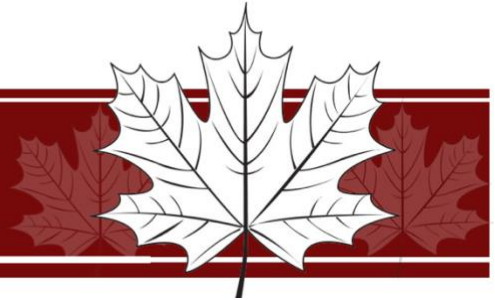


Telling the Stories of Race and Sports in Canada

A Symposium



TELLING THE STORIES OF RACE AND SPORTS IN CANADA INTERVIEW WITH ROSETTA (ROSIE) ALLIET

Interview Status: open to public

Name of narrator: Rosetta Alliet (RA)

Name of narrator: Pauline Kwon (PK)

Name of interviewer: Marsaydees Ferrell (MF)

Number of sessions: 1

Session #1 (August 10, 2018)

Part 1 of 1 recording

Length of interview: 0:50:16

Place of interview: Woodstock Institute Sertoma Help Centre (WISH Centre)

Date of interview: August 10, 2018

Language of interview: English

Name of transcriber: Marsaydees Ferrell, edited by Ron Leary

Date of transcription: 2019

The *Telling the Stories of Race and Sports in Canada* project is dedicated exploring the past, present, and future of race and sport in Canada. The [Telling the Stories of Race and Sports in Canada](#) web portal is one of three components of a larger project, funded by a SSHRC Connections Grant and supported by the University of Windsor's Office of Research and Innovation Services; the University of Windsor's Leddy Library, Department of History, Leddy Library's Centre for Digital Scholarship, Department of English, Faculty of Human Kinetics, and School of Creative Arts.

PART ONE

0.00.01

MF: So, the first part of our questionnaire, I'm just going to start with some questions about yourself. So we're going to get into your background and we'll start with what's your name?

RA: Okay. My name is Rosetta Alliet, whatever, however they say it and what else would you need me?

MF: When and where were you born?

RA: I was born in Chatham, Ontario, November 17th, 1937 at one block from here.

0.00.31

MF: You were born and raised in Chatham, you only lived here all your life?

RA: No, I lived in Toronto. I moved to Toronto in my early twenties, and I lived there until I retired when I was 60, and then I moved back.

0.00.46

Family Background

MF: Can you tell me about your family, like parents, siblings?

RA: My mother's name on the hall out there on the door, my mother's name was Sylvia Taylor. She's the niece of JG Taylor that used to be the building across the street. That's now this building. JG Taylor community center was across in the park. That's my mother. So, what else can I tell you..

0.01.13

Family Background

MF: Sisters?

RA: I have sisters and brothers. I had six sisters and brothers that were also born here in Chatham that didn't go to Toronto. They spent their whole life here. What else can I tell you? You'll have to ask me questions because [laughs] I don't know what you need from me and I don't know what...

0.01.37

Sports growing up (Belva Wright, Claudine Pryor, Paula Chase, Maple City Jets, Tecumseh Park, travel ball)

MF: How about were any of your or your siblings or parents involved in any sports in the community?

RA: Yes, I was. I guess I'm the only family member that was involved. And we had an all-girls Black, I guess it was called a fastball team or a softball team. And it was consisted of mostly all the girls that were growing up together here in this area. We all went to school together, I can remember a few of them. One Belva Wright, Claudine Pryor. This is awful [pauses], Paula Chase, she was a friend's wife who else? My goodness. Oh, wow. You should of got me 20 years ago, I'm telling you [laughs]. Who else? Let me read. Can I read my printout here and I hope it refreshes my memory. Yes, we were called the Maple City, Chatham's Maple City Jets and believe me it was fantastic. It was so much fun and it was so good for our community. Because at the time they used to have a baseball diamond right in the center of downtown Tecumseh Park and they had flood lights there and we played at night under the flood lights. So, it was great, most of the East End came to watch the girls play and we used to have a ball, we'd... If

they weren't fighting, they were swearing and if they weren't swearing they were running around the base, we had a good time. What else can I tell you? We used to go all over and play, we used to go to Dresden. We'd played teams in Dresden. There were girls baseball teams in Dresden, there was girl's baseball teams in Florence. I think there's a... am I going too fast for your darling? There's a community called Florence, Ontario. We used to go there and play. At one point I was, that's a brag, I don't want that to brag. They asked me to come and play with them, they were semi-pros. The Florence girl's baseball team were semi-pros and they used to go to California and play teams in California. And I was really tempted, but my mother wouldn't let me go.

