

## Philip Aspler - Preliminary Draft Interview Questions

### Questions for interview

Good day Mr Aspler, my name is Wanda...Wanda Potrykus...may I call you Philip or would you prefer Phil?

Just to recap and to make sure we both have the same understanding that we are recording this interview in English for use in the Atwater Library 2017-18 Oral History project currently in progress...the participants of which are interviewing Montrealese islanders, former and current residents and workers as well as those just passing through and we are asking for stories about the area surrounding the Atwater Library.

Your own story is of great interest because I understand you have lived your whole life in the area between Bishop Street in downtown Montreal and Victoria Avenue in Westmount...apart from the time you were in Canadian military during WWII?

So, if it's okay with you, I like to perhaps start at the beginning...

1) Your parents lived where exactly? What did father work at? Did your mother work (which I understand would have been quite unusual at the time)?

2) You are 93 years old and very spry with a great sense of humour as I know from the last couple of years spent playing cribbage with you. And from previous conversations you told me you were in fact also born right in this very area in the former Women's Hospital that was originally located on Guy street, and that moved to Tupper Street. In fact the Atwater Library was built in the 1920s right next door to it. It seems around the same time as the opening of the library, was when the Women's Hospital name was changed along with its function. Still a neighbourhood maternity hospital but now its mandate was widened to include more specialities and so was renamed the Women's General Hospital. There was one more name change to come though, which in fact happened in 1945 when the Women's General became the Herbert Reddy Hospital in recognition of the work of one of its long time and much beloved doctor - Dr Herbert Reddy? Do you have any memories of the hospital...no, not being born, of course, but did you ever attend it as a child or adult?

3) I understand you were a twin? What was your brother's name? Which one of you was born first? Do you have any other siblings? If so are any still alive or what were their names? What was the order of birth i.e. are you older or younger than them?

4) Do you have memories you would like to share with us about your childhood on (insert name of street lived on)?

5) What kind of home/apartment did you live in?

6) Which school(s) did you attend? Did you and your brother attend the same school(s)?

7) Did you play any sports? Or other games? Pool? Soccer? Baseball? Hockey? As I understand you are an accomplished checkers player? Along with card games, such as cribbage. Do you play chess? Or? Did you play them as a family or just with your brother or with other friends?

8) Growing up you ever attend games either at the old MAAA field where Westmount High now stands or at Montreal Forum or at the Montreal Baseball field, which I understand was located where the Alexis Nihon mall and apartments and office towers now stand?

9) If so, can you tell us some stories about that time? Growing up in the area? For instance, do you remember the Montreal street cars and/or trams. Did you get to travel much on them i.e. to see family, etc. If so, where did you catch them from? Cabot Square (opposite the Atwater Library)? Or ??

10) Did you ever visit the Atwater Library across the street from Cabot Square? It would have been new to the neighbourhood but since you were born the same year it opened, it would have just been part of the neighbourhood to you?

11) Along the north side of Cabot Square is the famed Montreal Forum...

"Called "the most storied building in hockey history" by Sporting News, it was the home of the National Hockey League's Montreal Maroons from 1924 to 1938 and the Montreal Canadiens from 1926 to 1996. The Forum was built by the Canadian Arena Company in 159 days. " Source Wikipedia

Did you play hockey as a child, as an adult? If not, did you have any particular sport?

12) Did you attend any games at the Forum as a child? As an adult?

13) Do you have any stories to share with us about the Montreal Forum?

14) You told me you used to live overlooking the Montreal Baseball Field. Could tell us where and what sort of view you had? Were games still being played at that time as before you were born the Royals moved to DeLorimier Field, so weren't the 'local' team anymore. Do you happen to know who played there? Was it just pickup games or were organized games still played there any league play or municipal house teams that you know of?

15) What was this area like living in. Especially with the open spaces i.e. the Montreal Baseball field, the Congregation Notre Dame complex across the street?

16) You were 15 or 16 when the Second WW began. What was that like? What memories do you have of the war both the time leading up to it and the start? Was it exciting or were your parents worried? What was it like being a young man at that time? What memories do you have?

17) I understand you and your brother enlisted? What year was that and how old were you?

18) Can you tell us what the military was like? Which branch did you choose or were you just assigned. Were you and your brother in the same regiment/unit? What was training like? Do you have any good memories or funny incidents that happened during your time in the military?

