# Oral History: Marianne Kurlak

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| Title | Title of Document |  Rebeca\_Salas\_With\_Marianne\_Kurlak\_10-26-16 Complete  |
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| Interviewee | Name of Interviewee (SURNAME, given name(s), middle initial) |  Marianne Kurlak  |
| 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) | Marianne begins the interview describing her earliest childhood memories, where she was born, where she went to school, and the various experiences she had there. She talks about whether her memories stem from traditions within the Ukrainian community that she is a part of. She then reflects on special memories that she has of her immediate family as well as what her mother and father’s personalities were like. Marianne explains her mother and father’s journey to Canada and how their family ended up in Richmond. She attempts to recall their first impressions of Canada, what their hopes and dreams might have been, and what they missed about their life back in the Ukraine. Marianne highlights the various Ukrainian traditions that were transported over and maintained in Richmond. She discusses her involvement in the Richmond community as well as the benefits and challenges of living in the city. Near the end of the interview Marianne outlines the various articles of traditional Ukrainian clothing that her parents brought with them to Canada, what it symbolizes for Ukrainian people, and the personal significance it has to her. |
| Keywords | Keywords indicating interview subjects (Copy and Paste from “Keyword” section of Form 12 Interview Summary.) |  Marpol, Grauer, Francis Road, Ukrainian Hall, Ditch Tag, Ukrainian Dancing, BC Packers, Mundare, Alberta, Cannery, Ukraine, Vegreville, Quebec, MacKay, Opportunity, Holodomor, Immigration, Communism, Poland, Blacksmith, Cook, Genealogy, Food, Soap, Community, Volunteering, Church, Mission, Embroidery, Apron, National Dress, Vest, Vancouver Foundation. |
| Subject | Subject headings applicable to the Interview. The OHC uses Library of Congress Subject Headings. |  Immigration, Ukraine, Traditions, Clothing, Food, Dancing, Opportunity, Hopes and Dreams, First Impressions, Hardships, Childhood, Character. |
| Duration | Length of Interview Session (if applicable) hh:mm:ss |  01:29:40  |
| 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  |
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| 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  |
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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

[00:00:14]

*REBECA*
Alright, so, as I just said a minute ago, um, welcome and we can start at the beginning with, you know, where you were born to learn a little bit about your life.

*MARIANNE*

Okay, where was I born. I was actually born in St. Paul’s Hospital. I’m considered a baby boomer. I’m born in 1946. From my understanding I was a preemie. So I did not come home right away from the hospital. I came home, apparently, a couple of weeks later and my birth certificate card shows my birthdate and the registration are almost a couple of weeks apart so there might have been . . . Kind of odd, I think, you know, was there a little bit of a problem? Was I going to make it or was I not going to make it or what? But apparently mom did not come home with a baby. I stayed at the hospital for a while and came home a little bit later. My baby pictures showed me with a bald head, the preemie look with no hair, no hair, for the longest period of time. What can I say? [laughs]. Um, I have lived in Richmond all my life. I lived on the same road all my life up to ten years, no, six years ago. So that’s actually . . . My family did not move around a lot which is, I gather, unusual. What else is there? I was supposed to . . . I was born in January so was wanting to start . . . I didn’t want to start school but, you know, you have five going on six so let me start school but I guess I couldn’t start school in the regular public system. They put me into a Catholic school. I guess I didn’t like it because my sister saw me walking around Marpole when she was coming home on the tram and there’s this little kid who’s five, going on six, wandering around Marpole which is at the end of Yorkland Bridge. It was a little community at the time and I guess mom and dad got really angry and pulled me out and I started school. I was supposed to have started at Grauer in ’52. I stayed there and then went into Grauer, went into Steveston, and then graduated . . . When did I graduate? ’64. I was having reminders by my sister “you could have graduated, to this day, you could have graduated school a year early.” I didn’t want to, I didn’t . . . [laughs]. From what I gather I was probably, I set my mind on something but I wasn’t going to do it. I wasn’t going to do it. I gather I was a little bit of a brat. What can I say? That’s the way it is. The difference between my sister and myself is twelve years so I’m reminded that she had to look after me and babysit me for this period of time when I was growing up and she was, kind of, if she wanted to go somewhere you had to look after this kid who didn’t always want to listen. Um, what else was there? As we’re now older we’re more . . . the twelve years is closer but at that time, apparently not. What else was there? What else should we mention?

*REBECA*
What do you remember about your school experience? How was school for you?

*MARIANNE*
School was fun. School was good. I had no problems with school. No, it was good. Science is what I was good at, math. I was good at . . . Okay, in those days usually home-ec and it was cooking and sewing. That was what I was really good at and, actually, to this day I still can. I just . . . time factors just not there anymore. So more the creative side as opposed to the other side. I wanted to go to university and go into archaeology. It wasn’t going to get me a job. I’m not sure. I was interested. I still am interested in history and archaeology and all that stuff but science . . . I also had a pretty good interest in science. My sister ended up working, for a period of time, at the Cancer Agency in the lab. She mentioned that there was an opening for, you know, after I graduated school, you know . . . I was going for an interview. I had already had a job, graduated high school, ended up as a telephone operator at BC Tel which is now Telus, I guess? I guess it was BC Tel but it was not as the operator . . . Oh, but this is for information. It was really interesting. It was really . . . You worked with a lot of interesting people. They would phone 411 or whatever the line was for information and you would sort of talk to people from all over the place. It was really interesting and then she said they were looking for somebody to train for this very specific lab job that’s called cytology, c-y-t-o-l-o-g-y, the study of cells. In this case to diagnose for cancer pathways. There was an opening for, you know, in the training program. Oh, okay. So I went in for an interview. On my way to BC Tel, put in my resignation, and then I, you know, I started the job a week later. That was in the end of March 1966 and stayed there for forty-five and a half years.

*REBECA*
Wow.

[00:05:56]

*MARIANNE*

Almost to the day.

*REBECA*
Interesting.

*MARIANNE*

I wasn’t going to stay for a couple of years like everybody else does but, just, you know, the position you built up and it was more interesting and more interesting and more interesting. So, yeah, I stayed there. Yeah, it’s a long time. I gather it’s a long time to be in one job.

*REBECA*
Yes, it’s a big commitment.

*MARIANNE*
Well, it was interesting and it still is. It probably changed over time and you’ve seen changes over time in the treatment of cancer but, no, it was . . . Yeah, I guess forty-five and a half years is a long time [laughs].

*REBECA*
It’s a very long time.

*MARIANNE*
It paid well. I was still interested in archaeology and history, whatever, but that was the job.

*REBECA*
I’m curious, outside of schooling and career, moving back in time a little bit to when you were younger. What was it like growing up in Richmond as a child, perhaps in home as opposed to your school experiences.

*MARIANNE*
Home was actually good. I’ve actually talked with my sister about this and I said “I do not remember mom and dad ever physically or arguing.” You know, having an argument. If there was an argument, she did the silent treatment. That was it. So we never remember them . . . And if there was a discussion it would have been away from the kids. There was just the two of us, if there was any discussion. But, no, home was, it was good. We lived next door to what was the first Ukrainian Hall on Francis Road. So there were things happening there all the time. Mom never got involved with the Ukrainian community in Vancouver. It was a hall down on Cordova and Princess. There was a large community that met there for banquets and dances and weddings and more weddings. It was like, I guess, like an Italian family, everybody went. Nobody stayed home. They didn’t have a baby sitter. You took the kids and you had a great time. I remember that part of growing up and I remember the picnics in the summertime because we had a large backyard. So there was always picnics in the yard. It was that part of the community of growing up. There weren’t many houses along Francis Road. I remember that. So, who was it I played with? Um, one, two, three, four, four other kids along there. We played and that was it. You sort of played together. There were ditches on Francis Road at that time and in the summertime we played something called ditch tag. The water dried up so you’d just jump back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, and try to catch each other and it was fun. They were small ditches so you’re okay with that. The larger ones like on Number Two Road and Three and whatever which some of them are still there. They sold them for . . . Yeah, some are still there. Yeah, you didn’t go in there but the smaller ditches that now have become paved over and the culverts are in there and the whole bit, yeah, and you played in them because it was kind of fun. So I have, actually, kind of pleasant memories of growing up. Halloween was kind of a bust because you have to go really far to get anything [laughs]. That was the hard part. Other than that, no, it was actually good, yeah. They were good times. I remember as a child it being fun and pleasant. Yeah.

