

**009 Sandra Foster****[0:00:00]**

**Interviewer:** Okay. So I'm sitting here with Sandra Foster, and Sandra, thank you very much for coming in. I explained, but I'll say it again that...

**Respondent:** Mm-hm.

**Interviewer:** I'm on the Board of Directors of Harbord Village, and we are doing this history committee because we want to learn what changes have occurred. And so I do want to thank you for coming in.

**Respondent:** You're welcome.

**Interviewer:** I would like you to just give me your name.

**Respondent:** [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** **[0:00:30]** And tell me when you moved here, and how old you were at that time.

**Respondent:** Okay. My name is Sandra Foster. I live at 212 Brunswick Avenue. I moved to Brunswick Avenue in 1952. I think it was June. And I've resided there ever since. This is now going into 2012.

**Interviewer:** Wow. Okay. So who did you move there with at the time?

**Respondent:** I moved there with my family. **[0:01:00]** My mother, my father, a sister, a sister-in-law, my brother, my aunt, my other sister, and a nephew.

**Interviewer:** And through the years, how has that all changed? Who are you living there with now?

**Respondent:** Oh, well right now I'm by myself because the family has passed away, or married and moved out.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

- Respondent:** So like I said, I'm there by [0:01:30] myself now.
- Interviewer:** And who were you there with, say, twenty years ago?
- Respondent:** Twenty years ago. Let me see how long – twenty years ago. Oh, my mother was still – my mother, my aunt was still alive. I think there were some nephews, two or three nephews. The family kept changing as one got older and moved out, another one came in and took his place, or [0:02:00] her place. And my sister was still alive. So I think that's it. Basically mostly all the family was always still there.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** A turnover.
- Interviewer:** Right. Yeah. Do you have any idea what prompted your family to move to this neighbourhood?
- Respondent:** Like my mother was telling me, I think it was 1940s. Well we came – at the end of the war, they were living at College and Euclid renting, [0:02:30] I guess – well I know it's a two-storey home. And they had lived there – my sister with her family, and my mom and dad with our family. And I was just telling my sister the other day, "How did we all manage and fit into that house?" because we're talking seven kids and six adults.
- Interviewer:** Whoa.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** [Laughs]
- Respondent:** So then my sister got pregnant with her sixth child.
- Interviewer:** [Laughs]
- Respondent:** My mother and father put her into a house that they had owned on [0:03:00] Euclid Street, and we moved up here to Brunswick

Avenue, so in 1952 we moved up here, and we split up because the family couldn't fit in two floors anymore.

**Interviewer:** There's still a lot of people in each bedroom.

**Respondent:** Oh yeah. I said, "Well where did we all fit?" She said, "Well we had bunk-beds."

**Interviewer:** And one bathroom.

**Respondent:** Yeah. One bathroom, one small kitchen, and I said, "We must have been all very small at the time," but actually she just said, "Well we managed and we did it, and everybody was happy." That's why I said, you know, we share a bedroom. [0:03:30] It forms a certain bond with your family members, either brother, sister, cousins, nephew, nieces, you know? It forms a good bond.

**Interviewer:** Well I'm so pleased to have you here because you have lived here for many years, and you've watched the changes.

**Respondent:** Mm-hm.

**Interviewer:** Do you like this neighbourhood now? I mean you've been here for decades.

**Respondent:** I love the neighbourhood. Always have. I think my mother was threatening to move in the sixties or something [0:04:00] like that, and I told her if she moves I'm not going with her, so I'm still here. My mother really loved me. [Laughs] So I've always loved it here. It's always close to everything, it was central, never seemed like they had a problem, so I saw no reason to move. And I still see no reason to move.

**Interviewer:** So central works for you.

**Respondent:** Central works for me.

**Interviewer:** Do you feel safe in the neighbourhood?

- Respondent:** When I was growing up in the [0:04:30] neighbourhood. That one time no one ever locked their doors. None of the doors were ever locked. Yeah. But now in the last, I'd say, maybe the last ten years, it's always good to lock your doors and – you know, because our door was always open. I still keep my door open to this day, but it's locked. The screen door is locked now. But I still feel relatively safe. I'm in a nice neighbourhood, and a lot of the neighbours had been around for a while. Not as long as I have, but they've been there around thirty years, thirty-five, [0:05:00] forty years, so I feel relatively safe. We have a very good neighbourhood. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So in that respect, you had the doors unlocked before, and now you lock the door.
- Respondent:** I lock the screen door. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** But if you have to come home, say you get off the subway at Bloor and Spadina, do you feel safe to walk home at ten o'clock at night?
- Respondent:** Ten o'clock, eleven o'clock, yes. It is. Bloor Street is, nowadays, is quite busy. A lot of people on Bloor Street.
- Interviewer:** I feel the same way. I mean – yeah.
- Respondent:** [0:05:30] Yeah. Once I get down to Bloor and Spadina or Bloor and Bathurst, I feel relatively safe, you know?
- Interviewer:** Well what I'd like to talk – I mean mainly what we are going to be talking about changes, and you've seen changes. So I'm wondering if we could start with different waves of population that have come through in your memory.
- Respondent:** In my memory when I first moved up here it was predominantly [0:06:00] Native Indians, Jewish, one family from Poland. There was one family from, I think it was called Hungary then. One Chinese family, which is still there. [Laughs] There was one Japanese family, the Hashimodos, and they still, I think, still own their house the next street over. And basically – and the white middle-class, [0:06:30] and there was just three black families on the street. Mine was one, and the one black family is still there. The

other family moved away but is still in touch, and they owned a couple of houses on this street.

**Interviewer:** Wow.

**Respondent:** The Jacksons.

**Interviewer:** That's smart. Wow.

**Respondent:** Yeah. The Jacksons, so I'm told. Because one of my sisters married a Jackson. Was my sister. Yeah. So that's how come I know, and they have all the history, you know?

