

029 Anna and Bob Barnett

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

[0:00:00]

**Interviewer:** Well, I want to thank both of you for coming. You know that I'm on the Board of Directors of Harbord Village, and I guess it was Sussex Ulster when you were on the board?

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. And we're doing this history committee, and we're meeting people who have been here for a long time because we want to record people's experiences and the changes in particular. So I'm going to ask you first to both give your names, introduce yourselves, [0:00:30] say where you live, and how long you've been living here, and then we'll go into it after that, please.

**Respondent 2:** Okay. Anna Barnett. I live at 84 Sussex Avenue.

**Respondent 1:** And Bob Barnett.

**Interviewer:** Who lives in the same place. [Laughs] And you've both lived here since 1973?

**Respondent 1:** Three – middle of...

**Respondent 2:** May.

**Respondent 1:** May 15.

**Respondent 2:** May. 1973.

**Respondent 1:** 1973, so that's a little over forty years.

**Respondent 2:** When we bought our house.

**Interviewer:** Was there any particular reason that you [0:01:00] moved...

- Respondent 2:** Just under forty years actually. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Okay. But was there some reason that you chose to live on Sussex in this neighbourhood?
- Respondent 1:** We looked at different neighbourhoods, and we looked in Palmerston, we looked at Riverdale, and this neighbourhood seemed to have the best sort of mixture of people. Like **[0:01:30]** we also looked in Parkdale, I think, a little bit.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah, I think we did.
- Respondent 1:** At any rate, Riverdale hadn't happened yet, and Palmerston was all big houses filled with tenants, and we liked the mixture of small houses, and the sort of texture of this area.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. I think that there was more to it than that. We'd – this was the era when people were ripping **[0:02:00]** out interiors and living bare brick, and painting everything white. And we at that point were even interested in a historical house, so we looked at a lot of places, which had just been destroyed to the point of – there was just too much work. Well, the historical detail had been taken out.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. I think the house brought us to the...
- Respondent 2:** The house brought us, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** ...to this neighbourhood, but we did like the neighbourhood.
- Respondent 2:** We liked the neighbourhood because, for instance, Riverdale – you said it hadn't happened yet. It **[0:02:30]** was happening, but Parliament was scary.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, that's true.
- Respondent 2:** Parliament was full of people who were drunk, and drug addicts, and whatever, and we were thinking – we were a young married couple, we were going to have children, so we looked – we're

thinking even then about schools and neighbourhoods, and this just looked friendly.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** So.

**Respondent 1:** And I just finished architecture, and we were of a generation that was trained, or **[0:03:00]** told by our profs, that we should go and rejuvenate the city and build up these downtown neighbourhoods, so when we first lived here, five of the guys in my architectural class all lived within one block of our house.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent 1:** So somehow the message sank in, and I guess Marty Meyers is – Martin Meyers is the last...

**Respondent 2:** Last of those, yeah.

**Respondent 1:** Oh no. And Colin.

**Respondent 2:** Colin.

**Respondent 1:** Colin Anderson. Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** Colin Anderson.

**Respondent 1:** So there's still three of us within one block, but **[0:03:30]** two of them have now moved out, so. So we're kind of rejuvenating the neighbourhood, and I first – I mean I guess somehow I was involved in politics even before I got here because I remember being involved – was I at the university age? Whenever the – fighting the Spadina Expressway. I remember being part of a group that was making a movie, and we were doing it over in Rosedale, and we were carrying **[0:04:00]** this coffin, and the coffin symbolized the neighbourhood that was going to be destroyed if they brought in the Spadina Expressway. And we were doing all these takes, and carrying the coffin. Have I got it wrong? I've got it wrong? Okay.

- Respondent 2:** Totally wrong. Totally wrong.
- Interviewer:** I'm sorry that I'm not videotaping this [laughter], because you're shaking, "No, no, no."
- Respondent 1:** Anna's going to correct me.
- Respondent 2:** It wasn't political. It had nothing to do with politics. We were just part of a movie.
- Respondent 1:** Oh was it? Oh okay.
- Respondent 2:** It was after we were married.
- Respondent 1:** Oh okay. At any rate, at that time, nonetheless, the **[0:04:30]** Spadina Expressway had just – trying to remember. Was that '68?
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Anyways, that is just...
- Respondent 2:** It was before then.
- Respondent 1:** ...it had just been sort of defeated, and this neighbourhood would have been disturbed by the Spadina Expressway, and this was sort of a thing to do to come down and repopulate it. When we first moved in, my impression at any rate was that it was mostly populated by, you know, the old Italian **[0:05:00]** families. There were a lot of the old Italian families, some of the old Jewish families, and remember the Spitzbergs?
- Respondent 2:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent 1:** And a lot of Portuguese families. And the message that we got when we talked to our neighbours is, hey, this is just a matter of time. This area's going to turn into St. James Town. And we're just waiting to cash in because there's going to be big bucks when we sell out to the developers, and we're all moving to Mississauga. And they had some good reason to think that because **[0:05:30]** the

Robert Street playing field was destined to be a high-rise building, and they just built 666 Spadina, and 720 was built when we first sort of moved in. You know, the Pitney-Bowes building. But where the Robert Street playing field is, that was destined to be a high-rise apartment. So they – there was neighbourhood opposition from our forbearers. You know, the Max Vosses, and the [0:06:00] Peter Beeckmans, and I'm trying to remember who was the president before them? But any rate, those guys fought against that thing that was happening, and the apartment building that would have been in our neighbourhood is now built on the south bank of Ramsden. Trying to remember the name of that little street – the one north of Belmont, just comes in off Bay down in front there. So that huge apartment building would have been on Robert Street, but they [0:06:30] switched it for the – they used to have a playing field. U of T schools used to have a playing field up there, so they swapped that land to bring the playing fields down to Robert Street. So that's why we still have a playing field, and not a great high-rise building, you know, half a block closer to where it is today.

**Respondent 2:** But then we felt pioneer-like when we first in.

**Respondent 1:** Absolutely. Oh yeah.

**Respondent 2:** Definitely felt pioneer-like.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** I mean there were the – [0:07:00] there was the old leftist, old guard, like the Beeckmans who...

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. The Beeckmans were here. You should talk to them. They were here before us.

**Interviewer:** I'm going to write that. Before you? I'm going to write their names down.

**Respondent 2:** And I mean the story we always tell, Bob's father was an architect but lived in Leaside, but was horrified, horrified that we were moving to the centre of the city. I mean we'd be mugged, we'd be – our house would be vandalized, our cars would be torched. I don't

know what he thought. **[0:07:30]** And so we had the two fathers – my father, who was really worried that the house was so old it was going to fall down around our ears. And so Bob's father, as an architect, said, "No, no, no. Don't worry, Alex. The house is fine. It's structurally sound." And my father kept saying, "Like, you know, don't worry about it. We've lived in a centre of a major city all our lives. It's fine. They won't get killed if they move down here." [Laughs] So both fathers – Bob's father and my father – were reassuring each other in their different ways that **[0:08:00]** we hadn't done a really stupid thing.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** But I mean those are the days when everybody was moving to – where did all eastside people go?

**Respondent 1:** Well when I graduated, I graduated with people from Leaside high school, and that generation of people were all moving up to Unionville.

**Respondent 2:** Unionville. Yeah.

**Respondent 1:** Like when I grew...

**Respondent 2:** Richmond Hill.

**Respondent 1:** ...up in Leaside, that – at Bayview and Eglinton – that was the edge of the city, and we had a farm just past our door, and my dad **[0:08:30]** severed – bought a big lot and severed it into houses, and that was built on Bessborough. But then we had the farmland behind us, and so when the people who moved in in that generation, when they graduated from high school, their idea was to leave the city behind and move to the new frontier, at that point, which was Unionville.

**Respondent 2:** And it was the whole thing about if we have children, there's no way we can bring them up downtown.

**Respondent 1:** No, no. We need the back-...

- Respondent 2:** Where would they play? [Laughs]
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. We need a backyard, and...
- Respondent 2:** A [0:09:00] huge backyard. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** You know, I know when I moved to Toronto, I'd lived – I'm from Montreal. I'd lived in Palo Alto, California from 1964 to '68, and then I moved here, and I lived on Robert Street just north of Harbord, and I had grown up in a blue-collar part of Montreal. My mother came to visit and her heart just sank, you know?
- Respondent 2:** You haven't left. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** That's right. I had married this person while he was a medical student. He did his residency at Stanford. [0:09:30] We came here, and there I was, back in the slums again. So she had that exact same take on it.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Well we had neighbours across the street who were Portuguese, and it was a – it's very much a dysfunctional family. Mother with mental issues, father who was never there, kids completely out of control. And our house used to be a New Press. So when we bought our house, it wasn't a residence, it was an office.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent 2:** And so of course [0:10:00] nobody was there during the weekend, nobody was there in the evenings, and the kids got used to just rampaging through the yard, and climbing the trees, and there was a plum tree, and they used to pick the plums, and we had to sort of make them understand that this was no longer their playground. And so there were a few – not confrontations, but a few rubbings between the two families, and I remember the father saying, "You're living in the slum. If you don't like this, you should move out of the slum."
- Interviewer:** So he was living here.

- Respondent 2:** He was living here. Yeah, [0:10:30] yeah. So you know, your mother with her heart sinking, that's how he thought of where he was living. I mean he hadn't made it, so he hadn't moved out yet. But it...
- Interviewer:** But most of the people who were living here at that time, how did they feel about the neighbourhood? I mean I know how that man felt, but a lot of the other people, did they feel that they hadn't made it yet and they were just waiting?
- Respondent 1:** Well there were the new people coming in, like the Beeckmans.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** He worked at the University of Toronto, and she's a – not the University of Toronto. He [0:11:00] worked at Ontario Government as a planner, and she was a librarian. Lily Gibson was a schoolteacher, and she...
- Respondent 2:** Hanna was an artist.
- Respondent 1:** Hanna, that's right. And Hanna would be another one. She was here pretty much when we were too.
- Respondent 2:** When we were, yeah. I would say that the...
- Respondent 1:** So those were the newbies. Those were the repopulating people.
- Interviewer:** So that's the mid-'70s.
- Respondent 2:** That's the mid-'70s. And it really started then. I mean that's when house prices started [0:11:30] skyrocketing, was just a year or two before we bought ours.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** And so young professional couples started moving in just about then.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** It's funny to think of them skyrocketing at that time when you think of where they are now. [Laughs]

**Respondent 2:** Yeah.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. We bought our house for – it's usually a secret here – fifty thousand, five hundred dollars.

