

Amelia DiMeo: Today is July 31, 2009. My name is Amelia and today I am interviewing Mr. Jim Tesoriere. So could you please tell me your full name and where we are and when and where you were born?

James Ross Tesoriere: My legal name is James Ross Tesoriere. I use a French pronunciation, its not French. I was born in London, England, October the 8th, 1946.

ADM: And how long did you live there for?

JRT: I came to Canada as an infant. I came here when I was about seven month old and have been a Canadian citizen and lived in Canada my whole life.

ADM: So although you're born in England, your last name appears to have a different origin. So could you please explain to me the origin of your last name, Tesoriere..

JRT: The pronunciation I use is a French pronunciation which is incorrect. I was born in England, came to Canada, joined the Canadian military, and in the course of joining the military – an individual in the forces told me – and the pronunciation my parents used for the last name was Tesoriere – and when I joined the military one of the fellas was a francophone and told me that my last name must be French origin and it should be pronounced Tesoriere. And I adopted that pronunciation only to find out, about 20 years ago, that was incorrect. I didn't know very much about my family history so I did a little investigation and my great-grandfather immigrated from Italy to South Africa. MY grandfather lived in South Africa, my father was either born in South Africa or England, I am not 100% certain but probably England. And my grandfather had immigrated from South Africa to England in the 1910, 1920s in that area somewhere.

ADM: Wow that's very interested, so what was it like growing up in Canada?

JRT: Well, since I have little to...growing up in Canada I can't compare it to growing up in another part of the world. I have travelled quite a bit and seen other parts of the world and that changed my perspective significantly but as a Canadian I probably enjoyed similar youth as you have growing up here. We enjoy security and comfort that most people in the world don't have the opportunity for. When I joined the military, I had the opportunity to travel various plac most remarkable was travelling to South America, throughout the Caribbean and down to South America as far as Buenos Aires. Travelled in Venezuela and Brazil and at that time I was only 18 years old and the lifestyle that I saw there gave me an idea of how fortunate we were to be raised in Canada versus how some other people in the world live.

ADM: So what part of the military were you in?

JRT: Canadian Navy, I joined the military when I was 17 and stayed for six years; two three year hitches. Canadian Navy is no more, it is part of the Canadian Armed Forces but at that time it was a separate branch.

ADM: So what work did you do in the Navy?

JRT: My trade was weapons underwater, which is anti-submarine weapons. So we took care of homing torpedoes and mortars etc and we also did surface demolitions. But everybody who lived aboard ship was also a seaman. So your principal occupation aboard ship was seamanship...but, you had a trade over and above that.

ADM: Well that's very interesting, if you had to join the navy again would you?

JRT: Absolutely, probably one of the best things that happened to me in my life. At sixteen, my life took a shift, I ended up on my own at sixteen. Joining the military at seventeen did a lot towards giving me an opportunity to grow up in a secure setting.

ADM: Now what made you join the navy? Like, what called you to join it?

JRT: As I said, my father died when I was sixteen and I started to...I went and lived with my mother for a few months, that didn't work out. And I left home at about sixteen and a half and I was living alone in Ontario, trying to find work and I moved from, one menial job to another and finally ended up in Windsor, Ontario. And my father had always told me, if I reached a point in my life where I could use some security, then the military was a viable option. My father had been in the British army, actually he started out in the Palestine Police before the Second World War and had been in the British army throughout the Second World War. So...that, that's my background, a military background.

ADM: So you have a very military background, that's very good. So you obviously, you took some schooling...Do you know exactly where you studied? Why did you choose the courses that you did study?

