

Transcription of Roy Muise - Our Voices Matter Interview

Interviewer: Graham Hooper

GH- Hello, this is the Our Voices Matter Oral History Project. My name is Graham Hooper, I'm here today, it's January the 14th 2011, and I'm sitting with Roy Muise. Ah Roy could you tell me where you were born and maybe start with what your childhood was like?

RM- Sure, ah I was born ah in a small town in Nova Scotia, Berwick. Ah down in the Annapolis Valley. Ah my dad was in the air force, so we were actually, he was actually stationed in Greenwood at the time. And then ah we did some moving around and what not while I was quiet young. Ah we moved to ah Summerside, and after Summerside ah we moved to Chatham, New Brunswick, and it was while we were in Chatham, I was seven at the time that ah my dad passed away. And after he passed away, we moved back to Berwick ah because that's where my mom's parents were living. And so ah we umm we moved in with them. So ah a lot of, the rest of my childhood ah yeah was spent down in the valley, ah in Berwick, ah going to school there, and ah and everything else so.

GH- Umm when you say school you did finish high school down there

RM- I actually ah have my grade eleven, I didn't, I didn't finish, back then ah you could still go to University with a grade eleven. But the main reason that I didn't ah get my grade twelve, I did go to what's, at that time called a vocational school. I took a retailing course ah partially because ah I felt it necessary that I get out and start earning a living as soon as possible. Ah my mom wasn't able to work and umm because of some health issues, she had been working before but ah had a lot of problems and everything else like that. So ah, ah I had been told when my dad died

that ah I was now the man of the house, and I took that quiet seriously so my plan was of course, you know to get to work and start supporting the family.

GH- Do you have any particular memories of your childhood good or bad that really stands out

RM- Well I think what really stands out, ah yeah there's a couple of things, you know there were a lot of ah, ah a lot of good times as far as that goes, yup. You know I had friends and everything but there was also umm I remember a lot of people talking or saying to me at different times you know you're always so serious, you're always so solemn ah you hardly ever laugh and you know I didn't think a whole lot about it at the time other than hey I don't laugh at something cause I don't find it particularly funny. But I now realize that, that was probably the very beginning of my depression. Ah I took it very seriously that I was the head of the household even though I wasn't even the oldest child, ah I was the oldest male, and ah mom tended to depend on me an awful lot. Ah you know during the summer I did the grocery shopping ah, ah I was always the one that she sent with the cheques to go pay the bills and, and things like that. Ah a lot of times ah we weren't destitute but a lot of times ah there wasn't a lot of money and ah, ah so if there wasn't ah, ah quiet often she would take me to one side and say well you know I'm buying the kids ah I'm buying your sisters and your brother a new outfit for school but I just don't have enough money but I know you understand.

GH- Right

RM- So that happened a lot while I was growing up

GH- Did you have a lot of friends or were you kind of a solo individual at that point

RM- I had a few friends ah, I, I, I wouldn't say a lot of friends but certainly had a few friends that you got along, you know ah, ah, ah you know in the particularly younger days played a lot together and things like that but ah, yeah ah, ah it wasn't a lot but there was some because ah umm part of the other thing is to is that a lot of times ah I didn't have time to do that. Ah a lot of times ah for example ah my older sister and I at quiet a young age cause my grandmother couldn't manage cooking for ah, all of a sudden cooking for two to cooking for seven people ah we learned how to cook supper.

GH- How many brothers and sisters do you have?

RM- I have two sisters and one brother.

GH- Ok, umm so when you finished grade eleven and you were looking at vocational schools did you go away to school or did you move away

RM- No ah, the vocational school was in Kentville and there was a bus from Berwick you know, ah there was a school bus and everything like that so, so I took a retail course there, yup.

GH- And when you finished that you obviously started working I am assuming at some point umm wha, what sort of employment wise you know job search

RM- Well, well it was kind of interesting because ah I knew I had a job even before I went into the school. Ah I, I, I knew that there was a job. Ah our next door neighbour had a grocery business in Berwick and ah I knew there was a job there for me. Ah but part of what was happening to was that he and my mother had started to date. And I was extremely jealous because here was this male figure taking my place and ah she was working for him. And ah I had a lot of problems dealing with that. And it was towards the end of the school year there are, I

remember there was about three of us in the class, three or four, that because we had, had a lot of experience, because I was working part-time for him at the time ah because we had a lot of retail experience and it was a retail course that we were taking ah we were going to be able to take the two year course in one year. And ah anyway towards the, the end of the year ah someone had come to the school, ah actually it was from a, from a, from a grocery wholesaler, ah they were looking for people to ah work in this new store they were opening in Bedford. And I decided to go. So when I left school that's where I went, to start with.

