

# Victoria Brown Oral History

August 23, 2021

Location: Virtual

Interviewer: Sulema DePeyster

Transcriber: Sulema DePeyster

Editor: Ciara Chagnon



WINDSOR  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay, so I'll start by saying hi, my name is Sulema DePeyster and I'm the community history specialist at the Windsor Historical Society. And I'm here today with Victoria Brown, and [00:01:00] we're going to conduct an oral history interview. And Ms. Brown, could you begin by introducing yourself and giving consent by saying, "I, Victoria Brown, consent to have his interview conducted."

**Victoria Brown:** Okay. Hi, I'm Victoria Brown and I give consent for this interview to be conducted.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay, great. The first question I have is tell me about your childhood and what your experience was like during that time?

**Victoria Brown:** My childhood was pretty awesome. I grew up on Mountain Road, which, in the 50s, was called Woodland Road. It runs across Bloomfield Avenue. And so it was a dirt road. When my father built there in the early 1920s, there were only four houses on the street, so most of my childhood, there were just those four houses. But then in the early 50s, Mountain Road began to be developed. [00:02:00] So we had neighbors and I had kids to play with. But up to then it was the woods and the brook and just doing things with your family, typical cooking. We had six acres of land, so there was just everything. Beautiful fruit trees. My dad had humungous gardens so we ate off the land. We had chickens and a chicken coop. So we had chicken legs, eggs all during the week and roasted chicken on Sunday for dinner. So what other kinds of things? Like about day-to-day activities? What are you interested in?

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yes, you can talk about –

**Victoria Brown:** What life was like?

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yes, you can talk about both. So, your family life, family dynamics. And you can also talk about routines and chores, things like that. Any way you'd like to go.

**Victoria Brown:** Okay yeah. So family life was pretty fun. [00:03:00] My dad and mom both worked hard. My dad worked as a machinist until I was about five. So, my mom was home with me until I was five. I had an older brother and an older sister, both of whom were pretty wonderful. Oh my gosh, what was a day like? As a little, little kid, I can remember maybe – the farthest back I can remember is maybe five or maybe four. My four-year-old memory is going to the Big E with my sister. [laughs]

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh wow! [laughs]

**Victoria Brown:** It was my first time going to the Big E. [laughs] I can even remember the dress I had on because my mom kept it for years. It was a little yellow dress with little brown elephants embroidered across the front. My sister put little barrettes in my hair. I don't know why I can remember that so vividly. I guess because that was my first fair. So, day-to-day life was you'd get up, [00:04:00] every meal was homemade. Homemade breakfast. My dad was a great, great, great cook. My mom was a New Englander, so not so much. But homemade breakfast every day. Chores? I don't remember what chores I had as a little kid. When I got older I had more, but as a

little kid, I don't remember anything but playing and having fun. Oh I'd spend a lot of time outside because, like I said, we had a lot of land, so we had a lot of woods. So, our yard was big, but we also had a lot of woods to play in. And our land abutted a farm, so even though the cows weren't ours, they felt like they were ours. [laughs] So, I got to go down to the fields to play with the cows all the time. And we had well water. We didn't have city water. We had well water, so there was a pump house in the woods that my dad had built. [00:05:00]

**Victoria Brown:** He also built our home, which I should have probably said that at the beginning. He built the home we lived in. It's a small little house. Very cute. Like five and a half rooms and we all managed to be in there some kind of way. So, let's see. Mealtimes were always together. Yeah, always together. My sister was 13 years older than me, so she worked. You know, probably by the time I was five. Yeah, so she was working part-time by the time I was five years old. She worked for a vet on Poquonock Avenue and then she worked at the Lincoln Dairy in Hartford and brought home lots of ice cream. Then my mom went to work. When I was about five, she started working at G. Fox, which was downtown. And my dad retired so he was home with me every day and that was the best. [laughs] [00:06:00] So that was a whole new life and my memories of that are very vivid. So, days with him, it was the same thing.

**Victoria Brown:** He would fix me breakfast every day. He would work in his gardens. He was a very religious person, so he would do Bible studying. He was one of Jehovah's Witnesses, so I would go out in the ministry with him. We'd go door to door, and we would always stop in the center on the way home. He'd always give me a quarter, especially on Saturdays. That meant you got a quarter and went to the Liberty Store, which is right next door to the Plaza Theater, was right next door to where the Plaza Theater is. That building that they're redoing. So, there was the Plaza Theater. Next door to that was the Liberty Store, which was like a five-and-dime store. And on the corner of Elm and Windsor Avenue was Prouty Drug. So, you could get an ice cream cone for \$0.10. [laughs] And where Geissler's [00:07:00] is now, on the very end where Subway is, [that was] where Finest Supermarket was, so that was first national. So that's where we shopped. And the quarter allowance would get me a funny book, an ice cream cone, and a candy bar. Picture that – \$0.25.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Wow.

**Victoria Brown:** [laughs] I know, right?

**Sulema DePeyster:** That's a large difference. [laughs]

**Victoria Brown:** But think about it, people were making under a dollar an hour. I think minimum wage was under a dollar an hour, so it's all relative, isn't it? Yeah, so you know that was kind of some days. And then since my mom was working, my dad would come home and take care of the gardens and whatnot and pick the produce. Some of it he'd sell door to door. The berries, he'd sell door to door all up and down here and Hillcrest Road, which I remember fondly because I remember somebody giving me a doll. [00:08:00] So Dad would fix dinner for my mother. When my mom came home, her meals were always cooked. And then on Sundays, they did the meals together, which was really nice. I guess I want to talk about my sister as well and

how much she loved me and what an amazing sister she was to be that much older and to spend the amount of time that she did with me. I don't know where to begin and it's hard because I miss her a lot. But anyway, so she did wonderful things like she made a lot of my clothes. She sewed very well so she made me a lot of clothes. So even though we didn't have a lot of money, I always had beautiful clothes because [00:09:00] she'd make me skirts and sometimes, she'd make little doll dresses that would match my clothes.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, that's very sweet.

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, it was. Really, it was awesome. And she would teach [me]. She and my mom and dad both, all of them really, taught me how to bake things. So I knew how to make apple pies and the little twist ups and little like Apple tarts and those kinds of things. When it was rainy weather, we always did stuff like that. My sis[ter] would take me to downtown Hartford on the bus. And we'd go to G. Fox and we'd go to Woolworths, which was then directly across the street from G. Fox. And once in a while, we'd get to Sage Allen, and I think all those stores have probably gone before you. Oh my goodness, before you were born! Right, yeah?

**Victoria Brown:** So that would be another thing we would do. Oh, Sundays would be rides in the country. Like after dinner, that would be [00:10:00] you just get in the car and go for a ride. That was recreation. So my dad did that with us, but that was also my sister's way of taking us on adventures. She'd just throw me in the car and we'd drive up to I mean anywhere. We'd go up to Vermont. [laughs] You never knew where you were going to end up. It was just always an adventure.

**Sulema DePeyster:** So it was very spontaneous?

**Victoria Brown:** Yes spontaneous. "You want to go for a ride?" And I'd be like, "Yes!" And she'd just do these wonderful things like stop at a general store and grab a package of hot dogs and then go over to some little State Park or something and say, "Okay, let's dig a hole." And she'd take a hot dog and put it on a stick and light a fire and we'd sit there and cook our little hot dogs. Just really, just fun. Just the simplest things but they were so much fun. In the wintertime, I was always outside. I would stay outside until I turned blue. Your hands and your feet would be [00:11:00] completely soaked. They'd say, "Are you cold?" "No." And you'd literally be turning blue, so you'd come in and you put your wet gloves on the register and let them dry out. And as soon as they were dry, you went right back outside. So outside was – my sister was very artistic so she would make these amazing snowmen. Like amazing. Not like your average snowman. These things look like [laughs] – oh dear, I mean she'd make snow bears.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Snow bears! [laughs]

**Victoria Brown:** She'd make a big bear. Really! She sculpted a bear that really looked like a bear with the ears and everything. And then I'd always tease her and be knocking the ears off with a snowball. [laughs] And we'd play fox and geese where you make this circle in the snow and you run. Like one would be it, one would be in the middle. They'd be the fox and she'd

chase you around in a circle. Just so much, so much fun. Just great, great times. [00:12:00] What else?

**Sulema DePeyster:** And what is your sister's name by the way?

**Victoria Brown:** My sister's name was Joan.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Joan. Okay.

**Victoria Brown:** What else was fun? I haven't thought about this stuff in so long. What else was wonderful? In the spring and summer, we had a beautiful willow tree in the front yard with draping branches. And I would always get this army blanket that my brother had brought home from the Korean conflict, and I would just lay under that tree and watch the branches sway. And then we had a strand of beautiful pine trees on the side of the house, and I would curl up under there with my comic books and just read for hours or some little hand me down magazines or something. Or sometimes some toys that my Uncle Floyd had passed on. Uncle Floyd, I didn't know him well. I didn't get to see him often.