0.04.11

Tecumseh Park

MF: Why?

RA: I was only 15, so I couldn't make the decision myself. So, she said, no, no, no. She didn't let us too far out of her sight for one thing. At 15, she wouldn't let me go. And I think that was a big mistake because I would have really enjoyed it, you know. And then other than that, I don't know what else to tell you. When we were playing, when our team was playing in Tecumseh Park under the lights, we could hear the people from the neighborhood, they were rooting us on. And it made you feel so good. You know, it was great. Not only were we having a ball, they were having a ball. And it was something to pull the people out of the neighborhood. It was great. Tears coming into my eyes.

MF: What years did you play?

RA: Oh wow [laughs], you really want me to... What year was that? '42? No, I was only born in '37. I was 15, so that makes it '42 thanks my darling [laughs]. I need some help thank you. Let me think now, did we play anybody else? No, I can't even remember which teams were... I know that there were at least three or four teams. There was another girls' team here in the city of Chatham and we didn't win too many games, let me put that in there. I'm not bragging. We didn't win too many games, but we sure had a lot of fun. I can recall, now this is a story I don't know whether you want it or not, I can recall one of the girls had played in the field, which was the center fielder, she left her glove laying out in the middle of the field on the grass. And one of our baseball girls got up, hit the ball and she was running out in the middle of the field, looking for second base and the whole team was laying on the floor laughing, on the diamond laughing, and all the people in the stands were laughing. And it was, I mean, hilarious. You had to be there to see what I meant. Yeah, it was really funny.

0.06.28

MF: Just some more questions about your actual team.

RA: My actual team...

Maple City Jets (Arthur Wright, Williams)

MF: Your team was called the Maple City Jets, did you guys have any sponsors?

RA: No. We didn't have any sponsors. I don't know who supplied our equipment. I don't remember. I remember our coaches. One coach was named Arthur Wright. And the other coach was, his name was Williams, but I can't remember his first name. Williams. Do you remember Raymond and the Evelyn Williams brothers? Do you remember, what are their names or do you remember their name...

PK: Raymond was one of them

RA: But it wasn't Raymond that was our coach, does it tell us here? No, I can't remember his name. And I got this printout. My friend, I had a neighbor that lived next door to me, his wife played baseball with us and he knocked on my door one night and gave me this printout and he said, do you remember hitting

three home runs in this game? No, I don't. That was how much fun I was having. Big deal, I hit three home runs. I don't even remember it. Yes. And I'm glad he gave it to me.

0.07.55

Maple City Jets

MF: Can you tell me what you liked about baseball?

RA: The camaraderie, because the friends on my team that I played with were also my friends that I went to school with. And this community, I remembered this community down here, it was like a real community. We were always into each other's homes. If one was in trouble, the other one was there to help. It was really a community feeling and a community spirit down here. I can't remember too much else. Wow, you just got me too late darling, you should have come 20 years ago. I'm not retaining too much these days.

0.08.40

MF: What else can you tell me about the community at the time?

RA: Do you really want to know? Can you tell me, I can't remember too much...

PK: What happened in our community. If one kid got in trouble, every mother was out there watching, and you knew that you were going to get in trouble and got home. Every mother watched every kid in the neighborhood.

0.09.02

Discrimination (now and then)

MF: Did you face any difficulties or challenges while playing baseball?

RA: I don't recall any. No, no, not that I recall. We didn't, I don't remember even discrimination. There was a lot of discrimination, it's different now. Racism is so wide open now and it's in your face and you can deal with it and you can discuss it and talk about it. Before, when we were growing up in Chatham, the racism was there but it wasn't out in the open. You knew that you were a second-class citizen by the way you were treated by the rest of the community that were white, yes. Like I don't know how to explain it to you, it was so different. I think it's so much better now. The community is so much better now because I feel that it's out in the open and unless you can discuss something, you can't fix it. We have to talk to our white friends and white neighbours and whatever. But we weren't able to do that because... I come from a racially mixed up family, my mother was Black, my father was white and we were really discriminated against. We were discriminated against by the white kids and the Black kids. We were half breeds to the Black kids. And we were, what is the word that the white kids call us, I won't say it, but so therefore we used to... and then we were also accepted by the Black community down here. So, we had it two different ways. I can remember going to school most of my life fighting all the way to school and all the way home. But we stuck together as a unit, the Black community did. You tackled one of us you tackled all. It's a little different now, but it doesn't need to be like that so much now. I actually find it great. I find that the white community are now... for the first time and I'm 80 years old for the first time in my eighty years, I feel like the white community has our back. They're standing with us. Most of them not against us like they used to.

