

026 Betty Pratt and Arthur Zimmerman

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

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: Okay. We can start. I want to thank Arthur Zimmerman and Betty Pratt for joining us today. I explained to you that I'm on the history committee of Harbord Village Residents' Association, and both of you have long histories in this neighbourhood. So what I'm going to ask you to do is just give me names, ages, when you lived here, or with you, Arthur, it was your grandparents. Just as an introduction so that we can have that information. [0:00:30] Have some dates.

Respondent 1: Okay. [Laughs] Betty Pratt. And Bill and I are here at 122 Major Street, and we'd been here since 1983, and we lived one year before that at 266 Brunswick. And my mother lived at 255 Major Street, just around 1917. It's the Varti family. [0:01:00] And then Bill's mom was born on Brunswick, south of Ulster or near Ulster, I think, just in 1917 as well. So we started to remember all this when we moved here, and they, my family, told me some interesting stories. And we have – okay. So.

Interviewer: And we're – the interview is taking [0:01:30] place at 122 Major, which is your home.

Respondent 1: Right.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent 1: Okay.

Interviewer: We'll come back. I would love to have some of those stories, okay?

Respondent 1: [Laughs] Okay.

Interviewer: I'm sure you'll be able to fit them into some of these categories that we'll be discussing because you have a long history here.

Respondent 1: Right. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Yeah. And?

Respondent 2: Arthur Zimmerman. I grew up at 514 Brunswick between Dupont and Wells for sixty-odd years there. I'm sixty-nine at the moment. My maternal grandmother **[0:02:00]** lived at 124 Robert Street from 1922 until she died in '54. The family apparently – my mother was born in 1916 on Lower Markham Street, but her sister, her younger sister, three years younger, was born at 144 Robert Street. Haven't been able to confirm that, but that's the story. I've been around this neighbourhood **[0:02:30]** I guess all my life because of my grandmother.

Interviewer: Yeah. And that's why you're really a good candidate because you've always lived close by, but for this project it's because your grandmother was here. Can you each – when you visited your grandmother, who lived in that house? How many people were there?

Respondent 2: In my day it was my grandmother plus a tenant up at the front room on the second floor.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent 2: And that was it, I think. And for a while I think my aunt and her family lived there while they were trying to **[0:03:00]** settle themselves, so that would be probably, oh gosh, I guess it'd be about 1944, '45, somewhere in there probably.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. And when you and your husband moved here, it was the two of you.

Respondent 1: Yes. Bill works at the Royal Ontario Museum, and I was working there then too, so we had the connection to that, and we had both gone to U of T. **[0:03:30]** And that was why we wanted to live nearby and walk to work, but my dad's generation – he had been an English teacher at Central Tech School.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 1: So in the '50s.

Interviewer: Wow.

Respondent 1: And his best friends that he played poker with all through the years after that, when he moved on to other schools, were from Central Tech. So actually my [0:04:00] first memories were visiting Central Tech when I was a little girl, and seeing the arts school and all the wonderful things at the open house they used to have once a year.

Interviewer: What brought the earlier generations here? Can you answer that? Will you talk about earlier generations from your families?

Respondent 1: I have to have Bill try and remember why his father was – his family was here. [0:04:30] I'm not sure because I know they moved to Bathurst and Lawrence after that, after about 1929, but I have been trying to find out what my grandpa Varti did, but we're pretty sure he worked for the Heintzman Piano Company, or a furniture company, something nearby here. And Heintzman was over at the Junction at the time, but [0:05:00] he might have worked somewhere else, and I'd have to look that up. And then they moved to the Beaches area after that.

Interviewer: And where did your families originate? Your family and Bill's family?

Respondent 1: Well Bill's from Sault St. Marie. Bill's parents met here in Toronto during World War II, and his mother from here married and moved up to Sault St. Marie where Bill was born, and he came down [0:05:30] here to be – to work and be at U of T, and eventually the ROM, and I'm from Leaside. So my dad got a new house in 1949 in Leaside and they had all grown up in the Beaches area mostly.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. And do you know what brought your family here?

Respondent 2: I don't know...

Interviewer: Your grandparents, yeah.

Respondent 2: I don't know specifically what brought them here. I know that my grandfather was born in a place called Lipnishki [0:06:00] in Belarus, and my grandmother was born in [indiscernible 0:06:05], and the story was that my grandmother's brother had been a friend of my grandfather. Now there's a fair distance between those two towns, so I don't know how that happened, but my grandmother was taken to Leeds to live with her sister when she was about sixteen, so that would be around 1900 by her father, who then went back [0:06:30] to the old country. And my grandmother met my grandfather in Leeds, and he was a furrier, I think, even at that point. Why he came here, I don't know. They came here about 1910, but my grandfather – I've just been rereading the story. He knew Eli Herrmann, who was a not very good furrier at Gerrard and Bay Streets – according to what my mother said – [0:07:00] and he needed help. And my grandfather, who was a furrier, came in and helped him, and eventually I think my grandfather was a foreman, or a partner, or a semi-partner or something at Herrmann Furs. But why they came here specifically, I don't know. There may have been relatives in Toronto.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Respondent 2: My grandmother may have had...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: ...relatives here. There was a Lazarus family that my mother talked about in the Junction, but...

Interviewer: But they chose to live here...

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: ...in this neighbourhood.

Respondent 2: Yeah, yeah. They came here.

Interviewer: [0:07:30] Yeah, yeah, yeah. Are you aware of, from your own experience, the different waves of immigration as they occurred in this neighbourhood?

- Respondent 2:** Not so much this neighbourhood. When my mother was living here, there were a bunch of Jewish immigrants in the neighbourhood, but I don't know when they...
- Interviewer:** So this was in – in the what? **[0:08:00]** What...
- Respondent 2:** Robert Street.
- Interviewer:** And what years are you talking about approximately?
- Respondent 2:** Oh, it's got to be in the – from, I guess, the mid-'20s through the mid, late '30s, I guess.
- Interviewer:** Okay. So it was at least fifty percent Jewish from what you think.
- Respondent 2:** I don't know.
- Interviewer:** You don't know.
- Respondent 2:** But they knew the Jewish people in the neighbourhood.
- Interviewer:** Right.
- Respondent 2:** Because, I guess, they all talked Yiddish together...
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 2:** ...and probably not much else...
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** ...in those days.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. Uh-huh.
- Respondent 2:** **[0:08:30]** The Golds on Willcocks were good friends, and there were a few up and down the street that she mentioned the names of, but...