**Victoria Brown:** He was such a quiet man. [00:13:00] But every now and then, I would get some little – oh my gosh. I remember getting these wooden puzzles from him. Wooden puzzles. I hadn't thought about that in years. I must have been maybe five? You know, wooden puzzles because we didn't have stuff like that. I didn't have those kinds of toys. So those wooden puzzles and he gave me a steam shovel, which is like, I don't know what you call them now, but it's not a bulldozer. But I got a bulldozer and a steam shovel with a little scooper that scoops down in the dirt and lets the dirt go out. And that was so exciting to me who had been watching the construction workers build the homes on our street. I was fascinated with that heavy equipment. [laughs] It was like so fascinating to me. The coolest thing I'd ever seen was a car. So that was a nice [00:14:00] memory of Uncle Floyd. Oh my gosh, I don't know what else to tell you. There's so much.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah, that's okay. I think some of the questions also steer you in a specific direction and then that allows you to also choose which [stories to tell].

**Victoria Brown:** Okay, okay.

**Sulema DePeyster:** I would like to ask, what was your father's name?

**Victoria Brown:** My father's name was Emory. E-M-O-R-Y Brown.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay.

**Victoria Brown:** And my mother's name was Gladys Niles Brown.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And I heard you had an older brother as well. What was his name?

**Victoria Brown:** Niles.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, his name is Niles. Okay.

**Victoria Brown:** Niles Emory, as a matter of fact. So, he had my mother's maiden name and my dad's first name for a middle name.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay, that's actually very nice. [laughs]

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, it was pretty cool.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And I think we actually covered a good portion of the first question, so I was going to ask about your parents' [00:15:00] jobs. And you said your father worked in not manufacturing, but more –

**Victoria Brown:** I think he was a machinist because he was a machinist. Like in Hartford. I can't remember the name of the company. It was Hartford Machine Screw or something like that.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay. And your mother worked at G. Fox?

**Victoria Brown:** Mhmm.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Was that her job for the majority of her life or did she switch jobs at all?

**Victoria Brown:** No, she was actually, in the 40s before I was born, she was a machinist as well. She was one of the first women. I guess I don't know if it was a turret lathe or whatever she told me. And I don't remember the name of the company, but it was quote, "a man's job." And when she went in for the interview, they said: "Well, we don't have anything." You know, blah dah, dah, dah. "All we've got is this," and she said, "I can do it." [laughs] Like, "I can do that." And she did, you know? Yeah, she was – she was amazing. She was just amazing. [00:16:00] Let's see. So, what else do you need?

**Sulema DePeyster:** So, did she retire from G. Fox?

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, she did.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, okay.

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, she retired from G. Fox.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And for your father's occupation, that was mainly being a machinist. Did he ever switch careers as well?

**Victoria Brown:** You know what? My father was a very private person. I don't know what he did before that. He was a very, very, very, talented man. But he was so humble that he never told us how he knew how to do the things he knew how to do. Because he would build crystal radio sets in the basement. He built our garage. He built our home, and that was the second house. He had built my mother another house when they were first married, but evidently, it [00:17:00] burned down and the house we grew up in was supposed to be a temporary house. So, I don't know if he just never had the money to [build] another big house or what but that's the house I grew up in. And then I didn't find that out until my sister died. She told me. Picture that.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And I also heard you mention your brother as well. How much older was he?

**Victoria Brown:** 18 years older than me.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, 18 years older. Okay. And what was your relationship like with him?

**Victoria Brown:** Well, [laughs] he was 18 years older than me. He was good to me. I mean he wasn't around much. You know what I mean? When I was a little girl [in] the early 50s, he was in the Korean [War]. He was already gone to war, so to speak. He was in the Korean conflict. And I remember [00:18:00] him coming home. It's funny because I still have these little shoes. He brought me these little shoes back and they're about this big. And by then, my feet were about that big because I had grown so much.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah.

**Victoria Brown:** He was a big tease. [laughs] You know, he would hold me upside down and make [me] believe he was going to stick my head in the toilet bowl. Stuff like that. That's the thing I remember about him the most. He was a big tease. But sometimes, when he was still living at home, he would make me breakfast like the toad in the hole or pancakes and I don't want to say I was spoiled, but they were just so loving. Every one of them, really. When I was a kid, little things that were so wonderful that parents and families don't do today. Like if they made you pancakes, they were shaped like little animals. You know those black wrought iron skillets? I'm sure you've seen and heard of them. So, they would make they would get dropped into the pan and we [00:19:00] made the shape of little rabbits or something like that. Just everything was just so nice. Really was. Yeah, so he was a tease. That was the biggest thing I can say of him. And then he left home when I was probably six or so, so I don't remember much about him after that. My sister was the one I was closest to.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And how would you describe your relationship with your parents?

**Victoria Brown:** I would say – I don't know how you even put it into words. I just, I still think about it. I think I had, I guess most kids would say, an ideal childhood. Because it was interesting being a minority, so to speak, family in a predominantly white town, [00:20:00] which I never gave any thought. I never really thought about it growing up, because that's just life. You know, that was what life was. And we never had those kinds of [race] discussions either, so it really wasn't a big deal. I would say with them it was just really, really good. My mom was maybe not quite as tolerant as my father was in some ways. You know, she would get upset with me a little more quickly and I'd get a spanking a little more quickly. [laughs] But with my dad, I always knew why I was getting a spanking because he'd always explain things to you first. Don't ride your bike out in the street. Don't go across Bloomfield Ave.

**Victoria Brown:** The neighbor would tell him, "Oh, I saw Vicki riding her bike." Oh, I'm going to get it. Yeah, but I would say really, really wonderful. I had a conversation with a schoolmate maybe [00:21:00] a couple of years ago. She lived out at the end of the street, and she said one of the things that was such a wonderful childhood memory for her was coming to my house on a

Saturday morning when my father had made homemade cornbread in the frying pan and would cut us these huge slabs of it and layer it with butter. Either apple butter or homemade jelly and butter, and we'd sit there on the steps eating that cornbread with the juices rolling down the side of our face. You know, and she was telling me how unhappy her childhood was, but that was, like my place, was like sanctuary for her. So that really helped me appreciate everybody that you might have looked at thinking, "Oh, well everybody in that family's got a bicycle and I didn't get a bike until I was nine." But everybody that had material things was not happy. And I was very, very happy and always felt loved. [00:22:00] Yeah, I always felt loved and taken care of and safe. Very important.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah, definitely. And based off of that, would you say when you hung out with most of your friends, they would come over to yours? Or was it even?

**Victoria Brown:** You know, believe it or not, back then you would be friends with people, but you weren't in their house.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, okay.

**Victoria Brown:** So, there were limitations. I think even with kids that you were fairly close to, and where we lived was a different part of [town]. Like a lot of the kids lived here in the center of town or maybe a lot of people lived in Wilson. That was like miles from where we lived, and as a little kid, you weren't playing with those kids. You played with who was in your neighborhood. So I played with the neighborhood boys because there really weren't very many girls. [laughs] They were all boys. [00:23:00] So the bike riding and the sledding like sliding down the woods, then playing baseball. My dad gave them permission to put a baseball diamond behind our house when I was a little probably seven or so.

**Victoria Brown:** So that's where we played. That's where we played. [We] played mostly outside. I didn't like playing inside my own house. Yeah, and then to my grandmothers because my grandmother lived where Mr. Niles lived. My grandmother lived about a quarter of a mile west on that same road, so we would walk from my house on Mountain Road through the woods. Literally, over the river and through the woods to my grandmother's house. [laughs] So yeah, I would say it was good. I would say it was really good. Yeah, very good. I'm just thinking back and it makes you smile. [00:24:00] You realize later that everybody just didn't have it like that. You know, you don't know when you're a child, how good you have it. Because you assume that you're normal and everybody's life is the same.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And we were talking about your neighbors as well, so can you go deeper into your relationship with the boys in your neighborhood? What were they like?

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, let's see. Who was it, Ray Overstrung. Let's see, there was Ray, Guy, Donnie. I guess those were primarily the three I would play with. I don't know, they were, you know, they were okay. They weren't abusive really. I don't remember any bad experiences. I do remember one kid, I won't mention his name because he's still alive and he still actually lives on that street. I got feedback, one time he made a negative comment [00:25:00] and said something



to somebody about their home or something and then he mentioned ours and it wasn't in a nice context and I was always a call you out for it person. And I went right to him and I said, "I heard you said such and such and such." [He said]: "I didn't mean it, I didn't mean it. And he was a couple years older and, "I didn't mean it. I didn't mean it like that." You know, "I like you and what not. I said, "but then why would you say such a mean thing," you know? But I'll never forget that because it hurt my feelings and I had never, you know, I didn't get called names.

**Victoria Brown:** I don't remember ever getting called names as a kid, and I was literally the only black female that graduated from Windsor High in my class, but I don't remember, you know, other than maybe two situations where I had to straighten somebody out. So as a child, that was kind of hurtful, you know? That was hurtful. But yeah, we would do things. We would ride bikes together, we always, always, always played in the snow together [00:26:00] like, you know, on our sleds racing down the hill and our flexible fliers. We traded funny books. You know, I wouldn't get as many comic books as they did, but sometimes they'd give me like two for one or something. So when we got comics, we'd swap funnies. That's the kind of stuff we did. Oh, we built forts. We built forts in the woods. My dad actually let us cut down trees and moved it.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh okay, trees.