0.11.23

MF: Can you tell me more about that.

RA: About the Black and the white community?

MF: Yeah,

RA: Well, it's just what I feel. I feel that because we're having the discussion and because it's so blatant racism, that most of the white people they didn't even really notice it. Like we as children, we would get mad at each other and call a name and then we would be friends again in an hour. Now it's like I'm noticing, I'm on Facebook, on social media all the time because it keeps me in touch with my friends. Right. That's how I talk to my friends. I have friends up north and in Toronto and all over and I don't want to lose touch with them, right. So, I'm on social media and I'm reading all of what's going on in the United States and in Canada and I'm having this overwhelming feeling that, wow, finally we have the white community on our side. For the first time, I think they're understanding. And they know that they need to stand with us. The ones that are standing with us are going to change things for all of us. Do you not feel that as a young person going to the university?

0.12.33

MF: Me?

RA: Yeah, have you experienced racism?

MF: I definitely have experienced, on the simple side since 1994, I have only experienced...

RA: The one side, the racism side. Don't you feel that you have white friends that are now saying, yes, I understand what you're dealing with and I'm on your side and...

MF: I don't think they understand that certainly as much as they acknowledge it.

RA: Oh really?

MF: And that's a big step.

RA: That's a big step. Maybe that's what I'm trying to say is this getting acknowledged? There is a difference because I've been dealing with it for 80 years. Racism. And in the last, I would say 10 years, I am noticing a difference. Even I have white friends and Black friends and I'm noticing white friends wow, they're standing for the first time.

0.13.23

MF: It's a nice thing too...

RA: Well it's good because it gives me hope. It gives me hope, that's all. I am not believing that it's all changed. I'm not naive but it gives you hope that... because you know my darling, because we're going to be all mixed one day. If we're all mixed then what? [laughs] Yeah, yeah.

Black baseball in Chatham (Stirling Park, Anna Taylor, Donise Washington)

MF: Any people that helped you and encouraged you, while you're were playing baseball?

RA: While I was playing baseball? No, not that I'm aware of. I don't even know where we got the idea to build a team. Must've been from the guys I know. Yes, I was encouraged. There was a Black male's baseball team here, they used to play at Stirling's Park. I remember. And my uncle, my aunt, her name was Anna Taylor, but then she married someone named Donise Washington from the United States and he came to Canada and lived here in Chatham and he played with the Black baseball team and they used to be a hardball team and they were well known. They were, oh, you've got pictures of them out there in the thing...

MF: Were they called the Panthers?

RA: Were they call the Panthers?

MF: The Taylor ACs?

RA: No, that may have been... the Taylor ACs, maybe there's a picture of them in the club. We used to go and watch their games and we used to really have the pride from them and we were trying to carry on the pride, I guess. You know, they were really good. They were great. They were as good as the professional teams that we used to see playing baseball. They were very good.

0.15.23

MF: So by watching their games it inspired you to...

RA: It inspired us to have a team. Yes, exactly.

Girls baseball

MF: Do you have any memorable stories or thoughts about growing up down here?

RA: Well, other than that one of my friend running around, looking for the second base, I'll never forget that. Yes, when I first started playing baseball, when you played baseball or softball with a bunch of girls, girls have a habit of hitting the ball and throwing their bats. We don't lay 'em down like boys do. So, when I started, I started off as a catcher. Oh, some girl threw a bat, hit me in a head, give me a big knot on my head, knocked me unconscious. So I recall that break in as a catcher and I no longer was catcher. I went to first base, the coach moved me to first base or I was going to quit the team because I couldn't handle the baseball bats flying at me. Yeah, I remember that. I used to laugh about it after when it was funny. I should have been thinking about this, but I have been trying and I can't because it was a long time ago.

0.16.43

On getting the nickname Roughhouse Rosie

MF: What about any achievements? You told me about how the Florence team told you to go play for them. Do you have any other achievements?

RA: No, other than I was, I guess they wanted to me because I could hit and I didn't understand that it was anything special at that time. I just enjoyed playing baseball. But I remember a neighbour down in the East End and he used to come and used to sit right behind first base and he used to holler at me, go get 'em Roughhouse Rosie. Yeah. And I used to just die laughing. Roughhouse Rosie, he give me the nickname actually. Everybody down there, used to call me Roughhouse Rosie after he would be... and I thought it was so great. You know, I had a fan and I want to do [laughs]...