- Interviewer:** I think you...
- Respondent 2:** ...aside from that.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. I think there were a lot of Jewish people living in this neighbourhood at that time.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. But waves I couldn't tell you.
- Interviewer:** Well, but that point itself is significant.
- Respondent 2:** Is it? Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** So with all your years of visiting your grandparents being in this neighbourhood...
- Respondent 2:** Grandmother.
- Interviewer:** ...your [0:09:00] grandmother, okay, thank you.
- Respondent 2:** Grandfather died 1929 just before the crash. Just at that – yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Just at the time of the crash.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. But your grandmother stayed here for a long time.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Do you have any – since you've been here or known the neighbourhood, any comments on the different waves of immigration? Who has lived here, the changes that have occurred.
- Respondent 1:** Yes, because we talk about the fish store that was on [0:09:30] the corner of Harbord and Major, and we miss that. It closed when we came here in 1983. It wasn't there very long. I remember the family that was there on the corner, and it was nice to have a useful store, a place to shop like that, and since then so many restaurants have taken over, so that's a big change. And then [0:10:00] my...

- Interviewer:** What do you remember about those owners?
- Respondent 1:** Well I remember the men in the white aprons. A Jewish family...
- Interviewer:** It was a Jewish family.
- Respondent 1:** The name just escapes me at the moment.
- Interviewer:** No, I wasn't aware that it was a Jewish family. Okay. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** But there were so many of them in there waiting to help you, and so it seemed like a big family.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. Uh-huh.
- Respondent 1:** And, of course, Harbord Bakery is still there, and we really appreciate that.
- Respondent 2:** I remember you could smell the fish on the [0:10:30] street.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** I don't know if that was welcome or not. [Laughter]
- Respondent 2:** Remember that?
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah. But the bakery makes up for it, I think. [Laughter] So that helps.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** And well, going back to my mom's family had just got married and moved here from Owen Sound before the First World War.
- Interviewer:** And what's your family's background, religion, nationality?
- Respondent 1:** Well [0:11:00] United Church. So my mom, when they lived at 255 Major, remembered the giant Trinity Church when Bill and I moved

here. She must have been about five years old then. She remembered that big church that we go to hear Tafelmusik now.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: So they must have attended there. And my dad's family [0:11:30] weren't in this neighbourhood. They had come about 1910 from Prince Edward County to Toronto, and that grandfather mainly was in the Beaches area, so I think that's – he was doing real estate and building houses, so I think that's why they stayed there and moved there.

Interviewer: So you've been here – next year it'll be thirty years that you...

Respondent 1: Right. Yeah.

Interviewer: Have you seen changes [0:12:00] in generally the ethnic population? Have you seen that?

Respondent 1: Yes. Yeah. Well my neighbour on this side was Italian background, and she stayed here until she was very elderly. And the neighbours to the south, she's in her eighties, Mrs. Ho. So they're from China and Hong Kong, and they all [0:12:30] grew up here. This Italian lady has since passed away, but she was here from 1960, I think, and then the Vosses who are Dutch background, they owned this house and told me and Bill that there was – they owned it, and then there were Portuguese family before that. And the Negelbergs lived here maybe [0:13:00] from the '20s to the '50s, and before that we looked at the city archives, and there were a lot of British, English names, World War I. And before that, we think there was a house on this lot in the 1870s that was a much smaller stucco house, and then there was a widow Loane, I think was her name, that built this [0:13:30] new house in 1889. [Laughter]

Interviewer: This new house. [Laughs]

Respondent 1: So.

Interviewer: So this house itself has had a lot of different...

Respondent 1: Yes.

Interviewer: ...people from different origins living here.

Respondent 1: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. You mentioned the fish store. I'd like to kind of go back to the stores and stay with that for a while. If you can think of – because you go back a long time visiting your grandmother, and you've been here for nearly thirty years. **[0:14:00]** If you think about the stores – we'll stay with stores for a while – on Harbord, on Bloor, on College – some thoughts, some memories about that and comparing to what we have now.

Respondent 2: I remember a variety store at the corner of, I guess the corner of Robert. The east, southeast corner of Robert. I don't remember who owned it, or maybe **[0:14:30]** it was on this side. Maybe it was there the Chinese are with the flower shops.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent 2: But I don't remember anything about who owned that. I remember that one of my treats when I came here was to go over to Borden's Dairy to get an ice cream cone.

Interviewer: And where was that? Was that on Borden Street? I don't know.

Respondent 2: No, no. Borden's Dairy was where City Dairy was on the curve.

Interviewer: Oh, on the circle. Right. Right. Right.

Respondent 2: And where you see that sort of verandah-looking thing with the pillars was a **[0:15:00]** sort of a porch where you could sit at ice cream-type tables. Those little round tables with the wire legs.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Nice memories.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

- Respondent 2:** I remember that for sure. And I remember the little store down – I don't remember going into it ever, but the little store down Robert Street across from the school.
- Interviewer:** Yes. That was there until just about five years ago, I think.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. With wooden floors. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** I remember that. And [0:15:30] what else? I really didn't get – I mean I was just a little kid, so I didn't...
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** ...really get around.
- Interviewer:** Well but even since then, your experience with the stores on these streets, do you have any...
- Respondent 2:** Oh the pharmacy at Willcocks and Spadina, northwest corner, which is now I guess a residence of some sort, but that was an active pharmacy, I remember. And I think my grandmother [0:16:00] used to have her kids go there to buy her mentholettuce.
- Interviewer:** To buy her what?
- Respondent 2:** Mentholettuce.
- Interviewer:** What is that?
- Respondent 2:** Mentholatum. [Laughter] Universal cure. [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** Nice when there's one thing that cures everything.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.

- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. That's a very sweet, lovely memory. Yeah. Anything else about stores that either of you – I mean you talked about the fish store that you missed when it...
- Respondent 1:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** ...was gone. And Harbord Bakery, which is still there.
- Respondent 1:** I think everything's [0:16:30] very much the same since we came here in '83. We missed Kensington Kitchen Restaurant. I remember that. And I can talk about the '90s because I was helping with Harbord Village then. What – we got going on several projects, so just stop me if you don't want to go in that direction. But we did this traffic maze, which we may [0:17:00] or may not like the way it is, but we were the first neighbourhood to do all these one-way streets to slow down the traffic because they...
- Interviewer:** I definitely want to talk about that, so please go ahead. Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Right. [Laughs] So they had it started north of Harbord, and we were working with Joan Doiron, and Olivia Chow, and Jack Layton, and great councillors at City Hall through the – this was 1991 to about 1995 [0:17:30] when I was helping, and it took us about a year to get that going for south of Harbord, and at the time they didn't do speed bumps. They've since decided that speed bumps are better than these one-way at each corner with tree planters to kind of catch your eye and slow you down to make a turn. So we're still with this old-fashioned system, but it was new then. [0:18:00] And...
- Interviewer:** So you were one of the people who worked on it.
- Respondent 1:** I'm afraid we were, but Susan two doors away, Susan and Bryn, and Wynona and Peter Murphy, and several neighbours just close around here helped a great deal, so. And then through that time was the Spadina LRT, light rapid transit. Of course they wanted it to be very rapid, and we had meetings for about five years with [0:18:30] Metro Hall at the time, and all the neighbourhood communities as you go down each section, so that Chinatown, and the neighbours down at Harbourfront each, they had their own

meetings and sometimes we all got together to talk over issues. But they wanted to slow the streetcar down, the businessmen, so people would stop and get off at U of T and get off at their stores, and use their businesses. So the [0:19:00] whole thing changed because of what the community was telling them. And of course we wanted bicycle lanes, and....