GH- You came, you came to Metro?

RM- Yes, I came to the metro area and everything. Ah I stayed less than a year. Umm it just it, it, it well for a whole lot of reasons it didn't work out and everything like that. I missed people and because I didn't know a lot of people and everything ah one thing in another and I was kind of still very, very confused and everything else like that. But I think it was to because I had ah, was, I was still going home on the weekends if I didn't have to work. And I, I, I think I was starting to reconcile, reconcile myself to the two of them going out and everything else. So after ah let's see I started working in Bedford ah in early April and ah I came back home in September.

GH- Ok, no, the big city can be a little dark to anyone

RM- Yeah it was, it was

GH- Especially in your late teens and early twenties

RM- Exactly

GH- And you got personal stuff going on, so did you move back home after that?

RM- I moved back home, but very quickly found an apartment

GH- Right,

RM- The, the, the same area and everything. For, for the individual that I was talking about ah he and mom ended up getting married and ah actually further down the road I ended up along with a partner we ended up taking over the business.

GH- Right, so that was further down the road, but you worked, you were working for him and living in an apartment

RM- Yup

GH- In the Berwick area

RM- Yup

GH- In the Kentville area

RM- Yup

GH- Umm what was going on, you had said you when you were in school, grade school you started to see maybe in retrospect signs of depression and stuff, was this continuing this time, were you getting, was this an issue for you

RM- This was still continuing all though I don't know if I would call it an issue because at the time I just thought it was the way everybody felt. And so ah I, ah I, didn't really think a whole about it you know it's just you know I had days were I didn't want to get up and go to work but I

knew I had to, so I got up and went to work. Ah you know there were times when the last thing I wanted to do was being around people. But you know because of situations you know I would go ahead and do it. And, and everything so

GH- Right and you had an apartment by yourself

RM- I had an apartment by myself

GH- How long did this sort of stage of life where you're working and living by yourself in Berwick go, what was the next sort of big land mark

RM- Well sort of the big landmark ah I started dating somebody, and ah that was going really, really well. Ah and we decided to get married and ah I was, yeah ah I was still working for ah for working for well I call, I call him my step-father although you know I was nineteen I think when he and mom married but umm he, he, he kind of liked that. That we did that so but anyway ah you know I was working for him but he was also priming me to take over the business. And ah so anyways ah I did ah I got married, umm still working at the store ah getting ready to take over the business he, he and my mother were actually married the same year that I got married. And ah anyways umm ah I had a, I had sort of said all along that ah I really wanted somebody to go into business with me if I was going to take over the store. Ah and umm so it just happened that an opening came up and everything, I hired a friend of mine and, and everything so we started making plans to take over the business.

GH- Right, umm so what age were you when you got married just so I have some sort of perspective you were?

RM- I was, well I turned twenty-one the following week so

GH- Ok so married and was it a long time before you took over the business or did this all just sort of happen

RM- It would be about three years after that.

GH- So still your early twenties

RM- So I was still in my early twenties, ah we, we took over the business ah and, and everything and you know it, it, it was fine. We had, ah we had this circle of friends and everything that ah, ah everything seemed to go quite well you know and ah I guess I was relatively happy at the time.

GH- And at home umm I mean taking over a business your life isn't your own, anyway

RM- No, no

GH- Umm but home was, was ok at that point

RM- It was ok, it was ok.

GH- I know you have grandchildren so were there children then

RM- Ah well ah, my son was born umm four years after we were married.

