously, to be recognized means that you have touched the lives of someone else who have found your work significant. That’s gratifying because for anything to be successful, one, almost, has to put your entire heart and soul into something. The number of contributions that I have received is a reflection that when I try to do something I try to give it my best, even though sometimes things don’t always turn out the way you expect them to turn out. It obviously means that the work that you have done has made a difference in some peoples’ lives. So, that to me has been gratifying, but it’s not always the awards that we receive, but it’s the invitations that you get from other people that you sometimes are even more gratifying because then they say, “Would you like to join me on this committee, or could you help us on this committee, or could you do this or that.” And, so, the recognition is something that, uh, it’s a tangible, it’s something tangible but, deep down, it means that your life has been worthwhile on this earth and you have created change and made it a better place. That, I think, is most rewarding. It’s been interesting that, when I was Principal, I made changes in the lives of the young. When I was Student Council President or when I was working with Business Education teachers or, now again, in Richmond and working with the, you know, this project on the liberation. Just the fact that creating change or making a difference in a child’s life is so fulfilling. I received, this week, actually it was on Friday, a student at ASPER [Program] at MacNeil School gave me her painting, her drawing. It was a sunset over the dike and it had a few birds in it. She said, “Here, I want to give this to you.” I said, “Well, thank you so much.” You know, just a small token means that, obviously, I touched her in some way that she thought it was recognizable. So, yes, it . . . I could go through all the accolades of all the awards that I’ve been acknowledged with, but I’ll leave that to my resume [laughs].

REBECA
There you go [laughs]. Well, as I sit here and reflect on the things that you’ve told me and that we’ve spoken about, um, you’ve talked about your personal heritage, your family heritage, heritage in Richmond, heritage from before your parents came to Canada, um, and obviously your move to work with the museum to share your life story and to share the story of your family, so, I wonder if I can ask what your heritage means to you or what the importance of heritage means to you and if, perhaps, you had thought about that or if you have a particular feeling or value of importance around it because it comes across, for sure.

[02:40:12]

ADRIANA

Well, I was drawn to heritage because when my parents came to Canada, it was their Dutch heritage that influenced my upbringing. I think I’m the person today because of that connectivity to that Dutch heritage. Sometimes, I think I’m more Dutch than I may be Canadian, because the Canadian exposure is a blended exposure of many ethnic cultures. Today, I feel almost a little bit of an Asian feeling. Sometimes I feel like I’m a Mexican, because I’ve been to San Diego and lived near Tijuana. I think it’s important for us to know that we are a community here in Richmond, that’s multiethnic and if I, in some way, can share a little bit of what Dutch-Canadian heritage is, then I have left a legacy for others to appreciate. My parents were Dutch and pure Dutch. At that time, the Netherlands was the Netherlands. Today, you have the European Union. The European Union has taken away a lot of pureness in some of the cultures. For example, the currency is all European Union currency. It’s no longer the Dutch guilder and you get McDonalds, and you’ve got Starbucks, and you get those franchises all through Europe now. They didn’t exist in 1945, in 1948, right? So, the purity of the Dutch culture is being lost in the Netherlands, and it’s going to be lost here, too. I think that I can still bring that little bit of pureness of what that Dutch culture was and how it got, kind of, blended with the Canadian culture by the artefacts that my parents brought from the Netherlands, the tools that they used to advance their lives, and the tools that we used, I used, to embrace the Canadian culture. So, if I can share that with the future then I have touched the future and have left a legacy.

REBECA
So, do you think that sentiment and that appreciation backs this relationship that both you and your family seem to have with the museum? I had noticed that your family was involved in terms of donations, previous interviews, and just general support. Is that where that comes from?

ADRIANA

Yes, because it’s people to educate people and I think that’s what my parents have to share is their education of what it was like for them when they first came to a new country, and how the world has changed, and their wanting to give back, um, is one way to say thank you. I just feel that our lives have value and have a purpose. The only way we can contribute to maintaining that purpose, and value, and contribution is to share what that meant to us while we were here because we all don’t stay here forever. I have the choice to take it and, perhaps, give it no value by taking it to a garbage dump, which would be easier, right? There is value in it because it can educate others and, I think, my parents were into educating. My brother was a part of 4-H, which is, you know, the means of education of, um . . . And that’s why that scholarship was set up and I have set up a scholarship at the university of San Diego. I set that up a couple of years ago. So, there’s a scholarship in my name called the Dr. Zylmans’ Leadership Award for a Canadian student who would like to experience an American education. So, it’s that kind of giving back and wanting to enrich the future in providing opportunities for young people that they may not necessarily have. That, we’re grateful for and we want to share that with others. So, we feel that others can benefit in the hopes that they will enrich the future lives. I don’t know. It may be a bit, um, I don’t know what word to use but, I think, heritage is the fullest of meanings for education is what was life like then and what would life be like tomorrow, and the best way to do that is to look at what life was like then and see if there’s something there that can help you predict what the future might be like. So, I think museums, libraries, have a lot to contribute to society. Often, we don’t visit them, we don’t recognize their contributions. If we don’t document what we have done, then we may lose the richness of living in a community and, therefore, that’s what we don’t want to lose, what we’ve actually experienced.