Interviewer: Back then?

Respondent 1: Back then.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 1: And we fought very hard, and didn't work out very well on Spadina. I think the bicycle lane that was marked has since been taken away.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: But Harbord has a better bicycle lane, or going east and west they've done a better job with that.

Interviewer: You're talking about something that's very dear to my heart...

Respondent 1: Good.

Interviewer: ...since I use my bike a lot.

Respondent 1: Okay. [0:19:30] Well we need to revitalize that too, I suppose. And then Olivia Chow was so inspiring, and Joan Doiron was a school trustee at the time. We got involved in Neighbourhood Watch, and having kids walk safely to school so their bicycles wouldn't be stolen from them, and all these different issues that were coming up. And we had [0:20:00] another committee working on someone who was mugging people. And he lived right on Lennox, and we went to court and kept an eye on him for a while. Different things were going on like that, but were quite important.

Interviewer: So you actually knew who he was?

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah. We had a – well you've heard about Pizza Gigi too. It's been here so long, and all the other businesses on Harbord look so great, and they're so responsible, but [0:20:30] we had a – with Susan Purvis here, when she lived on Lippincott, they asked for – not a private detective, a detective in disguise to watch that place for year. And we knew about it back then that there was – it's drugs being traded from there.

Interviewer: How long ago are you talking about?

Respondent 1: Well this is early '90s. '91 to '95. So...

Interviewer: So you're saying twenty [0:21:00] years ago you knew that there were drugs in there.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Isn't that interesting? It's such a...

Respondent 1: And so you should talk to Susan about that. She really did most of the work on that one.

Interviewer: Wow. Well and it's such an eyesore.

Respondent 1: It is. That's what I said.

Respondent 2: That part on Harbord is...

Respondent 1: You can tell by looking at it that it wasn't – why the local BIA noticing that, or cluing into what was happening there. Why did it look like that?

Interviewer: [0:21:30] And why did it take twenty years for them to really get on their back? Like possibly. This is fascinating. All this is wonderful information.

Respondent 1: Well...

Interviewer: But I mean you were so connected with the roads, and the transportation, and the public transportation.

Respondent 1: Mm-hm. And it's just also, I guess, the last thing before – I was so glad Gus Sinclair took over because it got to be quite overwhelming because then U of T printed a huge booklet on all their new developments [0:22:00] and changes, and that was just about going along with the Spadina LRT as well. And one of the last things we looked into was New College was building a new residence, which is another concrete building along the other side of Spadina, and then they built that new one with the long...

Interviewer: Those narrow...

Respondent 1: ...overhang with the ...

Interviewer: [0:22:30] Yeah. The U of T.

Respondent 1: ...capital "O" on it, and that was going up all at the same time, so U of T was really expanding and made this concrete wall, which doesn't really fit in well with the neighbourhood. And we didn't do very well with communicating or getting them to think about that. So these issues are still ongoing.

Interviewer: Well...

Respondent 1: We hope they – they have hopefully [0:23:00] designated that college, the old building in the circle, as a historic building, but I see it's under construction now, so.

Interviewer: Well we – somebody – do you know Sue Dexter?

Respondent 1: Yes.

Interviewer: Because she...

Respondent 1: And she was on all of that.

Interviewer: Yeah. And she liaises with Harbord Village and the university.

Respondent 1: We met, and she managed to save one pine tree on the corner, but they had ripped down three beautiful, historic houses next to the

Faculty [0:23:30] Club along Willcocks there, without retaining anything of the nice appearance, or even the facades, the way they had done along Baldwin Street behind there. They had done such a nice job one block south of that by kind of integrating the nice, old buildings with the new parts. But somehow we couldn't keep that conversation going, and other things were [0:24:00] coming up at the time about Bloor Street, like the Metro Store was going to expand. And that didn't seem to happen while I was working on it, but they were taking another nice, old World War I, or 1920 house and built that giant condominium just south of Metro right on...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: ...the west side of Spadina.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: And that just replaced one house, the footprints of one house.

Interviewer: [0:24:30] It's called the Mosaic now.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: I think. Right.

Respondent 1: And that was the same time as the New College residence that was being built. So we didn't win very many battles there. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Yeah. You're saying we're losing a lot of the charming old places for these...

Respondent 1: Well I realize they had – there has to be changes, but there's a thoughtful way of integrating it, or we're very well aware of when it happens in our interior streets. [0:25:00] Even if they put up new townhouses they can fit it in so it looks like the rest of the row housing, or has some charm to it. Or even the same materials, the same landscaping, anything, but to...

Interviewer: Yeah.

- Respondent 1:** ...but to change it as much as that is a lot. Of course, and then they have their – the city is allowed to do that on the main streets, so there's different **[0:25:30]** rules for the heights on Spadina, Bloor, as opposed to our residential streets too. Anyway.
- Interviewer:** Oh no, that's...
- Respondent 1:** I won't get – that's a long...
- Interviewer:** No, but that's all very...
- Respondent 1:** A lot of topics.
- Interviewer:** It's a lot of topics, but it's all very relevant to what we're looking for, the changes.
- Respondent 1:** That's right.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. You've crossed a lot of the different topics that I wanted to bring up, so that's...
- Respondent 1:** Good.
- Interviewer:** ...completely fine. Any comments about the **[0:26:00]** food that neighbours, restaurants – any kinds of food differences that you've seen?
- Respondent 1:** Oh well there's a lot of sushi now, and Thai, and that's a big change. I miss the Hungarian restaurants, and I used to – there was one we liked that had wienerschnitzel. And there's only one left, I think.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Country Style.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Country Style.
- Interviewer:** Right. I used to like to come for the dobos torte. **[0:26:30]** Crispy. Had a sugar top. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.

Interviewer: But there were, I think, about four of them...

Respondent 1: Right.

Interviewer: ...and now there's just the one left.

Respondent 1: Right.

Interviewer: So you remember those fondly.

Respondent 1: Well that was – I only think in terms of Bob Barnett was the President of the Harbord Residence Group at the time, and he – with him we made a list of about three hundred restaurants, so that was in this – the 1990s period, [0:27:00] and we – but a lot of them changed within a year, and Brunswick Tavern changed into a new type of venue. It used to be more of a neighbourhood with local musicians, and now it's, you know, gambling and something else. I haven't been in – I haven't even been in lately, but Bob Barnett was trying to keep the venues small so you wouldn't [0:27:30] have huge dance-halls, and large, noisy things because they can stay open quite late at night, so he can tell you a lot more about that issue.

Interviewer: Well I just left a message for Anna two days ago.

Respondent 1: Okay, good.

Interviewer: So I hope to hear back from them.