GH- Right

RM- Yup so ah so he was born ah and, and everything. You know with the business store and everything else like that yeah there was, there was ah there were times that probably wished, wished I could of maybe been home but it, it wasn't that bad, ah and, and it just sort of worked out to that a lot of times when I had to work in the evening ah my wife had to work in the

evening as well. Ah because she, she was trained as a school teacher, had gone to the Nova Scotia Teachers College, but ah for the first couple of years out of college she couldn't get a job teaching. Or, or only part-time like on call sort of thing. So she was actually working as a activity planner ah at a large nursing home. And most of the activities took place in the evenings. So ah, so ah I had to work at night or something like that because of the business, ah quite often we'd be getting home at the same time so.

GH- Right, umm no I mean here you are a young man, family and business

RM- Yup

GH- Cruising along

RM- Yup

GH- But most people figure things are good was there a point where umm things changed drastically all of a sudden, or was there a change cause you obviously left that at some point

RM- It started to go downhill ah, ah again it was just this feeling of, of, umm just not being happy, ah I started having ah, all the time I didn't realize what they were, I now were anxiety attacks. Ah I was ah really having some issues and things like that and my wife at the time too was going through a rough time, she'd come from a, a, a very ah what we call now a dysfunctional family. And she, you know she had a pretty horrendous childhood by times. Ah so she had ended up going to see a psychiatrist ah to get some help and everything and there was a time that he wanted to see both of us for awhile so we used to both go. And that seemed to be helpful and everything and, and it certainly seemed helpful for my wife, ah then after awhile I think he, he tried to pick up on maybe that I wasn't doing as well as I was trying to let on to

people. And so he started seeing me on my own and umm had a lot of chance to talk and everything else and but things started to escalate and ah, ah it just got to the point where I just felt I couldn't go on anymore ah so in 1977 I think it was, no 70, 79 sorry, in 79 he actually sent me to the Nova Scotia Hospital

GH- Ok

RM- Ah at that time he thought I was going to be down there for a maybe a couple of weeks ah it turned out to be three months ah and probably well without a doubt the absolute worst experience of my life.

GH- Right now without going into specifics necessarily, what made this the worst period of your life, how you're feeling or what information you were learning or, what, what characterises this as the worst period

RM- It, it, it, it was several things, first of all it was how I was feeling ah secondly it was just being so isolated from people that I knew and (coughs) thirdly ah it was sort of learning how to yeah, yeah hey there is something definitely wrong here, but I think the worst part to was back at that period of time ah medication was a be all, end all. And ah as I like to say they would keep pumping you full of, of medication and as long as you can stand upright everything was ok. Ah when I went into hospital ah I was, of course this was this back in the days of valium, and everything and ah I, I was on valium from the ah psychiatrist at home ah it was just sort of as need type thing. Ah but when I left hospital I was on eight different medications.

GH- So very over medicated

RM- Very over medicated, ah the, the whole time down there ah because at that time there were no programs, nothing.

GH- No supports

RM- Ah you know you had to get up in the morning, ah you went into the breakfast room, you had breakfast, you went and got your medication, then you went into the T.V. room and sat and watched T.V. until it was lunch time and then you know, and, and ah there were no activities or anything else like that. Ah I remember there was this one nurse ah she was really good, like she, she, she really knew that we needed a lot more and everything and she started in the evenings when she was working, ah doing some relaxation therapy with us, ah she had an empty room and we'd go in with a pillow and we would, we would do deep muscle relaxation, and I remember thinking how well that made me feel and everything else like that, well then the sort of powers to be found out about it and put an end to it. And ah my psychiatrist that I had, had at the time, in the three months that I was there I think I saw him a total of three times. Ah on the first time I saw him he told me, he said if you learn how to swim you'll never have another problem and I thought "ok", and as it happened they had a swimming pool in the hospital so they enrolled me in swimming lesson and ah you have to sort of realize I'm somebody, I, I can't stand to have my head underwater and I'm just terrified and everything else and I tried for about, I think I think I went to three and, and I just I can't do it anymore. Ah the other thing that was happening because of the medication, ah I call it my zombie days. Ah it, it, it was, it was an experience that ah I had never had before and I hope to never ever have again. But I can remember I would be like sitting in a chair ah particularly because by this time I was going home on the weekends and ah I was on a lot of medication but I'd be sitting in a chair and first of all I couldn't keep my eyes open ah it

was just too much effort it wasn't that I was tired because I would be fully awake and I would be aware of everything that was going on, there would be conversations going on and I just couldn't join in. It was just too much effort to try and say anything. And another thing that was happening that I can always remember too is that ah I would sit with my arms like this, not resting on the arms of the chair but about an inch above.

