019 Rafi Kosower

Please note that any items that were difficult to transcribe are marked with an **[indiscernible]** tag.

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: Okay. I'm Eleanor Levine and I am welcome Rafi Kosower to be interviewed. Rafi came to our neighbourhood many, many years ago, and he'll talk about that. Rafi, I just want to explain to you that I'm on the board of Harbord Village Residents' Association, and this is our project, our history project, and we want to learn people's stories – people who moved into the neighbourhood many years ago.

Respondent: What are you going to do with them?

Interviewer: What am I going to do with them?

Respondent: About these people and their **[0:00:30]** histories?

Interviewer: We're going to collect them. We thought we'd do a book. We're probably not going to do a book; we'll put it onto our website, and just enrich our neighbourhood by knowing the history.

Respondent: Sounds good.

Interviewer: Yeah. So Rafi, I'm going to ask you some questions and you can just take off, okay? When did you – I want to know when you…

Respondent: I'm a short-distance flyer. Like I never put a lot of gas into certain – **[0:01:00]** I can take off from there, but if you want me to keep going, you're going to have to continue to feed me. A theme of some sort.

Interviewer: My pleasure. [Laughs] I'll feed you. Okay. So Rafi, how old were you and what year did you move into the neighbourhood of Harbord Village?

Respondent: Dates are not good. [Indiscernible 0:01:25] in terms of wherever I was, **[0:01:30]** what was happening at that time. It would have been exactly certainly – we moved into the bakery before we moved in, you know, a hundred percent with our baggage and our few sticks of furniture, so it would be exactly 1945 that we took possession of the bakery itself. That means the lock, stock, and barrel, the **[0:02:00]** business called Harbord Bakery. And above Harbord Bakery was a very, very smart apartment, completely redone in late '40s style of tiles and, you know, really quite tasteful. I know places now that would give their right arm for that, you know, for a shop that had that kind of, say, washroom that they had upstairs. Anyway, that's another story. **[0:02:30]** So 1945 is that event, and I think 1948 would be when we actually moved into the apartment.

Interviewer: Right above the store.

Respondent: Above the store. Yeah.

Interviewer: And who was in the house? How many generations? Who was there?

Respondent: Of us?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Oh there were the – there would be the two generations, my parents and the three kids. 1948. **[0:03:00]** Would Suzie be around? 1936. 1949, Suzie would not have been around until '49, so I'd have to say, oh wow. That was a good thing. I'd have to say '49 rather than '48. '48 did I say? '48.

Interviewer: **[0:03:30]** And you stayed in the neighbourhood for how many years? Living in the neighbourhood.

Respondent: Well my parents stayed in the neighbourhood and above the store until my father no longer could negotiate the steps, the steep steps that led upstairs to the apartment. I'm going to reserve that. I'm going to have to check with Suzie because she would have been –

she would be better at that exact date. I would say, oh about – **[0:04:00]** leave that with me.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. What I'd like to move onto then is you're still working in the neighbourhood, and so you're talking about 1945, 1948, and this is 2012. So although you're not living in the neighbourhood now, you know it very well and you did live there for many years. So just sort of as a global question, do you have some impression of what the **[0:04:30]** biggest changes in the neighbourhood are?

Respondent: Well probably beginning with the beginning is the area probably bounded by, let's say, Ossington, bounded by Ossington and Hoskins, probably. That would be Hoskins.

Interviewer: We're really talking **[0:05:00]** Bathurst to Spadina, and College to Bloor.

Respondent: Okay. So not to go below College is really easy because that was the major – still is the major slice of Jewish downtown living.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: What did they see over this whole stretch you mean? Or beginning?

Interviewer: Just your general observations of the changes.

Respondent: The coming, the going, the leaving of – I think **[0:05:30]** in sociology they call the area of – transitional area. That was for – it hadn't been so transitional because Jews stayed quite a long time there. All the shuls were on the streets and so on, and the community had all the Jewish institutions including the JCC, which used to be on Brunswick.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: On Brunswick. And on the other side of it, on the flip **[0:06:00]** side of Brunswick next to the…

Interviewer: So that was Brunswick and College.

Respondent: That was Brunswick and College. So that was important. And that was still there, of course. That was there, and it remained there for a bit. I can't tell you what their history was in terms of when they left. And the social part where kids came and met, and groups met, and now it's a craft store place. On the Brunswick side – no sorry, on the Major side, the flip side of Brunswick, **[0:06:30]** right? Athletics, and gym, and a swimming pool if I'm not mistaken, which I never went to.

Interviewer: And you still don't go.

Respondent: And I still don't go to. [Laughter] And so they decided they were going to, you know – then they built a new university on that side. So that was – where was I? So that was the heart of the huge community. College, Bathurst, Spadina, **[0:07:00]** all the way down and up those streets including Major Streets.

Interviewer: So you said it was transitional.

Respondent: It was transitional for all immigrant groups, all sorts of people have been there and stayed a while, then moved out when there was money to move out because those houses, which are so attractive now, were not considered so attractive and they were very inexpensive places to live in, which of course they're not now. At all. Any of **[0:07:30]** that, they're attractive and they've been made in…

Interviewer: So you're saying people at that time felt that it was a stepping stone until they had more money and could move into…

Respondent: Oh absolutely.

Interviewer: …bigger, better, nicer.

Respondent: Right. Bigger, better, and nicer always meant up the hill, which is what it was called. Richman's – the Davenport hill, the old hump that runs through **[0:08:00]** the city.

Interviewer: Right, right, right.

Respondent: You see it from the city, in the place there. So long ago. Before there were Jews.

Interviewer: So it was transitional, and you're saying a lot of the Jewish people moved out. Did you…

Respondent: Okay. Now we're talking about what happened. So Jews began to move out and up the hill, up up the hill. Gradually up, upper and more upper.

Interviewer: And what happened to the Harbord Village? **[0:08:30]** That neighbourhood, what did you see happen there?

Respondent: Italians moved in, Portuguese moved in, of course Jews had moved in among the first of the new transitional groups. There were – I know of pockets of Irish families throughout that particular – mostly in the upper, Robert Street. That was all – **[0:09:00]** Robert Street and Harbord Street. A lot of Irish.

Interviewer: And did you observe whether they became integrated with each other, whether they got along? Were there tensions? What was your observation about that?

