

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

Laurianne Hynes
(Interviewer: *Andrea L'Hommedieu*)

SWOH #030
July 24, 2009

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview for the Shoe Workers Oral History project at Museum L-A. The date is July 24th, 2009, and I'm here with Laurianne Hynes, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Laurianne, could start just by spelling your name for me, so I'm sure I have it right?

LH: Last one or the first one?

AL: Both

LH: The first one is all in one word, L-a-u-r-i-a-n-n-e. Hynes, H-y-n-e-s.

AL: Where and when were you born?

LH: Was born in Lewiston, Maine, October 17, 1933.

AL: So you grew up in this community.

LH: Yes.

AL: And what were your parents' names?

LH: Edward and Amelia Trembly.

AL: And what did they do for work in the community?

LH: My mother worked in the mill, and my father's the one that built the cellar down here, where I'm living now. Mr. Boucher, the Mayor of Lewiston and Auburn, owned this place, and when he started up, my father happened to be laid off, and he's the one that made the foundation of this building. Long time ago.

AL: So your father did construction.

LH: He did construction, and he was a bed laster in the shoe shops, and my mother worked at the Bleachery, in the mill. I don't remember the job she was doing.

AL: Was that Jean Charles Boucher?

LH: Yes, the mayor. He used to be mayor of Lewiston.

AL: And so how many brothers and sisters did you have?

LH: We had two brothers, one died, one is dead, and I had two sisters, one is dead too. We were five. There's only three of us left.

AL: What part of Lewiston were you living in?

LH: On the Old Greene Road, right up here. I was born, at those times, you were born in a home, you didn't go to the hospital, so I was born in that block, where we lived, across the street on the third floor. My brother was born there, my two brothers were born there, my sister was born on the second floor, and the baby one, Sue, was born in a hospital.

AL: So you lived there most of your growing up years.

LH: Oh yes.

AL: Is the house still there?

LH: The house is still there, but it's all fixed, remodeled. The block is still there too, but it's all remodeled.

AL: So what was Lewiston like when you were growing up?

LH: It was nice. We used to go downtown on Saturday afternoons, a whole bunch of us, we used to take the bus. We used to go downtown, there was Woolworth, there Kresge's, there was Newbury, there was, name it, they had it. There was *(unintelligible)* news, and it was wonderful to go downtown. Now, downtown is like a ghost city to me. There's nothing down there, nothing that attracts me down there no more.

AL: But that was a big deal at that time, on the weekend, to go - .

LH: Well, at Kresge's, there was Bizalion Music Store, if you wanted to get a record, you wanted to buy a record, you used to go in there, and they used to try it out. My mother and I used to go there every Monday and buy some records. And those days too, at Woolworth, they used to, if you like to, my mother, we're all musically inclined, and my mother, when she heard a new piece on the radio, she went down to Woolworth, and they played it for her, and there was somebody there that used to sing it for us, and we bought the music sheets. It was nice in those days. I liked it. Today I

don't like it.

AL: Did you play instruments?

LH: Oh yes, I can play the organ. I play the accordion, and I can play the piano. I won a talent contest and I won a little trophy. I used to work at Shapiro's, when I got laid off on Panther Moccasin, I worked at Shapiro's, and a girl entered me in a contest and I didn't know about it. And I went down the stairs to get, on the stage to get my cup, I tripped on the wires, I was so shook up.

AL: So this is the Auburn-Lewiston Lions Club in 1951. Oh, that's really nice.

LH: I try to keep it shiny, but it's hard.

AL: Oh yeah, it's brass, I would think, yeah.

LH: So I keep it, for a souvenir.

AL: Oh, that's nice. And so your brothers and sisters played instruments?

LH: Oh yeah, my brother used to play the guitar and the harmonica. My brother Roland's got a beautiful voice, he sings. And my sister played the harpsichord, and she plays the organ, and she plays the piano and guitar. We're all, Sunday morning we used to get up there, we used to go to church, over here, Holy Family, and after mass, we used to go to an early mass, after mass my mother would get the dinner ready on the stove, and then my father used to take out his banjo, my mother used to be on the piano, we used to sit around and listen. It was fun.

AL: Oh, I bet it was.