**Interviewer:** And it already skyrocketed.

**Respondent 2:** And it skyrocketed. We could have bought it for probably thirty, forty-two years before.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** And so we were trying madly to get into the market because [0:12:00] the prices were so high.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. So we bought our house from New Press, who were running their – they're actually quite an important publisher of new Canadian literature.

**Respondent 2:** And they were being bought out by Maclean-Hunter.

**Respondent 1:** Maclean-Hunter. Yeah, that's right.

**Interviewer:** So it had been totally used as a business.

**Respondent 2:** Yes. Yeah. All the rooms. Each room was a different office. I mean they come back. I mean that's one of the lovely things about our house, is people come back, and knock on the door and [0:12:30] ask to come in and tell us a little bit about its history, and the New Press people came in and said, "Oh yeah, this used to be John's place." And...

**Interviewer:** What year was your house built?

**Respondent 2:** '85. 1885.

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

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. So we researched the history. Oh, one of the things that I did, in 1985 I got a grant from the city for the 150th anniversary to put plaques on the houses. So you see these little [0:13:00] plaques.

**Interviewer:** Oh, so you're the one who got that?

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** Mm-hm.

**Interviewer:** Because my house has one, 1881.

**Respondent 1:** Oh okay. Oh. So you've got one of...

**Respondent 2:** Oh.

**Interviewer:** It says Centennial Project.

**Respondent 1:** Mm. That's right.

**Interviewer:** Oh, thank you so much. I love it. So proud of it.

**Respondent 1:** So I hired a student, and the idea was that the individual would pay, I think, twenty dollars, and the students would go down and do all the research, and we get the plaque engraved, and then put it up...

**Interviewer:** They're lovely plaques. It's lovely. Oh, I'm just so delighted.  
[Laughter] Thank you very much.

**Respondent 1:** So that was a [0:13:30] fun little thing.

**Respondent 2:** That was a fun thing.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

- Respondent 2:** And I remember the students disappeared and I ended up finishing up the research.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Which was fun actually. I really enjoyed it.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** Is all this information somewhere? I mean whatever they were researching, were you researching mainly when each house had been...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, they were doing that. I mean I ended up with everything. It's probably in a box somewhere in the basement, which Anna would very much like to get rid of, but...
- Respondent 2:** I have a feeling it ended up at the office, but I don't know.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, maybe. The [0:14:00] other group of people you should talk to, there aren't many of the old residents left, but you should talk to – you should try to find out if there are some, but Santina Giovanazzo, who lives across the street from us, and she was part of that generation before, and she's one of the few that haven't moved out.
- Respondent 2:** And her English isn't that great, so...
- Respondent 1:** Her English isn't that great, but she...
- Interviewer:** What language?
- Respondent 1:** Italian.
- Respondent 2:** Italian. But if you...
- Respondent 1:** She can carry on a conversation, but...

- Respondent 2:** Yeah. She's a little bit difficult to understand, but [0:14:30] certainly you could – and she wouldn't – you'd have to be introduced. I don't think she'd talk to a stranger. She's the sort that doesn't open the door unless she knows who's coming, but her son – if her son was there, he could...
- Interviewer:** Okay. So before you leave, after you stop speaking to each other as we're being recorded...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** I'd like to write some of these ideas down, and I will make...
- Respondent 1:** Because there aren't many of the original ethnic – I wonder if Mercedes up the street – I think she was there before.
- Interviewer:** Yes. Helen [0:15:00] Breslauer got...
- Respondent 2:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** ...her permission, and she's agreed to speak to me. I haven't called her yet.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Okay. Because she's quite conversational. She'd be good. But there aren't many left of those old, you know – first it was the Jewish wave, and then it was the Italian wave, and then it was the Portuguese wave. Not many of those folks left of any of those generations.
- Interviewer:** So you've just covered something that I've wanted to talk about. You've talked about the different waves of immigration, which those are the languages, and those were the customs that [0:15:30] were.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.

- Interviewer:** Who would you say followed that? As you described, around the mid-'70s when more educated people began to move in. University, and teachers, and...
- Respondent 1:** People, people like us.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** But it was government employees, University of Toronto employees, just people like us, like I'm supposed to be an architect, you know? People. [Laughter] People just started coming in because it became a neat place to live.
- Respondent 2:** **[0:16:00]** It was no longer the – it was no longer the traditional route of coming to Toronto, getting work on Spadina, going to shop in Kensington Market, live in our neighbourhood. That sort of disappeared, so it's – there really isn't – in terms of our streets, I don't see an ethnic wave of any sort. It's been – ever since then it's been a completely mixed bag.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. When we first moved into **[0:16:30]** our house, we tried to get a mortgage and went to the bank, and the bank said – I can't remember which one, but, "We're not giving a mortgage on that place. That's a slum."
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent 1:** And, "Those houses are all built of wood down there. That's just a fire trap."
- Respondent 2:** It's all going to fall down, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So the bank, the bank also felt that way.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. Definitely. I mean we got a partial mortgage, but we had to scramble around and find money to get a proper mortgage because the bank wouldn't do it.

**Interviewer:** Well I guess [0:17:00] these were the simpler houses, and north of Bloor were the more elegant, large, quote, well-built homes.

**Respondent 2:** Mm-hm.

**Interviewer:** Must have been their attitude.

**Respondent 2:** And I guess there was a large Hungarian contingent. I mean Bloor Street was all Hungarian shops and restaurants, and...

**Interviewer:** But there weren't many Hungarians living on our street.

**Respondent 2:** Not living, no. You're right. But I mean the guys still hang out on Bloor Street.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** Some of the old Hungarian guards still hang out there.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah. Hungarian Castle, and Annie Ratz, and...

**Respondent 2:** And the Blue Cellar. The Blue Cellar room.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. The Blue Cellar. Yeah, yeah. And the Hungarian [0:17:30] Deli was here. That lasted until ten years ago.

**Respondent 2:** Yeah. Maybe a bit longer.

**Interviewer:** So the only one left is Country Style.

**Respondent 2:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** The only Hungarian Restaurant. And it's a busy place.

**Respondent 2:** Is it?

**Interviewer:** Oh yes.

**Respondent 2:** Do you know, I've never been in it?

- Interviewer:** Well my husband, Paul, is from Slovakia.
- Respondent 2:** Okay.
- Interviewer:** And he speaks Hungarian, and our friends Tommy and Katka speak Hungarian. So we go there and it's a busy place.
- Respondent 2:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. So they're doing well, and their portions are gigantic.
- Respondent 2:** Mm-hm. Blue Cellar Room used to have the wiener schnitzel, remember?
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So you know what? Let's stick **[0:18:00]** to the stores for a while, and if we can talk about Bloor, Harbord, College, Spadina, okay. So I'm going to kind of reign us in because you've touched on so much that I want to talk about, and then I'm going to come back to – you've talked about renovations of your home, so we'll come back to that. But let's think of the stores on these – the three major streets.
- Respondent 1:** I can't think of much on Harbord.
- Respondent 2:** Harbord was...
- Respondent 1:** Jack Nunes used to run the building that was formerly owned by Crangle's Collision, **[0:18:30]** which is now Tino and Tarara.
- Interviewer:** Okay.
- Respondent 2:** No, Harbord was dead. Except for the Harbord Bakery, I can't think of anything that was...
- Respondent 1:** No. Harbord Bakery was there, yeah, but didn't seem to be anything much else. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So nothing much commercial really.

- Respondent 1:** Well I'm sure...
- Respondent 2:** Yeah, there were places.
- Respondent 1:** ...it had to be commercial because it's shaped like commercial, but...
- Respondent 2:** Nothing of interest.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. We never go there. But Bloor Street...
- Interviewer:** What was on Bloor Street?
- Respondent 1:** It was only – well there was a...
- Interviewer:** Not Fifty and Sushi.
- Respondent 1:** ...there was a better [0:19:00] mixture.
- Respondent 2:** There was a much better mixture of far fewer restaurants.
- Interviewer:** So what was there?
- Respondent 2:** Far fewer restaurants.
- Respondent 1:** Oh I remember there were two Wiener's Hardware a block apart.
- Respondent 2:** Gus the Barber?
- Respondent 1:** They weren't owned by the same Weiners. I mean there was...
- Interviewer:** Competing family members?
- Respondent 1:** No.
- Respondent 2:** No.

- Interviewer:** No?
- Respondent 1:** Just another Wiener's Hardware, which is where – sort of where the Natural Food place is now.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent 2:** And Gus the Barber was where [0:19:30] the Ukrainian place is. Future Bakery is.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, that's changed. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** And those – where Kinko's is on the corner, there was the pharmacy.
- Respondent 1:** That was Starkman's Chemists.
- Respondent 2:** Chemists. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent 2:** And there was another chemist across the street.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, that's right. There was another drugstore over there, yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Wow.
- Respondent 2:** And I remember the food, where the Supersaver, whatever it's called now, was. [0:20:00] Remember the – there's a store there. We swore that they got everything off the back of a truck, that fell off the back of a truck...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** ...because everything was cheap and rotten, half-rotten, and...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. I can't remember what the name of it was.

**Respondent 2:** I can't either.

**Respondent 1:** Huh.

**Interviewer:** Were there corner stores around...

**Respondent 2:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...when you were here?

**Respondent 2:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And if so, where?

**Respondent 2:** All right. Brunswick and Sussex on the southeast corner was **[0:20:30]** a shoemaker.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent 1:** Good memory.

**Interviewer:** Oh my god.

**Respondent 2:** Across the street from us on Major and Sussex...

**Respondent 1:** Northwest corner.

**Respondent 2:** Northwest corner was Andre's, which was...

**Respondent 1:** He still lives there. Oh, he'd be a good guy to talk to too. Andre's been there since before we were there.

**Respondent 2:** And he had a little variety store, typical variety store right on the corner.

**Interviewer:** What's his origin? What's he...

**Respondent 2:** He's Portuguese.

**Respondent 1:** He's Portuguese. Yeah.

- Interviewer:** Portuguese.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Our house, well [0:21:00] our house was a business. It was a...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** ...publishing company.
- Respondent 1:** Before that, it was a children's bookstore, and Sussex Research, and before that – I've got all the information at home.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** But we'll go back. It used to be a junk dealer. The junk dealer had all his stuff in the boulevard along beside the house, and his wife was a seamstress, I think.
- Interviewer:** Wow. So she had a little home business.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. So we met [0:21:30] that family as well. They've been around. And then...
- Respondent 2:** And...
- Respondent 1:** ...before that it was wax.
- Respondent 2:** That's the history of our house.
- Respondent 1:** I know. I know, but...
- Interviewer:** But that's interesting. That's our neighbourhood.
- Respondent 1:** ...let's not shut it down.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent 1:** Wax furriers was in on the '30s, and they're the ones that built the little store on the side of our house, and then we can go right back historically in – it was built in 1885, but in 1995 a [0:22:00] gentleman that worked at Eaton's, he was a carpenter.