*REBECA*
The houses were quite far apart. You’ve shown me some photos but was that because most homes had a little bit of farm?

*MARIANNE*
They had land, yeah.

*REBECA*
Oh, okay.

*MARIANNA*
There was always, um, everybody had land. If that house is there now they were probably able to put between that house and the next house maybe three or four houses in between so everything was widely spaced.

*REBECA*
And your family had strawberries?

*MARIANNE*
Oh, it had strawberries, yes, in one area there was. Don’t eat too many strawberries, you can kind of get sick on that. Potatoes in another area. I do remember, even to this day my sister and I remember, um, Labour Day. Somebody came in, pulled up all the potatoes, the machine came in and you just had to clean it up. So we’re part of the clean-up crew picking potatoes. Labour Day doing potatoes. All the dust and whatever and went to school the next day but you remembered Labour Day. It definitely was *Labour* Day [laughs].

*REBECA*
[Laughing].

[00:10:39]

*MARIANNE*

Oh my gosh. Um, but other than that, no, I remember, actually, a really good childhood when I really think about it. You know, a fun time. The [annels?], um, you know, definitely the picnics from the hall, the picnics at the property. We had a big yard. There were families that would come from Vancouver and the kids came. We never had a car so it was the Interurban. That’s the one way you got into town. We took the Interurban. If anybody did have a car to go downtown for any of these functions we just went with them and they drove us home but no car. The first car was actually when my sister and I started to work. Actually, not when my sister was working but when her and I, when I started working, so the two of us went and got our first car. It was a ’67 Ford Vulcan, brand new. Dad says “you’re never going to . . .” So we walked to the credit union and we got a loan and he said “they’re not going to give you a loan.” Of course they gave us a loan because the car is the collateral [laughs]. So he was really happy with that. “Does it have four doors?” “Yeah.” “Okay.” He was happy [laughs]. Not too long after that my sister married. I didn’t have a car because she took the car and then I got a car. The second car was the ’72 Chevy Malibu.

*REBECA*
Pretty cool cars, hm.

*MARIANNE*
Yeah, but my driving lesson was on a Ford Mustang.

*REBECA*
Wow.

*MARIANNE*A ’66 Ford Mustang. That was really cool. That was, yeah, that was classic. To get your driver’s license and I guess to get the benefit of insurance or whatever you took driving lessons. It wasn’t somebody who taught you in the parking lot. You paid for driving lessons, as it should be. Yeah, so that was . . . That Vulcan lasted for quite a while until somebody ran into it. It was parked on a road but that was a solid car. After that it’s been a couple of cars ever since. Primarily the Volvos. I like them, they’re comfy.

*REBECA*
I’m curious, thinking back to you talking about picnics and the hall being close by, were many of your memories stemming from traditions within the Ukrainian community? Or was it just . . .

*MARIANNE*
It would have been partly from the Ukrainian community because . . . Oh, yeah my sister taught Ukrainian dancing. Oh, my gosh. So there was that aspect of it. We had to learn the concerts and be in the concerts at that time and learn the dancing which was kind of fun. Of course, part of the tradition of weddings was the dancing. Some were along the line near the, you know, once everybody’s had more than one drink, or two, or three at these weddings because the alcohol pretty well flowed. Dancing, you know, those who knew the Ukrainian dancing would come out and start dancing and it was fun but there was actually, for a period of time, you actually were in concerts.

*REBECA*
So the kids would put on a concert?

*MARIANNE*

Yeah, there was a concert and dancing or singing and this may be for a once a year festival or something along that line so you did learn to do that thing. Mentally, I think, I could still do it [laughs]. It is actually kind of fun to do. For boys it’s a little harder. They have to get down and kick and whatever but for the girls it’s actually pretty dancing. It’s actually quite creative. I think it’s probably similar to other European dancing that comes in costumes. So everything’s in costumes. You had the full costumes with the headdresses. It was actually kind of nice.

*REBECA*
How long did you do that for?

*MARIANNE*
Probably into my early teens because beyond that I probably rebelled because I didn’t want to do it anymore [laughs]. For sure as a little kid you did that and it was kind of fun because you’re there with all the other little kids and stuff like that but I know my sister was one who taught. It was easy to do because it’s kind of fun and the music is really fun to listen to and it’s lively and it’s good. Probably in my teens I would have said “Ah, no. I don’t want to do it anymore.” The usual bit of rebellion in there [laughs].

[00:15:24]

*REBECA*

I’m curious if you have any special memories of your childhood within your immediate family. At home with your immediate family, was anything special that you remember just about being home with your sister and parents?

*MARIANNE*

Not really. I know it was a little bit stressful when we found out dad was diabetic and then of course the whole insulin bit with the needles and everything. I wasn’t near any of this. It was my sister who ended up doing it which is interesting because after that, much later, he . . . From the diagnosis to him passing was only maybe a year or two but after that when it comes to diabetes I ended up with several diabetic cats. So guess what, I did the insulin bit [laughs]. You have to but at that time I would have been late teens early twenties. I was just backing away with this. I didn’t want to . . . It just, that part, you kind of didn’t want to deal with but you know you had to. Mom definitely wasn’t going to deal with it. She was interesting, she lived to almost ninety-eight, yes, um, but she was not the nurse type. So yeah, she more or less stayed healthy. I mean she mothered very well but if you got sick she wasn’t the type to, really, nurse you that much. That was not her thing.

*REBECA*
Right.

*MARIANNE*
Which is kind of interesting. She did care but she just was not the nursing type. Okay, so we knew to stay healthy [laughs].

*REBECA*
Can you tell me a little bit more about her personality?

*MARIANNE*

I think she had a very strong personality. One, when she supposedly came to the country in whatever, 1930, and for where she was supposed to go to work and where she decided, no, she’s not going there. She went somewhere else further west. I mean, right there, and to come basically on her own. She didn’t come with any family members. There was no family here. She didn’t really know the language so, twenty-something, early to come on your own. Yeah, that takes something. I think about it and I don’t know if I can do it. Even for my dad it’s the same sort of scenario. I’m not sure how much of the English language they knew. If they knew . . . They might have had the rudiments of it. They would have stuck with their own, sort of, immediate communities and then kind of pick up the language as you go along but beyond that I think, no, she had a stronger personality than, I think, dad did because when it came to living in the house that we lived on for quite a number of years it was getting tiring going up and down three floors. She said she wants to move [laughs]. So I think . . . The second house on Francis Road was built. It was a big house. The first house was when the old style three-floor houses and, yeah, it was a big house. At some point along the way there was an extension added to it from the pictures. So it was a bigger house but it was a lot of upkeep. I know she only worked for a very, very short time and she was married at the cannery. Dad worked at the cannery forever until he passed at BC Packers but then he . . . My sister would come home from school and nobody’s there and dad didn’t like that so she didn’t work anymore but then she ended up working at home. We had cows, we had chickens, we had pigs, we had the whole . . . So she was working, in the strong sense, at home. We had fruit and trees and berries. So I think she worked more at home.

*REBECA*
That’s a lot of responsibility.

*MARIANNE*
Yeah, a lot of responsibility and raising a couple of brats or two [laughs].

*REBECA*

I think, now, hearing a little bit about your family a little bit about their personalities it would be interesting to move into maybe starting with your mom’s journey to Canada. Maybe we can start looking into how she ended up in Richmond.