**Interviewer:** Well maybe you can give [0:07:00] me some names later.

**Respondent:** Yeah. I could do that because my neighbour across the street, Patrick, at 213 Brunswick, they wrote a book on the Jackson family, and he traced them back to runaway slaves.

**Interviewer:** Oh my god.

**Respondent:** I'm not sure if he won a Giller Award for it, or there was something. I think it's called "The Long, Long Way from Home," or something like that. I forget.

**Interviewer:** Well and also you said there's a Chinese family.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** That's still living there.

**Respondent:** Yeah. They're still living there. Yeah. The Lees. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** I'll [0:07:30] write this down later, but if you can help me get in touch with them that would be great.

**Respondent:** Oh yeah. Okay.

**Interviewer:** And so you're talking about a long time ago. Did you watch some changes in terms of – some people like to move north as they have more money.

**Respondent:** Yes. Yes. Well there was a time, I think, that there was – like I said, there was the epidemic when everybody was moving to Scarborough. Boy, that's when my mother threatened to move. [Laughs] I remember that. And all the neighbours – I mean it [0:08:00] was a lot. I think the properties were larger. It was...

**Interviewer:** Oh yeah.

**Respondent:** It seemed like a good idea at the time. Get away from the city. So a majority of them moved, you know? And some...

**Interviewer:** And who took their places? Do you have some general idea?

**Respondent:** The new flux of new people coming in too were – there was a German family that moved in, there was this other family that came up and they're still there too. [0:08:30] The Garys. They are from Jamaica or Cuba via Jamaica. They were new into the neighbourhood. Let me see what other – and I think that's basically middle-class white that I can remember. And I think that's about it.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So no major waves.

**Respondent:** No major – no. It was gradual. It was gradual. And then there was a time, which I [0:09:00] can't remember what year when we started getting people like from India, and Pakistan, you know? And different ethnic groups. Then a lot of people from the Caribbean came in.

**Interviewer:** And that would have been – any idea? You don't remember.

**Respondent:** Got to be in the seventies.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Yeah.

**Respondent:** The seventies they started, you know? Or late sixties. I think the Garys were the first, like, Caribbean family that I was aware of,

**[0:09:30]** could remember. But everybody up to then – basically we had a small black community and we were in that smaller black community. And there wasn't anybody, like, from the Caribbeans, or from Africa. Never met anybody from that other part of the world.

**Interviewer:** And what was the atmosphere and the mood amongst the different groups?

**Respondent:** It was just wonderful. I mean I can't – we shared everything. There was people had fruit trees in the back. Some of them are still there. The pear trees, apple trees, cherry trees. **[0:10:00]** And what I can remember, the neighbours would all share, and we had two Italian families move in. Dominic and Tudy, and the Martinas. They moved in. They had the pear tree in the backyard. The other Italian family down the street taught my mother how to cook in the basement. [Laughs] I never, ever used the basement to cook because it was so hot in the summertime then. They put the stove down in the basement and they would cook in the basement.

**Interviewer:** So everybody lived harmoniously.

**Respondent:** Everybody did. Yeah. **[0:10:30]** We shared up and down the street.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Especially the Italian – they had a lot of tomatoes. So they would – and make wine. So it was shared. And then the Martinas would give us some – like the apples, and the pears, and all the fruits that were going up and down that were growing in the back laneway. It was nice.

**Interviewer:** So you shared and also exchanged different kinds of food. Like the Italians...

**Respondent:** Italians. Yes, yeah.

**Interviewer:** you would use some of their wine, and of the tomatoes that they grew and such.

- Respondent:** Uh-huh. And send up to my mother. My mother was a widow by then, so [0:11:00] everybody – and then I can remember some people bringing by bags of vegetable. Because then – I don't remember. There used to be a truck, or actually the horse used to come by and bring the vegetables. [Laughter] The vegetable cart.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah. That used to come by, and that's when – you know. It was the end of the day or whatever because we had a big family, big neighbourhood, the guys left all the vegetables with my mom, and my mother would dish them out to the neighbourhood. So.
- Interviewer:** And you [0:11:30] must have heard a lot of languages.
- Respondent:** [Laughs] Yes. Yeah. Especially the ones from Jamaica via Cuba. I wasn't allowed to go past Sussex Street at that time, but I said, "There's a new family that lives up the street. They're black, but they speak funny." [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** So they were speaking some kind of...
- Respondent:** No. No. It was just different. I had never heard Caribbean accent. You know? It was Jamaican.
- Interviewer:** So you had difficulty understanding them?
- Respondent:** Well [0:12:00] to this day. [Laughs] Got to really listen. But now, now they've been here for a long time, and I guess we all went to school together, so you understand them, you know?
- Interviewer:** Where's your family from? Your parents or grandparents?
- Respondent:** My father apparently, we don't know where we got the name Foster from. My father was something like twenty-five years older than my mother.
- Interviewer:** Woo.



**Respondent:** Yeah. So we have these two families. Like I just had – [0:12:30] my sister is eighty-nine and my brother, who's ninety-five, just passed away in July.

**Interviewer:** Oh my god.

**Respondent:** And I'm sixty-five, so there was a big gap in there. But apparently, again, my father came to this country at the turn of the century and he was the first TTC conductor.

**Interviewer:** And where did he come from?

**Respondent:** We figure he comes from Jamaica or he could have come through Cuba off [0:13:00] the famous banana boat. You know, guys would get a job on the banana – or come through the islands and they had a lot of nicknames, so we figured that's probably where he might have come through there.

**Interviewer:** But starting in Jamaica.

**Respondent:** Starting in Jamaica.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And your mother? Where?

**Respondent:** My mother came from Barbados, and this is the all-time classic story, which I have found. She had two sisters, and my grandmother – and I've got their birth certificate. And [0:13:30] my grandmother was born on the Gazette plantation. On a plantation.

