

INTERVIEW WITH PATRICIA PARÉ CAMIRÉ

Conducted by Madeleine Roy

April 20, 1998

Life in a Franco Family and life at Ave Maria Convent

Good Morning. This interview is being conducted by Madeleine Roy on April 20, 1998. I'm interviewing Patricia Paré Camiré in the kitchen of the apartment to which she recently moved on Randall Road in Lewiston. The interview is part of an assignment for the Franco-American Studies course being taught by Suzanne Pelletier.

Roy: The first thing I'd like to do is to let you know that you'll have to sign an agreement saying that you're agreeing to do this interview and that you're giving us permission to put it in the archives. That's the only reason that you'll be signing this, but for your protection and our protection, we have to do this.

Camiré: Okay.

Roy: So now, we'll just go on with the interview.

Roy: The first thing I'd like to ask you is, Where and when were you born?

Camiré: March 17, 1921, in Lewiston.

Roy: You were born in Lewiston.

Camiré: Yes. We lived in Auburn, but I was born in Lewiston.

Roy: You were born in Lewiston.

Camiré: Yes. In Lewiston—at the hospital, at St. Mary's.

Roy: Okay. What was the name of your parents? Were they both of French origin?

Camiré: Yes. They were.

Roy: Okay.

Camiré: My mother was a Lessard—Aurore Lessard, and my father, Cyrille Paré.

Roy: Okay. Now had they emigrated from Canada? Or were they born here?

Camiré: My mother was born here. But my father came from Canada. I don't know at what age, but, do you know?

Roy: No. No. Uh, Do you know why they immigrated?

Camiré: Probably.

Roy: Was it for? Do you think it's...?

Camiré: To get work, or....

Roy: Yuh. Do you think it's similar, like in the course that we're taking, people immigrated because most of them were farmers and they were doing very poorly, so they came here thinking they'd make a lot of money by working in the mills and such.

Camiré: Yes. Working in the mills, and....

Roy: Do you know if the grandparents on either side worked in the mills?

There's laughter in the background.

Camiré: I don't know. I don't know what they did. Pèpère Lessard didn't work, did he?<sup>1</sup>

Roy: I don't know. I don't know. I don't know if they worked in the mills. I'm under the impression they didn't.

Camiré: No. I'm not either. Ma tante Féline worked.

Roy: But I don't know what they did.

Camiré: I know Ma Tante Féline worked in the mills. The older children worked in the mills, but I don't remember my grandfather.

Roy: Now, are you under the impression...? I'm under the impression that Pèpère Paré was fairly well-to-do. From what I remember, they never lived in tenement houses, like the Lessards did? They owned a home in Auburn?

Camiré: Yuh, yuh. That's right.

Roy: So you don't know why he was fairly, how he got, I don't think he was real rich, but I think he was better off than many of the immigrants who came in.

Camiré: I think so too, and then too, I think the children worked.

Roy: Yuh.

Camiré: And at that time, the children more or less supported the families.

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<sup>1</sup> Madeleine Roy intended to interview Patricia Paré Camiré as if the two were strangers, but it became evident here that they were sisters.

Roy: Yes. Yes. Well that, in their case.

Camiré: Children worked and they brought their pay home. That was it.

Roy: Now, did your father and mother, or Papa and Mama ever work in the mills?

Camiré: No. No.

Roy: What did Mama do?

Camiré: What did Mama do? She worked in the shoe shops I think.

Roy: Did she?

Camiré: Yes. I seem to remember that she worked in shoe shops, and then she worked for her older brother there, at his pill business—selling pills. He sold medicine, and she did the office work for him.

Roy: Right. That type of thing, or did she help Ma Tante Féline who was a seamstress, maybe? Or, no. Because she wasn't that young when she got married. She got married when she was twenty-one.

Camiré: Twenty. Yuh. So she had to work.

Laughter.

Roy: Okay. So you don't know that. And Papa—what did he do, mainly?

Camiré: Well, he was a painter, and paper hanger, and....

Roy: But, before that. Like, when they got married, what did he do? Do you think? Do you remember?

Camiré: Well, he tried.... Before he was married, he used to work in restaurants, but when he was married....

Roy: Did he work in the shoe shops?

Camiré: I think he might have worked in the shoe shops. And then he tried selling insurance. I remember that. But then, mostly, it was painting and paper hanging.

Roy: Yup, yup. From what I remember. But I knew he'd done other things before. Now, you have brothers and sisters, evidently. Ha! Ha! Ha! How many did you have?

Camiré: I have uh. (She hesitated for a long time)

Roy: Four brothers and five sisters, and two half brothers—yuh. So we were eleven counting the half brothers.

Camiré: Yuh.