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, we cut down trees and we had a fort down in the woods on like on our property. You know, just trees maybe about that big around and three sides. Three sides. And then we'd get an old blanket or something to put in the front. We'd sit in there and read our comic books. It was pretty cool. And then we had one that we had dug a hole. In back of one of the guy's houses, we dug a hole [00:27:00] down in the ground about maybe five feet deep and put a little makeshift ladder in there. We put boards over top and then sod on top of that so you can go down. I remember not liking to be in there because I don't like that. I don't like being in the ground and with things over top of me. But that's the kind of stuff we'd do. You know, play in the brook. Yeah, get leeches all over us and go home screaming like little girls. My sister and I, too. We used to go down to the brook and we'd take clay from the side of the brook and make little dishes. And leave them out in the sun and then go back a couple of days later and get them. Yeah, it's fun stuff.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Wow, that's nice.

**Victoria Brown:** It's fun stuff, yeah. Lot of fun, yeah.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And what age would you say this was happening around?

**Victoria Brown:** Probably between seven to maybe 10. Because after my dad died, [00:28:00] I don't remember how much I played with other kids there for a while. I was kind of feeling like not being around people too much. So probably up until I was 10 or so. Yeah, and then after that, I started going to my cousins who lived here in the center like after school. My mother didn't want me to be by myself so I had to go to their house, [laughs] which I didn't like going to. I loved their house, I just didn't like having to go someplace other than my own house.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, I see.

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, because that's what I was used to. They lived across the railroad tracks. There's a brick house next to those condos. I don't know if you know where that is, right up the street from you.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yes, I do.

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, so if you're coming up before you get to the underpass, there's a dirt road. Up that dirt road, there's a big brick house. That's where they lived.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, okay.

**Victoria Brown:** So, I used to go spend the night there once in a while and play with them, but [00:29:00] I liked being at home with my parents. Yeah, well, that was kind of it. Yeah, playing at that age. And then when you get older, you know, as you get into your teens, things change a lot. You're not playing anymore. Yeah, so you're not playing and it's completely different.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah, so which cousins were they?

**Victoria Brown:** The Allen's. And I just had a childhood flashback. Okay, let me go back. I'm going backwards because you had mentioned my Uncle Floyd so I remember one other thing that he did that was pretty awesome. He gave me these huge, I think they were tobacco crates. They were probably yay high by yay wide and yay deep. And I think he gave us maybe, [00:30:00] I don't remember, four or five of them? And my dad stacked them so that it was like a fort. It was so cool because, you know, it was like having a house. There were different rooms, you could go from the 1st floor and climb up and then you were on the 2nd floor and my mom gave me little you know, rags or old pieces of sheet or whatever that you put over. Same thing, climb in there and read your funny books and just simple stuff. Grab some rhubarb out of the garden, put some sugar on it, sit there and eat that. Pick some tomatoes and put them in there and eat those. Yeah, it was fun. Oh my gosh, just the best.

**Victoria Brown:** That doesn't mention – what else did we do? Okay, not playing with the boys, but the other fun thing I forgot was also coming to Windsor Center. There was a store on Poquonock Avenue called Schweiger's. There was an elderly lady named Mrs. Schweiger [laughs] [00:31:00] and when you walked in the door, you know, you walked across the floor, the boards would squeak. And they had the old-fashioned soda cooler, because the sodas would just sit down in the icy cold water and the thrill of it was the way the bottle sounded when you take your soda out. The soda bottles would clang together, and it's just one of those memories from childhood you never forget that sound. And then you'd lift your soda up and the water would be dripping back down in and then you'd pop it out the side. [laughs] So you'd have that and she had penny candies and you know Hostess cupcakes and all these other cool things. And so that was where my sister always went and snuck me a bag of candy when I was a kid. And then after school, we would do the same thing. After high school. Junior, yeah, Senior High she was still there. We still would go there and get candy and stuff. Fun stuff, [00:32:00] yeah.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And how do you spell the owners name?

**Victoria Brown:** I think it's S-C-H-W-E-I-G-E-R. I think it's Schweiger. Yeah, Mrs. Schweiger.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And it was sort of a convenience store?

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, well I don't know what you'd call it then. It was like a little, almost like a little general store. It was very small. It's not there anymore. I don't even know what's there anymore. [On the] corner Prospect [Avenue], there's a brick house that used to be the Carmen Funeral Home. Then there was another building next to that and hers was like right there. Jim's Pizza came and then she was right next door to that, yeah. Across from where that Steak and Seafood place is now.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, okay.

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, that was a fun place. You want some other [00:33:00] town landmarks too? [laughs] There was also a great bakery where the Webster Bank is right now. Where that Webster Bank Plaza is, there [were] stores there. So facing Bloomfield Avenue was Julie's bakery. Yeah, Julie's bakery, which was just awesome. I can't remember what was – and then right next door to that but on the Windsor Avenue side was Linden Jewelers. There was a jewelry shop there and there was a bakery. It might have been something else. I think there were other things upstairs, but I don't remember what those were. So the jewelry shop became the place where you'd buy earrings when you got into high school. And the bakery was where you prayed your parents would take you when they [00:34:00] brought you to Windsor Center. It didn't happen that often simply because everybody baked homemade stuff, but my dad would take me in once in a while and get me some Valentino cake or something like that. Yeah, or a cupcake or something. That was always a big treat. Yeah, fun stuff.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah, so going back a little about your neighbors. Did your parents have a relationship with your neighbors or was it mainly you, you know, playing with the boys that were on the block?

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, it's a funny thing like you knew everybody on the street, but as far as like interacting, I don't even think they did. I think everybody worked. Everybody kind of stayed in there in the 50s and the early 60s. I think people – I could still name the name of everybody that lived on that street, really, starting from the Bart's. You know, the Bart's to the Quigley's to the Wise's to the Donovan's to the Walstein's to the Macauley's to the [inaudible], the Phillips, [00:35:00] the Barrows, the Smiths, and the Drakes. That was the whole [neighborhood]. So you knew everybody, but you weren't in and out of their homes. You know, you weren't visiting like that. Everybody worked. And on the weekends, people were taking care of their homes and you know, yeah. But everybody spoke, everybody waved. Everybody knew who everybody was. And I think if I did something wrong, I probably got told off. [laughs] Oh boy. Yeah, yeah.

**Sulema DePeyster:** So there was somehow a sense of community, even though people mainly kept to themselves?

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, I would say so. I would say so. Yeah, I think the fact that you really did know everybody and everybody. Yeah, because I could start on the other end and go all the way

up that street and remember the names of every single family from, yeah, from the Westfort's to the Ashley's to the Borgard's, the Milligan's, [00:36:00] the Cohen's, the Marks's, the Coolie's. There's one I can't remember in between and the Stankewitz's. That's everybody up the street, you know. And I, so you know, it's pretty vivid. You know, it was a nice, it was a nice childhood.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And you were mainly in the same house, it sounds like.

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, always yeah. Yep, always in that same house, yeah.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Can you talk about the house a little more? You talk about the exterior and, you know, your father's garden and things like that. What else about the house can you remember?

**Victoria Brown:** I wish I had a picture. I do have a picture but I'd have to get it off the wall. It was a little house. When you came in the back door, it was a little hallway. And it was – I don't remember what mom kept in there back then. It's like your little mud room. You know, you kept your boots [00:37:00] and your shoes and things like that. And maybe a little chest with some things in it, I don't remember. Little kitchen. We had a kitchen, like a little wooden kitchen table with the drawer that you pull out and the silverware and things went in that. We had a gas stove. Oh, the washer was in the hallway. The washing machine, I think, stayed in the hallway and then when we needed to do clothes, it came into the kitchen. I think that's what it was. So that was, yeah, that kitchen was just small with a few cabinets, and we didn't have a pantry. We had a dining room with a custom hutch in the corner that a man from town had made and I still have it. That's where Mom put her nice dishes, some of which, you know, were – a lot of them were hand me downs from my grandmother and some were probably my great grandmothers and I, fortunately, I still have a lot of that stuff. [00:38:00]

**Sulema DePeyster:** That's great.

**Victoria Brown:** Yes, a little dining room. We ate in there, mostly on Sundays. The other nights we sat at the kitchen table and ate. And it was the old-fashioned dining room table with the metal and agate kind of top and those nice solid maple chairs. Still have that too. Then the living room. And we had a piano, a couch, I think and two chairs, a table and lots of beautiful house plants. My mother loved house plants. Loved house plants. And it was homey. It was simple but it was really homey and comfortable, and it always felt and smelled like love. [laughs] Upstairs there were three bedrooms, one very small, one in the front, and then my parent's big room and then one other bedroom on the side. So my sister and I shared a room when I was little, when my brother was still at home, but when [00:39:00] he moved, I got my own room. And she was gone, so yeah. Yeah, it was pretty cool.

**Sulema DePeyster:** So based on what you were saying, when did your sister pass away? Was it early on?

**Victoria Brown:** 2000.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And how long was she in the house for?

**Victoria Brown:** Oh, she moved. When did she? She got married in '55 or [56] I think? Okay yeah, '56. Yeah, uh-huh. That was sad. [laughs] I hated to see her go.

**Sulema DePeyster:** It seems like you were very close.

**Victoria Brown:** Oh yeah, yeah. Always. Always very close. She was amazing.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Would you say she was the person you were the closest to in your entire house?