**Interviewer:** Whoa. Yeah.

**Respondent:** And she had three kids for the overseer, and he had – yeah. So I got all that. And I just touched – I have cousins still in Barbados and I keep in touch with, and I get all the information I can about my family back there.

**Interviewer:** So who came to Canada?

**Respondent:** My mother. She came here when there was only by [0:14:00] the boat, which they called the boat the Seahorse then. I'd have to look

it up when she came here. But she came here in through Halifax, because I think that's the only place the boat docked, and through Halifax she came in through Truro into Montreal. Or was it Montreal first then Truro? It's in there somewhere. Into Toronto, and she was a domestic at – she [0:14:30] worked for this Jewish family in Rosehill, and then she raised their three kids. And then the last, the youngest one, used to always come and visit my mother.

**Interviewer:** Oh, she loved your mother.

**Respondent:** Yeah. She always. And I think she got hit at Brunswick and Bloor by the streetcar or something, and went home and died.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So that must have been a loss for your mother too.

**Respondent:** It was. Yeah. Because my mother raised her, and she was short. And we used to always [0:15:00] ask her, "When is she going to grow up?" [Laughs] You know?

**Interviewer:** So your mother is from Barbados.

**Respondent:** Barbados. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And your father from Jamaica.

**Respondent:** Jamaica. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** But your father came earlier.

**Respondent:** My father must have come, yeah, much earlier. He was married to the first Mrs. Foster, which is my sister's mother. And my sister's – and she's talking. Well she's trying to tell me everything that she can, but my memory isn't that good. I should get her to record it. Yeah. And so she's telling me a few things. Interesting.

- Interviewer:** Oh yeah. **[0:15:30]** What about religions? Were you aware of people going to church, going to synagogue, changes, anything there?
- Respondent:** Well I was aware of people going to the synagogue because there's two on Brunswick Street. There's originally two. The old one is still operating on Brunswick.
- Interviewer:** That's right. North of Harbord.
- Respondent:** Yeah. But there was another one at the corner of Sussex and Brunswick many – that's the bigger one. It's, I think, a government building now, but that was another Jewish synagogue there. So on **[0:16:00]** the high holidays, the influx of all the cars, and the singing, and the music – so I was aware of that. And then my sister, the first – my sister's brothers and sister were Roman Catholics and we're Methodist, but we had the respect for each other's religion because I remember going to midnight mass Christmas Eve or something like that.
- Interviewer:** Oh yeah. Yeah. Those are lovely. Very musical.
- Respondent:** Yeah. And then my sister, she just took me to church with her **[0:16:30]** where she went because she's sick now, so if she needs company, go to the church. So I just took her to, I think it's St. Matthias on Bellwood, somewhere down around there. Yeah. So I saw the two religions, and then...
- Interviewer:** It's interesting when I asked about religion the first thing you thought about were the two synagogues on Brunswick.
- Respondent:** Yeah. Well I wasn't allowed to go below Harbord Street, and I can only go to Sussex. That was my boundaries. Never got to Bloor Street unless my mother – just out of bounds. You just didn't go. You couldn't go. Wasn't old enough.
- Interviewer:** **[0:17:00]** So you had some freedom, but she wanted you to stay...
- Respondent:** Yeah. We were in that block. Everybody had to stay in that block. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** I guess considering how dense the population is, I'm sure there were a lot of people to be with.

**Respondent:** But you know, it was fine because as I can remember, Saturday afternoon matinee's one o'clock. I grew up where there was a lot of kids on the street. We had a lot of kids. But Saturday at one o'clock, everybody went to the movies. You know? My mother would make the popcorn. I guess we couldn't afford to give everybody – I don't know. Popcorn was maybe five cents a bag then, so we'd get the [0:17:30] popcorn. My mother would make popcorn, and we'd have those little brown Spanish peanuts.

**Interviewer:** You're making me hungry. [Laughs]

**Respondent:** [Laughs] And we'd go to the movies from one o'clock to about five o'clock. No adults were allowed in the movies because it was for the kids, and that's where we – and the street was quiet until the movies got out.

**Interviewer:** Isn't that funny? So that was everybody's activity no matter what.

**Respondent:** That was everybody. All the kids, yeah. All the kids on the block went to the movies. The Midtown, I think. Still up there. It's called the Bloor Cinema now, but it was called the Midtown then.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. I grew up in Montreal where children [0:18:00] under sixteen were not allowed into movie theatres because apparently there had been a big fire. So until sixteen you weren't even allowed into the theatres.

**Respondent:** Oh okay.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So what I'd like to talk about are some of the more street kinds of issues, and the changes that you've seen such as people getting around. Was there any difference in how people travelled around the neighbourhood? You talked, in fact – I'm interrupting. I know.

**Respondent:** No, no.

**Interviewer:** But [0:18:30] you talked about food being delivered by horse.

**Respondent:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

**Interviewer:** So what was that? What was delivered by horse at that time?

**Respondent:** It would be a vegetable cart that you'd go out and buy your vegetables, fruit and vegetables. It would be fruit and vegetables. The vegetable man. And I think they used to ring a bell or something. Yeah. Yeah. They used to ring a bell to know that you were in the neighbourhood. Drop the feedbag off for the horse. [Laughs] Then all the mothers would come out because mothers were all at home in those days.

**Interviewer:** [0:19:00] Yeah. Yeah. Yes, of course.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So it was fruits and vegetables. Anything else?

**Respondent:** No. I don't remember. Fruit and vegetables only that I can remember. But you're talking I was seven or eight.

**Interviewer:** What about stores? Were there large stores? Or mainly corner stores?

**Respondent:** There were corner stores. We had the one corner store at Brunswick and Sussex on one side, and there was another corner store on the opposite side. Those were the two corner stores.