Roy: Did you always live in Lewiston, or did you live somewhere else?

Camiré: We lived in Auburn when I was young.

Roy: How long did you live in Auburn?

Camiré: Well, 'til I made my First Communion, because I made my First Communion at St. Louis in Auburn.

Roy: So you went to St. Louis School. How long?

Camiré: Yes. I started. Well, it couldn't have been that long. To me, just the first year.

Roy: Then where did you go?

Camiré: Well. We moved to Lewiston, there with Ma Tante Féline. Because Papa went to Canada there, Out West. Well, we lived with them, and I went to St. Peter's for maybe a year, and then we were living with Ma Tante Féline, and there was Louis and Paul, and there were too many people in the apartment. Mama was always friends with the nuns, and the nuns suggested to have me and Lucille go to the convent, so that's how come we went to the convent. They were good to us, you know.

Roy: I see.

Camiré: They made arrangements, that they could pay later on, or....

Roy: So, in a sense, it was a way of helping Mama out--while Papa was out west.

Camiré: Yes. Yes.

Roy: Do you remember how long he was out west? Was it months, or weeks, or...?

Camiré: I would say that he was out there for one season at least. He didn't like it.

Roy: So then, when you started going to the Ave Maria Convent, you were in third grade, maybe? The reason was, to help Mama out. Now you went? Lucille must have been like first grade.

Camiré: Yes.

Roy: Now, do you remember what kind of nuns were teaching at St. Louis when you were in first grade? Was it the Ursulines? Or?

Camiré: No. I don't remember.

Roy: So, St. Peter's were the Dominicans.

Camiré: Yes.

Roy: So you had been exposed to the Dominicans.

Camiré: Yes. Yes.

Roy: So, did you find that they were the same type, and I mean, they were Dominicans, but were they more like the real French nuns, or....

Camiré: Most of them came from France or from Belgium. So they were very different from what we were used to, as far as their language and their way of living.

Roy: How was the discipline with these French and Belgian nuns?

Camiré: They were very strict. Very. As far as I'm concerned.

Roy: No nonsense type thing, or?

Camiré: No, no. No, no.

Roy: You were at the convent how many years?

Camiré: I was there 'til I did my High School. Nine years.

Roy: Did you complete your High School there?

Camiré: I completed four years in two.

Roy: Oh? Is that the way they used to do it?

Camiré: Yes. That's the way they did it for me.

Roy: Did you get a diploma?

Camiré: Oh yes.

Roy: So you did four years out of two? What is your experience, or your impression of convent life?

Camiré: Well.

Roy: I mean, as a little kid, then growing up, and then, you know.

Camiré: I was very lonesome while I was there. I uh, there's certain things I liked....

Roy: Or maybe I should ask, What did you like about convent life? And what did you not like?

Camiré: I didn't like too much discipline. I was very uh, I don't know. I didn't like the discipline. That's what I didn't like.

Roy: What did they do as discipline, for instance?

Camiré: Well, everything was so, all the time....

Roy: Regulations? (Laughter.)

Camiré: Yuh. That time, and that time, and that time. You ate, you had to eat what they gave you, whether you liked it or not. You had to go to bed at a certain time. You had to get up at a certain time.

Roy: Eat certain foods?

Camiré: Yes.

Roy: Play?

Camiré: Yes. Go to church at a certain time. You had to go to confession every week. (Background laughter from Roy) Or else they'd mark it in a little book that you didn't go. (More laughter) Things like that. (Laughter) That's what I didn't like about the convent, but I liked the uh, the companionship. I liked being with other kids, and uh....

Roy: In that vein. How many kids were you per class, for instance.

Camiré: Well, I graduated from eighth grade, we were four. So that's why we could absorb and get so much more because you have an hour class and there are four people in that class, you get much more attention. And, of course, you have to pay attention, you can't get away with not paying attention.

Roy: Laughs. That's right.

Camiré: If you're not paying attention, you have to know what's what, because you know they're going to talk and ask you questions.

Roy: Laughs. So in a sense, do you feel that you got a better education?

Camiré: Yes. Yes. As far as that goes. Now, I really appreciate what I got.

Roy: Because if out of two years of High School, for instance, you got the equivalent of four, you had to have a quality education. Because it seems that most people who came from Ave Maria have a certain quality about them that you don't find elsewhere.

Camiré: Yes. And as you get older, you appreciate it, because then you see that you really did get a good basic formation, and then, you know....

Roy: Yuh. So the things you didn't like were discipline, you were lonesome.

Camiré: Very lonesome.

Roy: Were you lonely all the time you were there, or do you remember it more as a little kid?