JRT: Well, when I left home at sixteen I had completed grade ten and I was part way through grade eleven and then my life turned a bit of at turn, I was allowed in the military with grade ten in those days. While I was aboard ship, I took correspondence and night courses and completed my high school, completed grade 12. I decided that I wanted to go, I did six years in military and decided I wanted to go beyond high school education and do something else with my life so I applied to Dalhousie University and I was accepted at Dal and did a Sociology major, a B.A. in Soc. I was, that period was around the end of the hippie period, people were quite socially conscious so, that probably encouraged me into Sociology. Not a very practical course, um, to earn a living, pretty much today qualifies you to drive a taxi. But in those days it was a good idea. After I completed my degree, I applied to the Bank of Nova Scotia and was successful at getting a position as a loans officer, or a credit officer, at one of the branches for the bank. And I worked at the Bank of Nova Scotia for about three years before I decided to come back to Ontario.

ADM: Did you study anything else at any other universities?

JRT: After I came back to Ontario, I started to work in manufacturing. I decided that I really did not like working in finance. I took a job in a manufacturing plant and actually worked in a plant for about three years, that was Fibreglass Canada. Fibreglass decided to open a new factory here in Toronto and I was given an opportunity to come up here as a first line supervisor. Came up here to start a new manufacturing plant, in the course of doing that, I got to know the fellow who was the human resources manager and he suggested I start to take some training in HR. I did some basic supervisory training then I did a diploma in Human Resources Management at Centennial College. As a matter of fact, about six years after I started working, in and those days it wasn't called Human Resources it was called Employee Relations, I started to take courses at Trent University and ended up doing a second degree in Trent, I majored in Psychology. So, I have a double-BA plus a diploma in Human Resources.

ADM: That's very good. What's it like working in Vaughan, do you enjoy working here?

JRT: Vaughan's a great place to work. I am fortunate that the company that I joined here was privately owned at the time that I joined it and gave me an opportunity to come up and...I've always worked, I've spent a lot of time working in manufacturing, this was a chance to join another manufacturing company. I'm...besides being a human resources manager I am a health and safety and environmental specialist. And this company was in need of people with those skill sets so I was fortunate that I was able to come up here and work for a private organization who really hadn't developed an awful lot in those areas so I was able to give them a little bit of direction. At that time, I was living downtown in Toronto in the

Beaches, the commute was difficult, I did it for about three years and decided to come live in Woodbridge, and that's where I'm residing now. This company, along with many other companies within the plastic industry, focus a lot of the labour, or seems to attract a lot of the labour from individuals that are new Canadians. Our workforce is comprised of probably sixty percent individuals of East Indian origin and probably 20 percent of individuals from African origin. Training people are kind of a mixture of other nationalities. And that's pretty well true throughout the plastic industry in this area.

ADM: And now if you were to change your career, what would you do?

JRT: If I had to go do it over again, I wouldn't change what I am doing now. I pretty much chose what I am doing, I'm happy working with people, I enjoy the challenges that it offers but it also, I think, enhances your life having the opportunity to work with people every day in and day out.

ADM: So, going back now, what traditions or classic family stories have been passed down in your family?

JRT: What traditions? I guess...I don't have a lot to go on, I had one older brother. My brother and I were both a by-product of the Second World War. My father had been in the Palestine Police which was a branch of the British military. Britain was taking care of Palestine at that time. He learned to speak Arabic in the Palestine Police and at the outbreak of the Second World War he joined the regular military and went into Africa for seven years. My brother was born in 1939 so he was obviously conceived at the start of the war, I was born in 1946 directly after the war. So the military had played a significant role in my life, other than that, most of the other major influences in my life came more from friends and associations that happened later in life. At about 35 or so, I began to socialize with a group of people, those people were interested in some physical activity, so I started to run with a group. And I became a long distance runner for many years, from 35 I only quit running about three years ago, so I ran for more than 25 years which added a whole dimension to my life. I ran with probably four different running clubs. I've completed four marathons and a couple of hundred races.

ADM: Which marathons have you completed?

JRT: My first marathon was in Toronto in 1986, I was fortunate enough to train with a group of people from Longboat Roadrunners. And because of that I was able to qualify by time to enter Boston. I ran Boston in 1987, I ran New York in 1988 and I ran Ottawa in 1991.