0.17.33

MF: Do people still call you that?

RA: Yes [laughs], they do. He labeled me. Yes he did. That's funny.

MF: Were you involved in any other sports?

RA: No. No. I'd never... you know what, they built that pool across and I never learned to swim, isn't that terrible. My sister-in-law was the swimming instructor at the YMCA. Several times, she tried to teach me to swim. And when a swimming instructor can't teach you to swim, it's time to give up. And I gave up. I just never learned to swim.

0.18.07

MF: Still?

RA: No I can't swim, I just can't swim. I think there's such a thing as sinking and I sink. My brother had an indoor pool, an inground pool, and he had a deep end and I would go down the slide into the deep end and just flip over and float over to the side. I wasn't afraid of drowning, but I could not stay above the water. I don't know what was wrong. And you're laughing [laughs] but you should see me, it was funny. It's hilarious, yeah.

0.18.42

MF: So it was just baseball for you.

RA: Baseball, yeah. It was.

MF: How old were you when you started playing baseball?

RA: Oh Wow. I have no... I had to be younger than 15. I had to be 15 because that was why I couldn't go and play for the Florence chicks. My mother wouldn't let me go.

MF: That's when you started when you were 15?

RA: I think so, yeah. I don't think there was a team before then.

0.19.07

MF: As soon as you started, you were just hitting home runs?

RA: Oh well I played all my life when we were kids. When you grew up in the East End you did everything, we were survivors then. Yeah, we didn't have indoor plumbing. Can you believe young lady, that I remember a horse and a wagon selling chunks of ice out on Main Street down King Street coming into our area.

MF: What year?

RA: [laughs] What year? That's a good question. Must have been probably in the '40s and I would say it had to be in the '40s cause I know that our memory does not kick in until you're at least five. I think any kids will have memories. So I had to be at least five, so I was born in '37. I would say the early '40s, they were selling ice on a horse drawn... I remember horse-drawn milkmen delivering milk to our door. We had no indoor plumbing. We had... we had the first TV in the neighborhood. We had a seven-inch TV screen. My brothers had 12-inch heads and we kids we couldn't see the TV... [laughs] But we did have a seven inch TV screen. I could remember that. Now what else can I remember? Oh my, I don't remember too much.

0.20.36

Sports and activities in the neighbourhood

MF: Can you tell me about sports in the community and just what sports were like growing up in this neighborhood?

RA: Wow. We didn't have too much sports. My brothers... I have three brothers and three sisters. I'm the oldest and none of my brothers were into sports, no. I know that... yes, we used to go roller skating. We had terrific roller skating. Oh yes. Bring me back some memories. We had roller skating twice a week at the community center and all of the kids from our neighborhood all went because they could dance on skates. And also we remember... Motown, do you remember Motown? Do you know what Motown is?

0.21.34

Motown comes to Chatham (Diana Ross, Stevie Wonder, Little Richard)

MF: I know about Motown.

RA: Well when Motown was starting, they started and they used to come to Chatham to entertain. We've seen in this city live entertainment. We've seen Diana Ross come in this city, Stevie Wonder when he was first started and he was playing harmonica. We've seen him live at the community center. We've seen Little Richard at the community center live.

0.22.01

MF: What was the community center called?

RA: It was the Chatham Memorial Center. It was out on Queen Street. You know where they play hockey, there was a building beside it also.

Stirling and Taylor Parks

MF: What about places like Stirling Park or the Taylor Institute?

RA: Stirling Park was like our home. We used to go there while swimming. I used to call it swimming. I call it floating now, but we went swimming at the Taylor Park. As a matter of fact, I remember going to Taylor Park to watch the men's Black team play baseball. That was in the '40s and I also was at Stirling Park not more than eight years ago watching my nephew play baseball at Stirling Park. So, it's like something that's carried on and carried on and carrying on. Yeah, brought back a lot of memories Stirling Park.

0.23.02

Black Panthers baseball

MF: Do you want to get into some of those memories, like what do you remember? Like what do you remember watching games in these parks and what was that like, what was the atmosphere like?

RA: Great. It was great watching the men's Black Panther. If it was called Panthers, I forget the real name, but watching them play ball. We didn't have TV then, but it was like we had the newspapers when we were reading the newspapers about the professional baseball teams in the United States. We didn't have any in Canada and we knew that these gentlemen were superior to what we were reading in the paper. We were so proud of that Black men's baseball team. We knew everything we read about them. They were really great. I don't know how to... too bad they didn't have movies then because they were really good. They were really that good. I'm still a big baseball fan. I watch it [laughs] even still today. What else did we do? We did roller skating. We did baseball. I didn't do too much other than that.