Respondent 1: Good. He'll explain it better. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Yeah. No, but that's very valuable because I know that there's a lot of difficulty for people who live near Brunswick House.

Respondent 1: Right. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. It's noisy, and the people are...

- Respondent 1:** Right. [0:28:00] And we like the restaurants. We use them once in a while, but I find just a personal comment is I go down – I prefer College Street because there's still a few family restaurants, and old places, and things that are a little more neighbourly somehow, rather than Starbucks, Tim Hortons, the usual things...
- Interviewer:** The big chains.
- Respondent 1:** [0:28:30]...that you can find anywhere.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Anything you want to add to that?
- Respondent 2:** No, no. I don't have that much experience in that area here.
- Interviewer:** What about your own street. Has it changed? And if yes, what are the changes?
- Respondent 1:** [Laughs] Well I read Victorian Homes magazine and I like the antique look to the houses, so I get sad when I see [0:29:00] porches coming down, and they aren't always replaced, but I am very glad to see [laughs] – we had quite an experience next door, so it's another large topic. A contractor bought the house joined to our semi-detached wall, and just last year we had a very noisy experience because in taking down the drywall and renovating [0:29:30] everything, and having a generator motor going every day, it was so noisy I couldn't even be in my own home. That was for a whole year. So that's another whole topic...
- Respondent 2:** Did they pull out the transit window?
- Respondent 1:** ...that I feel for the rest of my neighbours and wonder how many people are going through it.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. She was really worried about the transom window over the front door, and it's...

Respondent 1: The stained glass went out in the garbage, or I think he [0:30:00] sold one of the nice – even though there were three neighbours on this street asking for, you know...

Interviewer: That window.

Respondent 1: ...to keep the stained glass...

Interviewer: Yes. Absolutely.

Respondent 1: ...and preserve it, I mean he has done a very nice job replacing everything to code. And I can explain all that to you later, but – and the new couple that's moved in, they're pleased with it, and it's – I'm sure it's lovely.

Interviewer: So they have a modern home.

Respondent 1: Yes.

Interviewer: A modern new home.

Respondent 1: Totally [0:30:30] new. Four bathrooms, and all the bells and whistles, I'm sure. New basement, and – which we don't have. We still have our old basement, and our old kitchen. [Laughs] So...

Interviewer: I think your kitchen is terrific.

Respondent 1: ...it has to happen, but how it happens I think is a big issue for Harbord too.

Interviewer: And have you seen that with other homes here too that...

Respondent 1: Yes. It's happening right now. Good friends are adding onto their back of their house [0:31:00] now, and this was also difficult because there's four or five houses here that have no access to a back laneway, so when others – they can have trucks come in the back, and here we had new dumpsters every other day, so we had to move our cars out of the way for these giant trucks, and about forty dumpsters changing over the year. And [0:31:30] the, you know, the street being taken up while people are working seems to

be increasing. Like more people are having to renovate. And we had some bad fires...

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 1: ...farther down on Major Street, and also eight houses on Robert Street, so that had to happen for them to – anyway. **[0:32:00]** [Laughs] That's a really big topic. I don't want to...

Interviewer: No, but they're all...

Respondent 1: ...start.

Interviewer: ...important. And...

Respondent 1: It's such a big – as the older Italian lady who was all by herself, it was so quiet for so many years, and that was just a huge contrast for us. And I'm just thinking it must be happening to a lot of people as the older people move out.

Interviewer: Well and especially if you get – as soon as you said to me that a contractor bought the house...

Respondent 1: Right.

Interviewer: ...trouble.

Respondent 1: Well that's trouble. **[0:32:30]** That to me, I didn't know was allowed to happen. In other words, up until now you've had families move in, and you renovate a little bit at a time more quietly, but to have it done on that scale and be a person who was never going to live here or really care about the street really worried us. [Laughs] It could have taken on a whole different style, but luckily he kept the front of the house **[0:33:00]** – we can ask him to keep the front of the house basically in a style that fits in. We were lucky he just happened to do that, but he doesn't need to. He's not required to do any of those things. But of course, you've got a great committee on Robert Street, Willcocks, and I think Bob Barnett's street they're starting to think about historic designation **[0:33:30]** on Lower Brunswick. So they've done really well.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: I'm thinking...

Interviewer: Well, and so many of us who live here cared about that.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Keeping the character and the nature. Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Any comments about – well maybe you might know about this, Arthur, when you were coming around as a child, or maybe you were too young. Any people working at home? Any kind of home employment? **[0:34:00]** Any thoughts about that?

Respondent 2: No. None. I heard stories from my mother.

Interviewer: What did you hear?

Respondent 2: Her friends, the Golds on Willcocks, the father used to make pickles in the basement. [Laughter] And sell them.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent 2: He had a wagon, I think, and sold them.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: And there was somebody down the street, and I don't know whether they worked out of the house or not, who sold **[0:34:30]** cloth scraps. What do you call it now?

Interviewer: Schmattas.

Respondent 2: Almost. Yeah. Yeah. But my grandmother used to make my mother's dresses out of these scraps, and somebody sold buttons.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: But again, I don't know whether it was out of the house or not.

Interviewer: Well could have been.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: My mother went to Central Tech and she was in arts school. I'll just tell this little story.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: And a lot of the people in arts – the students in our school were debutantes. They – [0:34:00] this is in the mid- late '30s, and they owned sports car convertibles, and they wore very fancy clothes. And my grandmother made these clothes by herself by hand. She just put a big piece of wrapping paper on the floor, draw out the pattern, cut it out, put it together with whatever she bought from this guy, and the debutantes used to ask my mother, "Who is your couturier?" [Laughter] She wouldn't tell. [Laughs]

Interviewer: [0:35:30] Oh, so your grandmother was a very skilled seamstress.

Respondent 2: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Did she also sew for other people?

Respondent 2: No.

Interviewer: So it was just for her daughter.

Respondent 2: I think so.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: She ran a store on Wells for a while...

- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent 2:** ...but that was – I don't know...
- Interviewer:** Yeah. But that wasn't home industry. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** No.
- Interviewer:** But so the pickle one is the only one that you know for sure happened from home.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** But I've got to tell you another little story. When my grandmother – my grandparents lived, I said, 144 [0:36:00] Robert Street, my mother said – I haven't been able to prove it – and when they bought 124, or were going to buy 124, the owner would not let my grandfather into the house to look it over because he was Jewish.
- Interviewer:** Oh my god.
- Respondent 2:** But he bought it anyway.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So he was willing to sell it to him, but not let him step inside the house.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Hm.
- Respondent 2:** That's the story I got from my mother. [0:36:30] Now...
- Interviewer:** Well that's the way she got it.

Respondent 2: ...can't document it.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did your mother give you other stories about what it was like being Jewish in this neighbourhood?

Respondent 2: Just little bits. One of them was that they didn't go above Bloor Street, that that was an alien world, and they just didn't go there.

Interviewer: When you say "alien" do you know in what ways?

