



Interviewed: Nicky Cohen
Oral History Clip Title: A Big Part of My Life
Theme: Ties to Southern Africa
Interviewer: Lisa Newman
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(Nicky)

My main point of wanting to go back to Johannesburg was that I had a lot of memories. Just a lot of memories, but they were from so long ago and it was, you know a big part of my life. All these trips and spending time with my grandparents, and I hadn't been back to this place in twenty-four years. So, I think we had four days in Johannesburg and there really isn't a lot to do there. Crime is very high. So, my grandmother moved to this certain building in 1957 and she lived there until she immigrated in '86. So she was there for close to thirty years.

(Interviewer)

She Immigrated here?

(Nicky):

Yes. So in '86 she immigrated here. So she was in this particular apartment building for close to thirty years. I am trying to think if my mother would have been. No, my mother was ten it says here. All of my memories, all of our trips back, we stayed with my mother's parents who had more space in this apartment. So I had a lot of memories down to, I knew where the doors were, the bathroom, the phone. I had a lot of memories. In the four days that we had in Johannesburg, I was really determined to get in that apartment building. There was a security lady in the lobby and I explained our story. She actually had a nephew in Toronto and my husband knew his nephew. So there was bit of a connection. So I explained who I was and I said to them, are the people home or is there a maid was there. So I believe she said to me that the maid has gone out, I can't recall if she made a phone call, but the maid had gone out but she was coming back. So I said okay we're just going to wait and we were just on the property, and I'll show you the photos after, but I knew the property. I knew the trees, I knew the doors. I knew everything. We waited and soon after she came back and so, her name was Susan. I didn't recognize the name but I began just telling her who I was, who my mother was and who my grandmother was and I said that our maid growing up for so many years was a lady named Ruth, do you know her? So she said Ruth is my mother. So that was quite amazing. So Ruth was still alive. She actually has just retired from working with that family, so if I have my years right; she worked in that flat beginning with my mother in the 1960s. So, she was working in that flat from the early '60s to 2008. It's a long time...forty-five years. And so she had just retired, I believe she was in her early 70s, when she kind of I think stopped working, and her daughter Susan took over her job. And so over those few days we actually spent, we met Ruth in the first four days that we had, we met with her, well at least twice. Then, from Sun City I know we spoke to her, I think I gave her money. I can't recall if they asked or if I probably just gave her money. I can't recall, and I think she said with the money she was able to buy a phone and I think she called me at Sun City to say thank you.

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