[00:19:54]

*MARIANNE*
Okay, so her coming to Canada was prompted by a relative who had been to America or Canada and seen what was here and when he went back to Western Ukraine he said to my grandmother “there’s nothing for her here. She’s better to go away” and then, of course, my grandmother probably had more foresight than a lot of the women at that time sent their only daughter away that they would never see again. That takes a lot but she could probably see that there was nothing for her where she was immediately. My grandfather had passed. I think it was . . . He wasn’t in the First World War but he was . . . soldiers had come through and I think he took a beating somewhere along the line so that precipitated an early death. So she was left with six children to raise but she was obviously able to do that. So she went by herself. I think with somebody from the village as well went with her. They needed, in that time, people to work in Canada. It says on a document there, if I could ever see the original one again, where she was actually supposed to go but she decided she wasn’t going to go and ended up in Alberta. In a place, a little village called, not a village, it’s called Mundare which is north of Edmonton, I believe. There was quite a large Ukrainian community there and I think that’s somewhat closer to Vegreville which for sure is a large community. There is a community there with a huge, giant Easter egg and stayed there for a short period of time. I think she was, sort of, like a cook and bottle washer for a Jewish family. That I do remember. She, I remember saying something that she kind of, you know, there’s something for Gary and there’s something for me but I think dishes were put together, but what do I know. I bet she did that but from the area, I looked it up, the area that she came from in Western Ukraine there was a large Jewish population. So she, kind of, would know the food. She would know a bit about what to do and what not to do and she stayed there for a period of time but I guess there were friends that she met along the way that said that there’s more in Edmonton so she went to Edmonton. She must’ve found a job of some sort. She’s a pretty good cook. She’s a damn good cook. There she met my father. Both are from the western part of Ukraine but they did not know each other until they met in Alberta. Yeah, I think he pursued her. She wasn’t interested but I guess he had a [word?] [laughs]. That was kind of the story that I got. He always worked. He always found a job. He’s a blacksmith at a logging camp so he was away but he was always, you know, during that whole period of time which is now the Depression he was always working which is good. So which tells me that . . . which kind of makes sense. By always working he was able to afford what they were able to get, the property when they came to Richmond, but mom got tired of winters in Alberta. She was not going to have any more winters in Alberta so they moved to BC in ’37. They rented or stayed with a woman called Mrs. [Yudi?]. There was a road named after her in Richmond for a short period of time. So somewhere between ’37 and ’46 was able to purchase a property and build that house because there’s pictures of me in that house on Francis Road, a big three-storey house. So they obviously had some money, some means, some capital of some sort to do this but all that time he was working as a blacksmith, found a job at BC Packers and stayed there for the rest of his life which says a lot for him which is kind of admirable.

*REBECA*
It also reminds me a little bit about your career path.

*MARIANNE*
Stayed in one place. Stayed in one place but I think I’m part of that generation that stays in one place, not move around a lot, and if you did maybe a job or two but you’d find something you like and you stayed with it. I think most people if you find something you like you do stay with it and if it gives you some satisfaction or whatever you do stay with it but not anymore, apparently. So, yeah, that’s how they ended up in Richmond.

*REBECA*
I’m curious, moving back in time a little bit, if either of your parents ever, if you ever heard what their first impressions of Canada were or anything that surprised them.

*MARIANNE*
No, no, nothing, not that I ever heard them say anything. I wouldn’t be surprised that they would think of the vastness of this country. Both of them landed in Quebec and then trained across. We’re not talking a short distance here we’re taking it from Quebec City to Alberta. It’s a fair distance by anybody’s standards.

[00:25:19]

*REBECA*
Right. I suppose maybe the weather.

*MARIANNE*

Okay, mom came in May so the weather would be very similar to, um, her part of the world. Dad came in November to Quebec which is really cold but made his way westward into Alberta, which is still going to be cold, to a farm where his brother was in MacKay, Alberta. It was in, what . . . I was very young. It was a summer thing to go and visit your uncle in Alberta. So you took a train. I vaguely remember taking a train but I must have been quite young but I do know that I was there and that’s all I remember. My sister periodically went there for a period of time every summer, she’d have to [laughs]. Me, I just remember once going and that’s it.

*REBECA*
Okay. I’m curious if they ever spoke to you or maybe you were able to figure out on your own what their hopes and dreams were at the time. I suppose it just sounds like opportunity when they were leaving to come to Canada.

*MARIANNE*
Well, I’m kind of thinking now, um, well the one saying that there’s nothing for her here and seeing the writing on the wall of what was going to happen politically at that part of the world and my dad, probably, also noticing what was happening in that part of Eastern Europe and into the Ukraine because it still was, at that time, under Polish . . . Their passports were Polish. When they came in their passports were Polish. It’s interesting when I went onto the government website one of them says they’re Polish and the other one says Austrian. I’m going “I can’t remember which one the federal government has listed on there on that sheet.” I think they were thinking of the opportunity at that time or somebody was telling them or they can sort of see that things were changing a little bit over there. It did change drastically after now. In the western portion of the Ukraine I think the borderline changed between Poland and whatever. In the eastern portion was a little bit, I think they suffered even more. There was . . . I think that came later in the ‘30s. Um, Stalin created a [spaltz?]. Well, it’s called Holodomor. It was a famine but that was more in the eastern portion but I think the whole country was affected to some degree. I think somebody could see that something was changing in that part of the world. Most people are going to immigrate for “we’re not going because I want to see a change of space. I’m happy where I am but let’s go see what else is there. Let’s move there.” No. People come for a reason. People don’t just pack up and move to another part of the world for no apparent reason and say “okay, I like it here. I just, you know.” No. Immigration is for a reason.

*REBECA*
Right. Hm. I’m curious then if your parents ever shared with you any special memories about back home or anything they missed about back home if they did come to Canada for, you know, the reason of opportunity.

*MARIANNE*

If they did we never knew about it.

*REBECA*
No?

*MARIANNE*
No. One time, because the political situation changed, then it was under the Russian rule or communist rule, so the border, it was tough to even go back and whatever. To go there was difficult. You had to have permission to go to this place, this place, and this place. In fact, mom, she didn’t expect to be around to see when the wall came down. She was surprised. When was that? In November? When the wall in Germany came down? It was in November.

*REBECA*
I can’t remember a specific date.

*MARIANNE*

Is it ’89?

*REBECA*

I think you might be right.

*MARIANNE*

But it was November. Okay. She was surprised to see that happen. She didn’t think she would live to see that happen but prior to that, you know, “did you want to go there?” No, and she always said there was nothing there. It was very emphatic. I didn’t question it. She said there was nothing there, okay. To some degree I’m kind of curious about what is there and who’s there but I’m more curious, actually, of my ancestry DNA because there’s a lot of history of peoples’ coming and goings and invasions and whatever and peoples moving back and forth. So what is my blood line? I’m kind of curious of that more than I am any other genealogy. The DNA I’m more curious on.

[00:30:35]

*REBECA*
Have you started looking into DNA at all?

*MARIANNE*

No, I haven’t.

*REBECA*
Do you think you will?

*MARIANNE*
I think I might.

*REBECA*

Yeah?

*MARIANNE*
Yeah, because I know there’s a period of . . . If you look at the history there was a Norwegian invasion down at that part and that part where mom is there was a large Jewish population. What do I know? My mother, periodically, she would get angry at me and she would say in Ukrainian to me [speaking Ukrainian]. “You have a Jewish attitude.” What does that mean? [laughs]. I got this every once and a while. I don’t know. I’m just kind of curious on that part of the DNA. There’s a lot of invasions that come through in that part of the world of peoples’ going back and forth and armies coming and going and staying and moving on. There’s a lot of history in that part of the world. The land was good. The history, not so much in that part of the world.