Camiré: I remember it more as a little kid. And even when I grew older. Sometimes I resented the fact that I was stuck in a convent with nuns, and all my brothers and sisters were home, and to me, they were having a good time all the time, while I was stuck in the convent. I'm sure it wasn't like that, but that's what I had in my mind.

Roy: Your perception. Of course it wasn't like that. And the ones at home sometimes had the concept that you guys were the favored ones--that you were lucky.

Camiré: That's right. It worked both ways. They thought that we were favored. Yes. But that's the way I felt.

Roy: Yuh.

Camiré: I don't know if Lucille felt..., Lucille didn't feel the same way I did.

Roy: No. Well, she's a different temperament. So how did you do scholastically in your younger grades? Did you struggle, if you were lonesome and you didn't like the discipline?

Camiré: No. I did well. But....

Roy: Did everyone do well there, because you could get special attention:

Camiré: I think so. Because you, yes. It was easier.

Roy: In a sense, yes. You had no choice. It's not like if you're home and you can run outside instead of doing homework.

Camiré: No. You got all the attention, so naturally you absorb more all the time.

Roy: And did you have special periods to study, or were you on your own, or were the nuns, with you?

Camiré: We were in class, but we had study periods. Silence—and no TV and no radio.

Roy: There were no TV's at the time.

Camiré: No. No. There were no radios either. It was in the classrooms, and it was an hour that was for study, and under supervision. The nun was sitting right there in front of you—so what were you going to do?

Roy: What type of discipline did they use there? Did they? Were they very strict? You hear stories about straps sometimes in schools, or....

Camiré: No. Never. Never. I never noticed or never, never.

Roy: In Catholic Schools you hear about that.

Camiré: No. Not at the convent. I never saw anybody get anything like that. You'd get punished. Like, we used to wear medals. If you were really good, you got the gold medal. There were silver medals, or you didn't get any.

Roy: Laughs. Did you get medals?

Camiré: Not too often.

Roy: Laughs. Lucille probably always did.

Camiré: Yes. Lucille was very neat, and was very..., and I was very rebellious. I see now that I gave them a hard time in school.

Roy: Laughs. Oh, God. So give me an example of your day there. For instance, you got up at what time:

Camiré: We'd get up at seven, we'd go to Mass. (Sounds sarcastic)

Roy: Every morning?

Camiré: Every day!

Roy: Whether you wanted to or not.

Camiré: Yes. That's another thing. I wasn't very, I wouldn't say religious, but, I didn't have that much faith.

Roy: You were ahead of your time. Laughs. You tend to question, maybe.

Camiré: Yes. I thought a lot of it was foolishness. But anyway, that's what we did. We went to Mass every morning. Then we went to breakfast. Then we had classes until noon, then it was lunch. After lunch, we had recreation. I liked that.

Roy: What did recreation consist of?

Camiré: Well, we'd play outside. We'd play games.

Roy: Did you play marbles?

Camiré: No.

Roy: Or did you jump rope, or did you have baseball teams?

Camiré: We jumped rope. No, it wasn't baseball, but there was some kind of like volleyball or something like that. We had sides that we had to go on the other side and steal the flag or something—things like that.

Roy: It was physical stuff.

Camiré: And then in the winter, we had sliding, tobogganing, skiing, skating.

Roy: That was a nice spot for it.

Camiré: We always had activities, really.

Roy: Did the nuns take part in those activities?

Camiré: Some of them did.

Roy: How long was the recess? About?

Camiré: About an hour.

Roy: Just to give you a break.

Camiré: And then it was back to studies again. And then at suppertime, it was supper, and then at night, well, it was studies, or,

Roy: Did you have chapel time again at night?

Camiré: Yes.

Roy: Night prayer? Or the rosary? Or?

Camiré: Oh yes. The rosary, and sometimes, the Way of the Cross, depending on what was going on.

Roy: How many nuns were teaching there at the time?

Camiré: Oh, dear. There were quite a few nuns. Most of them were from France too. We had a few from Lewiston.

Roy: Who spoke French like we did—that type of thing.

Camiré: Yes. I'd say there must have been twelve or fifteen. There were quite a few.

Roy: How many students were you when you went? About?

Camiré: Oh, dear. I think, the first year, we were about twenty-eight in all.

Roy: In all! From first grade to.... Did they start in first grade?

Camiré: Yes. Well, I don't remember that we had some that were that young though.

Roy: Or did they start?

Camiré: They might have started in the third grade—or second grade, or....

Roy: A little older. I could probably look that up somewhere, but, uh.... But then it grew though?

Camiré: Then it grew, but it never grew to that big of an institution. It never went up to fifty.

Roy: Right. And they closed in 1965, is it? Or 19--?

Camiré: I don't remember what year they closed.

Roy: What were some typical subjects that you were learning in school.