Respondent: The groups?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: I would say that it was – because **[0:09:30]** when the actual cloud of the Jews socially, politically – politically, I know what I'm saying when I say politically – from every point of view was such that they were quite well-respected. There were, for example, anti-Semitic pockets or folk who lived along Harbord, but who were **[0:10:00]** not allowed to vent very much because there were other non-Jews who had never been friendly with Jewish people. In terms of where the bakery was, that was a melting pot, so that the Irish families who had lots of kids – I remember only respect with a few kids who came from **[0:10:30]** further west into the school area or for whatever reason along Harbord Street. Could be quite vocally, say, anti-Semitic. Say, "Hey, Jew boy." That kind of thing. So that was – mostly I think it was an area of mutual respect. I can't remember

anyone that I grew up with saying that, "That Ukrainian kid. He had a weird shaped head," or something. And I don't remember **[0:11:00]** any of them saying, "Oh those Jews. They killed their Lord Christ."

Interviewer: So…

Respondent: It was peaceful. It was peaceful. There was, of course, at our time had been perceived by the fighting – the big gang war in the Christie Pits.

Interviewer: In the Christie Pits. Right, right.

Respondent: But I knew nothing about that.

Interviewer: Yeah. But your day-to-day life, you knew that this anti-Semitism **[0:11:30]** was there, but…

Respondent: But in other places.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay.

Respondent: On Spadina sometimes I encountered it on the TTC line, which also of course disappeared from Harbord Street. So what other major things for the movements – people like us, because we had a shop and a growing business after we kick-started, **[0:12:00]** we had no reason to leave. We had a nice apartment, which we inherited, bought from the people who had been in the bakery.

Interviewer: With your beautiful bathroom. [Laughs]

Respondent: With the beautiful bathroom, and other beautiful rooms. Hardwood floors. I mean there were many, many symbols of us going up the hill but staying down the hill.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Up the hill, down the hill.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: Have I confused the…

Interviewer: No, no, no. **[0:12:30]** I think we're going to move on, okay?

Respondent: Yeah, let's move on.

Interviewer: Okay. You talked a little bit about the waves of immigration because you've already discussed that to some – what about religion? Different religions and different religious institutions. Any comments about that?

Respondent: Not so many different ones that I know of. **[0:13:00]** There were Anglican Churches, there were United Churches, there were lots of synagogues, big and small, pocket-size and very, very grand ones. They were the grand reform synagogue.

Interviewer: But in our neighbourhood, yeah.

Respondent: Oh, that's outside.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Our neighbourhood had these shteebles, the little synagogues in homes in the one room **[0:13:30]** reserved for a shul or a synagogue. And I don't know much about it, except I know there were the beautiful churches, which were around – how far west? Spadina? Well there were those churches already, the big churches on the top of Major, top of Robert.

Interviewer: And then there's one on Spadina south of Harbord. It's been there for a long time too.

Respondent: Oh Knox Church, of course.

Interviewer: Right. **[0:14:00]** Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: I think the relationships such as it was with all these places was a model of, you know, cooperation. I can remember it as very comfortable.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: You may hear differently from others, but I…

Interviewer: I've interviewed one person so far and she described it in a very similar way.

Respondent: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. **[0:14:30]** And she's African-American, and she had a very similar description. Yeah, yeah. Anything about class structure that – I could say that to you because you're the sociologist. [Laughs]

Respondent: I hung around with Irish kids a lot.

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Respondent: And they would be considered lower working class people, but it's not meant anything to me, and **[0:15:00]** nor was our successful business anything more than a, you know, place that they – we were across from probably the pocket within your area, our area – excuse me – of the lowest class of Anglo-Saxon life, community. **[0:15:30]** In families who were typically – I mean you could see them in any – Ireland or Irish, in the Irish poor. This is how they were here. But again, they were – I don't think that's going to help. But they – no one cared about that.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: I mean there may **[0:16:00]** have been some – I'm not saying that all Jewish kids would have gone into their houses and vice versa, but we had a unique relationship with them, but it wasn't so unique.

Interviewer: So you're saying that ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic class, it was a melting pot in terms of people getting along with each other.

Respondent: Oh absolutely. Absolutely.

Interviewer: That was your experience. Yeah.

Respondent: Absolutely. We met at the same grocery shops on the little streets **[0:16:30]** that we lived at, you know? It was – we went to the same skating rinks and for, you know, through the winter.

Interviewer: And anything about languages?

Respondent: We cheated on the same exams. [Laughter] We helped each other in cheating. [Laughter] I had a gang who protected me from anyone who would **[indiscernible 0:16:54]** for whatever reason, and all I had to do **[0:17:00]** was supply them with answers to their exam questions.

Interviewer: So it was a very harmonious, comfortable place to be.

Respondent: It really was. But we still have coming to the bakery the grandchildren, the children and the grandchildren of kids that I went to public school too, and they come to the bakery quite – but of course now they're middle class people. **[0:17:30]** But I remember them very fondly as kids with torn shirts and all the rest of it, and who knew that this was a synagogue, and who knew hands-off that they could share all sorts of things with us. I mean their lunch stories.

Interviewer: Sounds lovely.

Respondent: Gan 'Edhen.

Interviewer: Yeah. [Laughs] It still is for me. Gan 'Edhen means the Garden of Eden. Yes, yes, yes. **[0:18:00]** What about employment? I mean your family had a business, but were you familiar with cottage industries? People having little – working at home?

Respondent: Not really. Cottage **[0:18:30]** industry. Work?

Interviewer: Yeah. Anybody who had…

Respondent: I think I heard and went to towns were someone brought home – in that sense, brought home stuff from the factory on Spadina to make

a little extra money or whatever, but I don't think anyone did a – mind you, some people had a room in the house that was meant for business. I remember someone had a room where they **[0:19:00]** just did recordings of, you know – that was their business. I guess there were other places that had other businesses.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. But in no big way that you can recall.

Respondent: No, no. I don't think it was like, you know, the New York tenant area, that kind of – you know, your more romantic cottage industries. I mean sort of really workplaces in the home.

Interviewer: No. I mean more on – somebody doing some tailoring at home, but that's – **[0:19:30]** kinds of small things, yeah.

Respondent: Oh, sure. I think they worked. It wasn't a major part of what I was…

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Any comments about the kinds of schools that were in the neighbourhood? And any comments about the kinds of schools that were in the neighbourhood then and what you know about the schools now?

Respondent: Our school, our public school's the Lansdowne. It was not called Lord Lansdowne. They had no Lord **[0:20:00]** connection. I think it was considered a good school. I don't think people really in those days in our class knew a good school from a bad school. Our parents barely spoke English at the beginning. But any school was considered a good school, and a teacher was a good teacher, and if we were good to the teacher, he would be good to you.