**Interviewer:** And you can see that those were stores.

**Respondent:** [0:19:30] Yeah.

**Interviewer:** They have the big curtains.

**Respondent:** Now I can't remember because it's called Metro now. It used to be called Dominion. I'm not sure, but I think Dominion was there many, many years ago because I think I remember my mother sending us

to the store to get peas, and it was to get a couple of cans of peas, so everybody went. If you had to go, everybody that you're playing with went. So there would be seven or eight of you, then the dog, go to Dominion, get this can of peas. You go and you get the can of peas, and it better be the right can of peas otherwise my mother would be sending us back. [0:20:00] [Laughter] And it used to seem so far away. It's like making a trip, but we all went. It was the summertime.

**Interviewer:** It was a nice little trip. Yeah.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** What about the changes in homes. Have you seen people making changes in the homes?

**Respondent:** Well I've seen people doing a lot of changes in the house. Like I've kept my house as it was when we moved in. I still have the high ceilings, original moldings, [0:20:30] the banisters I've managed to maintain and save all of that. You can save the floor. The plumbing I just had an upgrade. The electric, all that, had to be upgraded, but I've managed to save all that. And your big baseboards, your six-inch baseboards over there. I've actually over the time stripped them all down to the original, and I've got them that way and I'm keeping them that way. But what I notice in the neighbourhood now is people are gutting them out, just keeping the front and gutting them out, and it hurts my heart to see them throw out all the old [0:21:00] banisters and all the six-inches baseboard, and all that molding that they just don't make anymore, and they don't know how to make it. So those are some of the changes. Yeah. They're losing it. And once it's gone, it's gone. It's unfortunate, but once it's gone, it's gone. You know? But that's the only thing I find a little disheartening because they're wonderful, beautiful houses on the inside. A lot of workmanship.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. Beautiful. Lots of character.

**Respondent:** [0:21:30] Lots of character, you know? And I said, "My." Because I stripped down a doorframe, and when you strip all that paint off it's just beautiful under there. And there's on one little piece of wood

there's five lines, you know? You never saw with all the paint. You know? So.

**Interviewer:** So some of them are modernizing it. They're losing some of the character.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Yes. Yeah. Unfortunate.

**Interviewer:** Any changes in the back lanes that you see?

**Respondent:** Oh yes. Back [0:22:00] lanes and basements. When I was growing up, no one ever used the basement. It was just to store the potatoes, and the coal, and everything else. All the heating stuff. And no one ever used the back lanes unless you had a car, and very few people had a car, so they weren't utilized as much as they are now. I guess we have the bigger population. Like the back of my lane, which I suggest they name it the Fosters Lane, but they're naming it after the Jacksons, which is okay because they're almost family.

**Interviewer:** Oh right.

**Respondent:** It's like another [0:22:30] road. It's like almost a sidewalk.

**Interviewer:** Right. Right.

**Respondent:** It's very busy. There's a restaurant right at the end of the lane, the Green Room, so it's very busy. You get the kids from Central Tech coming over and hanging out, so it's a busy, busy lane. And the parking there – which busy can be good, you know? It's like a security type of thing, and the lanes are quite lit right up now, by the new lighting system, so it's almost like another [0:23:00] form of getting around, especially if the main arteries are full. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So that's a big change.

**Respondent:** That's a big change. Yeah. Very interesting.

**Interviewer:** And any thoughts about the use of backyards? Any changes there?

**Respondent:** Oh yeah. Like I say, when we were growing up, the backyards were mostly used for planting vegetables, tomatoes. Tomatoes. Green beans, potatoes, carrots. My mother had them all in the backyard, so it was a source of, I guess, food. [0:23:30] Well no one had a luxury in those days. No, no. I don't even remember going outside to barbecue. In my day, no one had a barbecue. You know? So it was a luxury. I remember those tomatoes. [Laughs] We'd have tomatoes, tomatoes, tomatoes.

**Interviewer:** So a good piece of it was used for food for the family.

**Respondent:** For food. Yes. Food for family and shared.

**Interviewer:** Right. And did you sit out there at all?

**Respondent:** I don't think so. It's almost just like – you didn't sit out there. It was the garden.

**Interviewer:** So where did you sit in the summer?

**Respondent:** On the front [0:24:00] porch. On the front porch. That reminds me, my neighbour across the street, Anna, she's been there quite a while too and she was telling me how she used to sit on her verandah and look over on our verandah. She's like, "Your verandah was always full. There was always a lot of laughter coming." I was – yeah. It was. But you're right. We all sat on the front porch because we had chairs out there, and I guess when the lights came on everybody had to go to their verandah. All the kids had to go sit on your verandah, nine o'clock, and the lights – you got to sit on our verandah I guess, [0:24:30] and then you could ask your mom and dad, "Well could I go over to so and so's verandah?" And I guess they'd give you ten, fifteen minutes. You can go over there and chitchat, and then you have to come home at a certain time. Then everybody else would walk you back home, and you'd walk.

**Interviewer:** So there were a lot of people sitting outside.

**Respondent:** Oh yes. Because it's too hot in the house.



**Interviewer:** Yeah. And speaking to each other to other verandahs? Like the ones you were very close?

**Respondent:** Oh yeah. Yeah. Next door to us, or next house there because I had Mr. and Mrs. Roy beside me. And then there was beside him, them, there was Mr. Freeman, and so we were [0:25:00] in talking distance. And then there was the Martinas because they had about five kids in their house. Five or six kids, and nine o'clock at night everybody's sitting on the verandah. Maybe we were loud. I don't know. But everybody was on the verandah, and everybody was talking. It was summertime.

**Interviewer:** It's wonderful.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. I've lived that way, and I love it. I think it's fabulous.

**Respondent:** Uh-huh. I think so too. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** What about heating the homes? Any change?