**Respondent 2:** 1895.

**Respondent 1:** 1895. He was a carpenter at Eaton's, built the third storey on our house and the addition on the back, so we know of that historically, you know? Our house used to look like the rest of the row, but this guy took it and turned it into a bit more of a – something anyways.

**Interviewer:** Well, the places that used to be corner stores looked like corner stores. They just put [0:22:30] window coverings, whereas your house doesn't look as if it had been a commercial, I don't think.

**Respondent 2:** Well the side, the side window definitely does. I mean that's a store window where I have all my plants on the...

**Interviewer:** Oh. That's interesting because I just saw your plants.

**Respondent 2:** Yeah. I mean that's the typical entryway...

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent 2:** ...for a shop. And Andre has completely redone his house because his used to look like a convenience store. It had that corner entrance.

**Respondent 1:** Jeez. Remember the time he'd been robbed and he was running [0:23:00] down the street after the robber, and yelling, and...

**Respondent 2:** No.

**Respondent 1:** Okay.

**Respondent 2:** All I do remember is him sacrificing the sheep in the middle of the street for Easter or something.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. He used to put...

- Interviewer:** Right on the corner of your street?
- Respondent 2:** He did it in the driveway with the blood running into the gutter. [Laughs] It upset quite a few people. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** So were you already here?
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** So you watched him do this on the street?
- Respondent 2:** I don't know if I watched it...
- Interviewer:** Or you heard about it?
- Respondent 2:** I certainly – it's certainly part of the...
- Interviewer:** It's vivid. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** ...it's part of the lore.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** [0:23:30] Oh man, I miss that shoemaker.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** That's why I remember him. I used to go to him all the time.
- Respondent 1:** Huh. Okay.
- Respondent 2:** You don't remember the shoemaker being there?
- Respondent 1:** Don't remember the shoemaker.
- Respondent 2:** Really?
- Respondent 1:** No. Huh. Okay.

- Interviewer:** Did you use College Street much? I mean do you know much about...
- Respondent 2:** No. No.
- Interviewer:** You know that's...
- Respondent 1:** And we never went to Kensington Market. I mean it wasn't – well actually we did.
- Respondent 2:** Excuse me, one of our first dates was...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. One of our first dates was in Kensington Market. [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** It sounds very romantic. [Laughs]
- Respondent 1:** That's right. That's right.
- Interviewer:** [0:24:00] Amongst the tomatoes.
- Respondent 2:** I was new to Toronto, and Bob was showing me the...
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent 2:** I mean it was very...
- Respondent 1:** Ethnic.
- Respondent 2:** It was very anti-wasp. [Laughter] It was super anti-wasp.
- Respondent 1:** Unwasp. Not anti. But...
- Respondent 2:** It was almost anti-wasp. I mean Bob was very much – grew up in a wasp family, so he's been rebelling all his life against being brought up by these Anglos. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Was it a very Jewish market at that time? Or mixed?
- Respondent 2:** [0:24:30] It was mixed. It was still Jewish, it was largely Portuguese.

- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent 2:** I'd say Portuguese and Italian at that point.
- Interviewer:** So you used it a bit...
- Respondent 2:** Mm-hm. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...and that's where you courted. But it's not – you know what I'm seeing is that the people who lived closer to College used that artery, and people didn't move very much. So if you lived closer to Bloor, that's where your life was.
- Respondent 2:** Mm-hm. Yeah, no. Our life [0:25:00] was definitely Bloor Street.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Well I mean we're a block away.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** And there was nothing on Harbord, so you don't walk three blocks, three long blocks all the way down to College.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, that's right.
- Respondent 1:** If you need milk, you go to Bloor Street.
- Interviewer:** And people laugh when I say I'm going to up to St. Clair, or certainly up to Eglinton.
- Respondent 2:** Do you? [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Well if I have a meeting, I have peer supervision once a month, and I – but really it's really going up there.
- Respondent 2:** Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah. I mean the store [0:25:30] was always there, the JCC was always there. I'm trying to think. The library was up – no, the library...

**Respondent 2:** The library was there.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. I guess the library was there. I thought the library came when they converted the Baptist seminary or whatever it was into the First Nations complex.

**Respondent 2:** You know, I can't remember.

**Respondent 1:** I think the library was the second building part of that.

**Interviewer:** Where was the library?

**Respondent 1:** Just at Bloor and Spadina.

**Respondent 2:** Spadina.

**Interviewer:** [0:26:00] Oh. So it moved north, where it is now, it's north. Yeah.

**Respondent 1:** Well I don't know whether it was a library before.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent 1:** I don't think there was. My memory of it is that when they built the First Nations housing complex in the main building, at that point the library...

**Respondent 2:** I think you're right because I think I remember going to the library with the kids on Palmerston.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** But you're saying there was a library [0:26:30] at Bloor and Spadina.

**Respondent 1:** Well the existing library.

- Interviewer:** Oh, the existing library.
- Respondent 1:** The existing library that came into effect when our kids were young, which would have been...
- Respondent 2:** Mid-'80s?
- Respondent 1:** You know, 1980-ish and the kids were four, sort of thing, yeah.
- Interviewer:** You know, I grew up in Montreal. There was one library with English books. It was on Dorchester. Miss Vaughan was the librarian. So when I moved to **[0:27:00]** California and then I came here, I couldn't believe the number of libraries. [Laughter] I couldn't believe it. To me, every city has one...
- Respondent 2:** English books?
- Interviewer:** ...so I just thought this was an amazing place with so many libraries.
- Respondent 2:** Honest Ed's was certainly – their books. That's where you went when you got stuff for your...
- Respondent 1:** Oh Honest Ed's was...
- Respondent 2:** ...apartment before you were married.
- Respondent 1:** Sorry. I'm eating your dinner here.
- Interviewer:** Oh please do. That's why I put it out. [Laughter] People have also talked about movie theatres. Were they **[0:27:30]** still here when you came in '73? That there were a lot of movie theatres.
- Respondent 2:** Oh yes. There was a wonderful movie theatre. Oh, and you used to go to College. Remember the Spanish restaurant...
- Respondent 1:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent 2:** ...right next to the cinema?

- Respondent 1:** Don Quixote.
- Respondent 2:** Don Quixote's.
- Respondent 1:** And we went down there...
- Respondent 2:** There were a couple of good – and the pizza place that's right on the corner of Robert and College.
- Interviewer:** So you went there more for entertainment and some food, as opposed to...
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. Don Quixote's definitely, and then on Spadina there's Jerusalem. **[0:28:00]** Remember the Jerusalem? The Israeli restaurant? And yeah...
- Respondent 1:** Down farther.
- Interviewer:** Where?
- Respondent 1:** South of College.
- Respondent 2:** South of College on Spadina.
- Interviewer:** Oh okay.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. And right across on College on the south side at Spadina, there was also the Jewish deli that was really good.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. I can't remember the name of it.
- Interviewer:** So where do you see the changes, I mean generally speaking, the changes that...
- Respondent 1:** Can I just say that when I went to U of T, the architecture school down at College...
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent 1:** [0:28:30] ...and our hangout, we used to go and play pool were the El Mocambo is now, and so the other thing was that the Silver Dollar – I don't know. Is the Silver Dollar still there?

**Respondent 2:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent 1:** Is it? Okay. Any rate, that was our drinking place, and the guys used to get there, you know, and somebody's birthday or whatever we'd go over and they'd get quite tanked, and I remember one student in our class in particular, the doors had the crash bar, and this guy was [0:29:00] so drunk he was just falling down. Any rate, they put his arms through the crash bar, and so he was just kind of hanging on the door, and you know, how the people...

**Respondent 2:** It hasn't changed very much. [Laughter]

**Respondent 1:** Hasn't changed very much. And they used to have strippers, so we'd all go over and watch the strippers, and have a few beers, and...

**Respondent 2:** But that was the Victory.

**Respondent 1:** Oh no. That's further down. No, no. The Silver Dollar had strippers, and you'd go – and we'd go out, you know, drink beer. And of course, the guys worked all night. I used to commute back up to Leaside, but [0:29:30] the guys would be working all night and stuff, and we'd go over and have a few beers, and there'd be the stripper, and the beer. It's quite something.

**Interviewer:** Good ol' days. [Laughter] You know, you said that your families had some different views about where you were living, and it was a slum, and you're wasting your money, you're going to lose it. What about – but you were happy to live in the core, central. What about security and safety then and now?

**Respondent 1:** [0:30:00] I never felt insecure at all.

**Respondent 2:** No. I mean we never – I mean we really didn't lock our doors. I mean I would go out to Bloor Street and go shopping, and

especially in the summertime. Well now – and now we definitely lock our doors. How's that?

**Interviewer:** Well, but that's important to talk about.

**Respondent 1:** But we never really felt unsafe living downtown. The kids grew up there. They...

**Interviewer:** Were your children born in that house?

**Respondent 1:** Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah. And they'd come home. Like they'd come home at ten and [0:30:30] eleven o'clock at night. We never had any worries about them being molested, or robbed, or anything. It just never occurred to us.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** Well for nothing else, because they'd grown up here, around that time of night nobody was there, I guess, but you knew all the shopkeepers, and you went to the – it's still a drycleaner's, but...

**Respondent 1:** Knob Hill?

**Respondent 2:** Knob Hill. What was the name of the family?

**Respondent 1:** There's Rose.

**Respondent 2:** Oh man. Her son was an architect.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. That's true, yeah.

**Respondent 2:** Her son finished architecture and then [0:31:00] decided to go back into the dry cleaning business with his mom. I don't know what happened because they sold this business afterwards. Anyway, I mean they used to give candy to the kids. Wiener's Hardware knew the kids, you know?

**Interviewer:** Oh. So they knew them by name.

**Respondent 2:** Yeah. They knew everybody, so the kids knew...

**Interviewer:** So with the kids, they could go in and say, "I want this, I want this," and they would write it down and...

**Respondent 1:** No.

**Respondent 2:** No.

**Interviewer:** That didn't happen.

**Respondent 2:** Those days were gone.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent 2:** Those days were gone.

**Interviewer:** But they knew the kids and would welcome them...

**Respondent 2:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...and the kids felt comfortable to go there.

**Respondent 2:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** [0:31:30] So that's a difference. I mean now we still have some small stores, but I don't think people know. They don't know the names of the kids, and the kids don't know their names. I think.