Interviewer: Yeah, right. Yeah. But I know. You're right about that, yeah. The teacher had respect and **[0:20:30]** authority.

Respondent: Absolutely. And he had a strap too.

Interviewer: [Laughs] Yeah. I remember that.

Respondent: A strap in the cloakroom, and a black book in his desk or her desk.

Interviewer: That was the same in Montreal. I remember it well. Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: The old times?

Interviewer: Not the good old times. The old times. Yeah, yeah. And what more about the schools? As you remember them, do you have any observations about current situations of schools?

Respondent: **[0:21:00]** Central Tech was, of course, on Harbord with the schools, the main schools. We're going over to Bathurst, so there was a – what's the one at College before – College and Bathurst? College and Borden? Public school. Just north of College?

Interviewer: There was a school there?

Respondent: There still is. **[0:21:30]** It was like another world. It seemed so far away. I don't think it was strange when people said, "What public school did you go to," or, "What public school are you at?" And Lansdowne was obviously – I barely remember what that was called.

Interviewer: And Central Tech, can you talk about that? The way it was?

Respondent: Central Tech had, of course, a very good reputation. **[0:22:00]** Schools had – if you were talking not about public schools, then we can talk about reputations. We can talk about the images and who went to them, and so on. Central Tech had a bad reputation other than some of its specialty things, which had very good reputations. The people – the kids that went to the Central Tech were definitely considered inferior to those who didn't go to a collegiate. It was known. There's often fights and brawls and stuff between kids who went to **[0:22:30]** Central Tech and people who didn't go to Central Tech. I went to a collegiate, although I'm not sure that Harbord Collegiate kids fought. But there would be a lot of rivalry in sports and stuff like that. What were you going to say?

Interviewer: Okay. So Central Tech, you're saying, was a different population, say, from Harbord Collegiate or the Lansdowne School.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Okay. So and in kind of socioeconomic **[0:23:00]** terms, it was a lower strata.

Respondent: For sure. For sure. And still is considered so, and so teachers also are considered inferior to those who teach in at Harbord Collegiate, say. While on that subject, we talked about all the area and the harmony of the area. There was a lot of harmony in the high school. It was a harmony based on **[0:23:30]** the majority of the students being Jewish and bright, and the minority being the teachers who often were bright enough to be either neutral or appreciative of the smarts of their students who, you know, sort of fill the history books of the country with some of their contributions, in with them. Sammy, go away boo-boo. Go, go sit down. Go **[0:24:00]** sit down. And the other slice of the pie were the teachers who were definitely and very faintly veiled anti-Semitic and couldn't bide the garlic of the kids as they breathed in, deliberately exhaled it, and showered with it. And said, "If there's one thing I hate, it's garlic. And if **[0:24:30]** there's a second thing I hate, it's people who live on garlic."

Interviewer: Wow.

Respondent: So these things were said.

Interviewer: Wow.

Respondent: They had quite free rein too. There were, let's say, five, six, seven teachers who were famous for their anti-Semitism who were mocked, they were laughed at, and they were sort of figures of derision, but they often could do damage and did. So that was a given. That was a constant – the battle **[0:25:00]** between the students and some of the principals, the vice-principals, the important subject teachers who were anti-Semitic. Harbord Collegiate was almost like eighty percent Jewish, so the others were almost never Chinese as they are now, of course, the majority, but there were some Ukrainian kids who were certainly very bright, and there were others who were not considered very bright because they were Ukrainian, and they were supposed to be **[0:25:30]** a bright…

Interviewer: So that was some stereotyping you're talking about.

Respondent: It was just some stereotyping. Exactly.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. But that was Harbord Collegiate.

Respondent: That was Harbord Collegiate.

Interviewer: So I think we're going to get off that one because that's not right in our neighbourhood.

Respondent: Oh, but most of the kids went to Harbord Collegiate, so it's important.

Interviewer: Yes. Yes. Right. Yeah, yeah. I agree. And so you're talking about the teachers being Anglo-Saxon and the students being Jewish, **[0:26:00]** and the majority of the teachers were okay, and there was some small group that were anti-Semites…

Respondent: Right. Right.

Interviewer: And they found ways of being kind of being insidiously anti-Semitic.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. So Rafi, we're going to move on a bit. I want to talk about some of the city things such as traffic, sidewalks, that kind of thing. Have you noticed any changes in the way the traffic moves in the neighbourhood?

Respondent: Oh, absolutely. Now **[0:26:30]** and, you know, beginning quite some time ago, but the last ten years anyways the street has become a major artery and…

Interviewer: You're talking about Harbord.

Respondent: Harbord. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: You want to know about that?

Interviewer: Yeah, of course. I just wanted to name it.

Respondent: So that's a big change. Become a major artery. They removed a lot of the – the streetcar was there. Kind of a big event, I think.

Interviewer: There was a streetcar on Harbord.

Respondent: Oh yes. There was a streetcar on **[0:27:00]** Harbord. I grew up to the clang of the streetcar on Harbord Street.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: I'm trying to remember what it's – I think it was Bathurst. It's extended on Bathurst on the west, and then I think – I don't remember what happened if you wanted to go further west. I guess it was a bus or something that didn't…

Interviewer: Now there's a bus.

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah. But I don't know.

Interviewer: So there were streetcars on Harbord with streetcar tracks.

Respondent: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: **[0:27:30]** Oh my god. Yeah, I never saw those. Yeah.

Respondent: My bedroom was at one point the window that looked onto – my bedroom looked onto Harbord and so I just grew up with that and it was pretty natural, so when people talk about noise and street noise, I say you get used to it.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's one of the familiar sounds of home practically. Yeah. So you're saying that the traffic along Harbord…

Respondent: And **[0:28:00]** it met, and joined, and crossed with, and made a junction with the north-going Bathurst section, and that took you up to the Vaughan loop, where you got a bus to the rest. There was

nothing north with streetcars, north of there. It went by bus, which was already into the country almost, virtually. It was a bit too far from the country at Harbord **[0:28:30]** Street.

Interviewer: So you lived in the inner city, but it was pretty much the limits of the city, just ten minutes north the city was rural.

Respondent: That certainly is – you know, we notice – the big change of course, most recently, is that Harbord has become the street of fancy restaurants, whereas it used to have a few dives and a few sort of – **[0:29:00]** what are they called? You know, that there were trucks out along Harbord. They're called – where you have a good solid working class meal. Diner.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: There were diners, the restaurants where you had good grilled cheese sandwiches and hamburgers and stuff like that. There was a big drug store where the bank – you know where the bank is?

Interviewer: Yeah. **[0:29:30]** Yeah.