**Respondent:** I remember – yeah. I remember the oilman when they used to come. [0:25:30] [Laughter] That pump, and they'd fill up the oil, do it vaguely through the basement or something. I remember the coal. The coal being delivered. And I remember, I guess, from coal we went to the oil, and I remember that big potbelly stove with the arms coming out, and you'd stand close and you'd get really hot. [Laughs] I remember that. Yeah. And then we had the oil. And then we didn't notice if the house was cold or hot because your mother was [0:26:00] always cooking, so the stove through cooking kept the whole place hot. Now that there's nobody there and there's nobody cooking, you notice it's cool. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So you have to make sure the heat is on.

**Respondent:** Yeah. So that heat does – yeah. So that just brought all my memories back. That's right.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. That's very interesting because going from coal to oil.

- Respondent:** Yeah. To high-efficiency. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Right. And what about garbage collection?
- Respondent:** I didn't know this, but when I was growing up [0:26:30] my mother used to recycle.
- Interviewer:** Wow. How? What?
- Respondent:** Well any peels from the potatoes, or any potatoes or vegetables that went bad, and chicken guts, fish guts, everything. She'd dig a hole and put it in the backyard. I guess that helped the garden.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Oh.
- Respondent:** So we actually recycled.
- Interviewer:** She was composting.
- Respondent:** She was composting. Yeah. And I don't know if there was much garbage generated in those days. I can't remember.
- Interviewer:** [0:27:00] And how was the garbage picked up? Do you have any memory of that?
- Respondent:** I don't remember garbage pick-up. I didn't have to do that. Maybe the boys had to do it, but I doubt it. My mother, my sister, my aunt – they did everything because we were all still little. We had to shovel. I had to shovel snow. Mr. and Mrs. Roy, our neighbours next door to us were an older couple, so we would have to get up before we went to school, if it snowed [0:27:30] we'd have to shovel their walk, then shovel our walk, and the other older neighbours across the street, we'd have to shovel their walk.
- Interviewer:** But you're talking about community – help them. Like how thoughtful that was.
- Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah. Well we never said, "Well mom, how come we have to?" If we just got up, we know it snowed, okay. We've got so and

so and so walks to shovel, and we've got to do that, be back, and get something to eat and get ready to go to school.

**Interviewer:** And also when you say they were an older couple, how old were they? Your age now? [Laughs] My age?

**Respondent:** **[0:28:00]** [Laughs] Probably. Yeah. [Laughs] We have tend to learn the role. With glasses, and white hair, yeah. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** How lovely in terms of community.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Exactly. And you know what? We you couldn't – we never heard of getting paid for it. Never, you know? But I remember my mother would never allow them to give us money for shoveling the walks, but when Mr. and Mrs. Roy had gone on vacation they would always bring us back silver dollars.

**Interviewer:** Oh yeah.

**Respondent:** They **[0:28:30]** always brought back silver dollars.

**Interviewer:** So you had a collection of silver dollars.

**Respondent:** Yeah. I wish I knew where they were now. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** Yeah. You're right. You're right. Yeah.

**Respondent:** Yeah. So.

**Interviewer:** Anything about cottage industry? Anybody working at home that you were aware of?

**Respondent:** Everybody. Well all the moms were at home.

**Interviewer:** But working to earn some money.

**Respondent:** I think they were just working to feed us. [Laughs] There was no – I don't think there was no luxuries. **[0:29:00]** You know, I tell my sister, "Were we poor?" [Laughs] I said we were never hungry, and I guess being that young fashion wasn't a – fashion just didn't exist.

You got clothes handed down to you. It was acceptable. And clothes last in those days to be handed down two kids, and then when you're finished, give them to the neighbours across the street. You know? So.

**Interviewer:** It's an interesting question, "Were we poor?" because you had all the fundamentals. **[0:29:30]** You had food, you had a roof over your head.

**Respondent:** Our head. We had a dog, we had friends, family. Yeah. So I can remember one time my mother saying later on just before she passed, I says, "Mom, remember those special dinners that we used to have? We used to make?" She used to make all these biscuits with jam, and butter and jam. And I got cholesterol now from [laughs]...

**Interviewer:** The good old days...

**Respondent:** Days. Yeah. The butter and jam, she'd make tea with a lot of milk in it, and I said, "Remember **[0:30:00]** those special dinners you used to make for all of us?" She says, "Yeah." She said, "You got those special dinners because that's all I had to feed you with," you know? And we could eat – and she'd have all kinds. I remember her baking muffin tins. I think I still got them. And we'd have – the tin would be full of muffins and the jam, homemade jam that some neighbour made, and the butter, and all this milk, and tea, and cocoa, you know? And that was our special dinner. I still remember to this day. Said, "Oh okay."

**Interviewer:** **[0:30:30]** Okay. Here's an interesting topic. What about dating?

**Respondent:** Oh, wasn't allowed to at seven. [Laughter] No one's allowed to date. [Laughs] I have to take one on that because I don't know. Wasn't old enough, you know?

**Interviewer:** What about twelve, fifteen, eighteen?

**Respondent:** No. Absolutely. Remember, I'm sixty-five, and my father was from the old school, and so was my sister from – she's, you know, they're from the old school.

**Interviewer:** [0:31:00] So nothing to do with boys?

**Respondent:** No, no, no, no, no, no. Oh, absolutely not. Oh no. Mm-hm. You know, even though your brother had friends or whatever, that was fine, but there was – no. But I mean you were not allowed out. [Laughs] So how can you go out with somebody if you weren't allowed off the block?

**Interviewer:** And do you remember any of the people you went to school with?

**Respondent:** Yeah. I remember one girl down the street. She had a boyfriend. [0:31:30] She ran away with him. That was a big thing. She ran away with him for a couple of days. That was the big, big thing, but I think that's about all that I can remember about relationships, you know?

**Interviewer:** Did people have animals, pets? Were there lots of stray animals on the street? What about animals?

**Respondent:** I don't think they were strays because it seemed like everybody had a dog.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh. Oh.

**Respondent:** All the kids. [0:32:00] All the kids had a dog. We had two cats. We didn't need a dog because our friends would have a dog, so we shared our animals. Literally we shared the dog. Yeah. So that would be it because I guess no one could afford a guinea pig or one of those luxury pets. The pets we had had to do a job.