0.24.14

MF: Do you remember any of the people in the community that we're responsible for organizing any of the sports teams or any of the sporting events?

RA: No, not really, I don't. I think you're asking the wrong person, now. Have I talked to anybody recently that's jog my memory? No, I haven't. You know what happens when you've lived this long, you don't want to live to be 80, trust me. Most of your families, usually I'm lucky my family is not gone. But all your friends are gone before you and then you don't have any one to reminisce with about old memories and that's when they start to fade and you start to lose all those old memories when you can't say like Jean, I've been friends with Jean, Jean came here from the United States, 50 years ago. We've been

friends that long. She lived down the street from me and like her and I had never reached that. We can, she can trigger something in me and I can trigger something in her. But unless those people are around anymore, they go, your memories like they just, they're there. You've got to have to dig in the file and pull them back. And if that's hard to do without some... without some... I don't know, can you trigger anything? You've got a good memory. She should be asking you these questions, not me.

PK: We have a lot of athletes in our family, we do

RA: Do we, trigger some memories, tell me who?

PK: Craig, he played rugby here and then they sent to the United States and he was really good and they send him to France to play.

RA: That's my nephew, plays rugby.

PK: My youngest son, he's also written a book. It's in here. It's called *One Night in Mississippi*.

RA: Craig, his name is Craig Shreve. That's my sister's son.

PK: And then his wife plays baseball.

RA: They all played baseball here in Chatham?

PK: And hockey.

Born at home

MF: So overall would you say that sports were important and valuable in your community?

RA: Yes. It was after, I guess after my generation, I am old and then the next generation, we got a little bit more freedom and we got a little bit more money and we could afford to get into more things. But we were really, really a poor... I was born in a house. I wasn't born in a hospital. I was born in a house down the street. We were really poor.

MF: Is the house there?

RA: Yeah.

0.26.57

MF: What number is that?

RA: We grew up at 242 King Street East. That's not where I was born. I was born across the street, so it had to be at an odd number. So I would say was about 230 something? Yeah. I was born in the house. Second floor. And you want to know something, yeah I'm a twin.

MF: You're a twin?

RA: Yes, am a twin.

MF: What's your twin name?

RA: Laretta but she died at nine months old. That's ok, I'm over it now. Quit laughing, see I forgot what I was gonna to tell her now [laughs]. I forgot.

0.27.41

MF: We're talking about how valuable sports were in the community.

RA: Yeah. We didn't have enough spots. We didn't have a lot of anything actually. I remember my brothers, now I'm the oldest and then the next two siblings are both boys. And I don't recall them being out of the house. Like other families were into sports more than my family was. My brothers weren't, they weren't sports oriented. Not at all. Now that make me think of it, I don't even remember them golfing. They didn't do anything. They ate a lot [laughs] Yeah, that's a sport. Don't make me laugh. My eyes, water went up. Any other questions? Refresh my memory young lady.

028.31

MF: Do you have any particularly memorable stories or memories about sports in the community?

RA: About sports in the community? No. I don't even remember them playing golf. They didn't play, my brothers didn't play hockey. They didn't play baseball. No, I don't.

Family and the American influence on Chatham (JG Taylor)

MF: Have things changed since you grew up regards to sports in the community?

RA: Absolutely. The generation after me, I seen things changing. As I say, I guess we got better jobs. We could afford to go and join and buy sports equipment. It wasn't always supplied like... No, I don't remember anything down here that we got excited about or anything that brought us other than entertainment. When I was growing up here, we had a lot of American influence. The kids, young Black people from America used to come to Chatham. We had more American friends and Black friends that were here. We had a very small Black community, really. It's grown a lot. We got mixed with the mixed the groups and the whites and Blacks and there's thousands of us now. I came back here and thought, how come I don't know these people, they're all Black. How come I don't know? There are thousands of them here now. You know what I mean? [laughs] Stop laughing, you're making this harder Pauline. I'm trying to think of something about this community. Like, see, I'm one of the older ones. We were just getting started in this community when I was born because my mother wasn't born here. My mother was born in Hamilton, her family moved here. JG Taylor that actually he started a school in the building across the street for the Black community. JG Taylor did that. He was my mother's uncle. They used to live in Woodstock and I don't know, we're now... my sister and I, we keep saying, how come we never asked a million questions? We don't know about this and we don't know about that. Pauline even went to the library to try and go back in our culture and in our family and our roots. It just ah... I don't know.