GH- Ok

RM- And you know it, it, it was just you know like I say the whole thing was just really ah you know, well I call it like I say I call it my zombie period.

GH- Yeah umm during this time you said it was three months that you were at the hospital

RM- Yup

GH- In total, umm what sort of changed after three months you know when you were finally released, did you go back home, and had you had a chance or were you unable to because of the medication to sort of process this whole occurrence you know that you had been to hospital

RM- I wasn't processing it or certainly not much. Well number one there was really no opportunity unless you just sat and did it on your own. But ah what I didn't know at first in the background was that my mother was in constant ah, ah, ah contact with them. And she was convinced that I had this deep dark secret that I was trying to hide and that's what all the problem was. So ah it sort of all came to light, I got called for an appointment with my psychiatrist, ah the head of psychiatry was sitting there and my mother was in the waiting room. And I thought well now what's going on. And she just said something about, well you know we didn't expect you to be down here this long and everything, so I went in and the first thing the

head of psychiatry said was why do you hate your psychiatrist so much. And I, you know sitting there thinking, what are you talking about I've only seen the man once you know (Chuckles)

GH- Yeah

RM- And, and, and everything and well we've been getting letters that you're not getting any help or anything else like that, I said well nothing seems to be happening but that I get more and more medication. And ah and everything. And ah you know well you know your family thinks there some deep dark secret and you're not telling us what it is and we want to know what it is. And I said there is no deep dark secret that I'm aware of or anything, and ah so that was it as far as ah I didn't know anything you know. They sent me back to the ward and everything and then it would be about three or four days later ah they wanted me to start seeing a psychologist who was in a different building down there. And ah so I started to see, to see him and it was great you, you know I had an opportunity to talk to somebody. And you know come to find out I guess there maybe was a deep dark secret and that ah I hadn't really wanted to go into retail but I was feeling forced into from my mother and my

GH- The responsibility

RM- The responsibility and everything like that. And when I finally said that to him, it was just such a huge relief and I realized, "ok this is where something is going on, right". So anyway we were, we did some more talking. I just want to go back for a second thou, talking about the medication to show how bad it was at that time ah there was umm ah, a throat infection going through the ward and so after awhile I got it, so went to see the ah the GP who was on on-unit all the time and he said yeah you got the throat, throat infection that's going around ah he said I will

give you some penicillin and I said well I am allergic to penicillin and he says oh what happened I said well I would break out in a rash and then I get welts and, and everything. Well we'll have to see so of course they gave me penicillin twenty minutes later I'm at the nurses' station red as a beet, welts are starting and everything else like that and I just said see I told you, and rather than, yeah at first he says to me, he says "well we had to check for ourselves because we certainly couldn't take your word for it" which sort of let me know ok yeah this is sort of where you are and everything and I think the other thing that aggravated me too was rather than take me off the penicillin and try something else they just gave me something to counteract the, the side effects of the penicillin so but anyways getting back to where I was with the ah, with the having some therapy finally with this psychologist ah yeah we sort of determined that ah, I wasn't going to go back to work, not, not back to where I was. Ah he was pretty blunt the last meeting that I had, had with him. He said Roy, he said as far as I am concerned he says you're ready to go home. He says, don't take this the wrong way but he says I hope I never see you again. And, but he says, I will tell you this he said if you go back to the store he said I will probably see you within six months.

GH- Right

RM- So, that's (laughs) that took a lot when I went home.

GH- Yeah, umm so with this new information umm, you realized I, I gather that you knew something clinical was wrong but you also knew situational you had to change things

RM- Exactly

GH- So you leave the hospital and you go home, then what happens?

RM- Well what happened after that, first of all, ah was still seeing the psychiatrist back home, ah he was, was very upset when he saw me the first time because I'm still in my zombie state sort of. Ah yeah well not sort of, I was, luckily he started weaning me off the different medications and things like that, and by the time I was off the medications ah I just swore that first of all never again would I ever go back to hospital, never again would I ever go on any kind of psychiatric medication and so I sort of entered what I call my los, my lost decade that was the eighties

GH- Right

RM- Because I was in complete denial. There wasn't anything wrong with me, there was things wrong with everybody else, but there was nothing wrong with me.