Camiré: Like any other school. Bookkeeping, shorthand, typing, religion, English, French,...

Roy: The regular. English, Reading, Writing, that type of thing. So that was your day. So you would come home on the weekends.

Camiré: Not in the beginning. In the beginning, we'd come home maybe once a month.

Roy: Oh, wow!

Camiré: But after a few years there, we got to come home every weekend.

Roy: I see. Now, when you only came home once a month, did the parents go up?

Camiré: The parents could come up and visit us on Sunday.

Roy: Did that apply to all the students there?

Camiré: Yes. But not all the parents came up all the time, because some of the girls were from out of state even.

Roy: Oh, I see. Oh, they weren't all local.

Camiré: No. No. There were some girls from New Hampshire. And some of the parents would come up and we'd be called to the parlor.

Roy: I see. So you would visit with them in the parlor.

Camiré: Yes. And it would just be certain times in the afternoon. I'd say from one to four.

Roy: So it was sort of a formal visit, more or less.

Camiré: Yuh.

Roy: Could you be alone with your parents, or were the nuns there too?

Camiré: Well, not the nuns especially, but there were other parents.

Roy: You were all in the same room?

Camiré: Yuh. Well, Yuh. Well, there were two or three parlors. So it wasn't one family to a parlor. There might have been three families or four families in one parlor.

Roy: It sounds a little bit like visiting inmates in jail. They're all in the same room. On those weekends, your parents couldn't take you out. In your case, they wouldn't have, because they didn't have a car.

Camiré: Yes.

Roy: Was the fact that they didn't have a car the reason that you got rides home?

Camiré: Yuh. Because they didn't have a car, we uh...

Roy: How did you get home?

Camiré: There was Mr. Pinette. He used to give us rides. Dr. Fahey used to give us rides. We rode quite a few years with Dr. Fahey. Mr Pinette too.

Roy: Because their daughters had started school at about the same time you did? And all those years too.

Camiré: Well Margaret Fahey was in the same class I was. The Pinette girls, Rita was one year higher, and Loretta was one year younger.

Roy: Was that a good experience for you, or did you feel inferior when you got rides with those people?

Camiré: No. No. They were very nice. Very accommodating. You always felt welcome, like at the Faheys'.

Roy: Did you go to their houses, sometimes?

Camiré: Oh, yes.

Roy: Were you there with any of the Shaffers?

Camiré: Which one? I was there at the same time as Madeleine and Patricia. Madeleine became a nun, but I don't think it's a Dominican.

Roy: Let's go back to your disliking the convent. You disliked it to what degree?

Camiré: Enough to run away. I ran away. I took my sister and we ran away. We walked all the way down to almost Holy Family.

Roy: All the way to Holy Family!

Camiré: Oh yes. We had walked quite a ways. The nuns had sent Mr. Beaulé after us.

Roy: Mr. Beaulé was who?

Camiré: Mr. Beaulé was the man of all trades, I guess. He took care of the animals, he took care of maintenance.

Roy: Of kids who ran away. (Laughs)

Camiré: Of the animals, and the garden, and all that. He used to...

Roy: So when you ran away, you ran away to go home?

Camiré: Yes. Yes. I was going home.

Roy: Did you leave just the two of you, with nothing?

Camiré: Yuh. We just left.

Roy: Did you have your uniforms?

Camiré: Yuh. We always wore uniforms. But I think it was the weekly uniforms. See, during the week, it was like a blue smock like. On the weekends or holidays, we wore the formal ones. It was like a sailor top. The collar with the white stripes, the pleated skirts. It was formal. But daily, it was a light blue, with a little white collar.

Roy: So you weren't quite as visible, I mean walking down the road, as if you were wearing you formal uniforms.

Camiré: Yuh. We had walked quite a ways when they picked us up.

Roy: What happened after that?

Camiré: What happened? We got—I got punished. I couldn't go home for I don't know how long. I wasn't beaten or anything. I was just punished.

Roy: Psychologically punished. (Laughs. Oh, gosh.) So you got a good reprimand, probably.

Camiré: Oh, yes. And, how would I say it. They'd work on your sentiments too, and "Do you know how you hurt your mother?" They made you feel as if you had murdered somebody. All I did was run away.

Roy: They didn't really look into why you did this. You know, what led you to do that.

Camiré: No. They just made you feel guilty, guilty, guilty. And of course, I had brought my sister with me, and poor Lucille was so....

Roy: Was she punished also, or you were the responsible one?

Camiré: I don't remember that Lucille was punished.

Roy: No, 'cause she just went along. How old were you when that happened?