Respondent: It was across the road on the east side, so that was a huge – that had a huge bar, I remember. Or was that a little bit out a bit east of Spadina? Anyways, that is certainly a major thing. Harbord Bakery made a very big dent in all that, you know, that phase. Change of Harbord Street. What **[0:30:00]** else did we have on Harbord Street? Harbord Street had a fish market, which was a very lively…

Interviewer: Yeah. I heard about – I think I even remember it briefly. Yeah.

Respondent: It had a fish market that shared that lane, and it was a very important part of the scene. What else was there? Fish market, grocery shops, no such thing as convenience stores.

Interviewer: So it was more working class.

Respondent: Mm-hm. Oh, for sure.

Interviewer: **[0:30:30]** I mean the restaurants were, as you said, good grilled cheese sandwich, whereas now you can go and spend fifty dollars on a person.

Respondent: Oh…

Interviewer: And have nice wine.

Respondent: There was nothing like that. There was no such thing as wine.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. But whatever's going on, Harbord Bakery always fits in.

Respondent: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: I mean it's become more upper-middle class.

Respondent: The Harbord Bakery was the constant in the picture in terms of a business. Poretta's also stayed, and of course everybody eats pizza. I mean it's **[0:31:00]** classless. The boxes look the same when they're in the garbage, whether wealthy people eat them or…

Interviewer: Do you see the sidewalks being used in any kind of different way?

Respondent: Not really. Let me think. Am I missing something? You know, the Residents' Association puts pots out here, or pots hanging over, or stuff. I don't think **[0:31:30]** that makes any major contribution particularly. I'm not a great **[indiscernible 0:31:33]** of that kind of confection, or whatever you call it, make-up.

Interviewer: Beautifying.

Respondent: Cosmetic stuff. It doesn't. I think that the businesses have to generate their own kind of…

Interviewer: Merit. Yeah.

Respondent: **[0:32:00]** And when it does. It would be unheard of, of course, to have someone like a car jockey to take in your car. I mean no one came – my car – cars were…

Interviewer: But that's interesting too, that more people coming by car to the restaurants now, and before it was for the locals.

Respondent: Right. But you have the locals still go. I think the locals make good use of the local restaurants, and I think that it would be quite a different thing **[0:32:30]** if they depended on foreigners all the time coming in for…

Interviewer: So now it's both. Yeah.

Respondent: It's both now.

Interviewer: Yeah. Because before I guessed the locals ate at these…

Respondent: What are you thinking of when you're talking about things on the sidewalk, for example?

Interviewer: Well I guess I'm also thinking – I mean it's interesting what you said about beautifying and people wanting to put flowerpots and all that, but I'm thinking also of on the side streets. How much of the sidewalks were used? **[0:33:00]** Like I'm thinking of maybe children playing outside. I think that there's been a change. I think children play less on the sidewalks than they used to.

Respondent: Oh absolutely. There's – no one has put a hopscotch ladder or whatever you call it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: What is it called? Whatever. That's a good point.

Interviewer: And what about the lanes? Do you have any sense of whether that has changed? Use of the lanes.

Respondent: There's **[0:33:30]** a lot of all sorts of things happening in lanes. People who were drinking in lanes, people who were initiating relationships, and things of that sort. There were carpenter shops with sawdust all in the lane. They were cutting through shortcuts. Everyone talked about the shortcut. "What do you use? Do you use

this one? Do you use that one to get to school?" Or, "No, I go up there. I don't use any shortcuts because I'm afraid of the lane. It's very mucky." The lanes were very **[0:34:00]** mucky. Now they're at least semi-paved or paved a certain way. They were very old-fashioned, they were very, you know, widely – people used to walk through them in the summertime. Kids collected the lilacs that went along. No cars because they didn't have them. But along snipping lilacs, they climbed the fences – the homes on **[0:34:30]** Major, and Robert Street, and so on, and they went and sold these lilacs.

Interviewer: Oh. So they cut them from other people's trees?

Respondent: Oh yeah. [Laughter] I remember one of the favourite places to sell them was up near the church corner because the church people bought them very early for ten cents or fifteen cents. [Laughter]

Interviewer: That's a new one for me. [Laughs]

Respondent: The lanes were interesting. I think it's appropriate not only for whatever use is **[0:35:00]** thought now, but they're important to have names, although they didn't of course, because there was a lot of liveliness in them, and when I think of some things that happened – I mean there were not people dressed fancily using them for sure. There were horses, there were wagons, there were real – and **[0:35:30]** all sorts of old-fashioned things.

Interviewer: What were the horses and wagons doing? What were they carrying?

Respondent: They were carrying ice, or what we're called watermelons, and the cry was, "Watermelon. Watermelons. Get your watermelon." I remember that and the ice. They were carrying milk. There will still a couple companies that still had wagons, horse-drawn wagons for their milk and cheese and stuff. Came in bottles, which **[0:36:00]** was nice, instead of this – whatever it's called.

Interviewer: The cartons.

Respondent: The lanes were busy. Kids would stop and chat. Kids would go and see – and I remember one of the games was to have – what was it called? The bolo bat?

Interviewer: Yeah. Oh yeah.

Respondent: Take the bolo bat and see if you can go through the whole lane with your bolo bat and the bet's on whether you could or not. People who **[0:36:30]** had kids met kids, and other people met…

Interviewer: So it was a social ground. Very much a…

Respondent: It was a social ground. It was a bit of a business ground with a lilac tree. This illegal lilac tree. These are the flowers, eh? You know the lilac flowers? Kids sold them for a dime.

Interviewer: They'd go pick them from somebody else's tree and then go sell them? [Laughs]

Male: You've got to make a business.

Interviewer: [Laughs] Yeah. Any comments about the – did people have **[0:37:00]** backyards, and those who did, did they use them?

Respondent: Absolutely. They'd have flowers and they'd have vegetables, depending on what their talent was. They put the – I think some of the poor Irish would have nothing, just sort of junkyards for stuff. Yeah. Of course they had backyards. Houses came with backyards.

Interviewer: But my question **[0:37:30]** is how they used the backyards.

Respondent: Well how they used them? I don't think they sat out in them at all. I don't think they had nice fountains, or even particularly nice flower gardens in this area anyways. I think mostly they were either junkyards, sometimes they were – since houses had summer kitchens…

Interviewer: Yeah, right.

Respondent: Or they would – the summer kitchens **[0:38:00]** had storage and also sometimes – they might – I can't even see them. There were no barbecues, and there were – I never saw a barbecue or a steak until I was, you know, thirty years old or something. It wasn't part of the life.