*REBECA*

It’s interesting to me that you mention your mom said there’s nothing there because from the sounds of, you know, you talking about your childhood and the involvement in the hall and, you know, even her cooking it sounds like there was still a lot of ways . . . Yes, the traditions are maintained.

*MARIANNE*

They’re still creating it. Yeah. Although saying that there’s nothing there they’re still bringing it here and trying to keep it with the church, with the hall, with the food, but yet saying there’s nothing there. Being very emphatic in saying there’s nothing there. So there was never interest in ever going back for her. Dad never expressed any interest either.

*REBECA*
What were some of the dishes that your mom used to cook the most?

*MARIANNE*
She’s really good at making bread. Oh, breads are so good. She was very fussy. They had to be . . . you know, babka, these things. You’ve seen them but it had to be as light as a feather and if it wasn’t there was something wrong. They were the size of the Italian panettone which are really quite light and that was very critical. You can’t make one. You don’t make the recipe if you only make one. You make about a whole rack of these things. They go in the freezer or you give them away or whatever. Her borsch, unbelievable. To me, my favourite was the Christmas borsch. Sometimes the borsch was made with spareribs. It’s so good but you don’t get that anymore. To me, cooking is okay. I can cook but it’s not my thing that I like to do. I enjoy eating [laughs]. Actually, anything she cooked, there was no recipe which is amazing. “How much do you put in there?” “Just a little bit.” “How much is a little bit?” I think it’s like Italian cooking.

*REBECA*
Taste as you go.

*MARIANNE*
Taste as you go. So anything, so cabbage rolls, yes, she can do the cabbage rolls. It will take me one and she’s done a whole row. You know, the little penny-heads, the perogies or however one says them. Those were time consuming but very good and very fussy. Breads or soups, anything, actually anything. A corn chowder that she made. A potato corn chowder. That was so good. Cabbage soup, there was a . . . Oh.

*REBECA*

Were these foods ever . . . Did she ever cook for the hall?

*MARIANNE*
Always. In the much younger years they would have sort of like a chief cook, the chief cook of the hall, the Richmond one. I think for a period of time in the Ukrainian Church as well. The one who sort of oversees everything. But yeah, and then involved with the weddings. Anytime anybody had a Ukrainian wedding, well, there’s the food. The food is the most important thing. You had to put out, you know, you can’t . . . This is a woman who doesn’t know how to cook for one. This is a woman who knew how to cook for a banquet. So, yeah, food was a really, really big thing.

*REBECA*
In what sorts of ways was your dad involved in the community?

*MARIANNE*
He worked, you know, back and forth in the canneries and working overtime and stuff like that but, actually, just with the overall community and there was the men involved. It was more with, not so much with the cooking, but anytime that mom did anything he was totally there to support her. He had no choice, I don’t think, but both of them I think were very extraordinarily hard workers. Actually, I was at a funeral just a couple of days ago and one of the women there who was about my sister’s age reminded me of dad knowing how to make this particular wine. Oh, yes, of course he knew how to make wine. We had a barn so the wine was made in the barn with this barrel and the whole system with the fruit that we had.

[00:36:01]

*REBECA*
Right.

*MARIANNE*
Or the berries or whatever berries that we had. I think that’s very telling as well [laughs].

*REBECA*
Yes, it is [laughs].

*MARIANNE*
And good wine, too. When it comes to, I’m thinking of everything else, um, large garden. There’s always a large garden. So pretty well grew everything and would have to not buy a lot. We had cows so we had our own milk. Okay, so what milk was left over she made cottage cheese. I cannot eat store bought cottage cheese because there’s just something not right with it. So, there was so much cottage cheese that was made that she would sell it. In fact they even took some to work because there were a couple Jewish ladies in the lab who knew about this cottage cheese and so she made it. It was good. Yeah. I do remember the cottage cheese.

*REBECA*
So food was a big part of your childhood.

*MARIANNE*

Oh, food is a major part of this. So I would say there are probably . . . See, people way back then, you had the space. You didn’t live in the city. You lived on the farms in the country. You grew everything. You had your animals. In fact, we had our animals. So we grew our animals so they had the pigs and cows. They had the calves. We had our own beef. Earlier, I think you were able to slaughter your own or you sent them out to somewhere and they came back to you.

*REBECA*
Okay. I’m curious, now, listening to how your parents were involved in the community and your mom, to think about the ways in which you were involved in the community. It seems to be less of the cooking way but the crafting way. Is that accurate?

*MARIAN*

[laughs]. Well, I guess, not much. Probably yes. Mom was actually very . . . Dad probably did go to church but mom went to church more. She was there pretty well every Sunday. I’m now there more. I didn’t go as much when I was a kid or even in my teens or even older but as, you know, things shifted I’m there now. Where she’s not there anymore, I’m there every Sunday. So you get the shift in there. The other parts of the community . . . No, I’m not that involved with the Ukrainian Hall but more so with the Church. That was mom’s things. Church was just around the corner. We just kind of went in.

*REBECA*
Right. Right. Before we started this interview you were telling me about what you are preparing for. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

*MARIANNE*
Yeah, there’s a . . . Actually, it’s happening today. There’s a function. There’s a Ukrainian priest being ordained today in the cathedral in the U.S. and his first service is going to be at our little church on Sunday. [indecipherable whispering]. It’s not a huge church but it’s a pretty church. Inside of it there’s just a gorgeous icon in there. It’s quite a pretty little church. It’s very [indecipherable sentence, unclear]. It was in Doors Open last year and it had quite a number of people come through. They were quite surprised to see it. From the outside you don’t pay much attention to this building but this building, when you come inside, is actually quite pretty.

*REBECA*
What are some other ways that you’re involved in just the Richmond community?

*MARIANNE*

Me?

*REBECA*
Yeah.

*MARIANNE*
I do volunteer at London Heritage Farm. So I’m getting my history part of it in here.

*REBECA*
Right.

*MARIANNE*

I was involved there for quite a period of time and I . . . Some of my soap is in their gift shop. So I volunteer and I volunteer with the collections in there kind of sorting that out and seeing what has to go out, it doesn’t fit the mandate. So that’s something I find really interesting. It’s keeping me occupied. When you do retire you kind of want to do something with your life. Getting up and reading the paper and having your morning coffee is okay but there’s other things to do and that’s actually really quite interesting. We’re busy now because we’re making . . . [Crawford?] season is coming so the house is kind of full of boxes of stuff to go out.

*REBECA*
Could you tell me a little bit more about that?

*MARIANNE*
I make soap. So there’s a lot of soap in the house right now in different boxes all packed and ready to go to different shows.

*REBECA*
Oh, okay. How does that process go? You have different essential oils and that sort of thing or . . .

[00:40:57]

*MARIANNE*

All vegetable base. When did I start doing this? About eighteen years ago. I got this little blue book for a book club. This little book and said “oh, okay. This can’t be too difficult. This sounds interesting. This sounds creative.” I’m a visual person. I went, “okay.” The challenge was getting everything at a price that’s not going to be costing you an arm and a leg. You could go to the pharmacy, the drug store, to get some of these ingredients that are really expensive. So you kind of want to find the wholesale part of this. So I was able to get all that. Finding the wholesaler for essential oils which is another challenge but I found that and then it just slowly evolved and then I got involved in different pathways. It sort of got bigger, bigger, bigger. It’s interesting. It’s fun. You meet the same people or similar people that, all of a sudden, you . . . I know when I’m unpacking next week, two weeks, and everything you’re going to see these people and you’re going to think “didn’t I just see you a couple of months ago?” and, you know, a whole year has gone. That’s scary. Life is going too quickly. Yeah, it is fun and it is interesting. So, for a period of time mom helped me with the packaging. That was a fun process and then, of course, she’s not around anymore and now my sister is helping with some of the packaging. It’s getting a little harder for both of us to do because arthritis is setting in and your hands, if you do too much of it you feel it in your fingers. It’s not fun getting old [laughs].