PK: I can tell you a little bit about JG Taylor.

RA: Go ahead and help me.

PK: When he went to Woodstock, he had bread different kinds of chickens. He became the only one that grew Brown Horns

RA: It was a bred.

PK: He won 11 blue ribbons in the London fare. He went to Madison Square Gardens in the States and his picture is still there. I found that.

RA: She was digging back in our family. We have family roots that we didn't ask enough questions of our family before they died and it's trying to find out now. It's like really difficult.

0.31.32

MF: I agree.

RA: That's why you're doing this isn't it, I know that's a good thing. I wish I could... I wish I was younger and I could retain... listen darling your retention starts going down at 40, and I've been 40 years and I'm now at the bottom now. It's like I remember where I live and I remember my phone number, not too much more than that. Trust me.

0.31.55

MF: You're doing great. You said that the generation after you, sports changed within the community, how would you compare it to today?

RA: To today in the community? Well, I don't know too much about, I haven't lived down here for a while, so I don't know what they're doing down here. I don't know what the kids... haven't even gotten any family. We got family down here now that are in living in the community down here?

PK: Sarah and them are in soccer.

MF: It doesn't necessarily have to be down here, could be Chatham as a whole.

RA: Chatham as whole, not necessarily this community. Oh, I see. Chatham as a whole, Ooh, you're asking the wrong person about Chatham. I always say get the hell out of here. I don't know what I'm doing back here. [laughs]

0.32.40

MF: Okay. So I'm just going to, we're going to try some particular teams. So I'm going to ask you some questions about...

RA: Go ahead. Yes, please help me.

MF: What can you tell me about the Taylor ACs? Like when they play...

RA: I don't know. I don't know. You know what? This is really surprising. Never ever in my lifetime did I have a loss for words [laughs]. It's true. And I cannot think of anything to help you out wow you should've got me even last year I was in better shape.

0.33.16

The Taylor ACs (Flat Chase, Donice Washington, Don Tabron, Boomer Harding, Mr. Pryor)

MF: Do you remember anyone who played on the team?

RA: That's the men's team that you're talking about, right? The Taylor ACs, Yes, I know. I remember Flat Chase. His name was Flat Chase. Donise Washington. He was my uncle. He was married to my aunt. I remember someone else from... he was American and I guess you must've moved over here to cause his name was Don Tabron, who else did I remember? Boomer Harding. Yeah, he played on the team, Pryor. Mr. Pryor. I don't know if he was the coach or if he played, but I remember seeing his picture and I remember him because they lived right behind us. Who else do I remember on that team? Oh, I can't I'm doing oh wow I'm racking my brain [laughs].

0.34.35

MF: Do you remember any of the coaches or who may have coached the team?

RA: No, I don't.

MF: But you remember watching these teams?

RA: Oh yes. Oh yes. I was a fan. Whenever they played, I watched.

MF: Where did they play?

RA: Stirling Park.

0.34.49

MF: Can you tell me about any of your experiences while watching?

RA: I can tell you that I don't remember ever seeing them lose. No. That's why I thought I was so impressed with them. I thought that they were as good as any professional team we... We didn't have a

lot of baseball. We didn't have TV, but there was baseball, you know, in the United States. But not hardly in Canada. Chatham was a superior team. Very superior. I know that for a fact.

0.35.22

MF: What were they like as a team?

RA: Well, that's a good question. Now, how do you mean that. How were they with each other, or how were they as a team playing? How do you mean.

The Taylor ACs and U.S./Canadian discrimination comparisons

MF: We can do both?

RA: Well, I know that they were very united. I know that... what else about them impressed me? It was like they were training each other. What one couldn't learn, they were being taught by each other. And I think it was the guys from the United States that came over here that put the team together because Canada, we didn't have... like we were second class citizens, the Black community. But in the United States, my aunt moved to Detroit. My aunt gave up her Canadian citizenship. She was an American and I almost did the same thing at 18, because I used to spend a lot of vacation time with my aunt and I found that in the United States the racism was more open. You could deal with it easier than you could here. It was like Chatham and Canada, I always found it racist, but it was always behind the door. You were treated like you weren't a first-class citizen. But they didn't in the United States. You just knew they didn't like you because you were Black. Here, we didn't know why they didn't like us. They treated us like they didn't like us, but they didn't come right out and say, it's because your skin is a different colour. We were aware of that. So what's underlying racism that we dealt with here? In the United States, I found it quite different. So, I almost gave up my... and I'm so glad I didn't, it would have been the biggest mistake of my life. Wasn't given up Canadian citizenship to move over there, but it was easier to deal with the racism over there. Like you dealt with it. If somebody didn't like you, I don't know how to explain it to you. I don't know, it's just different. Very, very different. Very much different to deal with. If you don't like me and you tell me, I can handle that. But if I don't know why you don't like me, I can't handle that. I can't deal with that. You know what I mean? Does that make sense to you? Good.