GH- Right

RM- And you know ah I, it wasn't easy I had to dissolve the partnership umm

GH- The business partners

RM- The business partnership, the ah the other thing that had happened to was that ah my mother and step-father did not take it very well ah they immediately thought that I was trying to put the blame on them and you know I kept trying to tell them no I'm not, you know I went into and everything ah you know and no I'm not blaming anybody. So that took, that put a strain on things, the other thing had happened too in along with this before I was actually hospitalized was when our son was born ah my wife had extreme, extremely sever post-partum blues and she actually ended up being hospitalized ah because of it. Ah the one of the things that had happened which she sort of kept this from me but I knew that her father had schizophrenia and she had

actually been diagnosed ah with ah umm schizoid-affected disorder and she had actually, the psychiatrist we had been seeing had actually ah recommended that she not have children.

Because he said the trauma of childbirth, he said I don't know what might happen. And what did happen was ah after the, after she got over the post-partum depression and everything she was a completely different person, she was definitely not the person I married. Ah in a lot of respects I think she turned out to be a better person in that she was more sure of herself, and had a lot more confidence and everything else like that. But it was like ah coming home a night to a stranger because this was not the person that I had married. Ah so it was only a few years after giving up the business that our marriage broke up as well.

GH- Were you still living down in the Valley

RM- Still living in the Valley, I had found another job. We had moved away from Berwick, not far but we had moved away from Berwick because it, it, it was I couldn't stand seeing the store every day, you know and, and everything so ah got a job with a, a, a wholesaler and ah down in the Valley and that's ok, ah I started working that in, ok I got out of the hospital in ah April, end of April, and I think I started, I actually found the job it was before, it was around the middle of May, so I really wasn't without work that long ah but then ah when I did ah get to work there it was ok, it was a job, but I really wasn't happy with it. But anyway I got laid off in the following February ah only because there was a couple of other people who were just seasonal, you know applied and everything else like that. The full intention was we'd be hired back on and everything and ah that sort of thing but with ah well it was unemployment then, employment insurance, now of course I had to be available for work. So I ah went in actually, it was for an interview with a new Canadian Tire store that was opening in New Minas, and ah it was for a job

working in there warehouse, but after talking to the store owner he realized the retail experience that I had and everything else like that I actually got a job in the store, in the new store and everything, so ah so after Rose and I separated ah she moved back to Berwick, ah I stayed where we were for a little while then I just moved to Kentville, because it was a lot easier for me and everything like that.

GH- Umm during this time umm your marriage dissolved, but you were still seeing your son I'm assuming and

RM- Yup, yup, we had worked out things

GH- So it wasn't a terrible situation,

RM- It wasn't terrible, it, it, it wasn't perfect but it wasn't terrible.

GH- And you had a new job,

RM- Yup

GH- So again this must of gone on for a time period, when sort of the next big change, when did the next big change take place after this, I, I, I look at junkets of life

RM- Exactly

GH- When was the next sort of turning point?

RM- The next big change, the next turning point, ah the marriage breaking up was definitely one because yes I got through it but I would of almost done anything to keep the marriage together, I would, I was willing to almost sell my soul to the devil but it wasn't going to happen. The next

big junket actually came ah towards the end of the eighties, ah that was back in the time we were in rescission, ah the store owner was quiet blunt about it in that you know he was ready to retire in a couple of years and he hadn't made as much money as he thought he was going to make from the store. Ah it was a very successful store in fact, quiet proud of the fact that we were one of the top ten stores in Canada, but anyway he you know, he basically said, this was ah leading up to Christmas, it would of been in October, ah late September or early October in 89, ah he basically, no in 90 sorry, ah he basically said that umm I have a lot of full time employees here, this was in a conversation to me, ah I could replace each and every one of you with a couple of part-time people and I don't have to spend, pay as much, and don't have to give benefits too, and ah then he created a new job for me because at that time I was assistant store manager, but he created a new job ah it had to do with raising the ah, ah the gross profit of the store and everything else like that. I was supposed to do this in a period of three months, but my hands were tied in that I was no allowed to order merchandise to do it, or anything else like that. And I wasn't going to be given any figures to know how things were going. So I sort of saw the hand writing on the wall and I ah, decided it was October and I said you know to myself I'll have a better chance finding a job leading up to Christmas then waiting till the New Year. So I had sort of debated ah I had friends down in Annapolis Royal, ah new a lot of people in Annapolis Royal and in fact actually turned down a couple of job offers over the years down there, but I also had a couple of friends in Halifax who were saying, come to Halifax, and I thought probably a better chance at Halifax. So I ah, moved to Halifax, ah Thanksgiving weekend. I had put in my notice, and ah came to Halifax so.