*REBECA*
It’s neat that you’re doing it together though.

*MARIANNE*
Yeah. It is fun. At one time I said to my sister “well, come over we’ll pack it together. It’s easier. I’ll just get the boxes, give her the labels, give her the ribbon, give her everything else. Here. Price two. Don’t price these guys.” I make them pretty. I either wrap them in tissue paper and make them pretty or they’re wrapped in ribbons. So that adds a little more colour on the table. So it’s just not a plain bar of soap. It has to be pretty. That’s very important. Visual is very important for me. Have it pretty. So that’s happening right now.

*REBECA*
How did you start helping with the collections part?

*MARIANNE*
Oh, when did I start on that? Um, so that would have been a couple of years ago because I had already retired and I was kind of interested in it even when I was volunteering at the farm doing the tea room and stuff like that. I kind of was thinking this soap work or whatever it’s kind of something you see but you think something should be done a little bit differently. They needed a volunteer so I sort of volunteered. Was I volunteered or did I volunteer? Either way, volunteered. What are you supposed to do? Okay, there’s a process for this. Okay, you just can’t turf it. You have to . . . There’s a step by step legal process you have to do. Basically, I had gone through everything with the help of a couple of people along the way. We were photographing the accessioning and taking it to the next step which has gone to other sites. Actually, a whole whack of it this summer went for auction. I don’t know how the auction is done, how well we did, did we make any money, I don’t know. The process of moving all this stuff up, guess what, we found other things that maybe needed a new home. It’s actually been interesting. I like doing it. It’s almost becoming like a point of pride like “oh, hey.”

*REBECA*
So do you think that’s, maybe, for you, what the meaning has become, a sense of pride? Is there a difference between the meaning that it had at the beginning to what it is now?

*MARIANNE*
Probably different, yeah. I think it is. Before it was more “hm . . .” I wanted to make it . . . Can’t really make it prettier or make it like a museum because I don’t have that training but I just wanted it to look nicer or displayed a little bit better. Maybe change things around so it doesn’t look the same every time somebody goes up there. Let’s move a few things around or put a different hat there or move this around or move some of the articles away and bring these out because we’ve got all this stuff. I’d go “hm, okay.” Yeah, so from then it’s become “oh” to “yeah, this is actually becoming fun.” The levels of frustration like every other museum where things are coming in and than we need, than we need.

[00:45:50]

*REBECA*

You mentioned your sister a few times. I’m curious to hear about her personality. You mentioned when you were younger she was a bit of a caretaker.

*MARIANNE*

Yeah, I’m still reminded daily that “I had to look after this little brat.” Okay. There’s a twelve year difference so when you’re one or two and she’s in her teens there’s, yeah, you’re not . . . “I just put her to bed and she just woke up.” We had an earthquake in, I think, the early ‘40s, somewhat of a major earthquake, and apparently she just put me to bed with an earthquake and things are shaking and falling all over the place. She got really mad at me because I woke up. Things were falling and that was one of the major ones we had in the late ‘40s, ’47, ’48. Something like that. To this day I’m still reminded.

*REBECA*
What’s her personality now to you that you’ve, you know, you said your age feels closer.

*MARIANNE*

Older sisters you get a little annoyed of them even though they’re all that much older but I think we’re more equal than apart [correct word?]. The problem is sisters would be a couple of years apart as opposed to twelve years apart. It’s interesting, she was graduating from high school the year I’m starting grade school.

*REBECA*

Right.

*MARIANNE*

Which is interesting when you kind of see that. So therefore mom and dad were having this little person and she has this young daughter who can go off to be whatever she wants to be.

*REBECA*

Do you think that either of you, you mentioned your mom had a strong personality, either of you has taken after your mother’s spirit at all? Or either of your parents, really.

*MARIANNE*

My sister said she’s more like her dad and I think she probably is more like my dad was. It’s kind of hard as far as personalities go. I don’t know. I think mom, of the two, was the stronger personality. I know for sure . . . I do kind of remember about the move and she just was not going to do anymore three flights of stairs in this house. The opportunity was there to move it to a newer place.

*REBECA*
Right.

*MARIANNE*

But there’s still a lot of work. Most places there is still a lot of work.

*REBECA*
Did your parents, in general, ever talk about or mention what it was like to just settle in Richmond in general?

*MARIANNE*
No.

*REBECA*

And what that was kind of like? More talk about work and that sort of thing, I suppose?

*MARIANNE*

I don’t think it was any more talk. It was just did. They were at this place for a short period of time. There must have been land available for him to build on Francis Road and purchase this other property where we had the potatoes. They rented a house. I do physically remember that house on the other side of 2 Road where all the potatoes were and I think there was wheat or something else at that period of time before there were potatoes. I do remember that. I remember, physically, I can remember this house where they rented and used as rental. It was for 30, or 40, or 50 dollars a month. I think that’s . . . which was a lot of money, I think, in the ‘50s. Yeah, so I do remember that but as far as . . . They just did. It wasn’t talked about. You just did. Went to the canneries. It was nice working at BC Packers because sometimes you came home early-ish. It was really nice. It was just done. It wasn’t anything talked about. You just did the involvement with the immediate community and that was it.

*REBECA*
So no real benefits or challenges that were really, you know . . .

[00:50:12]

*MARIANNE*
If there were, my sister and I, we never felt them. If there were challenges or anything like that they were discussed. We weren’t aware of what they were. They were just able to deal with whatever it was. Like I said, we never had a car, being able to grow your own food. People now are wanting to grow their own and going green and having everything. It was there. There are trees. I remember the walnut trees. I remember, I don’t know how many different apple trees, cherries. You had everything. You had the berries and you just grew everything. Did they have to buy anything? Probably not a lot. I was told that during the war years, um, they had to give up certain portions of the ration because we had our own and certain things you could buy. They had their own cows. You had your own milk. You make your own cheese. You had your own butter. You had your own buttermilk. You had your own fruit. You had pretty much everything so there wasn’t much you needed to buy. Even flour or whatever, you’re probably buying that but the bags that came with that had fabric that could be turned into clothing because they had patterns on them. So it was all . . .

*REBECA*

It sounds like any potential challenge being just having to put the work into it was turned into a benefit or an opportunity.

*MARIANNE*

Yeah, yeah. I know they gave away a lot of stuff because they had the excess fruits so the fruit must have gone, there was the berries, the raspberries, whatever, went to the canneries. That I do remember. The truck coming by picking up the fruit because you had so much of it you can only have so much of it but somebody was picking it up so I guess they were selling it. The work, it didn’t come easy. Like I said, a car was not a factor. Local transportation was a factor. Like I said the Interurban was just down the road so take it from there but any difficulties I can’t . . . I have to really think about that. There aren’t challenges that I’m aware of. There may have been but us kids were not made aware of them which is kind of, you’re almost being insulated from this but you don’t . . . We both remember bringing in each other growing up and people around. It was good.

*REBECA*
What about for yourself? If you had to talk about the benefits and challenges of living and growing up in Richmond your whole life, is there anything that comes to mind when you would say “these are the benefits or challenges to making a life in Richmond.”

*MARIANNE*
What I’m noticing, I’m just noticing the changes over time from playing on the road because the the best place to play and play baseball was on the road and periodically you would yell “car” [laughs], but otherwise you played on the road or the local fields or whatever but that’s . . . Or roller-skate, you’d just roller-skate up and down the road because you could roller-skate up and down the road and not worry about a car. As you can see, things are changing as people are moving in. I remember, way back, now I’m going “oh, this has changed. Where is this? I don’t remember” and things are being torn down which is kind of “why are old places being torn down?” that kind of gets a little annoying. Some history is going down the tubes and it shouldn’t be. Yeah, I like the old. I know things have to progress but sometimes it’s just changing too quickly.

*REBECA*
Do you think maybe that speaks to a little bit of your involvement with collections and the heritage fund and . . .