Camiré: Maybe I was thirteen or fourteen. I wasn't that old. I must have gotten mad at something. I don't remember. I think it might have been at the time when you'd all go up to camp. The family all went up to camp at Memorial Day and they stayed until it snowed. And I remember thinking, They're all having a good time at camp, and I'm stuck here, and I resented that. So I don't know if it was one of the reasons, or something had happened at school.

Roy: But something must have triggered that, or brought you to that point, I would think.

Camiré: Yes. Something must have happened, or I was too lonesome, or I didn't want to be there.

Roy: Did this happen again, or just one time.

Camiré: No. Just one time.

Roy: Laughs. One time is enough. Enough guilt accumulated for the rest of your life. Laughs. Oh, God. That's interesting. You said you couldn't go home for quite a while. That was your punishment.

Camiré: I couldn't go home. I couldn't go out to recreation. I had to stay in—under supervision.

Roy: Did you have a bodyguard?

Camiré: Yes.

Roy: More or less?

Camiré: More or less. There was somebody watching me.

Roy: Are you aware if anybody else ever did this, or is it you who set the record?

Camiré: I don't know. I don't remember if anybody else did that.

Roy: Do you remember if the other kids knew about this?

Camiré: I'm sure they knew. I don't know what went on while we were gone, but I'm sure that uh....

Roy: When Mr. Beaulé found you, was he nice about it? Did he pick you up, and,

Camiré: Yuh, Yuh. He had a horse and buggy.

Roy: That must have been fun.

Camiré: Yuh. Mr. Beaulé was very nice. He was a nice man.

Roy: Did he live there.

Camiré: He lived across the street from the convent. He had a large family.

Roy: So he took care of the gardening and stuff.

Camiré: He did the gardening, he took care of the animals. They had cows, they had pigs, they had hens.

Roy: At the convent?

Camiré: Oh, yes.

Roy: Now, were you involved with that at all? The kids?

Camiré: No. Oh, no.

Roy: Or the garden?

Camiré: No. No.

Roy: Strictly education.

Camiré: He had sons. His sons used to work.

Roy: Did you have any priests who would visit there?

Camiré: Oh, yes. We had Father Farley.

Roy: Oh, I remember him. He was the chaplain?

Camiré: He was the chaplain for a long time. I don't remember the other priests. That's all I remember, is Father Farley.

Roy: He was probably there quite a while.

Camiré: He was there for a few years.

Roy: Okay. So. We'll probably go back to that. What year did you graduate? You combined four years of High School into two, you said.

Camiré: Yes.

Roy: So you graduated from there.

Camiré: I don't remember the year.

Roy: It probably was, you started going there, it was probably the early thirties, forties, was it still during the Depression era? It must be, because I was born in '32 and I remember you coming home on weekends.

Camiré: Yuh.

Roy: I remember that, but I was little. So it must have been in the late thirties.

Camiré: Yuh. But not too late, because I got married in forty-two.

Roy: Oh, so it must have been, Gee.

Camiré: And uh,...

Roy: I must have been real little, maybe two or three.

Camiré: I went out, we went out almost four years before—it might have been the middle thirties.

Roy: Mid-thirties.

Camiré: Thirty-five, thirty-six. In the thirties.

Roy: It doesn't matter the exact year, but it would be, uh.... So when you, what did you do after that?

Camiré: I, uh. I taught school for a while at Marcotte.

Roy: Really. I didn't know that.

Camiré: Yuh.

Roy: To the orphan girls there?

Camiré: Yuh.

Roy: Oh, really? And how was that experience for you?

Camiré: I didn't like it at all. I wasn't, ... With all the discipline I'd had, I wasn't good at discipline at all. I found it awfully hard. I didn't like that at all. Then I worked for a while doing office work at the Chamber of Commerce. I didn't like that either. Then I went to work in the shoe shops. That I liked. Ha! Ha! Ha!

Roy: What made you like that? The social aspect, maybe, or people were more down to earth, or approachable, or that type of thing?

Camiré: Yuh, yuh, yuh. I was more comfortable with the, yuh.

Roy: Yet you had the education that you could have done office work, but you preferred the other type of uh,....

Camiré: Oh, yuh. But I didn't care for office work at all. To me, it was too monotonous.

Roy: Repetition, and uh,... What did you do in the shoe shop?

Camiré: I did at that time what they used to call top taping on a machine.

Roy: Which shoe shop?

Camiré: At the Federal.

Roy: Which was in Auburn or Lewiston?

Camiré: It was in Lewiston. On the corner of Bates and, what's behind Main Street there, the first street, there was a big uh,...

Roy: On the corner there, by that little Protestant Church, where the bus depot is today?

Camiré: Behind the bus depot, there's a big...,

Roy: What is Knapp Shoe today?

Camiré: What is Knapp Shoe today. That's right. It was Federal back then.

Roy: And how long did you work there?