**Respondent 2:** Yeah. And certain cases you still do, but...

**Respondent 1:** They still know me up at Wiener's Hardware, but I've done architectural work for them. I've known Marty for many, many years. Forty years.

**Respondent 2:** Since he was a little kid.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** He's the person who's running it now?

- Respondent 1:** Marty Wiener still runs that store, yeah.
- Interviewer:** And was it his father or [0:32:00] grandfather?
- Respondent 1:** Jerry ran it before that.
- Respondent 2:** And his grandfather started it.
- Respondent 1:** And his grandfather started it.
- Interviewer:** His grandfather started it and he's...
- Respondent 1:** They got pictures up over the door of all the different generations, yeah.
- Interviewer:** Well I've certainly shopped there.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** I haven't looked at the pictures. Yeah, yeah. So in terms of safety, your children felt safe. And you lock your doors now. Do you feel safe to walk here at night?
- Respondent 2:** Oh yes.
- Respondent 1:** Oh heavens.
- Respondent 2:** It wouldn't occur to me not to.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. I do too.
- Respondent 2:** I mean I've felt – I've seen vandalism, and we certainly experience vandalism, [0:32:30] but we always [laughs] – the vandalism – I mean the Brunswick.
- Respondent 1:** We had the house broken into a couple of times, you know? I mean not often we've left the door open.
- Respondent 2:** Recently.

- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Somebody came in just the last couple of years and actually broke the window to get in, and our tenant walked in at the same time, and...
- Respondent 2:** She walked in the back door to see that somebody was in the front hall. And both – Bob was out of town, I was out of the country, and she just happened to walk in as he – **[0:33:00]** I was actually – anyway. Yeah. She walked in as he was sort of heading up the stairs or coming down the stairs, and she freaked him out and he ran away. And I was coming home from the airport and I walked in the doorway to find the hallway full of men. I realized they were in...
- Interviewer:** Police uniforms.
- Respondent 2:** ...police uniforms. [Laughter] And that's what's going on.
- Interviewer:** Wow.
- Respondent 2:** But you know, people toss garbage over the fence. They get drunk, they try to knock our copper posts **[0:33:30]** off the top.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** It used to be students. I think it's still students. They just get stupid.
- Respondent 1:** We used to have a rubber raft, a big one that we would fill up as a swimming pool for the kids.
- Interviewer:** Oh my god.
- Respondent 1:** Well they took the water out of it and somebody stole it. You know what I mean? Just idiot stuff like that.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. But you're saying that it felt safe then, and it still does now, although you lock your doors.
- Respondent 2:** **[0:34:00]** I would say the incidence of petty crime has increased in the '70s. Even until the last ten years, I don't think it would occur to you that somebody was going to break into your car.

- Respondent 1:** Here's a funny story.
- Respondent 2:** No. Now people break into your car and steal everything, but...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. We've had our car broken into what? Three times just outside of the house?
- Interviewer:** So even if you don't have something that looks inviting, they'll still break in? Or is it if they see something?
- Respondent 2:** Oh no. There are inviting things left [0:34:30] in the station wagon because some of us don't think. [Laughs]
- Respondent 1:** Well some of us think that it's so much trouble to take it in every single night, but now I've learned I have to take everything out of the car.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. Which is a difference. I mean that...
- Interviewer:** So if you don't leave anything that looks tempting...
- Respondent 1:** I'm going to tell you a couple of other stories.
- Interviewer:** Please do.
- Respondent 1:** We have a very nice lamp hanging in front of our house.
- Respondent 2:** Oh, this is an interesting story.
- Respondent 1:** And we got home and realized the lamp wasn't there anymore. [0:35:00] Just a bare wire hanging down. So I printed up wanted posters for our light, and took it around to the antique dealers, and so...
- Respondent 2:** The antique market down at Queen's Quay that was there.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. So one of the dealers said, "Why don't you go over to..."
- Respondent 2:** No, no. Actually he said something more interesting than that. Sorry.

- Respondent 1:** Okay. Let's get it right.
- Respondent 2:** He said, "Where do you live?" And Bob told him where we live, and he said, "Oh. In that case, [0:35:30] why won't you try this address?"
- Respondent 1:** "Broadview and Queen. There's an antique store down there that you might go and have a look at." So I went down to the store, and I think it was on a Sunday.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. It was a Sunday.
- Respondent 1:** And there was my lamp hanging in the window. So there was a cop car sitting across the street, so there's me knocking on the door saying, "My lamp in there. These guys have obviously stolen it." So they said, "Well just [0:36:00] don't do anything for a little while. We're doing an investigation and we're closing in on them. These guys are fencing things." So they were taken to court, and I went and testified, and we did get our lamp back. So then a few months later we picked up a copy of...
- Respondent 2:** Years.
- Respondent 1:** ...a couple of years later we picked up a copy of Toronto Life magazine, and...
- Respondent 2:** I looked at it, and it was about [0:36:30] Riverdale?
- Respondent 1:** It was about a – yeah, I guess it was Riverdale. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Anyway, it was about a neighbourhood where gentrification had happened on half of the street and not on the other, and it had interviews with families, and it said whenever the police get called to the neighbourhood, they know exactly which address they go to. And they had full pictures of the yuppies and of the other family, and I said to Bob, "Oh look, this is an interesting article." And he looked at it and he said, [0:37:00] "Those are the guys that stole our lamp. I remember them from court." [Laughs]

- Respondent 1:** Those are the guys that were in court.
- Interviewer:** Those who were on the yuppie side of the street.
- Respondent 2:** No, no. This was the...
- Respondent 1:** No, no. These...
- Respondent 2:** ...troublemakers that the police had [laughs].
- Respondent 1:** The old-time...
- Respondent 2:** Irish.
- Respondent 1:** You know, the white trash that had lived there for umpteen generations and, you know, they were into that kind of seedy stuff.
- Respondent 2:** So that's – yeah, that's one of our – the crime was more sophisticated, [laughs] and that [0:37:30] was just smash and grab.
- Interviewer:** So interesting that this guy sent you to the right place.
- Respondent 2:** Well exactly.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Exactly.
- Respondent 1:** So we gave him the hundred dollars, that's for sure. Our lamp is back out there today. Knock on wood.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. We didn't put that lamp back out for decades because...
- Respondent 1:** Maybe twenty years, yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Because we didn't want it stolen again.
- Respondent 1:** But now it's back out with our fingers crossed. [Laughs] There was some other theft story that was funny, and I can't remember what it was. Something else [0:38:00] along that vein.

**Interviewer:** That happened to you or a neighbour?

**Respondent 1:** Oh, I know. No, no. We're talking about community safety. So one of the stories that we should follow through is my historical role with the old Residents' Association, but at one time we were fighting a group who wanted to bring a very active restaurant in, the sort that would have entertainment, and whatever, up where the Kinko's is [0:38:30] at Major and Bloor. So they...

**Respondent 2:** It was there for a while.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** The Mexican place, or whatever it was.

**Respondent 1:** Well no, no, no. That was – no. These were other guys. Anyway, these are people that had been involved with the Brunswick House, and they were making a liquor license, and they wanted to have this big thing. I was fighting it, and some of the other people on the street like Asher Edinger and who else? Somebody down [0:39:00] just south of them. At any rate, I had a death threat phoned into me. You know, "If you don't stop fighting our application, you know, members of your family are going to be dead," sort of thing. And...

**Respondent 2:** And Asher, they moved out.

**Respondent 1:** They moved out. And somebody south – I just can't remember which house it was – had their car bashed in with concrete blocks thrown in the back lane. Concrete [0:39:30] blocks through the windshield. All as this was going on, just as we were appearing at the liquor license board opposing this application.

**Respondent 2:** Yeah. So being part of the Residents' Association hasn't always been.

**Interviewer:** So what year would that have been? I mean approximately.

**Respondent 1:** Early '80s.

**Respondent 2:** Early '80s.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So one of the families moved away.

**Respondent 2:** Yeah.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** That's not the family who had their car...

**Respondent 2:** No.

**Respondent 1:** No. That's a different family.

**Interviewer:** And did they stay or did they leave?

**Respondent 1:** No, I think they stayed.

**Respondent 2:** They stayed.

**Respondent 1:** I don't think they're not – I can't remember.

**Respondent 2:** [0:40:00] It wasn't the – Gary and Cheryl, was it?

**Respondent 1:** No, it wasn't Gary and Cheryl. No. They never get that involved.

**Interviewer:** You must have been quite terrified, I would think...

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...considering the threat and what they had done.

**Respondent 2:** Mm.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** But you stayed.

**Respondent 1:** And these guys said some – I can't remember what they said anymore, but they said some pretty seedy things to me at the hearing. You know, "If you don't do this," then you know. At any rate, literally having a death threat phoned in at three o'clock in the morning isn't the nicest thing in the world.

**Interviewer:** [0:40:30] But you decided to stay.

**Respondent 1:** We stayed.

**Respondent 2:** Bob's pig-headed. He would stay because of that. [Laughter]

**Respondent 1:** Anyway, so it was kind of a mafia-like group that was running the Brunswick House, and these guys were looking to take over more locations.

**Interviewer:** Well the Brunswick House is still not a favourite place for our neighbourhood.

**Respondent 1:** No. No.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent 1:** So that was one. Well I used to go off and [0:41:00] in the old days, the Residents' Association was very, very much, you know, a couple of people. We'd have meetings every now and then, but it was a couple of people really carrying the can, not, you know, block people and all this stuff that we do today. But...

**Respondent 2:** Well there are two super controversial things that I remember. I think while you were – if not in charge – and one was the maze, traffic maze.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent 1:** The traffic maze was extremely early. [0:41:30] That came in just as we were...

**Respondent 2:** My grandfather was alive.

- Respondent 1:** Just when we first moved in, we...
- Respondent 2:** My grandfather was alive because he came to visit us, and I remember we sat him on a chair in the corner and had him count cars...
- Respondent 1:** Count cars turning left, turning right, going straight through.
- Respondent 2:** And he died when Alex was two or three, so that would have been...
- Interviewer:** So was that – were you part – one of the people responsible for the maze?
- Respondent 1:** No, that had been approved before we got in. So we moved in in '73 and it had already been approved.
- Respondent 2:** Must have taken [0:42:00] a while.
- Respondent 1:** It was in on a sort of a trial basis and...
- Respondent 2:** That's true. They did some streets.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. So it was kind of solidified during our era, but...
- Interviewer:** And did it make the difference that people thought it would?
- Respondent 1:** Oh huge. People used to go zooming – because it was all one-way. Like...
- Respondent 2:** From Bloor to College.
- Respondent 1:** ...Manning and Euclid, people would just go zooming down all the time and...
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. So it worked.
- Respondent 1:** It really did keep a lot of the traffic out of the neighbourhood.