*MARIANNE*
Maybe because I like some of the older things, probably. There’s a bit of history. That bit of way back when I wanted to get into archaeology which probably wouldn’t have paid the bills as well. Where I would be working I have no idea.

*REBECA*
Did you have a passion for the history?

*MARIANNE*
I still do. I really find it interesting. Those things I really find interesting. Other people may not. My sister kind of looks at me strange. She’s not so much into that sort of thing but I kind of am. Yeah, I like that.

*REBECA*
And if you were to talk about the benefits of living in Richmond what sorts of things . . .

*MARIANNE*
Well, I kind of like where I am which is in Steveston which is just that little bit of the village I kind of like. It’s nice to be there and yet your sort of in a nice little, I was going to say cutesy, it’s not necessarily cutesy, just this little country, nice place but your near a big city. I kind of like being near a big city for some big city stuff but I like to be away in a quiet place. I couldn’t live in a big city. I could not live in a big city. No, I can’t, no. I cannot do so. I like my little bit of quiet. I like my little bit of green space. Yeah.

[00:55:57]

*REBECA*
So Richmond has that sort of two different parts.

*MARIANNE*
Yeah, we’re country enough, city-ish, and then you’ve got city and then you can go back to your little country-ish. Now, to live way in the country, um, I’m not sure if I could. I have a girlfriend who lives in Mission so we trek out there and she lives farther up the mountain and it’s okay, fine, but you’re in the country. Even I noticed, the couple of years I’ve been going out there now, things around her are changing. Newer houses are coming in so that’s, again, there’s that change of people moving in.

*REBECA*
If you were to think about your hopes and dreams when you were younger and compare them to now or even just, you know, what you’re looking to in life. I know it’s a big question but to think about the changes that you’ve seen over time. Maybe you’ve had those hopes and dreams in looking into history and archaeology and that sort of thing and now that you’re retired what do those sort of things feel like in Richmond?

*MARIANNE*
Oh, wow. Really?

*REBECA*
It’s interesting to reflect. You don’t have to give me an answer if you can’t. That’s fine.

*MARIANNE*
No. No. That’s, yeah. Just living here I just noticed so many changes over time. I’m not sure if all of them are good. I just have noticed so many changes. Yeah, part of me still likes what was. You can’t go back to simpler times. It wasn’t simpler times but, now, yeah. Parts of it I do like now. That’s a hard question. You can’t go back to what really was way back when. It’s just not doable.

*REBECA*

If you were to think about your parents’ immigration story, to think about what they were hoping for when they came to Canada which was just a better life for opportunities, and thinking about once they did settle what sorts of things they were looking to, um, what do you think the difference would have been over time there? Would it have been just to raise a family and be involved in the community or what sorts of things do you think they had hopes and dreams for once they settled?

*MARIANNE*

I’m thinking . . . Well, seeing as how they both came by themselves I think they were just simply coming because they knew it was going to be . . . they weren’t sure that it was going to be, they were perceiving that it was going to be better than what was. How it evolved is that, you know, people meeting other people and whatever and yet, over time, they’ve also stayed very much within their own identity group. I don’t think either of them knew English when they came because mom said her first time on the boat she saw this black steward or whatever. I went “Okay.” I gathered that was quite common to see a negro or black for the first time and they were even stewards on the ships. That would surprise. I guess, also, coming here you’re coming from a group where everybody in your area is the same. You’re coming to somewhere where you’re going to see people who are not like you. You’re going to see other nationalities, other cultures. So I think that would have been a bit of a surprise in there. Although, both had ended up in the prairies which was predominantly English, Caucasian, European. Coming to the West Coast would have been a bit of a culture shock, I think, to some degree because we ended up in Richmond. It definitely would have been a shock.

[01:00:07]

 Well, they would have seen Asians and South Asians which probably was of some surprise. I don’t know. Nothing is ever talked about in that aspect. They took everybody for whatever their value was. When I’m thinking about when dad rented this place, a house on the other side of Number 2 Road, they rented after the war to a Japanese family who stayed there for the longest period of time. Mom gave them a box of Japanese oranges for Christmas and they gave mom a nice lacquered dress for Christmas. I went “holy crow.” It was the Japanese oranges which, at that time, came in little boxes. I still got one of those little boxes with the label. I do. It’s not going anywhere and those were the good oranges, the ones from Japan. After that somebody else rented it but then we had problems with them. So in the back of my mind I’m never going to own a place that I want to rent to anybody because there’s going to be problems. They didn’t see these other people, the other nationalities, as . . . they just saw them as people.

*REBECA*

But at the same time they still had a very strong connection to their own community?

*MARIANNE*
Very much with their own because they were with their own group of people and, you know, nationalities and you’re speaking the language that you feel comfortable with, although being able to mix with anybody else was not a problem.

*REBECA*

Good for them.

*MARIANNE*

I do remember the house that was rented. You’re home, you came in, bedroom is on this side, a long hall, there wasn’t even a hallway it was just the door. The door to the bedroom is on this side, there’s the living room and dining room, and then there was space in the back which was the kitchen and the bathroom. Just this long house and that was the . . . Whether dad moved it there or it was there on that property I don’t know. They rented it out. I do remember the names of the Japanese family.

*REBECA*
Really?

*MARIANNE*

[Yusui?].

*REBECA*
[Yusui?].

*MARIANNE*

They had several kids. I guess when the kids were able to work and earn some more money they were able to help their parents get their own place. Instead of renting they had their own place. I remember the daughter’s name. One of the girls’ name was [Oyako?] but that family name was [Yusui?] for the longest time. My sister says [indecipherable whispering]. Okay, because I think somebody after didn’t pay the bills or whatever. They ended up taking them to small claims court [laughs]. That would have been probably into the late ‘50s, early ‘60s, and by then that property was sold and no more potatoes. Oh, god.

*REBECA*
A blessing and a curse.

*MARIANNE*

Oh my gosh. We’re not talking a few potatoes. We’re talking an acre or two full of potatoes but then we’re not keeping all of them. They’re being sent off. So, again, being able to be part of that grain project, helping the economy, because you’re selling it off and going to market somewhere. Richmond had a lot of land. It wasn’t developed. Your major roads were just . . . there were none of these little subdivisions that, kind of, ended up within these other roads.

*REBECA*
So you’ve experienced a lot of geographic changes.

*MARIANNE*
Oh, I’ve seen so much now, so much now. Actually, I’m just looking at some of these pictures and I think I probably still have them because the second house on Francis Road there was a really neat picture with the fields right beside them and behind them there were horses. A couple properties over and that was only into the ‘80s. That would have been into the ‘80s. So you can see how the changes have come quickly. Too quick. Yeah, I know it has to happen.

*REBECA*

You do have some neat things here that reflect some history though. It would be cool to hear about them. So we’ve seen a little bit. You’ve got some photo albums here and then also the items there. So is there anything you’d like to share?

*MARIANNE*

Well, I’m trying to think of when either of them would have immigrated. They probably didn’t bring [Cochkeh?]. I think everything that would have been brought from the old country, if there was anything, would have been fabric or clothing. I think this is what most of this is. I don’t remember any of those cute little keepsakes that might have been moved across or something but I don’t remember seeing them or any special attention being paid to them but I remember these. These were a part of the national dress. I think it’s seeing its . . . A lot of beautiful beadwork on here. I think mom would have . . . I don’t ever remember her growing up doing any sewing but, then again, eyesights change. Some of this she might have done as a young girl or somebody would have done this when they were quite young with really good eyesight. So we’ve got the really pretty apron which would have been worn as part of the, what I refer to as the Ukrainian costume.

[01:06:05]

*REBECA*
Is it mostly stitching, there’s also beadwork?