Camiré: It must have been three years. Two years anyways. Because when I got married, I was working there.

Roy: And where did you meet your husband, Buck?

Camiré: I met him in the neighborhood.

Roy: Oh, I see. 'Cause we lived on Webber, and,...

Camiré: We lived on Webber, and he lived on Rosedale, and we'd go down to the corner to the store, and then, I babysat for a while on Rosedale Street—right next to where he lived. That's when I met him.

Roy: Right, right. And you went out for four years.

Camiré: We went out for almost four years.

Roy: Would you say courtships were different then than they are today?

Camiré: Very, very.

Roy: Ha! Ha! Ha! Could you elaborate?

Camiré: We didn't have cars, to start with. And, our parents really watched over us. We'd come home, and let's say we'd go for a walk, we'd go to the movies maybe once a week, we'd take walks, we'd go to the library. Friday night, we'd go to the library. On Saturday night, we went to the movies. When we'd come back from the movies, we'd get off the bus on the corner of Pleasant and Webber, and we'd walk, and when we'd get to our house, all of a sudden, we'd hear, "I see you, I'm watching you." (She says this in a singing voice.) My mother would be up in her bedroom there, saying her rosary, standing in the window watching us.

Roy: Laughing. She did for many years, because she did it in my time too. Laughs.

Camiré: "I see you." (Singing.) Ha! Ha! Ha!

Roy: I remember that you used to spend quite a bit of time at the house.

Camiré: Oh, yes. Well yuh. Like on Tuesday and Thursday, he'd come to the house.

Roy: So you would go out Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Camiré: Oh, no. Tuesday and Thursday, he'd come to the house, and we'd go out Friday and Saturday, but Sunday afternoon, and Tuesday night and Thursday night, he'd come to the house.

Roy: Oh, I see, yuh. So then you got married in, do you remember that?

Camiré: In '42. 1942.

Roy: So that was still during the war. Was Buck in the service then?

Camiré: Yes, yes.

Roy: When did he go in the service? At the very beginning?

Camiré: Yes. He was drafted in—right after '41. I think that it was in '42 that he left. Because we got married when he got done his basic training—so he was drafted in '42,

because we were married in September of '42. It was after his basic training, when he was sent to Louisiana.

Roy: I see. So then, you followed him.

Camiré: About a year after, I followed him.

Roy: A year. You had a whole year, hmm.

Camiré: Yes, because he had gone on maneuvers and all that, so after he got to stay in Louisiana, I followed him. I went down there and stayed with him.

Roy: What did you do that year—in between your wedding and when you went to Louisiana?

Camiré: I worked at the shop.

Roy: You worked at the shoe shop. And you had your friends there, Marie-Rose, and, I remember them. How long were you in Louisiana?

Camiré: I was there for a year. Until he was sent overseas.

Roy: After he was sent overseas, you came back home?

Camiré: After he was sent overseas I came back home. Yuh.

Roy: To live at home. And then, uh, what? Did you go back to work, or is that when you joined the service?

Camiré: Well, no. I didn't go back to work right away. It was uh—I don't remember. Then I decided to join the service instead of going back to work.

Roy: What was the uh.... There weren't that many women who joined the service at that time. So what was the reaction to that by let's say, Mama and Papa, or by Buck himself? Were they in favor, or...?

Camiré: Buck accepted it at first, and then he was against it, but then it was too late.

Roy: Ha! Ha! You were in. Ha! Ha!

Camiré: No, he accepted it. Papa and Mama, I don't remember their reaction—that it was that bad.

Roy: 'Cause Grace was in already.

Camiré: Grace was in already, and uh, no. And then I was old enough. I was in my twenties.

Roy: And it was a good thing to do—you know instead of staying home and uh....

Camiré: Yes. Yes. I enjoyed that very much.

Roy: You did! Your stay in the service! Buck was overseas what, three years?

Camiré: Almost four years.

Roy: Almost four years—ch boy!

Camiré: He was in the Phillippines.

Roy: In that area, yuh. And you were in the service how long? 'Til he came back?

Camiré: Yes.

Roy: So, about three years maybe?

Camiré: He came back in '45.

Roy: Were you still in when he got out?

Camiré: Yes. That's the reason I could get leave--because he came back. He came back from overseas, and if your husband was discharged, then you could get a discharge.

Roy: And did you want to get discharged, or you would have stayed in.

Camiré: Well, at that time.... But I would have liked him to stay in. I liked—see that discipline that I got at the convent? When I was in the service, I liked the discipline.

Roy: But was the discipline as rigid, do you think?

Camiré: Probably not.

Roy: Although things are scheduled too.

