

Interviewer: And your Name is?

Kay: Kay Kenley, Kay you can call me Kay.

I: How long have you been living in Vaughan

KK: Oh, um let's say 7 years.

I: Okay, so where did you live before here?

KK: Oh I lived here before but I came to Toronto about 17 years ago from Montreal, Quebec – Where I was born and raised, and raised my children.

I: So, do you live here by yourself?

KK: Yes, I do – I have to live here by myself. Well, I have my children and my grandchildren here. I followed my children when they both came. My son went to school here, he went to Osgoode. He became a lawyer and he settled here. And my daughter married a Torontonion and that's why I'm here.

I: Do you like it here in Vaughan?

KK: Oh I love it here, I am very very happy.

I: Have you seen any big changes in Vaughan since you came?

KK: Well, I haven't been here in Vaughan or say, for only seven years. It's a very nice community, um, I guess in terms of the Promenade there's a more of a multicultural aspect to it which is nice. Because the Promenade was, at the beginning it was really going down until they opened up T&T and everybody started coming and it became revitalized and it's a good thing.

I: So do you think you've adjusted well to the community?

KK: I think so.

I: Yeah? Do your grandchildren and your children like it here too?

KK: They don't live in this community, they live in Forest Hill down south. I'm an up north kind of person and they like to be down south.

I: What do you do for a living?

KK: Well, I'm retired now. But when I was in, I'm trained to be a teacher, a school teacher and after that I worked with my father, he had a fur business many many years ago in Quebec which I know now is taboo. People don't buy furs anymore, well about 30-40 years ago, people did buy furs. That's what I did, I worked as a bookkeeper for him.

I: Is that what you wanted to do when you were younger?

KK: No, I wanted to be a social worker or a teacher. Which I became a teacher...

I: Would you say that you liked your job then?

KK: Which job?

I: Um, was a teacher..

KK: Yes, yes I did.

I: Did you teach in this neighbourhood?

KK: I taught in Quebec, yes. I taught in Montreal where I lived but in later years my father was ill and he needed me to help him. He owned the business and he had Parkinson's. So he needed someone to help him. I did that for about...quite few years before I came here.

I: Do you have any favourite stories from your work life that you'd like to share?

KK: Oh, well...I can't think of anything really special. But when I was a schoolteacher it was really a long long time ago, I just loved the children and they loved me. And then when I was in the fur business, it was a cutthroat business. And he manufactured, oh what my father did, was at Expo '67 which was way before your time....he had a kiosk and at that time, it was in Montreal, it was a big big, people came from all over the world and he sold fur coats and fur hats and fur dolls and it was a really big thing and movie stars came to his place and he was really excited about that.

I: What do you do now that you're retired?

KK: Well, I...what do I do? I find that I'm really busy a lot of the time with my grandchildren. I help out, I help my son and my daughter a lot. The kids are getting older now, they both, especially my daughter since she's working it took a large part of my time to help out with the raising of the two girls that she has. And I belong to book clubs and I like to go to the casino...(laughter)

I: So what is your ethnic background?

KK: Jewish.

I: And is that both your mom and dad?

KK: Yes, they came over. They were raised in Canada so I'm more like a second generation Canadian.

I: Do you have any siblings?

KK: Well I had one sister...And I had just gotten married, I was 19 years of age and I was a school teacher, one night in the middle of the night the phone rang and my husband at that time said "go to your parents" and I knew that would be the worst night of my life. When I got to my parents I was told that my sister, who was seventeen, had died in a car accident. She had, they had been, four girls, four young girls had gone out for a drive. One of the girls was a new, beginning driver, and I guess a big truck came behind them and the guy started trying to interact with them instead of driving away she put her foot on the breaks and the truck went right into them and the two girls in the back were killed instantly. One was my sister and my parents never got over it, it was a terrible terrible thing in my family. I'm the only one left, so I'm over-protective of my grandchildren as you can imagine...

I: Yeah, how old are they?

KK: One is 16 and one is going to be 13, one is 10 and one is 8.

I: So you said you grew up in Montreal, what was that like?

KK: Oh Montreal when I grew up it was all English. It was the time before the French, before the FLQ and the Parti Quebecois came in and I grew up in an English setting and later on there was a lot a lot of trouble with the French and they, and there was, at one point they were bombing in the mailboxes and they, and there was bad things and they didn't want any English and you could barely, if you went out to a department store they wanted you to speak in French or they made it very unpleasant for the people. And that's why my kids came here because it was intolerable of the French situation. The only people that I know who stayed there are those who are very very wealthy or had businesses or had real good jobs.