**Victoria Brown:** No because there was nobody [00:40:00] like my father. Nobody. Nobody. That was – I can't. I still have a hard time talking about him without crying. Which I'm about to, I'm sorry.

**Sulema DePeyster:** That's okay. It's okay, take your time.

**Victoria Brown:** Well, that should tell you something about what he was like.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah, definitely.

**Victoria Brown:** It's hard to even explain, it really is. It's just [00:41:00] really hard to explain the kind of human being that he was. Yeah, it's just he was – the only word I can think of is extraordinary. You know? He was just exceptional. I don't think I've ever met as spiritual and humble and beautiful a human being ever in my life is as he was. It was incredible. Like I said, he was so intelligent, he was so smart, but he would never tell you a thing about how he obtained the knowledge. If you asked him, he'd just go like that with his hand and I mean he wouldn't tell you. I said, "Dad, how do you know how to cook so well?" You know, and he didn't cook like fried chicken and just fried pork chops or [00:42:00] you know. He made stuff that was not your everyday food like Braciolo. You know like the flank steak, pounded thin, stuffed with carrots and celery and stuffing and fresh sage from the garden. And you know roasted potatoes and carrots and stuff like that. Yeah and most people weren't eating that. You know, a lot of kids were talking about their TV dinners. I didn't know what a TV dinner was. I don't think I ever had one. So he was extraordinary. He was extraordinary. But you know, in that order, probably him, and then I think my sister and then my mom and my brother last. Yeah, I mean I loved my mother to death and she was wonderful, but my sister was just that person that always got me. You know, she always got me. [00:43:00]

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah. And so the next topic is actually school. We can also bounce between topics.

**Victoria Brown:** Oh, I can't. I got focus issues and you're going to have me bouncing all over the place. [laughs]

**Sulema DePeyster:** That's okay. It's great to flow naturally and choose whatever direction you want to go in. But with schools, I know you mentioned Windsor High School and being the only black female to graduate. But can you also talk about elementary school and that experience?

**Victoria Brown:** Elementary school, I hated. I hated it. I hated first grade more than I can even mention because I had a witch for a teacher. Sorry. But she really was – I mean, I had never been away from my parents, so it was really weird just going to school. And my dad took me my first day. I can remember what I [wore]. I can actually remember the dress I wore to first grade. And I had this teacher named Mrs. Baram [00:44:00] and she was not exactly what you would call warm and fuzzy. [laughs] She wasn't. So, I knew how to spell my name when I went to school, but I spelled it V-I-C-K-I and she was an absolute martinet. There was no way. "That's not your name!" and I said, "Yes, it is." She said, "That's not your name. Your name is Victoria. You're going to write Victoria." So she made me write Victoria. You know, you had to put your little name tag, so I had to be Victoria. I couldn't be Vicki. So that kind of thing. Yeah. Traumatizing. [laughs]

**Sulema DePeyster:** And how do you spell her name again?

**Victoria Brown:** But I don't remember much. Huh?

**Sulema DePeyster:** How do you spell her name again?

**Victoria Brown:** B-A-R-A-M. I don't know how I remember that. I have no clue. [laughs] Never forget your first trauma.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah, it sticks with you. [laughs] [00:45:00]

**Victoria Brown:** But I don't remember much else about first grade other than, you know, Dick and Jane, reading "Look, look, oh look. See, spot, run. Look, look see puff and spot." [laughs] You know those are little books that we had to read. You know, I remember just learning your letters and learning different things. But yeah, I don't remember much else about it and that was at what is now the Catholic school on Bloomfield Avenue. That was then called Roger Ludlow.

**Sulema DePeyster:** I'm sorry, can you repeat that?

**Victoria Brown:** Roger Ludlow.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh Roger Ludlow, okay. And when did it change into the Catholic school, do you know?

**Victoria Brown:** I'm not sure. You can probably look it up, but that, I don't remember exactly. Because I did first and second there [00:46:00] and then I went to John Fitch.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, okay. And what made you transfer?

**Victoria Brown:** You just did first and second grade at Roger Ludlow.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, okay.

**Victoria Brown:** Roger Ludlow was first and second, John Fitch was three through six. And then from sixth grade we went to Leland. Leland P. had just been built, so we went to Leland P. Wilson for seventh, eighth and ninth. And then the high school for tenth, eleventh and twelfth.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh okay. And if you were to compare the diversity of the three schools, how were they?

**Victoria Brown:** Diversity? Of what?

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah. Were they all the same in terms of diversity?

**Victoria Brown:** What's diversity? [laughs]

**Sulema DePeyster:** Like the population of the students. Was it similar in all three of the schools or? [00:47:00]

**Victoria Brown:** Are you talking color wise or?

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yes, for diversity, you can talk about race or class or any form of diversity.

**Victoria Brown:** Well, so, I wasn't very aware of class differences very much in probably first, second, third, probably right up through sixth grade. I wasn't very much aware of, you know, that some people may have had more or better clothes. I really wasn't aware of much of that. I know, you know, that like my mom would sometimes refer to certain people as being trashy, but I didn't really kind of get that either. But diversity as far as minorities, so to speak, there were the Clarks. I went to school with Art and Charles Clark. They were the only two. Oh no, Jimmy [00:48:00] Davis. Jim Davis lived way down Bloomfield Avenue on the corner of Pigeon Hill. There were little houses that looked maybe like what migrant workers might have lived in at one time. Just little cinder block houses I guess they were. He lived there and the Clark brothers lived up in Hayden station, so that was it. And then one girl named Carol. I mean, I can remember all the people that looked like me because there were so few. And I wasn't friends with any of them because I didn't live near, you know, we didn't live in the same neighborhood, so. Yeah, I didn't have any little brown friends at all.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, so all of the boys that were in your neighborhood were white children?

**Victoria Brown:** Oh, yeah.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, okay. And I think I got their names. Were they Donnie –

**Victoria Brown:** Donnie, Guy and Ray. Ray Overstrom whose brother [00:49:00] was a firefighter later. Guy Smith and Donnie Drake. Donnie still lives on Mountain Road. Yeah, he lives in the house he grew up in. Yeah. And the Carols too, but they were on Bloomfield Ave.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And this is also kind of shifting topics again. But there was never a moment where you felt like your race mattered when you were hanging out with them? Because you said you never really discussed it as a child?

**Victoria Brown:** No, that would never, never even thought about it. Yeah, I never thought about it. Never really had any reason to think about it. I guess if I'd felt treated, you know, like I was being treated differently. I'll tell you my really first even – it's funny you brought that up because the first [00:50:00] recollection of race was actually in third grade where a little girl had come to

our school at John Fitch and we were out on the playground playing and she said to me, “Where I come from, I wouldn't have been able to play with you.” And I was like, “Where's that?” I had no clue. I didn't. That's how naive I was. I didn't know that right here in the United States that Black kids didn't play with white kids. I didn't know that. I didn't know that even in anywhere else in Connecticut, probably even in Hartford, it was – people just didn't. So I really didn't know. So when she said that, I didn't know what she meant, and I said, “Well, where are you from?” And she said, “South Africa.” Well, she may as well told me Timbuktu because I had no clue. I didn't know what apartheid was. She didn't either, but I went home, and I told my mother and my mother [00:51:00] said, “Yeah well there are parts of, you know, there's places where people don't like people that look different from them.”

**Victoria Brown:** But that was the end of the discussion. There was still never any discussion about, you know, what I want to call racial injustice, or segregation or any of that kind of stuff. Never, you know, never really brought it up. And I'm sure my mother went through stuff growing up here herself. I'm sure they did. But they never really talked about it. There was one family, and I would rather not mention their names on record, but there was one family that lived not far from where my grandmother did, and I think that there was some name calling and whatnot when my mother was younger. Because I was friends with an ancestor of theirs and my mother was always very cool to her because her [00:52:00] mother's family were the ones that were doing the name calling. And so I told my mom. I said, “Ma, I have to make my own decision when it comes to my friends. You know, she's never said anything or done anything to me, her parents welcome me in their home. That how you want me to judge people?” You know, she left it alone. She left it alone because you can't hold the next generation of the generation after accountable for the sins of the fathers. You know, we just can't. So that was that.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And can you recall any of your closest friends from school? That could be anywhere from elementary school.

**Victoria Brown:** Oh yeah, yeah. My friend Donna. We're still friends. We were friends from like fifth grade. I think I met her when I was maybe six. I think my dad was selling blueberries, raspberries or something door to door and I saw her, and I was [00:53:00] hiding. I was peeping around behind my father and she was kind of peeping around behind her dad, and then we ended up in the same class that year, which I think was fourth or fifth grade, yeah. And we just stayed friends all the way through junior high, high school. She lives up in New Hampshire now. We're still, we're still friends. Yeah, she was definitely my best friend. And there were others that I really liked a lot and was pretty close to through high school.

**Sulema DePeyster:** When was the last time you spoke to Donna?

**Victoria Brown:** On Facebook the other day. [laughs]

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, nice. [laughs]

**Victoria Brown:** And we're due to catch up. We don't talk a lot, but, you know, we do keep in touch. We've got great childhood memories of school dances and all that kind of stuff. You



know, because when we were teenagers, we had a lot of [00:54:00] record hops at the schools. Like at Leland P, which was our junior high school, in the cafeteria, they would have a DJ come and they'd bring – you know what a record is?

