



Elsie Fraga

Naomi Slipp:

... record. So would you tell me about this doll?

Elsie Fraga:

Yes. When we were in kindergarten, we were asked to bring a long cotton stocking. We used to wear long cotton stockings to school. And we took the stocking and we each brought it to the teacher. She would shape it into a doll and paint a face on the stocking. And then she would cut out an outfit for the doll, and a hat with a brim, and give us a needle and thread and show us how to stitch. And we made a doll. And I still have it. I mean, can you imagine today giving a five-year-old a needle? Why, they'd think they'd kill themselves. And I still have that doll.

Naomi Slipp:

And what school was that?

Elsie Fraga:

At the Betsy B. Winslow School.

Naomi Slipp:

Huh. And was that right near where you grew up? How did you get to school?

Elsie Fraga:

I used to walk to school. We walked to school, and we came home at, I don't know exactly what time it was, we came home for lunch. We walked to school and we walked back from school, then we went back for one o'clock, and I think we were dismissed somewhere between 3:15 and 3:30. And I did eight grades at the Betsy B. Winslow School. And then we had graduation. And from there, we went directly to the New Bedford High School. We did not have a junior high school. I lived in this neighborhood. Where I live now was like the end of New Bedford. The street beyond me going west was a dirt lane. So that was a good many years ago.

Naomi Slipp:

Wow. Was it woods behind you? What was it like?

Elsie Fraga:

Not directly behind me, but beyond the next two streets running, let's see, running north and south there were woods. Yes. This was the end of the city. There was lots of farm land. I can remember the street I live on. There were very few houses. It was a wonderful neighborhood. We used to play outdoors. You don't see children playing outdoors today, but years ago you came home from school and you changed your clothes, especially your shoes, and then you went out to play. You either played hide-and-go-seek, and the girls played hopscotch, and this kind of thing. And nobody was afraid of, you weren't afraid to let your children be outdoors.

And another thing that I remember years ago that I don't see today. Mothers who had babies in carriages, in the afternoon for a nap, they'd put them out in the carriage and put a netting over the carriage so the mosquitoes or the flies wouldn't get at the child, and leave the child out in the yard. And the mothers would go back in the house and do their work or whatever they had to do, and the child was out in the yard. Today, my gracious, that's



unheard of.

Naomi Slipp:

I can't imagine.

Elsie Fraga:

Yeah, well that's what we did years ago.

Naomi Slipp:

Oh. Did you-

Elsie Fraga:

And you tended to stay in your neighborhood. This is something, today the children roam all over the place. But then you tended to stay in your neighborhood.

Naomi Slipp:

And if you did leave the neighborhood, was there a trolley out to here, if you went downtown?

Elsie Fraga:

Oh, there was always a bus that ran on Rockdale Avenue. So we walked from here to Rockdale, which is two, let's see, a block and a half, two blocks, to catch a bus to go downtown. And the bus would stop on any corner. You just raised your hand and he would stop and take you wherever you had to go. And we had a little ice cream shop that was, oh, about one block from Rockdale Avenue. And I remember ice cream cones were 5 cents. And they sold penny candy. It was just wonderful. It was a great growing up. I've lived in this neighborhood all my life. I was born in this neighborhood and I'm still here. And I love New Bedford. I really do.

Naomi Slipp:

Lovely. Anything else you want to share for our [inaudible 00:04:14]?

Elsie Fraga:

Well, I went to St. John's Church. I was baptized there, married there. I taught school for many years. I taught high school. French, Spanish, and English. And when I got married, my husband said, "I would love to have you work in the office with me because I have Wednesdays off and you're working." So I always said, "Mother, I will never work in an office. That's the most boring job you can have." But anyway, I ended up working in the office and I did it for many, many years. I was the office manager. And we had a great life and I miss him terribly.

Naomi Slipp:

I'm sure. Hmm.

Elsie Fraga:

So that's my life. I have no children. I have no children and I have no close relatives, but I have the most wonderful friends that anybody in this world could ever have. And I will tell you, growing up, my mother ... My father had a bad accident and wasn't able to work for years. So Mother had to go to work. And I had neighbors like you can't believe. I was like a latchkey kid. And those neighbors looked after me like I was their own child. It was wonderful. We mostly had Jewish neighbors in this area and they were just wonderful for me.



Naomi Slipp:

Isn't it amazing how a neighborhood can just make-

Elsie Fraga:

Neighborhood changes, but they're changing for the better. Now, my street was all retired people, and now we have children. It's alive. I love to watch these children grow up. They're so smart today. And some of them are so polite. Oh, it's wonderful.

Naomi Slipp:

Well, that's-

Elsie Fraga:

I've lived a long time and I've seen a lot. And when people can't see the beauty in New Bedford, they just don't open their eyes wide enough. Because there's a lot here, if you just look. And take advantage of it.

Naomi Slipp:

Absolutely.

Elsie Fraga:

That's my story.

Naomi Slipp:

Wonderful. Thank you.