0.37.53

MF: Just getting back to that, Taylor ACs, the team. Do you know how the people in the community felt about the team? Did they feel similar to how you did?

RA: Yes.

More Taylor ACs and the Japanese community in Chatham

MF: They were very proud of them?

RA: Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah, they were I guess they were so good and I was so impressed that all of my life, I always thought they were professional baseball team. Can you believe that? I really did think they were a professional... I see that picture out there now. They even have uniforms. We didn't... the girl's team, we couldn't afford uniforms. We had no uniforms. We just played in our old street clothes, you know. And something else now that I'm thinking about it, we also had in the east end, there was a few Japanese families. The Japanese community kind of mixed in with the Black community down here and they also... I remember they took one other player from our baseball team Dalbar Wright. And they took us to Toronto to play. They ask us to play for their team so that we could go to Toronto and play for their team from Chatham so we could play against the girls in Toronto. It was all Japanese except for us two Black girls.

MF: So there was an all Japanese team in Chatham?

RA: Yes.

0.39.21

Japanese baseball in the region

MF: Can you tell me more about them? Do you know what their name was?

RA: I haven't even got a clue. I didn't even know they were a Japanese... I didn't even know that they had a league of their own until they asked us to come and go to Toronto with them and play a game, like they were playing in a series in Toronto. I wasn't even aware of them actually.

MF: Were there multiple Japanese teams in Chatham or just the one and they kind of have a bigger league.

RA: Yeah. They had a league that was not in the city, but they went to other places to play. This is the first time even thinking about this team in Chatham, going all the way to Toronto to play Toronto in those days. You know how long it took to drive to Toronto? It took me seven hours to drive to Brantford. There wasn't a 401. Honest to goodness, honest to goodness and we went to Toronto to play baseball, it took us maybe six, seven hours to drives to Toronto.

0.40.16

Travelling Southern Ontario

MF: So there wasn't a 401?

RA: Nope. Number 2 Highway. Number 2 Highway goes from Chatham to every little stop. I used to drive my family, my mother's sister used to live in Brantford. You know where Brantford is? Just outside between Hamilton and London. I used to drive my mother there to visit her sister, it used to take me seven hours. You would drive Number 2 in every small town you would have to drive through each small town, slow down to the 30 mile limit. Honest to goodness, you don't remember there not being a 401 [laughs].

MF: What year did you go to Toronto with this team?

RA: Well, I had to be a teenager, maybe 15, 16 when we were just getting started. I don't even remember how many years I played on that team.

MF: You played on that team also?

RA: No, on our team. Our girls team here. I only went once with those people to play with the Japanese girls, I only went once.

0.41.26

Japanese baseball players in Chatham (Wakabayashi)

MF: Can you tell me anything about that team? The Japanese, who played on it, coaches maybe.

RA: You know what? I don't think we even understood what they were saying in those days, they weren't speaking very good English. But we knew how and what baseball was, no, I can't even remember. I only remembered two families of Japanese families living in the city. One was actually right across the street, one family right across the street where those townhouses are now. And one family lived down around the corner from us and they must had had a daughter on that team or else how would they have known us, Wakabayashi. That's exactly what their name was. And you know what? Believe it or not, that young lady that works in here that... it's a volunteer Dorothy, right. You know Dorothy, her brother Eddie, he's on the hockey team and I think he was a friend of or played with the Wakabayashi's, Herbie

Wakabayashi actually he played with, yeah, yeah, yeah. So pick her brain about the hockey team and the Black community. Her brother, he was just young when he was here. He's done well too.

D_: He's at Boston University.

RA: Yeah, he's done well. That's great.

0.42.56

MF: Do you remember the other family's name other than Wakabayashi?

RA: No, I don't. As a matter of fact, I probably never was able to pronounce it. I only remember Wakabayashi because they were the ones across the street? Yes. And the family that lived around the corner from us... I know my mother used to talk to the lady, but they never ever were in our homes, they live four doors from us. We were friendly neighbours, but we were never in their home and they were never in our home. But they felt secure down there with us. Yeah, that was amazing. I'm just now thinking about that. Thank you.