I: Have you ever visited Quebec after?

KK: Oh yes, my parents were there and since I was an only child I did. But now I have no interest because my parents are gone and Montreal has sad memories for me because of what I told you so I don't go there very often.

I: What is your favourite memory of your childhood?

KK: Favourite memory of my childhood...it was such a long time ago it's hard to remember. Maybe going out on Sunday nights for, we call it smoked meat. What do you call it here? I don't know. You know? Centre St. Deli. Or else we went out for Chinese food once a week. That was with my family and that was a happy thing.

I: Did you have a nickname growing up?

KK: Nope, just Kay.

I: Do you remember any childhood stories that you were told as a kid?

KK: It's so long ago, it's hard to remember childhood stories. Well, like what kind of childhood stories would there be? Is there any examples? I don't know. My father came here when he was about maybe 6 years old from the old country and I think he told me he grew up in a place where there's a lot of apple trees in Europe, in Poland. He was very very young...that's all I remember offhand.

I: Do you have any regrets in life?

KK: Well, truthfully there are regrets, I shouldn't have married the man that I married. I only married him because my mother pushed me...and that was a regret. And then before I came to Toronto I met another man and I spent too many years with him. It wasn't going anywhere, I spent about 16 years, I didn't live with him but I saw him and I feel like I maybe wasted a good chance to meet another nice man and get married and remake my life in a different way.

I: What have you learned in life so far?

KK: Always be happy with what you have, don't look at other people, you know? My mother was the type that always looked to see who had more money or had more...if I have enough of everything that's good enough for me, I don't care what other people have. I think I'm a better mother than my mother was to me, because she was a very bitter woman. And, thankfully because of my dad it doesn't follow that the

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Jewish mother is wonderful. It doesn't follow that, you know you hear about that but it's not always the case.

I: Can you tell me more about your religious beliefs?

KK: I'm not very religious, you know I don't go to synagogue too much, hardly ever. I find it just boring....and I just follow the traditions more or less you know and that's what it is, for the culture and the traditions but I'm not really the type that goes to synagogue....

I: Do you have any family that live in places other than Canada?

KK: Well I don't have any family in Europe at all. I have one cousin that lives in the States, she lives in somewhere near, I don't know now, I don't speak to her very often. Oh, I have friends that live in New Jersey and that's about it.

I: What is your favourite place to be in Vaughan?

KK: Favourite place in Vaughan? Favourite place to be...I like everything about Vaughan, I like the library which we are in right now, I'm always here. And I like all the restaurants here, the food, the restaurants, all the new stores and stuff.

I: Do you have a favourite restaurant?

KK: I like lots of places in Vaughan. There's one in...Well in Vaughan, there's Thornhill, let's see – I can't think of anything right off hand. The breakfast places, the new places, Bagel World, then there's the wing place I went to and Italian restaurant's like Dante's or I don't know, just any place. The coffee shops of course, I go for coffee every morning. I go at the Country Style or Tim Hortons every single morning of my life. I never eat, have coffee at home. People wonder at that but I just like, when you live alone you get up and you go out. I don't mind being home at night but in the morning I want to be out.

I: Let's talk about school....do you remember any teachers that made a big impact on your life?

KK: Yeah, when I was in university at Macdonald College at Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, a teacher's university. There was a professor Young who taught Psychology, I really liked him, I remember him a lot. And, there was a mean teacher when I was young and it was in Alfred Joyce, I was in grade 3 and she was a bitter old lady and I hated her (laughter). So those are...I can think of off the top of my head....

I: When you were younger, did you ever think you would become a teacher? Is that what you wanted to do?

KK: No, I wanted to be a social worker...

I: Oh yeah, sorry...

KK: It's okay, but yeah, I guess I knew I didn't want to just go into the workforce. I knew I wanted to go to university and I tried to teach that to my children. Both of them went to university and I am hoping my grandchildren will do the same.

I: Can you tell me more about your grandchildren? Like, what favourite memories are? What you do together?

KK: The 16 year old was difficult, she's been difficult for a long time. I just had something with her today, she...some people when they go through their teenage years they're not as hard as others. It's been hard for her. She just came back from Costa Rica she did some kind of course there. I don't know what its called, Blyth or something?

I: Yeah, Blyth...