LH: There's nothing like that today. We were close.

AL: And so besides going downtown to shop, what was some of the other social activities?

LH: Oh, we used to go to the dances, when I was old enough, we used to go to (*name*), Maurice Gagnon played there, and then we used to go to the Jacques Cartier (*sounds like*) on Lisbon Street, and Bert Dubord played there, and he's the one who played at my wedding, years ago.

AL: So dances were big then.

LH: Oh my god, yes. And we used to have the mixed shower.

AL: What's that?

LH: That was, they used to have a Jack and Jill, they call it Jack and Jill today, we used to have that before we got married, and the money that we got from the tickets was ours. We had that, and then we had, oh yeah, all kinds of good stuff that we don't see today. There used to be a dance, and we used to wait and reserve the hall, because nobody went to the dance in my days, not nobody, but most of us didn't go to the dance during Lent. So we reserved the first Saturday after Lent, so there was a lot of people there. And Donald Morin plaid the accordion with Bert Dubord and it was nice.

AL: What role did the church and religion play in your life over this time?

LH: A lot, because if I wouldn't believe, I would never have gone through what I went through. Everybody goes through everything, I mean, I'm not the only one, but I lost, my first husband died, then I got married here, and my second husband died. And I had a friend of seven years, and he's going to make two years next month, he died. So I don't want to get attached to nobody.

AL: That's hard.

LH: I had a good life. They were all good to me. I can't say nothing, had a good life, lucky, got a lot of good memories. Most people don't have that. Most people don't have memories. They say you, memories, nobody can take that away from you.

AL: Talk to me about how you got into working at the shoe shops. How old were you?

LH: My uncle Ray, I was young, I was young. My uncle Ray Laplante, he's in Tennessee now, he's the one that, I was working at the hospital when I got to a certain age, I was an assistant dietician at the hospital, at St. Mary's, and I started, I was twelve, thirteen years old. And my uncles, then when I was old enough, I wanted to go work in the shoe shops. I didn't want to go to, I went to high school and then, those days, you know, it wasn't like today. And my uncle Ray says to me, he says, there's an opening at Lombard Watson. It was on Main Street in Auburn. And he says, as a cementer, cementing the shoes. I says sure, I'll take it. So I took it, and when I get laid off from there. I went to Panther Moccasin, when I got laid off from there, I worked there for quite awhile, I went to Shapiro's. Then I went to work at Dori Shoe, that's my last place, and then, well not my last working place, but when I saw they were going to close, I went to put my name in at Geiger Brothers. And I worked there for fourteen years, that's where I retired.

AL: So, you met your first husband -

LH: I met my first husband, I just came out of the convent. I went in to be a nun. And I was sick and I had to come home, and the doctor had to heal me, you know, I had to get treatments and all that. Nerves I guess. I don't know. Anyways. And I met him at a dance. I went to the dance, my girlfriend wanted me to go, and I says, nah, I says, I didn't feel like it, you know, because I wanted to go back in to be a nun. And that's where I met my husband, at the Jacques Cartier Club, with my girlfriend. And we started dancing, and I never went back to be a nun. It wasn't meant to be I guess, but I wouldn't trade those six months for all the money in the world, because what I learned, the Sisters of Charity, Gray Nuns, in Canada, what I learned there, I wouldn't trade it for all the money in the world. You don't forget that. You can apply it in real life, and it comes in handy.

AL: And so you started working at, so the first few shoe shops, they were short jobs, and then you went to Dori Shoe and stayed for a long time.

LH: I stayed there for, it was eighteen years when I left there.

AL: What did you do there, were you a cementer?

LH: Cementing heels. Not bottom cementing. There's a difference. Bottom cementing is, you cement all this around here before they put the sole on. And the heel cementer, it's after, my husband used to put the heels on, and there was no sole then on the shoe, and I used to cement the heel.

AL: And so your husband worked with you at Dori Shoe.

LH: Yeah, yeah, then when my husband died, his wife died and we started going out. I knew his wife well. And we started going out, and got married.

AL: So talk to me about your experiences in the shoe shops. What was it like, in terms of the work, and also in terms of the social aspect and making friends.