19) I don't wish to open old wounds but I understand you were injured in training and so did not go overseas at the same time as your brother? Can you tell us about that and about what happened to him?

20) What year was that? How hard was that for you? For your parents (and other siblings, if any?)

21) How long did it take for the hurt to heal, if it ever did?

24) After you left the military. How did you decide on a career? What did you train as? I understand it was wartime and then postwar and you perhaps did what was available to do? Lots of soldiers coming back from the war and looking for work. Did you ever want to go to University, or was that not a option for you?

25) What made you decide to be an electrician? Did you always want to do that or was that just what was available. Did your poor sight make that job harder to do?

26) Did you have any other career ideas? If so, what?

27) When did you marry? Did you have any children? Did you ever have occasion to take them to the Montreal Children's hospital or did you stick with the Reddy or maybe the Queen Elizabeth on Marlowe in NDG?

28) Where were you living at this time? Did your wife work?

29) You showed me a photo that appeared in the Westmount Examiner of you playing checkers in Westmount Park with those huge pieces on a large checker board and your children watching you. Who were you playing against? Was that a regular weekly game or just occasionally? Did you also play with those huge pieces with your children too? What were they made of? Were they heavy or light?

30) I understand your son also went into the military but stayed in as a career soldier and settled in Edmonton. Was that because he was posted to a base there? What regiment was he in? As far as I understand he is the current Canadian military chess champion and is, I believe, coming to Montreal and Ste Jean sur Richelieu next week to defend his title. It will be nice to see him I guess?

31) What do your other children do? Are they in Montreal or if not, where? Do you have any grandchildren?

32) Can we go back to your middle years? I believe you stopped working as an electrician and went to work in an antique store in Westmount somewhere along Sherbrooke Street? Where you already living in Westmount at that time? If so, on what street? And what year did you move there?

33) Can you tell us the name and address of the antique store? Plus some tales of your life working there? Was it more of a love or did you make money? Did you like it? Did you miss being an electrician or did you prefer your life in an antique store?

34) Did you work for someone or did you own the store? Where did the items come from? Estate sales? Auctions? Other dealers? How did you learn the trade? Did you study or was it a lifelong interest?

35) When did you retire from the store? i.e. How old were you? Did you sell it? If so, who to?

36) How did you spend your retirement? Did you ever think about living into your nineties?

37) When did your wife die? What age was she? Is it lonely in the house without her?

38) What activities do you do to keep busy in retirement?

For instance, I know you still swim at the Y. In fact, you were feted at the Westmount Y's 100th anniversary Gala a few years ago since you had the title of the Y's oldest active member? These days you still go there as you play cribbage there twice a week after the Senior's Aquafit class.

Also I know you also still do some of the maintenance on your house yourself i.e. this fall you were cleaning out the gutters? Pretty bad ass for a man in his 90s up that ladder? Are you worried you might fall? Especially since I understand you have eye issues i.e. glaucoma? Could you tell us what that is like to live with? For instance, what does it make it hard to do? Most things?

39) Nevertheless, you remain so upbeat all the time. Can you give us some tips on how to live into our 90s and in our own homes no less? i.e. the secret to a long life?

40) Do you have any insights or hopes or wishes for our island city now or in the future that people listening to this recording in the future might benefit from (or grimace that it was never done)?

???? Anything else you might like to add?

Note to Phil: these are just an idea of how the interview might go. If there are some of these questions you don't wish to answer. Just let me know and I won't ask. Also if there are some areas of your life I haven't asked about that you might want to talk about feel free to let me know and I can add them.

Once again, thanks for doing this. I am looking forward to it.

Sincerely

Wanda

**After Interview notes:**

I prepare these notes in advance and give them to the interview so he/she has a comfort level with the type of questions I might ask. They are compiled from notes I make after chatting with the interviewee prior to the recording taking place. Their sole purpose is to help the flow of the conversation should they be needed to keep the conversation going during the recording session. Thus, even though they may contain errors sometimes the person calls me up about them but in this instance Phil didn't so it was while the recording was in progress I discovered Phil didn't work as an electrician (thus my mistake). In past conversations he had mentioned about working the RCA building in St Henri...so at some point I must have put two and two together and made five. He, in fact, worked as an office administrator (explained in the interview).