**Interviewer:** And they did?

**Respondent:** And they did.

**Interviewer:** Which we discussed.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** We talked about Metro, which used to be Dominion. And you talked a little bit about the [0:32:30] corner stores. Do you remember anything specifically about the stores on any of our major streets such as Bloor...

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** or Harbord, or College?

**Respondent:** Well see then again I wasn't allowed to go to Bloor Street, plus Harbord Street or College. Bloor Street – it was just – some of the things are still there like the hardware store, Wiener's Hardware Store is still there. There's some things that are still there, and some things that's changed. But [0:33:00] mostly I think it's just busier now. The times – a lot of restaurants. At one time there wasn't any restaurants on Bloor Street. Maybe one or two, and that was it. There was a lot of different ethnic restaurants. You can get Mediterranean, you can get sushi, the Japanese type, you know? All of them. That wasn't there. That just came in, in what? In the eighties? The different fluctuation. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** There's a huge selection.

**Respondent:** Yes. Very. Never heard of all this stuff before.

**Interviewer:** [0:33:30] But the Bloor Cinema was – what was it called again?

**Respondent:** I think called Midtown. There was actually two of them. Lee's Palace was another movie theatre. I think that was called El Hambra, and the Midtown, so they were the only two movie theatres on Bloor Street at the time. Now I'm not sure if the El Hambra had puppet shows.

**Interviewer:** Oh my.

**Respondent:** I'm not sure. I forget.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. I'm certainly pleased that we still have one...

**Respondent:** Oh yeah.

**Interviewer:** theatre there. It's big.

**Respondent:** Oh yeah.

**Interviewer:** And now they're renovating it.

**Respondent:** Yes. [0:34:00] Probably wouldn't be able to fit in the seats now.  
[Laughter]

**Interviewer:** I want to move into the whole category of institutions. So we'll start with healthcare and hospitals. Any thoughts about that? Of the changes?

**Respondent:** Well yeah. Right at Brunswick, well Brunswick and College, that new complex, medical complex, that used to be originally was called the Doctors Hospital, and that was new to the area. That was the first hospital that I was [0:34:30] aware of. Otherwise it was only the Toronto Western, I believe – because I think I was born at Toronto Western. Yeah. I think that's all that I can remember. And there was St. Christopher House. My mother said she used to take me to the St. Christopher House, the original St. Christopher House on Wales to get – the babies got inoculated.

**Interviewer:** Oh. So there was a clinic of some sort.

**Respondent:** A clinic of some sort. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Right. Right.

**Respondent:** Yeah. There was a clinic.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** And then later on in my teen years, [0:35:00] I think was the same place – it turned into a community centre where we all congregate there at the community centre.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. I think it did become a major community centre.

- Respondent:** Community centre. Now it's moved to Ossington and Queen. Still existing. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Okay. Thank you. You talked about the synagogues and a little bit about the church [0:35:30] that you went to with your family, but that wasn't right in the neighbourhood.
- Respondent:** No. It was on Shaw Street.
- Interviewer:** Right.
- Respondent:** The property is still there. It had a fire, big fire, a couple of years ago and it burnt down, and it's still just sitting there vacant, but that was a church that our family had gone to. But then Knox church was always still there. What I can remember vaguely, Knox church was always there too. That was at Spadina at Harbord. Yeah. [0:36:00] I believe so because I think my brother – I think he went to some kind of camp, or there's...
- Interviewer:** A day camp of some sort.
- Respondent:** or some kind of camp.
- Interviewer:** Well the church is certainly still there, and then there's the one on Bloor Street right near the Metro.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. Yeah. Right – yeah. That's always been there. Yeah, that's always been there.
- Interviewer:** And that has a lot of community activities.
- Respondent:** Yes, yes, yes.
- Interviewer:** Huge there. Yeah. But you weren't...
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** too familiar.



**Respondent:** [0:36:30] Well the only time I went there was going to Dominion to get those cans of peas. [Laughter]

**Interviewer:** Do you feel that the university has some influence or impact on years ago and then now?

**Respondent:** Well yeah. Years ago it wasn't as extended as it is now. Like behind Dominion, they have the field, and they have the hockey arena there, which is unfortunate that they don't maintain and keep it up because we used to go skating there all the time. It's come over, and [0:37:00] it's seemed like it's expanding all around. It's expanding. It's expanding everywhere, you know?

**Interviewer:** Does that feel positive, or other?

**Respondent:** I don't mind it expanding as long as you don't tear down all those wonderful old buildings. I mean incorporated in. You know? We all have to learn. You know?

**Interviewer:** What about the students. Do you feel the impact of students living in the neighbourhood in any way?

**Respondent:** Only on [0:37:30] Thursday, or Friday, or Saturday night when the bars close. [Laughs] You know? But that's about it. I think the students are students, and they're there to learn, and they can't fool around otherwise they don't graduate. You don't graduate, then you've got to repeat – it costs money. And it's getting now that you can't afford to repeat something. You just have to be serious, so once in a while you let your hair down, or you put your hair up, whatever, [0:38:00] you know? And they come by my house, making a lot of noise and I say, "Hm, I think I've done the very same thing myself." [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** Okay. So you're empathic about it.

**Respondent:** Yes. Exactly. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. What about Kensington Market? I'm asking you about the changes and any impact it has on our neighbourhood.

**Respondent:** Oh, big, big changes. Well I went down there in – what? The fifties and sixties, so I saw the change. I still find it exciting. [0:38:30] It's just so cozy or nookish, or there's just so something nice. And I think they should keep cars out of there. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** Well you know, they do at...