MF: Is there anything else you want to say about that?

RA: No. No. Well, it's amazing. It's amazing to me that they must've been discriminated against also, so they thought felt that they were secure down here with us. Oh. And blows me away.

0.43.50

MF: What about the Panthers? What can you tell me about them? Do you remember any players on the team, any coaches?

RA: No, I don't, think Rose think. No, I don't. I can't pull anything out of my head.

MF: Any other sports teams you remember watching or playing alongside?

RA: No. I wasn't really into other sports. I'm not a hockey fan. When I went to Toronto, now I don't know if this is interesting or not, when I went to Toronto I played on the football team, the women's football. Can you believe I played football? Now listen to this. I played in one game. We went to Buffalo and there was no women's football teams in Canada. There was just one in Toronto when I was there. And don't ask me how I got involved because I found it hilarious. And when we went to the States to play the one football game that I played in, it had rained and you had never seen anything like a bunch of women playing football muddy from the top of their head to the bottom of their feet. And it was all very, very hilarious. But I can't even remember the name of the team. I know there was no teams in Canada and we had to go to the States to play against someone so I didn't like that. I played football. Wow. No wonder my body is so broken up.

0.45.29

MF: I have one last question for you.

RA: Good.

MF: Is there anything else you would like to share about sports and recreation growing up?

RA: Not really. If you'd asked me when I really had something to say, I probably would've said yes. It probably would of done our community much better if we'd of had more sports and if somebody would have sponsored us. But when you asked me who sponsored our baseball team, I had to think about that. And I'm wondering still how did we play? We didn't have equipment. How would we get equipment? You have to have a sponsor. Right? I wonder if anybody else is around that could tell me. I don't think there's anybody else alive, is there? That you know that played on that team? No.

PK: Nope.

RA: With your memory, you can remember? No, I can't either. Then I don't feel bad. If you can't remember, that's a long time ago.

0.46.24

Local sports and entertainment (Evelyn Wright, JG Taylor community center, Detroit bands)

MF: You said that you think it would have been good for you guys. Can you explain that a little bit more?

RA: If we would of had more sports down here, yeah because we had nothing. It was a long time before even TV came out. So I sit and I wonder sometime, well how did you entertain yourself? What did we do to entertain ourself down here when we were kids? Do you remember?

PK: In the summer time, we used to throw water on each other with our mother and father.

RA: We even took water in the house.

PK: We were all soaked by time we were done [laughs].

RA: But, but for excitement or for... what else would we have done down here for... not for excitement? I mean, it was exciting enough just staying alive. I don't know what we did for pleasure to be honest with you. I don't know. I guess we just sat around and talked. We didn't have any sports teams. We didn't play on any sports teams. We had the playground. You know what, I do also remember something else and this is what Jean's going to get into. There was a lady named Evelyn Wright. Her name was Evelyn Williams Wright. She volunteered at the community center, which was across the street. The JG Taylor community center. She volunteered three nights a week, Wednesday night, Friday night and Saturday night. She opened that center from, I believe probably eight o'clock in the evening until 10. And we used to go there and we had ping pong, we had dancing, they had a jukebox, they had a dance floor. She would cook hot dogs and sell hot dogs. And that was when most of the teenage... that's where we spent our evenings. And also I remember at the JG Taylor community center, there would be bands, I mean musical bands and musicians. Great musicians come from Detroit, like a piano player, drummer, guitar player or a saxophone player, trumpet player, complete band. Black band would come to the JG Taylor community center on a Saturday night at nine o'clock and we would have a dance and it would be the people enjoyed it so much that I would see some people standing on the chairs dancing, standing on the desk dancing. It was hilarious and absolutely fun. It was great. And the bands that used to come here, I think they came and played for free. They enjoyed it as much as we enjoyed it. The whole half of the building was a dance floor. The other half was a counter where they sold food and a ping pong table and then they would open at nine o'clock and if the Black community, the kids, if there was nothing to do, can you imagine how much they enjoyed that place? And that lady that opened it for us, Evelyn Williams. She should be in heaven because she volunteered her evenings for us kids. She was really a great person. Evelyn. That's who Jean worked the playground with, she'll be telling you about her when she comes in.

MF: That's good. Thank you for everything.

RA: That's good, I'm finished. You got everything out of me. Wow you brought back some memories.

MF: Good ones, I hope.

RA: Yeah, I hope it was a help. If you would of got like I said, 20 years ago, I could've gotten probably a little bit more on my head, but I can't now.