REBECA
Right. Yes. As a museum person, I will biasedly agree [laughs]. So, I’ve come to the end of my specific questions. The very last question is: is there anything else that you wanted to add that I haven’t asked or that you haven’t had the opportunity to speak to?

ADRIANA

I think we’ve done a fairly thorough history of what I’ve done. I think I may not have addressed that I had my own educational consulting business as an educator, called Zylmans’ Consulting. That did land me some contracts that I worked with the BC Securities Commission in Vancouver and created that binder over there called The Teacher Binder for Planning 10 with the character profiles. I’ve done a tremendous amount of writing. Somebody recently called me the author of life, which I was . . .

REBECA
That’s a big compliment.

ADRIANA

Which I had never thought of myself as the author of life, but I thought that was interesting to hear. I continually visit opportunities like Margaret Atwood’s presentation as she was just at UBC recently. I like to read biographies and hear about other people’s stories. Sometimes I feel like I’m part of a storywriter myself. I haven’t written a book yet, to publish, but there may be a book somewhere in the works in my later years. I don’t know and I’m not sure what it might look like, but it’s certainly something I have put my thoughts to. As I have said in the past, I’m grateful for everyone who’s been part of my life up to now. I’m 65, going to be 66 in March. Every one of them has some . . . has impacted me in some way or other. Sometimes it’s not measurable until later years [laughs], but I’m grateful for having had the teaching opportunity in Richmond. Richmond is an excellent school district. It’s had good leadership. If you get involved in the district, there are many opportunities to influence change and affect the lives of young people. So, I hope that young teachers coming into the profession understand that it is a special gift to be a teacher and that it does take some special stamina, but that the rewards are very great. It can be a lifetime career, not a lifetime job because career has a different connotation for me than a job. A job, to me, says that I have to be there from eight to five, or from nine to three, or whatever. A career doesn’t have limitations. So, it’s um, ….Looking back, I’m very grateful the day I got my Bachelor’s degree. Earning a degree, I think, is the stepping stone for many young people for once they have something tangible, like a university degree, then they can actually say, “I have achieved this. I’ve accomplished this” then it allows them, gives them the confidence that they can become whatever they want to become and they can do whatever they want to do in life. They just have to have the willingness and the desire to do it![[27]](#footnote-27)

REBECA
Well, I want to say thank you for sharing your personal story, your family story, professional story, and for reflecting in the process made for a very lovely interview and I know people will enjoy. So, thank you so much.

ADRIANA
Thank you.

[END OF TAPE PART ONE OF ONE]

[02:51:46]

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Note: present address is: Lot 6, Block 3N, Plan 3166, Section 18, R. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Kees de Jong, brother of his mother [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Today this address is: 17731/17771 Westminster Highway [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Correction from Adriana. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Note from Adriana: “The Sisters of Charity of St. Louis had built a new school in Burnaby called Marian High School. When I was principal of the Marian High in 1987-1988, the school was owned by the Vancouver Archdiocese, but when I attended the school as a student, the school was privately owned by a religious Order of nuns, called the “Sisters of Charity of St. Louis.” [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Note from Adriana: After high school graduation… [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Adriana’s note: Should be $60,000 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Adriana’s note: National Department of Defence [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Adriana’s note: as a stud [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Adriana’s note: The Keyboard Wizard was created by UBC Education Asst. Prof. Marv Westrom and one of his collaborators visiting lecturer Dr. Adriana Zylmans. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Correction per Adriana Zylmans. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Adriana’s note: A program for special needs students. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Revision by Adriana Zylmans. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Adriana’s note: Otto and Frances. The Oeser Family lived on Gilbert Road a few doors to the north of where Uncle Kees de Jong had his chicken coop. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Adriana’s note: Henedine (Nadine) Therrien [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Adriana’s note: 1948 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Revision by Adriana Zylmans. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Note from Adriana: This property was on Finn Road. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Adriana’s note: Today, in Canada, instead of the Bintje, we have a genetically modified variety. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Note: Correction by Adriana Zylmans. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Revised by Adrian Zylmans from: “Before we were able to launch…” [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Edits by Adriana Zylmans. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Correction by Adriana Zylmans; audio says “eagle”. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Revision from “had” by Adriana Zylmans. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Revised from “Red” Liberator Tulip to “Canadian” Liberator Tulip through this paragraph and manuscript, by Adriana Zylmans. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Revised for grammar by Adriana Zylman, from “So, it’s um…” [↑](#footnote-ref-27)