Respondent 2: I don't know. I didn't – it just was the place [0:37:00] they didn't go because the people were, I don't know, not friendly, or I'm not sure what the reason was. It just – they just didn't go there.

Interviewer: Yeah. That's interesting.

Respondent 2: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Of course, the homes there are much larger, so I would think that in terms of affluence, or lack of it, it was probably a wealthier population, is what I would...

Respondent 2: And Jews didn't live north of Bloor Street very often, I think.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Respondent 2: The neighbourhood was down [0:37:30] here at that point.

Interviewer: Right. Yeah.

Respondent 2: But again, I can't document very much of this.

Interviewer: Well, but that's what you grew up listening to those stories.

Respondent 2: ...that's what I...

Interviewer: You grew up listening to those stories, and not that – so what you're describing, you can't document it, but those were their experiences.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: So that's valid. I mean that's good for our information. Yeah.

Respondent 2: Sure, sure.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Oh, speaking of stores, I've got to tell the dairy story. Do you know about Grimsby Dairy?

Interviewer: Nothing.

Respondent 2: Rose didn't tell you about Grimsby Dairy? **[0:38:00]** We did a bit of research on it. We got a picture of their truck, we've got a picture of one of the milk bottles. Grimsby Dairy was down the lane, just down below Ulster, is it?

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent 2: Going through the – what's the name of the name now? Louis Laki?

Respondent 1: Louie Laki Lane.

Respondent 2: Louie Laki Lane? It's near the bottom of the lane. It's a big square structure. There's a woman living in their now. It was a – **[0:38:30]** in my mother's day it was a dairy. It was owned by a guy who lived on Willcocks named Mr. Locke, and according to my mother, Mr. Locke had a wife who had a brown, frizzy wig, and also there was a very pretty girl who was – they had a little sales counter in this dairy, and a very pretty girl ran the sales counter, and she was – according to the local scuttle bug, she was his mistress. **[0:39:00]** Whether my mother knew that as a kid, I don't know. She may have found this out later. What else do we know about Grimsby Dairy? Oh yeah.

Respondent 1: The horses.

- Respondent 2:** Yeah. Locke apparently owned some kind of a barn, whether it was with the dairy or whether it was away from the dairy, and he used to tend pregnant mares for I don't know who. Maybe for other dairies, I don't know what the story [0:39:30] was. And he wanted the mares to be exercised, so my mother's younger sister used to ride the mares up and down the lanes [laughter] for exercise, and my grandmother at one point looked out the back window and saw my aunt's head bobbing up and down behind the fence at the back riding a horse.
- Interviewer:** So she didn't know that her daughter was doing it?
- Respondent 2:** At the beginning she didn't know. But...
- Interviewer:** So she was a pretty good rider, I guess.
- Respondent 2:** Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** She was a tomboy.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** She was pretty athletic. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** But Locke had [0:40:00] something to do with an association to do with horses, we think anyway.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. We found that out.
- Respondent 1:** That's something we could research.
- Respondent 2:** We didn't know [indiscernible 0:40:10]. We went back there and we met the neighbours. They saw us with our cameras, looking at the place, and they came out and talked to us, and they said, yes, it was a dairy, but inside is changed now. There was a – I think there still is a vaulted ceiling on the first floor. So whether that was for wagons or carriages, [0:40:30] or trucks, or what, we don't know.

Respondent 1: Yeah. And you can still see some old doorways, and hinges...

Respondent 2: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent 1: ...and things.

Respondent 2: The person living there wouldn't let us in. She said the place was a mess and blah, blah, blah, so we didn't get to see it.

Interviewer: So was there a barn there?

Respondent 2: There must have been somewhere. There was also a building up at the north end of that lane, a square block of a building. I don't know. Could have been the barn, I have no idea what it was.

Respondent 1: Yeah. It's about the – like a carriage house, but very plain **[0:41:00]** now. Just square brick kind of.

Respondent 2: Yeah. My mother couldn't tell. My mother was always very bad with directions. My father used to say she couldn't find her way home from Bloor and Yonge. [Laughter] So she didn't really have any idea of exactly where these places were, but we did find the dairy.

Respondent 1: And you have a story about your grandma's cat. Used to meet her in Kensington too.

Respondent 2: Oh, that was the other grandma.

Respondent 1: I like that story.

Respondent 2: That was the other grandmother.

Respondent 1: Oh okay. [Laughs]

Respondent 2: Yeah. They lived on Centre Avenue behind Maclean's. **[0:41:30]** And my grandmother would, I guess, get her shopping bags together and a little wagon or whatever she had to head out shopping to Kensington, and she'd get there and there was the cat in front of the dairy store, waiting for her. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Cat thought she was a dog, I guess. Usually you think of dogs that way.

Respondent 2: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: From what you remember, or you too, how well assimilated was the neighbourhood? I mean you [0:42:00] go back farther, but your memories are not as clear because you were a child, and you came nearly thirty years ago, but what are your thoughts about people getting along, staying separated? Your thoughts and experiences.

Respondent 2: I don't remember any note of contention at all on the street.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent 2: The neighbours were – my grandmother, I knew, seemed to be very friendly and helpful and all that, but I don't have any [0:42:30] other stories. I do have a little story about when my grandfather was still alive, so this had to be in the late '20s. The neighbour was Mr. Polashuk, who I do remember. An old man. And he used to walk around bent over with his hands behind his back, looking very pensive and all, and my grandfather used to say, "Mr. Polashuk. [indiscernible 0:42:55]."

Interviewer: Meaning?

Respondent 2: "You're going to smell up your hands."

Interviewer: [Laughs] [0:43:00] Because his hands were near his bum. [Laughs]

Respondent 2: Now that was the next door neighbour, 122.

Interviewer: That's cute.

Respondent 2: Yeah. You know, these are kid stories.

Interviewer: Well but you learn them from the people who are living here in those early years.

Respondent 2: Yeah. Right, right.

Interviewer: Yeah. And do you have any comments about people getting along, or tensions?

Respondent 1: Well all I can think of at the moment is it's a great neighbourhood and so many good [0:43:30] neighbours. But the Italian family next door started out all right with us, and you wanted to know about gardens, but they had a whole vegetable garden, mostly tomatoes out the back, and they'd give us some tomatoes, and share wine that they made, and she did baking, and she showed me how she made these special [0:44:00] desserts and things that she had learned in Italy as a child. But we had a bit of contention with them because the son, about our age, wanted to raise pigeons, and he had a lot of pigeons and rabbits in the back shed here. And for us just moving in thirty years ago as a young couple, it was hard for us to associated with that. The pigeons [0:44:30] would all land on the back deck of our house, and it was too much. They were actually noisy at five in the morning, and then we'd have to talk to them, and ask them. And the rabbits were very quiet, they were back in the shed, but there was some kind of odour that came from that that we had...

Interviewer: No kidding.

Respondent 1: ...to ask about.

Interviewer: Oh. And the pigeons too. The pigeons.