ADM: That's very good, what did you place? Do you remember what your place was?

JRT: No...

ADM: It's okay, you completed it, that's still good...So you said you travelled a lot, around the world sort of, or your family has...

JRT: I travelled in the military, extensively, so I've been to Europe to England to Holland, France and Germany. Throughout the UK, went back to visit England several times, did, travelled through the Caribbean to many islands in the Caribbean. Did the South American trip, travelled through the Panama Canal, up and down the west coast of the States and the east coast of the States. I was stationed in Vancouver for about six months, but most of my time was Halifax as a home port. Going back and forth across the Atlantic, at least six times, I've been as far north as about 200 miles off of Iceland and as far south as Buenos Aires in Argentina.

ADM: Now do you have any interesting experiences that happened to you while you were out taking those trips?

JRT: I was, because I was raised pretty much in Southern Ontario, I knew next to nothing about the ocean and marine life. Shortly after I joined we were on a cruise headed south, in the winter time the Canadian Military would go with the NATO forces. We would usually be based out of Bermuda or San Juan, Puerto Rico and then we would do our exercises in the Caribbean. I remember on one of the first cruises, one of my shipmates said to me, "you should go up on deck because the flying fish are there." And, I thought this was fictitious but obviously there are obviously fish that fly and glide along the surface of the water. When I was down around the equator, on our way to South America we encountered two giant sea turtles floating on the surface and that was the first time I'd ever seen a really large sea turtle. Marine life is interesting. Lots of whales, lots of dolphins....

ADM: Do you have any more favourite stories from the military or from even work?

JRT: Hmm...give me a minute, I'll have to think of that one for a little bit...You asked me what I served on, for most of the time when I was in the military I served on a destroyer escort, her name was HMCS Saguenay. She carried about 250 men, she had been built in '59. I went aboard in 65 when the ship was converted and one of the rear guns were taken off and they built a flight deck on it and we carried the Sea King helicopter. You probably read in the media, that those helicopters are still flying. About...ten years or so ago I happened to be looking for the ship on the internet and got a picture of it. And, read a little bit more about it and found a picture of the ship as it sank. My son at that time, was about 7 or 8 years old and he couldn't understand how the ship had sunk and we did a little research and found out that they took her after she was decommissioned down to Lunenburg, Nova Scotia and sank her as an artificial reef.

ADM: And now obviously, you've been through a lot throughout your life, you've been through a lot of schooling and you have work experience so what changes have you seen in your lifetime?

JRT: An awful lot, in the, obviously in the time that I grew up electronics were virtually non-existent. Today, young people think everything from cell phones to calculators to television sets are all part and parcel of day to day life. None of that existed when I was a child...I can remember the advent of television, I remember parents having a tiny black & white screen that was a great acquisition in the early '50s. I can remember simple things that are day to day for you, the advent of ball point pens...Calculators were considered revolutionary, everything from watching the way entertainment has changed. Music for example, when I was a child growing up, people had records, generally had 45s or 78s then we went to the beginning of taped music where there were two reels on a tape recorder from there it went to 8-tracks and then little cassettes and today none of that exists. Now it's all CDs and it's all recorded in an entirely different process. I remember buying my first computer in late 1970s or early 1980s and it was a Commodore 64. The screen was such that you could only see half a line at a time and only 3-4 lines wide. And, it's funny because I started out teaching myself a little bit about computers and at that time I was working for Campbell's soup and Campbell's soup sold the plant that I was in so I came back to Toronto looking for a job and ended up to become the corporate services manager for Epson Computers. Where we were selling computer hardware throughout North America. It was kind of interesting because it was just at the early stages. I remember them being so happy to be able to give me a laptop and a laptop computer in that day was more like a suitcase, it weighed about twenty five pounds and it was interesting...

ADM: What's it like living in Nova Scotia compared to Vaughan?