Interviewer: So it was growing food, or just a catchall.

Respondent: It was a catchall, I think. Most cases the yards were run-down catchall. The fences were always – seemed to be in bad repair. There were not any lovely **[0:38:30]** fences as there are now.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay, so let me just ask…

Respondent: Or gates, or any…

Interviewer: Yeah. So you're saying that that's really been an area of big change.

Respondent: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Because there are beautiful gardens there now.

Respondent: I'm sure – oh yeah, there are.

Interviewer: And I think people probably even sit out there, and as you said they have barbecues too. So the backs are used now, and they're beautiful, I suppose.

Respondent: Oh yeah. It's a different time and a whole different style. I mean the gentrification of the whole **[0:39:00]** area continues, and it's interesting to see houses where I had friends – not the Irish friends, but Jewish friends, some of whom were Orthodox kids and went to the Talmud Torah on Brunswick Street rather than to private little shuls or something, where they went for school. So some kids were at Talmud Torah and had a very full day education, even **[0:39:30]** after school education, whereas others – I'm talking about Jewish kids, of course. Anyways, these families – the homes of these families were often more similar – there are two, three I can think of – were similar to the Irish, except they were more kempt. And they

are now some of the very lovely places on Brunswick on College, larger houses, they were also unkempt large, Jewish houses, **[0:40:00]** and kempt ones, and then ones that were then sort of somewhere in between, and now it'd become, of course, palaces beyond anybody's reach in terms of buying them or whatever. But why do I tell this? Because they were visually – they were important then. We call them the big houses or the mansions. "Oh yeah, you live on that mansion almost at College Street," where some of the big houses are, and quite **[0:40:30]** beautiful. And now they are again being – now we're in cosmetics, and new colours, and new spaces inside, so it's sometimes hard to remember what they did look like and say, "Well they did look like – they looked nice, but they didn't look like that." But what did they look like? Well you know, I'm not sure sometimes, but they sure look proud.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And **[0:41:00]** so they're being restored in a sense to their proudness, or their…

Interviewer: They are beautiful. Yeah.

Respondent: Now you say something.

Interviewer: Okay. I'm just going to ask you one other question in this, and that is heating. The heating of the homes.

Respondent: Coal mostly, if I'm not mistaken.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Coal.

Interviewer: I remember that when I was a child. Delivering the coal.

Respondent: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Dirty stuff.

Interviewer: Yeah. **[0:41:30]** Yeah. And fireplaces? Not much? Yeah?

Respondent: Never used.

Interviewer: Oh, so you had fireplaces, but it was the coal that…

Respondent: For the home – for beauty's sake and like that. There might be one real waspy place or two, but I don't think anybody made a fire for – in the fireplace, even if it was Christmas, if I recall. Most of them were really very, very **[indiscernible 0:41:59]**. **[0:42:00]** Most of them I don't think had lines, otherwise the whole place would have gone up in the fire, I think, with these Victorian fireplaces. Most of them were closed off. They were mantelpieces.

Interviewer: Yeah. Right. Yeah.

Respondent: Everybody had a mantelpiece. We had a mantelpiece at one point. When we didn't have, we built one. It was all bogus.

Interviewer: So it was **[0:42:30]** part of the decoration of the home.

Respondent: Exactly. You could go to a place and the fire in it, it finally became electric. They had these phony fireplaces. You probably had one in Montreal, no?

Interviewer: No, I never had one, but I certainly have seen them. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And the plastic furniture disappears of course. You eventually…

Interviewer: Even they were putting the plastic on top of their sofas.

Respondent: Right. And that disappeared. I remember my parents saying, "Well plastic, **[0:43:00]** goodbye now." We had a thing for fabric, we would go and choose fabric like this or something, and it didn't have to have – where some of the people who moved up the hill still carried on with plastic furniture and probably still do.

Interviewer: Well I remember the plastic, but I also remember that some people had a parlour and the children were not allowed in there. It was just when company came.

Respondent: Oh really?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. That's right. Yeah. **[0:43:30]** What about garbage collection? Any memories of what it was like compared to now?

Respondent: No. I just remember – I could come back to it. I don't think I can tell you much about that. I don't even think there was garbage collection. There had to be, I guess. What I do remember is milk delivery with the milk bottles, and popping the – in the winter, and getting **[0:44:00]** this much of a cap of frozen milk. [Laughs] And the poor paper cap to it sitting way up there with – so that I remember. So all the verandahs had that type of…

Interviewer: The milkman.

Respondent: The milkman.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: Mm-hm. I wonder if the milkman did what he does, and you know, the role that he played beyond the milk delivery. Whether or not he flirted with **[0:44:30]** the lady of the house, and…

Interviewer: All those milkman jokes?

Respondent: All those milkman jokes. [Laughter]

Male: And you looked like the milkman.

Interviewer: [Laughs] That's right. [Laughter] So Rafi, any thoughts about…

Respondent: I can tell you about garbage. I remember a little bit about garbage.

Interviewer: Okay. I'm going to change the topic very drastically. Any thoughts that you have about when you were fifteen, younger, older, about

dating? **[0:45:00]** What you observed at that time, or experienced, and what's going on now – any changes that you see? [Laughs]

Male: Change the subject.

Respondent: As the denizen of your Harbord area, the girls that I knew were all from my – it was on this movement. So they – almost all of them lived outside **[0:45:30]** of Forest Hill or up the hill. So whatever social niceties they knew were not in the lane ones or that type of thing. You know, they were very civilized, and all dictated by movies of the time, and the stars of the time, and that kind…

Interviewer: Oh, so they emulated those.

Respondent: Those were the values. **[0:46:00]** You know, my whole life then was shaped by the movement, by the youth movement, so we were also outside the main fashions.

Interviewer: Yeah. And you also did a whole lot as a group as opposed to going on a date with somebody, from what you're describing.

Respondent: I remember the only dates that I had as such **[0:46:30]** were New Year's when I went out with a group, in a still group bash, if you want to call it.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent: So I'm not sure by what dating – it wasn't a subject. We didn't date, at least I didn't and my friends didn't as such until you're forty years old or something. [Laughter] It was too late, but we knew what to do. And there wasn't anything we went to or nothing.

Interviewer: **[0:47:00]** [Laughs] As I was driving here I was listening to CBC, but I'll tell you about it after the interview. [Laughs] You talked about the stores on Harbord, how they were much more for the working class – the restaurants. And any other comments about the stores in general, the neighbourhood, including College, including Bloor? Any thoughts about that?