Camiré: Yuh. And I'm still that way. I like things to be on time, and I like to know ahead of time what I'm going to be doing. You know. Like tomorrow, I'm going to go here, I'm going to go there. I like that.

Roy: And it's so much part of your being. You had it for all those years.

Camiré: And I liked the work that I was doing in the service.

Roy: And what were you doing in the service?

Camiré: I was doing uh, I worked in the legal office.

Roy: So then you liked office work?

Camiré: Well I liked that because it was the legal office. It was court-martials and things like that. I liked that.

Roy: I see. So it was probably like secret stuff that you couldn't, you know.

Camiré: Or people that were getting court-martials or , or something.

Roy: So it was interesting.

Camiré: It was interesting, it was different, it wasn't monotonous, there was always something new.

Roy: Something new. And you were stationed where?

Camiré: Well, I did my basic training in Georgia at Fort Oglethorpe. And then you could pick where you wanted to go, and I picked Fort Grenier Field in New Hampshire.

Roy: 'Cause it was closer to home.

Camiré: It was closer to home. I could come home weekends if I wanted to.

Roy: Yup, yup. Did you find the experience in the service as a French woman to be different than it would have been if you would have been from another background? Were there other French women with you? Or were you a minority?

Camiré: There were a few, there were a few from Lewiston. There was another girl from Lewiston. There were other girls from Maine. There weren't too many French.

Roy: So your background didn't matter all that much? You were treated more or less the same.

Camiré: Yes. We were treated all on the same level.

Roy: 'Cause sometimes, you know.

Camiré: There were girls from all over. You met girls from practically (end of side one of tape).

Side two:

Roy: And you were discharged from the service?

Camiré: Yuh.

Roy: What did you do after that? You lived at Mama's?

Camiré: Yuh. We lived at Mama's until after I had Pat.

Roy: For a year-and-a-half, maybe?

Camiré: Yuh. Just about huh?

Roy: Then you built your house next door. You never went to live in a rent after that?

Camiré: No. No.

Roy: Okay. So you had how many children?

Camiré: I had six children.

Roy: Right. Okay. And, uh. You always lived there on Webber Avenue.

Camiré: Yes. Yes.

Roy: Now, did you get to work after you were married?

Camiré: After I was married? No. I stayed home and took care of my family.

Roy: So when did you go back to work?

Camiré: Well, I took a course in hairdressing before I got pregnant.

Roy: Through the GI Bill?

Camiré: Through the GI Bill--and I worked. I worked at hairdressing until I got pregnant for .... Let's see, I had Pat, Rachel, George, I think I quit hairdressing when I got pregnant for Theresa, my fourth child.

Roy: Oh. So you worked several years.

Camiré: At Gilbert's. Oh yah. I worked several years.

Roy: At Gilbert's?

Camiré: Oh yuh. I worked part time.

Roy: At night maybe? Or Saturdays? You didn't work full-time.

Camiré: No. Not then.

Roy: You worked around the kids.

Camiré: Yuh. Then I stayed home. When I got pregnant for Theresa, I stayed home. Then I had Louise, then I had Paul.

Roy: Right.

Camiré: And then, after I had Paul, then I went to work at St. Mary's. I started working nights at St. Mary's.

Roy: Did you work part-time there or full time?

Camiré: Well, it was three hours at supertime when I started. It was about three hours a night. It wasn't an all-night thing. I'd work from four to seven or four to eight, and that was it.

Roy: What did you do there?

Camiré: When I first started I worked in the cafeteria. Doing all kinds of things. And then after that, as the children got older, I put in more hours—I'd work weekends, then I'd work holidays, then I started working days. Then I worked in the cafeteria as a cashier, and then I went up to the old ICU. I worked up there in the kitchen and then they offered me a job in the diet office, so then I went down and I worked in the diet office. I worked in the hospital for twenty-four years. I went to work for a while, and I stayed for twenty-four years.

Roy: You liked your work there? Or the people, the atmosphere?

Camiré: Yes, oh yes.

Roy: There too there were <sup>some</sup> ~~sub~~-social aspects too probably.

Camiré: It was pleasant. I liked my work at St. Mary's very much.

Roy: You made friends there?

Camiré: Yes. I loved the people.

Roy: So you worked for twenty-four years. Now, your children are all grown, and how many grandchildren do you have?

Camiré: I have fifteen grandchildren.

Roy: Any great-grandchildren?

Camiré: I have three great-grandchildren and two on the way.

Roy: Really! Who's expecting?

Camiré: Kim. Scott's wife is expecting again and Melissa, George's girl.

Roy: So you have two on the way. That's good.

Camiré: So I'll have five great-grandchildren

Roy: So you lived in your house on Webber Ave. for how many years?