JRT: Growing up in Ontario and never seeing the ocean it was a bit of a revelation to get down to the East Coast and get introduced to the ocean and the coastline. I lived for most of my time in Nova Scotia in Halifax-Dartmouth, which is a metropolitan area. Similar to what you may experience here in Ontario, although that was quite a number of years ago and the city was not nearly as developed as it was today. For most of the time that I lived in Halifax-Dartmouth, I actually lived in Dartmouth which is on the far

side of the harbour. And, used to commute back and forth across the harbour in a ferry although there was one bridge at that time but many people didn't have cars and we just took the ferry back and forth. Spent a lot of time travelling around Nova Scotia, particularly after I got out of the military. When I left the military and I went to Dalhousie, I needed a part time job. The last year that I was aboard ship, one of my shipmates was a lieutenant who was also involved in a sports car club in Halifax and he took me to a couple of sports car meetings and I drove little cars in those days. And, he and I teamed up to start to rally, we used to race little cars. The, I bought myself a little old Renault and at that time Renault were being manufactured in Canada, at least assembled in Canada in St. Bruno, Quebec. And there was a company owned branch in Halifax and that's where I used to go buy the parts, the odds and ends that I needed. When I got to university, I happened to be going into this branch one day to buy some parts for my little car and the fellow, who is the branch manager, would sell me parts at wholesale cost as long as I had decals and that sort of thing on the outside of my car. I talked to him, and he said "your hair's getting longer, that doesn't happen, are you still in the navy?" And I said, "No, actually, I just got out of the navy and I'm going to University," and he said, "what are you going to do for work?" and I said "well I don't know." And he said "well why don't you come and sell cars?" And I said, "I can't really sell cars, don't know anything about them and certainly not about selling." And he said, "well you know quite a bit about the cars because you race them...you can sell cars." Ultimately, that was my part-time job for three years during the military and because this was a company owned branch we frequently had visits from the corporate people out of St. Bruno, Quebec where the cars were being built in Canada. I was there actually working one day in the show room and my little rally car was parked outside and this fellow came in who was the vice president of Renault in Canada at that time and he came in and said "so who drives that little rally car outside?" and I said "well, I do..." and he said "how long have you been rallying" and I said "couple of years..." and he said "how would you like to drive a company car?" and I said "well yeah, they give me a car here at work, a loner car all the time." And he said "no no, a company rally car" and I said "love to" but that was the end of the conversation. About two months later I got a phone call from St. Bruno, Quebec telling me that my car had arrived and would be shipped to me in three or four weeks. And they sent me a Renault 8 Gordini which is a racing model of the little Renault and I drove for Renault Canada, as part of a race team, for about two years. And because of that, I raced and rallied all over Nova Scotia so I got to see a lot of the back country that I probably wouldn't have seen in any other way which was a lot of fun and taught me an awful lot about Nova Scotia. After I left Nova Scotia and came back to Ontario I kind of gave up racing which is kind of a shame but it was a lot of fun and when you're young you enjoy that sort of thing.

ADM: Did you enjoy living in Nova Scotia?

JRT: Nova Scotia is great, actually I find the East Coast is great. People tend to be very open and friendly, maybe not quite as conservative as they are here in Ontario. I remember travelling around, particularly around the Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, going into some of the smaller villages and people would accept you like a member of the family just because you showed up. A lot of fun, a lot of parties, a lot of happy easygoing individuals many of which, actually that many of which are my friends now because I end up having to run into a number of East Coast people here in Ontario and they have become my friends.

ADM: So how many years have you lived in Nova Scotia?

JRT: I lived in Nova Scotia from 1964 to about 1975...

ADM: Oh, so that's interesting and you've lived in Vaughan for how many years now?

JRT: I only, I lived in Toronto for quite a number of years but moved to Vaughan about four years ago..

ADM: So what are some significant differences that you found between Vaughan and Nova Scotia and Toronto?