*MARIANNE*

There’s beadwork in here and a lot of embroidery, a lot of cross stitching, and I think this is done on a mould because it looks like it might have been on a cedar chest but it looks like something is getting at it. Some critters are getting at it. Anyways, I cannot do this kind of work. I can do needle point, penny point, but not this type. This is serious embroidery. This is all done by hand which is nowadays done by machine. So a really pretty apron which would be part of the dress. It is a runner which would have been on top of a table or a sideboard, but just by the looks of it and just by looking at the fabric I think this was done, she might have done this as a young girl. This is really fine, fine work. This is actually not falling apart, surprisingly. It’s a good quality linen. This is actually quite pretty. The colours are quite pretty and these two colours, the yellow and the blue, represent the Ukraine.

*REBECA*

Is there other symbolism on this runner?

*MARIANNE*
There is. I don’t know these two letters because I don’t know the alphabet but the yellow and blue are definitely of the flag of Ukraine and just birds but that was interesting because there’s a heart there with the two. The birds, I don’t know what they were. It could have been birds that were near a river that was . . . And then these are just different patterns. It almost looks like a sampler. I’m just looking at this and you know how you get samplers with different patterns and stitches. It almost . . . because it’s different. You don’t have this pattern at this end. It almost looks like a bit of a sampler because you’ve got different stitches in here. It could be because it’s . . . These two symbols, I have no idea what they mean. I’m just looking at this so I’m thinking this is different at either end. So it’s almost like a sampler. You look at things differently after a while. You see things differently. This is, actually, a gorgeous shirt. Must be a man’s but the embroidery on the sleeves and the collar is unbelievable.

*REBECA*
So this shirt, would this be . . . There’s beadwork as well here I can see.

*MARIANNE*
It could be used as part of the Ukrainian costume. It would have been something that would have been worn, I suspect, for functions, high holidays. It is quite elaborate. It looks like it’s had some serious . . . Surprisingly, the beadwork is still standing up here but then again I’ve got it stored away and it doesn’t . . . I kind of like to give it a good clean but I better not touch this.

*REBECA*

What sorts of material do you have here?

*MARIANNE*
This is like a really heavy cotton but I think it’s good quality heavy cotton, not the stuff you find now. This is *cotton*. The beadwork on this is amazing. The beadwork and the embroidery. This is tight embroidery and usually the back is supposed to look almost as good as the front. It’s a lot of work. Somebody knows what they’re doing here. This is not machine done.

*REBECA*
And this was made by, again . . . Was this brought or made by your mother?

*MARIANNE*

I think this would have been brought. If not made by mom it may be my dad’s side of the family because it looks like a man’s shirt. They could have brought it. So somebody made it.

*REBECA*
Was it mostly women that were doing the work?

*MARIANNE*

Yes, they would have been doing this. Unless, of course, you had a tailor but a tailor would be making suits and whatever or making just the clothes. This would have been done by . . . I’m looking at these and they’re identical on both sides. Somebody didn’t finishing something here. Oh, isn’t that interesting. No, no. When you look at these things carefully you notice. So we haven’t finished. We ran out of . . .

*REBECA*

Green.

*MARIANNE*
Yeah. Okay, you’ve run out of green. That’s kind of neat.

*REBECA*
Interesting what you learn when you go back and pay attention, right?

*MARIANNE*
Yes, pay attention to detail. We’ve run out of green. Interesting. I think the workmanship on this is amazing. I’ve never seen anything quite so tight. I could probably fit into this. I’d better not touch it. There’s certain things you don’t touch. This is one of them [laughs]. The collar, this is amazing. Yeah, it would have been done separately and then attached. I like that shirt. I do want that shirt. The next one is a jacket which would have been also worn because the Ukrainian costume was a blouse, a jacket, a headdress, a skirt, an apron, and it was all different colours. This was mom’s. I do know that for sure. This, she probably would have brought. I know, at one point in my life, I was a little thinner. I know I did wear it.

[01:12:24]

*REBECA*
So does this have any, sort of . . . Is it a dress or a vest?

*MARIANNE*

It’s a vest. A long vest, yes.

*REBECA*
Does it have a special meaning?

*MARIANNE*
It may from that region she was from but I don’t know because I’ve seen some with, actually, quite heavy embroidery. This is embroidered enough but it’s not as heavily as others that are around. It’s gorgeous though. It has been used, was worn probably for some Ukrainian concert somewhere but it was worn. It’s actually in remarkably pretty good condition. Yeah, but it’s stored away in the cedar chest. I tried to put it on last night and went “oh, can’t do this anymore” [laughs]. So the costume would have been, as you saw in this book, a blouse of some sort, the vest, a skirt. Depending on what area you’re from they all had different . . . For different parts of the country there were all different types of costumes. It’s like parts of Germany or you go into Italy or whatever, there’s certain areas that have very specific . . . This is the same sort of thing. There would be a blouse, the vest, the skirt, the apron, the headdress. A lot of the times . . . You see these men’s are actually quite, somewhat, elaborate but this one is really elaborate. The sleeves and everything, it’s major. Yeah, see hers was right along there. Now that may or may not be hand done or machine done. I don’t know. I know there is one at home and my sister thinks that mom did do, and has done, a pair of shoes. I did wear that one. It’s actually kind of pretty. It’s not as elaborate but it’s pretty. It’s still hanging on there. They’re in pretty good condition. This for sure I did wear. It’s heavy.

*REBECA*
So these are photos of the Ukrainian dancers and your sister.

*MARIANNE*
This would have been for the opening of the dedication of the hall but we would have worn something like this: a headdress, and the [joo joo?] ribbons that came with the headdress, and, oh, yeah there’s beads. It was actually quite colourful. They’re all different. It’s not a uniform. It’s a uniform in the sense that it’s a costume. That was, like, a uniform but everyone’s is separate. The men’s is almost identical but the women’s is a little different which is kind of neat. Yeah, it was kind of neat. The vests are different depending on the regions.

*REBECA*
So the items that you brought here, these are reflective of what might have been used for special events or are these . . .

*MARIANNE*
It wouldn’t be for special events. Although, I think they’re still used. I know for sure the shirts because some of the members of my parish, they come from the Ukraine and they actually, you know, sometimes when there’s a special event or whatever they’ll wear their Ukrainian shirt and it’s usually around Easter or something like that. I couldn’t get into any one of them anymore so, not happening [laughs].

*REBECA*
I’m just observing the beadwork, the embroidery, and the materials, these sorts of skills, are they quite symbolic of Ukrainian tradition? Is this what you would typically see?

*MARIANNE*
I’m just looking here. That one has got some beadwork. These are plain. So, again, it may reflect the region.

*REBECA*
Makes sense.

*MARIANNE*
I think it’s like that in, probably, other national dresses or whatever. These, for sure, are not done by machine. This is done by hand. It’s a lot of work. I’m just thinking of the shirt which is more labour intensive. Yeah, that’s totally done by hand. There’s no machine that did that. You’ve got to admire the people who can do that. I think mom probably did know how to do that. It’s interesting she always said she never did. I always admire the Ukrainian eggs but she never knew how to do that. Okay, I guess I’m not going to learn that.

*REBECA*

So what sorts of . . . I guess you’ve kept these for a long time in your home. The sorts of . . .

[01:17:12]

*MARIANNE*
Where am I going to put them after?

*REBECA*

[laughs]. I was curious about the personal meaning and symbolism that . . . we talked about a little bit of the Ukrainian part of it with the special events and the dance but of the personal meaning that the items have to you.

*MARIANNE*
They are my heritage such as it is. Some of them I have worn which is kind of interesting when you think about it but it’s part of my history I guess. I didn’t even think about that but it is my history. Okay. Yes. Yes. I’m proud of that. It’s kind of neat.

*REBECA*
Definitely. Yeah it’s very beautiful and in really good shape. So it obviously means something to you to keep them.

*MARIANNE*

Well, I store them away from the moths. That apron I think is a fine wool. These are hanging on pretty good. From what I can remember mom had them stored pretty good. I’ve got them in a cedar chest now so we’re keeping them away from critters as best we can and I’ve got them in regular tissue although I probably should get archival stuff.