GH- Umm so when you came down here I'm assuming you found a job here, and started living in the Metro area.

RM- Ah yes, it took awhile ah to find something; I actually didn't find anything till after Christmas. But ah but anyway I did find a job here ah by that time I was starting to realize too I think that there was something seriously wrong

GH- Mmhmm

RM- Really wrong with me. Ah I was just so unhappy, ah it didn't matter you know ah, ah, ah I was just plain miserable. Ah got to the point where ah I was sharing an apartment with a friend until you know I got myself settled and, and everything. I was sharing an apartment and I had been doing some journaling which is something I had never done before, but I was just, doing it on my own with sort of writing down my thoughts and everything else like that. And anyway I don't think I did it deliberately but maybe sub-consciously I did, I left the journal out one day because I had written in it that ah, ah I, I just wanted my life to end. Anyway the person saw it, read it, ah came rushing home from work, and dragged me down to the emergency ward, room at the hospital.

GH- Mmhmm

RM- So while I was there they did an assessment and everything and ah basically said I'd be getting a call within you know, three days to see somebody ah and everything. And ah I did, actually what I actually was called for was a drug trial, that they were doing with people with depression. So I got called in, and you know it was all explained to me and everything else like that and you know that I'll still see, you know still being seeing somebody on a regular basis you know and, and everything and so you know you was I willing, so I said sure. So this would, that was in April and so I was on the medication for three months, ah started feeling a little better ah

stopped the medication because the trial ended, and everything and it was sort of felt that maybe everything was ok, and ah that fall I attempted suicide.

GH- Ok, so before we get to the suicide you, I'm assuming by what you said the denial period of what you saw of your lost decade was grinding to an end,

RM- It, it, it was grinding to an end

GH- You realized there is something wrong

RM- There, there was something wrong.

GH- And by complying to this treatment

RM- Yup

GH- It was sort of acceptance that there was something wrong,

RM- There was something definitely wrong, yup

GH- So, the suicide attempt umm describe sort of, what happened in the aftermath more, what that attempt, what happened to your life after that.

RM- Well, after that ah several things happened and ah not all them good. Ah, ah, ah of course I ended up being hospitalized, ah that was when I finally got the diagnosis of clinical depression, ah was put on umm medication, ah one of the things I found really interesting, well a couple things I found interesting, first of all it was just the fact that the psychiatrist said to me that you know I mean we hear a lot about the chemical imbalance and everything else like that, he actually said to me he said you know your serotonin is low he said we don't know if low

serotonin causes depression or if depression causes low serotonin levels however we treat the serotonin levels so that was back when Prozac was first out, and so I was put on Prozac and ah was in hospital for awhile, ah I think about three weeks ah then they had ah they had sent me to the ah, ah the day treatment program at the Abi Lane as well, ah which was for six weeks plus they had ah lined up after that I would be seeing a social worker for cognitive behaviour therapy. Found a whole bid difference in the hospital itself, ah just in not, not, not only in the fact that ah there was a windows in the room,

GH- This is a decade later?

RM- Yeah this is, this is a little over a decade later and everything plus they were actually things to do, and you can actually go out on the property, and after awhile you earned passes so that you can walk downtown if you wanted to, you know so and, and a whole different sort of atmosphere and everything else like that I mean when I said I was allergic to penicillin and by that time found as well sulpha drug as well they actually put it on my chart (laughter) you know so there was a whole different attitude and everything and, and of course it wasn't always over medication and everything because ah you know it was very much explained to me that what we will find is the ah medication so that you're feeling well then we'll try to back it off a little bit until we find the maintenance dose. I was like all this was, this all makes sense and everything but on the negative side is what it did to my family because I was always the strong one, I was the one they always went to ah whenever there was a problem or anything, ah or of they just needed to talk to somebody, or whatever it was they always went to Roy. And all of a sudden Roy wasn't there. And they acted probably the best they could for themselves but it was the

worst they could of done for me, in that they just cut off all contact with me. And so that made things really, really difficult but ah