JRT: Each, I think each area that you live in has positive attributes and its up for you to find them. I enjoyed very much living in the East Coast, the people were open and friendly and I've lived in various other places in Ontario but ended up living in downtown Toronto. Enjoyed that, enjoyed the Beaches area and it's kind of an arts community down there. But because the travelling time was difficult, I moved up here to Vaughan and found that once again there's a whole lifestyle up here. I've enjoyed meeting people up here and building some friendships. Restaurants and food up here is wonderful, the markets up here are great and I've had lots of fun.

ADM: Well that's excellent, but previously you stated that you worked in HR for many years. So what different cultural groups have you worked with throughout these years?

JRT: You asked me earlier what I'd do for a living if I had a choice and I told you that I would work in Human Resources and part of that is the opportunity to work with people from all different ethnic backgrounds. When I started my first real position in employee relations, in those days, I happened to work in a company where it was, or most of the plant people, were young men that were of pretty much Anglo Saxon background. I think the average age in our plant at that time, was maybe 25 and all males, no women in the plant whatsoever. And over the years, going from company to company its surprising how much of that changed. I remember working in Campbell's Soup in a mushroom growing and processing operation down near Belleville. Shortly after the Vietnam war and where 400...and I think we had about 400, 425 people in our plant and a lot of the plant employees were new Canadians of Vietnamese origin and it was really interesting to get to know those people, see some of their cultural differences and learn to enjoy their food. Coming back to live and work in Toronto over the years I've always enjoyed moving from one ethnic community to another whether it's the Greek community in the Danforth and the Chinese community...Toronto is a wonderful opportunity to experience a lot of cultural diversity and certainly up here in Vaughan where its primarily persons of Italian background although now there's a greater influx of people perhaps of East Indian origin either living in the area or living adjacent to the area and coming here to work.

ADM: What other hobbies or interests do you have?

JRT: When I started to run the group of people that I ran with we became a whole social centre. The running club that I belonged to had about 200 members and besides running together we spend a lot of our social time together. Over the years in my life I have been camping quite a bit but just simple drive in sort of camping...the fellows in the running club decided that what we ought to do is go and learn how to do some whitewater canoeing. So we joined a group in Toronto and took some training in canoe skills...we ended up, a group of us took a trip where we went to South River in Ontario and flew by bush plane over to Lac Des Moines and canoed 8 days down the Des Moines River in white water conditions and that kind of became a huge activity for me. I've always done camping as I said, but now I've kind of made that transition from doing the regular drive in sort of stuff to pretty much focusing on wilderness camping. So this week, beginning on Monday I will be going with a friend and again, this year, going to Algonquin, entering Canoe Lake and going back about 5 lakes back in to a wilderness camp and canoe for about a week. It's great fun, gives you a chance to spend time out there in nature, do a little bit of photography and just enjoy hanging out with the bears.

ADM: Now going back to the military, have you used the training that you have learned in the military in another ways throughout your life?

JRT: Military training has been useful in a lot of different things I guess, everything from basic life skills, living aboard ship, everyone who is aboard a ship is trained in firefighting and damage control. So in later life, the military training and firefighting is very extensive. You don't really have an option aboard ship, if there's a fire you get away from it. So you have to learn how to handle it, in later life I've used that training when it came to firefighting as well as damage control as well as working with explosives, teaches you an awful lot about safety and that type of thing which probably has assisted me in the safety aspect of what I do now. For a number of years I took care of an internal industrial fire squad and the military training and firefighting taught us to use foam and that sort of thing where I was in a plant that had a lot of ammonium formaldehyde and you'd use firefighting foam to blanket any spills, to keep the vapours down, so that was useful. But just being in the military teaches people self-discipline and teaches you control, even later on as I said, for six years I was a leading seaman. So you got through a certain amount of leadership training which I've obviously found useful as I progressed through work. Probably helped me in attaining my first job as a supervisor, just because I had a military background and some military training there.

ADM: Thank you very much for allowing me to interview Mr. Tesoriere it was a pleasure...

JRT: Thank you..