KK: So she was there, I haven't seen her yet. I am angry that she just got back last week. She's working for, my daughter-in-law's a lawyer so she's working for a law firm for the next month from 9-1. That's the 16 year old. Then there's the 12 year old, is delightful and loving and beautiful and I hope she doesn't go through that teenage angst. She's not into it, so I'm not sure, she's going to be 13 in October. I hope she doesn't....then I have an 8 year old grandson, they say that he's smarter than 95% of people his own age. He's a little arrogant, but...and there's my granddaughter who is a little princess. And she's sweet and cute and beautiful and she takes guitar, ballet, every other thing...and she just came back from camp and she went horseback riding and whatever....

I: Do any of your grandchildren look like you? Does anyone say that?

KK: Well maybe the one, the 12 year old, I don't know if she does. But, I'm with her a lot, we're quite close. People say she does, but I don't really know, she's got blonde hair and I don't...You know, I never did.

I: What do you do together?

KK: Well, with my granddaughter...I take her out to eat a lot, which is what I do. I bring her to the library, she likes to sit on the computer. I take the others to movies, I just you know, even if I babysit them quite often, they're just happy to play on the computer and not bother with me. They used to, I used to take them out more. I'd take them to the glaze place which is out here, I've been doing that for years. They do ceramics there, I'm always there, I have a card. Each of their homes have lots and lots of things that we've made, that they've made.

I: You said you were Jewish, have you ever been to Israel?

KK: Once yes, many many years ago I was there yes.

I: What was that like?

KK: Well I had a really bad experience there that scared me for life. What happened was, that I was part of a tour and I got to a hotel there and I wanted to stay alone, I didn't want to share a room with anybody and they said the room was taken and I said "no, I want this room" and I made a whole fuss about it. And, what happened was, I got to the room and I don't opened up the drawer and there was something in the drawer in a plastic bag and it was white. And at that time, I didn't know anything about drugs, anything at all, anything...So a couple of days later, I took the bag and I was in the lobby and I had

met other people on the group. And, I asked, I said "what's this?" and there was a woman from New York, I said "I don't know what it is" and she said "give it to me." I'm lucky I gave it to her because later on my life I got to know that there was drugs in that drawer. But, and I asked her what she was going to give me, and I said "I haven't slept," and she gave me a sleeping pill, the same girl, and I took it and I was leaving the next day and I wanted to have a good night's sleep. The next thing I knew, there was knocking on the door of my room and the bell hop was there with two polish women that wer in the plane with me and I was missing my plane because the drug, or the sleeping pill, put me out and I didn't

even wake up. I was half groggy, I got on the plane and they helped me and they were part of a Christian group that was in Israel. And that was my memory which isn't so good (laughter). Scary, so I don't know if I ever want to go back. I've been to Mexico, I've been to Europe, I've been to many places...Hawaii.

I: Do you like travel a lot?

KK: Not as much as I did. Well I don't have the funds to travel you know, so I've seen a lot of places, I've been on cruises, I've done a lot of things in my life, so you know if you don't have the money to do it you have to make the best of your life at home. Especially, since I've seen a lot anyways.

I: What was your favourite trip?

KK: I've been to Mexico to Cancun and I liked it a lot there. I had a cough for weeks and weeks and weeks and I couldn't get rid of it. This was March and I was sick since January or February. The first day I was there, I went into the water and the cough just disappeared. So I think that was a good memory, Mexico – it was Cancun.

I: So from Montreal did you move right away to Vaughan?

KK: No, well I did at first, my daughter was expecting a baby and she wanted me to come so badly. She just drove me crazy, anyways, so she helped me find a place. Actually it was the Townsgate (Drive) on the corner of Steeles & Bathurst. I don't know if you know it, well it's right down the street here. Well, not far, I was in Vaughan originally then I moved to North York. And, I knew that I liked being up north so I went back here. Even though my kids, like I say, they like to be down south. The parking, everything about being up north is better; when I go down south, or go downtown I just can't wait to go back. Once a year or twice a year I go downtown of course but I like it up here. I like the concerts in the park and you know, I go to those....

I: Okay, do you have any traditions that have been passed down from your family that you still follow?

KK: you mean like Jewish traditions?

I: Yeah...

KK: No, nothing special. I am friendly with Jewish people if that's the tradition. Oh yes, there is one...I don't know if its from my family or what but I don't like eating seafood like snails and things like that. I don't like that. I eat like salmon and halibut but I don't eat like, my children eat crab and all those things but not me.

I: I think that's it...

KK: Okay..

I: do you have anything else you want to add?

KK: No, I can't think of anything except you're a nice girl and that I like you.