



Interviewed: Laurie Manoim

Oral History Clip Title: Immigrating Solo to Canada

Theme: Arriving in Canada

Interviewer: Gail Freeman

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(Laurie)

I came on a look-see and, as I say, I got a job here. They gave me a year to pack up and come here. And I took the full year because I was a bit scared. I have family in Caracas and in Rio and I decided to go and visit the family in Rio first. We went to Rio first. We visited that family and then I wanted my son to meet his American family so we went to the States. And when we were coming you could bring in goods and things tax-free. So I had a friend in New York and he had a friend who owned a garage and they helped me. I think he must have paid—I can't believe—because I got a Datsun for \$5,000. When we immigrated I was considered single even though I had a child and there was a limitation on the amount of money we could bring. I don't know if that was the same with others. But the maximum that I could bring I think was \$5,000 and families were given \$10,000 or something like that. My cousins helped me with some money in New York. They gave me some money and so I bought the car and I bought various things to come here with so I wouldn't have to pay tax because if you brought it in with you as an immigrant you didn't pay tax. And I got the car and I was so terrified because I had never driven on the left. And driving in New York, I said to my mom, "Listen, Mom. You and Gary catch the...bus—no, the plane to Buffalo and I'll meet you in Buffalo and we'll cross the border in Buffalo." But there was no room for my mother and my son in the car so my son came with me and my mother and four tires went to Canada on the bus (laughs). And when friends picked my mother up, they were horrified about these tires. But there was no room for them in my little Datsun. And we've laughed over that for many, many years. So I drove and we drove across the border at Buffalo, came into Toronto, only to find the place I was supposed to stay at when I phoned them up and said, "Hi, Jack. I've arrived in Toronto. We'll be over in about half an hour." "Oh, Laurie, sorry, no, you can't come." So I didn't know where to stay. I didn't know what to do. So it was a bit of a shock.

I found the Canadians very, very cold. I thought maybe it was because I was single. I couldn't understand it at first until I made some single friends. And then we talked about Canadian-South African Jewish issues and she said, "You know, you South Africans are very stuck up. You're very cliquey." So I said, "Well, we're probably cliquey because you guys don't ask us. We come from a community that is very, very friendly. You can pop into people's houses. You don't have to make an appointment. We don't care if you arrive for dinner and we don't quite have enough. We just spread it out. Here we've come where it's very formal even between parents and children. And as for being friends with you, it's very difficult

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because we don't know how to do this." So then we discussed it and one of the things I thought was very interesting was...because we talked about the Jewish people who had come before, their parents, and the Holocaust and everything else. We were one of the first communities that came here that didn't require financial assistance—not most of us anyway. I had to get some. But the majority of the South Africans that came, came with some money. They also came educated. They didn't need an education. So I think the Canadian philanthropic community, or the Canadian community, didn't quite understand how to help make South Africans part of the community in the early days. The rest of the South Africans who came in the later years were lucky because they had a foundation that we had built together in the early years through our SAJAC or through our different community things as South African Jews and they could say, "Who's a doctor? Who can we go to as a doctor? How do we buy meat? How do we do things?" The Canadians didn't have time for that, for us. And we didn't understand that and they didn't understand our need. They didn't understand that different immigrant groups need different things.

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