Respondent 1: They really liked the country, like they were [0:45:00] having some country aspects to living right here in the city, and the homing pigeons, they really wanted to race them. That's a hobby with some people, and use them as racing pigeons. So it ended up we had – [laughs] and then as this Italian lady got much older and not so well in health and so on, and the [0:45:30] neighbours on the other side had arguments with her, mainly about the fence line and keeping the trees from coming over a fence. In other words, the border of their fence was incredibly important. Unlike us, we didn't mind having our English garden, having bushes, and flowers, and trees

overlap a bit, they really objected to that. [0:46:00] So things over the years got a little more contentious.

Interviewer: Were you able to get rid of those pigeons and rabbits? Because that's terrible.

Respondent 1: Yes. The son moved away with the three little boys, and so there were only the two grandparents, the older couple left after that. He took the pigeons with him...

Interviewer: And the rabbits?

Respondent 1: ...up to Woodbridge, new house I'm sure, and the rabbits too were gone then. So that just happened.

Interviewer: [0:46:30] So it wasn't related to ethnicity or...

Respondent 1: No.

Interviewer: ...religion or anything like that. It was just that they were smelly, dirty, and...

Respondent 1: Well it was something unusual for us to see in the city, and I remember too there were people – I think they had some kind of – they were smoking sausages, but I didn't know too much about them because they were behind our backyard, but that isn't happening anymore.

Interviewer: [0:47:00] Yeah. So that could have been pretty smelly too.

Respondent 1: Right.

Interviewer: And smoky.

Respondent 1: We started with vegetables too. We were interested in that when we first moved in, and then we changed just to a flower garden, and the Chinese-Canadian neighbours on the other side had some kind of Oriental greens or lettuces that they were growing, and they've since changed to flowers, so she's got older. [0:47:30] She's not doing so much heavy gardening either. So...

- Interviewer:** So what you're describing is a lot of the vegetables have...
- Respondent 1:** Right.
- Interviewer:** ...vegetable gardens became flower gardens.
- Respondent 1:** Right. And – but Arthur and I were talking about this because – and I know in England they're thinking of – they're so tired of buying fruits and vegetables from other countries. They're thinking more in terms of going back to this homegrown vegetables, and no matter how small your **[0:48:00]** plot is, or your community is – and I know Joan Doiron was really working hard on community gardens, and bringing all that back. So it may come back again, and I think that would be great.
- Interviewer:** And do you remember what your grandmother had behind her house?
- Respondent 2:** No.
- Interviewer:** You don't remember that. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** There was a little backyard, but I don't remember anything growing there. You've got a few revisions done to make it.
- Respondent 1:** Actually **[0:48:30]** if you want to take it, take. I'd like to put some tea on. Do you like that?
- Interviewer:** Well let me turn this off.
- Respondent 2:** My aunt was born at 144 Robert Street in 1919. The landlord was named Widdick. And the other story is the two old maids were selling 124, which my grandfather bought, and he was not allowed to go inside and see the house. He had to buy it as-is. At the time he bought the house with these two old maids, there was a rumour the city was going to bring Willcocks Street **[0:49:00]** through the house, but he was assured he would be well-paid for the property. And I just found out that he came here to work for Eaton's. Would be about 1910. And Mr. Polashuk had 122 Robert, and there was

an old man living there before who used to – my grandfather used to be called at all hours to pick the old guy up off the floor. He used to fall out of bed. [0:49:30] And Mrs. Dowe used to look after him. What else? Susie Kaminsky lived on Major Street. The backyard's not far apart over the back fence, over the back lane. And the Golds lived at 91 Willcocks. My instructor calls him Gould. Miriam Levy lived on Robert near Harbord. Used to go out with Ben Lenik.

Interviewer: So I think instead of going through all this reading, [0:50:00] I think what you're saying is that group was certainly a lot of Jewish people living in that part of Robert and Willcocks.

Respondent 2: Yeah. One more little story...

Interviewer: Please.

Respondent 2: ...my mother and her younger sister, ages maybe six and three, were sitting on a curb. Robert Street was then brick-paved, and a little girlfriend was sitting with them, and a truck backed up and killed the little girlfriend, and my mother had snatched my aunt off the curb just before the truck got to her. That's the story I have.

Interviewer: [0:50:30] Wow. I'm sure it's true.

Respondent 2: Yeah. That would be about 1922. Something like that.

Interviewer: The same – we talked about the stores along the different streets. I guess none of you lived here. We're looking at patterns of dating, but you weren't living here, and you guys moved here after you're married, so [laughs] we're not going to talk about dating. [Laughs] Any changes in the [0:51:00] heating systems since you've been here?

Respondent 1: Oh, well this house – there's coal in the ceiling. It's four little stoves probably. The stove pipe went out...

Respondent 3: The stoves. Yeah. That's what it was in this house.

Respondent 1: We can't find a mantle here at all, so we think – you think maybe it always had a furnace in the basement...

- Respondent 3:** Well there's another hole just around the corner here, so. There were two here. One in either room.
- Interviewer:** [0:51:30] Oh so the stoves, and...
- Respondent 3:** A potbelly stove.
- Interviewer:** Oh. Right.
- Respondent 3:** And the pipes would have gone up there to heat the upper floors.
- Interviewer:** So would that have been coal?
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 3:** I would think so. I would think so, yeah.
- Interviewer:** So it was probably down in the basement.
- Respondent 3:** Yes, they would have delivered it through there.
- Respondent 1:** Under this window was a little square...
- Respondent 3:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** ...for a coal chute.
- Respondent 3:** And that's where they would have delivered it in.
- Respondent 1:** Right.
- Interviewer:** Oh, but that's quite lovely that you know exactly...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** ...the route that the heat took.
- Respondent 3:** Yeah.

- Interviewer:** Yeah. And you can see it in your home. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** And [0:52:00] then what? Oh, these are antique lights that we liked, but when the electrician was up there, he found a little gas – two big...
- Respondent 3:** The gas pipes were all up still in the ceiling and in the floors. They're all still there, disconnected, of course.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. But that's a clear evidence...
- Respondent 3:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** ...of the history of the lighting and heating.
- Respondent 3:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. [0:52:30] Any comments at all about the churches, synagogue, institutions in the area? Churches, synagogues, health care?
- Respondent 1:** Oh, well Doctor's Hospital dominated down the street, and they rebuilt it all into chronic care, but that's a big change. But it – the history of that, and the space, is still there. And then we got interested in the schools, and we were [0:53:00] working with the schools for Neighbourhood Watch, but Lord Lansdowne, you have a picture of it from your family, Arthur, was an old building, and now has been replaced by – actually I think they've designated the round school at Lord Lansdowne as a historic, modern type of architecture to be noted, you know? And then we were just talking about [0:53:30] the – across Spadina, because Rosemary Donegan wrote a beautiful book on Spadina, and she talks about Spadina having a huge church where the institute for mental health is.
- Interviewer:** Oh really?
- Respondent 1:** So that was all rebuilt, and it was Tip-Top Tailors on the corner, but that was quite a giant Methodist church. And that was in [0:54:00] Rosemary's book. A nice picture of that.