- Respondent 2:** And the second thing was – which I mentioned to you before, was the – [0:42:30] no, I can't use the word. People beginning to get rid of the Victorian architectural detail on their houses. That was an enormous controversy, fight, clash of cultures, clash of classes.
- Respondent 1:** You didn't want to say Portuguese?
- Respondent 2:** No, I didn't want to. [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** So we won't say it. You won't say it. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** And that was a huge effort, and...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. [0:43:00] We got Neil Wright, and credit to him, because we put out a brochure with pictures of some of these details, and Neil Wright said, "Your house is worth more if you have these details on the house." And he's right, you know? And we're putting these flyers at everybody's house.
- Respondent 2:** It reminded me very much at that point – sorry, it's off-topic – of the protests against the Vietnam War in the States...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 2:** ...because I was going to graduate school in North Carolina, and of course everybody was for the war, and [0:43:30] when we were...
- Interviewer:** Whoa.
- Respondent 2:** ...protesting, we felt the only way to get to people was to tell them how much it was costing. We figured that they would understand, and this was the same thing. We were basically saying...
- Interviewer:** Money.
- Respondent 2:** Money.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. It's so interesting because I was in Palo Alto and I was protesting against the Vietnam War, against napalm, and all this. That was '64 to '68 that I was there.

**Respondent 2:** '68, '70.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent 1:** So I guess where I was going with my story is that [0:44:00] I would go off and fight these applications at the Committee of Adjustment.

**Respondent 2:** Always fighting them.

**Respondent 1:** Bob the lone wolf fighting the Liquor License Board, fighting applications, I'd be at Committee of Adjustment, I'd go to the OMB, and I actually won some cases at the OMB and they would have a lawyer, and a planner, and all this whole team assembled, you know, so there would be sort of six or eight of them, and then I'd show up all by myself, and I actually won some at [0:44:30] the OMB, so that was really quite exciting.

**Interviewer:** So that was a time-consuming commitment that you had to this community.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah. I've always been a bit of a nutcase, you know? I mean I take on these crusade things.

**Interviewer:** Well I'm on your side, of course, so I appreciate...

**Respondent 1:** The biggest battle was Doctor's Hospital because Doctor's Hospital wanted to build a pretty big hospital over on Brunswick. [0:45:00] And we didn't want that to happen, you know? We thought it was too big for the neighbourhood, it was out of place, you know? So we really fought pretty hard against that, and some of the things...

**Respondent 2:** The thing had a cruddy reputation.

**Respondent 1:** No, it was an awful hospital.

**Respondent 2:** People used to say, you know, as the ambulance is taking you away, you can hear the people just saying, "Just not Doctor's Hospital." [Laughs]

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. So ultimately it came down to an OMB fight, [0:45:30] and we raised quite a bit of money. I don't know what it was at the time. It seemed like a lot. It might have only been fifteen thousand dollars, but we raised a lot of money, and [indiscernible 0:45:38] Jaffrey, who had recently been a city councillor, to help us at the OMB, and so we fought at the OMB and we lost, but we slowed them down immensely. And then they had – and [0:46:00] this guy, Brian MacFarlane, was the head of the hospital, and he was just my archenemy. So he arranged to have David Peterson, who was the Premier of the day, come to announce the new hospital being built, and they were having a big ceremony. And I was – was it just me, or it was a bunch of people.

**Respondent 2:** A couple of people.

**Respondent 1:** Anyways, a small group was there protesting, [0:46:30] you know, this thing, and they didn't want to have us protesting when the Premier was there, so they were trying to shut us up.

**Respondent 2:** It got physical, as far as I know.

**Respondent 1:** It got pretty physical that they didn't want these people around objecting to this thing. So I can't remember how it happened, but basically we made a big mess of their presentation. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** So you had to fight hard. My goodness.

**Respondent 1:** Oh yeah.

**Interviewer:** To not let this place become...

**Respondent 1:** So you know...

**Interviewer:** ...very different from what you have.

**Respondent 2:** Well that's what I'm thinking.

**Respondent 1:** [0:47:00] So ultimately they never got their funding. I don't know whether new government – I can't remember the details, but they never did get their funding, and now it's an old folks' home, it's

much lower-scale, it's much quieter for the neighbourhood, they don't have ambulances, you know?

**Respondent 2:** But you know, like when we're talking about the architectural detail, I mean the salesmen of aluminium siding and angelstone were incredibly aggressive. I mean they went door-to-door in this neighbourhood promoting their product, and there was a real danger that it was [0:47:30] all going to disappear. Not all. You can see some in the street. Margaret Farley-Park on the north side.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** That's Ulster, right?

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** On the north side of Ulster, and you can see the beautiful old Victorians, and suddenly after two it's gone, and all these horrific...

**Respondent 1:** Angelstone.

**Respondent 2:** ...angelstone square, flat-roof things are there.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** So we could have certainly lost the character of the neighbourhood. And it was a constant battle against foes from every direction. [Laughs]

**Respondent 1:** So I was [0:48:00] fighting. I was fighting. I finished with my Doctor's Hospital story. In fighting Doctor's Hospital, I got spending a fair bit of time with Larry Grossman, who was our local member, and he was Conservative at the time. And you know, I'd spent a fair bit of time talking to him. And his assistant was Harriet Walman, and she later went onto a political career up in Richmond Hill, but the opposition, [0:48:30] the Brian MacFarlanes, got to telling people that I was sleeping with Harriet Walman. So this was...

**Respondent 2:** Well actually what they said was, "He's in bed with her." But of course they're speaking to the Italian and the Portuguese...

- Respondent 1:** And the Portuguese...
- Respondent 2:** ...community, who immediately said, "Oh, Barnett, he's sleeping with her." [Laughs] So yeah, yeah. Things got quite dramatic several times.
- Respondent 1:** Things were pretty hairy, you know? Yeah. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** **[0:49:00]** But you persevered. You didn't back down obviously.
- Respondent 2:** Bob never backs down.
- Respondent 1:** Well.
- Respondent 2:** I'm completely serious. He never backs down.
- Respondent 1:** At one time I sort of got fired by the Residents' Association because they thought I was doing too much on my own, and Rosie Smith was – you should talk to Rosie too as part of the...
- Interviewer:** Just write her name down, please.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. I've got her name.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Good.
- Respondent 1:** At any rate, you know, "We should be more democratic," and you know, "The Association shouldn't be deciding who we're fighting against," and all those kind of things. So I think **[0:49:30]** I had a little hiatus of not being president for two or three years because Rosie ran me out of town a little bit. And eventually, eventually I got back in as president, if I remember.
- Interviewer:** What were your years?
- Respondent 1:** Oh, I can't remember anymore.
- Interviewer:** Approximately?

- Respondent 1:** '80s.
- Respondent 2:** '80s. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** But you really worked hard.
- Respondent 1:** '80s. Maybe early '90s. At any rate, it was before, you know, Harbord Village. I'm trying to think who was after me? **[0:50:00]** Sarah Hasty was after me, Max Voss, Peter Beeckmans were before me. Dick Nelles was before me. Kathleen Craig were before me as head of the Residents' Association. No actually I'm trying to think. Maybe Dick Nelles and Katherine Craig were after me. Any rate, I don't...
- Interviewer:** It's a list of committed people.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. There were some good people who should go down in the record because they carried the can for many, many years, **[0:50:30]** you know?
- Interviewer:** Well and you kept the buildings from becoming high-rises.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Which is very important to our neighbourhood.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. And the U of T always kind of had to be kept in check.
- Respondent 2:** Oh, the U of T was another very bad neighbour.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Somebody...
- Respondent 1:** We had one historic meeting on the U of T Graduates Centre where they were proposing this building and the great big "O" hanging out over the street and **[0:51:00]** all that. So a bunch of us went and

they had a big meeting at the JCC, I think, on that, and a bunch of us went from the community...

**Respondent 2:** It was packed.

**Respondent 1:** It was just packed with people. Well it turns out that Stephen Teeple, who had designed the building, was sort of a famous architect, you know. So the architectural community came out in huge numbers, and they're all dressed...

**Respondent 2:** And they were very funny because they were all standing around the perimeter of the room. You know where the Second Cup is right now? That was a meeting room. [0:51:30] Or was it upstairs? Maybe it was upstairs.

**Respondent 1:** I think it was upstairs.

**Respondent 2:** But anyways...

**Respondent 1:** It was a big, big meeting room.

**Respondent 2:** And only architecture students dressed in black from the university.

**Respondent 1:** It wasn't just architecture students. It was the profs...

**Respondent 2:** Oh yeah.

**Respondent 1:** ...it was the well-known architects.

**Respondent 2:** It was what's-his-name from...

**Respondent 1:** Bruce Kuwabara...

**Respondent 2:** Bruce Kuwabara...

**Respondent 1:** ...was there, you know, all of the architects, you know?

**Respondent 2:** Bruce Kuwabara got up and said he thought it was a wonderful building, and he was an architect. [Laughs] And Bob got up and

said, "Bruce, I went to school with you. I'm an architect too."  
[Laughs]

**Respondent 1:** [0:52:00] And this was a piece of garbage, and you're insulting our community, you know? It was that kind of a night. [Laughs] Anyways, they went ahead and built that building, but oh, I'm eating all your food here.

**Interviewer:** That's why I put it out. [Laughter]

**Respondent 1:** So yeah, it's pretty much everything off my list.

**Interviewer:** Somebody called – somebody described the U of T as a bully to [0:52:30] this neighbourhood.

**Respondent 2:** Yeah. I think I did in the email I sent to you.

**Interviewer:** Oh okay. Maybe that was it. Yeah.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, very much.

**Respondent 2:** Yeah, and they get on their high horse and condescend, which was really interesting because a lot of people here – and they think they're better...

**Interviewer:** They're their gift to us.

**Respondent 2:** Yes. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** Well you know we have Sue Dexter now who is our liaison person, and [0:53:00] so we always have some fair sense of what is about to happen, what their plans are, and there's communication constantly happening, and she speaks up.

**Respondent 2:** You know who else has been here is...

**Respondent 1:** Esme?

**Respondent 2:** Esme Benny.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** I want to move back briefly to you bought a commercial property and you made it into a home. So I'd like to move back and **[0:53:30]** talk about the kinds of changes that people have made to homes, and you were saying of course you didn't like when the Portuguese [laughs] wanted to take all the charm and all the character...