Respondent: Yes. College Street – excuse me. I'm so hungry. **[0:47:30]** College Street was a street of delicatessens, as they were called. Never delis, and I wouldn't have known what a deli was. But of delicatessens based on that kind of brisket, and smoked meat, and kishkas, **[0:48:00]** and also restaurant-restaurants. Jewish restaurants like Silver's and so on. And then they catered, I think. Well to the Jewish families, but also to the single Jewish immigrants after the war, that lived through it, and came as a single person to Toronto from wherever they came. And that was it. So either the delicatessen or the restaurant-restaurant, which was not a delicatessen at **[0:48:30]** all, but a full food – and usually were delicious food indeed, which we don't have anything left of virtually now and haven't had for years. Those places were also event places and celebration places, or once a week-type places that you celebrated. And I know that many who still remain here miss them, and **[0:49:00]** follow them up to Eglinton and some a little further. Even there they're scarce.

Interviewer: Like United went up north.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Switzer's, which is closed now, but that also went up north first. Shopsy's.

Respondent: There were also these very rare places, and you can't minimize the role that Harbord fish market played in supplying many of these delis with their smoked fish, **[0:49:30]** which was something they didn't do themselves. So the smoked carp, and smoked whitefish, and so on, those were very important pegs of the food culture, which now has spread to supermarkets with fifteen different kinds of smoked things and stuff.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And of course **[0:50:00]** these places did not have cheeses or anything like that; they were strictly meat places there with the odd vegetarian place.

Interviewer: There were some at that time, or now you're saying?

Respondent: Then. There was one or two.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Because it's much more…

Respondent: Well first of all there was the United Baker's, that was strictly vegetarian. And I think after the war – **[0:50:30]** before the war and after the Second World War, there were two or three, not Israeli still, but there were places…

Interviewer: Middle Eastern?

Respondent: Well no, no, but dairy places.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Concentrate on dairy. And there's Harbord Fish Market and then smoked fish were very important, and that became part of the delicatessen scene. That was important, and there **[0:51:00]** weren't many Harbord Fish Markets in the city. And when they closed – because they really sort of – they did close and pulled up all their goodies and tried to do it elsewhere with two of the kids of the family. It didn't work. It didn't work at all, and now there's some other people who do that kind of thing on a big scale. But there were places – I don't want to get lost, **[0:51:30]** as is my want. There were places like Wilco Appetizer on College Street that pioneered the whole business of fancy foods that are wrapped, that are – you know, fancy foods like smoked oysters, and stuff like that, and vinegars, and fancy…

Interviewer: So that started – you're saying College Street in our area? We're kind of pioneers in terms of some of that.

Respondent: Yeah. Well **[0:52:00]** Wilco was one of that – was on Borden.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And I remember because I was very young when I got interested in what my aunt used to call – what did she call it? Internationalischessen. [Laughter] I tasted all these things before anyone could even spell them.

Interviewer: So you were a more **[0:52:30]** worldly person according to your aunt.

Respondent: I traveled and stuff.

Interviewer: Yes, yes.

Respondent: So there was that stuff. What else was there? Don't forget also the butcher shops that were at almost all corners.

Interviewer: Kosher butcher shops?

Respondent: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Respondent: All kosher. If not kosher, then there was an Estonian place just before Bathurst on College whose name I just forget now, but I used to like that because **[0:53:00]** I liked things like smoked eel, and they were probably the only place in the city where you got smoked eel. And sour bread, and…

Interviewer: Yeah. But butcher shops are really a thing of the past pretty much. I mean you get it at your supermarket.

Respondent: You're right now, I mean you have it if you go to Church Street. You see the whole stretch of the new healthy butcher shop type of things, just as you do on Eglinton north.

Interviewer: Yeah. **[0:53:30]** I think there's one on Bloor Street now.

Respondent: There may.

Interviewer: Yeah. There's a – yeah. And there are a couple of butcher shops in the Market, but basically I think most people are buying their meat at the supermarket these days.

Respondent: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. But I think there was a trend to both the supermarket butcher shop becoming a little more artisan-like, and giving you **[0:54:00]** the cuts that you need, and advertising how healthy that the cows are that they killed to have this oven steak and stuff like that. So I think there's now a – it's a little confusing. The traffic is going both ways, I think. One is taking from the other, and the other is gradually disappearing anyways.

Interviewer: Okay. We're going to move on. Okay. For our last kind of ten minutes or so – to talk about the institutions. **[0:54:30]** We talked about churches and synagogues already. Health care.

Respondent: Health care.

Interviewer: What existed?

Respondent: What existed in health care was carbolic acid. Carbolic acid did all the good health thing that – you know carbolic acid smells like?

Interviewer: Oh, it smells like hospitals used to smell.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Every hospital had that smell.

Respondent: So what do I know about that? The only thing **[0:55:00]** I know about health care is carbolic acid. [Laughter] But I almost never remember what is called – so this is a first for you, I think.

Interviewer: But I do remember hospitals having that hospital smell, and that was carbolic acid.

Respondent: I used to think that was the best thing since sliced bread.

Interviewer: Oh, you loved the smell?

Respondent: Actually I didn't like sliced bread, but I liked carbolic acid. I liked carbolic acid even in the smell of Band-Aids turned me on.

Interviewer: [Laughs] Should we **[0:55:30]** talk about dating again? [Laughs]

Respondent: Yeah. Restless.

Interviewer: So when you think of institutions, do you think of that smell of the carbolic acid?

Respondent: Carbolic acid I think of – because carbolic acid was what I first smelled when I woke up from the concussion I had when I was taken to Sick Kids Hospital. What I remembered was that there was a wonderful place called Sick Kids Hospital that smelled **[0:56:00]** so clean, like laundry, fresh laundry, which we didn't have at all, and I don't remember how we got anything fresh. I guess my mom washed it.

Interviewer: And hung it outside.

Respondent: And hung it outside.

Interviewer: Yeah. Right. This is all going to be taped.

Respondent: Never has an interview been carried out under such difficult…

Interviewer: That's the dog eating.

Respondent: You have to tell who you report to…

Interviewer: That's right. When you say sending away, **[0:56:30]** it's not Eleanor going away.

Respondent: You have your respondent who did nothing but eat. [Laughter] Nonstop – anyways. Sick Kids Hospital, very important. Health care also, if you got into a hospital, like I did in the concussion when I was nine years old from me falling on the ice, which was on a **[0:57:00]** driveway of Robert Street, Major Street – still there and still in our area, you area – that when you were finished with a hospital, which was, say, a week for my concussion, or ten days,

you weren't sent home. You certainly weren't pushed out of a hospital after three days, but you went to Thistletown, which was where the recuperative thing – it was in the country, but right now it's in a horrible **[0:57:30]** part of the city. But Thistletown was the byword for getting really better. So you got your leg fixed, or your amputation healed, but then you spent another ten days in Thistletown Hospital.