GH- Just, just, just to clarify, this is both umm your ex-wife and son but also were your parents

RM- Well by, by that time actually ah my mother had passed away and ah, ah yeah my two sisters and my brother. And they just, they basically cut off all contact ah with me, and everything so, ah even after getting out of hospital and, and the day treatment program, and the day treatment program was great cause I learned all kinds of positive life skills, and things like that, but what happened to I guess was I went through this period you know really trying to particularly when I was seeing the social worker for the first time really tried to reconnect with my family and nothing was working and finally he said which was probably the best advice that I got he said look your leaving the door open but he said there is nothing more you can do, he said all your doing is making yourself miserable. He said you need to start moving on so that's what I started to do. I started to move on, ah it wasn't easy. Ah, ah, even while I was in the day treatment program I was still working evenings. Ah I really wasn't supposed to be but I needed the money. Ah and, and, ah, anyways umm but you know I was getting by and everything. Ah so I went about six months that would include the day treatment program and everything else like that. All of a sudden I went down into another deep depression.

GH- So were you, this, this is something I have always been interested in umm were you able to at that point in time this is knowledge of your illness to discern what were real life problems such as the difficulties with your family and what was clinical depression.

RM- NO

GH- You couldn't

RM- At, at, at, at that time I was still having a lot of difficulty and everything else like that, yup. At that particular point in time and I said I suddenly went into a depression ah got to go and back track a bit because after six months on the Prozac, they took me off the Prozac and cause everything seemed to be fine, and it was about a month after that I crashed. And so the first thing the psychiatrist said was well we'll put you back on Prozac. Ah and it, nothing happened and I ended up being hospitalized again.

GH- Mmhmm

RM- And he said well you know he said to me he said well were going to try something else because he said sometimes this happens that if people have been on Prozac and go off when they go back on again it doesn't work. So you know he said you know not, not to worry there is lots for us to try and everything. Ah so we did, we, I forgot now what the second one was, because what happened after that was I went through several years of being on a medication that would work for six or eight months then just stop.

GH- Mmhmm

RM- And so ah, it ah was you know constantly trying new medications and finding ones that work and, and everything else and depending too on how badly it affected me quiet often I was hospitalized while they were doing the switch sometimes I didn't have to be or, or more than likely I'd, I'd end up being hospitalized.

GH- Umm you mentioned obviously the different medication trials at that point just to explain the therapy's available for people in your situation, we're there any sort of alternative therapies, have you taken up different forms of exercise or anything peripheral to medication.

RM- Ah, exercise cause I did a huge amount of walking, I mean I walked all over Halifax, it didn't matter ah what was going on I would walk to it. You know I would walk back to it didn't matter what end of the city it was and anything else like that so I was doing that but other than that, other than you know talk therapy, medication that was basically it.

GH- Mmhmm

RM- In the early days

GH- Did you journal, or monitor your sleep or that sort of thing

RM- They, they, they would talk about journaling a bit and everything and umm although I had tried it once before I, I, I gave it an honest try but it didn't seem to, seem to help. What was helping me more than anything was the CBT because I was learning how to switch the way I was thinking about things but it still wasn't easy and, and, and at that point too there was like we mentioned earlier it was still finding it difficult to recognize the difference between a situational depression and, and the clinical depression I hadn't gotten there yet. But what was happening through this period of time was that ah I sort of took it upon myself, I said I got to learn everything there is about depression and ah I would go to the library and get books, if I was in a grocery store and there was a magazine there and depression was on the cover I'd, I'd buy it. Ah I did, I, I, I went looking for any and all, any information that I could get on it ah and everything. Really trying hard with, with that ah CBT and everything but it just, (sighs) we couldn't really, it

would work a bit but it just wasn't doing the right job and, and, and everything so I was constantly in and out of hospital, ah like I said constantly changing medications, and, and everything you know really trying, still trying to work and everything else ah finally ah in ah 96, I attempted suicide again.