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yes. [laughs]

**Victoria Brown:** I'm sorry for being sarcastic. [laughs] So, they would, you know, they would come and they would spin records and we'd dance in our socks in the cafeteria. And then at the high school we had live bands so we went to dances all the time on the weekends. And there were a lot of local guys and groups. There were a couple of guys that grew up here in town who actually went on to become recording artists. They graduated with me. Yeah, they had a song that was actually a number one hit for I think six weeks on the charts. Their names were The Wildweeds.

**Sulema DePeyster:** The wild? Can you repeat that?

**Victoria Brown:** The Wildweeds. All one word.

**Sulema DePeyster:** The Wildweeds. Wow, that's really cool, actually. [laughs] [00:55:00]

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, that was awesome. Yep, so she's the only one that I really keep in touch with. There's others on Facebook, but, you know, not that I'd do anything with or anything, but still talk and whatnot. And strangely enough, some that I was never friends with in school but knew, that are now my quote 'Facebook friends'. [laughs] Yeah, and you know there's this subtle thing of understanding that, I think one schoolmate told me a couple years ago. She was a year behind me in school. Her parents wouldn't have allowed her to have black friends. She couldn't listen to black music. You know, because sometimes she'll see me post something on Facebook and she'll say, "Oh, I wish I had your mother. You know, "I wish your mother had been my mother." And I said, "That's unfortunate that you grew up you know, experiencing that, because, yeah, you would have [00:56:00] loved my mother," you know? But yet we never would have had a chance to play together because of our [skin] color, you know, so they missed out. If you know what I mean, they missed out. They really missed out. I don't think I missed anything, but they did.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And what would you say your fondest memory of school was?

**Victoria Brown:** Recess? [laughs] I don't know, you mean like grade school or high school or?

**Sulema DePeyster:** If you would like, you could choose one from each, or you can just choose a standout memory of a time when you were in school.

**Victoria Brown:** I don't have a lot of standout memories [from] 1st [00:57:00] through 6th [grade]. 6th grade, I'll take that back. 6th grade was interesting. I was a talker, still am. And that was what I always used to get in trouble for in schools - talking out of turn. So, my 6th grade teacher, whose name was Ms. Cyril whose home still stands – what's the street that runs by Bart's? It's a big, beautiful house. She was a spinster. I guess you'd call her a spinster back then single woman, but she also taught my mother and I think my brother and sister too. So by the

time I came along and was very different from them, whew she was ready for me. So, her characteristic was that she was strict. Very, very strict. So I would just forget. I'd just be talking in class. Next thing you know, she'd have my desk moved up next to hers. [laughs] She didn't play. And this [00:58:00] as a standout memory is kind of ironic because it was kind of unfortunate, but then it turned into something good. We had a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful choir in that year. That 6th grade year. That was also the year my dad died. So I was going through a lot. And we had this amazing, amazing, amazing music teacher named Mrs. Clark. And the choir was so good that we actually got to travel all over Connecticut and sing at other schools. We were really good. I mean she had us singing in four-part harmony that sounded like some adult glee club. Fantastic. Well, I don't know what I did in Ms. Cyril's class, but all I remember was her telling me that if I didn't get my grades – I can't remember if she said, "If I didn't get one of my grades up," or "If I didn't stop talking." Whatever it was. But she put the kibosh on choir.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh no.

**Victoria Brown:** I was devastated. I was devastated. [00:59:00] I loved to sing, so that hurt. But then once I got back in it, I was fine because I realized that she was really giving a lesson. Really giving a lesson. There's rewards for good things, and when you don't, it's just like being, you know, raised by your parents.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah, yeah.

**Victoria Brown:** And so she was still teaching. So when I think back on that and I think back on the kind of woman she was, and back then, we had to take penmanship. I have nice, relatively nice, handwriting to this day because of her. I think that my love for words and always wanting to know what words meant came from her because she would give us 10 words and she'd make us define them, and then she'd make us write them in a sentence. It didn't seem like that much fun then, but the further on you go in school and you realize how much [01:00:00] importance there is to words and writing and reading. Yeah, so I would say that's one of my best. It sounds strange, but her and one of my senior Windsor High School teachers. She was fantastic because she made everything come off the page. Pat Boyle.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Pat Boyle?

**Victoria Brown:** Pat Boyle, yeah. She was my senior English teacher. She was fantastic.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And you'd say –

**Victoria Brown:** Other than that, my best school, especially high school memories, my best ones are like working after school. [laughs] Oh, that was fantastic. Those are my favorite memories of high school.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And where did you work after school?

**Victoria Brown:** G. Fox.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, G. Fox? [laughs]

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, yeah. So you know other kids would be in the Glee club or whatever, and I'd be heading down Capen Street to get the bus to go to G. Fox. You'd go downtown and you could get some peanuts or something at the peanut store, or you'd run and get a record [01:01:00] and then you'd go to your little job. It was fun. It was good. It was a good time to grow up.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And what kind of tasks did you have at G. Fox?

**Victoria Brown:** I was a cashier. One year, I was [a] cashier in the toy department at Christmas time, but I worked nights. I worked after school and weekends, so a couple of different departments. That was fun, and it was nice having your own money to be able to... That helped you. Kids today get everything handed to them. That truly helped me appreciate what a dollar was. It helped me learn how to save. I was always a saver, anyway. Yeah, it helped me learn okay, you're making a dollar an hour. That handbag on the first floor cost \$13.00. So that means I'm going to get this amount of money. So that means I'm going to take \$2.00 from this paycheck and by the end of the month, I'll be able to get that purse. That's the way you really have -- you really have to think that way. You know? [01:02:00] And it was, and it was good. It was really good. It helped you appreciate what you had. Yeah, so those were good memories. Good ones, yeah.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And going off of that, because that was your job after school in high school, what did you want to be when you grew up, and how did that change over time?

**Victoria Brown:** I wanted to be a psychiatric social worker before I even knew what [that meant]. I didn't even know what a psychiatric social worker was. [laughs] But that's what I wanted to be. Because for some reason, for some reason, all the way through school, my mother used to get so irritated with me. Everybody would come to me for advice.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, okay.

**Victoria Brown:** Kids that I didn't even really know that well. If they had girlfriend/boyfriend problems or they were having problems at home or something, my phone would ring. And my mother used to call me Dear Abby. [laughs] [01:03:00] It's not that funny, it was actually kind of mean, but anyway. But that was -- I loved to write. I loved to write poetry. I loved to read and I loved to help people. And I was always sticking up for the underdog. So, you know, that was it. I said I like, I *love* the study of the mind. But you know, I knew we didn't have the money for me to go to college full-time. And back then they didn't encourage -- I'll tell you, they encouraged you to a certain degree, but they had sort of set ideas as to what people would be. You're either going to go to college and be a teacher, or you're going to be a nurse, or you were going to work in a factory or whatever. I know I didn't want to work in a factory. I wanted to work in an office. So when I found out I couldn't, you know, really couldn't afford to go to school for four years, I just set my goals on being a secretary, you know, and -- [01:04:00]

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay.

**Victoria Brown:** Because I had done, you know, I'd done well with business practices and whatnot so. And it really, it really had ended up paying off quite well. Yeah, yeah, no regrets there. Nope, not one.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And [being] a secretary, that was your first full time job?

**Victoria Brown:** My first full time job was actually a clerk, like a typist, I think at Travelers [Insurance]. And I said, "I can't do this." I can't work in an insurance company, and I can't be a typist. I need to, you know, I need to write. I need to be able to do things, so I took a state exam and started working for the state, the same year I graduated. But I was going to college nights for advanced secretarial courses because I wanted to at least get a, you know, I wanted to get an associate's [degree]. So that's what I did. Went to school part time nights and started [working] as a clerk typist, then went from a [01:05:00] secretary to secretary two to whatever. Stenographer three or whatever. And then I just kept going. Yeah, so I stayed in state service almost all my life.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And which school did you go to to get your associate's?

**Victoria Brown:** I went to [Tunxis] for a while. I went to Manchester Community for a while, and then when I started working at the Commission on Human Rights, I went to Hartford College for Women for legal studies. Paralegal studies.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Paralegal studies, you said? And so, did you ever transition into paralegal work? Or was it mainly?

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, I did. I became a paralegal at the Commission on Human Rights, but I didn't like it. I did not like it. Yeah, I didn't like it. I'm a people person, that didn't work well.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And how long was that [01:06:00] for?

**Victoria Brown:** I don't think I would've stayed [that long]. That was probably 1984, so I think from '84 to '85, and then I just decided I just was unhappy there. I left state service for 11 months and went to work at the Village for Families and Children over at Albany Avenue. And I was working for the director of the agency, and I was working my head off. And every other [laughs] part of my body. I mean, I'm serious. For the amount I took a cut in pay to leave state service, and I sat there and after nine months, I said, "I have 11 months to get back and I get another month to get back into state service." I don't care if I have to take a cut in pay. Just taking minutes at, you know, two or three meetings and I'm interviewing people and they're taking your office supplies and I was not. My boss was great and the agency was great, [01:07:00] but I came back to state service. And, you know, came back just entry level. Not entry level but came back as a secretary and went from a secretary to administrative assistant to an executive secretary and then from there to office supervisor.