Interviewer: Oh what a difference to today.

Respondent: Otherwise I remember always – because we had an important surgeon in our family – my father's cousin. **[0:58:00]** And so what was medicine? Medicine was the numerous clauses that didn't allow Jews to go into the profession.

Interviewer: Wow.

Respondent: And medicine was the – our family doctor, our pediatrician who was about this high, Silverstein – and glasses, and looked like some kind of a gnome. And certainly **[0:58:30]** you can't see any hospital in – come in. But anyways, he had diagnosed Roz with a stomach flu because she didn't get out of bed, and she was looking horrible, and moaning, and it happened that our cousin just came in to say, "Good Happy New Year," or something. I had a very close relationship with him. And he took one look at Roz and this horrible slum in which we lived, which was **[0:59:00]** next to the Peardon Laundry, which was right at the top of Brunswick just below Bloor, and now it's called the TRANZAC Club.

Interviewer: Oh my god. So you lived there?

Respondent: We lived there. Yeah. That was one of the places that we lived in. And so he drove – there were a few people in our families who had a car to say hello, and he said, "Let's get her into my car. She doesn't have long to live." So she had a ruptured appendix. So ruptured appendix **[0:59:30]** is what I know about in medicine, of course, that our doctor saved her. So I'm always interested to hear about ruptured appendix stories and whether or not – who are the actors, the characters in that. Otherwise, I don't remember the – the

Women's College Hospital was there across from Eaton's College, and I always remember wondering, "What does it mean?"

Interviewer: Women's College Hospital was where?

Respondent: I think where they were.

Interviewer: **[1:00:00]** Oh, where they are now.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. But anything in our neighbourhood in terms of…

Respondent: Well there was the hospice or whatever, there was the nunnery, which is now of course the Rosedale Home at the bottom of Brunswick. What's that called?

Interviewer: Oh Kensington Gardens.

Respondent: Kensington. Not Rosedale. Kensington Gardens.

Interviewer: So there were nuns being trained there or living there?

Respondent: **[1:00:30]** Living there, but in the front of course. And some of that was demolished, and the Doctor's Hospital became part of the scene.

Interviewer: Right. But first there were nuns living there?

Respondent: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: Being trained there? Or living there?

Respondent: Mm-hm. I think – well certainly on the Major Street part of it.

Interviewer: Right. Okay, okay. Oh, that's something I had never ever heard of.

Respondent: What else?

Interviewer: Wow.

Respondent: TGH was a big hospital, but it was not for us, and nobody ever knew of Mount Sinai, from the tiny little **[1:01:00]** Mount Sinai in Yorkdale, on Yorkville where it began. Jewish Home and Hospital, I think it was called. No, it was called Mount Sinai. It was called Mount Sinai on Yorkville. There was nothing that we could do. We knew of it, and we knew the building. We knew from the area. **[1:01:30]** Ah, we knew that Palmerston Boulevard was the Doctor's Hospital. The doctors' street.

Interviewer: So there were doctor's offices on Palmerston?

Respondent: Well we knew – though we never used them – that they originally were built to attract Jewish doctors. Built almost exclusively, and did, and were very successful so that the whole stretch below Bloor was named **[1:02:00]** wealthy doctors, or very well-off doctors.

Interviewer: Yeah. So who did the people in your neighbourhood between Spadina and Bathurst – who were their family doctors? Or who were…

Respondent: The family doctor visited.

Interviewer: **[1:02:30]** Yeah. Okay. So there's a big change.

Respondent: You didn't go to a hospital to see your family doctor.

Interviewer: Right. Of course. Okay.

Respondent: But I understand now that's changing. There's a bit of a reverting to that, that doctors are now going to homes.

Interviewer: Minimally.

Respondent: Not by the majority.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. We're going to move on from that. Okay. Oh, just one more thing about institutions or areas. Kensington Market, which is south of us, but did you feel that it had any influence on us from College up to Bloor?

Respondent: Oh yes.

Interviewer: What kind of…

Respondent: Big shop there. People went for their fish there. People went for their **[1:03:00]** dill pickles. Oh yeah. A lot of shopping for their schmattas. For all sorts of things. Eggs.

Interviewer: And are there any changes that you're aware of?

Respondent: By the way, we should also mention – since we did the butchers, the poultry people, the Tennenbaum's on Brunswick who were a big fixture of the place. And Feld's Drugs, which was a filthy place, but it sold drugs. [Laughs] Maybe to just teenagers, I'm not sure, but it **[1:03:30]** was a drug store, right just where the second – well actually I think where the pottery – just above where the potters are.

Interviewer: Okay. So runs with the northwest corner of Brunswick and Harbord.

Respondent: By the way, we also lived in a slummish – in another house, which is the first – the two, three renovated houses above Harbord on Brunswick, and **[1:04:00]** there we lived on the ground floor flat, and very poor, again without our sleeper furniture, and that would be right directly across from Feld's Drugs. But do you know where? It's virtually the backyard of the nice new place. What is it called? Dessert Trends?

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: Right next to Dessert Trends.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Just north, there's again a house **[1:04:30]** attached.

Interviewer: So did you live in three different – you lived above the store, and then you lived near TRANZAC, and then you lived near Dessert Trends.

Respondent: Lived in TRANZAC, if you want to call that, I think it's 171 Brunswick, before we lived on Harbord.

Interviewer: Ah okay. So Harbord was a step up for you.

Respondent: Harbord was…

Interviewer: Was an improvement.

Respondent: …a big step up. It was a gigantic step for mankind.

Interviewer: And for the Kosower family.

Respondent: And for the Kosower family, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. And then you moved to **[1:05:00]** near where Dessert Trends is.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: So you didn't live above the store anymore.

Respondent: No. We went from upper Brunswick, sorry, to lower Brunswick, to…

Interviewer: Above the store.

Respondent: Above the store.

Interviewer: And then your parents lived there until your father could no longer negotiate the stairs.

Respondent: Right. Let's see if we can figure that out. I'll give that to you.

Interviewer: We don't need the specifics. Okay. Just two other general areas **[1:05:30]** because we've been talking for a long time. The community…

Respondent: It's okay. Ask. I'm eating.

Interviewer: Yeah. [Laughs] The livability and the security of the neighbourhood.