GH- So at this point just, as I had said to you before we started tapping the line between symptoms, diagnosis, intellectual understanding, and then finally sort of an acceptance and working with it, you were at this point trying to gain an intellectual understanding

RM- Yup

GH- Of your illness but still the illness was, still had control of you completely

RM- Exactly and I'm glad you used the word controlled, because you will understand a little later but, yeah, but so after that attempt ah and I got out of hospital and still you know ah, I was very fortunate in that I had the same social worker for almost fourteen years and with the exception of one break I had the same psychiatrist for almost the same period of time so I had build up a really good rapport with both of them and, and everything which was really important but you know I started thinking that you there's got to be more than this and everything else like that and, and quiet innocently well at that particular time, just let me go back to the suicide attempt and everything like that, ah at that particular time like, things had been really bad at work ah

GH- You were still working?

RM- I was still working, the ah I was working for a chain, the district supervisor, I was assistant manger I worked myself up to that again, but the district manager had said to the senior management in the store he will never go any further because of his illness ah

GH- This was disclosed was it?

RM- They disclosed to me, they weren't supposed to but they did ah and I often thank them for that, I have always thank them for that but anyway but he said in fact he say were going to eliminate the assistant manager position in the store, we can't fire him but you know that's what we're doing. So anyway while I was in hospital and while this was going on, it was they were you know, staff was actually saying, Roy you cannot go back to work there, because I found out, I found out to at that time they had, they had actually staff had been told if I did the least little thing that seemed out of line they were to report it, and things like that

GH- Did you know this at the time or was that told to you afterwards

RM- I found out afterwards,

GH- Ok, which was, I was wondering

RM- Because, actually before it, it, it, it was all that led up to the suicide attempt because I called into the manager's office one day and he pulls this stuff out of a file and starts wanting explanations for stuff that has happened nine, ten, eleven months ago and I'm like I don't even remember it happening, you know and that sort of thing and it was just a very toxic situation. And, and everything so they basically said at the hospital Roy, you cannot go back to work while I was there I had gone on short term disability cause at that time I think I spent about three months in hospital ah I gone on short term disability which was cut off without any explanation

or any advance warning ah and everything well anyway long story short I ended up resigning my position there ah and ah when I came out of hospital I was on social assistance,

GH- Mmhmm, and you were how old just so I get the whole picture

RM- Then I would have been what thirty six, yup about, thirty-six.

GH- About thirty-six and umm outside of obviously work was a big part of life were you either like, had you engage in other interest or social or anything in that sort of

RM- There were a few things, I was doing some volunteer work, I was actually volunteering for CMHA at that point,

GH- Right

RM- Cause I had started volunteering with them in 92, ah that was something that ah through my social worker ah got my involved in the Building Bridges

GH- Right

RM- Program because he was on the advisory committee

GH- Ok

RM- And, so that was how I first got involved with CMHA, and ah you know I was a volunteer with the program and then ah I ended up on the board and you know various other things, so yeah that started a lot of the volunteer work that I was doing. Ah started doing a lot more after I stopped work and also for other organizations and things. But ah, about that same time I was finding because one of the things that I did after I left work was I joined the social club at

CMHA, and one of the things I found was that people felt really comfortable talking to me, and it made me feel good, you know they would be talking about their problems and, and I could just sort of give my perspective but I always felt good about it. Ah even if they didn't listen to it. You know it didn't really matter,

GH- So

RM- Everything, so, that sort of put an idea in the back of my head well maybe this is something I would like to do down the road, or something like that, and of course the more logical side of me would be saying training, blah, blah, blah, your too old, and everything, anyway, but it was an idea in the back of my head but also at this time to and I think to probably leaving work was in the end was actually a blessing it gave me more time, ah I started thinking about you know the illness everything and I said ok enough is enough I am sick and tired of this illness controlling me it's time for me to start controlling the illness. And I remember telling my social worker and I remember him saying look we'll do anything to help you, so ah they had a couple programs there about depression that I took, ah I also did some OT tests as to what kind of work I would be good at, funny thing counselling kept coming up as a job I might be good at. But anyway, ah I was doing a lot more volunteer work ah not just with CMHA although ah I was doing a lot with them, and ah I also got involved with the provincial organization and also the national organization.