**Respondent 1:** Mediterraneanize the houses. You know?

**Interviewer:** Okay. So any more comments that you'd like to make about the homes and the changes that have occurred, or that people have maintained? Any comments about that?

**Respondent 1:** Our house had built-in **[0:54:00]** plywood, 1960s – you wouldn't even call it furniture. Benches, and you know, they'd taken out the fireplace and built this plywood fireplace surround, and it was all painted with white and turquoise.

**Respondent 2:** It was white and turquoise.

**Respondent 1:** White and turquoise was the colours, and sort of blood red were the colour schemes for the house, so we had a lot of ripping out to do, and I mean people were – we had our friends over and they were pulling it away, and **[0:54:30]** great piece of plaster would come out with, you know, as they're pulling this off, and anyways, we put it all back together and rebuilt the plaster. Like not taken it down, not stripped it, we just rebuilt it. But we don't have insulation, and we've kept the old windows, you know, so it rattles around and it uses a lot of heat, but we've tried to just put it back the way it was. Including the slate roof, which is my masterwork of my life probably. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So that's...

**Respondent 1:** **[0:55:00]** Rebuilding – putting all this roof.

**Interviewer:** It's been very dear to your heart.

- Respondent 1:** This roof. You know?
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 2:** With the kids.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, with the kids.
- Interviewer:** So you lived in the house and you were doing a lot of work constantly.
- Respondent 2:** That's what everybody did.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 2:** That's what everybody did. Everybody, like – I don't know any – that's something that's brand new.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** People buying houses and not living in them for a year while they renovate is something that just didn't exist. I mean...
- Interviewer:** People couldn't afford.
- Respondent 2:** ...people couldn't afford it. None of them could afford it.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. How do they carry the house for a year **[0:55:30]** while they're doing two hundred thousand dollars worth of renovations, you know?
- Respondent 2:** You know, that's if it's two hundred thousand. But I mean it just really didn't – all of us, and we were all professionals. I mean we weren't all professionals, but it was that crowd that was moving in. It was the professor, it was the teachers, it was the psychologists, it was the...
- Interviewer:** So people couldn't afford to live in one place and pay for that...
- Respondent 2:** Yeah, exactly.

**Interviewer:** ...plus all the others.

**Respondent 2:** So what you did is you did a room.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** And you got that room done, you did another room, and maybe two years would go by, and you'd have enough money to [0:56:00] do a third room. Maybe people weren't going into debt as much as they are now, I don't know. Maybe that economic thing. But as trends in style come through, you can see the – I mean it almost hurts to see the houses being...

**Respondent 1:** Guttled.

**Respondent 2:** ...guttled...

**Respondent 1:** You know, all the stuff going out in the bin, all the trim and everything just...

**Interviewer:** One of the things that I see, which happened to this house. I have no idea when. Is they changed the front, so [0:56:30] a lot of people get rid of this, whatever it's called, the overhang.

**Respondent 1:** The porch? Yeah. The porch roof. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Which means I can't sit outside while it's raining. When I lived on Robert Street, I could sit outside on a nice, warm, rainy day and it was just beautiful, and I can't do it unless I sit with an umbrella.

**Respondent 2:** For that matter, get in your front door...

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** ...with the key, without getting soaking wet.

- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. But that's one thing that I see a lot of. Oh, we're moving in, we're going to upgrade it, we're going to modernize it, get rid of that. [0:57:00] Drives me crazy.
- Respondent 2:** Even friends that we have now who we quite like say things like, "You don't have central air conditioning?" No, we don't. [Laughs]
- Respondent 1:** We don't even have a dishwasher.
- Respondent 2:** But that may be us, but now this – it's the same thing as when we were growing up. People's apartments – people's expectations now are so much inflated.
- Interviewer:** Oh yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 2:** So much inflated.
- Interviewer:** I notice the word "need."
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** Need something, which of course, need is [0:57:30] not the right word, but that's the word that they use.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. And I see a huge difference between – that's just a North American thing between, let's say, European expectations and North American expectations suddenly.
- Interviewer:** Oh yeah. Oh yeah.
- Respondent 2:** If you have four people you need four thousand square feet.
- Interviewer:** Would you comment just generally on the changes of the street? Just how people are using the sidewalks, how people are using [0:58:00] the street itself. See some changes that way?
- Respondent 2:** I've seen much less use of the street.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** When our kids were little, the kids played in the laneways, the kids played hockey in the street, they – I'm not home as much, so I don't see it as much, but there were constantly children.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** Children everywhere.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. Using the street, using the sidewalks, using the road.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** And play in the laneways.

**Interviewer:** And using the lanes also.

**Respondent 1:** There were so many young kids always in a block, you know?  
[0:58:30] I don't know whether ten little kids all the same ages now, those kids.

**Respondent 2:** Well just think about Halloween.

**Respondent 1:** Yes.

**Respondent 2:** We used to expect a hundred kids.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** And the last couple of years we had twenty, thirty.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Respondent 2:** And I think a lot of them actually have been brought in from somewhere else because I don't recognize any of them, but...

- Interviewer:** So you think they're fewer children and the children who are here are on the street less...
- Respondent 2:** I think so.
- Interviewer:** ...and they're more in programs or in the house?
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent 1:** That may be just kind of **[0:59:00]** a cyclical thing, but we were young families moving in, and all the kids were sort of the same age, and you know, the one family's kids babysit our kids, and you know it was all very, very friendly, and the mothers all would walk up and down the street together. So that's sort of changed. It seems to be a lot of more or less empty-nesters at this point, a lot of people **[0:59:30]** our age. Our age. Think maybe we can afford to live there, and – because it wasn't expensive when we moved in, you know? I mean...
- Interviewer:** I see a few young families on my street on both sides.
- Respondent 2:** There are, there are some.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** But the kids are in daycare, or they're in programs, so they're not playing on the sidewalk or on the road as much at all.
- Respondent 2:** And when our kids were growing up, the playing field on Robert was very, very active.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** So I mean I never...
- Interviewer:** And now it's locked.

- Respondent 2:** And now it's locked, and [1:00:00] the skating rink doesn't work, and the tennis courts are falling apart. I mean our kids were always there.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 2:** I never took my son to hockey. And basically said, "Do you want to play hockey? Go ahead. Down the street." [Laughs]
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** That's a loss to not have those spaces open and kept at.
- Respondent 1:** I think there were more people sitting out in front of the houses, you know? Like the Santinas, and the Mercedes still do that, but...
- Respondent 2:** We do that.
- Respondent 1:** We do that a bit, but [1:00:30] there used to be a lot more people out. The street was a place where...
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. You know, that's very true because especially [laughs] when – since we've had over the past ten, fifteen years, the influx of what was on our street called "stupid rich people" who have never become part of the neighbourhood, and they drive into the house from the back – like they drive, they drive into the laneway, they [1:01:00] park their car, they go into the house from the back, it's the door, and you actually never see them. So it's...
- Interviewer:** So it's not a community the way it used to be.
- Respondent 2:** It still is, but we work at it, and it has to be worked at now. We have our Christmas party.
- Respondent 1:** On Major Street.
- Respondent 2:** On Major Street Christmas party every year.
- Respondent 1:** North block of Major has a Christmas party every year.

- Respondent 2:** To which everyone is invited on the street, and **[1:01:30]** it's at a different house every year.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** And the writers never – almost never come, the younger families almost never come. They're invited. We knock on the door, we get – you know, we hand them an invitation, but they don't participate as much.
- Interviewer:** Major Street seems to have had more of that real sense of "we" of a community...
- Respondent 2:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** ...because I've spoken to several people, and some south, **[1:02:00]** but some of them want to talk only about Major Street because it has been such a powerful influence and sense of community for them, so Major Street seems to be quite special that way. I mean I love this community. It's my community. And when I lived on Robert Street, I mean I've been here now for twenty-five years, but when I became an empty-nester – but when I lived on Robert Street, we sat outside until twelve-thirty at night on the front porches.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Drinking beer? [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** Just talking to...
- Respondent 1:** **[1:02:30]** We get the university students sitting out on the front porch drinking beer, making a lot of noise, and we do get a lot of those sort of university-age parties, and I get fed up. One of my tricks is three o'clock in the morning when I'm tired of all the noise, I put on my dressing gown and I go and join the party. [Laughter]
- Respondent 2:** It makes them go inside very quickly. [Laughter]

**Respondent 1:** Puts a little damper in the activities, you know? I don't want this old [1:03:00] fart around in his pyjamas. [Laughter] They don't give me a beer, that's for sure. [Laughs] They don't invite me in.

**Interviewer:** My husband, Paul, feels the same way. [Laughter] We have two bedrooms upstairs, so when they become really noisy we move to the back bedroom because he gets really upset at them. Yeah. [Laughs] When you first moved here and there was more a variety of cultures, was there some [1:03:30] real joining or was it kind of separate that the Portuguese people hung out with...

**Respondent 1:** It was always pretty separate. It was never much. Never much joining, I don't think. Everybody was friendly, said hello, but...

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent 1:** Today the few that are left are sort of, you know, they sort of join in a bit, you know? We know Santana, and you know, other people.

**Interviewer:** The old-timers, yeah. Yeah.

**Respondent 1:** But there's hardly any of them left.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent 1:** You know? I mean if they're going to have any social life at all, they're going to have to talk to us, I guess.

**Respondent 2:** But we had, [1:04:00] I mean, there's Mrs. Brown next door, and the Spitzbergs at the door after.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. Poor Mrs. Spitzberg, and they were incontinent, and couldn't get up the stairs, so they'd pee at the backyard, and that. We had, you not, not into a pot. They'd just pee in the backyard, so we had terrible, terrible cockroaches for years.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent 1:** And finally the Spitzbergs – she died, he moved to an old folk's home, and miraculously a month or two later the cockroaches had

all gone away. Now [1:04:30] I can't really blame it on them, but I mean they couldn't do any housekeeping.

**Respondent 2:** No, they were beyond it.

**Respondent 1:** Couldn't even use a toilet, you know?

**Interviewer:** Very unpleasant for you.

**Respondent 2:** Well the poor people, you felt so sorry for them.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, that's right.

**Respondent 2:** Nobody to look after them.

**Respondent 1:** We'd go in and talk to them, but it wasn't a very happy existence.

**Respondent 2:** Now we're that generation. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** But you're not doing some of the things they did. [Laughter]

**Respondent 1:** We're probably the same age, we're just a bit more with it, you know? [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** [1:05:00] Could you talk specifically about backyards? How you remember people using them.

**Respondent 1:** We never had one.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent 1:** You know, we're on the corner.