**Respondent:** In the summertime on the – yeah. Which is just perfect. But I guess when I was going down, my mother used to take me, but hardly anybody had cars, so the only cars that would be in there would be the cars or the horses delivering stuff. I think it would be the horses delivering stuff, and the trucks, they delivered stuff in the market because everything was out on the street. You know? Wintertime didn't need [0:39:00] refrigeration. The fish and all the stuff would be out on the street. Just come and pick it up, and the meats all be out on the street. You know?

**Interviewer:** And have you seen changes in the market?

**Respondent:** Oh yeah. It's becoming quite trendy. More bars, you know? Which at one time it was a market.

**Interviewer:** Right. Right. So now it's a market. But you're right. Yeah.

**Respondent:** Yeah. They have a few of the places that do have the – well most of them still have the fruits and vegetables outside, and all the nuts. No meat, [0:39:30] I guess. New health regulation, can't keep the meats exposed to outside. Refrigerated, so it's coming. It's keeping up with progress I would imagine. No, but it's becoming quite the trendy – there's condos down there now, you know?

**Interviewer:** Yeah. There's one very classy one there that I've been in. High ceilings.

**Respondent:** Yeah. I like to incorporate the old with the new, but let's keep more of the old.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. You don't want to lose it.

**Respondent:** Old. Yeah. Old is better. [0:40:00] [Laughter] Yeah. Lasts longer.

- Interviewer:** Okay. We talked a little bit about security. This is on my list here, but you and I have already discussed that. What about home renovations that you've observed?
- Respondent:** Oh what I see, which is going on all over in all these nice old Victorian – now it's called "retro" – Victorian homes that they're just – like I said, they're just gutting them out, leaving the [0:40:30] front on and just gutting it out and making it so modern that they lose all the character to it.
- Interviewer:** I noticed that they also get rid of this overhanging thing.
- Respondent:** Oh, on the verandahs? Yeah.
- Interviewer:** On the verandahs. Yeah.
- Respondent:** I know. I got rid of mine because it fell down. [Laughter] I'd like to put it back, but I tried to keep everything as it was. So inside the house, everything is basically – my home is basically the same. Yeah. Kept it that way.
- Interviewer:** [0:41:00] Just to talk about some of the big events. One is the Spadina Expressway. In the sixties until 1971, do you have any memory of that?
- Respondent:** No. I just – you know, I was twenty-one or something. You want to put a subway in, then go ahead, fine. I remember vaguely reading about it and hearing about it on the news about this new Spadina subway's going to do so much, take you so much, and that's about just a fleeting – you know?
- Interviewer:** [0:41:30] And you weren't opposed to it?
- Respondent:** Well I wasn't opposed to it. You know, I wasn't informed at the time of what it would do because my travels – I only stayed within my area, my district. I went as far as Yonge Street. [Laughs] You know? And that was the streetcar then. Yeah. The streetcar used to run along Bloor Street. The streetcar used to run on Harbord Street. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** We still have good transportation in this neighbourhood for sure.

**Respondent:** Yes. Oh very good, yeah. We're close to everything, [0:42:00] you know? If you're not close enough, just get off and walk.

**Interviewer:** What about Rochdale. Any memories of that?

**Respondent:** I think – wasn't that the apartment building on Huron Street and Bloor? Okay. That was the time when they had the LSD and all the hippies and all that. I just remember vaguely hearing things about the hippies are smoking pot in there, but that's about it.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. It certainly had no impact on you.

**Respondent:** It had no [0:42:30] impact on me. No.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Well we've covered pretty much everything that I was hoping that we would cover. When you think of living in the neighbourhood and the changes that you've observed and participated in, off the top of your head can you think of anything that I haven't asked you about?

**Respondent:** Oh. In the neighbourhood when I was growing up no one had fences. No one had fences.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** We used to play ball, [0:43:00] bobbing on the lawn. You just go get your ball. When I look out my window now, everybody has a fence.

**Interviewer:** Oh, it's fascinating.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Everybody has a fence. It would be nice if people just took down their fence, you know? But I even have it. Well my mother put the fence up, so that's why that's up, but that's it. No one had any fences.

- Interviewer:** That's a very, very interesting one. Yeah. And it felt better to you to not have the fence.
- Respondent:** [0:43:30] Yeah. I mean if you're running, you don't see this fence, you trip over it or you can't get your ball because you're trespassing.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Right.
- Respondent:** You know? So we had more – but then there's hardly any kids outside playing in the streets anymore. We don't have playing in the streets. Well we never had games. We had to make our own games. We had to make our own fun, you know? And sometimes I see in September no kids picking up the chestnuts. You know, the chestnuts are sitting there, we'd run over, pick them up. Yeah. That was one of the things we had. [0:44:00] We picked up chestnuts. One of our toys.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. That was a fun thing to do with your friends.
- Respondent:** That was a fun thing because we used to make toys out of them even.
- Interviewer:** Wow.
- Respondent:** Yeah. It was called the doney whacker because you put a chestnut on the end of the rope, vaguely, and then you'd have to take another chestnut and hit it off. There was some silly little game.
- Interviewer:** It sounds fabulous.
- Respondent:** You know that other game like scissors, rock, and paper?
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Same type of game. The doney whackers were like that too, so you'd have to run and get all the chestnuts. I mean the squirrels had to fight us kids for the [0:44:30] chestnuts.

**Interviewer:** Now anything about the schools – now we're talking about kids. Any thoughts you have about that?

**Respondent:** Oh, when I went to school I went to Lord Lansdowne. Is it still called Lord Lansdowne now?

**Interviewer:** I think so. Yeah.

**Respondent:** Yeah. I went to Lord Lansdowne there on Robert Street, and what I remember is there was only two black families that went to that school, and predominately Jewish. There was, [0:45:00] I think from Poland there was some Polish kids in there too, but it was predominately Jewish when we went to Lord Lansdowne. And middle-class white.