*REBECA*
You could, probably.

*MARIANNE*
Who do I talk to about that? Yeah, so just keeping them safe but this one I really think because it’s so different, this runner, it’s almost like a sampler. I don’t know the meaning of those two words. Those two letters in there. It must mean something. I’ll have to find out. Okay, I’ve got to find the meaning of that one. I’m kind of curious now.

*REBECA*
We’d be curious to know if, you know, to explain what we’re seeing here, like, if it’s something that’s easy to figure out.

*MARIANNE*
Yeah. I actually do not know how to read the thing. I was, again, I was a rotten kid so they sent me to Ukrainian school but I didn’t want to go. So I cannot read it. I understand it to a point. As I’ve said, I can understand the Canadian version of Ukrainian but the Ukrainian that I hear from people talking in Ukrainian, not really. I think it’s no different from a lot of other kids who grew up in the country. You get the dialect or whatever and they don’t understand it anymore. I’m not sure if it’s the same as Italian or anything. Okay, it’s the same.

*REBECA*

It’s very similar.

*MARIANNE*
What Ukrainian I do know is the Canadian version because every once in a while you’ll hear an English word thrown in or whatever [laughs]. Okay. It’s quite typical I gather, which is kind of funny.

*REBECA*

I’m curious if there were any other family stories that I haven’t asked about that you had that you might want to share about your family’s immigration story? There’s quite a bit that you looked into on your own.

*MARIANNE*
Other than knowing that mom said she heard that all the people were saying to my grandmother “why are you sending her?” and my grandmother saying “if I could go I would.” So I guess they wanted younger people. She’d be coming with a bunch of children. Oh, no, she wouldn’t be. All the kids, they were older. I guess they wanted younger people to come at that time.

*REBECA*
The Canadian government?

*MARIANNE*
It might have been. I don’t know. I don’t know. I don’t know what the parameters were and then to just go . . . both of them had twenty-five dollars which in 1929, 1930 was a lot of money. Some think “twenty-five dollars, where’s that going to get you?” but obviously there was the means and probably you had to pay for your passage which was . . . I have no idea how much that was on the ship. I gather . . . Dad didn’t say anything and mom liked the trip on the boat. She didn’t get sick. Everybody else did. It was actually kind of interesting because at some point there, when we started traveling, we took several cruises. I said “okay, this is different from when you came” but, yeah, it’s . . . Again, back to people immigrating, they’re not leaving for a holiday and then coming back. They’re going for a reason and for whatever reason, you know, “it’s not going to be great where I am. Somebody is telling me I should get out or I know that I should get out and it should be better for me over there.” It may. In some cases it wasn’t. Let’s be realistic there but in some cases it was really good. Both of them did okay. Just the right combination of people met up and they did okay. What can I say? [laughs]. As far as any hardship in the sense of financial hardship or physical hardship I’m not aware of any that there were.

[01:22:39]

If there was anything it was hidden but they must have done okay. Dad mentioned one time, you know, something about money and whatever, it was a question somebody said, and he said “I always had it and I always will.” Okay. That’s a positive attitude. He must’ve been able to because he was working all the time and working at BC Packers and able to purchase three different lots of property with acreage on there but then considering the ‘30s and ‘40s, maybe into the early ‘50s, things are pretty inexpensive. I think really inexpensive. I know one of the bits of land was sold and I did find the documents. It was five acres once for 100,000 dollars. I’m going “oh, no.” That’s not a lot of money in this day and age but it’s five acres. That was in the ‘80s, late ‘70s early ‘80s, so it was not a lot of money.

*REBECA*
So what has it been like for you to dig around in the family history? I think someone listening to this oral history, coming from their own perspective, they’ll take what they take from it and they’ll learn something, perhaps, about the community, Ukrainian traditions, food, this sort of thing but for your personally to look into your family history what has that been like for you?

*MARIANNE*

It actually has been kind of interesting. I know a bit about it. I don’t know a vast amount about it. Do I want to know more? I’m not . . . Do I or don’t I? I want to know my DNA is what I want to know because there’s a lot of interesting history there. I don’t know but it’s been interesting to have that little dig in to and see what . . . When you think of it, what prompted dad to . . . Actually, what prompted his brother to come first? We don’t know.

*REBECA*

It speaks to the importance to keep the, I guess, the stories alive which is what you’re doing which is really cool.

*MARIANNE*
I’m trying to. I know both of them were very much involved with their community and they liked to help people. It was not unusual for them to lend somebody the money to get help. That I do know. There’s no kids so how do I keep their legacy going. So I’ve actually set up a fund with the Vancouver Foundation. So it’s the Julian Alexander Fund. So we contribute to that. It’s now, by definition, with the Vancouver Foundation. It’s fully funded so now monies will start going out to whatever, you know. So I just every year put in a little bit more to get my charitable donation but that to me, that’s how I can keep their name alive. I can’t do it by having kids because I don’t have any kids here. Not happening.

*REBECA*
That’s really neat though. The way that I think a lot of people carry on their family traditions, sometimes without knowing it, but also that’s very cool.

*MARIANNE*
For me, that was one way that I can, sort of, carry their name on because it kind of stops at my sister and me. There’s no further after that. So we’re carrying on that tradition. We’re carrying on their tradition of helping and I know they did help. Different people would come to dad for money or whatever.

*REBECA*
Did you hear any particular stories about that?

*MARIANNE*

Well, sometimes he didn’t like somebody and said “no we can’t help you right now.” That I did know. Okay, but somebody needed because they were going to purchase something or whatever. They would pay you back. I know when the . . . Next door to the Ukrainian Church there was a senior’s home called the Ukrainian Village. I’m not sure if any of it has changed or not but prior to them purchasing the property X number of members were asked to contribute to, sort of, put the seed money in and then you got the money back.

[01:27:03]

Dad had already passed so mom was approached and, I think, everybody put in X number of a thousand dollars. For some reason 5000 comes to my brain. I’m not sure that’s their exact amount. Anyway, it was whatever money and then the money would come back to them with interest. So, again, the helping, which was really important for both of them. So helping the community in their own way of helping.

*REBECA*
Right, which you were also doing with your collections work.

*MARIANNE*
I guess I am, in my own way. My own little funny way.

*REBECA*
Alright, well, I think that’s really interesting and I learned a lot about your personal history and a little bit about the Ukrainian community, a little bit about Richmond as well. Is there anything else that you wanted to add?

*MARIANNE*
I don’t know. So you’re going to send me a transcript right?

*REBECA*
Yes.

*MARIANNE*
Okay, so when I go through that my brain might think of more things. Okay, so what is the process for this?

*REBECA*

If you want to add more?

*MARIANNE*
Yeah.

*REBECA*

We can always meet again and you can add more.

*MARIANNE*

Because I’m going “oh, yeah, I remember.” I probably will.

*REBECA*
That’s totally fine.

*MARIANNE*

Because I’m just going by the memory that I have of what I . . . But again, it’s incredible, back to the immigration part. I just don’t know. They never enlarged upon their feelings or whatever. They just knew that they had to be here. They had to come.

*REBECA*
That’s their experience, that’s their story, and . . .

*MARIANNE*

And we’re sticking to it.

*REBECA*

And I think that it sounds like, and you’ve touched upon this, it’s just the way that they were as well, right? It was something that they had to do and that is their story. They did what they had to do, they worked hard, and raised you guys, and were involved in the community.

*MARIANNE*
Yeah, definitely. Both of them were all about helping.

*REBECA*
Yeah. Well, alright. I think maybe if we’re out of ideas or stories for today we can leave it there and if you do think of anything else you’re welcome to add to it. We can always meet again. Okay?

*MARIANNE*
Okay.

*REBECA*
Alright, thank you. Let’s turn this off here.

END OF TAPE PART ONE OF ONE

[01:29:40]

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)