LH: Well, the people that I worked with, I can't say, well there's always a few that, you know, but you've got to overlook it. Like my mother said, I don't care where you're going to work, there's always something or somebody. And at Shapiro's, I remember one time, I got laughed at. I used to have a very hard time with my English, until I married my husband, because it was always French in the house. And one noon we were eating, and I said to her, I says, gee I ate a rip banana in the morning, and she laughed, you know, and she was very sarcastic. She says, you dumb frog, you can't even say a, it's not a rip banana, it's a ripe banana. So I looked at her, and I says to her, I says, can you speak French. She says, no. Well, I says, at least I'm trying. My mother taught me, when there's people around that don't speak your language, try and

speaking theirs if you can, the best that you know how. And I says, at least I'm trying, but you're not. Later she came to apologize, and we became the best of friends. You meet all kinds.

AL: I like that story.

LH: I'll never forget that. That was before I went in to be a nun, that's when I first started working here. I'll never forget that, I tell that story a lot.

AL: So you made some good friends over the years.

LH: Oh yes, oh yes, and some of them, we're still friends.

AL: What was the management like in the shoe shops?

LH: Oh, I had good bosses. John Roux was good, because the girls had taken me out, I got to tell you that one, the girls took me out, when I went to be a nun, at Shapiro's, and I never had had a drink in my life. I was eighteen years old, never had had a drink. So they took me to a, it was, it's closed now, where Stekino is, Stekino's, they took me there. They said, you got to have a drink, Laurie. I says, I can't have a drink, I said, I don't drink. They said, we'll order you one. They ordered me a Zombie. I never drank in my life, I went back to work, I was loaded. Took the bus then, we didn't have no cars, and then when I got back, my boss, John Roux, had a pair of dark blue pants on, and he came to me, he says, how you doing Laurianne. I says, well you know Johnny, I says, you got a nice pair of brown pants. He's says Laurie, he says, I think you better go home, he says, take the next bus and go home, he's says, you're feeling pretty good. I says, I know, I don't drink and, I said, they ordered me a drink. The girls were laughing. But I was a good sport. I got home, I was feeling good. My mother said, what happened to you. I says, the girls took me out, I says, to eat, and I says, I'm going to bed. I had drinks after that, but I never had a Zombie.

AL: Oh, that's funny.

LH: Yeah, I met a lot of nice girls, and when I saw some of them wouldn't try, I just didn't bother with them.

AL: Were you working in the shoe shops when they started laying off and closing different places?

LH: Yes, I was working at Dori Shoe then, and when I saw that it was going down, Arthur Beauchesne was my boss, he's dead now, and he told me, I told him that I had gone to put my name at Geiger Brothers, and they says, I said, I could start Monday. He says, go ahead. I said, I have to give you a notice. He says, I'll put it in the office

that you did give me a notice. So I went that Monday, I went at Geigers and that's where I retired. I was there fifteen years.

AL: And what kind of work did you do?

LH: Retail. I made those books, put the books together. See, when we got these, there was no cover on it. I got those pages, those pages were all loose in a pile, and this was all alphabetically in another pile, they weren't collated. And this, there was as plastic sheet on top of that, and this, and you used to take that, and put it here, put it down. Then you took you're A, B, like that, and then you put it here, and you took two pages, you put it there. And at the end, when you got to the, I don't know if I did that on line, no, at the end, anyways, there was a page for the zip code, and some for the different, yeah, different zip code, and a map, a thing like a map. We did some big ones. And the wires, I wired those, I wired them, and I closed the books. We put those, see, something like that too, in the big ones.

AL: Oh yes, a map of the U.S.

LH: Yeah, and we had that, not apart, they were all collated in order, and we put this at the end, and then we put another thing, and another plastic, but I didn't put it, it was for me, so I didn't bother. But I loved my work. And then we did some planners, like these, no, I don't think I have any. We did some planners, and it was the same thing, bigger books, 8X5, we wired them.

AL: How was Geiger Brothers to work for?

LH: Oh, I liked it. Oh my god, it was fun working there. But after Ray Geiger died, I retired just in time, after he died, things changed. Well everything changes. But I can't say nothing against them, because they treated me good. Whatever they're doing today doesn't have anything to do with me, so I can't say anything bad about them. I'm not sorry, that was the best place I, and I worked at Raytheon also.