Respondent: I think, though one would think not, people felt much more secure in those days about, you know, whether you lock a door or not than they do now. I even **[1:06:00]** know a lot of my friends' families never even thought to lock the door or lock the car, once they had cars. Although there was a single period where they sure did lock them. I don't remember any kind of crime in the area at all. I don't remember police cars, I don't remember ambulances either. I don't remember any other kind of stuff happening. What about security? **[1:06:30]** I think there was a stretch where it was not safe, say, to be in the store late alone. My mother once had people barge in. The lights were almost all out, and so if not for the Poretta kids, or from all the kids – there was a family whose house we lived in – was the kid who was now a good man who…

Interviewer: Johnny Fuda.

Respondent: The Fuda – right.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Where **[1:07:00]** Fuda saved the day.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Respondent: People were holding her with a gun or something.

Interviewer: Really?

Respondent: So there was that.

Interviewer: So she was held-up?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: And Fuda – somebody in the Fuda…

Respondent: Yeah. I forget the name. He was part of the story. I was off at school, I think, at York at the time. So there was a time when there

were – when you're talking about Harbord Street, I think well what's very rough? It became a street of a lot of hold-ups, several times where **[1:07:30]** the Japanese sushi places and…

Interviewer: So when you're talking about – are you talking about current, more like ten years ago?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: No?

Respondent: Not ten. I'm talking about maybe fifteen, twenty years.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay.

Respondent: It wasn't a good place to be on, but clearly some kind of gang – yeah. I'd have to…

Interviewer: And do you think it's safer **[1:08:00]** again now?

Respondent: Oh I think so. I think so.

Interviewer: You know, I used to walk along Bloor Street, along Harbord, every Sunday morning with Alan Borovoy, and we saw a lot of the windows smashed in on Sunday mornings. We would often see the – just around that time. Like fifteen years ago.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: The stores on Harbord.

Respondent: We had – perhaps more recent – all the flowerpots broken and stuff like that, and all sorts of desecration of things, and…

Interviewer: Yeah. **[1:08:30]** But it's…

Respondent: It seems to no longer be a place. I think there's so many other good places to hit now.

Interviewer: Okay. Just our last category is I want to talk about historical events, and I have a list of three here. But we're talking about fighting the Spadina Expressway. Did that make any impression on you? Or do you remember it?

Respondent: Oh yeah. For sure. **[1:09:00]** It was a big movement, I remember. It had a lot of clout to it. All the – didn't work finally. I think I was busy with other causes at the time, so it didn't really interest me a great deal.

Interviewer: Well you were probably on your way out by that time too. Like maybe in New York by **[1:09:30]** that time. Yeah, yeah. Anyway, but you remember it…

Respondent: Oh yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: …and that they stopped it. They were successful at stopping it. Yeah.

Respondent: That was Jane. I was going to say Jane Russell. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Jane Jacobs?

Respondent: Jane Jacobs. Yeah. I felt that was not my battle. It was not.

Interviewer: What about Rochdale and the student activism of the '60s?

Respondent: Absolutely. **[1:10:00]** Very loud, very imitative of, say, what had happened at Columbia University just before that. The students' holding the systems in the schools, as the universities do run. So I hated Rochdale with a passion because it was dirty, **[1:10:30]** it was dirty inside, it was dirty outside, it was a continuous battle to prevent kids from jumping and killing themselves out of their windows. I didn't like the whole idea of Rochdale, and it was a big – and it was a hideous building. When they put up that hideous so-called sculpture I hated it even more. I hate it to this day every time I go by.

Interviewer: It is a very unattractive building. Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: **[1:11:00]** So it's…

Interviewer: I think it's a seniors' building now or something.

Respondent: God help the seniors. I'm sure it's…

Interviewer: [Laughs] And in terms of historical events, at the end of World War II…

Respondent: I remember very vividly. The end of World War II I was on Bloor Street between Bathurst and Borden, just where the movie house is. **[1:11:30]** The movie…

Interviewer: Bloor Cinema.

Respondent: Well yeah. It wasn't the Bloor Cinema then. The Bloor Cinema was across from it where all of the kids waiting in line for these shows or whatever. That's all got this graffiti on it. I forget what that is. I wouldn't know. That was the Bloor Cinema, and the other was called the Midtown Cinema. It was run by a Jewish family as part of a four or **[1:12:00]** five theatre, or maybe six, seven theatre franchise. And so there was the rich part of our family that was in the movie business. Uncle Sam was the one that brought my mom over, and he was the owner of this whole circuit of movie theatres.

Interviewer: Oh wow.

Respondent: So why do I remember it? To your question – because the crowd began pouring out towards it and from it, and saying, "Hey, the war's over. **[1:12:30]** The war's over." And below the few cars that were here, the twelve cars then that were in the city of Toronto at that time were blowing horns and so on. I don't know where I was coming from, but I know I was going home, and it was the day my parents signed the – they accepted the offer for the bakery.

Interviewer: Wow. So two big things happened that day in your life.

Respondent: Yeah. Then **[1:13:00]** of course I think it was sad because – it was on that people finally made their peace. They couldn't do that, but

made their acceptance of the reality of the fact that they were sister and brother and stuff.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: It went up in smoke.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. So it was nice that the war was over, but the losses were…

Respondent: Oh, it was terrible **[1:13:30]** because the response, you know – or something. But no. The response of the **[indiscernible 01:13:43]**, so so what?

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Okay, Rafi. We're going to end this right now. I want to thank you very, very much. Much appreciated.

Respondent: It was good. I'm sorry I have no voice today.

[At this time the recorder was turned off,
then turned on again a few minutes later for a few final remarks.]

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. So Rafi, you want to just kind of…

Respondent: If I can find some voice, a voice to cap this very nice talk with you, I would like to say that in the course of the many years that I've been at the bakery, after doing many other things that were very interesting, none of those seemed as interesting as being in **[0:00:30]** the heart of an area that was so exciting and so interesting to grow up in. The kind of thing that makes novels and so on in Montreal and some in Toronto too. All the people that I meet in the bakery are with one voice, positive and excited to have grown up in this quadrant of the city, in this part of the city, and feel very connected to it still **[0:01:00]**, bring their kids and their kids' kids down to see on their own and with their own eyes what a lovely place this is. And feel very attached to their growing-up stories,

which they then share as they're munching on a croissant or whatever. Remember the good growing up, and the times, even some that were scary, but otherwise a part of the good life that we knew were far from good, well-off financially, economically in those days. So it's been a good ride.

Interviewer: That's it. Thank you. I'm glad you had time to think of…

[End of recording]