**Interviewer:** So you have that lovely stuff around on your corner.

**Respondent 1:** We're just – in a way it was sort of at the semi-front here.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. But did you have a sense of how people used their backyards those years?

- Respondent 1:** Not really.
- Respondent 2:** Well I would – well all right. You weren't around as much. I hung around with the monks.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. That's right. You used to play in Sharon's backyard.
- Respondent 2:** Sharon's, Cheryl's, [1:05:30] Anne's.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, that's true. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** So we did use them a lot. I would say there just wasn't – things were shabbier.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent 2:** You know, you didn't have the fine decks, and the horticultural displays, and whatever was there was there.
- Interviewer:** So mothers or families were using them a bit, but they weren't manicured and...
- Respondent 2:** No. They're certainly not manicured.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Well that's a change because what [1:06:00] people described from a long time ago is that some people use it just as a catch-all for their junk, or other people just had lots of vegetables, and then they could feed the families.
- Respondent 2:** Certainly I remember chickens.
- Interviewer:** Oh, tell me about that.
- Respondent 2:** Well just hearing chickens in the backyard. I mean people did keep poultry.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. I can't think of anybody in particular that had them, but I do remember people...
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.

- Respondent 1:** I remember people used to have the pigeons, you know, roosting.
- Respondent 2:** Pigeon coops, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah. But I can't remember [1:06:30] a particular house that was sort of...
- Interviewer:** But you could – you heard them.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah, you did, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** You could hear them, and you'd see them, and you knew they were around the neighbourhood.
- Respondent 2:** And of course there were the people who grew pot on their roof, but that's. [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** I hope you were friends with them. [Laughs] What about heating your houses? How was your house heated when you first came? Is it the same now?
- Respondent 1:** It was oil, eh?
- Respondent 2:** I don't think so. It was always gas.
- Respondent 1:** It was always gas.
- Respondent 2:** It was always gas, but our first furnace was probably as big as your kitchen.
- Respondent 1:** [1:07:00] Yeah. [Laughter] It was the office that was oil. That's right. We've been gas ever since.
- Respondent 2:** We've been gas. I mean this was this huge octopus of a thing that took up an entire – it was enormous. It was huge.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah.

- Respondent 2:** And now we have this little thing about this big that hangs on the wall. [Laughs]
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** But yeah, it's always been gas. And we have rads.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent 2:** So that's another reason why in our house central air conditioning would be...
- Interviewer:** Oh my god, [1:07:30] you'd have to take the walls down.
- Respondent 2:** We'd have to take – it'd be awful.
- Respondent 1:** We dug up the backyard because I put paving, big pavers in, and not the concrete ones. And in digging that up, we found all sorts of neat old bottles, so I'm sure what people used to do was just heave all this stuff out the backdoor, and we still have a horse-hitching post right by our backyard.
- Respondent 2:** Oh, we do.
- Respondent 1:** An original.
- Respondent 2:** Behind our kitchen. There's a horse-hitching post.
- Interviewer:** Whoa.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, [1:08:00] yeah.
- Interviewer:** Oh my god.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So you can get a horse. [Laughs]

- Respondent 1:** That's right. So we have a whole bunch of bottles that were dug up in our backyard because that used to just be the local tip, you know?
- Interviewer:** But they weren't broken, or maybe...
- Respondent 1:** Well some of them were broken.
- Interviewer:** Do you have them? You kept them?
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah. We still have them, yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Where's the mezuzah that we used to have?
- Respondent 1:** Oh, I'm not sure.
- Respondent 2:** It used to be on our front door.
- Respondent 1:** We found a piece of newspaper from 1895 in the wall one time, and I can't remember where that is. It probably [1:08:30] disintegrated by now, but that's how we know the back of the house was built in 1895.
- Interviewer:** But there was a mezuzah somewhere?
- Respondent 2:** Oh yeah, on the front – well most of the houses had them.
- Interviewer:** Well I think the rule is if you're going to go buy – I mean I'm doing things correctly – is if it's a Jewish family moving in, you're not supposed to take the mezuzah off. You should leave it for them. But if it's not a Jewish family – I might be wrong, but that's what I've been told.
- Respondent 2:** But it was always...
- Interviewer:** You can take it.
- Respondent 2:** I would say it was from the '40s because – [1:09:00] I mean I don't know how old, it might have been much older than that, but I think the last Jewish family...

- Respondent 1:** The last were the Wax family.
- Respondent 2:** And they probably left in the '50s.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Fair. I'm not sure what nationality they were.
- Respondent 2:** But it was on our front door when we moved in. [Laughter]
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Did it make you feel safer? [Laughs]
- Respondent 2:** But it has to be somewhere.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. No, we wouldn't have thrown it out.
- Respondent 2:** Oh definitely we wouldn't have thrown it out.
- Respondent 1:** I don't know where it is. Yeah. Anyways, yeah.
- Respondent 2:** We'll find it somewhere in the basement.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. One of these days we'll be cleaning out.
- Interviewer:** [1:09:30] Where did your children go to school, and what was the school situation when you were living here with your family?
- Respondent 1:** Our kids went to Huron and we didn't think much of Lord Lansdowne, which was the alternative at the time.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** I don't know whether it's gotten better, but at that time...
- Respondent 2:** I think it has.
- Respondent 1:** ...it wasn't the place to send your kids particularly.
- Interviewer:** And what about high school?

- Respondent 2:** Oakwood.
- Respondent 1:** They went to Oakwood. They definitely traveled for the music program.
- Interviewer:** Your children are musical, [1:10:00] I gather?
- Respondent 2:** Well they went to Winona, which had a – which was a seven/eight, because Huron only goes up to six. So they started in music at Winona, and then most kids who are in the music program at Winona ended up going to Oakwood, so.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. So they were commuting children.
- Interviewer:** The JCC. What was it at that time? Was it already at Bloor and Spadina when you moved here? It used to be down at Brunswick and College.
- Respondent 2:** It must have been. [1:10:30] Yeah. It must have been.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** It was at Brunswick and College?
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Oh. Not in a building that's still there.
- Interviewer:** Long time ago.
- Respondent 2:** 1950s. I think 1950s is when they built it, if I remember the corner stone.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, that's right. No, it's definitely built in the fifties architecturally. Yeah. So that was a bit before our time. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** You certainly use it.
- Respondent 2:** I certainly use it.

- Interviewer:** That's how you and I know each other.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** I just used it for the athletic program. I've used it for the athletic program.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. For me it was never sort of an integral part of the community, and it was sort of – [1:11:00] I was surprised when you started going there.
- Respondent 2:** With Bill...
- Respondent 1:** Wiley.
- Respondent 2:** His name was Wiley?
- Respondent 1:** No. Okay. Bill.
- Respondent 2:** Maureen and Bill.
- Interviewer:** Emery.
- Respondent 2:** Emery.
- Respondent 1:** Emery. That's right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 2:** He really reached out to the community...
- Interviewer:** Really?
- Respondent 2:** ...and really made it an integral part of it.
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah. He invited in the Residents' Association, and we'd have meetings with them.
- Respondent 2:** We held meetings there.

- Respondent 1:** It began to feel more sort of friendly about the JCC, but up until then it was sort of a place where, you know, the Jewish people went, it was their thing, you know? [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** [1:11:30] Oh has that ever changed.
- Respondent 2:** It wasn't part of the community at all. And then he – I think it was Bill that started the Bloor Street Festival that's going on...
- Interviewer:** Oh really?
- Respondent 2:** I believe he did that.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** He was an extraordinary person, and he's...
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I was on the Board of Directors at the JCC and worked very closely with him, and yeah.
- Respondent 2:** And plus I don't know enough about the Jewish immigration patterns. That's wrong, but [1:12:00] families began to move back into the centre, and to look for religious education for their children, and a place to worship, and suddenly, like, the little synagogue on Brunswick – I mean that was...
- Interviewer:** It was on its way out.
- Respondent 2:** It was on its way out, and then suddenly there was this massive revival, and so a lot of that has happened in the last...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah. People...
- Respondent 2:** ...fifteen, twenty years.
- Respondent 1:** ...commute down.
- Respondent 2:** That's right.

- Respondent 1:** Now they come from north of St. Clair. [Laughs]
- Respondent 2:** And wasn't there a synagogue on the north side of [1:12:30] Sussex that became an arts school after?
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. That's at the northeast corner.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. But that was a synagogue. I think when we moved in that was still a synagogue.
- Respondent 1:** Definitely a synagogue when we moved in, yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. And then it became an arts school, didn't it?
- Respondent 1:** Became the arts school, and then whatever it is now. It's now Greenpeace or...
- Respondent 2:** It's an environmental thing. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** ...whatever.
- Respondent 2:** But that was a growing concern. But again that all – as that immigration moved, as they became wealthier and moved out of the neighbourhood, that all – [1:13:00] I think that's why the JCC was not...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** ...it wasn't part because it wasn't thriving, I think.
- Interviewer:** Well and also it wasn't as welcoming to everybody else.
- Respondent 2:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** And then people came back, and Bill reached out and made it clear that it's for everybody. Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 2:** So it's definitely a force of the neighbourhood now, which it wasn't thirty years ago or forty years ago.

- Interviewer:** Oh that's interesting for me to learn how instrumental Bill was in making that happen.
- Respondent 2:** Very much.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Very, very much.
- Interviewer:** Oh [1:13:30] good for him.
- Respondent 2:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. We used to have an auto repair place. I think it was sort of a body shop.
- Interviewer:** Where is that?
- Respondent 1:** On Brunswick right beside the Warfels.
- Respondent 2:** Oh, the chicken place. The chicken farmer.
- Respondent 1:** That's right. You're right. Then there was the chicken place right down the...
- Respondent 2:** Right next to the park on Brunswick.
- Respondent 1:** No, that was farther south.
- Interviewer:** A chicken what?
- Respondent 2:** No, no, no, no, no. There's a chicken shop.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. That was just about two north. That was right beside [1:14:00] the pottery place.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. But just north of the little tiny – not a park, but there's that little green space in between that they've caught all those...