**Sulema DePeyster**

And did you retire as an office supervisor or was there –

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, yeah. Well, that was on the desk when I walked out the door. Yes, I just took an early retirement. But I worked in Environmental Protection for seven years and that was probably my favorite. That was probably my favorite job ever.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And how long were you an office supervisor for?

**Victoria Brown:** I was at DCF, so actually, I hadn't even stepped into the class. So maybe less than a year.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, okay.

**Victoria Brown:** Maybe less than a year. Yeah, I was an administrator. What happened was [01:08:00] I was an executive secretary for seven years and that was at the Department of Environmental Protection. That's like an unclassified position. It's like, you know, you're appointed. The governor appoints the Commissioner, the commissioner appoints you. I was in that position for seven years with two different Commissioners. But I didn't have union protection, so when my second boss did not get reappointed by the incoming governor, I said, "Yes!" [laughs] I went back to classified service because I want security. Yeah, so I left there and went to DCF and went back as an administrative assistant. And then they pulled me from the person I'd been working for, and he wanted me to oversee the closed records division. And I said, "Yeah, when you make me an office supervisor. [laughs] I'm not supervising people and handling the budget and all this stuff. I can't." But it was on the desk and, you know, I just started getting the, [01:09:00] I don't know what you call it, temporary pay. And they offered the golden handshake and my sister had died and my mom was not doing well. I quit. Yeah, I did what I had to do. Take care of my mom.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And what year was that, actually?

**Victoria Brown:** I retired in 2003.

**Sulema DePeyster:** 2003. I'm trying to decide which direction to go in.

**Victoria Brown:** Whatever you want, Hun. Whatever you want. [laughs]

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah, I think we can also talk about, you know, life after retirement. So what was that like? What did you pursue? [Were] there any organizations in Windsor that you were part of?

**Victoria Brown:** No, but I was a member of the take care of Gladys Henrietta Brown [01:10:00] Foundation. My mother was 100. 100 years old at the time. I think when I retired, she was – let's see, 2003, how old was she then? Oh whatever, but she was pretty close to 100 when I retired and she was showing some signs of dementia. So, she literally became my full-time job so to speak. So yeah, so that was, you know, moving her. She moved in with me for a while. I was living in a condo, moved her in with me for a little while, but it wasn't good because I was living in a third-floor walkup. Her place on Mountain Road just was not conducive, you know, to her living there and getting care. So we ended up selling that and, you know, buying another house

and just we moved into that, and I took care of her for 10 [01:11:00] years. She died in 2010 as Windsor's oldest native resident.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Mhmm. And how much do you know about your mother's early life?

**Victoria Brown:** Quite a bit. I mean, as far as details, not a lot. I know, you know, the names of all her sisters and brothers and I know about my grandfather and my grandmother. I know their history, where they grew up, when they were born, all of that. But as far as her actual life, not a lot. I mean, she was one of 15 kids.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, wow.

**Victoria Brown:** She was the youngest. She's Floyd Niles's sister. [And] she's the youngest. And Uncle Floyd [01:12:00] was, I don't know if I have how old he was. I don't know what the difference was [in age]. I'm not sure. So, I don't know much. You know, I'm sure that it wasn't easy because, like I said, there were 15 kids. And I know some died. Some died very young, even though she was the youngest, I think there was at least one that was born after her who died. But my grandfather was injured in a horse and wagon incident. I don't know how old she was, but I know he was partly crippled for some time because the wagon. I guess the wagon, I don't think the wagon fell on him, but it broke and fell on him and crippled him. He died when [01:13:00] she was 10. So I'm sure they had, you know, didn't have it easy.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah.

**Victoria Brown:** Because, you know, my grandmother had the house and a good bit of land. But she had older sons, you know, who helped take care of the house and whatnot. But they all had to, you know, they all had to work. They all had to work. I think – I don't know how far into school my mom went. I'm not sure. I'm not sure, maybe ninth grade.

**Sulema DePeyster:** How much would you say you know about your family history beyond Windsor? Because I know you can trace it back very far in Windsor, but do you know anything about --

**Victoria Brown:** Quite a bit. Yeah, yeah.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, [01:14:00] okay. Do you mind going into depth about that?

**Victoria Brown:** I do in some ways, and in other ways I don't because I don't want my cousins to have the information. [laughs] They have it anyway, so it's not like a big secret. I am actually looking at [records] going back to 1754. I'm sure I'm not going to get this right. [I] guess my mother's great great grandfather was named Primus. Born in 1754. She was a Quickam and he was a Richards. [01:15:00] And then...I don't have my good stuff out. Hold on a minute. I've got so much stuff. I've got Van Allen's, I've got all kinds of stuff in here. Oh, I just found something I didn't even know I had. I'm trying to find that page that goes back that far. There's one, but that's not back to where I'm trying to get. One of my family members tried to replicate what was stolen, but I lost so much. Birth certificates and – disgusting. [01:16:00] Okay, this is my cousin's. I never even looked at this. She said, "Surprise!" Okay, this helps a little bit. I lost the

connection there between him and the next person who's Henry Richards, who was I guess my, I don't know, this is not done well. Okay, who married an Olive Crosby. And they had a Eunice Richards who married Clark Niles. That's my great great grandfather. No, that's my great – yeah my great [grandfather]. [01:17:00] So Quickam was Quickam, no Primus. Then there was somebody in between I'm missing. Then his son was Clark Niles and then my grandfather was Elwood Niles, who was my mother's father. And he was born in 1861 in East Haddam. And my grandmother was born in 1870 in Stock Ridge, Mass.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Mass, okay. So, most of your family history can be traced to the New England area, you'd say?

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah. Mhmm.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh okay, that's very interesting. And how long has the family history been collected? It seemed like a very extensive –

**Victoria Brown:** I don't know. [redacted] I don't know when it first started. The one that first got me kind of interested in it was a cousin who I had never met back in 2000, or maybe, yeah, maybe 2000. He reached out to me and asked me 'was I interested in family history?' and he sent me a little booklet like maybe this thick that had things like this in it, what I'm showing you now. You know, a list of my great, great, great grandfather and whatnot and the history. And that kind of got me interested because I didn't know whether it was right or not. And then my cousin's ex-wife, even though she's his ex-wife, she's closer to me than he is. She started [01:23:00] doing it for their daughter and had a genealogist and whatnot come in. So, some of what I have and some of what I've been able to put back together is from her, but I've never gone through it to, you know, really put it together. But there's a lot of – there's some stuff off of ancestry.com, but then there's this. These are from the town records. Let me see if I can read this Sulema. Yeah, this goes back to July of like 1870. So this shows my [01:24:00] great grandfather and his wife and my grandfather. It's dated Hartford, 1870. Yeah, so there's a lot of stuff like this, but I also lost a lot of things like this. You know, copies of original documents. Yeah. So that's kind of what that is. What else did you ask me about the family?

**Sulema DePeyster:** It was mainly how much you know about your family prior to Windsor, but I also wanted to ask about whether your family tracing is on your mother side or your father side? Is it mainly your father's?

**Victoria Brown:** It's mostly my mother's. Mostly my mother. My father was 20 years older than my mother, so I [01:25:00] haven't been able to get back too far with him. I've only gotten him as far as – because he was born in 1883. I think. 1880?

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay.

**Victoria Brown:** I think 1883, and what I got on him, I only got back as far as his mother. I have not been able to find a whole lot more. You know, I've got his mother, his sister, his brother. But then it's like I just haven't been able to research it myself and I would have to do it because they were primarily researching my mother's side of the family.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah.

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, but I have a lot. I mean I – I really do have a lot with hers because it intersects with other families like the Van Allen's. Because my grandmother, her family were Van Allen's. [01:26:00] And what else? Yep, so there's Van Allen's and Finch's and Richard's and that's pretty much it. Generation one, okay, here we go. Generation one, this is my grandmother's mother. My grandmother was born in 1870 in Stockbridge, died in Windsor, October 28th, 1963. Her first husband was Leonard William Kuhn. He was born in New Hartford, CT in 1887. He died around – then he died. He died and then she married my grandfather, Elwood Burton Niles in 1888 in West Hartford, CT. He was the son of Clark Niles and Eunice [01:27:00] Richards. He was born in 1861 in East Haddam. And then there is a couple, you know, there are a couple of layers before that, so that's kind of my grandfather's side. And then my grandmother's side, you know, they're from Great Barrington, Mass, Stockbridge, Mass, kind of up in that area. The Van Allen's and my great grandmother [inaudible]. So James Van Allen Pierce in 1860. Yeah, Great Barrington, Stockbridge Mass, Bloomfield, CT. That's kind of where my grandmother's family was.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay. [01:28:00] And I also wanted to ask – this is more of a general question instead of just family history. But which side of the family would you say you spent more time with, even though you have records of more one side? Is there --?

**Victoria Brown:** There was nobody left on my dad's side of the family when I was kid.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, okay.