AL: Was that after Geiger Brothers, or before?

LH: Way before.

AL: Way before. So talk to me about how, well you mentioned it a little bit, when I asked you what Lewiston was like years ago, in what ways have you seen it change?

LH: Well, I'm going to tell you one thing, when it's Memorial Day, I wrote a letter to the editor. Memorial Day, there used to be a big parade. It used to be the bands from schools, big bands, and all that. It used to be worth going to see a parade. And the last time I went to a parade was when my friend was alive, because he was in the Marine

Corp, WWII, he went to Iwo Jima, and he was there when they raised the flags and everything. But he never talked too much about it. I never questioned him, because they, people that seen a lot don't want to talk about it. But anyway, getting back, so we went, he got dressed up and everything, with his Marine thing, and everything, to go to the parade. I was so disappointed in that parade, I called Burt Dutil, and I told him. I says, what happened. We stood there an hour waiting for the parade, and it only lasted fifteen minutes. No band, no nothing. Thank god for the Shriners, because, I says, I'll never go back to another parade again, and I've never been. He says, well now it seems the high school kids don't want a parade. And the parents, well, they do something that day.

They're killing the holidays. And we used to have a big Thanksgiving parade, and Santa Clause used to arrive. And then the clubs, all the clubs used to get, what did they used to call that, they used have it in February, snowshoers, whatever, and all the snowshoers used to come and have a big parade on Saturday night, and it was so fun to go, you know. And they used to come, and a parade Sunday morning. Some of them were feeling pretty good, but who cares, they were having a good time. So it's changed, it's dead. It's dead now. I don't care if it's the 11th of November, or if Memorial Day, there's nothing. A little bitty parade that's not worth to go see. And I don't understand, Portland's got a big parade on that day, and Brunswick's got one. But downtown here, it's - .

AL: Have you ever been to the balloon festival?

LH: Yes, I have. That was nice, too, but I never got into a balloon, it costs too much. But I would have gone, yeah. And I remember too, Bath Iron Work, my nephew worked there, the iron workers had a big picnic at Thomas Point every year. That year we had a free ride to go in a balloon, a free ticket to go in the balloon, and we couldn't go, the wind was blowing too much. But all those things we used to have, and now they don't have that.

AL: Did any of your brothers and sisters work in the shoe shops?

LH: Oh yes, my two brothers were bed lasters in the shoe shop. As a matter of fact, we all worked together in Panther Moccasin, they worked upstairs and I worked downstairs. And the shops, they come in one day, they had a padlock on the door, so, then we all switched shoe shops. Then my brother ended up by being a supervisor at Pioneer Plastic. That's where he retired from. And my other brother that died was working at L&A Tire, then he went to work at Sears.

AL: Yeah, but a lot of you had to switch professions, near the end.

LH: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And my sister moved to California, that's her there, she's

dead, and her husband died. He died not too far after she did, from a broken heart. And my other sister, well now she's got a good job, she's a payroll in Auburn, you know where, Goff Street, where Rite Aid is, that street there, and she works for the, makes payroll for all the, she's got a good job. She's younger, she's the baby so she's still working. The babies had babies. I kid her about it.

AL: Is there anything that I haven't asked you about that you think is important to add? Something about your life, or Lewiston, or shoe working.

LH: Well, I can say one thing too, since the TV came out, and the cars and the computers, and everybody has a car, that broke up a lot of good family stuff. We had games, my neighborhood I was living, on the old Greene Road, they all had a lot of big families, you know, and they were always coming at my house. And my mother, they owed the lot from the Greene Road to Dupont Avenue, they owned the whole land, and they had croquet, and they had badminton, they had horseshoe and, or one, we used to switch games, and my mother used to make us some cookies and lemonade, and it was so much fun. And at the dance, they'd all meet at my mother's house. We used to get on the bus, wait for the last bus, because we knew the guy that was running it, and we used to get on the last bus, and we'd all be together. We used to pick up, you know, a lot that went down. It was fun. Now it's, well everything changes. It's a new generation, and they're doing their own thing. Nothing against that. But good things never stays the same.

AL: Thank you so much.

LH: You're very welcome, my dear.
End of interview.