- Respondent 1:** No, that's where the auto repair shop used to be, right beside the Warfels.
- Respondent 2:** Okay.
- Respondent 1:** So you know, they tore that down and the city said, you know, it's a non-conforming use. They turned it into a park.
- Respondent 2:** But I think just next to that is where the chicken...
- Respondent 1:** No, no, no. No, no.
- Respondent 2:** Anyway...
- Respondent 1:** But there used to be a chicken – I don't know whether they butcher them there, but there's certainly a good kosher [1:14:30] butcher. .
- Respondent 2:** The kosher butcher was fabulous.
- Interviewer:** So where was that? On Brunswick?
- Respondent 1:** It's just north...
- Respondent 2:** On Brunswick.
- Respondent 1:** ...of the pottery place.
- Respondent 2:** North of the pottery place on that side of the street.
- Respondent 1:** We used to have a coach house place, for funeral coaches, right across the street from...
- Interviewer:** So like a huge...
- Respondent 1:** ...the Warfels.
- Interviewer:** Garage of some sort?
- Respondent 1:** I don't know how huge it was, but you know, they used to maintain funeral coaches, and it was a strange part of the neighbourhood.

So I could show you which building it was, but they've still got [1:15:00] the lane going in beside the coach house in the back.

**Interviewer:** So those are some big an interesting changes.

**Respondent 2:** Yeah. I'd forgotten about the chicken guy. I mean he had fantastic chickens. [Laughter]

**Interviewer:** And kosher too.

**Respondent 2:** Exactly. No, but that means they were fresh, they were probably organic, and grain-fed, and antibiotic-free.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. And then we used to have the guy that fixed small engines just south of where the driving school is at [1:15:30] Brunswick.

**Respondent 2:** Oh, I've just remembered something. The guy who used to sharpen knives.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent 2:** He used to walk around all the time.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** And then there was another guy with the truck. He used to come around and sell cherries, and strawberries, and things off the back of this truck.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** But the guy with the knives used to walk around with this big wheel, ringing his bell, and going up and down the streets.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent 2:** That's right. I'd forgotten that.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. And then they used to have the truck that came with the funny music to drag all the kids out for ice cream.

- Interviewer:** Oh yeah.
- Respondent 1:** [1:16:00] [Sings]
- Respondent 2:** [Sings] [Laughter] They're not allowed to play that anymore.
- Respondent 1:** Aren't they?
- Respondent 2:** No.
- Interviewer:** You mean that song? Or have those...
- Respondent 2:** The song, I gather. I think they have to be quiet. I don't think they can – it's probably dangerous. I don't know. [Laughs]
- Respondent 1:** The children come running across the streets and whatever. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So you're saying you came here at the tail-end of the Spadina Expressway. It had already been defeated.
- Respondent 2:** Defeated, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** That had been decided, yeah.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. But you would have fought it like crazy, knowing – now that I know you.
- Respondent 1:** We were [1:16:30] there, but yeah, they were just as a first wave of councillors that – Carl Jaffreys, and the Colin Vaughans, and there was a whole – John Sewell came in at part of that movement, so that whole new bunch of...
- Respondent 2:** And Jane Jacobs moved up to Toronto from New York.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Yeah. I think Bill Archer was the councillor, and he was kind of a retrograde, kind of an old dinosaur kind of a guy, but the new councillors came [1:17:00] in and sort of rebuilt the city, you know?
- Respondent 2:** It was an exciting time for Toronto actually.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** But could you imagine our neighbourhood had the expressway come through it?

**Respondent 2:** I would have gone.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. And then there was Allan Sparrow who was our councillor here, and – did he kick someone in the balls in council? Or was he kicked in the balls? [Laughter] At any rate he was quite – there was quite a fracas. It wasn't just a shouting match. There was actually [1:17:30] a kick to the groin that was quite famous at one point.

**Interviewer:** Oh. And that was about Spadina or about something else?

**Respondent 1:** Oh, I can't remember.

**Respondent 2:** It was just passion.

**Respondent 1:** I can't remember what it was about, but the politics were spicy there. I mean it was a big deal in those days, getting progressive councillors elected. And you just don't think about it. You just assume that Olivia Chow and Adam Vaughan are going to win, you know? But in those days it was real visceral.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Respondent 1:** And before us, I mean, they had communists [1:18:00] before our time. They had communist reps here, you know, during the war sort of, or whatever, in the '30s. So it was – and then it became Conservative with Larry Grossman, and then over to Bob Wong, and you know, and the Dan Heap days. Who did Dan Heap beat? You know what, Dan Heap came in when the Liberals tried to run Jim Coutts. Jim Coutts.

**Respondent 2:** Jim Coutts.

**Interviewer:** Wow.

- Respondent 1:** [1:18:30] And even I, when I voted to get Jim Coutts out of town – because he was Trudeau's appointed boy, you know, was going to come in. And then Peter Stollery tried to run here, and he didn't have any success. It's the politics in here. Quite interesting.
- Interviewer:** Boy, do you ever have a wonderful memory of this. The lineage. [Laughter] What about Rochdale? Was that before you came? Or was it...
- Respondent 1:** Rochdale was [1:19:00] in the university.
- Respondent 2:** But Bob, it was enormous when I came.
- Respondent 1:** Oh it was still going on when you were in – before you...
- Interviewer:** In what way? I mean did it impact on people living here?
- Respondent 2:** In the neighbourhood?
- Respondent 1:** Didn't much impact on our neighbourhood?
- Respondent 2:** No, not an actual impact. Sort of a psychological or...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** This is part of our close neighbourhood. We knew there were people jumping out of windows in drug stupors, and...
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Well they had barricaded floors that the police couldn't get [1:19:30] into. Oh, it was just something.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah, that – I think that had stopped. By the time I got here to Toronto, it was more sort of the hippie haven, and downstairs was the vegan restaurant with those guys with the white turbans.
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah, that's right. Yeah, yeah.

- Respondent 2:** Remember the huge, tall white turbans and the wrappings around their...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** ...all dressed in white?
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Well I think I have covered what I was hoping [1:20:00] to cover with you, and of course I have a list here, but I kind of jumped into whatever you were – but I'm wondering if – obviously you gave it some thought because you sent me an email, but I'm wondering if there's anything that you've been thinking about that I didn't bring up at all that we can talk about before we say goodnight. And I do appreciate your making this list, because I'm going to take these people's numbers, names and numbers from you. Anything at all?
- Respondent 1:** I can't [1:20:30] think of anything else. I mean probably as soon as I put my head on the pillow I'll think of more things, but you can continue the discussion.
- Interviewer:** But do you think we covered a lot of the significant changes?
- Respondent 1:** But I can't think of anything else right now. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** I don't know. I think one of the things was we all felt a bit like pioneers.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, very much so.
- Respondent 2:** As if we all had sort of common goals, and [1:21:00] a common understanding...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, that's true.

**Respondent 2:** ...in the '70s and '80s. All the people that were moving in, you sort of understood each other. And I think that has disappeared.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** It's about money now. I think because it's become such an expensive place it's...

**Interviewer:** So that's a bit of a loss.

**Respondent 2:** That's a loss.

**Interviewer:** It is a loss.

**Respondent 1:** We were definitely urban pioneers moving into this place that people were telling us was a slum, and rejuvenating it. [1:21:30] All people like us, you know, this neat thing we were doing.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. I mean just the word "pioneer" says that you were building something with a community.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent 2:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** And that was all part of the – of what kept Toronto. I mean we were a small little segment of what kept Toronto as an interesting urban experiment, whereas in the United States urban centres were dying. Here it began to thrive. Now [1:22:00] it's not quite the same way, but in those days...

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. Well this was just after the days when they were doing – well they probably built Alexander Park when – I don't remember. Maybe it was built just before we came, but that was maybe done in the '60s and we came in the '70s, but they were doing urban renewal, and wiping out huge blocks, and putting up Alexander Parks, and Regent Parks, and you know, so we were the next

[1:22:30] generation after that rebuilding these communities and making use of them.

**Interviewer:** You know, when you go east towards the Beaches area, but on the waterfront, they have some very large groups of homes that they've created, and they're making it look like what we have here. I don't know if you've seen them.

**Respondent 2:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent 1:** Greenwood, maybe.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, maybe. But they're really emulating what we have here.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah. That's right. Well this is the new urbanism, is what [1:23:00] we have. There's an architectural movement to recreate cities not like Don Mills and Richmond Hill, but create what we've got. This is considered pretty ideal. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** When I moved here in 1968, I had one son, became pregnant with my second son, and the landlord owned – it was a three-floor, so the landlord lived on the first floor. We rented the second and third floor, but we used the second floor [1:23:30] and we rented the third floor to somebody else [laughter] because it was too expensive for us. Even in '68.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** In 1971 when we moved in, Bob and I were both working. We had no debts. We both for that time earned a decent, not a fantastic salary, but a decent salary, and we couldn't afford our house.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent 2:** We were looking at that point to buy something for thirty-five, thirty-eight thousand, and of course the real estate agent starts from there and works you up to a more expensive one. So we rented all the rooms in our house to friends of ours. [1:24:00] We had people on the third floor, we had people in the back.

- Interviewer:** So how many people were living under your roof? Do you have...
- Respondent 1:** Well we had at the back half o the house was one apartment.
- Respondent 2:** Was separated at that point. There was a wall, and so...
- Interviewer:** So what? Then you opened that up and made it a part of your home.
- Respondent 1:** We had the back entrance, we had the front entrance, and then we had two friends as roomers living on the third floor.
- Respondent 2:** On the third floor.
- Respondent 1:** So we had...
- Respondent 2:** And we lived on the main floor and on the second floor.
- Respondent 1:** At the front of the house.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** And then [1:24:30] when we got our mortgage paid off, I guess – what came first? The apartment went?
- Respondent 2:** The mortgage paid off, we got the apartment. We had kids, and then we needed the third floor, so at that point people...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. But the apartment went first, I think, and then the room – we still had the rooms? No, we got rid of the rooms first, the kids moved up to the third floor, and then – that's right. Then we took down the wall and moved back into the back of the house.
- Respondent 2:** Went to the back of the house, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** So now it's just [1:25:00] two of us in this great, big house [laughter] that used to have one, two, three, four, five, six, seven people living in it. [Laughter]
- Respondent 2:** Seven? Oh, you mean the kids.

**Respondent 1:** Well once the kids were there, you know, we still had people upstairs for the first couple of years until they needed their rooms.

**Respondent 2:** Yeah, that's true.

**Interviewer:** Well we'll say goodnight for now.

**Respondent 2:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** I just want to say thank you.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, good.

**Interviewer:** Oh thank you, Bob.

**Respondent 2:** Oh, we have to take the – what time is it?

**Respondent 1:** Nine-thirty.

**Interviewer:** Anyway...

**Respondent 1:** We're doing okay.

**Interviewer:** ...you've [1:25:30] really given us a tremendous amount of very interesting information, and noted a lot of changes that have occurred in the last forty years. So thank you both very much.

**Respondent 1:** Do you have a pad I can write these names on?

[01:25:35]

[End of recording]