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, they were all gone. Yeah, nobody, nobody was here but my Aunt Teal. And I didn't know her very well. She lived in Hartford. She was married and lived in Hartford, and I didn't know -- I never really had a chance to get to know her very well because she lived in the city we didn't visit. She'd come up and visit once in a while, but she was pretty. She was very smart too. She was very smart, very handy. She was a beauty. I remember that she was so beautiful. She was very cultured. His family was very cultured. I really [01:29:00] do wish that I'd known more about how they knew how to do the things they did, but not because I think my aunt used to work. I think my mom said at a hotel up in Boston, like in the 40s. Like setting up banquets and like setting tables and stuff for cotillions. And that's not something that a black woman, you know, at that time would've particularly been doing so I thought that was kind of fascinating. Yeah, but I don't know much other than that. Yeah, so it was definitely my mom's side more so.

**Sulema DePeyster:** We did briefly talk about your Uncle Floyd. And can you also describe your relationship with him? It seemed like you didn't know him too well, but he did [01:30:00] pop in every once in a while or give the toys.

**Victoria Brown:** I didn't know [him]. I probably knew him the least well out of my uncles who were alive. Because he didn't live in the same – see my two other uncles, Uncle Robert, who was the bus driver, and Uncle Clinton, still lived in the house with my grandmother. But Uncle Floyd



lived up the street and was married and had a family, had two daughters. Lois is one of his daughters and then he had a disabled daughter named Janice. She died, I don't remember when, but quite some time ago. So yeah. And he was working, you know, he worked a lot. I know he did moving and I don't know what other kinds of things he did, but he knew a lot of people in town. I gather he was very, my uncles were very, very much respected and loved. [01:31:00] I've, you know, read some of the things that people had said about them when I posted something. I've created a group called Windsor CT Folks 50s and 60s, and I put that picture in from the Historical Society of my Uncle Floyd. And it was just really nice seeing a lot of the kids that I grew up with say, "Oh, we really loved him. He was our bus driver. He was so nice. He was so much fun." So Uncle Rob was the one I knew the best and Uncle Floyd [was] the one I knew the least but always wanted to know better. Yeah. I always wanted to know him better. And all the others were gone by the time I was born, so I didn't get to know any of them.

**Sulema DePeyster:** What was the exact year that you were born, by the way?

**Victoria Brown:** [19]48.

**Sulema DePeyster:** '48. [01:32:00]

**Victoria Brown:** Things have changed.

**Sulema DePeyster:** I actually have another question.

**Victoria Brown:** Things have changed a lot, haven't they? Things have changed a lot, haven't they, Sulema?

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah.

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, yeah. What were you going to say, hun? I didn't mean to cut you off.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah, that's okay. I was also thinking about the age gap between you and your siblings. So, what contributed to that age gap?

**Victoria Brown:** I don't know. My mother told me she took him the way God gave him to her. [laughs] I remember asking her that very specifically. No, it's funny that you said that because I remember asking my mom that question and that was her answer. And that was always good enough for me, you know? Yeah.

**Sulema DePeyster:** That's very funny. [laughs]

**Victoria Brown:** I know, exactly! But I was very, I can tell you that I'm happy in a way, very happy that that was the case because, like I said, that sister of mine [01:33:00] was, she was something else. She was some kind of special, I guess the word is. [laughs] Yeah, some kind of special. I think I have a chart. I might have a – let me see, Sulema, if I have this. Oh, it's all over the place. Yeah, but this is a pretty good, detailed chart of my grandmother's side of the family. But like I said, I don't have a whole lot when it comes to my father's at all.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And so my next few [01:34:00] questions are more about your experience in Windsor in general. So are there any aspects of Windsor that you particularly enjoy?

**Victoria Brown:** Today or growing up?

**Sulema DePeyster:** I guess you can go from the beginning to now and also how it's changed.

**Victoria Brown:** I would say that growing up, what I loved about it, I loved that it was a small town. I loved the small town feel. I loved that we had lots of land. You know, I mean, when I sold that property back in 2003, there was no piece of land left like it in Windsor. There was no place like it, none. It broke my heart to have to sell it so our little house that took up that land, there are now like five \$500,000 homes sitting on that property.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, wow.

**Victoria Brown:** You know what I'm saying? [01:35:00] Yeah, and sometimes I drive by there and I just feel sad because it's like I just still wish our little house was sitting on that hill and I could just run down and play in the woods one more time. Yeah it was really, that part of it was really special. And then watching, even as a kid, watching the neighborhood change to go from having just us and only two houses below us. So, I only knew the Overstrom's and Mrs. Adamic. That was it, you know, and then I-91 wasn't even built then. We could walk through the woods and across the field to my grandmother house on Williams Street. So you know where the Firehouse is?

**Sulema DePeyster:** Mhmm.

**Victoria Brown:** And you know where McDonald's is?

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yes.

**Victoria Brown:** That's William Street. Not Williams, William Street. So William Street had one, two, [01:36:00] there were two houses. The first house was the Sail's, the second house was the Caeser's, then my grandmother's house was directly behind where the fire station is. So we could walk from [what] was Woodland Road right down through the woods to my grandmother's house. That was fantastic, you know, the trudge through the woods? Yeah, it was fantastic. That part, I loved. I loved that part of growing up. [And] everybody's property that abutted yours, you know, Mr. Pratt's property abutted ours and somebody else who I didn't know abutted ours. So, we had six acres, but it felt like you had 20 acres. It was just, it just went, you couldn't go any further. You know? You didn't have to worry about safety. You didn't have to worry about safety, you could just go in the woods and pick wildflowers and come back with wintergreen berries, eating and pick wild cherries off the trees and hang [01:37:00] out in your yard and everything was just, it was just right there, and it was fantastic. So as I grew, you know, when the houses were built and whatnot, that became a different dynamic because it brought people. It didn't bring any people that look like me, but it didn't, I never thought about that, though. I never thought about it one way or another because I wasn't used to being around people that looked like me. The first time I really was around people that looked like me was when my sister got

married when I was like eight, nine? Was I nine? Maybe nine. No, I was older because my dad was still alive. No, I was younger. I was eight, going on nine when my sister got married.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay.

**Victoria Brown:** And she moved to Hartford. And I heard people talking like this. I was like, [01:38:00] “Oh wow! That's cool.” “What are you finna cook Ms. Jones?” I was like, “What did they just say?” “What are you finna cook Ms. Jones?” I said, “Huh, now that is really cool.” So, I said to my sister, “How come they talk like that?” [laughs] She said, “Because they're from the South.” I said, “South where?” She said, “No, they're from the South. The southern part of the United States.” She says, “So they have an accent.” I said, “Oh, okay.” I thought that was the coolest thing. So it was really, that was kind of interesting for me because then I started seeing a lot of people that looked like me, you know, and they looked different. Some had wavy hair, some had kinky hair, some had their hair braided and some had their hair straightened.

**Victoria Brown:** And it was, that was really kind of fun. That was kind of fun. And there were things I could do when I went to visit her that I couldn't do in Windsor. I didn't have a sidewalk. [01:39:00] I learned how to roller skate on Windsor Street in Hartford. The playground still on Windsor Street called the Willie Ware playground. My sister lived on Warren Street, so I used to be able to roller skate up and down her street with those skates that clamp on your shoes. So that was the difference between, you know, the country and the city. But as far as it changing, a lot of little things changed like that were landmarks. And seeing those things change around you, I don't want to say it's traumatic, but in a way, it is because you don't have any control over it. They weren't your things or your places to begin with, but as a child, you begin to realize that your world changes.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah.

**Victoria Brown:** So, at the end of the street, at the end of the corner of Mountain Road, while it was Woodland Road and Bloomfield Avenue, there was originally a great big water [01:40:00] tower. Don't ask me what that water was in there for, I don't know if it was irrigation. I have no clue. But then the Knights of Columbus Building was built, and that water tower came down. And it's like, you know, there goes your little landmark, you know what I mean? That's like what you relate to. And then Mr. Pratt, whose property was on Bloomfield Avenue and right next to that, well, that abutted our property. Then that got sold and Brown [inaudible] built the Tobacco Valley Inn, a big hotel and whatnot and a gas station. You know? [laughs] So the changing was kind of interesting. But it never felt like it was changing for the better. It was progress, but it doesn't feel like it.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, I see.

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah. And then even things in the center changed. You know, some of the grocery stores went. I don't remember when London Jewelers, I think [01:41:00] the Jewelers and the bakery and whatnot might have gone after I grew up, so I don't remember being traumatized by that, but it's changed. It has changed a lot. The other thing that was interesting

was migrant workers because Windsor is a tobacco town. So, when you talked about diversity, there really wasn't any. I didn't know what a Puerto Rican was. I didn't. I had no idea what Puerto Rican was. I had no idea what a Jamaican was. So, I would see them, you know, the guys like walking from the tobacco fields and whatnot, and I just remember my mother saying, "Don't talk to them. Don't talk." But because I was a real outgoing kid. I talked to everybody, but she would say like, "Don't talk to strangers, don't talk, don't talk to them. You know, they work on tobacco." I was like, "Oh, okay." I just figured, "Hey, they look like me." [01:42:00] [laughs] So, you know, so that whole thing of diversity, it just wasn't an issue in town because there just wasn't any. It just really, I mean it was, but it was in pockets. Like my mom's family was primarily like Cook Hill Road. Cook Hill Road and Williams Street. That was my mom's family. And then the Allen's in the center of town. Then everybody else was sort of, you know, spread out. There just weren't there, just weren't a lot. So that was, those were – those were changes when I came back to Windsor, which was in 2005, [redacted] but the growing up part and the changing, I don't know. I guess it's all good. Now, it's just a very different town. Because so much of the center of town is gone.