Camiré: Fifty years. I was pregnant for Rachel when we moved in. We moved in at Thanksgiving, and Rachel was born May 1<sup>st</sup>. I was there a good fifty years. Rachel will be fifty in May. I sold my house just before—in November.

Roy: Yes, yes. So you've been here in your apartment a few months—and you enjoy this. Now that it's done.

Camiré: Although now, at this time of year, I miss going outside.

Roy: Probably. Yuh. Mowing your lawn, and raking, and....

Camiré: Raking and, you know, just going out in the woods. In back of my house, I used to go out in the woods. I used to enjoy that. Or sit out there or something.

Roy: Now, did you take part in uh—part of the Franco culture we're learning is that a lot of people took part in a lot of organizations—like the Foyer Musical or the parish organizations, or some were in the snowshoe clubs, or that sort of thing. In our family, that doesn't seem to have been a big thing for either us or our parents.

Camiré: No. There was the *Dames de Ste. Anne*.

Roy: Church related things.

Camiré: Church related things. For quite a few years, at the convent we used to have reunions—and alumni things going on for quite a few years. One year, I was president of that. But at that time, it petered out. Everybody got older, and everybody left the state or whatever, and they got more involved with their families, and it just petered out.

Roy: But no social organizations in town, like you read about so many of these different things.

Camiré: No. No clubs or no snowshoe clubs or no. No, no.

Roy: Then another thing that we read about or that I've discovered since I've worked at the Collection is how a lot of Francos were very involved, you know get together on Saturday nights to play music and sing. They'd have dances in the homes and all that.

Camiré: No. We weren't like that.

Roy: I realize that we've never done that. So, you know, that's strange, you know, because so many people did.

Camiré: At home, we used to sing like *La Bonne Chanson*. Mama would sing, and she'd have all of us singing.

Roy: And they'd listen to the Franco music on the radio. But it wasn't that atmosphere.

Camiré: No. But they had *Le Messager*

Roy: I just wondered if way back... Or another thing that they point out is that people loved to tell stories. That I don't remember, but maybe you do.

Camiré: Well, that, I do. I remember, during the Depression I guess it was, Mon Oncle François moved in with us, and on winter nights, we'd all sit in the kitchen. Mama would close the doors because the stove was there, and Mon Oncle François would tell stories.

Roy: What kind of stories. About Canada? About his youth? About...?

Camiré: All kinds. Foolish stories like they tell in Canada. Ha! Ha!

Roy: He held your attention? I'm sure.

Camiré: Oh yes. He was a very good storyteller. Oh yuh. I remember him. I liked him too. He was nice.

Roy: Yuh. That was a fairly common thing in those days--that family move in with family.

Camiré: Well yuh. And I think that must have been why. I don't remember if that was because of the Depression, or you see, Mon Oncle François lived in Auburn. They went through the fire, and then they lived on River Street—they went through the flood. So I don't remember now if it was then that they moved in with us—and for a while, we had Mon Oncle François living with us, and we had Ma Tante Féline living with us—so we were three families.

Roy: Yes. They were with us for a while. Now why had they moved in with us? Was it to help out, do you think? Financially and otherwise?

Camiré: Yes. I think Papa, they were having a hard time, and that's why—like Ma Tante Féline it was to help us.

Roy: Right—because Papa didn't work sometimes for four or five months of the year. 'Cause I remember Mon Oncle Délard and Féline living with us.

Camiré: Of course, they'd pay rent, and that would help us.

Roy: When they were all living there, where were the rest of us in that house?

Camiré: Well, some of you weren't born then.

Roy: I was born before we lived on Webber Avenue. I must have been a baby.

Camiré: You were a baby, because I seem to remember that you were in a crib in the middle room upstairs.

Roy: Oh yuh. So what room did they have, Mon Oncle François and Ma Tante Génée?

Camiré: They had the room downstairs. In the back room there. And Ma Tante Féline had the room upstairs.

Roy: In the front. *Et puis Robert?*

Camiré: Well Robert at that time, he was more or less away, he was at all of his stores there, I know that.

Roy: Yuh, yuh, yuh. But it was probably something of the times too, where people moved in and helped each other out.

Camiré: Yuh, yuh, yuh.

Roy: That lasted for a while, because we all went back to live at some time. Okay. Uh. I think that's about it, huh? Okay I think we've covered just about everything, so I just want to thank you very much for your time, and I want to make you aware that I'll make a report on this in class, and it will go in the archives....

Camiré: Eh boy!

Roy: ... for others to hear and to see what life, especially life at the convent, or life in a Franco family was like.

Camiré: I hope they realize that's my version.

Laughter.

Roy: That's fine. Everybody who gets interviewed, it's their version.

Camiré: Okay.

Roy: Okay. Thanks again.

Camiré: You're welcome.