- Interviewer:** Well there's still a church on Spadina...
- Respondent 1:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** ...here...
- Respondent 1:** Right.
- Interviewer:** ...and then of course the one on Bloor Street.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. And we were talking about Central Tech because there are pictures at the City Archives that it was a row of older houses before Central Tech, so the picture even before Central Tech went in. That was a part of the [0:54:30] neighbourhood homes as well.
- Interviewer:** Oh. See, nobody's talked to me about that.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So a lot of homes were taken down? Because that's a big block.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So a lot of homes were taken down in order to make the school.
- Respondent 2:** What about that place down the street that's been revamped?
- Respondent 1:** Yes. And luckily that's saved.
- Respondent 2:** The church thing, or...
- Respondent 1:** Mort told us that it was for nuns.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** I haven't been working on that like Gus, and Claire, and others have the history of that.

- Interviewer:** [0:55:00] So where was this? Because I've heard people say nuns, but there was some...
- Respondent 1:** Yes.
- Respondent 2:** It's like a barn down in the next block on the...
- Respondent 1:** Building. Yeah. That looks a little bit like a plain church or something.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So it's where the nuns lived? Or trained? And they lived there together.
- Respondent 1:** And it may have something to do with starting that health centre, I believe. I mean that's where the idea came from, and then the new hospital came up from that idea.
- Respondent 3:** [0:55:30] There's a big plaque right in front of it on the grass now.
- Interviewer:** The one where the nuns...
- Respondent 3:** Ten minutes to read. Yes. The entire history of it. It's there.
- Interviewer:** Is it on the – so it's on Major?
- Respondent 3:** It's on the west side. Yes.
- Interviewer:** The west side. Oh.
- Respondent 3:** It's just to the north of the new chronic care units.
- Interviewer:** Okay.
- Respondent 3:** Didn't they refer to it as the chapel at some point? Connected to the hospital.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.

- Interviewer:** Ooh. Okay.
- Respondent 3:** I don't know. Anyway, the history's all there.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. I'll have to look at it.
- Respondent 2:** **[0:56:00]** And then there's the Talmud Torah that used to be on Brunswick. You know about that. Near College.
- Interviewer:** So the Talmud Torah and the Y, the YMHA? Was that there at the same place?
- Respondent 2:** I'm not sure which side of the street either of them was on. I know it was down there.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. I was still living in Montreal at that time, so I...
- Respondent 2:** Ah.
- Interviewer:** I think what I'd like to just end up with is talking about the University of Toronto and Kensington Market, **[0:56:30]** how it impacts or influences. What relationship we have with both of those institutions.
- Respondent 1:** [Laughs] Well Bill works there. Yeah. So...
- Respondent 2:** Well lots of students and professors clearly live in this neighbourhood.
- Respondent 1:** Right. And I went to U of T. I was going back and forth on the subway for eleven years going to U of T, and when I finished, then I moved here. [Laughs] And I could have **[0:57:00]** walked.
- Interviewer:** Could have walked there. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** [Laughs] All this time. But...
- Interviewer:** Do you feel it has any impact on us?
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Oh yes.

- Respondent 2:** On the parking situation.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** [Laughs] A huge impact on parking because students and people coming to U of T will park here all day.
- Interviewer:** And Robert Street is protected because they don't allow parking. We get tickets on Robert Street.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. Yeah. Yes.
- Interviewer:** So Robert Street is protected.
- Respondent 2:** Well and it's two hours parking here, but you know, the police have to make an effort to come by twice...
- Interviewer:** Right. Right.
- Respondent 2:** ...and chalk the tires first, and then come by again. And they do it [0:57:30] once in a while, but...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. We find there are some U of T people parking in the day on Major, but it's not as much of a problem as Robert Street had. We have more of a problem Friday nights with restaurant people parking on Major Street, so the restaurant situation has escalated. People want to park here to go to dinner, but.
- Interviewer:** Restaurants – you're talking about...
- Respondent 1:** From Harbord Street.
- Interviewer:** Oh, from Harbord.
- Respondent 1:** [0:58:00] Right.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Oh yes. Oh yeah, there's so many restaurants there.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent 1: But yeah, U of T – we were talking about being on committees with all of their development, which is ongoing, and the ROM expanded, and Bill went through all of that rebuilding. So it has to do with the traffic. It's just that I got [0:58:30] interested in it because when we first moved here, our neighbours told me about children being hit or nearly hit, and run over, and we wanted this traffic calming zone because of – I don't know how many people go to U of T now. It used to be forty thousand, but it might be more than that now. So they're all coming into this area, and of course make College Street, Bloor Street really thrive for businesses, [0:59:00] and Harbord Street as well. So we see them all the time when we go out to the restaurants and the bookstores. We like the bookstores. We like the effect. Computer stores are new, and they've really expanded.

Respondent 2: On College.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Like the old paint store is going out of business, and it'll...

Interviewer: Oh really?

Respondent 1: ...probably become a computer place, or electronics, so.

Interviewer: And what about Kensington Market?

Respondent 1: [0:59:30] Ah, well [laughter] Arthur had a good story about that.

Respondent 2: Oh, the cat story.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: I told already. I'm sure that both my grandparents shopped there all the time.

- Respondent 1:** My neighbours use it quite a bit, but...
- Respondent 2:** I really miss [indiscernible 0:59:56] Bakery.
- Respondent 1:** Just leave that. Sorry I – [1:00:00] yeah. My neighbours use Kensington Market quite a bit, but. Yeah. My neighbours use Kensington Market quite a bit, and you walk through...
- Respondent 3:** I go down and get some things down there, but I don't get my fresh fruit and vegetables. I'm sure some neighbours use it more extensively than we do.
- Respondent 1:** But we like it.
- Respondent 3:** It's nice to have. Yes.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, we like the vintage fashion, and the fact that they've [1:00:30] kept chain stores away from it, and it still looks like an old neighbourhood. George Brown College moved out. They've had some big changes too, and there was – we were helped by the centre on Bellevue, was very helpful to our neighbourhood in all these projects we had because they have a community centre right down there on Bellevue, [1:01:00] just south of College.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent 1:** And the church there, which was such a lovely, historic roofline to it, seems to be diminishing and sadly going downhill, like the one at College and Brunswick. They took down the church, they left the tower, and made the rest into seniors' apartments, so that the churches there seem to be suffering a little bit. [1:01:30] But we're glad they're still there and that they have a good community. Also, there was a Kensington newspaper that helped us a great deal put in our concerns about Neighbourhood Watch, or reports, and I think that newspaper's not functioning anymore.
- Interviewer:** I don't know.
- Respondent 1:** David [1:02:00] – I'm trying to remember the fellow's name that lived there and helped us so much.