**Victoria Brown:** You know, like some, so I'll give you some landmarks. Like I told you that corner where that corner store was, where the bakery was, and the Jewelers was. And then across the street from that was Selig Jewelers. So that's an antique store now. She's changed that before you came on board, but [01:44:00] that changed. Right next door to that, there was a building which they've taken down, which was an Old Town Windsor family named Snelgrove's, so they had a nursery. They had a florist shop. And then next to that was another building where the Pizza Palace is now and the Thai restaurant on the corner. The Thai restaurant on the corner in the 50s and 60s was called the Cozy Corner. That was a place where you can go in and get, you know, hot dog, hamburger, French fries, a soda, pop, cokes. Had a jukebox machine, you know. Where you'd go hang out after school.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah.

**Victoria Brown:** There's no place, there's no places or things like that anymore. Kids don't walk down to the center to get an ice cream cone at the Lincoln Dairy. That's not there anymore. The Lincoln Dairy was where Gino's is, where Giavanni's is, yeah. So that that kind of thing, [01:45:00] and kids don't do that stuff anymore. There's no place really for them to go. The theater is not there. We could come down on a Saturday and go to a matinee for \$0.25. You know? That kind of stuff. That really, but every town went through those kind of changes.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Mhmm. Definitely.

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, drive-ins came. The little town theaters went, you know? But those are some of the things that I've seen over the years that have [changed]. A Day Hill Road [laughs] drag race. I mean no, we didn't. I didn't drag race, but I know people who did, and I was there. So Day Hill Road was tobacco country. There was no, like, all the buildings that you see there now, that wasn't there. That was all tobacco. All Day Hill Road, Pigeon Hill Road, all of that. I don't even know what some of those [01:46:00] side streets are off of Poquonock Avenue. Pigeon Hill

Road, that was all farmland. There were no developments. Like maybe starting in the 60s, that started changing. So the town, things changed quite a bit, yeah. The old Firehouse, the Windsor Firehouse is the restaurant that is on Union Street. You know that restaurant on Union Street that looks like a Firehouse because it is?

**Sulema DePeyster:** I think I know what you're referring to.

**Victoria Brown:** Come on, I'm going to have to take you. Do I have to come take you for a town tour and give you some history?

**Sulema DePeyster:** Honestly, I wouldn't mind it. I think that would be a great opportunity.

**Victoria Brown:** Well, one day. Hey, maybe one day we can. I would do that with you. Sure. Tell you some of the little things I can remember. Yeah, [01:47:00] because there really are some cool things about town that it might be fun for someone to tell you about, like where the old feed store was on Poquonock Avenue where my dad used to go get chicken feed for the chickens. Stuff like that. Those are the kinds of things that went. The old gas station that was on Poquonock Ave where they pumped the gas and, you know, the guy would give you a little lollipop. And you do have pictures of some of those things there, I know. I know you have some of that. I'm sure there's some of that.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah, I think we do.

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, great stuff. Let's see.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Well, you said that Windsor didn't necessarily change for the better, but was that more of a neutral change or would you say it's, in your opinion, more negative?

**Victoria Brown:** Oh, I don't know, and I shouldn't really say. I guess it's really a matter of perspective because I think my feeling [01:48:00] was because Windsor is such an Old Town and a historic town, there are things that I personally would have loved to have seen stayed and never have gone away because it changed the entire character of the center of Windsor. So, when they started tearing down buildings like the building that the Linden was in, like the building that Julie's Bakery was in, and putting in more modern buildings, and taking out the Windsor House restaurant and putting in a CVS and putting in the post office where it is. [There] were I think two to three big, beautiful mansion type houses that stood on the green [that] were displaced by the post office and CVS. CVS was a restaurant. It was the Windsor House restaurant. That got torn down I don't remember what year. But nobody would buy it and the guy that [01:49:00] was running it wasn't managing it well, so it started deteriorating and they took it out. But that was there for years. That was a landmark. On the corner of Maple Avenue and [Broad] Street, sorry not Windsor Avenue. I keep saying Windsor Avenue. On the corner of Maple [Avenue] and Broad [Street], where the farmers market is now on Thursdays, that's where the Old Town hall was.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh.

**Victoria Brown:** I couldn't believe, I really couldn't believe when they took that down. I couldn't believe it. I was like, "What the Dickens. They couldn't have made something out of that?" It's a freaking parking lot now. What? I'm like, "Are you kidding me?" Yeah, that I couldn't believe. That and the houses on the green, one of whom was my doctor. Doctors used to come to your home in the 50s. So when I broke my collarbone when I was in first grade, Doctor Pratt who lived right on the Windsor, [01:50:00] right on the green there in one of those houses next to the – there's the Grace [Church], I'm going to start from the library. There's the church, then there's the Huntington house, that house that's now an office. I don't know if you know. So, you know where the church is, right?

**Sulema DePeyster:** Mhmm.

**Victoria Brown:** Then there's a house right next to it that belonged to a family called the Huntington's. They were, yeah. Then there were at least three or four big like, what would you call it, almost like Victorian homes on that stretch. Those are gone. We have the town hall and a CVS in the oldest town in Connecticut.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah.

**Victoria Brown:** How is that good? Is it convenient? Yes. Because one of the reasons I stay where I am is because I'm aging and I'm close to that stuff. But that's, it changed the history, you know?

**Sulema DePeyster:** I see. Okay.

**Victoria Brown:** And then you make a right, then you go down [01:51:00] Palisado Avenue to the street with all the historic homes. Poor planning, poor planning. So that's what I mean by that. Not that it's bad. Not that it's bad. But a lot of neighborhoods have not. I would say the neighborhood that's probably changed the least is the one I'm in. The only difference is probably there are a lot more black families than there were. There were none. There were zero. Yeah, nobody could have afforded to live here in the 50s if they would have let them. You know, so that's changed, you know, that part's changed and the diversity part is nice. Yeah.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And this is actually my final question, so what would you say has kept your family in Windsor all of these years?

**Victoria Brown:** [01:52:00] I would say for me personally, I guess because my mother. My mother was born here, my dad bought that piece of land on Woodland Road for a dollar back in – I'm going to get you some information too, because I want to find out I want to find out. I just discovered something a few weeks ago. I put something together and [talked] to a young man who was, actually, he's not related to me, but his aunt was married to my Uncle George, so one of Floyd's brothers. So technically my cousin is related to him, I've got to try to get him some information on her. But what's interesting is, I think it's, I don't know, I think for me it's roots. I was born here. My mother was born here. My family is from Connecticut originally. [01:53:00] There's just such an interesting history. And it's a nice town. You know, it's a nice town. But now that my mother is gone, I primarily came back to Windsor because I wanted her to finish her life

in the town she was born in. She was in Windsor all her life and when she died, like I said, she was Windsor's oldest native resident at 104 years old. There was nobody in town who lived here longer than her. And I just kind of wanted to keep that going for a while, but now, whatever. I'll do whatever I have to do. You know, I'm not, like, "Oh, I'll never leave this town." Yeah, I don't feel that way, but it was a nice place to grow up. I'm happy that my family gave me what they did. I'm happy for the legacy. Yeah.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah, that's great. [01:54:00] Well, I just want to say thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me and share your story with the Historical Society. It's been a great conversation, and if there's anything else you want to mention, I'd be happy to hear it.

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, I don't think so. You're wonderful. You're going to be so good at your job.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, thank you. [laughs]

**Victoria Brown:** I just wanted to tell you that and how proud I am of you, and how nice it makes me feel seeing, you know, and I'm not really into the race thing, but at the same time, now I'm going to get emotional. But at the same time, seeing you so young doing what you're doing, and when I was coming up, that would not have happened. You know? That would not have happened. So I'm proud of you. [laughs]

**Sulema DePeyster:** Thank you so much.

**Victoria Brown:** And I'm glad that you're there because there are stories to be told, you know, and they're very – the sad part of it is that I wish that like when my grandmother was alive and when [01:55:00] there were ones here who could have told the stories, that the older stories had been told and that somebody cared enough to ask them. That's what I think makes me feel bad.

**Sulema DePeyster:** I definitely understand what you mean.

**Victoria Brown:** You know what I mean? Because the stories, the things that they could have told are so different. I know they did interview my grandmother one year because they did an article in the Hartford Courant on her one year. Because she was, I think she was 90 and still living alone and still cooking her own meals and in the house she, you know, was raised all her children in. I wish the house was still there because it would have been a beautiful historic place to tour. It still had the potbellied stove in the living room. It still had the wood burning stove in the kitchen. That's what she cooked on. You know? It would have been wonderful [01:56:00] if the town had jumped in and said, "Yeah, you know what? We need to preserve this."

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah.

**Victoria Brown:** Back then, those things just didn't happen, you know? At least some good things can happen now, and there'll be a little bit more town history left for people to look at.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Victoria Brown:** Yeah, so thank you.