

**BRICK WORKERS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
LEWISTON-AUBURN, MAINE**

**Ron LaChance**

*(Interviewer: Andrea L'Hommedieu)*

September 18, 2007

**Andrea L'Hommedieu:** This is an interview for the Brick Makers Oral History Project, at the Museum L-A. The date is September 18th, 2007. This is Andrea L'Hommedieu, and I'm interviewing Ron LaChance. Ron, could you start just by telling me your full name?

**Ron LaChance:** My full, my name is Ronald LaChance, I'm originate, originally from Canada, and I worked at, you want the shoe shop, or brick making?

**AL:** Sure.

**RL:** I worked at the shoe shop in nineteen, around 1968 to 1974, as a hand sewer. I worked full time over there, and I loved to do that, but after a while, the shop closed down because they didn't have enough orders, so I have out of work for that, at that time, in 1974.

**AL:** And did you do, you'd get paid by piecework?

**RL:** I was paid by piecework, it was around sixty cents a pair to, to do that at that time, and it's a good, I made good money on that, yeah.

**AL:** And what is your date of birth?

**RL:** April 9, 1939.

**AL:** And you were born in Canada?

**RL:** Yes.

**AL:** And when did you come to the US?

**RL:** I come in the US in 1962, because we get married over there, and we, we come back over here in 1962.

**AL:** So, you grew up in Canada?

**RL:** Yes, yes.

**AL:** What part of Canada?

**RL:** It's out, it's around Saint George, it's about twenty five miles east of Saint George, Quebec. And it takes about three and a half hours from Canada to get in Lewiston.

**AL:** Well, that's not bad.

**RL:** No, no.

**AL:** And what size family did you come from?

**RL:** Pretty big sized, there was fourteen kids in the family, and I was in the middle, so right in the middle of the family.

**AL:** And what did your parents do for work?

**RL:** They was farmers most of their life. And my mother was born in Canada, and my father too, they become both from Canada.

**AL:** So, you came to the US, and you worked in shoe making?

**RL:** First, I go to, I worked at the Hill Mill, in 1962 to 1964, around there. It was just in the wintertime, because the wintertime I didn't have much work outside, so I worked in the mill both winters, 1962 and 1963.

**AL:** And when were you involved in brick making?

**RL:** I was making that brick at that time in the summertime, then in the wintertime, I worked in the mill. I worked two years at the (*unintelligible word*) for brick making.

**AL:** Can you talk about your experiences in brick making?

**RL:** Well, there, first of all, I have the little bit hard time to start, because I didn't know how to do it, but they showed me how, and after a while I learned, and it was pretty hard work. I did it for, all summer, with two other guys from Canada. They came here and they worked with me for the, all summer, and they'd go back. Now, they live to Augusta, those two guys.

**AL:** What did you do in the brick making process?

**RL:** I was making the brick itself, striker, it's called a striker. And I was shoveling the mud in the machine, then two guys in front making the brick, and that's, that's pretty much, that's hard work, but I can do it, I can do it at that time. I was younger, so you know.

**AL:** Now, what were you, did you have to wear a bathing suit?

**RL:** Yes, yes, I do have bathing suit. In the morning, in the summertime, it was not too bad, because the weather was hot then. But that time of the year, around September, October, you have to break the ice on the, and it was pretty cold wearing a bathing suit at that time.

**AL:** So, which brickyard did you work for?

**RL:** Morin, Albert Morin, in Danville. Yeah, I worked there for two summers, yeah, yeah, 1962, 1963.

**AL:** Did you help build the kilns as well, or were you, did you work just as a striker?

**RL:** Just as a striker, yeah. One of my brothers came here, and he was a, making, put wood in the, to, to cook the brick. And he's in Lewiston, he's still living here in Lewiston, and I worked at the same brickyard, but not the same work though.

**AL:** Now, is that Eloi?

**RL:** Eloi, yes.

**AL:** I had the chance to sit down with him a couple of weeks ago, so.

**RL:** Oh yeah, you interviewed him?

**AL:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**RL:** Oh yeah, oh.

**AL:** So, do you remember some of the people you worked with at the brickyard, that you could talk about?

**RL:** Well, to tell you, that's a long time ago, but (*unintelligible word*) a guy I couldn't. Well, my boss, Albert, and another guy, his brother, was nice to us, and they treat us good, and they pay us good, so I liked to work for them at that time. That's, that's pretty much what I have to say about that right now.

**AL:** Now, tell me your reasons for coming to the United States from Canada.

**RL:** Oh, well, in 1957, my wife's sister came to live in Lewiston, and we came to visit them once a year then. We liked, we liked the environment, and we decided to, I had my visa at that time, but my wife didn't. So, she had her visa and get married over there

in Canada, and then we come back in the United States in 1962.

**AL:** And you've been here ever since?

**RL:** Yeah, I lived in Lewiston for forty years, and then in Minot for, right now it's five years in September, this September here.

**AL:** Is there anything about the brick making that I haven't asked you about, that you think is important to add?

**RL:** Well, the only thing is to prepare the, the clay. The, the, the, it's made with clay and sand. We had to mix it with water, but we can't put enough, just so much water, because it's too, I don't know how do you say that.

**AL:** Too soft?

**RL:** Too soft, yeah, yeah. So, we had to put the, the exact amount of water in there, and you have to shovel it. It had to put, first you had to put it in the pit. It's a big box, about twelve by, oh, by ten. You have to fill that at night, then in the morning it's ready to, to put it in the machine, and we had to shovel it in the machine, then two guys in front, in front, were making the brick. So, one guy was shoveling behind the machine, and two guys in front to make it, make the brick, so, and the mud, it had to be pretty much good to make that.

**AL:** Did it, did you have to throw out a lot?

**RL:** Oh yeah, the guy, who in back is shoveling, was pretty busy, because if the machine, if there's not enough mud in the machine, the machine won't work good, so that's why the guy in the back, whatever (*unintelligible word*), but he had to finish enough mud to, to make the brick, it come out good.

**AL:** Well, I think I've asked all the questions that I had. Is there anything else you want to add?

**RL:** Not that I, right now, no, no, not, not much, not much else, no.

**AL:** Great, thank you so much.

**RL:** You're welcome.

*End of Interview*  
*brick.lachance.ron.wpd*