**Interviewer:** And what was the education like? And what were the kids like with each other?

**Respondent:** I believe we were all fine. We came from a time when no one had anything. We didn't know it, but we all seemed to get along. [0:45:30] And I went to the reunion in 1988. They had a reunion, so all of us who went to the school, we're all sitting around like – you know, it's so many years later and we're all sitting there it's like time hasn't passed for any of us. And then the teacher comes up and tells us, he says, "This is the first time I've ever had to tell you kids you've got to leave now." [Laughs] "You've got to get out of the school." [Laughs] You know? So we were just there. We were just talking, talking, talking, talking. Yeah. That I thought was amazing. It was like we're all older [0:46:00] now, wiser, married with kids and stuff, and we're all sitting at that table talking like no time has passed. I think in those days because we didn't have much, we formed a certain special bond, and I don't know. It seemed like it just carries through. It's very special, and I don't think it's going to happen again because of the new modern technology. Everything is so fast, so paced.

**Interviewer:** So you had different relationships.

- Respondent:** We had different [0:46:30] relationships, I guess, with our neighbours, family, friends. It was much different because I guess we didn't have very much.
- Interviewer:** And where are most of these other people living? Or did you not discuss that?
- Respondent:** This reunion was back in 1988.
- Interviewer:** Which is still a long time ago.
- Respondent:** Yes. Every now and again, because some people were still in the neighbourhood – Mike Better and his brother, but they both passed away. I haven't seen him in years, so I presume he's gone. You know? And [0:47:00] then there was the Schwartz's further up on Brunswick Street. I didn't see Max for a couple of years, so I ran into his sister and she had told me, "Well he was in some kind of accident and he was a paraplegic now." But he must be about seventy now. My brother would be about seventy, so I'm not sure if he's still here or if he's passed away, you know? It's just that we're all getting older. And some people [0:47:30] still come back. There was Marilyn Goldstein, a teacher. She would bring her class. I forget where she taught out of. She would bring her class down to the neighbourhood that she lived in and she just happened to see I was standing outside, and she said, "Are you still here?" And I said, "Yes, I am." Then I had another Jewish family that came back that lived in my house. They lived in my house? Yeah. They lived in my house at 212 [0:48:00] and their aunt lived at 216. And her grandson was doing some type of work in school. Something about heritage too.
- Interviewer:** Oh my gosh.
- Respondent:** Yeah. So I said, "No. Come in the house. Come in the house and I'll show you." And I said, "We have some stuff in the house that was left over from your family. There's some mirrors, and there's a nice little telephone stand that I kept." I said, "Yeah. This belonged to your family and it's still in the house."
- Interviewer:** Oh [0:48:30] fabulous.

**Respondent:** Yes. So she brought – the grandson wasn't interested. He was about eleven. [Laughs] But the older daughter was interested. Yeah. And I said, "Oh yeah." So I brought them in, they looked around, and then they were telling me how 216, I think her parents paid something like five thousand dollars for it. [Laughs] You know? Five thousand dollars was a lot of money in those days.

**Interviewer:** Oh yeah. It was.

**Respondent:** There's a lot of people that come back to the neighbourhood, you know? And they don't recognize my house [0:49:00] because it's changed a bit. Like I said, the verandah fell off, so I've changed it. Now I have the house with the big flagstone on it. Big mistake. I put flagstone on. I shouldn't have done that, but in the eighties we were doing things like that. And I told them, "Yeah, I'm still here. I'm still here." I said, "Now you're sorry you moved, aren't you?" There's the Bigrades that come back to the old neighbourhood. There was a couple of other families that came back, you know? And I said, "I'm still here." [Laughs] Yeah.

**Interviewer:** [0:49:30] Any final stories, old secrets, old funny memories? Anything that you want to...

**Respondent:** I would have to think about it because there's a lot. We had such a nice good neighbourhood, you know? If we could go back to that way, I think the world would be a better place. Everybody cared. I remember we'd get the apples or the pears from the neighbours down the street, and [0:50:00] of course we would bring them in and we'd have to sit down all the kids. We'd have to peel them because my mother would do preserves, so we'd have to peel them. And then I remember we'd peel the apples or the pears, and then there'd be a worm in half, so my mother would say, "Well, you've got to share." Cut that half out, give it to the worms, [Laughter] and cut the other half up because no one used pesticides or anything there.

**Interviewer:** That's right. Yeah. I remember that with peaches. Eating peaches. Oh.



- Respondent:** Yeah. Oh [0:50:30] no, my mother did preserves, so we had to cut it out and scoop. But we shared and everything went back into the lawn, you know? I can remember that. Sharing with the worms.
- Interviewer:** She was ahead of her time. Yeah.
- Respondent:** She was. I guess all mothers in those days were because you just had to be. Who knows when garbage pick-up was. I don't remember if there was and how the sanitation was in those days, so you had to keep things free of germs and bacteria and all of the other stuff. Yeah. But I just remember peeling those, [0:51:00] and the tomatoes. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Well and the sharing of the tomatoes and the fruit.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Love that.
- Respondent:** Definitely. And the wine too. Mother gave us wine at Christmastime. The Italian family – I remember he'd make them in those big jugs with the plastic on top. I guess he'd make them, and you could see it. And there'd be fermenting or however they made the wine, and my mother would give all of us some wine.
- Interviewer:** [Laughs] Well Sandra, we've come to the conclusion of this meeting. It has been a [0:51:30] total pleasure for me. Thank you so much.
- Respondent:** And interesting for me too.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Brought back some memories. Yeah. I'll probably think of some more. I'll write them down and call you. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** You do. You do. I will certainly appreciate it if there's more you want to talk – and I think you're right. That this will really trigger other memories.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** So you can write them down and we can meet together and...

**Respondent:** Exactly. Yeah. Now I know where you live. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So you can come over, we can talk for another half-hour.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Certainly.

**Interviewer:** If you have more memories of the changes that you've experienced and observed, please get in touch with me.

**Respondent:** Mm-hm. [0:52:00] Yes. Will do. Okay. Yeah.

[00:52:04]

[End of recording]