Interviewer: Talking about Neighbourhood Watch, what are your thoughts, or feelings, or experiences with security and safety in Harbord Village?

Respondent 1: Well my neighbour across the street just said someone had a lovely bench stolen off their porch this week, and it was her grandmother's bench, and she's really upset about it. So I'm afraid this is [1:02:30] still going on. When I was working on this more than fifteen years ago, I'd hear about this type of thing all the time. And basically if you have something on the front porch, it has to be chained, and a van could come up and take it. I'm not sure what's going on, whether it's antique dealers, or metal dealers taking things away in a van, or whether it's people just [1:03:00] trying to make money for drugs or other reasons to take things, or just pranks. You can't blame it on students, I don't think, all the time...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: ...because I think they would normally just throw something, or people coming out of pubs at night might throw something over the fence, and you find it later, but not necessarily steal it.

Interviewer: Yeah. But you need to be able to carry something away, so [1:03:30] you need to come with a vehicle most likely.

Respondent 1: So I'm afraid – I'm not sure whether we need to really get into all those issues again and remind people, do not leave your car unlocked and your doors unlocked, and most people – a lot of people here do leave their doors unlocked, so they're not too worried about it. [Laughs]

Interviewer: When you were a child visiting your grandmother, do you think she left her doors unlocked, or...

Respondent 2: [1:04:00] Probably.

Interviewer: Yeah.

- Respondent 2:** Probably. What about your fence? You've had damage to your fence a couple of times. The picket fence in the front.
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah, we did. We think vandalism once, but oh, that's the garbage trucks. [Laughs]
- Respondent 2:** Oh, oh. You think?
- Respondent 1:** So with the claw – they use this great mechanical system – and they dump the big bin on top of our wooden picket fence. It's been getting damaged quite a bit. [1:04:30] And then the new contractor next door, when he moved in the giant bins on the front lawn, he really tore off a corner doing that, so yeah. But [laughs]...
- Respondent 2:** [indiscernible 01:04:43]
- Respondent 1:** The big difference when we first moved here, everybody had a little fence, and it was mainly to keep dogs out, I think, and just a lot of blowing papers, and bits of garbage, but now [1:05:00] dogs are trained beautifully, and they don't bother people, and I don't think fences are much of a concern anymore, but we like the fences. Also because trucks pull up on the sidewalk, or close to your garden, and people like a little fence to keep the cars and trucks right off your lawn basically.
- Respondent 2:** Didn't you have a story about somebody stealing plants off...
- Respondent 1:** [1:05:30] Oh yes.
- Respondent 2:** ...verandahs?
- Respondent 1:** Like if you have a small, light, hanging basket of plants, they would disappear from an Italian-Canadian family next door. But if you have something heavier, something that's too hard to lift, that's okay. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** But what about your own feeling of security? If you're outside at night, would you walk home from Bloor and Spadina feeling comfortable? Or would you prefer not to do that?

Respondent 1: I think that it's [1:06:00] one of the best places in Toronto because Bloor Street's always so busy and active, and I'm not alone as a lady walking down the street at night. But as I say, we had this one young fellow stealing things out of construction sites at a church, or mugging someone who was expecting a baby. That was more closer to Bloor. [1:06:30] And breaking into...

Interviewer: So there was one person that you all knew?

Respondent 1: Yeah. But I think – I'm sure that's still ongoing because of things I just heard lately. I think there's still a lot of things disappearing.

Respondent 3: I wouldn't say this neighbourhood is any better or worse than any other neighbourhood, but it is, as Betty says, so lively on Bloor Street that there's people around all of the time. I [1:07:00] feel perfectly safe here.

Respondent 1: But I heard a lot of stories that people didn't want to get involved phoning the police, but we got to know the community officers, and they're trained especially to talk to the neighbours. So if people would just report in things, it would help them to know what to look for. Like New Year's Eve or Saturday night, there's a lot of vandalism to cars, which is still ongoing. [1:07:30] They will kick off the rear-view mirrors, and that's very expensive, and leaves other dents that you can't fix. Or they break a window, and that's just vandalism. But there were a lot of things that the parents had around the children's park. There were – there was a fellow stalking thirteen-year-old girls. There was needles found on the top of the little shed in the garden there. [1:08:00] And there's all kinds of issues around that when you have little children, so. I imagine it's still going on quite a bit, and we have to always watch for these things, so.

Interviewer: Before I turn off this machine, I'm wondering if there's anything that we have not talked about that you had thought about before I came and thought, "This is something I'd like to talk about because I've seen [1:08:30] changes, or it's significant, about our neighbourhood"? So is there anything you would – any of you – would like to talk about?

- Respondent 2:** Another story just came to mind, but it's in my high school days. The Smiths at Ulster and Brunswick. A Jewish family. I went to school with Ronnie Smith. I can't tell you much about him. He's still around. They don't own the store anymore. A convenience-type [1:09:00] store, northwest corner. That's about all I can tell you about...
- Interviewer:** There were a number of little corner stores...
- Respondent 2:** Yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...you can see...
- Respondent 3:** That's still a convenience store.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. It's still a convenience store. Yeah.
- Respondent 3:** It's still on Brunswick, northwest corner.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 3:** Yeah. You can tell with all the windows that they used to be stores.
- Interviewer:** So either of you have anything you'd like to talk about, generally about our neighbourhood as it was? I mean you've been here nearly thirty years, the two of you.
- Respondent 1:** [1:09:30] Well I think without the Harbord Village group we'd be lost. It's just been fabulous to have it, keep it going, and meet everyone in it, and I know they have a big party in the park every September, and the Halloween pumpkins...
- Interviewer:** Isn't that wonderful?
- Respondent 1:** ...all of that is so wonderful.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** And it helps. It helps a great deal. Without that, I think [laughs] [1:10:00] the neighbourhood would disappear in all the big

development. And young people want to buy houses. I mean you can tell by the prices, and by the lineup to buy anything that goes for sale, rather than condominiums, I think people want to live in a neighbourhood, and I think it's important, and it's important next to U of T. A lot of staff people and ROM [1:10:30] staff people live in this area, and I'm glad to be here.

Respondent 3: Well people who like to walk and not be dependent on transit...

Respondent 1: Right.

Respondent 3: ...to walk to work, to walk to grocery shopping, and walk to bookstores.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah. And there are a lot of anti-car people like to live here and can enjoy it that way. Or pro-TTC people.

Interviewer: Well thank you very [1:11:00] much. Okay.

Respondent 1: Tomorrow that – just trying to gather my thoughts about Harbord area and why it's so important, but I think our identity is lost because we're next to a giant, which is U of T, it's like an elephant. And Kensington, which longer history in the neighbourhood to the south of us – and the Annex, [1:11:30] which has a lot of writers, publishers, and newsletter, and quite well-knowns, and people like to say, "We're in the south Annex," but that's not quite true. So Harbord needs to develop its identity, I think, and talk a bit more about its history.

Interviewer: Fabulous.

[01:11:55]

[End of recording]