

Interviewed: Percy Skuy

Oral History Clip Title: The History of Contraception

Theme: Contributions to Canada

Interviewer: Naomi Raichyk

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(Percy)

It's now 1965. I've now been taken into the office at Ortho [clears throat], women's health being a major part of this now, and continuing education professionally with the health categories of nursing, medicine, pharmacy was becoming quite involved. And I was invited by a small group of pharmacists in Hamilton, Ontario to give them a talk on modern methods of contraception, which meant the pill and the intrauterine device. Well, I know what they wanted to know about that, but I have always had an interest in historical things and collecting things. And so I went to the meeting and I took five minutes or so to introduce the subject with a little bit of history and I dangled a couple little items in front of them (moves hands to demonstrate) and gave them my talk. Cup of coffee. Went home. Never gave it a second thought. It's now about three months later and Hamilton became the host city for the provincial pharmacy association convention with between two and three hundred pharmacists. And I think they must have liked my introduction better than my actual talk because they wanted to me come back and talk purely on the historical aspects. They knew all about the pill and the IUDs but THIS, this was different (laughs), you know? So I thought, no problem. I have an interest in photography. All I have to do is go to Planned Parenthood, my friendly obstetrician-gynecologist, Ortho in the U.S., and they'll give me these old items that they have been saving, naively thinking that the people would save old contraceptives. They don't. They throw them away. So I struggled to get enough items just to be able to photograph them. Made my presentation. Went over very well. Fine. I'm now left with these dozen or so little, different items. Well, I'm never going to throw them away. I get a nice black cloth, put them out there. (inaudible) Naomi (inaudible) What do you think of these items? "Percy, that's interesting." Whoever walked in said, "That's interesting." And I said to myself if people find this interesting why don't I collect more just to collect them? And that's when I found out and appreciated people were not saving items of historical interest. So I made it a campaign for myself initially to follow up and see if I could find more of these items. And it was a very interesting exercise. And, of course, I like the challenge of the search. So that package of always collecting things and always putting things together came together on [sic] in this subject. And I was in the fortunate position of dealing mainly with obstetrician-gynecologists with a company that was involved with women's health. My job had improved and changed significantly so I was traveling a lot in the States and so on, too. And I had the means to do a follow-up of finding these items that grew and grew and grew. And then it grew to the point from being those dozen or so items to a recognized collection...a museum of over 700 artifacts...at one time. Eleven

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cabinets full of these items and the whole display was in Don Mills and it travelled extensively around the world, from Singapore to Greece to France, I was invited. I took it out there and it just built and built and built.

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